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DEVELOPING COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING ON LGBT ISSUES IN THE CLASSROOM

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

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DEDICATION

To my mother Nina Ladd, who will always be my first and favorite teacher. To my sisters, Candace and Anna Ladd, who knew who I was before I did and helped me to become the person I am today. To my father Bruce Ladd, who is one of the best listeners in the world. To Aubriella Huntington, who inspires me to be the kind of role model that my future students deserve. And finally, to Daniel Patton, who showed me how to be brave.

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Abstract

Social studies educators hold an important role in shaping the ideas their students have about society and what we owe to each other. Because of this, it is crucial that we model how to treat LGBT individuals with respect and care to our students, their families, and fellow educators. Unfortunately, pre-service educators often receive little training to ensure that they feel confident enacting a radically inclusive approach to LGBT issues in their classrooms. Through this research I sought to understand what pre-service teachers' perceptions, preparedness, and awareness of LGBT issues were prior to and following a professional development unit that I delivered about the topic. Conducting an assessment beforehand was crucial to ensure that I could provide them with training that would be relevant to their practice. I worked with eleven pre-service educators to help them build an intellectual toolkit about LGBT issues that they could utilize as they begin their careers. This involved two surveys, a training session, a focus group debrief session, and a website that we developed with various resources that they can access at any point. I found that many pre-service educators struggled with fear of pushback from parents and administration if they enacted an LGBT-inclusive curriculum, as well as a general lack of knowledge about how LGBT issues could be incorporated into their curriculum in an appropriate manner. These findings suggest the need for more widespread precedent in regard to these practices.

Keywords: LGBT, Pre-Service Educators, Inclusion, Diversity, Transgender, Two-Spirit, Homophobia, Transphobia, Education, Social Studies, Professional Development

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Introduction

Problem Statement

Social Studies education students in the educator development program I studied at in Oklahoma are only guaranteed access to training about LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) students in a small unit during one course in the first half of their time in the program. This training is surface level and not specific to LGBT issues in K-12 schooling or social studies. Little is done to respond to the needs of preservice educators in regards to their LGBT students directly before and during their internship semester. This is a crucial time in teacher identity development. We need to ensure that social studies education graduates have the confidence and knowledge necessary to accommodate their LGBT students as they begin to establish their own classrooms.

Sensitive and thorough LGBT training is sorely needed in the social studies education program I studied, which is evident through the atmospheres of schools in the surrounding area. Although progress has been made, LGBT students remain a marginalized group within the public school system at large, but especially in Oklahoma. LGBT students have higher rates of bullying based on their sexuality and gender presentation than their cisgender heterosexual peers (Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center, 2020). In 2017, only 22% of LGBT students in Oklahoma reported that their schools were at least somewhat supportive of LGBT students (GLSEN 2). LGBT students are often harassed and excluded by fellow students (Goodboy & Martin 2018). This phenomena should cause a sense of urgency in all educators, especially considering the link between bullying and suicide.

Significance of the Study

What we focus on in our teacher education programs is directly related to the traits we value in educators in our schools. Although teachers with a specific passion and interest in accommodating their LGBT students generally have the information to be able to do so through outside sources, we need to provide adequate training to all pre-service educators so that they will be equipped to educate the broad range of students they will encounter in their classrooms.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of what pre-service teachers are learning about LGBT issues, I conducted a cursory review of the LGBT inclusivity of eleven teacher education programs in the same region as the university I studied. I scanned their websites for diversity statements and social studies education bachelor's degree checklists. The eleven programs that I looked at were University of Arkansas, University of Central Oklahoma, Emporia State University, University of Houston, Kansas University, Kansas State University, University of Missouri, University of New Mexico, University of North Texas, University of Oklahoma, and Oklahoma State University. Of the diversity statements that I was able to find, Kansas University was the only one to explicitly name gender and sexuality. The rest of the statements used language such as inclusion, multicultural, diverse, etc. without mentioning specific areas of oppression like gender or sexuality. Nine of the programs I analyzed had a required course in cultural diversity, however Kansas University was the only program whose multicultural course description included both gender and sexuality. At the University of Houston, their multicultural course description mentions gender but not sexuality. At the University of Central Oklahoma, their required adolescent psychology course description included a mention of sexuality. While it is possible pre-service teachers are receiving training about LGBT issues as part of their coursework, it does not seem to be a priority for most of these programs.

Another way that we can assess the current preparedness of educators graduating from teacher education programs in Oklahoma is to examine what students are experiencing in public schools. With this in mind, I set out to see what documentation I could find on the topic. There is a stark lack of information on the internet about LGBT students in Oklahoma. I have found that the majority of mentions of LGBT students on official school websites for Oklahoma are exclusively focused on bullying and harassment (Oklahoma State Department of Education, Norman Public Schools, Moore Public Schools, and Oklahoma City Public Schools). Bullying is a major issue, however it is only a part of the picture when it comes to inclusion of LGBT students. It is not enough to wait until a student is harassed to respond to homophobia and transphobia. Schools need to create environments that are inclusive from the start to make sure that all students understand that homophobia and transphobia will not be tolerated, whether or not there has been a recent incident.

Building an LGBT inclusive school atmosphere is an iterative process that is multi-pronged. With regards to gender divergent students (referring to those who do not identify as male or female and/or those who identify with a different gender than the one they were assigned at birth), this means considering how transgender and nonbinary students fit into the many aspects of school that are designed around the idea of two biological permanent genders. With this information, we can redesign aspects that are not accommodating of them (Woolley 2019). Some examples include gender segregation of gym classes, bathrooms, locker rooms, and sex education. Most of all, teachers need to be trained in the intricacies of LGBT identities so that they can avoid alienating students or their parents. While every student has unique needs, teachers should begin their careers with an intellectual toolkit of general knowledge about LGBT accommodations that they can access at any point.

Social studies educators also need the confidence and know-how to be able to incorporate LGBT issues into their curriculum in ways that are not tokenizing or demeaning. LGBT students deserve to see themselves represented in curriculum, just like their cisgender heterosexual peers already do on a regular basis. However, because this is not the current reality, most pre-service educators will need someone to model LGBT inclusive curriculum for them so that they can replicate it in their own classrooms. Teacher education programs are the perfect space for pre-service teachers to encounter instruction that centers queer pedagogies in ways that are authentic and meaningful.

Subjectivity Statement

As a member of the LGBT community, I have learned how to navigate meaningful friendships with people of diverse gender and sexual identities. However while I was student teaching in a high school Spanish class I realized there is a lot of specific practical knowledge that teachers need to possess in order to make their students from across the LGBT spectrum feel welcome and safe in their classroom. It was out of this need that I set out to enrich the experiences of other pre-service educators in regards to training on LGBT issues, so that they can be better equipped to serve all kinds of students.

I am a queer, cisgender woman. Because of my membership in the LGBT community, I have an insider perspective on many of the issues we will be discussing. At the same time, while many of my closest friends are transgender I do not have firsthand knowledge of those experiences. Additionally, I was mostly in the closet until my third year of college so I did not face open, targeted homophobia from teachers or classmates in middle or high school.

While I have faced marginalization as a fat, queer, woman with chronic anxiety, I still have many privileges that color my perspective as a researcher. I am white, I was born in the

United States to a family that is upper middle class and Christian. I am not disabled. I recognize that without these points of privilege, I may not have been able to gain the access to conduct this research in the first place. Poor, transgender, Black, Indigenous, Asian, and disabled members of the LGBT community experience homophobia and transphobia in ways which I will never fully understand. It is because of the experiences of marginalized students that we need more nuanced and responsive training.

While student teaching in a high school Spanish classroom, I had many students that identified as LGBT. I took small measures to be inclusive, such as putting up a sign that said "All are Welcome Here" and asking students which pronouns they use in the beginning of the year survey. I struggled with knowing whether or not to conceal my identity as a Queer woman. I came out to a few LGBT students in conversation, but I never told all of my students. If I were to redo that semester, I would choose to be open with everyone. Representation is so important for LGBT students who are still questioning and/or hiding their identity in high school.

My status as a member of the LGBT community means that I do not know what it is like to serve LGBT students as a straight cisgender person, as the majority of my participants were. Additionally, because this subject is so deeply personal to me I may have blind spots and sensitivities. At the same time, I believe that my perspective as an insider both in the pre-service social studies educator community and the LGBT community uniquely positions me to be able to provide educators the training they need to best serve their LGBT students.

Research Questions and Purpose

Through this research I am seeking to understand what pre-service teachers' perceptions, preparedness, and awareness of LGBT issues are prior to and following a professional development unit that I delivered about the topic. I want to know what areas of need pre-service

teachers have in regard to knowing how to work with LGBT students and how these areas of need can be addressed in a professional learning experience. My hopes are not only to enrich their knowledge of LGBT issues, but also provide them with practical tools they can use as they begin teaching. By assessing their needs through a diagnostic survey, I can make recommendations for improvement of the training on LGBT issues that pre-service educators take part in.

Literature Review

In this literature review, I have a few aims. Most importantly, I would like to impart the idea that we cannot discuss LGBT oppression in the United States without understanding how it is entangled with settler colonization and white supremacy. Secondly, I want to explain how homophobia and transphobia in our schools leads to direct emotional and physical harm of our students. I also provide backing for the inclusion of LGBT studies in general social studies classes and the ways that training can play an important role in how effectively teachers serve their LGBT students.

Firstly, I would like to recognize that homophobia and transphobia in what is currently the United States is a direct result of colonization, a process which is ongoing. As a settler of Kikkapoi (Kickapoo), Wazhazhe (Osage), Kitikiti'sh (Wichita), and Kanza (Kaw) lands, I have benefitted from the unjust occupation of Tribal lands. As a scholar and an educator, I am accountable to my Indigenous neighbors for unlearning the worldview I have inherited, which is deeply rooted in colonization and white supremacy. It is with this mindset that I decided to forefront this literature review with the acknowledgment that queer history is much longer and deeper than the activism of the past 60 years in the United States. Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer (Indigenous and queer) people have existed on this land since before we had any written records. In their work, Pruden and Edmo (2013) list the 95 known words in tribal languages across the United States that are used to describe Two-Spirits, an umbrella term for Indigenous people whose genders exist outside the male-female binary. In many tribal nations, Two-Spirit people have been held in high regard and have even fulfilled special roles in the community (Neptune 2018). In the podcast All My Relations (2019), Joshua Whitehead, an Oji-Cree Two-Spirit

Indigiqueer member of Peguis First Nation, explains why the use of the term Indigiqueer is useful for modern Indigenous peoples. Terms for non-heterosexual identities did not exist in Native languages due to the fact that homosexuality was normalized to the point that they would not have needed to come up with a separate word to describe these people. Whitehead specifically identifies with the term Indigiqueer because it places himself in the present era, however he also uses the term Two-Spirit because it calls him back to his ancestors (Keene et al. 2019). These terms serve two different and important functions in the lives of many Indigenous people. Whichever terms are used, the truth remains that the cis-heteropatriarchy is a colonial construction which is antithetical to the idea of relationality with our communities and the land. European colonizers have attempted continually to erase the identities and existence of Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer people. Their continued presence on this land and resistance to European cisheteronormativity is a testament to their radical refusal to be erased (Neptune 2018; Simpson 2007).

There are often debates as to the correct definitions for gender, sex, and sexuality. While there is no definition for these terms that will entirely encompass our cultural ideas around these concepts, I will provide working definitions for the purpose of this paper. Rushton et al. (2019) conceptualize the differences between gender and sex like so:

> We define gender as being the socially constructed processes and differences, often aligned with being feminine, masculine, blended elements of both, or neither...Sex is defined as the physical characteristics used to identify differences between males and females; this does not mean that a person's gender or physical sex characteristics necessarily align with their sex assigned at birth based on visible genitalia.

Gender is based on the socially constructed identity group that we place ourselves in, whereas sex is defined by an individual's blend of physical sexual characteristics such as genitals, secondary sexual organs, and hormones. Gender is centered around who we imagine ourselves to be both in isolation from and together with those in our society. On the other hand, sexuality is primarily centered in how we relate to others. It is a broad term that can encompass who people are attracted to, how they express their attraction, their perceived roles in relationships, and more (Shively & De Cecco 1977). Sexuality, sex, and gender are fraught terms that are continually evolving with the culture around us. As educators, this means that we must be open to our students changing the way they describe their identities as they see fit. No terms for sexuality or gender fully encompass what they mean for each individual, so it's important to allow fluidity with how our students identify themselves.

In recent years, there has been more research done into how we can be culturally responsive to Black and Latino urban queer youth (Brockenbrough, 2016; Gay, 2000). Brockenbrough (2016) recommends enacting a model of care, respecting the various cultures of students, and drawing upon their funds of knowledge when designing learning experiences (p. 173). Increasing access to the teaching profession for queer people of color is also extremely critical. On this subject, Lewis (2012) notes:

> As...a Black lesbian woman, I recognize that students potentially perceive my body, at the intersection of these identities, as "embodied text" in their practice of making connections and identifying silences in course materials. As already noted, Alexander (2005) contends the teacher's body becomes material content in the classroom, an object of inquiry that can "speak" to omissions and absences in the curriculum and signal teachable moments (p. 34).

As Lewis states, when teachers visibly hold marginalized identities, this can enhance the learning experience for similarly marginalized students and open the minds of relatively privileged students to more critical perspectives. As someone who is queer, I understand that schools are not always friendly towards teachers being openly queer and/or transgender. There have been times when I was worried about being rejected in the teaching field because of my sexuality. While professional standards for conduct are important, these should never encroach on a teacher's ability to be honest about who they are, especially when it could be beneficial to students. Teachers and administrators need access to more critical and reflective training about LGBT issues so as to reduce bias and stigma around openly LGBT teachers and students. We also need expanded scholarship programs for pre-service teachers of marginalized identities so that LGBT people experiencing financial oppression are not kept from being able to become certified teachers.

Although the field of LGBT studies in education is expanding to include more perspectives, we need more critical research into the ways in which the LGBT identities that many students hold intersect with other identities they may have (Crenshaw 2017). This includes but is not limited to disability status, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, body size, religion, mental health status, first language, and citizenship status. All of these systems and identifiers we have constructed have a material, bodily effect on the everyday realities of LGBT students. LGBT students facing additional systems of oppression have to navigate complex social webs every day just to survive. When they are facing these challenges in isolation from the school community, they will be less likely to be able to focus on learning and preparing for their future. For some students, they may not be able to envision a future beyond high school because all of their energy is focused on surviving. If teachers are able to provide support for these students and

connect them to resources, they will be more likely to have the mental energy needed to learn (Johns et al. 2019).

In our teacher education programs, we need training that will give teachers the confidence to enact inclusive pedagogy for all kinds of LGBT students, including but not limited to Indigiqueer/Two-Spirit, Black, disabled, and homeless youth. This training should not only seek to expand their knowledge base of LGBT history and issues, but give them practical tools to intervene in situations where their LGBT students are at risk. Swanson and Gettinger (2016) found that teachers who had attended training about LGBT students were much more likely to take on supportive roles with their students. This support can look like many things, such as having conversations with students about which name and pronouns to use for them in class and around their parents, checking in with students on a semi-regular basis, and advocating for them when they are targeted by school staff or peers. This will look different for every teacher depending on their context and disposition, but all teachers have the opportunity to create a safe space for their students of all gender identities and sexualities.

The mistreatment that LGBT students endure often does not end at school. In 2019 it was reported that LGBT teenagers are three times more likely to commit suicide than their cisgender heterosexual peers (Zimlich, 2019, 34). Many LGBT teenagers face harsh rejection from their families, sometimes even being kicked out of their homes because of their sexuality and/or gender identity. In 2017, it was estimated that between 320,000 and 400,000 LGBT youth were homeless (Tierney, 2017, 498). Under the right circumstances, teachers and peers can be a robust support system and safety net for LGBT students facing abuse and neglect. Teachers are not the ultimate solution for all the issues that LGBT students encounter, but we can be a part of the solution.

Abuse, bullying, and harassment is only one piece of the puzzle when it comes to what LGBT students experience in schools and beyond. When we exclusively focus on the immediate dangers that many LGBT youth are in, attention is diverted from the ways in which the cisheternormative structures of schools themselves can perpetuate violence based on gender identity and sexuality (Formby, 2015). As Marston and Perry (2013) note, perpetuating these structures can cause teachers to foster bullying and harassment unintentionally.

> Understanding gender norms, heterosexism and heteronormativity push us to look beyond individual incidents of bullying and explore the negativity that surrounds nonheterosexual identities and gender nonconformity in different social settings, including schools. Homophobic bullying does not exist in isolation from wider social and cultural norms – it is directly informed by them (6).

It is impossible to understand bullying if we look at it as only an issue between individuals. If this was the case, every group of students would be bullied at approximately the same rate. But LGBT students are bullied at higher rates because the heteronormative school system positions LGBT students as outsiders and cisgender heterosexual students as the accepted norm.

While some may view the inclusion of LGBT subjects in curriculum to be inappropriately sexual, our curriculum is already heterosexualized in various ways, such as the regular presentation of heterosexual relationships in literature given to students (Sumatra & Davis, 1999). Britzman (1995) points out the double standards and exclusion within curriculum in a poignant and compelling manner:

> Can gay and lesbian theories become relevant not just for those who identify as gay or lesbian but for those who do not? What sort of difference would it make for everyone in a classroom if gay and lesbian writing were set loose from confirmations of homophobia,

> the afterthoughts of inclusion, or the special event? What is required for gay and lesbian scholarship and demands for civil rights to exceed its current ghettoized and minor identity? More interestingly, what if gay and lesbian theories were understood as offering a way to rethink the very grounds of knowledge and pedagogy in education? Conceptually speaking, what is required to refuse the unremarked and obdurately unremarkable straight educational curriculum? (151).

If their article was written in 2021, I have no doubt that the concept of transgender and non-binary identities would be included within their discourse about curricular exclusion. Nonetheless, their perspective is still incredibly relevant and important. LGBT issues should not be an afterthought in lessons or a sidebar in textbooks. There are so many possibilities for educators to radically incorporate queer understandings in ways that transform their entire pedagogy. In our cisheteropatriarchal society, claiming queer identities is inherently oppositional to the oppressive norm. Embodying this spirit of bravery can embolden educators to teach with critical authenticity and care.

We need social studies teachers that understand how to both build respectful and inclusive communities and enact curriculum that is representative of a wide diversity of perspectives, including those of LGBT youth of color. In order to understand how to incorporate LGBT issues into social studies, it is necessary to understand the goals of social studies as it should operate in our classrooms. Barr (1997) describes social studies as having two common aims: “understanding the world, and participating in society as responsible citizens” (p. 7). This framework fits well with the aims of LGBT studies, which is to include LGBT narratives in curriculum and recover the “lost subject” (Schmidt 2010). In order to understand the world, it is important for students to be exposed to a wide variety of LGBT narratives, of both beauty and

pain. LGBT people have always existed and have played roles in virtually every society we have records of. If these perspectives are being silenced, the students' understandings of history will always be necessarily limited. Additionally, in order to participate in society as a responsible citizen we cannot be indifferent or callous to an entire group of people that are being targeted by systematic oppression.

LGBT narratives are crucial in the social studies classroom, not just for their inclusionary effects but also because they are a part of our history. When studying LGBT issues, it is important that educators center the experiences of Indigenous, Black, poor, and disabled LGBT people. Not only will this help educators to better understand how to support their students, it will also increase the cultural responsiveness of the curriculum. Homophobia and transphobia is a crisis in our country. As educators, if we enact inclusive pedagogy and curriculum, we can change the outcomes of LGBT youth in our schools.

Theoretical Framework

I designed this learning experience based on key tenets of professional development for educators. When professional development is done correctly, it can lead to both student and teacher growth (Darling-Hammond et al. 2017). However not all professional development is meaningful to teachers (Savage 2019). According to Desimone (2009), professional development should include "(a) content focus, (b) active learning, (c) coherence, (d) duration, and (e) collective participation" (p. 183). I had logistical limitations to incorporating some of these factors considering that the main training session I conducted only lasted for one hour and participation in each step of the project was completely voluntary, so three out of the eleven total participants took part in every step of the process (the surveys, the training session, and the focus group). However participants that were involved in everything had the opportunity to analyze

their own beliefs through the surveys (coherence), be presented with a framework for understanding sexuality and gender as it applies to the classroom (content focus), ask questions of me and the group at-large (collective participation), and help me develop a website to be a tool to themselves and fellow educators (active learning). I also was intentional in letting participants know that they are free to contact me with questions at any point in the future and I will try my best to help them find answers (duration).

This project is also deeply rooted in LGBT studies. Queer theory is another popular area of study that has emerged from LGBT studies, however my project is centered more in LGBT studies than queer theory. Schmidt (2010) differs between these fields like so:

> LGBT Studies is attentive to the inclusion of lesbian, gay, and bisexual and transgendered...persons and issues in the curriculum (Halperin, 2003; Lovaas, Elia & Yep, 2006). While LGBT Studies attempts to recover the lost subject, queer theory questions how the categories of LGBTQ came to exist and how they affect the way in which people behave and can be identified (p. 316).

Queer theory is a generative space for social studies educators to draw upon, however for this project it made the most sense to focus on LGBT studies, which is centered around including LGBT people in curriculum.

In their book, Gibson et al. (2014) recognize that LGBT studies are still a marginalized field in various ways. Many times, courses with LGBT content are treated as an opportunity to learn about tolerance and basic respect for LGBT individuals instead of treating it as a natural and normal part of the curriculum that does not need specialized justifications (Gibson et al. 2014, p. xv). Although my specific training was more focused on the idea of tolerance and

inclusion, I also encouraged my participants to treat LGBT history as a subject worth studying in its own right, regardless of any political agendas or personal beliefs.

Methods

This study is based on a Mixed Methods Embedded design, which means that one data set is meant to play a supportive role in relation to the other, primary data set (Creswell & Plano Clark 2017). In this case, I was hoping to support the findings from the pre-survey and post-survey with commentary from my focus group session. In the following section I will outline the participants and setting, instructional materials, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations for this study.

Research Design

Participants and Setting

This study was conducted among students at a large public university in the state of Oklahoma. The social and geopolitical climate surrounding the university is highly influenced by the Protestant Evangelical Christian religion. This area is colloquially known as the "Bible Belt." The town in which the university is located is mixed politically, however the political landscape in the state of Oklahoma is generally conservative. There is a significant Indigenous population in the area as well. The land acknowledgment from the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department of the University of Oklahoma, which is in the same general area, is as follows:

> We gather on, teach and learn, and engage with scholarship on land placed by its Creator in the care and protection of the Hasinai (Caddo) and Kitikiti'sh (Wichita) peoples and

originally shared by many Indigenous Nations—including the Cáuigù (Kiowa), Nʉmʉnʉʉ (Comanche), Na i sha and Ndee (Apache)—as a place of gathering and exchange.[1]

I worked specifically with nine pre-service educators and two in-service educators. Three participants were undergraduate students and eight were graduate students. Of these participants, nine self-identified as primarily white, one as Asian American, and one as both white and Native American. Nine participants identified as heterosexual, and two participants were bisexual. All participants were cisgender, with seven women and four men. The participants ranged in age from 22 to 45. Of the participants that identified their religious beliefs, six did not identify with any particular religion and two were Christian.

Training and Instructional Materials

I led this training as part of either the methods course, which is generally taken the semester before student teaching, or as a supplement to the student teaching seminar course. This is an impactful period of time in the lives of pre-service educators, especially in regards to professional identity formation and pedagogical stance. In the first half of the education program, students are learning about theories and writing hypothetical lesson plans. This is also the period where they receive a general allyship training from the on-campus Gender and Equality Center. I participated in this training in the Spring of 2018 and I remembered there being a lot of focus on definition of terms and not very much in-depth discourse. I reached out to the staff member in charge of these training sessions to see what material they are including now. They told me the following:

[1] This land acknowledgment is used internally in documents by the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department at the University of Oklahoma but it has not been published. I received permission to use it in my thesis from a professor in the department.

> The LGBTQ+ Aspiring Ally training is broken down into two parts: the first is foundational knowledge and key concepts of identity development; the second is focused on discussing challenges faced by the individual and the community as well as tools for allies. The key concepts discussed in part one: sex assigned at birth, gender identity, gender expression and sexual identity as they exist within and outside of binary socialization.[2]

As I envision it, the allyship training provides a starting point for those wishing to understand gender and sexuality as they operate within society at-large. However as education students enter their internship semester, they start to have a lot more questions about how to apply what they have learned to their practice. This is where I believe it is crucial to provide vocation-specific, responsive training about LGBT issues as they relate to K-12 schooling.

This training was developed based on participant responses to the pre-survey, as well as a framework for understanding gender and sexuality that I consider foundational to understanding LGBT issues among youth. One common piece of feedback I received from participants in the free response section was that they were afraid of pushback from parents and administration if they enacted inclusive pedagogy, so I made sure to cover advice for handling that in my training. Additionally, in the initial survey 27% of participants responded that they somewhat agreed or were unsure if non-binary identities are relatively new in the world. As social studies educators, I wanted to make sure everyone understood the historicity of non-binary genders both here in the United States and across the world. Out of this felt need, I spent a considerable portion of the presentation displaying resources about Two-Spirit identities. I also chose not to discuss the topic of religion and sexuality for various reasons, including the fact that most of my participants did

[2] Written permission to quote these comments was obtained.

not identify as religious and more importantly because I did not want to insinuate the idea that personal beliefs should impact whether or not one chooses to accommodate their students. Lastly, 36% of people on the pre-survey said that they somewhat agreed that gender is biological and 27% were either unsure or agreed that everyone is born either male or female. Due to this, I spent a small portion of the time explaining about how gender is an identity and sex is biological and that intersex people (people whose sexes do not fit into the male/female binary) exist.

In our training session, we covered the topics of gender identity, Two-Spirit history, LGBT-inclusive social studies curriculum, and recommendations for educators. I am including all of the non-original illustrations and resources I used in Appendix C. We started our sessions by talking about gender identity. I used a popular image called the genderbread person to explain the difference between gender identity, sexuality, expression, and sex. I then gave the participants a brief overview of the following terms related to gender: gender identity, gender dysphoria, transgender, assigned (male/female) at birth, and intersex. I also explained to my participants what to avoid saying, such as hermaphrodite, biologically male/female, born a male/female, using deadnames, male-to-female/female-to-male, his/her when gender is unknown, and *preferred* pronouns (as opposed to "personal pronouns" or simply "pronouns"). I then used two illustrations to explain how diverse the genders that fall under the category of non-binary can be. I finished up the section on gender by playing a video about Two Spirit identities by Geo Neptune (2018) and showing my participants a slideshow made by Harlan Pruden and Se-ah-dom Edmo (2013) with historical photos of Two Spirit people and the 95 known words from tribal languages that describe people with genders that are not strictly male or female.

After this, I went through a list I made of nine ideas for including LGBT issues in your social studies curriculum. These were as follows:

- Colonization of North America: Two-Spirit people (Thomas & Jacobs 1999)
- Civil Rights Movement: Sylvia Rivera, Marsha Johnson, Bayard Rustin, Stonewall (Bronski & Chevat 2019)
- Legislative process/branches of government: analyzing passage of major civil rights bills for LGBT people (Ogolsky et al. 2019, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2018)
- Economics: discuss costs of LGBT discrimination within workforce (Longarino 2019)
- Sociology and Criminology: discuss imprisonment and murder of Black trans women (Russell et al. 2021, Dvorak 2019)
- World Religion: examine roles of LGBT people in different religions. Some examples of non-binary genders that are held in high regard in traditional religions and spiritualities include the Hijras in South Asia (Hossain 2012); the Quariwarmi in Peru (Picq & Tikuna 2019); the Māhū in Hawaii (Robertson 1989); the Aravanis of Tamil Nadu (Rudisill 2015); the Acaults of Myanmar (Ho 2009); the Calabai, Calalai, and Bissus of Indonesia (Davies 2010); the Lhamana of the Zuni tribe (Clemmer 1994); and more.
- Identity politics: discuss formation of subcultures such as LGBT communities (Whittier 2017)
- Holocaust: discuss internment of LGBT people (Grau et al. 1995)[3]
- Psychology: discuss how homosexuality and transgender identities have been treated like mental illnesses (Hegarty 2018)

[3] To be clear, the purpose of including LGBT narratives in discussing the Holocaust should not be to diminish or deny the oppression faced by Jewish people, Romani people, and disabled people, but rather to amplify the voices of all those who were targeted.

Finally, I gave my participants six recommendations for educators wishing to be inclusive of their LGBT students and families:

1. Be sensitive about the names and pronouns you use for students.
2. Enact LGBT inclusive curriculum.
3. Be prepared to deal with pushback.
4. Include visual representation of LGBT people, signs, and/or flags in your classroom.
5. Openly address bullying and harassment.
6. Allow students to explore their identities.

After the training, I distributed a link to the website we developed with resources for educators wishing to enact an LGBT-inclusive pedagogy:
https://sites.google.com/view/lgbtresourceseducation/home
The goal of this training was to provide participants with a general framework for understanding gender identity and sexuality, as well as ensure they have the tools needed to continue their learning process independently.

Data Sources, Collection, and Analysis

The primary method of gathering data was through the survey on teacher perception of LGBT issues that I authored (included in appendix A). This survey was given to the participants before and after delivering my training unit. Before giving the survey to participants, it was reviewed by various people. The first person was my faculty advisor, Dr. Kristy Brugar. She narrowed the focus of the questions to pedagogy. Next, I consulted with a friend of mine who is transgender. I wanted to make sure my questions about transgender people were relevant and

respectful. Finally, I asked my mother to take the survey and recorded her oral feedback considering the construction of the questions. I wanted to see how the questions would be perceived by someone who is not a member of the LGBT community. It was through her perspective that I realized some of the questions were leading participants to answer in certain ways.

After receiving responses to the pre-survey and post-survey, I analyzed results by scoring participants based on their acceptance towards and understanding of LGBT issues. I devised my system for scoring based on a conversation with my research methods professor, Dr. Shinyoung Jeon. She suggested that I score each response on a scale of -2 to 2, with negative scores indicating negative bias towards LGBT issues and positive scores indicating positive bias towards LGBT issues. Some questions were coded negatively and some were coded positively. For example, question 14 ("Inclusion of LGBT curriculum and classroom practices only benefits LGBT students") was coded negatively so if a participant agreed strongly they received a score of -2 for that question and if they disagreed strongly they received a score of +2. On the flip side, question 15 ("Inclusion of LGBT curriculum and classroom practices benefits all students") was coded positively so if a participant agreed strongly they received a score of 2, if they somewhat agreed they received a score of 1, if they were unsure their score was 0, if they somewhat disagreed their score was -1, and if they strongly disagreed their score for that question was -2. For reference, in Appendix B all the positively coded questions have (+) written after them and all the negatively coded questions have (-) written after them. Nineteen questions were coded negatively and nine questions were coded positively. After scoring all of the participants, I aggregated all of their scores and tracked differences between both aggregate scores and responses to specific questions. There was no way to track the change in score before and after

the session for each particular participant because the survey was completely anonymous to ensure participants felt comfortable answering honestly.

The training was conducted twice over Zoom. The first time was with a group of three participants and lasted around 75 minutes. The second training had eight participants and lasted 50 minutes. In the second session, two participants joined around halfway through the training due to some logistical issues. I recorded the audio for these sessions and listened to the recordings afterwards. I also copied the questions and comments that participants added in the Zoom chat to reference later.

Lastly, I conducted a focus group interview with three participants afterwards (questions in Appendix B). I chose the focus group format because there was less pressure on each participant to answer every question and I hoped that they would feel more comfortable sharing constructive criticism than they might in a one-on-one interview. There were multiple purposes for this session. I started off by asking them to share about their experiences in the training, what they liked and what could have been improved. I also asked them to discuss which areas of growth they had in regards to their personal understanding and confidence with LGBT pedagogies. Finally, I concluded by showing them the website I developed with resources about LGBT issues for educators (https://sites.google.com/view/lgbtresourceseducation/home). I walked through each section of the website and gathered suggestions for more content that could be included. I wanted to make sure that the website would be relevant for participants. After the session, I transcribed the audio using the Otter.ai web program. I have included excerpts in the findings below.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that the four tenets of trustworthiness for qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability. With this study, I attempted to avoid filtering participant voices as much as possible. At the same time, I recognize that my perspective will always color the way I interpret participant responses. Every piece of data for this study was self-reported, both on my part and on the part of the participants. I also gave members of the focus group a chance to check the transcript excerpts I included in the findings section to ensure I was representing their comments accurately (credibility). As you will see in the analysis, not all of the survey results were as positive as I had expected. Out of transparency, I decided not to try to downplay these results and instead present them with the confession that I do not fully understand why everything resulted the way it did (confirmability). Throughout the process, I made sure to discuss findings with my advisor, Dr. Kristy Brugar and reflect honestly on how the training and data collection process could have been improved (more on this later). As for dependability, I am not entirely certain that the findings could be repeated in different contexts. The training session I conducted was based on the specific context I was in and the findings are mostly applicable to our program and participants. Nevertheless, the idea of conducting a professional development training session based on pre-assessment and many of the main ideas I presented in my training could be applied to a wide variety of learning contexts (transferability).

Ethical Considerations

Polonsky and Waller (2014) posit that voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and potential for harm are the four overarching areas of ethical

considerations for research projects. All of these areas were paramount to me when designing this study. I was careful to stress to participants that participation in every step of the study was voluntary and would in no way affect their grade in their methods or student teaching course. Additionally, I made sure they understood what they were consenting to by both explaining the study verbally and outlining it in the consent form at the beginning of the pre-survey. I also kept the results of the survey anonymous even to myself and was careful to remove identifying factors from participant comments. Lastly, I did not see any potential for harm to participants, as the activities that participants took part in were not dissimilar from what they would be asked to do in a typical course in the college of education.

Beyond the typical ethical obligations of research, I feel strongly about the idea of relational accountability with who I choose to cite in my research (Wilson 2008). Wilson proposes the idea that research is a conversation between the scholars whose works have been cited and the authors of the research project. With this in mind it was essential that I attempt to forefront voices and work of queer scholars. In an effort to include these voices, it is important to investigate the backgrounds of those cited. LGBT people have often had their narratives retold by cisgender heterosexual researchers, at times reducing their original message down to the components which are digestible to straight audiences (Wagaman et al. 2018). Unfortunately, I do not know whether or not most of the researchers I cited hold LGBT identities because that is not a salient feature which can be easily discerned through an internet search. Nevertheless, to the best of my knowledge, all of the sources I cited are reputable according to academic standards.

Findings

Surveys

Below I have included a table with the average score for each question in the pre-survey and post-survey, as well a table summarizing the free responses from question 29. There were eleven responses to the pre-survey and seven responses to the post survey. There were a few participants who responded to the post-survey but not the pre-survey because they joined the session late. There were also a few people that filled out the pre-survey but did not show up for the training, so they did not take the post survey. The highest possible score for each response is 2, and the lowest possible score is -2. As you can see, for six of the questions the average score was lower in the post survey than the pre-survey. Four of the average scores stayed the same, and eighteen of the average scores increased after the training session.

Question	**Avg. Score Pre-Survey**	**Avg. Score Post Survey**	**Change**
1. The words gender and sex can be used interchangeably. (-)	1.45	0.29	-1.16
2. Gender is socially constructed. (+)	0.55	1.14	+0.59
3. Gender is biological. (-)	1.00	0.00	-1.00
4. Everyone is born either male or female. (-)	0.72	1.29	+0.57
5. Being transgender is a conscious choice. (-)	1.27	1.29	+0.02
6. Non-binary gender identities are a relatively new occurrence in the world. (-)	0.82	0.86	+0.04
7. Non-binary is the same thing as intersex. (-)	1.18	1.29	+0.11

8. Children under the age of 13 do not understand gender and therefore cannot be trans. (-)	1.73	1.72	-0.01
9. Transgender people wouldn't exist if we were more accepting of boys wearing feminine clothes and girls wearing masculine clothes. (-)	1.45	1.86	+0.41
10. Young children (under the age of 10) can have persistent gender dysphoria (the feeling that their gender does not align with the one assigned to them at birth). (+)	1.18	1.57	+0.39
11. Everyone knows if they're LGBT or not by the time they're a teenager. (-)	1.64	1.71	+0.05
12. Educators should ask all students which pronouns they use, not just the students who appear trans. (+)	1.91	1.86	-0.05
13. Educators need to correctly use their students' pronouns, even if their choice of pronouns seems ungrammatical or unconventional (they/them, ze/zir, etc.). (+)	2.00	1.86	-0.14
14. Inclusion of LGBT curriculum and classroom practices only benefits LGBT students. (-)	1.55	2.00	+0.45
15. Inclusion of LGBT curriculum and classroom practices benefits all students. (+)	1.91	2.00	+0.09
16. Teachers should share their beliefs about a variety of issues in the classroom. (+)	-0.09	0.29	+0.38
17. LGBT students should not mention their gender or sexual identity in class because that is inappropriate. (-)	1.55	2.00	+0.45
18. There's not much teachers can do about students who bully LGBT students, kids are just like that. (-)	2.00	2.00	±0.00
19. Teachers should be proactive in fighting homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, even if there isn't a LGBT student present. (+)	2.00	2.00	±0.00
20. It is inappropriate for a teacher to be openly LBGT. (-)	1.91	2.00	+0.09
21. Children should not be exposed to LGBT people. (-)	2.00	2.00	±0.00

22. It is important for youth to have LGBT role models. (+)	1.73	1.86	+0.13
23. We should not allow transgender women in bathrooms because they are likely to assault real women. (-)	1.91	2.00	+0.09
24. Transgender people should be able to use whichever bathrooms they want to without fear of harassment. (+)	1.82	1.57	-0.25
25. You cannot be LGBT and Christian. (-)	1.09	1.43	+0.34
26. You cannot be LGBT and Muslim. (-)	1.09	1.43	+0.34
27. It is bad for a child to be raised in a home with LGBT parents. (-)	2.00	2.00	±0.00
28. Sexuality is a conscious choice. (-)	1.27	1.43	+0.16
Participant score for all questions (out of 56)	41.13	42.57	+1.44

Pre-Survey: What questions do you have about creating an inclusive environment for LGBT students? What would you like us to address in our training? *(some responses are shortened/summarized)*
How would I talk to a parent that disagrees with me openly talking about LGBT problems?
When teaching gendered languages, how can World Language teachers respectfully include non-binary/genderfluid students?
How do I address pushback from students about asking for pronouns?

Post-Survey: What questions do you still have about creating an inclusive environment for LGBT students? What kind of resources would you like for us to include on our website? *(some responses are shortened/summarized)*
How can teachers work with school counselors/community resources to help LGBT+ students?
What kind of resources are out there that could help educate teachers on LGBT culture, history, and society?
I would like access to materials for confronting bigoted administrators.
How do we deal with parents/guardians/community members who oppose or feel threatened by an LGBT+ welcoming classroom?

Focus Group

Below, I will outline the questions I asked and share excerpts from the responses participants shared. There were three participants in the focus group, who I will be calling Josh, Olivia, and Cara. Josh is a white heterosexual man, Olivia is a white bisexual woman, and Cara is a white heterosexual woman. Josh and Cara are majoring in Social Studies education, whereas Olivia is majoring in Latin education.

1. **In the training, what was new or surprising to you?**
    a. **Cara:** "I particularly liked the emphasis that you've placed on...the history of Two Spirit people...That's not usually presented in...a more conventional LGBT, like allyship training or something like that. I feel like that's not [usually as] central as it was with yours."

b. **Olivia:** “I think that your inclusion of non-binary people, and our discussion on that...I feel like that was something that I didn't get from the allyship training that we had, as students. So I really appreciate that you took the time, and kind of [added] a little extra emphasis on that.”

2. **What do you wish we would have talked about more? What questions do you still have about teaching LGBT students?**
    a. **Josh:** “more information on lesson plans for including...LGBTQ issues, history, topics...in social studies classes”
    b. **Cara:** “Not necessarily providing, like lesson plans, but having like, oh, here's an example of a lesson plan that someone did.”
    c. **Olivia:** “Hands on stuff would be really helpful because it's one thing to discuss the issues and say, Oh, yeah, I understand how this is important and why it's important. But it's different to be in the classroom in the moment and be like, Hmm, what do I do? What are the steps that I take?”
3. **Which resources were the most helpful for you?**
    a. **Olivia:** “I remember you...showed us a pronoun sheet (referenced in Appendix C) where you had all those questions about different situations. And I definitely put that in my toolbox. And I definitely plan on using it. I also liked that you always looked at it...or you tried to look at it in the context of different cultures and different racial and ethnic identities. Because it's one thing to say, Okay, here's LGBT issues and things to keep in mind and just say, all right, well consider this for all possible situations. But it differs depending on where somebody's from, what kind of cultural values their family has. And that's all something to take into

consideration. So I think you did a great job with...looking at Indigenous perspectives on Two Spirits, and also on your website with looking at the different contexts of African and Asian contexts and Indigenous contexts. And I think that's something that easy to overlook, but you were very intentional with it."

b. **Cara:** "I particularly liked the example handout (referenced in Appendix C), I guess...like getting to know your students, and the questions that follow, like your pronouns. And...essentially asking when do you want me to...use your pronouns in this way, and I thought that was something that I hadn't considered...I think it can not only help the students in your class, who identify as being LGBT, feeling more comfortable, but also letting other students know that this is something serious. And like you talked about with your example, when you were student teaching, your kids just kind of joked around with it. But creating that space where you're being obviously very intentional, and like that, you recognize that it is not, like so black and white that I wanna be referred to this at all times."

4. **As you enter your teaching career, which practices do you plan to implement in regards to LGBT issues?**

   a. **Josh:** "I definitely want...students who...maybe aren't comfortable, like coming out...to feel like they can talk to me, like I just want to be...available. And I know our students are cautious about who they talk to. So just, I don't know...besides like putting up a LGBTQ ally placard by my desk or a little flag, finding other things I can do to...let students feel comfortable"

   b. **Cara:** "I definitely see myself...for a specific example, when talking about various civil rights movements, including conversations about the...gay liberation

movement...And like in your slideshow that you presented, you talked about Sylvia Rivera, and Marsha Johnson, and I feel like their perspectives to me, whenever I learned about them, I was like, wow, like they're central to this movement. And...if you get any kind of LGBT inclusive education, you really don't get that even when you're talking about Stonewall. And so it's very surprising that they're completely erased from that history. And so I know that that's something that when I talk about that I want to be explicit about the people who were central to this movement, it was often trans women of color. And I feel like that is something that I will do."

c. **Olivia:** "I'm working towards...becoming a Latin teacher in Oklahoma, and you really get an opportunity to look at lots of different things in not just language, you get to look at culture and history and art as well. And there is often this perception that Latin and the Roman Empire are like, pretty much white. And you know, you only get this one sort of perspective of emperors and laurel wreaths, and everything's purple and gold. And that's not the way it was. And I don't think that's the way we should teach it. And so I'd really love to take your ideas of gender and perspectives. And let's talk about the people who were overlooked. Let's talk about Sappho. And not just in the context of well, she was from the island of Lesbos. And that's where we get the term lesbian from, and then we move on, you know, let's talk about, you know, what she did and what she contributed. And, you know, what she did for literature at the time, regardless of being a woman or being a woman who loves other women. So I would really love to change the way that I teach Latin, as opposed to the way that maybe I've been

doing it before. And part of that is drawing from your, your speaking experience and what you shared with us."

5. **Do you feel as if you approach LGBT issues in ways that differ between your personal and professional lives?**
    a. **Olivia:** "I navigate the space personally a little bit more freely and openly and perhaps a little bit more vocal. And professionally, I tend to step back and just kind of watch and listen, maybe that's because that's how I always saw teachers treating the subject. They didn't ever dive really in, or if they did talk about it, they kind of touched briefly on it, and then we moved away quickly. But I don't want it to be that way. I want to be able to approach it professionally, with more freedom, and being more vocal about it. Maybe not to the same degree as I would be personally but more than I have been in the past."
    b. **Cara:** "I think in my...personal life, I'm much more vocal about just my general opinions. And then in a professional setting…[I'm] sitting back and watching and listening. And I also think that some of that...stems from being anxious about the reaction that you'll receive, even though I know that that is part of the problem...and I will be honest, that anxiety is still there. But that silence is still perpetuating the problem and...making the topic seem much more negative than it is...And so I think that there's some anxiety, talking about it in a professional setting, because of...the students in your class, or their parents, or administration...And if you frame it as being this controversial issue, then it's like, the issue itself is not the controversy...because it's people's life

experiences….you're viewing these situations, through very weird lenses that dehumanize the people and their experiences."

c. **Josh:** "I think I kind of approach them the same way in that I think... it should be normalized...I like to have fun debates and argue about things on the internet and elsewhere, but like, LGBTQ issues are not something that I treat like an academic exercise. It's just like, you're talking about, like, you know, human beings and their rights...As far as teaching goes...I don't want [LGBT issues] to be a special unit like, "Okay, everybody it's LGBTQ week."...But as something that's like a normal part of like teaching history or incorporated...at every stage."

Discussion

In this study, I was attempting to see what pre-service teachers' perceptions, preparedness, and awareness of LGBT issues were prior to and following the professional development unit I delivered about the topic. The initial responses were mixed in regards to their understanding of the key ideas about gender identity and sexuality. However, most participants strongly agreed with the need to accommodate LGBT students in the classroom. This implies that there are pre-service educators who wish to build an LGBT-inclusive classroom but not all of them currently possess the intellectual toolkit to be able to do so in an informed way.

The average scores for the post-survey either increased or stayed at the highest possible score (2.00) for 22 out of the 28 questions. This suggests that the training session had some impact on the participants' understanding of and acceptance towards LGBT issues. The findings may be skewed on the side of positive bias towards LGBT students given the fact that the training was voluntary so those who do not have an interest in accommodating LGBT students

would be less likely to participate. However nonetheless the improvement in scores shows the possibility that increased training about LGBT issues for educators offers. Considering there was a marked improvement in participants' understanding after a one hour long session, the results of adjusting the entire teacher education curriculum to integrate a wide range of LGBT perspectives would most likely yield greater results.

When looking over the results from the surveys, I was initially confused by the decrease in average score for questions 1, 3, 8, 12, 13, and 24. The differences for questions 8 and 12 (-0.01, -0.05) are not statistically significant, especially considering the small number of respondents, so I decided not to analyze those questions further. I did not address the idea of transgender people and bathrooms (Question 24) in my training because the initial positive bias for transgender people using bathrooms was very high (1.86). However I directly addressed the content from questions 1, 3, and 13 in my training. Question 1 (The words gender and sex can be used interchangeably) and question 3 (Gender is biological) were both designed to assess participant's understanding of the difference between gender and sex. I discussed these concepts at the beginning of the presentation, so it is possible that the participants who joined after this section and took only the post-survey and not the pre-survey may have affected the scores. Lastly, question 13 addresses the need for teachers to respect all students' pronouns. I know that all participants were a part of the discussion surrounding pronouns, so I'm not entirely sure why this score would have decreased. The only factor that may explain it is the fact that the most salient determinant of participant responses is their preconceived notions and deeply held beliefs. Given this and the fact that not all of those who answered the post survey had responded to the pre-survey and vice versa, it would make sense that there may be some discrepancies between their beliefs.

I was expecting to support the data from the surveys with the comments from the focus group session. However, I found that the data from the focus group interview was much richer and easier to draw conclusions from, so it ended up being my primary source of data. Many participants expressed a desire for practical tools they could use to address bigotry and include LGBT issues in their curriculum. I addressed this by developing a website with resources that participants can refer to at any time. However I was disappointed to find that many of the resources I was searching for, such as lesson plans about specific LGBT topics rather than those primarily about the general topic of inclusion, were few and far between. This suggests the need for more LGBT-inclusive K-12 curriculum development.

We also had a chance to discuss our ideas on how to respectfully incorporate LGBT issues in the curriculum in a way that would not be demeaning or tokenizing. We discussed the need for LGBT issues to be treated not as a special unit or topic of controversy, but instead as a natural part of the curriculum. Participants voiced the fact that they had not experienced an LGBT-inclusive curriculum in the history courses they had taken, which could be a key factor for whether or not they feel confident enacting an LGBT-inclusive curriculum in their own classroom. We often discuss training in the form of professional development and teacher education programs, but many times the bulk of the deep, implicit training educators receive is through their experiences as a student and as a teacher on the job. This means that enacting change may take a few generations of teachers modeling inclusive pedagogy for the future educators in their classrooms. However we cannot start this process without more widespread training in teacher education programs and professional development sessions.

The anxieties that participants expressed about pushback from parents, administrators, and students can only be addressed to a certain point within the scope of a professional

development unit. Their fears about pushback are not unfounded, considering that as recently as 2020, teachers have faced discipline for openly showing solidarity with LGBT communities (Strapagiel 2020). This is a systemic issue that calls for systemic solutions. A few brave teachers alone will not be able to change the bigotry of parents and school administrators in our country. However I believe that if we band together as educators and unabashedly support our fellow LGBT-inclusive educators and LGBT students, we can enact real change. It is easy to fire a few outspoken teachers who stand on their own, but if they are supported by their teacher unions and networks, administration will be forced to reconsider. I was careful not to promise participants that they would never face any controversy if they enact LGBT-inclusive pedagogies. Notwithstanding these concerns, participants also expressed a strong desire to be a safe person for their LGBT students to come out to. I believe that the positive effects of these pedagogies on the experiences of LGBT youth in our school system far outweigh the possible consequences. LGBT youth in our nation are in crisis. As educators, we must stand up for these students. We cannot directly control how they will be treated by their families or the community at-large, but we can make our classrooms a place where they feel safe to be who they are.

Implications and Conclusion

The responsibility for making schools safe and welcoming for students of all genders and sexualities does not belong only to teachers. We need training and programs that will also target administrators, support staff, students, and community members. Very few programs that target the entire school community have been attempted. We need more research into the effects of a program that involves the entire community. Approaches to inclusion of LGBT students will be different according to each context and community. This could look like enacting a restorative justice model for repairing the harm enacted on LGBT and POC (people of color) students (Gavrielides 2012). Schools districts could also hire specialists or counselors specifically to advocate for and educate on behalf of LGBT students. There is also lots of potential for growth with the roles of organizations such as the GSA (Gender and Sexuality Alliance) in school leadership. At the base level, we need to ensure that upon graduation from teacher education programs, educators have the practical tools necessary to serve their LGBT students in an informed and intentional manner. However many of the solutions to homophobia and transphobia in schools should be community-based and centered on the voices of the students most impacted. Professional development plays an important role as to what students experience in our schools, but it is not the ultimate and singular solution.

The results of the surveys led me to question how much having basic understanding of LGBT concepts correlates with inclusion of LGBT students. In the future, I would be interested in assessing the understanding of LGBT concepts among in-service educators and then observing in their classroom and interviewing students to gain an understanding of how inclusive their classrooms are. I wonder if there is a disconnect between understanding LGBT issues and

enacting an inclusive pedagogy. If so, there could be more research generated about why this could be the case.

There are still many areas of concern when it comes to properly training educators in LGBT issues, especially given the fact that in many school environments it is counter-cultural to advocate for students with diverse gender and sexual identities. This seemed to be one of the most salient areas of concern for participants. Moving forward, we must work to change the policies and culture around LGBT students within school administrations. However while this work is in progress, teachers who wish to be inclusive should be encouraged to find and/or build networks of support whenever possible. This could be through formal avenues such as the GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Educators Network) or other professional networks, or through informal communities. Although there are many educators who push back against the idea of teachers being openly inclusive of LGBT people in their classroom, many others are willing to be inclusive but do not necessarily have the support systems they need to be able to do so confidently.

The positive results of this study suggest that pre-service educators and most likely their future students would benefit from an increase of in-depth, vocation specific training about LGBT issues. Many pre-service educators are willing and able to enact LGBT inclusive pedagogy, but do not know how to do this in practice. This is likely due in part to the fact that they have not seen these pedagogies modeled for them. If we train this generation of educators to be inclusive and accepting of students and parents of all genders and sexualities, the reverberations on teaching practice and our society at-large will be long-lasting. Conversely, if we continue to allow the pushback and bigotry from some parents, administration, and students to control how we treat our LGBT students, the negative effects will echo down for generations.

We have already lost too many lives to the deleterious effects of homophobia and transphobia in our nation. As educators, we have the opportunity to make a difference in the communities we inhabit.

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Appendix A, Survey Questions

Demographics Survey

1. How old are you? *(free response)*
2. Which option most completely describes your current status?
    a. Undergraduate student
    b. Graduate student, in-service educator
    c. Graduate student, pre-service educator
    d. In-service educator, not enrolled in an education program
    e. Other: (*fill in the blank*)
3. Which best describes your gender?
    a. Transgender female
    b. Transgender male
    c. Cisgender female (assigned female at birth)
    d. Cisgender male (assigned male at birth)
    e. Non-binary
    f. Agender
    g. Two-Spirit
    h. Other: (*fill in the blank*)
4. What is your predominant racial identity? *(free response)*
5. What is your sexuality?
    a. Heterosexual
    b. Homosexual
    c. Bisexual
    d. Pansexual
    e. Asexual
    f. Questioning/unsure
    g. Other: (*fill in the blank*)
6. What are your religious beliefs? *(free response)*

Pre-Survey

(possible answers include strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, unsure, somewhat agree, strongly agree)

1. The words gender and sex can be used interchangeably. (-)
2. Gender is socially constructed. (+)
3. Gender is biological. (-)
4. Everyone is born either male or female. (-)

5. Being transgender is a conscious choice. (-)
6. Non-binary gender identities are a relatively new occurrence in the world. (-)
7. Non-binary is the same thing as intersex. (-)
8. Children under the age of 13 do not understand gender and therefore cannot be trans. (-)
9. Transgender people wouldn't exist if we were more accepting of boys wearing feminine clothes and girls wearing masculine clothes. (-)
10. Young children (under the age of 10) can have persistent gender dysphoria (the feeling that their gender does not align with the one assigned to them at birth). (+)
11. Everyone knows if they're LGBT or not by the time they're a teenager. (-)
12. Educators should ask all students which pronouns they use, not just the students who appear trans. (+)
13. Educators need to correctly use their students' pronouns, even if their choice of pronouns seems ungrammatical or unconventional (they/them, ze/zir, etc.). (+)
14. Inclusion of LGBT curriculum and classroom practices only benefits LGBT students. (-)
15. Inclusion of LGBT curriculum and classroom practices benefits all students. (+)
16. Teachers should share their beliefs about a variety of issues in the classroom. (+)
17. LGBT students should not mention their gender or sexual identity in class because that is inappropriate. (-)
18. There's not much teachers can do about students who bully LGBT students, kids are just like that. (-)
19. Teachers should be proactive in fighting homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, even if there isn't a LGBT student present. (+)
20. It is inappropriate for a teacher to be openly LBGT. (-)

21. Children should not be exposed to LGBT people. (-)
22. It is important for youth to have LGBT role models. (+)
23. We should not allow transgender women in bathrooms because they are likely to assault real women. (-)
24. Transgender people should be able to use whichever bathrooms they want to without fear of harassment. (+)
25. You cannot be LGBT and Christian. (-)
26. You cannot be LGBT and Muslim. (-)
27. It is bad for a child to be raised in a home with LGBT parents. (-)
28. Sexuality is a conscious choice. (-)
29. What questions do you have about creating an inclusive environment for LGBT students? What would you like us to address in our training? (*free response)*

Post-Survey
(possible answers include strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, unsure, somewhat agree, strongly agree)

1. The words gender and sex can be used interchangeably. (-)
2. Gender is socially constructed. (+)
3. Gender is biological. (-)
4. Everyone is born either male or female. (-)
5. Being transgender is a conscious choice. (-)
6. Non-binary gender identities are a relatively new occurrence in the world. (-)
7. Non-binary is the same thing as intersex. (-)
8. Children under the age of 13 do not understand gender and therefore cannot be trans. (-)
9. Transgender people wouldn't exist if we were more accepting of boys wearing feminine clothes and girls wearing masculine clothes. (-)

10. Young children (under the age of 10) can have persistent gender dysphoria (the feeling that their gender does not align with the one assigned to them at birth). (+)
11. Everyone knows if they're LGBT or not by the time they're a teenager. (-)
12. Educators should ask all students which pronouns they use, not just the students who appear trans. (+)
13. Educators need to correctly use their students' pronouns, even if their choice of pronouns seems ungrammatical or unconventional (they/them, ze/zir, etc.). (+)
14. Inclusion of LGBT curriculum and classroom practices only benefits LGBT students. (-)
15. Inclusion of LGBT curriculum and classroom practices benefits all students. (+)
16. Teachers should share their beliefs about a variety of issues in the classroom. (+)
17. LGBT students should not mention their gender or sexual identity in class because that is inappropriate. (-)
18. There's not much teachers can do about students who bully LGBT students, kids are just like that. (-)
19. Teachers should be proactive in fighting homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, even if there isn't a LGBT student present. (+)
20. It is inappropriate for a teacher to be openly LBGT. (-)
21. Children should not be exposed to LGBT people. (-)
22. It is important for youth to have LGBT role models (+)
23. We should not allow transgender women in bathrooms because they are likely to assault real women. (-)
24. Transgender people should be able to use whichever bathrooms they want to without fear of harassment. (+)

25. You cannot be LGBT and Christian. (-)
26. You cannot be LGBT and Muslim. (-)
27. It is bad for a child to be raised in a home with LGBT parents. (-)
28. Sexuality is a conscious choice. (-)
29. What questions do you still have about creating an inclusive environment for LGBT students? What kind of resources would you like for us to include on our website? (*free response)*

Appendix B, Focus Group Questions

1. In the training, what information did you find new or surprising?
2. What do you wish we would have talked about more? What questions do you still have about teaching LGBT students?
3. Which resources were the most helpful for you?
4. As you enter your teaching career, which practices do you plan to implement in regards to LGBT issues?
5. Do you feel as if you approach LGBT issues in ways that differ between your personal and professional lives?

Appendix C, Instructional Materials

Website I developed with resources for educators:

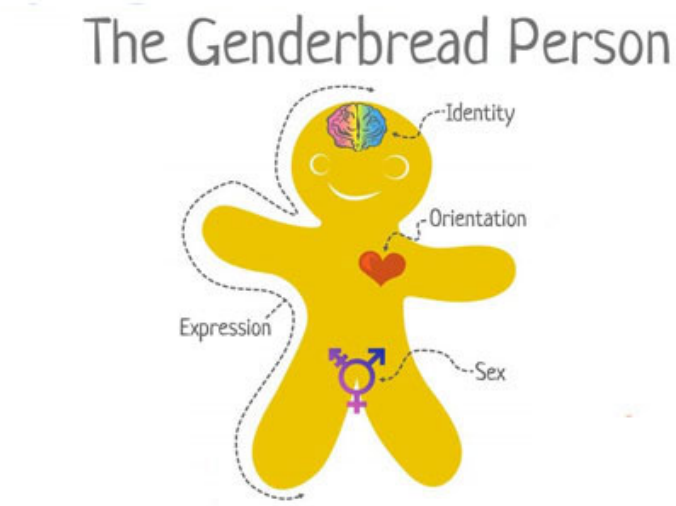
https://sites.google.com/view/lgbtresourceseducation/home

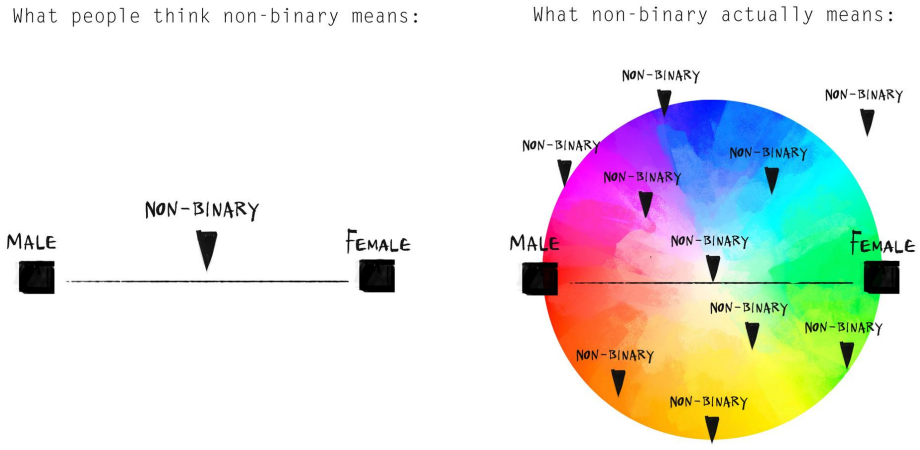
Slideshow about Two-Spirit People by Pruden & Edmo:

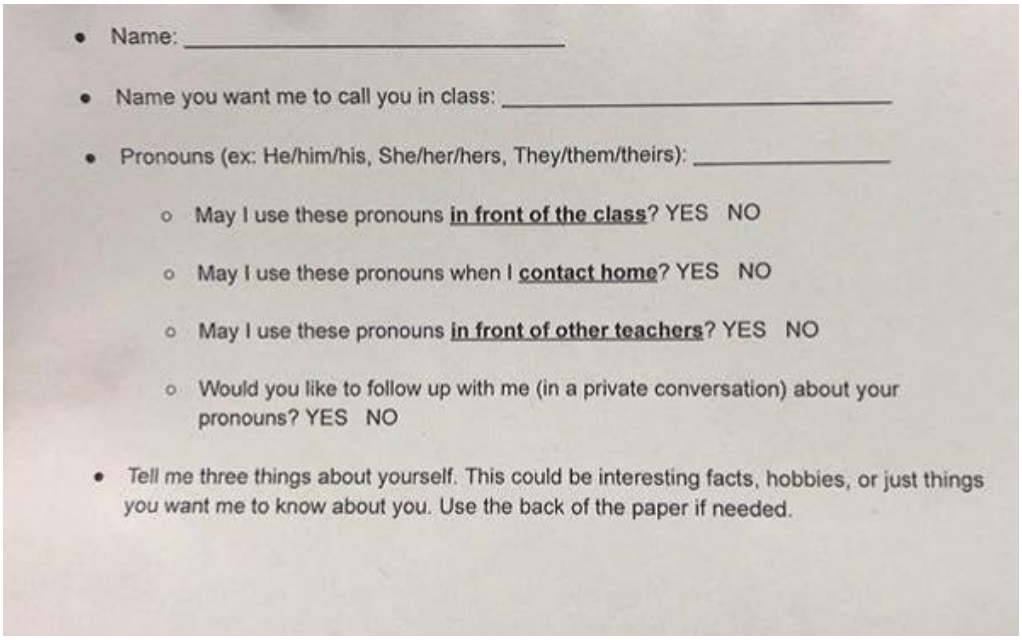
https://www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/initiatives/Pruden-Edmo_TwoSpiritPeople.pdf

Video about Two-Spirit People by Geo Neptune:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4lBibGzUnE







- Name: _____
- Name you want me to call you in class: _____
- Pronouns (ex: He/him/his, She/her/hers, They/them/theirs): _____
  - May I use these pronouns **in front of the class**? YES NO
  - May I use these pronouns when I **contact home**? YES NO
  - May I use these pronouns **in front of other teachers**? YES NO
  - Would you like to follow up with me (in a private conversation) about your pronouns? YES NO
- Tell me three things about yourself. This could be interesting facts, hobbies, or just things you want me to know about you. Use the back of the paper if needed.