American Psychological Association

A Guide for LGBT Students Navigating Graduate Training

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A Guide for LGBT Students Navigating Graduate Training

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PROUD AND PREPARED:
A GUIDE FOR LGBT STUDENTS
NAVIGATING GRADUATE TRAINING

American Psychological Association of Graduate Students
Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity
(APAGS–CSOGD)

MISSION STATEMENT

The APAGS Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity (APAGS–CSOGD) works on behalf of the community of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender graduate students in psychology and their allies nationwide. The committee provides education, advocacy, and personal and professional development opportunities to ensure the successful graduate experience of LGBT and allied students. The committee aspires to build, strengthen, and empower its members through the use of innovative technologies, collaborative advocacy, and inclusive practice.

ON THE USE OF LANGUAGE IN THIS GUIDE

Language often imposes constraints on the ability to communicate about diversity issues clearly and concisely. Throughout *Proud and Prepared: A Guide for LGBT Students Navigating Graduate Training,* we deliberately use a variety of terms to describe the communities with which LGBT people identify. These terms include *LGBT, sexual minority,* and *queer,* among others. We believe that in using a variety of terms, we are better able to capture the diversity that exists within sexual minority communities. When we use acronyms, we choose to use LGBT, with the understanding that this acronym is not as inclusive as others (e.g., LGBTQQAI), but is currently the most widely used and understood of the alternatives. When we use the term *LGBT,* we mean to include all individuals who identify as diverse with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity.

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|prīd|
noun

The word "pride" has become associated

with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities thanks to countless parades and other community events and celebrations with that title. In 2009, President Obama even officially commemorated the month of June as "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month." What does *pride* actually mean though? According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2015), pride can be both "the consciousness of one's own dignity" and "a person or thing that is the object or source of a feeling or deep pleasure or satisfaction." In titling this resource guide "Proud and Prepared," we hope to not only align ourselves with the history of LGBT empowerment, but also to emphasize both of those aspects of pride in our own identities. We hope that through using this resource guide, you and other students like you will not only be reminded of your own worth as an individual but also of the satisfaction and pleasure you can take in your unique intersecting identities.

It is true that as members of a marginalized population, LGBT-identified individuals may experience frequent discrimination and microaggressions, and navigating the graduate school process can be more complicated and challenging as a result. However, there are also unique opportunities to be had in graduate school as an LGBT-identified individual or ally. This guide is therefore designed to prepare you to take on the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities graduate school may present.

This guide is brought to you by the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity (APAGS–CSOGD, formerly the Committee on LGBT Concerns). Our committee's dedication to helping support our student members as they pursue graduate studies has been longstanding. More than 20 years ago, APAGS–CSOGD issued a pamphlet for LGBT students that highlighted concerns students may face in graduate school and provided a

list of resources for them. Then, in 2006, CSOGD published the first edition of this resource guide to provide more comprehensive recommendations and support to students who identify as LGBT. Clearly, the experience of LGBT students has changed dramatically in the last 20 years, both in society and within our profession. Since that time, LGBT individuals have gained significant ground in the struggle for social equality. However, discrimination and microaggressions against LGBT communities are still widespread.

Because of the ongoing negative impact of heterosexism and cisgenderism on LGBT individuals, it continues to be imperative that our committee provide support for graduate students who identify as LGBT. It is our hope that this guide can serve as a helpful initial reference for you as you research graduate school options, begin your graduate school career, or confront new challenges along your academic journey. Thus, the guide is intended for individuals who identify as LGBT or as allies to LGBT communities and who are considering pursuing graduate studies in psychology or who are already enrolled in graduate programs.

Rather than simply providing a list of resources (although such a list is included in the final section), this guide is filled with suggestions, advice, and support written by a variety of LGBT psychology graduate students. *Proud and Prepared* is presented as a series of chapters, each of which addresses a distinct set of issues graduate students may face. These chapters have been intentionally written by students from diverse personal and academic backgrounds to represent a broad range of perspectives. We wish to note that this is not an exhaustive guide, but rather a starting point for spurring additional exploration.

The concerns of LGBT individuals continue to be under-addressed in the field of psychology as a whole, but the unique concerns of other LGBT groups, including individuals who identify as bisexual, transsexual, transgender, or gender variant, are represented even more scarcely. As we compiled each chapter of this guide, we attempted to highlight the unique concerns of these groups, while also including separate chapters on tips for transgender and bisexual students. There is certainly overlap among all sexual minority groups (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender), and we believe the information in this guide will apply to many LGBT individuals. Yet we also believe there is much that is unique about each group, and it is important to explore those differences between groups to the extent it is possible to do so.

The APAGS–CSOGD members are excited to provide this guide for you. Please come to us with any comments or unanswered questions. We would love to hear from you, and we welcome your involvement in our committee! APAGS–CSOGD maintains an active Listserv, which you can join through the APAGS homepage (www.apa.org/apags). We also coordinate a national mentoring program and other initiatives to support LGBT students in psychology and their allies (http://www.apa.org/apags/governance/subcommittees/csogd.aspx). We hope you find this guide truly helps you to feel both proud and prepared as you undertake your graduate school journey!

CHAPTER

ASSESSING YOUR PROGRAM'S CLIMATE

Included in the American Psychological Association's Vision Statement (APA, 2009) is the goal "To be an effective champion of the application of psychology to promote human rights, health, well-being, and dignity." This and similar statements have informed a culture within the profession of psychology that seeks to be affirming and inclusive of diverse identities, including LGBT identities. To this end, a large body of psychological literature on LGBT issues has been published in recent years, including the *APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients* (2011), which features attitudes psychological professionals and faculty are encouraged to uphold toward LGBT persons. Though this document is geared specifically toward practicing psychologists, the main tenets apply to behavior toward LGBT students as well.

Specifically, the APA encourages psychologists to not pathologize LGBT identities and to recognize the impact discrimination has on the psychological well-being of LGBT persons (APA, 2011). Furthermore, research has increasingly focused on the importance of a supportive and affirming environment for LGBT individuals in a variety of contexts, including LGBT students on university campuses (Perez, DeBord, & Bieschke, 2000; Sanlo, 1998). Therefore, this chapter explores areas LGBT graduate students can reflect on when assessing graduate school climates toward LGBT individuals and highlights some considerations for students who are thinking about coming out during their graduate training.

DEFINING CLIMATE

We use "climate" to refer to the general sentiment toward LGBT individuals in one's department, lab, clinic, or other social environments. Research has shown that LGBT persons can be impacted by LGBT climates across multiple levels, including regional and institutional settings (Kosciw, Greytak, & Diaz, 2009). A university setting offers a specific set of experiences and engenders a

unique climate that can greatly influence a student's academic experience. Evidence of this can be found in research on minority students' perceptions of their campus climate. Cress (2000) found that out of more than 9,000 students at 130 institutions, women and minority students were more likely than men and nonminority students to perceive their campus as hostile. The study found students' perceptions of the campus as hostile correlated strongly with increased emotional distress and academic disengagement. In *Working With LGB College Students* (Sanlo, 1998), campus climate researcher Sue Rankin identifies several hurdles that LGB individuals may face in university environments, including: invisibility, ostracism, isolation, concealment, and consequences specifically related to university environments (e.g. lack of research opportunities and professional role models). As such, it is important to carefully evaluate the climate at your institution in order to assess the unique challenges you may encounter there.

Assessing the climate of your academic environment is an important first step in exploring how to integrate your personal and professional lives. As members of an often-invisible minority group, LGBT students may already have developed skills in judging the safety and support they can expect to receive in their lives, regardless of setting (e.g., family, work, friendships). However, graduate training programs typically include dozens of students and faculty within a larger university culture, so assessing the degree to which a program is LGBT affirming can be a complex task. Different people in your program will provide you with different levels of support, and you may receive mixed messages about LGBT inclusion and acceptance within your academic environment. Exploring several aspects of not only your academic program, but also the broader environment in which it is housed, will provide you with an accurate and comprehensive picture of the climate you are entering.

APAGS developed a workbook-style climate guide in 2010 that you can use to assess climates of various settings, including your school and any other training sites. Download this free guide at http://www.apa.org/apags/resources/clgbt-climate-guide.pdf.

ASSESSING CLIMATE

"My experience with self-disclosure to my program was a bit unique and what some may consider 'risky,' as I came out during the interview process, before I was even accepted. I am not one to lie directly or by omission about my sexual orientation; it is a part of my identity that I both take pride in and love. So when a few of the faculty interviewers asked what had sparked my interest in LGBTQ issues, I explained my personal experience as a member of the community was an important motivator for my passion to work with the population. I expressed how I want to help improve both the mental and physical health of individuals in the community who are struggling. I did my homework before the interview though. Through my research I discovered my program has a policy of diversity inclusion. It also has a Diversity Affairs Committee encompassed by students and faculty from diverse backgrounds, including sexual orientation. The program's faculty site also listed several faculty members with both clinical and research interest in LGBTQ issues. I even looked through the program's elective course catalog and found it offered a course focused solely on psychotherapy with LGB clients. I'd done a risk-benefit analysis, and I had a fairly good idea I would be entering a supportive and accepting program. I was correct.

"After I disclosed my sexual orientation, the faculty members were very welcoming and receptive to my disclosure. They began discussing various resources both on campus and in the area as well as opportunities for research and clinical work. Now in the second semester of my program, I have become even more aware of how welcoming and LGBTQ-inclusive my program is. I have been encouraged to bring any ideas for LGBTQ events to the attention of the Diversity Affairs Committee. My classmates have also been very welcoming and accepting. There is a real sense of respect for the diversity of others within the program.

"I don't necessarily advocate coming out to one's program the way I did, nor do I necessarily discourage it. There can be risks associated depending on the type of environment one finds himself or herself in. Deciding if, when, and how a student wants to disclose his or her sexual orientation is a very personal decision. Students should do their research by asking questions and reading programs' diversity policies to gauge climates.

"I know my experience may not be the norm. I also know that doesn't mean it shouldn't be. Hopefully all programs across the nation can and will engage in initiatives toward creating more supportive and safe climates for LGBTQ individuals. Perhaps then students will not feel as apprehensive in their search for inclusive programs and about whether or not to disclose. They instead will feel comfortable being open about their sexual orientation with the knowledge that they will be greeted with acceptance rather than consequence."

—Amber Massa, University of Indianapolis

When you first come to a new university environment and are making decisions about when and whom to come out to about your sexual orientation and gender identity, you may want to first consider regional, institutional/university, and department or program policies that relate to LGBT persons.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL CLIMATE

"Initially, I had reservations about moving to Montana for graduate school. How would I fit in? Would I be able to conduct research and acquire meaningful clinical experiences with LGBTQ populations? These were just some of the concerns I had about moving to a large, rural state. As it turned out, this was the best decision of my life. My time in Montana taught me that you don't have to live in a major metropolitan city to do great work and be a part of a community. It also provided me with a greater appreciation for the unique challenges that are faced by LGBTQ people, especially youth, who live in rural areas."

—Nicholas Heck, PhD, Marquette University

Before beginning their training program, students who have chosen to enroll in graduate school in a new location may first need to be aware of the broader environment to which they are moving. For example, nondiscrimination legal policies differ across states, with only 21 states and Washington, DC, providing legal employment protections for LGBT persons at this time (HRC, 2014).

Furthermore, as of this time, no federal legal protections exist for employed LGBT persons. However, even in the absence of state regulations for legal protections for LGBT persons, local city ordinances may provide certain protections. If you are interested in learning more about employment nondiscrimination laws at the state level, you can refer to various resources for more information and search local resources to determine what policies and protections are in place at more local levels. Policies and nondiscrimination statements can help provide some perspective on the degree of acceptance and tolerance of LGBT identities in the broader community. One final consideration regarding legal concerns is to note that some protections are in place for sexual orientation, but not for gender identity or expression. Those particularly interested in learning more about legal concerns related to gender identity and expression may consider contacting the Transgender Law Center.

UNIVERSITY CLIMATE

"People often ask me 'why did you attend a non-LGBTQ affirming religious school if you were gay' with a tone of confusion and sometimes overt disapproval. The answer is complex. I chose to attend a religious program because I sought a place where I could grow in my relationship with God and develop skills as a psychologist to address spiritual issues in the lives of clients. Another reason I attended a faith-based program was I hoped to find answers and resolution to my long battle with (at that time in my life) unwanted same-sex attractions. Little did I know at the time that such a journey would help facilitate, through both positive and negative experiences, my journey toward acceptance as a gay man. Looking back, I do not regret attending a non-LGBTQ affirming doctoral program because of where I was in my own emotional and spiritual journey when I started. At times, the support I received from individual friends and faculty members was easily overshadowed by a larger community which was very rejecting of the LGBTQ community. My hope is that religious programs in the future work to become increasingly more inclusive and welcoming toward LGBTQ students, while also being allowed to maintain a unique religious traditions and identities."

—Joshua Wolff, PhD, Asst. Professor, Adler University, Chicago

After taking time to understand and consider the broader regional and local environments, it will be important to learn more about the policies and regulations within your academic institution. Many colleges and universities have nondiscrimination statements that specifically include sexual orientation (and less frequently, gender identity). Such policies can provide important knowledge about the overall climate for all minority students while also affording some degree of protection against mistreatment. Statements that include an explicit mention of sexual orientation or gender identity can reassure students that LGBT-related discrimination is not tolerated in the university. However, universities may create policies without implementing any programs for preventing discrimination or enforcing these standards. Asking if your university provides partner benefits or has an active LGBT student or faculty organization may provide you with a more comprehensive view of the support that exists for LGBT individuals and issues on your campus. Often, information on partner benefits is available online if you do not feel comfortable directly asking about it in person.

PROGRAM CLIMATE

"When I was interviewing for my doctoral program at a Christian institution, I disclosed that my primary research interest revolved around the LGBTQ+ community and that my passion lies in advocacy as an ally. I knew that I was risking rejection based on this disclosure; however, that is what being an ally means to me—taking personal and professional risks in order to support and advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. Fortunately, my graduate program respected my identity as an ally, and I am now one of the first students in our program to focus my research on LGBTQ+ issues."

—Kendall Betts, MA, Azusa Pacific University

"As a straight cisgender ally with a religious background, I entered the field of psychology with the hope that I would be able to learn how to check my privilege and manage bias in an appropriate way. I chose an institution that I thought would lead me to like minds with similar backgrounds of faith, so that we could all work

through our baggage together. But I found that many of my peers did not engage at all in materials describing the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals, which has been a challenge and a frustration to me."

—Kimberly Applewhite Teitter

Though students must negotiate the context of the state, local, and university environments, it is likely that the climate of the academic training program itself will best determine an individual student's experiences—both positive and negative. As a result, it will be important to attend to a number of factors to determine the degree to which your program may be supportive and affirming of LGBT identities and concerns. Factors that might indicate level of LGBT affirmation include explicit program statements, the program's curriculum or course of study, and direct interactions with others.

Program materials

Your program's diversity statement may serve as a helpful source of information regarding your program's values and goals as they relate to LGBT concerns. You can observe whether specific language related to sexual orientation and/or gender identity and presentation exists. However, as many programs lack such statements, it may be necessary to conduct a more detailed assessment of diversity issues within your program. Online searches for student clubs or organizations, as well as for faculty and student involvement in research, training, and advocacy projects that focus on LGBT concerns or diversity issues, may indicate the level of support you are likely to receive from others in the program. Research has shown that even the presence of such clubs in the university can positively impact students' well-being (Walls, Wisneski, & Kane, 2013).

Sometimes a visual assessment of program space, including offices or area hallways, can provide important clues. For example, Safe Zone posters or stickers, LGBT-themed books on bookshelves, and other similar items are good indicators that the individual displaying them has an interest in diversity and may be supportive of LGBT individuals and issues. Further, the use of inclusive language (e.g., partner or significant other rather than assuming husband or wife) can also be an important source of information, as it can signify awareness and sensitivity to issues of difference related to LGBT identity. Research has demonstrated the subtle ways language can determine the degree to which someone perceives another to be LGBT affirmative (Dorland & Fischer, 2001).

Coursework

Though not every program has a value statement readily available online, all programs should have a curriculum or course of study that they make available to students. This information may be included in a student handbook, if it's not published separately online.

How affirmative is your program's training?

In reviewing a student handbook, asking yourself and others the following questions can help guide your thinking related to how LGBT affirmative your program's training might be:

- Do the required courses offered by your department include any explicit focus on LGBT concerns?
- If not, are there any courses with an explicit focus on diversity issues more broadly?
- If so, how are diversity issues treated within these courses?
- If your program offers electives on issues of diversity, are these electives valued in the program, and are students encouraged to sign up for these courses?

As some of these questions (see sidebar) may be difficult to assess, you could consider contacting the program head or the professor of the course to ask for a copy of the course syllabus. This will allow you to review statements within the syllabus, topics to be covered, and the reading list. If you feel uncomfortable making such a request to faculty, you could consider asking a student who is currently taking the course or who has recently completed it if they would be willing to share their copy.

Although there are often minimum requirements for the study of diversity within training programs, the existence of additional elective courses in these areas may convey a strong commitment to inclusion within your program. The questions in the sidebar are helpful to consider, as faculty members and students who seem actively interested in and aware of the importance of diversity issues may be more likely to be respectful and appreciative of the contributions and experiences of LGBT students.

For those programs that do not specifically provide a diversity or multicultural course, and even for those that do, it will also be important to assess whether your program consistently integrates diversity issues into all aspects of training. Such integration can provide you with evidence regarding both the explicit and implicit priorities of your program. In many graduate courses, there are ample opportunities to assess your program's inclusion of diversity. For example, many key psychological theories on relationships and identity (e.g., Freud, Erikson) are grounded in assumptions that tend to privilege the experiences of White heterosexual men of middle to upper socioeconomic status. As a result, instructors' and other students' willingness to discuss the bias in these theories and across other areas of graduate coursework can give you further clues about the degree to which others consider and attend to issues of multiculturalism and diversity.

Interpersonal interactions

Though information gleaned from value statements and coursework can provide some clues as to the overall climate of the program related to LGBT issues, your interpersonal interactions with others may provide you with the best source of information regarding what your individual experience may be like. Within a single program there are often substantial differences regarding attitudes toward LGBT issues. Some faculty members and students may be very supportive and affirming, while others with different life experiences, values, and training may be less committed to these goals. If you have concerns about how affirming faculty members or students may be, casually discussing LGBT figures prominently featured in the media or raising issues or discussions on behalf of LGBT clients or research participants can allow you to observe others' responses and attitudes toward LGBT persons. You may also consider enlisting trustworthy friends in your department to bring up LGBT issues in classes or applied settings so you can gauge the responses of others.

> "I usually glean the level of support of a person or group of people based on my interactions with them prior to any mention of my sexuality. At my program I assumed that I would not run into many problems, given that psychology is often embraced by liberal thinkers. I also took a cue from the abundance of "S.A.F.E" stickers on faculty doors, which signifies they have attended LGBTQ+ training at the university."
>
> —Sarah Adelson,
> University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh

> "One of the most significant aspects of my program's climate is the realization that there are currently no 'out' core faculty. What's worse is that there are 'whispers' regarding the sexuality of some faculty members, I imagine making it more difficult to feel safe to be out as a faculty member in our program. This has the direct impact of feeling as though this is not a welcoming place for LGBTQ+ individuals. As an out gay woman, I am often looked at as 'the only one' and am often on the receiving end of microaggressions. It would make a world of difference to me to know my faculty felt safe enough to be out in our department."
>
> —Deanna Cor, MA,
> George Washington University

Assessing the availability of program support

For LGBT students who feel able to ask or search for more information more directly, the following questions may be useful to ask as you try to determine the availability of support in your program:

- If you have faculty or students within your department who publicly identify as LGBT, do you perceive that they are treated with the same respect and courtesy as other faculty or students?
- If they have partners, are the partners included and welcomed at social events held by your department to the same degree as partners of cisgender and heterosexual persons?
- What is the quality of interactions between heterosexual/cisgender and LGBT individuals in your program?

Often, out members of your department can be the best source of information on the overall climate and can usually offer their perspectives about which individuals may be most sensitive and respectful of sexual minority concerns.

Research training

Inclusion in research can also provide valuable clues about the climate in research-based graduate programs.

Useful research-related questions to consider

- Are sexual orientation and gender identity addressed within the body of research produced by your department?
- Do the authors discuss potential limitations of broadly applying theories and measures that could pathologize or ignore the experiences of individuals within minority groups?
- Do authors discuss important between-group differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) and acknowledge within-group differences among the variables examined in their work?
- When differences exist between majority and minority groups, do faculty members attribute these differences to pathology or inferiority, or do they demonstrate an understanding of the unique life experiences of individuals from minority groups?
- Did faculty members provide support, resources, and information on LGBT issues in student-directed research?

It may be helpful to ask students if their research includes a focus on diversity issues. A lack of interest or willingness to explore such topics may be an indicator of a lack of support from your program. If you are able to find examples of past student research that addresses LGBT concerns (e.g., previously completed theses, dissertations, presentations, or talks that specifically discuss LGBT issues), you may want to ask the students involved in the project about the support they received from faculty and the

program as a whole for this type of work. Asking fellow students, especially other LGBT students, about their experiences and comfort within the program can be your best source of information.

In most cases, the information you find will provide complex, multilayered messages about patterns of LGBT inclusion. Certain faculty members and students may be sensitive and open to discussing sexual minority issues, while others may appear indifferent or even hostile to the same issues. You may find that how your program looks on paper regarding issues of diversity bears little resemblance to the experiences of LGBT students within your program. The results of your assessment of your program may be complicated, but continuing to gather information about your program will help you better understand your own expectations and needs and ultimately help you make the best decisions regarding how to integrate your LGBT and professional identities.

Applied/clinical training

For those who are enrolled in an applied psychology program, it will also be important to consider the training environment in client-based settings. Similar to considerations for assessing overall program climate, it may be helpful to review whether the program's main practicum training site (if one exists) includes a diversity statement. If information on clinical staff is available online, it may also be helpful to see if any staff state an explicit focus on LGBT issues or express an interest in working with LGBT students.

Beyond Internet searching, students can also ask the following questions:

- At clinical training sites, do faculty and supervisors discuss heterosexual privilege and issues of oppression that minority group members may face?
- Do supervisors invite discussion and criticism of existing theories and research from the perspective of minority individuals?
- Do supervisors of your applied work ask about the sexual orientation and gender identity of clients, patients, and other consumers you serve, or do they automatically assume heterosexuality?
- Do supervisors provide readings or case studies that reflect the full diversity of the population with whom you will work in the real world?

If the clinical training sites acknowledge the importance of such overall diversity, they may also be open to exploring LGBT-related issues. Often, faculty and students interested in other aspects of diversity can give you names of individuals in your program who may be most receptive to LGBT issues, especially if there are few or no openly LGBT people within your program.

Online resources

To get a sense of program climate, you can also consult Internet resources like the LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index compiled by the national nonprofit Campus Pride (http://www.campusprideindex.org). Campus Pride rates more than 360 campuses on a five-star scale based on LGBT policy inclusion, LGBT institutional support and commitment, LGBT academic and student life, LGBT housing, LGBT campus safety, LGBT counseling and health, and LGBT recruitment and retention efforts (Campus Pride, 2006). The Advocate also has published a printed college guide based on nearly 5,000 online interviews with students and 500 interviews with faculty and staff (Windmeyer, 2006). The website for the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals (http://www.lgbtcampus.org) also features a map of campus support services for LGBT students across the country with links to different campus LGBT centers (http://www.lgbtcampus.org/lgbt-support-services-map).

CHAPTER 2

SELF-DISCLOSURE IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

COMING OUT IN YOUR PROGRAM

For those LGBT students who may not be out to others in their program and are thinking about coming out, there are several factors to reflect on when making such a decision. Though we wish it were no longer necessary, it is still important to consider negative consequences that may result from coming out. After assessing your regional or local, institutional, and program climate, the following questions may be helpful while exploring coming-out issues in a potentially genderist or heterosexist environment:

- What is my relationship to this person (or group) and what power do they exert over me in this program?
- What recourse do I have in this situation?
- How longstanding is my relationship with this person (or group), and how can I negotiate the relationship to protect myself without compromising my personal values or sense of self?

If the answer to any of these questions would suggest that you may be compromised personally or professionally as a result of coming out, it may be important to reach out to others for support and additional guidance.

Conducting a detailed assessment of LGBT climate may inform your decisions related to coming out to others while in graduate school. However, even if you can expect positive outcomes based on your assessment, making the decision to come out in graduate school can nonetheless be an emotionally difficult one. There may be a lot of fear, uncertainty, or general apprehension associated with coming out in both personal and professional contexts. It is possible you may experience overwhelming affirmation and acceptance in coming out to others, but you may also encounter some prejudice and discrimination. As a result, it is important to be aware of the resources you can access to help support you through the process. For more information on strategies and resources to do so, please see Chapters 3 and 4 in this resource guide on social support and mentoring.

GENDER TRANSITIONING IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

Beyond coping with the emotional experiences associated with coming out, students who transition genders in graduate school also need to navigate an assortment of logistical issues. Though not exhaustive, the following is a list of logistical issues students who are transitioning may want to consider:

Name change: Your institution will issue any official documents (e.g., diploma, tuition and fees statements, etc.) using your legal name. If you choose to legally change your name, your institution may be able to reissue your diploma to reflect the legal name change. Similarly, you will need to sign any legal documents using your legal name. This is particularly important for students in applied programs, as any clinical notes, which are considered to be legal documents, need to be consistent with one's legal name.

Health insurance: If your graduate institution provides health insurance benefits for students, carefully review what transitioning-related costs, if any, it will cover. For example, some health insurance plans may cover a wide range of medical expenses, others only certain procedures. Still others may include language excluding psychological services related to transgender care. If you are seeing a therapist or counselor, it will be important to have a discussion with them regarding what diagnosis they submit to your insurance company (if you go through an insurance company at all).

Restroom usage: It may be helpful to explore buildings on campus and in your area that provide single-stall or all-gender/gender-neutral restrooms. Students comfortable raising such concerns may also find it helpful to speak with a faculty advisor or program head about designating a transgender-friendly restroom in the building in which the program is housed. Though such changes often need to be approved at an institutional level, some faculty may be willing (even excited) to explore such an option.

VOICES ON COMING OUT

"I first came out in high school so by the time I got to graduate school, the experience was not new. I knew right away that I would eventually be out to the department, but I began the process with my classmates. I came out to a couple of my classmates one by one as part of friendly conversations. By October, I was Facebook friends with all seven of my classmates, and so I assumed from then on that they had seen my annual coming-out status post for National Coming Out Day. During my second semester I took a Gender, Sex, and Sexuality class with the graduate students in my year and the year ahead of us. It was a discussion-based class, and I chose to come out on the first or second day to the older students and the professor. One instance where I did not come out was during my first department presentation over my thesis topic. My thesis involves romantic relationships, and one faculty member phrased a question with 'If you had a boyfriend.' Normally I would correct the person on their assumption, but since I was only out to one faculty member at this point and was trying to present myself as professionally as possible, I addressed his question without correction. Often I choose not to come out unless my audience has already expressed accepting views."

—Sarah Adelson,
University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh

"Education is extremely important to my family as my aunts on one side of the family were in arranged marriages and did not have the opportunity my sisters and I have to continue in school. Coming out in all settings would be dangerous for much of my family as well as well as for me when I visit them. While it is not always important for me to come out to all family members or all professionals I work with, it became increasingly important for me to let my clinical supervisor know that I am a lesbian. An extern at the clinic I work at is serving an adolescent experiencing some of the same challenges I once experienced with my father. I would sit there week after week while the group supported the patient's mother. Finally, I expressed that sometimes it was hard for me to hear what the patient and her mother are going through. My peers and supervisor got up and one by one, with teary eyes, asked if they could hug me. Now I do not fear what they will say or that I might accidentally reveal my true self. Coming out to my supervisor and supervision group has been a positive experience for me. I am my whole self there, and it allows me to feel completely genuine in all my interactions with patients, peers, and my supervisor. Additionally, it gave me room to take a deep breath when I am at clinic and seek support in the form of talking with LGBT+ friends, seeking a mentor from the APAGS mentoring program, and continuing to be happy as my whole self. In fact, it was in conversations with my APAGS mentor who is from a similar background that I could come out to my supervision group. Just weeks after coming out to the group, a psychiatric fellow joined the group and mentioned his husband. We joked that if I would have just waited a couple of weeks I could have naturally piggy backed off of his coming out to the group. The opportunity to be my whole self in the setting that I love to work in the most has given me great peace and enjoyment."

—Anonymous

"I chose not to disclose my sexual orientation in graduate school, mainly due to the microaggressions displayed by some and the area of the country I lived in. Although at the time I thought I was doing what was best to keep myself safe and feel as comfortable as possible in my environment, I regret that decision and wish I would've

taken those experiences as opportunities to help others learn and grow from the discussion. In some ways, I felt that I sacrificed my own well-being for the comfort of others."

—Lauren Cunningham, MS,
Ball State University

"When I was confronted by one of my classmates about the nature of my relationship with my girlfriend (who was also our classmate), I felt that my knees were shaking and my heart was beating like a roller-coaster. I was silent for a few seconds trying to figure out a 'proper' answer, to avoid rejection. When I couldn't, I decided to come out to her defensively with a 'so what?' attitude. To my surprise, she said she had never seen me so happy and gave me a hug. I realized that the fear inside me was my biggest enemy."

—Andrea Avila De Garay

"I recently came out to my clinical supervisor. I worked with her for 6 months before she got a promotion that required her to transfer to a different VA. I was scared to come out to her days before her transfer in fear that my self-disclosure would create a rupture in our mentor-mentee relationship. I also feared self-disclosing because the social climate at this VA is highly conservative. I ended up deciding to tell her because I knew that if I didn't, I would regret not sharing such a pivotal part of my identity with someone who had become a true mentor to me. Although it was hard to be open about my sexuality, her reaction strengthened our relationship and challenged my preconceived notions of being open about my sexuality with clinical supervisors, particularly in socially conservative practicum sites. She was so supportive and affirming and showed so much interest in my experience as a sexual minority woman in this field. One of the things I shared with her was information about Safe Zone training. I told her how small symbols of acceptance, such as Safe Zone stickers, could encourage others to come out in environments where many of the staff are covertly oppressive. After my self-disclosure, my supervisor expressed strong interest in making her office space more LGBTQ welcoming. As a going-away present, I gave her a Safe Zone pin, and after a couple hours when I walked by her office, I saw that she had pinned this symbol of acceptance to a board she had on her door. This action filled my heart with warmth and a strong feeling of support."

—Millie Gargurevich,
Texas Woman's University

"Coming out is always an interesting experience. To self-disclose or not to self-disclose is a daily debate I experience as a feminine lesbian. It's basically your classmates' way of saying: You can't be gay until I know that you're gay and you know that I know that you're gay; then, you can be gay. It's truly my hope that as a lesbian graduate student, someday, coming out won't change others' opinions of you, and that to self-disclose or not self-disclose won't even be a question. Along with debating over LGBTQ+ stereotypes in class, being posed with the question of 'Well, what gay people do you know?' and me responding with 'Well, my girlfriend is the closest gay person to me' and being met with a shocked silence made me realize how despite being in a field that is supposed to be progressive and accepting, stereotyping is a reality that will continue until something is done about it. It truly was a turning point in my decision to be an out and proud LGBTQ+ graduate student."

—Whitney Griffin, Sage College

"I'll never forget that nerve-wracking conversation when I told my advisor I wanted to do research with LGBTQ+ individuals. While my advisor respects my determination and reasons for working with the LGBTQ+ community, I'm not sure he will ever completely get what it means to be an LGBTQ+ graduate student. That experience was definitely a turning point in my 'coming out' as a graduate student and woman who also proudly identifies as LGBTQ+."

—Mary T. Guerrant, MS,
North Carolina State University

"Identifying as a bi-cisgender woman in a relationship with a male, I have the privilege to decide who I disclose my sexual orientation to. The decision became much easier in grad school when I began working with advisors and supervisors who, through their language, practices, and research/clinical interests, I felt much more comfortable around. Having an academic advisor exclaim 'Thank you!' and comment that I seemed so much happier after telling him was such a relief! I also ended up disclosing to my program chair because he reviewed my essays for internship, which was okay since he was also my dissertation chair on research about the LGB community…so maybe he could guess? When it comes down to it, if I got an uneasy or uncomfortable feeling around someone, I was able to decide not to come out. But fortunately, I have been surrounded by many people that are supportive and affirmative."

—Elisabeth Knauer-Turner, MS,
University of La Verne, California

"My first internship was at a college counseling center. I was very out to the staff and my classmates as bisexual, and I assumed that people understood that this did not give them the right to out me to others, especially to potential clients. I also became aware that most people didn't really understand bisexual identity since it wasn't taught in any of my classes or internships. At that time, training was exclusively focused on gay and lesbian people. I soon learned that an intern was regularly referring students to me when they asked for a 'lesbian therapist.' Not only was I being outed to clients (which I would never have done at the time), but I

was also being misidentified. I had no guidance on how to address this other than asking for the intern to stop sharing my sexual identity with anyone she referred to me. But this still created very uncomfortable dynamics for me with those clients because I was dating a man at the time, and I felt I was keeping a secret from my clients. It did not seem appropriate to address this since the clients had never directly asked me about my sexual orientation, so we were robbed of that clinical opportunity. Neither correcting the misidentification nor bringing my own orientation into the room seemed appropriate. It was something that was enacted on me and my clients which felt out of our control and definitely affected my clinical relationships. The person making such referrals also was clearly not aware of the biphobia that was common in the lesbian community at that time, and, thus, unaware that some of these clients may have preferred a straight female therapist rather than a bisexual female therapist.

—Keely Kolmes, PsyD, California School of Professional Psychology, AIU Graduate

"I decided to come out during the interview process. It was scary to think about outing myself in the professional setting, and I often questioned whether this was even appropriate. I ultimately decided that the interview was a chance to see if the school would be a good fit for my needs. If they were not warm and accepting to my research interest and identity, then I didn't want to be there. I couldn't be happier with my decision. As a teaching assistant, I was responsible for lecturing on sexual orientation and had to navigate whether to disclose to the class. How could I talk about the LGBT community as if it was some far-off group, ignoring that it was a core part of my identity? Was I ready to be the GAY teacher (because there is no turning back)? I decided not to disclose until I was ready. When I did end up sharing my identity with a class, the students were shocked. There was even an audible gasp. Was it really so unfathomable that I (or anyone) could be gay? Some students told me after how great it was that I had shared. I am not sure who it was more meaningful to, them or me."

—Rebecca Schlesinger, University of Akron

"I made the call early on to be pretty universally out in graduate school. I'm at school in a conservative area, but my program is pretty liberal, so I've never had problems with professors or classmates. I did, however, have a terrible experience with one clinical supervisor who spent an entire supervision session screaming at me that I couldn't disclose my sexual orientation to clients. Fortunately, I'm now in a new environment with a supervisor who is very supportive, and I have some coworkers who are LGBTQ+!"

—Allie Wills, Illinois State University

"I had been out in my personal life for about a year before entering my graduate program at Iliff School of Theology for my Master of Arts in Social Change. I was working as a love and sex columnist for an online magazine. I was a bit anxious to share that information with my cohort, but ended up doing so at the end of my first quarter. I was met with warmth and curiosity from my fellow students and ended up continuing on in my graduate program focusing on sex, sexuality, and BSDM as it relates to the historically Christian community."

—Alison Wisneski, MA, University of Colorado-Denver

"It wasn't until I had finished my undergraduate education that I gave thought to the possibility of living life as a gay man. Then I discovered this quote by Harvey Milk—'If you are not personally free to be yourself in that most important of all human activities…the expression of love…then life itself loses its meaning'—and my whole world changed. As a current graduate student studying clinical psychology, my primary focus is to gain the necessary skills to best serve the LGBTQ community. I'm proud to call myself gay."

—Matthew C. Wivell

THERAPIST SELF-DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY: ISSUES TO CONSIDER WITH ADULT CLIENTS

Regardless of the therapist's sexual orientation or gender identity, decisions regarding what personal information to communicate to clients are an ongoing part of the therapeutic process. In recent years, literature concerning therapist self-disclosure has provided a wealth of insight into the motivations, best practices, and therapeutic outcomes pertaining to therapists' decisions to share (or withhold) factual information about themselves (for a review, see Henretty & Levitt, 2010). These investigations include the ethics of therapist self-disclosure (Peterson, 2002), the impact of therapist disclosures on the therapeutic relationship (Audet & Everall, 2010), assessing the effectiveness of therapist self-disclosures (Barrett & Berman, 2001), and suggestions for practitioners regarding the use of self-disclosure with clients (Knox & Hill, 2003).

Despite the ever-expanding literature on therapist self-disclosure, little attention has been given to the issue of revealing one's sexual orientation or gender identity to clients (Moore & Jenkins, 2012). Literature on trans therapists' experiences with self-disclosure of gender identity is sorely needed. What little mention of sexuality exists within the literature on therapist self-disclosure provides a mixed message to sexual minority clinicians, as major theorists hold contradicting opinions on such disclosures in therapy (Moore & Jenkins, 2012). Furthermore, resources to understand and support the experience of LGBT student therapists, for whom the complexity

and concerns related to self-disclosure may be heightened, are virtually nonexistent. In light of the recent surge in literature attending to the dynamics of sexual orientation and gender identity within the therapeutic context (American Psychological Association, 2012; Bieschke, Paul, & Blasko, 2007; Croteau, Bieschke, Fassinger, & Manning, 2008), the void concerning the topic of therapists disclosing their LGBT status to clients is especially apparent.

To address this gap, the remainder of this chapter aims to contextualize the unique disclosure concerns LGBT therapists face, explore the complex factors that can guide LGBT student therapists who are navigating decisions on the disclosure of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and examine how students can access support in deciding both how to effectively disclose and when it is appropriate to do so.

Unique Concerns Related to the Therapist's Disclosure of an LGBT Identity

While all practitioners face issues of self-disclosure, LGBT therapists may have concerns about the disclosure of their sexual orientation and gender identity for a number of reasons. First, like the larger LGBT population, sexual and gender minority therapists typically have a personal history with disclosure (Guthrie, 2006). For example, the phrase "coming out" is commonplace when describing the LGBT identity development process (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1979). Due to the often indiscernible nature of their sexual orientation or gender identity, many LGBT clinicians have made ongoing decisions about if, how, when, and to whom to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity long before becoming therapists. This history of disclosure may have been rife with negative feelings (e.g., rejection, internalized homophobia, anxiety, acceptance concerns), which may be retriggered for the therapist considering communicating an LGBT identity to a client (Guthrie, 2006). These concerns may be intensified for LGBT student-therapists, whose critical milestones within the coming-out process are, on average, more likely to be recent, in process, or still to come. In fact, the first question many LGBT student-therapists face is whether it is ever appropriate to come out explicitly to clients.

Another way in which coming out as LGBT may differ from other self-disclosures within the therapeutic context is that it represents the disclosure of a stigmatized status. Though all disclosures may come with some level of vulnerability, it is widely documented that people holding a sexual or gender-minority status face stigma within the contemporary sociocultural context of the United States (Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Herek, Chopp, & Strohl, 2007; Meyer, 2003). Thus, in addition to the standard concerns about disclosure (e.g., shifting the attention from the client, biasing client transference), the therapist may fear ruptures or termination due to a client's negative evaluation of their LGBT identity (Moore & Jenkins, 2012). These concerns may be amplified for LGBT student clinicians who, as therapists in training, may already have pronounced concerns about client judgment and retention. It is not uncommon for LGBT student-therapists to experience varying levels of trepidation when engaging in initial interactions with clients.

Clients may also label or directly inquire about the sexual orientation or gender identity of the therapist (Guthrie, 2006). For example, LGBT clinicians who fit into more conventional gender roles may be incorrectly assumed to be cisgender or heterosexual, leaving the therapist to decide whether to correct or collude with the assumption. On the other hand, an LGBT therapist whose appearance or mannerisms fall outside traditional gender norms may be received with curiosity or questioning. Finally, many LGBT clients may inquire about the sexual orientation or gender identity of their therapist either because it would make them feel more comfortable or understood or because of clinical concerns surrounding their LGBT identity (Guthrie, 2006). Directly or indirectly, these various situations may spark conversation about the sexual orientation or gender identity of LGBT therapists, forcing them to disclose their identity, dodge the topic, or conceal their LGBT group membership. Trainees who are used to either being very open or very discreet about their sexual orientation may struggle to strike the right balance in responding to client inquires about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Theoretical Orientation and Therapist Self-Disclosure: A Brief Overview

Many counseling theories offer a clear perspective regarding the appropriateness and effectiveness of therapist self-disclosure. Opinions on the matter are so distinct that existential therapist Yalom (1985) claimed, "More than any other single characteristic, the nature and degree of therapist self-disclosure differentiates the various schools of…therapy" (p. 212). On one hand, you have Freud's classic position that the clinician should present him or herself as a neutral "blank slate" on which client fantasies and emotional content could be projected. In psychoanalytic theory, therapist self-disclosure is thought to contaminate the process by disrupting the practitioner's anonymity and distorting client transferences (Barrett & Berman, 2001; Peterson, 2002). On the other hand may be therapists working from a feminist perspective, in which self-disclosure is an essential part of the therapeutic process to minimize the client-therapist power differential, convey feminist values, build trust, and facilitate client liberation (Knox & Hill, 2003; Peterson, 2002). Research suggests that LGBT therapists working from a feminist perspective may be most likely to disclose their sexual orientation to clients (Berg-Cross, 1984).

Although psychoanalytic and feminist theorists have written most extensively about therapist self-disclosure, approaches to disclosure have arisen within most approaches to therapy. Reviewing each theoretical orientation and position fully is beyond the scope of this guide (for a more thorough review, see Carew, 2009; Knox & Hill, 2003; and Peterson, 2002). However, it is clear that most theoretical orientations support therapist self-disclosures in relevant contexts. For example, the person-centered humanistic movement values greater congruence, transparency, and genuineness between clients and therapists (Glue & O'Neill, 2010; Peterson, 2002). Rational-emotive therapy emphasizes that therapist-self-disclosure can help build a collaborative working alliance, can be effective in modeling coping behavior, and can allow for feedback to correct erroneous or distorted self-perceptions (Carew, 2009; Knox & Hill, 2003).

Knowing how various counseling theories approach therapist self-disclosure may not be enough to sufficiently guide trainees. Many therapists in training may still be in the process of adopting a theoretical orientation or may work in an integrative manner, pulling appropriate practices from one or more schools of thought. Although most orientations have a dominant perspective regarding self-disclosure, there is considerable variance among practitioners within each theoretical orientation with regard to this issue. Also, some approaches psychotherapy may be less explicit regarding how therapists should think about self-disclosure. Thus, it is important to discuss other factors student-therapists can consider when deciding if, when, how, and to which clients they should disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Other Factors Guiding LGBT Student Therapist Disclosure Decisions

A number of issues can guide decisions regarding whether or not to self-disclose one's sexual orientation or gender identity to clients. Though by no means exhaustive, this chapter will review the following areas of potential consideration: intent and relevance of disclosure, assessment of risks and benefits, timing within the therapeutic relationship, and identity of the client.

Intent and relevance

Thinking about what is motivating the disclosure can help the clinician determine whether it is for the benefit of the therapist or in service of the client's needs. When a student-therapist is making a decision about whether or not to explicitly disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity in the context of the therapeutic relationship, it is imperative that the disclosure be done for the benefit of the client (Knox & Hill, 2003; Peterson, 2002).

Disclosure simply for political reasons or solely for the sake of relieving internal anxieties of the student-therapist, without regard to the client's presenting difficulties, can not only cause harm but may create ethical concerns as well. Presenting problems that are unrelated, or only marginally connected, to sexual orientation or gender identity issues may not necessitate disclosure of the therapist's LGBT identity (Peterson, 2002).

Risks and benefits

One might also consider the potential harms and benefits of disclosure, both for the client and the therapist. For example, not disclosing one's LGBT identity when it is relevant to therapeutic work could reduce the sense of trust within the relationship (Henretty & Levitt, 2010), leave the therapist feeling inauthentic or ashamed (Frommer, 2000; Guthrie, 2006), and reinforce the invisibility of LGBT therapists (M. R. Moore, 2012).

Also, some research suggests that concealing a stigmatized identity can have negative mental health consequences such as depression and anxiety, which may impact therapists who choose not to self-disclose. However, some scholars have argued that the benefits of not self-disclosing include keeping the focus of the therapy on the client (Barrett & Berman, 2001; Henretty & Levitt, 2010; Peterson, 2002) and maintaining a therapist image that allows for useful client transference to occur (Jeffrey & Austin, 2007).

Disclosing one's LGBT identity could also lead to a rupture in the therapeutic relationship or cause clients to censor themselves in session so as not to appear homophobic. But a potential benefit of disclosure is that it might enhance the relationship by encouraging greater trust, validating a parallel concern in the life of the client, or modeling genuineness (Perlman, 1991; Peterson, 2002).

Timing and therapeutic alliance

It may be useful to consider the timing of the disclosure and the stage of the therapeutic relationship. The relationship between you and the client might need ample time to develop before self-disclosure becomes appropriate (Gelso & Palma, 2011). In addition to client concerns, some therapists do not feel confident in the utility of disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity before learning more about the particular client and forming a strong working alliance. A therapist should never feel pressured to self-disclose if it feels inappropriate for the stage of the therapeutic process.

Although disclosure of one's gender identity or sexual orientation has the possibility of negatively impacting the therapeutic alliance, a decision not to disclose can carry powerful messages about social norms and can reinforce internalized homophobia or transphobia. A decision to remain silent can serve to disrupt

the student-therapist's ability to be genuine within the therapist–client relationship. Likewise, a hasty decision to openly disclose one's sexual orientation or gender identity may also be detrimental to the therapeutic relationship by bringing undue attention to the student rather than focusing collaboratively on the client's difficulties.

Regarding timing and the development of the therapeutic relationship, LGBT student-therapists and their supervisors should consider (a) what meaning their sexual orientation or gender identity might have for the client, (b) why the subject is coming up now, and (c) whether the self-disclosure of LGBT identity would be more beneficial if delayed until later in treatment (Peterson, 2002).

Development as a therapist

A person's development as a clinician is also relevant to the issue of disclosure. Problems regarding self-disclosure can occur when a student in training hasn't yet established a theoretical orientation or a stable sense of professional or personal identity. For example, LGBT student-therapists may over-identify with the client or find their own issues spilling over into the session.

LGBT students face several unique challenges in developing their identity as student-therapists. These issues may be amplified for psychology students and trainees, who are more likely to be dealing with coming-out issues and disclosure concerns within their personal lives. They also may have a greater fear of prejudice or rejection from clients.

Finally, LGBT student-therapists may have greater difficulty interpreting a client's reaction to their disclosure. If the client does not respond to the new information, or their response is ambiguous, the LGBT student-therapist may become preoccupied with understanding the client's view of them in light of their LGBT status. Knox and Hill (2003) encourage therapists to not only look for reactions to therapists' self-disclosure, but ask for feedback on them.

Personal comfort level

Some clinicians may consider their own individual comfort disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity. As previously mentioned, revealing information before you are ready may impact your comfort in session or make the therapeutic relationship feel awkward. Scholars in the area of therapist self-disclosure suggest that clinicians only consider disclosing about issues they have resolved for themselves (Knox & Hill, 2003).

Whether or not an LGBT student decides to disclose, it may be important for student-therapists to consider their own comfort with their sexual orientation and/or gender identity before working with LGBT clients or those who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity. For student-therapists in the process of questioning their own sexual orientation or gender identity, it may be advisable to avoid working with LGBT individuals who are in the process of coming out.

Based on your comfort level, you may choose different ways of disclosing. When faced with decisions about how to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to clients, some LGBT student-therapists take a proactive stance in asserting their sexual orientation or gender identity. In more muted circumstances, LGBT student-therapists may wish to display a picture of a significant other, or a rainbow flag, to subtly give clues about having an LGBT orientation. In either case, it is important that the LGBT student be prepared for questions from their clients that these indicators may prompt.

Client factors

Lastly, scholars agree that the appropriateness of disclosure depends on the individual client (Glue & O'Neill, 2010; Guthrie, 2006; Knox & Hill, 2003). LGBT student-therapists should make disclosure decisions on a client-by-client basis, considering the unique clinical, multicultural, and ethical components that would be relevant to the disclosure of sexual orientation or gender identity. One aspect that may be considered is the severity of the client's clinical concerns. For example, some psychologists have voiced concern about divulging personal information in cases where more rigid client–therapist boundaries are appropriate, such as working with clients with personality disorders or poor reality testing, clients who focus on the needs of others, and criminal offenders mandated to receive therapy (Glue & O'Neill, 2010; Goldstein, 1994).

Therapists may also consider the sexual orientation and gender identity of the client. For example, the literature on therapist self-disclosure of LGBT identity often discusses disclosure to sexual or gender minority clients (e.g., Frommer, 2000; Guthrie, 2006) separately from disclosure to heterosexual clients (e.g., Moore & Jenkins, 2012). LGBT student-therapists disclosing their sexual or gender identity to heterosexual clients may be more preoccupied with fear of client judgment and more likely to face heterosexism in the therapeutic context (Moore & Jenkins, 2012). On the other hand, disclosures to sexual or gender minority clients may involve considering where the client is in his or her identity development process to assess whether disclosure may facilitate or hinder the goals of therapy. Some scholars have

argued that LGBT therapist disclosure is important when working with sexual or gender minority clients because therapists may be the only LGBT role models available to them (Cabaj, 1996). However, therapists have cautioned against assuming that therapist disclosure of sexual minority status is always appropriate or beneficial when working with LGBT clients (Frommer, 2000; Guthrie, 2006). Also, acknowledging a shared sexual orientation or gender identity does not necessitate the overuse of personal examples (e.g., personal coping mechanisms), which can distract from client issues and lower the client's opinion of the therapist.

Other aspects of the client's identity (e.g., race, religion, age) may be relevant when considering whether or not to disclose one's sexual or gender minority status. Some scholars and researchers have considered the interaction between race and self-disclosure (Constantine & Kwan, 2003; Sue & Sue, 2012; Sue & Zane, 1987). Constantine and Kwan (2003) argue that therapist self-disclosures are especially beneficial in therapy with people of color to create an environment in which conversations about culture, race, and trust can be freely engaged. However, they noted that clients from cultures that emphasize formal roles might question the competency of self-disclosing therapists.

IDENTIFYING SUPPORT REGARDING SELF-DISCLOSURE AS AN LGBT STUDENT-THERAPIST

With so many complex and potentially contradicting influences, disclosure decisions can be fraught with pitfalls for even the most experienced practitioner. It is often useful for student-therapists to seek support in planning, executing, and debriefing about self-disclosure in the therapeutic context.

It may be advisable for LGBT student-therapists to reveal their sexual or gender minority identity after they have consulted with a trusted supervisor or qualified mentor. Someone in this position can help LGBT student-therapists evaluate their motivations for doing so—both conscious and unconscious. By utilizing appropriate consultation and supervision, you can be confident that your decision to disclose (or withhold) information about your sexual orientation or gender identity is well planned and will likely benefit the client.

Another consideration that LGBT student-therapists often must take into account is whether or not to come out to their supervisor. Fear regarding exploring disclosure concerns with one's supervisor or getting advice from a supervisor who is not competent in LGBT issues may exacerbate disclosure-related problems in therapy. Whereas some students may find their supervisor or core faculty member to be LGBT-affirming, other LGBT student-therapists may feel confused and hesitant about disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity for fear of repercussions. This is a personal decision, and you may wish to seek support and consultation in arriving at this decision.

Students who maintain therapy while completing their program may find that discussing matters related to their sexual orientation and gender identity with their therapist can help keep these concerns from unnecessarily leaking into sessions with their clients. Scholars suggest that increased self-knowledge can help therapists decipher the difference between therapist disclosures that are in the best interest of the client versus those that are a symptom of unresolved client issues (Sturges, 2012).

For those students who choose to disclose, it is essential to consider possible ramifications that such a disclosure can have and, conversely, how choosing not to disclose might impact your own mental health or freedom of expression. If you choose not to disclose with clients, supervisors, or in your own personal therapy, LGBT-affirming support can be instrumental in providing necessary camaraderie, consultation, and interactions and can lessen feelings of isolation and detachment.

CHAPTER 3

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Although much national and global progress has been made in recent years toward greater acceptance of individuals who identify as LGBT, members of LGBT communities still face microaggressions and acts of discrimination daily (Nadal, Issa, Leon, Meterko, Wideman, & Wong, 2011; Pizer, Mallory, Sears, & Hunter, 2012). People's response to your LGBT identity will likely vary depending on numerous other factors, including your gender presentation, age, ability status, ethnicity, and location of your campus (Harper & Schneider, 2003). Social support can serve as a much-needed buffer against the negative effects of these experiences, and this can be especially true when transitioning to college or graduate school.

WHY SHOULD LGBT STUDENTS SEEK SOCIAL SUPPORT?

Social support has been found to buffer the negative effects of the stressors that LGBT students face on college campuses (Berger & Mallon, 1993; D'Augelli, 1989; Vincke & Van Heeringen, 2002; Williams, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2005). LGBT students should seek out individuals both on and off campus who are available and willing to provide emotional, material, and social resources and who affirm or validate the lives of LGBT students (Smith & Brown, 1997). Berger (1992) found that the amount of support a person has is positively correlated with their self-esteem. Additionally, higher levels of peer and family support have been associated with lower levels of suicidality and depression among LGBT individuals (Friedman, Koeske, Silvestre, Korr, & Sites, 2006; Williams et al., 2005), better psychological well-being (Waller, 2001), and lower levels of career indecision (Schmidt, Miles, & Welsh, 2011).

The "matching theory" created by Cohen and Wills (1985) posits that support is most effective in buffering the negative effects of stress when the type of support matches the type of stressor. Thus, for individuals who identify as LGBT, it might be important to have a support network that helps them cope directly with experiences of discrimination they might face as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Doty, Willoughby, Lindahl,

and Malik (2010) found that having high levels of support for concerns related to one's sexual orientation significantly predicted lower levels of emotional distress for that person. Sheets and Mohr (2009) similarly found that general social support was associated with lower levels of depression in bisexual college students and that social support focused upon one's bisexual identity was associated with lower internalized biphobia. Doty's team (2010) found that, in general, youth who identify as LGBT are better able to find support for concerns related to sexuality and gender identity from other members of the LGBT community. In contrast, Sheets and Mohr (2009) found that support from straight allies was particularly helpful in bolstering the development of a positive sexual orientation identity.

It might be important for you to form social networks within LGBT and ally communities in order to buffer the many stressors associated with sexual and gender identity on one's campus. Sources of social support can include anyone from close relatives or families of choice to roommates or other friends to less-direct forms of support like an open-minded local community group and inclusive campus or community services.

"As a straight and cisgender ally to the LGBTQ+ community, I decided early in my graduate program to use my privilege in a positive way. Coming into a religious-based institution, there was a great deal of reticence about discussing sexual orientation and gender; however, I made my passion as an ally known in any way that I could. My hope was to foster a safe and accepting social environment in my cohort and let others know that I was available as a friend and a colleague."

—Kendall Betts, MA,
Azusa Pacific University

"As a straight and cisgender ally I find that the best way to build resilience and provide community is to speak up. It is often the case (unfortunately) that people may be more receptive to allies' advocacy efforts than they are when LGBT students advocate for themselves. That makes it that much more important for us as allies to speak up and act. You can do something small or something big—every little bit counts. Confront microaggressions (and admit and apologize for mistakes), cultivate safe spaces (like peer support groups or diversity committees), admit and challenge your own privilege."

—Irene Daboin, MA,
Georgia State University

FINDING SOCIAL SUPPORT ON CAMPUS

There are many sources of social support that exist on a university campus, ranging from individuals (e.g., classmates, faculty) to formal, institutional sources of support (e.g., LGBT centers). Utilizing the support structure on your campus is a good way to start making connections with the LGBT community.

"While I was interviewing for a doctoral position in a counseling psychology program, I came across multiple students who referred to their significant others as "partners" and used the "they" pronoun liberally. I thought I struck gold at the prospect of joining a department that was filled with LGBTQ+ individuals! It turns out that many of them are wonderful (straight or cisgender) humans who decided to create a more inclusive environment for all. I now cherish them dearly as my colleagues and friends."

—Mun Yuk Chin

If your campus has an LGBT center, connecting with resources there can be an important step in establishing a supportive social network. Exploring your campus's LGBT center will allow you to not only meet the students and staff there, but to also meet other LGBT and allied students. Programming might include mentoring networks, social outings, support and discussion groups, educational outreach programs, and many others. Some campuses have diversity centers that include programming for multiple forms of diversity rather than a specific LGBT center. Others may have centers that focus on multicultural or gender-related programming, and others may have student-organized groups rather than specific centers. You can also learn about programs and events with LGBT themes from your department or other inclusive departments. By attending such events, you can interact with a wide range of individuals who are likely to be interested in promoting tolerance and diversity.

If your college does not have existing programs or organizations to support LGBT students, it might be possible for you to form your own group. If you want to organize a university-sanctioned group or program, consult with staff in the Student Affairs and Diversity offices, as well as with other student group leaders, to gain information about the process of forming an organization at your particular university.

Other ways to find support at your campus can include reaching out to inclusive departments, such as Gender and Women's Studies, and connecting with faculty members and students researching LGBT and diversity-related topics. Seeking mentorship from such professors and upper-level graduate students can help you grow professionally and create stronger connections with the campus community. A qualitative study of LGBT graduate students found that participants associated their successful completion of the program to the support of their mentor (Lark & Croteau, 1998).

Although expressed interest in diversity-related topics is often an indicator of acceptance, many other strong allies may be within your department, including within your cohort or faculty, whose research areas do not happen to be LGBT-related. In whatever way feels safe to you, assess which straight and cisgender peers and professors may be able to act as sources of support. Russell and Richards (2003) found that interacting with allies led to greater resilience among LGBT individuals. If you are at a small campus where there may not be a large LGBT community, it will be essential to forge connections with accepting people who do not identify as LGBT. Even where there is a larger LGBT community, though, such connections may be significant.

> "Contrary to the advice I was given by my supervisors and colleagues, I decided to take a tremendous risk and share my personal story with several faculty members at my school. After careful thought, I decided I could no longer live a lie, even if it meant risking expulsion from the program. Thankfully, on the whole, I have felt accepted by those faculty members in the psychology program, as well as many of the friends and peers at my school whom I have come out to. Though many do not accept my sexual identity as a gay man (e.g., not agreeing based upon theological beliefs), I have felt safe to disclose my story to select faculty members. I've also experienced somewhat surprising and unexpected support. For example, when I disclosed my fears about being expelled, I was told by a professor whom I respect that he and other faculty members would fight for me and defend me publicly if it ever came to this. I was truly humbled that this faculty member essentially was willing to risk losing his job to defend a position that would likely have received little support within the larger university community. Because of both the positive and negative experiences which occurred throughout my graduate training, I was able to find a place of true freedom by accepting my sexuality as a gay man as I neared the completion of my graduate work."
>
> —Joshua Wolff, PhD,
> Asst. Professor, Adler University, Chicago

Considerations for finding support on campus

It is important to find social support on campus, but there are some considerations for LGBT graduate students in psychology to consider when doing so. If you are a graduate instructor, you may encounter dual relationships with other LGBT students or, if you are an undergraduate, you may encounter dual relationships with your graduate instructors. LGBT campus communities are often fairly small, so if you are involved on campus you will likely have to act as an instructor or student for individuals you already have a personal relationship with through the LGBT community. Consult with your department and university policies, as well as with more advanced graduate students in the LGBT community, to better understand how such complicated relationships are generally handled. In some cases, it might be possible to have a different teaching assistant grade a student's work, and it will be important to have an open conversation with the student or teaching assistant about how your dual relationship will be addressed in and out of the classroom.

Other marginalized identities also may not be well represented within the campus LGBT community. Thus, students who identify as LGBT who are diverse with regard to racial or ethnic background, ability status, age, socioeconomic status, and other identities may have difficulty feeling connected to their campus's LGBT community (Harley, Nowak, Gassaway, & Savage, 2002). This may be particularly true for students of color attending predominantly White institutions (Good-Cross & Tager, 2011; Vaccaro & Mena, 2011). Some students have found it helpful to become active in groups that represent their other identities, such as cultural organizations or disability support or advocacy groups, in order to make up for the perceived disconnect from those identities in the LGBT community (Good-Cross & Tager, 2011). However, this disconnect is a concern many campuses are working to address in order to build cohesion within the LGBT community. You can be a part of that effort by serving as an ally for other members of the community and reaching out to individuals who have intersecting identities different from your own.

FINDING SOCIAL SUPPORT OFF CAMPUS

Not only can students seek social support on campus, but there are often off-campus sources of support as well. A great place to begin learning about these resources is your campus's LGBT center. Many cities also have LGBT community centers that can provide information and support related to LGBT issues. Aside from LGBT centers, you can also check out women's centers, counseling agencies, community health agencies, bookstores, health food stores, multicultural centers, progressive places of worship, and arts centers. It is likely that at least one of these can be found in your

local area. LGBT and LGBT-friendly organizations often advertise in these spaces, and LGBT newspapers and local web resources exist in many parts of the country as well. Once you make contact with groups serving the LGBT community, try to attend their meetings, social events, and fundraisers. Many LGBT centers run support groups, mentoring programs, and youth programs; any of these can be an excellent way for you to become involved in the community. You can participate as a group member or mentee, or, depending on your background and interest, you might also be able to help facilitate groups, serve as a mentor, or work with youth. You may want to try out many groups to find which ones are a good fit for you. Network within those groups; each person you meet can lead you to new spaces and potential sources of support. However, it is also important to be aware of your own limits so you don't spread yourself too thin (Vaccaro & Mena, 2011).

Some students may gain emotional support by being a member of a faith-based community. However, for individuals who identify as LGBT, finding a community in which they feel accepted can be a complicated process due to the homophobic and heterosexist views held by some religious organizations. Consulting with online resources can be an important first step in identifying communities that might be a good fit for you. Websites such as GayChurch.org (http://www.gaychurch.org) and blogs like Queer Faith News (http://queerfaithnews.wordpress.com/gay-friendly-places-of-worship) provide links and contact information for houses of worship around the country that have been identified as "LGBT-friendly." You can also consult with students and faculty at your university who are allies or part of the LGBT community for additional recommendations or contact houses of worship in your area anonymously to inquire about their positions on gender identity and sexual orientation.

> "As a child I was taught that nothing was stronger than my Christian faith…I overcame the ethical dilemma [of conflicting religious beliefs and LGBT identity] with the use of positive psychology, implementing the use of '3 Good Things' on a daily basis. By remaining resilient, the internal confrontation with my religious upbringing has ceased."
>
> —Avery Carter M. Walker, MS, Chatham University

The process of transitioning to a new campus and program can be extremely stressful, particularly for individuals who have the added stress of negotiating marginalized identities. Establishing a connection with a mental health care provider you trust can help provide a space for you to process that stress and seek additional emotional support. If you are especially interested in using therapy to explore concerns related to your LGBT identity, it may be helpful to seek a therapist who has training or experience in working with LGBT clients. Obtaining suggestions from allies and community members in your area is probably one of the best ways to get a referral to a therapist who is likely to be affirming. Some websites allow you to search for therapists based on whether or not they identify themselves as being affirming or having an interest in LGBT concerns (exp.: GoodTherapy.org: http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/lgbt-therapist; Psychology Today: http://therapists.psychologytoday.com/rms). Also, in some states, there are networks of LGBT-affirming therapists, including Utah (http://www.lgbtqtherapists.com), California (http://www.gayfriendlytherapists.com/index.html), and Minnesota (http://www.lgbttherapists.org). Prior to making an appointment with a therapist, you may want to assess whether or not they will be a good match for you by calling to ask about their professional background and affiliations as well as their perspective on working with LGBT clients. This will also allow you to gauge their level of awareness by noting whether or not they use inclusive language.

Another effective way to gain social support is to connect with the LGBT community through activism and volunteering. Many states have advocacy groups that monitor legislation related to hate crimes, inclusion policies, human rights, and HIV. Some advocate exclusively for sexual orientation, while others include this as one of many social justice issues (see Chapter 7 in this guide on advocacy and confronting discrimination). For example, connecting with local feminist groups, ACLU chapters, peace coalitions, disability advocates, racial and ethnic rights groups, and other groups that work to end oppression can be a powerful way to create a support network. Yet again, the Internet is useful for locating chapters of advocacy groups near you. The Wikipedia page for "LGBT Political Advocacy Groups in the US" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:LGBT_political_advocacy_groups_in_the_United_States) has an extensive, although not exhaustive, list of national and regional organizations. Furthermore, local newspapers and your campus diversity or LGBT center will also be likely to provide information about other groups in your area. During the summer, particularly in June, many cities host Pride festivals or events. Many local organizations have informational tables at these programs; attending the Pride festivities in your region can be a good way to become connected with LGBT or allied organizations. Becoming involved with such organizations can help point you to other local events and offer connections with other community members and opportunities to gain leadership experience.

Considerations for finding support off campus

As with seeking social support on campus, there are important points to consider when seeking support off campus. Becoming involved with LGBT groups off campus could possibly result in dual relationships with your students, instructors, and/or clients if you are pursuing a clinical degree. There is no hard and fast rule about what to do when dual relationships arise because there are so many different factors to consider, including the closeness of the relationship and any potential power differential or threat to confidentiality. You can seek advice about how to navigate such relationships from more advanced students in the community, trusted faculty members, or your clinical supervisor.

When seeking your own counseling, it is important to keep in mind that your school's counseling or clinical psychology program might have connections to the agencies or providers you are interested in receiving services from. It can be difficult to know when dual relationships might be problematic. As such, be sure to ask your mental health care provider about any affiliation they may have with your program and whether or not that affiliation might impact your training or therapy. Some universities provide free counseling on campus through student services; however, counseling there may be provided by more advanced students in your own program. Ensure that receiving services will not affect your future practicum possibilities or pose a risk to the confidentiality of your sessions.

Additionally, even if the therapist you choose is not affiliated with your program, you may encounter them outside of therapy if they are involved with the LGBT community. This possibility is something you can discuss with them early in therapy to determine how you would both like to handle such a potential dual relationship.

Being a student is very time consuming. Based on your schedule, it may be difficult to attend meetings for off-campus groups regularly, or it may require a significant investment of time and money spent on transportation.

Finally, don't forget that even if your campus seems fairly accepting, the surrounding area may not be. Be mindful of your safety at all times and consult with more advanced students and other community members about the security of off-campus spaces. Also, keep in mind that some identities may be more stigmatized off campus than others. Thus, even if other LGBT students feel comfortable in a space, it may not be equally comfortable for people with other identities, such as people of color or people with disabilities. Double check with members of other communities if you are unsure and listen to your instincts if a situation begins to feel unsafe.

SEEKING LONG-DISTANCE SOCIAL SUPPORT

Although in-person social support is likely to be an important part of encouraging your mental well-being, building and maintaining long-distance connections can also be valuable. This is especially true if your school is in a very rural area or if it has an intolerant atmosphere that makes it difficult to locate allies and community members.

The most obvious form of long-distance support is to stay connected to loved ones via social media, e-mail, and/or the phone. Regular contact with people who have been strong sources of support for you can help smooth the transition to graduate school by providing interpersonal continuity. It can also be a useful outlet for discussing concerns about your program or location with people who are not closely associated with it.

Additionally, online communities can offer support through discussion boards, webinars, electronic mailing lists, and chat rooms. There has been some empirical support for the mental health benefits of connecting with others on virtual platforms, such as decreasing loneliness and increasing self-esteem (Shaw & Gant, 2002).

Becoming involved with regional or national professional organizations, like APA, is another excellent way to establish supportive connections. APA has many committees and divisions related to diversity, and several related specifically to LGBT issues, including Division 44 (http://www.apadivision44.org), the LGBT Concerns Office (http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/index.aspx), and the APA Graduate Students Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity (CSOGD; http://www.apa.org/apags/governance/subcommittees/csogd.aspx). Furthermore, there are subcommittees for LGBT concerns within some of the broader divisions, such as Division 17 for Counseling Psychology (http://www.div17.org/sections/lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-issues). These committees and divisions often have ways for students to become involved, such as through serving as representatives to the committee, contributing to discussions, or joining LISTSERVs or other electronic mailing lists to receive announcements and information.

The APAGS–CSOGD also runs a free yearlong mentoring program that connects students with mentors who are clinicians, faculty members, or advanced graduate students (http://www.apa.org/apags/governance/subcommittees/clgbtc-mentoring-program.aspx). Involvement with the program as a mentee or mentor can be a great way to not only receive direct social support from the program, but to also connect with other students and professionals who are members of the LGBT and allied communities across the country.

> Being a part of the CSOGD Mentoring Program has provided me with the unique opportunity to develop from mentee to mentor while working with other students and professionals who are passionate about LGBT psychology. Building a mentorship constellation is a powerful tool within our field, and I am proud to be able to give back as a mentor and thankful for all the support I have received as a mentee.
>
> —Nick Grant, MA, MS

Considerations for finding long-distance support

As useful as it might be to establish or maintain connections with individuals who do not live near you, there are also some points to keep in mind when doing so. Long-distance connections might not be quite the same as having social support nearby because they may lack the emotional connection of face-to-face contact and be less readily available for casual interactions. Some research has suggested that relationships primarily maintained online are not as close as those sustained through other means (Cummings, Butler, & Kraut, 2002).

Whether your primary support comes from people on campus, off campus, or long distance, and no matter how busy you get with your studies, it is important to develop a social support network to keep you as healthy and happy as possible!

CHAPTER 4

MENTORSHIP AND LGBT STUDENTS

Researchers have suggested that mentoring relationships for LGBT individuals may serve as crucial relational tools to process LGBT-related stigma (Russell & Horne, 2009). Mentoring is defined as a positive relationship in which a mentee acquires professional skills (Knox, Schlosser, Pruitt, & Hill, 2006). Mentors support mentees in setting goals and objectives and assist the cultivation of mentees' development conducive to long-term professional success (Russell & Horne, 2009). Involvement in mentoring relationships is associated with greater research productivity (Hollingsworth & Fassinger, 2002) and can lead to more satisfaction with graduate school and networking (Tenenbaum, Crosby, & Gliner, 2001). Mentoring programs may also serve as a mechanism to improve retention of students from historically underrepresented groups (Girves, Zepeda, & Gwathmey, 2005).

"I was lucky to have an advisor who stood up for his students and went above and beyond to ensure that we made a successful transition to graduate school. One time when I was particularly proud of him was when the city where our university was located was debating whether to pass a nondiscrimination ordinance that would protect LGBTQ people. During an open town hall forum, my advisor spoke in favor of the ordinance, eloquently citing research related to minority stress and the benefits that such ordinances could have on the health and well-being of members of the LGBTQ community. Despite significant opposition, the ordinance ultimately passed."

—Nicholas Heck, PhD, Marquette University

CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

For mentoring dyads that include LGBT individuals, it is important to consider the context and discuss possible forms of prejudice (Herek, 2004; Russell & Horne, 2009). For instance, recognition of stigma needs to be an explicit aspect of the mentoring relationship. Both mentor and mentee should discuss the nature of stigma, as well as its potential influence on both individuals.

Direct acknowledgement of stigma contravenes social norms that propagate a "don't ask, don't tell" attitude toward matters of sexual orientation and gender identity (Russell & Greenhouse, 1997). However, direct acknowledgement is necessary in order to identify an important yet elusive source of stress and to engage in more effective problem solving (Russell & Horne, 2009). Such direct discussions may also allow mentors and mentees to cultivate more open and honest mentorship relationships.

Another potential topic to discuss is the degree to which each party of the relationship considers themselves "out." Disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity to others, or "coming out," is one of the most difficult issues LGBT individuals encounter (Griffith & Hebl, 2002). Coming out is an important life event that can have significant impact on a person's academic or professional goals and trajectory. However, the coming out process often remains an invisible life stressor, and its impact on a person's personal and professional trajectories may not be fully realized by others (Russell & Horne, 2009). Discussing issues related to coming out within a mentoring relationship may be helpful for some, as this topic may not be attended to in other relationships.

"Sharing with language that focuses on things as personal experience is a great way to ease in uncomfortable conversation with someone who may not have the language to discuss what you (the student) are going through. I make sure to say 'This is how I have experienced ____' before continuing to share more, as it is important to me to use language that doesn't include or indict my fellow queer classmates. Many mentors for me were older in my program, as Iliff is a historically theological/seminarian education space. I was gentle but intentional with my word choice—referring to my partner as my wife with older folks so they didn't question if it was my business partner. I also gauged situations based on how much of myself I felt I needed to reveal. There is always a level of discomfort/questioning of safety when sharing parts of sexuality with others."

—Alison Wisneski, MA,
University of Colorado-Denver

Another consideration for mentorship relationships is the cohort difference between mentor and mentee (Russell & Horne, 2009). While age and historical differences are not unusual within mentoring dyads, Russell and Bohan (2005) suggested that generational differences between younger and older LGBT people may be especially pronounced and challenging. For example, mentors may experience a different level of comfort about their own self-disclosure relative to mentees or vice versa. Mentors of an older generation may also struggle with how to relate to younger LGBT individuals who may appear to be too public with their sexual orientation or gender identity (Russell & Horne, 2009). While cohort differences might seem to divide mentors and mentees, "mentors' disclosure and self-representation as LGBT professionals can serve an important unifying function" (Russell & Horne, 2009, p. 198).

"I am a 53-year-old partnered gay male in my second year as a PhD student in clinical psychology (a second career for me). I have two mentors, one who is 15-20 years older (recently retired from practice, but still active in psychological organizations), and another, 15-20 years younger (in active practice). Both are heterosexual and take into account that my career trajectory will not be the same as a mentee in her 20s or 30s. From their differing generational perspectives, they are helping me figure out what my career might look like when I graduate in my mid-to-late 50s."

—Allie P. Laurie, Jr., The California School
of Professional Psychology, Los Angeles

Dual relationships

There is a potential concern with mentors over their dual role. When negotiating this concern, be sure to have clearly articulated roles and an explicit conversation about the way power operates in dual relationships. Mentors should be aware of this concern, and mentees can better initiate conversations with mentors in which boundaries are clearly demarcated.

If applicable, it may be important to address questions such as:

- How does our mentoring relationship affect positions like advisor-advisee, instructor-student, and supervisor-supervisee?
- What does a mentoring relationship consist of in terms of intensity and duration?
- How much contact and what type (lunch, meeting, phone, e-mail) is comfortable for the mentor and the mentee?

Initiating dialogue around these questions can be useful in establishing clear and beneficial boundaries and opening communication for both the mentor and the mentee.

RESEARCH MENTORSHIP

Having a strong mentoring relationship with a faculty advisor can be an important factor in the success of your research as a graduate student. Studies indicate that graduate students' mentoring experiences are central in promoting research productivity (Hollingsworth & Fassinger, 2002). When considering which graduate program to attend, it is therefore important to identify faculty members you might feel comfortable working with over the course of your graduate career. Depending on your own personal preferences in mentoring style and any prior experience in

research, you may feel confident working with an advisor whose primary area of research is different from your own. However, particularly if you are relatively new to the prospective topic you are hoping to study, it can be helpful to identify a faculty member who already has a background in that area so they can give you more specific advising regarding possible promising research avenues and resources to consult with and methods to use for that particular topic.

If your assigned faculty advisor does not have research interests that align well with your own, you might find it helpful to seek out mentorship from other faculty members within your program or from faculty members in other departments who are doing similar research. You may also find it helpful to have a different advisor or mentor for different aspects of your work, such as one who is well versed in LGBT topics and one who is an expert in research methodology. One way to start the process of locating programs with faculty members interested in LGBT issues is to refer to this national study carried out by APA in 2009 concerning LGBT research: http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/survey/index.aspx.

Advanced doctoral students interested in similar topics can also serve as important resources for emotional and instrumental support throughout the research process. Finally, professional networks and organized mentoring programs outside your college or university can help connect you with other professionals who are conducting research on topics relevant to your own work.

> "At the University of Guelph, there are no faculty supervisors or research labs with a sexual orientation or gender identity focus. When a fellow PhD student and I realized we were both very interested in this research area, we decided to start our own grad-student-run grassroots lab called the Sexual and Gender Diversity Research Lab. Our lab has revealed a very large and widespread interest in this area from such diverse academic backgrounds as social sciences, arts and humanities, and business. We now have an interdisciplinary team of lab members and multiple faculty sponsors from various departments. We want to let grad students everywhere know that even if your interest in sexual orientation and gender-identity-focused research seems to have no home at your institution, there are always going to be people who share your interests with whom you can collaborate and make a home for this area of research."
>
> —Amy Ellard-Gray, MA,
> University of Guelph (Ontario)

SEEKING MENTORSHIP

In seeking mentorship relationships, LGBT graduate students can take several possible steps. As discussed in the Social Support chapter, researching the clinical and research interests of the faculty of your program can be a gateway to finding and establishing a research, teaching, or clinical mentor for your interests and experiences with LGBT issues. Faculty members whose work addresses LGBT populations, in and outside of psychology departments, are likely to be quite knowledgeable about LGBT issues and can serve as personal role models, sharing their experience with coming out in graduate school or doing LGBT research. Additionally, personal mentors can assist in making connections with other LGBT faculty, staff, or clinicians. Establishing a relationship with a professional who identifies as LGBT or LGBT-affirmative can also facilitate your professional development in many ways. Mentors serve as professional role models, help identify paths to professional growth and development, and provide support in dealing with heterosexism, genderism, and LGBT-related discrimination.

Students can look in many places for mentors

The APAGS Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity has established a mentor program that can match you with someone who has similar professional interests and who has encountered similar barriers. Division 44, the Society for the Study of LGBT Issues, holds a social hour at the APA annual convention where faculty, professionals, and students can make connections and discuss common interests. Further, many APA divisions have websites that provide contact information and e-mail addresses of professionals who can serve as informational guides in exploring these routes. For more information about mentorship opportunities, see the Additional Resources chapter of this guide.

Graduate school can be an emotionally draining and confusing experience, especially when someone is negotiating the challenges of institutional heterosexism and genderism. Searching out an LGBT or LGBT-affirmative mentor to provide support, guidance, and networking opportunities can be a strong tool in navigating the complexities of graduate school. Mentors can be found in your program, in your university, or even in national professional organizations. The mentor relationship can add tremendously to your professional and personal development.

CHAPTER

TIPS FOR TRANSGENDER OR GENDER VARIANT GRADUATE STUDENTS

Research on the unique needs, barriers, and experiences of transgender, transsexual, and gender nonconforming graduate students is greatly underdeveloped. In this chapter, we provide an overview of critical areas of concern for these understudied populations.

Definitions

While these definitions provide a guide when discussing gender diversity issues, identity terms hold different meanings based on regional, cultural, temporal, and individual differences. Terms emerging from the mental health and medical community (such as transsexual and gender variant) can sometimes be seen as pathologizing and offensive. Many people with a history of transitioning gender prefer to simply be referred to as "male" or "female." When using identity terms with students, colleagues, and clients, remember it is always best to ask what identity terms they use to describe their identity and transition process.

- *Transgender* is often used as an umbrella term meant to encompass the experience of individuals whose gender identity or expression does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth (Feinberg, 1992; Kirk & Kulkarni, 2006). Although the term may include specific subgroups such as transsexual individuals or gender nonconforming people, not all transsexual people or all gender nonconforming people identify as transgender. The label can be used to describe a community of people as well as to describe an individual person.
- *Transsexual* refers to people who have transitioned, or seek to transition, from male to female or female to male through medical interventions (including hormones and/or surgeries; GLAAD, 2014). For varying reasons, transgender people do not always

POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF GRADUATE SCHOOL

The graduate student environment can offer several benefits to transgender students. Although transgender students continue to report harassment and discrimination in university settings (Grant, Mottet, & Tanis, 2011), these settings are often more inclusive places than the general community. As such, transgender individuals might have an easier time feeling comfortable and accepted on a college campus than in the larger community. Many schools have resource centers or student groups for LGB, and, increasingly, for transgender students, that they can use to find peers like them and get support. In fact, while transition-related health care is nearly always excluded from health care coverage in other contexts, colleges and universities are leading the charge in covering transition-related care in their student health care plans. You can check the status of your own university by contacting your campus health care facility or by checking the Campus Pride Trans Policy Clearinghouse at http://www.campuspride.org/tpc. Finally, your institution will probably offer psychological services you can take advantage of. If not, the school will probably be able to give you helpful referrals. These factors may make graduate school a beneficial and supportive environment for transgender students.

FINDING SUPPORT

Finding transgender-friendly allies can greatly improve the graduate school experience of transgender students. Some universities have specific transgender support groups (Beemyn, 2003). Transgender students can possibly find allies within the larger LGB community, but this is not always a certainty. If the LGB community on campus is not knowledgeable of and sensitive to transgender issues, then it is possible its actions might be just as transphobic as the actions of those who are not members of the LGB community. Mentoring and academic support might also be found from fellow academics who are studying areas related to transgender issues (e.g., human sexuality, women and gender studies, queer studies, sociology, and psychology).

Important alliances can also be made outside of the university community. Internet groups can be useful for linking up local members of the transgender or transsexual communities. Finally, some transgender graduate students may find therapy helpful to balance the demands of graduate school and personal difficulties. As always, when seeking a therapist, it is important to look for someone who is a comfortable match and who is familiar with key issues. Finding a therapist with knowledge of transgender issues or who provides trans-affirmative therapy may be especially important for transgender students seeking support (Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubbs, 2005).

> "Navigating my doctoral program in Kentucky as an out transgender man has been challenging to say the least. From discrimination in practicum placements to microaggressions in the classroom, making space for trans and genderqueer students has been fraught with missteps. Ultimately, these issues have pushed our program forward, but it takes a toll. Throughout this process, having a family of peers for support has been invaluable, as well as identifying allies among faculty and trans mentors within the broader field. I encourage anyone finding themselves alone in the struggle to reach out. If you can't find someone in your program, then look to other departments, join the CSOGD mentorship program, get involved in APAGS, and join Division 44. I have found that the professional LGBT community in the field is very welcoming and supportive, and just being in an affirming professional space has reminded me there is indeed life after grad school."
>
> —Jacob Eleazer,
> University of Louisville

POSSIBLE CHALLENGES IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

Transgender graduate students may face particular challenges not found in the larger transgender community. Deciding if and when to come out in the academic context is one such issue. Coming out to supervisors and advisors might be especially challenging, as they play key roles in a graduate student's studies and there might be concern about how these people will react to your gender transition (McKinney, 2005). However, if you have affirming supervisors and advisors, then you could use these relationships to gain valuable support and advice. Those who are engaged in teaching might also

undergo sexual reassignment surgery and/or hormonal therapy (Nestle et al., 2002).

- *Gender nonconforming* is a fairly broad term referring to people who differ from the gender norms associated with their sex assigned at birth. Gender nonconforming people may identify with the sex assigned to them to varying degrees and may or may not change their social or legal gender.
- *Genderqueer* is a term that is increasingly being used by younger transgender people and some who prefer not to use the word transgender. The term genderqueer describes a wide range of gender identifications, behaviors, and expressions that are not exclusively male or female (Nestle et al., 2002).
- *Cisgender* is a more recent term that refers to people whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth are in alignment. It is important to note that a person's gender identity can change; many transgender people move fluidly between identities over time, often without any specific labels (Whittle, Turner, & Al-Alami, 2007).

need to come out to their students. Both of these situations are complicated because of the power dynamics involved. It is worth noting that for those transgender students undertaking a gender transition, coming out can prove particularly challenging. As with any coming out process, a supportive counselor and strong community can ease the stress involved.

There is a certain amount of stigma that goes along with being transgender that can play out in different ways. One way this occurs in a psychology setting is through the stigma present in communities about transgender individuals. Transgender students may face discrimination in the form of avoidance whether or not they are out, depending upon their gender presentation (Clements-Nolle, Marx, & Katz, 2006). Transgender students may face increased difficulty in forming peer relationships. Further, faculty members may make themselves less available to transgender students. This may be in part because well-intentioned individuals simply do not know how to make themselves available.

Allies can unintentionally out transgender students who have recently transitioned through their use of pronouns and names. When coming out, it may be important to caution allies about this. Once transgender students have come out, they may be asked to speak for all transgender people in classes and feel pressured to educate others. Transgender students may be asked to prove they can manage client reactions to their gender identity disclosures. Furthermore, you may have to navigate relationships with professors, supervisors, and students who may ask invasive and inappropriate questions about your gender identity.

Psychology programs that primarily produce practitioners have a responsibility to the public to monitor trainees' appropriateness for clinical work. Depending on the school's gatekeeping practices and presence of discriminatory beliefs, an unfortunate student may be perceived as possessing serious psychopathology or emotional instability, poor boundaries, or ethically questionable behavior simply for identifying as transgender, transsexual, and/or a member of a gender nonconforming community. In such a circumstance, having faculty allies or a mentor is vital. If your program discriminates against you, it is important to know your options. Resources such as the Transgender Law Center (www.transgenderlawcenter.org), the Sylvia Rivera Law Project (www.srlp.org), and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU; https://www.aclu.org/lgbt-rights/know-your-rights-guide-trans-and-gender-nonconforming-students) can help provide resources and guidance specifically about legal issues.

Finally, some transgender students may face legal issues. These issues are most likely to arise for students who have undergone, or are in the process of undergoing, legal and social gender transition. Though some universities will use names other than a student's legal name on class lists, transcripts, and diplomas, other universities will require a formal name change (Beemyn et al., 2005). In some cases a letter from a mental health care professional explaining the therapeutic value of using a different name or gender is sufficient. Some transgender students may also experience issues over bathroom use (Beemyn et al., 2005). This particularly difficult issue can be useful to explore with your student government. Allies of the transgender community can provide advice on transgender legal issues, as many of them will have faced similar challenges in the past. Again, the Transgender Law Center, the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, and the ACLU provide a great deal of information about resources students can utilize to deal with these issues. The particular legal status of transgender people will vary depending upon country, state, province, city, and county laws and is something you should investigate.

This chapter did not cover every aspect of the transgender graduate student's experience, but we hope it will serve as a useful starting point. There are a number of potential pitfalls to navigate, but there are also a number of possible positives involved in the graduate student experience. Taking a proactive stance can help minimize the former and enhance the latter.

CHAPTER 6

TIPS FOR BISEXUAL GRADUATE STUDENTS

Extremely little has been written about the opinions and needs of LGBT graduate students. Of the scarce research that has been done in this area (e.g., Smith, 1995), data from bisexual students are almost universally combined with those of their gay, lesbian, transgender, and/or queer-identified peers. While LGBT graduate students are confronted by many similarly heterosexist attitudes within and outside the context of their graduate training environments, important challenges are unique to bisexual students.

First, a note on language

Bisexuality is an identity label often used to indicate fluidity or flexibility in one's attractions to others—physical, romantic, emotional, and so forth (Bisexual Resource Center, 2014; Diamond, 2009; Dworkin, 2002; Klein, 1993). It is acknowledged, however, that the term "bisexual" is inherently dualistic in nature, springing from heteronormative discourse that may devalue the experience of individuals whose partner preferences span what is increasingly understood as the continuum (or continua) of gender expression in that the term can reinforce the idea of two, and only two, genders that are distinct and easily identifiable. This dualistic discourse has origins in the early days of sexuality research, with Masters and Johnson (1979) defining a bisexual person as someone who has equal attraction to both genders without a preference for one over the other. More recently, "pansexual," "omnisexual," "fluid," and "queer" are labels being selected by some individuals who wish to highlight their own understanding of gender as fluid, changeable, or somehow not dichotomous. Given that "bisexual" remains a more frequently used descriptor, however, it has been chosen for use in this chapter as an umbrella term for graduate students with more fluid, flexible, or nondichotomous attractions.

The purpose of this chapter is to briefly highlight some of the potential barriers that bisexually identified graduate students may encounter. The two main issues discussed are persistent

negative attitudes toward bisexuality and identity maintenance for bisexual students.

PROBLEMATIC ATTITUDES TOWARD BISEXUALITY

Bisexual graduate students are apt to encounter two distinct, contradictory messages about the authenticity or existence of bisexuality from individuals within their training programs: (1) "Bisexuality does not exist," and (2) "everyone's bisexual." Sometimes these messages will be covert, other times explicitly stated. If the potential harm in these statements is not immediately clear, imagine replacing "bisexuality" or "bisexual" with any other reference group label (e.g., "people with disabilities do not exist"; "everyone's Native American") and asserting the new statement in a social or academic setting with your colleagues. It is difficult to imagine that such a proclamation would go unchallenged.

The first problematic attitude toward bisexuality—denial of the possibility or plausibility of a self-actualized, integrated bisexual identity—is rooted in persistent bi-negativity, which exists in the larger sociocultural context among both sexually marginalized and heterosexual individuals. Bi-negativity is more frequently referred to as "biphobia," an unfortunate misapplication of a psychological construct given that what is typically being described is oppressive and intolerant attitudes/behaviors rather than an anxious response to a feared object (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; see also Weiss, 2003). Bisexual individuals report lack of validation, isolation, and ostracism from both lesbian/gay and heterosexual communities (Israel & Mohr, 2004). Despite the oft-quoted Kinsey studies (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953) that revealed a sexual identity continuum, with most participants falling in the middle, many people—including researchers, health care providers, and lesbian and gay individuals—continue to believe that bisexuality does not exist (Dworkin, 2002). Researchers have reasoned that such denial may be rooted in the challenge that bisexuality presents to fundamental, binary assumptions about sexual orientation. For example, in disputing the assumption that sexual orientation is a dichotomous and fixed construct (i.e., gay/lesbian vs. heterosexual), bisexual individuals raise questions about the essential nature of sexual attraction that some may find disconcerting (Erickson-Schroth & Mitchell, 2009; Israel & Mohr, 2004).

> "When I come out as bisexual, some people assume that I am confused about my sexual orientation. For me, this is a particularly triggering microaggression. I am not confused or ambivalent or closeted or experimenting. I am not figuring things out. I am simply attracted to both men and women. However, I've noticed that people tend to come around, even become allies, if you give them some time. Sadly, I may be the only out bisexual woman some of these people know, so the idea may take some getting used to."
>
> —Kathleen Alto, University of Akron

For these reasons, bisexuality is often referred to as an "invisible identity," susceptible to erasure from both heterosexual and lesbian/gay communities (Erickson-Schroth & Mitchell, 2009). Recent attention to bisexuality in the popular media has mostly served to reinforce these attitudes (e.g., Carey, 2005). Within psychology training programs, manifestations of bi-negativity may be challenging for students to address in that these attitudes have historically influenced and been integrated into psychological theory and research. Indeed, bisexuality has previously been conceptualized as an immature or impaired psychological state (Fox, 1996; see also Guideline 10 of the *APA Guidelines for Working With Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients*). Relatedly, bisexuality often continues to be portrayed as simply a transitional stage in the development of a gay or lesbian sexual orientation (Israel & Mohr, 2004). For bisexual graduate students, particularly those working with faculty or supervisors trained according to these viewpoints, confronting the vestiges of these conceptualizations may feel overwhelming or even professionally dangerous. Additionally, because of the frequent marginalization of bisexual individuals within the LGBTQ community, bi-identified students contemplating addressing bi-negativity may have reason to fear a lack of support from lesbian/gay faculty or students and heterosexual students otherwise viewed as allies.

> "Even in a community that prides itself on LGBT competency, bisexual invisibility is commonplace. As a bisexual woman married to a man, my sexual orientation is confusing to many people. Colleagues and professors often appear surprised that I identify as queer when I have a male partner. People seem to wonder why I bother to be out if I can pass as straight. My sexual orientation is an identity that is important to me, which is why I continue to be out in professional spaces. I don't want my marriage to a man to erase my queerness."
>
> —Kathleen Alto, Akron University

The second problematic attitude confronting bisexual students is that which suggests that bisexuality is in some way a universal state ("everyone's bisexual"). This belief, while less aggressive than negating bisexuality, may nonetheless present difficulties for bisexual students in that it minimizes the uniqueness of the experience of bi-identified people and concomitantly devalues the strength and struggle associated with living a marginalized identity. Bisexual students who challenge such statements may engender feelings of confusion, frustration, or alienation in

(typically) well-meaning colleagues. However, failing to address such attitudes may have a negative impact upon bisexual students and the climate of the training program.

In addition to problematic attitudes about the authenticity or existence of bisexual individuals, other stereotypes can contribute to an unwelcoming or hostile educational environment for bisexual students. Bisexuality remains associated with deviant sexuality, perhaps even more so than for lesbian and gay individuals (Ochs, 1996). Thus, a common stereotype is that bisexual individuals are obsessed with sex and are either unable or unwilling to be monogamous (Eliason, 1997). Similarly, research has documented that bisexual women and men are often viewed as less trustworthy and loyal than individuals of other sexual orientations (Mohr & Rochlen, 1999; Ochs, 1996). In a recent study, heterosexual, lesbian, and gay male groups all reported less willingness to be in a relationship with a bisexual partner than to have sex with them (Feinstein, Dyar, Bhatia, Latack, & Davila, 2014). Researchers are just beginning to document the negative impact of such stereotypes and resulting microaggressions on the health and well-being of bisexual individuals (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2014; Sarno & Wright, 2013; see also the APAGS–CSOGD webinars "Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Microaggressions in Clinical Settings" and "Navigating Discrimination as an LGBTQ Student in College" at http://www.apa.org/apags/governance/subcommittees/lgbt-training.aspx).

"As I am a cisgender female with a male partner, some colleagues have seemed genuinely surprised when I disclose my bisexual identity to them. Although everyone I have come out to has been supportive, I will admit that I feared being viewed as hypersexual by others in my department. Given that my research focuses on LGBTQ health, I was also concerned that having an opposite-sex partner would somehow make me appear disloyal to my community, despite being a strong advocate within my department and beyond."

—Natalie M. Alizaga, MPH, MPhil,
The George Washington University

IDENTITY MAINTENANCE FOR BISEXUAL STUDENTS

A common misperception about LGB individuals is that their sexual identities are inexorably linked to intimate relationships; it can be more challenging to maintain an "out" gay or lesbian identity in the absence of a same-sex partner to which others may associate that orientation. For bisexual individuals, the problem is compounded (Hartman-Linck, 2014). That is, even in the context of an intimate relationship, inaccurate perceptions of one's sexual identity by others is still very possible (i.e., assuming both partners in a same-sex couple identify as gay or lesbian or that partners in an opposite-sex couple both identify as heterosexual) and, in fact, may be related to the negative attitudes previously discussed. Research has started to explore these concerns, though remains scarce. Israel and Moor (2004) found that a bisexual individual dating a heterosexual partner may be perceived as uncommitted to the LGBTQ community or as refusing to give up heterosexual privilege. Dyar, Feinstein, & London (2014) reported that bisexual women in same-sex relationships experienced a higher frequency of assumed lesbian identity and less bi-negative inclusion and rejection by the lesbian/gay community than bisexual women in opposite-sex relationships.

"Identifying as bisexual and doing research within the LGBTQ community has provided a multitude of positive experiences, however, it has also been met with microaggressions by professionals in the field. I will never forget assisting a PhD student with her thesis that was primarily on lesbian women and their experiences around childbirth. I was sitting in her office, and she was providing me with background information regarding the LGBTQ community. I listened attentively and then she asked, 'Is your partner a man or a woman?' I stared blankly and out of pure shock answered, 'My partner is a man.' She replied, 'Oh, okay, so you are straight. You wouldn't know any of this then.' I immediately felt silenced, and as if the gender identity of my partner immediately labeled my own sexual orientation. That moment hit me, and I still carry that silence at times."

—Meredith Martyr, MA,
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Deciding whether to correct misperceptions about one's sexual orientation when they occur in an academic or professional setting is akin to deciding whether to come out in such an environment (see Chapter 2 for more information), though with the additional stigma associated with bisexuality. Likewise, transitioning out of or into relationships may give rise to questions or assumptions about one's sexual orientation that otherwise would remain unspoken (e.g., "But I thought you were gay!"). A seeming discontinuity of partner choice corresponds with common assumptions that bisexuality is a time-limited status and may result in people's wondering if a colleague is "still" bisexual (Israel & Mohr, 2004). Whereas maintaining a sense of continuity of personal identity can be challenging for bisexual individuals, maintaining continuity of a social or professional bisexual identity can be confusing and risky, depending on the climate of your training program, the institution in which it is situated, and the larger community.

This guide provides many ideas for addressing issues that have a unique impact on LGBTQ students, including coming out, finding mentors, and locating social support essential to managing the stress associated with graduate school. While the specific

challenges bisexual students face have some distinct characteristics, the resources provided are meant to be useful to the entire LGBTQ community, and the reader is referred to other chapters in this guide for additional support. Though the focus here has been on some specific challenges bisexual students confront in graduate training programs, discussion of these barriers is not meant to deny the affirmative experiences available to bisexual students. It is inarguable that developing and maintaining a positive sense of oneself as bisexual provides valuable opportunities for growth that can be an asset to aspiring psychologists. The process of claiming a marginalized identity requires and reveals personal strength, and choosing to do so professionally may serve to additionally enhance the work and relationships in which one engages.

"I once visited the most prominent LGBTQ+ community center in the state and was told by a staff member that their organization did not offer specific programs and services for bisexual people because we are a 'small, covert population that really fits in with any of the other groups.' I was shocked at the blatant bisexual erasure being perpetuated by someone within the LGBTQ+ community, especially since I had already disclosed that I am bisexual (Yoshino, 1979). After this encounter I formed a relationship with the director of the center and spoke with him about the needs bisexuals have and the unique challenges we face. He acknowledged that they needed services for bisexuals and allowed me to start a bisexual support group."

—Colton Brown, MS,
Oklahoma State University

CHAPTER

LGBT ADVOCACY AND CONFRONTING DISCRIMINATION

"In many ways, I feel that my experience during my graduate training has demonstrated both the challenge of finding the voice to speak up and validated the empowerment and liberation that comes from letting my voice be heard. At the beginning of my program, I struggled most with finding a way to discuss my experiences with classmates as a lesbian individual without feeling I was being given the burden of being the 'token lesbian' who embodied the primary voice of LGBTQ issues and perspectives. While it was certainly relieving and encouraging to feel accepted and respected for my identity as a lesbian student, I also remember feeling high levels of pressure during some class discussions and was often afraid of being 'boxed in' and viewed primarily by only one of my many intersecting identities. However, I can now see that finding the voice that represents a core aspect of my identity—a voice that for many years had been silenced completely or stated only in a soft whisper—is the first and most important step. By finding my voice and continuously challenging myself to strengthen it, I feel more freedom in allowing people to fully experience other aspects of my identity. But more importantly, I feel I am in a greater position to advocate for those who are still searching for their voice. That is the ultimate liberation and the greatest empowerment."

—Lauren C. Craig, MA,
University of Oklahoma

Although graduate programs in psychology must attend to issues of diversity in order to earn and retain accreditation, discrimination and microaggressions against LGBT communities are still widespread and may occur to some extent no matter how tolerant a person's campus (Berlan, Corliss, Field, Goodman, & Austin, 2010; Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; D'Augelli & Grossman, 2006, see excerpt from the *Guidelines and Principles for Accreditation of Programs in Professional Psychology* on page 50). Additionally, as an ally or LGBT person, you may be more

aware of sexual minority issues than many of the heterosexual students and faculty within your training program. As such, many of us will have a strong desire to advocate for LGBT issues that educate the public and ultimately benefit ourselves and other LGBT individuals. There are many ways to be an advocate, including being vocal about issues of equality, sitting on an advisory board, and lobbying for policy change. Advocacy can be an empowering and rewarding experience; however, taking on the role of advocate, especially as a graduate student, can present a complex array of both risks and benefits. This chapter will explore the process of identifying discrimination, how to advocate for change, and how to take care of yourself throughout the process.

FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

It is important to realize that LGBT discrimination can take many forms, including heterosexism, genderism, homophobia, and transphobia. Heterosexism is centered on the belief that heterosexuality is not just superior but the norm; this includes assumptions that people are heterosexual unless they indicate otherwise. Genderism is the belief there are only two genders and that gender is automatically and intractably linked to one's sex assigned at birth. Homophobia is the irrational fear of homosexuals or homosexuality, whereas transphobia is the irrational fear of those who are gender variant and/or the inability to deal with gender ambiguity.

Another important fact to note is that not all LGBT discrimination is overt, deliberate, or done intentionally; discrimination can take the form of microaggressions. Microaggressions are defined as brief verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults (Sue, 2010). Microaggressions occur frequently in offhand and unintended ways when people say and do things that communicate prejudice, discrimination, and hostility subtly with words as well as actions.

Additionally, some groups, such as bisexual and transgender people, can face discrimination even within LGBT communities. These within-group discrimination experiences can lead to psychological distress (Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Meyer, 2003) and further serve to marginalize such individuals. Women and people of color can also encounter multiple forms of discrimination as a result of their intersecting identities.

REFLECTING ON AND CONFRONTING DISCRIMINATION

You may face explicitly heterosexist, homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic comments, opinions, and actions, and it is common and natural to feel angry or frustrated in response (Nadal, Issa, Leon, Meterko, Wideman, & Wong, 2011; Pizer, Sears, Mallory, & Hunter, 2012). Deciding how to respond to experiences of discrimination within your graduate programs can be incredibly daunting. Given the power differential between students and faculty, students who advocate for themselves or their peers may fear retaliation. While increasingly more colleges and universities are implementing policies that support LGBT students, even in supportive programs, it can be challenging to navigate experiences of microaggressions and discriminatory attitudes. When deciding to confront discrimination in general, Nadal (2013) suggests asking yourself three questions:

1. Did a discriminatory event really occur?
2. Should I respond to this event?
3. How should I respond to this event?

The first question (Did a discriminatory event really occur?) may have you asking yourself if what you perceived as discrimination actually happened (Nadal, 2013). This includes an appraisal of whether the discrimination likely occurred because of your sexual orientation or gender identity or because of some other factor. To find confirmation of the event, you can use your surroundings, such as inquiring if another person witnessed the same thing. Additionally, preemptive self-reflection on topics or actions that might be particular "hot buttons" for you might also help you become aware of contexts in which you might be more prone to perceive an event as discriminatory. Finally, replaying the incident to another person after the fact could help determine if actions were likely to have been motivated by discrimination. However, this approach might remove you from the actual moment of the interaction, causing a delay of reaction. It is important to note that no matter how others perceive the event, you can address how the incident made you feel, even if an observer or the other person involved believes the event was not discriminatory.

The second question, regarding whether or not to respond at all, addresses potential consequences of confronting discrimination. Important things to consider are your relationship to the person, both interpersonally and physically (Nadal, 2013). For example, how you react to a discriminatory event when surrounded by friends in a familiar location might be very different from how you react when surrounded by strangers in an unfamiliar setting.

The third question, regarding how to respond, asks the individual to consider which means of confrontation might be most appropriate and effective in a given situation (Nadal, 2013). You may choose to respond in a variety of ways, including assertively and directly, more passive-aggressively, or with humor (Nadal, 2013). It may be helpful to appeal to others' thoughts and feelings about fairness and sensitivity to create a more receptive environment

in which to discuss issues of oppression and discrimination, which may then lead to an exploration of how these forces impact sexual minority individuals. The way you choose to respond is likely to be based on your personality and general approach to conflict resolution, as well as your relationship with the individual involved and the context. No matter what you do, you should have outside support in the form of friends, loved ones, and possibly a therapist to deal with the personal anger and hurt you might feel you are unable to share—even if you are in a tolerant area or department.

CONFRONTING DISCRIMINATION AND ADVOCATING IN YOUR PROGRAM

When determining how and when to conduct advocacy or confront discrimination in an academic setting, it is important to understand and consider the power dynamics of your particular program and any relationships you may have already formed with other students or faculty. Context is critical as well. How you handle a discriminatory comment by a classmate in a discussion post for an online course might be different from how you handle such a comment delivered in a lecture by a faculty member. As some campus climates are more supportive than others, you may need to be strategic about how you advocate so you can express your experiences and share your concerns in a way that feels safe and effective.

It can be hard to determine if a microaggression occurred during a lecture, unless it is explicitly written on a slide or was very directly spoken by a faculty member. If confirmation is needed, it may be best to wait until after the lecture to ask other students if they perceived the same discrimination you did. Waiting until after a lecture is over may have other benefits as well. If the faculty member who committed the offense is one who does not like being interrupted during lecture, they may not appreciate receiving feedback during class. In this case, either a having private word, sending an e-mail after class, or submitting an anonymous complaint to your department might be the best course of action.

> "In a graduate class on human sexuality, I was astonished when the syllabus featured homosexuality on a list that included deviations, dysfunctions, coercion, promiscuity, prostitution, incest, and pornography. In 2015. I'm pretty soft-spoken and fought with myself about saying anything, but I finally had to admit that I felt insulted; surely this could be combined with 'diversity of human sexuality,' right? After class, I approached my professor and raised it as gently as I could. I was glad when the professor appeared actually grateful and promis0ed to revise the syllabus. I felt like I'd won a small victory when we received a new one the following day."
>
> —Darin Witkovic,
> Loyola Marymount University

If the discriminatory statement comes from another student during an active discussion portion of a class, then it may be most appropriate to confront the statement right after it happened. For example, asking the other student to explain why they feel a certain way or believe something to be true may help engage them in conversation about why the comment can be perceived as discriminatory. This is potentially optimal for two reasons. First, there may be additional witnesses to the discrimination to help support you in challenging it. This might make it harder for the person who made the comment to respond defensively and easier to involve the person in a more engaged discussion about it. Second, if the discriminatory statement goes unchallenged, then it might be interpreted as implicit group approval, making it that much more difficult to shift implicit attitudes. Allies can offer support, particularly if you are concerned the offending student might believe you are simply being defensive or sensitive to their comments. Faculty members can also help facilitate appropriate discussions within the classroom and can offer assistance and intervention if the situation becomes extreme or chronic.

> "It's hard to decide whether or not to speak up in class regarding microaggressions. They happen so suddenly you can feel too shocked or overwhelmed to act quickly or competently. As an ally, I don't want to speak for a group to which I don't officially 'belong.' But then I remember, 'You know what doesn't belong? Ignorant, uneducated remarks in the classroom.' As a cisgender ally, I find it really disconcerting, disappointing, and disgusting when people think I will be 'on board' with their homophobic jokes or remarks. I usually address the remark and let the person spell out exactly what they mean by asking 'why' or 'what do you mean' like an incessant two-year-old. It's a good way of getting the speaker to really analyze what they are saying and of letting them sit with their own biases hanging in the air. Of course, then they think you have no sense of humor or are LGBTQ+ because why else would you be 'upset' or 'offended?' But you know what the great thing is? 1. Who cares? 2. They stop saying homophobic things around you."
>
> —Tanya Erazo,
> The Graduate Center, CUNY

Depending on the visibility and existing climate toward LGBT individuals within your program and institution, you may be seen as a token minority. If your program does not already include significant numbers of faculty, staff, and students who are LGBT-identified, you may be seen as the authority on all aspects of the LGBT experience and be treated as an in-house expert on all sexual and gender-minority (and, possibly, all diversity-related) issues. These demands can create a substantial amount of stress (Lipka, 2011).

"Within my program, although they've been very accepting of me as a woman married to another woman, my biggest struggle is that we don't seem to talk about LGBTQ+ issues in class at all. I think LGBTQ+ has maybe been mentioned once or twice in a couple of classes and then only in passing. So I find myself being the person in the back of the class asking, as my wife phrases it, 'What about the gays?' I end up taking on the responsibility for making sure we talk about LGBTQ+ concerns in class and being the 'token gay' when people have questions. I don't mind it, but I do wish I wasn't the only person addressing it."

—Allie Willis,
Illinois State University

In-class advocacy

In addition to confronting discrimination, there may be many opportunities to engage in advocacy within your program. Since psychology graduate students spend the majority of their time in class and applied settings, such as engaging in practica, research, and consultation, these settings can provide important opportunities to promote equality. Graduate courses often encourage critical thinking and an exploration of divergent points of view, offering a convenient outlet for advocacy in the classroom. Asking open-ended questions about course materials is a good way to convey your interest in LGBT issues and your willingness to explore diverse perspectives in a professional manner. Furthermore, you can encourage your colleagues to do more research on LGBT populations and to ask more LGBT-sensitive questions in their research to promote inclusivity and increase knowledge about how to work with those who identify as LGBT.

One issue you are likely to encounter, both within coursework and applied experiences, will be assumptions about your sexual orientation and gender identity. People are often assumed to be heterosexual, and this bias is seen informally, like in conversations with peers in which opposite-gender partner labels are used without asking, as well as in more institutional contexts, such as intake forms that only include male or female gender options. One way to raise awareness about heterosexism and promote discussion about LGBT inclusivity in clinical settings is to ask practitioners how they know the gender or sexual orientation of their clients. This may open the door for additional conversations about how to be more mindful about those topics.

Demonstrating how assumptions and negative stereotypes about LGBT individuals undermine ethical, high-quality research and the ability to serve LGBT individuals can also have a powerful impact on students and faculty, in some cases, providing a first-person perspective on how biases can lead to exclusion and harm can personalize the experience to those who are skeptical of your views. This works especially well with those who may not have personally encountered discrimination and oppression themselves. As individuals are often reluctant to take responsibility for their own roles in perpetuating heterosexual privilege, students and faculty members may respond more favorably to recommendations regarding how they can raise their own awareness of sexual minority issues and begin to become more LGBT-affirming. Additionally, using classroom exercises like privilege checklists might help faculty members and classmates become more aware of the privileges they have access to as a result of their specific intersecting social identities.

Raising awareness of LGBT issues can lead to a more diverse and inclusive curriculum and openness to questioning heterocentric assumptions and language. In addition, your efforts may spur dialogue about LGBT issues in all aspects of your program, including discussions of theory, research, and applied work. Ideally, your advocacy could help broaden your program's definition of diversity and encourage the program to successfully recruit LGBT and LGBT-allied students and faculty to create a lasting legacy of LGBT awareness and inclusion.

CONFRONTING DISCRIMINATION WITH CLIENTS AND CLINICAL PLACEMENTS

When encountering discriminatory attitudes in applied settings, it is important to remember that as clinicians it is not our role to attempt to alter or influence beliefs of clients that differ from our own. That said, it can be very beneficial therapeutically to question and challenge discriminatory attitudes revealed in session. For example, rather than pointing out to a client that what they have just said is discriminatory, you could ask them to clarify what they meant by their statement. This can go a long way toward challenging prejudicial attitudes and determining maladaptive core beliefs that may be subtly hindering a client's progress toward relevant treatment goals.

It is important to remember that many clinicians may not have access to educational experiences that promote inclusive beliefs. Though it is not solely the responsibility of LGBT individuals to educate others, many faculty members or students in our field are reflective and may welcome an opportunity to learn more about the community. Becoming a more culturally competent psychologist takes time, and it is important to help others make progress through continued education.

"While I was in graduate school, our training clinic started a process group for people who identified as transgender or with another gender minority identity. Despite being in a large, rural state like

Montana, we had tons of interest and were able to successfully run multiple groups and provide individual services to many transgender members of the community.

—Nicholas Heck, PhD,
Marquette University

ADVOCATING OUTSIDE OF YOUR PROGRAM AND APPLIED EXPERIENCES

You might also want to advocate for LGBT issues outside your psychology graduate program. Many opportunities to do this exist within your university, your local community, and regional and national organizations. Many campuses have LGBT student groups and/or diversity groups that need volunteers. As a volunteer for these groups, you can help to create LGBT-affirming policies, programs, and activities that lead to a safer, more-inclusive campus. Larger cities often have their own LGBT community and political organizations that bring like-minded individuals together to work on community issues (e.g. antidiscrimination laws, marriage equality, or civil union initiatives).

Encountering HOME (Heterosexuals Organized for a Moral Environment) on campus was just a precursor to my advocacy efforts. The following year, I found myself campaigning for marriage equality on campus. Feeling extremely anxious, the first person I sought was a friend with whom I often had discussions about social justice and equality. Because I was so certain she would support our rights, the rejection hit me very hard. While I still feel nervous, these experiences have fueled my passion and my responsibility for advocating for LGBTQ rights.

—Rieko Miyakuni,
Governors State University

APA's Division 44 focuses specifically on the advancement of LGBT issues within psychology. Additionally, several other APA divisions have created their own task forces or working groups on LGBT issues (see Additional Resources chapter). Last, but certainly not least, APAGS has its own Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity (CSOGD) to address the needs of LGBT psychology graduate students. You are welcome to join any and all of these divisions and to seek support from APAGS-CSOGD. Among other resources, APAGS-CSOGD has developed educational webinars, a mentoring program, programming at the annual APA convention, and this guide to support you as you navigate the challenges of graduate school.

At the national level, organizations such as HRC (Human Rights Campaign), GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), and Stonewall often look for volunteers interested in working on large-scale advocacy projects. For those interested in working with LGBT youth and parents of LGBT youth, GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network) and PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) are two organizations that work to raise awareness, educate others, and influence policy. You can find even more organizations to get involved with by doing a simple Google search of "LGBT Rights Organizations." Being involved in political campaigns can also be an avenue for LGBT advocacy, especially if you are supporting candidates who support LGBT rights. You can research where candidates stand on LGBT issues and donate to or volunteer for campaigns of candidates who are most LGBT-friendly. Getting involved with LGBT organizations and political campaigns will allow you to develop skills and knowledge about resources you can use throughout your career and meet other similarly dedicated individuals, all while helping to support those who have diverse sexual orientations or gender expressions.

As a member or ally of the LGBT community, you might feel an affinity to advocate for issues that affect people with other minority identities. Racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, and many other "isms" have a profound negative impact. Working to address these issues is an important way to advance equality, not only for LGBT individuals, but also for all individuals.

CHAPTER 8

CONDUCTING LGBT RESEARCH

For over a century, research has been conducted to better understand what it means to identify as an LGBT individual. In 1865, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs published one of the first studies on same-gender sexual attraction in an effort to lobby for greater acceptance of LGBT individuals in Germany (Bullough & Bullough, 1997). Since that time, the work of numerous researchers has continued to expand awareness about sexual orientation and gender diversity, from Katherine Bement Davis's (1929) studies on female sexuality to Alfred Kinsey's work demonstrating the ubiquity of same-gender sexual attraction (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948) and Evelyn Hooker's (1957) pivotal findings illustrating that such attraction is not pathological. Such research contributed to changes in how same-sex sexual attraction was perceived in the field of psychology, a process that led to the American Psychiatric Association officially removing homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-III* in 1972 (*DSM-III;* Maher et al., 2009). However, gender identity disorder continued to be a diagnosis until the *DSM-5* when it was replaced by the diagnosis of "gender dysphoria." Continuing psychological research on LGBT topics remains vital as it allows us to make informed recommendations on best practices for mental health treatment and public policy decisions (Anton, 2008).

The American Psychological Association has been using research to inform public policy and court decisions on LGBT issues for decades (Herek, 2007). Amicus briefs submitted by APA have included:

- Lawrence et al. v. Texas, 2003: The United States Supreme Court ruled a Texas law criminalizing sodomy is unconstitutional.
- U.S. v. Windsor, 2013: The United States Supreme Court ruled Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act denying same-sex couples the rights associated with federal recognition of marriage is unconstitutional.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON LGBT TOPICS

Because LGBT communities remain marginalized in our society, individuals who identify as members of these communities are at greater risk of exploitation. Indeed, the history of research in LGBT communities includes many examples of studies that resulted in mental and sometimes physical harm to participants (Martin & Meezan, 2003). It is therefore imperative that when you conduct research, you not only consult with your institutional review board to ensure your study meets ethical standards, but you also strongly consider consulting and collaborating with community members to minimize the risk of accidental harm or exploitation to participants and to ensure that your research addresses topics members of the community feel are relevant and important (Singh, Richmond, & Burnes, 2013).

Many areas may require greater attention to ensure ethical research practices when working with LGBT populations. These may include the process of protecting data confidentiality, obtaining parental consent, and presenting findings as authentically as is possible. Individuals who identify as LGBT may not be open about their sexual orientation or gender identity to people in all areas of their life, and this means that extra precautions should be taken to keep all data de-identified and confidential so participants' identities are not at risk of accidental exposure. Similarly, participants who are under age 18 may not be open about their identities with their parents, so obtaining parental consent may place them at risk (Mustanski, 2011). It may be important to pursue having your IRB waive parental consent or draft consent forms that do not connect the project to topics of gender identity or sexual orientation. Finally, because past researchers have reported results that misrepresented members of LGBT communities, individuals may be reluctant to participate in research at all, particularly individuals from older generations (Grossman, 2008) or from ethnic minority backgrounds who have also experienced mistreatment at the hands of past researchers (Zea, Reisen, & Diaz, 2003). We advise you to be mindful of this history when recruiting participants, respect their concerns about the potential misuse of their information, and make every effort to minimize heterosexist and genderist bias and to stay true to all participants' voices in reporting results (Martin & Meezan, 2003).

"I am conducting qualitative research with a theater group in which LGBTQ and allied young people perform pieces based on their lives. Our team wants to ensure that not only is our research a safe and positive experience for our participants, but also that it gives back to their organization and the larger community in tangible ways. Therefore, we collaborated with the leaders of their organization to design the project so they can use it to inform their own work, and we consulted with other experts and community members about methodology and ethics. From the informed consent process, to the focus groups, to the analysis and write-up of results, we have tried to be intentional about protecting our participants and honoring their unique voices. For example, our parental consent documents avoided mentioning LGBTQ themes in case participants had not discussed the topic of the theater group with their families, and our analysis stays close to the youths' spoken words so we can represent their perspectives faithfully. It has been an exciting project, and I feel honored to get to work with such an inspiring organization and to bear witness to the experiences of so many amazing young people!"

—Julia Benjamin, MA,
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Because each research project is unique, each one will present a different array of risks and benefits for research participants. The ethical considerations discussed above are only a few of the many different considerations you may need to address having chosen to conduct research with LGBT communities.

- Department of Human Services v. Howard, 2006: The Arkansas Supreme Court ruled it is unconstitutional to deny LGBT individuals the right to act as foster parents.
- Boswell v. Boswell, 1998: The Maryland Court of Appeals ruled parents should have equal opportunity for child custody following divorce regardless of their sexual orientation.
- Perry v. Schwarzenegger, 2012: The Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that California's Proposition 8, a constitutional amendment that passed in the 2008 state elections defining marriage as between a man and a woman, is unconstitutional.

For a complete list of research-based amicus briefs APA has submitted to advocate for LGBT rights, see http://www.apa.org/about/offices/ogc/amicus/index-issues.aspx#sexual-orientation.

Potential ethical considerations for research

The following resources provide additional information about potential ethical considerations for doing research on sexuality and gender:

- *APA Division 44 Science and Research Resources* (http://www.apadivision44.org/resources/research.php).
- *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*, by Tolman and Diamond (Eds., 2013).
- *The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People: Building a Foundation for Better Understanding,* by the Institute of Medicine (2011).
- *Ethical and Regulatory Issues With Conducting Sexuality Research With LGBT Adolescents: A Call to Action for a Scientifically Informed Approach,* by Mustanski (2011).
- *Navigating Risks and Professional Roles: Research With Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer Young People With Intellectual Disabilities,* by Marshall et al. (2012).

CHOOSING TERMINOLOGY

Another important and challenging aspect of conducting research on LGBT-related topics, both historically and currently, is the multifaceted nature of the concepts themselves. If you are interested in conducting research on an LGBT-related topic, it is essential that you think carefully about research questions and the operational definitions you choose to implement (Moradi, Mohr, Worthington, & Fassinger, 2009). Terminology used to describe sexual orientation and gender identity has been changing throughout history and continues to do so today, making appropriate selection of terms and definitions an essential but complicated part of conducting research on LGBT topics (Sell, 2007).

> "I have been really humbled as I go through the process of collecting my data for research (my project is on the lives of LGBQ individuals in conservative religious communities). Even the demographic form was imperfect; there weren't enough relationship statuses or the right terms, 'coming out' meant different things to different people, and some people didn't see a value in a gay identity at all. I think it's important when we're doing research to make sure we're asking precise questions and that we're asking the right questions."
>
> —Kimberly Applewhite Teitter

The terms you decide to use should be broadly based on what is currently considered to be most inclusive and accurate and should also be based on specific research questions (for a list of some LGBT-related terms and their definitions, see: http://www.lgbt.ucla.edu/documents/LGBTTerminology.pdf). The phrase "sexual orientation" can be taken to mean many different aspects of sexuality, from identity to behavior patterns to feelings of attraction (Ridolfo, Miller, & Maitland, 2012). The term "gender" can refer to internal experience of gender identity, behavioral alignment with cultural gender norms, and external appearance. When studying the experience of people who consider themselves to be members of LGBT communities, it may be most useful to focus on definitions related to identity rather than behavior (Bauer & Jairam, 2008). If, however, you are most interested in the associations between substance use and sexual behavior, it might be more useful to ask specifically about behaviors, since same-sex behavior does not necessarily coincide with identifying as a sexual minority (Pathela et al., 2006). This may be particularly true when conducting research with youth (Savin-Williams, 2001; Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003) or with individuals from cultural groups in which it is more common to engage in same-sex sexual relationships without identifying as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (Harawa et al., 2008). Disentangling such concepts and clarifying what is meant by phrases like "sexual orientation" and "gender," when used by both researcher and research participants, will improve the validity of subsequent findings (Ridolfo, Miller, & Maitland, 2012; Sell, 2007).

Additionally, it is important to consider not only how you define concepts related to your research question, but also what the benefits and drawbacks may be of choosing to research LGBT communities in general versus identifying a specific population or identity to explore in greater depth (Meyer & Wilson, 2009). Historically, many studies have treated individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender as one single population, distinct from the population of individuals who identify as heterosexual and cisgender. This allows for more broadly generalizable findings about topics that may uniquely affect all members of LGBT communities, like minority stress (Meyer, 2003) or health effects of structural stigma (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2014). However, this strategy also fails to acknowledge the heterogeneity within LGBT communities (Meyer & Wilson, 2009; Savin-Williams, 2001). The experience of an individual who identifies as a cisgender gay male is likely to differ significantly from that of a transgender straight female, yet in many studies both individuals would be grouped together for data analysis purposes. In addition, everyone has overlapping identities that include gender and sexual orientation as well as ethnicity, race, religion, socioeconomic status, and current ability status. The combination of these identities makes each person's experiences unique. The more specific the combination of identities you focus on, the more difficult it will be to recruit a large sample size. However, the more specific the sample is, the more precise the results will be to individuals' lived experiences.

Resources for terminology

For further consideration of sampling and terminology, the following resources may be helpful:

- *Sampling Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations,* by Meyer and Wilson (2009).
- *Counseling Psychology Research on Sexual (Orientation) Minority Issues: Conceptual and Methodological Challenges and Opportunities,* by Moradi, Mohr, Worthington, & Fassinger (2009).
- *Avoiding Heterosexist Bias in Psychological Research,* by Herek, Kimmel, Amaro, & Melton (1991).

"Working within the scope of LGBTQ issues, we moved across different aspects of marginalization/-isms (race, class, gender, etc.) and stumbled as we did so. There were points of privilege that some folks were not willing to see past when it came to these conversations, but that is a part of life that I think marginalized people learn to live with. I was given the opportunity to do exegetical work surrounding the Hebrew Bible and chose to view the "Song of Songs" in the Old Testament as a nongendered BDSM story. My university gave me the space and resources to do the research."

—Alison Wisneski, MA,
University of Colorado-Denver

RESEARCH FUNDING

Finding funding for research can be challenging no matter what the topic. Depending on the institution or organization the student is working with, financial resources may be even more limited for research on LGBT-related topics due to conservative institutional values. Luckily, there are numerous sources of funding specifically for research on LGBT-topics for which graduate students can apply. These scholarships and grants are constantly changing, but some organizations, like the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and APA, maintain lists of current sources of funding.

Information about funding

Here are a few places offering funding or information about funding sources.

- HRC LGBT Student Scholarship Database (http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/scholarship-database): Links to over 300 scholarships that can be sorted by state or specific schools
- APA LGBT Research Support and Awards (http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/research.aspx): Application materials for scholarships and grants sponsored by APA, as well as links to other funding sources for LGBT-related research
- APA Division 44 Science and Research Resources (http://www.apadivision44.org/resources/research.php): Information about private and national sources of funding and links to many other useful references about conducting research on LGBT topics
- The Williams Institute (http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/small-research-grants): Offers small project grants for graduate students and faculty members working on LGBT-related public policy or population research
- Funders for LGBT Issues (http://www.lgbtfunders.org/seekers): Provides links to local and international funds and foundations for work with LGBT populations
- The Ford Foundation (http://sites.nationalacademies.org/pga/fordfellowships): Offers funding for exemplary research at the predoctoral, dissertation, or postdoctoral level on topics related to diversity
- The Fenway Institute (http://lgbtpopulationcenter.org/web-resources/#funding): Links to several different funding sources for graduate and postdoctoral research on LGBT-topics
- Arcus Foundation (http://www.arcusfoundation.org/socialjustice/grants): Awards grants to organizations involved with social justice work in the United States and internationally, with a focus on LGBT advocacy
- The Kinsey Institute—Grants and Fellowships (http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/resources/grants.html): Links to local and national organizations that provide funding for sexuality and gender-related research

SAMPLING STRATEGIES

As with all empirical research, strategies for sampling LGBT individuals must be considered prior to data collection. Both probability and non-probability sampling methodologies can be used when conducting LGBT research, each with its own strengths and limitations.

Probability sampling

Probability samples are defined as those in which every person in the target group has a known probability of being selected to participate in the study, which ensures that the findings can be generalized to the entire population. To be able to make valid inferences about your data, appropriate item design, high response rates, and large samples are typically needed (Institute of Medicine (IOM), 2011). Probability sampling techniques include both simple random sampling, where an entire population has an equal chance of being included in the study, and stratified or cluster sampling, where different segments of the population are targeted for inclusion (Meyer & Wilson, 2009).

Probability sampling has infrequently been used in LGBT research because of the relatively small size of the population, the cost of collecting probability samples of LGBT individuals across the United States, and the sensitive nature of questions related to one's gender expression or sexual identity, attraction, and behavior. Meyer and Wilson (2009) note that many probability samples of LGBT individuals are subsets of large-scale studies in the general population. These probability sample studies often include questions related to one's sexual orientation or behavior, which can allow researchers to assess similarities and differences across LGBT subgroups (Herek, Norton, Allen, & Sims, 2010). However, these large-scale national or statewide probability samples may include too small of an LGBT sample to be useful when conducting intersectional research to assess variability within the population, such as differences across cultural groups or socioeconomic statuses (Meyer, Dietrich, & Schwartz, 2008).

Non-probability sampling

Non-probability sampling is more commonly used in LGBT research, given the potential cost and time limitations of using probability sampling techniques. Non-probability samples are those in which the probability of a target individual's being included in the sample is unknown. Since some segments of the target population may be over- or underrepresented in the sample, extra attention should be paid to address potential biases. For example, there may be inherent differences between LGBT individuals who volunteer to participate in a study compared to those who do not, which may ultimately have an effect on the results. Although non-probability samples have been referred to as convenience samples, Meyer and Wilson (2009) note that the name can be inaccurate, given that researchers must pay careful attention to the research design and sampling plan.

TECHNIQUES FOR COLLECTING SAMPLES

There are several methods for collecting probability and non-probability samples:

- ***Respondent-driven sampling,*** or RDS, is a probability sampling method frequently used in LGBT research because it allows researchers to collect data from hard-to-reach populations. In this method, one begins with a set of recruiters called "seeds" who then refer the researcher to other potential study participants. Generalizations about the population as a whole can be made if one can assume participants correctly identify the number of people in their network and recruit others randomly (IOM, 2011). However, this may be difficult to prove.

- ***Time-location or time-space sampling*** is a non-probability sampling method in which multiple stages of data collection are used to reach a representative sample of the target population. Collecting data from several sites could help you avoid potential biases related to oversampling from certain areas. For example, if you are interested in conducting research with lesbian and bisexual women, time-location sampling can help with identifying locations where your target group may be found. Meyer and Wilson (2009) emphasize that it is important for researchers to decide if the sampling venue or the population type is more relevant for answering your research question especially if you are not able to locate many venues where LGBT individuals congregate or can be identified.

- ***Purposive sampling*** is a non-probability sampling method that encompasses sampling potential research participants based on a particular element that is most relevant to the topic of interest. For example, if you were interested in gaining a better understanding of how experiences of bullying may negatively affect LGBT students, you may choose to recruit potential participants in schools. One strength of using this sampling strategy with LGBT individuals is that you may be able to reach a target sample with knowledge of the subject matter in an efficient manner.

- ***Quota sampling*** is a non-probability sampling method used to recruit a certain number of participants for set categories to increase variability or diversity of the sample (Binson, Blair, Huebner, & Woods, 2007). For example, if you were interested in recruiting equal numbers of LGBT participants representing several racial or ethnic identities, you may choose to sample certain groups at a higher rate than what would be found in the population to allow for greater power in statistical analysis. This type of sampling may be especially beneficial for recruiting individuals who may be underrepresented in research.

- ***Snowball*** sampling is similar to respondent-driven sampling in that initial participants will act as "seeds" and recruit others from their social networks to take part in the study. However, unlike RDS, snowball sampling does not use probability

sampling methods to select potential participants (IOM, 2011). For example, individuals who identify as gay or bisexual may be specifically recruited at organizations serving LGBT communities.

Overall, it is important to be aware of the potential difficulties associated with conducting research on LGBT-related topics and to appreciate the necessity of enhancing our understanding of LGBT communities. Defining and obtaining a representative sample can be a difficult aspect of conducting LGBT research, but non-probability samples can also offer valuable information on issues affecting these individuals. It is important to note the potential strengths and limitations of each of these sampling strategies to determine which might be most effective in addressing your specific research question.

QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Another question to consider is whether to use quantitative or qualitative research methods for your project. Quantitative research can include any sort of numeric data such as the results from surveys or patient-level data, while qualitative methods include analyzing interviews, focus groups, and other non-numeric data. Either method can be used in either one-time cross-sectional data collection or with more longitudinal projects.

Survey research

Surveys are useful for collecting information about the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and health of LGBT populations and subpopulations. For example, survey research could help assess LGBT individuals' potential experiences of discrimination in health care settings. An important aspect of survey research to remember is that the data is only as useful as the accuracy and inclusiveness of the terms used to define the research population and the steps taken to avoid introducing error. Both sampling and non-sampling errors can limit your findings, but steps can be taken to reduce their impact on your data.

Sampling errors can occur when a subset of the population is surveyed rather than every member of the target group: The sample selected may not be representative of the population you want to generalize your findings to. As the size of your sample increases, the amount of variance due to sampling error decreases (IOM, 2011).

Non-sampling errors occur because of limitations in the data-collection methods. Four types of error include coverage error, nonresponse error, measurement error, and processing error. Coverage error happens when there are differences between your target population and your sampling frame population. For example, you may aim to survey all individuals who identify as LGBT but may be inadvertently sampling only in higher-income neighborhoods and therefore not obtaining a representative sample. Nonresponse error is defined as when a target fails to respond to some or all portions of the survey. This can bias your results if there are inherent differences between the targets who responded to your survey compared to those who did not, or if there are differences between items left blank on the survey versus others. Measurement errors occur during data collection, including incorrect survey design or question wording. Processing error is defined as an error that occurs after you have collected your data, such as errors made during data entry (IOM, 2011).

Internet and online surveys are commonly used because of their low cost and the ability to include aspects such as skip patterns or changing of the subsequent question or page on a survey depending on the participant's response (IOM, 2011). Since surveys completed online also allow greater participant anonymity than those completed in person, this method can help ease apprehension about answering potentially sensitive questions about gender or sexual identity or behavior. These surveys are also subject to bias, however, because you may not be able to verify participants' identities and individuals without Internet access may be excluded from your sample.

Patient-level data

The use of electronic medical records (EMR) or electronic health data (EHD) is becoming increasingly popular in LGBT research because it can be a cost-effective way to assess health outcomes or the effects of events, such as policy changes or provider interactions, on patient well-being (IOM, 2011). This data can generally be found in health care centers and hospitals and can include information such as patient demographics, diagnoses, prior medical histories, and insurance status. EHD has been used in prior research to gain a better understanding of the effect of same-sex marriage laws on the health care of sexual minority men (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2012) and the prevalence and incidence of hepatitis C among HIV-infected men who have sex with men (Garg, Taylor, Grasso, & Mayer, 2013). Prior to using EHD, however, it will be important to note any potential restrictions on using the data and any precautions you should take prior to data analysis, such as de-identifying patient information.

Interviews

Individual interviews can be structured or unstructured. The interviewer can follow scripted questions in an arranged order, asking open-ended questions that have been arranged in the same sequence but that allow participants to elaborate if needed, or can hold a free-flowing conversation with no set order to the questions (IOM, 2011; Patton, 1987). Interviews are optimal if you hope to gain a better understanding of your research questions,

identify concepts for future research, or delve into more complex events or behaviors (IOM, 2011).

Focus groups

Focus groups involve collecting data from several participants at once, generally in groups of six to eight. This method of data collection allows the researcher to get a better understanding of how participants think and feel about a topic, especially since they are encouraged to interact with each other and exchange comments and anecdotes. However, there may be confidentiality risks in conducting focus groups that might be of particular concern for LGBT participants. For example, participants may not have disclosed their sexual identity to friends, family, or coworkers. Therefore, confidentiality should be stressed prior to beginning the focus groups. Researchers who choose to use focus groups should have an understanding of group dynamics and should strive to find ways to encourage all participants to speak during the discussion and feel open about sharing their thoughts and feelings with others (Kitzinger, 1995; Wilkinson, 1999).

Resources for conducting qualitative research

For additional information on conducting qualitative research, you may find the following resources helpful:

- *Best Practices for Mixed Methods Research in the Health Sciences,* by Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark, & Smith (2011)
- *Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry,* by Creswell & Miller (2000)
- *For Whom? Qualitative Research, Representations, and Social Responsibilities,* by Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong (2000)
- *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide* (2nd ed.), by Richards (2009)
- *Small Group Dynamics: The Utility of Focus Group Discussions as a Research Method,* by Seal, Bogart, & Ehrhardt (1998)
- *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology* (3rd ed.), by Willig (2013)

Longitudinal cohort studies

Longitudinal studies are often used to assess participants' behaviors and outcomes across several time points. For example, the Growing Up Today Study (GUTS) is a longitudinal study of adolescent boys and girls that includes questions related to sexual orientation (Corliss, Rosario, Wypij, Fisher, & Austin, 2008). Depending on your research question, this type of study may have advantages over cross-sectional studies because this method allows one for tracking changes over time. Longitudinal studies can employ both non-probability and probability sampling strategies and can utilize quantitative or qualitative methods such as surveys or interviews. However, recruitment and retention for longitudinal studies may be difficult.

Data sets

If you are interested in using secondary data for a research project, there are a number of data sources available that include items related to sexual orientation and gender identity. As with all studies, it is important to note the sampling strategies used to collect the data, the terminology used to define the target population, and the types of behaviors or concepts assessed. You should also be aware of any restrictions on using the data, including asking for permission prior to publication. In addition to using these data sets, you could also ask faculty members in your department if they have data they have yet to analyze that they would be willing to share.

- LGBTData.com
  (http://www.lgbtdata.com)
  This serves as a no-cost, open-access clearinghouse for the collection of sexual orientation and gender identity data and measures.

- Behavioral Risk Factor Survey
  This is a list of state surveys that have collected sexual orientation or gender identity measures (http://www.lgbtdata.com/behavioral-risk-factor-survey-bfrs.html) and more general information about the CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) (http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/index.htm)

- National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)
  (http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm)
  NHANES is a program of studies designed to assess the health and nutritional status of adults and children in the United States. The survey combines both interviews and physical examinations. Questions related to lifetime and past-year sexual behavior, as well as sexual attraction, are included in the survey.

- National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)
  (www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm)
  The NHIS collects information on a variety of health topics, including the health status and health care access among the civilian noninstitutionalized U.S. population. Sexual orientation is assessed through sexual behavior questions, and household information that can be used to identify same-sex couples.

- Youth Risk Behavior Survey(s) (YRBS)
  (http://www.lgbtdata.com/youth-risk-behavior-survey-yrbs.html)
  The YRBS lists state surveys that have collected sexual orientation or gender identity measures and general information about the CDC's national school-based Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System.

- Surveillance System (http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm)
- American Community Survey (ACS) (http://www.census.gov/acs/www)

The ACS provides demographics and economic information each year to help plan federal and state investments and services. Sexual orientation is not directly assessed, but household information questions can be used to identify same-sex couples.

RESEARCH ON LGBT-RELATED TOPICS AND YOUR IDENTITY

"I chose to focus my graduate research on the transgender community and its struggles. Being an out and proud lesbian in graduate school, I truly understand the struggle of being a part of a minority that people, even peers, often feel they can categorize into a stereotype and the emotional damage it can cause. It is a daily reminder of how important the research work I contribute to aids in breaking down heteronormativity and hopefully helps to create a future in which people will not define other humans by their sexual preference or gender expression but by their merit and kindness."

—Whitney Griffin, Sage College

"I've recently begun research that seeks to understand the effects that intersectional identities have on gaymers. I chose the research because my closest friends are gaymers and, as a female and an ally, the need for normalization within communities that are discriminated against feels paramount; both the normalization of LGBT+ individuals within the gaming community and the normalization of gamers within the LGBT+ community. Because I'm researching intersectional identities, both of which I identify as, I struggle to maintain a balanced perspective. There are times I feel myself leaning toward one identity or another, depending on the concept at hand. Identity in research (and in anything, obviously) is so important to consider, especially when understanding and confronting bias within that research."

—Melody Stotler, Fielding Graduate University

"I have been conducting research on LGBT resilience. One thing I hadn't considered was that I may be outing myself when researching this population, whenever friends or family ask what my thesis is about. While this can be stressful, it also means the work needs to be done. Doing 'mesearch' and knowing I have an opportunity to advocate for my community has been incredibly rewarding and at the end of the day drives me to keep pushing through thesis/dissertation."

—Rebecca Schlesinger, University of Akron

You may encounter personal challenges if you choose to conduct research on LGBT topics. It is often popularly assumed that individuals who conduct LGBT research are members of the community themselves. As such, researchers in the LGBT field may be "outed" or may face discrimination regardless of their self-identified sexual orientation or gender identity. Although attitudes toward individuals who identify as LGBT have improved in recent years, it may be difficult to assess other people's potential reactions toward a given research topic, and you may therefore encounter negative responses from individuals who hold biases and stereotypes about LGBT individuals. (For another perspective, this article might be helpful: "The Psychology of 'Me': The Pros and Cons of Research Ideas That Are Central to the Self," by David R. Kille (2011) at: http://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2011/11/self-ideas.aspx).

Despite potential challenges, there are many potential personal benefits to be gained from conducting such research. Heightening the visibility of sexual and gender minority communities and improving the mental and physical health of LGBT individuals are important reasons to conduct LGBT research, but you may enter the field for more personal reasons as well. Research that is of personal interest and relevance can be highly meaningful, and this can serve as a powerful incentive for completing projects. You may also find that conducting research in this area helps you discover new things about yourself, including new areas of interest or motivators for conducting your research. Conducting research on LGBT topics can also help you build a better connection with the local LGBT community, since you may be working very closely with others during the data collection process. Moreover, if you are LGBT-identified, you may be more attuned to the nuances of issues that impact that community. Thus, LGBT individuals entering the field may have a unique perspective that can assist with identifying relevant topics and guiding research into uncharted areas.

Your sexual orientation and gender identity are just two facets of the many identities and passions that make you who you are. They do not define you, nor should they have to define your research. In other words, just because you identify as LGBT or care about social justice advocacy does not mean you need to do research on LGBT-specific topics. It is essential that you choose a research topic that resonates with you on an intellectual level, makes you feel motivated to learn more about it, and inspires you to contribute to the field. Even if an idea seems interesting in theory, it might not be a great fit for you as a research project if you find yourself zoning out any time you read an article about it. You must be willing to immerse yourself in the literature

related to your topic. Completing graduate school is a long process, and for many students, writing their thesis or dissertation is especially arduous, so ensure that your journey is as smooth as possible by choosing research topics that really fit your interests and career goals. You will have the opportunity to shift the psychology field toward greater understanding and efficacy in whatever areas you choose, whether they include LGBT-related topics or others, but the first step in doing so is to successfully complete your graduate program by staying true to yourself and your research interests.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR LGBT STUDENTS

APA RESOURCES

Amicus bbriefs related to sexual orientation
http://www.apa.org/about/offices/ogc/amicus/index-issues.aspx#sexual-orientation

Division 44 (Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues)
Division 44 strives to advance the contribution of psychological research in understanding lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues; promote the education of psychologists and the general public; and inform psychologists and the general public about relevant research and educational and service activities. Division 44 annually provides multiple graduate student awards for LGBT-related research and conference-related travel.
http://www.apadivisions.org/division-44/index.aspx

Division 44 also has committees focused on children, youth, and families; aging; bisexual issues; mentoring; racial and ethnic diversity; transgender people and gender diversity; communications; education and training; fellows; finance; membership; program; public policy; scholarship; and science.
http://www.apadivisions.org/division-44/leadership/committees/index.aspx

The American Psychological Association of Graduate Students
APAGS supports a Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity (CSOGD). CSOGD provides resources (including this resource guide, a mentorship program, an electronic mailing service, LGBT focused grants/scholarships, and convention programming) for graduate students in psychology.
http://www.apa.org/apags
http://www.apa.org/apags/governance/subcommittees/csogd.aspx
http://www.apa.org/apags/governance/subcommittees/lgbt-training.aspx
http://www.apa.org/apags/governance/subcommittees/clgbtc-mentoring-program.aspx

Guidelines for working with LGB clients
Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients was published by APA in 2011.
http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/guidelines.aspx

APA Mentoring Task Force
The task force provides a list of APA-affiliated mentoring programs.
http://www.apa.org/education/grad/mentor-task-force.aspx

Safe & Supportive Schools Project
This project works to strengthen the capacity of the nation's schools by promoting safe and supportive environments for all students and staff. The project aims to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections among adolescents through building communities that promote acceptance and respect.
http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/programs/safe-supportive/default.aspx

APA vision statement
http://www.apa.org/about/apa/strategic-plan

The Public Interest Directorate
This APA office runs an LGBT Concerns Office. By working closely with other groups within APA, the office works to eliminate the stigma of mental illness long associated with same-sex sexual orientation and to reduce prejudice; discrimination; and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. The website contains links to APA's resolutions on current issues related to sexual minority individuals (e.g., marriage, military service) and to the 2009 study on graduate faculty members in psychology with specific interest in LGBT issues.
http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/index.aspx
http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/survey/index.aspx

Division 17 LGBT Issues Section
http://www.div17.org/sections/lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-issues

PSYCHOLOGY RESOURCES

American Psychological Foundation

The foundation offers grants to graduate student and early career psychologists to encourage research on gay, lesbian, or bisexual issues.

http://www.apa.org/apf/funding/placek.aspx

Other professional associations

Many groups maintain active special interest groups (SIGs) for LGBT professionals and students. Check with your professional organizations to learn if they have an LGBT SIG.

http://www.apadivisions.org

http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/associations.aspx

http://www.apa.org/about/apa/organizations/associations.aspx

AFFIRM: Psychologists Affirming Their Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Family

This network of psychologists supports their LGBT family members. AFFIRM provides open support for LGBT family members, supports clinical and research work on LGBT issues within psychology, and encourages sensitivity to the role of sexual orientation in all clinical and research work.

http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/affirm

NATIONAL RESOURCES

The Advocate

The Advocate published a printed college guide in 2006 based on nearly 5,000 online interviews with students and 500 interviews with faculty and staff.

http://www.advocate.com/politics/commentary/2006/08/14/college-made-easy

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

The ACLU works to protect individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and laws of the United States guarantee to everyone in the country. It has published the document *Knowing Your Rights: A Guide for Trans and Gender Nonconforming Students.*

https://www.aclu.org/lgbt-rights/know-your-rights-guide-trans-and-gender-nonconforming-students

Campus Pride Climate Index

This index can assist schools in finding ways to improve their LGBT campus life and ultimately shape the educational experience to be more inclusive, welcoming, and respectful of LGBT and ally people.

http://www.campusprideindex.org

Campus Pride Trans Policy Clearinghouse

This is a comprehensive resource for transgender policies at colleges and universities.

http://www.campuspride.org/tpc

CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers

This exists to support the development of strong sustainable LGBT community centers and to build a unified center movement.

http://www.lgbtcenters.org

The GALIP Foundation

GALIP stands for "God's Agape Love (put) Into Practice." It is a nonprofit organization that runs the largest known affirming church directory.

http://www.gaychurch.org

Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

The network works to ensure LGBT students are able to learn and grow in a school environment free from bullying and harassment.

http://www.glsen.org

GLAAD

GLAAD promotes fair, accurate, and inclusive coverage of LGBT individuals in the media.

http://www.glaad.org

GoodTherapy.org

This is an association of mental health professionals from more than 30 countries who support efforts to reduce harm in therapy. In addition, the association hosts a directory that allows viewers to search for therapists based on whether or not they identify themselves as being affirming or having an interest in LGBT concerns.

http://www.goodtherapy.org

http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/lgbt-therapist

Human Rights Campaign (HRC)

The largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender political organization in the United States, HRC works to shape public policy on issues that affect LGBT individuals.

http://www.hrc.org

The HRC maintains a list of each U.S. state and a snapshot of the status of the laws and policies in seven issue areas that affect the LGBT community in those states.

http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//files/assets/resources/statewide_employment_10-2014.pdf

Wikipedia's LGBT Political Advocacy Groups in the U.S.

This Wikipedia page provides an extensive list of national and regional organizations.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:LGBT_political_advocacy_groups_in_the_United_States

National Consortium of Directors of LGBT Resources in Higher Education

This consortium maintains a directory of campus support services for LGBT students across the country, with links to different campus LGBT centers.

http://www.lgbtcampus.org

http://www.lgbtcampus.org/find-a-lgbt-center

Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG)

A national organization of LGBT and LGBT-affirmative individuals, P-FLAG offers support, education, and advocacy for LGBT individuals and causes, with a special emphasis on school/youth and family issues. P-FLAG maintains more than 500 local chapters in all 50 states.

http://community.pflag.org/Page.aspx?pid=194&srcid=-2

The Point Foundation

The Point Foundation is a nationwide LGBT scholarship organization that focuses on granting assistance to undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students. Point scholars are chosen for their demonstrated leadership, scholastic achievement, extracurricular activities, involvement in the LGBT community, and financial or emotional need.

http://www.pointfoundation.org

Psychology Today

Psychology Today provides detailed, largely paid advertisements for psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists, counselors, group therapy, and treatment centers in the United States and Canada.

https://therapists.psychologytoday.com/rms

Queer Faith News (QfN)

This affirming and welcoming religion news website views all religions via a queer lens.

https://queerfaithnews.wordpress.com

Sylvia Rivera Law Project

This project works to guarantee that people are free to self-determine their gender identity and expression regardless of income or race and without facing harassment, discrimination, or violence.

http://srlp.org

Transgender Law Center

http://transgenderlawcenter.org

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

LGBTQI Terminology Sheet

http://www.lgbt.ucla.edu/documents/LGBTTerminology.pdf

STATE AND CITY RESOURCES

GayFriendyTherapists.com (CA)

This California resource connects licensed professionals experienced in working with LGBT individuals, couples, and families with people seeking professionals.

http://www.gayfriendlytherapists.com/index.html

The LGBT-Affirmative Therapist Guild of Utah (UT)

This Utah-based, grassroots organization consists of licensed mental health professionals and students-in-training who share a commitment to make affirmative culturally competent therapy available for anyone.

http://www.lgbtqtherapists.com

LGBT Therapists (MN)

This is Minnesota's LGBT and allied mental health providers' network.

http://www.lgbttherapists.org

Stonewall Community Foundation (NYC)

This public foundation focuses on the needs of New York City's LGBTQ community.

https://stonewallfoundation.org

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Arcus Foundation

The foundation offers awards and grants to organizations involved with social justice work with a focus on LGBT advocacy in the United States and internationally.

http://www.arcusfoundation.org/what-we-support/social-justice-lgbt

APA Division 44 science and research resources

Division 44 provides information about private and national sources of funding plus links to many other useful references about conducting research on LGBT topics.

http://www.apadivision44.org/resources/research.php

APA LGBT research support and awards

This site provides application materials for scholarships and grants sponsored by APA, as well as links to other funding sources for LGBT-related research.

http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/research.aspx

The Fenway Institute

The Fenway Institute provides links to several different funding sources for graduate and postdoctoral research on LGBT-topics.

http://lgbtpopulationcenter.org/web-resources/#funding

The Ford Foundation

The Ford Foundation offers funding for exemplary research at the predoctoral, dissertation, or postdoctoral level on topics related to diversity.

http://sites.nationalacademies.org/pga/fordfellowships

Funders for LGBT Issues

This site provides links to local and international funds and foundations for work with LGBT populations.

http://www.lgbtfunders.org/seekers

Human Rights Campaign (HRC)

The largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender political organization in the United States, HRC works to shape public policy on issues that affect LGBT individuals. It offers the LGBT Student Scholarship Database.

http://www.hrc.org

http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/scholarship-database

The Kinsey Institute grants and fellowships

The Kinsey Institute provides links to local and national organizations that provide funding for sexuality and gender-related research.

http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/resources/grants.html

The Williams Institute

The institute offers small project grants for graduate students and faculty members working on LGBT-related public policy or population research.

http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/small-research-grants

DATA SETS

LGBTData.com

This site serves as a no-cost, open-access clearinghouse for the collection of sexual orientation and gender identity data and measures.

http://www.lgbtdata.com

Behavioral Risk Factor Survey

This is a list of state surveys that have collected sexual orientation or gender identity measures and more general information about the CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).

http://www.lgbtdata.com/behavioral-risk-factor-survey-bfrs.html

http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/index.htm

National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)

This program of studies is designed to assess the health and nutritional status of adults and children in the United States. The survey combines both interviews and physical examinations. Questions related to lifetime and past-year sexual behavior, as well as sexual attraction, are included in the survey.

http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm

National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)

The survey assesses information on a variety of health topics, including the health status and health care access among the civilian noninstitutionalized U.S. population. Sexual orientation is assessed through sexual behavior questions and household information that can be used to identify same-sex couples.

www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm

Youth Risk Behavior Survey(s) (YRBS)

The YRBS lists state surveys that have collected sexual orientation or gender identity measures and general information about the CDC's national school-based Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System.

http://www.lgbtdata.com/youth-risk-behavior-survey-yrbs.html

http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm

American Community Survey (ACS)

The survey collects demographic and economic information each year to help plan federal and state investments and services. Sexual orientation is not directly assessed, but household information questions can be used to identify same-sex couples.

http://www.census.gov/acs/www

RELEVANT ARTICLES

Herek, G. M., Kimmel, D. C., Amaro, H., & Melton, G. B. (1991). Avoiding heterosexist bias in psychological research. *American Psychologist, 44,* 957-963. http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/avoiding-bias.aspx

Meyer, I., & Wilson, P. (2009). Sampling lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 56,* 23-31. doi: 10.1037/a0014587 http://www.columbia.edu/~im15/papers/sampling.pdf

Moradi, B., Mohr, J. J., Worthington, R. L., & Fassinger, R. E. (2009). Counseling psychology research on sexual (orientation) minority issues: Conceptual and methodological challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 56,* 5-22. doi: 10.1037/a0014572 http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/cou/56/1/5/

Wolff, J., & Himes, H. (2010). Purposeful exclusion of sexual minority youth in religious higher education: The implications of discrimination. *Christian Higher Education, 9,* 439-460.

ETHICAL CODES OF POTENTIAL INTEREST TO LGBT STUDENTS

(APA, 2010)

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOLOGISTS AND CODE OF CONDUCT: http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx

Principle E: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity

Psychologists respect the dignity and worth of all people and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination. Psychologists are aware that special safeguards may be necessary to protect the rights and welfare of persons or communities whose vulnerabilities impair autonomous decision making. Psychologists are aware of and respect cultural, individual, and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status and consider these factors when working with members of such groups. Psychologists try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those factors, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone activities of others based upon such prejudices.

3.01 Unfair Discrimination

In their work-related activities, psychologists do not engage in unfair discrimination based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or any basis proscribed by law.

3.03 Other Harassment

Psychologists do not knowingly engage in behavior that is harassing or demeaning to persons with whom they interact in their work based on factors such as those persons' age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status.

7.04 Student Disclosure of Personal Information

Psychologists do not require students or supervisees to disclose personal information in course- or program-related activities, either orally or in writing, regarding sexual history, history of abuse and neglect, psychological treatment and relationships with parents, peers, and spouses or significant others except if (1) the program or training facility has clearly identified this requirement in its admissions and program materials or (2) the information is necessary to evaluate or obtain assistance for students whose personal problems could reasonably be judged to be preventing them from performing their training- or professionally related activities in a competent manner or posing a threat to the students or others.

EXCERPT FROM THE *GUIDELINES AND PRINCIPLES FOR ACCREDITATION OF PROGRAMS IN PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY*

(APA, 2013)

APA COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION

http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation/about/policies/guiding-principles.pdf

DOMAIN D: CULTURAL AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND DIVERSITY

The program recognizes the importance of cultural and individual differences and diversity in the training of psychologists.

1. The program has made systematic, coherent, and long-term efforts to attract and retain students and faculty from differing ethnic, racial, and personal backgrounds into the program. Consistent with such efforts, it acts to ensure a supportive and encouraging learning environment appropriate for the training of diverse individuals and the provision of training opportunities for a broad spectrum of individuals. Further, the program avoids any actions that would restrict program access on grounds that are irrelevant to success in graduate training.[4]

2. The program has and implements a thoughtful and coherent plan to provide students with relevant knowledge and experiences about the role of cultural and individual diversity in psychological phenomena as they relate to the science and practice of professional psychology. The avenues by which these goals are achieved are to be developed by the program.

Footnote 4

This requirement does not exclude programs from having a religious affiliation or purpose and adopting and applying admission and employment policies that directly relate to this affiliation or purpose so long as: (1) Public notice of these policies has been made to applicants, students, faculty, or staff before their application or affiliation with the program; and (2) the policies do not contravene the intent of other relevant portions of this document or the concept of academic freedom. These policies may provide a preference for persons adhering to the religious purpose or affiliation of the program, but they shall not be used to preclude the admission, hiring, or retention of individuals because of the personal and demographic characteristics described in Domain A, Section 5 of this document (and referred to as cultural and individual diversity). This footnote is intended to permit religious policies as to admission, retention, and employment only to the extent that they are protected by the United States Constitution. It will be administered as if the United States Constitution governed its application.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS (APAGS)

The American Psychological Association
750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 336-6014
apags@apa.org | www.apa.org/apags

Join APAGS and get involved! Be a part of organized psychology at the national level! For more information, visit www.apa.org/apags/join or call the APA Membership hotline at 1-800-374-2721.

When graduate students join APA as a student affiliate, they automatically become a member of APAGS. By paying an additional $35 in addition to your student affiliate fee, undergraduate students may also become a member of APAGS.

Make sure you have access to the critical tools available to APA members by becoming a member today.

WHAT IS APAGS?

The American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (APAGS) is the voice of student concerns within the APA. APAGS develops, endorses, and disseminates information to students about relevant education and training issues, legislative positions and developments, and future directions or changes in the field through printed resources and the website; and APAGS creates and supports opportunities for students in the form of scholarships and awards, association advocacy work, and a host of development activities.

APAGS offers all its members enormous opportunities to enhance their development toward a career in psychology and shape the future of the discipline. With several thousand members, APAGS is one of the largest constituency groups of the APA, as well as the largest organized group of psychology graduate students worldwide.

GOVERNANCE

APAGS is governed by nine officers elected by APAGS members along with the chairs of five specialized subcommittees—all supported by professional staff at the APA headquarters in Washington, DC. The APAGS subcommittees include:

- The Science Committee (http://www.apa.org/apags/governance/subcommittees/science.aspx)
- The Committee for the Advancement of Racial and Ethnic Diversity (http://www.apa.org/apags/governance/subcommittees/cared.aspx)
- The Advocacy Coordinating Team (http://www.apa.org/apags/governance/subcommittees/act.aspx)
- The Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity (http://www.apa.org/apags/governance/subcommittees/csogd.aspx)
- The Convention Committee (http://www.apa.org/apags/governance/subcommittees/convention-committee.aspx)

VISION AND MISSION

APAGS aspires to achieve the highest quality graduate training experience for the next generation of scientific innovators, expert practitioners and visionary leaders in psychology. APAGS builds a better future for psychology by serving as a united voice to enrich and advocate for graduate student development.

MEMBERSHIP IN APAGS

Membership in APAGS includes these benefits:

Professional Identity

As a member of one of the world's largest associations for students in psychology, you will have clout to shape the future of the field, representation in political and educational arenas, and access to cutting-edge science, practice, and public interest news.

Funding and Savings

Gain access to thousands of dollars in grant and award opportunities; reduced or free registration at our annual convention; and discounts on student liability insurance, car rentals, hotels, and membership in various APA divisions.

Publications

You'll receive three of psychology's top resources in the mail—subscriptions to *The American Psychologist, Monitor on Psychology* and *gradPSYCH,* the quarterly magazine for students. You will have access to the APAGS-sponsored journal, *Translational Issues in Psychological Science.* You'll also have access to resource guides on practicum, internship, mentoring, and thriving in school as a graduate student. Finally, you will receive a credit toward APA journals and up to 60% off books and databases (such as PsycINFO).

Professional Development

APAGS members are eligible to serve on task forces, run for official positions, access the PsycCareers database and practitioner portals, converse on LISTSERVs and social media, and participate in convention programs.

INFORMATION ON LGBT MENTAL HEALTH

Several large-scale studies have found high rates of victimization for LGBT-identified young people (Berlan, Corliss, Field, Goodman, & Austin, 2010; Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; D'Augelli & Grossman, 2006), and those who hold other marginalized identities in addition to identifying as LGBT often must contend with multiple forms of oppression and discrimination (Hightow-Weidman, Phillips, Jones, Outlaw, Fields, & Smith, 2011; Poteat, Mereish, DiGiovanni, & Koenig, 2011). The emotional costs of living in a heterosexist society can result in greater risk for mental health concerns for those who identify as LGBT (Meyer, 2003). Research has linked discrimination against LGBT individuals with higher levels of substance use, risky sexual practices, depressive symptoms, and suicidality (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009; Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; D'Augelli, Grossman, Salter, Vasey, Starks, & Sinclair, 2005; Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008; Marshal et al., 2011).

This is true on college campuses as well as in society at large. Even though many colleges strive to be accepting of all forms of diversity, students who identify as LGBT still face discrimination on campuses across the country (Rankin, 2003; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010). Although many college students consider leaving their program at some point during their academic careers, LGBT students consider dropping out more often than their heterosexual and cisgender peers as a result of the many stressors associated with being a sexual or gender minority (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Sherrill & Hardesty, 1994).

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This guide is brought to you by the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity (APAGS–CSOGD, formerly the Committee on LGBT Concerns).

Rather than simply providing a list of resources (although such a list is included in the final section), this guide is filled with suggestions, advice, and support written by a variety of LGBT psychology graduate students. *Proud and Prepared* is presented as a series of chapters, each of which addresses a distinct set of issues graduate students may face. These chapters have been intentionally written by students from diverse personal and academic backgrounds to represent a broad range of perspectives. We wish to note that this is not an exhaustive guide, but rather a starting point for spurring additional exploration.

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