Exploring LGBTQ Diversity in Higher Education: Extending Research into LGBTQ Student Experiences

Research report

March 2018

Dr Michael Keenan – Nottingham Trent University

Contents

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

- LGBTQ student experiences remain under-researched.
- Existing research is often focused on the umbrella term of LGBTQ and is not able to fully explore the diversity if experience existing within the LGBTQ community.
- It is important that more specific and focused research is undertaken.
- Such research needs to engage with day to day experience in order to explore the interconnecting influences on student experiences.
- There has been an increase in universities' engagement with inclusive practice, partly stemming from legal and policy changes (Ellis 2009), and emerging programmes such as the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme and Athena SWAN
- Previous research identifies that despite an increase in focus on inclusion LGBTQ students continue to experience exclusion and discrimination across campus spaces, across disciplines, and across the university community.
- Such experiences of exclusion are often missed by formal policy due to the ingrained heteronormative and cisgenderist nature of some university spaces and communities.
- Heteronormative and cisgenderist structures are underlined in everyday experience through the presence of microaggressions within interactions.
- This project utilised a photo-elicitation method to explore everyday experiences in order to reflect upon the interconnection of structure and microaggression in bi and trans students' interactions.
- The project recruited 15 students. In terms of gender identity 11 participants identified as trans or non-binary, and in terms of sexual identity 10 identified as bisexual or pansexual.
- The project also brought together academics, students and representatives from university equality and diversity departments in an advisory committee to reflect on their experiences and the emerging findings from the project.
- Four emergent themes are presented in the report – Conditional Acceptance, Absence/Exclusion, Misrepresentation/Misidentification, Escape.
- Conditional acceptance was experienced in terms of time or space specific inclusionary practice which had potential to further differentiate the university community rather than bring it together. The theme was also reflected in experiences which illustrated potential coexistence of inclusion and rejection.
- Absence/Exclusion was present in a variety of interactions and experiences which illustrated heteronormative and cisgenderist structures and everyday exclusions. Examples included exclusion from class/subject content, from campus life and from the provided for university community. These examples illustrated experiences of LGBTQ students in general, but also specific issues experienced by trans and bi students.
- Misrepresentation /misidentification again illustrates the coexistence of heteronormative cisgenderist structures and microaggressions. Examples included the misidentification of bi students as straight/gay or on one occasion 'half-gay', and non-binary and trans experiences of misgendering and misnaming.
- Escape was a theme which illustrated participants' connection with safe spaces outside the university which allowed them to escape everyday pressures. This need for escape underlines the tensions and stresses experienced at university. Examples included reflections on the importance of 'home', and getting 'head space'.

- The report ends by making 9 recommendations to universities - these recommendations emerged from the findings and advisory committee discussions.

Report

This report provides an overview of the work undertaken to complete, and emergent findings from the project 'Exploring LGBTQ Diversity in Higher Education'. This project was designed to engage with and to develop upon existing research exploring the experiences of LGBTQ identifying students in higher education. With reference to the exploratory nature of the existing research, the project hoped to illustrate the importance of engaging more fully with diverse experiences, and to evidence the relevance and importance of engaging with everyday mundane experience in order to develop understandings of the influences on students' interactions and experiences.

The Aims and Objectives of the project were -

Aims:

1.   To review existing research and knowledge of LGBTQ student experiences within higher education in order to reflect upon diverse needs and the limitations of existing research.

2.   To generate qualitative research into bi and trans experiences at university to understand diversity within the LGBTQ student population and constructively critique current practice regarding LGBTQ inclusion.

Objectives:

1. To undertake a review of existing literature on LGBTQ university experience, and diversity within the LGBTQ community.

2. To engage with and reflect upon first-hand experience and knowledge through the use of an advisory committee.

3. To access day to day experience through participatory photo narratives.

4. To co-develop narratives of university interactions through semi-structured interviews based upon photo narratives.

The research undertaken in line with objective 1 influences the next section – which presents a brief overview of existing research, while objectives 3 and 4 influence the data discussed – which emerged from the photo-elicitation project. The influence of the advisory committee (objective 2) impacts recommendations, and the views of the advisory committee also helped to develop understandings of the emergent themes from the photo-elicitation project.

Context and literature review

Despite a growth in research and writing around both LGBTQ and higher education experiences, the university experiences of LGBTQ students remain under researched. While recent years have seen a rise of exploratory studies, more research, and particularly more focused and reflexive research continues to be required. This project sought to build upon this current situation in order to illustrate the importance of focused, reflexive small scale studies, and to offer insight into the relevance of engaging with everyday experiences.

The importance of researching LGBTQ student experience is underlined by developments in university policy and practice which illustrate an increase in the attention and focus many institutions have given to reflecting on inclusionary practice. Ellis (2009) for example discusses the legal impact of Employment Equality Regulations, and the Gender Equality Act, and the emergence of programmes like Athena SWAN and the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme have highlighted the importance of engaging with diversity and inclusiveness at a variety of levels. However existing research has illustrated that despite presenting stories of positivity, many LGBTQ students continue to face discrimination and exclusion.

Such research has highlighted experiences of exclusion and discrimination on campus (Reed et al 2010), in classrooms (Pryor 2015), and amongst peers (Jewell and Morrison 2010). Further to this experiences of exclusion have also been discussed across disciplines - e.g social work (Swank and Raiz 2010), engineering (Cech and Waidzunas 2012), and computing (Stout and Wright 2016); countries e.g Canada (Jewell and Morrison 2010), South Africa (Munyuki and Vincent 2017) United Kingdom (Valentine, Wood and Plummer 2009), United States of America (Garvey, Taylor and Rankin 2015); and university locations – e.g University accommodation (Taulke-Johnson 2010), sports clubs and recreational spaces.. Such reflections are varied but illustrate the continued presence of exclusion (Ward and Gale 2016) and discrimination (Rankin et al 2010) across these various locations and levels.

Therefore – despite stories of improvement (Ellis 2009) and efforts towards inclusion, the ground level experiences of LGBTQ students continue to point to moments and interactions which illustrate continued discrimination and exclusion – often in ways and locations which remain hidden from formal university structures and policies (Keenan 2012). To gain better understanding of the sorts of experiences LGBTQ students have, and to reflect upon the diversity of these experiences across expected and unexpected locations it is important that research becomes increasingly focused and in-depth. Further, although previous research has uncovered specific experiences – e.g of trans students, lesbians and bisexuals (Formby 2015) - their remit to explore the experiences of all who fall within the umbrella LGBTQ has meant that while there are important reasons for such umbrella approaches (Dugan and Yurman 2011), such research cannot always give appropriate space to explore and represent diversity, or emphasise specific needs and experiences. This is reflected in wider discussions of sexual and gender identity which have identified the silent B (Heath 2005) – in Social Work practice

(Goodine 2015), mental health (Pallotta –Chiarolli and Martin 2009) and religious identity (Levy and Harr 2018); and silent T - in terms of Aging (Persson 2009), medical education (Wong 2014) and education (McEntarfer 2016) in LGBT research. With this in mind, the specific experiences of Bi and Trans students in universities remains underexplored, and it is for these reasons the current research focussed specifically on such experiences.

In engaging with trans and bi students' experiences the current project aims to explore impact of microinteractions, structural contexts, and their interconnection. In doing so the project utilises the concept of microaggressions– understood as 'the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group' (Sue 2010:5), the influence of which on LGBT people was described by Nadal et al (2011) as 'death by a thousand cuts', and the specific experiences of trans people have been reflected upon in terms of a typology of 12 microaggression categories (Nadal, Skolnik and Wong 2012). Alongside this the project also recognises the potential ingrained nature of such microaggressions, and the structural presence of heteronormative and cisgenderist expectation – illustrated by discussions of institutional heteronormativity (Ferfolja 2007, Vega et al 2012), biphobia (Barker 2004), and transphobia (Mizock and Meuser 2014), where the 'institutionalised' aspect is understood as ingrained within structures and practices which are missed when inclusive practice is focused in response to individual instances of exclusion or discrimination (DePalma and Atkinson 2010). The study's focus on the interconnection of structure and commonplace action brought the study to focus on moments and spaces of interaction, wherein the project could reflect upon the various impacts and influences within experiences of belonging and exclusion.

Method and structure of empirical work

Following on from the above discussion, and the research aims - the project sought to focus on diversity of experience, with a focus on the lives of bisexual and trans students at English universities. This focus allowed the project to connect with existing research around the experiences of LGBTQ student experience, while also drawing attention to difference within this community.

Engaging with the everyday offers a distinct perspective on experience, which has been argued to be foundational to understanding (Douglas 2017). This project engaged with everyday experiences as a way of reflecting upon the interconnection of the influences of micro-interactions with structural constraints.

Having such a day-to-day focus led to the use of a participant generated photo-elicitation method, which has been referred to as a 'can-opener' (Leonard and McKnight 2015) method that opens up reflections on everyday experience which may not otherwise be accessed by research (Pink 2013).

Participants were asked to take pictures of things, spaces and moments which reflected their experiences as bi and/or trans students. In total the project collected photos from 17 students across 13 institutions, however it was not possible to arrange interviews with 2 of these students, therefore 15 students across 11 institutions were interviewed about the photographs they took. Students took between 4 and 15 photographs, and interviews lasted between 50 and 100 minutes. Of the 15 interviews 11 participants identified as trans or non-binary, and 4 as cis-gendered. 10 students identified as bisexual or pansexual.

Participant recruitment was undertaken in two distinct drives on either side of the 2017 summer break. Each drive involved seeking email and social media contact with LGBTQ societies at all higher education institutions across England, in order to provide information on the project to gatekeepers. Following this some gatekeepers forwarded the information to members, others offered an opportunity to communicate with members, some student groups did not engage with research as a matter of policy, and some approaches were met with non-response. Recruitment was particularly challenging due to the need to explain an innovative method at a distance. There was a dropout of 5 students who expressed interest in the study, but did not continue to the photograph method.

Participants were provided with a brief information sheet on contact (Appendix 1), and brief photography guidelines after they agreed to take part (Appendix 2) which emphasised taking photographs that represented experiences without placing the participant in danger. Participants were also asked to avoid including people in photographs. Regular contact was maintained with participants where possible during the photography stage to encourage continuation and provide direction where required. Participants took pictures with their own equipment and returned photographs before interviews were arranged. Interviews took place between March 2017 and March 2018 and were arranged to occur as close to the completion of the photography aspect of the research as possible. Interviews were primarily based around photographs and therefore took a conversational approach with little pre-defined structure. This meant that discussions emerged from specific interactions and contexts leading to more general reflections about university experiences ('can opening'), rather than the opposite approach which often emerges out of qualitative interviews (where a focus on general experience might lead to discussion of example). The project was approved by the Nottingham Trent University College of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, and followed the ethical guidelines of the British Sociological Association.

Interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically. Themes arose from a close reading of the interview transcripts (which were read alongside the photographs which provided the frame of the interview). Transcripts were ordered thematically using Microsoft Word, but

also engaged with in full in order to reflect on the context through which themes emerged. While the photographs were primarily used as prompts for interviews they were also viewed as important sources of data. This report focusses upon the discussions emerging from interview, however themes also emerged from the items and contexts photographed by various students, and photos have relevance and add to stories and themes which exist across student narratives. These are issues which will be explored further as dissemination of the research findings continues.

The project also brought together an advisory committee connecting students, academics, and human resources professionals. The advisory committee met formally, and discussed the research informally throughout the year. This committee was a space to reflect upon the development of the research and emergent findings. It was also a discussion space which impacted the overall findings and recommendations emerging from the research.

Findings

The above-described photo-elicitation project has allowed for in-depth reflection on the specific experiences of bi and/or trans identifying undergraduate students. As such it raises a number of discussions which connect with existing literature on the experiences of LGBTQ students, while also drawing attention to specific experiences which can be missed by umbrella approaches to LGBTQ research. In this section I present 4 emergent themes from the research. The first theme engages with the limits of inclusion experienced by participants, themes 2 and 3 explore specific experiences of exclusion and misrepresentation, and theme 4 reflects on escape and experiences of difference.

1. Conditional acceptance

This theme emerged when participants reflected on the boundaries or limitations of inclusionary practice, such reflections illustrated the unchecked influence of heteronormative and cisgenderist structures, which constrained participants' abilities to belong. Photographs 1 and 2 elicited relevant discussion -

Photograph 1	Photograph 2

Photograph 1 raised the issue of the potential ghettoization of LGBTQ students through compartmentalised inclusion, an issue which has been discussed in terms of LGBTQ specific sport (Drury 2014) and social care (Westwood 2016). As the university flew flags at specific times of the year, their presence identified to the participant that there was something that LGBTQ people should be celebrating. Such timed engagement with LGBTQ inclusion had the potential to separate the university population rather than bring it together 'you know, sort of like, you get a toasted cheese awareness day. And you're like, "oh, okay, I'm sure that's a big deal to the cheesemakers"' – so marking LGBTQ events becomes an 'LGBTQ thing' rather than a 'university thing', potentially ghettoising LGBTQ interests as an accepted/tolerated other rather than included or celebrated members of the university community as a whole.

Picture 2 documented the experience of setting up and staffing a stall in the university. The student reflected upon this as a moment of university sanctioned public presence through which the LGBTQ society were able to make themselves known on campus. However during the course of the day the students were met with rejection from a visiting academic, whose behaviour was left unchallenged by accompanying members of the institution's staff. Therefore, although LGBT students were given presence on campus, their presence was met with hostility and the acceptance of hostility. The silence from staff members is reflected upon in the work of De Castell and Bryson (1998) who identify silence or non-response as implicitly validating rejection, and such silence is widely noted across the literature on LGBTQ experiences in education both amongst staff (e.g. Blackburn and Smith 2010) and students (Hylton 2005), as an illustration of heteronormativity and implicit rejection.

These examples highlight the continuing ways in which LGBTQ difference is present on campus – whether (as in picture 1) as a minority group recognised at specific times of year, or as a potentially divisive group (illustrated in picture 2) tolerated rather than celebrated. Both examples highlight structural heteronormativity and cisgenderism implicitly and explicitly present in university contexts. In the first example the compartmentalised nature of public

support marks LGBTQ people as different from the mainstream university community – recognised at 'gay' times of the year. In the second example the marginal status of the LGBTQ society is underlined in the presence of both explicit rejection and implicit condoning of such rejection. By highlighting difference rather than inclusion, such examples leave unchallenged engrained structural inequalities (DePalma and Atkinson 2010), which come into play in a variety of day to day ways, as shown in the following two themes.

2. Absence/Exclusion

Absence has been recognised across the literature as an issue which marginalises and excludes LGBTQ students from the university community. Absence impacts at the level of subject content, campus presence, and expected community. Such absences were also discussed by students in this study. For example, absence from curriculum was discussed in a conversation emerging from photograph 3. Here the respondent talked about their desire to engage with queer theology in their dissertation,

Photograph 3

but were concerned by their supervisor's response - saying "he was like no-one's ever written about it at our university before so I don't know how it's going to go down". This reaction not only reflected an absence of LGBTQ content, but also a reflection on appropriateness, identifying queer theology as beyond the normal scope of theological reflection within the department, and as such perhaps, beyond 'normal' theology. Therefore queer theology, and perhaps linked to this, queer lives are identified as outside of the norm – reflecting Ripley et al's (2012) discussion of the impact of heteronormativity in the classroom, and the 'novelty' and otherness of non-heterosexual content.

Absence was not only discussed in terms of experiences with academic content or curriculum, but also in reflections on wider social spaces and locations. Photograph 4 for example resulted from one student's desire to document the absence of LGBTQ presence on campus (particularly the invisibility of bisexuality). In interview she referred to this as the 'invisibility thing' which was experienced across various aspects of university experience. Such invisibility has been tied to silencing of diverse voices,

Photograph 4

constraining talk and silencing and further marginalising identities (Cramer 2002, Ward and Gale 2016). These examples of absence underline the findings of previous research and can mark out LGBTQ experience as beyond the norm, or even irrelevant to the imagined university community, and illustrates a cultural exclusion which is not challenged by action focused inclusion policy.

Perhaps where this narrative of exclusion or absence was clearest in the specific experiences of bi or trans students was with reference to toilet provision and the experiences of trans students (illustrated in photograph 5). One student said "so I tend to use the gender neutral, but I feel like a bit of an idiot because a lot of them are just disabled toilets. … but if you walk into the disabled toilet and you are not[disabled], …I do feel a bit awkward". This issue of absence from the expected diversity of student identities was raised by others who again rejected the requirement to identify as 'disabled' or 'parent'

Photograph 5

due to the absence of appropriate provision. The sociological relevance and political potential of toilet provision has been discussed by Blumenthal (2014), and here a lack of suitable toilet provision excludes trans and non-binary students, also reminding them of their difference and absence from the expected university community on a daily basis. Although there has been an increase in discussions of gender-neutral toilet provision at universities, these students' experiences reflect the ground that is still to be covered and the impact of the absence of appropriate provision on campus. These 'toilet discussions' are particularly illustrative of the interconnection of microaggressions and structural heteronormativity. The structural impact of binary views of gender are encapsulated within daily environmental injustices –which act to underline and reinforce existing views and marginalisation.

3. Misrepresentation/Misidentification

Misrepresentation was a key theme emerging within the research, and was often specific to the experiences of bi and trans students. Photograph 6 for example connected to a bi student's memory of a night out with friends and strangers. During the course of the night a friend referred to this individual as 'half-gay'. For the participant this was both a moment of outing during which he felt uncomfortable about the possible consequences due to the presence of strangers, it was also understood as insulting – misunderstanding his sexual identity and misrepresenting him. Later in the interview he reflected on such misrepresentation saying 'Like,

Photograph 6

obviously because it's like, "Oh, you're half-straight and you're half-gay. You're half the enemy", almost', emphasising that such mis-representation emerged from both heterosexual and lesbian and gay individuals. Other bisexual students shared similar experiences with one reflecting on being misrepresented as lesbian, and this being a space of particular discomfort 'like [name] he's a gay friend of mine and he calls me a lesbian all the time and I'm like, I'm not a lesbian. … he used to call me a lesbian all the time and he knew it annoyed me. It's like, why are you trying to like, invalidate my experience as a Bisexual woman'. For these students such moments undermined their identities and had the potential to question friendships placing the responsibility with the student to excuse friends, or move on from difficulties - as reflected in Ueno and Gentile's (2015) discussion of LGBTQ students 'rationalising' such actions in protect and maintain friendships.

For trans students issues of misrepresentation specifically emerged with reference to pronouns, as recognised in Formby's (2014) research around trans identity. A discussion emerged from photograph 7 centred around identification. The discussion particularly centred on the student's identification with the pronouns 'they/them'. Such non-binary identities challenge, but also underline the structural presence and dominance of binary understandings of gender. This dominance being played out in daily mundane interactions through the mis-gendering experienced by non-binary individuals. The everyday nature of such misrepresentation was summed up by one

Photograph 7

trans student saying they regularly hear people say 'it is just so hard to remember' – reflecting both the presence of misgendering, and the 'othering' of trans and non-binary identities. Misgendering of trans and non-binary students was widespread from peers, staff, and at times through structures and systems which constrained choices of pronouns and titles to binary gendered options. For the participant who took picture 7, such moments of misgendering were so present that they often did not challenge moments of misgendering. However each episode of misgendering was painful for them, and was something they would reflect on. They said 'No, no. Every single time I hear it, recognise it and then make the decision what I'm going to do with it. It doesn't wash over me at all. I don't let it just wash over me because if I did that then – I mean I'd be erasing myself which I did for a long time and I don't want to do that anymore'. Here again this student is taking responsibility in the face of microaggressions to find space to go on, and making decisions to avoid confrontation and discomfort (Jagessar and Msibi 2015), leaving the impact of such misgendering on them due to the overarching dominance of binary cis-genderist understandings of gender.

Illustration of the interconnection and impact of heteronormative/cisgenderist structures and microaggressions with regard to misrepresentations were further illustrated by one trans male participant who included two photographs of his student ID card (not included to protect anonymity). These photos were taken to illustrate the problems the student had having his name and gender recognised by university structures. This student went on to discuss how the institution's entry system included a screen which flashed student names when they signed in. The experience of having had to use an ID card in a name which the student did not identify with meant that being misnamed was not only a structural issue but the institution's structures committed microaggressions by misnaming the student on a daily basis.

4. Escape

This final theme is reflective of the consequences of the interconnection of the heteronormative structures and microaggressions discussed above. In a number of student narratives there was a clear discussion of 'escape' or finding space away from the university. This was particularly present in the narratives of trans students. The following two

| Photograph 8 | Photograph 9 |

examples reflect the finding of safe community, and the space to reflect.

Photograph 8 is a 'den' made by a participant and his housemates. This was one of a number of pictures of living space that this respondent included and these pictures encouraged discussion around acceptance and the importance of 'home', which also chimed with the narratives of other participants. Home was seen to become particularly important for trans students who were 'living stealth' (passing as cisgendered), as this often included keeping distance from others to protect this stealthness. However continued experiences of misrepresentation and exclusion were discussed by others as being reasons for the importance of home as 'safe space'.

Photograph 9 reflects on safe space, in terms of head space. For this student time alone walking was a time they could reflect on experiences and move past frustrations.

These illustrations of escape and safety draw a distinction between these safe spaces and university space. They underline experiences of university spaces as heteronormative, and escape narratives particularly made reference to escaping the constant pressure of microaggressions and misrepresentations which are not present in home environments where housemates understand. This was particularly present in non-binary narratives, where consistent mis-gendering was escaped in homes where they were understood. Munyuki and Vincent (2017) illustrate that finding 'home' space can be more challenging for LGBTQ students in higher education, however where it does exist as a safe space it offers support and comfort in a variety of ways.

Conclusions

These 4 emergent themes reflect the interconnection of structural pressures and micro-interactions in the experiences of difference and marginality expressed by the respondents. While by no means comprehensive in their representation of the themes and issues emergent from the research, they reflect key ideas within the respondent narratives which develop existing research of LGBTQ student lives. The recognition of the constraint and exclusion emergent from unchallenged heteronormative and cisgenderist university structures underlines and develops existing research in terms of the continuing ways in which LGBTQ students are othered in university contexts, including in aspects of 'inclusionary' practice. The themes also illustrate the continuing existence of microaggressions which impact student

experience on a daily basis in interactions with peers, staff, buildings and administrative structures.

The themes also emphasise the importance of developing LGBTQ research 'beyond the umbrella'. Reflections on exclusions and misrepresentations illustrate the very specific experiences trans and bi students have, and the need for research that reflects upon this. Examples such as misrepresentation and identification of bisexual individuals, and trans experiences around pronouns and toilet provision are illustrations of such specific needs and experiences which underline the importance of focused research and specific knowledge.

These student experiences, alongside advisory committee reflections brought to the fore key issues which raised recommendations and ideas for university policy and practice. The report ends with these recommendations.

Recommendations for Higher Education Institutions

The research and discussions undertaken within this project have raised issues and experiences which further understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ students in general and Trans and Bi identifying students in particular. The following recommendations are designed to suggest ways this knowledge can be practically engaged with and responded to in higher education institutions.

Recommendations

- Ensure the awareness of diversity and appropriate practice across staff and student bodies, and provide access to training to ensure such practice.

- Ensure that curriculums across the university reflect the diversity of the university community.

- Ensure clear paths to advice for students needing to engage with university structures and policy around gender or sexual identity. Checklists, printed and online guides should be available for those needing to engage with changes of name and/or gender identity.

- Ensure policies, processes, documents and written interactions offer diverse gender and identification options and use inclusive language.

- Ensure that online and offline guidance and support reflects upon, and speaks to the diversity of the LGBTQ community rather than focussing solely on the LGBTQ label.

- Ensure that appropriate provision is made for the comfort and inclusion of the diverse university population on a day to day basis, including the provision of gender-neutral toilets and changing facilities.

- Incorporate diverse members of the student body in plans for development of estates to ensure the university is being designed with a diverse student community in mind.

- Public recognition of the diversity of the university population should be always present rather than focused on specific times of year, and should be present across documents and spaces from application to graduation.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Photo-Elicitation Information Sheet

This study seeks to explore your experiences as an undergraduate student who identifies as bisexual or trans. The study is particularly focused on how your experiences in higher education are impacted by your sexual and gender identities. These experiences can be good or bad, illustrative of opportunity or constraint, inclusion or exclusion. The study uses a research method called photo-elicitation interviews. This form is designed to tell you a bit more about the study so you can make an informed decision about whether or not to take part.

This study is part of a project which seeks to extend existing research on the university experiences of LGBTQ identifying undergraduate students. The project seeks to explore the diversity of experiences and challenges in LGBTQ university lives.

This is what you are being asked to do …

Over a period of 2 weeks I would like you to take up to 20 photographs of objects, areas, contexts or symbols which reflect your university life. These may be things that are important to you, which represent influential times or people, or reflect something that happened (or you thought about) during the day.

I will then ask you to send these two me after the two week period, and we will make an appointment for me to travel to you to discuss the pictures during an audio recorded interview that is likely to take between 60 and 120 minutes.

If you decide to take part there are a few things I would ask you to bear in mind when taking the pictures (more information is provided in the attached guidelines)-

Please …

- do not photograph other people as the focus of your pictures
- do not put yourself at risk when taking photographs
- do not take or keep photographs which you are not comfortable having on your phone
- you do not have to take 20 photos, 10 or even less may be fine!

If you decide to take part in the study please be aware that the project team will work to anonymise your responses in order to protect your privacy. You have the option to decide whether or not the pictures taken can be used in presentations and publications. If you

agree to this (on the consent form provided) the team will still attempt to anonymise recognisable aspects of buildings or contexts. If you decide not to give this permission, the photos you take will be described rather than reproduced.

There is a possibility that some photos taken, or subjects discussed at interview will connect to difficult or sensitive issues. You have the right to withdraw from the study or not to answer any questions which make you uncomfortable.

This project aims to further academic research on the experiences of LGBTQ students and to help improve policy and practice in universities. We are very grateful for your time thus far in considering taking part, and hope that you will agree to continue to be part of the study.

Please Note - All data collected during this study will be held on password protected devices. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed, during the transcription process recognisable information will be anonymised.

Thank you!

Appendix 2

Photography Guidelines

Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in this stage of the project 'Diverse Diversity in Higher Education'

You are being asked to take up to 20 photographs using your mobile phone over a 2 week period. These photos should be in some way reflective of your life at university as a bi or trans identifying student. Research has suggested that bi and trans students' experiences are under-researched and often missing from discussion. I hope your photos will allow us to discuss your experiences and help the research to explore what life can be like for bi and trans students.

When you have completed the task – please send the photos via email along with an electronically signed (or signed and scanned) consent form to me via email. We will then arrange a time I can come and see you and we can discuss the photos.

It is hoped that the photographs will reflect your everyday experiences as well as documenting particular experiences you have had at university in the past. So please try to take the pictures as part of your everyday life.

Please bear the following points in mind when taking pictures:

- Do not photograph other people as the focus of your pictures
- Do not put yourself at risk when taking photographs
- Do not take or keep photographs which you are not comfortable having on your phone
- You don't have to take 20 (if you do we may not be able to discuss them all)

Your photographs can be of anything, they should be photographs of objects, areas, contexts or symbols which reflect your university life. These may be things that are important to you, or represent influential times or people, or reflect something that happened (or you thought about) during the day. For example, it might be that a place is particularly meaningful to you and so you may choose to photograph it, it may be you feel a sense of connection eating with friends and decide to photograph the food, or that a particular piece of clothing is illustrative of you on campus. These are just examples … your photos may be completely different but I hope we can explore your experiences as a bi or trans identifying students through the pictures you take.

If you would like any further guidance, or to ask any questions about the research – please do get in touch!

Thank you for doing this.

References

Barker, M., 2004. Including the B-word: Reflections on the place of bisexuality within lesbian and gay activism and psychology. *Lesbian and Gay Psychology Review*, 5(3), pp.118-122.

Blackburn, M.V., and Smith, J.M., 2010. Moving beyond the inclusion of LGBT- themed literature in English language arts classrooms: Interrogating heteronormativity and exploring intersectionality. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 53(8), pp.625-634.

Blumenthal, D., 2014. *Little vast rooms of undoing exploring identity and embodiment through public toilet spaces*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International.

Cech, E.A., and Waidzunas, T. J., 2011. Navigating the heteronormativity of engineering: The experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students. *Engineering Studies* 3(1), pp. 1-24.

Cramer, E. 2002. *Addressing homophobia and heterosexism on college campuses*. New York: Harrington Park Press.

De Castell, S., and Bryson, M., 1998. "Don't Ask, don't tell: 'Sniffing Out Queers' in Education." In Pinar, W.F.(ed) *Curriculum: Toward New Identities*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 233-252.

DePalma, R., and Atkinson, E., 2010. The nature of institutional heteronormativity in primary schools and practice-based responses. *Teaching and Teacher Education,* 26 (8), pp. 1669-1676.

Douglas, J.D., 2017. *Understanding Everyday Life: Reconstruction of Social Knowledge*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Drury, S., 2014. Gay sports spaces: transgressing hetero(/homo)normativity and transforming sport? In Hargreaves, J. & Anderson, E. (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Gender and Sexuality*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 309-317.

Dugan, J.P. and Yurman, L., 2011. Commonalities and differences among lesbian, gay, and bisexual college students: Considerations for research and practice. *Journal of College Student Development*, 52(2), pp.201-216.

Ellis, S.J., 2009. Diversity and inclusivity at university: A survey of the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) students in the UK. *Higher Education*, 57(6), pp. 723-739.

Ferfolja, T., 2007. Schooling cultures: Institutionalizing heteronormativity and heterosexism. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 11(2), pp.147-162.

Formby, E., 2014. *(Trans)gender identity awareness and support in Rotherham*. Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University.

Formby. E., 2015. *From freshers' week to finals: Understanding LGBT+ perspectives on, and experiences of, higher education*. Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University.

Garvey, J.C., Taylor, J.L. and Rankin, S., 2015. An examination of campus climate for LGBTQ community college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 39(6), pp.527-541.

Goodine, R., 2015. The silent B: The erasure of bisexuality. IN O'Neill, B., Swan, T., & Mule, N. (eds) *LGBTQ people and social work: Intersectional perspectives*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, pp.107-126.

Heath, M., 2005. Pronouncing the B in GLBTTIQ. *Gay & Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review*, 1(3), pp88-92.

Hylton, M.E., 2005. Heteronormativity and the experiences of lesbian and bisexual women as social work students. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 41(1), pp.67-82.

Jagessar, V. and Msibi, T. 2015. 'It's not that bad': Homophobia in the residences of a university in KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. *Agenda*, 29(1), pp.63-73.

Jewell, L.M. and Morrison, M.A., 2010. "But There'sa Million Jokes About Everybody…": Prevalence of, and Reasons for, Directing Negative Behaviors Toward Gay Men on a Canadian University Campus. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 25(11), pp.2094-2112.

Keenan, M. 2013. *Coming out and fitting in: A qualitative exploration of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer students' university experiences*. SRHE https://www.srhe.ac.uk/downloads/KeenanReport2012.pdf

Leonard, M. and McKnight, M., 2015. Look and tell: using photo-elicitation methods with teenagers. *Children's Geographies*, 13(6), pp.629-642.

Levy, D.L. and Harr, J., 2018. "I never felt like there was a place for me:" Experiences of Bisexual and Pansexual Individuals with a Christian Upbringing. *Journal of Bisexuality*, pp.1-20 https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2018.1431169.

McEntarfer, H.K., 2016. *Navigating gender and sexuality in the classroom: Narrative insights from students and educators*. Abingdon:Routledge.

Mizock, L. and Mueser, K.T., 2014. Employment, mental health, internalized stigma, and coping with transphobia among transgender individuals. *Psychology of sexual orientation and gender diversity*, 1(2), pp.146-158.

Munyuki, C. and Vincent, L.D., 2017. 'It's tough being gay'. Gay, lesbian and bisexual students' experiences of being 'at home'in South African university residence life. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 31(4), pp.14-33.

Nadal, K.L., M.A. Issa, J. Leon, V. Meterko, M. Wideman, and Y. Wong. 2011. Sexual orientation microaggressions: 'Death by a thousand cuts' for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 8(3), pp. 234-259.

Nadal, K.L., Skolnik, A. and Wong, Y., 2012. Interpersonal and systemic microaggressions toward transgender people: Implications for counseling. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, 6(1), pp.55-82.

Pallotta-Chiarolli, M. and Martin, E., 2009. "Which sexuality? Which service?": Bisexual young people's experiences with youth, queer and mental health services in Australia. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 6(2-3), pp.199-222.

Persson, D.I., 2009. Unique challenges of transgender aging: Implications from the literature. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 52(6), pp.633-646.

Pink, S., 2013. *Doing visual ethnography*. London: Sage.

Rankin, S., G.N. Weber, W.J. Blumenfeld, and S. Frazer. 2010. *State of higher education for lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender people*. Charlotte: Campus Pride.

Reed, E., Prado, G., Matsumoto, A. and Amaro, H., 2010. Alcohol and drug use and related consequences among gay, lesbian and bisexual college students: Role of experiencing violence, feeling safe on campus, and perceived stress. *Addictive behaviors*, 35(2), pp.168-171.

Ripley, M., Anderson, E., McCormack, M., and Rockett, B. 2012. Heteronormativity in the university classroom: Novelty attachment and content substitution among gay-friendly students. *Sociology of education*, 85(2), pp.121-130.

Stout, J. and Wright, H., 2016. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Students' Sense of Belonging in Computing: An Intersectional Approach. *Computing in Science & Engineering* 18(3), pp. 24-30.

Sue, D.W., 2010. *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation*. New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons.

Swank, E. and Raiz, L., 2010. Attitudes toward gays and lesbians among undergraduate social work students. *Affilia*, 25(1), pp.19-29.

Taulke-Johnson, R., 2010. Assertion, regulation and consent: gay students, straight flatmates, and the (hetero) sexualisation of university accommodation space. *Gender and Education,* 22(4), pp. 401-417.

Ueno, K. and Gentile, H., 2015. Moral identity in friendships between gay, lesbian, and bisexual students and straight students in college. *Symbolic Interaction*, 38(1), pp. 83-102.

Valentine, G., Wood, N., and Plummer, P., 2009. *The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual Staff and Students in Higher Education*. Equality Challenge Unit Research Report. London: ECU.

Vega, S., Crawford, H., and Van Pelt, J.L., 2012. Safe schools for LGBTQI students: How do teachers view their role in promoting safe schools? *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(2), pp.250-260.

Ward, N. and Gale, N., 2016. *LGBTQ-inclusivity in the Higher Education Curriculum: a best practice guide*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

Westwood, S., 2016. 'We see it as being heterosexualised, being put into a care home': gender, sexuality and housing/care preferences among older LGB individuals in the UK. *Health & social care in the community*, 24(6), pp. 155-163.

Wong, J., 2014. Medical School Hotline: Looking Forward and Enriching John A. Burns School of Medicine's Curriculum: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Healthcare in Medical Education. *Hawai'i Journal of Medicine & Public Health*, 73(10), pp.329-331.