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West Chester University
Higher Education Policy and Student Affairs
THESIS



A Queer Approach to Sex Education in the University: Analysis
of the Insufficiency of Access without Education

Rebecca Seeley

May 2020

A Queer Approach to Sex Education in the University: An Analysis of the Insufficiency of
Access without Education

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the
Department of Educational Foundations and Policy Studies
West Chester University
West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of
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By
Rebecca Seeley
May 2020

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to those who identify as bisexual.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis would not be possible without the wide range of support throughout my education. I would first like to thank my mom and dad, who without their support, the pursuit of my education would not be possible. To Robert, for being the most supportive partner I could ask for, thank you for staying up with me and being my audience for when I needed to brainstorm ideas and for being my biggest fan. To my best friends, Kaitlin, Jack, Sarah, Annie, & Marina: you are the light of my life and my biggest inspirations; I love each of you so much and would not be who I am without you. To Wes Miles & Ra Ra Riot: thank you for being my musical inspiration and for giving me something to turn to in times of endless pain & endless joy; I can't see nothing without your light.

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To queer & trans people of color: this is for you. Although I do not understand your struggle firsthand, I promise to use my privilege to fight for you, and this thesis is a place to start.

Abstract

This master's thesis is a critical action research proposal for an undergraduate advocacy leadership role that is based philosophically and theoretically on the need for sex education resources for queer & trans students of color in universities. American culture is historically uncomfortable with and outwardly opposed to education on sex and sexuality, which often prevents queer identified people from receiving the distinct education and resources necessary to protect themselves from STIs or unhealthy relationships. Although this education is often provided, it is often unknowingly designed for their straight counterparts, which excludes and denies the queer student from participating in this education or from receiving these resources. Additionally, sex education often fails intersectional identities, with little resources for people of color, let alone queer & trans people of color. Through the philosophical lenses of Dewey, Freire, Crenshaw, & Foucault, as well as the Social Change Model of Leadership, I will challenge the lack of sex education in the university and argue the need for a queer approach to sex education in the university. This thesis proposes a paid opportunity for queer & trans students of color to autonomously engage in transformative leadership and advocacy on their campus and in their communities.

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Chapter One

Introduction and Positionality

“The talk”

The action responsible for our very existence has been consistently forbidden and gatekept, which has confused me and challenged me to think differently for as long as I can remember. Sex education has always been the most controversial form of education, and advocates on both sides have attempted to either expand or eliminate it from K-12 education. According to the Guttmacher Institute for Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights (2020), as of February 2020, only 39 states and the District of Columbia mandate sex education, and the discrepancy among state laws differs the requirements of that state’s education. For example, only 17 states require their sex education to be medically accurate, and only 10 states mandate HIV education. Students in these K-12 education systems will eventually come to college with varying degrees of sex education, and this discrepancy has and can continue to cause significant problems for students in higher education (Guttmacher Institute, 2020).

I grew up in Pennsylvania, where sex education is not mandated, but HIV education is (Guttmacher Institute, 2020). I come from a white, upper middle-class family and I grew up in a wealthy suburban town. My first introduction to sex education was in 5th grade. We had a special health class where the boys and girls went to separate rooms, and we watched a VHS tape on the science of the menstrual cycle, and the science of the male anatomy. They gave us a pad and a period starter kit, and nothing else was discussed until 8th grade, where they finally started using the words “penis”, “vagina”, and “sex”. The boys and the girls were still separated. I remember the message clearly as our health/physical education teachers had taught us: the only way to 100% prevent pregnancy is by abstaining from sex. They told us what sex is, how it happens, and

what can happen if we choose to do it. There was even an anonymous question box for students to submit questions they may not feel comfortable asking out loud.

Finally, during senior year of high school, we had a sex education portion of our health class where we were not separated by gender. This class was mostly focused on the pregnancy and birthing process (yes, we watched the infamous birthing video), and had a brief introduction to sexually transmitted diseases and infections. In fact, it was not even a full class; half of the semester was “sex education” (I am almost positive it was not specifically referred to it as such in the curriculum language) and the other half was learning CPR/First Aid skills. My high school was privileged, benefitting from the property taxes of the upper class and upper middle class who lived in the area. Although Pennsylvania, the state I grew up in, is a state that does not require sex education, I was fortunate to grow up in a wealthy school district with plenty of resources to be able to provide *some* sex education. Although it was present, it had gaps. We had money and resources, but as in most states, sex education was not a priority. I finally experienced the consequences of this after a routine OB/GYN exam.

Learning the hard way

When I tested positive for chlamydia the summer after high school, I felt disgusting. Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted infection (STI) that is curable with antibiotics. According to the Center for Disease Control, chlamydia is the most common STI, and there were over 1.7 million reported cases in the United States in 2018 (Center for Disease Control, 2018). Chlamydia is extremely contagious and can be spread through most kinds of sexual activity. There are often little to no symptoms associated with chlamydia, so there is no way to know whether or not a person is infected with it without a lab test. It can be cured with a round of antibiotics but left untreated it can cause serious health problems and infertility (Center for

Disease Control). Although it is easily curable, it is easily spreadable, and very easy to contract again if your partner does not receive proper treatment and education.

At an OB/GYN appointment, I was honest about my sex life when asked, which prompted the nurse to do a routine STI screening. At the time, I was engaging with an abusive partner who had convinced me we didn't need to use condoms since I was on birth control and "couldn't get pregnant". I tested positive for chlamydia and allowed my ex-partner to convince me it was my fault, and my fault alone. I even continued to see that partner after we both received treatment, but it was obvious that my ex-partner was lying about who he was having sex with when I retested positive again weeks after the initial treatment.

On my first day at college, right after I moved in, I got a frantic call from my mom. I had to learn the hard way that in Pennsylvania, when there is a reported case of an STI like chlamydia, the health department is responsible for contacting the person to make them aware of it and to ensure they are properly treated. Unfortunately, the only contact information the health department had was my mom's. This led to an unfortunate three-way phone call with myself, my mom, and the person from the health department. They were only allowed to give the information to my mom with my permission, and the pressure of the three-way phone call combined with my mom's obvious concern forced me to reveal what I had tested positive for.

Both of my parents have been my main foundation of support my entire life, and because they were always uncomfortable when presented with anything about sex (like most parents), they were scared and disappointed in me. It was through this lived experience that I learned how common STIs are, how easily they spread, and how they resurface if both partners are not properly treated and educated. The most present symptom from my STI were not the physical symptoms, but the emotional consequences of feeling guilty, shameful, and disgusting: both

from my abusive ex-partner who was not educated enough not to put the blame and shame on me, from my parents, who were not educated enough at the time to realize that I would be okay, and from myself, who was not educated enough at the time to know I was not alone.

Even though I knew what chlamydia was, I still contracted it. Luckily, I had the resources and privilege to be able to afford treatment and further education, but after my own experience I realized that not everyone has the same opportunities. I continued through college hyper-aware of STIs, determined to prevent myself from contracting any, and constantly educating my friends and peers about the importance of their sexual health. I maintained a healthy sex life, which was especially important to me after coming out as bisexual and accepting myself as someone who is gay.

“But how can you like both?”

Sexuality is a spectrum, and figuring out one’s sexuality can often be a lifelong process (Dillon, Worthington, & Moradi, 2011). Although sex is not the only determinate of a person’s place on the sexuality spectrum, it can play a huge role in someone discovering who they are and are not attracted to. Gay people have gay sex, and it is a lot different than the sex I had been taught about. There were almost no out gay people at my high school, and once I got to college I was finally able to feel more comfortable in my place on the sexuality spectrum. I had the chance to meet other gay and bi girls at my large public institution, something I was not comfortable doing until my later years of college. I had sex education in my K-12 education: even if it was not the best, it was there. Yet, I cannot recall a single instance in my limited sex education that included any talk of LGBTQ bodies. I cannot recall learning about sex other than through consequential instruction.

The content we had was purely cause and effect:

- If you have sex, you can get pregnant.
- If you don't use a condom, you can get an STI.

Other than through the 8th grade anonymous question box, masturbation or pleasure were not discussed, regardless of the female anatomy's organ with the purpose of lubrication and pleasure (Levin, 2019). The function of my own anatomy was always a little-known fact, but I needed to confirm it with medical research for the purpose of this paper. Upon my research, I found Levin's study titled "The Clitoris—An Appraisal of its Reproductive Function During the Fertile Years: Why Was It, and Still Is, Overlooked in Accounts of Female Sexual Arousal" (2019). I felt an instant flow of comedy and irony when I Googled Dr. Levin and discovered that he is an older, British, white man; I wondered what interested him in such a topic.

Regardless, Dr. Levin's study found that reproductive efforts are more successful when the clitoris was activated, meaning that pregnancies were more likely if the couple engaged in foreplay and stimulated the vulva owner's clitoris. Dr. Levin found that clitoral stimulation and lubrication causes more successful flow of the semen through the female reproductive system, leading to a more successful conception and pregnancy (Levin, 2019). In his abstract alone it was evident that orgasm need not be fully accomplished to achieve more likelihood of reproductive success, as "no matter how or when the clitoris is stimulated—they reveal its overlooked reproductive function" (Levin, 2019, abstract). Dr. Levin's conclusion urges attention to female sexual arousal, proving how it is overlooked as a method of increasing likelihood of success in planned pregnancy. In the most scientific way possible, and in the title and abstract alone, Dr. Levin proved to us that female sexual arousal is essential for any attempt at pregnancy. I was shocked to see Dr. Levin's face and laughed while imagining his British accent say the word

“clitoris”, but it turns out that Dr. Levin is attempting to dismantle patriarchal expectations of sex and convincing men to pleasure their wives.

Growing up, I was constantly confused about my sexuality. I felt sure enough that I still liked men, so I knew I wasn’t a lesbian. I was confused because I knew I was attracted to girls as well as boys, but I didn’t have a crush on any of the girls at school like I did toward the boys. I later realized this was due to the development of my place on the sexuality spectrum: I didn’t know that I was not yet romantically attracted to girls. I now know this is because of the internalized biphobia I had against myself growing up in a bi-phobic world. People often don’t see bisexuality as a real, valid sexuality and there are so many misconceptions: they’re just going through a phase, they’re promiscuous and they’ll cheat on you, they’ll eventually leave you for someone in the other gender, or that the bisexuality will go away once a person settles down with a life partner. These misconceptions were even proven in a qualitative research study by Feinstein et. al in late 2019. Over 80% of participants reported experiencing identity invalidation, with other people outwardly thinking they were faking it or going through a phase (Feinstein, et. al, 2019). This is another aspect of life that is failed to be addressed by traditional sex education: the fact that you might be confused and unsure of who you are attracted to, and once you do discover it, you may be more susceptible to STIs or unhealthy relationships, because your sex education did not include you, and did not teach you how to stay healthy.

The sex education that I had included me: I was secure enough to know I liked boys, and I knew I wanted to have sex someday, as most teenagers do. However, it troubles me to think about how I would have learned had my sexuality been different. I imagine the thoughts and questions I would have had if I were lesbian instead of bisexual:

- “How do I have sex, then?”

- “Can I still get an STI then? Since I’m not having ‘regular’ sex?”
- “What can I use to protect myself against STIs, then?”
- “Well I can’t get pregnant, so I don’t need to worry.”

I then think of other questions I had throughout my development, that were not answered during my sex education:

- “Is my vagina supposed to do that?”
- “Does my vagina look normal?”
- “Can I still get an STI if I’m only having oral sex?”
- “What does it mean to give consent?”
- “What if I don’t want to have kids?”
- “What if I don’t want to have sex, does that make me weird?”

The problem

If these questions are common, and not exclusive to queer people, why weren’t they answered? These questions and thoughts were not addressed in my own sex education, and they continue to be ignored in traditional education. Every visual example that I can remember was a white, straight body: white vulvas, white penises, and “penis-in-a-vagina” sex. Since I am white, and thought I was straight most of my life, this seemed normal to me at the time, but my college experience has helped me realize that not only are queer bodies blatantly ignored in sex education, but bodies of color, especially queer & trans bodies of color, are ignored as well. It became more obvious to me that the lack of sex education is rooted in white supremacy and heteronormativity.

Throughout my coming out process and beyond, I continued to notice more discrepancies and problems that were an obvious result of lack of sex education, or at least

accurate sex education. My education did not include discussions on consent or trauma, cultural expectations, pleasure, or body acceptance and body positivity. Almost all of what I knew about sex, especially gay sex, came from the internet and media, like Twitter, Facebook, movies or TV shows. During one of my routine STI checkups at the local free clinic, the nurse asked me if I had sex with men, women, or both, and whether or not I used “condoms”. Not “protection”: but “condoms”, specifically.

I thought to myself, “You’re asking if I have sex with women, but only asking me about condoms? That doesn’t make sense.” It was in this moment, I realized we not only need better sex education, but we need sex education that includes queer bodies, bodies of color, and queer bodies of color. United States culture is so uncomfortable talking about sex, as evidenced in lack of policy. Queer and trans people of color experience these consequences, such as sexually transmitted infections (Center for Disease Control, 2020), sexual assault, and domestic violence at higher levels than their white, straight counterparts (Dank et al., 2014).

The reality

Despite a painful history of discrimination and Queerphobia, colleges and universities have come a long way: universities all over the country now have queer identity centers, inclusive residence halls and bathrooms, and educational opportunities on social justice and marginalized populations. However, there is still a long road to the queer person being fully liberated and included in the university, let alone society.

Queerphobia has not been completely eradicated on college campuses. Campus Pride, a nonprofit organization whose goal is to create a safer environment for queer college students, reports dozens of schools on their “Shame List”: a list of higher education institutions “that either received or applied for a Title IX exemption to discriminate against LGBTQ youth, or

demonstrated past history and track record of anti-LGBTQ actions, programs and practices” (Campus Pride, 2020). Although the majority of these institutions are heavily based in religion, making it unlikely that an out queer person would choose to attend, it is evident universities are not completely immune from consequences of queer discrimination. Many religiously affiliated institutions still outwardly do not support the queer population, as evidenced by Campus Pride, and the current political climate seems to be moving backwards as right-wing populists remain in power and attempt to pass legislature that blatantly dismisses the identities of queer individuals and sexual assault and abuse survivors (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2020).

While the root of this problem can and should be addressed during childhood and early stages of development, higher education can play a role in filling the gaps left open by the discrepancies of state mandated education. I am not claiming that someone’s traditional high school or college education should invite them to start having sex. I am not claiming that the university is always a space to discover one’s sexuality, but it was for me, and I know it was for many people like me. I am not claiming that sex education should teach people how to have sex or encourage people to start having sex. I am not suggesting that religiously affiliated institutions should automatically change their values, and I am certainly not suggesting that every college student should be forced to participate in a sex education practice.

I am suggesting, however, that college is often the first time a traditionally aged (18-24 years) college student experiences independence and freedom. The stereotype of college students and “hook-up culture” is real (Toprak, 2020). College students are often sexually active, and it is irresponsible to pretend otherwise. I am suggesting that if a university is going to provide safer sex materials, like free condoms in the residence halls, or any kind of sex education

programming or curriculum, that it must contain accurate, up to date content that does not assume that everyone is a cisgender, heterosexual person who wants to have children.

Sex can be a critical aspect of a queer person's identity, and historically queer people have been excluded from sex education. Simply having "free condoms" available on campus is not enough. Providing access to resources without accurate, inclusive education on those resources is insufficient, dangerous, and exclusive to queer and trans students of color. The inspiration for this project comes from my own experience with STIs, my experience coming out in college, and the process of understanding my privilege as a cisgender, white, straight-passing woman. Queer people have been historically "othered", discriminated against, and excluded from traditional educational curriculum. The purpose of a queer model of sex education is to validate and support the identity of queer and trans students of color, and the university should be a place with resources to allow this. College is supposed to be a time of self-discovery, freedom, and independence: something that can be even more difficult for a queer person.

Conclusion

By providing accurate resources and education related to sex education for queer and trans people of color, the university extends itself as a space for the queer and trans students of color to thrive and experience a liberating, transformational education that helps them develop a sense of self and a critical consciousness. Contracting an STI or experiencing sexual assault can inhibit the college experience and cause the student to lose focus on their academic work, experience symptoms of mental illness, or even develop a mental illness. Since queer and trans people of color are more likely to contract HIV (Center for Disease Control, 2020) education and resources specific to their needs is more than necessary. In chapter three, I will discuss the need for an intersectional approach to this concern, as influenced by Kimberlé Crenshaw. I will also

discuss the philosophy and importance of an experiential, transformative education as a path to liberation and democracy, influenced by John Dewey and Paulo Freire.

I will argue the need to transform the university into a space that challenges traditional, conservative, and religious views on sex and sexuality, such as:

- Sex only defined as inserting a penis into a vagina
- Traditional gender roles and expectations
 - Everyone will get married, and sex should wait until marriage
 - Women should have children, and only married women should have children
- Patriarchal expectations of sex
 - Sex is about the pleasure of the man and nothing else
 - It is the woman's responsibility to please the man
 - A man who has sex with a lot of women is a player, but a woman who has sex with a lot of men is a slut
 - Only women experience sexual assault or abuse
 - Men who experience abuse are weak
- Biphobia
 - Women who are bisexual are either promiscuous, experimenting, or seeking attention
 - Men can't be bisexual
 - Bisexual women always like threesomes
 - Bisexuality doesn't exist, and eventually they will "choose"

The goal of my program is to eventually create a space where these views are challenged.

I hope to eliminate the barriers that prevent queer and trans students of color from having a

healthy sex life and healthy relationships, and providing future generations of queer and trans students of color the independence and freedom of attending an institution that provides for their specific needs. Through the implementation of the Qvocacy Program, I will plant the seed for student affairs professionals to subconsciously incorporate the idea of queer sex education into their future policies and programming. By providing queer and trans students of color the resources to meet their specific needs, as well as transforming the space of the university to include queer and trans students of color, the university becomes a space for the queer and trans students of color to not only receive their degree, but to improve their sexual health, mental health, and emotional health.

Chapter Two

Thematic Concern, Conceptual Framework, and Definitions

Thematic Concern

Despite human existence relying on sex, sex education is still one of the most controversial topics in American culture. Discrepant levels of sex education in United States curricula affect student life at institutions of higher education, where students come to college from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences and are often experiencing life without supervision for the first time. Most college students live on campus their first year, and hookup culture is prominent on and off campus. Often universities attempt to provide access to sex education resources but with little to no subsequent education on why those resources are needed or a critical understanding of why they are necessary. This disproportionately impacts queer and trans students of color, who often experience the consequences of failed sex education more than their straight, cis, white counterparts. Queer and trans identities are developed from the very idea of sexuality, and a university that does not provide the proper resources and education for queer and trans students of color is undemocratic.

Conceptual Framework

1. Why is sex education critical for traditionally aged college students?
2. What is the role of education in society, and what role does sex education play in a truly democratic society?
3. How do neoliberalism, religion, and heteronormativity disproportionately impact queer and trans people of color in the university?

4. How can student affairs professionals support a democratic education for queer and trans students of color?

Definitions

Constitutive

Asexual

A broad spectrum of sexual orientations generally characterized by feeling varying degrees of sexual attraction or a desire for partnered sexuality. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy, which is the deliberate abstention from sexual activity, despite sexual desire. Some asexual people do have sex and do experience varying levels of sexual attraction. There are many diverse ways of being asexual. A person who does not experience sexual attraction can experience other forms of attraction such as romantic attraction, as physical attraction and emotional attraction are separate aspects of a person's identity. These may or may not correlate with each other - for instance, some people are physically and romantically attracted to women. However, others might be physically attracted to all genders and only emotionally attracted to men (UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center).

Bisexual

A person whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of any gender, or towards people regardless of gender.

Biphobia

Aversion, dislike, or prejudice against bisexual people, intentional or otherwise.

Cisgender

A gender identity that matches that the sex assigned at birth. For example, a person born as a male identifying as a man. A person whose gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth likely does not identify as cisgender.

Cissexism/Genderism

The pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion founded on the belief that there are, and should be, only two genders and that one's gender or most aspects of it, are inevitably tied to assigned sex. This system oppresses people whose gender and/or gender expression falls outside of cis-normative constructs. Within cissexism, cisgender people are the dominant group and trans/ gender non-conforming people are the oppressed group (UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center).

Coming Out

Coming out is the process of voluntarily sharing one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity with others. This process is unique for each individual and there is no right or wrong way to come out. The term "coming out" has also been broadened to include other pieces of potentially stigmatized personal information. Terms also used that correlate with this action are: "Being out" which means not concealing one's sexual orientation or gender identity, and "Outing, " a term used for making public the sexual orientation or gender identity of another who would prefer to keep this information secret (UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center).

Critical Consciousness

Originally coined by Paulo Freire (1997), critical consciousness is a state of becoming “with the world” by being able to critically “read the world.” It is the idea that, “Awareness [is] developed through **critical** thought that enables one to see beyond the superficial to what is typically controversial because it threatens the hegemony or status quo.”

Critical Thinking

An objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgment (Oxford Dictionary).

Gender

A social construct typically used to classify a person by masculine or feminine terms. Fundamentally different from the sex one is assigned at birth.

Gender Expression

How one expresses oneself, in terms of dress and/or behaviors. Society, and people that make up society characterize these expressions as "masculine," "feminine," or "androgynous." Individuals may embody their gender in a multitude of ways and have terms beyond these to name their gender expression(s) (UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center).

Gender Fluid/Genderfluid

A gender identification and presentation that often shifts, whether within or outside of societal, gender-based expectations. Being fluid in motion between two or more genders (UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center).

Gender Identity

One's innermost concept of self on the gender spectrum, how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves related to masculinity and femininity. One's

gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth (Human Rights Campaign).

Intersectionality

A term coined by law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1980s to describe the way that multiple systems of oppression interact in the lives of those with multiple marginalized identities. Intersectionality looks at the relationships between multiple marginalized identities and allows us to analyze social problems more fully, shape more effective interventions, and promote more inclusive advocacy amongst communities (UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center).

LGBTQIA+

A common name for the community comprised of people of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other queer identities. The term started as “LGBT”, and subsequent letters have been adopted in various literature and other spaces to be more inclusive (UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center). For the purpose of this project, the community of people with these identities will be referred to as the queer community.

Metacognition

Awareness and understanding of one’s own thought processes (Oxford Dictionary).

Microaggression

Brief and subtle behaviors, whether intentional or not, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages of commonly oppressed identities. These actions cause harm through the invalidation of the target person’s identity and may reinforce stereotypes.

Neoliberalism	Theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey, 2005).
Sexual Orientation	Sexual orientation is an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual or affectional attraction or non-attraction to other people. Sexual orientation is fluid, can change, and people use a variety of labels to describe their sexual orientation (UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center).
Tokenism	The practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to be inclusive to members of minority groups (Oxford Dictionary).
Transgender/trans	An adjective used most often as an umbrella term and frequently abbreviated to “trans.” Identifying as transgender, or trans, means that one’s internal knowledge of gender is different from conventional or cultural expectations based on the sex that person was assigned at birth. While transgender may refer to a woman who was assigned male at birth or a man who was assigned female at birth, transgender is an umbrella term that can also describe someone who identifies as a gender other than woman or man, such as non binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, no gender or multiple genders, or some other gender identity (UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center).
Umbrella Term	Term covering an overall classification of something.

Operative:

Advocacy	Public, genuine, active, and consistent support of a cause.
Cohort	A group of individuals working together to achieve a common goal.
Critical Thinking	The process of questioning what one already knows.
Program	An event developed at a university intended to educate students.
Queer	An umbrella term used to describe anyone who does not identify as straight or cisgender.
Qvocracy	A play on the word “advocacy”, Qvocracy is the overall term for queer advocacy, or advocacy through a queer lens. It is the proposed name of the intervention presented in this thesis.
Qvocate	A play on the word “advocate”, a Qvocate is a student member of the Qvocracy program.
Sex Education	The process of educating on topics including but not limited to sex, bodies, and pleasure.

ACPA/NASPA Competencies

The ACPA/NASPA competencies set the standards for how student affairs professionals should conduct themselves in their work and continuously engage in professional development in order to support incoming generations of students. The competencies elaborate essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of all student affairs professionals regardless of

functional area (ACPA/NASPA Competencies). While no individual can master all competencies perfectly, it is the responsibility of the student affairs professional to engage with all competencies throughout their career and specialize in as many as they are able. The competencies student affairs professionals should uphold are personal and ethical foundations; values, philosophy, and history; assessment, evaluation, and research; law, policy, and governance; organizational and human resources; leadership; social justice and inclusion; student learning and development; advising and supporting; and technology (ACPA/NASPA Competencies).

Each of the competencies must be addressed in any university program implementation but the most critical competencies of the Qvocacy program are advising and supporting, student learning and development, social justice and inclusion, personal and ethical foundations, and leadership. The staff member will support and advise the students, and students will learn to support and advise each other. The purpose of the program is to create social justice in the university community for queer and trans students of color and foster leadership and student development in marginalized populations. The participating queer and trans students of color will develop personal and ethical skills to understand the complexity of the social justice concerns they choose to address. The goals and values of the Qvocacy program align with the ACPA/NASPA competencies and professional staff members should easily be able to implement and address them in the development of the program.

Chapter Three

The Narrative

While education systems have existed and functioned globally for centuries, the inconsistencies in perspectives of the philosophy of its purpose have caused a divide in the functioning of higher education systems. A commonly known perspective of education is that of a good: a degree that can be bought (with loans), then sold, (the student attends college). Those with this view say it will benefit its consumer, (the student), by providing them with a promised future of higher earnings. Educational philosophers have problematized this notion through various critical viewpoints, related both to education, as well as neoliberal economic functions.

In this chapter I will discuss my philosophical positionality on education, influenced by the work of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Michel Foucault. I will discuss the role and purpose of education, as well as higher education's role in that purpose. I will then provide the historical context for why this concern is a necessary topic for student affairs practitioners to consider, including the painful history of queer exclusion in higher education, as well as the intersectional oppression that causes such events, which I will then use to justify the formulation of this philosophical position to my thematic concern. This chapter provides the philosophical and historical context that will set up the framework for my intervention, to be discussed in Chapter 4. To begin, I will discuss and defend the foundational and philosophical principles that guide these ideas.

Introduction to Educational Philosophy

Individuals develop attitudes and beliefs through their lived experiences. All individuals have a set of philosophies and beliefs, even if the individual is not conscious about what those

beliefs are, and the events a person experiences in their lifetime will shape those beliefs as they happen. Philosophy plays a key role in the structures and systems of education; it provides educators with a foundation for different learning methods, as well as means of educating. It is critical for an educator to understand their own beliefs and philosophies before attempting to educate; this allows the educator to avoid teaching blindly or with no direction or purpose. Educators must empathize with other beliefs, while simultaneously being conscious of and educating with their own beliefs. This is not exclusive to traditional K-12 education, or even standard higher education teachings in college level classes.

Educational philosophy transcends the classroom and is necessary in any educational practice, otherwise the educating occurs without purpose. When there is no philosophy behind a style of educating, the educator is doing so blindly, and with no direction. Having a purpose for educating is critical, otherwise the individuals on the receiving end of the education will have no consciousness as to why they are learning what they are learning. When students question why they are learning, and they do not receive an answer that makes sense to them, it demotivates them to be educated. It reminds me of my own K-12 education, and how much I hated math when I was growing up. It confused me and made me feel bad about myself when I couldn't get the answers right, and I did not understand why I had to learn it if I had no desire of being a mathematician. As a child, my teachers and parents tried to explain the importance of math to me, but it wasn't until I was much older that I learned the importance of math, through my own experiences. Although this can be difficult with young children, it less difficult with adults and traditionally-aged college students who are at a very crucial time in their development.

Executing a teaching style with a philosophy gives it a purpose because it allows the educator to be conscious of why they are teaching, which helps the student understand why they

are learning; increasing the likelihood of the student benefitting from their education experience, instead of simply being present to fit a requirement. To begin the discussion on my philosophical positionality, I will start with one of the earliest educational philosophers, John Dewey, and chronologically discuss preceding notable philosophical frameworks, such as those of Paulo Freire and Kimberlé Crenshaw.

Philosophical Positionality

The goal of an education should be an experience, and students should be actively involved with their learning. Not only to learn, but also to learn to be able to question what they know and have been taught. This set of ideologies comes from John Dewey, a well-known philosopher of education whose pragmatic perspective views education as a democratic experience. Though his work dates back to the early twentieth century, Dewey's teachings transcend and are reflected in modern educational practices. At the time, his views were progressive, despite his original philosophies and their influence on modern methods of educating, and what is often known as "learning by doing". Any time your teacher gave you an activity where you got out of your seat, it was likely influenced by John Dewey (1916).

Democracy of Education critiques traditional education settings and practices. Dewey (1916) declares that society "exists through a process of transmission quite as much as biological life. This transmission occurs by means of communication of habits of doing, thinking, and feeling from the older to the younger" (p. 3). He theorizes a truly democratic system, one where students develop democratic sensibility through their education, and use the classroom as a space to create change.

According to Dewey (1916), society is the foundation for education, and education attempts to preserve what society deems important, which causes us to question who deems what

is important and who is in power making these decisions. Early philosophers like Plato thought other philosophers should make key decisions, because Plato thought that those who hold the knowledge should hold the power. Both he and Dewey considered the way society has always been massively unequal, and both wanted to see change.

However, Dewey wanted to take Plato's idea and instead hold society accountable for its actions by creating a democratic society where power is shifted from the hands of individuals and back into the collective's. Dewey felt education should not be defined by one person or party, and that education is a reproduction of power structures that remain unchanged if not challenged. Dewey's (1916) ideas of democracy include mutual interest, meaning all parties collaborating in joint efforts, and free interaction between group and constant communication, meaning anyone is able to speak with whom they wish and when they wish.

Dewey also suggests that education is in motion and is constantly changing. According to Dewey (1916), educational shifts mirror societal shifts, and "a society which is mobile, which is full of channels for the distribution of a change occurring anywhere, must see to it that its members are educated to personal initiative and adaptability" (p. 13). In other words, a society that is constantly moving and changing must educate its members to adapt to the changes. Dewey's view of education is not static or defined by one person; he viewed centralized power structures as undemocratic and unrepresentative of societal needs.

For Dewey, the improvement of education comes directly from constant communication and changing viewpoints, and he believed these create democracy. While these ideas seem standard in terms of the right for someone to have control over their education, these ideas struggle to occur in standard American education. In the U.S, teachers decide what students will learn, and the students are expected and required to exceed a certain standard. Additionally, it is

difficult for educators to face those in power and make changes, especially when the changes are seen as radical, like sex education curriculums in public schools. Due to the standard United States culture of discomfort when it comes to sex, it can be difficult for educators to advocate for sex education in their schools, despite the fact that a society would not be, as Dewey (1916) suggests, “mobile”, without the act of sex in the first place. According to Dewey, the university is a reproduced version of society, and a society that is uncomfortable talking about sex and sexuality is going to fail to approach this in its universities. How can a society, whose primary existence relies on sex, be so uncomfortable talking about sex? How can a society expect to serve its people if their education systems are blatantly excluding the topic that creates them?

For a queer person, attraction to others defines their identity. Attraction is a normal part of human life, and sex is part of the human experience. A sex education that is preventative of experiencing an act that distinctly sets identity apart from the “norm” negates queer potentiality. Sometimes queer folks do not understand their identity until they are older, and some come out much later in life. As Dewey says, humans learn through experience. How is a queer person supposed to truly understand the aspect of themselves that differs them if they are not given the resources and tools to do so in a healthy manner that gives them a sense of normalcy? Instead, they simply do not receive it: they search for it on their own, most likely through the internet, and they do it discreetly, and likely without contraception or protection. The consequences of this can be evidenced in the rates of STIs in queer identified people compared to their straight counterparts (Everett, 2013). Since students come to college and are housed together with complete freedom to have sex, the university often provides readily available condoms on campus as if everyone is automatically having straight sex.

If straight students are able to access what they need in order to engage in protected sex, but queer students are not, the university has failed them while providing for their counterparts. Heteronormativity is unknowingly perpetrated in most aspects of university life: when residence halls are gendered, when sorority and fraternity life are highly present in social scenes, and whenever students are provided with contraception resources without being required to participate in education to receive them. In these situations, the queer student is negated because university culture has excluded their identity, thus failed to meet their needs. I am not only suggesting that universities immediately provide a variety of contraception, or immediately mesh gender in the residence halls. Although these instant actions would be helpful, these actions alone without a public explanation would miss the mark entirely. For the straight student, college life is designed to fit their needs and is a completely normal experience. For the queer student, and especially for the queer or trans student of color, this is typically not the case.

A traditional purpose of the university is for the student to study and to eventually receive a degree. It is not intended to be a space for students to explore their sexuality, but it inevitably is, regardless of whether or not this idea is accepted. College students have sex, and hook up culture exists, and is often rooted in heteronormativity and gender roles (Toprak, 2020). Ignoring this and assuming otherwise is irresponsible, and universities often provide free condoms to keep students safe who choose to have sex. If straight students have access to something that protects them against STIs, but queer students do not, a queer student may be led to believe that their university does not care to protect them protect them against STIs. Students attend college for the experience as well as the degree, and in the case of a lot of students, college is the first time they are experiencing the freedom to act without the supervision of their parents or families, thus being more likely to engage in sexual activity.

Sex acts performed between queer couples could also be performed between straight couples; gay sex is different than straight sex, but there is a common purpose of sex across all sexualities: pleasure. Traditional sex education and stigmas associated with sex often assume that straight people are only having sex in order to procreate, and never for pleasure. Many religious ideals prohibit sex before marriage and encourage this stigma, let alone discourage the existence of the queer person. Since queer couples typically cannot procreate, the purpose of queer sex is pleasure, and because of the shame and stigma associated with sexual pleasure, queer people are often negated from the sex education they are in need of, and are told that their sex is shameful or unnatural. The purpose of the university factors into these ideals, as opinions on sex education are entirely subjective, and no one person has the ability to decide whether or not sex education is needed. Education shifts and changes over time and implementing this program will eventually result in growing acceptance of sex education.

Not only did Dewey's work provide the inspiration for modern-day philosophies of education, it also provides the framework for the purpose of education and who it is aimed to serve. Paulo Freire (1972) is another notable educational philosopher who was influenced by Dewey's work and critiqued traditional educational practices. His book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* critiques modern education, and, like Dewey, claims that education should be a practice of freedom. Freire (1972) proposes a method of education that suggests a new relationship between the student, teacher, and society. Freire's (1972) controversial perspective critiques the concept of "banking education", in which the "scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits" (p. 72). In other words, Freire critiques the traditional student-teacher relationship and methods of conducting a class by coining it with the term. Freire critiques traditional practices, such as assurance through policy

and classroom rules that only the teacher does the teaching and only the students do the learning. According to Freire (1972), *banking education* assumes the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing, and asserts that the teachers choose the program content, and the students should adapt to it regardless of its outcome (p. 73). While this can be closer to reality for young children at the elementary levels, this idea is fundamentally problematic for adults in higher education. Since most adults are permitted to attend higher education institutions, college students come from a plethora of backgrounds and experiences. Although the instructor of a college class may know more about the subject than the students enrolled in the class, it does not mean the instructor cannot learn from the students and create a mutual learning environment. Instructors who ask their students for feedback would likely be supported by Freire. As a solution to banking education, Freire suggests supporting the conscientização.

Banking education tactics, Freire (1972) contends, have the ability to limit students' creativity because students are "storing the deposits entrusted to them", meaning learning the information that is taught to them and depositing it into their mind without a critical analysis of what they learned (p. 72). This prevents the learner from developing critical consciousness, or commonly known in Portuguese as conscientização. Freire believes education should be a chance for the student to participate in their own learning in order to develop their consciousness, or conscientização. In systems of power, oppressors often attempt to "change the consciousness" of the oppressed, rather than the characteristics which oppress them (Freire, 1972). For queer people, this often comes as a subconscious, natural experience.

Bisexual people, for example, are often asked which gender they "prefer" upon coming out. Whenever this occurs, and whether or not they are aware of it, the person asking this is contributing to oppressive systems that attempt to change the consciousness of bisexual people.

As a bisexual person, whenever I am asked this, it does more harm than the person intends. I have been asked this on many occasions, and it often proves to me that most people think that all bisexuals will eventually settle down with a partner of a specific gender, therefore “choosing”. In my experience, the questioner likely has good intentions, but with the opposite effect. By asking me this, whether intended or not, it tells me that you do not see my bisexuality as valid, and you are attempting to change my consciousness by insinuating that I should choose, rather than changing the situation that oppresses me by realizing the harm of this question. If I’m in a relationship with a man, people will assume I’m straight, if I’m in a relationship with a woman, people assume I’m a lesbian, and heteronormativity is the oppressive force that causes people to forget about bisexual identities. I cannot speak for all bisexual people, but I do not have a level of preference for a specific gender, and I do not appreciate being asked this. Even though being asked about preference is not an act of blatant discrimination against bisexual people, it still oppresses them. Asking a bisexual person their preference is an example of what is often known as a *microaggression*.

According to Sue (2010), the societal state of acceptance toward queer people leaves bisexuals as a target for *microaggressions*, or subtle forms of discrimination that are usually well intended. Although they are not directly violent, they are just as harmful. Upon telling someone who is straight that I’m bisexual, I hear the typical micro-aggressive response, even though the person is more than likely just trying to show that they are accepting of me. “That’s awesome!/Good for you!” “You’re twice as likely to find someone!” “I hate men too, sometimes I wish I was bi or a lesbian!”. Too often, folks go to great lengths to prove their acceptance of me as a bisexual person, and do not realize that their efforts can make me uncomfortable. I’m not looking to be praised or complimented for my bisexuality, and I likely brought it up because the

context of our conversation made it relevant, not because I need your vocal approval. I do not need someone to prove their acceptance of me, because I am already assuming this as a basic aspect of human decency. It took until I was 22 years old to come out as bisexual, and it took until then to realize that I had been experiencing this microaggressive biphobia my entire life.

Biphobia is different from homophobia; although rarely violent, it is omnipresent in oppression. Queer people have been discriminated against as long as they have been present in history, but bisexual people experience it differently because they receive the micro-homophobia that has adapted with society's overall acceptance for queer people. People do not want to be outwardly prejudice against us, because society has come to a point where blatant discrimination is not socially acceptable. To a straight person, bisexuals are often seen as not "fully" gay, and are seen as less like gays and lesbians, and as more "normal", therefore subject to more subtle forms of oppression like backhanded compliments about how someone is proud of my sexuality. I did not realize this was happening to me until I started exploring the gay areas of social media and had queer friends explain these concepts to me. It was through a different process of education that I developed the critical consciousness to realize people were saying things to me that were not kind, even if they did not mean to be unkind. I became aware of myself, my sexuality, and what it means to be a queer person through the different parts of my college experience.

For Freire (1972), the problem in functional education lies in attempting to change the viewpoint of the oppressed rather than change the situation that oppresses them and diminishes their ability to reach their conscientização. For example, a curriculum without sex education denies the significance of sexuality to the human existence, and the consequences of this eradicate the existence of the queer person, as the queer person's identity is built on their

sexuality. Freire would likely be a supporter of sex education for this reason and would likely suggest queer liberation through means of active education. Freire proposes *problem-posing education* as a solution to banking education. A classroom led with Freirean, problem-posing tactics aims to transform the educational experience. The students would become “critical co-investigators” with the teacher, who would constantly create knowledge along with their students (Freire, 1972, p. 81). To be critical is to be able to analyze, and a critical consciousness means using the mind to question what you think you know. Freire believed it is just as important for the teacher to learn as much as the students, and that the purpose of the education is to be constantly developing critical consciousness on both ends. Students stay the same age as the teacher gets older, and the teacher’s ability to learn from their students as time goes on speaks volumes to their intentions and ability. Freire (1972) proposes education be a practice of freedom rather than domination, meaning students are unrestricted in the knowledge they can acquire, and would have likely opposed general education requirements and the pressure to choose a major in college. Both Dewey (1916) and Freire (1972) argued that students should play an active role in their learning, that knowledge is constantly changing and shifting, and that educational spaces should be a place for social change. In order to address the oppressive forces identified by Freire, renowned law scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw suggests an intersectional approach to social justice.

The term “intersectionality” was originally coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, not in the education realm, but for court of law. Her 1989 original paper for the *University of Chicago Legal Forum* is one of the most famous pieces of social justice literature and is the foundation for most modern social justice education. Crenshaw (1989) originally coined the idea in order to reject race and gender as “mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis” (p. 139). The term recognizes discrimination that is fundamentally omnipresent in order to expose the

discrimination taking place in layers. In other words, discrimination usually exists in terms of sex and in terms of race, but modern literature and policy around discrimination rarely considered the challenges caused by the overlap of identities. A heterosexual, cisgender male is going to experience far less discrimination than his black, gay, female counterpart. This has been evidenced in decades of blatant social inequalities, such as the racial wealth gap, HIV rates, and redlining, as well as history's timeline of human rights for women and people of color. The goal of intersectionality is a reminder that discrimination occurs in layers, and the more layers one has in their identity, the higher the risk of being discriminated against. A commonly known consequential piece of evidence of intersectional discrimination is the unfortunate rate of pregnancy related deaths. In a 2019 study, by Petersen, et al., the CDC reports that African American, Native American and Alaska Native women experienced pregnancy related deaths at a rate three times higher than white women, while the same study reports that 3 in 5 of the deaths were preventable. This evidence has caused a stir in social justice literature and is just one example of disproportionate societal effects on women of color.

Society has disproportionately allowed the discrimination of marginalized populations to exist, and intersectionality is an approach to challenging this. It is an attempt to explore the intersecting of historically oppressed identities and analyze the specific consequences of the overlapping of these identities. The history of the term, summarized in the original paper, originates court cases in which black women attempted to sue for discrimination in the workplace; the courts failed to recognize the combined discrimination, and focused on sex and race as mutually exclusive categories, ultimately preventing the women from receiving accurate justice for their discrimination. In one example that occurred shortly after the Civil Rights Movement in 1964, five black women attempted a lawsuit against General Motors for laying off

all Black women employees in 1970. As described by Crenshaw (1989), the court determined the lawsuit “must be examined to see if it states a cause of action for race discrimination, sex discrimination, or alternatively either, but not a combination of both”, completely dismissing the blatant, combined racism and sexism of the case (p. 139).

Crenshaw’s work looks to explore challenges and dilemmas faced by people with intersecting marginalized identities, such as gender identity, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and disability status. The intersectional experience, as Crenshaw (1989) suggests, is “greater than the sum of racism and sexism” and because of this, the framework of social justice discourse must be reconstructed to consider overlapping identities (p. 140). The experience of a black woman is going to differ from the experience of a black gay man, which will differ greatly from the experience of a disabled, black, queer person. Crenshaw’s work has been used widely in higher education as a foundation for social justice education, but there is more work to be done to include folks who are marginalized by their oppressed, intersecting identities. Crenshaw has aimed her usage of the term at white women specifically, as to expose the way people of color historically come last in order of gaining their individual rights and liberties. The year 1920 is often celebrated as the year women received the right to vote in the United States, but it would be decades before that right was granted to women of color. Even though the term was coined in the late 1980s, the oppressive forces are still alive and acting today to keep people with intersected identities from achieving their potentiality.

The Role of “Queer”

It is critical to understand the shift in discourse around activism for queer folks and usage of the term “queer” in literature and advocacy. Cathy J. Cohen (1997) discusses the “Radical potential of queer politics” in her essay “Punks, bulldaggers, and welfare queens”. Cohen’s essay

demonstrates the history of the discourse of the term and discusses the need for new thinking in terms of queer politics in order to enact fundamental liberation for queer communities. Cohen (1997) is critical of queer politics and their causal dichotomy of queer versus straight, and argues that “a truly radical or transformative politics has not resulted from queer activism, despite the possibility invested in the idea of queerness and the practice of queer politics” (p. 438).

To challenge this, Cohen suggests a “reconceptualization not only of the content of identity categories, but the intersectional nature of identities themselves”, and claims they must “become part of our political practice” (p. 462). Cohen (1997) also suggests the same intersectional approach that Kimberlé Crenshaw coined just years before this piece was written, and suggests that “only an articulation and commitment to mutual support can truly be the test of unity when pursuing transformational politics” (p. 462). Both Crenshaw and Cohen were focused on bringing the intersectionality of identities into academic literature to bring social, economic, and racial justice to people in marginalized communities. These scholars began discussing this over twenty years ago, and while there have been many accomplishments for queer folks, queer and trans people of color are still impacted by society more than their white, straight, counterparts.

The Human Rights Campaign has been tracking the deaths of transgender and nonbinary people in the U.S who were killed due to fatal violence. In 2019 alone, at least 26 queer & trans people were killed, along with 24 the year before, and the majority were black trans women (Human Rights Campaign, 2019). Scholars have been working tirelessly for decades to bring liberation and life to queer and trans people of color, and this project is a proposal of a program intended to address this.

The Role of Higher Ed & Student Affairs

If Dewey, Freire, and Crenshaw were alive at the same time and had a chance to work together, they would likely develop something that parallels this project and its goals. Dewey's work subsequently influenced the work of Freire's, and Crenshaw found a way to address some of the problems proposed by Freire. The purpose of education, as posed by these three scholars, is to provide a critical experience that creates transformative social changes, increases the learner's critical consciousness, and addresses the intersections of identity.

It is often challenging and time-consuming to enact change at the K-12 level, as it is controlled by state and local governments with specific contingencies for policy transformation. Practitioners in higher education, however, do not experience the same boundaries. Depending on the context, size, history, and status of the institution, these philosophies can be directly implemented into the work of higher education practitioners, and change can be enacted through the educational programming they develop. Although university faculty can certainly create change in their classroom instruction, this project will focus on the student affairs professional as a catalyst for transformational change in the university. They play the role of the "teacher" in the Freirean sense, and their instruction often transcends traditional classroom instruction.

Students attending a university have the opportunity to become involved with their campus community, and the programs developed and implemented by student affairs professionals have been shown to impact student development. Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement explores the role of participation during the college experience and its effects on student development. Renn and Reason, as cited by Patton (2016), contend that this theory suggests "the meaningful educational engagement in college stimulates increasing cognitive complexity, leading to learning and development" (p. 34). In other words, the more involved a student becomes with their campus, the developed their mind becomes. Astin, as cited in Patton

(2016), defines *involvement* as the amount of physical and mental energy the student devotes to their academic experience (p. 34). This theory indicates devotion to activities outside of studies as involvement, and subsequent scholars have used this theory in support of clubs and organizations for student involvement on campuses. Astin denotes that the more energy a student exerts into their experience, the more they will benefit and develop as a student and a citizen. It reminds me of the old saying, “you get out of it what you put into it”, which for me, is a basic universal truth to life; if you pay more attention to something, you will know a lot more about it, and be more likely to enjoy it.

This is the where roles of higher education administrators and student affairs professionals become more than an occupation. Being prominent figures on a campus, student affairs professionals have a responsibility to act as educators. Their positions in various functional areas exist to serve students and it is imperative that they have guiding educational philosophy behind the programs they develop. This is especially prevalent with the presence of identity centers across college campuses, such as Multicultural Centers and centers for queer identified students. These functional areas of higher education typically seek to educate the campus, but they cannot eradicate issues of racism and queerphobia through their work alone. Additionally, the existence of identity centers on campus stems from a need, and a need for identity centers began with a history of oppression and discrimination against marginalized populations within the university. Although public institutions of higher education have a history of allowing identity centers and sex education tools over the course of time, the struggle for resources parallels the chronological, historical struggle for human rights for marginalized populations. Kristen Renn (2011), a scholar known for literature in queer student development,

wrote specifically about the adverse effects of identity centers in order to critique and transform them to their intended purpose. Renn (2011) states,

historically, identity centers have brought together faculty, students, and administrators within the communities represented in the centers, but they have also become lightning rods for accusations for self-segregation or campus balkanization and locations for in-group discrimination (e.g. racism in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender [LGBT] centers, sexism in ethnic centers). Identity centers are one institutional response to helping students cope with campus climates characterized by outright hostility and subtler, but no less harmful, microaggressions. They are also sites of positive, strengths-based identity development. Yet, the idea persists that women or students of color or LGBT students who get together in their own centers are practicing reverse sexism, racism, or heterosexism; a common criticism is that identity centers create spaces that deprive majority students of opportunities to meet the other (pp. 244-245).

Renn summarizes the adverse side effects of the identity center, and uses these critiques to further defend the need for critical attention to them. As evidenced previously in my philosophical analysis of the university, society reflects the work done in its universities, and to prove this further I will now discuss the historical context of sex education in the university.

Introduction to Historical Analysis of Higher Education

Historically, the university existed as a space for only the wealthy, white, male to study, and it was through struggle and activism for human rights that eventually allowed women and People of Color to attend university (Wilder, 2013). Although there are strict, federal anti-discrimination policies in place at universities and workplaces, marginalized populations still face oppression and discrimination in these spaces. Racism and queerphobia are still inherently present in the university, otherwise there would be no need for identity centers and safe spaces on campuses, otherwise there would have been no long history of student activism, and otherwise more queer and trans people of color would attend university and become prominent world leaders like their straight, white counterparts.

As Dewey (1916) argues, society is a reflection of its universities and the university has historically existed as a space that is exclusive to the queer and trans person of color, and more specifically, the queer and trans student of color. The foundation of this discrimination lies in the history of the founding of the university itself. The university was founded through religious ideals, and religious ideals have a historical record of persecuting and discriminating against queer and trans people. Additionally, the history of the university developing into a neoliberal state is one of the main factors contributing to students receiving access to sex education materials without receiving adequate education on why they are necessary. In this section of the chapter, I will discuss the history of the university as a space for religion and neoliberalism to negate the potentiality of the queer & trans student of color.

Religion, Racism, & Queerphobia in the University

Education has a history of being controlled and dominated by religion and money. It was not until the 19th century, as Anderson (2010) suggests, when John Hopkins University was the first to adopt Germany's popular method of research and teaching in search for impartial truth, leading to what is now known as the research university. The American Industrial Revolution called for the need of engineers and scientists, and soon the newly colonized world would need trained scholars. This quickly became the dominant model for American universities, and with the early colonization of the United States the university quickly shifted into a business opportunity, reserved only for the elite until the late 20th century (Anderson, 2010). Eventually college started to become more accessible to women, People of Color, indigenous peoples, and other historically marginalized groups. Even though the public university was eventually formed and is one of the largest attended institutional types today, a large number of higher education institutions are religiously affiliated. Even though there are specialized laws to protect

marginalized populations from violence and harassment, the university still often exists as a space that promotes religious ideologies that are affiliated with violence and discrimination against queer bodies. According to Siker (2007), the Christian tradition has generally forbidden any kind of sexual contact from anyone before the act of marriage, let alone the act of two people of the same sex engaging in sexual contact.

At my undergraduate university, there was a group that would come to campus every so often; they would spread out on our Quad with microphones and loud speakers in the most heavily foot-trafficked area of campus, with large signs that read hateful statements like “Fags burn in hell”, “Whores deserve nothing”, etc. My university was public, so officials were prohibited from telling them to leave as not to violate free speech laws; it was still free speech, even though it was hate speech. There eventually became a schoolwide cultural acceptance to ignore the group whenever they came, and they came often, as it was very obviously a scam to attract outrage attention and attempt to win money in lawsuits from students who may become violent in retaliation to their hate. My university did everything it could to protect students from the hate, including warning students whenever they would come to avoid the area and constant communication encouraging students to seek help and resources if troubled by this group. Even though my university administration attempted to offer support against the views of this group, this group was still allowed to be present on my campus whenever they wanted. I attended a large, public university. It was one of the most attended schools in my home state and has a large queer population. Even though my undergraduate institution was generally a queer friendly institution, they still did not have the power to prevent groups that hate them from coming to campus. Although my school was a safe place for me as a gay person, there are no laws to

prevent people who are pretending to use religion to spew hate from coming to my campus and discriminating against me.

Even though more women today attend college than men, women were not allowed to attend college until the mid 19th century. Oberlin College was the first university that admitted Black people since its founding and has a history of advancing Higher Education for African Americans (JBHE chronology of major landmarks in the progress of African Americans in Higher Education). What is now known as Cheyney University was established in 1837, and was established to be free for all Black Americans. While these sound like accomplishments for the Black community, they were only able to have such “accomplishments” because of the lengthy, painful history of slavery in the United States. Millions of black bodies were kidnapped and forced to work under abusive conditions, and according to Wilder (2013), the average person is unaware that many large popular universities were built primarily by slaves. Although slavery was abolished in 1865, there is a subsequent history of segregation and discrimination that follow for People of Color, and with a different presence of discrimination within the university. Slaves were responsible for the existence of many universities, but were often denied entry to them once they became free, and had to fight for the right to attend the university that was not admitting them based on race.

I remember seeing a common post on social media circulate around February, Black History Month, every year. It was Tweet with a rejection letter from Emory University School of Medicine in Georgia, and the letter was short and looked official. It read “I am sorry to write you that we are not authorized to consider for admission a member of the Negro race,” (@drantbradley, 2018). The letter was dated 1959, (the year both of my parents were born), and even included a postscript that the admissions office would return the applicant’s \$5 fee. This

was only 61 years ago, and although such a letter would constitute legal action today in 2020, it is evident that discrimination against Blacks in higher education is still prevalent. The combination of discrimination of queer people in religion mixed with the painful history and consequences of slavery leave queer & trans people of color more vulnerable in a university than their straight, white counterparts.

The results of this are often unknowingly manifested in many areas of university life. Religion is not the sole cause of racism and queerphobia, but its history of persecution against these groups still contribute to the spread of these discriminatory ideals, which eventually lead to subconscious heteronormative practices. People often still use religion as an excuse for homophobic actions and racism, and because this is becoming less socially acceptable, racism and queerphobia are manifested in less obvious ways. The most obvious is the presence of gender normativity and heteronormativity on the college campus through forces of power through ideology. According to Louis Althusser (2014), an ideology is “an imaginary relation to a real condition of existence” (p. 181). In other words, ideologies are widely held, basic assumptions about reality that may not have a factual basis, but instead are formed by the beliefs people hold that shape who they are. A person’s ideologies are a direct result of their beliefs. Ideologies are behind the force of power because they intrinsically influence beliefs, which then control actions.

For example, the ideology of masculinity has influenced the belief that men are supposed to act masculine in order to maintain their masculinity. The ideology of masculinity is a result of the existing societal patriarchy and history of male domination; it asserts that men are the dominant gender and should act accordingly. The ideologies of gender and the patriarchy have created a society where women and queer people are marginalized and held to societal standards.

This ideology is a force of power that keeps queer people oppressed. For example, queer men may not fit the standards of masculinity, and if a queer student is the only queer man in his residence hall, he may have a harder time fitting in with his hallmates. As Backer (2018) suggested, people are then interpellated, or automatically reproduce their ideologies. People are interpellated to tell a boy not to cry, because ideologies of masculinity would say a crying boy is not masculine. Additionally, that student may be more fearful to interact with his straight hallmates, and be interpellated to search for other friends that seem more like him.

Power is reproduced in university settings through ideologies, but specifically through materialized ideologies and rituals from those ideologies. In addition to the ideology being an imaginary relation to a real condition of existence, Althusser (2014) contends, “the ideology also has a material existence”, in other words, it becomes manifested into real practices by humans that reinforce and ritualize the ideology (p. 184). Practices are “regulated by rituals”, Althusser (2014) continues, in which they are inscribed within the material existence of an ideological apparatus (p. 186). Althusser’s work highlights the significance of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), or sites where ideologies are reproduced, such as schools and places of religious worship. On the opposite end is the repressive state apparatus, where centralized organization supersedes ideology, such as police or military forces. The ISA and the university predominantly function by ideology, and are sites of class struggle, as the class in power cannot lay down the law in the ISA as easily as it can in its repressive counterpart, which therefore allows members of ISAs to make transformative change within their state (Althusser, 1970). The university is an ISA because it reinforces ideologies such as heteronormativity and neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism & Power Structures: Access without education

Neoliberalism, as described by David Harvey (2005), is a...

theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. (p. 2)

In other words, neoliberalism is the governing ideology that has influenced society since the 1970s, mainly driven by profit, competition, and self-interest. It maintains that control over the economy should be held by large corporations and wealthy individuals with money and power, with little to no government interaction to the free market. A well-known result of neoliberalism is the student-debt crisis, which occurred from the ideology of education as an investment, and led to mass debt-financing when tuition increased from the 1990s-2010s. Students were interpellated to believe that a bachelor's degree was a guarantee for a higher income, which led them to believe that debt-financing was the best way to fund their education.

As for neoliberalism in the university, consider state requirements for an institution of higher education that require students to take an online, module-based course around sexual assault and Title IX before they can begin their first semester. For example, my undergraduate university required us to take courses like this created by EverFi. EverFi is an online learning development platform that creates learning tools for universities and large entities. In a 2017 article, Wan summarizes a \$190 million fundraiser for advancements in the company (Wan, 2017). Most of this money came from a company called "The Rise Fund" (Wan, 2017) which specializes in business investments for social and environmental change. While this company clearly has values and ethics in mind, campus sexual assaults still happen every single year. I completed a required EverFi courses before my first year of college in the Summer of 2014, yet in that year almost 10% of college females reported experiencing sexual assault (Krebs, et al., 2016).

If this company can raise over \$190 million for its efforts, and its efforts are to prevent campus sexual assaults, and universities utilize their content, why are students still sexually assaulting other students? Sexual assault is a common threat to college campuses, and neoliberal efforts to prevent them from occurring have failed. Additionally, students are being required to learn about sexual assault and consent, with absolutely no critical education related to sex or sexuality, and no education on the power dynamics that occur during a sexual assault. Every single student receives the same exact sexual assault training, even though students are coming from schools that likely did not require them to learn sex education, even though a student could come from a culture where victims of sexual assault are blamed, punished, and killed. How can universities be teaching every incoming student the same course on sexual assault when they come from such inconsistent backgrounds of knowledge? The answer is neoliberalism and is evidenced in university attempts to fulfill state requirements while incurring the lowest possible costs. Sexual assault on college campuses is one of the many symptoms of the disease of neoliberalism, and to prove this further I will now discuss the lack of discourse around sexuality as a product of neoliberalism, as outlined by queer French philosopher Michel Foucault.

Foucault's (1978) overarching philosophy holds that knowledge is power, and that it is "the production of effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge" that drives the ability to spread knowledge (p. 102). Knowledge is a cycle of power because of the domination of these instruments historically held by the upper class. For example, access to published research and academic journals are often restricted, and members of the public are often required to purchase access to them with a credit card. This idea transcends to sexuality, and cisgender and heterosexual people remain in power because of the domination of discourse on sexuality. Due to the dominant group holding power, in addition to the ideology of sex as an

unthinkable subject, the effective instruments to produce knowledge on sexuality are inhibited, as evidenced with the lack of federal policy regarding sex education in the United States. This lack of discourse on sexuality is more specifically outlined in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault's (1978) four-volume study of sexuality discourse in western society.

The History of Sexuality focuses on the "repressive hypothesis" of sexuality which arose from the rise of the bourgeoisie and capitalism from the 17th to 20th centuries, and led to topics of sexuality being societally prohibited (Foucault, 1978). Foucault holds that the repression of sexuality is linked to the rise of the bourgeoisie becoming wealthy through capital, and with the societal shift to economic profit and self-interest as the dominant ideologies, sex outside of marriage was viewed as a waste of time and energy. Conversely, sex within marriage allows procreation, and therefore more market contribution from the parents and future children. This assumptive ideology is negating of the human condition and oppresses not only queer people, but also childfree folks and folks with reproductive issues who long to be parents. This example is an important reminder that a need for sex education benefits everyone, regardless of sexual orientation.

According to the *Cass Model for Homosexual Identity Development*, originally published in the Journal of Sex Research in 1979, coming out is a lifelong process that occurs in stages. In the later stages, the individual develops an awareness of the incongruity between the person's increasingly positive concept of themselves, and an awareness of society's rejection of this orientation (Cass, 1979). It is important to understand that a queer person's sexuality encompasses their identity and makes them unique. In relation to *The History of Sexuality*, this explains the awareness of society's rejection of the queer person as a result of a lack of discourse. Society is barred from talking about sexuality, therefore even more barred from

talking about and providing rights to people of sexualities that stray from the norm of heterosexuality. Queer people have faced oppression as long as they have expressed their existence, and even though there have been recent strides in their liberation, there is still a lack of discourse on sexuality, especially in the university.

The university, in general, is a space of inequality for queer people and reproduces the ideology of heteronormativity unknowingly. Strict gendered housing is a prime example, especially considering the majority of new college students live in campus housing. Separating students by gender in the residence halls assumes that all students are cisgender, straight, and are comfortable living with a person of the same gender. During my first year of college, I attended a Catholic institution where the residence hall policy did not allow overnight guests of the opposite gender, attempting to prevent boys in the girl's halls, and vice versa. While this policy likely exists as a safety precaution and has its intentions, the enforcement of this policy implies that all students at the university are heterosexual, leaving even more implications about campus climate for queer students at this particular institution. This is just one example, and I am not suggesting that universities should completely eradicate gendered housing. However, the interpellated heteronormativity that is occurring as a result of these policies implies the university as a heteronormative space. The power, then, is held within the cisgender and heterosexual students who can go about their normal activities and living styles with no fear of oppression or discrimination.

Another example of heteronormativity in the university is the repression of discourse on diversity, inclusion, and marginalized groups. At my undergraduate institution, students were required to take several different interdisciplinary and diversity related courses. I had the opportunity to learn about social justice in the classroom, and as a person of a privileged

background, it was one of the first spaces I heard Black folks talk about their struggles. I learned about trans identities and became comfortable in my queer identity because my university was a place that took the time to educate its community. I am grateful for this, and it led to develop the career goals that led me to this project, but this is not the case across all universities. Sexuality discourse and sex education are often repressed in the university, especially at religiously based institutions that still hold conservative values related to sexuality, like the first institution I attended.

Another common sex education resource is the availability of free and low-cost HIV and STI testing. At my university, in particular, free HIV testing is available to all students at the health center. I am aware of this because I was informed by staff at sick visits to the health center, but it is not a service that is advertised prominently around campus, as a lot of my friends in college did not know this was a service that was available to them. The majority of HIV positive people in the United States are gay men, and black gay men (HIV.gov, 2020). My university had testing services available, but as far as I knew they did not provide any extra prevention education strategies that specifically aimed to educate populations that are most at risk. Having HIV testing available to everyone without critical education for the most vulnerable groups is an example of access without education and discourse, which is mis-educative and insufficient. In my home state, sex education is not required by state law (Guttmacher Institute, 2020). I am able to go to the community center in any county in my state to receive free testing for HIV, but my school is not required by the state to educate me on what HIV is. This is an example of access without education that further disserves queer and trans students of color. Even though universities have come a long way to provide sex education resources for students,

there is still work to be done to ensure sex education is not assuming everyone is straight and cisgender.

The heteronormativity and neoliberalism that is reproduced in the university, Foucault's repressive hypotheses of sexuality discourse in society, in tandem with the educational philosophies set forth by Dewey, Freire, & Crenshaw imply the need for a transformative pedagogy to meet the needs of queer and trans students of color. According to Foucault (1978), transformation occurs through discourse, and liberation comes from open discussion and occurs in places that are meant for it, such as the university. When discourse of sexuality is liberated, the identity of the queer person can then be liberated as well.

Field Experiences

I held a semester-long internship at the community college in my hometown. I was the intern for Student Life, which held engagement opportunities for students like clubs and leadership events. Engagement can be a challenge for community college staff, as students typically do not live on campus and are at very different levels of engagement. At the beginning of my semester I attended a meeting for the LGBTQ+ student club, and upon their first meeting the group decided together that they would rebrand and change their club name to SAGA, short for the "Sexuality and Gender Alliance". At the first meeting, the students were eager to get the semester rolling with ideas and programs. The club was also involved in the college's first recognized celebration of National Coming Out day and held a ceremony to hang a rainbow pride flag on the campus, which was covered by the local media outlets. Even though the group was small and at a community college, I felt a sense of community being built from observing that first meeting. Students were not afraid to express their concerns about students not feeling welcome on the campus and planned a subsequent meeting time for students to participate in a

support group. I remember seeing the same group of SAGA students spending time in the student club area, and they were always hard at work on some kind of project to make their club a success.

Additionally, this field experience at a community college provided significant implications on levels of engagement for social justice work and differed tremendously in programming than my four-year undergraduate institution. Separate from SAGA, my supervisor asked me to attend a “Safe Zone” training sponsored by another department’s social justice series at the college. The instructor went over basic queer language and explained trans and non-binary identities, and it was obvious from the questions asked that most of the students were learning most of this information for the first time. The reactions to this training were vastly different than the reactions to any programming I attended at my undergraduate institution, and it was clear that a lot more introductory work had to be done at the community college level to introduce students to queer identities. It is imperative to meet students where they are cognitively present as to not overwhelm them with too much information at a time.

The following intervention will work best at a large, public, four-year institution with a strong presence of social justice education. Providing queer and trans students of color with an opportunity to create change through leadership will support a democratic, liberating educational experience for any student under the umbrella.

Chapter Four

Design

Introduction

Despite higher education's constant trend of implementing "diversity", "inclusion", or "social justice", the university has historically existed as a space for the upper class, white, cisgender, straight men, and every other marginalized group's education rights were a result of social change (Wilder, 2013). Society and the university are each a reflection of the other, and a society that is uncomfortable talking about sex is likely to have consequences in the university setting. This is especially the case for Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC), who have had their identity and experiences dismissed by the lack of discourse around sex and sexuality. This reality has since transcended to the university and institutions of higher education where students are separated by gender and often given access to sex education resources while providing no education on proper use of these resources. More QTPOC are coming to college each year, and public policy has initiated discrepancy in the sex education, or lack thereof, students receive before attending college. Students come to college with varying levels of sex education (Moore & Smith, 2012) and it is the responsibility of the university to provide comprehensive sex education to avoid the consequences of lack of sex education.

These consequences include, but are not limited to, sexual assault, unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and dating violence, all of which QTPOC are more likely to experience than their white, straight, cisgender counterparts (Dank, Lachman, Zweig, & Yahner, 2014). Student affairs professionals have the opportunity and obligation to aid students in creating transformational change on their campuses to make them a liberating space and

experience for queer and trans students of color, and to prevent these consequences for all students. Sex education is part of self-care, and care of the self is a spiritual process that educators should consider through queer pedagogy (Drazenovich, 2015).

Through the Q-Advocacy program, students will be recruited and selected to act as transformational leaders on their campus, as well as a liaison between students and university staff. By fostering a leadership and advocacy role for students in marginalized populations under the QTPOC umbrella, student affairs professionals will develop creative methods of allowing students to see leadership and queer identity as inseparable and create social change through their leadership and identity (Renn, 2007). Students will learn from experience through responsibility for implementing their own projects (Dewey, 1916). Through the cohort model of this intervention, students will become co-creators of knowledge (Freire, 1978). The social change enacted by the Q-vocates (pronounced like “advocates”, but replacing the “ad” sound with the letter “Q”) is intended to transcend to societal change, and will lead to a safer, more inclusive campus environment for queer and trans students of color. Additionally, the implementation of this intervention will lead to more sexuality discourse and encourage conversation about the need for sex education in the university and preceding educational curriculum. Institutions of higher education have shifted their values and practices immensely to adhere to the growing population of incoming queer students (Pratt, 2014). Universities want to be known as “LGBT friendly” institutions to increase their enrollment.

In a 2014 article in Time Magazine, Pratt summarizes the growth of queer presence on college campuses and highlights a few universities that have made significant attempts to “catch up” (Pratt, 2014). It was only a few years prior to this article that Elmhurst College in Illinois became the first higher education institution in the United States to inquire about sexual

orientation and gender identity on their application for admission (Pratt, 2014). To the queer community, this signifies the first university that has taken such proactive steps toward making the space for them, rather than just including them in the space. Pratt even summarized and analyzed the intersectional issues of queer students coming to college at Elmhurst by noting most of them were people of color and the first in their family to go to college (Pratt, 2014). There are about 200 hundred centers for queer identified students nationwide (Pratt, 2014), which was the most surprising aspect of the article. The purpose of this project is not only to increase the number of institutions with identity centers for queer students, but to continually encourage change and development at existing centers. I will begin with examples of current and best practices.

Current Practices of Supporting Queer and Trans Students of Color in Higher Education

For the purpose of this project I will be critiquing the use of the term “allies” in the context of support for the queer community. An “ally” is often used to refer to a heterosexual, cisgender person who is supportive of folks under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella. For example, my undergraduate institution’s center for support of folks in the queer community used to host a consistent “LGBT Ally” program: students would attend three separate one-hour sessions, after which they would be considered an “LGBT Ally”. Students who completed the sessions received a sticker and a certificate, after which there were no further requirements. This was a progressive step for a university at its creation and was a successful program with plenty of students in attendance each semester. However, the content and structure of the program evidently outgrew itself, as many believe the term “allyship” insinuates passive participation in queer support and a false representation of advocacy.

A common practice of queer ally-ship and support is the placement of symbols, such as Safe Zone stickers or rainbow related symbols in plain sight of students, such as offices and classrooms. This is a typical trend in higher education, with helpful and supportive intentions to indicate the sticker's owner as an ally. Devita and Anders (2018) critiqued a participant of their faculty interviews on the subject, who was noted saying he would put a sticker on his office whether he knew what it meant or not, because he "wanted to be helpful" (p. 72). Devita and Anders (2018) quickly noted that being helpful is not the same as being an ally. Trainings that automatically give these stickers are typically one-time commitments with little to no reflection or action items, and rarely address the systemic issues and roots of oppression that make these trainings necessary. I agree with this critique and suggest this could do further harm if a faculty or staff member attempts to show their ally-ship through a symbol, but completes an oppressive or discriminatory act, knowingly or unknowingly. A student's learning and development will be impacted if they are falsely guided or unknowingly discriminated against. In conversation with my advisor, who facilitated a similar program years ago, she explained how she would ask students why they are attending the program to start conversation. When students answered that they were attending for a resume booster, she knew the program was quickly developing into something counterproductive to its original purpose (J. Hodes, personal communication, April 2020).

The resources used by the center at my undergraduate university are dated from the 1990's at the early stages of queer rights. During these foundational times, it was difficult to gather a few people in a room and even say the word "gay" (J. Hodes, personal communication, April 2020). Queer based programming has transitioned drastically in the few years since I was

an undergraduate student, for example transforming their “LGBT Ally” training series into different programs that focus on advocacy over allyship:

From Allyship to Advocacy Training

Tuesday, March 3, 2020, 10:00—12:00pm in [REDACTED] [click here to register for the March session](#)

Wednesday, April 15, 2020, 10:00—12:00pm in [REDACTED] [click here to register for the November session](#)

What does it mean to be an ally vs an advocate? During this 2-hour training participant will critically examine privilege, explore language, discuss strategies for accountability and ways to improve the climate for trans and queer communities. This training will provide tools and resources aimed towards deepening awareness, understanding, and knowledge. For more information, please check out our website, [REDACTED], or contact us at [REDACTED], or 610-436-3147.

Source: West Chester University Center for Trans & Queer Advocacy Website

Additionally, the center went through a recent rebranding and changed their name entirely, from “LGBT Services” to “Center for Trans & Queer Advocacy”. This name change was significant, and I remember hearing rumors of the controversy it caused, including a staff member who was apparently appalled by the usage of the term “queer”, asked if staff members should be supporting other derogatory terms. Although I was shocked at hearing such a rumor, it was later explained to me by a colleague in my graduate cohort that this individual was likely uncomfortable with the use of the term “queer” because of its history as a slur. Although the term has been widely reclaimed by the community, my colleague reminded me that the use of that term is often traumatizing for queer people who lived through the discrimination and were insulted with the term, and discussed with me the possibility that the staff member was overwhelmed by the idea of supporting what they thought was discrimination. It was a humble

reminder that life experiences alter an individual's perception on matters of social justice and activism. Before I begin the implementation of my intervention, I will outline the importance of action research and discuss how it frames the goals of my project.

Critical Action Research

Critical action research (CAR), as defined by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury in "Why action research?" (2003) is a "participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment" (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003, p. 10). In other words, CAR is a collaborative, participatory method of exploring the root causes of an issue to enact long-lasting, democratic social change that maximizes human potentiality. CAR rejects positivism, or the belief that every reasonably admissible claim can be validated with logical, scientific, or mathematical proof.

An example of positivism in relation to sexuality is the well-known fact that sex causes pregnancy and is often the motivator in discouraging teenagers and young people from having sex. Even though it is justifiably true that pregnancy is caused from sex, this fact often causes positivistic ideals that invalidate and exclude the queer person and negate their very existence. It is counterproductive to use pregnancy as a scare tactic into abstaining from sex, since two people of the same biological sex cannot physically create a child together. When young people are discouraged from having sex, it is often under the assumption that the teenagers are straight and having only straight sex that can get them pregnant. This is one reason that traditional, abstinence-only sex education negates the queer student. If a queer student's university excludes them when it provides resources for safe sex, then the university is not providing a democratic education for the queer student.

Critical action research should be used to challenge these notions. A critical action research model for sex education would include methods to normalize queer presence and queer sex and would engage in pedagogy as if were any other kind of sex, and would include queer people and queer sex in the conversation.

Sex education should be provided in institutions of higher education because the ability to understand oneself as a sexual being is a fundamental part of the human experience, and since it is the obligation of the university to provide the student with the tools to succeed, it is the responsibility of the university to provide sex education resources to queer students.

Additionally, critical action research can be controversial in the university because it can often challenge authority and hierarchy in order to evaluate and confront the root causes of university issues. Queer sex education is an example of this, because the idea of a queer sex education challenges authoritative conservative opinions. I am proposing a critical action research approach for a sex education program designed by and intended for queer and trans students of color, the Q-Advocacy program.

Program Proposal

The Q-Advocacy program fits the criterion of critical action research because it is committed to democratic social change (Brydon-Miller, et. al, 2003), and changing the narrative for queer people by normalizing sex education to include them would accomplish this by creating a culture of normalized sex and sexuality. In CAR, the knowledge comes from below (Brydon-Miller, et. al, 2003), meaning ideas are shared by all. In the Q-Advocacy program, students will be solely and jointly responsible for the content and implementation of their programs. CAR includes empathy and listening (Brydon-Miller, et. al, 2003), and students in the Q-vocacy, Q-vocates, would focus heavily on relationship building and compassion for one

another before beginning their advocacy work. In CAR, theory informs practice (Brydon-Miller, et. al, 2003). Queer politics (Cohen, 1997) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) will be used as the foundation for understanding the unique needs of queer and trans students of color. The university can be a space to use theory to normalize the queer experience.

As a specific example to dispute positivism, the university can design its sex education programs to dismiss common misconceptions of sex, for example the false narrative that sex can only involve a penis being inserted into a vagina. Implementing CAR would involve redefining “sex” to normalize it through a strategic plan crafted by students with the support of student affairs professionals. Ideally, queer theory and critical action research would be integrated into the university so much that a strong, cultural sense of normalcy is manifested by the queer student, with the ultimate goal of the queer student no longer being marginalized in the university or society. Using queer theory to design sex education programs in the university breaks down sexuality into its holistic aspects, and critical action research helps to integrate the theory with practice .

The Q-Advocacy program is a paid year-long leadership experience for queer & trans students of color to engage in activism for sex education and queer rights. The Q-Advocacy program will start by recruiting between four and eight students, “Qvocates”, in its first year. Upon the completion and success of its first year, the Q-Advocacy program will grow with subsequent academic years, recruiting for six to ten students the following academic year, and so on with subsequent academic years, with a maximum of fifteen students in a cohort. The first cohort selected will be primarily first-year students and transfer students, which will allow them to continue with the program each subsequent year until graduation. First-year and transfer queer and trans students of color will be primarily recruited, but any student with a commitment of

social and racial justice for queer and trans students of color is invited to apply. Students will be recruited (Appendix B), complete an application process (Appendix C), and be interviewed about their interest and desire to participate before being selected to be part of the cohort. The application process will be considered professional development with opportunity for feedback for students who are not selected.

Selected students will participate in a cohort together until graduation, or until they decide to end their role as a Qvocate. Students will be encouraged and incentivized to return for subsequent years with a higher stipend and more responsibility in their role, but will also be encouraged to end their role as a Qvocate if their other responsibilities need to be prioritized. The Qvocates will be active leaders on their campus and will be a resource to students for the content areas of social justice and reproductive rights through sex education. Students will be responsible for implementing individual projects related to these topics and programs as well as collaborating to design large scale programming. The program will grow with each year, with a potential for advancement in content and implementation. Projects and programs will include service-learning projects, activism, and educational events. Students will be responsible for developing projects within their own cohort as well as across cohorts. Starting with the third academic year of the program, students will be able to implement a large-scale event or program designed by all Qvocates across cohorts.

Qvocates will be paid a yearly, guaranteed stipend for their work. The Qvocacy program recognizes neoliberal politics and the causal poverty that often disproportionately affects queer and trans people of color. Financial compensation addresses this issue and allows the students an opportunity to accumulate funds in order to meet their needs, and will not have their hours tracked in order to receive pay. Students will set their own goals and expectations at the

beginning of each year and will decide what tasks and activities they plan to complete. It will be up to the students to decide how much time is devoted to each project, as to allow the students flexibility to handle their various responsibilities. Students will undergo a performance review each semester with themselves, their peers, and their staff supervisor, but will not be punished or terminated if the set goals or expectations are not met. If goals and expectations are not met, the staff supervisor will play the role of an advisor and discuss with the student if the Qvocracy program is meeting their personal and professional needs. The staff supervisor will then help the student decide whether or not they will reapply for the following year. The culture of the Qvocracy program will be focused on voluntary advocacy, meaning students will be expected but not enforced to complete the requirements of their position. This culture will motivate students to be proud of the work they accomplish, while not overwhelming them with extra duties on top of their academic work and personal responsibilities.

Theoretical Framework

The design of this program is influenced by the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (Astin & Astin, 1996). The model constitutes three different levels of leadership that eventually connect: the individual, the group, and the community. The individual level values include consciousness of self, or being aware of one's own values and the way one is motivated, similar to Freire's (1970) idea of conscientização. The group values of the Social Change Model include collaboration, common purpose, and controversy with civility; meaning folks work together to achieve a common goal, with respect for differences along the way (Astin & Astin, 1996). The model then values citizenship, where the individual and the group become connected to society through their leadership (Astin & Astin, 1996). Transformational change is the ultimate goal of the model, and these values give student affairs professionals a guide to

assist students in creating their own change. This model aligns with my proposed educational practice of andragogy, or adult education.

Knowles' (1970) theory of andragogy asserts that adults learn best when they know why the knowledge is important, and when it is important to them. This theory explains why an adult needs a different style of learning and teaching than a child; since adults have had years of life experience rather than the naivety of a child, it is important to be strategic in methods of teaching them in order for them to learn properly. Adults learn best when the time is right for them, when the learning is experiential, and when they have the freedom to learn it in their own way. A common practice in andragogy is metacognition, or the process of thinking about one's thinking that enhances critical thinking, problem solving, and reflective processes. This stems from Freire's (1970) ideas of conscientização, as Freire was one of the original scholars that suggested that students engage in their own learning rather than deposited learning. The Qvocacy program is framed from Knowles' (1970) andragogical theory of maturing self-concept, or the idea that adults grow toward being more independent when self-driven. The Qvocates will be responsible for designing and implementing their own programs, which will aid them in their development and independence.

Program Goals

The overarching goal of implementing the Qvocacy program is to shift societal discourse allowing comfort around topics of sex and sexuality. This practice will eventually liberate the queer & trans person of color and eliminate negations related to their identity. The goals of implementing this program, and their subsequent objectives are:

1. To validate the importance of sex education and eliminate heteronormative educational practices that exclude the queer/trans student of color

Objective: To analyze the racial and heteronormative discrepancies in sex education

2. To transform higher education into a space that supports the well-being and success of queer & trans students of color

Objective: To identify the specific needs of queer and trans students of color and understand systems and practices in higher education that prevent them from achieving their specific needs

3. To provide queer & trans students of color a leadership opportunity specific to their needs and experiences of without tokenizing them or their experiences

Objective: To design a leadership opportunity for queer & trans students of color to have agency in their own advocacy

Implementation & Components

Timeline (Appendix A) The first academic year of the Qvocracy program is a pilot program, with the intention of expansion in subsequent years. Appendix A details the timeline of the Qvocracy program and denotes each aspect of the program into the month it occurs.

Staff Member The Qvocracy program will need to begin with a university staff member who will be responsible for initial program implementation. The program would benefit from a Graduate Assistant or a part-time staff member to take on the responsibility of being an advisor to the cohort members. If a full-time staff member's responsibilities do not allow time and dedication to the Qvocracy program, an additional staff member should be hired, with the Qvocracy program being their initial responsibility. At my undergraduate institution, the cost for a full-time graduate assistant is \$20,000 per academic year (J. Hodes, Personal Communication, April 2020). This cost could be reduced by hiring a half time or part-time graduate assistant, so

as long as a staff member is fully dedicated and given appropriate time to contribute to the success of the program.

Recruitment (Appendix B) Since the Qvocracy will begin as a pilot program, professional staff will need to spend the semester prior to the pilot semester recruiting students to apply. Recruitment is crucial to the success of the program, as it will not be possible if students are not made aware of the opportunity. The leading staff member in charge of the pilot will recruit students, faculty, and staff members to help advertise and market the application to prospective students. Advertising will be placed all throughout campus at available flyer posting locations, as well as on the university website and social media accounts. Promotional material will ensure that queer & trans students of color are encouraged to apply, but that any student is welcome to apply. Students in existing identity-based student organizations, such as a Black Student Union or LGBT club, will be recruited to provide voluntary feedback. All promotional material will be seen by students for feedback before official release.

Application Process (Appendix C) The application is intentionally designed to promote diversity within the program: in the students selected, in the content of the questions asked, as well as the way the questions are asked. The application will be hosted on the university's online engagement platform and will be a series of demographic questions, followed by short answer questions. The application will ask students about their demographic features and students will have the opportunity to fill in the blanks and type their own answers, rather than select from options, which avoids "othering" the students (Crozier, Burke, & Archer, 2016). The variety of questions on the application are intentionally selected to give the professional staff member the opportunity to select a diverse group of students. This process is dependent on the number of applications received, but it will allow the staff member to intentionally select a diverse group of

students, rather than students who are similar to each other. The application also asks students to identify their sexual orientation, gender identity, and race. While this may seem invasive, it is crucial to the program goals and objectives of the Qvocacy program, as the purpose of it is to liberate and give an opportunity to queer and trans students of color. A group that contains four students from different backgrounds will produce different results than four students from the same background.

The application process is voluntary and students are not required to sign up if they are not interested. A student who is interested in doing the advocacy work of the program is more likely to be “out” and likely to be comfortable answering questions about their identity. The application also asks about race and contains a short definition from the U.S Census Bureau. I did not choose the U.S Census Bureau’s definition because I think it is the most accurate, but because of the U.S Census Bureau’s status as a trusted and well-known government organization in the United States. The intention of this is to start the conversation around race with a basic definition that can be understood by the average person, which can eventually lead to a critical conversation about race once the group is formed. The demographic questions on the application are followed by a few short answer questions to gauge the students’ interest in participating and basic knowledge of social justice. The short answer section gives an opportunity for queer & trans students of color applicants to discuss how their identity will help them in the role, while conversely giving students who do not identify under those umbrellas an opportunity to indirectly acknowledge their privilege when applying. It is important for students in dominant identity groups to understand their privileges, as the Qvocacy program directly addresses privilege and oppression.

The first round of applications for the pilot program will take place in the antecedent semester of the first cohort. Any student will have the opportunity to apply to participate in the first cohort, but the recruitment efforts will aim to attract first-year students, second-year students, and transfer students, with the hope of retaining the students in the program until their graduation. Once the application deadline passes, professional staff members will contact students to set up interviews. The interviews will consist of questions similar to, but in more depth than the short answer questions on the application. Professional staff will make every effort to communicate to students that since it is a paid position, they should do their best to engage in professional interview preparation and basic career competencies. The professional staff will collaborate with the campuses' career center to prepare students for the application and interviews. Since the program only seeks between 4 and 8 students in its first year, it is inevitable that not all students who apply and interview will be selected for the program. This will be a professional development opportunity for students, and staff will be supportive of students who are not selected by providing them with feedback and suggesting they apply again next year. Professional staff will encourage students to treat the interview as if it were a job interview, while at the same time providing the support for students who may not have developed the career competencies to do so.

In preceding academic years, cohort members will play a larger role in the application and interview process. Once this is accomplished, the professional staff member will encourage the subsequent cohort members to treat applicants with an appropriate balance of high expectations and support in order to provide the most effective professional development opportunity while remaining sensitive to varying levels of career competency.

Training (Appendix D) Once students are selected, they will be required to complete a personal creative project over the semester to present at the first training, to be held at the beginning of the pilot semester. Training will mirror the goals of the Social Change Model, and students will participate in individual, group, and community training for the first month of the semester. The purpose of training is to prepare the cohort with the skills to work as a team and develop their own educational programs. A few examples of activities related to each sector are detailed in Appendix D. This is a guideline for the goals and objectives of the training, as the specifics of the content go beyond the scope of this proposal. The student affairs professional would be responsible for conducting their own research on best practices related to social justice education and refurbishing them to meet the needs of queer & trans students of color. The pilot program's training material and content are also a pilot opportunity, and the students of each cohort could provide feedback and play a role in redesigning it to allow yearly improvements.

Budget & Funding Plan (Appendix E) Obtaining the budget to be able to run the Qvocracy program would be possible through maximizing the variety of sources of income. Funds for the program could come from a variety of sources, such as student tuition and fees that fund the student support center responsible for implementing the program. Funds could be raised through grants, fundraising, and donations from queer alumni. Queer sex education is a provocative topic that progressive philanthropic sponsors and healthcare agencies may be interested in supporting, so this is a program likely to be successful in fundraising.

Additionally, the program is designed to grow and develop to allow more students to be involved. More students involved would evidently demand a need for more funding to ensure the students are still able to be compensated for their time. The cohort model is designed to allow cohorts to continuously participate until graduation, meaning the student would ideally see a pay

raise for their increased dedication to the program. The cited budget located in Appendix E is a hypothetical, maximized estimation of funds needed and assumes eight students are participating in the cohort. It allows a flexible amount of \$500 for the cohort to use to purchase supplies to implement their programs. Students will be responsible for managing this budget and reporting expenses to the professional staff member. The budget plan includes:

- a) Student stipend
- b) Supply budget
- c) Food and snacks for training and community service trip
- d) Cohort quarter-zip
- e) Transportation for community service trip

These costs were estimated, flexible, and subject to change. The total cost of the pilot program was estimated at \$34,250 per academic year. Out of the top 10 universities in the United States with the largest number of students, the average population of these universities is about 45,000 students (Kowarski, 2019). If the Qvocacy Program was implemented at one of these universities, and student fees were increased by \$2 per student, it would cover the cost of the program and allow additional funds. College students are often charged a variety of fees with their tuition, often for services that students are not required to utilize. Although funds could accumulate from a variety of sources, the purpose of the Qvocacy program is to promote sex education on a college campus. Although the goals of the program benefit queer and trans students of color the most, the purpose of the program is to allow the Qvocates to implement educational opportunities that benefit the entire campus. Since the educational programming implemented by the Qvocates is intended to benefit all students on campus, allocating funds from student fees would be logical and appropriate. However, as with most societal expectations,

one cannot reasonably expect every student to financially support one of the most controversial topics in United States culture. The implementation of this program presents a number of challenges.

Challenges & Recommendations

Foremost, this program aims to recruit a narrow range of identities, and would be best suited at a large, public, non-religiously affiliated institution and casting the widest net possible in recruitment avoids potentially tokenizing queer & trans students of color. This program would not be possible at small institutions where there are little to no “out” queer students, let alone “out” queer and trans students of color. It would be distasteful to attempt to implement this program at an institution where there are no “out” queer and trans students of color, and it is recommend that professionals looking to implement a program similar to the Qvocacy program research and ensure there is a large enough demographic of queer and trans students of color.

This program is designed for a large institution with populations of queer and trans students of color, and unfortunately must be adapted to broader identities if implemented at a smaller institution with less prominent populations. Conservative institutions looking to implement new sex education resources could benefit from implementing a simplified version of this program that focuses broadly on sex education. A simplified version diminishes the intersectionality aspect of the program, but recruiting queer and trans students of color is asking them to “out” themselves, and if marketing to the narrow population of students is unsuccessful, then the program must be redesigned to complete the objectives with a lighter approach to identity politics.

Additionally, this program is bound to receive negative feedback from conservative and religious students, parents, faculty, and community members. When I originally designed this

program, I envisioned a sex education workshop for college students. I feared that others would think I was designing something that teaches 18-24 year olds how to have sex, rather than properly educating them and giving them the tools to engage in perfectly normal, healthy sexual activity.

Conclusion

If I had a magic wand and an unlimited amount of money, I would focus solely on sex education in the university. However, in order to avoid this backlash, I thought I would let the content fall in the hands of the most sexually oppressed groups of people, queer and trans people of color. I know that I should be worried about the backlash and conservative counterpoints, but honestly, I am ready for it. There is absolutely no reason young people should be shamed into not engaging in sexual activity, or so shamed that they engage with risks. As long as the program is following all legal and university policies, there is no reason it should not be implemented. The purpose of this program is to encourage comfortability with discomfort and I encourage educators to implement these programs despite fear of negative feedback.

Chapter Five

Assessment and Evaluation

Introduction

Working with students and developing educational programming requires intentional preparation with elements of effective leadership. Higher education administrators and student affairs professionals have a responsibility to practice effective leadership in program development and assessment. This chapter will examine the role of effective leadership characteristics, assessment, and evaluation in higher education and student affairs. I will then review the role of assessment and leadership in the functioning of my proposed intervention, the Qvocacy Program. Additionally, this chapter will outline the limitations of this project as well as implications and recommendations for future practices related to sex education for queer and trans students of color in higher education.

Characteristics of Leadership in Higher Education

Effective leadership in higher education should be modeled from those in positions of power and university leadership often determines student experience and campus climate. An understanding of effective leadership characteristics is critical to promoting democratic education within an institution of higher education. Kouzes and Posner's *The Leadership Challenge* (1987) outlines the benefits of individual leadership skills. Using case studies, the authors examine "The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership", and within these five practices they provide tangible actions for leaders to illustrate these practices of leadership. Kouzes and Posner are not the only scholars to have studied leadership models, but their proposed practices are significantly relevant to the work of student affairs professionals. The five practices of exemplary leadership are modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process,

enabling others to act, and encourage the heart (Kouzes and Posner, 1987). In my opinion, these practices are examples of basic human decency and should be naturally ingrained in any effective leadership style and in personal relationships. Leaders that follow these practices are those who lead by example, are willing to make change, and are able to have empathy and compassion for others.

Participatory leadership is a leadership style where team members participate in the process of decision making; participatory leaders offer guidance and value input (Northouse, 2009). This style is crucial to student success in higher education environments because college students are able to see through phoniness and are often demotivated when they cannot see the relevancy in what they are being required to participate in. Leaders in higher education should not just observe and supervise group processes but should lead by example and be directly involved, and effective leadership comes from all levels. Leaders should guide group decisions together rather than make decisions for the group. The Qvocacy program reflects this characteristic through its cohort model and student agency. Cohorts will make decisions on program content together with the guidance of the staff member, rather than the staff member instructing the students on how to implement their programs. These ideas are supported by Kouzes and Posner's (1987) practices of exemplary leadership as well as Freire's problem-posing education (1970). The leadership in the Qvocacy Program will come from within, and cohort members will be direct agents in their educational programs.

Effective leadership in higher education that transcends to the Qvocacy Program also includes active, transformational change as well as empathy. Influenced by Kouzes and Posner, these ideas align with my philosophical positionality of democratic education and constant

change, originally influenced by Dewey (1916). Effective leaders should be constantly “challenging the process” and encouraging shifts from traditional ways of thinking.

The Qvocacy program’s pilot design is intended to allow evolution of the program. The first year of the program is a trial run, and the future of the program will depend entirely on its results and the feedback from the students involved. If students are not benefitting from the program, it would be irresponsible and against the values of the program to not be proactive in improvement. Leaders in higher education and within the Qvocacy program must be comfortable and accepting of potential failures and be prepared to develop a proactive plan to address them.

Most importantly, effective leaders empower others (Kouzes & Posner, 1987) and motivate their team to exceed expectations of themselves. Trust and respect are non-negotiable and must be omnipresent. Effective leaders actively work to build community and empathy among their team. The staff member of the Qvocacy program must be intentional with the content of empathy exercises and should evaluate traits of cohort members before designing specific training content. These characteristics of effective leadership should be considered across college programming and especially with the implementation of social justice programming. Next, I will consider effective leadership methods that can be used alongside these characteristics.

Leadership in the Qvocacy Program

The role of leadership in the Qvocacy program will begin hegemonically and authoritatively in nature with goals of shifting to a more democratic and laissez-faire approach throughout its implementation. The staff member will play the role of a supervisor the most in its pilot year. The role of the staff member will shift from a supervisor to an advisor as the culture of the Qvocacy program grows and students become more independent and comfortable with their

work. At first, the staff member will assist the students in setting their own deadlines to accomplish the goals of the program. Since the cohort members will evidently report to the staff member, their role will be inherently authoritative.

However, it is within the goals of the program that the staff member remain as *laissez-faire* as possible in order for the students to have the autonomous leadership experience they were offered. A *laissez-faire* leadership style would best fit the Qvocacy program. *Laissez-faire* leaders offer minimal guidance and value teamwork; decision-making often sits with the group and members have freedom to make their own decisions with the guidance of the leader (Northouse, 2009). Accountability is a must, but with room for flexibility and failure. The staff member should provide a balance of challenge and support as long as the program exists, but their role should chronologically shift into a more hands-off approach as the program develops. Additionally, as the program develops, so will leadership across cohorts.

The purpose of the program is to create a new cohort each academic year. If this approach is successful, experienced Qvocates can pass on knowledge and expertise to the incoming cohorts of Qvocates, and the staff member's role can diminish in its expected fashion with student-to-student advisement. The staff member responsible for training the first cohort should exemplify the previously discussed characteristics of Kouzes and Posner (1987) in order to instill these characteristics in future Qvocates. If the first cohort of Qvocates has an exemplary model of leadership, excellence will follow in preceding cohorts and generations of Qvocates, allowing for constant improvement and development, and evident success of the program. The staff member will always be a present leadership figure, but leadership will be mainly fostered by students. For example, the staff member can instruct the cohorts to split up into committees to

delegate tasks, but it will be up to the students how to sort the committees and decide what each committee will focus on.

There will inadvertently be inter-cohort leadership, and Qvocates will act as leaders to each other and will focus on relationship building together. Students should be trained to hold themselves and each other accountable and will work together to decide what will be accomplished and how. In addition to inter-cohort leadership, the program is designed to eventually develop to allow leadership to develop across cohorts. As the program develops with new cohorts over preceding academic years, cohorts will exhibit, practice, and reflect on leadership to and from each other to improve the overall success of the program. Cohorts in their second or third year can help incoming cohorts become acquainted, and incoming cohorts can help preceding cohorts with fresh ideas and practices. Ideally, students will eventually be able to develop cross-cohort subcommittees where members of each cohort collaborate and accomplish additional goals. Students will meet as a cohort on a regular basis, as a cross-cohort subcommittee on an occasional basis and meet as an entire group at least once per semester.

This will encourage team-building and will challenge the evident hegemonic culture of any program, as it will ensure that no cohort or cohort member, regardless of seniority in the program, is seen as superior to another. Additionally, assessment and evaluation must be intentionally crafted to maximize the potential of the program.

Assessment & Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation are critical to the success of any educational program. Assessment is a systematic process of documenting and evaluating data. In higher education and student affairs, assessment is typically focused on student learning, satisfaction, retention, and success. Evaluation and assessment are mutually exclusive as programs are evaluated on whether

or not they achieve certain standards. In order to understand if a program was successful the educator must assess what students learned and evaluate the impact.

If the purpose of an educational program is to educate students on a topic, and there are no predetermined tools in place to assess whether or not students were educated, then the program becomes counterproductive. If students learn, but the educator is unable to assess and evaluate the learning, then there is no documented proof of its outcome, and educators are unable to see firsthand whether or not it was successful, and whether or not students learned. Without this proof, institutions do not have a visual representation of the value of a program. Assessment and evaluation are non-negotiable in action research because it “is a disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for those taking the action. The primary reason for engaging in action research is to assist the ‘actor’ in improving and/or refining his or her actions” (Sagor, 2000).

Intentional assessment and evaluation tools are methods of documenting the value of a program and outlining what worked and what did not. Assessments can be direct or indirect. Direct assessments measure the learning and what students can do as a result of the program; indirect assessment measures the student’s perception on what they learned and how they feel about how and what they learned (Southern Methodist University, n.d.). Educators will often use surveys, focus groups, and combination of qualitative and quantitative data to assess whether or not learning outcomes were met and student opinions.

Assessment in the Qvocacy Program

The Qvocacy program will use mixed methods approach to assess and evaluate the program. A broad area of quantitative assessment is recruitment success and program retention which are critical to the goals of the Qvocacy program. The data showing the number of students applying and reapplying each year is one of many determinate factors of the success of

recruitment and student interest. The program would not be able to run if student interest and participation are low, and educators must carefully and intentionally seek feedback in recruitment efforts to maximize its potential. Long-term assessment is necessary for the growth and development of the program and data of each step of the recruitment and application processes should be carefully recorded and documented. The staff member should document the following quantitative data for long-term assessment:

- Number of students applying
- Educational & personal demographics of students who apply
 - Race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, academic standing, major, reason for applying
- Number of students who stay in the program until graduation
- Number of students who reapply after 1,2,3 years
- Number of students who leave the program
- Any other quantitative differences

In addition to recruitment efforts, the staff member responsible for the Qvocracy's pilot year can design indirect, qualitative assessment efforts through individual student assessment, peer assessment, and group assessment to evaluate the success of the program.

Individual assessment (Appendix F) Students will complete a self-assessment through a creative project at the end of each academic year that mirrors the creative project they completed the summer before their first semester. Students will not be limited to any medium and will have the option to journal, write, create a piece of art or music, or whatever they feel will best capture what they learned throughout the semester. Students will present the creative project, informally but in detail to each other and to the staff member. This assessment will be difficult to evaluate

quantitatively as its indirect results will be the personal perception of students. In the presentations of the personal creative projects, the staff member will evaluate students not only on the content of their project, but their ability to speak on whatever they are passionate about. The staff member should look for themes of personal growth in each student, such as confidence, passion, and visible effort in completing the project. Since students completed a similar project during the summer before their first semester as a Qvocate, this individual assessment should be completed at the end of the each academic year, and should be designed not as something to pass or fail, but designed as an opportunity to see what students create and how it reflects on their growth. The staff member should keep these evaluations confidential but use them as a point of reference to evaluate the difference in the student's initial individual project and their final individual project.

Peer assessment (Appendix G). Qvocates will evaluate each other individually. Students will be paired to complete an anonymous evaluation of one other cohort member. This allows students to be evaluated by their peers. This form will be completed in a private online format to allow anonymity as well as ample time for students to complete it. The form is a short questionnaire that asks about what students did well, could improve upon, as well as space for any other message for the cohort member to leave. According to Weaver & Cotrell, a peer evaluation format “emphasizes skills, encourages involvement, focuses on learning, establishes a reference, promotes excellence, provides increased feedback, fosters attendance, and teaches responsibility” (1986). Peer evaluation offers students a form of feedback that comes from someone closer to their development level. The Qvocacy training focuses heavily on relationship building, and by the time this group evaluation occurs the cohort should have worked to build trust and empathy for each other, meaning cohort members should be able to gracefully and

intentionally provide each other with helpful feedback. Each cohort member will receive their anonymous peer evaluation and will have the chance to develop based on student-to-student feedback.

Group assessment (Appendix H). In addition to individual peer evaluations, the cohort will complete an assessment of their semester together as a group. The responsible staff member should prepare and develop a short group assessment open forum with the sample questions presented in Appendix H, allowing students time for honest reflection on their experience. The open forum should follow the model of a focus group, where the staff member plays the role of a facilitator and allows the group to control where the conversation goes. Cohort members should be provided a safe space to speak freely about their perceptions of the program in order to yield the most honest results. The session should be recorded but stored confidentially and used for tracking key points in the conversation. This allows qualitative evaluation of the program that the responsible staff member can share with relevant campus personnel, and students can assist with transcribing the conversation. The long-term goal of this program is to create campus environments that readily provide sex education resources for queer and trans students of color. An ultimate evaluation of this program over several decades of implementation would hopefully reveal a shift in sex-positive discourse and more accurate sex education specifically designed for queer and trans students of color, which is unfortunately beyond the scope of this proposal. Assessment and evaluation of the Qvocacy program is necessary for its success and should be implemented in a variety of methods by the responsible staff member.

Limitations

Although this program could be implemented at an institution with resources, it has a wide variety of limitations that should be addressed and considered. Every aspect of the Qvocacy

program is flexible and has room to adapt to fit the needs of students. The most prominent limitation is institutional context. As previously discussed in Chapter 4, the program should not be implemented at an institution without a large enough population of queer and trans students of color, therefore this would likely be most appropriate at a large, public institution with an existing presence of social justice education culture. The program should begin at a non-religiously affiliated institution, as certain religious cultures and policies would likely prohibit the discourse of the program. The cohort style of the program can be adapted to fit the needs of smaller institutions, but the content of programming must be simplified to meet the existing level of comfort with queer advocacy topics. Even when implemented at large institutions, there is likely to be pushback from students, parents, and university personnel who disagree with the values of the program. The purpose of the program is to challenge this, but it must be done so carefully and respectfully.

Another important limitation is the level of commitment being asked of students. The guaranteed stipend is designed to be an incentive for commitment, but students can sometimes be overwhelmed by their academic and personal responsibilities and be demotivated to participate. People are typically motivated when they enjoy their work environment, and it is critical that the staff member make intentional efforts to ensure the students are genuinely enjoying the work they are doing. The Qvocacy program is supposed to be enjoyable, and the laissez-faire style of leadership is intentional in that it allows students to create projects they are interested in and passionate about. Constant group check-ins are crucial, and the staff member should play the role of an advisor and find creative ways to keep students motivated throughout the semester.

Recommendations & Looking Ahead

Even if this program is never directly implemented, themes can be utilized to continue to support queer and trans students of color in higher education. A university does not have to implement the Qvocacy program in order to provide sex education resources, but such a program avoids the neoliberal practice of providing access to a resource without education. Universities should not discontinue their distribution of free contraception on campus, but would benefit from enlightenment on the harmful, adverse impacts of doing so. The program does not necessarily have to be implemented immediately and student affairs professionals in functional areas of higher education can implement the themes of the Qvocacy program into their existing programs and learning outcomes.

Regardless of the functional area of my future occupational positions, I plan to incorporate the themes of the Qvocacy program and encourage queer sex education methods in any future role as it aligns with my basic values and beliefs to do so. I will develop programs that avoid cis-normative or heteronormative themes, and I will use inclusive language that considers the wide spectrums of sexuality and gender. I will promote sexual health from any position and be a resource and advocate for queer and trans students of color wherever I am located. I hope to continue this research at the PhD level and present this proposal at higher education conferences.

I hope this thesis impacts readers and encourages new ways of thinking. While this project stems from a lens of educational theory and philosophy, the themes and values of the Qvocacy program are not limited to academia and education. The educational aspect of this proposal should not limit the possibilities of incorporating the themes of Qvocacy. Sex education is needed in many vital areas of a functioning society, especially healthcare and politics. The constant debate of reproductive rights is not only harmful to queer people, but to anyone with reproductive disabilities or anyone choosing a childfree lifestyle. Hetero/cis-normativity and

neoliberalism prevent adequate sex education and higher education practitioners should aim to challenge these ideologies in their programming.

Although this proposal begins in the university, the need for sex education transcends beyond the college student. It is irresponsible to support educational culture that works so hard to prevent young children from learning that human existence relies on sex. Although children should be protected from topics inappropriate for their age, it is entirely possible to introduce the aspects of sex education to young children without ever using the word “sex.” Children are often taught about appropriate and inappropriate touches and told to stay away from strangers, while at the same time being expected to hug and kiss family members and being called disrespectful if they say no. How can college students be expected to understand sexual consent at the same level of their peers, when consent is ingrained so differently among cultures? This is only one of many reasons why we need queer sex education: we need to rethink what we already know about sex and include those who may have missed out. We need to create a culture where sex is not a shameful, unspoken topic. Pleasure is part of the human experience and invalidating the importance of pleasure negates the human experience.

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Appendix A

Program Timeline

Pre-Semester: Staff Led

February & March: Recruitment for first cohort

April: Interviews set up & begin

May: Interviews conclude, 4-8 cohort members are selected

Summer: Selected cohort members complete 1 reflective individual project to present at first day of training

Semester 1: Staff Led, Student driven

August: Cohort members arrive on campus, engage with each other

Students will, as a cohort:

- Choose a cohort name and become acquainted both socially and professionally through teambuilding activities and challenges
- Set individual & group goals
- Engage in a group community service project

September: Cohort members begin training & planning, students will complete:

- Teambuilding, trust, & empathy exercises
- Social justice education, current events analysis, and program planning
- Planning programs & events for the semester

October & November: Student led programming occurs

- Cohort members will develop & execute their individual & group programs & events

November: Light recruitment for potential newcomers

December: End of semester review:

- Individual and group
- Revisit goals & engage in reflection
- Set goals & plan lightly for following semester

Semester 2: Student led

January & February:

- Onboard new members & reconnect
- Solidify semester goals & programs

March: Recruitment for 2nd cohort begins

March & April: Spring programming takes place

April:

- Cohort 1 students have the option to travel & participate in a conference or organized activism
- Potential new members interviewed by Cohort 1 members & staff

May:

- Interview for cohort 2 are complete & members are selected
- End of semester review: revisit goals & engage in reflection

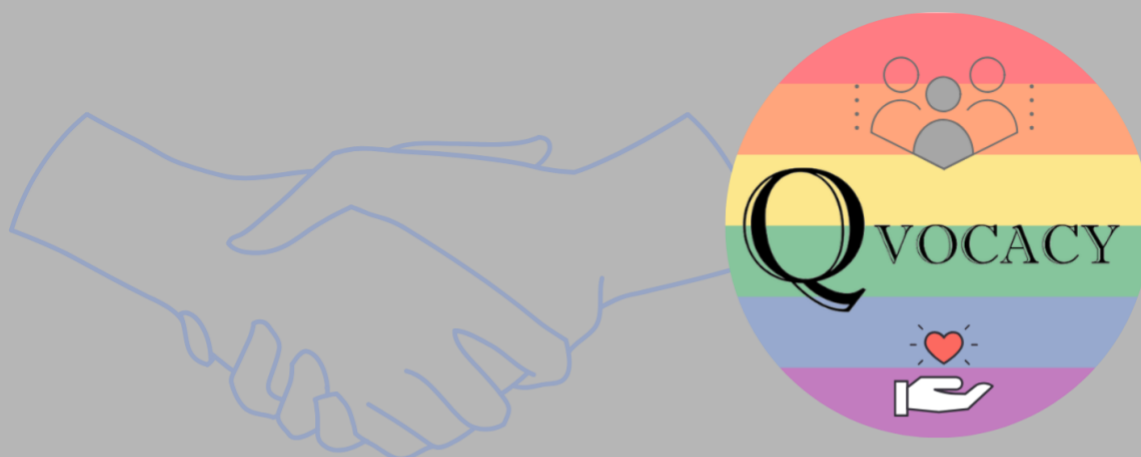
Summer:

- If recruitment is successful and a second cohort is selected, staff will host an optional social event for both cohorts to engage & welcome each other

Appendix B

Logo & Recruitment Materials





QVOCACY PROGRAM INFORMATION PACKET

**Application open to all students:
March 10th- March 24th on Student
Portal**

**QUEER & TRANS IDENTIFIED
STUDENTS OF COLOR
ENCOURAGED TO APPLY**



ELIGIBILITY

In order to apply to become a Qvocate, students must:

- Be an enrolled student
- Be committed to social, racial, economic, and bodily justice & to serving students & the community
- Devote at least 5-10 hours per week
- Be willing to learn how to think outside your current perspective & empathize with others
- Maintain the college's GPA requirement for participating in paraprofessional work

RESPONSIBILITIES

As a cohort, Qvocates will be responsible for:

- 1 large scale program or event per semester
- 1 large scale community service project for semester
- Meeting as a group regularly throughout the semester for team building, reflection, & check-ins

As individuals, cohort members will be responsible for:

- 1 individual community service project
- 1 small scale event or program in small groups
- Meeting one-on-one biweekly with staff supervisor for check in & reflection



BENEFITS & OPPORTUNITIES



- \$1500 stipend per semester
- Free quarter zip sweater & college merchandise
- Partial funding for conference or activism travel
- Free food & snacks at trainings
- Develop transferable skills in leadership, teamwork, social justice, community service, public speaking, empathy



A UNIQUE, HANDS OFF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

The Qvocacy Program is a "hands-off" leadership experience, meaning:

- Cohort members will have agency in what they accomplish with themselves, each other, & the community
- Cohort members will have the support & advisement of professional staff, but will be challenged with independent projects

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Who are the Qvocates?

The Qvocates will be a cohort of 4-8 students committed to promoting social justice education on campus.

Why is it called "Qvocacy"?

"Qvocacy" and "Qvocate" is a play on "queer", "advocacy", and "advocate" and promotes queer based advocacy designed by and for queer identified people.

What is the Qvocacy Program?

The Qvocacy Program is a brand new, PAID leadership position on campus.

Who can apply to be a Qvocate?

Any student can apply to become a Qvocate. The purpose of the Qvocacy Program is to provide an equitable learning opportunity to students who are committed to engaging with each other and the community. **However, the Qvocacy Program's goals and objectives are framed from historical evidence of hegemonic racism and homophobia, therefore, the Qvocacy Program is designed to support Queer & Trans Students of Color.** We encourage students from all backgrounds to apply, but will aim recruitment students under the umbrella of those identities.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does it mean to be "queer"?

"Queer" is a term that often describes people under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella. The term has been adapted and reclaimed to account for the wide variety of sexual orientation and gender identities. The Qvocacy program recognizes the significance of sexual orientation and gender identity to student development, and is intended to normalize the existence of queer identified people.

I do not identify as queer or trans, and I am not a person of color. Should I still apply?

Yes. Students from all backgrounds and identities are encouraged to apply. Students should be prepared to discuss hegemonic racism and queerphobia and engage with students from all backgrounds.

I identify as a queer student of color. Why should I apply? How do I know this will be a safe space for me?

The Qvocacy Program is designed to address the specific needs of queer & trans identified students. The program's goals are framed from a concern of systemic racism and hegemonic masculinity in society and university culture. This program provides students a paid opportunity to lead campus-wide education efforts to challenge these concerns. The Qvocacy Program is intended not only to recognize the struggle faced by queer and trans people of color, but to provide a hands-on opportunity to take action and challenge these issues directly.





TIMELINE

March 24

Application Deadline

April 1

Interviews Begin

May 1

Interviews Conclude, Cohort Announced

Summer

Cohort members will complete a personal summer project

August & September

Training & semester planning

October & November

Implementing programs, light recruitment

December

Group & Individual assessment, reflection, celebration

Appendix C**Application**

Name:

of academic credits:

Expected graduation semester:

Gender identity:

Sexual orientation:

Race*:

Housing status (on campus, off campus, commuter):

*The Census Bureau defines race as a person's self-identification with one or more social groups. An individual can report to the US Census Bureau as White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or some other race. (Source: US Census Bureau)

Short Answer Questions

1. Why do you want to apply to be a Qvocate?
2. What does social justice mean to you?
3. If you are a queer person, trans person, or person of color: How will your identity help you in this role?
4. If you are not a queer person, trans person, or person of color: How will you use your identity to support marginalized populations?
5. Identify a problem in your community, and describe how you would address it.

Appendix D

Training Outline

Area of Training	Activities	Learning Outcomes, Students will be able to:	Resources
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Viewing and responding to media related to social justice Metacognition: Journaling, self-reflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulate a personal values statement and Define advocacy and demonstrate understanding of their role as an advocate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Film, television, books, social media Autoethnography
Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storytelling and group discussion Teambuilding challenges Social justice training & awareness: queer identities, bodies of color, and the implications of a lack of sex education Design a mock program under the direction of the professional staff member before designing Basic assessment training to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate empathy for their cohort members and work as a team Define social justice and critical thinking Identify relevant problems related to social, racial, and reproductive justice Collaboratively design educational programs Collaboratively design an assessment system to improve future programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students' personal experiences and autoethnographies Staff member will develop training materials from a variety of resources and previously designed social justice trainings The Assessment Loop (University of Iowa, n.d.) Students will eventually use this assessment model to design their own

	improve the future of the program		
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informational sessions on campus resources led by college personnel • Engage in a short-term community service project • Develop & implement semester-long service project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate knowledge of campus resources • Recognize issues in local community • Collaborate to construct a semester-long service project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campus service-learning center • Relevant college personnel • Local community resources

Appendix E

Budget

Qvocacy Budget

Expense	Cost	Amount needed	Total Cost	Notes
Student Stipend	1500	8 max	12,000	
Cohort budget	500		500	Cohort will be able to utilize these funds for supplies needed at staff member's discretion
Student travel fund	100	8 max	800	
Meals for training	150		300	15 per student, 2 meals, including tax and gratuity
Snacks for training	100		100	
Cohort quarter-zips	25	10 max	250	8 for students, 2 for staff members
Community service trip: transportation	100	1 van or 2 cars	100	
Community service trip: meals	15	8 students, 2 staff members	200	Including tax and gratuity
Staff member/graduate assistant	10,000	Per semester	20,000	
				17,125 USD per semester
				34,250 USD per academic year

Appendix F

Individual Project Instructions & Evaluation

Instructions

Students will complete a personal creative project that reflects their individual experience in the Qvocacy program. Students are not limited to any medium and are free to complete this project in whatever way fits them best. Students should choose one of the following ideas for their individual project to complete their yearly individual assessment:

1. An analysis of a current event or concern and a reflection on how this concern has affected you
2. A presentation of your personal growth the past academic year
3. Something you experienced this past year as a result of the Qvocacy program and how it has affected you

Some examples of projects include, but are not limited to:

- A photography series
- A poem, song, or dance performance
- A video
- A scrapbook
- An essay, a journal, or any kind of creative writing

Discuss your idea for your creative project with the staff member in your next one-on-one meeting. This project should be positive and reflective, so be sure to pick something that you will enjoy working on and sharing with cohort members.

The staff member will evaluate your presentation, but only a reflective basis. As long as you have completed a project and you present it to the cohort, you will fulfill your individual requirement. The evaluation will be confidential and kept between you and the staff member for reflection.

Please contact us if you have any questions, ideas, or concerns.

Good luck and have fun!

Individual Evaluation- to be completed by staff member and kept confidential

Qvocate Name:

Project Title:

Medium/Type of Project:

Briefly the content of the project:

Briefly describe the student's perception of their personal growth:

Is the student comfortable and confident presenting to the group?

Does the student appear passionate about their project?

Did the student make a visible effort to complete this project?

Appendix G
Qvocacy Peer Evaluation
To be completed anonymously

Qvocate name:

1. How has this person contributed to the goals and values of the Qvocacy program this semester?
2. In your opinion, has this person been a positive representation of the Qvocacy Program?
How can this person improve for next semester? Please explain your answer in detail and provide them with constructive feedback.
3. What is one message you would like to leave this person with?

Appendix H
Qvocacy Group Evaluation: Sample Open Forum Questions
To be presented orally in an open forum

Program questions

1. How would you describe the success of the programs you developed?
2. What worked this semester? What did not work?
3. Were you satisfied with the turn out of your programs?

Leadership questions

4. In what ways can professional staff improve your experience for next semester?
5. How do you feel about your relationship as a group? In what ways can you continue to build trust and empathy with each other?

Questions about the individual

6. How have you changed this past semester?
7. What do you know now that you did not know at the start of the program?
8. With the knowledge you have now, what changes do you want to see?