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University of Maryland, College Park

Authors



EZINNE D. OFOGBU

Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership
Santa Clara University
eofogbu@scu.edu



JAMIE PUGLIN

Associate Director of Assessment
Duke University
Jamie.Puglin@duke.edu



CHESTER L. MILLER, Jr.

Director, Residential Learning
North Carolina State University
clmiller@ncsu.edu

What Do Students Want?

Designing a Living-Learning Community for LGBTQ+ Students

LGBTQ+ STUDENTS FACE SEVERAL CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES in college and university residence halls. Prior research shows that living-learning communities can be a space in which students develop a sense of belonging and community, as well as pursue academic success. Using the findings of a qualitative study that explored LGBTQ+ students' experiences in residence halls and living-learning communities, this paper discusses what factors should be considered when designing living-learning communities for students who identify as LGBTQ+. With these findings and considerations, practitioners can make data-driven decisions about the services and programming they provide these students in residential spaces.

Living in campus housing has become an integral part of the college student experience in four-year colleges (Martin, 2019). Several researchers (Blimling, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) have inferred that living in residence halls can lead to social, cultural, and extracurricular involvement as well as broader student outcomes. Proximity to resources and peer-to-peer interactions that are cultivated by the variety of educational and community programming within residence halls are among the reasons why living on campus is viewed as a foundational aspect of college life (Astin, 1985; Blimling et al., 1999). Living on campus also facilitates students' sense of belonging (Supiano, 2018) and creates opportunities for student-faculty engagement and cocurricular learning (Kuh et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). While the potential to realize these benefits exists, many studies demonstrate that the attainment of benefits varies across diverse student populations (Harwood et al., 2012; Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012; Turley & Wodtke, 2010). Residence halls can alternatively promote groupthink and provide space for microaggressions to manifest (Blimling, 1993; Harper et al., 2011; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012), leading to a different impact on the experiences of underrepresented and/or marginalized student populations.

LGBTQ+ students are one such group that can experience residential life in problematic ways due to the often gendered and heteronormative climates present in campus environments (Preston & Hoffman, 2015). Among others, the challenges

LGBTQ+ students face can include coming out or being out in their residential spaces (Evans & Broido, 1999; Fanucce & Taub, 2010; Kortegast, 2017) and navigating issues with roommates and housing assignments (Kortegast, 2017; Pryor, 2018), often complicated by the absence of supportive roommates, residential staff, and structures meant specifically to support LGBTQ+ students (Evans & Broido, 1999, 2002). At the level of basic needs, negative experiences in-residence can impact LGBTQ+ students' sense of safety and well-being (Blakmon et al., 2020; Fanucce & Taub, 2010; Nicolazzo & Marine, 2015; Pryor & Hoffman, 2020; Pryor et al., 2016). At a developmental level, negative residential experiences can also diminish their sense of belonging and community which, in turn, are key contributors to student success (Kuh et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Living-learning communities (LLCs) provide a potential alternative to generalized housing for LGBTQ+ students. LLCs are high-impact educational practices that are "designed to bridge students' academic and non-academic lives and address specific learning foci" (Spanierman et al., 2013, p. 310). Given their holistic nature and their capacity to address the learning needs of specific student populations, LLCs can play a role in positively shaping college students' experiences (Brower & Inkelas, 2010) and can serve as affirming, communal spaces for LGBTQ+ students in particular (Yosso & Lopez, 2010). As such, LLCs can advance important student outcomes related to student success, including developing a sense of belonging and community (Inkelas & Weisman, 2003; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2007; Spanierman et al., 2013; Wawrzynski et al., 2009). Despite these benefits and calls to leverage LLCs for the enrichment of historically underserved and marginalized student populations, there is little discourse on LLCs that addresses sexual and gender identity and expression and few existing LLCs specifically dedicated to that task.

The purpose of this study is to explore what an LLC would look like for LGBTQ+ students by asking them what they want and/or need. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. *What factors need to be considered in developing an LLC supporting LGBTQ+ students?*
2. *What resources and support structures are needed to develop an LLC for LGBTQ+ students?*

With these findings and considerations, practitioners can make data-driven decisions for how to support LGBTQ+ students in residential spaces.

CAMPUS CLIMATE AND SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ+ STUDENTS

To understand why designated on-campus spaces for LGBTQ+ students are important, we must acknowledge issues of campus climate. As Preston and Hoffman (2015) noted, most colleges and universities are traditionally heterogendered, meaning the institution has historically privileged cisgender norms and heteronormativity. As such,

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campus environments “operate in a way that continues to sustain and reaffirm traditional hierarchies of gendered and sexual oppression, regardless of the various policies, regulations, and diversity programs in place to support LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff” (Preston & Hoffman, 2015, p. 65). For example, some institutions frame LGBTQ+ students as vulnerable and as being needy for services such as suicide prevention and mental health support, rather than serving their holistic and multifaceted needs (Preston & Hoffman, 2015; Pryor, 2018). Such framing marginalizes the learning and development of LGBTQ+ students, making them feel as if they do not belong on their campuses (Preston & Hoffman, 2015; Pryor, 2018; Pryor & Hoffman, 2020). As a result of this heteronormativity, LGBTQ+ students have experienced bullying and harassment (Evans et al., 2017; Pryor, 2018; Pryor & Hoffman, 2020); microaggressions by other community members, faculty, and staff (Evans et al., 2017; Tetreault et al., 2013; Vaccaro, 2012); and feelings of isolation or withdrawal (Evans et al., 2017). Experiences and perceptions of campus climate also vary across identities within the LGBTQ+ community. For example, rather than inclusive and welcoming environments, transgender students have faced hostile campus environments that lacked support services and resources and were staffed by employees who were discriminatory and lacked knowledge about transgender identity and issues (McKinney, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2016; Pryor, 2015).

Higher education institutions can effectively address LGBTQ+ inclusion through campus resource and support centers. There are presently about 275 LGBTQ+ resource centers on college and university campuses across the country (Campus LGBTQ Centers Directory, 2020), and they are an important source of support, community, affirmation, and advocacy (Pitcher et al., 2018; Self & Hudson, 2015). Although some studies demonstrate that these intentional spaces are critical for facilitating inclusion and belonging for LGBTQ+ students, other studies counter this assertion. For example, Self and Hudson (2015) found that some LGBTQ+ campus centers and staff focus on Whiteness and homonormativity in a manner that alienates LGBTQ+ students with various intersecting identities, and Ortiz and Mandala (2021) note that LGBTQ+ resource centers were not built to address issues of racism. Ultimately, campuses should not only provide intentional spaces for LGBTQ+ students but should also support intersecting identities within the LGBTQ+ community. The present study builds on this scholarship by presenting important considerations for designing an LLC that centers LGBTQ+ students' needs and provides more inclusive environments for them.

EXPERIENCES IN RESIDENTIAL HOUSING

Prior research has documented that many LGBTQ+ students have experienced mistreatment or were made to feel unwelcome by roommates (Kortegast, 2017; Pryor, 2018), had concerns related to being out or outed in residential spaces (Evans & Broido, 1999; Fanucce & Taub, 2010; Kortegast, 2017), and felt unsafe in these spaces (Blakmon et al., 2020; Fanucce & Taub, 2010; Nicolazzo & Marine, 2015; Pryor & Hoffman, 2020; Pryor et al., 2016). These concerns speak not only to a sense of belonging but also to a feeling of inclusion and safety in residential spaces they are supposed to call home. A review of the research produced conflicting results on the role of staff in the residential experiences of LGBTQ+ students. One study demonstrated that residential staff were either sources of affirmation and support (Pryor & Hoffman, 2020) or upheld exclusionary campus policies that housed students in undesirable locations (Kortegast, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2020; Pryor & Hoffman, 2020; Pryor et al., 2016). These studies demonstrate that work is needed in creating residential spaces that are affirming and welcoming for LGBTQ+ students.

In order to create more inclusive residential options on college and university campuses, multiple studies have explored the needs and experiences of transgender students in residential settings (Nicolazzo & Marine, 2015; Pryor & Hoffman, 2020; Pryor et al., 2016). Transgender students described having to contend with genderism, feeling unwelcome, and being unable to navigate institutional policy, while reporting that staff had little knowledge of identity-related matters or how to navigate institutional policy (Denton & Cain, 2020; Pryor et al., 2016). For these reasons, scholars have called for more gender-inclusive housing options on college and university campuses (Nicolazzo et al., 2018). The success of gender-inclusive housing is contingent upon being able to navigate institutional and state policies that dictate how students are housed (e.g., by biological sex versus self-identified gender), having staff who are invested in learning more about the LGBTQ+ community and their experiences, and centering transgender students and perspectives as they are developing student engagement initiatives (Nicolazzo & Marine, 2015; Nicolazzo et al., 2018). The present study adds to this body of literature by presenting factors that practitioners should consider when designing inclusive and affirming housing options for all students' identities along the LGBTQ+ spectrum.

Proximity to resources and peer-to-peer interactions that are cultivated by the variety of educational and community programming within residence halls are among the reasons why living on campus is viewed as a foundational aspect of college life.

METHODS

A qualitative methodology was employed in this study, which allowed for collecting and analyzing descriptive data on the subject to uncover patterns relevant to the research questions (Patton, 2014). Qualitative data are most useful when answering broad questions that benefit from discussion and reflection. As campuses grapple with how best to support LGBTQ+ students and how housing departments can play a role in this work, we found qualitative research to be the best approach to collect data on what students need from LLC spaces and the best ways to meet these needs.

Research Setting

This study took place at a large public research university in the Southeastern United States. At this institution, more than 30% of students live in university housing, and more than 15 LLCs have been established through university housing and partnerships with academic and student affairs units. LLC participation at this institution has grown significantly in the last several years, as almost half of all incoming first-year students live in an LLC because of a mandatory live-on requirement. This institution does not have an LLC specifically for students who identify as LGBTQ+.

Data Collection

Students who identified as LGBTQ+ and who were currently enrolled at the institution were eligible to participate in this study. Participants were recruited in several ways, including through LLC program directors and the campus LGBTQ+ resource center. Study information was also sent to all students currently living on campus. These strategies captured students who were currently living or had lived in university housing at any point, past and current LLC participants, and students involved in various aspects of campus life.

Focus groups were the primary method of data collection. Patton (2014) described focus groups as group interviews of about six to ten people with similar backgrounds and/or experiences. In most studies, multiple focus groups are conducted in order to include a wide variety of perspectives and increase the reliability of the study's findings. By using this method, we could find themes that emerged across groups to better understand how students could engage with LLCs and the various issues surrounding their implementation. Ten focus groups were conducted with a total of 64 participants. The focus group protocol was informed by prior literature on LGBTQ+ college students, the impact of LLC participation, and campus climate. We asked questions to assess three primary areas of interest: (1) What role do LLCs play in supporting LGBTQ+ students? (2) What do LLCs need to do to increase this support? (3) How would an LGBTQ+ LLC serve the campus community? Focus groups lasted 1–2 hours and had both a facilitator and a note-taker present. Focus groups were audio-recorded to capture data verbatim.

Data Analysis

A combination of deductive coding and the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965) were used to analyze data. Analytical notes were taken during each focus group to determine potential follow-up questions, noteworthy experiences that participants shared, and emergent themes across participants' responses. These memos were used to develop a coding scheme that covered three areas: (1) how LLCs were currently supporting LGBTQ+ students, (2) how LLCs could be supporting LGBTQ+ students, and (3) how an LGBTQ+ LLC could support students. Pre-codes were developed related to each of these areas, and then we leaned on elements of the constant comparative method to conduct multiple rounds of coding. We did this by constantly comparing our data with the codes and categories that arose and continuing to compare them as we developed our themes. The constant comparative method involved an iterative process of reviewing transcripts, developing codes, and constantly comparing and redefining themes as we analyzed more data (Glaser, 1965). In each round, the established pre-codes and open coding were used to code the data and compare new codes, note emerging themes, and outline steps to guide the next round of coding. Following the final round of coding, a consensus around themes was established.

LIMITATIONS

This study was not without limitations. Given that the setting of this study was a large public university in the South, these findings may be limited in reflecting the needs, desires, and expectations of all LGBTQ+ college students. Participants in this study were speaking to their experiences within an institutional environment with which they were familiar. Thus, it is important not to generalize these findings across institutions, especially those with characteristics different than those of this study site.

FINDINGS

Four considerations emerged which shed light on what was important to students when designing an LLC for the LGBTQ+ population. The following considerations were most relevant for practitioners in the planning stages of an LLC: sense of belonging, staff and training, resources and programming, and safety and well-being concerns. Across the ten focus groups conducted, these topics generated the most discussion from students and were most salient regarding implications for policy and practice. While some subthemes emerged, we instead focus on the overarching themes to bring clarity to our recommendations. Some subthemes, such as community building, occurred across all four themes. This is because each of our themes has considerations that will assist in the building of communities for LGBTQ+ students on campuses.

Sense of Belonging

Students across all the focus groups shared experiences that made them feel excluded on campus. Some identified spaces that made them feel unwelcomed, while others described incidents of microaggressions and bias. When asked to consider the impact of an LLC for LGBTQ+ students, they felt this would positively contribute to their overall sense of belonging on campus, in part because a dedicated LLC would address issues of visibility. As one participant explained,

When I was looking at the [LLCs], I also was looking for one anywhere specifically related to being queer or . . . like being in the community and not seeing one was a little bit disappointing. I definitely think that it's something that we probably should consider and need on the university level because I definitely think it's one thing to be in the LGBT community and . . . choose to go to the [LGBTQ] center and choose to walk all the way [out of the way] in order to see . . . another gay person. I think it would be really cool for the university to say, "Hey, we know you guys are out there and we know you guys want to find a community. Here's one for you. Here's one where you can . . . surround yourself with people who identify the way that you do and people who you can connect with."

This student advocated for visibility, especially with the administration, and recognized that an LLC would create a space where people could connect and be in community with one another. This student's reflection also highlights an expectation for the university to have spaces where students do not have to leave their comfort zones in order to connect with other LGBTQ+ students, thus mitigating the fear of being rejected by other students or excluded from some campus spaces.

Students also pointed out that having an LGBTQ+ LLC would not only increase their sense of belonging, but would also solve logistical and identity issues with roommates and staff. For example, one student described how they felt about sharing a room with someone who might not know their identity.

I picked my roommate solely on the fact [that] she had a rainbow flag in one of her Instagram posts. Turns out later she was hella gay. It was really cool and awesome and we have a lot of other interests too beyond that fact. But we did a roommate match thing. I don't know if they still do that. It was through Facebook. But I just went through a bunch of different people's social media profiles and I was like, "doesn't seem gay-friendly, doesn't seem gay-friendly." I don't even want to deal with that. So I'm just going to pick the first person that seems like they're not going to hate me for that if that comes up. So if I went into an LLC immediately that was like "anyone who you room with who wants to be in this LLC probably isn't gonna hate you for this unchangeable fact or at least be weird about it and . . . not necessarily hate you."

This student noted the significance of living in a community where they won't immediately fear rejection from assigned roommates and community members. Furthermore, within an LGBTQ+ LLC, holding an LGBTQ+ identity would be normalized,

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allowing practitioners to nurture and support this identity, as well as facilitate the development of other salient identities that students held. Students also emphasized that the space should support intersecting identities.

For example, we were talking about the . . . symposium and how a lot of the spaces that we're going to enter are White spaces and in these White spaces, of course, there are White people but . . . there's often times when . . . people will say things and they're like, "Oh I'm not racist, I'm gay." That's something that we generally encounter and that's just . . . something we have to navigate because we're Black and queer. So, you enter a space assuming it's a safe space 'cause it fits one of your identities, but doesn't fit the other one. It's not on us to pick and choose which identity we want to go with today. We should be able to always be our full Black queer selves in every space and either they accept it, or they get out.

Students believed that addressing issues of exclusion and developing an LLC devoted to LGBTQ+ identities would help to create an affirming and supportive space for them. They felt encouraged that a community that is accepting of their gender identity and sexual orientation would create and develop intersectional spaces on campus. This aligns with previous research that has found that intentionally built LLCs have a positive impact on students' overall sense of belonging.

Staff and Training

Throughout the focus groups, students emphasized the impact of staff on the LLC experience. Given the amount of interaction students have with both student and professional staff in campus housing, it is important to train staff to be well versed in a variety of issues and skills. Students specifically recommended training them on bias response, conflict and mediation, LGBTQ+ history and issues, university history, mental health, sexual health, and transgender rights. Students shared that staff, particularly student staff, would benefit from a deeper understanding of LGBTQ+ history and issues that specifically affect the LGBTQ+ community. Students also suggested hiring professional staff with backgrounds in counseling, citing the prevalence of mental health issues that affect the LGBTQ+ community. Furthermore, they emphasized the role that staff play in creating inclusive spaces. One noted the importance specifically of having staff who represented an array of intersecting identities:

I think having as intersectional [a staff] as possible would be very good. . . . I don't really know how you would fix problems within the community based on race or sex or whatever. So I think having [staff] who are in charge of fixing these problems, who experience these problems, would be better equipped to handle them, not even

from any training, just from living their own day-to-day lives. They would know better than anyone who went through any sort of training on how to handle these issues. Yeah, so I think as many people of different races and genders and abilities and nationalities and . . . different experiences and backgrounds as possible [should] be equipped with dealing with any issues that may arise from students.

This student emphasized the importance of having staff reflect the diversity of the students within the LLC, although many also expressed that they would be open to having allies on staff. Overall, it is essential that much of the staff shared the identities of the students.

Additionally, three areas of training were highlighted across the focus groups: mental health and counseling, inclusive language and practices, and sexual health and education.

For training, I think there needs to be more informal things that affect the LGBT community, like sex education for queer people. Because it's very different. More well-rounded training on issues that can look different for other people to unpack their own biases and be more accepting of other things. Basic scripts, like . . . [other centers], they have their basic scripts to be more inclusive.

On mental health, one student commented, "The LGBT community suffers significantly higher rates of mental illness, interpersonal violence, and sexual assault. I think that's all important. I think it's incredibly important." In identifying these focal areas for training, students expressed that these were ongoing needs they saw in the support and programming they currently had on campus.

Resources and Programming

When thinking about what programming opportunities could look like for an LGBTQ+ LLC, students offered a wide range of suggestions. The theme that arose most often was a need for programming and events that focused on community building.

I think aside from doing special stuff during Pride month and stuff like that, I don't think you necessarily have to make it a huge focus for everything to be LGBT-centric. You could just have like, "Hey, Avengers: Endgame is coming out. Let's all go watch that!" That could be like a normal program or something. It doesn't have to be [that] the gays are going to watch Endgame, but we are. I mean I think just having normal college student programs that don't have to be LGBT-centric 'cause that's a way that you can isolate yourself. Especially if you're like me and you don't want to be recognized only as a gay college student. You want to be a college student first, that sort of thing.

This student emphasized how community building plays an important role in LLCs and that they did not want to be recognized only by their LGBTQ+ identity, so incorporating activities that are not identity-focused is important. Also, students were interested in having a linked LLC course that focused on LGBTQ+ history and societal issues

that were typically not covered in the general education curriculum. An LGBTQ+ LLC would present an opportunity to engage with their identity in a more intellectual way.

Besides engaging through academics, students also saw the LLC as a space for addressing intersectionality and lived experiences on campus, particularly the intersections of race and LGBTQ+ identities. They explained that many spaces on campus were identity-focused but were focused on only one identity at a time. This brought up feelings of not being “enough” to enter certain spaces. Students felt this LLC would allow the exploration of other salient identities that students held through mentorship, programming, and community engagement, thus providing a resource that did not currently exist on campus.

That could also address intersectionality because the experiences of a White queer person are very different than [those of] a queer person of color. So bringing in other groups on campus but also being able to support students that have other identities in addition to their sexuality or gender identity.

This student highlighted how an intersectional approach would better support students in the LLC and how students felt the LLC would be distinct from an existing LGBTQ+ center on campus and other centers they believed were singularly identity-focused.

Safety and Well-Being Concerns

Safety was a significant concern among students: On one hand, living in a community for LGBTQ+ students would provide a safe space, but, on the other hand, some students felt that a space like this would be a potential target for bias and hate incidents. Students felt that the LLC should be in a building that is central to campus rather than being isolated.

I think it's important to be on central campus because it's the Pride LLC so they should be proud to be an LLC, and it's really hard to do that if your LLC isn't in a place where people will see it. But it also seems like it could be more prone to something, like any kind of hate crime if it's farther away.

They also pointed out that a dedicated LLC would alleviate other concerns related to safety and well-being, such as assigned roommates and access to gender-neutral bathrooms. Overall, while a dedicated LLC would solve some concerns about safety, other concerns arose during our conversations.

First, students wanted clear guidelines and an understanding of what being part of the LLC would look like—not only the physical location, but also understanding who has access to their information. Students were concerned that parents or guardians who were unaware of their LGBTQ+ identity could see information on their student profiles about their involvement in the LLC. They were also concerned about visits from parents and guardians during events like family weekend. To combat this, they suggested creating alternative methods of engagement for students who were not out.

Examples included living in the same building but on a different floor or being a member of the LLC with access to events but living in a different location.

Anytime your parents would like to visit, family you know, there's a huge barrier of feeling unsafe. I feel like a good medium would be to offer open attendance. The LLC events can be broadcast through the LGBTQ center, and even if you're not a part of the LLC, you can definitely attend the events, student/staff run events, so you don't have to live in it to go to those things. It's not exclusive.

Despite bringing up some concerns about safety, they also highlighted how an LLC like this alleviated other concerns. When thinking about roommates, a student shared,

I think that could also be good especially for incoming freshmen or just people who are getting placed with a random roommate because if you do want to be out but you're not entirely sure how your roommate is going to react to that, it can help prevent some of that tension.

Another student shared the following: "I think it would just be a more comfortable atmosphere because you won't have to be worried about if someone is homophobic or like your roommate is gonna get freaked out by you or something. It's just more understanding." These students emphasized how important a roommate is to the residential experience, and creating this LLC could alleviate students' concern about having a roommate that is unaccepting of their identities.

Bathrooms in residential settings can also be problematic for these students. Common bathrooms in a suite-style (shared with a few suitemates) or hall-style (shared by multiple people on a floor) building can be a significant obstacle for LGBTQ+ students in an LLC. Some students noted that this arrangement could help develop community among students, but most emphasized the importance of having other options for those who need them. Bathrooms were emphasized in every one of our focus groups, and students advocated for multiple single-use bathrooms within the LLC.

There needs to be more than one single-occupancy bathroom in the entire residence hall because most of [the residence halls on this campus] have one for the entire building. If you have more than one person, which you probably do, who would like to use that bathroom, that can be a problem. And very few have a shower . . . almost none of them have a shower that's for single occupancy.

One cannot overemphasize how having bathrooms that meet the needs of our students supports their well-being and belonging.

Overall, an LGBTQ+ LLC presents some additional safety and well-being concerns regarding sharing information and physical location. Students told stories that demonstrated the impact an LLC would have on roommate assignments, bathroom access, and in alleviating concerns and negative impacts on their well-being and sense of belonging.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND POLICY

The purpose of this study was to explore the possibility of designing an LLC for LGBTQ+ students by asking students what they'd want and/or need from such a space. During discussions in focus groups, students shared important considerations to address when identifying suitable locations. Each consideration highlights many practical implications for campus housing professionals.

Students felt that an LGBTQ+ LLC could be an inclusive and affirmative environment in which they could develop a sense of belonging and create community with other students. This finding aligns with prior scholarship indicating that LGBTQ+ students were more likely to experience community in spaces designed with them in mind, such as LGBTQ+ campus centers (Pitcher et al., 2018; Self & Hudson, 2015). Furthermore, intersecting identities and challenges related to those intersections must be considered. Providing intersectional spaces and support within the LLC will not only ensure that LGBTQ+ students with multiple marginalized and intersecting identities can develop a sense of belonging and feel that all their identities are accepted and valued in this space, but will also prevent the reproduction of issues that may be present in other campus spaces.

Next, this study captured student perspectives about staffing and staff training within an LGBTQ+ LLC and highlighted the importance of preparing staff to support the unique needs of this student population. This finding both supports prior assertions that LGBTQ+ students are underserved and under-supported by staff in residential spaces (Denton & Cain, 2020; Kortegast, 2017; Pryor et al., 2016) and emphasizes the significance of staff in supporting LGBTQ+ students in these spaces (Evans & Broido, 2002; Mollet et al., 2021; Pryor & Hoffman, 2020). Staff must be prepared to address how campus climate and personal issues may be affecting students' interactions within and outside of the LLC. To build an inclusive and supportive LGBTQ+ LLC, staff must respond to students' unique needs and expectations and be equipped to serve as mentors and allies for those whose experiences, perspectives, and issues have historically been underrepresented and under-supported within our campuses and within LGBTQ+ communities.

Additionally, this study highlights the importance of providing various forms of programming for an LGBTQ+ LLC. Housing staff should provide spaces for community building and various cocurricular options for students. For example, students discussed collaborations with other identity-based centers and programs to address and support students' intersecting identities and to allow them to engage in critical discussion and programming about intersectionality and how students experience college. The programming recommendations and implications presented in this consideration also map onto Inkelas and colleagues' (2018) model of building LLCs, in which "formal, out-of-class activities . . . supplement and fortify the academic goals of the LLC" (p. 21). Engaging in these cocurricular activities will provide students with access to learning opportunities that complement the interactions they have within the LLC and the content they are learning in their courses.

These findings demonstrate that students are aware of how an LGBTQ+ LLC may attract unwanted attention from people who believe that this space and LGBTQ+ students do not belong on their campuses. Practitioners must create spaces in which LGBTQ+ students can decide how visible they'd like to be and have access to the same resources and opportunities as all students, and they should ensure that these spaces are safe and comfortable. These findings also highlight why gender-inclusive housing options are important for any students who may be uncomfortable with the traditionally heterogendered nature of college residential settings (Nicolazzo et al., 2018; Pryor & Hoffman, 2020). Practitioners should consider the implications of gender in matching roommates and selecting buildings with such features as multiple bathing options.

Finally, outside of creating an LGBTQ+ LLC, a few policy implications are present for residential life, in general. Nguyen and colleagues (2020) discussed the significance of gender identity and antidiscrimination policies, as well as LGBTQ+-inclusive housing options.

While some campuses have antidiscrimination policies in place to protect students marginalized on the basis of gender and/or sexual orientation, other affirming institutional policies such as LGBTQ+ housing are needed to more fully support LGBTQ+ students and their lives on campus. (p. 41)

Thus, the findings of this study, particularly regarding sense of belonging and safety concerns, support the need for LGBTQ+-affirmative and inclusive policies that allow students to safely navigate common practices such as roommate selection and to be able to select housing that aligns with their needs and preferences.

CONCLUSION

Recognizing opportunities for LLCs to enhance the LGBTQ+ residential experience on college and university campuses, this study examined potential elements that leaders may consider when designing such an LLC. As practitioners embark on developing LGBTQ+ LLCs and other LLCs for marginalized populations of students, it is important to center student voices and perspectives by asking what students want and/or need. Mindful that projects of this scope may entail budgetary or staffing constraints, the findings will help practitioners consider the feasibility of such an endeavor and strategies for accomplishing value-added outcomes. Of particular importance in designing LGBTQ+ LLCs is the extent to which spaces create a sense of safety, promote productive relationships among residents, and validate students through a sense of belonging. Moreover, the characteristics that residential life leaders should incorporate

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into their LLC design include space dedicated specifically for the LGBTQ+ community, an awareness of the positive and negative aspects of visibility for the residential community served, staff trained to specifically serve the LGBTQ+ community and educated on the specific needs of the population, and programming that balances a focus on LGBTQ+ identity with more holistic, non-identity-related topics.

The implications of this study are shaped by several institutional factors, such as staff or budget limitations, which can help practitioners determine the feasibility of an LGBTQ+ LLC on their campus. As practitioners move forward in creating such spaces, it is important to engage in conversations with student and administrative stakeholders and deeply consider how their institutional context and campus climate will shape and respond to an LGBTQ+ LLC. This is particularly true when considering issues of visibility, what obstacles may need to be overcome to create and sustain an LGBTQ+ LLC, and training and educating faculty, professional, and student staff to better serve these students. ■

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When critically evaluating your residential living program and curriculum, in what ways might they continue to reaffirm heteronormative experiences?
2. Findings from this study reinforce extant scholarly work in providing an undeniable connectedness between communal association (e.g., sense of belonging and community) and student development. How has your student housing curriculum intentionally sought to nurture this connection, especially for students with marginalized identities?
3. In what ways do your student housing policies and procedures allow LGBTQ+ community members to experience equity, safety, inclusion, and care?
4. What steps might you take to create an LGBTQ+ inclusive climate for all residential students and visitors in your halls?
5. For students representing marginalized identities or the intersection of multiple marginalized identities, what takeaways from this article can you use to enhance their residential life experience?

Discussion questions developed by Christopher Heasley, Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania