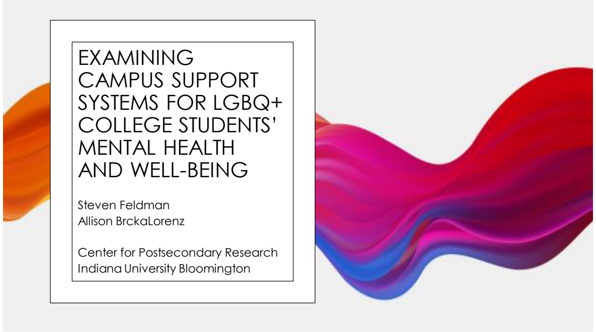

EXAMINING CAMPUS SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR LGBQ+ COLLEGE STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Steven Feldman
Allison BrckaLorenz

Center for Postsecondary Research
Indiana University Bloomington

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

As we gather for the ASHE 2023 Conference, it is important to acknowledge that we are currently on the traditional ancestral homeland of the Dakhóta Oyáte (Dakota people), the original inhabitants and stewards of the land and waterways of Minneapolis, MN.

We wish to acknowledge and honor the Indigenous communities native to this region and recognize that Indiana University Bloomington is built on Indigenous homelands and resources. We recognize the myaamiaki, Lënape, Bodwéwadmik, and saawanwa people as past, present, and future caretakers of this land. We are dedicated to centering Indigenous voices & perspectives, improving community relationships, correcting the narrative, and making the IUB campus a more supportive and inclusive place for Native and Indigenous students, faculty & staff.

WHAT WE KNOW

- **Factors the impact students' mental health and well-being**:
  - **Working** more hours to alleviate financial strain (Peltz et al., 2020)
  - Holding one or more **minoritized identities** (Chan et al., 2022; Jackson et al., 2020; Maloy et al., 2022)
- **College counseling services** have seen an increase in the number of students seeking help (Xiao et al., 2017)
  - This was exacerbated by **COVID-19** (Gattamorta et al., 2022; Gonzalez et al., 2020)
  - College and university campuses have largely been **unable to adequately meet the rise in demand** (Hood et al., 2019; Santos et al., 2021)
- **LGBQ+ students disproportionately face challenges to their mental health and well-being** (Chan et al., 2022)
  - Microaggressions, bullying, harassment, and other forms of victimization (Heck et al., 2014; Seelman et al., 2017)
- Some research has shown that **faculty and staff affirming students' gender and sexual identities results in positive outcomes** for academic success (Linley et al., 2016), ability to envision a future for oneself (Feldman et al., 2022), and overall well-being (Salerno et al., 2022; Sotardi et al., 2022; Woodford et al., 2018)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do different subpopulations within the LGBQ+ community perceive difficulties related to health, workload, and relationships?

How do different subpopulations within the LGBQ+ community perceive support from personal and institutional relationships?

What do LGBQ+ students see as potential avenues for support from their institutions?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: PROUD & THRIVING REPORT AND FRAMEWORK

- Developed by The Jed Foundation (JED), the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals, and a team of individuals with expertise on the topic
- **Risk factors**, which highlight the contributors to negative mental health and well-being
- **Protective factors**, which highlight the contributors to positive mental health and well-being
- The framework separates risk and protective factors by "queer and questioning" students and "trans and non-binary" students.
- **In this paper, we look exclusively at sexual orientation and not gender identity**.

METHODS & ANALYSIS

- 2023 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
  - Mental Health & Well-being topical module (65 U.S. institutions; 27,342 student respondents)
  - We limited our sample to **6,258 students who self-identified as part of the LGBQ+ community**
- Measures:
  - **Risk factors** on 3 scales:
    - **Health** (including mental or emotional exhaustion, sleep, physical health, etc.)
    - **Workload** (including academics, finances, and employment)
    - **Relationships** (including relationships with peers, loneliness, family relationships, etc.)
  - **Protective factors** on 2 scales:
    - **Personal relationships** (including friends, family, significant others, etc.)
    - **Institutional relationships** (including instructors, academic advisors, counseling services, etc.)
  - Institutional support
    - 10 items asking students if they would know how to get help at their institution with different issues
- Analysis:
  - A series of **OLS regressions** with sexual orientation selection as the primary independent variable and each risk or protective factor as its own dependent variable
  - **Descriptive analyses** to determine knowledge of institutional support

RESPONDENTS

6,258 total LGBQ+ students	**%**
bisexual	52
queer	15
pansexual or polysexual	13
questioning or unsure	12
lesbian	11
ace, gray, or asexual	9
straight	9
gay	9
demisexual	6

'Straight+' **students who chose straight and another LGBQ+ identity**	**%**
questioning or unsure	43
bisexual	41
ace, gray, or asexual	17
demisexual	14

RESULTS: RISKS & SUPPORTS

Regression Coefs (B Sig.) for Risk and Protective Factors by Sexual Orientation Identification

	Straight+	Bisexual	Lesbian	Gay	Queer	Pan/Poly	Ace/Gray /Asexual	Demi-sexual	Question/ Unsure
Risks									
Health		.056*	-.149**			.175***			
Workload	-.104*	.055*				.164***	-.224***		
Relationships	.151**								.170***
Supports									
Personal	-.145**						-.132**		-.163***
Institutional	-.135**			.184***					-.158***

NOTE! Coefficients are compared to the average score of LGBQ+ students overall.

RESULTS: RISKS & SUPPORTS

Regression Coefs (B Sig.) for Risk and Protective Factors by Sexual Orientation Identification

	Straight+	Bisexual	Lesbian	Gay	Queer	Pan/Poly	Ace/Gray /Asexual	Demi-sexual	Question/ Unsure
Risks									
Health			☺			☹			
Workload	☺					☹	☺		
Relationships	☹								☹
Supports									
Personal	☹						☹		☹
Institutional	☹			☺					☹

NOTE! "Faces" are compared to the average score of LGBQ+ students overall.

☺ Students felt less difficulty or more support ☹ Students felt more difficulty or less support

RESULTS: ACCESS TO SUPPORT & RESOURCES

Percentage of students that *did not know* where to get help at their institution for various issues:

- Sleep difficulties (73%)
- Lack of care for dependents (73%)
- Housing insecurity (61%)
- Emergency financial situations (59%)
- Substance abuse (55%)
- Food insecurity (38%)
- Discrimination or harassment (31%)
- Sexual assault or relationship violence (28%)
- Mental health crises (27%)
- Depression or anxiety (22%)

DISCUSSION/SIGNIFICANCE

- We need to **disaggregate** data pertaining to the LGBQ+ community
  - When compared with an average of LGBQ+ students that skew toward the average of bisexual students, **pansexual/polysexual** students still had notable differences
    - In other words, we shouldn't group all plurisexual people together
- Students who identify as straight and another sexual orientation (i.e., **straight+**) may experience disparities like other LGBQ+ students
  - In other words, we **cannot keep thinking about sexuality as a binary** between straight and not straight
- **Less than half** of LGBQ+ students in our study knew where to get help
  - We need to increase awareness of these resources.

REFERENCES

- Chan, A. S. W., Wu, D., Lo, I. P. Y., Ho, J. M. C., & Yan, E. (2022). Diversity and inclusion: Impacts on psychological wellbeing among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.726343
- Feldman, S., Watson, R. J., & Gallik, C. (2022). College aspirations, gender sexuality alliances, and teacher support among diverse LGBTQ youth. *Educational Review, 74*(2), 281–297. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2020.1816907
- Gattamorta, K. A., Salerno, J. P., & Laporte, R. R. (2022). Family rejection during COVID-19: Effects on sexual and gender minority stress and mental health among LGBTQ university students. *LGBTQ+ Family: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 18*(4), 305–318. https://doi.org/10.1080/27703371.2022.2083041
- Gonzales, G., Loret de Mola, E., Gavulic, K. A., McKay, T., & Purcell, C. (2020). Mental health needs among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 67*(5), 645–648. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.08.006
- Heck, N. C., Lindquist, L. M., Machek, G. R., & Cochran, B. N. (2014). School belonging, school victimization, and the mental health of LGBT young adults: Implications for school psychologists. *School Psychology Forum, 8*(1), 28–37.
- Hood, L., Sherrell, D., Pfeffer, C. A., & Mann, E. S. (2019). LGBTQ college students' experiences with university health services: An exploratory study. *Journal of Homosexuality, 66*(6), 797–814. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2018.1484234
- Jackson, S. D., Mohr, J. J., Sarno, E. L., Kindahl, A. M., & Jones, I. L. (2020). Intersectional experiences, stigma-related stress, and psychological health among Black LGBQ individuals. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 88*(5), 416–428. https://doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000489
- Linley, J. L., Nguyen, D., Brazelton, G. B., Becker, B., Renn, K., & Woodford, M. (2016). Faculty as sources of support for LGBTQ college students. *College Teaching, 64*(2), 55–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2015.1078275
- Maloy, J., Kwapisz, M. B., & Hughes, B. E. (2022). Factors influencing retention of transgender and gender nonconforming students in undergraduate STEM majors. *CBE—Life Sciences Education, 21*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.21-05-0136
- Peltz, J. S., Bodenlos, J. S., Kingery, J. N., & Rogge, R. D. (2021). The role of financial strain in college students' work hours, sleep, and mental health. *Journal of American College Health, 69*(6), 577–584. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2019.1705306
- Santos, T. C., Mann, E. S., & Pfeffer, C. A. (2021). Are university health services meeting the needs of transgender college students? A qualitative assessment of a public university. *Journal of American College Health, 69*(1), 59–66.
- Seelman, K. L., Woodford, M. R., & Nicolazzo, Z. (2017). Victimization and microaggressions targeting LGBTQ college students: Gender identity as a moderator of psychological distress. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 26*(1–2), 112–125. https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2016.1263816
- Sotardi, V. A., Surtees, N., Vincent, K., & Johnston, H. (2022). Belonging and adjustment for LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ students during the social transition to university. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 15*(6), 755–765. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000305
- The Jed Foundation. (2021). *Proud & Thriving report and framework: Supporting the mental health of LGBTQ+ high school, college and university students.*
- Woodford, M. R., Kulick, A., Garvey, J. C., Sinco, B. R., & Hong, J. S. (2018). LGBTQ policies and resources on campus and the experiences and psychological well-being of sexual minority college students: Advancing research on structural inclusion. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, 5*(4), 445–456. https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000289
- Xiao, H., Carney, D. M., Youn, S. J., Janis, R. A., Castonguay, L. G., Hayes, J. A., & Locke, B. D. (2017). Are we in crisis? National mental health and treatment trends in college counseling centers. *Psychological Services, 14*(4), 407–415. https://doi.org/10.1037/ser000130