Council on Social Work Education–Lambda Legal Study of LGBT Issues in Social Work

James I. Martin
New York University

Lori Messinger
University of Kansas

Ryan Kull
New York University

Jessica Holmes
Council on Social Work Education

Flor Bermudez and Susan Sommer
Lambda Legal

Acknowledgments

Abstract

This study by the Council on Social Work Education and the Lambda Legal sought to determine the level of preparation for social work students to serve lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals, especially young people. An Internet-hosted, two-stage survey collected data from a random sample of social work program directors (N=299) and faculty members (N=547). Results indicated that most programs do not formally assess student competence in serving LGBT individuals; do not contain content on LGBT youth; do not provide field placements in LGBT-specific, youth-oriented settings; and do not have faculty members with sufficient awareness of LGBT issues. Recommendations include infusion of content on LGBT youth throughout the curriculum, particularly in child welfare courses; additional field experiences that involve work with LGBT youth; more attention to gender-identity issues; increased faculty development opportunities that focus on LGBT issues; and assessments of support systems for LGBT students at the program, institution, and community levels.

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of LGBT Issues in Social Work**

Purpose and History of Project

The purpose of this study was to determine how well social work education programs in the United States are preparing students to provide competent services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals and, in particular, to LGBT youth.

LGBT individuals have been subjected to historical discrimination and oppression in American society, causing attendant challenges to their well-being. LGBT youth in out-of-home care are especially vulnerable to discrimination and stigma based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. The social work profession, with its commitment to promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients, plays an important role in addressing the problems faced by LGBT people. Indeed, both the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2008) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2008) have adopted standards to ensure that social work professionals are trained to provide competent, respectful services to those who are LGBT.

Although there has been considerable discussion among social work educators about the treatment of sexual orientation and, to a lesser extent, gender identity issues in social work education (McPhail, 2008; Morrow, 1996; Van Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004; Vanderwoerd, 2002; Van Soest, 1996), as well as the environment in social work programs for lesbian and gay students (e.g., Martin, 1995; Messinger, 2004; Newman, Bogo, & Daley, 2009; Towns, 2006), few empirical studies of this kind have been conducted. Mackelprang, Ray, and Hernandez-Peck (1996) surveyed deans and directors of all U.S. programs that were accredited as of 1996; emphasis on LGB content was found to lag far behind emphasis on race and ethnicity, and few programs placed a priority on recruiting LGB faculty members or recruiting and retaining LGB students. Mackelprang and colleagues did not examine gender identity/expression issues, treatment of transgender faculty members and students, or issues pertaining to LGBT youth.

The study was initiated by Lambda Legal, a nonprofit national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of LGBT people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education, and public policy work. Since 1973, Lambda Legal has used educational campaigns, policy advocacy, and groundbreaking litigation to set standards for fair and equal treatment of LGBT individuals. In particular, Lambda Legal's Youth in Out-of-Home Care Project raises awareness and advances reform on behalf of LGBT youth in child welfare, juvenile justice, and homeless settings who are routinely denied basic services and face neglect, discrimination, and abuse because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Recognizing the problems faced by these youth in out-of-home care, Lambda Legal collaborated with the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) to organize a series of listening forums in 2003-2004, which were held in more than a dozen locations around the nation. A clear consensus was voiced at these forums that case workers, social workers, and child welfare administrators lack adequate training to competently serve LGBT and questioning youth in out-of-home care. Young people reported this situation as well as social work practitioners, who felt that they and their colleagues often did not have the requisite background in sexual orientation and gender identity issues that would enable them to serve these individuals with competence and professionalism (Woronoff, Estrada, & Sommer, 2006). In light of these findings, Lambda Legal initiated a collaboration with CSWE to determine the level of proficiency in preparing social work students to work with LGBT individuals, especially LGBT youth in out-of-home care. The ultimate aim was to more fully equip social work students with the knowledge and skills that would best serve LGBT individuals, especially youth. Adding to the effort to improve preparation of social work students, Lambda Legal and NASW developed a curriculum to train social workers and other providers of services to LGBT youth in out-of-home care (see Elze & McHaelen, 2009).

This study also represents a long-delayed response to concerns voiced by the CSWE Commission on Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression about the treatment of LGBT issues, students, and faculty members in social work education programs. In their commentary on the second draft of the proposed *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* in 2001, the commission co-chairs noted that many students reported a dearth of LGBT-related content in their program's curriculum, and some faculty members reported a lack of attention to LGBT issues among accreditation site teams. The co-chairs expressed concern about the lack of any systematic attempt by CSWE to determine the extent of these problems and the treatment of LGBT faculty members and students in social work programs (Martin & Hunter, 2001a).

Methods

Study Design

An Internet-hosted, two-stage survey design was selected for this study, with data being collected first from a sample of social work program directors, and then from a sample of social work program faculty. The authors initially discussed studying outcomes among social work students, but it was determined not to be feasible to obtain student enrollment lists from programs in order to develop a sampling frame. Participation in the study was confidential; names of participants and their institutions were known to the project coordinator, but they were not shared with the principal investigators or others involved with data analysis. Multiple drawings for Amazon.com gift certificates worth $50 were used as incentives for participation. A list of all participants' e-mail addresses unconnected to any of their survey responses was used by the project

coordinator to select the winners of each drawing through random-number generation. A total of 78 gift certificates were awarded. The study was approved by New York University's Committee on Activities Involving Human Subjects.

Sample

This study used a random sample of all 664 CSWE-accredited programs stratified according to auspice (public, private sectarian, private nonsectarian) and degree level (baccalaureate, master's). Because of their relatively small number, baccalaureate and master's private, nonsectarian programs and master's private sectarian programs were over-sampled. Forty percent of baccalaureate and master's public programs and baccalaureate private sectarian programs were randomly selected for participation in the study, as were 75% of baccalaureate and master's private nonsectarian and master's private sectarian programs. Programs were selected from the sampling frame using random-number generation until the desired number of programs in each category was obtained. Because programs were sampled rather than institutions, both a baccalaureate and a master's program from the same institution could be invited to participate.

A total of 301 social work programs were invited to participate in the study, but two programs closed during the study. Completed surveys were received from the directors of 157 of the resulting 299 programs. Across the categories of auspice and degree level, response rates ranged from 45% (baccalaureate private sectarian) to 62% (master's public), with an overall response rate of 52%. Tables 1, 2, and 3 show the demographic characteristics of programs, both in the sampling frame and the final sample. There were few major differences between the sampling frame and the final sample of accredited programs with respect to setting (urban, suburban, rural) or regional distribution. However, the setting is unknown for 14% of programs in the sampling frame, while the setting was reported for all programs in the final sample. Programs from the northeast were somewhat over-represented in the sample (15% as compared to 10% in the population), and programs from the Great Lakes were under-represented (13% as compared to 20% in the population).

Directors provided contact information for a "most knowledgeable" faculty member for each curriculum area in their program, and in the second stage of the study each of the identified faculty were subsequently invited to participate as a "curriculum area expert." Completed surveys were received from 52% of invited practice and field learning faculty members, 48% of research faculty members, 45% of human behavior and the social environment (HBSE) faculty members, and 40% policy faculty members.

Table 1
Auspice and Degree Levels in Final Sample and Sampling Frame: Number and Percent

Auspice	Baccalaureate		Master's		Total	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*
Private sectarian						
Sample	29	18	9	6	38	24
Sampling frame	162	24	22	3	184	28
Private nonsectarian						
Sample	21	13	11	7	32	20
Sampling frame	51	8	26	4	77	12
Public						
Sample	51	32	36	23	87	55
Sampling frame	257	39	146	22	403	61
Total						
Sample	101	64	56	36	157	100
Sampling frame	470	71	194	29	664	100

Table 2
Program Setting in Final Sample and Sampling Frame: Number and Percent

Program setting	Sample		Sampling frame	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*
Urban	73	46	270	41
Suburban	38	24	136	20
Rural	42	27	163	25
Missing/unknown	4	3	95	14
Total	157	100	664	100

Table 3
Regional Distribution in Final Sample and Sampling Frame: Number and Percent

Region	Sample		Sampling frame	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*
New England	12	8	42	6
Northeast	23	15	64	10
Mid-Atlantic	16	10	82	12
Southeast	32	20	126	19
Great Lakes	21	13	135	20
South central	18	11	73	11
Mid-central	14	9	50	8
North central	4	3	23	3
West	8	5	43	7
Northwest	5	3	22	3

Missing/other*	4	3	4	1
Total	157	100	664	100

* Guam not counted in any of the above regions; regional location missing for 3 programs in sampling frame.

Measurement

A self-administered questionnaire was designed for directors, and different self-administered questionnaires were designed for faculty members. Items had various response formats, primarily matrix or yes/no/don't know. A few items had four-point rating scales. For example, on one of these items, response choices ranged from (1) "not at all comfortable" to (4) "very comfortable." It was estimated that it would take less than 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The directors' questionnaire consisted of 39 items focusing on institutional and program demographics (e.g., institutional auspice, program levels offered, program size); institutional and program structure (e.g., nondiscrimination policies); program admissions (e.g., "other" gender category on applications); faculty members (e.g., how knowledgeable faculty members are about sexual orientation and gender identity/expression); students (e.g., how comfortable LGBT students are likely to feel in the program); curriculum (e.g., whether the program has a course focusing on LGBT issues or child welfare courses that provide content on LGBT youth); and assessment (e.g., how well the program trains students to work with LGBT youth or LGBT individuals in general). In addition, the following open-ended item appeared at the end of the directors' questionnaire: "Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the ways in which your program addresses LGBT issues in its policies, practices, or curriculum?"

There were five versions of the faculty questionnaire intended for identified experts in each of the curriculum areas (i.e., human behavior [HBSE], policy, practice, research, and field). All versions began with eight common items focusing on program faculty members (e.g., how knowledgeable faculty members are about sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) and students (e.g., how comfortable LGBT students are likely to feel in the program). On all but the field faculty version, these items were followed by five specialized items that focused on curriculum (e.g., which LGBT-related topics are covered in courses in the curriculum area) and faculty members (e.g., how knowledgeable are faculty members who teach in the curriculum area about sexual orientation and gender identity/expression). The field faculty version contained eight specialized items (e.g., whether there are field placements that provide opportunities to work on LGBT-related issues or with LGBT clients; whether any training on LGBT issues is provided to field instructors).

These questionnaires were developed from literature on teaching culturally competent practice with LGBT populations (e.g., Black, Oles, Cramer, & Bennett,

1999; Crisp & McCave, 2007; Crisp, Wayland, & Gordon, 2008; Foreman & Quinlan, 2008; Mackelprang et al., 1996; Martin & Hunter, 2001b; Meezan & Martin, 2003, 2009; Mulé, 2006; Newman, 1989; Van Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004), optimal LGBT-supportive program policies (Mackelprang et al., 1996; Messinger, 2002), and issues of heterosexism in social work education (Aronson, 1995; Fish, 2008; Messinger, 2004; Morrow, 1996). The researchers used this literature base, along with textbooks on social work practice with LGBT populations (Hunter, Shannon, Knox, & Martin, 1998; Morrow & Messinger, 2006), to identify items associated with specific content to be addressed in each of the subject areas (HBSE, policy, practice, research, and field) on the faculty questionnaires. These items were reviewed by subject experts among members of the CSWE Council on Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression for thoroughness and completeness.

Data Collection

On March 3, 2009, invitation e-mails were sent to the directors of the programs selected for participation. Invitations incorporated a description of the study and informed consent information. A direct link to the study questionnaire, which was hosted on the Web site Zarca Interactive, was also included in the e-mail. Data collection from directors was terminated on April 1, 2009. On March 16, 2009, similar invitation e-mails were sent to faculty members who had been identified by their directors as the "most knowledgeable" and appropriate person to answer questions about each of the five curriculum areas (HBSE, policy, practice, research, and field). Invitations to faculty members were sent out on a rolling basis as their names and contact information were received from the directors of their programs. Data collection from faculty members was terminated on May 1, 2009. In order to maximize the response rate, four reminder e-mails were sent to directors and faculty members between the respective opening and closing dates.

Findings

This study's primary question pertained to how well social work education programs are preparing their students to provide competent services to LGBT individuals and particularly to LGBT youth. Only 19% of directors reported that their programs assess the competence of their graduates to provide services to LGBT individuals. When asked how well they thought their programs trained students to provide competent services to LGBT individuals, 59% responded "very well" to "fairly well," and 41% thought their programs trained students "slightly well" to "not at all well." Directors' ratings were somewhat lower when asked how well they thought their programs trained students to provide

competent services to LGBT youth: 47% reported "very well" to "fairly well," and 53% reported "slightly well" to "not at all well."

In the rest of this section descriptive findings are presented on the explicit and implicit curricula among social work education programs, followed by analysis of variables that are associated with the primary research question and the related question of how comfortable LGBT students are likely to feel in the program. Variables are also examined that are associated with the presence of open LGBT students in social work education programs. Finally, a summary of qualitative data that program directors provided is presented.

Explicit Curriculum

Course material. Only 14% of directors reported that their programs offered a course that focuses specifically on LGBT issues. Such courses were more common among master's programs than undergraduate programs, χ^2 (1, $N =$ 154) = 15.99, $p < .001$. Sixty-eight percent reported their programs offered courses on diversity that are external to the curriculum areas; among them, nearly all purportedly include content on sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, or LGBT people. In addition, nearly all directors (95%) reported their programs offered a course on human sexuality during the past two years. About 82% stated their programs regularly offered courses on child welfare, but material specific to LGBT youth was reportedly not included in many of them: Only 54% reported material on identity development among LGBT youth, 50% on LGBT youth in out-of-home care, and 41% on best practices with LGBT youth.

Coverage of LGBT-related topics within the curriculum areas, as reported by the faculty "experts," varied greatly, as shown in Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7. Programs reporting coverage within HBSE courses ranged from 97% for "gender identity development" to 44% for "LGBT history." Among policy courses that range was from 95% for "lesbian and gay discrimination" to 49% for "diversity among LGBT populations." Among practice courses it was from 92% for "self-awareness of values and biases" to 50% for "legal issues." Among research courses the range was from 78% for "avoiding sexual orientation bias" to 16% for "issues facing LGBT researchers." The full list of coverage of LGBT-related topics in each of these four curriculum areas appears below. Because the number of faculty "experts" responding to each item varied among curriculum areas, this number is noted for each table.

Table 4
Coverage of LGBT-Related Topics in HBSE Courses: Number and Percent*

HBSE course content	n	%
Gender identity development	70	97
LGB identity development	68	96

LGBT relationships and families	65	90
HIV/AIDS	64	90
Theories of oppression/discrimination—sexual orientation	64	90
Critiques of gender in human development theories	63	89
Coming out as LGB	62	87
Theories of oppression/discrimination—gender identity	60	84
Intersecting oppressions facing LGBT populations	58	82
LGBT-specific issues across life course	56	80
Critiques of heterosexism in human development theories	56	79
LGBT cultures and community	55	79
Human sexuality as it relates to LGBT people	54	76
Coming out as transgender	47	66
LGBT resources	47	66
Health issues other than HIV/AIDS for LGBT populations	42	60
LGBT history	31	44

* *N* = 70–72 for each item

Table 5
*Coverage of LGBT-Related Topics in Policy Courses: Number and Percent**

Policy course content	n	%
Prejudice and discrimination—lesbian and gay populations	60	95
Civil rights issues—LGBT populations	57	92
Implications of social welfare policies for LGBT populations	49	78
Prejudice and discrimination—transgender populations	46	74
Policies directed specifically at LGBT populations	46	73
Social and economic issues facing LGBT populations	45	71
Prejudice and discrimination—bisexual populations	44	70
LGBT advocacy and organizing	40	63
LGBT history	40	62
Human sexuality as it relates to social policies	34	54
Implications of youth-related policies for LGBT youth	33	53
Diversity among LGBT populations	31	49
International LGBT issues	10	16

* *N* = 62–64 for each item

Table 6
Coverage of LGBT-Related Topics in Practice Courses: Number and Percent*

Practice course content specifically with LGBT clients	n	%
Practitioner self-awareness—values/biases	75	92
Cultural competence	73	89
Confidentiality/privacy	70	85
Self-determination	69	84
Assessing strengths, problems, needs, and resources	67	82
Engagement	66	81
Ethical issues other than confidentiality/privacy	65	79
Advocating for services for clients	62	76
Issues in practice with couples and families	58	71
Issues in practice with LGBT youth	55	67
Issues in maintaining a positive working relationship	54	66
Issues in practice with groups	52	63
Goal-setting and contracting	47	57
Issues in practice with communities	41	51
Legal issues in practice	41	50

* *N* = 81–82 for each item

Table 7
Coverage of LGBT-Related Topics in Research Courses: Number and Percent*

Research course content	n	%
Avoiding sexual orientation bias in research	58	78
Avoiding gender identity/expression bias in research	56	74
Special ethical issues in research with LGBT adults	49	64
Special ethical issues in research with LGBT youth	41	55
Sampling and recruitment issues with LGBT populations	41	54
Definitions and measurement of sexual orientation	28	37
Definitions and measurement of gender identity/expression	28	37
Issues facing LGBT researchers	12	16

* *N* = 74–76 for each item

Field learning. Among field learning faculty "experts," 86% reported their program offers field placements where there is an opportunity to work on LGBT issues or with LGBT clients; 13% reported no such opportunities. Among the programs not offering these opportunities (*n* = 11), all are baccalaureate programs (primarily in institutions that do not also offer a master's program in social work). No other demographic differences were discernable between programs offering and not offering opportunities to work on LGBT issues or with LGBT clients. Table 8 shows the extent to which field learning faculty experts reported the availability of opportunities to work on LGBT issues or with LGBT clients in agencies providing services to youth, including youth in out-of-home care. Table 9 shows the extent to which these experts reported having field placement opportunities in agencies providing LGBT-specific services for youth or adults.

Table 8
Availability of Field Placements with Opportunities to Work on LGBT Issues or with LGBT Clients in General Youth or Youth in Out-of-Home Care Settings*

Field placement settings	*n*	*%*
Youth services programs	66	79
Health/mental health programs	61	75
School-based programs	54	65
Foster care/adoption programs	47	57
Runaway/homeless shelters	45	54
Juvenile detention programs	41	50

* *N* = 81–84 for each item

Table 9
Availability of Field Placements with Opportunities to Work on LGBT Issues or with LGBT Clients: LGBT-Specific Settings for Adults or Youth*

Field placement settings	*n*	*%*
HIV/AIDS programs	56	67
Violence prevention/victim services programs	43	52
Other adult health/mental health programs	41	49
Political advocacy organizations	34	41
Health/mental health programs for LGBT youth	22	26
LGBT community centers	17	20
Runaway/homeless shelters for LGBT youth	15	18

LGBT school-based programs	13	16
Other LGBT youth service programs	11	13
LGBT elder service programs	7	8
Juvenile detention centers for LGBT youth	5	6

* *N* = 81–83 for each item

Faculty Members

Among all respondents (which usually includes multiple respondents from each program), only 9% rated faculty members in their programs as being only "slightly knowledgeable" to "not at all knowledgeable" about sexual orientation. However, 30% rated their colleagues as only "slightly knowledgeable" to "not at all knowledgeable" about gender identity/expression. Faculty "curriculum area experts" were also asked to rate knowledge of LGBT-related issues among colleagues within their identified curriculum area. In this case, there was only one respondent per program. In just 12 – 13% of programs that were rated by a "curriculum area expert," HBSE (*n* = 71), policy (*n* = 63), and practice (*n* = 82) faculty members were rated "slightly knowledgeable" to "not at all knowledgeable." However, research faculty members (*n* = 76) were given this low rating in 33% of programs.

A little more than half of all respondents (53%) reported that there were open LGBT full-time faculty in their programs, and 5% were unsure. Fewer respondents (37%) reported open LGBT part-time faculty, but 20% were unsure. Open LGBT faculty members were more common among master's programs than undergraduate programs, both full-time faculty, χ^2 (1, *N* = 424) = 127.50, *p* < .001, and part-time faculty, χ^2 (1, *N* = 339) = 85.42, *p* < .001. Nearly two thirds of respondents (61%) reported there were no faculty development opportunities in their programs during the past two years focusing on sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, or LGBT people; 11% were unsure. Faculty development opportunities were more often reported by master's programs, χ^2 (1, *N* = 400) = 6.89, *p* < .01. Among the 83 field learning faculty experts, only 16% reported having field instructor training on these topics during the past two years.

About 41% of all respondents reported having program faculty whose area of scholarship focuses on sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, or LGBT people. Scholarship on these areas was more common among master's programs than undergraduate programs, χ^2 (1, *N* = 418) = 34.76, *p* < .001. However, among 41% of the 130 programs for which the director and at least one faculty member responded, there was either a difference of opinion on whether there was any such scholarship or respondents did not know.

Program and Institutional Environment

Among directors, only 9% reported that LGBT students are likely to feel "not at all comfortable" to "slightly comfortable" in their programs, and among faculty

respondents that figure was 15%. Correspondingly, 87% of both directors and faculty members reported there were open LGB students in their programs within the past two years. But only 22% of directors and 21% of faculty members reported open transgender students during the past two years.

Table 10 shows resources and characteristics of social work programs' institutions that are relevant to LGBT students and faculty members. Among directors, 53% reported their programs are in a jurisdiction with a nondiscrimination law that includes sexual orientation, and 15% were unsure. There were 36% who reported their jurisdiction has a nondiscrimination law that includes gender identity, and 26% were unsure. Hardly any programs are located in institutions that have prohibitions against same-sex sexual behavior or advocacy on behalf of LGBT people. As shown below, the great majority of directors reported that their programs are located in institutions that have sexual orientation nondiscrimination policies, but less than half have gender identity nondiscrimination policies or partner benefits available to same-sex couples. Notably, about a quarter of directors were unsure whether their institution has a gender identity nondiscrimination policy. Although about three quarters of the institutions are reported to have LGBT student groups, less than half have LGBT-oriented student services.

Table 10
Institutional Resources and Characteristics Reported by Directors: Number and Percent

Institutional resources	Yes		No		Don't know	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*
Sexual orientation nondiscrimination policy	119	79	26	17	5	3
Gender identity nondiscrimination policy	58	39	54	36	36	24
LGBT student services	68	45	69	46	14	9
LGBT student groups	110	73	33	22	8	5
Partner benefits for same-sex couples	58	39	65	65	25	17

Directors were also asked about resources within their programs and the facilities in which the programs are housed. Table 11 shows that nearly all programs reportedly have sexual orientation nondiscrimination policies; less than two thirds have gender identity nondiscrimination policies. While only 2% of directors were unsure whether their program has a sexual orientation nondiscrimination policy, 7% did not know if it has a nondiscrimination policy that includes gender identity or expression. Few programs allow prospective students to identify a gender other than "male" or "female" on their application, and hardly any of the programs' facilities have gender-neutral bathrooms.

Table 11
Program Resources and Characteristics Reported by Directors: Number and Percent

Program resources	Yes		No		Don't know	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*
Sexual orientation nondiscrimination policy	134	90	12	8	3	2
Gender identity nondiscrimination policy	94	63	44	30	11	7
LGBT student groups	34	23	116	77	0	0
Gender-neutral bathrooms	5	3	146	96	1	1
Applications ask about sexual orientation	5	3	146	96	1	1
Categories of "other" gender or "transgender" on application	10	7	130	87	10	7

Among field learning experts (*n* = 81), 25% reported having open LGBT-identified field instructors or liaisons, but fewer reported using specifically designed resource materials (13%) or support groups (4%) for LGBT students in field placements. Likewise, few reported offering any specific field instructor training during the past two years on working with LGBT students (11%). However, many field-learning experts reported that agencies had to agree not to discriminate against students on the basis of sexual orientation (82%) or gender identity/expression (73%) in order to be approved as field placements.

Variables Related to Student Competence and Comfort, and Presence of Open LGBT Students in Programs

In addition to the findings reported above, the relationships of other study variables with the major "outcomes" were examined, i.e., how well programs train students to deliver competent services to LGBT individuals and LGBT youth, and how comfortable LGBT students are likely to feel in the program. Also examined were variables associated with the presence of open LGBT students in social work

The Pearson chi-square test of association was used to test the statistical significance of these bivariate relationships. However, several chi-square analyses resulting in significant findings had violations of the assumption of normality due to low expected values. As a result, the four response categories for training students to provide competent services (not at all well, slightly well, fairly well, very well) were collapsed into two (slightly to not at all well, fairly to very well), and the four categories for LGBT student comfort (not at all knowledgeable, slightly knowledgeable, fairly knowledgeable, very knowledgeable) were collapsed into two (slightly to not at all knowledgeable,

fairly to very knowledgeable). In many cases, violations of the assumption of normality still occurred because of a low number of "don't know" responses on other variables. To check whether such violations were likely to have compromised the accuracy of the findings, the chi square was run again after filtering out the "don't know" responses (which resolved the violations in nearly all instances). Findings were reported only when filtering out the "don't know" responses did not change whether chi square produced a significant result. As noted below, the Fischer Exact test was run in one instance when filtering out "don't know" responses failed to resolve the violation of the assumption of normality. Phi or Cramer's V was used to estimate the strength of the bivariate relationships. According to Cohen's (1988) criteria, a Phi or Cramer's V score of .1 indicates a weak relationship, .3 a moderate relationship, and .5 a strong relationship.

Preparation of students to provide competent services. Several variables were associated with directors' ratings of how well their programs train students to provide competent services to LGBT individuals in general and to LGBT youth in particular, as shown in Tables 12 and 13. The strongest associations were with faculty knowledge about gender identity/expression.

Table 12
Variables Associated with How Well Programs Train Students to Provide Competent Services to LGBT Individuals: Assessment by Directors

Variable	Significance	Strength
Faculty knowledge about gender identity/expression	χ^2 (1, *N* = 146) = 32.50, *p* < .001	.47
Faculty knowledge about sexual orientation	χ^2 (1, *N* = 146) = 14.98, *p* < .001	.32
Gender-neutral bathrooms in program's facilities	χ^2 (2, *N* = 146) = 9.77, *p* < .01	.26
Faculty development on LGBT issues (past 2 years)	χ^2 (2, *N* = 145) = 8.77, *p* < .05	.25

All of the above associations were in the "expected" direction. That is, better assessments of training were associated with greater faculty knowledge about sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, presence of gender-neutral bathrooms, and faculty development opportunities on LGBT issues during the past two years.

Table 13
Variables Associated with How Well Programs Train Students to Provide Competent Services to LGBT Youth: Assessment by Directors

Variable	Significance	Strength
Faculty knowledge about gender identity/expression	χ^2 (1, *N* = 148) = 29.09, *p* < .001	.44
Material on best practices with LGBT youth in child welfare courses	χ^2 (2, *N* = 121) = 20.61, *p* < .001	.41
Material on LGBT youth in out-of-home care in child welfare courses	χ^2 (2, *N* = 122) = 17.80, *p* < .001	.38
Material on LGBT identity development in child welfare courses	χ^2 (2, *N* = 122) = 14.12, *p* = .001	.34
Gender-neutral bathrooms in program facilities	χ^2 (2, *N* = 148) = 9.70, *p* < .01	.26
Faculty knowledge about sexual orientation	χ^2 (1, *N* = 147) = 8.25, *p* < .01	.24
Faculty development on LGBT issues (past 2 years)	χ^2 (2, *N* = 147) = 7.34, *p* < .05	.22

These associations were also in the "expected" direction. Assessments of better training were associated with greater faculty knowledge about sexual orientation and gender identity/expression; content on best practices with LGBT youth, LGBT youth in out-of-home care, and LGBT identity development in child welfare courses; the presence of gender-neutral bathrooms; and faculty development opportunities involving LGBT issues.

Comfort of LGBT students in program. Directors and faculty respondents were asked how comfortable LGBT students are likely to feel in their programs. Tables 14 and 15 show the variables that were associated with estimates of LGBT student comfort according to directors and faculty members, respectively. Among both sets of respondents comfort was most strongly associated with faculty knowledge about sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Directors and faculty members differed on other associations with estimates of comfort, but these differences may have occurred because the two sets of respondents were asked different questions on their respective surveys.

Table 14
Variables Associated with How Comfortable LGBT Students Are Likely to Feel in Program: Assessment by Directors

Variable	Significance	Strength
Faculty knowledge about sexual orientation	χ^2 (1, N = 150) = 22.80, p < .001	.39
Faculty knowledge about gender identity/expression	χ^2 (1, N = 151) = 11.69, p < .01	.28
Human sexuality content in required courses	χ^2 (2, N = 150) = 8.36, p < .05	.24
Domestic partner benefits for same-sex couples	χ^2 (2, N = 147) = 6.11, p < .05	.20

The above associations were all in the "expected" direction, with directors' estimates of greater comfort among LGBT students associated with greater faculty knowledge about sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, inclusion of human sexuality content in required courses, and the existence of domestic partner benefits for same-sex couples. Among directors, estimations of how comfortable LGBT students are likely to feel were positively correlated with assessments of how well students were being prepared to provide competent services to LGBT individuals (r_s = .40, p < .001) and to LGBT youth in particular (r_s = .31, p < .001). The variables with noncollapsed response categories were used for these correlations.

Table 15
Variables Associated with How Comfortable LGBT Students Are Likely to Feel in Program: Assessment by Faculty Members

Variable	Significance	Strength
Faculty knowledge about sexual orientation*	χ^2 (2, N = 300) = 12.69, p < .01	.21
Faculty knowledge about gender identity/expression	χ^2 (2, N = 299) = 8.50, p < .05	.17
Faculty scholarship on LGBT issues	χ^2 (2, N = 298) = 6.11, p < .05	.14

* Fischer's Exact = .001

Once again, the above associations were in the "expected" direction, with faculty estimates of greater comfort among LGBT students associated with greater faculty knowledge about sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, and the presence of faculty members who engage in scholarship on LGBT issues.

Presence of open LGBT students in program. The reported presence of open LGB students in programs within the past two years was associated with estimations among all respondents (directors and faculty members combined) of LGBT student comfort, χ^2 (2, N = 449) = 10.12, p < .01, Cramer's V = .15. However, the association of LGBT student comfort and reported presence of open transgender students was not significant. As shown in Table 16, the reported presence of open LGB and transgender students was also associated with program level, auspice, and existence of nondiscrimination laws in the jurisdiction in which the program is located. LGB and transgender students were more likely to be in master's level and nonsectarian programs, and in programs located in jurisdictions with sexual orientation and gender identity nondiscrimination laws.

Table 16
Program Variables Associated with Directors' Reports of Open LGB or Transgender Students in Program During Past Two Years

Variable, open LGBT students	Significance	Strength

Master's-level program
    LGB
    Transgender
	χ^2 (2, N = 423) = 22.71, p < .001
	χ^2 (2, N = 416) = 64.86, p < .001
		.23
		.44

Gender-identity nondiscrimination law
    LGB
    Transgender
	χ^2 (2, N = 423) = 22.71, p < .001
	χ^2 (2, N = 335) = 64.86, p < .001
		.23
		.44

Nonsectarian program
    LGB
    Transgender
	χ^2 (1, N = 416) = 20.50, p < .001
	χ^2 (1, N = 331) = 20.23, p < .001
		.22
		.25

Sexual orientation nondiscrimination law
    LGB
    Transgender
	χ^2 (1, N = 349) = 6.35, p < .05
	χ^2 (1, N = 278) = 3.92, p < .05
		.13
		.12

Qualitative Findings

Fifty-six program directors provided specific comments in response to the open-ended question, "Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the ways in which your program addresses LGBT issues in its policies, practices, or curriculum?" These comments broke down into four general categories: (a) current faculty member and student engagement around LGBT issues and concerns outside the social work program; (b) efforts undertaken by programs to enhance or improve the implicit and explicit curriculum related to LGBT issues; (c) challenges and barriers faced in making program improvements; and (d) further explanations of quantitative responses.

Faculty and student engagement around LGBT concerns. Directors identified a number of ways that social work faculty members were engaged in education, advocacy, and support related to LGBT issues, including:

1. serving as adviser or sponsor for campus LGBT student groups;
2. conducting research and scholarship on LGBT topics;
3. offering continuing education in the community on LGBT topics;
4. serving on boards or leading local LGBT agencies/projects;
5. advocating for LGBT-supportive policies on campus and in the community; and
6. being an active force on campus on LGBT issues.

Directors noted that social work students were active contributors as well, by volunteering at LGBT-related agencies, coordinating LGBT-related learning opportunities for faculty members and students, and providing leadership for campus LGBT services and/or LGBT student groups.

Efforts to improve programs. Efforts to improve programs related to four areas: implicit curriculum, explicit curriculum, teaching methods, and extra- and co-curricular activities. *Implicit curriculum*, a term recently adopted by CSWE, relates to the program policies and practices that shape student learning. Directors identified several aspects of their programs that enhanced students' experiences and their learning. These include:

1. identifying gender-neutral bathrooms for students;
2. existing LGBT faculty members who were out and serving as role models for students;
3. supporting LGBT students through LGBT-specific student groups and caucuses;
4. updating admissions materials to be more inclusive of LGBT applicants;
5. encouraging faculty members and staff to place Safe Zone stickers on faculty office doors and to complete Safe Zone training;
6. creating a plan to improve the program setting for LGBT students; and

7. wearing of rainbow-colored academic stoles by LGBT faculty members and graduating seniors.

In commenting on the inclusion of LGBT topics in the explicit curriculum, several respondents noted that their programs infused LGBT content throughout the curriculum, while others described specific courses on diversity that included LGBT populations. Other approaches to ensure coverage of LGBT topics in the curriculum included:

1. monitoring curriculum to ensure LGBT content is included in all courses;
2. revising curriculum to ensure LGBT topics are included;
3. offering specific LGBT elective courses or reworking curriculum to develop these electives;
4. supporting students taking sexuality and LGBT issues courses in other departments;
5. bringing in an outside professor to teach a sexuality course;
6. having LGBT-specific field placement agencies; and
7. offering a graduate certification in LGBT studies.

Directors commented on a number of teaching methods used in their programs' courses to address LGBT topics. The most popular approach was to bring LGBT guest speakers and panels into classes, although faculty members also facilitated in-class discussions about LGBT issues, assigned LGBT-related research articles and LGBT narratives, or listed these materials in the syllabus bibliography. Other respondents reported using extra- or co-curricular activities to enhance the curriculum, including special lectures and presentations about LGBT topics for faculty members and students; student-initiated learning activities for faculty members and students; and LGBT alumni engaged in LGBT education who could present on these issues.

Barriers and challenges to program improvement. One issue that arose for several directors related to their program's size. Programs with few faculty members or small numbers of students found it challenging to offer LGBT-specific courses due to problems in finding knowledgeable instructors or enrolling sufficient numbers of students in elective courses. Several respondents reported that not all faculty members were equally knowledgeable or comfortable with LGBT topics. Similarly, several other directors noted that they needed practical information resources to improve their programs. Several of them learned about program and curriculum inadequacies as a result of participating in this study. As one director noted, "until I read your questions, I thought we did a pretty good job. Taking the survey has been informative about areas, such as the child welfare classes, that we need to enhance."

Discussion

The purpose of this survey of program directors and faculty members was to identify areas of strength and weakness within the implicit and explicit curricula of social work programs in the United States, with the hope that both directors and faculty members could use the findings to make improvements in their programs. Both strengths and areas of concern were found regarding the treatment of LGBT issues, students, and faculty members. The picture looks somewhat better for sexual orientation issues than for gender identity and expression issues; for LGB faculty members and students than for those who are transgender; and for the preparation of students to work with LGBT adults than with LGBT youth (including youth in out-of-home care). It appears that undergraduate programs may lag behind master's programs in some of these areas.

Most programs do not even formally assess their students' competence in providing services to LGBT individuals. More than half of directors estimated that their programs prepared students to provide competent services to LGBT youth only *slightly* to *not at all* well. Directors' estimation of the preparation to work competently with LGBT individuals in general was somewhat better. By contrast, the overwhelming majority of directors and faculty members believed that LGBT students are likely to feel comfortable in their programs. Most reported open LGB students were enrolled in their programs during the past two years, but only about one-fifth reported having open transgender students in their programs.

Even though the findings on *competence* and *comfort* were quite different, their strongest correlates overlapped considerably. In the view of program directors, both variables were most strongly associated with the faculty's level of knowledge about sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression. Faculty members were not asked the competence question, but in their view, comfort was also associated with faculty knowledge. These two outcome variables are conceptually related in that programmatic environments where scholarship on LGBT issues, or knowledge about them, is considered unimportant may tend to direct little attention to the preparation of students to provide competent services to LGBT clients. The large amount of disagreement among respondents within the same programs on whether any of their colleagues focused their scholarship on LGBT issues might reflect a marginalization of LGBT scholarship, as described by LaSala, Jenkins, Wheeler, and Fredriksen-Goldsen (2008). Although marginalization might not necessarily indicate a homophobic or transphobic environment, it could indicate the presence of heterosexist or binary gender biases, either of which may have negative impacts on LGBT students and faculty members, and the quality of the training offered by the programs.

Although the data show the presence of considerable infusion of LGBT content, they also show some gaps. Content on LGBT youth is frequently absent from each of the curriculum areas, including courses on child welfare. It is hard to imagine how programs can prepare students to deliver competent services to LGBT youth in out-of-home care without including such content in the explicit

curriculum. Similarly, there are relatively few programs that provide field placement opportunities in LGBT-specific settings for youth, although many programs report having opportunities to work with LGBT clients in general youth settings. The lack of availability among some undergraduate programs of field placements providing any exposure to LGBT issues or clients is a particular concern. Content on gender identity/expression and transgender people lags considerably behind content on sexual orientation and LGB people, and curriculum specific to bisexuals is less common than curriculum on lesbians and gay men. There is much less infusion of LGBT content in research courses as compared to the other curriculum areas.

The data also show strengths and gaps with respect to the implicit curriculum or program environment. One of the most important of these variables is the level of faculty knowledge about sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, and LGBT people. Although most respondents assessed their faculty members as being at least fairly knowledgeable about sexual orientation and LGB people, nearly a third gave their faculty members a relatively low rating on knowledge about gender identity/expression and transgender people. Although most faculty experts concurred that colleagues teaching in their curriculum area were at least fairly knowledgeable, faculty members teaching research courses were considered to be relatively lacking in knowledge about these issues among one-third of the research faculty experts.

One way to enhance faculty knowledge about LGBT issues is through faculty development initiatives. Unfortunately, less than a third of directors reported any LGBT-related faculty development during the past two years. The present findings indicate several areas in which the need for faculty development is especially pressing: information about LGBT youth, especially how content on LGBT youth can be infused in courses on child welfare and throughout the curriculum; information about gender identity/expression and transgender people; and information on how to infuse LGBT-related content in research courses.

In addition to faculty knowledge, the present findings indicate other gaps among programs' implicit curriculum on gender identity/expression and transgender people. Relatively few programs have a gender identity nondiscrimination policy, and almost none allow for the identification of *other* gender or *transgender* on their admissions applications or have gender-neutral bathrooms in their facilities. Gaps such as these contribute to a less positive educational environment for transgender students than for LGB students among social work programs, and they may reflect a lower level of consciousness about gender identity/expression than sexual orientation among program administrators and faculty members. The large proportion of directors who did not know whether their institution had a gender identity nondiscrimination policy or, to a lesser extent, whether their program had such a policy, speaks to a relative lack of consciousness about these issues. Finally, the greater proportion of sectarian programs reporting an absence of open LGBT students could indicate a less positive environment in

such programs for these students. That is, LGBT students might be less likely to apply to such programs; once enrolled, they might be less likely to be open.

Limitations

This study had several important limitations. First, although the sample was randomly selected, the ability to generalize the findings to the population of social work programs is somewhat limited by self-selection bias, as indicated by the 55% overall response rate. In particular, baccalaureate programs in private sectarian institutions and programs in the Great Lakes region were under-represented in the final sample. In addition, faculty responses are likely to contain selection biases since faculty participants were suggested by their directors. It is possible that faculty members engaged in scholarly work on LGBT issues, especially faculty members who are openly LGBT, are over-represented in the sample.

Second, all of the study's findings are based on self-report by program directors and faculty identified by their directors. As such, the data are likely to contain biases commonly associated with self-report data. Social desirability seems especially likely, and a measure of it was not included in the survey instrument. Thus the data might present a more positive picture of LGBT issues in social work education than may exist in reality. However, many participants reported less-than-positive characteristics about their programs.

Third, although the study asked how well programs are preparing students to provide competent services to LGBT clients, there was no direct measure of competent practice among students or graduates of social work programs. Likewise, comfort among LGBT students and knowledge about LGBT issues among faculty members were not measured directly. Thus findings on these questions must be considered only estimates; future studies may measure competent practice, student comfort, and faculty knowledge more directly.

Fourth, the lists of LGBT-related topics in each curriculum area are not exhaustive. These data should be used only for comparative purposes. Finally, because the study was cross-sectional, no causal explanations can be advanced regarding the relationships among preparation for competent practice, LGBT student comfort, and any of the correlates identified.

Recommendations

The findings suggest that, as a first step, social work education programs should make greater efforts to assess how well they are preparing their students to provide competent services to LGBT individuals, including to youth in out-of-home care. Because providing such preparation is a core part of their mission, programs should monitor how well they are living up to this responsibility.

Although programs may already include some material about LGBT populations, there is considerable room for improvement; many topics that are less frequently addressed can be integrated into each curriculum area. The lists of LGBT-related topics that appear in this report can be used as a resource for faculty members attempting to increase and diversify content on LGBT issues across curriculum areas. Programs do not necessarily need to have LGBT-specific electives. Having such electives without also infusing LGBT content throughout the curriculum segregates this knowledge such that most students will not be exposed to it. In order to deliver both breadth and depth of LGBT-related knowledge, both infusion (see Bassett & Day, 2003) and specialized electives are likely to play important roles. Programs must also monitor the extent to which these topics are integrated across instructors teaching the same courses.

Programs should make special efforts to increase the infusion of material about LGBT youth throughout the curriculum, particularly in child welfare courses, in order to adequately prepare their students for providing competent services to LGBT young people. In addition to topics infused throughout required courses, programs should endeavor to increase field-learning opportunities to work with LGBT youth, especially youth in out-of-home care.

Greater attention to transgender and gender identity/expression issues is especially needed. The findings show particularly large gaps in the preparation offered by social work programs on these issues.

As part of their assessments of the implicit curriculum, programs should evaluate the support systems for LGBT students and faculty members at the program, institution, and local levels. Doing this kind of assessment would require the collection of data on both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, which most programs are not currently gathering. Programs should consider including these categories on their applications and evaluation instruments to better assess whether LGBT students and faculty members experience heterosexism, binary gender bias, or other forms of oppression.

Programs should also ensure that they have faculty members who are knowledgeable about LGBT issues, including open LGBT faculty members and those whose scholarship focuses on LGBT topics. There is particular need for more knowledgeable faculty members in the research curriculum area. Both academic and field faculty could benefit from more faculty development opportunities on LGBT issues, especially youth and transgender issues. Because of the emergent nature of LGBT identities and developmental trajectories, and the changing social environment in which LGBT individuals live (Martin & D'Augelli, 2009), even relatively well-informed faculty members might benefit from greater exposure to the most current knowledge about these issues. Faculty members can also be encouraged to attend sessions on LGBT issues at local, state, and national social work conferences.

Programs should examine whether faculty scholarship on LGBT issues is marginalized; they should make efforts to support and foster such work among their faculty members.

To better recruit and support LGBT faculty members and students, programs should advocate for their institutions to adopt both sexual orientation and gender identity nondiscrimination policies. Other supportive policies, such as domestic partner benefits, can also contribute to a positive and supportive educational environment.

At the very least, directors and faculty members should take the time to learn the status of LGBT-supportive policies and conditions in their institutions and the jurisdictions in which they are located. Such efforts are especially needed with respect to gender identity/expression and transgender people. One very basic but important way to ensure respect for transgender students and faculty members is to provide gender-neutral bathrooms. Programs should also make sure there is an "other" category on admissions applications and other forms that ask people to identify their gender.

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