Sharon Colvin, Nina Routh & Thomas Akiva

This study is part of a School of Education Student Faculty Research project on LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic). The study was funded in Spring 2020 and was adapted for online implementation after students were sent home for the COVID-19 pandemic. This report describes preliminary analysis of survey data. An anonymous survey was sent out mid-September 2020, approximately a month after classes began. We sent links to the Qualtrics survey to faculty in GSWS, GSPH and SOE as well as to the Rainbow Alliance and to personal networks. We asked recipients to forward the survey to anyone who might be interested. In order to qualify for the study students had to be aged 18-24, a returning student enrolled in classes (no first years) and LGBTQ. Students were invited to enter a drawing for one of four $100 Vincent cards after they completed the survey.

Sample

We received 82 complete responses to the survey. The mean age of respondents is 20 years. Student respondents were in their 2nd(41%), 3rd (37%) or 4th (15%) year, and 7% (6 students) reported that they were in a graduate program. Though this survey was intended for undergraduates, we included the graduate students who fell within the required age range. The overall LGBTIA demographics of the University of Pittsburgh are unknown but we suspect that transgender students are underrepresented in this survey (See Table 1). The sample is majority white and female identified. The race breakdown reflects the racial diversity of the University of Pittsburgh. In Fall 2019, 70% of undergraduates were white, 9% Asian and 6% Black or African American[1]. Most of the students in this sample went to high school in Pennsylvania or surrounding states (See Table 2).

Table 1. Demographics

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

	#	Percent
Heterosexual	2	2%
Other	7	9%
Asexual/Aromantic	9	11%
Gay or Lesbian	19	23%
Bisexual/Pansexual	45	55%

GENDER IDENTITY

Transgender	3	4%
Male	9	11%
Non binary or gender	19	23%
Female	54	66%

RACE

Other	1	1%
Biracial	5	6%
Black or African	6	7%
Asian	11	13%
White	59	72%

Table 2. High School Location

	#	Percent
International	2	2%
NY	3	4%
OH	4	5%
VA	4	5%
NJ	8	10%
Other States	10	12%
Eastern PA	22	27%
Western PA	24	29%
Total	82	100%

Mental Health and School Climate measures

For this study we used several published and widely used scales to measure School Climate, Depression and Anxiety (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; California Department of Education, 2015; Spitzer, Kroenke, & Williams, 2000). We found no correlation between Depression, Anxiety, School Climate and any of the other measures.

Outness and Identity Measures

We used a published scale for outness and asked about several groups of people in students' lives (Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard School of Public Health, 2017). Table 3 shows the outness for each group on a scale from Everyone to No One. We bolded "friends at school" because this group has the highest percentage of being Out to Everyone and none of the students in our sample reported not being out to their friends at school.

Table 3. Sexual Orientation Outness

	Everyone	Most people	Some people	A few people	No one
Immediate Family	40%	12%	4%	28%	16%
Extended Family	9%	7%	12%	24%	48%
Friends at School	**54%**	**32%**	**10%**	**5%**	**0%**
Friends at Home	34%	29%	17%	17%	2%
Classmates	10%	18%	27%	27%	18%
Professors/Instructors	5%	6%	11%	28%	50%

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[1] https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/social-justice/student-dashboard

Open Ended Questions

The survey also included a handful of open-ended questions, which allowed students to write about their experiences being LGBTQ at Pitt during the COVID-19 pandemic and more generally. Two researchers coded each qualitative response and came to an agreement on each code before reporting results here. When appropriate, responses were double-coded to reflect multiple themes.

How do you think the University of Pittsburgh has handled the COVID-19 pandemic in general?

None of the responses to this question were related to LGBTQIA identity or services. However, students reported being unhappy with tuition and online learning and some were comparing Pitt's response to that of other schools. Mental health and stress were common themes.

Table 6. COVID Responses	% of responses
Positive	17%
Negative	26%
In Between	56%

> "On the surface, well. For student mental health: terribly... I am constantly exhausted and the fact I'm trying to deal with depression and PTSD on top of that is difficult. I don't know who to reach out to about this.… I'm considering dropping out."

What do you think Pitt has done well in the last year to support the LGBTQIA community?

A significant portion of the responses (43%) indicated that students did not know or could not think of anything that Pitt has done to support the LGBTQIA community. (This is different from those who left the box blank.) It is unclear if students are unaware of Pitt's efforts or if they simply did not remember anything recently.

> "I don't know what Pitt has done to support the community, so I guess that says something about what Pitt has/has not done."

Table 7. Support Responses	% of responses
In Between	2%
Negative	17%
Positive	37%
Don't Know	43%

Of the remaining responses, most were positive (37% of the total) including comments like, "**Stating pronouns has become standard**, I feel comfortable at Pitt stating my sexual orientation. LGBT+ organizations on campus are many and present, and are not hidden. I know many staff and faculty who are openly out and RSA staff are proud as well. The continued acceptance of the community and **allowing us to be who we are in a casual way** has been very helpful." Negative responses were less frequent (17% of the total) but were specific about their experiences. For example, one student responded, "I do not believe Pitt has done much for the community besides trying to plaster 'inclusion' on their advertising." Another stated that Pitt has been "**mainly focusing on the well-being of white and cis members of the LGBTQIA community**."

What do you think Pitt could do to better support the LGBTQIA community now and in the future?

Among the responses, half (50%) indicated that students want more LGBTQ-specific resources to be provided by the university. Some examples of suggested resources include: *organizational support*, *LGBTQ+ spaces*, and *funding for LGBTQ+ clubs and organizations*.

> "Actually care about us instead of pretending to."

Additionally, a significant portion of the responses (40%) showed that students want more LGBTQ-related university policies to be in place. Responses indicated that having more **gender-neutral bathrooms, implementing anti-hate policies, and being more vocal about queer issues** would better support the community at Pitt. Furthermore, one respondent said that Pitt needs to take "more active steps to support people, not just platitudes on social media."

Table 8. Suggestion Responses	% of responses
More diversity	7%
Don't Know	15%
LGBTQIA related training	23%
LGBTQIA related policies	26%
LGBTQIA related resources	57%

Of the remaining responses, 16% indicated that students want more LGBTQ+ training for both students and staff members. One student wrote, "Pitt also needs to **mandate courses** so the general community better understands LGBTQIA issues and how to talk about gender and sexuality. Ultimately, **Pitt has allowed for a lot of hatred towards LGBTQIA folx** within the community and it's unacceptable."

Additionally, 7% of the responses suggested that students feel an increase in student and staff diversity would better support the LGBTQ+ community. For example, one respondent said "**I also wish Pitt had a more diverse student population**. I often feel like the only LGBT person and/or person of color in the room. I've gotten used to it (because my hometown is also very homogenous), but I wish Pitt would increase the number of minority students that are accepted and create more well-advertised and accessible spaces for those students to meet each other."