Retaining LGBTQQIA+ Faculty to Tenure and Beyond

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, academia has attempted to be more open and accepting of diverse identities to better serve the campus community. To this end, there has been increased programming to focus on inclusiveness of marginalized identities such as LGBTQQIA+. However, much of this programming has centered on the student experience and neglected tenure-seeking faculty, who are generally used to carrying out such programming rather than benefiting from it. The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of tenure-seeking counselor education faculty during their tenure-seeking process. Using consensual qualitative research (CQR) as an analytical framework, the authors found three core ideas: identity, vetting, and support.

INTRODUCTION

In an open letter to Angela Davis, James Baldwin (1970) wrote, *since we live in an age in which silence is not only criminal but suicidal, I have been making as much noise as I can.* The Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Questioning Intersex and Asexual+ (LGBTQQIA+) community has had to be silent for several reasons and silenced in various parts of society. Though, much of the literature focuses on LGBTQQIA+ college student experience and development, this manuscript will focus on the unique experiences of faculty members within the counselor education community. There is a paucity of research in counselor education regarding faculty. Therefore, portions of this literature review will focus primarily on concentrations outside of counseling. Additionally, statistics for LGBTQQIA+ faculty are scarce as this information is not collected by national bodies. While the struggle for personal sexual identity and politics may often paint a rosy picture for sexual minoritized students and faculty, the truth is, that there has been a long and arduous climb.

At present there is ample literature regarding the experiences of LGBTQQIA+ faculty in the form of understanding harassment and discrimination (Marasco & Astramovich, 2022; Nadal, 2019a; Rankin et al., 2010; Speciale et al., 2015; Yost & Gilmore, 2010). In fact, researchers have investigated the experiences of gay male (Marasco & Astramovich, 2022) and lesbian (Speciale et al., 2015) counselor educators and the ways in which they have navigated systemic issues, microaggressions, outness, and building community.

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of LGBTQQIA+ faculty during their tenure seeking process. Much of the literature that does include LGBTQQIA+ faculty exists outside of counselor education. Additionally, some of this literature is outdated as many state and federal laws regarding marginalized populations have changed. In this manuscript, we intend to first provide a review of the literatures by exploring the tenure process, LGBTQQIA+ faculty experiences, and support systems available for tenure seeking LGBTQQIA+ faculty. Next, we will provide a methodology outlining our research process and a positionality statement followed by a presentation of findings. The document will end with a discussion and implications for the field and future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives have historically focused on race/ethnicity. Subsequently, this has created campus environments where students of different phenotypical and ethnocultural

backgrounds are better represented. There have also been advances for students (which will be discussed in later sections) regarding programming to increase belonging among LGBTQQIA+ students, creating a more welcoming campus community for non-heterosexual individuals. Due to DEI initiatives, diverse faculty recruitment has grown in recent years (DeAngelo et al., 2021; McMurtrie, 2016), leading to increases in people of color and gender growing in different disciplines (Nadal, 2019a). While the student experience regarding these initiatives are well documented, the faculty experience is under-researched, particularly in counselor education. However, there is an opportunity to investigate intersections such as sexual or affectional orientations to provide a greater understanding of tenure seeking faculty experiences. The purpose of this literature review is to give insight into the overall faculty tenure seeking process, campus climate and programming for LGBTQQIA+ belongingness, and investigate support systems for LGBTQQIA+ tenure seeking faculty. Please note, to honor the viewpoints of the cited authors and participants, the current researchers maintained the use of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) in this literature review and results section. Any use of the expansive LGBTQQIA+ in this literature review following sections is to reflect the current status and inclusivity of the community.

The Tenure Process & Potential Barriers

Research, teaching, and service are primarily believed to be the keys to earning tenure in postsecondary education (Hannon et al., 2019; Madikizela-Madiya, 2022), three components which are consistent throughout academia regardless of discipline. Requirements for tenure and promotion in the academy may be somewhat ambiguous, capricious, and vary from university to university (Ward & Hall, 2022). Finally, although committee formats are consistent, tenure seeking faculty may not be aware of committee membership and therefore may not know from whom to seek out for resources, requirements, and assistance. In summation, the requirements for tenure have been described clearly for tenure seeking faculty, however, the exact metrics on which they will be judged are not universal.

Tenure is desirable in regards to job security as tenured faculty can only be terminated for extraordinary cause (i.e. financial exigency, program discontinuation, etc.). Additionally, it provides protection allowing for freedom for research without outside pressures (AAUP, n.d.). When tenure is in jeopardy or is in danger of not being achieved, it may be associated with issues regarding research, teaching and/or service. For example, if a

professor's research focuses on controversial, understudied, or undervalued groups, there may be issues in publishing (Armstrong, 1996; Madikizela-Mazela, 2022). As a significant criteria for tenure and promotion, depending on the Carnegie designation, low publication rates can lead to tenure denial. Researchers have also found that women and professors of color tend to have been rated as less "brilliant" than White, male counterparts (Storage et al., 2016). Finally, service may not be seen as valuable depending on where the faculty chooses to put these efforts (Cleveland et al., 2018). The "cultural tax" of being a minority often means that faculty members are doing unrecognized work on behalf of minority students and the larger community (Arnold et al., 2021). This takes away time from research, which is a primary determinant of tenure. These added and often underrecognized restraints mean that minoritized faculty experience a different road to tenure than their non-minoritized counterparts.

LGBTQQIA+ and the Tenure Process

The road to tenure is often arduous regardless of one's intersecting identities. According to the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) 2022 annual report White women and men are the primary representatives of counselor education faculty at 61.89%, while people of color are still underrepresented 31.52% (CACREP, 2023). Moreover, counselor education faculty that do not identify within binary gender roles (i.e, male, female) make up 1.78% (CACREP, 2023). These numbers become important as CACREP is the primary regulating body for counselor education programs. This representation means that those of the global minority are the primary faculty seeking tenure and therefore, resources are generally catered to this population. However, the number of LGBTQQIA+ faculty are unknown based on current collection procedures, therefore legitimizing the current research regarding the needs of this particular group of tenure seeking faculty. Kezar (2008) found that faculty in leadership positions were more successful when they were provided institutional supporters, campus wide support networks, mentors, and an environment that supports questions and flexibility. As pre-tenure faculty are expected to be future campus leaders, these same supports should be built into the tenure seeking process. Outside of counselor education, institutions have created programs to assist tenure seeking faculty in this process (Nowell, 2017). Within the discipline, researchers have noted that focused support is necessary for faculty retention (Borders et al., 2011). Therefore, it is imperative to understand the resources available to LGBTQQIA+ tenure seeking faculty as these supports are instrumental in achieving tenure.

Research has shown that tenure seeking faculty are most successful when they have proper support including mentorship, professional development, and academic flexibility (Borders et al, 2011; Harris, 2019). However, it has also been found that faculty members with historically minoritized identities do not receive consistent and adequate mentorship and may be subject to further marginalization in primarily majority spaces (Bonner et al., 2021; Hannon et al., 2019). Holcomb-McCoy and Addison-Bradley (2005) denote that African-American women are often overlooked for mentorship in addition to experiencing discrimination regarding social and professional networks which can halt the tenure seeking process. This may also be applicable to the LGBTQQIA+ community as they exist as minorities in primarily heterosexual faculties. In a seminal study regarding LGBT social work faculty activists, Taylor & Raeburn (1995) found that LGBT faculty members who engaged in activism were more likely to experience discrimination in hiring, bias during tenure seeking, harassment and intimidation, and devaluation of research related to LGBTQQIA+ issues. Additionally, while affinity spaces are important, research has shown that white and POC LGBTQQIA+ men process these spaces differently as minority men are still stigmatized (McConnell et al., 2019). Newer research has emerged regarding the benefits to mentoring racially and sexually minoritized faculty and several institutions have created queer, faculty focused groups to aid in retention (BrckaLorenz et al., 2023; Wright-Mair & Marine, 2021).

Out and visible sexual minorities in the professoriate have grown in the last thirty years. Renn (2010) details a progression of LGBTQQIA+ faculty experience from being forced to hide their sexuality to an emergence of documentation of the LGBTQQIA+ experience in the 1990s. However, recent literature (BrckaLorenz et al., 2023a; BrckaLorenz et al., 2023b; Durham, 2022; Eliason, 2023) tells us that LGBTQQIA+ faculty members may still choose to hide their sexuality or neglect to correct the assumption they are heterosexual in an effort to assimilate to the dominant group. Relatedly, LGBTQQIA+ faculty spend time interpreting social cues as they may be assessing their safety at an institution (Bilimoria and Stewart, 2009). Researchers are also still finding that mentors suggest faculty hide their sexuality in the classroom until tenure is achieved as per Scharrón-Del Río (2020). Gordon (1978) defined assimilation as the "entrance of a minority group into the social cliques, clubs, and the institutions of core society at the primary group level" (p.169). Research has shown that historically marginalized individuals may employ assimilation techniques as tools to create safety and comfort within dominant communities (BrckaLorenz et al.,

2023a; BrckaLorenz et al., 2023b). Moreover, there is still the belief that their sexuality makes them vulnerable, fearing social stigma or backlash (BrckaLorenz et al., 2023b; LaSala et al., 2008). However, LGBTQIA+ faculty members have gained some level of equality through self-advocating within their respective institutions. That is, faculty have advocated through fighting for issues such as benefits for domestic partners and campus inequality (Fowler, 2005; Messinger, 2011).

Legislative Effects on the LGBTQQIA+ Faculty Experience

Despite governmental protections against sexuality discrimination, there is still the possibility for higher levels of scrutiny due to heightened visibility (BrckaLorenz et al., 2023a; LaSala et al., 2008). LGBTQQIA+ faculty members are also often expected to be content experts regarding research areas related to sexuality (LaSala et al., 2008; Sanchez et al., 2015). This may be a particular issue if LGBTQQIA+ issues are not in their content area as this can again lead to tokenism. There may also be an expectation that the LGBTQQIA+ professors work with any sexual minorities on campus on various issues. This devotion, which may contribute to service, can and may take time away from the scholarly productivity (e.g., class preparation, research, etc.) necessary for tenure.

While campus climates have become more inclusive regarding sexuality over the years (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Garvey & Rankin, 2015; Renn, 2017), many of these efforts focus on students and may not filter into the faculty space (BrckaLorenz et al., 2023b; Fassett & Pike, 2022; Renn, 2010). Though twenty-two states have laws which include nondiscrimination language for LGBTQQIA+ individuals (Graham, 2023), there are over 500 anti-LGBTQ+ state legislative activity occurring across the United States (Peele, 2023; ACLU, 2023). The Supreme Court ruled on June 15th, 2020 that it is against the law for employers to fire employees simply for being gay or transgender, protected under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Burrows, n.d.; Liptak, 2020). However, in 2023 there were 5x as many anti-LGBTQ+ bills introduced to state legislation in comparison to the last 5 years (Peele, 2023). The recently introduced anti-LGBTQ+ bills focus on areas such as civil rights, healthcare, freedom of speech, public accommodation, school & education, and public accommodations (ACLU, 2023; Peele, 2023). Although the federal legislation protects LGBTQQIA+ employees, many state legislations have countered and contributed to hostile and less supportive work environments. The supreme court ruling may create ambiguity in states that have active anti-LGBTQ+ bills or do not have nondiscrimination language for LGBTQQIA+ individuals. The ambiguity of how these laws have and will affect

LGBTQQIA+ faculty necessitates a deeper look into their unique experiences while seeking tenure.

METHODOLOGY

Given that the phenomena to be investigated had not been found in the counselor education literature, the researchers chose to use qualitative inquiry. Qualitative inquiry is the basis for studies prior to quantitative study when the phenomenon needs to be understood (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The central research question for this study was: What are the lived experiences of LGBTQQIA+ counselor educators as they navigate the tenure process? The authors used Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) for data analysis due to the emphasis on a team of multiple researchers, consensual agreement and a clear, methodical process of data analysis (Hill et al., 2005). CQR incorporates several other methodologies including grounded theory, phenomenology, and process analysis to encapsulate the participant's lived experiences. CQR advocates for a system which focuses on the participant narrative and inductive reasoning opposed to counting answers for data analysis. There is an emphasis on consensus from the research team regarding observations from the data that relies on mutual respect, equal involvement, and shared power (Hill et al., 2005).

Researcher Positionality

The research team consisted of the primary researcher, four research assistants, one auditor, and one editor. The primary researcher and auditor are Black male and female counselor educators who were pre-tenure at the time of data collection. The primary researcher identifies as gay and the auditor is heterosexual. The research assistants consisted of four master's level students in their first year of study with one student identifying as queer. The editor is a Black gay male counselor educator who is not engaged in the tenure process.

Procedure

Hill et al. (2005) describe several components to CQR that were replicated for this study. The authors advocated for open ended questions, non-numerical descriptives, a small sample and research team, and an auditor for the work. To achieve this, the researchers relied on open-ended questions using a semi-structured interview which allowed participants to respond as necessary. Follow up questions were used to gain clarification and expanded upon the participants' answers. CQR advocates for a system which focuses on the participants' narrative and inductive reasoning opposed to counting

answers for data analysis. Early portions of data analysis included this inductive reasoning to begin the process.

One of the benefits of qualitative research is the use of small sample sizes, which allows for a depth of understanding as results will not be generalized. CQR allows for a small sample size to create a thorough, contextual picture of the chosen population (Spangler, Liu, & Hill, 2012). The authors used six self-identified and self-described participants for this study, as LGBTQQIA+ experiences cannot be generalized across all populations. In keeping with the practices of CQR, the research team consisted of the primary researcher, four research assistants, and one auditor. The authors did not conduct a stability check due to the adequacy of the sample size. Additionally, CQR does not use the term saturation but focuses on stability of findings which was achieved through providing a thorough explanation in the procedures and participant quotes with extended examples in the findings (Hill et al., 2005).

Data Collection

Approval to conduct the study was granted by the first author's institution's IRB review board. Participants were recruited through word of mouth and purposive sampling at several in-person professional conferences including the American Counseling Association (ACA) and Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) national conferences over the span of a year. In addition, we also sought to recruit participants through the Counselor Education and Supervision Network (CESNET) listserv using an IRB approved flyer. Interviews were conducted in person with the first author. Participants completed a verbal informed consent and received a written copy at the time of the interview. Interviews began with a demographics form followed by a semi-structured interview. Interview questions were gathered after completing a thorough literature review regarding the LGBTQQIA+ faculty experience on college campuses (Cresswell & Poth, 2016). The guiding interview questions focused on how participants navigated their queer identity within an academic setting. Questions ranged from their level of outness to the ways in which their institutions showed support for their marginalized identity. The following is a sample of the guided questions employed in the semi-structured interviews: Are you out at work? Do you feel that your identity is respected at your institution? Would you say there are support systems in place for LGBT faculty? If so, what are they? Each interview was recorded live and stored on a locked device.

Participants. The study consisted of six participants who all met the criteria for the study, that is, tenure track or tenured counselor education faculty who

identified themselves on the LGBTQQIA+ spectrum. While most participants identified as queer, the intersections of gender presentation and race yielded varying experiences. Every participant worked at a CACREP-accredited counselor education program and only one participant (Ari) had achieved tenure at the time of the interviews, *see Table 1*.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Regional Location
Jim	Male	42	African American	Queer	Southeast
James	Male	29	Asian-American	Queer	Rocky Mountain
Paul	Male	37	White	Queer	Western
Erykah	Female	32	African American	Bisexual/Queer	North Central
Tyrone	Male	39	White	Queer	Western
Ari	Female	34	Non-Racial, Phenotypically Brown	Heteroromantic Demisexual	North Atlantic

Data Analysis

After all interviews were completed and transcribed, the team began the process of data analysis using CQR. CQR data analysis emphasizes three primary steps: 1. Participant responses are divided into domains; 2. Core ideas are constructed for each domain per case; 3. A cross analysis which creates categories describing core ideas across cases (Hill et al., 2005). The research team engaged in each of these processes including audits at the third stage. At each stage, the primary researcher held training sessions for the research assistants. They were informed of the inductive reasoning process and how to organize the data. Finally, the researchers used the qualitative research software program Dedoose to categorize the data and ensure consistent rules were applied across all cases.

During the first step, the researchers independently read each individual case and created domains per case. The researchers then compared those domains across cases to find consistency between cases. The research team then met to compare domains as suggested by CQR. In alignment with Hill et al (2005), all domains were discussed and only reached with unanimous consensus. At this point, the auditor was consulted and gave feedback for each domain. The research team adjusted the domains as necessary based on the auditor feedback.

At the second step, the research team then split again to create core ideas for each case for the newly created domains (Hill et al, 2005). Individually, the research team created core ideas for each case based on the domains and then condensed the core ideas across cases. The research team then met again to share core ideas and come to a consensus. The core ideas were condensed and supported by experiences from each participant. The auditor was consulted again to assess the core ideas and check for missed information or inconsistencies.

Finally, together, the research team met together to complete the third step of cross analysis. At this time, the researchers listed the support for each core idea and looked for similarities within that support. This cross analysis created the final list of categories for the data. Charting occurred during the cross analysis as the researchers categorized which experiences occurred across all cases (general), across three to five cases (typical), or less than three cases (rare) as outlined by Hill et al (2005). The auditor was brought in for a final time to assist with charting the data.

Trustworthiness

Hill et al. (2005) have noted several areas used to ensure trustworthiness that the researchers employed several to fortify the study. The first area addresses the adequacy of the questions. The questions were created after a thorough literature review. The questions were open-ended which allowed participants to answer based on their experiences. To bolster trustworthiness, the same interviewer completed all of the interviews to ensure consistency. CQR also has a high regard for the consensual portion of the methodology (Hill et al., 2005). To achieve this, all domains and categories were thoroughly discussed with the entire research team. The group did not move forward with deeper analysis unless there was full consensus with all members. Next, an auditor was used to check against the main research team for alternate interpretations of the data. Their thoughts were reviewed and incorporated into the analysis. Outside of the trustworthiness measures as suggested by Hill et al. (2005), the researchers

also engaged in bracketing, audit trails, reflexivity, and triangulation as outlined by Carlson (2010).

RESULTS

After cross analysis, the research team found three primary core ideas for the participant experiences: *vetting, identity,* and *support*. The vetting process is described as a conscious analysis of the environment to ensure safety regarding their sexuality. Identity included control over how their various intersectional identities were presented to the public. Finally, the participants assessed for support systems on and off campus and how they influenced their experiences as a counselor educator. The following paragraphs will provide a deeper description of each core idea and include participant quotes to further contextualize their experiences.

Vetting

Through the vetting process participants engaged in an internal analysis which determined if their possible institution was one where they could thrive given their sexual identity. All six participants shared a form of vetting process to ensure that individuals or institutions were trustworthy and safe regarding their sexuality. For some, this occurred during the interview process, for others, this happened during meetings and in personal conversation. Beginning with the interview process, Tyrone (White, Queer) shared:

> When I asked questions about the area one of the things I asked was what's it like, "what's the LGBTQ community like in this region, in the area, and also at the school," and I was told that they didn't know any gay people and if I did, and if I knew some gay people I should ask them...And that felt really unwelcoming and so it told me a lot about not applying there (laughs).

Here, Tyrone details a deliberate process where they asked targeted questions regarding the LGBTQQIA+ experience at a prospective institution. They found that the potential faculty member was uninformed, and therefore, the institution was not a fit for their needs.

The vetting process occurs multiple times throughout a faculty members' time at an institution. Even after accepting a position, the newly minted faculty member must figure out if their colleagues are trustworthy or if their initial support of their sexuality was only during the interview. For example, Jim (African American, Queer) shared:

> …the one faculty member who supported me through each of those times I advocated has been consistent but even then her

support has been behind the scenes. My thinking is if you want to come to my office and say "I'm glad you said that" why didn't you say that in the meeting with everybody else there?

In addition to vetting for acceptance of the LGBTQQIA+ identity, there is also a need to assess for trustworthy colleagues overall. Erykah (African American, Bisexual/Queer) notes general politics involved in the tenure seeking process and how they navigate these assessments:

…I think that because politically it can get, particularly within the department, it can get a bit messy, and there are very clear sides within the department, and I think that that divide... [between]...faculty...We talk to and like these people; we don't talk to those [people].... So, I think there are fears to some extent related to how it can come across if you do engage in any discussion about your department dynamics when somebody else is joining that department.

Taken together, these narratives detail vetting as a continual process. Participants were consistently doing internal checks to ensure that they were in a supportive environment. From interview and through tenure seeking, participants have an acute awareness of where they can go for resources and assistance during their time at their institution.

Identity

Based on what they learned during the vetting process, the participants noted importance in having control over how they presented across varying identities. Identity is defined as the different internal components that influence the participant's external experience. All of the participants viewed their identity, primarily their sexual identity, as an essential aspect of their work in regards to their research and teaching. However, the visibility and presentation of these identities varied based on the intersectional identities, such as, race, gender or their identification with asexuality. For example, the Black participants had unique intersectional experience at their respective institutions in regards to being both Black and queer. Also, our only asexual participant, Ari, shared feelings of rejection within different queer spaces due to asexual invisibility.

All six participants shared experiences regarding their sexual identity and the steps necessary to navigate the institution. This shared sentiment was portrayed acutely in the quote from James (Asian-American, Queer):

With my colleagues, the other staff, students like that is just who I am. And I think that is so central to …who I am as an educator, as a counselor educator, as a counselor, as a supervisor, and also as a researcher. I mean, it informs every single piece that I do and so I think for me to not be out would be a little bit disingenuous but I understand that there also has to be a safe and celebratory space for that …I remember leaving that with my students on the first day that I explicated all my identities for them (laughs) and I did that as a way not only to kind of offer this important consent about "here are my social identities" to really identify the cultural lens that I see through…

All participants felt that their sexual identity was integral to their experience as an instructor and a scholar. Elements of this showed up in how they teach courses, the research they chose, and the committees they joined.

While all participants shared experiences regarding their sexual identities, these experiences were varied based on other intersections. As noted above, the only two Black participants shared difficulties regarding the intersection of race and sexual identity. Jim (African American, Queer) stated:

It was the intersection of my queer identity and my Black identity, and how I not only integrate the two, but they're very there at the forefront of my identity and I'm very strong in those identities...I really didn't see much push back for my queer identity, honestly...But being Black and queer that's, where I got the push. Because I would never mention one without the other.

Similarly, Erykah (African American, Bisexual/Queer) shared:

I'm in a town that believes that they are very very liberal, very open, very welcoming, and they are very welcoming to people of many different identities as long as White is the first one.… so, gay people are beloved. We become invisible if we're not White. So, a lot of people probably don't know but there is no reason they would know... I don't think they've ever looked and half the time they can't tell me apart from any other Black person in the building, so that's probably another part of that.

One can observe that these two participants' experiences had a direct relationship to their Blackness in regards to their sexuality. In this study, none of the White or other POC participants mentioned race and how it affects their

experience. We can therefore conclude that the confluence of Blackness and sexuality creates a unique type of discrimination in counselor education.

Lastly, Ari (Non-Racial/Phenotypically Brown, Heteroromantic Demisexual), who was the only participant who identified with asexuality spectrum in our study, shared "feeling of being rejected" in conversations that happened *within* the queer community. These conversations, despite being held with people who share a sense of belonging in queer spaces, would often show little to no knowledge or sensitivity around asexuality. This left Ari to "educate when it comes to the asexuality spectrum specifically," which added to her feeling removed from the queer community around her.

Support

For participants, support encompassed both university sanctioned and interpersonal systems at the institutional or community level. Support systems were consistently evaluated as the participants negotiated support based on who they felt would be accepting of their identity. Community Support was described as LGBTQQIA+ support systems that existed within the surrounding communities (cities, towns, etc.) and were not sponsored by the university. Institutional Support included systems that may or may not exist at the university, at any level, geared towards LGBTQQIA+ inclusion. There was a lack of awareness around several areas of support expressed by all participants, particularly in relation to the specific requirements for tenure. While most participants found that LGBTQQIA+ supports on campus were tailored to students rather than specifically for faculty, all six participants shared varying experiences regarding support systems for LGBTQQIA faculty at their respective institutions.

Community Support. Half of the participants noted the surrounding community around the institution was not as supportive as the institution itself. Erykah (African American, Bisexual/Queer) noted "I'm in a town that believes that they are very very liberal, very open, very welcoming, and they are very welcoming to people of many different identities as long as White is the first one." Similarly, James (Asian American, Queer) noted the surrounding area is not as supportive of his sexuality as the capital of the state explaining he feels supported by the institution but not the surrounding town, "And then, we talked a little bit about the the Latter-Day Saints (LDS) culture regionally...and that sometimes it gives a space of silence to queer identities." Finally, Ari (Non-Racial/Phenotypically Brown, Heteroromantic Demisexual) shared the contrast between a republican leaning community which houses a campus that holds "Diversity Speaks" speaker series. The

experiences of these participants highlight the contrasting levels of support within their institutions versus the surrounding communities.

   Institutional Support. Participants noted either a presence or a lack of formalized institutional support for LGBTQQIA+ faculty at their universities. For example, over half of the participants shared that there was no LGBTQQIA+ group specifically for faculty. James (Asian American, Queer) stated:

> There's not really a more formal programming around trying to create supports for LGBT+ faculty… There's no place to gather on campus. There's nothing that's more formal [meetings] and so, there's not even programming, there's not even the social and so there's not even ways that we can connect across campus if we wanted to.

Here, the participant notes that there are no formalized, university sponsored groups which allow for the gathering of LGBTQQIA+ faculty. In the same vein, others reported that while these systems may have been available, they were not easily accessible. Paul (White, Queer) stated, "And I do remember uh like when I first got here kind of searching, doing some research and not finding anything. So there might be some resources out there but if they're not easily accessible or found." Taken together, this means that most of the LGBTQQIA+ faculty in this study did not have institutional resources to meet their unique needs as it pertained to their sexual identity.

   For the remaining two participants, LGBTQQIA+ faculty groups did exist but were not robust enough to meet their needs. Jim (African American, Queer) shared that while he was a member at first, it was not professionally vital and poorly organized:

> The weight was too business focused and not enough social and even down to wanting to make it a formal organization with bylaws and things of that nature. I like that kind of organizational structure but I don't think this was the time and place for that. This is…this should have been something that was more of a support for LGBT faculty, a place if they wanted to remain anonymous they could, and we could socialize away from everybody. You know, just be there and support each other.

Jim went on to share that he felt that "the group was a waste of time", which is an issue for new faculty who must invest their time in tenure focused

activities. Paul (White, Queer) also had the resource but it was reemerging and therefore not useful to him yet,

> "[The previous incarnation] died just due to lack of leadership, lack of participation. Uh, and I believe [sic] lack of interest as well. And literally just about uh maybe two months ago someone tried to start it up again. Uh, and we actually…I went in support of this person restarting it."

Both Jim and Paul demonstrate that support must be robust and actually useful to the new faculty member to be viable.

Outside of the formal institution, five of the participants noted interpersonal support systems that existed at the institution. These support systems were primarily person to person and not facilitated by the university. Participants noted interpersonal support from various parts of the institution, both within and outside of their department. James (Asian American, Queer) noted specific supports directly in their department, "And they are proud not only to celebrate my achievements but to celebrate who I am and what I contribute to this department." Ari (Non-Racial/Phenotypically Brown, Heteroromantic Demisexual) shared, "My chair is very supportive. My dean is incredibly supportive. If she ever chooses to leave I'm going to cry….Like she is absolutely amazing and she's an advocate and an ally across the board, which is pretty amazing too," demonstrating interpersonal support up the chain of command within her college. Outside of a strong LGBTQQIA+ community and outside of his department, Tyrone (White, Queer) found individuals who could share minoritized experiences and therefore empathize with him in some way:

> I guess I rely on help from people I would consider allies that are non-LGBTQ folks that I feel like…and often times, they end up being other minoritized faculty who understand oppression at least. And so I feel safer with them in some way, than just like your hetero-cis folks, White folks, that don't really experience these things when they're faced a lot of the time.

Within this interpersonal support, participants noted varying levels of mentorship and the usefulness of these connections. For example, Ari (Non-Racial, Phenotypically Brown/ Heteroromatic Demisexual) noted that while she did not receive direct mentorship from her tenure committee, she was able to rely on assistance from her department chair. Erykah (African-American/Bisexual, Queer) noted that there was some assistance but inconsistent, "I have a hard time calling it mentoring because it's very

sporadic." These examples demonstrate that in lieu of university structured programs and support systems, the participants still found acceptance within their department and other parts of campus.

Finally, half of the participants described a lack of support in understanding specific tenure requirements and subsequent lack of help and support from their institution's tenure committee. This created an environment where participants felt they had little to no resources regarding a very intense and important process. Jim (African American, Queer) noted, the requirements for tenure are not written, and Erykah (African American, Bisexual/Queer) stated that the conversations surrounding the tenure process are kept vague, even when speaking directly to the Dean. Tyrone (White, Queer) stated that the tenure process at his institution feels as though it relies on what the faculty member learned in their Doctoral program, making the participant feel as though they have to guess what the committee is looking for. He described it as "more evaluative than supportive." Taken together, one can see that the support systems here are failing LGBTQQIA+ faculty as they do not have enough information to thoroughly assess their progress towards tenure.

All participants shared a variety of experiences in how they have navigated their tenure journey within counselor education programs. It is evident that participants examined their safety through ongoing vetting, identity development and awareness, and support seeking behaviors. Moreover, it is pivotal to acknowledge the importance of support for participants on both a community and institutional level. In the discussion we will explore how the results of this study can inform the literature and the academy.

DISCUSSION

Minoritized, tenure seeking faculty must find ways to navigate an academic process that was not built for, or is silently unwelcoming for non-white, non-male, or non-heterosexual faculty, staff, or students. Although often not seen as an explicit part of the hiring or retention process, new or emerging faculty who are a part of the LGBTQQIA+ community often navigate the academic hiring and retention process in solitude. For these faculty to show up as their authentic selves they must also find ways to bring their intersectional identities (e.g., pansexual, Latinx, Catholic, middle class, female, millennial, etc.) to the Academy. Therefore, not being able to bring their whole selves, or feeling the need to suppress their sexual identity, may make it difficult for faculty members of the LGBTQQIA+ community into the academic playing field.

Vetting the Selection of a Welcoming Campus Environment

In this study the authors found that participants began vetting institutions as early as the interview process. Participants often discussed ways in which they evaluated safety in a range of professional settings, which aligns with previous research on the process of vetting or seeking safety amongst minoritized individuals in academia (BrckaLorenz et al., 2023a; BrckaLorenz et al., 2023b; Durham, 2022; Eliason, 2023). While a vetting process is natural during any interview, our research echoes authors (BrckaLorenz et al., 2023a; BrckaLorenz et al., 2023; Scharrón-Del Río, 2020) who highlight the added burden that members of the LGBTQQIA+ faculty members face as they are often forced to decide if their sexual identity will affect the hiring, promotion and tenure, or safety within an institution.

The authors also found that the vetting process is continual and goes beyond the initial interview. Participants discussed faculty meetings as examples of spaces where vetting processes can occur and intentionally observing social cues. Similarly to Bilimoria and Stewart (2009), participants spent a significant amount of time interpreting cues. Hannon et al. (2019) study highlighted "healthy paranoia" or an awareness of colleagues' cues, as a factor for determining trustworthiness. Taken together, one can conclude that for professors who identify as a part of the LGBTQQIA+ community, there may be a continual need to vet others actions and interpret social cues to assess their support during tenure seeking. This sustained effort is to discern which individuals in their workplaces are supportive of their sexual identities, adding another problem on the path toward tenure.

Finally, general workplace politics can influence the vetting process as the overall trustworthiness of colleagues must be determined outside of sexuality. Cornelius et al. (1997) stated that most Black faculty are not aware of the invisible political environments that exist in relation to tenure because they are not a part of informal information systems that are created as a result of mentoring. Information may be shared informally and junior faculty may find tenure requirements subjective and invisible (Addison-Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004) and removal from this in-group may mean missed information. Researchers have found that LGBTQ faculty are often discriminated against and excluded from social and professional networks due to their minoritized identity (Nadal, 2019b; Taylor & Raeburn, 1995). Given the fact that information about tenure spreads through exclusive informal networks and that Black and LGBTQQIA+ faculty are often excluded from these networks, the vetting process remains integral in deciding which colleagues are trustworthy and not biased toward the LGBTQQQIA+ community. Removal from the in-group can have detrimental effects on one's

tenure seeking career as important information may be missed. Possible ramifications of being shifted to the out-group may include missing crucial information (i.e., how to write tenure statements, advocacy support, and committee selection).

In order to acquire information necessary to achieve tenure, LGBTQQIA+ identified professors must gain access to invisible political environments from which they may be excluded based on their sexual identity. LGBTQQIA+ professors must attempt to discern the ambiguous requirements for tenure, while being isolated from groups where information about tenure is held.

Identity

Tenure is generally judged on one's teaching, service, and research activities. In this study, these three areas of work were in close connection with how the participants identified with the LGBTQIA+ community. Most of the participants found their sexual identity as integral to who they are as an instructor, an advisor, and a researcher. First, as an instructor, counselor educators often felt like referring to their experiences regarding their sexual identity was an effective way to demonstrate how to apply some of the content from their courses into real life situations. Concepts including privilege, oppression, phobias, stereotypes, visibility and self-disclosure were few examples that held close connection to their lived experiences as a queer person (Scharrón-Del Río, 2017; Orlov & Allen, 2014). In addition to their role as an instructor, the participants in our study also found that their sexual identity took a significant part in their role as an advisor. Some of their interactions with students involved sharing their personal experiences outside of classroom as an LGBTQQIA+ individual to provide guidance and support in non-academic spaces. Orlov & Allen (2014) found that out instructors advising students gave tailored, identity specific support to LGBTQQIA+ students. Combined, one can see that the instructor's student-facing experience is directly related to their status as an LGBTQQIA+ faculty member.

Building onto their roles as an instructor and an advisor, the participants also felt that their sexual identity was integral to who they are as researchers. In many cases, participants had at least a portion of their research tied back to studying and understanding the LGBTQQIA+ community. Similarly, Sanchez et al. (2015) echoed that almost 80% of the LGBTQQIA+ or queer healthcare professionals they surveyed were also involved in LGBTQQIA+-related educational, research, service and/or activities. Therefore, it is important to highlight that LGBTQQIA+ professionals are

intentional with examining and understanding shared lived experiences across research spectrums.

Despite having the majority of the participants share similar experiences in their sexual identity, the two Black participants in our study had notably different experiences. When they expressed the intersection between their sexual identity and racial identity, a unique set of difficulties were present for them. Similar to Combahee River Collective (1977) and Constantine (2008), participants in our study shared feeling invisible or hypervisible for their racial identity. Participants in the Constantine (2008) work also shared experiences of their qualifications being challenged by others, inadequate mentoring, high service-oriented assignments, and pressure to mitigate their Blackness. The Combahee River Collective (1977) highlights that multiple marginalized communities "often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously" (p. 272). The authors acknowledged the persistence of racial and sexual oppression which creates a unique experience for multiple marginalized communities as highlighted in our study. Crenshaw (1991) has succinctly called this experience intersectionality. For our study, although the Black participants parroted some of these experiences, a small, yet, important difference is made: The challenges they faced seemed only present when they expressed their sexual and racial identity *together*, thus displaying them as one intersecting identity. There was a rejection or a complete erasure when they tried to present both of these aspects, which was not found when only one of these two identities were made prominent.

Support

More than half of the participants in our study noted that no LGBTQQIA+ group, specifically for faculty, existed at their institution. Therein, half of the participants reported that LGBTQQIA+ supports at their respective institutions were tailored to students rather than specifically for faculty. Linley et al. (2016) found that many institutions have a LGBT resource center, where faculty are supported in the development for working with LGBT students. This validates participants' experiences where their institution's resource centers are equipped to provide support for students but not faculty. The authors recommend extensive advanced faculty development focusing on inclusivity for students, yet there is a lack of current literature that supports that same development of inclusivity for faculty. On the contrary, in a Pryor (2020) study, participants identified campus organizations that contributed to their successes and most of them consisted of LGBTQ

workers or allies to the LGBTQ faculty. Due to the expressed lack of university sanctioned support for faculty, participants in our study expressed a desire for programming similar to what the author describes. It appears that up to this point, many institutions have placed their focus of official support on students, not considering that their faculty desires similar support (BrckaLorenz et al., 2023b; Fassett & Pike, 2022; Linley et al., 2016; Renn, 2010).

Participants in our study reported that while LGBTQQIA+ supports for faculty were available, they were not easily accessible. Moreover, a pattern across the literature is that the Dean or Department Chair sets the tone for the departmental climate in relation to the perceptions of LGBTQQIA+ educators (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009; Garvey & Rankin, 2018; Vaccaro, 2012). Nearly all of our participants endorsed that interpersonal support systems at their institution played a key role in their experiences as counselor educators. These interpersonal relationships can be leveraged as many times, it falls on the department to outline expectations, provide opportunities to gain support, and welcome new faculty into their culture (Hill, 2009). Therefore, support for faculty can start with those entities closest to them in their daily job performance.

Only two participants in our study noted the existence of LGBTQQIA+ faculty group. While their institutions shared an overarching support, the participants found that these groups did not meet their individual needs. Academic success and career satisfaction for LGBT health professionals in academia, was found to depend on institutional support for LGBT scholarship, concordant mentorship opportunities, and inclusive institutional climate programming (Sanchez et al., 2015). This is very similar to the desires of the participants in our study who expressed a desire for official support spaces where LGBTQQIA+ faculty can provide one another with social support and a sense of structure. Garvey and Rankin (2018) found that while participants in their study felt comfortable and welcomed with their identity, the climate overall felt like one where LGBT faculty members would struggle to advance professionally. An institution where LGBTQQIA+ faculty support groups are not only established, but also easily accessible, removes the burden on faculty of having to fill in these areas of support on their own in addition to providing a space where employees can seek social support and organize and advocate for changes they feel they need in their workplace (Githens & Aragon, 2009).

Implications for Research

   This study has added to the body of literature regarding the LGBTQQIA+ experience for tenure seeking counselor educators. However, there is also a current lack of research discussing formal university sanctioned LGBTQQIA+ groups for faculty. As noted above, much of the research regarding LGBTQQIA+ experiences are tailored to LGBT university support for students, with faculty playing the supportive role (Linley et al., 2016). While this is important as faculty are instrumental in fostering a welcoming climate, it is also important to know who is providing this same climate for faculty. It is important for researchers to address queer faculty across academia.While this research focused on counselor education, these experiences are likely not an isolated experience. Additional research should be focused on queer counselor education faculty of color and their intersectional experiences. Other research can include understanding more about the interview process and how welcoming universities are to those of different sexual identities. There are also still questions regarding the mental and emotional toll of the interview process as the queer counselor educator deduces if the university will be an accepting space. There is also room for research regarding successful LGBTQQIA+ support programs and if they have helped tenure seeking queer faculty.

Implications for Academia

   While this study focused on LGBTQQIA+ counselor educators, there may be implications for academia at large. Institutions wanting demonstrative support for LGBTQQIA+ faculty should ensure affinity groups are established prior to the hiring process. By ensuring that LGBTQQIA+ support groups are established and easily accessible, institutions not only lower the responsibility for these individuals to create their own support networks, but also allow these faculty members to shift their focus onto their professional advancement. This looks like university supported, funded, and maintained groups that specifically focus on the advancement of LGBTQQIA+ faculty in their pursuit of tenure. These groups may be housed within human resources, faculty support services, or diversity and inclusion offices.

   After a stable and sustainable structure, universities should focus on programming to foster safety, support, and mentorship towards tenure. This means in order for faculty to feel fully supported, the supports must serve the professional advancement needs of the members. Resources should be dedicated to LGBTQQIA+ faculty growth including, but not limited to, workshops, university education, and community engagement events. There should also be formalized efforts towards mentorship where faculty can

connect to navigate the terrains that may come with the tenure seeking process. Finally, opportunities for visibility need to be provided so that faculty feel a sense of belonging but with an eye on safety depending on the location and cultural zeitgeist of the campus.

Limitations

There are limitations inherent to this study due to the qualitative methodology. This includes a lack of generalizability due to a small sample. Also, although the sample is diverse, it is not representative of counselor education as most of the participants were POC and male while the profession is still mostly White and female.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this paper highlighted the unique needs of LGBTQQIA+ counselor educators on their journey to tenure and the ways in which they engaged in vetting, support, and mentorship. The Combahee River Collective (1977) emphasized their intersectional experience when they shared, "As Black feminists and Lesbians we know that we have a very definite revolutionary task to perform and we are ready for the lifetime of work and struggle before us" (p. 276). While the women of the collective saw their experiences as a lifelong fight, it does not have to be in academic spaces. Institutions can foster spaces to empower and promote LGBTQQIA+ faculty so that they can move from surviving to thriving during the tenure journey. Ensuring that these spaces are in place prior to arrival will go a long way to ensuring faculty success and hopefully retention.

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