

Opening Up the Eau Claire Community: An Investigation into the Experiences of Members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community on the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire Campus and in the Eau Claire Community



Brianna Covington, Heidi Hanson & Allison Proite – Faculty Mentor: Nicole J. Schultz, Ph.D.
Department of Communication & Journalism – University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

Purpose:

- To study the experiences of members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) community on the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire campus, as well as in the Eau Claire community.

Research Question:

- Are there traceable patterns among the experiences of members of the LGBTQ community?
- If so, what are these patterns, and what can be learned from them?

Data Collection Method:

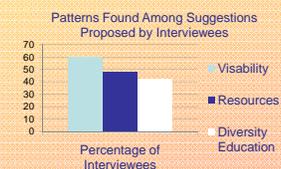
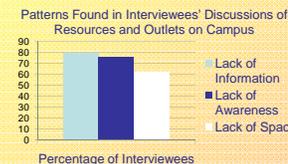
- Data collection was conducted through unstructured face-to-face interviews with members of the LGBTQ community who attend UWEC.
- Interviews were guided by the question: What are some experiences that you feel would be important to share with the UWEC community in regards to the LGBTQ community?
- Probing questions were also posed based on each individual interview
- These interviews were also recorded, for use in a supplemental illustrative piece.

Method of Analysis:

- A thematic analysis was conducted to find common themes and patterns throughout the interviews.

Findings:

- **Themes & Patterns:**
 - Coming Out to Parents/Friends
 - Disapproval
 - Denial
 - Acceptance
 - Resources/Outlets
 - Lack of information
 - Lack of Awareness
 - Lack of Space
 - Housing/Roommates
 - Lack of Respect
 - Ignorance
 - Lack of Options
 - Suggestions
 - More Visibility
 - More Resources/Outlets
 - Diversity Education



Implications:

- By playing a more active role in providing resources and outlets to the members of the GLBTQ community, students may feel more welcome knowing their university accepts them.
- Specific resources may include helping to organize new groups on campus for the GLBTQ community. However small the group is at the university doesn't mean they don't deserve a voice.
- The university needs to develop a plan to make the campus more welcoming to members of the LGBTQ community. This could be achieved through diversity education. Many UW-Eau Claire students may be lacking in diverse knowledge. By having a diverse education class as part of the curriculum or by educating students that live on-campus, the university can be assured that no student will be ignorant about diverse issues.

SOURCES:

- Aronson, J. (1994). A pragmatic view of thematic analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 1(2).
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming Qualitative Information*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Funding for this poster was provided by UWEC Differential Tuition.