Commodification Processes and Alternatives, Internship

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Literature Review Report

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Literature Review on Trans and Queer Spaces in Higher Education

***Introduction***

This Literature Review and report have been completed for the program Commodification Processes and Alternatives through an Internship with the Trans and Queer Center at Evergreen State College over Winter quarter 2017.

The beginning question for this research project was what literature exists around the creation, development, and implementation of Trans and Queer spaces, (or centers, offices, student groups, etc) or identity development and support programming for Trans and Queer people in higher education. It is a project to begin research that aims to be helpful to the further development of the Evergreen State College Trans and Queer center and any identity based development programs started by that center.

This literature review is presented as a collection of notes on and pertinent quotes from individual articles read, with additional discussion on connections and disconnections that seemed prevalent in the research and discussions within the articles, and suggestions of starting points for further research including promising work referenced in the studied articles.

In the spirit of creating a literature review to learn how to create a literature review, a coherent method was research was not developed until much of the research was done. Searches around trans and/or queer spaces or centers, higher education, identity development, LGBTQ and higher education were performed and articles were collected based on the projected relevance from the abstract or Journal it was found in. There were some technical issues with searching some of the databases that Evergreen has access to, and in general there was not a lot of articles directly related to the original question, so some of this work's discussion will be making connections between indirectly related research topics, discussing what types of research is being done and perhaps why it's being done over other kinds, and why it's important to include this indirectly related research as important to this line of research. There is also discussion of why further research on this topic is important and should be done.

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***Notes and Evaluations***

*LGBT and Queer Research in Higher Education: The State and Status of the Field by Kristen A Renn.*

This article was an overview of the field, and actually the first article read. It references a lot of studies and writings that would likely provide good next steps for research.

It is concerned with how institutions are taking LGBT research into consideration structurally, as well as with educational standards and type of research that's being done and on what level. It contains a brief history of the types of broad thinking that has happened LGBT issues, speaks about where various kinds of research stands, and how it is, and perhaps how it should be, impacting the institutions where most of that research is being done. There are pointers for what more research needs done in what areas, and some methods on what that research should include.

This overview was published in 2010, and likely provides a good look at what research had been done, and on what lines of questioning, up to that point.

For this literature review, this article served as an introduction to the patterns of thinking on LGBT topics that have already happened and as a starting point for further, more in depth research on how attitudes have changed toward LGBT issues in connection with Higher Education.

A pertinent quote found at the beginning of this article found on page 132, “Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), and queer research in higher education is embedded in a central paradox: Although colleges universities are the source of much queer theory, they have remained substantially untouched by the queer agenda.”

This connected to a pattern of thought found in preliminary research, that institutions of higher education may not be keeping up structurally and organizationally with the research that is being done within them.

*The Influence of Campus Experiences on the Level of Outness Among Trans-spectrum and Queer-Spectrum Students By Jason C. Garvey and Susan R. Rankin.*

As in most of the articles read for this project, this article also notes the lack of other research on the same or similar topics related to Trans and Queer LGBTQ+ students.

This study is concerned with how campus experience and gender identity impact whether a student will 'come out' or be out. It notes that studies have been done around how people experience coming out, and some in particular on how students experience coming out, but that none have explored whether there is a gendered divide in how students come out, and how campus experiences impact those students' experiences.

It notes early on, page 379, that LGBT centers and offices are critical places to LGBTQ students identity development. The article goes on to analyze data from *State of Higher Education For LGBT People (*by Rankin Et al) and talk about the different dynamics between gender and LGBT campus resource availability in how out students were, and how they felt about their educational institution.

On pages 381-382 the study notes; “The more out a person is with his/her/hir sexual and/or gender identity, the poorer he/she/ze perceives the campus responses to sexual and gender identity issues. Additionally, the more a student is out with his/her/hir sexual and/or gender identity, the less important he/she/ze views campus resources. . . . . . Though discouraging, these results provide empirical evidence for the demonstrated need for supporting trans-spectrum students. Negative classroom experiences lead trans- and queer-spectrum students to feel silenced and/or disengaged (Evans, 2000; Renn, 2000). It is therefore not surprising that trans-spectrum studets reported significantly lower perceptions of classroom climate and curriculum inclusivity.”

For the purpose of this project, the results that this article speaks of highlight the importance of campus resources as critical to student identity development, with the additional information that trans students have particular need of support from the campus administration.

While this article speaks of LGBT resources centers only in relation to students' coming out process and attitude toward campus, the fact that it is an important aspect of students' coming out process and that it is mentioned as critical to identity development means that resources centers are subconsciously considered helpful or necessary to students. It is important to note even these small assumptions and mentions in this project, because so very few articles directly dealing with the importance of, or information about setting up or running successful LGBT centers. This is an area where research is missing, and this project's purpose is to find things that are directly or indirectly related to this area of research and highlight its importance and usefulness.

*Raza Womyn – Making it Safe to be Queer: Student Organizations as Retention Tools in Higher Education by Anita Tijerina Revilla.*

This article was incredibly useful and enlightening for this project. Not only is it directly related to the original research question, but it also deals with the intersection between LGBTQ, race, and gender issues. It talks about the importance and impact of a student group on campus to student's identity development and success on the campus in generally academic terms.

And while it is a study of one student group on one campus, it is likely it is not the only group with similar goals and results, and it is also likely that a similar model would work in more places that do not have these kinds of groups.

This study talks about how this student group has evolved from the time of its conception based on the needs of its members and leadership. The study talks about the club as the formation of the group not only as a safe space, but as a 'counterspace of resistance within academia'. Meaning that it is not only to relax and feel safe to be and express your identity, but it s a space where you can work to change the institution, or the world, to be more inclusive and accessible to people who share that identity with you. It becomes a foundational space where hard social movement work can be done in addition to the healing and support work that individuals may need. “He found that many of these students were engaged in grassroots efforts to ensure that others from their communities survive at their institutions o higher education, often doing the retention work that the institution fails to do with such students” (Revilla, 43). This is a really interesting idea of what a student group can be to marginalized students. It also gives a much different idea of what kind of spaces and places marginalized students might want and need. To find this kind of research article and consider some of the goals and models this group exhibits for use in the creation of spaces for LGBT and further for intersectional students is exactly the type of information this project's original question was looking to find.

In this study, the group is credited with being a foundational force that gave students strength to continue with their educations when they weren't feeling as if they could; the student group helped them feel entitled to their education and their space on the campus. In higher education, this feeling of strength that was expressed by these students is an incredibly good result, and the strategies of this group could definitely inform on the success of other groups and the creation of LGBT centers and spaces.

This article was easy to read, and you got a definite feeling of community from the way the quoted students spoke about each other, and from the author's descriptions of how they spoke about the group and how it was created. It described the group as powerful because it provided not only community and space to be yourself, even if the identity you had of yourself changed, but it also provided a space for collaborative education on intersectional issues, and a space for action to work to change the problems faced on campus and in broader life. If there was an area or issue that one person was lacking in education on, another would step it, providing a very rounded and grounded, holistic approach to issue education.

In terms of usefulness in thinking about creation of Trans and Queer Spaces and in what forms they may already exist, this could be the most important article found in this project.

*Professional Allies: The Storying of Allies to LGBTQ Students on a College Campus by Maura Ryan, K. L. Broad, Clare F. Walsh, and Katheryn L. Nutter.*

This article is studying one Ally program at a southeastern college by studying the narratives stories that the professionals who go through the training tell and comparing it to the narratives that the training materials for the program highlight. It is looking at the connections and differences that individuals and organizations use to explain their purposes and goals. “While this is not an evaluation of an ally program, per se, it does offer insights into how allies on a college campus tell the stories of their experience and do so differently than the training materials would suggest, thereby offering important perspectives for future program development and ally work.” (Ryan et al, 84)

The differences this study found in the narratives the individuals were telling from the training materials was that the individuals were usually framing their involvement in and connection with the program in a very professionally based way, as opposed to the personal, emotional, identity based way that the training materials spoke of. Most noted that it was a professional responsibility to students, a continuation of previous professional development training, or a duty that was built into the job. A few individuals noted personal reasons, but these reasons were set aside from the more pronounced professional reasons. This is in contrast to the training materials that assume that individuals will frame their involvement in personal terms based on their own identity development and relationships to other's with diverse identities.

In terms of this project, this is an interesting study to consider because it is speaking to how individuals and organizations frame their involvement and participation, in this case, with the LGBT ally community. The idea of how arguments and participation narratives are framed has come up in other aspects of this project as well, and studying the variety of framing techniques that individuals and organizations have used could be useful to understanding which types of framing can be used to achieve which types of results.

*Penetrating the Ivory Tower: How Queer Social Movements Impact Universities In Establishing Queer Student Resource Centers. By Stef Shuster.*

This article was concerned with studying the political and social forces that contributed to three main rounds of LGBT resource center creation on several kinds of college campuses. It studies events that were happening around the times of resource center creation and talks about how these events influenced the creation of the centers and why.

“This research has attempted to illustrate how social movements impact the internal decision making processes of organizations, the diffusion of queer student resource centers over time, and the various factors that restricted or warranted the establishment of the centers.” (Shuster, 23)

This study talks a lot about what created the justification, validation, and social pressure needed to create these queer resource centers. As part of this discussion, there is consideration of how students argued for the creation of queer resource centers. Thus there is a study of the way arguments for the creation of queer resource centers were framed.

This article is useful to this project because of its study of how queer resource centers were formed and what pushed the educational institutions to accept the creation of the centers. In the discussion of how students framed arguments and what areas of the campus and community were involved in these arguments, there is useful knowledge as to what has worked previously and in understanding the past arguments light can be shed on what can be taken and used in the future to assure the survival and continued existence of LGBTQ+ resource centers and identity development spaces.

*Universal Design and LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, and Queer) Issues: Creating Equal Access and Opportunities for Success by Jennifer R. Daniels and Tracy J. Geiger.*

This article is arguing for the use of certain principles of universal design as a way to create inclusion for LGBTQ students on campus. The main arguments consist of making sure faculty, administration, and the institution are prepared to handle the issues that usually contribute to LGBTQ students burden before they are faced with LGBTQ students themselves. The main arguments is to prepare for, rather than react to, LGBTQ students.

The study makes note of a connection between improved campus climate and students increased academic success. It also makes note that there are explicit and implicit ways of communicating aversion for LGBTQ issues, which is a problem that the authors argue universal design theories applied to classroom experiences and curriculum could solve. The authors make sure to say several times that they are not equating being LGBTQ with being physically disabled, which is what universal design theories were originally created to address, but that there are several elements of preparedness, inclusion, and acceptance, that can apply to creating better campus environments for LGBTQ students as well as students with disabilities.

This article argues that removing the burden of navigating things like pronouns, chosen names, and the need for gender neutral bathrooms will allow students to have a better environment on campus, rather than needing to take on the burden of self advocacy for themselves.

Some suggested solutions are to include LGBTQ issues in curriculum before they are called out for lacking them, and to set in place systems to ensure that the student's proper names and pronouns are given to the professors before courses begin, so students don't need to be singled out of the classroom for any reason, as well as having access to groups and organizations such as pride networks, student clubs, and resource centers.

The article uses data gathered from a couple campus climate studies to see how well application of the principles of universal design line up with the previous studies of campus climate or friendliness, or acceptance of LGBTQ students. While it is small scale evidence, it does note that the suggestions of applied universal design do line up with better campus climate studies in terms of LGBTQ friendliness.

The study notes that making the suggested changes will help all students, but it will especially help affected students be less likely to suffer from depression and disconnection from the university.

“Understanding issues of gender identity/expression, or LGBTQ issues, through a framework of universal design is an important way of removing moral questions or an unfriendly campus climate in order to be proactive and inclusive of all student types.” (Daniels and Geiger, 23)

This discussion is useful to this project because it is a strategy that can be utilized in arguing for the importance of trans and queer spaces on campus, and for the importance of the creation of identity development and support programs on campuses.

*Fostering Meaning: Fostering Community by Charles Anderson and Velda McCune.*

This article is not directly related to LGBTQ issues, student resource centers, or identity develop programs or spaces. However it has been included because it is talking about creating learning communities, especially learning communities that can facilitate learning and discussion with people who have very different experiences and ideas than you do. This is useful to the project because Trans and Queer spaces are not simply concerned with providing resources to students, or a space for students to express themselves authentically. They are also spaces of learning and educational, though not always through formal means. With that in mind, this article has value in its discussion of techniques for developing communities that can learn and discuss things that might prove to be uncomfortable. It discusses communities that practice engagement and discussion with particular techniques that are meant to address 'in-betweens', which in this is taken to have a similar meaning to the word intersectional perspectives.

While study of learning community techniques is helpful in a way, it is not the main focus of this project, and serves to note that there was not discussion found of similar types of learning in the context of Trans and Queer centers or spaces in higher education, which represents an area of missing knowledge, or at least an area that has not been considered important yet and should be. How to learn around and with identity as a focus, and how to learn about your own identity are important aspects that should be noted in studies in the future.

“We have noted earlier the diverse, multicultural nature of many campuses; and if learning communities are to be truly spaces of the in-between in the terms of productive cultural interchange there is a clear need to act to reduce the likelihood that particular groups of students are 'othered' in direct, or possibly much more subtle, ways.” (Anderson and McCune, 293)

*Becoming A Student Ready College by Tia Brown McNair, Susan Albertine, Michelle Asha Cooper, Nicole McDonald, and Thomas Major Jr.*

This book was not fully read, and does not deal directly with LGBTQ students, however it is also helpful in considering general needs of students that can be applied directly to LGBTQ students needs. The main premise of this book is that colleges should focus efforts on becoming able to meet students where they are in terms of life and educational experience, in addition to including the entire campus community as part of the educational team. In this way leadership and mentorship, and learning are much more accessible to students if everyone who works on campus or with the campus is part of the education experience. More people are empowered to have responsibility and impact on each other's learning.

These ideas for meeting students where they are and working with students and community to contribute to the education and community building of the campus community. Much of the discussion in this book seemed very theoretical and intellectual rather than being rooted in tangible actions and processes that will help colleges and universities become 'student ready'. It is difficult to think about creating models that don't exactly exist, but it may still be frustrating if you are trying to really apply it to an institution and don't have tangible ideas to take action on.

This has been useful to this project because the topics and needs of students discussed are definitely applicable to LGBTQ students, and there is good information on how ideally institutions could react to students needs, be they LGBTQ students in particular or not.

*Reflections on Queer Studies and Queer Pedagogies by Judith Halberstam.*

This is a short reflection from a professor on how Queer studies and teaching methods have changed and why, and what it means for the field.

It is mentioned that queer studies is a very interdisciplinary field and that it usually ends up tucked into other subjects such as anthropology, or sociology, or cultural studies without needing its own specific subject to live in. Which can mean that it is being taught everywhere at once, or no where at all, depending on the choices of individual faculty. It is mentioned that queer studies and social sciences have been criticized for being too involved with real world experiences and directly with people that the work affects in a way that hard sciences do not needs to be.

It is partly this note that makes this short piece worthwhile to this project. Because it is involved so directly with real world experiences, and it is related to so many different studies, the presence of queer studies on a campus can have an impact on students. Previous articles discussed have talked about the importance of having discussion and education around intersectional and identity based issues, so it is also important to have conversation and discourse around queer studies.

This short discussion of the way queer studies have changed and why and what parts to need to be remembered and incorporated into continuing thinking processes on queer studies is helpful to this project in that it provides an area where seemingly lots of research is being done. Research is definitely being done on the concept of teaching queer studies and how it relates to other disciplines and what good teaching strategies are, and of course there is research on the theoretical sides of queer studies and much intellectual thinking being done. This means the subject is important, and it is close enough to the original question of this project that this type of project, and the research that this type of project is searching for is important. That is the benefit of including this article, and this discussion, in addition to the idea that queer studies generally have good impacts on LGBTQ students by raising awareness of issues without singling specific people out, as the Universal Design article was speaking of.

*Why Should Higher Education Be Concerned with the Identity Development of Diverse Students? Author Unknown.*

This article is primarily speaking about race and ethnicity diversity, but much of the same principles that are discussed can be applied across LGBTQ populations as well, especially when considering the intersectionality of many people's identities.

This article talks about personal identity development as a strategy tobe able to understand other's identities and thus be able to have disagreements and conversations productively with people with vastly different identities and experience than you have had.

“If higher education is sincere about creating positive learning environments for all students, then each person who works with diverse populations must also value these diverse development issues. The marketplace of ideas can be more fruitful when constructive, informed dialogue is expected and valued on the college campus.” (Why Should Higher Education Be Concerned with the Identity Development of Diverse Students?, 7).

This article has been helpful because it acknowledges that knowing about identities, even and especially your own, can help understand other's and help create productive and civil conversation. It shows there is value in understanding identity development and in providing services that allow for identity development and free personal expression and informal but valuable learning communities.

*Listening to Students: Interdisciplinarity, Local Studies, and Identity Building by David Seitz.*

This short writing is a reflection on what happened when a group of students and their faculty had to advocate to keep a queer studies program alive after the leading faculty member was gone. It offers somewhat academic and somewhat personal perspectives on why queer studies programs, and the ability to learn about identity development, intersectional social justice movements, and identity issues are important to have available for students.

“Thinking about daily life as political – and critiquing the sordid, oppressive histories of dominant institutions – can be overwhelming. But it can also be liberating. When I began to realize that the potential to work for social change wasn't limited to institutional politics, I started to see how people working in and across the fine and performing arts, media, public health, education, and faith communities can challenge convention. . . . But the very fact of the professor's departure – and of the need to engage in campus-wide dialogue about the importance and legitimacy of interdisciplinary and local studies – testifies to the stark reality that these fields continue to struggle for a place in academy. That means that students, faculty, and staff need to not only explain and defend but share, celebrate, and –yes – advertise their transformative and self-reflexive work.” (Seitz, 58)

Having access to these kinds of narratives has been important to this study because it provides breadth and depth when academic sources and research are lacking.

*Eternal Excesses: Toward a Queer Mode of Articulation in Social Theory by John Nguyet Erni.*

I have included this article that is on the topic of queer studies, in a theory capacity, because it serves to note that if the queer studies and queer fields of research and thought are academically, scholarly, important, they are also important to studies grounded in the lived experiences of people and students.

It is an interesting note that you can find many more articles and research on topics similar to this one, but you cannot find research nearly as easily on LGBTQ students identity development, or on strategies, techniques, and successes and failures of the implementation of Trans and Queer spaces and development programs. To not have an applicable counterpart to scholarly queer studies theory research is to have a missing piece of the puzzle.

***Connections, Themes, and Discussion***

Many of the themes and connections found in this slice of research are likely apparent in reading through the notes made on each fully reviewed article. This section is to make those connections obvious, and note some connections and patterns that were found while doing the article collection research itself.

Lack of additional study in directly related fields has been mentioned in several articles, retention as a measure of student and institution success has been found in several articles as well, as have discussion of argument and discussion framing techniques and discussion of the importance of the form that narratives take.

If it is noted that there aren't enough other studies in the same field, or with closely related topics, it means the people who are doing this work and writing are noticing a lack of studies on the topics they are interested in and writing about. It points to a lacking knowledge that would benefit both students and academics if that knowledge pool increased. In doing this research, it was relatively quite easy to find articles on various forms of queer theory, and even on how to teach queer theory and why teaching queer theory is important. But it was much more difficult to find information on applying queer theory and its related theories to helping LGBTQ students through resources centers, spaces, or identity development programs.

It's interesting that rentention has been used as a measure of student success and institutional success. In the researching portion of this project, it seemed that going down a specific path of student retention might yield more results than looking for student development centered work. This might signify that importance and power is placed with the institution's well being more than student's themselves. Of course, there may be other factors that are invisible at this point that contribute to this impression. Which might include that most research is being done by faculty and professors in institutions that are concerned with student retention and student retention is a measure of student success, and that brings in incentive to study student retention to benefit the instution the researchers are working at. Again, there may be other factors that are not visible at this stage. But it is still interesting to note that retention as a keyword and search intention yielded more focused and specific results than searches of a more student centered nature.

Noting that framing and narrative discussion is present in multiple articles is interesting because the discussion of framing, narratives, and what kind of arguments work for what situations is helpful in understanding how to advocate to achieve the goal you want. Of course it won't always work the same way every time as it has every time before, but still, understanding the dynamics of arguments and how to frame narratives and arguments is very useful.

In answering the question of what literature exists around the subject of implementation and development of Trans and Queer spaces in higher education, this project has provided a selection of directly and indirectly related articles to describe the types of discussions that are happening on the scholarly academic level around Trans and Queer issues in higher education, especially when related to the creation of identity development programs or serving the LGBTQ student population in higher education.

This project has aimed to create a sense of what kind of material can easily be found on this chosen topic, and provide starting points for further research into what has been done on this topic.

***Suggested For Further Research***

Provided here are a few books, organizations, and publications that were referenced in or around the articles that look like promising as next steps for continuing this line of research.

*Organizations.*

Campuspride.org: Campus Pride Index and Campus Pride National LGBT College Climate Survey.

Lgbtcampus.org; Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals.

transequality.org: The National Center for Transgender Equality

*Publications.*

Black Women, Gender, and Families.

Journal of Homosexuality.

The Educational Researcher.

State of Higher Education for LGBT People (Rankin et al): <https://www.campuspride.org/wp-content/uploads/campuspride2010lgbtreportssummary.pdf>

Troubling Intersections of Race and Sexuality: Queer Students of Color and Anti-Oppressive Education. Kevin Kumashiro et al.

Identity Development of Diverse Populations: Implications for Teaching and Administration in Higher Education: ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report. By Vasti Torres, Mary Howard-Hamilton, and Diane Cooper.

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