IMPLEMENTING GENDER-INCLUSIVE HOUSING: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to understand how institutions of higher education implemented a gender-inclusive housing option for students from the perspective of student affairs administrators. Of particular interest was how housing administrators perceived a gender-inclusive housing option impacted students and the campus community. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven administrators at four-year, mid-size, public institutions on the East Coast. Data were organized into four themes: experiences related to (a) creating a welcoming housing option, (b) shifting the binary on college campuses, (c) dissecting room selection processes, and (d) building the gender-inclusive team. The results of this study help student affairs educators better understand the nuances of aligning practices with professional values in relation to the needs of LGBTQ+ students.

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University housing plays an essential role in the experiences of undergraduate students (Stassen, 2003). Many institutions require students to live on campus in the first two years of college so they can fully engage with their new community. Schuh (2004) noted the main purpose of residence halls is to help influence growth and development during the early college years so students could gain a sense of belonging at their institution. Students receive the opportunity to engage with educational materials through programming, workshops, and discussions provided by hall staff. Winston and Fitch (1993) suggested that residence halls should ensure students receive a holistic education, so they may contribute to society, advocate for various social justice issues, understand their own spirituality, and confront difficult ethical issues that may arise. These guideposts are meant to help student affairs educators and administrators stay focused on the institutional mission and vision by contributing to the co-curriculum within different aspects of campus, such as housing and residence life.

While housing and residence life professionals on college campuses across the country understand the criticality of bringing to life and contributing to the institution's mission and vision, they also balance that imperative with meeting students' needs. University housing departments have morphed over time to meet the changing needs and demands of students. Housing styles evolved to provide options such as rooms that fit two to four students, apartments, and single rooms (Schuh, 2004). These options gave students the opportunity to identify how they wanted to live, with whom they wanted to live, and in which part of campus they wanted to live. Although many housing options may exist for students, there is still an ongoing need to provide additional inclusive housing options for students within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, and queer (plus other minoritized gender identities and sexual orientations) (LGBTQ+) community, and trans* individuals in particular (Krum, Davis, & Galupo, 2013). The asterisk used here in trans* is meant to be inclusive of all terms associated with gender identity that begin with the prefix trans (Nicolazzo, 2017). Gender-inclusive housing (GIH) is meant to provide a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for student to express their identities in a comfortable space on campus. Institutions that provide GIH vary in how students select GIH options. Yet stumbling blocks exist. For example, some universities require trans* students to out themselves through an application and/or interview process which can make obtaining a GIH option uncomfortable (Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubbs, 2005). Because there is no universal way of implementing GIH, institutions are unable to locate an established protocol to successfully include trans* students—among others with an interest in GIH—in the housing selection process. Though some best practices exist within the extant literature (e.g., Hobson, 2014), intentionality in practice is primary in GIH implementation (Nicolazzo, Marine, & Wagner, 2018) and needs further investigation.

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to understand how institutions implemented a GIH option for students from the perspective of housing administrators. Student affairs administrators may benefit when considering processes on their home campuses. This study was focused on gathering narratives on how administrators made decisions for GIH, and what impact those decisions had on residents and the broader LGBTQ+ campus community, including trans* students. Three research questions guided this study:

• How do campus administrators narrate stories regarding the implementation of GIH facilities on their (singular they) respective campus?

• How do campus administrators narrate stories about the role played by student affairs personnel during their respective campuses' GIH implementation?

• What stories do campus administrators' share when discussing the general culture of their current GIH community on campus?

Literature Review

GIH, also known as gender-neutral, gender blind, sex neutral, and/or open housing, allows students to live in a residence hall with someone of the opposite sex or whose gender identity does not align with their legal sex (Taub, Johnson, & Reynolds, 2016). GIH was not always meant for the LGBTQ+ community. Before the 1970s, college students expressed an interest to live with individuals of the opposite sex; however, institutions did not have policies in place for this (Schuh, 2004). The primary use of multiple gender housing options was meant for married persons and military families. Cohen, Bauwin, and Fritz (1993) mentioned that as students expressed expanding the housing policies, student affairs professionals sought practices to manage this request. Many institutions had a written policy stating opposite sex domestic partners were eligible to live with one another if there was legal proof. Some institutions allowed students to live with their significant other but needed to inform housing of their relationship. This would have been considered GIH because this option allows individuals of different genders to live in the same space. Later, administrators started to focus on the LGBTQ+ campus community and their housing needs. This is where the development of LGBTQ+-focused GIH started (Bleiberg, 2013).

According to Garvey, Chang, Nicolazzo, and Jackson (2018), the inception of GIH with a focus on the trans* community came as a result of both student organizing and advocacy and initiatives generated by institutional staff and administrators. A student's living space should be a safe space. Some trans* students have encountered negative residence hall experiences, which made them move off campus as soon as they were eligible to do so (Beemyn, 2005).

If housing and residence life would change policies to allow mixed-gender or all-gender living areas, this may help support LGBTQ+ students in ensuring their safety (Bleiberg, 2003). Some institutions provide GIH options that provide a single bathroom or a single-user bathroom with a locked door (Krum, Davis, & Galupo, 2013). GIH may assist students in feeling safe and comfortable with their daily routines in a private setting, and it may also break down barriers regarding gender stereotypes (Willoughby, Larsen, & Carroll, 2012).

A safe and welcoming living arrangement can foster student growth and identity development (Bleiberg, 2003). For many students, college is a time to express who they want to be and to explore identities that they may not have been comfortable exploring prior to college (Furrow, 2012). Newhouse (2013) discussed that many trans* individuals may have never had the chance to express themselves until they moved away from home. To continue helping this population, housing and residence life could provide support groups within the gender-inclusive residence halls (Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubbs, 2005). This would help students feel comfortable identifying as trans* while having the opportunity to openly talk about the issues and concerns with empathic peers.

It was not until the 1960s when the higher education community began to show interest in the LGBTQ+ college student experience (Chestnut, 1998). The LGBTQ+ community is a subpopulation of college students that has encountered numerous instances of discrimination and oppression throughout history. The group has faced threats, physical and verbal harassment, and LGBTQ+ jokes and/or slurs (Ivory, 2005). In the classroom setting, LGBTQ+ student issues have been suppressed and silenced because faculty and peers do not often know how to navigate difficult conversations when derogatory remarks regarding the LGBTQ+ community are presented (Chestnut, 1998). Muñoz-Plaza, Quinn,

and Rounds (2002) suggested four types of social support that could benefit this community: emotional, appraisal, instrumental, and informational.

The first type of social support is emotional support. This occurs when someone shows the individual they are loved, cared for, and will be listened to (Mufioz-Plaza, Quinn, & Rounds, 2002). Appraisal support is a method of positive feedback or affirmation. Individuals who want to help their LGBTQ+-identifying friends can reassure them that they appreciate who they are as an individual and embrace whatever identity they want to exemplify. However, trans* individuals may experience transphobia, which could result in harassment from both heterosexual and homosexual individuals (Sherriff, Hamilton, Wingmore, & Giambrone, 2011). Although homophobic harassment does occur for gay, lesbian, and bisexual (LGB) individuals, it is important to acknowledge that trans* people could encounter harassment from people who identify with the LGB spectrum. Nicolazzo (2017) suggested lesbian and gay college students have not prioritized advocating for trans* student rights.

Instrumental support is physical help such as money, labor, and time (Mufioz-Plaza, Quinn, & Rounds, 2002). Some trans* students may need to undergo processes such as hormone therapy and surgery as they transition. This process can be challenging and require additional support from a professional counselor. If an individual has the means to help, for example, it would be beneficial to drive the trans* friend to and from doctor appointments and/or raise funds for costs related to transition.

The last is informational support. It is often believed that LGBTQ+ students understand precisely what it means to be a part of the community (Mufioz-Plaza, Quinn, & Rounds, 2002). That is not always the case. For example, information related to accessing LGBTQ+-affirming medical care may be helpful to individuals new to any given community. Furrow (2012) suggested that bi-

sexual individuals receive less respect and more discrimination than their gay or lesbian counterparts because society believes that being bisexual is equivalent to being confused about sexuality. Many LGBTQ+ college students need various kinds of information; informational support provided by college personnel, friends, and faculty may be critical for someone who identifies as LGBTQ+ (Mufioz-Plaza, Quinn, & Rounds, 2002).

Singh, Meng, and Hansen (2012) argued faculty are not being educated about LGBTQ+ students, particularly students who identify as trans*. Administrators should provide campus-wide training that includes the use of inclusive language, safety, concerns on campus, and notions of allyship. Institutions could create this training by having speakers and films that display LGBTQ+ challenges (Beemyn, 2005). Assets within the community should be addressed as well. In addition, faculty and staff could attended programs put on by LGBTQ+ organizations on campus to engage with the actual population (Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubbs, 2005). If no such organizations exist, campus agents could ask questions about this absence and may conduct a needs assessment or volunteer to serve as advisors to an organization.

Over time, universities created and added non-discrimination policies revolving around sexual orientation and gender identity. These policies include information on "admissions, employment, educational programs, athletics, student health insurance, gender-inclusive facilities . . . and prohibition of harassment" (Renn, 2017, para 12). Institutions have started to add more options regarding sexual orientation and gender identity within admission requirements and campus surveys to be more inclusive. LGBTQ+ campus resource centers are being created to provide services, offer a safe space for the community, and to enhance student leadership opportunities.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the ideas of Schlossberg's (1989) theory of marginality and mattering, Strayhorn's (2012) theory of sense of belonging, and Simon's (1997) decision-making processes in administrative organizations. We used these three theories to guide the study's conceptualization, inform the data collection processes, and make sense of the data. Each is outlined below.

Marginality and mattering is a theory that has been utilized to explain transition processes. Schlossberg (1989) explained that when individuals go through transition many feel marginalized and as though they do not matter to their new environment. Marginality is when a person enters an unfamiliar space and does not feel a sense of belonging. These feelings could be permanent or temporary. An example of a temporary condition could be when a student transfers from one institution to another. The student begins at their new university feeling overwhelmed, confused, and uncertain. However, overtime, the student gets involved, has a routine, and adapts to their new campus. The second part of the Schlossberg's (1989) theory is mattering. Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) suggested that "mattering is a motive: the feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate, or experience us in an ego extension exercise a powerful influence on our action" (p. 165). People in society want to feel that they matter and are doing something substantial in life. When one feels the opposite, this may result in an individual being unhappy. People attempt to feel like they matter through attention, importance, ego-extension, and dependence (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981).

Strayhorn (2012) suggested that sense of belonging for a student is their "perceived social support on campus, a feeling of sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group" (p. 3). Although Strayhorn focused on gay men of color in his text, he noted that individuals going through the coming out process need to have a feeling of belonging as they begin to create new relationships within the gay community, continue to build and restore the previous relationships prior to coming out, and fix any issues they may have had with individuals that were not accepting to them. Once individuals felt that they were accepted by peers, family members, and co-workers, there was an increase in life satisfaction and happiness.

Simon (1997) discussed how administrative decisions are made and the effects these decisions have on the group. Simon stated there are three components to decision making: the hierarchy of decisions, the relative element in decisions, and an illustration of the process of decisions. Hierarchy of decisions focuses on choices that are made based on objectives, goals, and guidelines set in place. Relative element in decision is the idea of compromising. The focus is not to accomplish goals or objectives but to find the best decision that would benefit everyone. Some institutions provide resources for students within the LGBTQ+ community, such as GIH or a LGBTQ+ center. Acknowledging funding and resource availability, administrators may have to consider compromising what resource is necessary for their campus population. Lastly, illustration of the process of decision is when administration makes decisions that have practical reasons but acknowledge their personal values. This type of decision making combines the hierarchy and relative elements in decisions by using facts, figures, and personal experiences to make a choice.

Methods

A narrative inquiry methodological approach was used to collect and analyze the participants' stories of GIH implementation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This methodology highlights the temporality, sociality, and place in which a narrator's story occurs. The three areas intersect with one another and allows researchers to understand an

individual's full experience and how they interpret their experiences. Temporality reviews the time-frame in which these events took place. The researcher considers the past, present, and future of the participants' stories. Sociality focuses on the personal and social conditions that the participant faced during their experience. These conditions, for example, could be political, cultural, and/or institutional. Place is the physical space in which the experiences occurred. Researchers interested in utilizing narrative inquiry dissect all three areas of individual's story to better understand how the experiences occurred and what the participant was feeling during these experiences.

Following IRB approval, seven individuals were recruited using purposive sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) and agreed to participate in the IRB-approved study. See Table 1. To be eligible for the study, participants had to be presently employed as a director of housing and residence life, vice president of student affairs, and/or a dean of students, had to have worked within the student affairs field for three years, and had to have been present during the implementation process of GIH at their home institution. Recruitment was also relegated to the East Coast of the United States. Taub, Johnson, and Reynolds (2016) said GIH was more prominent on the East and West Coasts with around 160 institutions in the nation that provide or attempted to provide GIH.

Data were collected through the use of a semi-structured interview protocol. The 60 to 90 minute interviews were held using a video chat platform (e.g., Skype, FaceTime) and audio recorded. All audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and reviewed to ensure accuracy. Data analysis included coding and the creation of themes. Data were pre-coded, which is when a researcher circles, highlights, and bolds important transcript segments that stood out (Saldaña,

Table 1

Participants' Information

Pseudonym	Institution Pseudonym	Age	Title	Length in Field
Haley	Eutopia U	46	Associate Director of Housing Services	16 years
Denise	University of East	46	Senior Associate Director for the Office of Residence Life and Housing	22 years
Barbara	St. East College	63	Vice President of Student Affairs	37 years
Al	MSPI	59	Associate Director of Residential Programs for Administration and Services and Director of Housing	42 years
Daniel	Great Lake University	41	Sr. Associate Director of Residential Life	17 years
Chris	New England Institute	41	Associate Dean of Student Affairs	15 years
Susan	Atlantic Coast University	54	Director of Residence Education	29 years

2009). Once pre-coding was complete, an open coding technique began, which is when a researcher creates codes by summarizing what the data exemplifies (Saldaña, 2009). Codes were organized with an Excel document, and each transcript was manually coded. Thirty-eight open codes were generated through this process, and 10 categories were created by collapsing similar codes. Then, themes were built. Our three-fold theoretical framework was instrumental in the construction of themes, which highlight students' experiences of marginalization stemming from negative housing-related experiences, students' need to feel like they mattered and belonged on campus, and administrative attempts to make decisions aimed at better serving all students.

To ensure overall trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), credibility was attended to by using peer-debriefing to help establish the interview questions, transferability was established by use of thick descriptions of the participants' responses; dependability was established by the strength of the connecting themes across data sets; and confirmability was established by continuous reflexivity exercises and debriefing (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017) with methodological experts.

Findings

The data were organized into four themes introduced as second-person vignettes (in keeping with the narrative inquiry approach), namely: experiences related to (a) creating a welcoming housing option, (b) shifting the binary on college campuses, (c) dissecting room selection processes, and (d) building the gender-inclusive team. The use of the pronoun you in the italicized vignettes below is meant to invite the reader into the shared experiences of the study's participants.

Creating a Welcoming Housing Option

You are a Residence Hall Director at an institution of higher education. Today you were in the office answering emails and *scheduling one-on-one times with your Resident Assistants when you receive a phone call from a distraught student. The individual explains how they (singular they) felt uncomfortable in the residence halls and wanted to move into a single room. Not understanding the current circumstances, you ask the student to come into the housing and residence life office to have an in-person meeting. Time passes by and the student finally arrives. Uncomfortable, they begin the conversation by stating the residence halls are not inclusive to their needs and they do not feel like they belong on campus. The student continues explaining that their roommate does not support the LGBTQ+ community and always reminds them that they are not normal for identifying on the spectrum.*

After they finished explaining their concerns, you decide to ask what the best way would be to support them moving forward in the future and explain what resources are currently available on campus, such as the institution's LGBTQ+ organization and counseling center. They inform you that they would like to live with their friend who is the opposite sex but until that could happen, they would like to have a single room for their own emotional safety. You explain to the student you would like to do a roommate mediation, and you will work on finding additional resources. Once the student leaves, you begin to research other institution housing options and how these schools support this community. That is when you discover GIH.

It started off with one student. Then more began to trickle in. The students came to the housing and residence life office on a mission: to find a housing option that focused on creating a welcoming, supportive, and safe space for students to be who they want to be in terms of gender identity. For Denise, this was apparent when students were not just expressing safety concerns but wanted to feel less worried about what people thought of them on a day-to-day basis because of their gender and/or sexuali-

ty. Haley saw similar concerns from Eutopia U's students who expressed fears of coming home and fellow residents looking at them with an unsettling gaze. However, this discomfort did not just occur in the halls. It occurred in many other places on campus as well. Barbara told a story about a student who expressed difficulty using campus recreation's open shower facilities. On some campuses, students expressed feeling scared to express their identity to the whole campus because they feared discrimination. Students wanted to feel a sense of belonging by living with affirming roommates. However, the housing options at the time were not ideal. Al said:

> I would say that the majority of the students living in these communities come from the LGBT community, but not exclusively, and we're very, you know, up front about the fact that it's not just for LGBTQ students. It's meant for allies, it's meant for folks who think that this would be a good community for any number of reasons. But clearly that first group came almost universally, if not universally, from that community and feeling like they did not have a safe place to live.

These reports and concerns appeared in different forms and from different stakeholders at each institution. This required housing offices to think critically about why this type of housing was essential. At New England Institute, Chris said that the majority of students seeking GIH were gay males who had negative past experiences in high school with heterosexual, hyper-masculine males and wanted a space to feel comfortable. Atlantic Coast University already had a community that supports LGBTQ+ students by creating a living-learning community that focused on gender identity development. This community was attached to a faculty member and well-trained staff who were responsible for creating safe spaces that encouraged active conversations about the LGBTQ+ community. However, after assessments and communication with their LGBTQ+ center, housing and residence life realized they needed to develop another community that was focused on creating a rooming option that provided not just gender-inclusive bedrooms but gender-neutral bathrooms too.

GIH became a place for students to feel at home, somewhere where they do not have to worry about their living situation while attending college. However, prior to this option, some trans* students were uncertain they could work through their transition process and feel comfortable. This sparked many conversations within housing on how to ensure and provide a physical space for trans* students to work through these stages. It was apparent participants were still attempting to comprehend how they can be more supportive to trans* in the future. However, once housing offices acknowledged the importance of identity development for trans* students, GIH became an essential resource for this population of students.

Shifting the Binary on College Campuses

With your support, the housing and residence life office listened to the student's request regarding needing a space that made them feel welcomed, valued, and safe. However, adding a new housing program was not going to happen overnight. The department mentioned policy changes were necessary. As GIH became an apparent request, upper level administrators decided to review nondiscrimination policies to ensure gender identity was mentioned. Once this occurred, new and different resources became available. Gender-neutral bathrooms were being created within academic buildings and residence halls. Many buildings focused on flipping single-stall restrooms to accommodate this resource. The division acknowledged a need for a LGBTQ+ center on campus and focused their efforts on funding and staffing. These centers provided educational, social, and supportive programs to improve the LGBTQ+ community's experience on

campus. It was obvious when the institution began creating these types of resources, creating a GIH option was much easier. The office of housing and residence life continued to research how other institutions were implementing GIH and sought out ways to make it possible at your institution.

Although GIH was a specific resource students were seeking, participants acknowledged other steps needed to be taken prior to implementing such an option. At most of the represented institutions, there was a ripple effect. Initial requests for change on campus influenced subsequent changes that moved the campus to greater gender inclusivity. This process included updating institutional policies, adding gender-inclusive bathrooms, and continuing to do assessment and research on the topic.

When Barbara started at St. East College, she recognized the need to be more inclusive to students on the LGBTQ+ spectrum, but the institution did not provide resources to support this community. She started researching and discovered there was a need for a LGBTQ+ center on St. East College's campus. Barbara wanted to add this as part of the institution's extant diversity center. Then, she began to investigate the nondiscrimination statement and found no mention of gender identity.

Every participant discussed they needed to address the nondiscrimination policy prior to moving forward with any program changes because they needed guidelines to follow. It was the expectation of the staff and faculty to support the mission of the institution, which encompassed all policies around nondiscrimination. Al stressed the importance of language and staying up-to-date on current terminology. He mentioned that MSPI had to reevaluate their own non-discrimination policy to ensure that it involved inclusive language that did not assume someone's gender identity.

Once the policy language was updated, it was essential that administrators found ways to establish gender-neutral restrooms on campus. Many participants did not feel

comfortable moving forward with any GIH without this being in place or in progress. Within all the interviews, participants stressed the importance of providing gender-neutral bathrooms within the residence halls and academic buildings because students expressed physical safety concerns when having to pick between a male or female restroom. It was even more crucial to a trans* student who may have been in the transition process.

It took a lot of time, money, and energy to find the best way to implement gender-neutral bathroom options. Administrators had to examine physical spaces, plumbing, remodeling, and rebranding. The layout for public bathrooms were not all created to be semi-private stalls, which made designating gender-neutral bathrooms difficult. This was an issue because, generally, gender-neutral restrooms must have a locked door for anyone to use one at a time. St. East University, MSPI, and University of East started off by seeking out all single stall restrooms that could be easily be rebranded as gender-neutral. Once the campuses were more inclusive, focus was shifted to implementing GIH.

As campuses became more gender-inclusive and students were seeking the GIH option, housing offices began to do some research on how GIH was implemented and functioned at other institutions, particularly their competitors. Participants sought information on room style (traditional, apartment, suite) and selection process. They wanted to ensure they had enough data, research, and student feedback to create a sufficient proposal for upper level administrators. How were other institutions promoting and enacting gender inclusivity? Relatedly, how do institutions know whether their campuses are gender inclusive? In many cases, this information was hard to track because most institutions do not collect data on gender identity or sexual orientation. However, participants mentioned their students requesting for this housing option frequently. This meant that for change to occur, institutions

needed student feedback.

Research and assessment did not only occur prior to the GIH implementation process, but it was ongoing. For some institutions, there was not a large population of students living in this community (approximately 10 to 25), which made assessment difficult. Because some institutions did not conduct formal assessment on gender identity or/and sexual orientation, many universities did not have ready-made assessment tools to understand how the LGBTQ+ community was being impacted by the GIH. Additionally, participants explained that assessment, generally, was an area of growth for them. Because the GIH programs were still relatively new, they had not had an opportunity to fully develop a robust and comprehensive assessment plan specific to GIH, but those plans were in development.

Dissecting Room Selection Processes

Finally, the office of housing and residence *life implemented a GIH pilot, but there were many issues along the way. Initially, the office required students to do an in-person intake process; however, students began expressing concerns about having to out themselves while providing a valid reason for wanting to live in GIH. In some cases, this made students uncomfortable and wonder if it was necessary to participate in this program. Acknowledging the potential barrier, you, alongside the housing and residence life office, conducted research on how other institutions avoided this potential barrier. It was apparent the housing office needed to reevaluate their online housing selection program because it did not have the capability to allow students to identify their gender, pronouns, and (preferred ver-*

Figure 1. This visual displays how change occured at the seven institutions. The process was ongoing and cyclical.

sus legal) name, which made it challenging for students to select GIH. Once this was sorted out, the housing and residence life office began finding other ways to make this process more streamlined for all students.

It is essential to honor the importance of names, pronouns, and gender during an application process. Each administrator mentioned the potential challenge that occurred when developing a housing selection process online because the system may not function with the flexibility needed to move beyond binary considerations of gender. For example, many programs and systems were created based on cultural norms that only include two gender options. Denise and Al spent much of their time discussing how helpful their online program, StarRez-TM, was when developing the housing selection process for GIH. The program allows the student to indicate interest in GIH and then a list of rooms would appear that are available for this housing option.

In-person intake processes were cumbersome and problematic, so institutions found ways to adjust. New software was implemented. Websites were updated to incorporate information about the GIH option. Eutopia U defined what it meant to be an ally, while MSPI created a transitioning resource document to explain what a trans* person may be going through when transitioning. After providing ample information, students received a follow-up phone call by a staff member in housing to ensure that they understood they were opting into GIH.

Building the Gender-Inclusive Team

GIH has officially been implemented at your institution, which has made many students within the LGBTQ+ population happy. There has been an increase in LGBTQ+ awareness and support from the housing and residence life staff, as well as peers living in the community. Although the GIH community was satisfied with their living situation, there was still a need for other departments to recognize the importance of making campus gender-inclusive. Your

housing department began focusing their efforts on seeking collaborations regarding LGBTQ+ educational programming and socials. As this awareness increased, departments began understanding how to utilize this housing option as a recruitment and retention tool. Slowly, your campus shifted from no gender-inclusivity to some gender-inclusivity. Although there has been change in this area, you acknowledge that the campus still has room to grow when it comes to understanding and embracing gender-inclusivity.

Housing offices could not have successfully implemented the GIH option without the assistance and support from other campus functional areas. It was essential for the campus culture to buy-in to the idea of making campus gender-inclusive and supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. This development was created through the efforts of faculty, staff, and student collaboration. Some participants made it apparent how essential it is to create change through compliance from all parts of campus. It was important for the campus to update their nondiscrimination policy to cover gender identity. This policy would be utilized by all offices who would be supportive of this change. Barbara mentioned that this was not just a housing issue. She saw campus-wide systemic change as key.

Academic Affairs and Student Affairs units began to work closely with one another to develop gender-inclusive programs, such as a GIH living learning community, which would have a classroom piece added to a student's living requirements in the halls. In some cases, students and faculty worked together to develop this housing option. Many participants discussed how offices, such as the registrar and ID offices, wanted to provide opportunities for students to select their name, gender, and pronouns on their student files. This was a huge step for the participants' campuses because it made the process of developing GIH smoother and allowed for more flexibility in how they advertised, communicated, and educated

about the housing option.

GIH helped stimulate a campus culture change related to gender identity and sexuality. It became apparent that additional offices wanted to help support LGBTQ+ students. For example, once GIH was available, admissions offices were utilizing this housing option as an additional recruitment technique. Al stressed how creating a welcoming space to students was essential to the MSPI housing and residence life office and have the financial stability to provide these resources, such as assisting with finances for the LGBT center. Once this center was created, the institution was able to hire a full-time professional to oversee this space, which has made the campus more inclusive.

As the demand for different housing options increased, housing and residence life staff had to find different ways to accommodate students. These institutions encountered a high demand for single rooms from all students. Because spaces were limited and GIH was a smaller community, these institutions sought out assistance from the Office of Disability Services to determine if a student needed a single. Essentially, students would go to the disability services office and discuss why they needed this option. Denise stressed the importance of these conversations because the disability services office must keep everything confidential. Once the office understood the student's need, they sent a note to housing and residence life stating that this student was approved to have a single and must be accommodated without any explanation. Similarly, New England Institute wanted to offer preferred name options in all parts of a student's experience as long as it was legally feasible. Chris mentioned how financial aid is legally not allowed to use a name that is not a student's legal name. The workaround was partnering with the registrar to create systems that allow students to indicate their preferred name and pronouns on in-house documents and lists (i.e., class rosters, diplomas).

Discussion

We frame the discussion section by providing responses to the study's research questions (RQs). First, how do campus administrators narrate stories regarding the implementation of GIH on their respective campuses? Implementing GIH began when students reported a need for this housing option because they felt uncomfortable. These students sought out a place to make them feel at home and where they could develop individually. In many cases, this discomfort generally revolved around emotional safety. Krum, Davis, and Galupo (2013) mentioned one reason for GIH is to provide a space for college students who may identify as trans* or gender nonconforming to assist in making them feel safe and secure. Schlossberg (1997) suggested individuals who do not have a sense of belonging with their peer groups or living situation feel marginalized and as though they do not matter. Participants highlighted the importance of peer acceptance and how GIH would create an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ college students while they focused on their identity development.

Once GIH programs developed, housing offices concentrated on developing a streamlined housing process that would help support the LGBTQ+ students. They utilized an online system, such as StarRez^{TM}, to allow students to pick their gender, which then showed the gender-inclusive spaces on campus. Krum, Davis, and Galupo (2013) mentioned that institutions with GIH provided students an opportunity to select their gender identity versus their legal sex, which assisted in room assignments. Once students selected their housing option, there was follow-up with the students to ensure they understood their selection and whether they preferred a roommate. Housing offices wanted to ensure they were serving students in the best way possible.

Second, how do campus administrators narrate stories about the role played by student affairs personnel during respective campuses' GIH implementation? The par-

ticipants reflected on how essential it was for this to be a campus initiative versus an exclusively housing initiative. Creating cross-campus collaboration positively impacted campus culture regarding embracing and supporting students' various gender identities. Simon (1997) mentioned that when administrators make decisions, they focus on personal values and perspectives. Making campus gender-inclusive was a priority for administrators and student personnel on these campuses. Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, and Tubbs (2005) suggested that faculty, staff, and peers should continuously take time to engage and educate themselves about the LGBTQ+ community to enhance their understanding and support for gender identity issues and create change in the campus culture. The registrar allowed students to change their names, pronouns, and gender identities so faculty could have accurate information on their rosters. Admission offices added gender-inclusive opportunities on campus to their presentations and tours as a recruitment technique. Disability services assisted the housing offices by providing information on students that may need singles during transitions. Renn (2017) highlighted how institutions were developing different programs and services to enhance LGBTQ+ education on campus and heighten student leadership opportunities. The collective advocacy and critical resistance practices of these student affairs units and professionals was important (Marine, Wagner, & Nicolazzo, 2019). All these collaboration efforts helped elevate and create a well-rounded GIH experience for college students interested in this option.

Third, what stories do campus administrators share when discussing the general culture of their current GIH community on campus? The culture of GIH had to be campus-wide. However, it did not just start within the office. It started with policy change. Many participants elaborated on how non-discrimination policies needed to add information on gender-identity, which would help offices create programs and initiatives to support the LGBTQ+ community. Renn (2017) mentioned that across the United States, campuses created non-discrimination policies around sexual orientation and gender identity in efforts to further assist and support the LGBTQ+ community. Once updated policies were in place, campus-wide initiatives were put in motion that fed culture change: gender-inclusive bathrooms, LGBTQ+ centers, and a professional staff member to advocate for LGBTQ+ causes on campus. These new additions led campuses to do assessment and research to ensure they were creating the best student experience possible. These assessment tools drove the development of GIH. This cycle has been repeated numerous times when creating resources for the LGBTQ+ community: policy change led to new programs/initiatives, which led to more assessment and research (see Figure 1).

In addition to addressing the RQs that drove this study, we must also acknowledge the ways in which our three theoretical guideposts helped shape our understandings of the data. Schlossberg's (1989) work helped us understand the ways in which students who identify as being a part of the LGBTQ+ community, particularly trans* students, expressed feelings of marginalization, especially related to on-campus housing options and arrangements. Participants provided myriad accounts of students seeking resolutions related to housing-related issues. Participants' explanations of how their institutions responded showcased efforts to create environments where all students might experience feeling as though they mattered to the institution (Schlossberg's, 1989) and belonged there (Strayhorn, 2012). Lastly, Simon's (1997) ideas about decision-making processes in administrative organizations were useful in how we understood the implementation of GIH from the perspective of institutional leaders.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

Our study certainly makes a contribution to the growing body of literature on this topic, and it also provides student affairs practitioners and leaders with insights that may shape practice. Specifically, future research should focus on building upon what we offer here. Future studies could include formal evaluations of GIH offerings at either a single or small group of similar institutions. Large-scale survey studies built upon the iterative cycle elucidated above (see Figure 1) could shed light on the GIH implementation process at a national level. Other theoretical frames could be more apt in highlighting nuances related to GIH we were not able to offer herein. We also suggest future work focus on student perspectives. In terms of practical implications, our work provides a student affairs practitioners with an evidence-based process they may consider as their campus housing options evolve to meet students' needs. Implementing a GIH option is no longer invisible; we provide a template and a composite second-person experience through our narratives built from each of the four themes of this study. Our work is merely a start, however, and we hope scholar practitioners answer the call for ongoing empirical and practical work in this area.

Conclusion

The results of this study reinforced the idea that providing a welcoming space can help students feel a sense of belonging and mattering (Schlossberg, 1989; Strayhorn, 2012). First, students on-campus began to ask questions and express interest in housing options that addressed unmet needs. Feelings of discomfort, isolation, and alienation led these students to feel as though they did not matter (Scholssberg, 1989) or did not belong (Strayhorn, 2012). Second, prior to the inception of GIH, campus policies were interrogated regarding nondiscrimination based on gender identity and sexuality, which is in keeping with Simon's (1997) first component in administrative decision-making: the hierarchy of decisions. Policy change was a prerequisite for action, or the implementation of GIH. This policy change-action cycle was augmented by assessment, creating a three-part change process, which became widespread across campus as other units collaborated with housing and residence life offices.

Often, creating GIH options for students was part of broader campus-wide gender inclusivity initiatives, meant to upend cisgender norms on campus, thereby shifting binary views of gender to more expansive ones. Examples are gender-neutral bathrooms in academic buildings and campus recreation facilities. These provisions did not come without compromise, however, which aligns with Simon's (1997) second component. Sometimes state laws were roadblocks, for which creative problem-solving was necessary. For many campuses, gender-inclusive software was critical to effective implementation of GIH. Equity-minded and student-centered staff members were willing to make changes and learn new processes and systems, which resonates with Simon's (1997) third component.

While this study is rather limited in scope, the findings suggest important insights into the implementation process of GIH from the perspective of student affairs administrators. Further areas of study emerged from this study, such as how software programs affect the ability of student affairs professionals to do the inclusive excellence work related to implementing a GIH process. Further research on this topic would help not just housing and residence life offices, but also many other departments on campus. And, more research is needed to better understand trans* student experiences—with GIH and in general. Although many strides are being made (e.g., Garvey et al., 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017; Nicolazzo & Marine, 2015; Pryor, Ta, Hart, 2016), through the interviews, it was apparent that this is still a contemporary topic and student affairs professionals are just starting to learn more.

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