

Exploring the Experiences of Queer Students of Color within Predominantly White Institutions

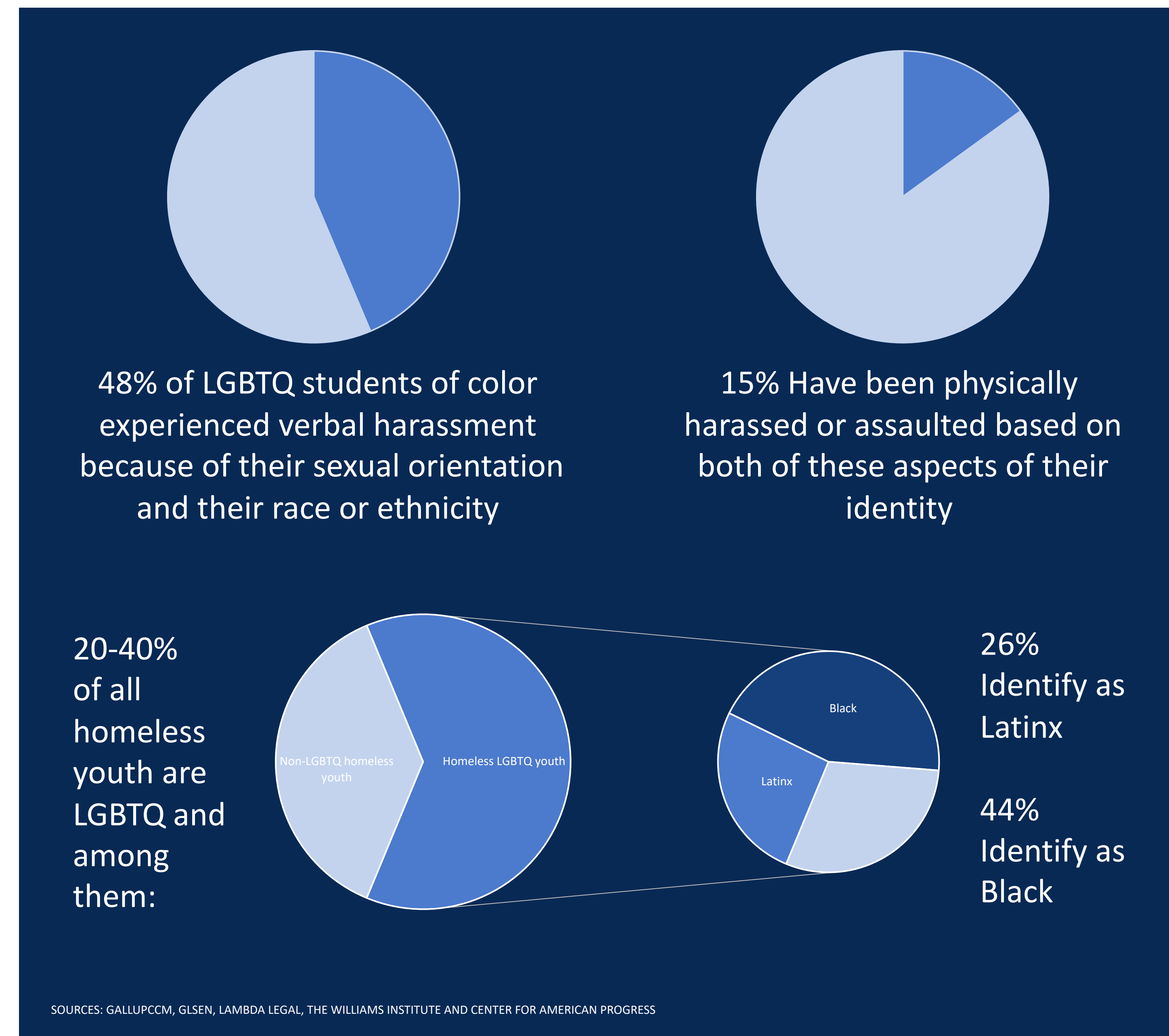
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Abstract

This study will provide an intersectional analysis and consider the role of queer frameworks in order to understand the experiences of Queer Students of Color (QSOC) attending predominantly white institutions (PWI) of higher education. Data will be collected through Zoom interviews and will explore how multiple marginalized identities manifest themselves and how these intersections are navigated and experienced on campuses of higher education. This research will explore both micro and macro level patterns of discrimination and racism, and will attempt to reveal issues including but not limited to structural and institutional racism, homophobia and heterosexism, and erasure of minorities identities. This research will help address problems involved with Queer students' wellbeing on college campuses, and can provide insight for scholars interested in learning more about issues involved with gender, sexuality, and education. Intersectional frameworks are vital for conducting this research, and address the interconnectedness of systems of oppression along with providing an analytic framework for researching identity on college campuses and can be used to develop affirming educational environments for future Queer Students of Color.

Methods

This project will consist of using a qualitative analytical approach to investigate the experiences of QSOC within PWIs. This approach will consist of one 45-60 minute Zoom semi-structured interview with each individual who identifies as QSOC on various Utah college campuses including Utah State University, University of Utah, and Weber State University. Participants will be recruited through snowball sampling and social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook). We will be asking for volunteers that will be willing to let researchers interview them, and then screen them by determining if they fit the criteria needed for the study. The researchers will provide participants with the informed consent documentation at the time of the interview and go over it with them to make sure they fully understand. The informed consent form will be signed and returned before the interview begins. Any communication that can identify participants will be deleted immediately after completing the interview and participants will have the ability to withdraw their information and to stop the interview at any point without any penalty. Carina Linares, the URF, will be administering the interview protocol to individuals who volunteer. The interviews will be recorded, and the audio downloaded from Zoom will be stored in a secure, password-protected Box folder. The researchers will be the only individuals with access to the Box folder.



Objectives

The experiences of Queer Students of Color (QSOC) within PWIs have been insufficiently researched and documented. However, the negative effects of holding marginalized identities and in this case dual marginalized identities have been well documented, and we know that there are serious issues that can impact the well-being of QSOC. Some research has addressed the experiences of QSOC, but few have discussed them in depth and personally with various research subjects. Additionally, because People of Color and Queer folks have been studied separately, we have limited understanding of the strains experienced by holding both identities. The objectives of this research will be:

1. To research the experiences of queer students of color within predominantly white institutions of higher education.
2. To identify ways in which QSOCs navigate PWIs successfully and unsuccessfully, looking at peer networks, social supports, and institutional resources.

Gaps in Existing Scholarship

Within existing scholarship, social scientists have primarily focused on either the experiences of students of color within predominantly white institutions or LGBTQ+ students within predominantly white institutions. However, in order to fully understand experiences of QSOCs and the association with their treatment within historically white institutions these identities require exploration through an interdisciplinary lens and specialized research activities.

Conclusions & Future Directions

QSOC on campus are not being adequately served. There is a gap in research when it comes to diversity and inclusion on college campuses, even though it has been recognized for decades. To address this lack of research, this study will explore the experiences of QSOC on campus through their own stories and words at various institutions of higher education. Because these students hold dual minoritized identities, many issues involve the pressure for students to separate their identities in order to receive the services and help they need. LGBTQ communities continue to grow in diversity with respect to race. With this increased campus population, QSOC face unique challenges as they navigate academia within institutions of higher education. These challenges include but are not limited to racism, homophobia, and tokenism. Queer students, faculty, and staff of color are often robbed of equity by neglect and the institutional lack of effort to form inclusive and intersectional organizations, curricula, and services that recognize more than just the white queer perspective. This research focuses on the ways that QSOC experience historically and predominantly white college campuses, and our findings will be published to an academic journal later this year.