

Project Title: Mental Health Treatment Services Exposure in LGBTQ+ College Students of Color

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Project Conduction Dates: May 31st to August 6th

Project Background: There is little research on the exposure of mental health treatment for those in intersectional marginalized communities such as those in the LGBTQ+ community and the racial/ethnic minority in the United States. The exploration of college students identifying with both of those marginalized groups and their exposure to mental health treatment services will be the topic of his research project. I have a personal connection to this research topic because I am a college student that is a person of color, part of the LGBTQ+ community, and have adequate access to mental health treatment. I believe it is vital to explore this research topic in order for 1) researchers to have the same statistical results of marginalized communities as non-marginalized communities 2) professionals in the mental health treatment industry to better understand the unique challenges that these marginalized groups may face regarding exposure to these services.

Project Objective: The objective of this study is to determine if race/ethnicity and status as a member of the LGBTQ+ community affect exposure to mental health treatment services.

Project Hypothesis: I hypothesize that college students in the US that are both people of color and part of the LGBTQ+ community will not have as much exposure to mental health treatment services due to marginalization in their communities. However, there may be some disparities depending on specific races/ethnicities due to the average socioeconomic classes associated with different races/ethnicities.

Project Terminology: For the purposes of this study, I will be explaining terminology of the project to the participants and in this proposal in order to eliminate ambiguity of definitions.

- Intersectionality- the sum of an individual's identity through social groups to understand their experiences with oppression and/or privilege.
- LGBTQ+ Community- the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer plus community is a group of people that do not identify as heterosexual (straight) and/or cisgender (identifying with a gender that is the same as one's assigned sex at birth).
- People/Person of Color (POC)- refers to an individual or group of people who are nonwhite, in which the term white refers to European. This term can also apply to those who are mixed with nonwhite ancestry.
- Mental Health Treatment Services- any professional and/or medical services that seek to treat and/or improve mental health condition(s).

Project Description:

Data Collection Methods- In order to determine if race/ethnicity and status as a member of the LGBTQ+ community affects exposure to mental health treatment services, I will ask participants questions about their racial/ethnic identities, sexual/gender identities, and their

exposure to mental health treatment services. These three categories of questions will serve as a baseline to understand the individuals' identities and experiences. In addition, I will also be asking questions about their intersectional experience with mental health treatment services that correlate to their identities that they described in order to determine if there is a correlation between race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and exposure to mental health treatment services. This research project will be conducted in an intersectional manner- meaning that the participants' various identities will be taken in consideration. In particular, the participants' racial/ethnic, sexual, and gender identities will be analyzed in conjunction with their individual experiences regarding exposure to mental health treatment services.

Participants/Sample Size- The participants who choose to participate in this study will be racial and/or ethnic minorities (people of color), a sexual and/or gender-conforming minority (part of the LGBTQ+ community), and will be currently enrolled in a university (college students). The participants will attend various universities in the United States in order for the results of this study to be more generalizable. My target sample size is 25 participants. This sample size will allow me to have in-depth interviews, while still being able to generalize my findings.

Analysis- I will be primarily utilizing thematic analysis in order to analyze the data I collect. Thematic analysis consists of identifying common themes in qualitative (non-numerical) data. This method of analysis will be useful in my research because my research methods are qualitative interviews and thematic analysis is an ideal method for analyzing this type of data.

COVID-19 Conduction Plans: I am able to conduct this study completely virtual because I do not need in-person contact to collect data. In order to collect data, I will be conducting interviews virtually. I have access to a wide variety of LGBTQ+ people of color, not only from The University of Alabama in Huntsville, but also from around the United States because I am in contact with other LGBTQ+ people of color through my officer position in an organization that I am a part of. I am also able to meet with my advisor (Dr. Lanius) virtually through Zoom to prepare and conduct elements needed for this study such as IRB approval forms and analyses.