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TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON CAMPUS CLIMATE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The overarching purpose of this report is to present the findings of a 2-year, multi-faceted study on the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt) to identify needs and propose action steps to improve sexual violence (SV) and broader campus climate for transgender and gender diverse (TGD) students. This campus-specific study was initiated because of deep concern based on findings from the American Association of Universities (AAU) Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct, which found that TGD students report some of the highest rates of SV on campus. Historic marginalization, discrimination, and oppression further contributes to a campus context in which TGD students (and others from oppressed groups) are under-resourced. This report seeks to center their needs and voices as we take steps to improve campus-wide prevention, programs, and policy.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

To contextualize the importance of this project, our team began with a scoping review of the scientific literature related to school-based interventions focused on SV and TGD students. Our review produced extremely limited useful information, suggesting a serious shortage of best practice knowledge. With this substantive knowledge gap in mind, we next conducted five listening sessions with current Pitt undergraduate and graduate students who identify as TGD (n = 21). Listening sessions were focused on understanding student experiences and perceptions of campus SV prevention, response, and policy. Qualitative data from listening sessions were coded thematically to produce overarching themes; these themes were then reported back to session participants via a member-checking survey to confirm that the team had accurately synthesized the findings. Our final step entailed presenting our listening session findings to campus and TGD-serving and/or SV-focused community organizations in Pittsburgh. Attendees (n = 29) validated the study findings reported, provided insight into improvements already under way, and highlighted institutional barriers that may be limiting progress. Cumulatively, this work yields several important findings and recommendations to improve the sexual violence prevention and response infrastructure and campus experience for TGD students at Pitt.

FINDINGS

At the broadest level, we found that addressing campus climate for TGD students is a prerequisite to improving SV prevention and response at Pitt. Specifically, TGD students need to feel safe, valued, seen, and heard to be likely to engage campus services and supports following SV victimization. Safety for TGD students can be improved through required universal training on gender diversity, clear processes for holding faculty and staff accountable for completing training and for any concerning behavior they might engage in, and establishing dedicated trustworthy spaces (e.g., an LGBTQ+ center on campus). The university can best show TGD students that they are valued by allocating tangible resources to support their needs. The university can show TGD students that they will be seen and heard by promoting meaningful inclusion in the development of programs and policies, prioritizing student needs over minimization of institutional liability, acknowledging that many TGD students come to campus with pre-existing trauma, and providing access to confidential, supportive, and responsive SV services.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

This report contains recommendations for improving Pitt's climate and SV prevention, policy, and response based on the findings of our two-year study. Our team has provided both short- and long-term action steps for the consideration of university leaders, community members, and anyone on campus wishing to better support TGD students. Within our recommendation, we highlight three primary areas in which Pitt must progress:

1. Moving from performative inclusion to meaningful inclusion.
2. Moving from prioritizing institutional protection to prioritizing TGD student wellbeing.
3. Moving from utilization of available resources to strategic planning and investment.

CONCLUSION

Addressing TGD students' experiences of SV cannot be accomplished without improving our campus climate. The restrictive and cis-/hetero-centric norms that were hallmarks of the negative climate experiences reported by TGD students are inextricably connected to SV. This climate contributes to TGD students' overall distrust of the university and the perception that university systems meant to support SV survivors are not designed to support them. Unfortunately, our current system of preventing and responding to SV does not work for TGD students, and moreover, the data shows that it isn't working for many students in our community. This report aims to offer a path forward for Pitt to become a leader in implementing new and novel approaches to reduce SV on campus for all students.

RESEARCH TEAM

Rachel E. Gartner, MSW, PhD, is an assistant professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh. Her prevention-focused research aims to address gaps in how we understand and prevent sexual violence, microaggressions (i.e., subtle identity-based stressors), and other forms of victimization for minoritized groups.

Carla D. Chugani, PhD, LPC, is an assistant professor of pediatrics, psychiatry, and clinical and translational science at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Her research interests lie at the intersection of mental health and higher education, with a particular focus on the needs of students from oppressed and repressed groups.

Adrian J. Ballard, MSW, LCSW, is a PhD candidate in the School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh. His research focuses on how experiences of sexual socialization impact risk for perpetrating and/or experiencing sexual violence. His clinical social work background entails assessment and treatment with both victims and perpetrators of sexual harm.

Emil Smith, MSW, LCSW, is a PhD student in Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh. Their research is focused on systemic interventions to improve the health and wellbeing of trans and gender diverse individuals.

Lauren R. Risser, MPH, CHES, is a Program Associate with the Pennsylvania Department of Health Division of Immunizations. She formerly worked as a Senior Research Coordinator in the University of Pittsburgh Division of Adolescent Medicine. Her research interests are focused on health equity for overburdened and under-resourced communities.

Liz Miller, MD, PhD, FSAHM, is professor of pediatrics, public health, and clinical and translational science and holds the Edmund R. McCluskey Chair in Pediatric Medical Education at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. She is also Director of the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine and the Medical Director of Community and Population Health. She serves as the Academic Co-Director of Community PARTners (the community engagement core) for the Clinical and Translational Science Institute.

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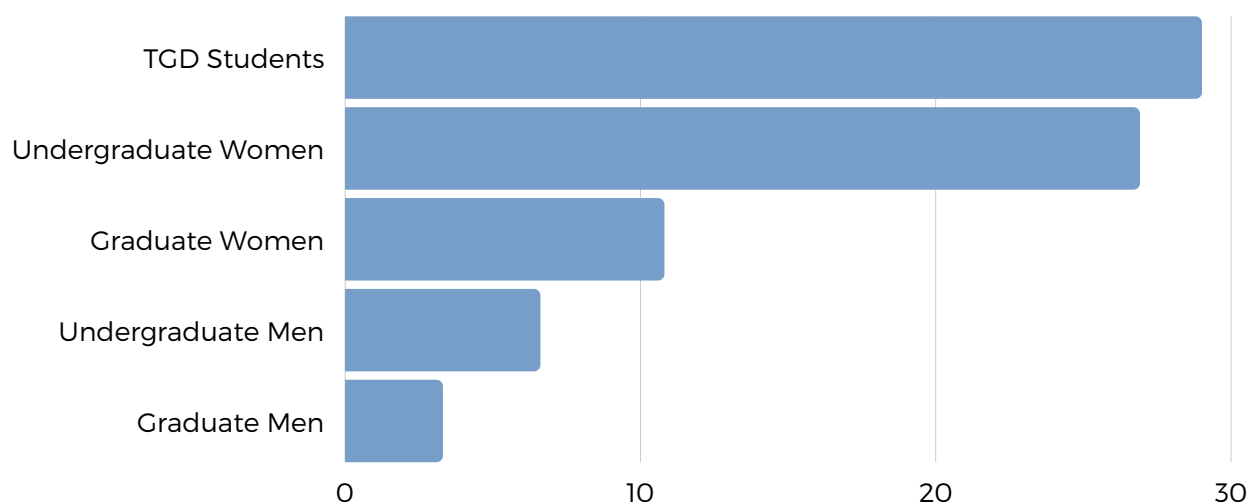
INTRODUCTION

Transgender and gender diverse (TGD)* students are individuals whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth and/or whose gender does not conform to a binary system of gender categorization (i.e., male or female). In 2015 and again in 2019, the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt) participated in the American Association of Universities (AAU) Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct. When we looked at these surveys, we were deeply concerned about sexual violence (SV) and other climate indicators for TGD students. At Pitt, TGD students are among those experiencing the highest rates of sexual violence, with 29% of TGD students reporting being the victim of nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or inability to consent since entering college. In comparison, 26.9% of undergraduate women, 6.6% of undergraduate men, 10.8% of graduate women, and 3.3% of graduate men report SV victimization (Cantor et al., 2019b). Further, research examining TGD and sexual minority (e.g., gay, lesbian, queer) students, in combination, finds that individuals of those identities experience a greater number of sexually violent acts during college than victimized heterosexual or cisgender male or female students (Kammer-Kerwick et al., 2019).

Percentage of Students at the University of Pittsburgh Who Reported Being Victimized by Physical Force or While Unable to Consent *(Cantor et al., 2019b)*

*The AAU Campus Climate Surveys use the acronym TGQN, which refers to students who listed their identity as Transgender woman, Transgender man, Nonbinary/genderqueer, Gender questioning, or Gender not listed.

These disparate rates of violence are extremely consequential for many reasons. Experiences of SV contribute to mental health concerns (Effrig et al., 2011; Seelman, 2016), academic disengagement, lower grade point average, and increased likelihood of dropping out of school (James et al., 2016; Woodford et al., 2017). We see this disconnection at Pitt, where our AAU survey results indicated that only 23% of TGD students felt 'very' or 'extremely' connected to the campus community (Cantor et al., 2019b). While TGD students at Pitt were more likely to be knowledgeable of SV policies and reporting procedures than any other group on campus, only 39% perceived that it was 'very' or 'extremely' likely that campus officials would conduct a fair investigation in response to a sexual misconduct report (Cantor et al., 2019b). Campus climate surveys and emerging research increasingly address the magnitude of the problem of SV against TGD college students (i.e., prevalence and incidence) and detail some of their barriers to seeking support. However, little has been done to understand the context and nature of TGD students' experiences, their perception of campus service provision, and the gaps they see in prevention and response efforts. Our study is a step toward filling this gap and provides TGD student perspectives on sexual violence prevention and response at Pitt to support a revisioning of resources and infrastructure in order to better meet their needs.

DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS

TGD students' current and historic marginalization has resulted in a lack of trust in institutionally-driven policies and procedures that are intended to support their safety and thriving in university contexts. TGD students were not the only minoritized group with disparate SV victimization rates, nor can TGD identity be understood separately from race, disability, socioeconomic status, and other marginalized and oppressed identities (Cantor et al., 2019a; Cantor et al., 2019b). The AAU data fills the Pitt community with a sense of urgency to address the extremely high rates of victimization within our student body. As we take on this charge and strive to improve our sexual violence prevention and response (SVPR) infrastructure, it is crucial that we do so in a way that builds trust. We must center TGD student, faculty, and staff voices both in the identification of the problem (as we do in this report) and in the execution of solutions.

This report brings TGD student insight to AAU campus climate data. We begin by reviewing the existing literature regarding interventions to address violence and harassment against TGD and LGBTQ students across educational levels. We then report on five focus groups conducted with twenty-one TGD students and a community meeting with invested organizations, partners, and members of both on-campus and off-campus communities. Finally, we put forward concrete steps that Pitt can take to improve campus climate for TGD students and build a more TGD-inclusive SV prevention and response infrastructure in hopes of, (1) transforming our campus, (2) establishing model approaches, and (3) positioning Pitt to be a leader in addressing this nationwide problem.

PHASE 1: SCOPING REVIEW

It was important to our process that we review existing literature and best practices before asking for the investment of time and emotional labor from TGD Pitt students. Scoping reviews are conducted in order to provide a lay of the land in understudied and emerging areas. They help to assess the scope of existing literature on a topic and identify knowledge gaps (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Colquhoun et al., 2014). We conducted a scoping review to better understand best practices for conducting sexual violence prevention with a focus on the needs of TGD students in university settings. Our preliminary search, with this narrow focus, yielded no useful results, indicating a lack of best practice knowledge in this area. After enlisting the assistance of a health sciences librarian, we expanded our search in three ways. First, we expanded from focusing exclusively on sexual violence to looking at violence broadly; second, we expanded from looking exclusively at interventions focused on violence against TGD individuals to those focused on sexual minority-targeted violence, as well; and finally, we expanded from focusing exclusively on university/post-secondary contexts to also including middle and high school educational contexts. We undertook these changes hoping that practices to prevent a range of violence against both gender- and sexual-minority students, throughout middle and high school, as well as postsecondary levels, might provide helpful information that could be applied to our specific area.

SCOPING REVIEW METHODS

Our approach was informed by Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage methodology: (1) identifying research questions, (2) identifying studies, (3) selecting studies for inclusion, (4) charting data, and (5) summarizing and reporting results. This review followed PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews) publishing guidelines (Tricco et al., 2018).

Eligibility Criteria

To be included, studies had to describe the implementation of interventions intended to prevent violence against LGBTQ students in middle school, high school, or postsecondary settings in the United States or Canada. We defined interventions as programs, curricula, services, or activities that are designed to be implemented at a local level (i.e., school-, district-, or institution-level). This does not include state- or national-level policies. English-language resources published between January 1, 2000, and June 16, 2020, were included.

Information Sources

All searches were conducted by a health sciences librarian with experience conducting systematic reviews. Databases were selected based on likelihood of containing relevant resources: Medline and APA PsycInfo (Ovid); ERIC, Social Sciences Abstracts, and LGBTQ+ Source (Ebsco); and GenderWatch and Dissertations & Theses Global (ProQuest). The database searches were conducted on June 16, 2020. We are currently in the process of rerunning our search to update our findings and are happy to share findings with OEDI upon completion.

Search

The research team identified three search term levels: (a) population (e.g., gender minority, sexual minority); (b) setting (e.g., colleges); (c) subject (e.g., violence). Subject experts were consulted about search levels and terms. A combination of Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) terms and title, abstract, and keywords were used to develop the initial Medline search, which was checked against a known set of studies. The search was then adapted to the other databases. Duplicates were removed during searches using the Amsterdam Efficient Deduplication (AED) method (Otten et al., 2019). EndNote (Clarivate) was used to store citations and remove duplicates following the Bramer method (Bramer et al., 2016). Search strategies and results were tracked using an Excel workbook designed for reviews (VonVille, 2021). Details of database search strategies are available from the authors by request. Chapters from books that were among the database search results and met inclusion criteria during title and abstract review were added for consideration. A team member reviewed reference lists of excluded reviews for relevant resources that may have been missed in database searches, but this yielded no additional resources for review.

Selection of Sources of Evidence

Citations were uploaded to DistillerSR (Evidence Partners) for study selection. Each resource was assessed for inclusion via a 2-stage process: (a) title and abstract screening; (b) full text review.

Title and Abstract Review

The research team developed a screening form in DistillerSR and maintained a codebook defining and clarifying criteria. Resources were included if they: (a) included violence prevention interventions that (b) addressed concerns affecting LGBTQ students and (c) were designed for middle school, high school, or postsecondary educational settings.

Prior to screening, a Cohen's kappa interrater reliability (IRR) test was conducted in DistillerSR, using a sample of 21 (1%) randomly selected resources. Three team members (RG, AB , LR) independently screened the sample and discussed discrepancies. We had strong agreement (Cohen's κ=0.8; percent agreement=95%). AB and LR then independently screened all titles and abstracts; discrepancies were resolved through team discussion. Interrater reliability was tested at five time points to ensure ongoing consistency in screening, with Cohen's kappa ranging from .74 to .83.

Full Text Review

Full text review was conducted in two stages. Initially, using the same inclusion/exclusion criteria as the title and abstract review, two reviewers (AB, LR) read and independently evaluated the full text of resources retained from the previous level. If all reviewers agreed on inclusion/exclusion, the reference was sorted accordingly. Discordant appraisals were resolved by a third reviewer (RG).

To center usable information about intervention implementation for Pitt, the team decided to only include resources that described the *implementation* of an intervention, thereby excluding resources that spoke about types of interventions without speaking about what the practice of the intervention looked like on the ground. For example, an intervention that compared schools that had GSAs to those that did not, without outlining specifically what a GSA entailed (e.g., peer support, faculty involvement, events, etc.), would not be included. In the second stage of full text review, two reviewers (AB, ES) read and independently evaluated the full texts of all previously included resources to ensure that these resources met updated inclusion criteria. Conflicting appraisals were resolved through group discussion (RG, AB, ES).

Charting the Data

Two reviewers (AB, LR) completed data extraction, gathering the following intervention characteristics (outlined in Appendix A): name, type (e.g., support service), strategy (e.g., training series, event), setting (middle, high school, postsecondary), recipient role (student, educator), recipient sexual orientation and gender identity (heterosexual/cisgender, mixed/general, LGBTQ), focus population (LGB and/or TGD), focus behavior (e.g., bullying, harassment), and whether and how the intervention was evaluated. Each reviewer extracted data for half the included references, then conducted a 'quality assurance' check on the extraction done by the other reviewer. Extraction disagreements were resolved by a third reviewer (RG). Additional information on postsecondary programs was extracted by a fourth reviewer (ES) to gather information about how interventions were developed and implemented, barriers and facilitators to implementation, level of student involvement, and information about administrative support and resources allocated for the intervention.

With our broadened search we found 30 resources (including peer reviewed articles, book chapters, educational toolkits, and dissertations). Looking only at those centering the university context, we found 6 resources that described interventions designed to prevent of violence against gender and sexual minority students. More details about this review can be found in Appendix A. We are in the process of updating this review and look forward to sharing the updated information with OEDI when we complete the resulting publication.
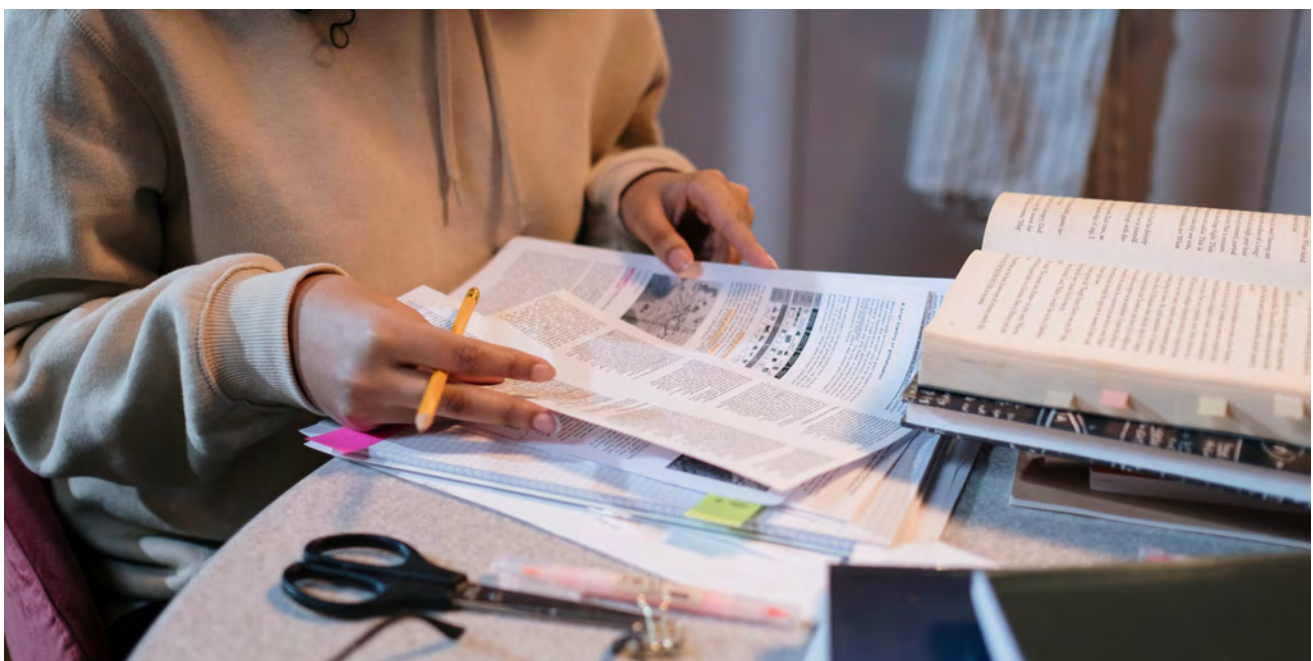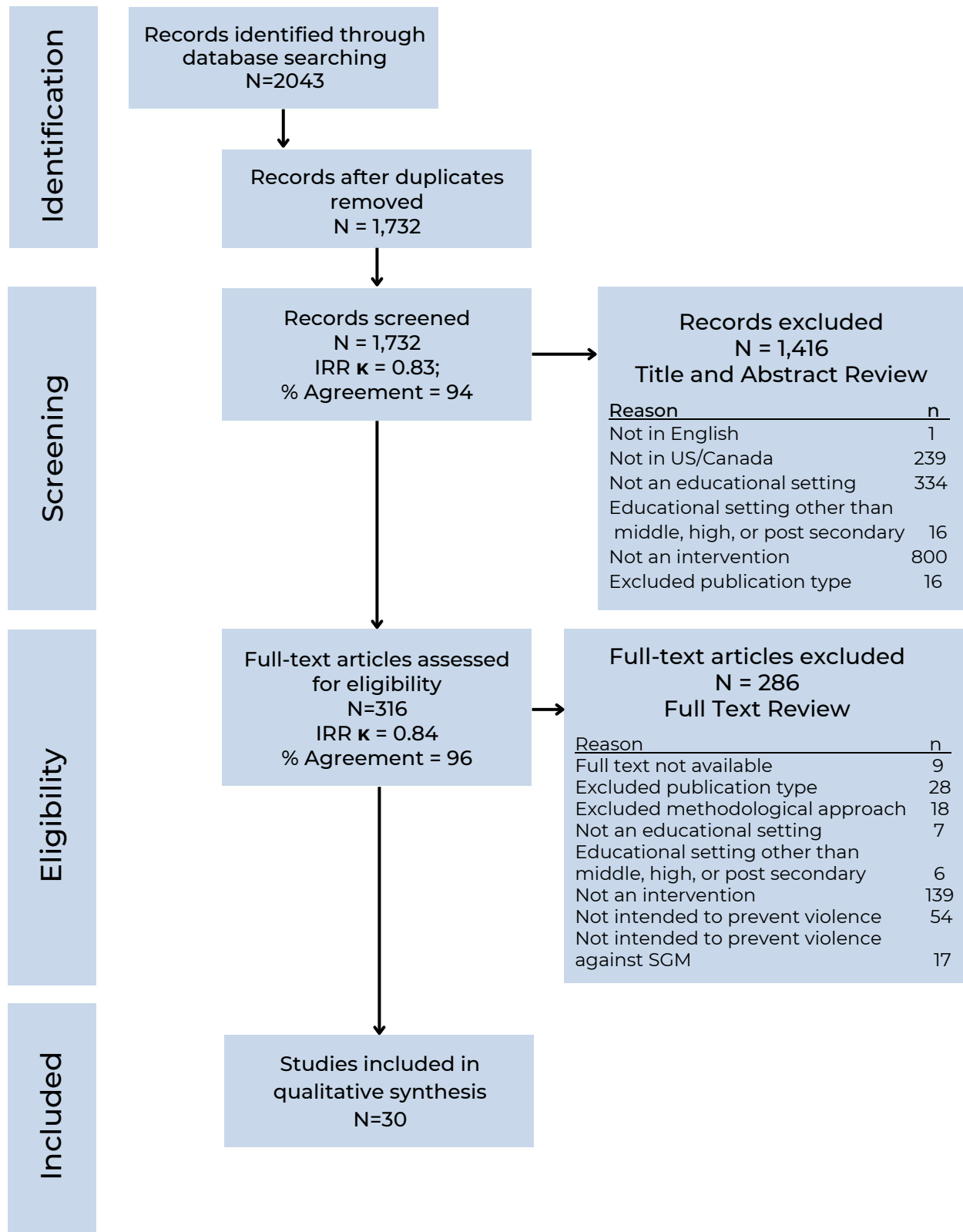
FIGURE 1

Scoping Review PRISMA Flow Diagram

Identification

Records identified through database searching
N=2043

Records after duplicates removed
N = 1,732

Screening

Records screened
N = 1,732
IRR κ = 0.83;
% Agreement = 94

Records excluded
N = 1,416
Title and Abstract Review

Reason	n
Not in English	1
Not in US/Canada	239
Not an educational setting	334
Educational setting other than middle, high, or post secondary	16
Not an intervention	800
Excluded publication type	16

Eligibility

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility
N=316
IRR κ = 0.84
% Agreement = 96

Full-text articles excluded
N = 286
Full Text Review

Reason	n
Full text not available	9
Excluded publication type	28
Excluded methodological approach	18
Not an educational setting	7
Educational setting other than middle, high, or post secondary	6
Not an intervention	139
Not intended to prevent violence	54
Not intended to prevent violence against SGM	17

Included

Studies included in qualitative synthesis
N=30

PRELIMINARY SCOPING REVIEW FINDINGS

Outlined below are the findings from our original search completed in 2020.

Post-secondary Interventions

Our search found very few resources that included interventions to reduce violence against LGBTQ students on college campuses (*n* = 6), and fewer that addressed violence against TGD students specifically (*n* = 1). Given the focus of our research, it is notable that our final sample did not include any interventions designed to address sexual violence against LGBTQ students in post-secondary settings. This highlights a substantial gap in the literature addressing this area and speaks to the challenges that campus sexual violence prevention practitioners face when trying to employ evidence-based practices.

When examining intervention implementation, we noted institutional support as a dominant theme. We found three resources describing interventions undertaken by the university as a whole with support from university administration, one resource describing a program undertaken by a small group of instructors and staff, and two resources detailing interventions initiated by individual instructors. Administrative support, including allocating adequate financial resources, was indicated as crucial for long term sustainability.

Hartman's (2014) description of three large universities' efforts to improve climate for LGBTQ students through the establishment of LGBTQ resource centers is of particular relevance to Pitt. Hartman highlights the role of administrative support in sending a clear message about university priorities to the university community and beyond, as well as the importance of allocating adequate resources to the success of an intervention. Resources such as Nicolosi's (2002) description of a campus-wide educational intervention to reduce violence against LGBT students is also interesting, as it models how students can be comprehensively involved in university-wide climate improvement efforts. See Table 1 below for further details.

Middle School and Secondary Education Interventions

When we broadened our search to include interventions designed to reduce violence against LGBTQ students in middle and secondary education, we found a greater number of resources (n = 24). Again, administrative support was crucial to intervention success, with administrators often playing a central role in the implementation of interventions themselves. There was much more student involvement in middle and secondary school interventions (n = 13) than was seen at the post-secondary level (n = 2), in part due to the widespread proliferation of student-led Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) or similar clubs, which both provide support to students and engage in action and advocacy. Training teachers and staff to be more LGBTQ-aware was also a focus that was not as prevalent in the university-based interventions. This training is particularly important as resources indicated that teachers' lack of understanding or support for LGBTQ students was often a barrier for implementation. Many of the interventions implemented in secondary schools were based on toolkits from national organizations such as GLSEN, which advocates for policies and practices that protect LGBTQ students. Examples of these widely implemented activities were 'ally week,' 'day of silence,' and 'no name calling week.' Action to improve climate for LGBTQ students was often prompted by state or district policy that enumerated sex and gender in anti-bullying policies. See appendix A for further details.

TABLE 1
Post-Secondary Results from Scoping Review

Source	Intervention Details	Student Involvement	Administrative Support	Barriers to Implementation
Cooper et al. (2014), "No Lone Wolf: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Creating Safe Schools for LGBTQ Youth Through the Development of Allies"	Michigan State LGBT center developed a 6-hour ally training, designed to be led by counseling staff. Consists of 4 stages: 1) Developing self-awareness 2) Learning about LGBTQ terms and development 3) Learn to recognize behaviors that are oppressive to LGBT people and define allyship, 4) Understand role of identity in ability to intervene, learn strategies for intervening in anti-LGBTQ behavior.	None	Not discussed	Administration can be a barrier to implementation. Facilitators must have done self-reflection prior to leading the training and be adequately informed about LGBT issues.
Hartman (2014). "'The Moment I Came in It Got Much Easier... I Should Come Here More': Student Experiences at Three Midwestern LGBT Resource Centers"	**Purdue-** As part of a five-year plan to address campus climate for LGBTQ students, developed an LGBT resource center with a full-time director and administrative assistant. The Center provides university-wide programming on LGBTQ issues through a distinguished lecture series, advocacy for equitable access/a discrimination-free environment, facilitation of training opportunities, and providing a "safer" space for LGBTQ students including a library of LGBT media.	Not discussed	Very supportive	Not discussed

(continued)

SCOPING REVIEW

Source	Intervention Details	Student Involvement	Administrative Support	Barriers to Implementation
Hartman (2014) *(continued)*	**University of Illinois-** Initially established a small office for an LGBT resource center with a part time director (a faculty member) and a $10,000 yearly budget. The under resourced office was underutilized. Responding to student pressure, the administration provided a budget for an office in the student union, full-time director, assistant director, and administrative assistant. The space offers a variety of cultural, educational, and social programs as well as support groups, referrals, and consultations to the university at large.	Student advocacy (Gay and Lesbian Student Group) resulted in establishment of center and expansion.	Initially inadequate support. Additional support after pressure from student body, staff, and faculty.	Administration's reluctance to provide adequate funding.
	Indiana University- Established an LGBT resource center in its own two-story building/house. Hired a full-time director and a team of staff including administrative assistants and student interns. The center houses an extensive LGBT library which contains more than 3,000 items.	Historic student advocacy requesting an office dedicated to LGB student concerns. Students also staff the center.	Very supportive, despite political backlash.	Political backlash from conservative student groups and republican legislators.

(continued)

Source	Intervention Details	Student Involvement	Administrative Support	Barriers to Implementation
Rogers et al. (2009), "Using a College Human Sexuality Course to Combat Homophobia"	Semester long human sexuality course offered as an upper-level elective for undergraduate students. Students explore the social construction of gender, body image, and sexuality as well as the consequences of differing meanings of "body" and "sex" can have on individuals and social groups. Course materials included: films, readings, class discussions, panels, and guest lecturers. Examples include a presentation by a surgeon who performs gender affirming surgeries and one of their patients, panel of LGBT elders, students completed a research paper on a sexuality related topic of their choice.	None	Not discussed	Not discussed
Alvarez & Schroeder (2008), "One College Campus's Need for a Safe Zone: A Case Study	Intended to train a group of staff and then display pink triangles to indicate that someone is trained and can serve as a resource for LGBTQ people. Many barriers to implementation with final practices unclear.	None	Lack of administrative support initially. More support after rebranded DEI investment.	Lack of administrative support initially. "Co-opted" intervention changed from grassroots movement to institutional DEI marketing opportunity, which resulted in conflict over who controlled the program, primarily between LGBTQ groups and Affirmative Action office.

(continued)

Source	Intervention Details	Student Involvement	Administrative Support	Barriers to Implementation
Nicolosi (2002), "A Community's Response to Hate: Reactions of a College Campus to Expressions of Homophobia and Heterosexism"	Faculty met with student leaders of the LGBT student group to strategize and develop plan for addressing a proliferation of homophobic incidents on campus. Organized a visibility campaign, student-led and organized teach-in ("comedic skits, personal testimony, music, films, sobering statistics"). The author (a faculty member) led discussions about LGBT issues (heterosexual privilege) in classroom and provided supports for students.	Students involved at every level including creation, development, implementation.	Very supportive	Significant backlash from students who were not supportive of events or programming.
Yep (2002), "From Homophobia and Heterosexism to Heteronormativity: Toward the Development of a Model of Queer Interventions in the University Classroom"	An instructor designed an activity for classes of 16-24 students to examine violence caused by heteronormativity. Addressed 4 quadrants: (1) Interior-individual, (2) exterior-individual, (3) interior-collective, and (4) exterior-collective.	None	None	Only offered in an individual course.

PHASE 2: LISTENING SESSIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This exploratory qualitative study involved listening sessions, a member-checking survey, and a community meeting. The method for each are described below.

LISTENING SESSIONS

We conducted five virtual, synchronous listening sessions (focus groups). Listening sessions were facilitated by a research team member, with a second team member providing technical assistance and taking observational notes throughout. Listening sessions allowed us to gain insights from more TGD Pitt students than individual qualitative interviews would have allowed, while also providing an opportunity to understand group experiences and perceptions of campus sexual violence prevention, response, and policy. Listening sessions were topically focused on prevention programming, response and support services, gaps in current resources, and input on opportunities for improvement. We analyzed session transcripts using both deductive and inductive approaches to multi-phase coding and theme development, which is detailed below.

Participants

Recruitment

Listening session participants were recruited via email announcements and social media postings shared with student networks by campus community entities. These schools, departments, offices, and student organizations are listed in Figure 2. Students were informed that they would receive a $35 electronic gift card for their participation if they were selected and attended a listening session. Interested students completed a Qualtrics screening questionnaire, and those who met inclusion criteria were contacted by email about their availability to participate in one of the listening sessions.

FIGURE 2

Recruitment Partners

Schools/Academic Departments

- Africana Studies Department
- Anthropology Department
- Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Department
- Psychology Department
- School of Education
- School of Public Health
- School of Social Work
- Sociology Department

Student Services/Administrative Offices

- Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion*
  - Trans Working Group*
- Title IX Office*
- University Counseling Center*

Student and Personnel Organizations

- AQUARIUS (Alliance of Queer Underrepresented Asians in Recognition of Intersectionality to Uphold Solidarity) *
- Asian Student Alliance
- Black Action Society
- BLAQ (Black Loud And Queer) *
- Latin American Graduate Organization of Students
- Latinx Student Association
- MOGI (Minoritized Orientations & Gender Identities) Graduate and Professional Student Association
- Pitt Queer Professionals
- Public Health Minority Student Organization
- Rainbow Alliance *
- T is For *

*Denotes university partners that were also invited to participate in the Community Meeting

Selection

Inclusion criteria for the study included:

- Current Pitt student enrolled at the Oakland campus.
- Identify as TGD.
- 18 years of age or older.

In order to form groups that would facilitate both participant comfort and relatability with other group members, listening sessions consisted of either all undergraduate or all graduate/professional students. In addition, we made efforts to include students of color in order to gain insights from diverse perspectives and experiences.

Listening Session Participants

Twenty-one TGD Pitt students participated in one of five listening sessions. Demographic characteristics of listening session participants are summarized in Table 2. Most participants were undergraduate, aged 18 to 25, and identified as nonbinary, queer, and white. Further demographic information is available in Table 2.

Data Collection

Procedures

Listening sessions were held via Zoom between November 2020 and February 2021 and lasted approximately 90 minutes. After each listening session, research team members who facilitated the session wrote memos summarizing initial impressions and documenting notable themes they observed in the group's discussion.

Recording and Data Transformation

Listening sessions were audio recorded through Zoom. The automated transcription feature in Zoom was used to generate transcripts, then checked by a research team member against the recordings and edited as necessary. Transcripts were de-identified with pseudonyms participants had chosen themselves, then they were uploaded to Dedoose to be coded.

TABLE 2

Demographic Characteristics of Listening Session Participants (N=21)

Student Level	n	%	Gender Identity	n	%
Undergraduate	12	57.1%	Androgynous	1	4.8%
Graduate	9	42.9%	Female	1	4.8%
			Genderfluid	1	4.8%
Age	**n**	**%**	Nonbinary	14	66.6%
18-21	8	38.1%	Transgender	4	19.0%
22-25	6	28.6%			
26-29	3	14.3%	**Sexual Orientation**	**n**	**%**
≥ 30	4	19.0%	Asexual	1	4.8%
			Bisexual	7	33.3%
Race	**n**	**%**	Lesbian	1	4.8%
Asian	1	4.8%	Pansexual	1	4.8%
Black	1	4.8%	Queer	10	4.8%
Hispanic/Latinx	2	9.5%	Straight	1	4.8%
Multi-Racial	3	14.3%			
White	14	66.7%			

Analysis

Data Analytic Strategy

After transcription and de-identification, listening session data were analyzed in 6 stages:

STAGE 1: DESCRIPTIVE CODING

We coded transcript excerpts based on the major descriptive areas of sexual violence prevention, response, and policy. Because it had been such a prominent topic in listening sessions, we added campus climate as a fourth major area. Additional codes within these areas were developed based on memo-ing we had done and discussion about topics we noticed frequently arising in the listening sessions.

STAGE 2: APPLICATION OF EMERGENT CODES AND RECODING

The codebook was updated with new codes identified through the analytic process. Then, once all codes were finalized, we recoded transcripts that had been coded before revisions were made.

STAGE 3: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, CONCERNS

We then identified excerpts that spoke to what participants expressed Pitt is doing well, where improvement is needed, ideas for improvements, and concerns about if/how improvements will be implemented.

STAGE 4: THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT

We identified and summarized themes through an iterative process of reviewing coded transcripts for the most prevalent and pressing ideas.

STAGE 5: MEMBER CHECKING

Member-checking is a process of returning results to participants to verify the credibility of findings. We sent a Qualtrics survey summarizing dominant themes to all listening session participants. The member-checking survey is outlined in more detail below.

Data Analytic Strategy (Continued)

STAGE 6: SUMMARY AND THEMATIC REFINEMENT

Bringing together listening session, member-checking survey, and community meeting information, additional thematic analysis was conducted by a member who joined the research team in September of 2021 (ES). This process informed the development of new thematic codes, which were reviewed and discussed in team meetings with the research team and during one-on-one meetings with the PI (RG).

MEMBER-CHECKING SURVEY

Member-checking surveys were used to confirm with listening session participants that summaries of the major themes we identified across session transcripts accurately and adequately reflected the perspectives they shared with us. The survey was sent to all listening session participants to complete anonymously using Qualtrics. Those who responded (n=17; 81% response rate) were compensated $25 for completing the survey. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = 'Not well at all'; 5 = 'Extremely well'), respondents rated how well they felt we had captured their perspectives on major topic areas. Average ratings ranged from 4.1 to 4.8 across topics, indicating that a majority of respondents felt we captured their perspectives 'well' or 'extremely well' in all areas. Respondents were also provided an opportunity to prioritize action steps for the University to take in order to address TGD student needs with regard to sexual violence on campus. Member-checking survey responses were downloaded from Qualtrics into Microsoft Excel, where descriptive statistics were generated for quantitative items. Text from open-ended responses was pasted into a Microsoft Word document for qualitative analysis. Additional information and insight provided through the member-checking survey was examined alongside the themes that we developed. Member-checking insight was congruent with prior interpretation and is reflected in findings and recommendations outlined in this report.

COMMUNITY MEETING

The final step in our data collection process was to present our listening session findings to campus partners and TGD-serving and/or SVPR-focused community organizations in Pittsburgh. The purpose of this meeting was to situate student perspectives within the context of current programs, services, and resources, in order to facilitate collaborative solutions. Email invitations were sent to community partners within the university and at organizations in the surrounding region. The event was not advertised to a general audience on campus or in the community. University community members who attended the community meeting represented the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, Pitt's Trans Working Group, the Title IX Office, the University Counseling Center, Student Health Services, IT, facilities, and LGBTQ and TGD student organizations. Pittsburgh-area organizations that were represented include Allegheny Health Network, #ChangeRapeCulture Pittsburgh, Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation, Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (PAAR), Persad Center, and Proud Haven. A total of 29 attendees participated in the community meeting. The community meeting validated certain concerns expressed in listening sessions and the member-checking survey. It also served to begin identifying sites of opportunity to address some concerns. Attendees were able to provide insight into improvements already under way and institutional barriers that may be limiting progress. Key takeaways from the community meeting can be found in Appendix C.

FINAL SYNTHESIS

After joining the research team in September of 2021, the newest member (ES) conducted a review of all transcripts, results from the member-checking survey, and summary documents. Through discussion in weekly research team meetings, we decided that further thematic analysis would be conducted to inform the development of this report. To accomplish this, the newest research team member conducted line-by-line coding of all transcripts and qualitative results of the member checking survey to identify 'problems' and 'solutions' proposed by participants related to sexual violence prevention and response programming for TGD students. This process informed the development of new thematic codes, which were reviewed and discussed in team meetings with the research team and during one-on-one meetings with the PI (RG). These thematic codes were revised in an iterative process based on feedback from team members and returning to the qualitative data, which resulted in aggregating the data into themes and sub themes, which were informed by prior codes.

FINDINGS

Below we summarize salient findings about campus climate and sexual violence prevention and response infrastructure for TGD students. Additional quotes which demonstrate these themes can be found in Appendix B.

CAMPUS CLIMATE

Students identified a critical need to address campus climate toward TGD students as a first and necessary step in reducing TGD students' experiences of sexual violence and increasing the accessibility of campus resources. They emphasized the importance of addressing systemic issues that foster the marginalization of TGD students on campus. This marginalization leads to a lack of trust in university systems and reduced utilization of existing university-based services and systems to support survivors of sexual violence. One student expressed their lack of trust in Pitt's ability or intent to help TGD students, sharing:

> *"There's nothing here that makes me say I should trust these people with my life, with my experiences. I'm here to get my degree and get out so I can help trans people, because I don't trust Pitt as an institution to help trans people."*

We found that to address systemic concerns, develop trust, and promote connection to the university community, TGD students must feel safe, valued, seen, and heard. A discussion of each of these core concepts - safe, valued, seen, heard - as expressed by participants follows.

SAFE

TGD students illuminated several avenues to increase safety on campus for TGD students, including:

Basic competence training
Require universal education for students and personnel about TGD identities.

Accountability processes
Develop accountability processes for addressing transphobia and ensuring trainings are completed.

Trustworthy spaces and personnel
Establish physical spaces and people that TGD students can trust.

Basic Competence Training

TGD students emphasized the importance of universal training for students and faculty to improve campus climate. Students highlighted the role of faculty and staff in shaping campus climate and explained that when daily discriminatory experiences went unchecked, it reduced their sense of safety and belief that the university cared about them. They clarified that optional trainings are not sufficient and do not increase their sense of safety because they attract a self-selecting group of people who are less likely to need these trainings, while failing to reach the people who are causing the most harm.

One participant described how training about diverse identities has benefits for the broader university community. While these trainings are frequently framed as supporting TGD students, they have the capacity to provide important education that gives the campus community the tools to question and resist harmful gender norms and stereotypes that promote and reproduce violence.

> *"I think it is important to emphasize that all individuals benefit from [training about] diverse identities. Pitt has been trying to make diversity here more important and I think this is one way they can show that they do really care about diversity and representation."*

Another student emphasized the importance of implementing strategies, such as training, to help reduce TGD students' fear of encountering discrimination or lack of knowledge from faculty and staff, which dissuades them from seeking help when they have experienced harassment, violence, or discrimination.

> *"[University personnel] are the ones that students want to turn to for help with situations, but [they] might be afraid to or regret it if the person isn't LGBTQ+ competent. Making sure personnel understand that using the right name and pronouns is super important [because] not only should they respect that but also [should] enforce [using correct names and pronouns] in their classrooms or workspaces."*

Students spoke to the role that faculty and staff play in fostering a supportive climate for TGD students. Additionally, students identified that changes in university polices regarding training and accountability could enable a positive shift in the overall culture of the campus.

Accountability Processes

TGD students reported concerns about the lack of accountability on issues that were important to them, such as respecting TGD identities and completing mandatory trainings. Students expressed concern that requiring training for faculty and staff without accountability structures for training completion, continuing education, and correcting concerning behavior could provide 'false safety.' To trust the basic competence training, students needed to know that it was being comprehensively executed and that harmful behaviors were being systematically identified and addressed so that harms to them as individuals did not balloon into chronic harms to their community.

In describing the significant consequences of microaggressions on TGD student wellbeing, one participant pointed out that microaggressions are frequently due to mistakes or gaps in knowledge, and typically do not reflect intentional hostility towards TGD students. Accountability processes could provide training and support for staff and faculty to learn about the needs of TGD students, while also offering an opportunity to improve and assess the practical application and implementation of TGD inclusive policy.

> *"I feel like accountability never has to be punitive... It can be transformational and focused on the way staff react so if it's not... blatantly violent--I mean, it is violent to misgender or deadname someone--but if they're not trained on using the system correctly or something like that, you don't have to punish them, you just need to show them how to do it. And then if it's a repeated behavior then maybe that dialogue changes, but I think the university doesn't have to see it as punishing someone. It's like teaching somebody."*

Students did not voice a desire for punitive approaches to accountability, but rather a desire to move the entire community to a place of knowledge, respect, and compassion.

Trustworthy Spaces and Personnel

TGD students reported that the lack of an LGBTQ center or support personnel designated for TGD needs makes it more difficult to access support, develop community, and work together to improve climate. The lack of an LGBTQ center or other easily accessible channels for finding information about TGD supports, resources, or gathering places communicates to TGD students that the university does not acknowledge or understand the difficulty that TGD students face in navigating an institution in which they are a minority in numbers and minoritized in historic and contemporary practices. Many universities (e.g., University of Minnesota, University of Pennsylvania, University of Michigan, University of Iowa) have physical spaces specifically designated for the needs of LGBTQ students and students of other minoritized identities. Pitt's lack of investment in spaces that demonstrate inclusion of these groups of students is understood by students as evidence that the university does not see their inclusion in the campus community as important or valued. It also represents a real barrier to students who struggle to make connections with peers and personnel, which can lead to increased isolation.

One participant described how a lack of a physical or virtual space to find information related to TGD students' needs made it difficult for them to identify supportive faculty and resources and contributed to their frustration with the University.

> *"I learned through back channels which professors are queer and safe, but I was not given any [resources]."* This participant continued to express their disbelief and frustration at Pitt's lack of an LGBTQ center: *"I was told there is no funding for an LGBTQ center. Pitt is a very well-off university, so I don't believe that."*

Another participant explicitly addressed the need for support connecting with on-campus resources. The participant emphasized how isolated changes intended to improve TGD inclusion in SVPR would not be effective without clear avenues for TGD students to connect with a network of inclusive services and supports.

> *"Scenarios that use gender neutral names and include trans students [in sexual violence prevention materials] are great but don't really address the fact that there's no place on campus that is explicitly carved for any sort of LGBTQ folks to go or connect with resources or find staff members who are affirming."*

Trustworthy Spaces and Personnel (continued)

Overall, participants perceived an absence of LGBTQ-specific physical spaces, support personnel, or resource hubs. The lack of this infrastructure and support made it difficult for them to connect with their peers or feel like there was a space where they would fit in, be supported, and be accepted.

Furthermore, students reported that law enforcement's role in perpetuating violence and discrimination against LGBTQ communities and communities of color makes campus police untrustworthy. TGD students expect to experience discrimination and violence if they engage with law enforcement, and thus police presence on campus and in SVPR processes decreases TGD students' sense of safety on campus. For this reason, University messaging that directs students to report incidents of sexual violence and harassment to campus police undermines TGD students' confidence in the university's approach to addressing experiences of violence and discrimination. As a result, TGD students are reluctant to engage with university resources for addressing violence and harassment, because they want to avoid interactions with campus police and are concerned that police are their only option or will become involved even if they goes to another resource (i.e., Title IX).

One non-binary participant expressed how they expect engaging with the police to be an invalidating and disempowering experience:

> *"If you're a queer trans person and you don't necessarily trust the university police…, that deals with structural issues that can't be solved through education [or] training. If you fundamentally don't agree with the idea that the university police are going to help you, whether that's based on your own experiences or the experiences of others or… anything going on in the country right now, then no matter what the university says, it's never going to be enough."*

The student raises two interlocking issues related to police as proposed resources after an experience of sexual violence: the first is community fear and mistrust, and the second is the structural and organizational approaches to power and redress of harm that are misaligned with the values of this student and others we spoke with.

VALUED

> **TGD students believe that the university does not care about them because it does not appear to allocate tangible resources to support their needs.** TGD students see that most of the labor designated to improve campus for TGD students (e.g., Trans Working Group) is unpaid, which places a disproportionate burden on TGD students, faculty, and staff to improve campus climate while not resourcing them to do so. **Students see the university's attempts to demonstrate inclusion of TGD students as performative when they aren't accompanied by funding or sustainability plans.**

For example, one participant expressed their skepticism about the university's intentions behind efforts to demonstrate inclusion of TGD students.

> *"What's the time and money, who's involved, is there consistency in this care or is there no follow through?...If people aren't willing to put money into something, to me that says they don't care about it when they're this big of an institution."*

Another participant spoke with frustration about the university's lack of action to improve campus climate and the university's expectation that TGD students will engage in unpaid and emotionally draining advocacy to improve campus climate for future TGD students.

> *"Once again, the students are going to have to talk to the dean and put together all the issues ...The labor all falls on us because [the university] is not doing the research, they're not willing to put in the time and the money and everything like that... To prevent future violence to other [trans] people we have to take violence upon ourselves and it's just very exhausting."*

The unpaid labor that students, faculty, and staff provide is draining – this leaves them with less time, energy, and resources to take on positive and affirming experiences. Even knowing the toll it will take on them, students have persevered because of the desire to prevent future violence to their community; however, this has fractured their relationship to Pitt as an institution.

SEEN AND HEARD

For TGD students to feel seen and heard they need to be included in the development of university policies and programs, have a part in the decision-making process, and know that their concerns are being taken seriously through meaningful action on the part of the university. TGD students want to see themselves represented at all levels of university faculty, staff, and administration, as well as in published materials and trainings.

One participant expressed their uncertainty about how TGD-inclusive policies can be developed without meaningful participation from TGD individuals.

"I would also really like to pitch ideal solutions, especially having inclusivity in who is creating policies...to have people from the gender non-conforming community screen these policies. Instead of just creating them without any sort of actual basis to know if they're inclusive or not."

Another student described how Pitt's policies about sexual violence and harassment are not attuned to the reality of the discrimination that TGD students regularly face. The student expressed feeling that Pitt's procedures were misaligned with TGD student realities to the point that they felt like fantasy.

"Pitt gives you the 'we're good allies and we're great at prevention and we're giving you the correct answer, in a perfect world,' but that is not what this world is. We're not living in this fantasy world where you can be queer [and] go to the police and be taken seriously, or be queer and expect that whenever you have an issue with like someone misgendering you or [experience] sexual violence if you then speak on that people will be like, 'I understand, you're valid,' which is like a huge issue that I think Pitt just doesn't acknowledge at all."

SEEN AND HEARD (CONTINUED)

A third participant expressed feelings of isolation that arise when they consistently do not see individuals who share their identity among the university's faculty.

> *"Something that an LGBTQ center might offer is--or something Pitt could do without [an LGBTQ center]--is [create] a list of affiliated faculty who are part of the community, who are people that LGBTQ students can connect with. No offense to anyone, but at the end of the day, sometimes I just want to chat with a queer person who might have experienced something similar... I'm 26, I've never had a trans professor, and I've been in school my entire life."*

Students did not see themselves reflected in the authority figures around them, nor did they see the complexity of their lives reflected in the policies or procedures they are expected to follow. They expressed a desire to fix it and be a part of the solution because without their voice at the table, they expect their needs to be ignored and/or mishandled.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

The data from our focus groups reflect and enrich our understanding of the the AAU report findings, primarily that the University of Pittsburgh's current sexual violence prevention, policy, and response (SVPR) infrastructure does not adequately support TGD students. For example, our study reflected the AAU's finding that TGD students are less likely than cisgender students to seek support from university services, even though they are more knowledgeable about the services that are available. One student reflected how, as a trans student, they feel excluded and expect to be left out of systems in general, but particularly systems designed to address sexual violence:

> *"We [trans people] get shut out twice because we're shut out or included based on assigned gender at birth, but then through transitioning, we get taken back out of things. And that is true in so many spheres...so we just have to go off and do our own things— perpetually and forever."*

However, our focus groups also offered some explanations of why the current system of SVPR isn't working for TGD students. Participants offered insight into what needs to change for Pitt's SVPR to be more responsive to TGD students.

The following four themes summarize students' perspectives on what needs to change for SVPR to be effective for the TGD student body. Each of these sub-themes are discussed in further detail below, with illustrative quotes from study participants.

1. **Representation and voice:** Increase the representation and voice of TGD students in SVPR programming and resources.
2. **Student needs over institutional liability:** Prioritize the needs of students over institutional protection from liability.
3. **Pre-existing trauma:** Recognize the individual and collective-level trauma that students may bring to campus.
4. **Confidential, supportive, and responsive SVPR resources:** Reduce barriers to accessing confidential advocates and provide clear information about alternatives to Title IX in prevention materials.

The following sections provide further insight into the meaning of these four statements.

Representation and Voice

TGD students need increased representation of their identities and experiences in SVPR. This looks like increasing discussion and visibility of intersectional identities in prevention materials, ensuring outreach efforts speak to TGD student needs, and having TGD people represented in the various levels of SVPR infrastructure – such as designing and delivering trainings, offering counseling support, and developing policy priorities.

One student expressed their skepticism about how programming is designed to meet the needs of TGD students. This student expressed the importance of involving a diverse body of TGD students, scholars, and experts in ensuring TGD 'competence.'

"When I look for competency that meets the needs of trans people, I [ask], Are there trans people on the committees doing this work? Are there trans therapists and gender therapists involved in doing this work? Are there trans youth and people from all corners of the community talking about this? Are African American studies scholars who are writing on sexual violence in Black communities contributing to this?"

Another participant reflected on how sexual violence prevention materials at Pitt fail to capture the experiences of anyone who isn't white, cisgender, and heterosexual.

"There is such a LACK of intersectionality when we talk about sexual violence prevention. It really is very focused on cis-het people, and if we don't include queer people are we also excluding, you know, people of color, people with disabilities, things like that?"

Students spoke about feeling that SVPR is created with white, cisgender students in mind, and as a result it fails to recognize the unique circumstances that students of varying genders, racial identities, and abilities may experience when engaging with campus sexual violence support systems.

Student Needs Over Institutional Liability

TGD students perceive that current SVPR infrastructure is primarily concerned with protecting the University from legal liability. This contributes to an overall mistrust and underutilization of SVPR resources. One student emphasized their distrust of SVPR systems due to their emphasis on liability, explaining,

> *"At the end of the day, most systems don't protect individuals, they protect institutions. I feel like [Title IX] is protecting the school, it's protecting Pitt."*

Additionally, the focus on protecting the university from legal liability results in sexual violence prevention efforts and response systems that lack empathy and are mis-attuned to TGD students' needs. One participant spoke to how the Title IX reporting process feels scary, because they believed that it can take away agency from the complainant in an already emotionally difficult situation.

> *"You have people who might just need a place to process their feelings, where they aren't really granted that because what ends up happening is you say, 'oh, this is what happened to me,' and now you're suddenly thrust into the bureaucratic process of Title IX reporting, whether or not that is what you as a survivor of assault wants."*

Student Needs Over Institutional Liability (continued)

Participants also spoke to the need to create alternative sexual violence response structures to Title IX that are not seen as traumatizing and punitive in nature. One student reported their horror at the implementation of the Trump Administration's changes to Title IX guidelines and how the Title IX process discourages students from coming forward with reports of sexual violence.

> *"At Pitt if you report sexual violence, you end up in a room with the perpetrator. And they get alerted that they were reported. There was some language like, 'and then you're cross-examined in front of--' Oh my GOD! So, you experienced this, and then you're stuck in a room with the person who you reported and they know it's you. I don't blame anyone who then is like, I don't want to report because Pitt is making it worse, exacerbating the trauma you just went through by then asking you to be in a room with this person and hear their side of the story, which I'm sure is...not fine."*

Additionally, throughout the focus groups, participants expressed frustration with the emphasis on physical acts of sexual violence in prevention and response efforts. TGD students stated that there is a need to see more discussions about healthy relationships of all kinds and to learn what strategies and supports are available to them to manage a wider range of sexually violent behaviors and harassment, not only the most physically violent.

Pre-existing Trauma

Many students have experienced sexual violence prior to coming to the University of Pittsburgh. Additionally, the visibility of violence towards TGD individuals in the news and on social media impacts TGD students and contributes to community-level trauma--this has been described as 'queer terror' (Harris & Holman Jones, 2017)--which causes TGD students to anticipate harm coming to themselves and others and can contribute to symptoms of PTSD. Current university SVPR infrastructure does not take this into account and as a result can be retraumatizing for students.

One participant discussed how students with trauma could benefit from warnings about the potentially triggering, graphic nature of the content covered in first-year sexual violence prevention materials.

> *"They brought like the entire freshman class into the Pete and gave no warning on what we were about to cover... Because you were in a crowded space, and the Pete is stadium seating, if you wanted to leave and you were in the middle, you had to ask half of your row to get up."*

Another participant spoke to how one of the most important things to consider in developing prevention materials for TGD students is that many students have pre-existing trauma.

> *"I think first of all to acknowledge that probably many trans and non-binary students have experienced violence, sexual or otherwise, before stepping foot on campus. I think that it's assumed that a lot of students arrive [as] clean slates, with no life experience. It's assumed that the first-year students are these 18-year-old kids who [are] experiencing life for the first time."*

Students spoke to the need to have SVPR systems that understand that many students have experienced trauma before coming to campus and may also experience trauma off campus while they are a student. This may look like including content warnings before showing images of violence or discussing sexual assault, having support groups available for students who have experienced previous trauma, and offering prevention in smaller, more intimate settings in which students may be better able to advocate for their own needs.

Confidential, Supportive, and Responsive SVPR Resources

TGD students reported facing logistical barriers to accessing existing SVPR resources or being unaware of how to find support that wouldn't involve mandated reporting to the Title IX office. Students wanted increased access to SVPR resources, particularly confidential, TGD affirming supports for those who have experienced sexual violence and harassment. One student spoke to how Pitt's messaging about how to access support if you've experienced sexual violence exacerbates barriers to attaining the support students may be looking for.

> *"They say go to Pitt, talk to your professor... If that's not an answer for you, then that hides all of the other resources that ARE the answer for you. When they just hand you this one answer, and you're like, that's not good for me...that can hide all of the other resources that are actually helpful."*

Another student spoke to their discouragement with the process for accessing support at the university counseling center, which often results in them not accessing support.

> *"I've gone to the Counseling Center before and I am a person with ADHD [so] getting to a resource is hard enough. Being turned away from a resource and being told, 'you have to go through this, this, and this avenue' is really frustrating because it already took so much of my brainpower to get to the first resource. So, I've definitely had that experience before where it, it's just more difficult, and then nothing gets done, and I am once again alone in my dorm room and sad."*

Confidential, Supportive, and Responsive SVPR Resources (continued)

Furthermore, TGD students recognized a need for non-punitive resources for perpetrators of sexual violence. Students reflected that offering support to perpetrators could both prevent future instances of sexual violence, and result in more students seeking support after experiencing sexual violence. One student stated,

> *"What resources could there be for perpetrators beyond punishment? Part of the consequences of one's actions is understanding how it affects other people. There's not enough discussion about that. It's always about what happens after for survivors. What happens after for perpetrators, and how do we make sure that it doesn't happen again? What do perpetrators of violence need to not be violent? There needs to be something in place for that."*

Participants stated that Pitt prevention materials focus on educating students about Title IX as the primary avenue to address experiences of sexual violence. However, because students wanted to avoid involving Title IX and mandated reporting, they felt they had limited options if they wanted to seek confidential support. Furthermore, TGD students were not certain that available supports would be adequately TGD-aware or affirming. They spoke to a need to provide healing and support for perpetrators of sexual violence, as well as victims, and how not necessarily wanting perpetrators, such as friends or intimate partners, to face punishment deters them from seeking support on campus.

DISCUSSION

The challenge that we currently face as an institution is not a lack of knowledge regarding what to do, but rather, how to do it in a way that leads to meaningful change that prioritizes and protects TGD students as equal and valued members of our campus community. Through the process of reviewing the scant literature available related to promising practices for SVPR and TGD students in higher education, as well as our listening sessions with campus community members, we have developed actionable recommendations. We wish to note transparently that some of these recommendations may overlap (or appear to overlap) with existing initiatives on campus. However, it is important to note that in all cases, the recommendations provided substantively extend current initiatives. In addition, we note that, at the broadest level, there are three primary continua on which all inclusion-focused initiatives must progress. These are summarized on the following page.

1. Moving from performative inclusion to meaningful inclusion.

Performative inclusion is defined as a stated commitment by an individual or institution to a cause without practical changes being made that reflect this commitment. All existing and future initiatives should be interrogated to ensure that they show clear practical and actionable commitment to meaningful inclusion of TGD students.

2. Moving from prioritizing institutional protection to prioritizing TGD protection.

Many existing practices and policies are designed (whether intentionally or not) to limit institutional liability, making it very difficult for TGD students to self-advocate, report misconduct, or receive meaningful repairs or apologies after harm has been done. All existing and future initiatives should prioritize movement toward protecting students first, including openness and transparency around acknowledging when harm has been done and offering reparative action that is meaningful and responsive to those who have been harmed. This will require going beyond the minimum of what is required by state and federal policy.

3. Moving from utilization of available resources to strategic planning and investment.

In response to the socio-cultural changes that began during the summer of 2020, many initiatives have been quickly formed to address diversity, equity, and inclusion topics. However, these often focus on utilizing unpaid labor of available students, faculty, and staff rather than prioritizing a more strategic approach guided by TGD community and expert voices. All existing and future initiatives should be examined to ensure a focus on investing appropriately in compensating experts and TGD community members for their labor in guiding strategic efforts to produce lasting and responsive change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our team has synthesized existing literature and recommendations from the campus community to produce the following actionable recommendations for the University of Pittsburgh. We strongly recommend that a committee of compensated TGD experts and community members be appointed to oversee the development and implementation of these changes. We provide short- and longer-term action steps to begin moving toward an inclusive campus.

REPRESENTATION

To feel valued and seen at the university, TGD students need to see themselves represented in positions of influence. They also need to be invited to the table to contribute to the decisions that impact their lives. To this end, we suggest:

- **Short term:** Compensate TGD student leaders, faculty, and staff for their labor to improve campus climate and prevent sexual violence. This may include covering percent effort for faculty, updating tenure requirements and guidelines such that TGD service is valued in tenure and promotion, supporting staff hours spent doing TGD service, and establishing paid student-leader positions related to climate and SVPR.

- **Longer term:** Create hiring initiatives to recruit and retain TGD faculty and staff. Build physical infrastructure (e.g., LGBTQ Center) to promote student inclusion and create spaces where students, faculty, and staff see themselves and others like them on campus.
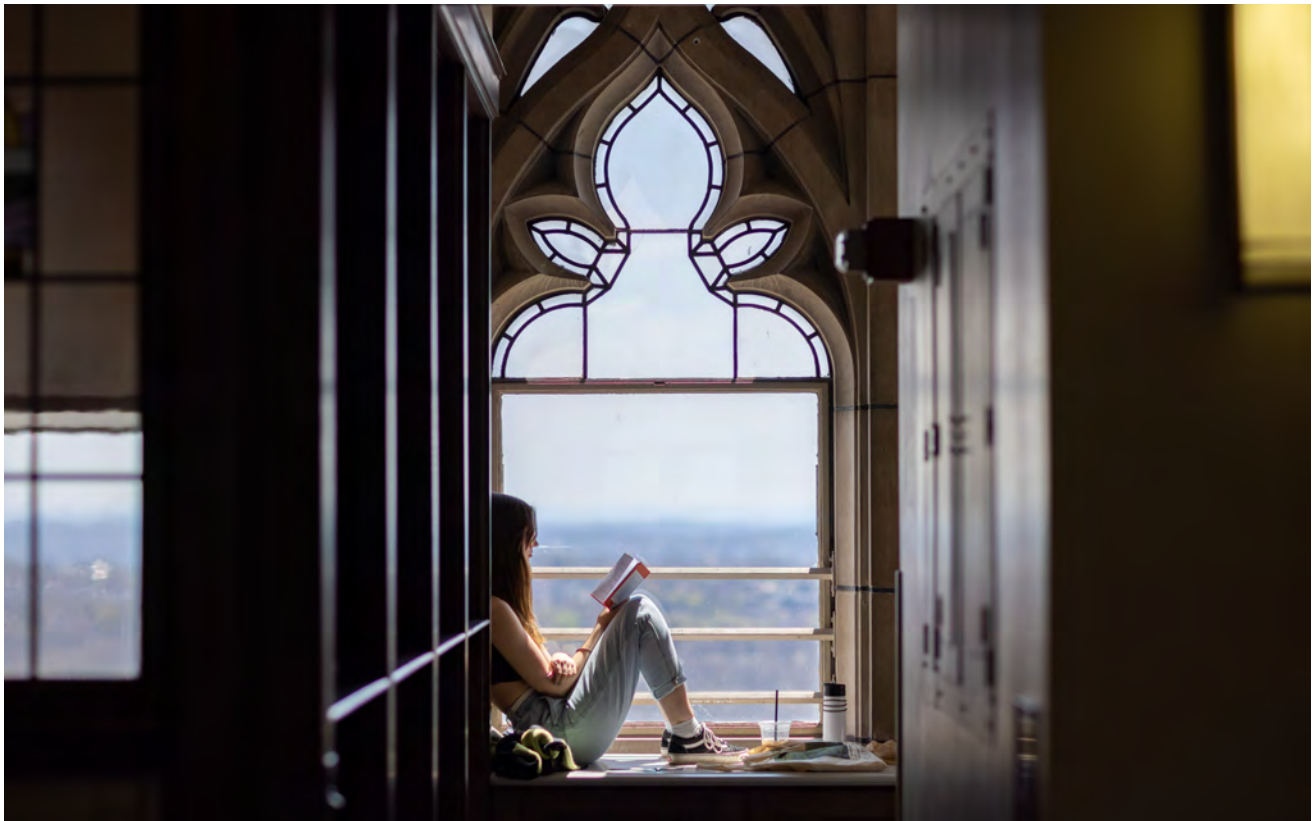
EDUCATION

It is critical that TGD students live and learn in a community that understands their reality and has the information and tools to support them. Ensuring that faculty, staff, and students have basic information about diverse gender identities and presentations is one step to improving the University of Pittsburgh's climate for TGD students.

- **Short term:** Engage in partnerships with local organizations and trainers to deliver mandatory trainings for faculty and staff on basic information and best practices related to gender diversity. Optional trainings only reach a small fraction of those who need the information and may miss those with the least awareness and most resistance. Build training about gender identity into required trainings for incoming students

- **Longer term:** Develop a yearly mandatory training series, in consultation with local and national experts as well as students, for all faculty and staff related to gender identity. Conduct curricular audits across programs to ensure that gender identity and expression is a part of the Pitt's core curriculum across schools and programs.

ACCOUNTABILITY

TGD students want to be heard. It is harmful when they experience discrimination on campus and that harm is compounded by the fear that the discriminatory experiences are going to repeat year after year for their community. To stop this cycle, Pitt needs to build accountability structures related to TGD discrimination. Misgendering, using incorrect names, and using derogatory language is unacceptable, and students need a way to report these issues. While students knew that sexual violence should be reported to the Title IX office, reporting incidents of gender identity-based discrimination did not have such a clear path for them. Students want to have an avenue for confidential reporting and to know the body receiving information will look for patterns across reports and establish plans for remediation, if needed.

- **Short term:** Clarify existing reporting structures so that students know where to go if they experience discrimination. Ensure that confidential avenues for reporting are made visible. If multiple avenues for reporting exist, build lines of communication across these avenues to identify harmful patterns of behavior.

- **Mid term:** Apologize to TGD students for their historic and contemporary exclusion in university infrastructure, policy, and practices. Make clear that the University of Pittsburgh sees the role that it has played in this exclusion. Make apology in conjunction with clear, strategic long-term plan for partnering to reform infrastructure, policy, and practices to better serve TGD students.

- **Longer term:** Work with TGD students to identify a reporting structure and process that they would trust. Connect with experts (e.g., HR, legal) to build infrastructure to compile and consistently review reports to look for patterns of harm. Establish accountability processes that move away from performative and punitive measures and toward repair and justice.

RESPONSE

TGD students do not feel served by the current sexual violence response resources. They do not want the process that they would encounter with a Title IX report, and they do not trust police because of long histories of violence and mistreatment toward TGD people, BIPOC, and people with disabilities by law enforcement. They see the counseling center as a place that will not have TGD-competent support. That these are the three dominant sexual violence response resources that students recognize on campus poses a notable problem for TGD students - creating the feeling that there is no support for them.

- **Short term:** Ensure that Title IX, campus police, and the counseling center staff receive training in diverse gender identities and expressions. Expand partnerships with off campus organizations to offer easy to access, consistently available, confidential supports for TGD survivors of sexual violence on campus. Invite off campus support resources on to campus to increase their visibility in a neutral space (i.e. not at Title IX office or Campus Police).

- **Longer term:** Work with students to interrogate Title IX, campus police, and counseling center approaches to sexual violence response. Develop alternative safety programs to campus police. Engage students and alternative justice scholars/consultants (e.g., local: Sacred Ground Collective; National: Mimi Kim and Creative Interventions, Brown University Community Dialogue Project) in the co-creation of mediation process that would provide them with a non-punitive avenue to address experiences of harm and create opportunities for healing.

PREVENTION

TGD students do not see themselves reflected in the health promotion or prevention materials that they encounter. They want materials that depict diverse identities (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation, religious backgrounds), relationship structures, and systems of support. They also stressed the need for resources to be trauma informed, speaking to the trauma histories that they and/or their friends arrived on campus with.

- **Short term:** Include information about diverse relationship structures as well as non-cisgender and non-heterosexual identities in prevention trainings. Develop prevention trainings that are interactive and in which students can share their experiences and learn about developing healthy relationships

- **Longer term:** Provide ongoing training for all students and integrate sexual violence prevention and healthy relationship promotion into the core curriculum. Develop a system of ongoing training modules required at least yearly (not only for incoming first years but each year that a student is a part of the Pitt community) that discuss a range of topics related to consent, sexual violence, and gender.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this study, it was clear that addressing TGD students' experiences of sexual violence on college campuses cannot be accomplished without also addressing TGD students' experiences of campus climate. The restrictive and cis/heterocentric norms that were hallmarks of the negative climate experiences that the TGD students in our study spoke about are inextricably connected to sexual violence. These climate issues also contribute to TGD students' overall distrust of the university and the perception that university systems meant to support survivors of sexual violence are not designed to support them. This experience may be particularly true for certain groups of TGD students, as research indicates that TGD students of color are more likely to have a negative experience of campus climate (Rankin et al., 2010), are more likely to experience harassment and sexual assault on campus (James et al., 2016), and are more likely to experience intimate partner violence (Whitfield et al., 2021).

Research also shows promise that campus-based structural initiatives to foster inclusion of and education about LGBTQ identities can lower rates of discrimination on campus and improve self-acceptance (Woodford et al., 2018), and that greater inclusion of TGD students is associated with lower rates of sexual assault on campus (Coulter & Rankin, 2020). Unfortunately, our current system of preventing and responding to sexual violence does not work for TGD students, and moreover, the data shows that it isn't working for most students. This report aims to offer a path forward for the University of Pittsburgh to become a leader in implementing new and novel approaches to reduce sexual violence on campus for all students. We look forward to working together to achieve this shared goal.

APPENDIX A
Intervention Characteristics

Author (Year)	Name or Description	Type	Strategy	Level	Recipient Role	Recipient SGI	Focus Population	Focus Behavior	Evaluated
Alvarez & Schneider (2008)	"Project Safe Zone"	Support Service	Adapted school practices	Post-secondary	Student, Educator	Mixed/ general	SGM	Harassment, property damage, physical violence	No
Betts (2018)	GSA	Affinity groups	GSAs	High school	Student	Mixed/ general	SGM	Bullying	No
Burk et al. (2018)	"Out in Schools"	Psycho-educational	Event	High school	Student	Mixed/ general	SM	Bullying	Yes
Byrd & Hays (2013)	"Safe Space"	Psycho-educational	Single dose training	Middle & high school	Educator	Mixed/ general	SGM	Bullying	Yes
Carlson & Roseboro (2011)	"Day of Silence"	Psycho-educational	Campaign	High school	Student, Educator	Mixed/ general	SGM	Bullying, homophobic remarks, physical victimization	No
Coker et al. (2020)	"Green Dot"	Psycho-educational	Training series	High school	Student	Mixed/ general	SM	Sexual violence	Yes
Cooper et al. (2014)	"LGBTQ Ally Training Program"	Psycho-educational	Single dose training	High school, post-secondary	Student, Educator	Heterosexual/ cisgender	SGM	Safe campus climate	No
Ernould (2013)	Mindfulness-based intervention	Psycho-educational	Training series	High school	Student	SGM	SM	Bullying	No

(continued)

Author (Year)	Name or Description	Type	Strategy	Level	Recipient Role	Recipient SGI	Focus Population	Focus Behavior	Evaluated
Ferfolja (2013)	"Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) Equity Foundation Statement and Commitments to Equity Policy (EFS)"	Institutional Policy	Adapted school practices	Middle & high school	Student, Educator	Mixed/ general	SGM	Bullying	No
GLSEN (2009)	"Day of Silence"	Event	Event	Middle & high school	Student, Educator	Mixed/ general	SGM	Bullying, harassment	No
GLSEN (2010)	"Ally week"	Event	Event	High school	Student, Educator	Mixed/ general	SGM	Bullying, harassment	No
Greytak et al. (2010)	"Respect for all"	Psycho-educational	Single dose training	High school	Educator	Mixed/ general	SGM	Bullying	Yes
Griffin et al. (2002)	"It Takes a Team!"	Psycho-educational	Single dose training	High school, post-secondary	Student, Educator	Mixed/ general	SGM	Sexual violence, anti-gay harassment, physical assault	No
Griffin et al. (2004)	GSA	Affinity groups	GSAs	High school	Student	Mixed/ general	SGM	Discrimination, harassment	No
Hartman (2015)	SGM resource center	Support Service	Adapted school practices	Post-secondary	Student	SGM	SGM	Harassment	No
Hatzenbuehler & Keyes (2013)	Anti-bullying policies	Institutional Policy	Adapted school practices	High school	Student	Mixed/ general	SM	Bullying, suicide	No

(continued)

Author (Year)	Name or Description	Type	Strategy	Level	Recipient Role	Recipient SGI	Focus Population	Focus Behavior	Evaluated
Horowitz & Hansen (2008)	"Out for Equity"	Psycho-educational, Support Service, affinity groups, Crisis Intervention	Single dose training, training series, course/curricular modifications, adapted school practices, GSAs	Middle & high school	Student, Educator	Mixed/ general	SGM	homophobic harassment and violence, harassing language/slurs, homophobic bullying	Yes
Horowitz & Itzkowitz (2011)	"Out for Equity (OFE) Middle School Project (MSP)"	Psycho-educational, affinity groups	Single dose training, one-on-one student support, special events	Middle school	Student, Educator	Mixed/ general	SGM	Bullying	Yes
Hutton (2015)	"Safe Space" stickers	Community involvement, social event, Safe Space stickers, affinity groups	Campaign	High school	Student, Educator	Mixed/ general	SGM	Bullying, harassment	Yes
Knotts (2005)	"Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act (AB 537)" (California Law)	State/Federal Policy	Adapted school practices	Middle school	Student	Mixed/ general	SGM	Bullying, harassment	Yes
Liboro et al. (2014)	GSAs and other SGM-affirming programs	Psycho-educational, affinity groups	GSAs	High school	Student	Mixed/ general	SGM	Bullying	No

(continued)

Author (Year)	Name or Description	Type	Strategy	Level	Recipient Role	Recipient SGI	Focus Population	Focus Behavior	Evaluated
Lin (2013)	SGM content and queer issues in classrooms	Institutional Policy	Course/ curricular modifications	Middle & high school	Student	Mixed/ general	SM	Bullying, verbal harassment, physical assault	No
Mayberry et al. (2013)	GSA	Affinity groups	GSAs, advocacy	High school	Student	Mixed/ general	SGM	General anti-SGM hostility	No
Nicolosi (2002)	Organization of a teach-in and other campus events	Psycho-educational, Advocacy, Activism	Training series, campaign	Post-secondary	Student, Educator	Mixed/ general	SGM	"Homophobia"-hate crimes	No
Poirier (2014)	GSAs, school policies	Institutional Policy, affinity groups	Adapted school practices	High school	Student	Mixed/ general	SGM	Bullying, harassment, homophobia	Yes
Rogers et al. (2009)	Human sexuality course	Psycho-educational	Course/ curricular modifications	Post-secondary	Student	Mixed/ general	SM	Homophobia	Yes
Singh (2013)	Popular opinion leader (POL) groups to reduce anti-SGM aggression	Psycho-educational	Popular opinion leader meetings	Middle school	Student	Mixed/ general	SGM	Bullying	No

(continued)

Author (Year)	Name or Description	Type	Strategy	Level	Recipient Role	Recipient SGI	Focus Population	Focus Behavior	Evaluated
Watson (2012)	"Safe Schools" program	Institutional Policy, Psycho-educational, Support Service, affinity groups	Single dose training, training series, course/ curricular modifications, adapted school practices, GSAs, campaign	Middle & high school	Student, Educator	Mixed/ general	SGM	Anti-SGM bullying & harassment; verbal abuse; homophobic language	Yes
Yep (2002)	"Beyond the charmed circle" (Classroom activity)	Psycho-educational	Single dose training	Post-secondary	Student	Mixed/ general	SGM	Homophobia, heterosexism, hate crimes, verbal abuse, physical violence	No
Wernick et al. (2013)	"Riot Youth Gayrilla" theater group	Psycho-educational	Single dose training, performance, and post-performance discussion	Middle & high school	Student	Mixed/ general	SGM	Bullying	Yes

APPENDIX B
Illustrative Quote Table

Theme	Additional Illustrative Quotes
CLIMATE	
TGD Competence Training	"It's self-selecting group of people who are interested [in optional trainings], and those people are usually not the ones who need the education."
	"Staff and faculty are really important because students might end up going to them first [about sexual violence] if they trust them or if they need additional resources. If these individuals can't even be gender affirming, I think that's a really big red flag and a good place to maybe start some of this training."
	"If a professor on their syllabus [says] instead of using 'they,' [use] 'he-slash-she,' then this signals to me that either the professor isn't knowledgeable about this or doesn't care...If I had an issue in their class, why would I feel comfortable talking to them?"
Accountability Processes	Regarding training staff so TGD students would feel more comfortable seeking services: "There would have to be a big change in accountability for staff. Maybe a space where students can report their experiences and then that staff being held accountable for whatever they did."
	"There's always a diversity statement...If you're going to put that and mandate it in every syllabus, then our professors should get a grade on that as well."
	"I'm wary about [staff/faculty training] being mandatory, just because people will then say, 'Oh, I have training in this.' And then it's false safety. I've been in this situation where a professor said, 'Oh, I have training in all of this,' and then they do the most egregious things ever. And then they justify it by saying, well, they have training in it. They have the certificate."

Theme	Additional Illustrative Quotes
Climate	
Trustworthy Spaces and Personnel	"The [LGBTQ+] center is important because it will give a home to an underrepresented population where similar individuals can find each other, organizations, and resources all in one place"
	"There's nothing here that makes me say I should trust these people with my life, with my experiences. I'm here to get my degree and get out so I can help trans people, because I don't trust Pitt as an institution to help trans people."
	"There are so many police, I don't understand that. So, less police presence, more robust mental health services."
	"If you heard from other students that now staff were not deadnaming people and not being insensitive in certain ways, I feel like that could motivate more people to go [use campus resources]."
	"I would never call the cops for anything outside of campus and I would never call them for anything on campus. I don't want cops on campus. That doesn't make me feel safe...and that I know is even more true for my friends and family of color. Why would they trust a system that has perpetually tried to kill them? There's no safety in these systems."
	In response to what ideal support services would look like: "Therapists that look like students and have the experiences of students."
Valuing TGD Community	"It doesn't just end at bathrooms because once Pitt put in gender neutral bathrooms they acted like, 'There we go...We care about our trans students. Have a bathroom."
	"One issue is the few queer professors at Pitt are the unpaid teachers to all the other professors or other staff members that should be aware of [the needs of TGD students]. It's unfair to the [few queer professors]."

Theme	Additional Illustrative Quotes
Sexual Violence Prevention and Response	
TGD Representation, Voice, and Student Involvement	"I remember [the training] did not feel gender-inclusive whatsoever. It was very much giving the experiences of cis people and not really showing different identities."
	"Please hire queer BIPOC people to work on sexual violence prevention programming and resources and not just cis, white people!!!"
	"I feel confident in the approach of having presenters who are TGD giving the presentation to students who are TGD. I also think that it would be beneficial to have a more diverse group of presenters in general."
	"In terms of feeling comfortable [accessing support]...I'm black, I'm mixed-race, in terms of something like [sexual violence], I would only feel safe talking to other black people. Preferably, black queer people."
	"There's already so few gender non-conforming professionals and especially gender non-conforming professionals of color. That's a big problem. Students can't see themselves in the professionals who are serving them. How much would Pitt be willing to actually do to combat that?"
	"I've seen [sexual violence prevention] presentations from Title IX and from PantherWell...I've gotten more information from...the students that work at PantherWell than I have anywhere else...[In] everything that Pitt has given me, I didn't get that sort of safety because it was coming from students to students and it seemed just better that way."
	"A lot of this information [about sexual violence prevention] needs to be heard from peers"

Theme	Additional Illustrative Quotes
Sexual Violence Prevention and Response	
TGD Representation, Voice, and Student Involvement (continued)	"Having STUDENTS involved in [policy development] when possible, or recent graduates is really valuable. Especially if they've experienced what the campus is doing wrong because the staff won't have those same experiences"
	"All the trainings touch upon asking for consent to touch the individual and all of that. But with trans and gender non-conforming individuals there's another element to that. Because their relationship with their body might just be that much more complicated."
Students Needs over Institutional Liability	"It feels like it's a liability thing for [Pitt], because it doesn't seem like they're using empathy in the execution of these things."
	"A lot of the time [sexual violence] comes from someone who you don't necessarily want harm to come to, for whatever reason. A lot of the times it's going to be a significant other or someone you're really close to…I mean, even if you feel like the situation is serious, you might not want to do that to someone who you care about, for whatever reason."
Pre-existing Trauma	"[There was] like no forewarning or any sort of like actual foresight for people who already been affected by sexual violence." (student describing first year sexual violence prevention presentation)

Key Take-Aways from Community Meeting

Domain	Key Points
Climate	**Infrastructure:** • Chosen name and pronoun in People Soft • Expansion of single-occupancy of restrooms on campus
	Personnel: • Prioritizing hiring queer and trans faculty is needed • Train staff (including orientation staff) on sexual and gender diversity
	Student Engagement: • Improve climate through visual signals such as putting up pride stickers, pronoun visibility, etc. • Provide paid opportunities for TGD students to participate in facilitating trainings to improve TGD awareness • Tailor Living-Learning Community events to the needs of students
Prevention	**Improving Prevention Approaches:** • Offering paid opportunities for students and community, volunteering is not sustainable • Transparent and ongoing opportunities for community involvement in developing materials • Shift from large group and online trainings to smaller groups that allow for more conversation, questions, vulnerability and make space to talk about identity and difference • Ensure that facilitators are trained about diverse sexualities and gender identities
	Integrating Prevention into Pitt's Culture: • Power dynamics must be discussed, not only in relation to TGD students, but also at the university level. We have to talk about power within our institution to understand how power relations contribute to sexual violence on campus.

Domain	Key Points
Prevention (continued)	**Resources to Engage TGD Students in Prevention Efforts** • Elevate the work that is already being done by increasing the visibility of peer networks, some people are doing this work already by themselves and for themselves • Look to historic practices that have been effective in doing this work (i.e., peer led queer violence prevention program in 1990s)
Response	**Mandated Reporting:** • Develop trauma informed protocol for staff and faculty • Is there a way to embed confidential supports into mandated reporting process?
	Confidential Support • Accessing resources off-campus resources may be helpful for students, PAAR provides transportation to off-campus location • On campus bridge to confidential supports needs to be in a neutral space (not Title IX office or Campus Police) • Emphasis on imperative that Pitt make confidential, off-campus resources more visible to students
	Alternatives to Title IX • What are the possibilities for a clear mediation process rooted in transformative justice external to Title IX? This could be developed in collaboration with community
	Importance of Empathy and Centering Students' Needs • There is a need for a student and survivor centered program • Concerns from group that if one program is meant to protect the institution and the group that institutional liability will always take precedence
Policy	**Concerns Regarding Current University Policy** • Definitions of sexual violence are currently unclear • There aren't clear guidelines about what consequences to expect after reporting (could be based on number of offenses or severity of violence) • No current polices that require staff and faculty to disclose that they are making a report to Title IX

Domain	Key Points
Policy (continued)	**Accessibility of Current Policy** • Plain language policy explanations need to be visible and widely available • Regularly held trainings (not once or only during orientation) needed to ensure understanding of policy
	Accountability for Staff and Faculty are TGD Competent and Understand Appropriate Responses to Student Disclosures of Sexual Violence • Recurring TGD competence trainings should be mandatory for staff and faculty, not only those who are interested • Policy could instate consequences for deadnaming, mis-gendering students, and not intervening in peer-to-peer harassment on campus • Faculty and staff could be rewarded for efforts to resource and improve climate for TGD students including pay for participating on committees and included in tenure reviews, this could result in less burnout and reduce unfair distribution of labor to TGD faculty and staff

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