



Protocol – Social Behavioral Educational Research and Record Research

UNR IRBNET ID: 2360613-4

Background:

The Student Voice project (Holquist et al., 2023; Student Voice, n.d.) is a school-based empowerment project, assisting students in developing a sense of advocacy in educational leadership. In local Washoe County School District (WCSD) high schools, this project was implemented three years prior to this study proposal, and the students selected LGBTQ advocacy in the school environment. This study seeks to explore the students' and former students' stories of the impacts of participating in this project on resilience, empowerment, identity development, and belongingness. Some researchers have shown the benefits of LGBTQ youth taking both an advocate and educator role (Lucassen et al., 2022). These researchers, including WCSD social worker and Student Voice project coordinator, seek to understand the student's lived experiences in selecting, researching, creating, and implementing a professional development day for faculty and staff.

While one study has examined the use of the Student Voice project for an LGBTQ-oriented via a teacher-researcher vignette (Sullivan, 2024), student-based data on the LGBTQ-focus in the Student Voice project is missing in the literature. This study will fill this gap by recognizing student-based narratives in an LGBTQ Student Voice project. Wagaman (2015) examined the impacts of a youth-based participatory action research project on LGBTQ young adults, discovering the value of empowerment capacity as a service model. In a college population, Greenwood et al. (2024) discovered the value and self-sustainability of a Transgender Justice Group. Finally, Poteat et al. (2023) underwent a comprehensive quantitative study of Gay-Straight-Alliance (GSA) based student advocacy, discovering predictive value in reducing depression of LGBTQ youth. Throughout these projects, a qualitative project particularly acknowledging the stories of advocacy of these at-risk youth has not been conducted. School social workers, school counselors, as well as teachers and administrative faculty all hold a stake in understanding the LGBTQ highschoolers' engagement in advocacy. This study seeks to fill the gap of student narratives, providing stakeholders with key themes on the impacts of the youth development project within this sample, from a broader storied perspective. Stakeholders may use this information to develop trainings, consider the application of future advocacy projects, and view the impact of a school-based project on one sample's trajectory of LGBTQ identity development through to early adulthood. Finally, beyond seeking publication, this research will directly benefit the WCSD school social worker and Student Voice organizer in accessing the students' experiences to further improve the ongoing project.

Study Aims/Objectives:

- Discover the role of a student-led participatory action research project on the development of LGBTQ identity in high school students via semi-structured interviews using the narrative research methodology.
- Observe the impacts of the Student Voice project on LGBTQ high school students' narratives of belongingness, while considering their cultural context.
- Understand the importance of faculty relationships with LGBTQ high school students from a narrative perspective.

Study Population:

The sample consists of students who participated or currently participate in the Student Voice project at Washoe County Schools. Students and former students are 17-21 years old and identifying as LGBTQ or as an LGBTQ ally. Participants must have participated in the Student Voice project and must have received previous parental consent to participate in the LGBTQ-focused Student Voice project. Screening will occur via the Student Voice coordinator's records upon WCSD Institutional Review Board approval. Between 4-6 students

will be selected based upon diversifying the range of years participating in the project (current participation, participated 1 year ago, participated 2 or more years ago).

Vulnerable Populations:

These participants are dually vulnerable in their sexual and gender minorities, and minor status with the study including at least 2 participants under the age of 18. This study is categorized as greater than minimal risk, because of the involvement of a marginalized population (LGBTQ individuals). These interviews are not inherently therapeutic in design or nature but may lead to the benefit of participants in clarifying their experiences in the Student Voice project. There is some emotional/psychological risk due to the interview process involving sensitive topics such as microaggressions. The primary authors will be available to participants or their families (for minor participants) via phone call during the study period, and mental health and wellness resources will be provided following the interview.

Sample Size:

This study aims to recruit between 4 and 6 participants. This study is aiming to gather a diverse sample of participants (purposive sampling via maximum variation) at different stages of identity development (current high school student to young adult) to understand the impacts of the short-term and long-term impacts of the Student Voice project on LGBTQ narratives.

Recruitment Process:

Upon access to the WCSD database of participants in the Student Voice project, current and past students will be identified for potential participation. For students who participated in the Student Voice project but are not documented in the district database, purposive sampling will be engaged by current students. Current Pride or Gay-Straight-Alliance club leaders may voluntarily forward the recruitment email to former students without disclosing any information to the researchers. Invitations to participate will be sent to all former students and all current students' parents via email. Advertising will not be engaged due to purposive sampling procedure. Recruitment materials are included in the IRB application, and are designed to align with WCSD IRB requirements. Hard-copies of the recruitment letter (see: Recruitment email – Youth) and parental permission form (see: Parental Permission Form) will be sent home with current student participants of the Student Voice project by the Student Voice coordinator during student program meetings. Recruitment emails will be coordinated by the recruitment team. The Student Voice coordinator may also engage in brief recruiting of the three identified Student Voice participants still enrolled at Wooster High School and Innovations High School, outside of class hours. Recruitment will be conducted by the research team, including the Student Voice coordinator, and participation will be clearly communicated as voluntary and not connected to school performance or Student Voice participation.

Screening Procedures:

The task of identifying LGBTQ students to their parents can pose a risk that should not necessarily be identified within the informed consent materials. According to the Student Voice coordinator, all students who have currently and previously participated in the Student Voice project have already received explicit parental permission and were identified as LGBTQ to parents if applicable, so this research risk is largely mitigated. Because disclosure of LGBTQ identity can be an evolving situation, especially in late adolescence, potential minor participants will be screened by the Student Voice coordinator for current safety with parent knowledge of any LGBTQ identity. The Student Voice coordinator may reach out to potential participants who meet inclusion criteria (expresses an LGBTQ identity openly and has participated in the Student Voice project) to determine if this student is comfortable with the researchers making parent outreach about participating in the study. If a student indicates that disclosure of LGBTQ identity to parents may be unduly impactful, then the student will be excluded from participating in the study.

Upon recruitment and signature of informed consent, participants will be screened using an email further outlining study requirements. Within this email, participants or participants' parents will be given an opportunity to read and sign the initial informed consent (and assent if applicable) and complete a demographic profile for

the participant. If there are more than the necessary students to participate in the study, a random draw will be used to avoid selection bias.

Informed Consent Process:

For adult participants, informed consent occurs at two stages: during the initial email communication with a signature of a Qualtrics form outlining the consent, and before the interview as outlined in the adult interview script. For minor participants, permission is gathered from parents in one stage which includes the signature of a Qualtrics form outlining the consent. Assent for minor participants occurs prior to the interview as outlined in the minor interview script.

In alignment with WCSD policies and 45 CFR 46 Subpart D (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2018), parents or adult participants will provide permission and provide written agreement to our informed consent. Minor students will provide written assent using an informed assent form, and appropriateness will be assessed prior to the interview protocol. FERPA-protected information (grades, disability status) will not be collected or requested, and this is described in the assent and parental permission process. For students who reach the age of majority during the study, the adult informed consent form will be digitally signed before the interview or member-checking stage. Age of participants will be confirmed as an aspect of the interview protocol script to ensure proper assent or consent is active and documented.

Data Collection Procedures:

Provide a thorough description of all project procedures, interventions, assessments, and participant activities in a sequential format. Describe how information will be captured (e.g. audio or video recorded, observations, note taking, computer task, etc.). For records research, include information about what records are being accessed and how. Upload data collection documents/surveys/etc. as supporting documents with your submission.

Data is collected qualitatively via interview data as outlined in the interview script document. The participants will engage in two interviews as aligned with the narrative interview script. Narrative data will be captured using a digital audio voice recording tool with an encrypted SD card, in addition to interviewer observations throughout the interview. 90-minute interviews will be conducted once following recruitment and screening, and 30-minute member checking phone calls will occur following first stage third-level coding.

Study Duration/ Study Timeline:

The WCSD IRB will be submitted simultaneously with this IRB submission. The study interviews will be conducted between January and May of 2026. Data analysis will occur during the entire year of 2026, with a goal study completion before the end of Winter 2026.

Study Locations:

Interviews will ideally be conducted face to face in a naturalistic or neutral, private environment to the interviewee (meeting room on school grounds, outside of school hours dependent upon approval by the WCSD IRB, participant's home). Zoom interviews may be conducted if requested by the participant. Private spaces provided by University of Nevada, Reno Department of Human and Family Development Science department may also be provided (booking space such as the Little Library or private meeting rooms in the Nell J Redfield Learning and Resource Center. This study's faculty advisor and primary student author are both linked to the College of Education Human and Family Development Science Counselor Education department.

International Research:

Not applicable – this study occurs regionally within Reno, Nevada.

Participant Compensation:

Participants will receive a \$10 Visa cash gift card upon completion of both the first and second interviews, with a total compensation of \$20.

Risk to Participants:

Participant risk primarily arises in the psychological and emotional impacts from the interview questions. Interview questions which target microaggressions, relationships with staff/faculty, lived experiences of belongingness and school climate may initiate discomfort and undesirable emotional states. Within the framework of the narrative methodology, researchers may engage in validation of any negative emotional states. Beyond any transient negative emotional states, participants will be referred to local and national services. Furthermore, participants will have access to the primary authors' phone numbers for questions and follow up regarding the study procedures. All participants will be provided with a list of local and national resources following the interview.

Benefits to Participants:

Conducting study interviews may allow the students and former students the opportunity to reflect and learn from their experiences in the Student Voice project. While the benefits cannot be claimed as "therapeutic," the nature of sharing information in a narrative format can allow participants to reorganize information, clarify gains from the project, and recognize their role in contributing to an advocacy project. Participants may also benefit from the knowledge that their contributions may inspire the future of WCSD strategies and other school districts as they navigate their own Student Voice projects.

Privacy of Participants:

Privacy during the interview process is confirmed via verbal agreement for Zoom-based interviews, and via a secured location for in-person interviews. Interviewers will guarantee privacy and will be trained on this privacy commitment during interviewer training. In-person interviews will occur on-location in UNR/WCSD spaces as approved by the school district and university.

Data Management and Confidentiality:

Regarding data privacy, these authors have planned for a robust system for deidentifying information and secure storage. Firstly, study data storage will be secured using NevadaBox, ensuring ease of access between study authors only. Secondly, interview data will be recorded and stored using encrypted, local computer drives via Zoom audio recordings. Interview transcripts will be transcribed using the encrypted, cloud-based Zoom tool. Raw audio files stored on NevadaBox will be linked to study participants using a random code, and names will be redacted from transcripts and replaced with monikers. The random code identifier document will be stored in a separate NevadaBox document with restricted folder access available only the primary, university-affiliated researchers. Any voluntarily shared FERPA-protected information will be stored and protected in accordance with the above guidelines, using secure and encrypted methods (random participant identifiers, transcribing audio using the encrypted Zoom platform). All six associated researchers are licensed or pre-licensed therapists who will receive additional training by the primary student research and doctoral student regarding the continued maintenance of confidentiality.

As mandated reporters, the researchers may report of any suspected or stated child, elder or dependent adult abuse or neglect. Any reports will be reviewed by the primary researchers Aaron and Dr. Boren before a call is made. In the case of a report, the follow up Washoe County child protective services (CPS) or adult protective services (APS) form will also be written, faxed, and documented within the encrypted NevadaBox by the primary researchers (Aaron or Dr. Boren) as is protocol with child/adult protection reports. Any CPS report directly related to the child participant's situation will result in study exclusion.

Approach to Analysis:

With the faculty advisor's expertise in qualitative data analysis, and the primary student researcher's experience with qualitative data analysis, this data will be coded using a reflexive open and narrative-based coding during the first pass (Kelly, 2010; Saldaña, 2016) using a secure and encrypted cloud-based qualitative software Dedoose or a similar software based upon study budget. Second level coding, including the pruning and focusing of codes will be determined via research team meetings (Saldaña, 2016). Thematic analysis will be conducted as a form of axiological coding (Braun et al., 2019). Analysis will be conducted within the narrative research methodology (e.g., restorying; Creswell & Poth, 2023).

References:

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