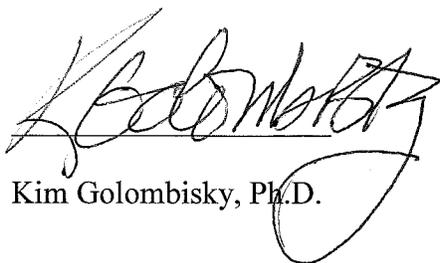Practicing Pedagogy Beyond the Classroom: A Feminist Reflection of USF's Safe Zone
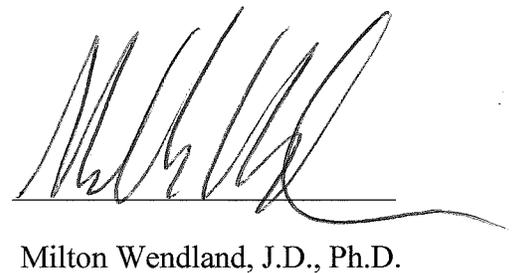
by

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An internship narrative submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

For the partial fulfillment of my master's degree in Women's and Gender Studies at the University of South Florida (USF), I interned with the Coordinator for LGBTQ+ Initiatives in the Office of Multicultural Affairs. This internship narrative reflects and responds to my time creating and editing content for USF's newly expanded Safe Zone Training Program, an LGBTQ+ allyship training program. Our goal in updating USF's Safe Zone curriculum was to create inclusive content to educate participants on advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community by promoting understanding, support, and inclusivity through interactive conversations and activities. I discuss the difficulties of attempting to bring feminist and social justice-oriented pedagogies into programs designed for widescale sensitivity training. Reflecting on my own work and the pedagogical challenges I faced redesigning USF's Safe Zone, I argue for the continued need of a feminist Safe Zone Training Program.

Practicing Pedagogy Beyond the Classroom: A Feminist Reflection of USF's Safe Zone

Safe Zone Training Programs (SZTP) are a small but crucial step in continuing to fight for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning LGBTQ+ rights and inclusion on college campuses. Here, I use LGBTQ+ as an umbrella term consistent with the language of the University of South Florida (USF)'s Safe Zone Training Program. Generally, "Safe Zone is a diversity-training program to increase sensitivity toward knowledge of, and advocacy for LGBT populations and issues that affect them" (Finkel, Storaasli, Bandele, & Shaefer, 2003, p. 555). As the Graduate Intern for LGBTQ+ Initiatives in the Office of Multicultural Affairs at USF since May of 2017, I have worked closely with the Coordinator for LGBTQ+ Initiatives to expand USF's Safe Zone Training Program. It is our fervent belief that this is a vital step towards genuine inclusivity and advocacy for the population that we serve: LGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty. Although any Safe Zone program is a step in the right direction, not all Safe Zone programs are designed with attention to feminist and other social justice-oriented pedagogies. I was careful to keep these pedagogies and my own feminist ideals in mind when designing new Safe Zone content. In this internship narrative, I argue for the continued need, despite marriage equality and other recent legal and social recognitions, for a feminist Safe Zone. To do so, I reflect on my own experiences developing content for USF's expanded program, and I explore some of the pedagogical challenges that arose in attempting to craft feminist trainings designed for wide-scale sensitivity training within institutional and time constraints.

In what follows, I first provide some background on the emergence of Safe Zone, in general and at my university. Then, I provide a brief justification as to why Safe Zone, especially in expanded training formats, is crucial for an inclusive campus climate. Third, I describe the relevant pedagogical theories and frameworks I used while developing content for USF's Safe

Zone. Next, I detail the process of developing that content and some of the pedagogical challenges that arose while doing so. Finally, I conclude with a call to continue evolving Safe Zone programs at USF and beyond to better reflect feminist and other social-justice oriented pedagogies.

Background on Campus Safe Zone

The first Safe Zone program was developed by student leaders in 1992 at Ball State University (Poynter, 2017, p. 1). Since then, Safe Zone, or similar programs by other names, have spread to many universities and colleges across the United States "as a means to improve campus climate and thus retention of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQIA+) students" (p. 1). There are no standardized Safe Zone criteria and the exact number of Safe Zone programs is unknown. Each university or college that has an LGBTQ+ awareness or allyship program creates its own content and trainings to fit its specific needs. Some programs do not even provide trainings; they just distribute Safe Zone signs or symbols, usually with accompanying relevant information (Poynter & Tubbs, 2007, p. 124). Aspects of Safe Zone programs include "general education about LGBT issues, such as vocabulary; examples of harassment, discrimination, and denial of rights; exploration of personal biases; awareness of campus and community resources; and how to assist an individual who is facing issues related to sexual identity" (Draughn, Elkins, & Roy, 2002, p. 13). Thus, each program has different but related missions, purposes, goals, learning outcomes, target audiences, etc. Nevertheless, "whatever their content differences, all Safe Zone projects are united in philosophy and in the adoption of a Safe Zone symbol to visibly affirm the acceptance of LGBT people" (Finkel et al., 2003, p. 555). For instance, my institution's mission statement is as follows:

The Safe Zone Training Program is the University of South Florida's institutionally

recognized Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Trans+, and Queer/Questioning

(LGBTQ+) diversity training program offered through the Office of Multicultural

Affairs. The Safe Zone Training Program aims to educate participants on advocacy for

the LGBTQ+ community by promoting understanding, support, and inclusivity through

interactive conversations and activities. (SZTP, USF, 2017).

The first Safe Zone Training Program (SZTP) at the University of South Florida (USF)

premiered in 2002. Since then, the program has undergone many edits and overhauls. At the time

of its inception, USF did not even have a full-time staff member dedicated to LGBTQ+ issues. In

the last year or so, the Coordinator for LGBTQ+ Initiatives, a relatively new position, has

endeavored to expand USF's original three-hour training into a four-part training program, where

each training is two hours long. The impetus for the expansion was twofold. First, the expansion

allows more time to cover more material. Second, having two sessions focused solely on

education allows those two sessions to be mandated without forcing participants into attending

Allyship and Advocacy, where participants now receive their Safe Zone swag signaling to the

broader USF community that they are allies to the LGBTQ+ community. The new trainings are

Education Part One (covering fundamental terms, identities, and experiences related to LGBTQ+

communities), Education Part Two (covering fundamental terms, identities, and experiences

related to trans+ and gender non-conforming communities), Allyship (covering tools and

teaching models on the how-tos of allyship for LGBTQ+ communities), and Advocacy (covering

the history of the LGBTQ+ movement, current policies, laws and trends affecting LGBTQ+

communities, and how to get involved in advocacy for LGBTQ+ communities). They are

designed to be taken in order by interested students, staff, and faculty.

Justification for Safe Zone

Although numbers of LGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty on college and university

campuses are hard to gauge, it is clear that these populations exist on campuses throughout the

United States (Poynter, 2017, p. 3). These campuses, however, continue to be unwelcoming and

even dangerous for LGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty (Adams et al., 2016; Young &

McKibban, 2014). As Poynter and Tubbs (2007) clearly state: "the reality is that not all people

on campus are supportive, knowledgeable, or understanding of LGBT people. Some persons on

campus are homophobic or heterosexist" (p. 127). Many more on campus are also transphobic or

ignorant of other marginalized identities, such as asexual, pansexual, and intersex. As Beemyn,

Curtis, Davis, and Tubbs (2005) demonstrate, "transgender students regularly encounter

institutional discrimination in higher education" (p. 49). In order to begin to alleviate these

problems that campuses have identified, universities and colleges offer Safe Zone programs that

embrace diversity and create learning environments that are accepting of LGBTQ+ individuals

(Draughn et al., 2002, p. 9). In Poynter's (2017) words, "Safe Zone programs have proven to be

useful in affecting campus climate change, while the associated trainings create more accepting

attitudes among Safe Zone members" (p. 6). LGBTQ+ students are more likely to perceive their

campus climate less positively than their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts, and SZTPs are

an important development in helping to "alleviate the real or perceived climate concerns" for

LGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty (p. 6).

Some schools fare better than others in providing and maintaining an inclusive campus

climate. USF, in particular, still has strides to make before becoming the LGBTQ+ friendly

campus it claims to be. For example, USF has received only three out of five stars from the

Campus Pride Index, "the premier LGBTQ national benchmarking tool for colleges and

universities" (Campus Pride Index, 2017). The Campus Pride Index measures eight inclusion

factors: policy inclusion; support and institutional commitment; academic life; student life;

housing and residence life; campus safety; counseling and health; and recruitment and retention.

USF's relatively low Campus Pride Index score indicates potential for growth in supporting

LGBTQ+ communities on campus. One of the many metrics to demonstrate how an institution

meets those inclusion factors is whether or not a school has an Ally program or Safe Space/Safe

Zone (Campus Pride Index). Although USF already had a Safe Zone program when it received

its first score on July 5, 2017, the Coordinator for LGBTQ+ Initiatives and I believe that Safe

Zone can be utilized to help meet some of the other metrics, such as training campus police on

issues of sexual orientation and training campus police on issues of gender identity/expression.

These two metrics could easily be met by requiring campus police to attend Safe Zone:

Education Part One and Two.

Keeping in mind the need for change at USF, the Coordinator for LGBTQ+ Initiatives in

2017 chose to expand the existing Safe Zone program. She believes that USF's previous three-

hour training, which could be required, was not enough to provide participants with the tools to

become effective allies for LGBTQ+ communities. Similarly, Poynter (2017) contends that

"joining a Safe Zone or Allies program, completing a workshop session, and hanging an

Allies/Safe Zone sign does not make one an ally" (p. 7). Additionally, SZTPs, like USF's initial

program, "that lack advocacy content are preparing participants to be only partial allies"

(Woodford, Kolb, Durocher-Radeka, & Javier, 2014, p. 320). One three-hour training is simply

not sufficient because "most initial training sessions, typically lasting three hours or less, cover

only basic information" (Draughn et al., 2002, p. 16). In just three hours, USF Safe Zone's

program was unable, like most other three-hour trainings, to teach participants the knowledge

and skills they need to understand and be supportive of LGBTQ+ communities. Four trainings

are arguably not even sufficient, although they are certainly an improvement.

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Relevant Pedagogical Theories

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Social Justice-Oriented Pedagogies

There are several different but related pedagogies that inform my understanding of and

development of Safe Zone content, as well as the writing of this internship narrative. These

include what I know of feminist, queer, trans, and social justice pedagogies. From my

understanding, feminist pedagogies "share a focus on challenging hierarchical modes of creating

and distributing knowledge" (Mann, 2012, p. 18). They recognize and value every voice in the

room (hooks, 1994). Feminist pedagogies are often also characterized by a reflexive approach to

knowledge through which it is important to acknowledge researchers' roles in constructing

knowledge as well as how social locations might influence the way knowledge is produced and

interpreted (Mann, 2012). Feminist pedagogies can also "highlight the differential privilege

given to certain groups in knowledge production" (Mann, 2012, p. 23). They do not shy away

from differences, but rather recognize and embrace them (hooks, 1994).

Queer pedagogies are more difficult to define. A queer pedagogy is necessarily based in

queer theory, which is itself difficult to define. However, queer theory has been characterized by

the belief that 1) power is the deployment of discourse (ideas), and that heterosexuality is one of

these ruling discourses, 2) sexuality is always practiced in a specific cultural context and should

be interpreted through historical and cultural context, 3) sexuality is currently defined by the

heterosexual/homosexual binary, which is a control mechanism to encourage participation in the

heteronormative power structure and 4) the consistency of gender performativity causes the

belief in discrete biological sex categories, not vice versa (Crawley & Broad, 2008, p. 547-549).

Queer pedagogy, specifically, has been defined as "teaching against-the-grain" (Bryson & de Castell, 1993, p. 288) or "a radical form of educative praxis implemented deliberately to interfere with, to intervene in, the production of 'normalcy' in schooled subjects" (p. 285). Alternatively, Susanne Luhmann (1998) claims that "queer pedagogy exceeds the incorporation of queer content into curricula and the worry over finding teaching strategies that make this content more palatable to students" (p. 120). She further suggests a queer pedagogy that "draws on pedagogy's curiosity toward the social relations made possible in the process of learning and on queer critiques of identity-based knowledges" (p. 120).

I am similarly informed by trans[1] pedagogy, as a subset of queer pedagogies and as laid out by Hilary Malatino (2015), who contends that trans pedagogy disrupts "hegemonic certitudes about corporeal stability, sex determination, gender dimorphism, and naturalized linkages between gender enactment and sexuality" (p. 408). Trans pedagogy also develops a "critical take on histories of medical pathologization of gender deviance" (Malatino, 2015, p. 408). It asks us to self-reflect on "how we may still be complicit in furthering trans* oppression in our policies and practices even when we take positive steps" (Nicolazzo, 2017, p. 142). Trans pedagogy also asks us to teach gender not as a naturalized determination (identity), but as "what one does in the milieu(x) they inhabit" (Malatino, 2015, p. 409). Perhaps most importantly, trans pedagogy "is committed to thinking a profound transformation in the logic of gendered being" (Malatino, 2015, p. 409).

The final pedagogies that have informed my thinking are social justice and critical pedagogies. As described by Adams et al. (2016), "social justice education pedagogy is based upon a set of principles and practices for teaching about oppression and social justice" (p. 27). Its

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[1] Like LGBTQ+, there is no one agreed upon term for trans+ identities. I once again use trans+ to be consistent with the language used throughout USF's Safe Zone. However, others may choose to use trans, transgender, or trans*, which are all acceptable terms to use.

aim is to "generate active engagement with social justice content through learning processes that are consistent with the goals of social justice" (p. 27). Social justice pedagogy, with its commitment to various social justice issues, may spark resistance in participants. That is why social justice education "needs a pedagogy that acknowledges the emotional as well as cognitive aspects of learning, and that encourages and models processes for dialogue, critical inquiry, and complex thinking" (p. 29). Social justice pedagogy has a focus on *praxis*, "the integration of learning goals with pedagogical processes that together encourage reflection and action to create change" and dialogue (Adams et al., 2016; p. 27). The idea is that social justice pedagogues should inspire participants to take corrective action (Adams et al., 2016; Freire, 1970).

Although each of these pedagogies is interrelated, they have each contributed something distinct to my understanding of pedagogy and of myself as a pedagogue. It is through my training in women's and gender studies that I came to understand myself as a feminist pedagogue. Through feminist pedagogy, I have learned to center the voices of the marginalized and attempt to be self-reflexive in everything that I do. Through queer pedagogy, I have learned to question the familiar, to question my assumptions, and to destabilize essentialist understandings of gender and sexuality. Trans pedagogy has taught me that even the most well-intentioned liberals can still be complicit in furthering trans+ oppression. Trans pedagogy has taught me not just to include, but to center trans+ experiences in discussions of LGBTQ+ issues. Finally, through social justice pedagogies, I have learned to go beyond analyzing structures of power and domination. Social justice pedagogies have taught me always to ask what I can do, and what I can ask Safe Zone participants to do, to help create social change. I have attempted to keep all of these pedagogies in mind when developing and editing Safe Zone Training content.

Deeply intertwined with all of these pedagogies, at least for me, is intersectionality and a commitment to combating oppressions beyond homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia.

Intersectionality

When I began my internship, I was determined to keep intersectionality in mind while developing Safe Zone content. Coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is a theoretical framework and analytical tool for understanding that categories of difference such as race, gender, class, nationality, sexual orientation, and ability, among others are interlocking and cannot be separated from one another. From its roots of theorizing the lives of Black women, intersectionality has been adopted to incorporate other systems of oppression as well. According to Poynter (2017), "we all have multiple identities that comprise our complete selves such as sexual orientation, race, faith, ethnicity, differently abled, gender, socioeconomic status, among others. Some identities are privileged over others that are oppressed" (p. 119). Further, in Nicolazzo's (2017) view, it is imperative to consider how transphobia intersects with other systems of oppression to variously impact the lives of trans+ individuals. LGBTQ+ students "are complex people who all hold various, intersecting social identities" (Nicolazzo, 2017, p. 152).

Although I knew when I began working on Safe Zone that intersectionality was not an additive model, I still felt that to be truly intersectional I had to include discussions of race and class, at the very least. Retrospectively though, I see that I was setting myself up for failure. An additive approach of attempting to include every category of difference, regardless of relevance, is fruitless. In her seminal articles, Crenshaw (1995) herself focuses on race and gender, while paying little mind to other categories of difference. As she says, "factors [she] address[es] only in part or not at all, such as class or sexuality, are often critical in shaping the experiences of women of color" (p. 358), and yet she chose not to engage them extensively in her piece because

they were not salient to the case at hand. Crenshaw's (1989; 1995) aim is to elucidate the invisibility of certain groups. In her case, it is Black women under the law. In my case, the invisible group is LGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty on college campuses. Gender identity, sex assigned at birth, and sexual orientation are the salient identities. Although it is important to acknowledge that other factors undoubtedly shape the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals, it is not *not* intersectional to center gender and sexuality in a program designed for widescale LGBTQ+ diversity and sensitivity training. I realized that what was important to me was to be careful not to paint the LGBTQ+ community as a (white) monolith. I want to acknowledge that homophobia is embedded in other systems of oppression, while still centering Safe Zone content on gender and sexuality. I also want to make sure that the SZTP I develop, to the best of my abilities, does not participate in other systems of oppression. For instance, although disability is never centered in our discussions, all of the videos in Safe Zone have captions on them and OMA has access copies of all of the workbooks.

Developing Safe Zone Content

Although Safe Zone and ally programs have been gaining popularity since the 1990s, they have received little empirical attention (Draughn et al., 2002; Finkel et al., 2003; Poynter & Tubbs, 2007; Woodford et al., 2014). In this section, I reflect on my experiences as Graduate Intern for LGBTQ+ Initiatives and the pedagogical challenges and choices I faced developing and editing content for USF's newly expanded Safe Zone Training Program.

Education Part One

Safe Zone: Education Part One's mission statement is "to educate the USF community on fundamental terms, identities, and experiences related to the LGBTQ+ community" (SZTP, USF, 2017). Developing content for Education Part One was by far the easiest compared to Part Two,

Allyship, and Advocacy because so much of Part One's "101" content was adapted from USF's original Safe Zone program. The challenges came in deciding, now that we have more time, what content would stay the same and what needed to change.

Education Part One is divided into three main parts: Breaking Down Identity, Being LGBTQ+, and The Power of Language. The first two sections remained mostly the same as they were in the original three-hour training and did not present many challenges. Although The Power of Language did not actually change much either, it did present some pedagogical challenges. The question arose as to whether teaching participants what language not to use was really teaching them what derogatory terms exist for LGBTQ+ people. Some of the content seems unquestionably important, such as teaching participants to use activist-accepted "intersex" in place of outdated "hermaphrodite." In almost every Safe Zone: Education Part One section that I have attended, it is evident that some participants had no idea that hermaphrodite is an outdated derogatory term (Davis, 2015) or that other alternate terms exist.

However, part of the training includes asking participants to shout out negative terms or words that could offend members of the LGBTQ+ community. Participants often look uncomfortable saying the derogatory words out loud in this "safe space." But nearly all of them seem already aware of "fag discourse" (Pascoe, 2007) and other slang terms used against LGBTQ+ individuals and communities. The idea is to show how pervasive this harmful language is and encourage participants to model more inclusive or affirming language. In the end, we chose to keep this section as is, but I still worry about the usefulness of having participants shout out nasty terms and phrases. Although it seems to help participants to see which terms are "bad" and why, I still worry a little about alienating some of the LGBTQ+

students, staff, and faculty in attendance who might feel uncomfortable during this portion of the session.

Directly after this discussion, we provide a two-column list and ask participants to tell us what is different about the two lists. The column on the left has words like, "homosexual, transsexual, hermaphrodite" while the column on the right has words like, "LGBTQ+, trans+, intersex." The idea is that the words on the left are "bad," while words on the right are "good" or more accepted. As a feminist pedagogue informed by queer theory, I worry that this is just creating another binary. And yet I have found myself unable to craft an alternative of this two-column list, in which we teach participants what accepted appropriate language exists. Part of the problem is that widely accepted language does not exist, in many respects. Activists in the LGBTQ+ community sometimes use different language than academics or medical professionals would. Even among the LGBTQ+ community, some terms are contested, and there is no "right" word to use. This became an issue when crafting this two-column list, for instance, because "LGBTQ+" should not be a replacement for "homosexual" as these terms do not mean the same thing. I do not think using "gay and lesbian" instead would solve the issue, however, because so many people conflate homosexual behavior with a gay or lesbian identity when that is not necessarily the case. LGBTQ+ remains, albeit slightly incorrectly, on the list as a better alternative for "homosexual" because it is a more inclusive term than "gay." There is no easy or "right" answer when language is still so contested within and beyond the community.

I would also like to note here that USF's SZTP does not utilize student panels or rely on the "special guest" approach (Malatino, 2015) like many other classrooms and Safe Zone programs do (Crawley & Broad, 2004; Poynter, 2017). In addition to the logistical issues of time and recruitment, I find this approach to be inadequate as Malatino (2015) persuasively argues, as

well as tokenizing and problematic. For one, there is a certain "anxiety and responsibility that comes with being spotlighted as a representative of a relatively uncommon minority" (Malatino, 2015, p. 397). Participating in these panels puts the panelists in a vulnerable position that can take an emotional toll (Crawley & Broad, 2004; Malatino, 2015). The questions asked are often "particularly othering" (Preston, 2011, p. 92). These panels can also serve the function of telling a story of a seemingly unanimous "cohesive, collective LGBT identity" that is representative or "typical" somehow of a larger LGBTQ+ community, identity, or experience (Crawley & Broad, 2004; Courvant, 2011). Even if the three or four panelists hold different identities, they can still become the spokesperson for their specific identity, which is only a marginal improvement from being the spokesperson for the entire LGBTQ+ community. USF's SZTP relies instead on input from facilitators or participants, as well as embedded videos with diverse LGBTQ+ people sharing their experiences. Although videos can sometimes serve the same homogenizing purpose, USF's Safe Zone facilitators are trained to stress that they are showing only one experience, not *the* experience.

Although feminist pedagogies clearly influenced my conviction not to include a guest panel in USF's Safe Zone, these pedagogies were otherwise challenging to weave throughout the "101" content provided in Education Part One. For instance, as I stated earlier, I worry that the two-column list of "right" and "wrong" words to use to describe LGBTQ+ experiences does not help to destabilize unhelpful binaries. And yet the list remains in the program because I could not figure out a less binarizing way of explaining to participants which words are preferred by LGBTQ+ communities. I think of social justice pedagogies as pushing a little further into actual social change, but much of that work was not accomplished until later sessions of the program.

Education Part Two

Whereas Part One introduces LGBTQ+ identities as a whole, Part Two delves deeper intro trans+ and gender non-conforming identities. Safe Zone: Education Part Two's mission statement is "to educate the USF community on terms, identities, and experiences related to trans+, gender non-conforming, and other queer identities" (SZTP, USF, 2017). The training is divided into four parts: Review, Breaking Down Identity (even more!), Understanding Trans+ Identities, and Trans+ Inclusion at USF. Although more original content had to be created for Education Part Two than for Part One, Part Two is still largely a "101" training. In that sense, the challenge was to limit what information to provide in such a short two-hour time frame. For example, we had to decide how much time should be dedicated to review of Part One? Keeping in mind that some participants may have taken Part One three years ago while others may have taken it three weeks ago, this was not an easy decision. In the same vein, is it more important for participants to learn the theories and terminology in understanding sex assigned at birth, gender, homophobia, and transphobia, or is it more important for participants to learn what resources are available on campus? I am not sure that there is a right answer. We chose to split time between the four sub-sections as evenly as possible, with the review of Part One a little bit shorter than the other sub-sections. Two hours will never be sufficient for teaching participants about trans+ and gender non-conforming terms, identities, and experiences that they might not have encountered before. And yet the importance of the work cannot be stressed enough as "transgender-focused educational programs can increase campus awareness of the unique challenges faced by transgender students" (Beemyn et al., 2005, p. 51).

Similarly to Part One, Education Part Two focuses on "101" content, and that created similar challenges in attempting to weave feminist pedagogies throughout the training. Since Part Two focuses primarily on trans+ and gender nonconforming identities, it was easier to

incorporate trans pedagogy. Queer and trans pedagogies are ever present as I attempt to

defamiliarize gender identity, sex assigned at birth, and sexual orientation for Safe Zone

participants. I believe that centering trans+ folk in LGBTQ+ discussions does important work in

battling against transphobia.

Allyship

The purpose of Safe Zone: Allyship is "to develop and promote allyship by teaching

models of acceptance, responses to potential situations, and provide visible support to ensure the

success of the LGBTQ+ community at USF" (SZTP, USF, 2017). When developing content for

Allyship, we want to stress that allyship is not a noun. It is a verb, a process, continued action.

We have to keep in mind that "to become an ally, it is necessary to learn about LGBT students'

experiences, critically reflect on one's attitudes, understand heterosexism and how it is

perpetuated… and develop skills to act as a resource and advocate" (Woodford et al., 2014, p.

317). Having participants put a Safe Zone sticker on their office doors or laptop is not enough.

Allyship consists of four sub-sections: Review, Understanding Homophobia, Allyship,

and the C.A.R.E. Model. One of the biggest challenges we faced while developing content for

Allyship was defining "ally" and "advocate." Washington and Evans (1991) define an ally as "a

person who is a member of the dominant or majority group who works to end oppression in

[their] personal life through support of, and as an advocate with and for, the oppressed

population" (p. 195). This definition seems inadequate for our purposes because it treats "ally"

and "advocate" as synonyms. They are not. It further assumes that an ally must be in a majority

group, but that is not always the case. All gay men, for example, are not always allies to lesbians,

bisexual, asexual, and pansexual people, or even to all other gay men for that matter. After much

brainstorming, the Coordinator for LGBTQ+ Initiatives and I settled on two imperfect

definitions. We define "ally" as someone who confronts homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and heterosexism, and recognizes that these issues are social justice issues (SZTP, USF, 2017). We define "advocate" as someone who takes extra steps to address oppression and systematic violence, such as taking political action, writing letters to government officials, or publicly speaking out on LGBTQ+ issues (SZTP, USF, 2017). For the purposes of USF's Safe Zone, an ally is reactive while an advocate is proactive. Advocacy takes allyship a step (or many steps) further. Flawed as these definitions are, they are the best definitions we have to date.

Pedagogical challenges continued as I attempt to explain how race can change LGBTQ+ folks' experiences with homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. In Allyship, we have one slide titled "QTPOC Ally," where QTPOC stands for queer and trans+ people of color. As Poynter (2017) has argued, "allies to LGBTQIA people need to learn to be intersectional in our work" (p. 120). It is the first time, up until this point in the training, that we devote serious time to tackling racism as it intersects with issues of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. Here, we provide specific how-tos for being an ally to QTPOC, such as understanding how LGBTQ+ stereotypes often do not include QTPOC and understanding QTPOC specific terms and appropriation. Additionally, it is here that we begin to delve into the history of the LGBTQ+ movement, and how it has been shaped by QTPOC. For example, the history of the dance "voguing" originated in QTPOC communities and the Coordinator for LGBTQ+ Initiatives incorporated a video detailing that history in Allyship. I also included a few lines in the facilitator script that speak to trans+ woman of color Marsha P. Johnson's key role in the historic Stonewall Riots. Although these few slides are insufficient for tackling the intersection of race and LGBTQ+ identity, it nevertheless serves as a good introduction.

Another pedagogical hurdle I faced was the constant need to avoid lumping the LGBTQ+ identities together—beyond the shorthand of the acronym. It is important to stress that the experiences of cisgender lesbians are not the same as the experiences of asexual trans men, for example. When developing some of the how-tos of Allyship, I worked to create content that would ensure that participants had the tools to be allies to trans+ and gender nonconforming folks, and not just gays and lesbians. I want participants to avoid conflating the two and to leave their Safe Zone training experience with a clear understanding that "transgender" is not a sexual orientation, as many of them previously believed based on Safe Zone evaluations. I also want participants to understand that sexual orientation should not be assumed on the basis of someone's gender expression, or at all (Poynter, 2017). Additionally, I want them to understand that no one LGBTQ+ experience is equivalent to another. Every letter in the acronym comes with its own unique sets of prejudices, stereotypes, and experiences.

For instance, trans+ individuals face unique challenges that gay, lesbian, and bisexual cisgender individuals do not face. Research indicates that trans+ college students have negative perceptions of their campus climates and experience violence and harassment at alarming rates (Nicolazzo, 2017). Further, as Malatino (2015) observes, trans+ folk must navigate a difficult terrain "in order to have their gender identities dignified by teachers, administrators, employers, and state institutions" (p. 396). Our hope is that teaching participants how to use the singular "they" pronoun as well as giving tips and strategies specific to trans+ folk—such as being consistent in name and pronoun usage even when talking in past tense and understanding that transition looks different for everyone—will ease this difficult terrain for students.

Allyship was much more exciting to develop than Education Part One and Two because it moves beyond "101" content and into skills for creating change in campus climate. Feminist and

social justice pedagogies felt easier to incorporate as I developed content for providing

participants with the tools to combat homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. In Allyship, Safe

Zone facilitators do not just talk about oppression, they work to combat it. Here, I could finally

focus on the *praxis*, on trying to take the knowledge from Part One and Part Two outside of Safe

Zone and into the wider USF community.

Advocacy

The purpose of Safe Zone: Advocacy is "to develop LGBTQ+ advocates by educating

participants on the history of the LGBTQ+ movement, current local, state, and national policies,

laws and trends affecting the LGBTQ+ community, and how to get involved in affecting positive

change" (SZTP, USF, 2017). According to Draughn et al. (2002), "the primary downfall of many

existing Allies and Safe Zone programs appears to be the failure to prepare individual members

to confront homophobia and heterosexism in group settings" (p. 17). I would further argue that

participants are left unable to confront biphobia and transphobia, and other related oppressions.

If the trainings fail to give participants the skills to confront homophobia, then they are not going

farther into the lesser-known territory of biphobia and transphobia. This was a downfall of USF's

original three-hour training session. The coordinator for LGBTQ+ Initiatives and I are trying

purposefully to design Advocacy content that will fill in this gap. In developing content for

Advocacy, we aim to teach participants some of the skills necessary to confront homophobia,

biphobia, and transphobia. Impacting individuals is always valuable, but at such a large

institution, impacting individuals is not enough to change campus climate and alleviate wider

institutional issues because in order for change to occur, the campus culture must change beyond

a few individuals.

Even beyond USF, we feel it is important for participants at this fourth stage of USF's SZTP to get a feel for the broader climate experienced by LGBTQ+ folks in Florida and the United States. After marriage equality, many participants are unaware of discriminatory laws and statutes that still exist. For example, there is no law protecting LGBTQ+ employees from being fired on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in Florida. Our challenge then is to choose which legal and institutional issues to tackle in Safe Zone: Advocacy and give participants the skills and knowledge to advocate on behalf of LGBTQ+ communities on these issues. In this final training, we also have a greater opportunity to teach the ways that these policies have disparate impacts, among the different identities that comprise "LGBTQ+" as well as with other categories of difference, such as race, class, and ability. For instance, if we decide to cover rates of homelessness among already overrepresented LGBTQ+ populations, we could parse out the ways that QTPOC are disparately impacted by homelessness.

Advocacy is still currently in development. Moving forward, I will attempt to be better at keeping feminist and social justice pedagogies at the forefront of the curriculum. In addition to better incorporating other categories of difference, Advocacy will be the session in which participants can most participate. Their voices, although always welcome, will become an integral part of the training. Teaching tools for advocacy will also necessarily align with social justice pedagogies, as we collaboratively work to advocate for social change at USF and beyond.

Additional Considerations and Pedagogical Challenges

Meeting the goals of Safe Zone training programs requires time, money, and institutional support; it requires resources. On average, Woodford et al.'s (2014) sample "had 1.38 full-time staff and 2.92 part-time staff dedicated to LGBT campus programs" (p. 318). This is thoroughly insufficient because, as Young and Mckibban (2014) point out, "a commitment to program

development takes *a lot* of time and energy" (p. 381). At the time of this writing, USF has one full-time staff member, the Coordinator for LGBTQ+ Initiatives, and one part-time undergraduate student assistant for LGBTQ+ Initiatives. As a part-time graduate intern, I was a temporary additional resource. Even so, for a university that serves approximately 50,000 students (USF Office of Decision Support, 2018), as well as LGBTQ+ identified staff and faculty, one LGBTQ+ coordinator leaves USF clearly understaffed to address these issues across the university system. As much as the Coordinator for LGBTQ+ Initiatives and I try, it is difficult to commit the kind of time to program development that Safe Zone demands, including training new facilitators, facilitating the program ourselves, and continuously evolving and updating the curriculum.

Additionally, it turns out that creating institutionally supported queer feminist social justice-oriented training programs for a wide audience is not as easy as it sounds. I found that "training allies to be 'guides' who pose questions, raise contradictions, and encourage self-reflection" (Draughn et al., 2002, p. 18) was more easily implemented in later sessions, particularly in Allyship and Advocacy as opposed to Education Part One and Two. Even so, it was difficult throughout to integrate feminist pedagogies into Safe Zone content in part because it sometimes felt like pushing boundaries that would alienate the audiences we are trying to reach. Participants are told they will learn about LGBTQ+ issues; they are not told the content will be *feminist.* For more resistant participants, being straightforward with these pedagogies can be an easy way to further alienate them. We also just do not have the time to teach tenets of queer theory or intersectionality in the total of eight hours that we *might* get with our Safe Zone participants, assuming they keep coming back to complete each of the four parts.

An additional more general pedagogical problem is to create "user (read hetero)-friendly programming" (Alvarez & Schneider, 2008, p. 72) without alienating the LGBTQ+ population we are actually aiming to serve. Because of institutional constraints, a hostile political climate, and resistant participants, Safe Zone content cannot be too "queer." In other words, we cannot push a "gay agenda" as some would say we are (Young & McKibban, 2014). However, the purpose of Safe Zone is to support LGBTQ+ communities on campus. In order for this purpose to be fulfilled, heterosexual and cisgender audiences need to attend, and they need to listen to the Safe Zone facilitators. LGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty should also attend to learn about identities other than their own, as well as some of the skills to be an ally or an advocate for their communities. Finding the balance between *queer* and heterosexual-friendly content for reaching a large audience has been incredibly challenging because I always want to push further, but I must constantly remind myself that my audience just might not be there yet. When participants enter Education Part One unable to define heteronormativity, I cannot reasonably expect them to leave that same training being able to interrogate it in their everyday lives. Part of the challenge is being patient. Perhaps by the time they attend Advocacy, they will at least be able to question heteronormativity when they see it. The only way some participants will continue through the series is if they do not feel that we are pushing that "gay agenda" too far. Those resistant participants are exactly the participants we most need to attend.

Furthermore, there is a certain stickiness in deciding whether or not to require the program as part of a student's grade, as some faculty members have done as part of their course requirements, or employee on-boarding, for example. Poynter and Tubbs (2007) contend that "no one should be pressured to become a member of a LGBT Safe Space Ally program" (p. 128). In my experience, this issue is not quite so cut and dry. On the one hand, pressuring participants to

"become allies" is certainly problematic. USF's original Safe Zone program, for instance, could

be required for certain populations to attend across campus. This became an issue because the

only way to prove you attended was to sign a "Safe Zone Ally" contract and receive a certificate.

This resulted in "allies" who perhaps never identified themselves that way. On the other hand, I

want all staff and faculty to be trained in these issues. I want LGBTQ+ students to feel safe

coming out to staff and faculty, to feel like they can call campus police, and to easily change

their names on university records without receiving inappropriate questions from IT, for

example. In attempting to tackle this paradox, the newly expanded four-part training now gives

instructors and employers the option to require Safe Zone: Education Part One and Two.

Allyship and Advocacy, however, can never be required. Participants must choose to participate

in these sessions. Our hope is that they will want to continue with our program and that all of our

Safe Zone allies, with their stickers and certificates, will be genuinely trying their best to be

supportive allies and advocates for LGBTQ+ communities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my year interning with the Coordinator for LGBTQ+ Initiatives at USF

has shown me that there is a continued need for a feminist social justice-oriented Safe Zone

Training Program, in which difference is highlighted and power is interrogated. I believe

expanding our program from one to four trainings was the right step in attempting to educate and

promote advocacy for LGBTQ+ communities. However, there is still much work to do, on

USF's program and others. Since college campuses and political climates are always changing

and evolving, it is imperative that Safe Zone programs adapt and evolve along with them. I have

reflected on some of the challenges and pedagogical dilemmas I encountered in my time as the

Graduate Intern for LGBTQ+ Initiatives developing content for USF's Safe Zone Training

Program. Some of these challenges included keeping feminist and social justice pedagogies at the forefront of curriculum development, working within a very limited time frame, and navigating whether or not to require Safe Zone. Because of these challenges and others, developing Safe Zone content is always a work in progress (Finkel et. al, 2003). Future research should investigate other colleges' Safe Zone programs to see what they are doing similarly and to see where we, as social justice educators, have room for improvement. Developers of these programs, including myself, should strive to keep feminist and social justice-oriented pedagogies at the center of our programs. Hopefully, in this way, our programs will be meaningful to LGBTQ+ as well as heterosexual cisgender allied participants. Hopefully, it will mean that our programs will help us enact change on our campuses and confront homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. Safe Zone training programs are a crucial step in learning to include and value LGBTQ+ individuals at colleges and universities. Let's work to make Safe Zone programs even better.

Appendix: Glossary

Adapted from the USF Safe Zone Training Program's Glossary

Asexual: A person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others.

Biphobia: The irrational fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of bisexuals. Biphobia can be seen within the LGBTQ+ community, as well as in general society.

Bisexual: A person who is sexually attracted to men and women. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders and there may be a preference for one gender over others.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth.

Fag/Faggot: From a Latin word meaning "a bundle of sticks," men who participated in homosexual behavior were thrown into fires to keep the fires burning. In 1913, the word is first used in print in a derogatory reference about gay men.

Gay: A man who is romantically and sexually attracted to other men.

Gender: The social construction of masculinity and femininity in a specific culture. It involves sex assignment at birth, roles, and identity.

Gender Expression: The external presentation of a person's gender identity, which may or may not conform to the socially-defined behaviors and external characteristics that are commonly referred to as either masculine or feminine.

Gender Identity: A person's deeply-felt psychological identification as a man, woman, or something else, which may or may not correspond to the person's assigned sex at birth.

Gender Nonconforming: Umbrella term which refers to people who identify and/or express themselves in ways that are different from society's binary norms.

Heterosexism: Any attitude, action, or practice—backed by institutional power— that subordinates people based on their sexual orientation.

Homophobia: The irrational fear and intolerance of people who are gay, lesbian, or engage in sexual or romantic behavior with others of their same sex or gender. Homophobia may manifest in hatred, revulsion, disgust, and culturally sanctioned prejudice and violence.

Intersex: A person born with a combination of genitalia, hormones, internal organs, and chromosomes (sex) that are not considered medically male or female.

Lesbian: A woman who is romantically and sexually attracted to other women.

LGBTQ+: A common abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/trans+, queer/questioning. The "+" aims to encompass additional identities that lay outside of the acronym.

Pansexual: A person who is sexually attracted to individuals regardless of sex or gender.

Queer: 1. Umbrella term for individuals who advocate for breaking the binaries of sexual identity; 2. A person who does not identify with a specific sexual orientation; 3. An academic term, as in queer theory (as defined on p. 9-10 of this narrative)

Questioning: Someone exploring, discovering, or developing an LGBTQ+ identity.

Sex Assigned at Birth: A medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, genitalia, secondary sex characteristics, and hormonal balances. Used to identify people as male, female, or intersex.

Transgender/Trans+: A person whose gender identity does not align with their sex assigned at birth.

Transphobia: The irrational fear or hatred of trans+ people. Transphobia manifests in a number of ways, including violence, harassment, and discrimination.

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