"Orientation" to the Intersectionality of LGBTQ, Gender Identity, and Disability Issues in VR and Employment

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Gender identity | One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth. (HRC, 2019)

Sexual orientation | An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. (HRC, 2019)

Non-binary | An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. (HRC, 2019)

Gender non-conforming | A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category. (HRC, 2019)

Transgender | An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc. (HRC, 2019)

Cisgender | A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth. (HRC, 2019)

LGBTQ | An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer." (HRC, 2019)

Ally | A person who is not LGBTQ but shows support for LGBTQ people and promotes equality in a variety of ways. (HRC, 2019)

Queer | A term people often use to express fluid identities and orientations. Often used interchangeably with "LGBTQ."(HRC, 2019)

Questioning | A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity. (HRC, 2019)

Historical and Cultural Context

1969 The LGBTQ+ movement started with the transgender and Drag Queen Community rioting outside the **Stonewall** Inn in New York (History.com).

June 28, 1970 marked the first anniversary of the Stonewall riots marking the **first Gay Pride** march in U.S.

1973 American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality as mental disorder in the DSM-2 (Sullivan, Feinstein, Marshall, Mustanski, 2017).

October 14, 1979 The first national gay rights march in Washington, D.C.

October 11, 1988 First National Coming Out Day to commemorate the second March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1987.

May 8, 2013 In the DSM V, gender nonconformity is not defined as a mental disorder, however, gender dysphoria is a unique condition in that it is a diagnosis made by mental health care providers, but the treatment is endocrinological and surgical.

June 26, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down all state bans on same-sex marriage, legalized it in all fifty states, and required states to honor out-of-state same-sex marriage licenses in the case Obergefell v. Hodges.

Oct 8, 2019 Supreme Court considers whether 1964 Civil Rights Act protects L.G.B.T. and gender non-conforming individuals in the workplace.

"'Intersectionality' refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power" (Davis, 2008).

Employment Issues

Inequalities

- Persons with disabilities earn 13.6% less than their peers without disabilities (Singh & Durso, 2017)
- People in the LGB community earn 22% less than their heterosexual counterparts (Mann & Wittenburg, 2015).
- LGBTQ people of color (32%) are more likely to experience discrimination than white LGBTQ people (13%) (RWJF.org)
- 22% of LGBTQ Americans have not been paid equally or promoted at the same rate as their peers (RWJF.org)
- In 2018, Over half (53%) of LGBTQ employees report having heard lesbian and gay jokes at work, while 37% heard bisexual jokes and 41% heard transgender jokes (Fidas and Cooper, 2019).

Work Disincentives

- 15.5% of individuals identifying as LGB persons with disabilities refrain from exposing either of their identities during the hiring process (Fidas, Cooper, Raspanti, 2014)
- 40% of participants admitted to not being 'out' at work due to fear of homophobia or 46% of LGBTQ workers in the United States are closeted in the workplace (Fidas and Cooper, 2019).
- Transgender and gender nonconforming individuals has been verbally, physically harassed by coworkers (Reed, 2015).
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual ('LGB') individuals experience sexual orientation-based employment discrimination at staggering rates of 8% to 17% (Reed, 2015).
- Individuals often experiences LGBTQ community public humiliation and embarrassment more often than their counterparts, once employed (Fidas, Cooper, Raspanti, 2014).

Protections
- No federal law protecting employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in the United States (Moreau, 2019).

Employees can be fired based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity In 29/50 States (HRC.org)

Tips For Counselors

Promote Non-binary language
- Include identity pronouns when introducing yourself in ALL settings
- Ask about pronoun and name preference if not provided
- Provide documents that promote non-binary pronoun options
- Alter questions to avoid heterosexual biased language
- Explore Implicit bias, microaggressions, and assumptions
- Avoid using participating in discriminatory language, jokes, and interactions

Understand implicit bias, microaggression and the impact on individuals
- Microaggression towards individuals in the LGB community is linked to higher posttraumatic stress symptoms than heterosexual individual (Robinson and Rubin, 2015)
- Transgender individuals report feelings of hopelessness, invalidated and misunderstood due to microaggressions (Nadal et all., 2014)

Utilize the CRC code of ethics
- The Code of Ethics for Rehabilitation Counselors, Section A. 1.e. states respect the rights of clients to make decisions on their own behalf in accordance with their cultural identity and beliefs.

Build knowledge ABOUT the population AND CULTURE
- understand one's own knowledge and beliefs before providing support to clients
- Lack of knowledge can lead to blatant heterosexism: Belief that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexual relationships are necessary for the preservation of family, particularly the nuclear family (Pharr, 1988)
- Participate in the community
- Advocate for the population
- Attend events specific to the population and culture
- The lack of culturally sensitive services for the LBGTQ community increases discrimination and inappropriate care by providers (Lim et al., 2015).

Educate when possible (Family)
- Help provide resources to educate the family on the impact of negative comments and bullying toward the individual
- 67% of LGBTQ youth hear their families make negative comments about LGBTQ people (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009).
- The LGBTQ community is at a greater risk of suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and unexcused absences from school or work when they experience forms of bulling or victimization (Robinson, & Espelage, 2012).

Educate when possible (Employers)
- Gain an understanding of federal, state and local laws and polies surrounding discrimination

Concluding Thoughts
- Don't assume everyone is heterosexual (Gerschick, 2000)
- If a rehabilitation counselors is uncomfortable about discussing sexuality, avoid projecting those feeling on the client
  - Refer to a professional when needed
  - Avoid participating in discriminatory language, jokes, and interactions

Resources

Human Rights Campaign
- www.hrc.org

Movement Advancement Project. *LGBT People With Disabilities*
- http://www.lgbtmap.org/lgbt-people-disabilities

Rainbow Alliance of the Deaf
- www.deafrad.org

Blind LGBT Pride International
- https://blindlgbtpride.org/