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**DO LGBTQIA ROWAN STUDENTS MATTER?  
MARGINALITY AND MATTERING IN ROWAN UNIVERSITY'S LGBTQIA  
UNDERGRADUATE POPULATION**

by

Liz Ditzel

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Educational Services and Leadership  
College of Education  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Master of Arts in Higher Education  
at  
Rowan University  
March 28, 2019

Thesis Advisor: Tyrone McCombs, Ph.D.



## **Dedications**

I dedicate this thesis to the Rowan LGBTQIA community. Stay strong, stay proud, and stay yourselves.

## **Acknowledgments**

Thank you to my incredible partner, Emmerich, for being constantly ready to give me a pep talk at a moment's notice and for listening to me read out endless paragraphs of near-nonsense to help me draw connections and make sense of information. Thank you also to the Rowan LGBTQIA community, for being both an excellent sample population and a wonderful support system throughout both my undergraduate and graduate careers. Thank you to my cats, for always making me laugh when I was stressed beyond belief. Finally, and most importantly, thank you to my parents, Ray and Joyce. I could never have succeeded at any of this without your boundless love, support, and encouragement.

## Abstract

Liz Ditzel

DO LGBTQIA ROWAN STUDENTS MATTER?  
MARGINALITY AND MATTERING IN ROWAN UNIVERSITY'S LGBTQIA  
UNDERGRADUATE POPULATION  
2018-2019

Tyrone McCombs, Ph.D.  
Master of Arts in Higher Education

This study explores feelings of marginality and mattering as defined by Schlossberg (1989) in LGBTQIA undergraduate students at Rowan University. The study used a modified version of the College Mattering Inventory (Tovar, Simon, and Lee, 2009) distributed via email to students utilizing the university's LGBTQIA Center. The study provided an opportunity for LGBTQIA undergraduate students to give feedback regarding their experiences at Rowan. A total of 39 students responded to the survey.

The study found that LGBTQIA undergraduate students at Rowan University are experiencing feelings of mattering and marginality simultaneously. These students feel that they matter as students, and that they matter as LGBTQIA individuals, but there is dissonance between these identities that is creating feelings of isolation, loneliness, invisibility, and marginality. Overall, the LGBTQIA undergraduate population is struggling as a marginalized group, but is having some positive experiences indicative of feelings of mattering as well.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	v
List of Figures .....	viii
List of Tables .....	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction and Proposal .....	1
Background: The Campus Pride Standard and Current Rowan University Services ...	1
Statement of the Problem .....	3
Significance of the Study .....	3
Purpose of the Study .....	4
Assumptions and Limitations .....	4
Operational Definitions .....	4
Research Questions .....	5
Research question one .....	5
Research question two .....	6
Overview .....	6
Chapter 2: Review of Literature .....	7
Marginality, Mattering, and Rowan University .....	7
LGBTQIA Students, Campus Climate, and Support .....	10
Summary of the Literature Review .....	12
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	13
Context of the Study .....	13
Population of the Sample .....	14
Instrumentation .....	14

## Table of Contents (Continued)

Chapter 4: Findings .....	17
Population of the Sample .....	17
Analysis of Responses .....	20
Stratification according to the CMI .....	24
Socially focused and academically focused items .....	35
Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendation .....	39
Summary .....	39
Discussion of Findings .....	40
Research question one .....	40
Research question two .....	42
Conclusions .....	43
Recommendations for Further Practice .....	44
Recommendations for Further Research .....	45
References .....	46
Appendix A: Alternate Consent for Online Distribution of Surveys .....	48
Appendix B: College Mattering Inventory Access Information .....	50
Appendix C: Permission to Use the College Mattering Inventory .....	51
Appendix D: Electronic Institutional Review Board Approval .....	52
Appendix E: Recruitment Email for Survey Instrument .....	54
Appendix F: Glossary of Key Terms .....	55



## List of Figures

Figure	Page
Figure 1. Sample population by gender identity, transgender to cisgender .....	19
Figure 2. Sample population by gender identity .....	19
Figure 3. Answers to the survey by frequency of scores .....	23
Figure 4. Frequency of answers by gender identity, comparing transgender and cisgender respondents .....	24
Figure 5. Frequency of answers to socially-focused items .....	36
Figure 6. Frequency of answers to academically-focused items .....	36
Figure 7. Frequency of answers for socially-focused items, comparing transgender and cisgender respondents .....	37

## List of Tables

Table	Page
Table 1. Demographics of the Sample .....	18
Table 2. Survey Responses Scored Numerically, Adjusted for Reverse Scoring .....	21
Table 3. General College Mattering .....	25
Table 4. Mattering Versus Marginality .....	27
Table 5. Mattering to Counselors or Advisors .....	28
Table 6. Mattering to Instructors .....	29
Table 7. Mattering to Students .....	31
Table 8. Perception of Value .....	32
Table 9. Mattering Versus Marginality, Transgender Students .....	33
Table 10. Mattering Versus Marginality, Cisgender Students .....	34

## Chapter 1

### Introduction and Proposal

Since 2014, with the opening of the Office of Social Justice, Inclusion, and Conflict Resolution (hereafter referred to as “SJICR”), services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and agender (hereafter referred to as LGBTQIA) students at Rowan University have been growing exponentially (Rowan University, 2018). SJICR opened its LGBTQIA Center and began offering support and programming for LGBTQIA students when the office gained a physical space on campus in early 2015. The number of LGBTQIA student organizations grew beginning in 2014, with a total of three organizations active on campus today (Rowan University, 2018). Additionally, in the time between the previous Campus Pride Index assessment and the most recent, Rowan increased from 2.5 out of five stars to 4.5 out of five stars. The Campus Pride Index is a voluntary assessment that measures institutional commitment to supporting LGBTQIA students and the current climate toward these students at the institution. When Rowan was re-assessed, the institution increased in every category but LGBTQIA health, which was already rated five out of five stars (Campus Pride, 2017). Other University departments also began showing a commitment to LGBTQIA inclusion, including the Wellness Center, and Student Center and Campus Activities (SCCA).

#### **Background: The Campus Pride Standard and Current Rowan University Services**

Rowan University is rated by the Campus Pride Index, a voluntary assessment to measure institutional commitment to LGBTQIA support. The index assesses support in eight areas: policy inclusion, support and institutional commitment, academic life, student life, housing and residence life, campus safety, counseling and health, and

recruitment and retention efforts. The institution answers a series of survey questions regarding criteria that they fulfill in each of the eight categories, and are rated based on how many of these criteria to which they adhere. Because the assessment is self-administered and voluntary, there may be some degree of bias.

As of 2017, Rowan University is rated at 4.5 out of five stars. Their strongest category is counseling and health, at five out of five stars. Their weakest category is support and institutional commitment, at 3.5 out of five stars. The school is listed as fourth out of the seven schools listed, behind Montclair State University, Rutgers University – New Brunswick, and Princeton University, which each have five out of five stars. It is rated higher than Stockton University and Ramapo College, which each have 3.5 out of five stars, and Rutgers University – Camden, which has three out of five stars. Rowan has an LGBTQIA Center through the Office of Social Justice, Inclusion, and Conflict Resolution (hereafter referred to as SJICR). SJICR runs the campus’s Safe Zone trainings, which are trainings given to faculty and staff in order to increase knowledge of support for LGBTQIA students, and a workshop about supporting transgender students (Rowan University, 2018). In addition to these trainings, the center also runs programming throughout the year to bring visibility to the campus LGBTQIA population, including National Coming Out Week and Transgender Awareness Week in the fall semester and Pride Week in the spring semester, and lectures about LGBTQIA topics and issues throughout the year (Rowan University, 2018). The LGBTQIA Center also oversees three LGBTQIA student organizations: Prism, True Colors, and Out in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, which is typically shortened to “oSTEM” (Rowan University). On the LGBTQIA Center website, there is also a directory of all-

gender restrooms throughout campus and a list of resources – both on and off campus – for LGBTQIA students. Finally, the center facilitates the Out and Ally Network, a network of faculty and staff members who have self-identified as either members of the LGBTQIA community or cisgender and heterosexual allies to the community.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Based on the context, Rowan has been doing a great job in increasing LGBTQIA resources. Where previously, much of the resources for LGBTQIA students fell to student organizations to provide, offices with qualified professional staff are committed to providing programming and support. Now that the school has addressed the issue of low resources, it might want to assess: are these resources and new initiatives working? What are the experiences of LGBTQIA Rowan students using the LGBTQIA Center and its programs? Using Schlossberg's Marginality and Mattering theory, as well as Tovar's College Mattering Inventory and other assessments, the study seeks to answer, do LGBTQIA undergraduate students at Rowan feel that they matter?

### **Significance of the Study**

Much of the research surrounding LGBTQIA students focuses on LGBTQIA youth in kindergarten through high school. Additionally, there is not much research connecting marginality and mattering with LGBTQIA populations. This study seeks to give LGBTQIA students at Rowan University a way to share their experiences and potentially lessen that gap in research. The study is significant in that it broadens the scope of Marginality and Mattering theory (Schlossberg, 1989) to extend to a population to which it is not commonly applied. The conceptual framework also assisted in

gathering insight into LGBTQIA student experiences at Rowan, providing a means of measurement for certain feelings and indications.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to assess the experiences of LGBTQIA undergraduate students at Rowan University within a given conceptual framework. Utilizing marginality and mattering in assessing the perceptions of LGBTQIA undergraduate students allowed for greater sense making of data and to make more informed inferences based on responses.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

The study recruited participants through the LGBTQIA center and its affiliated student organizations, as it was the most reliable way to reach LGBTQIA students at Rowan. Therefore, responses are limited to LGBTQIA students who are actively engaging with LGBTQIA resources and others within the LGBTQIA community on campus. Mean scores are also affected because missing data was counted with a score of zero, as well. Additionally, there is a possibility of researcher bias because I identify as a member of the LGBTQIA community, and regularly engage with LGBTQIA Center programming at Rowan.

### **Operational Definitions**

The following definitions are integral to the understanding of the study. For further definitions, see Appendix F: Glossary of Terms.

1. Cisgender: indicating that one's gender identity aligns with his or her sex assigned at birth.

2. Gender identity: How one feels they fit into society's greater perceptions and expectations of gender.
3. LGBTQIA: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, agender, or any other identity that does not constitute one identifying as both heterosexual and cisgender.
4. Marginality: the belief that one does not belong or fit in a certain environment. In the study, the environment is Rowan University.
5. Mattering: the belief that one is welcome, has a place, and fits in a given environment. In the study, the environment is Rowan University.
6. Sexuality: the attraction (or lack thereof) one feels, sexually and romantically, to other individuals.
7. They (singular): a singular gender-neutral pronoun used so as not to incorrectly refer to respondents who did not indicate gender-affirming pronouns or indicated singular, gender-neutral pronouns in responses.
8. Transgender: indicating that one's gender identity does not align with their sex assigned at birth.

### **Research Questions**

This study seeks to answer two research questions regarding the experiences of LGBTQIA students utilizing existing the LGBTQIA Center resources at Rowan University.

**Research question one.** Do LGBTQIA undergraduate students using the resources offered by the LGBTQIA Center at Rowan University feel as though they matter?

**Research question two.** Is there a difference in perceptions of mattering between transgender and cisgender LGBTQIA undergraduate students at Rowan University?

### **Overview**

Chapter two reviews the literature surrounding Marginality and Mattering (Schlossberg, 1989) and LGBTQIA student support. This is to better understand the ideas measured in the study.

Chapter three outlines the methodology for the study, including the background of the College Mattering Inventory survey instrument (Tovar, Simon, and Lee, 2009) and the source of the sample population. It also gives background information and context regarding the location of the study.

Chapter four synthesizes and presents the findings of the survey instrument.

Chapter five discusses the findings and how they relate to the research questions, as well as draws conclusions based on the data and offers recommendations for further research and practice.



## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

While there is plenty of literature surrounding Schlossberg's Marginality and Mattering, and some literature involving support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and agender students as well as other students with marginalized sexual orientations and gender identities (hereafter referred to as LGBTQ+ or LGBTQIA students), there is very little available literature that applies Marginality and Mattering to LGBTQIA students. However, through investigating what is currently being done to support LGBTQIA students at Rowan University, what kind of support is standard in literature about LGBTQIA students, how Marginality and Mattering works, and how other researchers that focused on marginality and mattering for historically marginalized at Rowan conducted their studies, one can develop a reasonable conceptual framework for the study.

### **Marginality, Mattering, and Rowan University**

First, one must gain an understanding of the concept of mattering. Mattering was proposed as a concept in mental health and sociology by Rosenberg and McCullough (1979) at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. They define mattering in three subsets: attention, importance, and dependence. Attention is defined as "the belief that one commands the interest or notice of another" (Rosenberg & McCullough). The second subset, importance, is defined as believing that others care about "what we want, think, and do," and that others are "concerned with our fate" (Rosenberg & McCullough). The third subset, dependence, is described as not only the state of a person relying on others, but also as others relying on the person (Rosenberg &

McCullough). Rosenberg and McCullough's work goes on to explain that mattering, when one feels that they possess these three subsets, has direct impacts on mental health in adolescents. An adolescent who does not feel like they matter much is more likely to struggle with feelings of depression and low self-esteem (Rosenberg & McCullough).

Schlossberg (1989) expanded the work done by Rosenberg and McCullough (1979) by going beyond adolescents and applying the concept of marginality and mattering to institutions of higher education, therefore expanding the range of ages this theory has been applied to. Institutions have a culture, and Schlossberg says, "Each culture defines its marginal groups and designates certain groups as invisible or invalid." Culture dictates who is valid or invalid through programs, policy, and more (Schlossberg). The amount students feel that they matter can be dependent on how well they feel included or served on campus. Students who feel involved, included, well-served, and that their needs are addressed and heard are more likely to feel like they "matter" at their institution (Schlossberg). Additionally, students may feel they matter within a specific community, such as an office or a student organization. However, it is possible for this community to still be marginalized by the greater surrounding culture at the school, through factors like resource allocation, attitudes toward the given community, and more (Schlossberg).

Research suggests resources and attitude play a significant role in how communities are seen and perceived on campuses. Rullman and Harrington (2014) cite Strange and Banning (2001), explaining that how facilities look, their location, their availability, the condition that they are in, and how well cleaned or manicured they are has an impact on what people perceive about the campus. A campus that claims to be

student-centered and offers a broad range of developmental opportunities would not have a peripherally located college union or career center. Rowan, which is placing a higher emphasis on inclusion and equity, is no exception. The fact that Rowan has a specialized LGBTQIA center, as well as an office that addresses issues of diversity and inclusion, is evidence of a desire to provide a supportive environment to students of all identities. Recently, Rowan has been named one of the most LGBTQIA-friendly schools in the U.S. (Rowan University, 2018). They are also in the process of building a new Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that will oversee continuing efforts toward creating a more inclusive atmosphere at Rowan (Rowan University, 2019). With that in mind, one can see a growing commitment to diversity and inclusion at Rowan.

However, according to Rullman and Harrington (2014) and Strange and Banning's (2001) observations, the location and state of SJICR, as well as its history, may be sending mixed signals. SJICR was founded in 2014 as a collaborative effort between students and staff. It opened in a physical space – an old office suite in an academic building – in the spring of 2015. By the fall of 2016 it had moved to a different location in the same building on the second floor. As of the fall of 2017, it had moved again, this time to a mixed-use academic building on the less-populated southwest part of campus, which had just been vacated by the College of Communication and Creative Arts. SJICR uses the vacated offices as staff offices and spaces for three out of the four centers that they host; their conference room is shared with the University and used as a classroom space, restricting use to hours when classes are not in session in the room. They recently renovated these spaces to better fit their needs over the summer of 2018. In the fall of 2018, the director of SJICR, as well as one of the office's assistant directors,

left to pursue other opportunities. As of the start of the spring 2019 semester, there are two assistant directors and an interim director overseeing four resource centers, a mentoring program, student staff, and graduate assistants. These factors place limitations on the usage of space in the office, programming abilities, and management of resources.

### **LGBTQIA Students, Campus Climate, and Support**

Rankin, Weber, Blumenfield, and Frazer, along with Campus Pride, released a report on campus climates and the state of higher education for LGBTQIA students in September 2010. This report surveyed LGBTQIA students, faculty, and staff across the United States and compiled data on experiences in a report released on their website. According to this report, LGBTQIA students are significantly more likely to feel discomfort on campus based on gender and sexuality, think about leaving their institution more often, and experience harassment and isolation more often than their cisgender and heterosexual peers (Rankin et. al., 2010).

Further complicating these matters is the attitude of academia surrounding LGBTQIA issues and challenges. According to literature, the attitude of academics when discussing LGBTQIA students and what these students may need in terms of support remains a point in need of improvement. J. Gilbert (2014) stresses the importance of talking *with* LGBTQIA students, rather than about them. She also details the things that often contribute to a hostile or awkward climate for LGBTQIA students, including educators' and researchers' reluctance to say words related to the LGBTQIA community unless they are talking about bullying or sex. The attitudes surrounding words like "gay," "lesbian," "transgender," etc. enforce society's treatment of LGBTQIA topics as taboo, treating LGBTQIA conversations as appropriate only in conversations about sex, or about

tragedy (Gilbert). Such attitudes, while perhaps not outwardly harmful, continue to isolate LGBTQIA students (Gilbert).

Similarly, Teman & Lahman (2010) observed two distinct ways educators try to garner support for LGBTQ+ students: the Tragic Queer narrative and the Super Queer narrative. When educating others about the needs of LGBTQIA students, students are typically defined by statistics surrounding hardship for the LGBTQIA community, citing primarily negative things like higher rates of suicidality or prevalence of anti-LGBTQIA behavior and attitudes on campus (Teman & Lahman). This is what characterizes the Tragic Queer narrative, which is often used to justify campus support for LGBTQIA students. Conversely, the Super Queer narrative presents a romanticized version of LGBTQIA student life. It places LGBTQ+ students on a pedestal, and leads educators to expect them to be constantly out and proud, and leading the campus when it comes to advocacy for the LGBTQIA community (Teman & Lehman).

Additionally, Yost and Gilmore (2011) conducted a study in which they surveyed students at Dickinson College to measure sexual prejudice, institutional climate, classroom climate, victimization, and co-curricular involvement regarding LGBTQIA students. In doing the study, they detailed some interesting perspectives from students. One student mentioned something they called “tolerant apathy,” or a state of not being unwelcoming or unsupportive, but not being outwardly welcoming or supportive either. Others participating in the survey expressed outright aggression toward LGBTQIA identities.

## **Summary of the Literature Review**

While information regarding Marginality and Mattering as it specifically applies to the LGBTQIA community is limited, there are plenty of articles regarding the theory in general and as applied to other populations, and ready information about supporting LGBTQIA students in a collegiate environment. Provided the context of Rowan's current support networks and efforts, as well as the information garnered from these articles, the study will seek to find out: do LGBTQIA undergraduate students at Rowan University matter?

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### Context of the Study

Rowan University is a four-year public research university in a suburban setting in southern New Jersey (College Board, 2018). The school offers degrees at the bachelors, masters, and doctoral levels, and has partnerships with nearby community colleges to offer a variety of cost-effective credit transfer options (Rowan University). Rowan University has one main campus, in Glassboro, NJ, and three satellite campuses: the Cooper Medical School and Rowan at Camden, both in Camden, NJ; and the School of Osteopathic Medicine in Stratford, NJ (Rowan University, 2018). The school is also experiencing rapid enrollment growth, growing from 13,349 students to approximately 18,000 students in five years (Lai, 2016; Rowan University, 2018).

In spring 2015, SJICR gained a physical space on the Rowan University Glassboro campus. Since then, the department continued to develop an LGBTQIA resource center that provides programming and support for students who identify as LGBTQIA or allies to said community. The population of students who identify as LGBTQIA appears to be increasing at the University, consistent with greater national and generational trends; participation in LGBTQIA student organizations and programming has grown each year. SJICR and other departments on campus are developing a commitment to LGBTQIA support in order to meet demand for resources.

## **Population of the Sample**

Data collection took place at Rowan University during the Spring 2019 semester. After garnering approval from the electronic institutional review board, the sample was gathered via email. Messages were sent through the official email channels for the LGBTQIA Center and three LGBTQIA student organizations between March 4 and March 8, 2019. The students were informed that the survey was voluntary, and provided with information on access to counseling and support resources in the event that the survey adversely affected them, via a disclaimer upon beginning the assessment. The sample was a convenience sample, due to the time constraints of the research project as well as the need to focus on a particular group of students to consider answers valid. It is estimated that approximately 378 utilize the LGBTQIA Center, and the recruitment goal was to reach all 378 students to give them the option to take the assessment.

## **Instrumentation**

The study was conducted using Tovar, Simon, and Lee's (2009) College Mattering Inventory, a 62-question Likert-type scale assessment ranging from one, *not at all*, to five, *very much*, used to evaluate the perception of a particular group as to whether or not they "matter" on their campus. Tovar, Simon, and Lee developed the instrument for a 2009 study of diverse urban college students at two southern California colleges. The instrument was developed as an attempt to fill a gap in research regarding Marginality and Mattering; previously, much of the research centered on very specific, nontraditional populations such as students above the age of 25 (Tovar et. al., 2009). The College Mattering Inventory was intended to create a more universal means of assessing feelings of marginality and mattering on campuses and in specific groups, using



questions that are typically more general and relatable in scope of experience, and can be given en masse or in small groups.

While the College Mattering Inventory was the best available instrument to measure feelings of marginality and mattering in the population utilizing Rowan University's LGBTQIA resources, it did lack specificity in regards to marginality as it pertains to gender and sexuality. Therefore, in the study, questions regarding sexuality and gender identity were added. This was used as a screening instrument, to maintain validity on whether or not the participants' answers were applicable to the dataset regarding the targeted population while maintaining the participants' anonymity and confidentiality. Permission from Tovar, Simon, and Lee was sought in January 2019 and granted in February 2019.

The survey instrument used a modified version of the College Mattering inventory. The instrument used a 5-option Likert-style scale, valued as such: one – *strongly disagree*, two – *somewhat disagree*, three – *neither agree nor disagree*, four – *somewhat agree*, and five – *strongly agree*. Out of 60 questions, 18 items on the survey were worded in a negative way – i.e. “I feel that I do not belong at Rowan” – and reverse-scored upon analysis, so that the value of one was assigned to *strongly agree* and five assigned to *strongly disagree*. The instrument contained questions pertaining to social and academic aspects of college life. One question was added to the original College Mattering Inventory regarding feelings of isolation as a result of sexuality. Additionally, prefacing questions were added to the beginning of the survey asking for individuals to identify their sexuality and gender identity, both as a screening measure and for further stratification of data, if necessary. Participants were given the option to skip questions. In

the event that a question was not answered, it was given the value of zero in that respondent's dataset.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

#### Population of Sample

By the end of the collection period, 39 people had taken the survey. According to the interim Assistant Director for the LGBTQIA Center in the Office of Social Justice, Inclusion, and Conflict Resolution (SJICR), Rowan University's LGBTQIA Center can, in combination with the office's other resource centers, serve over 6,000 members of the Rowan community in a given semester. However, the Assistant Director estimated that in a given academic year, the LGBTQIA Center serves approximately 378 students on average. Given these numbers, the margin of error is approximately 15%, with a confidence level of 95%. The survey was sent out via email to the LGBTQIA Center, True Colors, Prism, and Out in STEM mailing lists, via the organizations' official emails. It is estimated that, when accounting for overlap, the survey reached approximately all students the LGBTQIA Center serves. A total of 39 out of 378 completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 10.32%.

In the screening questions regarding sexuality, only one person answered that they identified as heterosexual, while 38 identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, or another option covered by the LGBTQIA umbrella. Additionally, the ratio of individuals who identified as transgender to individuals who identified as cisgender in the screening questions was almost even; 21 respondents (54%) identified as transgender, non-binary, or another gender under transgender as an umbrella term, and 18 (46%) identified as cisgender, or did not identify themselves as a member of the transgender community.

Gender identity overwhelmingly favored female and non-binary respondents, according to the screening questions. Out of 39 respondents, 14 identified as female, 22 identified as non-binary, agender, and/or other, and 7 identified as male. Respondents were given the option to select multiple identities to reflect the complexity and intersectionality of LGBTQIA identities.

Table 1

*Demographics of the sample*

Variable		<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Transgender	9	13.85
	Cisgender	13	20.00
	Non-binary	13	20.00
	Male	7	10.77
	Female	14	21.54
	Agender	3	4.62
	Other	6	9.23
Sexuality	Lesbian	14	23.33
	Gay	5	8.33
	Bisexual	15	25.00
	Asexual	1	1.67
	Pansexual	12	20.00
	Queer	11	18.33
	Straight/Heterosexual	1	1.67
	Other	1	1.67

*Note.* Students were given the option to select multiple items to best reflect their intersectional LGBTQIA identities.

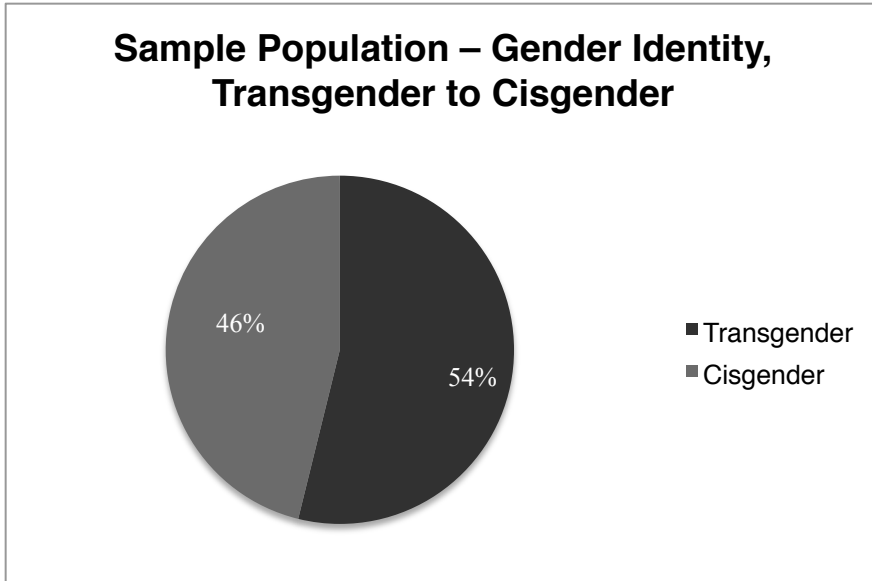


Figure 1. Sample population by gender identity, transgender to cisgender.

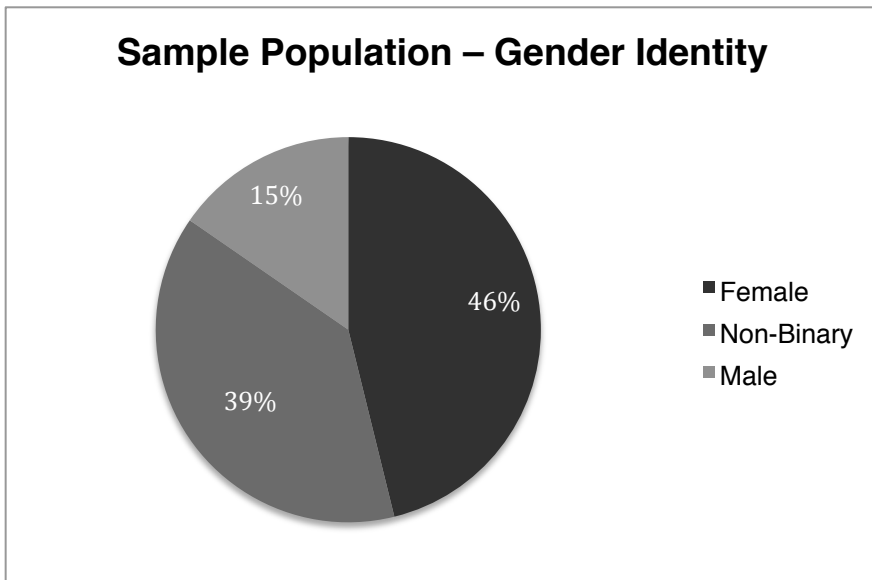


Figure 2. Sample population by gender identity.

## Analysis of Responses

Items were scored on a Likert-style scale, ranging from one, “strongly disagree;” two, “somewhat disagree;” three, “neither agree nor disagree;” four, “somewhat agree;” to five, “strongly agree.” These answers were given a numerical value corresponding to their place on the Likert-style scale, and rated as negative, neutral, or positive, with one and two being negative, three or no answer (zero) as neutral, and four or five being positive. Eighteen items were reverse-scored to correct for being worded as a negative answer. For example, if someone were to answer, “strongly agree” to item 30, “Sometimes I feel alone at Rowan,” their answer would be given a numerical value of one as opposed to five, as it would receive on a positively-scored item. There were a total of 13 items given a value of “zero” in the respondents’ combined data. Data was analyzed using a combination of Qualtrics reports, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), and Microsoft Excel. Table 2 below shows the average and most common results for the Likert-scale items on the survey.

Table 2

*Survey Responses Scored Numerically, Adjusted for Reverse Scores*

Item	Mean	Mode	Standard Deviation
4	4.23	5	1.16
5*	3.67	4	1.11
6*	2.92	2	0.98
7	4.03	5	1.25
8	4.05	5	1.23
9	3.95	5	1.21
10*	2.74	2	1.45
11	3.38	4	1.23
12	3.21	4	1.13
13*	2.87	4	1.32
14	2.85	3	1.35
15	3.67	4	1.3
16	3.82	4	1.16
<b>17</b>	<b>4.13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0.86</b>
18	3.87	5	1.3
<b>19*</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1.44</b>
20*	3.33	3	1.22
21	3.36	4	1.22
22	3.33	4	1.32
23	3.31	3	1.28
24*	3.59	4	1.09
25	3.46	4	1.17
26	3.23	4	1.2
27*	2.82	3	1.23
28	4.08	4	0.84
29*	2.64	2	1.25
30*	2.38	2	1.25
31*	1.95	1	1.19
<b>32*</b>	<b>3.48</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1.37</b>
33	3.15	4	1.41
34*	3	2	1.4
35	3.61	4	1.11
36*	2.56	2	1.25
37*	3.64	4	1.2
38	3.64	4	1.22
39	3.51	4	1.17
40	4.18	5	1.14

Table 2 (Continued)

Item	Mean	Mode	Standard Deviation
41	3.56	4	1.29
42	3.9	5	1.41
43	2.95	2	1.43
44	4.1	4	1.12
45	3.49	4	1.25
<b>46*</b>	<b>3.41</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1.48</b>
47	3.79	4	1.06
48	3.21	4	1.38
49	3.31	4	1.15
50	3.74	4	1.07
51	3.87	5	1.4
52*	4.49	5	1.12
53*	2.51	1	1.37
54	4.38	5	0.84
55	3.49	4	1.37
56	3.49	4	1.27
57	3.49	4	1.21
58	3.79	4	1.26
59	3.28	4	1.28
Total			
Mean:	3.46		

*Note.* Items marked with \* were phrased negatively and reverse-scored. Items in *italics* are questioning social aspects of college experience. Items in **bold** are directly relevant to gender and/or sexuality.

Overall, responses had a generally positive trend, with 58.8% of items receiving a response of four or higher. Approximately a quarter, 25.5%, of all responses were two or lower.



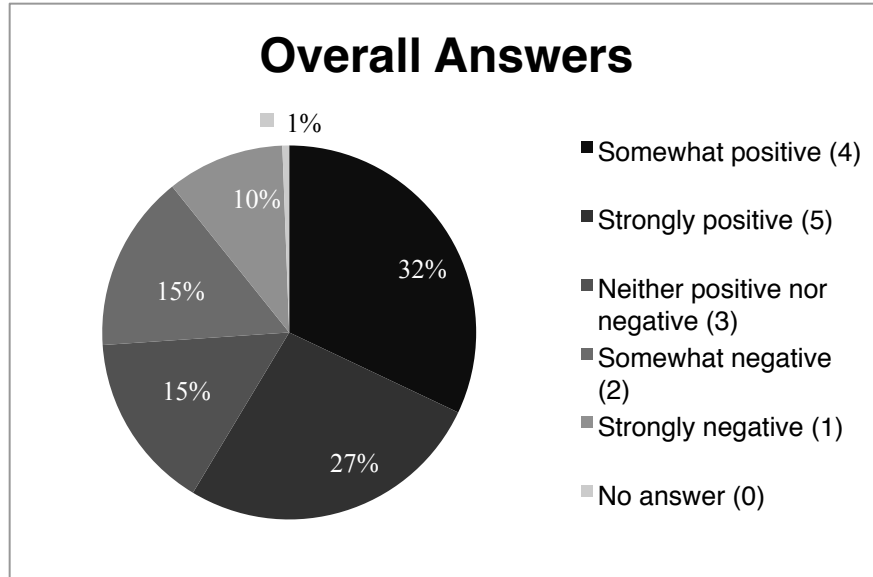


Figure 3. Answers to the survey by frequency of scores.

Cisgender respondents tended to respond positively more often than transgender respondents, responding positively 62.6% of the time, compared to 54.2% of the time for their transgender peers. Transgender individuals scored items negatively more frequently, with 29.9% of answers given a value of two or less, compared to the 21.1% given by their cisgender peers.

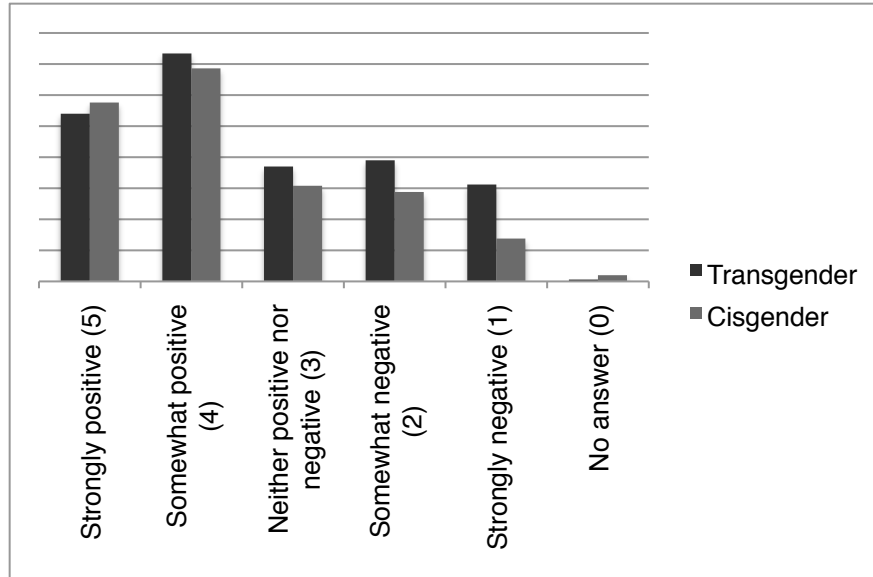


Figure 4. Frequency of answers by gender identity, comparing transgender and cisgender respondents.

**Stratification according to the CMI.** Tovar, Simon, and Lee (2009) stratified their survey items into six categories of assessment: *General college mattering*, *Mattering versus marginality*, *Mattering to counselors or advisors*, *Mattering to instructors*, *Mattering to students*, and *Perception of value*. Each category contains the items on the survey directly pertinent to that category. Two out of the six categories – *Mattering versus marginality* and *Mattering to instructors* – are comprised of reverse-scored questions, where a score of “strongly agree” or five would be given a value of one in the final analysis, and “strongly disagree” or one would be given a value of five.

The first category, *General college mattering*, is shown in Table 3. Overall, LGBTQIA students answered positively, with responses valuing four or five being reported over half the time. These answers say that LGBTQIA students at Rowan

generally feel as though they have others around them who care about their well-being, successes, and failures.

Table 3

*General College Materring (N=39)*  
*(1=Strongly disagree, 2=Somewhat disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Somewhat agree, 5=Strongly agree)*

Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Other students are happy for me when I do well in exams or projects <i>M</i> =3.46, <i>SD</i> =1.15	3	7.69	6	15.38	6	15.38	18	46.15	6	15.38
People on campus seem happy about my accomplishments <i>M</i> =3.51, <i>SD</i> =1.15	4	10.76	3	7.69	7	17.95	19	48.72	6	15.38
There are people on campus who are sad for me when I fail in something I set out to do <i>M</i> =3.49, <i>SD</i> =1.24	4	10.26	6	15.38	3	7.69	19	48.72	7	17.95
Some people on campus are disappointed in me when I do not accomplish all I should <i>M</i> =3.31, <i>SD</i> =1.14	3	7.69	8	20.51	6	15.38	18	46.15	4	10.26
People on campus are generally supportive of my individual needs <i>M</i> =3.74, <i>SD</i> =1.06	1	2.56	4	10.26	10	25.64	13	33.33	11	28.21

Table 3 (Continued)

Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
There are people at Rowan who are concerned about my future <i>M</i> =3.79, <i>SD</i> =1.24	2	5.13	7	17.95	2	5.13	14	35.90	14	35.90
I sometimes feel pressured to do better because people at Rowan would be disappointed if I did not <i>M</i> =3.28, <i>SD</i> =1.26	6	15.38	4	10.26	7	17.95	17	43.59	5	12.82

Conversely, Table 4, measuring the category of *Mattering versus marginality*, suggests that many LGBTQIA students feel marginalized. Items in this table are reverse scored in the overall analysis, meaning that answers reporting that the subject “somewhat agrees” or “strongly agrees” to the statement at hand are scored with a lower integer as opposed to a higher one in the larger table of results (Table 2.1). In the items measuring *Mattering versus marginality*, over half of the students reported that they somewhat or strongly agree to the statements, suggesting that LGBTQIA students at Rowan University frequently experience feelings of isolation, loneliness, and invisibility.

Table 4

*Mattering Versus Marginality (N=39)*  
*(1=Strongly disagree, 2=Somewhat disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Somewhat agree, 5=Strongly agree)*

Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Sometimes I feel that I am not interesting to anyone at Rowan <i>M</i> =3.26, <i>SD</i> =1.43	7	17.95	6	15.38	5	12.82	12	30.77	9	23.08
Sometimes I feel that no one at Rowan notices me <i>M</i> =3.36, <i>SD</i> =1.23	4	10.26	6	15.38	8	20.51	14	35.90	7	17.95
Sometimes I feel alone at Rowan <i>M</i> =3.62, <i>SD</i> =1.23	4	10.26	4	10.26	4	10.26	18	46.15	9	23.08
Sometimes I get so wrapped up in my personal problems that I isolate myself from others at Rowan <i>M</i> =4.05, <i>SD</i> =1.18	3	7.69	2	5.13	2	5.13	15	38.46	17	43.59
I often feel isolated when involved in student activities (e.g., clubs, events) <i>M</i> =3.00, <i>SD</i> =1.38	8	20.51	8	20.51	4	10.26	14	35.90	5	12.82
I often feel socially inadequate at school <i>M</i> =3.64, <i>SD</i> =1.29	4	10.26	4	10.26	6	15.38	13	33.33	12	30.77

*Note.* Items marked with \* were reverse scored

Table 5 illustrates LGBTQIA students' feelings of mattering pertaining to their counselors or advisors. This category had more variation in responses than the previous

two, but showed an overall neutral to positive trend. This suggests that, with some exceptions, LGBTQIA students feel as though they matter to counselors and advisors at Rowan, or at least do not feel as though they do not matter.

Table 5

*Mattering to Counselors or Advisors (N=39)*  
*(1=Strongly disagree, 2=Somewhat disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Somewhat agree, 5=Strongly agree)*

Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I believe that my counselor(s) would miss me if I suddenly stopped attending Rowan <i>M=2.85, SD=1.33</i>	9	23.08	5	12.82	14	35.90	5	12.82	6	15.38
My counselor is generally receptive to what I have to say <i>M=4.08, SD=0.94</i>	0	0.00	1	2.70	12	34.43	7	18.92	17	45.95
If I stopped attending college, my counselor(s) would be disappointed <i>M=3.31, SD=1.26</i>	5	12.82	4	10.26	12	30.77	10	25.64	8	20.51
If I had a personal problem, I believe that counselors would be willing to discuss it with me <i>M=3.64, SD=1.21</i>	4	10.26	2	5.13	8	20.51	15	38.46	10	25.64

Table 5 (Continued)

Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Counselors at Rowan generally show their concern for students' well-being <i>M</i> =3.58, <i>SD</i> =1.14	3	7.89	3	7.89	9	23.68	15	39.47	8	21.05

Similarly to *Mattering to counselors and advisors*, the *Mattering to instructors* category, shown in Table 6, had more variation in negative, positive, and neutral responses. This category was also reverse scored, much like the *Mattering versus marginality* category. In general, despite the variance in answers, the trend was more toward neutral and positive responses, suggesting that LGBTQIA students feel as though they matter to their instructors most of the time.

Table 6

*Mattering to Instructors (N=39)*  
(1=Strongly disagree, 2=Somewhat disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Somewhat agree, 5=Strongly agree)

Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I often feel my instructor(s) care more about other things than me as a student <i>M</i> =3.08, <i>SD</i> =0.97	2	5.13	11	28.21	8	20.51	18	46.15	0	0.00

Table 6 (Continued)

Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I sometimes feel my instructor(s) want me to hurry up and finish speaking <i>M</i> =2.67, <i>SD</i> =1.21	8	20.51	10	25.64	11	28.21	7	17.95	3	7.69
Sometimes my instructors simply do not listen to what I have to say <i>M</i> =2.41, <i>SD</i> =1.08	9	23.08	14	35.90	7	17.95	9	23.08	0	0.00
My instructors sometimes ignore my comments or questions <i>M</i> =2.36, <i>SD</i> =1.19	10	25.64	16	41.03	4	10.26	7	17.95	2	5.13

*Note.* Items marked with \* were reverse scored

Table 7 illustrates how much LGBTQIA students feel they matter to other students. Respondents reported that they “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree” over half of the time for all three items in this category. This suggests that LGBTQIA students typically feel that they matter to their peers at Rowan.



Table 7

*Mattering to Students (N=39)*  
*(1=Strongly disagree, 2=Somewhat disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Somewhat agree, 5=Strongly agree)*

Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Other students rely on me for support <i>M=3.31, SD=1.28</i>	5	12.82	6	15.38	7	17.95	14	35.90	7	17.95
When in groups, other students rely on my contributions <i>M=3.51, SD=1.26</i>	4	10.26	5	12.82	6	15.38	15	38.46	9	23.08
Some students are dependent on my guidance or assistance to help me succeed <i>M=3.21, SD=1.36</i>	8	20.51	4	10.26	4	10.26	18	46.15	5	12.82

Table 8 details respondents' *Perceptions of value* on campus, or how much they feel others at Rowan value their presence and contributions. Respondents to this survey reported a high perception of value; students reported that they "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" to these statements more than half to approximately three-quarters of the time for all three items in this category.

Table 8

*Perception of Value (N=39)*  
*(1=Strongly disagree, 2=Somewhat disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Somewhat agree, 5=Strongly agree)*

Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Knowing that other people at Rowan care for me motivates me to do better <i>M=4.13, SD=1.06</i>	2	5.26	1	2.63	4	10.53	14	36.84	17	44.74
There are people at Rowan that sincerely appreciate my involvement as a student <i>M=4.05, SD=1.22</i>	3	7.69	2	5.13	4	10.26	11	28.21	19	48.72
It is comforting to know that my contributions are valued by my instructors <i>M=4.05, SD=1.02</i>	1	2.63	2	5.26	7	18.42	12	31.58	16	42.11

In most categories, the responses trended toward feelings of mattering. There are, however, some items and one category – *Mattering versus marginality* – where the trend was toward feelings of marginality. There were also differences in areas of marginality or mattering when the data was stratified further to account for aspects of respondents' identities as reported in the screening questions.

***Transgender and cisgender perceptions of mattering.*** There were some differences in how transgender and cisgender students who identify as LGBTQIA perceived their experiences at Rowan. While the trend remains positive overall when data is stratified by gender identity, transgender students did report negatively more often than

their cisgender peers. This is especially apparent in the *Mattering versus marginality* category. Table 9 shows the responses for the *Marginality versus mattering* items from all students that took the survey who identified as something other than cisgender. Table 10 shows the responses to these items from all students that took the survey who did not identify themselves as transgender, non-binary, or another non-cisgender identity.

Table 9

*Mattering Versus Marginality, Transgender Students (N=21)*  
*(1=Strongly disagree, 2=Somewhat disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Somewhat agree, 5=Strongly agree)*

Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Sometimes I feel that I am not interesting to anyone at Rowan* <i>M=3.57, SD=1.50</i>	4	19.05	2	9.52	0	0.00	8	38.10	7	33.33
Sometimes I feel that no one at Rowan notices me* <i>M=3.76, SD=1.06</i>	0	0.00	4	19.05	3	14.29	8	38.10	6	28.57
Sometimes I feel alone at Rowan* <i>M=4.00, SD=1.11</i>	1	4.76	2	9.52	1	4.76	9	42.86	8	38.10
Sometimes I get so wrapped up in my personal problems that I isolate myself from others at Rowan* <i>M=4.00, SD=1.23</i>	2	9.52	1	4.76	1	4.76	8	38.10	9	42.86
I often feel isolated when involved in student activities (e.g., clubs, events)* <i>M=3.33, SD=1.36</i>	3	14.29	4	19.05	1	4.76	9	42.86	4	19.05

I often feel socially inadequate at school\*

$M=4.05, SD=0.95$  0 0.00 2 9.52 3 14.29 8 38.10 8 38.10

Note. Items marked with \* were reverse scored

Table 10

*Mattering Versus Marginality, Cisgender Students (N=18)*

(1=Strongly disagree, 2=Somewhat disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Somewhat agree, 5=Strongly agree)

Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Sometimes I feel that I am not interesting to anyone at Rowan* $M=2.89, SD=1.24$	3	16.67	4	22.22	5	27.78	4	22.22	2	11.11
Sometimes I feel that no one at Rowan notices me* $M=2.89, SD=1.24$	4	22.22	2	11.11	5	27.78	6	33.33	1	5.56
Sometimes I feel alone at Rowan* $M=3.17, SD=1.21$	3	16.67	2	11.11	3	16.67	9	50.00	1	5.56
Sometimes I get so wrapped up in my personal problems that I isolate myself from others at Rowan* $M=4.11, SD=1.10$	1	5.56	1	5.56	1	5.56	7	38.89	8	44.44
I often feel isolated when involved in student activities (e.g., clubs, events)* $M=2.61, SD=1.30$	5	27.78	4	22.22	3	16.67	5	27.78	1	5.56
I often feel socially inadequate at school* $M=3.17, SD=1.46$	4	22.22	2	11.11	3	16.67	5	27.78	4	22.22

Note. Items marked with \* were reverse scored

While over half of the transgender students reported negatively on all items regarding *Marginality versus mattering*, over half of the cisgender students reported negatively on only two items. More cisgender students (83.33%) than transgender students (80.96%) reported negatively on item 31, “Sometimes I get so wrapped up in my personal problems that I isolate myself from others at Rowan,” suggesting that transgender students are slightly less likely to isolate themselves based on personal problems. Overall, however, cisgender students reported less that they felt alone, invisible, and isolated than their transgender peers.

**Socially focused and academically focused items.** In analyzing the data, an apparent difference in answers arose between questions that focused on the social aspects of the university setting and questions that focused on the academic aspects of the university setting, both in the overall group and when stratified between transgender and cisgender respondents. When focusing on questions regarding the social aspects of Rowan, the frequency of positive answers dropped to 48.6%, and the frequency of negative answers rose to 39.2%, suggesting that students using the LGBTQIA Center may struggle with feelings of marginality in social settings at Rowan. Conversely, answers regarding academic aspects of Rowan were generally positive 63.1% of the time and negative 19% of the time.

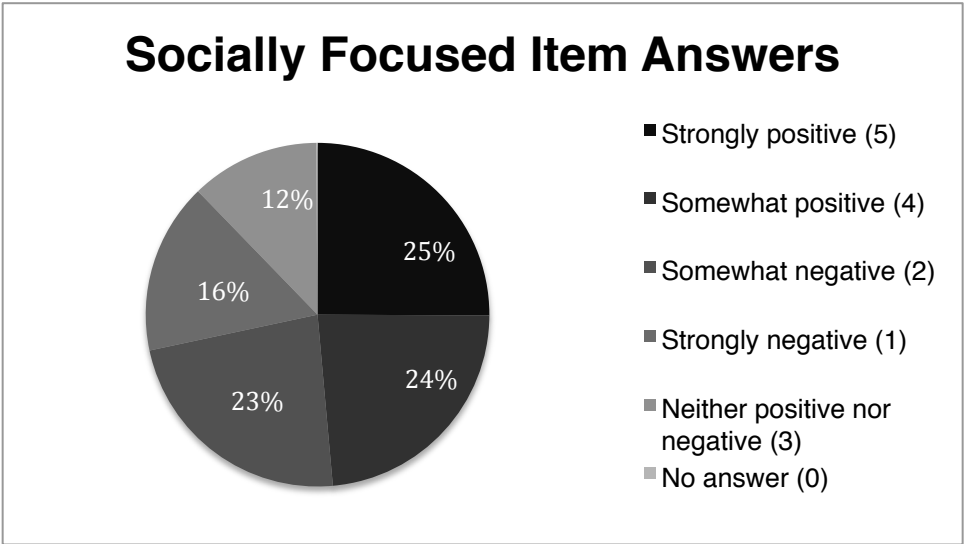


Figure 5. Frequency of answers to socially focused items.

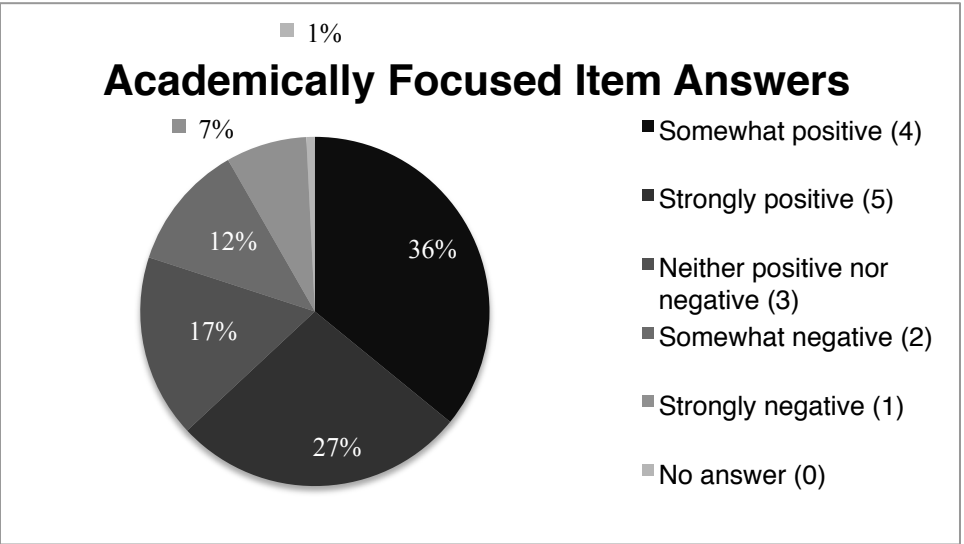


Figure 6. Frequency of answers to academically focused items.

The difference was even starker when stratified by transgender and cisgender respondents. Transgender individuals answered positively 43.6% of the time and negatively 46.6% of the time on socially focused questions. Cisgender individuals answered positively 54.5% of the time and negatively 30.7% of the time for socially focused questions. Transgender respondents answered positively for academically focused questions 59.9% of the time, and negatively 21.5% of the time. Cisgender respondents answered positively for academically focused questions 67% of the time, and negatively 16.8% of the time.

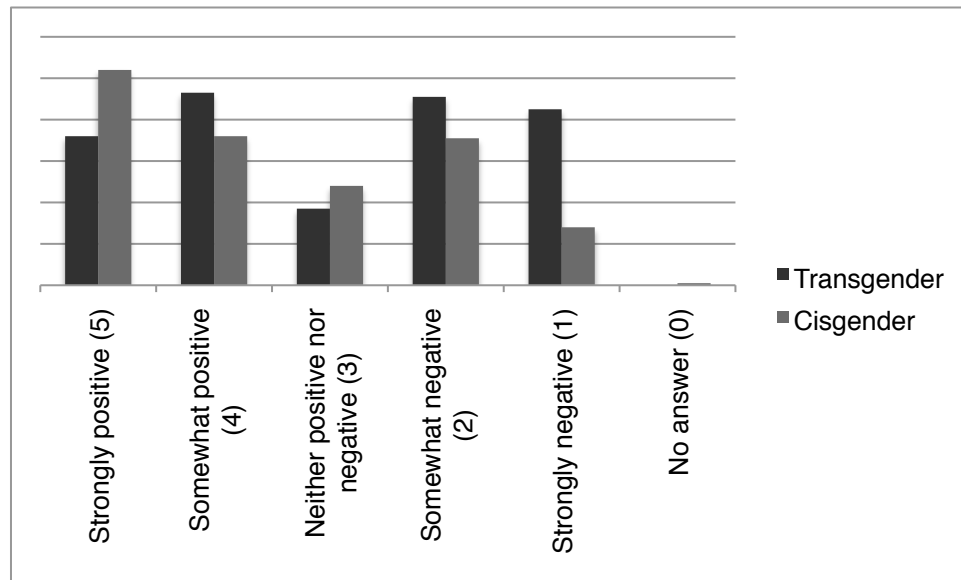


Figure 7. Frequency of answers for socially focused questions, comparing transgender and cisgender respondents.

In questions directly regarding gender and sexuality, respondents typically did not feel isolated because of their identity. Over half of respondents (64%) said that they do not feel isolated as a result of their gender identity; about a quarter (28.3%) reported that they do feel isolated because of their gender identity. In regard to sexuality, approximately half of respondents (56.4%) reported that they do not feel isolated because of their sexuality, while 35.9% reported that they do. Additionally, 87.2% of respondents agreed that they feel that others at Rowan are generally accepting of them.

Feelings of belonging were overall fairly contested, with some items being scored positively and others scored negatively. For example 87% of respondents agreed that there are enough opportunities on campus to connect with others and 56.3% reported that they feel they belong at Rowan, but 69% of respondents report that they feel alone and 64.1% report that they feel socially inadequate.

In summary, just under half of students reported positively to items regarding social aspects of college, while over half reported positively to academically focused items. Students responded negatively to socially focused items 39% of the time, and to academically focused items 29% of the time. Transgender students respond negatively more frequently than cisgender students, especially for items regarding the social aspects of college.



## Chapter 5

### Summary, Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

#### Summary

A Gallup poll published in May 2018 (Newport) estimates that 4.5% of Americans identify as LGBTQIA. According to the poll, approximately 8.2% of adults born between 1980 and 1999 identify as LGBTQIA, making them the largest age group to date that identifies in this way (Newport, 2018). As such, colleges are seeing an increase in their LGBTQIA student body. Rowan University began addressing this increase by opening an LGBTQIA Center as a part of the Office of Social Justice, Inclusion, and Conflict Resolution in 2014. Since then, students have utilized resources offered by the center, including programming, student organizations, and a physical space.

Schlossberg (1989) defined states of marginality and mattering in college and university students in terms of manifesting space on campus. She discussed mattering as a state in which students feel they have a place where they are considered important and integral to that place (Schlossberg). She termed marginality as a feeling of uncertainty surrounding one's place in a greater culture (Schlossberg). Tovar, Simon, and Lee (2009) expanded on Schlossberg's theory, creating an inventory designed to measure feelings of mattering and marginality in college students, called the College Mattering Inventory.

The study administered the College Mattering Inventory to students utilizing Rowan University's LGBTQIA Center in order to assess how they felt about their experiences at Rowan. The study garnered 39 responses out of approximately 378 students, resulting in a margin of error of approximately 15% with a confidence level of 95%. The students reported that they felt neutral or that they mattered in five out of six

subsets – *General college mattering*, *Mattering to instructors*, *Mattering to counselors or advisors*, *Mattering to other students*, and *Perception of value* – and strongly negative in one subset, *Mattering versus marginality*.

## **Discussion of Findings**

**Research question one.** Do LGBTQIA undergraduate students using the resources offered by the LGBTQIA Center at Rowan University feel as though they matter?

The purpose of this question was to assess feelings of marginality or mattering as reported by Tovar, Simon, and Lee’s (2009) College Mattering Inventory. Individuals responded to statements with “strongly disagree,” “somewhat disagree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “somewhat agree,” or “strongly agree.” These responses were given a numerical value on a scale of one to five, with one representing “strongly disagree” and five representing “strongly agree.” Eighteen items were worded negatively and reverse-scored upon analysis. Students indicated that they felt they mattered or did not feel strongly in either direction in five out of six subsets, indicating low feelings of marginality in these subsets. One subset had significantly low scores, indicating high feelings of marginality in this subset.

***General college mattering.*** Respondents typically scored high on the *General college mattering* subset of items. Between half and three-quarters of students who took the survey responded with either “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree” to all eight of the statements in this category. This indicates that the majority of LGBTQIA students feel that they have positive feelings regarding general college mattering.

***Mattering versus marginality.*** Respondents typically responded negatively to items in this subset. For five out of six reverse scored items, between half and three-quarters of students who took the survey gave responses that indicate they are struggling in this category. This indicates that the majority of LGBTQIA students feel marginalized, and the responses to individual items suggest that many LGBTQIA students feel isolated, lonely, and invisible. This is a concern because feelings of marginality or lack of feelings of mattering can increase the risk of suicidality in individuals, especially those who are already considered more vulnerable to mental health issues (Bonner & Rich, 1987).

***Mattering to counselors or advisors.*** Students reported that they feel neutral or that they feel they matter to counselors and advisors. There is a chance the higher amount of neutral responses is due to the wording of the items, as the assessment uses the word “counselors” interchangeably with “advisors,” whereas at Rowan, typically “counselor” refers to individual mental health professionals in the counseling center as opposed to mental health professionals and academic advisors. Therefore, some students may have felt that the questions did not apply to them if they are not actively engaged with the counseling center. Regardless, the data suggests that LGBTQIA students feel as though they matter to counselors and advisors, and many do not feel strongly toward mattering or marginality in this subset.

***Mattering to instructors.*** With the exception of one item, the responses to the items in the *Mattering to instructors* subset were neutral to positive. In the item, “I often feel my instructor(s) care more about other things than me as a student,” 46.15% of the responses were “somewhat agree,” indicating feelings of marginality. The responses to the other three statements in this category indicated feelings of mattering, or neutral

feelings in LGBTQIA students. Therefore, it can be assumed that LGBTQIA students generally feel that they matter to their instructors.

***Mattering to students.*** Students' responses were somewhat polarized in this subset. While the majority of students indicated that they "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" with most of the statements, at least one item had a high number of respondents that replied that they "strongly disagree" with the statement at hand. Overall, however, students' general perception was that they matter to other students at Rowan.

***Perceptions of value.*** This subset was the category on which respondents typically rated the highest. For all items, between half and three-quarters of respondents indicated that they "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" with the statements listed. This is indicative of strong perceptions of value in LGBTQIA students, meaning these students feel that they are worthy participants at Rowan.

**Research question two.** Is there a difference in perceptions of mattering between transgender and cisgender LGBTQIA undergraduate students at Rowan University?

The purpose of this question was to compare two subsets of the LGBTQIA community that often have very different experiences and attitudes regarding identity. About half of respondents indicated that they identified as transgender, non-binary, or another identity under the transgender "umbrella" of identities. In comparing the responses between the two halves of respondents, the goal was to assess differences in feelings of mattering between students using the LGBTQIA Center.

The data showed that in most subsets, there was a slight difference in transgender and cisgender students' feelings of marginality and mattering. Transgender students' responses typically fell closer to the marginality end of the spectrum than the responses

of their cisgender peers. Transgender students showed a generally lower perception of themselves in the *Mattering versus marginality* subset, indicating that while most LGBTQIA students as a group are experiencing low feelings of mattering, transgender students are especially vulnerable.

Almost half of transgender respondents (47.7%) reported that they do not believe other students would miss them if they were to suddenly disappear, compared to 22.3% of cisgender respondents. Transgender students are also more likely to report that they feel alone on campus; 81% of respondents who identified as transgender or gender non-conforming reported that they sometimes feel alone at Rowan, compared to 55.6% of cisgender students. Transgender respondents reported that they felt nobody on campus notices them more often (66.7% as opposed to 38.9%) than their cisgender peers. This is problematic because according to Bonner and Rich (1987), perceived loneliness and isolation, when combined with depression, can be an early indicator of suicidal ideation in individuals. Low perceptions of mattering, according to Rosenberg and McCullough (1979), can result in feelings of depression.

## **Conclusions**

According to Schlossberg (1989), marginality can be either a temporary or permanent state. Students who feel marginalized when entering a new campus, changing their major, or moving to a new town may overcome feelings of marginalization as they acclimate to the new culture surrounding them (Schlossberg). However, students who feel as though they are a part of two “worlds,” cultures, or belief sets as a result of an integral identity may experience marginality as a permanent condition (Schlossberg). The

Penguin Dictionary of Sociology (2006) defines dual consciousness as a state in which people hold two seemingly inconsistent sets of beliefs at once.

These concepts are reflected strongly in the data. Many students reported that they do not feel isolated as a result of their gender and/or sexuality, but many of the same students reported general feelings of loneliness, invisibility, and isolation. Students reported mostly neutral and positive experiences with professors, advisors, and other students, and over half indicated that they have high perceptions of value. However, the data also suggests that LGBTQIA students are still experiencing some kind of conflict resulting in feelings of marginalization, which manifests in the perception that they are isolated, invisible, and alone in their day-to-day lives on campus. Based on the generally neutral and positive trends seen in five out of six subsets, contrasted with the highly negative trend seen in the *Marginality versus mattering* subset, LGBTQIA students at Rowan may be experiencing marginality as a condition brought on by conflicting messages, values, or identities. These students may feel as though they matter as Rowan students, and may also feel as though they matter as LGBTQIA people, but there is potentially a conflict between these two identities resulting in long-term and hard to trace feelings of marginality in LGBTQIA students at Rowan.

### **Recommendations for Further Practice**

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended for future practice regarding LGBTQIA students at Rowan:

1. Hire a full-time professional staff member whose primary responsibility is the LGBTQIA Center and its resources.

2. Continue to expand resources – particularly academic, mental health, and social resources – for LGBTQIA students at Rowan.
3. Foster a partnership between the LGBTQIA Center and academic departments, as well as other departments within the division of student life.
4. Develop LGBTQIA-specific mental health and suicide intervention programs.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended for future research regarding LGBTQIA students at Rowan:

1. More research needs to be done on the dual consciousness of students who identify as LGBTQIA, both at Rowan University and in a larger context.
2. More research needs to be done on integrating academic and social aspects of a university setting.
3. More research needs to be done on supporting LGBTQIA student populations, particularly transgender and other gender non-conforming students, both at Rowan University and in a larger context.

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## Appendix A

### Alternate Consent for Online Distribution of Surveys

Online Consent.

You are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled Do LGBTQIA Rowan Students Matter? Marginality and Mattering in Rowan University LGBTQIA Undergraduate Students. You are included in this survey because of your affiliation with Rowan University's LGBTQIA student organizations and/or the LGBTQIA Center in the Office of Social Justice, Inclusion, and Conflict Resolution. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be approximately 30 subjects.

The survey may take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this online survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey. We expect the study to last approximately two weeks.

The purpose of this research study is to assess feelings of marginality or mattering, as described by Schlossberg (1989), in Rowan University's LGBTQIA undergraduate community. It is being conducted as a part of Liz Ditzel's thesis project in partial compliance with the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in Higher Education at Rowan University.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in the study, you may help us understand how we can better improve resources for LGBTQIA students. If, as a result of taking this survey, you feel as though you are in crisis, please contact the Wellness Center at 856-256-4333 during operating hours or the counselor on call at 856-256-4911.

Your response will be kept confidential. We will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of the study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact me via email at [ditzel58@students.rowan.edu](mailto:ditzel58@students.rowan.edu) or my thesis advisor, Dr. Tyrone McCombs, at [mccombst@rowan.edu](mailto:mccombst@rowan.edu), but you do not have to give your personal identification.

Please complete the checkboxes below.

- To participate in this survey, you must be 18 years or older, an undergraduate student at Rowan University, and identify as a member of the LGBTQIA community.
- Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey.

## Appendix B

### College Mattering Inventory Access Information

For permissions to use the College Mattering Inventory survey instrument, please contact Dr. Esau Tovar at [tovar\\_esau@smc.edu](mailto:tovar_esau@smc.edu) and Dr. Merrill Simon at [merril.simon.csun.edu](mailto:merril.simon.csun.edu).

Tovar, E., Simon, M. A., & Lee, H. B. (2009). Development and Validation of the College Mattering Inventory With Diverse Urban College Students. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, 42(3), 154–178.


<https://doi.org/10.1177/0748175609344091>

# Appendix C

## Permission to Use the College Mattering Inventory

Permissions for CMI 




 **Ditzel, Liz** <ditzel58@students.rowan.edu>  
to TOVAR\_ESAU ▾

Thu, Jan 24, 2:52 PM ☆ ↶ ⋮

Dr. Tovar,

My name is Liz Ditzel. I'm a graduate student at Rowan University and I'm in the process of preparing for my thesis. For my research project, I would like to assess marginality vs. mattering in our undergraduate LGBTQIA population. To do this, I would love to use the College Mattering Inventory, with a few added preliminary screening questions to assess gender identity and sexuality in participants. I wanted to reach out for permission to avoid any potential academic sanctions. Will this be okay?

Thanks and looking forward to hearing from you,  
Liz Ditzel

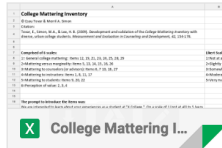
 **TOVAR\_ESAU** TOVAR\_ESAU@smc.edu [via smccollege.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:smccollege.onmicrosoft.com)  
to me ▾

Thu, Feb 14, 5:32 PM ☆ ↶ ⋮

Dear Liz,

You have our permission to use the CMI as noted in your request. I am attaching an Excel file with the items—in case you need them. Best wishes with your study!

Esau



## Appendix D

### Electronic Institutional Review Board Approval

3/27/2019

Rowan University Mail - Rowan University eIRB: Study Approved



Ditzel, Liz <ditzel58@students.rowan.edu>

#### Rowan University eIRB: Study Approved

1 message

eIRB@rowan.edu <eIRB@rowan.edu>  
Reply-To: eIRB@rowan.edu  
To: ditzel58@students.rowan.edu

Thu, Feb 28, 2019 at 4:42 PM

\*\* This is an auto-generated email. Please do not reply to this email message.  
The originating e-mail account is not monitored.  
If you have questions, please contact your local IRB office \*\*

DHHS Federal Wide Assurance Identifier: FWA00007111  
IRB Chair Person: Harriet Hartman  
IRB Director: Sreekant Murthy  
Effective Date:

#### eIRB Notice of Approval

##### STUDY PROFILE

**Study ID:** [Pro2019000326](#)  
**Title:** Do LGBTQIA Rowan Students Matter?  
Marginality and Mattering in Rowan University's LGBTQIA Undergraduate Population

<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	Tyrone McCombs	<b>Study Coordinator:</b>	
<b>Co-Investigator(s):</b>	Liz Ditzel	<b>Other Study Staff:</b>	There are no items to display
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Department Funded	<b>Approval Cycle:</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Risk Determination:</b>	Minimal Risk	<b>Device Determination:</b>	Not Applicable

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ik=d5c7c586e0&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-P%3A1626750451014237379&simpl=msg-P%3A1626750451014237379>

1/3

3/27/2019

Rowan University Mail - Rowan University eIRB: Study Approved

Review Type:

Exempt

Exempt Category:

2

CURRENT SUBMISSION STATUS

<b>Submission Type:</b>	Research Protocol/Study	<b>Submission Status:</b>	Approved
<b>Approval Date:</b>	2/27/2019	<b>Expiration Date:</b>	
<b>Continuation Review Required:</b>	Progress Report		
<b>Pregnancy Code:</b>	No Pregnant Women as Subjects	<b>Pediatric Code:</b>	No Children As Subjects
		<b>Prisoner Code:</b>	No Prisoners As Subjects
<b>Protocol:</b>	Recruitment Email Methodology and Lit Review Alternate Consent Form Protocol Ditzel Marginality and Mattering Survey	<b>Consent:</b>	There are no items to display
		<b>Recruitment Materials:</b>	There are no items to display

\* Study Performance Sites:

Glassboro Campus 201 Mullica Hill Rd, Glassboro, NJ 08028

There are no items to display

ALL APPROVED INVESTIGATOR(S) MUST COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1. Conduct the research in accordance with the protocol, applicable laws and regulations, and the principles of research ethics as set forth in the Belmont Report.
- 2a. **Continuing Review:** Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses in approval, submit a continuation application at least eight weeks before the study expiration date.
- 2b. **Progress Report:** Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses, an annual progress report is required at least 21 days prior to the expiration date.
3. **Expiration of IRB Approval:** If IRB approval expires, effective the date of expiration and until the continuing review approval is issued. **All research activities must stop unless the IRB finds that it is in the best interest of individual subjects to continue. (This determination shall be based on a separate written request from the PI to the IRB.) No new subjects may be enrolled and no samples/charts/surveys may be collected, reviewed, and/or analyzed.**

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=d5e7c586c0&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-P%3A1626750451014237379&simpl=msg-P%3A1626750451014237379>

2/3

3/27/2019

Rowan University Mail - Rowan University eIRB: Study Approved

4. **Amendments/Modifications/Revisions** - If you wish to change any aspect of this study after the approval date mentioned in this letter, including but not limited to, study procedures, consent form(s), investigators, advertisements, the protocol document, investigator drug brochure, or accrual goals, you are required to obtain IRB review and approval prior to implementation of these changes unless necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects. This policy is also applicable to progress reports.
5. **Unanticipated Problems:** Unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at: <http://www.rowan.edu/som/hsp/>
6. **Protocol Deviations and Violations:** Deviations from/violations of the approved study protocol must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at: <http://www.rowan.edu/som/hsp/>
7. **Consent/Assent:** The IRB has reviewed and approved the consent and/or assent process, waiver and/or alteration described in this protocol as required by 45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50, 56, (if FDA regulated research). Only the versions of the documents included in the approved process may be used to document informed consent and/or assent of study subjects; each subject must receive a copy of the approved form(s); and a copy of each signed form must be filed in a secure place in the subject's medical/patient/research record.
8. **Completion of Study:** Notify the IRB when your study has been completed or stopped for any reason. Neither study closure by the sponsor nor the investigator removes the obligation for submission of timely continuing review application, progress report or final report.
9. The Investigator(s) did not participate in the review, discussion, or vote of this protocol.
10. **Letter Comments:** There are no additional comments.

**CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE:** This email communication may contain private, confidential, or legally privileged information intended for the sole use of the designated and/or duly authorized recipient(s). If you are not the intended recipient or have received this email in error, please notify the sender immediately by email and permanently delete all copies of this email including all attachments without reading them. If you are the intended recipient, secure the contents in a manner that conforms to all applicable state and/or federal requirements related to privacy and confidentiality of such information.

Study,PI Name:  
Study,Co-Investigators:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=d5e7c586c0&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-P%3A1626750451014237379&simpl=msg-P%3A1626750451014237379>

3/3

## Appendix E

### Recruitment Email for Survey Instrument

The following message is given on behalf of Liz Ditzel, a graduate student in the Higher Education Master of Arts degree program and graduate advisor for True Colors:

Hi there!

Because you're an important member of Rowan's LGBTQIA Center clubs and programming, I'm asking you to take this survey, which is a part of a research study at Rowan. My name is Liz Ditzel, and I'm researching LGBTQIA student experiences at Rowan for my thesis project. My survey will take approximately 10 minutes, and can be found at this link:

[https://rowan.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3rgeMYUjMLaxqh7](https://rowan.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3rgeMYUjMLaxqh7)

The survey can be taken from any device that has an Internet connection. The information gathered will not only help me finish my thesis, but may also be used to help improve LGBTQIA resources and programming at Rowan. All responses are completely anonymous. If you have questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at [ditzel58@students.rowan.edu](mailto:ditzel58@students.rowan.edu), or my advisor, Dr. Tyrone McCombs, at [mccombst@rowan.edu](mailto:mccombst@rowan.edu). Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Thanks,  
Liz Ditzel

Study has been approved by Rowan IRB. IRB# Pro2019000326.



## Appendix F

### Glossary of Terms

1. Agender: Not identifying with any gender; genderless.
2. Asexual: A person who does not experience sexual attraction. They may or may not experience emotional, physical, or romantic attraction. Asexuality differs from celibacy in that it is a sexual orientation, not a choice. People who are asexual may call themselves “ace.”
3. Bisexual: A person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to males/men and females/women. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders and there may be a preference for one gender over others.
4. Gay: 1.) Used in some cultural settings to represent males who are attracted to males in a romantic, erotic and/or emotional sense. Not all men who engage in “homosexual behavior” identify as gay, and as such this label should be used with caution. 2.) An umbrella term for LGBTQ people.
5. Gender: 1.) A socially constructed system of classifications that ascribes qualities of masculinity and femininity to people. Gender characteristic can change over time and vary between cultures. 2.) Someone’s innate sense of being male, female or something else.
6. Gender Identity: A person’s sense of self as masculine, feminine, both, or neither regardless of external genitalia.
7. Gender Non-Conforming: A person who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer, butch, cross-dresser,etc.). Also known as ‘Gender Variant.’

8. Heterosexual: Being sexually, romantically, and/or emotionally attracted to members of the “opposite” gender.
9. Lesbian: Term used to describe female-identified people attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other female-identified people.
10. Queer: 1.) An umbrella term which includes lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, trans people, intersex persons, radical sex communities, and many other sexually transgressive communities. 2.) This term is sometimes used as a sexual orientation label or gender identity label used to denote a non-heterosexual or cisgender identity without have to define specifics. 3.) A reclaimed word that was formerly used solely as a slur but that has been reclaimed by some folks in the LGBTQ community. Nevertheless, a sizable percentage of people to whom this term might apply still hold ‘queer’ to be a hateful insult, and its use by cisgender, heterosexual people is often considered offensive.
11. Questioning: the state of being unsure of and/or exploring gender identity and/or sexual orientation.
12. Sexual Orientation: The desire for intimate emotional and/or sexual relationships with people of the same gender/sex, another gender/sex, or multiple genders/sexes.
13. Sexuality: Refers to a person’s exploration of sexual behaviors, practices and identities in the social world.
14. Trans: An abbreviation that is used to refer to a transgender/gender queer/ gender non-conforming person. This use allows a person to state a gender variant identity without having to disclose hormonal or surgical status/intentions. This term is sometimes used to refer to the whole gender non-conforming community that

might include (but is not limited to) transgender, genderqueer, genderfluid, non-binary, genderf\*ck, transsexual, agender, third gender, two-spirit, bigender, trans man, trans woman, gender non-conforming, masculine of center, and gender questioning.

15. Transgender: A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on sex or gender assigned at birth. Sexual orientation varies and is not dependent on gender identity.

This terminology sheet was originally created by Eli R. Green and Erica Peterson of the LGBT Resource Center at the University of California, Riverside 2003-2004 and has been revised using resources from the following organizations: University of California, Riverside; MIT; University of California, Berkeley; George Washington University; California State University, San Marco; University of California, San Diego; Bowling Green State University; The Asexuality Visibility and Education Network (AVEN), and Wikipedia. Updated May 2015. Found and quoted via Rowan University's Office of Social Justice, Inclusion, and Conflict Resolution LGBTQIA Center webpage.