Queer Agriculture and Rurality: An Educational Curriculum

Final Project and Report

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background

It is crucial to preemptively note that representative data and initiatives pertaining to queer people is lacking in every area of research (Lowry, 2020), and this erasure is both an intentional and harmful reality perpetuated by institutions of power for centuries as a way of maintaining heteronormativity as the global ideal. Despite these efforts, according to a recent poll by Gallup, the number of Americans who identify as LGBTQ+ has doubled in the last decade, from a measly 3.5% in 2012 to 7.1% in 2022 (Yurcaba, 2022). This figure becomes even larger when comparing data across generations of Americans, with 10.5% of Millennials and 21% of Generation Z adults identifying as LGBTQ+ (Yurcaba, 2022). On the other end of the spectrum, just 4.2% of Generation X, < 3% of Baby Boomers, and a minute 0.8% of adults aged 77 and older identify as LGBTQ+ (Yurcaba, 2022). This is not to say that queerness is a modern or generational trait, but instead that the prevalence and advancement of education and technology has increased access to non-heteronormative narratives and experiences. This has opened the door for those who have struggled to conform to societal standards of love and expression, and will hopefully lay the foundation for more people now and in the future to understand and appreciate the fluidity of human sexuality and gender expression.

Unfortunately, disproportionate access to essential technologies and education in areas across the country has had a major effect on the baseline level of competency regarding non-heteronormative people and lifestyles (Szalacha, 2004). Additionally, varying political and cultural climates put some populations at an inherent disadvantage and inequitable access to educational resources. For example, northern, more progressive states like Massachusetts have funded state-wide queer education initiatives for years (Szalacha, 2004). In contrast, just recently

in 2021 Alabama removed its mandate that sex education must include "an emphasis that homosexuality is not a lifestyle acceptable to the general public and that homosexual conduct is a criminal offense under the laws of the state" (Thoreson, 2021).

Data from the California Safe Schools Coalition's Preventing School Harassment (PSH) survey showed that school students who received inclusive education were more likely to feel safe in their schools, have a greater sense of belonging in the school community, and were less likely to be the target of sexual harassment or bullying on the basis of perceived gender or sexual identity (Burdge et. al, 2012). These findings are not exclusive to primary school either, with students in higher education describing their college campuses with minimal LGBTQ+ topics and curriculum inclusion as "chilly or not inviting," (Jaekel, 2021). The fact remains that evidence for LGBTQ+ (queer) inclusive education is both compelling and encouraging for future generations, provided that the federal government protects and advances protections for queer people and their histories.

Statement of The Problem

In the agricultural industry and rural communities, there is a long-held culture of queer (LGBTQ+) erasure, collective trauma, and overall lack of representation/visibility. This may be attributed to the widespread presence, enforcement, and encouragement of Western, heteronormative values and lifestyles in our society, as well as the prevalence of such attitudes in rural communities of the United States (MAP, 2019). Rural areas and communities of the United States are hereby defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as areas with open countryside with less than 500 people per square mile and/or less than 50,000 people in the area, depending on locality (USDA, 2019). For queer Americans in affected areas, this has resulted in

a disproportionate lack of access to land ownership, resources, community, and an overall decreased interest in the pursual of agricultural careers and residence in rural communities altogether for fear of violence and discrimination (MAP, 2019). Community education, intervention, and progressive action are essential components to the long overdue and necessary process of rectifying and mitigating the blow caused by these deep-seeded societal issues.

Significance of The Problem

Achieving a social climate of respect and acceptance is a dire necessity for public welfare in and out of the classroom, and people living in rural communities in the United States are at a particular disadvantage. This is exacerbated by factors like underfunding and isolation from the educational/infrastructural wealth of universities, which leads to difficulties hiring qualified educators, let alone those with advanced degrees or specialized training/certifications (MAP, 2019). Compared to 47% of urban counties, 64% of rural counties in the United States report high rates of child poverty (MAP, 2019).

LGBTQ+-identifying students in rural communities have even fewer routes of information and support, as evidenced by GLSEN's 2017 survey which reported that these students were the least likely to have access to supportive materials, spaces, and figures in rural areas (MAP, 2019). Furthermore, the few rural schools that did have inclusive initiatives like GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) groups reported better attendance from queer students, a benefit undoubtedly resulting from reduced instances of victimization and the presence of a welcoming or tolerant environment within the school (MAP, 2019).

Beyond the scope of education, queer people in rural areas have disproportionately negative experiences in healthcare, employment, the legal system, in public spaces, and at home,

and this is largely related to the conservative or outdated political policies in these regions (MAP, 2019). Specifically, the Southern and Midwestern areas of the United States are considered the most likely to have discriminatory laws and policies, with just 25% of Midwestern states and 18% of Southern states protecting their LGBTQ+ populations with nondiscrimination laws, compared to a whopping 89% of states in the Northeastern United States (MAP, 2019).

Purpose of The Project

The overarching purpose of this project is to create and describe a comprehensive, non-formal, adult educational curriculum designed with the goal of achieving participant competency regarding the obstacles and achievements experienced by the LGBTQ+, otherwise referred to as "queer," community, specifically in rural areas of the United States and the agricultural industry. This will be accomplished via thematic literature review to design modules, presentations, and associated writing/illustrative assignments to aid in determination of participant engagement/module success. Module objectives and assignments are based on the following goal learning outcomes:

- To achieve basic competency of sexual vs. gender identity, and dismantle preconceived notions of gender as a binary, static concept
- To achieve basic competency of the inequities historically and currently faced by the queer community, with an emphasis on queer communities in agricultural/rural areas of the United States

- To promote visibility for relevant issues and advocate for action in marginalized communities, a largely under-researched and undervalued topic of importance and urgency
- To educate participants about the histories, experiences, and innovations of queer people in rural/agricultural communities of the United States

Target Audience/Participants

The curriculum outlined and detailed herein is intended to be a non-formal, adult educational initiative for use in relevant community/agricultural spaces, such as local or regional agricultural associations, industry conferences, agricultural/LGBTQ+ leadership seminars, extension workshops, etc. The curriculum will be most useful in these spaces, in which the primary stakeholders are not limited by access to secondary education, and will be provided with helpful resources/information for further investigation or first steps to becoming involved. Additionally, it is designed to meet the participant where they are, in that curriculum material begins at an introductory level, and gets progressively more focused in content/depth.

Keywords and Terms

(Definitions obtained from https://www.merriam-webster.com/ unless otherwise stated)

Agender: of, relating to, or being a person who has an internal sense of being neither male nor female nor some combination of male and female **:** of, relating to, or being a person whose gender identity is genderless or neutral

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, (and) People of Color

Bigender: of, relating to, or being a person whose gender identity is a combination of more than one gender or is sometimes one gender and sometimes another gender

Cisgender (cis): of, relating to, or being a person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth

Heteronormativity: of, relating to, or based on the attitude that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural expression of sexuality

Intersectionality: the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups

Nonbinary: relating to or being a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that is neither entirely male nor entirely female

Pangender: refers to a person whose gender identity that is not limited to one gender and may encompass all genders at once (Obtained from: https://www.dictionary.com/e/gender-sexuality/pangender/)

QPOC: Queer People of Color

Queer: of, relating to, or being a person whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual and/or whose gender identity is not cisgender

Transgender: of, relating to, or being a person whose gender identity differs from the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth

Two-Spirit: refers to a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit, and is used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity (Obtained from https://lgbtqhealth.ca/community/two-spirit.php)

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Agricultural Education

The idea of the traditional family-run farm that we know and see in practice in the agricultural industry of the United States so much today asserted its most dominant influence in the 1930's. The United States Department of Agriculture pioneered a cultural movement centered around the prioritization of a patriarchal nuclear family in its efforts to combat the declining birth rate in rural areas (Leslie, 2019). Additionally, this movement inspired the USDA to establish educational initiatives like the 4-H program, a nationally popular agricultural extension program for children and young adults.

In the 1940's, the 4-H program included sexual education classes that taught children about how to engage in heterosexual courtship (Leslie, 2019). Included program materials "asserted that the economic and biological union between a revenue-producing male 'farmer' and a nurturing 'farmer's wife' constituted both the ideal and normal form of organization for rural life" (Leslie, 2019). For example, boys were taught financial skills to make them into successful farmer-businessmen, while girls were offered home economics classes that prioritized "…domestic consumption, nurturing, health, and aesthetics" (Leslie, 2019).

Such government efforts to enforce a heteronormative agricultural lifestyle in the 4-H program persist historically and as recently as the Trump administration, with demands made that required the 4-H program to withdraw its new policy that explicitly welcomed LGBTQ members and the revocation of guiding documents for LGBTQ inclusion (Leslie, 2019). While these long-upheld institutions are undoubtedly the dominant players in the national discourse surrounding agricultural education, it is also critically important to recognize current efforts and initiatives that seek to provide LGBTQ+ representation in rural and agricultural communities, as

these are the organizations that will transform the landscape for the better if given visibility and the platform to do so.

The Cultivating Change Foundation is a nonprofit organization in the United States that came together in April 2015 and finally made its debut at the beginning of 2016 with the mission of "Valuing and elevating LGBTQ+ agriculturalists through advocacy, education, and community" (Cultivating Change Foundation 2016). They seek to perpetually achieve this mission primarily through using their platform as a network for queer agriculturalists to connect and communicate regardless of generational differences and even across global distances. Through the use of the Internet/technology as well as the annual Cultivating Change Summit, regional caucuses, the Collegiate Affiliate Program, and other related industry events, the Cultivating Change Foundation is able to provide an inclusive and safe environment for LGBTQ+ agriculturalists of all backgrounds to come together to collaborate, educate/learn, develop their professional and leadership skills, acknowledge and propose solutions or action towards mitigating injustices faced by the community, and celebrate diverse/inclusive agricultural industry leadership and policy (Cultivating Change Foundation 2016).

The Queer Farmer Network, or QFN, is a queer-led organization founded with the purpose of building community amongst queer farmers and agriculturalists and "to reflect on and interrupt racist, capitalist, and heteropatriarchal legacies in Agriculture" (Queer Farmer Network). Through this mission and the desire to mitigate feelings of isolation so often experienced by queer farmers across the United States, the QFN organized its initial and presently consistent initiative, the Queer Farmer Convergence. The QFC has occurred for the past three years from Humble Hands Harvest, a queer, worker-owned cooperative farm in Decorah, IA, where the founders of the organization reside (Queer Farmer Network).

Further initiatives conducted by or with the platform of the QFN include a continued correspondence and community through email newsletters, zines, calendars, and even a Job Board/Resource Directory that supplies members/viewers with queer-friendly job postings on farms across the country in a variety of both in-person and remote roles, from farm-hand to Digital Marketing Manager (Queer Farmer Network). That being said, the QFN is still a relatively new organization with few listings and little visibility, and the need for accessible, gainful employment for queer agriculturalists of all abilities is still ever-present across the United States.

SONG, or Southerners on New Ground, is a region/demographic-specific organization originally founded in 1993 to "build, drive, amplify, and support Southern inter-sectional movement thru regional capacity building, leadership development, and organizing" (SONG: Our Mission, Vision, & History). They strive to achieve this through envisioning "a sustainable South that embodies the best of its freedom traditions and works towards the transformation of our economic, social, spiritual, and political relationships" (SONG: Our Mission, Vision, & History). These goals and visions of SONG are firmly rooted in core beliefs, including the unwavering worth, dignity, and respect of all people, as well as the inherent connectedness shared between them. As such, community organization is a staple component in SONG for promoting awareness and action from an intersectional lens in which the dynamic relationship between things like race, class, culture, gender, and sexuality are examined insofar as they affect one's lived experience in and perception of society. It is a core principle in SONG's ideology that the unification and collaboration of oppressed groups of people who experience chronic injustices have the best chance of sparking social change and liberation (SONG: Our Beliefs & Strategies).

Region-specific organizations like SONG are critically important in promoting awareness of issues unique to Southern/rural areas of the United States experienced by marginalized communities. SONG pioneered the first Southern, LGBTQ-led Organizing School that was able to travel across the country and train over one-hundred racial and economic justice organizations about the importance of integrating anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia into their missions, has held over fifty Southern sub-regional retreats for Southern QPOC, and was a central force in winning an injunction against legislation HB 87 in Georgia, wherein individuals or organizations could be punished by law for "harboring of illegal aliens" (SONG: Our Mission, Vision, & History).

Although there is currently no truly representative initiative that aims to outline an accurate count of LGBTQ+ farmers and agricultural workers, the United States Department of Agriculture conducted a Census of Agriculture in 2017, a process that is repeated every five years. This data showed that approximately 11,852 farms in the United States were run by either men married to men (MMM), or women married to women (WMW), accounting for just 1.2% of farms in the United States (Dentzman *et. al,* 2019). When comparing this figure to the 7.1% of American adults that identify as LGBTQ+ as of 2022, the discrepancy is clear (Yurcaba, 2022).

While still notable for its role as a stepping-stone in regard to same-sex marriage representation, this data just barely scrapes the surface of queer presence in agriculture, as it does not take into consideration many historically underrepresented and erased populations of the LGBTQ+ community, and this is by design. The census itself does not prompt any questions related to sexuality or gender identity, and as a result, there is no real data even remotely close to showcasing the existence of all queer farm-owners in the United States, including transgender

farmers, transgender and/or queer farmers who are in a heterosexual marriage, unmarried/divorced queer farmers, queer farmers who are in non-monogamous relationships, etc.

This erasure of rural queer identity and experiences is all too commonplace. As Baker notes, "rural places are continually deemed significant insofar as they are left behind; they are presented as playing an unimportant role in the actual constitution of authentic queer identity," (Baker, 2012).

Queer Contributions and Dynamics in Agriculture and Community

While there has historically been an overwhelming lack of visibility for rural queer people, their stories, and experiences, there are also many queer people today who have made it their mission to unearth precious details and history that have been lost for so long. Peter Boag's work concerning the presence of cross-dressers over the course of the westward expansion of the United States, and Emily Skidmore's work regarding fully assimilated transgender men in the 1800's are but a few of the emerging stories and explorations to further solidify the historical persistence of queer lives and livelihoods (Slepyan, 2021).

Many of these initiatives are also continuous, like Rae Garringer's "Country Queers," multimedia project, which has comprised the oral histories of rural queer people in the United States since 2013 (Slepyan, 2021). Garringer defines the goals of the ever-expansive project as "to preserve rural queer histories through documenting our contemporary presence and historical existence, push back against the narrative that queer people can only thrive in major metropolitan spaces, and connect country queers to one another across geographical distance in an attempt to fight the isolation we often experience, and to build rural queer community (Slepyan, 2021).

The critical importance of the value behind queer storytelling and oral history cannot be understated, as these are the roots which have fostered the growth present today. Queer stories and information have been cautiously circulated since the 1950's, and Queer publications, like "ONE," "The Mattachine Review," and "Ladder," were widely circulated across the country, and while published in the city, subscriptions were heavily present in rural areas (Slepyan, 2021).

KT Taylor, who grew up in the intensely rural area of Emmet, Idaho, is a prime example of one of the many queer people keeping the tradition of journalism as a tool for education and community for oppressed communities alive through their zine, "Not Alone, Never Was," (Slepyan, 2021). Founded from prolonged feelings of isolation resulting from pandemic quarantine, Taylor drew from historical examples and started out by providing a safe space for queer people to write letters to and share art with each other, and its success flourished (Slepyan, 2021). Continuing on the basis for the zine, Taylor writes, "One key thing you will notice if you do research into queer rural wellbeing, is that most queer rural people feel such a deep sense of isolation and loneliness…Part of what contributes to that loneliness is a lack of queer representation in the immediate world around them, but another part of that isolation comes from a perceived lack of history, a lack of ancestors. Working on making rural queer history visible helps communicate to queer rural people that they're not alone, they never have been, and that they can do this," (Slepyan, 2021).

Another one of the ways in which queer people have been able to achieve agricultural success and inspiration is from the sustainable agriculture and food justice movements. This sector of agriculture is generally perceived to be more welcoming of queer lifestyles and varying gender/sexual identities (Hoffelmeyer, 2019). That being said, even though the sustainable agriculture movement was founded in the 1970's with both environmental and social goals, the

majority of research and movement efforts have been focused on environmental and technical interventions for unsustainable agricultural practices, rather than pushing for essential investigations into social equity (Hoffelmeyer, 2019).

Ultimately, even with sustainable agriculture's more progressive foundations, research has shown that there are vast areas in need of improvement. A research project in New England found that queer sustainable farmers felt "targeted, uncomfortable, and claustrophobic," in their community spaces (Hoffelmeyer, 2019). More research is needed to determine the reasoning for queer interest in sustainable agriculture and food justice, but the research we do have suggests that queer people feel more drawn to disrupting harmful systems, like unsustainable agricultural practices, through the unconventional sustainable movement (Dentzman, 2021).

Food justice is defined as, "the struggle against racism, exploitation, and oppression taking place within the food system that addresses inequality's root causes both within and beyond the food chain" (Smith II, 2019). Queer people in particular may be drawn to food justice through its intersectionality with social justice, and the historical trend that has shown queer people struggling with food insecurity at a higher rate than non-queer identifying people. For example, a report conducted by the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law found that 27% of LGBTQ adults and families are food insecure as a result of economic factors (Smith II, 2019). While there is economic diversity in the queer community, research finds time and time again that lesbian, gay, and bisexual identifying people are more likely to be in poverty than heterosexual people, and transgender individuals in particular "face extremely high rates of poverty" (Smith II, 2019).

Queer agriculturalists who manage to break through are attempting to make an impact, not just for themselves, but for the future generations of queer people to come, and who will look

unto their elders for guidance. The Bushwick Farm campus in New York, along with the Make the Road New organization and local high school GSA (Gay Straight Alliance), have organized in an effort to "create a safe space for queer youth to experience their sexuality while working towards the development of a more just, sustainable NYC food system" (Smith II, 2019). On the opposite side of the country, the Fancyland project in Humboldt County, California, creates "queer and radical communities and individuals by being a small-scale rural resource in the following ways: acting as a site to plug into homestead projects; providing a feminist environment for learning and sharing useful rural living skills such as alternative building, appropriate technology, gardening, and land stewardship" (Smith II, 2019).

These spaces and projects are immensely important, not just because they provide a safe space for queer agriculturalists, but because queer people on their own cannot often afford to farm, especially queer people of color, in the way that cis, white, heterosexual people can (MAP, 2019). Farms are often generational, with the land passed down to its next heir through a family line (Leslie, 2019). Queer people of color are automatically excluded from this tradition, despite their ancestors being the ones to tend the land and generate profits for white landowners. Unfortunately, queer people in general have been and still are often shunned from their families/inheritances when their identity is revealed or becomes apparent (Leslie, 2019).

The United States agricultural system itself is inherently guided by neoliberalist policies that put small farms and sustainable operations at a disadvantage from their very inception (Leslie et. al, 2019). The acquisition of farmland for non-farm uses allows the highest bidder to completely transform the local landscape and send land prices soaring beyond reach (Leslie et. al, 2019). Women, in particular, are faced with a more glaring disadvantage because of their gender. They have been systematically excluded from being able to access government subsidies,

and overwhelmingly turned away from receiving land inheritance through their families through the enforcement of patriarchal inheritance. Without either major advantage, many women farmers are forced to "self-exploit," in order to keep what they worked so hard for afloat, whether that be in the form of working long, grueling hours with little to no pay, or stretching themselves thin trying to generate alternate avenues of income (Leslie et. al, 2019). In summation, Pilgeram puts it best, saying "while sustainable farming may have opened up a space for women to farm, it's a space most available for a very particular kind of women: white, well-educated, heterosexual, and married" (Leslie et. al, 2019).

Research has shown that while many queer farmers do in fact wish to meet and interact with others in the queer community, the majority "did not see themselves as a part of any definable LGBTQI community," because of factors like their forced withdrawal from mainstream queer movements that have ignored the rural community, their lack of identification with common sexuality/gender labels, and the nature of farm work (Leslie et. al, 2019). Other queer farmers simply do not identify with what are considered mainstream queer issues, like the issue of marriage equality in 2015. The legalization of "gay marriage," in the United States was unfortunately an extension of the continual perpetuation of a monogamous, heteronormative lifestyle, where there are two spouses united in the eyes of God and the government.

Queer opponents to the popularization of the movement and it being the "be all, end all," for queer liberation considered marriage equality "the status quo as usual," and far less important than other queer issues (Leslie, 2017). Innumerable amounts of alternative queer families and lifestyles are still not represented, accepted, or protected by the justice system. Instances of criticism towards the mainstream LGBTQ movement are not new, and as early as 2004, researchers and theorists have argued that the movement we have experienced and continue to

experience has “equated consumer visibility with political progress” (Leslie, 2017). Queer farmers in particular are especially critical of movement based on such heavy amounts of consumption and consumerism, due to preservation and sustainable-based environmental values, economic disparities and constraints, as well as “a broader critique of normative social structures” (Leslie, 2017).

By and large, queer farmers have found the most support in establishing networks with other rural, queer farmers. The system has failed them, the queer liberation movement has ultimately failed them, and the sustainable/food justice movement has failed them as well, all through a lack of visibility, safety, representation, and a means of livelihood alternative to the heteronormative, patriarchal system that put them behind in the first place. Research conducted in the Midwest investigating queer farms found that queer employees “gained solidarity, role models, and social networks,” through working on queer-run farms. This fulfilling work not only provided dignity and respect, but also revamped the flames of inspiration to continue careers in the agricultural/sustainable farming industry (Wypler, 2019).

Theoretical Framework: A Rationale for Equity and Learning

The development of this curriculum design project utilizing thematic literature review of secondary data was guided by the theory of intersectionality as a crucial understanding of the ever-present dynamics between power, privilege, class, and identity. Intersectionality as a concept was initially coined in 1989 by acclaimed civil rights activist and scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw as a way to describe the reality of life for Black women, whom inherently face the experiences of both racism and sexism first-hand (JSTOR Daily, 2020). Today, intersectionality is recognized as an invaluable asset in teaching and describing the multi-faceted experiences of

any individuals or communities who face compounding societal backlash for their identities, namely those which do not fit the Western ideal of wealthy, white, heterosexual, cis, Christianity (Goldberg, 2018). As Lutz writes, intersectionality is "a heuristic device or a method that is particularly helpful in detecting the overlapping and co-construction of visible, and at first sight, invisible strands of inequality," (Lutz, 2015).

Additionally, development of this curriculum is guided by queer theory, or a theoretical approach that acknowledges the influence of white, Eurocentric, patriarchal institutions on society, and rejects these and other perpetuated norms used as a means of control and dominance (Mattheis et. al, 2022). The utilization and prioritization of this theory is especially important in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) field, where "systems of dominance create inequities through patriarchal, heteronormative, white supremacist, Eurocentrist, neo-colonialist, ableist, and classist norms that have historically served to maintain a monolithic world view by delegitimizing other ways of knowing," (Mattheis et. al, 2022). By definition, queer theory questions what is considered typical and why, and forces researchers to investigate their inner biases towards what is considered atypical, as well as their influences on thought processes, data prioritization/documentation, perceived validity of data sources, etc.

The development of assignments in this curriculum prompting Internet research were guided by the learning theory of Connectivism. Connectivism was proposed by George Siemens and Stephen Downes in 2005 (Li and Yaqian, 2022). It came as a result of the developing prominence of online/research learning environments as technology has rapidly advanced in modern society (Goldie, 2016). This conceptual framework is rooted in the understanding of learning as a phenomenon influenced by technology and socialization, and epistemologically, it is similarly based in the concept of distributive knowledge (Goldie, 2016). Some principles of

connectivism include decision-making as a learning process, the importance of the ability to see interrelatedness or connectedness between fields and concepts, and the importance of maintaining current knowledge (Goldie 2016).

In contrast to many historically-embraced learning theories, connectivism rejects the idea that learning has a goal of possession or a grasping of knowledge, but instead frames learning as a dynamic, ever-evolving process that relies on the continuous building, development, and revision of networks (Downes 2005). These networks have levels, including the individual, group, and collective levels, as well as types, including cognitive neural networks, concept networks, and social networks (Li and Yaqian 2022). The success of connectivist learning relies on the ability for these networks to be affected by interaction, whether they be way-finding interactions, sense-making interactions, operation interactions, or innovation interactions (Li and Yaqian 2022). As one may assume, the success of an interaction is correlational with the success of further interactions, and most importantly, the development of networks (Li and Yaqian 2022).

Not all online courses or e-learning initiatives are based in or align with connectivist theory, and in fact, most simply move traditional classroom learning methods and outcomes to an online format with little effort to ensure and facilitate connections (Li and Yaqian 2022). With so many options or outlets for the dissemination of information and the constant search for further knowledge, identifying reliable sources is a skill of its own, and one of growing importance. As Li and Yang write, "…knowledge is needed but is often not understood," and "…knowing where knowledge is and understanding the methods to obtain it is more important to learners than the knowledge they acquire," (Li and Yaqian 2022).

This curriculum strives to embrace connectivism as a valuable tool in an unprecedented era of technological innovation, as participants will utilize their interactions with people they know personally, as well as personal stories of queer people online to develop their learning networks, and at the end of their experience, utilize the feedback form to openly express their opinions and recommendations that would positively benefit (and therefore connect with) future learners, and so on. Additionally, the feedback forms themselves should be analyzed under a connectivist lens in order to best facilitate the development of the curriculum and learners' success.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Methodology

This chapter highlights the primary methods and details of data collection, analysis, and application to the Queer Agriculture curriculum. Additionally, the curriculum will be outlined and broken down into its individual sections and associated learning milestones so as to clearly convey what the participant should be able to grasp and/or demonstrate following section completion. Curriculum applicability, scope, and limitations will also be discussed in an attempt to limit bias and understand the range/feasibility in implementation or translation of such a curriculum.

Information included in this Queer Agriculture curriculum will be gathered via literature review from a variety of secondary data sources, including interviews, research applications, literature analyses, and theoretical discussions. Additionally, consistent correspondence and involvement with the Queer Farmer Network (QFN), as well as other related organizations such as Southerners on New Ground (SONG) has been used as a valuable tool to network with other queer agriculturalists in an effort to remain informed regarding present/relevant issues, achievements, and the status of alternative agricultural operations across the country.

Reliable sources for literature review and curriculum inclusion have been identified from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University library database (lib.vt.edu) as well as Google Scholar (scholar.google.com). Search words/phrases including “LGBTQ Agriculture,” “Queer Agriculture,” “Rural LGBTQ History,” “Connectivist Theory,” “Intersectionality,” and “LGBTQ Education,” have been used as primary determinants of literature generation/retrieval online. In order to best serve the goals and outcomes of this curriculum, credible sources

identified for further inclusion or integration within the modules of the curriculum will be as recent and up-to-date as possible so as to portray the most relevant and factual information to participant and mitigate the possibility of misinformation or inherent obsolescence of data. Reviewal and reporting of information will include steps to reduce likelihood or instances of bias both in the literature itself as well as from the reviewer, including careful inspection of processes used by researchers in quantitative/qualitative studies, possible bias from the organization/group conducting the study/investigation, etc.

Regarding bias, it would be impossible to ethically report on and an injustice to the subject to fail to recognize the insider-researcher status of the primary author of this curriculum, as they identify as both queer and transgender, are from a rural/agricultural community, are of a low socioeconomic class, and suffer from a chronic illness that often disables them from regular involvement in society, especially in the typical workforce. That said, insider-researchers in qualitative studies possess inherent advantages as a result of their direct alignment with associated subjects, including a greater understanding of the group or culture being studied, a natural flow of social interaction over the subject, and "…having an established intimacy between the researcher and participants which promotes both the telling and judging of the truth" (Bonner & Tollhurst, 2002). In this case, where there is not yet a current or planned implementation of the curriculum, this would apply to the relationship between the author and the participant(s) upon execution, where there would exist an inherent trust between participants and the author to convey and discuss related information reliably.

All information has been gathered and vetted for bias and/or factual error, with the most relevant information identified and included in order to design the curriculum so as to best meet the outlined goals/outcomes of the project (See page 7), as well as guide the participant in the

completion of the curriculum assignments (See Appendix C). Language used is purposefully inclusive, and significant effort has been made to both present new and useful information to the participant while also acknowledging and disproving long-held, misinformed beliefs regarding gender, sexuality, and queer experiences, such as stereotypes of gay men being inherently feminine or submissive, trans people as simple cross-dressers or sex workers, etc. While this curriculum has the main goal of learning, it is just as importantly a process of unlearning.

The overall design of Curriculum modules, content, and assignments has been guided by the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework, which guides educators by providing an established process and structure for curriculum development and assessment that is based on seven key tenets (Mctighe and Wiggins, 2012). These tenets include the value of purposeful thinking by teachers in curriculum planning, the focus of curriculum being on the deepening of student understanding/learning, authentic performance as a means of measuring student understanding, backwards planning (Desired Results, Evidence, and Learning Plan), the role of teachers as coaches of understanding, the value of regularly reviewing curriculum content and methods, and a continual improvement approach to both students and teachers in their roles (McTighe and Wiggins 2012).

The design of the Feedback form (See Appendix D) follows this framework as well and has been crafted to provide measurable, scalable data, as well as mitigate the loss of essential, detailed participant responses through the inclusion of the open-ended, free-response section. The information provided by participants in this section has been carefully inspected following the completion of the curriculum, and should be in any future implementations, as these responses will be the primary influencer of curriculum revision and development.

Applicability and Scope

The development and completion of this project was undertaken with the goal of utilizing secondary data in the relevant literature to create an accessible educational curriculum devoted to providing visibility for issues specific to a minority population that is otherwise not included, prioritized, or accurately represented in research or social culture. In this case, that population happens to be queer people living in rural communities of the United States, but similarly designed modules/curricula should also be developed to create space for additional minority issues that have a disproportionately negative impact on communities of color, queer people, disabled people, and other populations with an intersectional or otherwise different/disparaging experience that disrupts the status quo.

Rather than this project/curriculum being a static intervention, it is my intention that the information and assignments within be continuously evaluated and developed as deemed appropriate by the primary stakeholders, or the participants, organizers, and rural queer community. Future implementations should be designed to increase the quality of education received by the module, perhaps through the promotion of experiential learning processes that offer participants a more memorable/applicable learning process through first-hand experiences/relatability.

The Queer Agriculture Module: Outline

This section serves to outline and provide essential detail with regard to participant learning objectives and goal outcomes throughout progression of the Queer Agriculture module. All sections of the module have been designed to best facilitate the completion of associated learning outcomes and assignments as noted below.

Section 1: Upon completion of Section 1, participant should be able to adequately explain definitions of key words and terms, and utilize them to appropriately refer to and describe LGBTQ+ people of varying identities for later use in Module

1.1 Introduction of Keywords and Terms - Queer, BIPOC, Two-Spirit, AFAB, AMAB, Intersex, etc. (See page 8)

1.2 How to use these terms respectfully to describe the people in our lives & Activity Part One: Participant will describe themselves and one other person using sex/gender identities and appropriate pronouns to demonstrate competency of keywords and terms (See Appendix C)

1.3 Activity Part Two: Participant will illustrate, in their desired format, the spectrum of gender, and place themselves within it to demonstrate competency of gender as a non-binary concept (See Appendix C)

Section 2: Upon completion of Section 2, participant should be able to identify and describe examples of historical injustices and contributory events to the mistreatment and demonization of the LGBTQ+ community

2.1 Historic Injustice Against LGBTQ+ People and The Impacts of Settler Colonialism

2.2 The Development of the Modern Queer Identity/Historic Queer Existence

2.3 Activity: Participant will complete a research assignment that prompts investigation into one non-heteronormative community of participant's choosing that has historical ties to land/culture, participant should describe the community/culture, its influences, obstacles, and merits

Section 3: Upon completion of Section 3, participant should be able to identify specific barriers that are unique to the experiences of queer people living in rural areas/in agricultural communities

3.1 Queerness in The South/Rural United States: History and Current Trends

3.2 Activity: Participant will detail at least three myths and their corresponding truths with regard to Queer existence and experiences in Agricultural communities of the United States

Section 4: Upon completion of Section 4, participant should have an adequate understanding of beneficial agricultural programs/initiatives catered to the LGBTQ+ community, and be able to describe the value/necessity of such initiatives

4.1 What Can Be Done About These Issues? Identifying Queer Community Needs/Areas of Opportunity

4.2 Who Is Doing It?: Identifying and Describing examples of beneficial agricultural/rural programs or initiatives that aim to combat discrimination/injustice or promote community visibility/viability

4.3 Activity: Participant will complete a research assignment that outlines a specific, ongoing LGBTQ+-specific program/initiative of participant's choosing. How does the program/initiative operate and work against systems of oppression? How can the program grow or be improved? (See Appendix C)

Section 5: Upon completion of Section 5, which culminates in the Module Project and participant feedback, participant should be able to assemble and deliver a report detailing

a hypothetical, but plausible intervention that demonstrates competency of community barriers and needs in the area of participant's choosing: accessibility, resources, community engagement, etc.

5.1 Activity: Participant will complete the Module Project by assembling a report in the form of one's choosing outlining one LGBTQ+ community need specific to rural/agricultural barriers, as well as a hypothetical, but plausible intervention that could successfully contribute to dismantling this barrier (See Appendix C). When grading, instructor should utilize the included rubric to gauge the successful completion of the assignment (See Appendix C).

5.2 Participant Feedback Form: Participant will complete the feedback form (See Appendix D) as instructed so as to best inform future implementations of this and other modules highlighting realities and injustices faced by marginalized communities.

Completion of Module

Upon successful completion of all lessons and activities of the module, participants will complete a written review of their experience and recommendations for module development/reimplementation (See Appendix D). This review will prompt participants to gauge their satisfaction with various elements of the curriculum. Additionally, participants will be provided with the opportunity to submit feedback in the form of free-response at the bottom of the form to encourage the most comprehensive and descriptive responses for continuous curriculum development. Participant success may be gauged based on their completion of the

associated module assignments/activities, and their ability to meet the module goal learning outcomes as referenced in the outline above.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this project is that the curriculum has not been widely implemented, and feedback is limited by the number of individuals selected for expert reviewal. However, the participant feedback form and its questions are designed to be applicable to the program or similar projects regardless of how it evolves to serve its goal purpose of education as a means of harm reduction/visibility for minority/diversity issues in American society.

Additionally, as evidenced previously, LGBTQ+ issues are still largely under-researched and under-funded, which limits the quantity and quality of data available. This systemic limitation can be progressively counteracted by simply doing more queer research, advocating for queer and queer-led research initiatives, uplifting queer voices/stories, etc. As noted by Renn, "Although higher education is the location of much development of queer theory, it is not an especially queer system of organizations or a system of especially queer organizations," (p. 138, Renn, 2010).

Expert Review

Initial engagement and review of this curriculum was completed by three participants, all of whom are considered experts for their positions as primary stakeholders in the agricultural industry in the United States, whether that be through agricultural leadership and community education in university/extension settings, direct agricultural cultivation/production, or NGO affiliation. Selected participants were provided with the *Queer Agriculture and Rurality* curriculum, and a hyperlink to complete a Google form document designed to serve as a survey to understand the current status of curriculum success/engagement, as well as the potential for future implementation success and utility in target spaces/communities.

Through these devices, it was discovered that all participants either moderately or greatly enjoyed the curriculum content and would overall recommend it to others such as friends, family, colleagues, or community members. Participants unanimously agreed that the ideal age range for curriculum involvement was at least 17+, with one participant recommending college-aged individuals (18-25), and another advocating for all adult ages, from young adult to elder-aged. All participants except for one individual highly regarded the curriculum's potential utility and necessity and potential success upon implementation. It is worth noting that this participant was the only individual selected for reviewal that is a cisgender, white male and the only participant who did not provide an adequate explanation of their responses. Being that one of the main goals of the curriculum is to dismantle past misconceptions and excuses over what is considered "relevant," or worth learning in agricultural community spaces, one might argue for the necessity of such an educational initiative in these spaces, speaking to the systematic barriers and discreditation that advocates for LGBTQ+ issues face when working to spread community visibility and tolerance.

In any future iterations of this curriculum or affiliated materials/content, it would be beneficial to not only have more participants, but to perhaps obtain more information that may situate feedback in a cultural context. Ideally, future participants would also provide a more detailed explanation of their thoughts and feedback, regardless of feedback-nature. This point further justifies the necessity of the open-ended, free-response sections included in the participant feedback form (See Appendix D).

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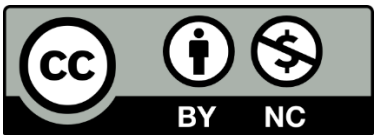
Queer Agriculture and Rurality: An Educational Curriculum

Written and Designed by Emmett Rowan Kaiser

May 2023



Appendix A

Resource Guide

The following Resource Guide is intended to be a comprehensive, but not exhaustive guide of online resources and supplemental information to accompany the content of the Queer Agriculture adult educational curriculum. This guide should be distributed to participants at the start of the course for investigative use and reference throughout curriculum progression, and be kept for use as needed following completion. The resources included will not only provide direction for further study of curriculum topics, but also avenues of support and community that promote participant well-being.

Pronouns, Gender Identity, Sexual Identity

- https://www.glsen.org/activity/pronouns-guide-glsen
- https://www.npr.org/2021/06/02/996319297/gender-identity-pronouns-expression-guide-lgbtq
- https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/sgmro/gender-pronouns-resource
- https://mytherapynyc.com/gender-identity/
- https://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/support/questioning/
- https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/article/understanding-gender-identities/

Impacts of Settler Colonialism, Queer/LGBTQ+ History

- https://www.loganmuseumexhibits.com/colonialism-as-antiqueer
- https://www.prismfl.org/post/homosexuality-in-the-pre-colonial-americas
- https://www.wisconsin.edu/student-behavioral-health/download/Decolonizing-Queerness.pdf
- https://gladstone.org/news/lgbtq-history-timeline?gclid=CjwKCAjw3POhBhBQEiwAqTCuBhHAokYq7Tcd4CeXdxRKY1koB2CJX6TVxzI49vL7rvfMkIKMJBFuKhoC5XsQAvD_BwE
- https://theoutwordsarchive.org/?gclid=CjwKCAjw3POhBhBQEiwAqTCuBkk3tV3p7NK246q9hlm05xnAKfaB6CFo2X_ZB75uZ-LEOtbQoxwfBRoCYWYQAvD_BwE

Rural Queer/LGBTQ+ Legislation, Discrimination, etc.

- https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights
- https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth-resources.htm
- https://www.glaad.org/resourcelist
- https://www.lgbtmap.org/policy-and-issue-analysis/rural-lgbt
- https://www.aclu.org/news/lgbtq-rights/rupauls-drag-race-finale-drag-defense-fund
- https://www.lgbtmap.org/rural-lgbt-resources
- https://www.ruralhealthresearch.org/assets/5121-23183/well-being-of-lgbtq-adults-slides-011823.pdf

Queer/LGBTQ+ Rural/Agricultural Initiatives and Resources

- https://www.lgbtmap.org/resource-page
- https://southernersonnewground.org/
- https://www.cultivatingchangefoundation.org/
- https://www.queerfarmernetwork.org/
- https://vrha.org/pride/
- https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunctionsaction=rols:main.dspList&rolType=Custom&RS_ID=146&rList=ROL

Other Support/Hotline Information

- Trevor Project: (Hotline) 1-866-488-7386, (Text) ‘START’ to 678-678, (Live Chat) https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help/
- Trans Lifeline: (Hotline) 1-877-565-8860
- SAGE LGBT Elder Hotline: 1-877-360-LGBT (5428)

Appendix B

Implementation/Facilitator's Guide

Note: This curriculum is designed to be as informative and accessible as possible. If instructor/participant do not have Internet access, module assignments can be completed based on included module information.

Time To Complete	**Module**	**Description**
1 – 3 hours	Section 1	The first module of this curriculum is intended to be a beginner's guide, or an excellent starting point/refresher for those who may be unfamiliar with curriculum content. Instructor should teach or distribute the content to best suit the participants' learning outcomes. For more experienced participants, such as those in queer spaces, this section may be partially or entirely glossed over to avoid redundancy.
2 – 3 hours	Section 2	The second module of this curriculum highlights the historical precedent of queerness and/or non-heteronormativity globally, and addresses the impact of settler colonialism on the survival of differing cultures and lives. The second part of the module focuses on queer expression in the United States, as well as historical/theoretical precedent for modern attitudes and applications.
2 – 3 hours	Section 3	The third module of this curriculum is focused on addressing and examining the history and current state of queer existence and life in rural/southern areas of the United States. Additionally, current statistics and data regarding discriminatory political policies and initiatives are addressed.
2 – 3 hours	Section 4	The fourth module of this curriculum builds off the information learned in the third module, and describes ways in which participants can make an impact in their communities and beyond on behalf of LGBTQ+ people. Additionally, current collective initiatives/organizations in affected areas of the United States are described.
3 – 4 hours	Section 5	The fifth and final module of this curriculum culminates in the completion of the curriculum project, which encourages the participant to use the information gathered over the course of curriculum completion to propose a plausible initiative that addresses a rural/southern LGBTQ+ community need or area of opportunity.

Appendix C

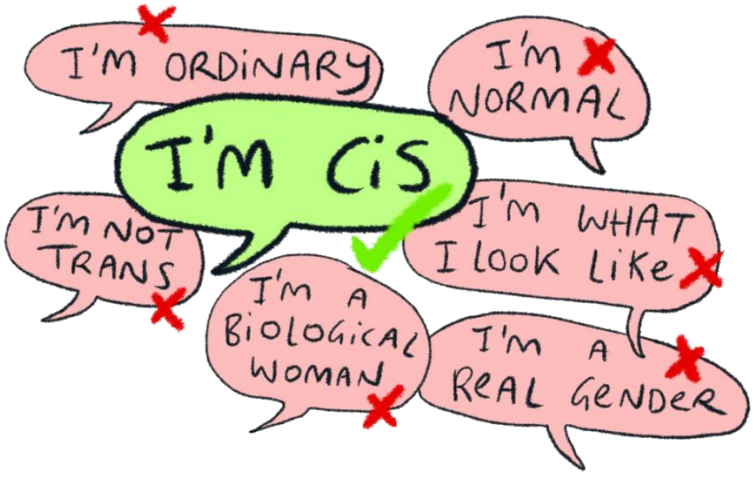
Section 1

Module Objectives: Upon completion of Section 1, participant should be able to adequately explain definitions of key words and terms, and utilize them to appropriately refer to and describe LGBTQ+ people of varying identities for later use in Module and throughout everyday life.

1.1 Introduction of Keywords and Terms

Ask yourself: Do I mentally and physically identify with the sex that I was assigned or everyone presumed I was at birth? When doctors told my caregiver(s) that I was a boy/girl/intersex, were they right?

If the answer is yes, then you are what is referred to as **cisgender**. This term allows people to more easily explain their gender identity at a surface level, with the prefix "cis-," originating from the Latin language, meaning "on this side." If you are cisgender, then your gender is on the same "side," as your sex at birth. Cisgender can sometimes be simply shortened to "cis," in conversation or casual settings, but the meaning remains the same.



Obtained from: https://www.transhub.org.au/101/cis , Credit: Briar Wolfe

If the answer is no, then you may identify with being **transgender**, with the Latin prefix "trans-," meaning "across." If you are transgender, then your gender identity is "across," or

differently located from your sex at birth. Similarly to the word cisgender, transgender is commonly shortened to "trans," by users of the term, but the meaning stays the same. For example, instead of saying "I am a transgender person," one may prefer to simply say, "I'm trans!"

While cisgender and transgender are the two most commonly used terms to describe gender identity, there are some people who feel that they do not fit into these categories either, and that is perfectly okay! For example, some people may describe themselves as **agender**, **bigender**, **pangender**, or something else entirely. The most important thing to remember is to always refer to someone in the way that they ask you to. Gender identity is a personal understanding of yourself that no one can discover or change except for you, so it is crucial to respect the validity of that journey for ourselves and others by addressing them appropriately.

While most people know the meaning of the acronym "LGBT," (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) you may or may not know that **Queer** has been added, along with a "+," to include identities that fall outside of these categories. People who identify as queer are those who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender. Many people today, and throughout this curriculum, may also use queer as an umbrella term that gathers all non-heteronormative identities underneath it.

Uncopyrighted and obtained from:
https://thesafezoneproject.com/resources/handouts-edugraphics/queer-umbrella-

When the word "queer," is used in this curriculum, you can assume that the people being referred to reject **heteronormativity**, or the societally enforced notion that heterosexuality is the only normal and preferable identity. If you feel the impulse to reject information about queer identities and experiences, whether they be inside or outside this curriculum, you may be struggling with unlearning heteronormativity, because cisgender, heterosexual people are the norm that we have embraced as a society. Sociologically, everyone is supposed to want to be "normal," or fit in to avoid rejection. Your automatic reaction to information that is new or different to you may be to reject it or its accuracy, but instead, try practicing an open-minded or curious approach that questions your reasoning/rationale.

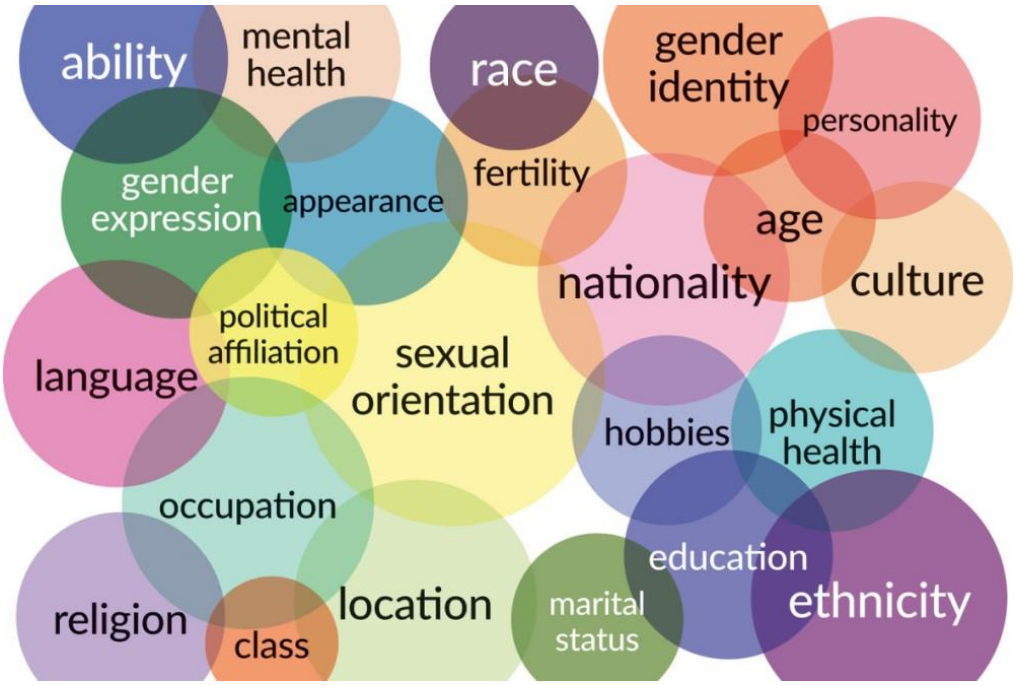
Some other examples of non-heteronormative identities are **nonbinary**, a term used to describe people whose gender identity is neither exclusively male or female, and **Two-Spirit**, a culturally-based Indigenous term sometimes used for those who have both a masculine and feminine spirit.

You may find that a great number of terms in and outside of this curriculum are simply acronyms or shortened ways of referencing larger categories. This is not meant to be confusing, but rather just the opposite, as it is meant to save time when discussing these topics. For example, **BIPOC** is an acronym referring to Black, Indigenous, (and) People of Color, and **QPOC** is an acronym referring to Queer People of Color. These terms are commonly used when describing spaces, communities, or opportunities specifically dedicated to groups of people within the target demographic.

Lastly, perhaps the biggest key to understanding the content within this curriculum and the dynamics that disenfranchised groups face in society is the theory of intersectionality. **Intersectionality** as a concept was initially coined in 1989 by acclaimed civil rights activist and scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw as a way to describe the reality of life for Black women, who inherently face the experiences of both racism and sexism first-hand. Intersectionality is recognized as an invaluable asset in teaching and describing the multi-faceted experiences of any individuals or communities who face compounding societal backlash for their identities, namely those which do not fit the Western ideal of wealthy, white, heterosexual, cis, Christianity.

For example, a black, transgender woman will inevitably face differential treatment throughout her lived experience as a result of not only the color of her skin (racism), but also because of her gender identity (transphobia, sexism). Our lived experiences are based on these identities that "intersect," or stack up when analyzing sociocultural dynamics. If we wanted to take things further to better understand the experience of the black, transgender woman mentioned, we may ask such questions as: What is her socioeconomic status? Is she differently abled? Is she heterosexual? What is her education level? The answers to these questions impact the way that she is treated and valued by our current society. See the graphic below for more examples of intersectional identities, and ask yourself: How am I treated based on these characteristics of my identity?

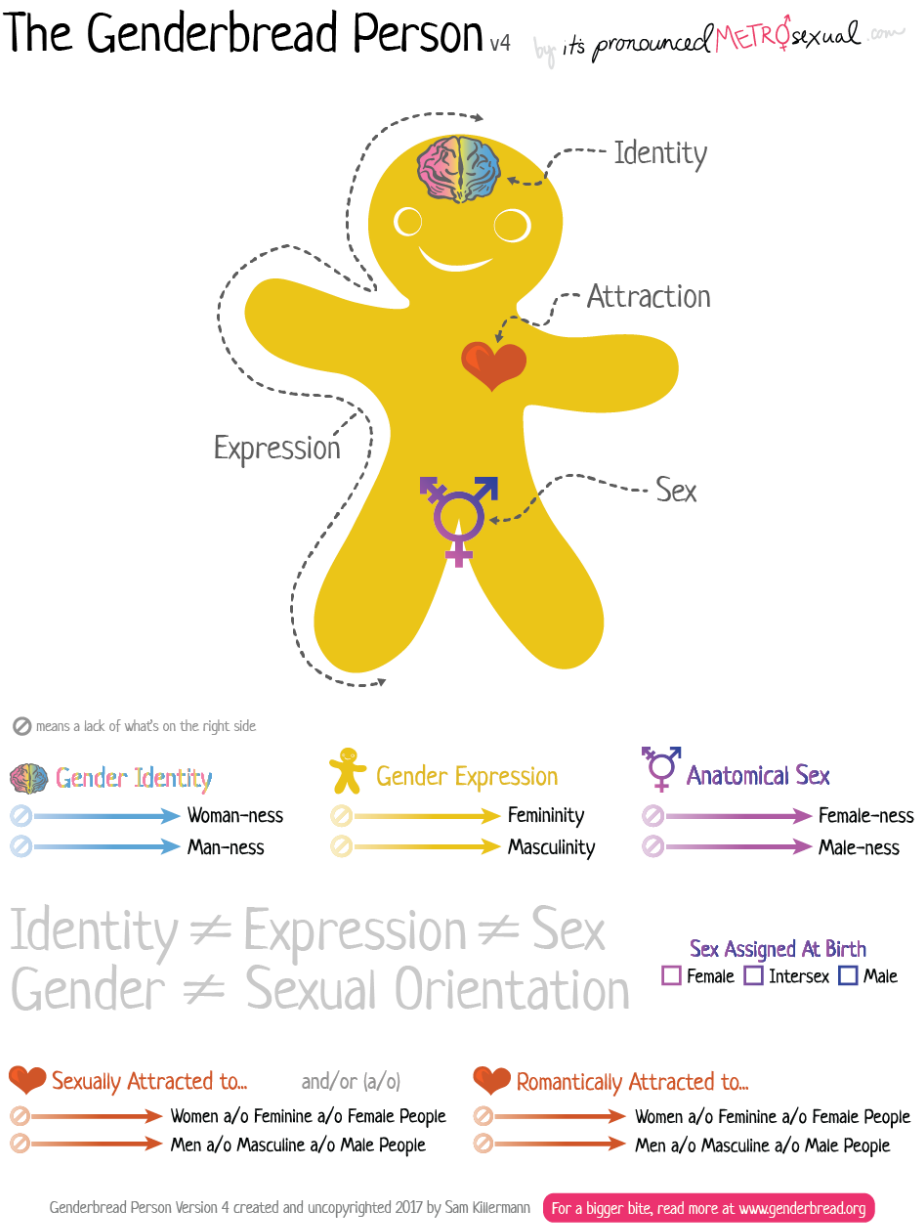
Information retrieved from: Goldberg, A. E., & Allen, K. R. (2018). Teaching undergraduates about lgbtq identities, families, and intersectionality. *Family Relations*, *67*(1), 176–191. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12224 , (2020, August 1). *Kimberlé Crenshaw's Intersectional Feminism*. JSTOR Daily. Retrieved March 12, 2023, from https://daily.jstor.org/kimberle-crenshaws-intersectional-feminism/ , https://www.merriam-webster.com/



Credit: Misty McPhetridge BSSW

Activity 1

1.2 - Part One: Participant will express competency of keywords and terms through the development of an introductory paragraph that describes themselves and one other person as they relate to their gender and sexual identities/expression. Additionally, the following graphic may be helpful to refer to throughout completion:



Hello! My name is _____! The pronouns that people should use when not referring to me by name are _____. I identify as _____, and I best express myself and my style through _____ clothing/aesthetics/presentation. My preferred romantic partners are _____, and my preferred sexual partners are _____. I would describe my gender identity as _____ and my sexual identity as _____.

This is my _____(relation), their name is _____! The pronouns that people should use when referring to them are _____. They identify as _____, and best express themselves and their style through _____ clothing/aesthetics/presentation.

Example pronouns: he/him, she/her, they/them

Example gender identities: cisgender male, cisgender female, transgender male, transgender female, nonbinary, transmasculine nonbinary, transfeminine nonbinary, intersex, queer

Example presentations: masculine, feminine, androgynous

Example sexual identities: homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, heterosexual, asexual

1.3 - Part Two: Participant will, to the best of their ability, illustrate their own unique interpretation of the spectrum of gender identity. This may be in the form of a poster, art illustration, or other form of presentation as deemed appropriate. Be creative, use color, and have fun! Once complete, participant will place themselves within the spectrum according to their answers above. Remember: A spectrum has no limits and no absolutes. Think of how you feel, and not how you think others see you or want to see you.

Section 2

Module Objectives: Upon completion of Section 2, participant should be able to identify and describe examples of historical injustices and contributory events to the mistreatment and demonization of the LGBTQ+ community

2.1 Historic Injustice Against LGBTQ+ People and The Impacts of Settler Colonialism

It is a common misconception that queerness as a whole is a modern phenomenon, and that the few instances of non-heteronormative behaviors that have occurred throughout history have always been condemned. In fact, the opposite is true, and in many pre-colonial cultures, queerness was not only accepted, but celebrated. Let's look at two of many examples:

The Diné of Turtle Island (colonized as the Navajo of North America)

The Diné people acknowledged the existence of nonbinary identities in their communities, and that gender identity is something that might change or one may discover as they grow and develop to be the person they are meant to be. Within their social structure there existed four prominent gender identities: male, female, feminine Nádleehi, and masculine Nádleehi. Nádleehi people were celebrated and since they were regarded for their wisdom, would often hold important social positions in the tribe.

Similar nonbinary identities historically existed in Indigenous communities, such as the Lhamana of the Zuni tribe and the Asegi of the Cherokee, but approximately 155 tribes across Turtle Island acknowledged the presence of multiple genders/gender identities. As referenced in the previous module, one may also describe some of these identities as "Two-Spirit," but it is important to note that this term may be rejected by Indigenous communities or persons who do not prefer this modern designation/categorization. When in doubt, simply ask someone how they should be addressed.

Creative Commons image obtained from: https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fpicryl.com%2Fmedia%2Fwe-wa-a-zuni-berdache-full-length-portrait-nara-523798-972242&psig=AOvVaw2lIUhXbW7e7cc3srnrxMbs&ust=1684180177169000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CBAQjRxqFwoTCKjf16DK9f4CFQAAAAAdAAAAABAD

The photograph above features a Lhamana person in the Zuni tribe named We'wha, who lived during the 1800's and was considered a cultural ambassador for the Zuni. They were a skilled weaver, pottery and textile artist, and craftsperson who greatly valued the protection of their culture and customs. Although We'wha and many other Indigenous people were brought to Washington D.C. for anthropological/cultural education, this did not stop the United States government from pushing forced assimilation and subsequent erasure of valuable Indigenous history, people, and culture.

Information retrieved from: https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/wewha

The Hijras of India/South Asia

South Asian culture has included the presence of a third gender for well over 2000 years, and even reference a hero who becomes the third gender named Arjuna in Hindu holy texts. Third gender peoples were highly regarded, and many held significant positions of power under both Hindu and Muslim rulers throughout history. The most common third gender group are the hijras, who are often (but not always) assigned male at birth, but present and act traditionally feminine.

Traditionally, a hijra person must leave home to join the hijra community, a society of its own that is separated from others, in order to be taught how to perform the various roles expected of them in Hindu culture. Hijras perform special dances, blessings, and songs, of which the lessons are sacred. To receive a blessing from a hijra for a wedding or the birth of a child is considered a great gift, and one that will bring fertility and prosperity. In rare cases, one may be cursed by a hijra, of which the duality has created attitudes of both respect and fear.

While the hijras still exist today, they are not nearly as protected or respected as they once were. British colonization of South Asia during the 19th and 20th centuries ravaged the land of the sanctity of its culture. Christian colonizers were aghast at the acceptance of a third gender people, and went so far as to outlaw the hijras as criminals in 1871. While this law has since been overturned, the effects of its enforcement and colonial ideology persist today, with many hijras struggling in poverty, begging for money or resorting to sex work for basic necessities. They are considered valuable insofar as their traditional Hindu responsibilities, and to many, are considered otherwise unfit for employment and education.

Pictured above: A 2010 photograph of hijras in Bangladesh

Information and Wikimedia Commons photograph retrieved from: https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/religion-context/case-studies/gender/third-gender-and-hijras

2.2 The Development of the Modern Queer Identity and Queer History in the United States

Early queer activists and historians (previously labeled as lesbian and gay historians), worked tirelessly to uncover truths that would sufficiently disprove homosexuality as a treatable medical disease or impairment and establish a precedent for queer existence. In this case, the label of historian is not contingent on secondary education, as many pioneers that sought to unearth previously hidden or destroyed truths about queerness as a natural and historically-based phenomenon were initially outside the world of academia. Many early historical projects or investigations were community-led and community-funded, with some researchers holding fundraisers at leather bars, pride marches, and other community spaces.

Before they were professionally trained or regarded, historians such as John D'Emilio, Estelle Freedman, Gayle Rubin, Dennis Altman, Joan Nestle, and Amber Hollibaugh, amongst many others, searched desperately for remnants of queer history. Oftentimes, this culminated into transforming their own personal or living spaces into queer history archives, of which information would be presented to community audiences in the form of public lectures or slide shows, exhibits, and articles in zines.

Pictured above: A collection of zines published between 1989-1993

Retrieved from: https://chicagoreader.com/music/thirty-years-ago-a-black-queer-zine-captured-the-scene-that-birthed-house/ , Credit: Amber Huff

The HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980's and 1990's further evidenced the need for queer community collaboration and mutual aid, as the United States government doubled down on its demonization of queer identities, and allowed the death of thousands of Americans and queer ancestors in a true show of the perceived expendability of queer lives.

One of the biggest themes in queer history and the development of what we now understand as queerness is the duality of how much it has changed, yet remained the same. While the word "queer," is now generally accepted and used widely to reference LGBTQ+ people, historically, such was not the case. This initial usage of "queer," in the United States dates back to the 1910's, where it was used as a slur to describe same-sex attracted men, and occasionally, for those men to describe themselves. Its reclamation in the 1990's by activists and scholars was met with shock by some in the community as a result of its history, and with pride in others who viewed it as a way of taking back the power and hatred it previously held. Additionally, its ability to encapsulate various identities and expressions while also simultaneously referencing/displacing the stigmatization of being othered.

Queer activist, historian, and philosopher Michel Foucault coined the term “biopower,” or the government/state project of “administering and managing the life of the population,” (Kunzel, 2018). To elaborate, biopower refers to the ways in which the state seeks to control aspects of life, and therefore, the population. What does this mean for queerness? Well, in the same way that the state exercises its power over the population via control of what we eat, see, hear, read, and experience, it seeks to maintain that power and establish a future workforce/population to control through the demonization of queerness and the embracement of white, Western, Christian, cis, heterosexuality. Consistent reproduction of similar or acceptable people, ideas, and values secures the continuation of power.

Information retrieved from: Regina Kunzel, The Power of Queer History, *The American Historical Review*, Volume 123, Issue 5, December 2018, Pages 1560–1582, https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhy202

Activity 2

2.3 - Using the Internet, participants/instructor will either individually or as a group/class, research one non-heteronormative community of their choosing that has historical ties to land/culture.

Name of Community: _____

Country of Origin: _____

Please describe the ways in which this community rejects heteronormativity:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

List at least 3 barriers either historically or currently (specify) experienced by this community:

1.
2.
3.

What intervention(s) would benefit this community?

_____

_____

_____

Section 3

Module Objectives: Upon completion of Section 3, participant should be able to identify specific barriers that are unique to the experiences of queer people living in rural areas/in agricultural communities

3.1 Being Queer in The Country: Rural American Queer Experiences and Trends

Efforts to establish an idealized model for American middle-class life throughout the 20th century were rampant, and were especially successful in rural areas and small communities where centuries of queer history and ways of living were lost or destroyed. One such story is that of Charity Bryant and Sylvia Drake, two women who forged a lifelong relationship together in Vermont in the early 19th century, but were surprisingly tolerated by the community because of their "productivity, modesty, and religiosity," (Kunzel 2018). This tolerance in their town may have also been contributed to by their perceived conformity to the sociocultural roles of husband and wife.

Pictured above: A double silhouette featuring Sylvia Drake and Charity Bryant, 1810-1820

Image retrieved with credit to: https://wams.nyhistory.org/building-a-new-nation/american-woman/charity-and-sylvia/

Decades later in the 1960's-80's, the seemingly collective migration of queer people to urban areas to participate in the Gay Liberation movement and meet others like them unintentionally contributed to the establishment of the common stereotype claiming that queerness is disproportionately present in cities, and absent in or incompatible with the countryside. Stereotypes such as these are not only inaccurate, but harmfully perpetuate the idea of queerness as a conscious choice and/or a purely urban phenomenon.

The urban, rebellious queer became a highly politicized identity, and thus, the most visible one. Regardless of its increased media and cultural visibility, rural queer people did not

see themselves and their communities represented in this depiction, and maintained their own authentic ways of living without considering themselves queer, or "LGBT." This archetype is often unrecognizable to both rural queers and their communities, as evidenced in research conducted by Dr. Colin Johnson, a professor of Gender Studies and History at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana.

As part of their research, Johnson conducted multiple interviews with elderly people in rural communities, and when asked about "LGBT people," they frequently denied their presence locally. Consequently, after researchers purposefully neglected to use common labels, and therefore, their associated stereotypes of what it means and looks like to be queer, recollections of old friends, neighbors, and family living beyond the constraints of heteronormativity came flowing.

Information retrieved from: Regina Kunzel, The Power of Queer History, *The American Historical Review*, Volume 123, Issue 5, December 2018, Pages 1560–1582, https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhy202 , Slepyan, A. (2021, April 9). *Rural Queer history: Hidden in plain sight*. The Daily Yonder. Retrieved November 12, 2022, from https://dailyyonder.com/rural-queer-history-hidden-in-plain-sight/2021/04/09/

While it has been a conscious effort by society to ostracize or erase queer livelihoods, especially in rural areas of the United States, over 3 million LGBTQ+ people live in rural areas across the country. This is a conservative estimate, as one may guess, since there are certainly others who have not fully realized their identities or are not publicly (or even privately) "out," to those in their communities for fear of rejection or differential treatment. Regardless, as this is the data we have to work with, even just this figure shows that 15-20% of the LGBTQ+ American population lives in these rural areas. This is proportional to the one-fifth of the American population who live in rural areas. Let's look at some other helpful data and statistics that provide a more clear understanding of life for rural queer people:

- 10% of rural youth identify as LGBTQ+, the same as urban youth
- LGBTQ+ healthcare: Access to this essential human right can be extremely difficult in rural communities, where healthcare providers are more likely to have religious affiliations or exemption laws that allow them to discriminate or get away with malpractice
- As compared to 57% of urban areas, just 11% of rural areas provide access to LGBTQ+ health centers. Additionally, compared to 48% of urban areas, just 10% of rural areas provide access to LGBTQ+ senior services/elder care. This forces many queer people in rural areas to have a means of travel to access these essential services
- Discrimination in healthcare settings is a significant barrier to service access for LGBTQ+ people, with 10% of LGB and 33% of transgender people reporting healthcare discrimination within a year's time. Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, 18% of LGB and 23% of transgender people have avoided receiving medical attention for fear of mistreatment
- LGBTQ+ education: Rural areas or school districts are more likely to struggle with lack of funding and teacher shortages (lower qualifications, lower pay, lower resources), and

at the same time, are more likely to have hostile or unwelcoming environments and fewer policy/structural supports for youth. On average, rural schools serve 20% of the country's students, yet receive just 17% of state education funding.

- LGBTQ+ Employment: Rural areas provide less space to simply exist authentically without outside judgement, and this increased visibility in tight-knit communities can lead to job discrimination, job termination, and little ability to act as a result of the lack of protections at local and state levels
- LGBTQ+ housing: While housing is more affordable in rural areas when compared to urban ones, housing still remains unaffordable or inaccessible for many, resulting in a disproportionately high percentage of queer people being homeless, as well as instances of housing discrimination or exclusion
- Rural areas are generally less supportive of LGBTQ+ people and lifestyles socially and politically, with fewer LGBTQ+/allied representatives in government and the legal system, residents and neighbors who are less likely to support inclusive policies or actions, and what laws that do address LGBTQ+ issues directly perpetuating harm or discrimination
- While technology has advanced into every sector of American lives, those living in rural areas remain at a disadvantage, as they are less likely to have access or funding to acquire Internet access, computers, or smart devices that provide unprecedented access to information, education, and community support

Data and information obtained from: Movement Advancement Project. April 2019. *Where We Call Home: LGBT People in Rural America*. www.lgbtmap.org/rural-lgbt

Although this data was primarily collected in 2019, four years later, anti-LGBTQ+, and particularly anti-trans legislation has become the forefront of concern for queer people, allies, and families. Unsurprisingly, most of this legislation pertains to rural/southern states and localities. Data collected from the Trevor Project's Survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health found that suicidal thoughts have consistently trended upward over the past three years, culminating in nearly half of LGBTQ+ youth reporting to have seriously considered suicide within the past year. 17% of LGBTQ+ youth report being threatened with or subjected to conversion therapy. 27-28% of LGBTQ+ youth who attempted suicide in the past year were threatened or subjected to conversion therapy. Similarly, the Trevor Project reported that 86% of LGBTQ+ youth have reported a decline in their mental health in the face of debates over their humanity and rights.

Statistics obtained from: https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/

Pictured above: 2017 image depicting protesters rallying against Trump/GOP policies, Creative Commons image obtained from: https://www.flickr.com/photos/109799466@N06/32376655622

Over the course of the 2023 legislative session, the ACLU has tracked a whopping 461 anti-LGBTQ+ bills in the United States. These bills specifically attack rights for queer people, such as:

- The ability to update records to reflect gender/sex changes on IDs, records, birth certificates, etc.
- The right to nondiscrimination and equal treatment by employers, businesses, and in healthcare settings
- The freedom of speech and expression in the form of performances, drag shows, and LGBTQ+ literature
- The right to receive medically-necessary healthcare, such as hormone therapy, essential and often life-saving surgical procedures, etc. Some of these bills ask for criminal penalties for individuals, families, and healthcare practitioners who provide gender-affirming care, block insurance coverage of such care, and force intersex youth to receive irreversible treatment to conform
- The ability to access public accommodations like bathrooms and locker rooms in schools, work environments, and public places/businesses
- The ability for LGBTQ+ youth and athletes to participate in sports. These bills are often targeting schools, with policies that require educators to censor LGBTQ+ topics and "out," students to their caregivers/school administration, and thus, their communities
- The ability for LGBTQ+ people to marry, a previously guaranteed right under the Supreme Court

Information and data obtained from: https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights

Activity 3

3.2 - Using the information above and/or the "Where We Call Home: LGBT People In Rural America," Report by the Movement Advancement Project (MAP) https://www.lgbtmap.org/file/lgbt-rural-report.pdf , please list and describe three myths and their associated truths with regard to queer existence and experiences in agricultural/rural communities of the United States:

Myths

1.

2.

3.

Truths

1.

2.

3.

What surprised or did not surprise you about this report?

Section 4

Module Objectives: Upon completion of Section 4, participant should have an adequate understanding of beneficial agricultural programs/initiatives catered to the LGBTQ+ community, and be able to describe the value/necessity of such initiatives

4.1 What Can Be Done About These Issues?: Identifying Queer Community Needs/Areas of Opportunity

Reading about and hearing these alarming statistics/discriminatory policies can inspire many negative feelings, such as hopelessness, sadness, anger, devastation, and confusion: How is this allowed to happen to fellow human beings in a world where we devote time and money to futuristic innovations like artificial intelligence and cryptocurrency? These feelings are normal and valid, but we owe it to ourselves, our predecessors, and the future population to address these harsh realities and do everything in our power to prevent as much further harm as possible, and to ensure the lives/livelihoods lost have not been lost in vain.

Just as it is critically important to remember that we must act on these atrocities, it is equally important to remember the progress that has been made. In 2022, over 200 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced, and nearly 90% of those were defeated as a direct result of hard work by advocates and allies. The Trevor Project outlines various ways that you too can get involved and inspire others to do the same, as our true power lies in the strength of the collective:

- When possible, stay informed about the status of current news, legislation, and other developments specific to the LGBTQ+ community
- Consider seeking out an organization that is accessible to you and volunteering time, money, resources, or promotion efforts
- Reach out to legislators and representatives that have direct sway with these issues. Legislators can be contacted through various routes, including phone, email, letter, or even face-to-face
- Watch or attend associated hearings or sessions from a place of advocacy for LGBTQ+ people, both to remain informed about developments and to provide positive presence
- Educate others in your community, family, friend groups, and wherever possible. If you do not feel comfortable or qualified to speak about these issues personally, feel free to direct others to online or physical resources, and remember, you do not have to be a scholar to make a case for fellow human beings from a place of empathy and compassion

Information obtained from: https://www.thetrevorproject.org/blog/our-resolution-defeat-anti-lgbtq-bills-in-2023/

Pictured above: Family participating in protest advocating for Trans rights, Creative Commons image obtained from: https://freestate-justice.org/protect-trans-kids-call-md-senators-to-pass-inclusive-schools-act-sb666/

4.2 Who Is Doing It?: Identifying and Describing examples of beneficial agricultural/rural programs or initiatives that aim to combat discrimination/injustice or promote community visibility/viability

While living in the southern United States or rural areas of the country, it can feel incredibly isolating or feeble to find local resources for community action/collaboration, but there do exist organizations in these areas that you can get involved with, support directly or indirectly, tell others about, or use as inspiration to foster the growth of your own initiative.

The Cultivating Change Foundation is a nonprofit organization in the United States that initially came together in April 2015 and finally made its debut at the beginning of 2016 with the mission of "Valuing and elevating LGBTQ+ agriculturalists through advocacy, education, and community" (Cultivating Change Foundation 2016). They seek to perpetually achieve this mission primarily through using their platform as a network for queer agriculturalists to connect and communicate regardless of generational differences and even across global distances.

Through the use of the Internet/technology as well as the annual Cultivating Change Summit, regional caucuses, the Collegiate Affiliate Program, and other related industry events, the Cultivating Change Foundation is able to provide an inclusive and safe environment for LGBTQ+ agriculturalists of all backgrounds to come together to collaborate, educate/learn, develop their professional and leadership skills, acknowledge and propose solutions or action towards mitigating injustices faced by the community, and celebrate diverse/inclusive agricultural industry leadership and policy

Information obtained from: https://www.cultivatingchangefoundation.org/impact-mission-strategy

The Queer Farmer Network, or QFN, is a queer-led organization founded with the purpose of building community amongst queer farmers and agriculturalists and "to reflect on and interrupt racist, capitalist, and heteropatriarchal legacies in Agriculture" (Queer Farmer Network). Through this mission and the desire to mitigate feelings of isolation so often experienced by queer farmers/agriculturalists across the rural United States, the QFN organized its initial and presently consistent initiative, the Queer Farmer Convergence. The QFC has occurred for the past three years from Humble Hands Harvest, a queer, worker-owned cooperative farm in Decorah, IA, where the founders of the organization reside (Queer Farmer Network).

Further initiatives conducted by or with the platform of the QFN include a continued correspondence and community through email newsletters, zines, calendars, and even a Job Board/Resource Directory that supplies members/viewers with queer-friendly job postings on farms across the country in a variety of both in-person and remote roles, from farm-hand to Digital Marketing Manager. That being said, the QFN is still a relatively new organization with relatively few listings and little visibility, and the need for accessible, gainful employment for queer agriculturalists of all abilities is still ever-present across the United States.

Information obtained from: https://www.queerfarmernetwork.org/about

SONG, or Southerners on New Ground, is a region/demographic-specific organization originally founded in 1993 to "build, drive, amplify, and support Southern inter-sectional movement thru regional capacity building, leadership development, and organizing" (SONG: Our Mission, Vision, & History). They strive to achieve this through envisioning "a sustainable South that embodies the best of its freedom traditions and works towards the transformation of our economic, social, spiritual, and political relationships" (SONG: Our Mission, Vision, & History). These goals and visions of SONG are firmly rooted in core beliefs, including the unwavering worth, dignity, and respect of all people, as well as the inherent connectedness shared between them.

Pictured above: SONG member Serena Sebring speaking at Moral Monday rally in Raleigh, NC, obtained through Wikimedia Commons:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Serena_Sebring_of_Southerners_on_New_Ground_speaks_at_the_Moral_Monday_rally_in_Raleigh.jpg

As such, community organization is a staple component in SONG for promoting awareness and action from an intersectional lens in which the dynamic relationship between things like race, class, culture, gender, and sexuality are examined insofar as they affect one's lived experience in and perception of society. It is a core principle in SONG's ideology that the unification and collaboration of oppressed groups of people who experience chronic injustices have the best chance of sparking social change and liberation (SONG: Our Beliefs & Strategies).

Region-specific organizations like SONG are critically important in promoting awareness of issues unique to Southern/rural areas of the United States experienced by marginalized communities. SONG pioneered the first Southern, LGBTQ-led Organizing School that was able to travel across the country and train over one-hundred racial and economic justice organizations about the importance of integrating anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia into their missions, has held over fifty Southern sub-regional retreats for Southern QPOC, and was a central force in winning an injunction against legislation HB 87 in Georgia, wherein individuals or organizations could be punished by law for "harboring of illegal aliens" (SONG: Our Mission, Vision, & History).

Information obtained from: https://southernersonnewground.org/

Activity 4

4.3 – Participant/Instructor will either individually or as a group/class, use Internet research to complete all information as appropriate, with the goal of successfully describing a specific, ongoing LGBTQ+ agricultural program/initiative of participant's choosing

Name of Program/Initiative: _____

Date of Foundation: _____ Still in Progress? _____

Program Mission/Goals:

_____

_____

_____

What specific barriers does the initiative face? (Financial, political, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

Now that you are an expert on this Program/Initiative, how do you think it can be improved/achieve more?

_____

_____

_____

Section 5

Module Objectives: Upon completion of Section 5, which culminates in the Module Project and participant feedback form, participants will assemble and deliver a report detailing a hypothetical, but plausible intervention that demonstrates competency of community barriers and needs in the area of participant's choosing: accessibility, resources, community engagement, etc.

Activity 5

5.1 - Participant will complete the Module Project by assembling a report in the form of one's choosing outlining one LGBTQ+ community need specific to rural/agricultural barriers, as well as a hypothetical, but plausible intervention that could successfully contribute to dismantling this barrier

Activity 5 Rubric Questions

1. **Did the participant clearly state and define the barrier, as well as who it is faced by? (Land acquisition, Funding, Community/Cultural, etc.)**
2. **Did the participant successfully provide a clear historical background for the inception of the barrier as it relates to the LGBTQ+ community?**
3. **Did the participant clearly define their intervention method of choice?**
4. **Did the participant provide sound, acceptable reasoning for their rationale behind the selection of the intervention?**
5. **Is the implementation of the intervention plausible/possible?**
6. **Did the participant use clear, concise, thoughtful language to describe their ideas throughout the report?**
7. **Did the participant cite their sources where necessary both throughout the report and in organizing their reference page?**

Appendix D

Participant Feedback

1. **On a scale of 1-10, how much did you enjoy learning the material of this module?**

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all **Greatly enjoyed**

2. **Would you recommend (colleague, family, friend, etc.) participation in this module?**

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all **Highly recommend**

3. **Which Activity was your favorite? Which was your least favorite?**

   Favorite: _____ Least Favorite: _____

4. **What would you like to see/see more of in future implementations of this module?**

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. **What would you not like to see in future implementations of this module?**

   _____

   _____

   _____