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Jody M. Russon & Christa K. Schmidt

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Authenticity and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual College Students

JODY M. RUSSON

Drexel University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

CHRISTA K. SCHMIDT

Towson University, Towson, Maryland, USA

Theories in career development have discussed the importance of career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE); however, there has been little development in this area for the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) community. Research has shown that LGB individuals may experience disruptions in career development if psychological energy is diverted to developing sexual identity. The present study sought to determine if authenticity, a strength-based characteristic, predicted CDMSE among LGB individuals. Survey results from 95 LGB-identified individuals indicated that components of authenticity, specifically unbiased processing and awareness, accounted for a significant amount of variance in CDMSE. Implications for social service professionals are discussed.

KEYWORDS LGB, career decision-making, authenticity, self-efficacy

INTRODUCTION

The multicultural movement has promoted a flourish in research with sexual minority populations; however, research related to mental health and career development of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues is far from commonplace (Perez, 2007). According to Chung (2003), vocational literature for the LGB population has made significant advances in the theoretical domain, which provides a springboard for research in this arena. For example, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) has been

Address correspondence to Jody M. Russon, Couple and Family Therapy Department, Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA 19102. E-mail: Jmr439@drexel.edu

used to understand how sexual identity and vocational constructs, such as career decision-making self-efficacy, are related for the LGB population (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996; Lyons, Brenner, & Lipman, 2010). Investigating such constructs for LGB individuals will further enhance our understanding of how to best serve this community in science and practice.

One theory regarding career development in LGB individuals that has some empirical support is the “bottleneck hypothesis,” which proposes that LGB individuals may experience a disruption in tasks related to career development when psychological resources are focused toward concerns surrounding sexual identity or vice versa (Hetherington, 1991; Schmidt & Nilsson, 2006). Lyons, Brenner, and Lipman (2010) found that LGB individuals may experience one of three trajectories: sexual identity tasks interfere with career development tasks, career development tasks interfere with sexual identity development tasks, or neither developmental process interferes with the other. Furthermore, individuals who experienced interference from one developmental task to another demonstrated a lower level of career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE) than those who did not experience identity interference in either direction. Although the research evidence for the bottleneck hypothesis is in its infancy, it does appear that, at least for some LGB individuals, sexual identity development and career development can influence each other.

In addition to looking at the ways career development may be disrupted or negatively affected for individuals negotiating a minority sexual identity, research is needed on the strength-based qualities that may enhance career development for LGB individuals (Preston-Sternberg, 2009). Riggle, Whitman, Olson, Rostosky, and Strong (2008) have identified several LGB community-based strengths that contribute to well-being. Their research identified three domains of positive aspects related to identifying as a lesbian or gay man, including disclosure and social support, insight and empathy for self and others, and freedom from societal definitions of roles. Within the domain of “insight and empathy for self and others,” the authors describe how the ability to be truly and honestly one’s self, also known as authenticity, is a critical element for the development of a positive sexual identity. As the strengths one possesses as an LGB individual are likely related to sexual identity development, it is possible that these strengths may also be linked to career development processes for this population.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR THE LGB COMMUNITY

Based on Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) uses social cognitive constructs, including self-efficacy, to conceptualize three career components (choice, interests, and performance) (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Self-efficacy is one’s confidence in his or her

ability to perform a specific task (Bandura, 1986). Thus, the more efficacious a person is regarding his or her ability to perform the tasks related to a specific career, the more likely she or he will be to pursue that vocational option. Furthermore, as SCCT considers the interaction of such individual-level variables as self-efficacy within the context of societal supports and barriers that are present in an individual's life, it is particularly useful to conceptualize the experience of marginalized populations such as the LGB community.

Career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE) is an often-researched construct related to SCCT. CDMSE addresses one's belief in her or his ability to successfully carry out the tasks necessary to choose a career, or make important career decisions. This construct attributes career decisiveness to maintaining self-efficacy in five distinct behavioral areas including the abilities to

- appraise one's career-related interests and skills,
- gather information related to various occupations,
- choose goals related to careers,
- make specific career plans, and
- solve problems as they arise.

As individuals' experiences with these tasks can differ widely, especially when considering potential societal influences and barriers related to gender, ethnicity, race, religion, ability, and sexual identity, this construct is useful when considering the career development process for marginalized groups (Taylor & Betz, 1983). In a review of relevant literature, Morrow, Gore, and Campbell (1996) examined the societal influences on the career development of lesbian and gay individuals in association with self-efficacy. The authors argued that individuals facing oppression or marginalization have unique developmental needs, as they are negotiating identities that do not follow heterosexist, socially sanctioned pathways (Morrow et al., 1996). According to the "bottleneck hypothesis" (Hetherington, 1991), individuals with sexual minority identities may experience a disruption in career development, self-efficacy, and vocational preparation due to the concurrent nature and competing demands of sexual and career identity developmental processes (Hetherington, 1991; Schmidt & Nilsson, 2006). When the bottleneck effect occurs, LGB individuals may devote more psychological resources to one area of development over the other, as these processes are generally emerging around the same time. According to studies supporting the "bottleneck hypothesis," if one area of development is the individual's primary focus, the other may be delayed (Lyons et al., 2010; Schmidt & Nilsson, 2006).

In a study investigating sexual identity development, social support, and career development with 102 LGB high school students, Schmidt and Nilsson (2006) found that sexual identity conflict and social support predicted

career maturity and vocational indecision. Those individuals who experienced higher levels of conflict and lower levels of social support had lower scores on career maturity and higher scores on vocational indecision. In another test of the “bottleneck hypothesis,” Lyons and colleagues (2010) sought to determine the extent to which LGB individuals experience disruption in one element of identity over the other. It was hypothesized that four types of people would emerge: one in which participants’ sexual identity interferes with career development, a second in which career development interferes with sexual identity, a third where there is high conflict reported in both areas and, finally, a fourth where there is low conflict reported in both areas. The authors hypothesized that participants, 127 LGB individuals between the ages of 17 and 29, who experienced high conflict related to sexual identity, would have lower levels of CDMSE as evidenced by the short form of the CDMSE scale (Betz et al., 1996). The cluster analysis results indicated that three of the four hypothesized clusters existed in this population (all but the high-conflict group). It was also apparent that the low-conflict cluster held the largest amount of participants, indicating that there is not necessarily a conflict struggle existing between developmental processes for LGB individuals on the whole. On the other hand, the presence of the career-conflict and the sexual-identity conflict clusters supports the “bottleneck effect” for at least some members of the LGB community. Individuals who fell into the clusters demonstrating conflict between career decision-making and sexual identity scored lower on the CDMSE scale, indicating that sexual identity is related to one’s beliefs of potential competence in career decision-making tasks whether sexual identity is being embraced or ignored. According to these results, development of a healthy sexual identity is associated with higher levels of CDMSE.

Strengths Related to LGB Career Development

Social service professionals are beginning to devote more attention to multicultural aspects of optimal human functioning (Frazier, Lee, & Steger, 2006). In a qualitative study, Riggle and colleagues (2008) engaged 203 gay and 350 lesbian individuals in an online survey that asked participants to respond to an open-ended question regarding the positive aspects of being a lesbian or gay man (Riggle et al., 2008). Using a grounded theory approach, the authors determined that there were 3 domains and 11 themes for positive aspects inherent to lesbian and gay identities. The three domains included disclosure and social support, insight and empathy for self and others, and freedom from societal definitions of roles. Many of the themes identified by participants were based around living authentically and being fully accepting of one’s identity. Riggle and colleagues (2008) suggested that strengths from authenticity enhance well-being in relationships, provide support for life activities, and facilitate insight for the self and others. Thus, it is likely that

this individually based strength would contribute to enhancement of career developmental processes, including career decision-making self-efficacy. According to Kernis and Goldman (2006), authenticity can be conceptualized in four dimensions: awareness, unbiased processing, behavior, and relational orientation. Awareness refers to knowledge of personal strengths, weaknesses, motivations, and feelings. Unbiased processing can be thought of as objectivity with regard to personal strengths and weaknesses. When one is unbiased in her or his processing, the result is a minimal amount of distortions and denial with regard to understanding the self and personal experiences. Authenticity in behavior refers to congruence in one's values and actions. Those who seek to please others regardless of their own needs would not be displaying a high level of authenticity in behavior. Finally, relational orientation refers to the interpersonal side of authenticity; those who focus on truthfulness in their close relationships would obtain a higher level of functioning in this area. Genuineness is another core element of relational orientation authenticity (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

Authenticity is a newly developed construct that has just began to garner attention in research related to the LGB community. Riggle and colleagues (2008) stated that authenticity and honesty can be expressed as self-acceptance, whereby an individual can be truly herself or himself with others and fully accept all parts of his or her identity. Alderson (2000) conducted interviews with 16 gay male participants to understand their process of defining and attaining a positive gay identity. Findings suggested that coming out to oneself involved a new conceptualization of one's relationships and surroundings, and that this process takes an enormous amount of emotional energy (Alderson, 2000). According to this study, the development of a positive sexual identity specifically involves authenticity, with oneself, in the form of acceptance.

Authenticity is shaped around maintaining personal insight (Riggle et al., 2008) and is integral to the strengths-based developmental perspective referred to as "coming out growth" (COG) (Vaughan & Waehler, 2010). Vaughan and Waehler (2010) tested a newly developed measure for COG, compared it to stress-related growth (SRG), and discovered relationships between COG and many constructs described in LG literature. With a sample of 418 openly lesbian and gay individuals, the author found that the levels of growth associated with coming out were equivalent to or exceeded the growth typically associated with stress. According to the author, COG had a significant, positive relationship with authenticity, as well as personal and social elements of well-being. As outness has been researched as a part of sexual identity experiences and development, this study indicated that internal authenticity is related to these processes (Knoble & Linville, 2010). However, research examining authenticity is currently in its infancy as very few studies have addressed this construct in relation to the LGB community, and fewer still have linked it to career development.

In one study that did not mention the sexual identities of participants, White and Tracey (2011) sought to extend previous linkages between authenticity and life satisfaction to new connections between authenticity and career outcomes. Specifically, the authors tested the relationship between authenticity and career indecision for 537 undergraduate participants. Findings demonstrated that higher scores on authenticity measures resulted in less career indecisiveness. The empirical connections between variables suggest that authenticity is generally important in career development of undergraduate students, and, as indicated by aforementioned studies, may be specifically significant for LGB individuals.

Summary

The present study sought to build on the previous research devoted to the career development of the LGB community by examining the relationships between authenticity and CDMSE. The specific strengths of LGB individuals related to having a sexual minority identity are just beginning to be understood (Riggle et al., 2008), and to date, there has been no empirical investigation into how these strengths would contribute to career development variables, such as CDMSE. Authenticity has been a key component in positive sexual identity formation processes and in forming connections socially (Alderson, 2000; Elizur & Ziv, 2001). As there is some evidence linking sexual identity development to career development for LGB populations, this study investigated the extent to which authenticity contributed to career decision-making self-efficacy.

METHOD

Participants and Procedures

Participants were 95 LGB, questioning, or queer-identified, undergraduate and graduate college students ages 17 to 43 years ($M = 21$). Sixty percent identified as female, 36.8% as male, 2.1% as female-to-male transgender, and 1.1% as male-to-female transgender (as the three transgender participants identified as sexual minorities, they were included in the analysis). For sexual identity, 29.5% of participants identified as gay, 27.4% as lesbian, 22.1% as bisexual, 3.2% as questioning, and 17.9% as other (e.g., “queer,” “pansexual”). A majority of participants (72.6%) were White/Caucasian, with people of color being underrepresented in all groups (7.4% Black/African-American, 6.3% Latino/Latina, 7.4% biracial/multiracial, 4.2% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2.1% other). Most participants (86.3%) identified as full-time students and 92.6% had declared a major. Participants represented diverse majors and were relatively evenly distributed around the year in school (25.3% first year,

16.8% second year, 20.0% third year, 12.6% fourth year, and 12.6% graduate and professional students). The majority of participants (95.8%) stated that they had some involvement in the LGBTQ campus community and 45.3% declared a considerable level or a great deal of participation. Finally, when asked how often career counseling had been received, 46.3% of participants had never participated in career counseling, 17.9% received it once, 21.1% had gone twice, and 14.7% were involved three or more times.

Participants were recruited to complete an online survey using both in-person (e.g., announcements at student group meetings) and online (e.g., Facebook) methods. While the online nature of the survey had the potential to reach students throughout the United States and abroad, recruitment efforts centered in the Mid-Atlantic region at two universities.

Measures

DEMOGRAPHICS

To determine sample characteristics, participants' ethnicity, race, age, gender, sexual identity, year in college, involvement in LGBTQA community organizations, most recent involvement in career counseling, and declared major were assessed using a demographic information form. This form also served as a basis to check participants' information for exclusion criteria.

CAREER DECISION-MAKING SELF-EFFICACY-SHORT FORM (CDMSE-SF)

The CDMSE-SF measures salient aspects of individuals' confidence in relation to the career decision-making process (Betz et al., 1996). While the original CDMSE has 50 items, the CDMSE-SF has 25 (Chung, 2002) and was developed for the purposes of usefulness and brevity in counseling and career assessment (Betz & Luzzo, 1996). Using a 5-point Likert scale (0 = no confidence at all, 5 = complete confidence), perceived efficacy is rated on the following subscales: Self-Appraisal (e.g., "Decide what you value most in an occupation"), Occupational Information (e.g., "Change majors if you did not like your first choice"), Goal Selection (e.g., "Choose a career that will fit your interests"), Planning (e.g., "Prepare a good resume"), and Problem Solving (e.g., "Choose a career that will fit your preferred lifestyle"). This 25-item measure is divided into 5 items for each of the 5 subscales; therefore, respondents' higher scores indicate more self-efficacy in each domain. Betz and colleagues (1996) reported that the CDMSE-SF has a Cronbach's alpha of .94 and demonstrates concurrent validity with other measures of career indecision. For the current study, the internal consistency reliabilities for the subscales are as follows: .74 (Self-Appraisal), .66 (Occupational

Information), .74 (Goal Selection), .70 (Planning), and .70 (Problem Solving). The Cronbach's alpha for the total CDMSE-SF in the current study was .90.

AUTHENTICITY INVENTORY VERSION 3 (AI-3)

Authenticity was measured by the Authenticity Inventory Version 3 (AI-3; Kernis & Goldman, 2006). This 45-item measure captures the ability for individuals to function authentically across the following four domains: awareness (12 items), unbiased processing (10 items), behavior (11 items), and relational orientation (12 items). Responses are measured with a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include "For better or for worse I am aware of who I truly am" (awareness), "I am very uncomfortable objectively considering my limitations and shortcomings" (unbiased processing, reverse scored), "I find that my behavior typically expresses my values" (behavior), and "I want people with whom I am close to understand my strengths" (relational orientation). Kernis and Goldman (2006) demonstrated that these four components of authentic functioning are both distinctive and interrelated. Furthermore, these constructs have been related to healthy individual and relational functioning (Brunell et al., 2010; Lakey, Kernis, Heppner, & Lance, 2008).

Higher scores on the AI-3 indicate a more authentic perception of the self. Previous research has shown a high coefficient alpha for the scale (.90). The subscales for awareness, unbiased processing, behavior, and relational orientation have been reported in previous research as .79, .64, .80, and .78, respectively (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). For the participants in this study, the Cronbach's alpha for the total scale score was .81. Reliability coefficients for the current study were .79 for Unbiased Processing, .52 for Awareness, .30 for Behavior, and .56 for Relational Orientation. The low alpha coefficients on the subscales may be a result of the fact that the AI-3 was not created for specifically for LGB individuals, who may have unique characteristics related to the expression and experience of authenticity.

RESULTS

The data were entered and analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 20 computer program. Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for measured variables were calculated (see Table 1). For the CDMSE-SF total scale and subscales, the means and standard deviations were average to high when compared with validation studies (Betz et al., 1996). Several bivariate correlations were uncovered between the subscales of the CDMSE-SF and AI-3. A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine which components of authenticity would predict career decision-making self-efficacy

TABLE 1 Summary of Bivariate Correlations, Means and Standard Deviations for Participant Scores on the CDMSE-SF (CD) and Subscales (Self-Appraisal [SA], Occupational Information [OI], Goal Selection [GS], Planning [P], Problem Solving [PS]) and the AI-3 (AI) and Subscales (Awareness [A], Unbiased Processing [UP], Behavior [B], Relational Orientation [RO])

| Variable | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|----------|----------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|----|
| 1. CD | 98.53 | 13.02 | — | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. AI | 150.92 | 18.05 | .09 | — | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. SA | 19.61 | 3.25 | .86** | .12 | — | | | | | | | | |
| 4. OI | 19.76 | 3.12 | .75** | .14 | .52** | — | | | | | | | |
| 5. GS | 19.81 | 3.24 | .87** | .04 | .76** | .58** | — | | | | | | |
| 6. P | 20.10 | 2.95 | .83** | .11 | .67** | .57** | .65** | — | | | | | |
| 7. PS | 19.24 | 3.36 | .75** | -.02 | .58** | .40** | .54** | .53** | — | | | | |
| 8. A | 42.94 | 5.74 | .31** | .78** | .34** | .28** | .15 | .30** | .17 | — | | | |
| 9. UP | 27.23 | 7.27 | -.23* | .72** | -.25* | -.13 | -.12 | -.15 | -.29** | .29** | — | | |
| 10. B | 35.74 | 4.81 | .06 | .79** | .08 | .07 | -.01 | .10 | .03 | .52** | .55** | — | |
| 11. RO | 45.00 | 5.87 | .23* | .75** | .29** | .27** | .15 | .16 | .07 | .64** | .26** | .43** | — |

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE 2 Summary of Linear Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting CDMSE of LGB Participants

| Variable | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | β | <i>t</i> | R^2 |
|----------|----------|-------------|---------|----------|-------|
| Step 1 | | | | | .22** |
| A | .72 | .29 | .31 | 2.44* | |
| UP | -.71 | .20 | -.40 | -3.60** | |
| B | .21 | .34 | .07 | .61 | |
| RO | .23 | .27 | .10 | .85 | |

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

(see Table 2). All subscales of the AI-3 were entered simultaneously as predictors of CDMSE. Total scores on the CDMSE-SF served as the dependent variable in this regression equation. The overall regression model was statistically significant; $R^2 = .22$, $F(4, 90) = 6.50$, $p < .001$.

An examination of the predictor variables demonstrated that the unbiased processing and awareness subscales of the AI-3 contributed statistically significant variance to CDMSE. As can be seen in Table 2, the awareness scale had a significant positive regression coefficient, indicating participants with higher scores on this scale were expected to have higher levels of CDMSE. The unbiased processing scale had a negative coefficient, indicating those participants with higher scores on this scale were expected to have a lower level of CDMSE. Scores on the behavior and relational orientation subscales of the AI-3 were not found to be statistically significant predictors.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which authenticity among LGB individuals would contribute to career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE). Results indicated that unbiased processing and awareness domains of authenticity contributed statistically significant variance to CDMSE. The behavior and relational orientation domains, on the other hand, did not make a statistically significant contribution. Therefore, as theoretical speculation in LGB development has indicated, awareness of oneself and experiences, without distortion, is a key contributor to important career-related variables for LGB individuals (Hetherington, 1991; Schmidt & Nilsson, 2006).

The findings of this study suggest that elements of authenticity may play a role as a personal resource in the process of career development for LGB individuals. For instance, the ability to be aware of one's authentic motivations and feelings (Kernis & Goldman, 2006) may be particularly relevant for the LGB community because of the marginalized status of this identity. Extending the bottleneck hypothesis (Hetherington, 1991), when

the self is seen as secure and stable, LGB individuals may be more able to effectively manage discrimination and heterosexist messages to focus their psychological resources on career development tasks. Indeed, the awareness domain of authenticity served as a positive predictor for CDMSE. LGB individuals may be able to use authentic awareness in developing CDMSE because it allows for a thorough understanding of strengths and weaknesses associated with various careers of interest. Having such inner understanding may guide one's process of researching, planning, and acting within vocational domains (Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1987; Taylor & Betz, 1983).

Interestingly, the present analysis indicated that higher levels of authentic unbiased processing, or maintaining an unbiased perspective on one's experiences, contributed to lower levels of CDMSE. Unbiased processing is the ability to objectively interpret one's external personal experiences without distortions and denial (Lakey et al., 2008; Kernis & Goldman, 2006). To understand the negative relationship between maintaining an unbiased perspective and CDMSE, it is important to consider the contextual factors surrounding LGB career and identity development. LGB individuals constantly face the real possibility of being rejected from mainstream workforce opportunities (Eddy, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2012; Elliott, 1993). Thus, maintaining an unbiased perspective means understanding the realities of living in a heterosexist environment (Parnell & Lease, 2012). Perhaps when a LGB person does have a clear, unbiased way of understanding his or her surroundings, the task of finding career domains that fit with the self and are nondiscriminatory seems daunting. To further differentiate the ability to maintain an unbiased perspective from awareness, one may be able to use his or her knowledge of personal feelings, strengths, and weaknesses to determine career pathways; however, if the social climate remains discriminatory, a realistic understanding of one's experience may promote a sense of hopelessness in career-related tasks.

The ability to examine personal life situations from an unbiased perspective has the potential to be an accessible strength for LGB individuals in their career development. Yet, for those encountering discrimination from the workforce, the realities may require building efficacy in navigating, overcoming, or working toward changing heterosexist systems (Murray, 2011). Future research can examine ways that LGB individuals use their strengths to combat discriminatory practices they might encounter in the workplace.

Limitations

Though interesting findings emerged from these data, there were factors that limit their interpretation. First, the small sample size limited the ability to identify statistically significant effects. A larger sample would provide the opportunity to detect smaller effects, which may have helped elucidate the

findings regarding behavior and relational orientation elements of authenticity. Second, when asking participants to self-identify as LGB in order to participate in research, only those who are open about their sexual orientation will be willing to participate, thereby potentially limiting the variability in the variables of interest. The sample might have generally communicated higher levels of authenticity when compared to LGB individuals who have not openly identified themselves as such. This is a problem inherent to research with LGB individuals, as participation itself requires a certain level of openness with this marginalized identity (Rothblum, 1994).

Furthermore, this study emphasized the need for greater instrumentation and measurement development for sexual minority populations. The measures used for the present study were not created for LGB individuals and this might have contributed to the low reliability coefficients on the AI-3 subscales. To best understand the LGB community through psychological research, future measurement development must address constructs that may be different for LGB and heterosexual populations. Though there are several measures related to the experience of heterosexism and homophobia (e.g., Self-Stigma Scale: Mak et al., 2007; Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale: Szymanski & Chung, 2001) and the sexual identity development process (e.g., Measure of Sexual Identity Exploration and Commitment: Worthington, Navarro, Savoy, & Hampton, 2008), currently a measure of the inherent strengths related to being LGB does not exist. Therefore, to fully capture the positive end of the LGB experience, greater instrumentation development in this realm is necessary.

Implications

The present study showed that awareness and unbiased processing components of authenticity predicted a significant amount of the variance in CDMSE. Based on these results, practical implications for career interventions intended for LGB individuals could involve multiple components. Career clients with a sexual minority identity should be encouraged to develop their awareness of how their experiences as a member of the LGB community may relate to their vocational interests. In accordance with SCCT, allowing for a thorough understanding of personal characteristics and context is essential to the developmental process (Lent et al., 1994; Morrow et al., 1996).

Culturally competent career counselors must be aware of the stigma and discrimination that LGB individuals face when preparing for and entering the workforce (Eddy et al., 2012; Elliott, 1993). Throughout their career development, clients may benefit from discussing how they will manage their sexual identities and work through potential issues of discrimination in the workplace. Furthermore, career counselors can help students connect with

organizations devoted to career support for LGB job seekers. Student engagement in LGB mentoring programs might also be a tool for expanding support systems to help navigate the career development process. Traditional-aged college students, who may be living on their own for the first time, may have yet to develop LGB-focused, organizational connections; therefore, mentoring programs could provide these students with the tools to connect to the community. In closing, social service professionals attending to the career development needs of LGB individuals should consider both the individual strengths and societal realities of discrimination and marginalization when working with, and advocating for, this population.

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