

Advancing LGBTQIA+ Inclusion in the Twin Cities Theater Arts Nonprofit  
Sector

AN ACADEMIC CAPSTONE PAPER SUBMITTED TO  
THE COLLEGE OF CONTINUING AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES OF THE UNIVERSITY  
OF MINNESOTA

BY

Meghan “Mac” McLaughlin

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Professional Studies:  
Arts and Cultural Leadership  
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Capstone Advisor – Tom Borrup, Ph.D.

May 2024

# Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Abstract	3
General Introduction	3
Positionality	5
Literature Review	7
Terminology	7
Acronyms	8
Heteronormativity	8
Privilege	8
Intersectionality	9
Coming Out	9
General Research Practices Around LGBTQIA+	10
History of LGBTQIA+	10
Coming Out	16
Invisibility of Trans, Gender Diverse, and Non-Binary People (TGDNB)	17
Human Resources (HR)	18
Workplace Discrimination	18
Human Resources Approaches	21
Human Resources Policies and Practices	22
Nonprofit Spaces	25
Conclusions from Literature Review	28
Methodology	31
About The Methodology of Phenomenology	31
The Phenomenological Research	33
Research	34
The Semi-Structured Interview Questions	34
Survey for Organizations.	35
Findings	36
Participant Responses	36
Range of Participants	37
Twin Cities Theater Organizations	37
Twin Cities Organizations Work Cultures	38
Human Resources Policy	39
Summary of Participants Experiences	40
Organizations Survey Responses	42
Analysis of Responses	44
Conclusions and Recommendations	48
Recommendations	48
References	51

Keywords: LGBTQIA + , Transgender and Nonbinary (TGDNB), Discrimination, Workplace Dynamics, Twin Cities Theater, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI),

## **Abstract**

This research explores LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the Twin Cities theater arts nonprofit sector. It delves into how HR policies impact LGBTQIA+ workers and suggests recommendations for improvement. Through personal narratives and organizational insights, it highlights the challenges and commitments to inclusivity. Ultimately, the study, through phenomenological research, includes interviews with LGBTQIA+ people in theater organizations and surveys of theater organizations regarding their HR policies and practices; aims to foster diversity and equity, building upon the historical legacy of social progress within the arts community.

## **General Introduction**

The Twin Cities theater arts nonprofit sector is a microcosm of societal dynamics, reflecting the intricate interplay of human identity, diversity, and inclusion. Over the years, researchers have delved into the multifaceted experiences and challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals within this vibrant community, uncovering nuanced narratives illuminating the quest for self-discovery, resilience in the face of discrimination, and aspirations for systemic change.

Historically, the theater arts have served as both a mirror and a catalyst for societal change, offering platforms for marginalized voices to be heard and stories to be told. Within the Twin Cities theater scene, this tradition continues, with LGBTQIA+ individuals contributing richly to the community's cultural fabric. The theater arts have been at the forefront of social progress, from pioneering works that challenge norms and provoke thought to grassroots movements that advocate for inclusivity and representation.

This research delves into how HR policies and practices, or the lack thereof, impact LGBTQIA+ workers in Twin Cities arts nonprofits. This study, through phenomenological research, includes interviews with

LGBTQIA+ people in theater organizations and surveys of theater organizations regarding their HR policies and practices. By examining these dynamics, the study aims to uncover how organizational structures either support or hinder the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals in professional settings. Personal narratives shared by participants shed light on how inclusive HR policies can foster a sense of belonging and safety while highlighting the challenges that arise when such policies are absent or inadequately enforced. Through these narratives, the research explores the intersectionality of identity and workplace culture, emphasizing the importance of proactive measures to create inclusive environments that prioritize the well-being and rights of all employees.

Moreover, organizational insights provide valuable perspectives on the institutional landscape of the Twin Cities theater arts nonprofit sector. Disparities in resources and capacity between large and tiny organizations underscore the challenges faced by smaller entities in providing comprehensive support for LGBTQIA+ employees. Despite these challenges, there is a shared commitment to inclusivity, as evidenced by written Human Resources (HR) policies addressing discrimination and proactive approaches to fostering an inclusive environment.

In light of these narratives and insights, critical areas for improvement within the Twin Cities theater arts nonprofit sector are recommended. Recommendations include prioritizing resource investment, adopting intersectional approaches to inclusivity, and actively engaging with the LGBTQIA+ community. By implementing these recommendations and advocating for meaningful change, the theater arts community can work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive environment for all employees, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or other intersecting identities.

Overall, exploring LGBTQIA+ inclusion within the Twin Cities theater arts nonprofit sector represents a critical step toward fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in professional settings. By amplifying voices, advocating for change, and promoting awareness, researchers and practitioners aim to create a more inclusive environment where all individuals can thrive and contribute to the vibrant tapestry of the theater arts community, building upon the rich historical legacy of social progress within the arts.

## Positionality

Positionality, the acknowledgment of one's social location and its influence on research, is integral to understanding the context and implications of scholarly work. In exploring topics related to identity, equity, and social justice, recognizing and articulating one's position within the research process is paramount. As such, in this study, I critically examine my own positionality within the context of investigating how HR policies and practices, or their absence, impact LGBTQIA+ workers in Twin Cities nonprofit arts organizations. By delineating my intersecting identities, experiences, and perspectives, I aim to provide transparency and insight into how my background informs the research process and shapes interpretations of the data. Through this reflective lens, I aspire to foster reflexivity, dialogue, and critical engagement with the research findings, ultimately contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics within the intersection of identity, employment practices, and organizational culture.

I'm Mac, an individual who identifies as nonbinary, queer, and pansexual, hailing from the Midwest with a heritage rooted in Irish/English ancestry. With a Bachelor's degree in Arts, I proudly stand as the first in my family to pursue a Master's degree. My journey has led me to carve out a career path within the nonprofit arts sector, primarily focusing on theatre, where my expertise lies in design, administration, and technical theatre.

Reflecting on my upbringing in a predominantly white community, I'm keenly aware of the privilege bestowed upon me and the significance of my heritage. However, life took an unexpected turn when I was confronted with a chronic illness, challenging my perceptions and reshaping my identity. Despite grappling with the complexities of disability in a world often oblivious to its nuances, I've come to embrace my queerness, finding solace in self-acceptance and resilience.

In navigating both personal and professional spheres, I've been a vocal advocate for LGBTQIA+

inclusivity, particularly within the nonprofit arts organizations of the Twin Cities. My experiences have fueled my curiosity about the impact of HR policies, or the lack thereof, on LGBTQIA+ individuals within these settings. Drawing from firsthand encounters and professional insights, my research aims to shed light on the intersections of identity, employment practices, and organizational dynamics, seeking to address systemic issues and pave the way for more significant equity and inclusion.

Identifying myself within this work is crucial for several reasons. First and foremost, my personal experiences and identities bring authenticity to the research, grounding it in lived realities rather than abstract concepts. By openly sharing aspects of my identity, such as being nonbinary, queer, and pansexual, I humanize the research process and establish a deeper connection with the subject matter. This authenticity fosters trust and credibility among readers and participants, encouraging more meaningful engagement with the research findings. Additionally, my intersecting identities as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community and a professional in the nonprofit theatre arts sector provide unique perspectives and insights into the topic. Drawing from firsthand knowledge of the challenges and experiences individuals face in similar contexts, I am better equipped to analyze and address systemic issues within the field.

Furthermore, my involvement in the research serves as a form of advocacy, signaling a commitment to promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusivity and equitable workplace practices. By highlighting the issues affecting marginalized groups and advocating for policy reforms and organizational improvements, I contribute to the ongoing efforts towards diversity, equity, and inclusion. Overall, my presence within this work enriches the research process, amplifies marginalized voices, and drives meaningful change in academia, employment practices, and social justice initiatives.

## **Literature Review**

This literature review explores disparities experienced by LGBTQIA+ individuals in the workplace. It delves into the impacts of heteronormativity on workplace dynamics and privilege, emphasizing the need for research that considers diverse identities, uses affirming language, and navigates the complexities of documenting LGBTQIA+ history. By addressing topics such as workplace discrimination, the influence of fear on career choices, and the consequences of coming out on vocational behavior, the review aims to dissect the challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals.

One significant observation is the existing gap between research on LGBTQIA+ individuals and their heteronormative counterparts. The literature review asks how HR policies and practices, or their absence, affect LGBTQIA+ workers, specifically in Twin Cities nonprofit arts organizations. Additionally, the review raises the importance of understanding the impact of these policies and practices by examining both successful and unsuccessful instances within these organizations.

Drawing on a diverse range of scholarly sources, including peer-reviewed articles with case studies and insights from industry professionals contributing to academic and consulting contexts, this review provides a comprehensive perspective. Despite the abundance of literature on HR policies and practices affecting LGBTQIA+ workers, a challenge is identified in obtaining content specific to nonprofit arts organizations in the Twin Cities. To address this gap, the primary research component of the project aims to contribute insights into the impact of HR policies, practices, or their absence on LGBTQIA+ workers in Twin Cities nonprofit arts organizations.

## **Terminology**

Using sensitive and inclusive terminology is essential to create a supportive and affirming research environment and to ensure that research accurately explores the experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual or Ally, and other diverse identities (LGBTQIA+) communities. It is essential to acknowledge that the terms used throughout this discussion, such as LGBTQIA+ and intersectionality, are widely accepted and recognized in the

United States as of 2024 and often evolve for various reasons. These terms have become integral to diversity, equity, and inclusion discussions, particularly within workplaces and social settings.

### **Acronyms**

Research stresses the importance of using appropriate and affirming language when studying and working with LGBTQIA+ populations. Incorrect terminology can impact data collection and interpretation. Acronyms like LGBTQIA+ are advocated to encompass the broad spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities. Different acronyms may be appropriate based on the research focus (Meyer & Millison, 2022).

TGDNB - Trans, Gender Diverse and Non-Binary People

LGBTQIA+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual or Ally, and other diverse identities

### **Heteronormativity**

Heteronormativity, where heterosexuality is privileged and seen as the norm, affects the workplace by perpetuating a heterosexual/homosexual binary. "Reactive silence" by colleagues is used as a tool of oppression, reinforcing the supposed abnormality of LGBTQIA+ co-workers. The heteronormative context within organizations can lead to stigmatization, discrimination, and the fear of negative career-related consequences that may silence sexual minority employees (Meyer et al., 2022).

### **Privilege**

The concept of privilege describes everyday activities, rules, laws, and situations that create opportunities or advantages for those who fit the norm and disadvantages for those who do not conform to society's expectations (Ng et al., 2017).



## **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is a concept used to understand how various aspects of social identity—such as race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, and others—intersect and overlap, shaping individuals' experiences of privilege and oppression. Coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s, intersectionality highlights the interconnected nature of social categorizations and how they can create unique forms of discrimination and disadvantage (Colella & King, 2017).

Rather than viewing social identities in isolation, intersectionality recognizes that individuals hold multiple identities simultaneously, and these identities interact in complex ways, influencing their experiences and opportunities. For example, a Black woman may face discrimination not only based on her gender but also due to her race, experiencing forms of oppression that are distinct from those faced by White women or Black men.

Intersectionality emphasizes the importance of considering the interplay of various social factors when analyzing power dynamics, discrimination, and social justice issues. It encourages a more nuanced understanding of identity and inequality, moving beyond simplistic frameworks to recognize the complexity of individuals' lived experiences (Colella & King, 2017).

## **Coming Out**

To come out as LGBTQIA+ refers to the process of openly acknowledging and revealing one's sexual orientation, gender identity, or non-heteronormative identity to others. This disclosure can be a significant and deeply personal decision, as it involves sharing an integral aspect of oneself with friends, family, peers, or the public. Coming out is not a one-time event but a continuous process that individuals navigate throughout their lives as they encounter new people and situations (Hall, 2009). The decision to come out is highly individual and influenced by various factors, including safety, acceptance, cultural or religious beliefs, and personal readiness.

For many LGBTQIA+ individuals, coming out can be a liberating and empowering experience, allowing them to live authentically and openly. It can foster a sense of belonging and connection within the LGBTQIA+ community and enable individuals to build more authentic relationships with others. However, coming out can also be challenging and fraught with risks, especially in environments where LGBTQIA+ individuals face stigma, discrimination, or rejection (Hall, 2009). Fear of adverse reactions, social isolation, or even violence may deter individuals from disclosing their identities. Overall, coming out is a deeply personal journey that varies widely from person to person. It's a process that involves self-awareness and self-acceptance and often requires support from understanding and affirming individuals or communities.

## **General Research Practices Around LGBTQIA+**

Research and practices involving LGBTQIA+ communities often focus on sexual orientation and gender identity, which can lead to an incomplete understanding of their diverse needs and experiences.

Some LGBTQIA+ scholars may avoid writing about LGBTQIA+ workplace issues to avoid being stereotyped as "LGBTQIA+ scholars," while heterosexual scholars can act as allies to highlight LGBTQIA+ concerns.

## **History of LGBTQIA+**

The review of passages that offered insights into the historical perspectives and practices of LGBTQIA+ individuals is the groundwork for the perspectives and practices of 2024's LGBTQIA+ individuals. Many LGBTQIA+ stories are missing from historical records due to the absence of an identifiable historical physical space with a clear trail for research and the erasure of LGBTQIA+ individuals from widely published mainstream works (Murphy & Bjorngaard, 2018). LGBTQIA+

heritage, according to Murphy and Bjorngaard in *Living Out Loud: An Introduction to LGBTQIA+ History, Society and Culture*, emphasizes that communities are constituted by their past and that a "community of memory" does not forget its history, regardless of the dominant culture of the time. Several factors complicate the documentation of LGBTQIA+ history, including the disenfranchisement and underground status of LGBTQIA+ individuals and organizations, frequent relocations due to harassment, and the challenges of identifying significantly associated sites, Limited documentation and record-keeping, as well as evolving understandings of gender, sexuality, and LGBTQIA+ terminology, also pose difficulties (Lustbader, 2018).

Murphy and Bjorngaard (2018) use social constructionism to argue that modern-day concepts and terminology of sexuality may not accurately describe the experiences and relationships of people who lived in different historical and cultural circumstances, especially when applying terms like "homosexual" to pre-twentieth century societies (Murphy & Bjorngaard, 2018). A social constructionist approach allows historians to examine how the understandings of LGBTQIA+ romance and sexuality have evolved, shedding light on how different societies have viewed LGBTQIA+. Historians and scholars have accumulated substantial evidence demonstrating that same-sex attraction and sexual behaviors, as well as various gender expressions and identities, have existed throughout history and across different cultures (Murphy & Bjorngaard, 2018).

An example is that Native American cultures had norms and practices, with hetero-marriage being part of tribal norms and distinct gender roles within these societies. European colonizers imposed their moral values and standards on Native American institutions, including attempts to control and regulate their sexual practices (Murphy & Bjorngaard, 2018). European colonizers in New England had strict codes of punishment for sexual transgressions; non-heterosexual sexual practices were viewed as unnatural and subject to punishment. Over time, according to Lustbader (2018), there was a gradual social acceptance of non-procreative sexual acts, especially within heterosexual

marriages, which challenged previous arguments against same-sex sex.

As time moved on, during the pre-Civil War era, diaries and letters suggested the existence of romantic friendships between people of the same sex. These relationships were socially affirmed and openly expressed affection. During this time, Romantic friendships were expected to precede marriage to an opposite-sex spouse. They were common among white, middle-class Americans in the Northeast, as well as in isolated settings where opposite-sex interaction was limited. It is unclear how frequently romantic friendships had a physical erotic or sexual component, as historical documents vary in the evidence they provide. While some documents suggest physical contact, others do not (Murphy & Bjorngaard, 2018).

In the 19th century, Some white upper- and middle-class women formed close, long-term relationships with other women, known as "Boston marriages." These partnerships were not universally accepted but were not necessarily viewed as sexually deviant. Male-dominated environments in the American West, such as mining camps and cowboy towns, had evidence of same-sex sexual activity (Murphy & Bjorngaard, 2018). In brothels, where women sold sex to men, some women developed romantic and sexual relationships with each other.

The turn of the 20th century marked the emergence of a consumer society in the United States, which brought discussions of sexuality and sexual expression into the public sphere. The concepts of heterosexuality and homosexuality emerged during this period, marking a shift away from earlier notions. These terms were used to describe specific types of individuals based on their sexual orientation (Lustbader, 2018).

In the early days of sexology, scholars considered "inversion," defined as thinking, acting, and feeling in violation of one's expected gender, as a potential explanation for same-sex attraction. However, Lustbader states that this model gradually faded as a dominant theory. Sigmund Freud's ideas gained popularity in the early 20th century. Freud theorized that an individual's sexuality was

influenced by complex psychological processes, emphasizing the role of social factors in shaping same-sex attraction (Lustbader, 2018). Over time, the understanding of same-sex desire shifted from being seen as a symptom of an underlying problem with an individual's gender to being viewed as a fundamental aspect of one's sexual orientation (Murphy & Bjorngaard, 2018).

The mid-20th century saw increasing medical, social, and legal proscriptions against homosexuality. According to Nadal (2023), Homosexuality and gender variance were often pathologized during this period. Beginning in the 1950s, the homophile movement aimed to create a safe social environment for same-sex-attracted individuals (Nadal, 2023). These organizations published literature and provided information on discrimination and legal issues, advocating for tolerance (Murphy & Bjorngaard, 2018). Nevertheless, during this era, being identified as a homosexual put individuals at risk of job loss, eviction, custody loss, or forced psychological treatment.

The Gay Liberation Movement in the United States emerged as a successor to the homophile movement in the mid-20th century. It rejected the pathologization of homosexuality and advocated for visibility and gay rights (Nadal, 2023). Gay Liberation activists engaged in public protests and advocacy, including picketing the White House, the United Nations, and other significant locations to protest anti-gay policies and promote gay rights (Murphy & Bjorngaard, 2018).

The Stonewall Inn in New York City's Greenwich Village was the site of a police raid in June 1969. This incident led to several days of protests and clashes between the police and LGBTQIA+ patrons and their supporters. It marked a significant moment of unity and activism within the LGBTQIA+ community (Lustbader, 2018).

The 1970s saw a variety of activists, from the homophile movement to the more openly gay members of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), advocating against various forms of social oppression, including racism, capitalism, sexism, and heterosexism. During the 1970s, efforts were made to educate psychological and medical professionals to reduce the stigma associated with

homosexuality as a mental illness. The American Psychological Association (APA) played a role in this effort, affirming that homosexuality does not imply impairments in judgment, stability, or social capabilities (Nadal, 2023). A vibrant LGBTQIA+ community developed in urban areas, while groups and publications significantly connected LGBTQIA+ people nationwide. Additionally, the ban on employing gay men and lesbians in the federal government was lifted in 1975. The 1970s saw efforts to include LGBTQIA+ individuals in religious contexts, with the Conference on Religion and Homosexuality bringing together participants from various denominations (Nadal, 2023).

The 1980s were marked by the emergence of the AIDS epidemic, which disproportionately affected the gay community. This crisis resulted in media coverage that increased the visibility of the gay community but also led to stigmatizing stereotypes. The 1980s also witnessed the emergence of the Religious Right, which used political and religious rhetoric to discourage social and cultural acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals (Murphy & Bjorngaard, 2018).

The 1990s saw progress in the LGBTQIA+ rights movement, with legal achievements such as the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and the inclusion of sexual orientation in hate crimes legislation. Cultural visibility increased through TV shows featuring LGBTQIA+ characters (Nadal, 2023).

In the 21st century, some milestones have been reached. In the United States, President Obama signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crime Prevention Act in 2009, making it a federal crime to assault individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, expanding hate crime protections beyond those based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Hate crimes against LGBTQIA+ people have been misreported or not received uniform data collection, leading to challenges in understanding the extent of the problem (Nadal, 2023). The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that state bans on same-sex marriage were unconstitutional, thereby legalizing same-sex marriage across the United States. There has been a significant increase in the number of

LGBTQIA+ characters in broadcast television, with the highest percentage of LGBTQIA+ identified characters in television history—the U.S. The Supreme Court ruled that LGBTQIA+ people were protected under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, making workplace discrimination toward LGBTQIA+ people illegal on the federal level (Murphy & Bjorngaard, 2018). Public opinion has evolved with the growing acceptance of homosexuality. The percentage of Americans in favor of homosexuality being accepted increased from 51% in 2002 to 72% in 2019 (İncekara & Ulaş, 2023). The number of LGBTQIA+ identified young people has increased significantly, with nearly 10% identifying as LGBTQIA+ (Nadal, 2023).

Despite significant progress, challenges persisted, including issues like the lack of comprehensive federal non-discrimination legislation in the United States, obstacles facing transgender individuals, and violence against transgender women, particularly women of color (Murphy & Bjorngaard, 2018). Many laws, mainly on state and local levels, still overtly target or discriminate against LGBTQIA+ people. In 2020, many pro-LGBTQIA+ bills were proposed and passed into law, but there were also anti-LGBTQIA+ bills proposed and signed into law. Not all states prohibit housing discrimination based on both sexual orientation and gender identity or public accommodation discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Colella & King, 2017). The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) policy banned blood donations from men who have had sex with men since 1983 (Nadal, 2023). LGBTQIA+ individuals in areas where heterosexism and transphobia are culturally accepted may encounter blatant discrimination, harassment, and bullying in their daily lives. Research found that a high percentage of LGBTQIA+ individuals reported being victims of hate crimes in their lifetime. A significant percentage of LGBTQIA+ identified students felt unsafe at School due to their sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity. LGBTQIA+ individuals are more likely to experience psychological distress and mental health problems compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Murphy & Bjorngaard, 2018).

Meyer et al. (2022) acknowledge the global context of LGBTQIA+ issues, highlighting that homosexuality is illegal or punishable by death in many countries. This context influences the decisions and identity management of LGBTQIA+ employees in different countries.

In the United States, the LGBTQIA+ community remains among the least represented in national, state, and local programs compared to their heteronormative counterparts. LGBTQIA+ individuals face social and economic disparities, including lower income, higher food insecurity, unemployment, and a significant percentage of homeless individuals within the LGBTQIA+ population. Suicidality rates are also higher in this community (Murphy & Bjorngaard, 2018).

LGBTQIA+ heritage is regarded as a tool that intersects historic preservation and social justice. It can help inform personal and political decisions, particularly in the face of pushback against LGBTQIA+ rights. LGBTQIA+ heritage can connect people to an often unknown and invisible past while providing intangible benefits such as pride, memory, identity, continuity, and a sense of community (Meyer et al., 2022).

### **Coming Out**

LGBTQIA+ employees often experience separation from their colleagues due to the process of coming out. Disclosure decisions are made when they enter a new workplace or interact with new people. These decisions can affect the degree of separation between LGBTQIA+ employees and their colleagues. Experiences of isolation, stigmatization, and discrimination can affect the voices of LGBTQIA+ employees in the workplace. The absence of similar colleagues can lead to a lack of motivation to voice concerns, as they may feel these issues are individual problems rather than systemic ones. Disclosure in unsafe workplaces can lead to various negative consequences, including discrimination, marginalization, and facing the "lavender ceiling," which refers to the perceived barrier to career advancement for LGBTQIA+ members (Hill, 2009).

The concept of "passing" and "revealing" has been one of the main strategies for managing



stigmatized identities among LGBTQIA+ individuals. Passers, typically referring to an individual who is perceived by others as cisgender or heterosexual, despite their actual identity as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, may feel more isolated and less effective at work. At the same time, revealers risk prejudice and discrimination in the workplace. Both workplace discrimination and coping strategies have significant implications for the vocational behavior, career achievement, and psychological well-being of LGBTQIA+ individuals. (Ng et al., 2017) Other concepts that LGBTQIA+ employees may employ include identity management strategies such as counterfeiting (creating a false heterosexual identity) and avoidance (avoiding the subject of their sexual identity). Openness about one's sexual or gender identity is associated with higher job satisfaction, perceived support, lower role ambiguity, and better work-life balance (Krupat & McCreery, 2001).

### **Invisibility of Trans, Gender Diverse, and Non-Binary People (TGDNB)**

The literature lacks a focus on or inclusion of, the transgender population, which poses a significant gap in understanding the careers and workplace experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals. One difficulty is that accessing a sufficiently large sample of transgender workers may contribute to the lack of transgender-focused research. McFadden (2015) highlights the similarity that is faced in the invisibility of bisexual workers, who often face discrimination and exclusion both in heterosexual and homosexual communities. The unique issues faced by bisexual individuals are frequently underrepresented as well. Bisexual and transgender workers have often been overlooked or grouped with gay and lesbian employees in the organizational literature.

Organizations often struggle to deal with transgender employees undergoing gender transitions in the workplace. There is a call to incorporate sexual and gender identity as a category of analysis that has been largely ignored in existing research. Research found that Trans, Gender Diverse, and Non-Binary People (TGDNB) individuals face additional stressors tied to their nonconforming gender identities, including concerns related to personal safety and gender policing. Mistreatment

based on gender identity or expression is a significant issue, with some estimates suggesting that 30% of transgender employees have experienced workplace mistreatment. While many organizations have become more inclusive and supportive of LGB (Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual) employees, TGDNB employees often still find themselves marginalized in the workplace, even in otherwise supportive environments (Huffman et al., 2021).

Social support, defined as interpersonal interactions involving emotional, instrumental, and structural assistance, can come from individuals within the organization. They are crucial for the well-being and success of TGDNB employees. Workplace support and affirming behaviors: Moving toward a transgender person, gender diverse, and non-binary-friendly workplace (Huffman et al., 2021) identifies three specific behaviors within the workplace that contribute to the support of TGDNB employees: encouraging the use of proper pronouns and titles, discouraging derogatory comments, and ensuring appropriate restroom access.

There exists a continuum of disclosure among TGDNB individuals in the workplace. Some are open about sharing their genuine gender identity, while others may choose to remain closeted to conceal their gender identity entirely. The lack of proper organizational support is a significant factor leading to adverse outcomes for TGDNB employees (İncekara & Ulaş, 2023).

## **Human Resources (HR)**

### **Workplace Discrimination**

Discrimination based on race, gender, appearance, and other socially constructed ideas of normalcy and deviance exists across areas of human life, including the workplace. McFadden (2015) describes the LGBTQIA+ employee population as one of the largest but least studied minority groups in the workforce. The study "Anticipated Discrimination and a Career Choice in Nonprofit: A Study of Early Career Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered (LGBT) Job Seekers" (Ng et al.,

2012) reveals that LGBTQIA+ individuals face prejudice and discrimination in the workplace due to negative stereotypes, religious interpretations, and irrational fears, including concerns about contracting AIDS. A significant proportion of the workforce, estimated at 10 to 14 percent, may identify as nonheterosexual (Munoz & Thomas, 2006). Discrimination against LGBTQIA+ Americans is a significant concern, with over one-third reporting experiences of discrimination in 2019. Additionally, more than half have hidden or altered aspects of their personal and work lives to avoid discrimination (Meyer & Millison, 2022). Furthermore, they may still face legalized discrimination in the workplace, such as a lack of policies prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and the absence of same-sex partner benefits.

Despite the presence of diversity programs, as Hill explores potential causes for the failure to create inclusive organizational spaces for LGBTQIA+ individuals in *Incorporating Queers: Blowback, Backlash, and Other Forms of Resistance to Workplace Diversity Initiatives That Support Sexual Minorities* (2009). Hill points out documented resistance and backlash against diversity programs in the United States that support sexual orientations and gender identities, emphasizing the pressure on LGBTQIA+ individuals to "cover" or not "flaunt" their identities. Arguments against LGBTQIA+ rights often center on the perception of "special rights" or "preferential treatment" granted at the expense of other groups. M. Kelly & A. Lubitow(2014) state that LGBTQIA + rights are about providing equal, not unique, treatment to these individuals.

There are significant factors impacting the careers of LGBTQIA+ individuals, including the importance of sexual/gender identity within the workplace and career choices. The International Labour Organization reported that LGBTQIA+ people often experience human rights violations, including discrimination, harassment, and prejudice in the workplace, particularly in countries where homosexuality is criminalized (Kelly & Lubitow, 2014).

Participants in the McFadden (2015) studies reported decreased job satisfaction in workplaces with

heterosexist and discriminatory environments within the United States. Discrimination and fear of discrimination can influence career choices, with some LGBTQIA+ individuals avoiding certain professions due to fear of discrimination and others choosing careers they perceive as safe spaces. The selection of LGBTQIA+-specific occupations may be influenced by the perception that these workplaces offer a safe space compared to non-stereotyped professions or workplaces.

Harassment and discrimination in educational settings can negatively affect the psychological and academic well-being of LGBTQIA+ students, impacting their career development. Studies also indicate that LGBTQIA+ youths might experience higher rates of school absenteeism due to fear of discrimination and bullying, which can affect their future career development opportunities (Nadal, 2023). Nadal's (2023) research suggests that LGBTQIA+ youths may have fewer role models to identify with due to the lack of visible LGBTQIA+ role models.

Discrimination against LGBTQIA+ employees can take various forms, including formal and informal, overt and subtle. Such discrimination can further enhance the sense of separation and difference experienced by LGBTQIA+ employees in organizations. Discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals can take the form of formal discrimination in employment processes (e.g., job applications and interviews) and informal discrimination involving interpersonal incidents like harassment, snubs, and exclusion. Coping strategies for dealing with discrimination include quitting, silence, social support, and confrontation. High agency hope is seen as a significant factor in maintaining life satisfaction for LGBTQIA+ employees in workplaces where discrimination is encountered.

Concealable Stigma and Occupational Segregation Among LGBTQIA+ Workers (Tilcsik et al., 2015) highlights the role of employment discrimination in creating occupational segregation, where specific individuals are steered away from particular job roles due to perceived mismatches between their identities and the requirements of those positions. Discrimination can manifest in various

forms, such as keeping African Americans away from customer-facing jobs or women from managerial positions, contributing to occupational segregation. The research acknowledges that while discrimination plays a role in generating occupational segregation based on sexual orientation, much of its influence occurs through indirect mechanisms. Tilcsik et al. (2015) identify that both gay men and lesbians often work in gender-balanced occupations or in roles where they are in the gender minority. One key finding from Tilcsik et al. (2015) is that gay and lesbian workers are more likely to cross gender lines in their choice of occupations. Both gay men and lesbians tend to concentrate on professions that provide task independence or require social perceptiveness, or sometimes a combination of both.

Some LGBTQ workers may also belong to other marginalized groups, such as marginalized races, women, individuals with disabilities, or those with limited access to education and economic resources. This intersectionality underscores the importance of understanding and supporting marginalized populations.

Many LGBTQIA+ employees believe that being part of the LGBTQIA+ community provides them with a unique perspective compared to their heterosexual colleagues (Krupat & McCreery, 2001). Paradoxically, those who feel they have a different perspective are more likely to experience discrimination in the workplace. This belief suggests that embracing diversity can lead to unique insights and challenges. Understanding the experiences of resistance to workplace equity and inclusion for LGBTQ individuals is essential. A change in the approach to diversity is needed based on the principle that "difference is a fundamental human right" (Krupat & McCreery, 2001).

### **Human Resources Approaches**

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Careers and Human Resource Development (McFadden, 2015) discusses various aspects of the career experiences of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and

Transgender) population in the workplace, with an emphasis on discrimination, identity management, and the intersection of sexual or gender identity with career development. McFadden (2015) uses Critical Human Resource Development (CHRD) to transform workplaces and CHRD practices towards justice, equity, and fairness. It is seen as a valuable approach to addressing the career issues of LGBTQIA+ populations. The CHRD field focuses little on social justice issues within the workplace or the broader social context. Factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, and issues like sexism, racism, patriarchy, and violence often receive minimal attention in the literature despite their significant impact on organizational dynamics.

“Where My Gays At?” The Status of LGBTQIA+ People and Queer Theory in Nonprofit Research by Meyer et al. (2022) discusses the role of LGBTQIA+ employee networks, the concept of the "stranger" within organizations, and the challenges and experiences of LGBTQIA+ employees in the workplace. The idea of the "stranger" refers to someone spatially close, such as being physically present in a group, yet relationally distant due to a lack of in-group membership. In the context of the study, LGBTQIA+ employees are considered the "stranger" in organizations because of their presence in the workplace but relational distance due to their sexual orientation, which does not align with the heteronormative group.

### **Human Resources Policies and Practices**

Human Resources (HR) policies and practices are essential for managing the workforce efficiently and ensuring a positive work environment. They are designed to guide employee behavior and promote efficiency, productivity, and job satisfaction within the organization. One of the primary objectives of HR policies and practices is to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations, including labor, discrimination, and workplace safety (Mehta et al., 2023). Regular updates are necessary to keep these policies in line with changing legal requirements, as non-compliance can lead to significant financial and legal consequences. HR policies and practices are generally

designed to create a workplace free from harassment, discrimination, and negative behaviors. This includes policies that promote equal employment opportunity, anti-harassment, and workplace safety to ensure employees feel safe, comfortable, and able to express their opinions without fear of retribution (Mehta et al., 2023).

McFadden (2015) emphasizes the role of organizations in providing protection and support for their LGBTQIA+ staff, contributing to a safe and stress-free work life. Workplace social elements, such as supportive supervisors and anti-discrimination policies, can positively impact job satisfaction and the extent to which individuals are "out" at work.

LGBTQIA+ employee networks have gained popularity as mechanisms to support LGBTQIA+ employees in the workplace. These networks provide individual and collective voice mechanisms, offer visibility and community, and promote organizational change. They bring together sexual minority employees, providing them with social support. These networks can aid some LGBTQIA+ employees in the workplace by creating a sense of affinity and support. However, not all LGBTQIA+ employees may feel comfortable joining such networks, and even among those who do, using the network as a mechanism for voicing concerns is not universal (Krupat & McCreery, 2001).

Estimates of LGBTQIA+ employees in the workforce compared to the prevalence of discrimination suggest that companies failing to encourage an inclusive and accepting workplace atmosphere among LGBTQIA+ employees may miss the opportunity to attract top talent from this segment of the workforce (Nadal, 2023). Research indicates that when employers actively integrate and value the unique perspectives of LGBTQIA+ employees, their teams can outperform less diverse teams by a significant margin, potentially up to seven times (Gacilo et al., 2018).

Recognizing and acknowledging differences within groups, including among LGBTQIA+ employees, is essential to reduce tensions and promote inclusivity (Gacilo et al., 2018). Successful

diversity efforts should move beyond tolerance to celebrate differences and recognize that everyone has sexual orientation and gender identity, along with other aspects like race and gender.

Welcoming workplaces positively affects workers' personal development and learning, contributing to their ability to contribute to organizational goals (Hill, 2009).

Using gender-neutral language in job descriptions, performance evaluations, and other documents is crucial for ensuring LGBTQIA+ employees feel valued and respected regardless of gender identity.

This practice promotes employee satisfaction and loyalty ( McFadden & Crowley-Henry, 2018).

Human resource practices set the background for employees to learn about an organization's values regarding inclusion and diversity. Munoz and Thomas (2006) assert that offering domestic partner benefits can signal to employees that LGBTQIA+ workers are valued in the organization. The commitment of top leadership is crucial for the success of diversity efforts, including LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Diversity training is significant for sensitizing the organization to LGBTQIA+ issues and providing employees with the skills to collaborate successfully in a diverse and inclusive work environment. Including sexual orientation in nondiscrimination statements can reduce discrimination and increase positive work attitudes among gay and lesbian employees. Efforts to promote diversity and create a positive social climate have been linked to higher job satisfaction among LGBTQIA+ employees (Munoz & Thomas, 2006).

Supportive policies and coworker support contribute to greater life satisfaction and well-being for LGBTQIA+ individuals. According to Ng and Riumens (2017), research on LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion is expanding to explore various issues and experiences for LGBTQIA+ individuals, including critiques of the idea of "gay-friendly" workplaces."Gay-friendly" organizations exhibit specific characteristics, including consistent enforcement of employment policies, domestic partnership benefits, support groups, diversity training, and respectful advertising. Not all organizations pursue LGBTQIA+ inclusivity, especially when not required by legislation.



## Nonprofit Spaces

Notably, the nonprofit sector is identified as a potential safe haven for LGBTQIA+ individuals, offering protection from workplace discrimination. Ng et al. (2012) indicate that LGBTQIA+ individuals value altruism and self-interest more than their heterosexual counterparts, aligning with the notion that nonprofit organizations attract them due to a desire to serve others and that LGBTQIA+ individuals may be more inclined to work in the nonprofit sector. However, there is no significant difference in their preference for a progressive work environment, suggesting that other factors influence their career choices (Ng et al., 2012).

LGBTQIA+ nonprofit spaces have traditionally served as essential contexts for individuals with marginalized sexual and gender identities to express themselves openly and negotiate their identities in a safe environment. Incekara and Enver's (2023) research has shed light on how LGBTQIA+ spaces can be homonormative, perpetuating hegemonic norms and neoliberal ideology. These spaces can be dominated by white, upper-class, and normative values to the detriment of those who are gender nonconforming, from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, or racial minorities. A homonormative space is defined as a gay (male) space that promotes assimilation to hegemonic norms and neoliberal ideology while simultaneously depoliticizing its population. Incekara and Enver's (2023) neoliberal ideology is defined as favoring policies that promote free-market capitalism, deregulation, and reduction in government spending for social support.

Homonormativity favors individuals within the LGBTQIA+ population who can trade on their privileged identities to "normalize" the LGBTQIA+ population according to existing white, cisgender, upper-class male power structures. Keen (2019) described Homonormativity as inherently classed and raced. It privileges middle- and upper-class white homosexuality, while other racial and ethnic identities are "othered" within the LGBTQIA+ community. Overt and symbolic exclusionary practices in the LGBTQIA+ community perpetuate and prioritize whiteness, creating a hierarchy based on race, class, gender, and age. Gay, but not Inclusive: Boundary Maintenance in an

LGBTQIA+ Space (Knee, 2019) links the issues of policing in LGBTQIA+ spaces to racial threat theory, suggesting that the presence of black and brown queer bodies is often viewed with suspicion, leading to discrimination, arrest, and exclusion. Nonprofits, while not associated with profit motives, can be driven by the same neoliberal processes that contribute to the recreation of homonormativity.

Knee (2019) states that the influence of neoliberal thinking within nonprofits can manifest in various ways. For example, nonprofits may prioritize specific programs or initiatives that align with neoliberal principles, such as promoting market-based solutions to social issues or emphasizing individual responsibility over systemic change. Additionally, nonprofits may adopt management practices that mirror those of for-profit organizations, such as performance-based metrics and competition for funding.

Furthermore, İncekara and Enver's (2023) research shows that nonprofits may inadvertently perpetuate homonormativity through their organizational structures and practices. For instance, they may prioritize the interests of donors or funders who espouse neoliberal ideologies, leading to the marginalization of certain voices within the LGBTQIA+ community. Additionally, nonprofits may engage in symbolic inclusion without addressing underlying power dynamics or systemic inequalities, reinforcing homonormative norms (İncekara & Enver, 2023).

Moreover, the phenomenon of boundary maintenance, as discussed in Knee's (2019) study on LGBTQIA+ spaces, can also apply to nonprofits. The presence of black and brown queer bodies within nonprofit spaces may be met with suspicion or discrimination, perpetuating racial hierarchies and exclusionary practices. This can result in the replication of power structures that privilege specific identities while marginalizing others, ultimately undermining the goal of creating inclusive and equitable spaces for all individuals within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Factors Influencing Institutional Betrayal in Nonprofit Arts Organizations (Woods, 2022) speaks on

Institutional betrayal as a psychological construct developed by psychologist Jennifer Freyd. It refers to the psychological harm caused by traumas that are either initiated or worsened by trusted organizations and institutions. Many nonprofit arts organizations highlight their role in the community and their commitment to the greater good, including principles of equity, inclusion, and belonging within their organizations. Woods (2022) points out that these organizations' claims about their democratic and supportive mission can sometimes conflict with historical evidence and contemporary reports of enabling abusive or exploitative behavior within their ranks or ignoring calls for correction and acknowledgment.

The concept of institutional betrayal is rooted in the Betrayal Trauma Theory (BTT). BTT suggests that trauma experienced within a trusting relationship leads to distinct and exacerbated harm compared to traumas inflicted by strangers or natural disasters (Woods, 2022). Institutional betrayal goes beyond BTT and describes the phenomenon of institutions causing, enabling, or ignoring harm experienced by individuals and groups who trust or depend on those institutions, even when the systems fail to prevent or address harm and injustice.

This notion of institutional betrayal is particularly relevant in the context of LGBTQIA+ nonprofit spaces, where individuals may look to these organizations for support, community, and advocacy. However, as outlined by İncekara and Enver (2023) and Knee (2019), these spaces can be influenced by neoliberal thinking and homonormative ideologies, which prioritize specific identities and exclude others. This perpetuation of homonormativity within LGBTQIA+ nonprofits can contribute to feelings of betrayal and loss of trust among marginalized community members, exacerbating the harm caused by discrimination and exclusion.

Moreover, the intersectionality of identities further complicates the experience of institutional betrayal within LGBTQIA+ nonprofit spaces. As noted by W. Wood (2022), marginalized communities may be at greater risk of experiencing institutional betrayal due to pre-existing

inequities and discrimination within society. For example, black and brown queer individuals may face additional barriers and discrimination within LGBTQIA+ nonprofits, exacerbating feelings of betrayal and mistrust.

The research surveyed suggests that institutional betrayal within LGBTQIA+ nonprofit spaces can have profound implications for individual well-being and community cohesion. The failure of these organizations to adequately address harm and injustice experienced by marginalized community members can lead to a loss of faith in the institution, as well as broken expectations and worldviews. Consequently, addressing and mitigating institutional betrayal is essential for fostering genuinely inclusive and supportive environments within LGBTQIA+ nonprofit spaces where all individuals feel valued, respected, and supported.

### **Conclusions from Literature Review**

Through the amalgamation of various aspects of LGBTQIA+ terminology, history, and challenges, the literature touches on the concept of heteronormativity, privilege, and the need for a comprehensive understanding of LGBTQIA+ communities' diverse needs to increase cultural visibility and growing public acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Through the various aspects of LGBTQIA+ individuals' experiences in the workplace, discrimination is a significant concern, with negative stereotypes, religious interpretations, and irrational fears contributing. The research emphasizes that despite HR approaches and policies, there are still challenges in creating inclusive spaces for LGBTQ individuals in nonprofit organizations.

Additionally, the research points out that LGBTQIA+ nonprofit spaces have traditionally served as crucial environments for individuals with marginalized sexual and gender identities to express themselves openly. Supportive policies and coworker support contribute to greater life satisfaction

and well-being for LGBTQIA+ individuals. However, it also highlights the potential for these spaces to be homonormative, promoting hegemonic norms and neoliberal ideologies. A neoliberal ideology is defined as favoring policies that promote free-market capitalism, deregulation, and reduction in government spending (Knee, 2019). Such homonormative spaces may favor white, upper-class, and normative values, potentially marginalizing those who are gender nonconforming, from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, or racial minorities. In conclusion, the literature emphasizes the ongoing journey toward equality, inclusivity, and support for LGBTQIA+ individuals while recognizing the complexity and intersectionality of their experiences.

Several critical gaps were identified while conducting a literature review to investigate the impact of HR policies and practices or their absence on LGBTQIA+ workers at Twin Cities nonprofit arts organizations. The current state of HR policies within organizations requires scrutiny, particularly regarding inclusivity for LGBTQIA+ individuals. The literature delved into implementing existing policies, exploring how well they are integrated into daily operations and organizational culture. Additionally, understanding the perceptions and experiences of LGBTQIA+ workers is crucial to assessing HR policies' influence on job satisfaction, sense of belonging, and overall well-being. Examining potential barriers to inclusion and the unique challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ workers within the nonprofit arts sector is necessary for a comprehensive understanding. The role of organizational culture and support mechanisms beyond formal policies, such as mentorship programs and training initiatives, should be explored.

Furthermore, assessing the impact of HR policies on talent recruitment and retention and ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks related to LGBTQIA+ rights is essential. Consideration of intersectionality, incorporating factors like race and socioeconomic status, will provide a nuanced perspective. Ultimately, synthesizing best practices and recommendations based on successful examples in similar contexts will contribute to formulating strategies for enhancing

HR policies and practices to support LGBTQIA+ workers in Twin Cities nonprofit arts organizations.

In conclusion, my journey to assess the existing literature in pursuit of answers to my research question has illuminated a significant gap in the intersection of HR policies and practices, LGBTQIA+ workers, and Twin Cities nonprofit arts organizations. While I encountered numerous texts exploring related topics, such as HR policies, LGBTQIA+ issues, and nonprofit organizations individually, none directly addressed the specific intersection at the heart of my inquiry. This realization underscores the need for further investigation into this critical area where my connection lies. As someone intimately familiar with the societal constructs and personal experiences shaping this intersection, I am uniquely positioned to delve deeper into understanding the complexities and implications of HR policies on LGBTQIA+ workers within the context of Twin Cities nonprofit arts organizations. Moving forward, I am driven by a sense of curiosity and purpose to fill this gap in the literature, contributing meaningful insights that may inform policies, practices, and advocacy efforts to foster greater inclusivity and equity in the workplace. Through this research endeavor, I aim to expand scholarly knowledge and effect positive change for marginalized communities within the nonprofit arts sector and beyond.

# Methodology

## About The Methodology of Phenomenology

As a research methodology, phenomenology intricately explores the nature of human experience and the interplay between subjectivity and objectivity. This exploration delves into the works of Vagle (2018) and Adu (2021), offering unique insights into phenomenology. Vagle's (2018) focus on phenomena and their manifestation in lived experiences reflects a commitment to understanding the essence of our existence in the world. Complementing this, Adu (2021) explores the distinctive nature of human beings, highlighting their capacity for reflection and the comprehension of shared experiences. Together, these works offer a comprehensive understanding of phenomenology, presenting it as a powerful lens to unravel the intricacies of human knowledge and the quest for truths.

In the work of Vagle (2018) on phenomenology, a central theme emerges, emphasizing the significance of phenomena and their manifestation in lived experiences. As described by Vagle (2018), phenomenologists view phenomena not as constructed by humans but as revealed through human existence in the world. The focus is on understanding how individuals position themselves in relation to objects and experiences, contemplating how things manifest in the lived world. This approach is not an attempt to delve into others' minds but to explore diverse ways phenomena appear through being. Amedeo Giorgi, an American psychologist known for his contributions to phenomenology and humanistic psychology methodology, highlighted in Vagle's (2018) text, underscores the importance of detailed descriptions, phenomenological reduction, and the search for invariant psychological meanings. This involves interviews, the writing of experiences, and a distinction between the roles of the researcher and the participant. Vagle (2018) also touches upon the challenges of adopting a phenomenological attitude, encouraging a turn to visual and

performing arts for guidance. Moreover, the discussions extend to methodological coherence, validity in research, and the dynamic processes of bracketing and bridling, where researchers actively wait for phenomena to unfold while maintaining a reflective openness. The overarching goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the essence of phenomena in lived experience.

In Adu's (2021) work on phenomenology, the author delves into the distinctive nature of human beings. Adu (2021) suggests that what sets humans apart is their capacity for reflection, enabling them to comprehend shared experiences. According to Adu (2021), this reflection contributes to the uniqueness of human existence. Additionally, Adu (2021) references Edmund Husserl, a philosopher and mathematician who established the school of phenomenology, a philosophical undertaking emphasizing the aim of identifying universal truths through phenomenological reduction. The core of Husserl's project involves analyzing various modes of intentionality to demonstrate that subjectivity plays a crucial role in constituting what natural sciences might perceive as objectivity. In this way, Adu (2021) points to the interplay between subjective experience and the quest for universal truths in the context of phenomenology, highlighting the intricate relationship between the human subject and the objective world.

In conclusion, the examined works by Vagle (2018) and Adu (2021) provide insightful perspectives on phenomenology, shedding light on the profound nature of human existence and the exploration of shared experiences. Vagle's (2018) emphasis on phenomena and their manifestation in lived experiences underscores the phenomenologists' approach, viewing these phenomena as revelations inherent in our existence rather than mere human constructions. The meticulous methodology, as outlined by Giorgi, involves detailed descriptions, phenomenological reduction, and a quest for invariant psychological meanings, contributing to a deeper understanding of the essence of phenomena in our lifeworld. Vagle (2018) also addresses the challenges of adopting a phenomenological attitude and discusses methodological coherence, validity, and dynamic



processes like bracketing and bridling.

On the other hand, Adu (2021) delves into the distinctive nature of human beings, particularly highlighting their capacity for reflection and the comprehension of shared experiences. Adu (2021) connects this reflection to the uniqueness of human existence, emphasizing the interplay between subjective experience and the quest for universal truths through Husserl's phenomenological reduction (Adu, 2021). The analysis of various modes of intentionality underscores the pivotal role of subjectivity in constituting objectivity, showcasing the intricate relationship between the human subject and the objective world. Together, these works contribute to a nuanced understanding of phenomenology, revealing its significance in unraveling the complexity of human experience and the dynamic interaction between subjectivity and objectivity in pursuing universal truths.

### **The Phenomenological Research**

Through phenomenological research, I am looking into how HR policies and practices, or the lack thereof, affect LGBTQIA+ workers at Twin Cities nonprofit arts organizations.

During the first week of January 2024, I contacted individuals through the Twin Cities Theatre Network online platform to have conversations. I also contacted various organizations to survey them about their HR policies. Furthermore, I utilized my networks to connect with others. Lastly, I held discussions with LGBTQIA+ workers to understand their perspectives.

The eligibility criteria for participants were as follows: individuals must identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, have recent experience working in arts nonprofits in the Twin Cities Theater scene, employment status could be either full-time, part-time, or gig-based, candidates could have worked in organizations of various sizes, and a target of approximately twelve participants needed to be met.

Throughout this period, I categorized my inquiries into four distinct sections: personal queries,

LGBTQIA+ perspectives, Twin Cities Arts Organizations' roles, and HR practices within nonprofits. After identifying participants through email and messenger, I proceeded with either semi-structured interviews or offered them the option to respond to questions in writing, according to their preference. All interviews and questionnaires submitted are anonymous. The complete set of questions for the semi-structured interviews are below.

## **Research**

### **The Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

1. Personal Questions
  - 1.1. What are the specific terms or labels you use?
  - 1.2. In a short story, How did you come to understand and embrace your identity?
  - 1.3. Tell me about some of the roles and organizations you have worked in in the Twin Cities theatre community.
    - 1.3.1. Length of time?
2. LGBTQIA+
  - 2.1. Have you faced any challenges or discrimination based on your queerness within your workplaces?
  - 2.2. Are there unique challenges you have faced in the workplace due to the intersectionality of your identities?
3. Twin Cities Arts Organizations Jobs
  - 3.1. Can you tell me about your professional background in the nonprofit theatre arts organizations you have worked with in the Twin Cities?
  - 3.2. How would you describe the work culture and environments of the nonprofit arts organizations you have participated in in the Twin Cities?
  - 3.3. Can you share any experiences or challenges you faced while working with nonprofit theatre arts organizations in the Twin Cities related to your gender, identity, or sexuality and how you overcame them?
4. HR within Nonprofits
  - 4.1. To your knowledge, did any of the organizations have a written non-discrimination policy that explicitly includes sexual orientation and gender identity?
    - 4.1.1. How is this policy communicated to employees, and where can they access it?
  - 4.2. What, if any, specific benefits or resources did the organizations provide to support LGBTQIA employees?
    - 4.2.1. If so, were there inclusive healthcare options, such as coverage for gender confirmation surgeries or hormone therapy?
    - 4.2.2. If so, were there guidelines or support mechanisms in place for employees

- who are undergoing gender transitions?
- 4.3. Did the organizations provide diversity and inclusion training that covers LGBTQIA issues?
  - 4.4. How, if at all, did the organizations ensure that employees were educated on topics related to gender identity and sexual orientation?
  - 4.5. Did any of the organizations have LGBTQIA employee resource groups or affinity networks?
    - 4.5.1. If so, How does the organization support and collaborate with these groups?
  - 4.6. How did the organization handle name and pronoun changes in its systems and communications?
  - 4.7. Was there a commitment to using inclusive language in official documents, policies, and communications?
    - 4.7.1. If so, How do the organizations address the use of gender-neutral language?
  - 4.8. How did the organizations handle reports of discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity?
    - 4.8.1. If so, was there a confidential reporting system in place?
  - 4.9. Is the organization actively involved in LGBTQIA community events or initiatives?
  - 4.10. How, if at all, does the organization contribute to broader LGBTQIA causes and advocacy?
  - 4.11. Were any efforts made to ensure the retention and advancement of LGBTQIA employees within the organization?
    - 4.11.1. If so, were there mentorship or sponsorship programs that focus on underrepresented groups?
  - 4.12. If you have had issues within theatre workspaces, did you find any support from coworkers, supervisors, executive leadership, or other places?
  - 4.13. What changes do you hope to see regarding LGBTQ+ acceptance and rights?

### **Survey for Organizations.**

5. HR within Nonprofits
  - 5.1. Name of Organization (optional)
  - 5.2. Size of Organization
    - 5.2.1. Tiny: Less than \$1 million
    - 5.2.2. Small: \$1 million – \$5 million
    - 5.2.3. Medium: \$5.1 million – \$10 million
    - 5.2.4. Large: \$10 million – \$50 million
    - 5.2.5. Huge: \$50 million – \$5 billion
    - 5.2.6. Colossal: \$5 billion+
  - 5.3. Is your Organization a Non-profit (501c)?
    - 5.3.1. Yes or No
  - 5.4. Does Your Organization have a Human Resources Person on Staff?
  - 5.5. Does your organization have a written non-discrimination policy
    - 5.5.1. If so, does that policy explicitly include sexual orientation and gender

- identity?
- 5.6. How is your non-discrimination policy communicated to employees
    - 5.6.1. where can they access it?
  - 5.7. What, if any, specific benefits or resources do the organizations provide to support LGBTQIA employees?
    - 5.7.1. If so, were there inclusive healthcare options, such as coverage for gender confirmation surgeries or hormone therapy?
    - 5.7.2. If so, were there guidelines or support mechanisms in place for employees who are undergoing gender transitions?
  - 5.8. Did the organization provide diversity and inclusion training
    - 5.8.1. If so, does it cover LGBTQIA issues?
  - 5.9. Does your organization have LGBTQIA employee resource groups or affinity networks?
    - 5.9.1. If so, How does the organization support and collaborate with these groups?
  - 5.10. How does the organization handle name and pronoun changes in its systems and communications?
  - 5.11. Is there a commitment to using inclusive language in official documents, policies, and communications?
    - 5.11.1. If so, How does the organization address the use of gender-neutral language?
  - 5.12. How does your organization handle reports of discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity?
    - 5.12.1. If so, was there a confidential reporting system in place?
  - 5.13. Is your organization actively involved in LGBTQIA community events or initiatives?
  - 5.14. How, if at all, does your organization contribute to broader LGBTQIA causes and advocacy?
  - 5.15. Were any efforts made to ensure the retention and advancement of LGBTQIA employees within the organization?
    - 5.15.1. If so, were there mentorship or sponsorship programs that focus on underrepresented groups?

## **Findings**

### **Participant Responses**

The personal narratives shared by the twelve participants centered on common themes. They spoke of their experiences with their LGBTQIA+ friends and queer communities, seeking positive representation in media or theater and undergoing a period of self-discovery, often during their college years. These journeys involved exploring their sexuality and/or gender identity, navigating

through various terms and sexual orientations to understand themselves better. Many participants also shared stories of coming out to their families, seeking gender-affirming care, and navigating intersections with neurodivergence. All the participants have worked in arts nonprofits in the Twin Cities and have some form of college degree.

### **Range of Participants**

Out of the twelve participants, various gender and sexuality terms were embraced and utilized.

Specifically, 16.7% preferred he/him/his pronouns, 58.3% favored they/them/theirs, and 25% opted for she/her/hers. Notably, one participant used plural system pronouns (we/them/us), which for this study will fall under the category of they/them/theirs. None of the participants indicated a preference for neo-pronouns or mixed pronouns. In terms of gender, 16.7% were nonbinary, 33.3% were both nonbinary and transgender, 8.3% were a transgender man, 25% were a cisgender woman, 8.3% were a cisgender man, and 8.3% did not specify their gender. Regarding sexuality, 8.3% identified as bisexual, 8.3% as gay, 8.3% as polyamorous, and 75% did not disclose their sexuality.

Throughout the interview process, I prompted participants to delve into the intersectionality of their identities. The intersectionalities discussed included disability, chronic illness, neurodivergence, queerness, age, being a person of color, and a term I've termed as "forgotten queer." This term refers to individuals who have openly come out as LGBTQIA+ in their workplace but find that their identity is often overlooked or forgotten by others within the LGBTQIA+ community.

### **Twin Cities Theater Organizations**

Through these interviews, a total of 39 Twin Cities theatre arts nonprofit organizations were mentioned, where participants had worked in various capacities, including full-time, part-time, and contracted roles. Some participants had overlapping experiences, having worked at the same organizations concurrently or at different times. The roles undertaken by participants were dynamic,

often changing based on their involvement in other productions. All interviewees were professional theater artists who typically transitioned from one production to another across different organizations. Among the participants, 2 out of 12 were actors, 1 out of 12 had served as a production assistant, 4 out of 12 had been stage managers, 3 out of 12 had operated as board and/or spotlight operators, 2 out of 12 had worked as general technicians, 1 out of 12 had been an assistant stage manager, 1 out of 12 had worked as a production stage manager, 3 out of 12 had been teaching artists, 1 out of 12 had interned, 2 out of 12 had worked as costume designers, 1 out of 12 had worked as a stitcher, 1 out of 12 had been a costume coordinator, 1 out of 12 had been a dancer, 1 out of 12 had served as a literary manager, 2 out of 12 had been lighting technicians, 2 out of 12 had been sound designers, 1 out of 12 had been in administrative management, 1 out of 12 had worked as a carpenter, 1 out of 12 had been a scenic designer, and 1 out of 12 had been a director. These diverse roles exemplify the multifaceted contributions of professional theater artists within the Twin Cities arts nonprofit sector.

### **Twin Cities Organizations Work Cultures**

Among the 39 Twin Cities theatre arts nonprofit organizations referenced, participants noted common themes in their work cultures and environments. While these cultures varied considerably, most exhibited an intensity that often led to feelings of jadedness or a sense that efforts to enact change were futile. Participants observed a disparity between the expectations and ambitions tied to programming and the lack of adequate funding to support projects, resulting in low wages for those in nonunion positions. Many individuals described feeling overworked and underpaid. Patents often influenced programming decisions, with predominantly white-run institutions displaying resistance to change. Despite the small size of the theatre community, each institution boasted a diverse range of cultures. While some organizations fostered supportive and inclusive environments characterized by respect and a balance of professionalism and informality, others prioritized profit and

appearances over the well-being of artists, resulting in toxic atmospheres. A notable disconnect existed between the dynamics within rehearsal rooms and the decisions made by administrative and management personnel, reflecting issues of poor leadership and financial mismanagement within the organizations.

Participants discussed how organizations managed name changes, common for trans and nonbinary individuals. Typically, participants would email the stage manager or production stage manager to request a name change and fill out a form to change their name and pronouns officially. Then, the stage manager would inform the designers and director. The organization would respect and follow the individual's lead regarding the name change. The key aspect emphasized was for individuals to advocate for themselves in this process.

### **Human Resources Policy**

Participants provided insights regarding the presence of written non-discrimination policies among the 39 Twin Cities theatre arts nonprofit organizations referenced. They observed that such policies typically included provisions for sexual orientation and gender identity. Around 80% of the organizations where participants had worked had established policies, while the remaining 20% did not provide policies to the participants. Some participants noted that smaller organizations might lack formal policies, whereas larger organizations often had entire departments dedicated to Human Resources, non-discrimination, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Access to non-discrimination policies was typically provided upon hire, with policies posted on call boards and included in handbooks distributed via email. Notably, the Actors Equity Association mandates non-discrimination policies for its member organizations; this particularly affects larger theatre companies.

Regarding health benefits or resources for LGBTQIA+ workers, 8.3% of participants indicated that organizations they worked for offered such support, 16.7% said the organizations did but with

limited benefits, and 75% were unsure. Around 41.7% noted that their organizations conducted DEI training, while 58.3% did not. Of those with DEI training, 50% included special education around gender and sexual identity. The use of inclusive language within organizations was reported at 41.7% for those that did, 16.7% sometimes, and 41.7% not at all. Only 16.7% of participants mentioned unofficial LGBTQIA+ worker resource groups, with none stating official existence. Retention and/or advancement, specifically around LGBTQIA+ workers, were lacking, according to 83.3% of participants, though 16.7% noted specific efforts in this regard. Around 58.3% of organizations contributed to LGBTQIA+ causes and advocacy, while involvement in LGBTQIA+ community events was less common, with only 16.7% engaged in specific events, 33.3% involved in a general manner, and 50% not involved at all.

### **Summary of Participants Experiences**

The experiences of discrimination within Twin Cities arts nonprofit organizations have been varied and complex. Participants faced daily misgendering, repercussions such as not being rehired after addressing disparities, and confrontations following instances of discrimination. Passive-aggressive behavior and sexism, particularly from older generations, were also prevalent. Additionally, participants encountered insensitive comments and blatant transphobia. Despite the perception of the arts sector as accepting, many participants expressed disillusionment with its reality. Some hesitated to join unions due to perceptions of exclusivity and toxic masculinity. However, positive experiences were also shared, including feeling safest in known inclusive environments and appreciating anti-discrimination agreements in contracts. Passing as cisgender also led to fewer instances of discrimination and challenges.

The participants found support in their networks mainly through friends and coworkers; many did not go to their direct supervisors for support, and almost none went to larger organization leadership for support around discrimination.



Participants provided significant commentary on how organizations addressed reports of discrimination. The reporting methods varied among individuals, with some choosing to inform the Stage Manager, others reporting to management in the absence of an official Human Resources department, and those in larger entities typically resorting to emailing Human Resources directly. Feedback on the reporting processes revealed several vital points: some organizations offered confidential reporting mechanisms, yet reports were occasionally either disregarded or left unanswered, resulting in adverse consequences such as not being hired again. In smaller organizations, the absence of formal reporting systems posed challenges. In contrast, although confidential reporting existed in larger entities, participants often felt that their reports did not yield any meaningful follow-up. Additionally, participants expressed frustration at receiving repeated apologies—"I am sorry you felt that way"—without any concrete action being taken. This collective feedback underscores the importance of enhancing organizational responsiveness and accountability when addressing discrimination issues.

Participants expressed hopes for acceptance and rights around LGBTQIA+ individuals, advocating for continued awareness of gendered and cis-gendered language usage and practices, particularly in dressing rooms and costumes. They aspire for LGBTQIA+ identities to be normalized in the workplace, desiring more queer representation and a shift in management practices coupled with improved pay. They reject being the subject of moral panic and seek the removal of hierarchical organizational structures, aiming to reform or establish new systems. Creating safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ individuals within the theatre community is paramount, alongside establishing employee resource groups and implementing mandatory comprehensive training. Participants also aim to cultivate an environment that attracts younger theater artists and maintains organizational values and practices. They call for increased hiring of LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly transgender individuals, in professional theaters, as well as more excellent representation in leadership positions and on boards. Inclusive healthcare, retention, and mentorship programs are

also emphasized, along with a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work and improved infrastructure in small theaters.

## **Organizations Survey Responses**

Among the 39 organizations mentioned, an email survey was dispatched to all of them. Merely 8 organizations responded to the survey. Among these, only 4 out of the 39 made their Human Resource information, packets, and contact details available online. Consequently, I obtained data from a total of 12 organizations.

One of the 12 responses did not pertain to a nonprofit entity, and hence, I excluded the response from that theater. Consequently, I have 11 responses from nonprofit TwinCities theater arts organizations to analyze.

Out of the 11 organizations for which I collected data, 45.5% fall under the category of Large Organizations, with budgets ranging from \$10 million to \$50 million. In contrast, 54.5% are classified as Tiny Organizations with budgets of less than \$1 million. Interestingly, 45.5% of the polled organizations have a dedicated Human Resources person on their staff, while 54.5% do not. This distinction aligns directly with the organization's size; large organizations typically have a dedicated HR person, whereas tiny organizations do not. However, it's worth noting that despite lacking dedicated HR personnel, tiny organizations often have individuals who handle HR-related inquiries or concerns while also doing another job within the organization.

Irrespective of their size, 100% of the organizations possess written HR policies nondiscrimination policies and explicitly include provisions against sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination within these policies. However, the means of accessing these policies vary across organizations. Some distribute them as part of the anti-harassment policy, which employees must sign; others include them in the physical and digital employee handbooks, often provided upon

hiring; and some post them in different areas within their physical spaces.

Transitioning to the examination of specific resources catering to LGBTQIA+ individuals within these organizations, it's noteworthy that 54.5% of the organizations fall into the Tiny category.

Within these organizations, healthcare coverage is typically provided only to full-time employees.

In 4 out of 7 instances, this coverage comes in the form of a healthcare stipend, allowing individuals to select their preferred plans and coverage options.

Interestingly, none of the organizations currently have LGBTQIA+ employee resource groups or affinity networks established, although there is expressed interest in establishing such initiatives.

Regarding the handling of name and pronoun changes in systems and communications, particularly within the majority of Tiny organizations, these changes are managed through internal discussions.

For official paperwork and payroll system alterations, requests are typically submitted via email or, in some cases, through an online form.

Moreover, it's common practice for employees within these organizations to include their pronouns in their email signatures. Importantly, all organizations surveyed affirmed a commitment to employing inclusive language in their official documents, policies, and communications.

Of the organizations, 42.9% offer diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training for all employees, while 57.1% do not. Notably, all organizations providing DEI training cover LGBTQIA+ issues comprehensively. Concerning the retention and advancement of LGBTQIA+ employees, 57.1% of organizations have made active efforts in this regard, whereas 42.9% have not prioritized such initiatives.

Interestingly, 71.4% of organizations lack mentorship or sponsorship programs specifically targeting underrepresented groups. However, a significant majority (85.7%) are actively engaged in LGBTQIA+ community events or initiatives.

Regarding discrimination reporting mechanisms, organizations employ diverse approaches. Notably, 85.7% have implemented confidential reporting systems. Employees can report discrimination directly to the Executive Director, the Human Resources Person, a designated report team consisting of two staff members and two board members, or a trusted management figure. After reporting, each organization follows a distinct process for resolution. Some involve the board or a human resources board member, others address the issue through meetings with the Executive Director or upper management, and organizations with dedicated Human Resources personnel have them process the reported issues.

## **Analysis of Responses**

The narratives shared by participants in the Twin Cities theatre arts nonprofit sector provide a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted experiences and challenges faced by individuals within this community. These narratives illuminate common themes that resonate deeply with many, including the journey of self-discovery and the quest for positive representation. Participants articulated how their college years served as pivotal periods of exploration, where they grappled with questions of identity and sought to understand themselves better within the context of their queer communities.

One striking aspect of these narratives is the rich diversity of gender and sexuality identities embraced by the participants. From the “traditional” pronouns like he/him/his and she/her/hers to more inclusive options such as they/them/theirs and even plural system pronouns, each individual's preferred terms reflected their unique journey of self-identification. The inclusion of terms like nonbinary, transgender, cisgender, bisexual, gay, and polyamorous underscored the complexity and fluidity of human sexuality and gender expression.

Moreover, these narratives delved into the intersectionality of identities, highlighting how individuals navigated through layers of discrimination and marginalization. Discussions touched

upon the intersecting challenges of disability, chronic illness, neurodivergence, queerness, age, and race, shedding light on the diverse lived experiences within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Additionally, the concept of being a "forgotten queer" within the workplace added another layer of complexity, highlighting the nuanced dynamics of inclusion and recognition within professional settings.

Amidst these narratives of struggle and resilience, participants also shared stories of finding support networks within their communities, often relying on friends and coworkers for solidarity and understanding. However, they also encountered significant barriers within the organizational structures of the theater arts nonprofit sector. Issues such as daily misgendering, disparities in wages, and a disconnect between rehearsal dynamics and administrative decisions underscored the need for systemic change within these organizations.

Participants' stories underscore the pervasive nature of discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals across various aspects of life, including the workplace. The study by Ng et al. (2012) revealed that LGBTQIA+ employees are among the largest but least studied minority groups in the workforce, facing prejudice, discrimination, and harassment due to negative stereotypes, religious interpretations, and irrational fears. Despite the presence of diversity programs, resistance and backlash against initiatives supporting sexual minorities persist, often pressuring LGBTQIA+ individuals to conceal their identities to avoid discrimination. Discrimination can significantly impact job satisfaction, career choices, and psychological well-being, leading some individuals to avoid certain professions or seek out LGBTQIA+-specific occupations perceived as safe spaces.

Harassment and discrimination in educational settings further exacerbate these challenges, affecting academic and career development opportunities (Munoz & Thomas, 2006). Discrimination against LGBTQIA+ employees takes various forms, including formal and informal, overt and subtle, contributing to occupational segregation and limiting career advancement opportunities.

Understanding and supporting marginalized populations, including LGBTQIA+ individuals belonging to other marginalized groups, is crucial for fostering inclusive workplaces. Despite facing discrimination, many LGBTQIA+ employees believe their unique perspectives contribute positively to workplace diversity, emphasizing the importance of embracing differences as fundamental human rights. Overall, these insights highlight the urgent need for systemic changes to promote equity and inclusion for LGBTQIA+ individuals in the workplace.

Transitioning from personal narratives to organizational insights, the data collected from nonprofit Twin Cities theater arts organizations offered valuable perspectives on the institutional landscape. The distinction between large organizations and tiny organizations based on budget size highlighted disparities in resources and capacity, particularly concerning the presence of dedicated HR personnel. Despite these differences, all organizations demonstrated a commitment to inclusivity through the presence of written HR policies explicitly addressing sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination.

Furthermore, data provided insights into the provision of healthcare coverage, DEI training, and LGBTQIA+ support within these organizations. While there were notable gaps in resources, such as the absence of LGBTQIA+ employee resource groups and limited access to comprehensive DEI training, there was also a clear commitment to improvement and advocacy. The presence of confidential reporting systems for discrimination and active engagement in LGBTQIA+ community events signaled a proactive approach to addressing systemic issues and fostering a more inclusive environment.

The organizational insights reveal several key insights into the challenges and aspirations within the Twin Cities theater arts nonprofit sector regarding LGBTQIA+ inclusivity. Mehta et al. (2023) underscore the significance of creating a supportive and non-discriminatory work environment, with a shared emphasis on the commitment of organizations to inclusivity through the presence of

written HR policies explicitly addressing sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination. However, data from nonprofit Twin Cities theater arts organizations sheds light on disparities in resources and capacity, particularly between large and tiny organizations, highlighting challenges smaller organizations may face in providing comprehensive support for LGBTQIA+ employees, such as the absence of dedicated HR personnel.

Despite these disparities, both the research above and Krupat & McCreery (2001) acknowledge gaps in resources, including the absence of LGBTQIA+ employee resource groups and limited access to comprehensive DEI training. Nevertheless, there is also a clear commitment to improvement and advocacy, as demonstrated by initiatives like proactive approaches to addressing systemic issues through confidential reporting systems and engagement in LGBTQIA+ community events. Furthermore, the research above and Krupat & McCreery (2001) underscore the importance of intersectional approaches to inclusivity, recognizing the diverse experiences and identities within the LGBTQIA+ community and advocating for systemic changes within organizations to address the unique challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals from marginalized backgrounds. Ultimately advocating for meaningful change within the theater arts community, emphasizing the importance of amplifying voices and advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights and recognition to advance equity and inclusivity within the sector.

In summary, the narratives and data presented offer a comprehensive portrait of the challenges and aspirations within the Twin Cities theater arts nonprofit sector. They underscore the importance of intersectional approaches to inclusivity, systemic changes within organizations, and ongoing advocacy for LGBTQIA+ rights and recognition. By amplifying these voices and advocating for meaningful change, the theater arts community can continue to strive toward a more equitable and inclusive future for all.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Narratives shared by participants in the Twin Cities theater arts nonprofit sector offer a profound insight into the diverse experiences and challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals within this community. These narratives underscore the urgent need for systemic changes to promote equity and inclusion in the workplace. Transitioning from personal narratives to organizational insights, data collected from nonprofit organizations further highlight disparities in resources and capacity, particularly between large and tiny organizations. Despite these challenges, there is a shared commitment to inclusivity, evidenced by the presence of written HR policies addressing discrimination and proactive approaches to fostering a more inclusive environment. To address these challenges and foster a more inclusive workplace environment for LGBTQIA+ individuals in the Twin Cities theater arts nonprofit sector, several key improvements can be made.

### **Recommendations**

All Organizations should do the following:

1. Update Policies and Practices Yearly - include specifics around LGBTQIA+
2. Improve access to policies and practices
3. Bring in more voices, specifically LGBTQIA+, especially in upper management
4. Look at Gaps in current reporting systems - update and clarify
5. Engage in the LGBTQIA+ Community that is genuine
6. Adopt a zero-tolerance policy for all discrimination
7. top leadership should demonstrate a visible commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion by actively participating in and supporting initiatives aimed at fostering an inclusive workplace culture
8. should adopt intersectional approaches to inclusivity, recognizing the diverse experiences



and identities within the LGBTQIA+ community.

- a. This includes addressing issues of race, ethnicity, disability, and other forms of marginalization in addition to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Specifically, Larger organizations should do the following:

1. Have a full-time trained HR person on Staff
2. Better and intentional follow-up with reporters
3. Commit to yearly DEI training for all staff - if not more

Specifically, Smaller organizations should do the following:

1. Minimally have a partially dedicated trained HR Person on Staff or Board
2. Allocate Board Time to DEI Initiatives.
3. A clear reporting system, especially if upper management is the problem
4. Commit to DEI information sharing and explore community options for DEI training.

Moreover, all organizations should actively engage with the LGBTQIA+ community through participation in events and initiatives aimed at promoting awareness, acceptance, and advocacy.

Some examples of these events and initiatives are Pride Parades, LGBTQIA+ Cultural Celebrations, Education Workshops, Ally training programs, LGBTQIA+ Health and Wellness Fairs, Cultural Competency training, LGBTQIA+ Networking Events, Collaborative Projects with LGBTQIA+ Organizations, and Safe Space Initiatives. This will help build stronger connections with the community and foster a sense of belonging among LGBTQIA+ employees.

Finally, further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of existing diversity initiatives and identify areas for improvement. This includes conducting surveys, focus groups, and interviews to gather feedback from LGBTQIA+ employees and assess the impact of diversity programs on

organizational culture and employee well-being.

By implementing these suggestions and continuing to advocate for meaningful change, the Twin Cities theater arts nonprofit sector can work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive environment for all employees, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or other intersecting identities. Further research in this area will be essential to monitor progress, identify emerging challenges, and inform future interventions aimed at promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the workplace.

## References

- Adu, H. G. L., Philip. (2021). *The Theoretical Framework in Phenomenological Research: Development and Application*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003084259>
- Colella, A. J., & King, E. B. (2017). *The Oxford Handbook of Workplace Discrimination*. Oxford University Press.
- Gacilo, J., Steinheider, B., Stone, T. H., Hoffmeister, V., Jawahar, I. M., & Garrett, T. (2018). The double-edged sword of having a unique perspective: Feelings of discrimination and perceived career advantages among LGBT employees. *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 37(3), 298–312. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-03-2017-00604>
- Hall, D. M. (2009). *Allies at work: Creating a lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender-inclusive work environment*. San Francisco: Out & Equal Workplace Advocates.  
<http://archive.org/details/alliesatworkcrea0000hall>
- Hill, R. J. (2009). *Incorporating Queers: Blowback, Backlash, and Other Forms of Resistance to Workplace Diversity Initiatives That Support Sexual Minorities—Robert J. Hill, 2009*.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1523422308328128?journalCode=adha>
- Huffman, A. H., Mills, M. J., Howes, S. S., & Albritton, M. D. (2021). Workplace support and affirming behaviors: Moving toward a transgender, gender diverse, and non-binary friendly workplace. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 22(3), 225–242.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2020.1861575>
- Incekara, H. İ., & Ulaş, E. (2023). THE EFFECTS OF DIFFERENT SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS OF INDIVIDUALS ON THEIR PROFESSIONAL LIVES. *Akademik Hassasiyetler*, 10(22), Article 22. <https://doi.org/10.58884/akademik-hassasiyetler.1276463>
- Kelly, M., & Lubitow, A. (2014). Pride at Work: Organizing at the Intersection of the Labor and LGBT Movements. *Labor Studies Journal*, 39(4), 257–277.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0160449X14567806>

Knee, E. (2019). Gay, but not Inclusive: Boundary Maintenance in an LGBTQ Space.

*Leisure Sciences*, 41(6), 499–515. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2018.1441767>

Krupat, K., & McCreery, P. (2001). *Out at Work: Building a Gay-labor Alliance*. U of Minnesota Press.

Lustbader, K. (2018). *LGBTQ heritage.pdf*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/cot.2018.0012>

McFadden, C. (2015). Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Careers and Human Resource Development:

A Systematic Literature Review. *Human Resource Development Review*, 14(2), 125–162.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484314549456>

McFadden, C., & Crowley-Henry, M. (2018). ‘My People’: The potential of LGBT employee networks in reducing stigmatization and providing voice. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 29(5), 1056–1081.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2017.1335339>

Mehta, A. S., Chauhan, A. S., & Ivanovic, A. (2023). Supporting LGBTQ Employees in the Workplace: The Role of HR Policies and Practices. *Reviews of Contemporary Business Analytics*, 6(1), Article 1.

Meyer, S. J., Dale, E. J., & Willis, K. K. M. (2022). “Where My Gays At?” The Status of LGBTQ People and Queer Theory in Nonprofit Research. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 51(3), 566–586. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640211021497>

Meyer, S., & Millison, J. (2022). Queer Up Your Work: Adding Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity to Public and Nonprofit Research. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 8(1), 145–156. <https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.8.1.145-156>

Munoz, C. S., & Thomas, K. M. (2006). LGBTQ Issues in Organizational Settings: What HRD

- Professionals Need to Know and Do. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.239>
- Murphy, M. J., & Bjorngaard, B. (2018). *Living Out Loud: An Introduction to LGBTQ History, Society, and Culture*. Routledge.
- Nadal, K. L. Y. (2023). *Dismantling Everyday Discrimination: Microaggressions Toward LGBTQ People* (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2w8kbrx>
- Ng, E. S., & Rumens, N. (2017). Diversity and inclusion for LGBT workers: Current issues and new horizons for research. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences / Revue Canadienne Des Sciences de l'Administration*, 34(2), 109–120.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/cjas.1443>
- Ng, E. S., Schweitzer, L., & Lyons, S. T. (2012). *Anticipated Discrimination and a Career Choice in Nonprofit: A Study of Early Career Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered (LGBT) Job Seekers.pdf*. SAGE Publications. <http://rop.sagepub.com>
- Tilcsik, A., Anteby, M., & Knight, C. R. (2015). *Concealable Stigma and Occupational Segregation: Toward a Theory of Gay and Lesbian Occupations—András Tilcsik, Michel Anteby, Carly R. Knight, 2015*. *Administrative Science Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839215576401>
- Vagle, M. D. (2018). *Crafting Phenomenological Research* (2nd ed.). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315173474>
- Woods, W. (2022). *Factors Influencing Institutional Betrayal in Nonprofit Arts Organizations* [M.B.A., The College of St. Scholastica].  
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2763250923/abstract/7323212EC2694F2DPO/1>