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Cultivating Resilience in LGBTQ+ College Students Through Mindfulness-Based Practices

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And you have to give them hope. Hope for a better world, hope for a better tomorrow,

hope for a better place to come to if the pressures at home are too great. Hope that all will

be all right.

-Harvey Milk, 24 June 1977

If we are to live our lives fully and well, we must learn to embrace the opposites, to live

in a creative tension between our limits and our potentials.

-Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*

This project would not have been possible without the support of several people. I

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way it knows how. Sometimes, all we need to do is acknowledge the message.

Luke Allen Madden

Abstract

Research shows LGBTQ+ college students experience lower mental and emotional well-being than their heterosexual, cisgender peers despite growing social acceptance. Research also indicates these disparities result from excess stress LGBTQ+ individuals experience due to the stigmatization of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Yet, LGBTQ+ college students continue to show up as their authentic selves in various campus settings, demonstrating a sense of resilience in the face of adversity that is characteristic of the broader LGBTQ+ community. As the number of students seeking or utilizing campus mental health resources increases, it is critical to provide vulnerable populations with resources and coping strategies that positively impact their mental health. Research shows that resources and coping strategies that cultivate resilience through mindfulness are beneficial preventative interventions in influencing the overall mental and emotional well-being of LGBTQ+ college students. Thus, this project describes a workshop designed utilizing the principles of positive psychology and a strengths-based approach to broaden and build resilience within LGBTQ+ college students. The workshop is composed of 10 mindfulness-based lessons that allow LGBTQ+ students to explore, and elicit strength from, various aspects of their identity.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement

Growing cultural awareness and societal acceptance have led to a generation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity earlier in adolescence than previous generations (Edwards & Grippe, 2019; Kahn et al., 2018; Russel & Fish, 2016). A recent Gallup poll indicated the number of Americans identifying as LGBTQ+ is increasing due largely to members of Gen Z (young adults between 18-23 years old as of 2020) disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity at earlier ages (Jones, 2021). Thus, higher education institutions pay greater attention to the needs of the LGBTQ+ community because students arrive on campus after beginning their coming out journey (Lange et al., 2019). Kosciw et al. (2015) stated the process of coming out and disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity is associated with higher levels of psychological well-being. Furthermore, being open about sexual orientation or gender identity promotes resilience for LGBTQ+ youth and young adults (Kosciw et al., 2015). Despite increased awareness and greater acceptance in society, Woodford et al. (2018) noted LGBTQ+ college students continue to experience increased levels of psychological distress when compared to their non-LGBTQ peers.

The lived experiences of LGBTQ+ college students are similar to experiences of other students in many ways, but LGBTQ+ students often experience increased adversity within various contexts in their lives (Asakura, 2019). Individuals' excess stress because of their marginalized or minoritized identity is often referred to as *minority stress* (Meyer, 1995, 2003/2013). Minority stress is additive to the everyday stressors all people experience, occurs chronically, and is reinforced by systemic structures within society (Meyer,

2003/2013). In other words, people who possess marginalized sexual orientations or gender identities experience higher levels of stress because of their LGBTQ+ identity. Additionally, minority stress arises from negative experiences and the totality of living in a culture that does not center the needs and experiences of sexual and gender minorities (Meyer, 1995). The excess stress resulting from the social constructs of sexuality and gender may significantly impact the lives of people who possess stigmatized sexual orientations or gender identities (Meyer, 2003/2013).

As a result of their marginalized status, LGBTQ+ people encounter unique challenges related to identifying and maintaining a healthy sense of their sexual orientation or gender identity (Guittar & Rayburn, 2016). Kniess et al. (2016) observed that developing a positive identity as an LGBTQ+ person during the college years collides with the developmental trajectory of being a college student, causing the stress of the college environment to be more significant for students identifying their identity as a queer or trans* person. While considerable research explores the queer and trans* community in higher education (for a comprehensive overview, see Renn [2010] and Lange et al. [2019]), research on how student affairs professionals can positively impact the mental and emotional health of LGBTQ+ college students to strengthen their well-being and resilience is lacking.

Importance and Rationale of the Project

The psychological and emotional well-being of college students is crucial to their success at higher education institutions and in their lives post-graduation (Douce & Keeling, 2014). Douce and Keeling (2014) noted mental and behavioral conditions could significantly impact a student's ability to learn by decreasing their intellectual and emotional flexibility, weakening creative thinking, and undermining their interest in gaining new knowledge, ideas, and

experiences. The number of college students referred to or who seek mental health services has dramatically increased over the last 20 years, forcing counseling centers to shift away from traditional forms of treatment in favor of short-term crisis support (Center for Collegiate Mental Health, 2021). Similarly, the number of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) young adults who experience a severe mental illness has increased, with approximately 62 percent of LGB young adults receiving treatment for their mental and emotional health in 2019 (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020). Wilson and Liss (2020) suggested college students who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community are a high-risk population that may benefit from increased institutional support because of their propensity to experience higher levels of depression and anxiety, and lower levels of belonging, happiness, and safety when compared to their heterosexual, cisgender peers.

Background of the Project

The course of the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement was forever changed on June 28, 1969, when the queer and trans* patrons of the Stonewall Inn stood up against harassment and brutality from the New York City Police Department (Blakemore, 2020). Renn (2010) shared that the events at Stonewall "sparked a movement on college campuses and in urban enclaves of gays and lesbians" (p. 133; see also D'Emilio, 1992). For queer people coming of age during the late 1960s, coming out was a revolutionary act of embracing their identity rather than conforming to mainstream society's sexual and gender expectations (D'Emilio, 2014). Additionally, D'Emilio (2014) suggested queer visibility in larger cities and college towns made it easier for those who did not publicly declare their sexuality or gender identity to find community.

During the 1980s, the overwhelming devastation of the AIDS crisis accelerated the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement and served to assert the humanity of the LGBTQ+ community

(NBC News, 2019). Halkitis (2014) wrote that because HIV/AIDS first affected gay men, it was largely ignored by the Reagan and Bush administrations. Furthermore, because the cause of the disease was primarily attributed to the lifestyle choices of gay men, heterosexual Americans largely ignored the devastation occurring around them. As the epidemic progressed, LGBTQ+ activists began demonstrating in the streets to fight back against the prejudice and stigma that magnified the number of gay and transgender people dying from AIDS (D'Emilio, 2014; NBC News, 2019).

A result of this continued activism in the face of adversity and prejudice has been an increased acceptance of LGBTQ+ people in the United States. A Pew Research Center (2013) survey found that most LGBTQ+ people believed society was becoming more accepting of them. Numerous changes and battles have impacted, or currently impact, the lives of LGBTQ+ people, such as increased visibility and representation of queer and trans* people, equal access to marriage, debates over bathroom access for trans* people, the imposition and repeal of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, and the ban on transgender people serving in the military (Edwards & Grippe, 2019; see also De La Garza, 2018; Fitzsimmons, 2019; Steinmetz, 2014; and Yglesias, 2015). When queer and trans* people fail to learn their cultural history, they become less likely to politicize their identity when future issues or concerns arise (Olive, 2012). Thus, a basic understanding of LGBTQ+ history in the United States provides background to the obstacles the LGBTQ+ community has overcome in the fight for equity and equality. The continued perseverance of the LGBTQ+ community in overcoming obstacles highlights the resilience present within this community.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project is to develop a mindfulness-based resiliency workshop for LGBTQ+ college students to assist them with cultivating resilience to stressors related to being a college student and the effects of heterosexism within their campus environments. Additionally, this workshop will encourage these students to explore the intersection and formation of their multiple identities. This program consists of 10 lessons meant to cultivate resilience in queer and trans students through mindfulness-based practices and techniques. The lessons presented through this program are adapted from *The Queer and Transgender Resilience Workbook: Skills for Navigating Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression* by Dr. Anneliese Singh (Singh, 2018). This workshop will also function as a support network for LGBTQ+ college students to turn to if and when they are overwhelmed by sexual and gender oppression. Additionally, students participating in the workshop will learn positive coping techniques that strengthen and affirm their LGBTQ+ identities and provide them with the skills to effectively cope with the everyday stress of being a college student.

Objectives of the Project

This project aims to cultivate a greater sense of resilience in LGBTQ+ college students through the principles of positive psychology to mediate the effects of the multiple stressors they experience as students and as members of a marginalized community. Additionally, this program strives to provide LGBTQ+ students with the space to speak openly and honestly about their mental and emotional health and feel safe asking for help when they need it. The program detailed in this project is meant to be a preventative intervention to influence the mental and emotional well-being of LGBTQ+ students positively. Hanson and Hanson (2018) suggested that mental resources like self-worth and kindness increase the ability to cope with adverse

circumstances and foster well-being. In other words, these traits foster resilience. By participating in the program, students will gain the tools and techniques to foster a greater sense of well-being. Thus, this program strives to assist LGBTQ+ college students in achieving their personal and academic goals while simultaneously empowering them to lives as their authentic selves.

Definition of Terms

Cisgender: a term for a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth

Coming Out: refers to the process where an individual begins to explore their sexual orientation or gender identity and disclose it to others

Gender Identity: refers to an individual's conceptualization of their gender

Heterosexism: A system of beliefs concerning gender and morality depicting sexual minorities as deviant, which are used to justify overt and covert acts of discrimination and victimization (Herek, 2004).

LGBTQ+: an acronym used to encompass the spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities represented within the queer and trans* community

Mindfulness: the practice of paying purposeful attention to the present moment in a nonjudgmental way to nurture clarity, greater awareness, and acceptance of our present-moment reality (Kabat-Zinn, 1994)

Queer: a term previously used an anti-LGBT slur that has been reclaimed as a politicized identity marker and as an umbrella term to describe the LGBT community (Singh, 2018)

Resilience: "the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats of significant sources of stress—such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors" (American Psychological Association, 2012, para 4)

Sexual Orientation: a term referring to the emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction a person feels toward others

Transgender (also referred to as trans or trans*): an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and expression does not align with the sex assigned to them at birth

Well-being: Refers to the resources available to individuals to handle stress caused by psychological, social, or physical challenges (Dodge et al., 2012)

A Note on Terminology

The language used to discuss sexual orientation and gender identity is constantly evolving (Legg et al., 2020). Throughout this project, the LGBTQ+ acronym highlights the diversity within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community. Additionally, the term trans* refers to the spectrum of gender identities that fall outside the gender binary. The term queer is also used interchangeably throughout this project to describe sexual orientation.

<center>**Scope of the Project**</center>

As stated earlier, the number of students being treated by campus counseling centers has steadily increased over the last decade. Yet, counseling centers have struggled to keep up with the demand. While the well-being of all students must include access to quality mental health services, it is beyond the means of this project to address those concerns at this time. Instead, this project is focused on providing preventive and protective measures for a vulnerable population meant to buffer against the effects of prejudice and discrimination.

Additionally, the current project is being conceived at a public, midsized university in Michigan that has continually demonstrated a commitment to equity and inclusion for the queer and trans* community. While the queer and trans* community in Michigan faces challenges, progress toward full equity is still occurring. It is essential to acknowledge that there are areas of the United States that are still openly hostile toward the LGBTQ+ community. Thus, this program may not be as effective at an institution or in a state with few or no protections for LGBTQ+ people. Furthermore, changing the campus climate, or the culture in which the institution is situated, is a daunting task beyond the scope of this project; therefore, this project seeks to empower LGBTQ+ students to speak out against systemic and institutional oppression.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Increased attention to the experiences of youth and young adults with marginalized

sexual orientations or gender identities in human development research has occurred as a result

of society's changing attitudes toward LGBTQ+ issues and people (Russell & Fish, 2019).

Incidentally, even as acceptance and support of LGBTQ+ people have increased, the lack of

support woven into the social and cultural levels of institutions that impact the lives of LGBTQ+

students diminish their rights and protections, leaving them more vulnerable to experiences that

can adversely affect their mental, emotional, and physical health (Russell & Fish, 2016). As a

result, mental health interventions that are affirming of the lives of queer and trans* students and

that serve to address stressors that are specific to the LGBTQ+ community are required for the

cultivation of resilience of LGBTQ+ youth and young adults (Iacono, 2018; see also Craig &

Austin, 2016; Kelleher, 2009). Similarly, challenges exist for LGBTQ+ young adults with

multiple intersecting identities due to numerous instances of marginalization (Levitt et al., 2016).

Thus, this literature review explores the challenges and triumphs LGBTQ+ college students

experience and the ways their resilience in the face of heterosexism can be cultivated. First, a

discussion of the theories and rationale guiding the creation and implementation of this project

are presented.

Theory and Rationale

This section begins with a brief introduction to the core principles of positive psychology,

followed by an exploration of the benefits of strengths-based approaches to education. Finally,

this section will explain the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998;

2000; 2001).

An Overview of Positive Psychology

A shift in cultural awareness surrounding the benefits of positive emotions has resulted in an increased interest in how people can improve their happiness, well-being, and overall satisfaction with life (Muscara et al., 2017). As a result, there has been a growing focus placed on the cultivation of positive emotions through the field of positive psychology, pioneered by Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) stated, "[t]he aim of positive psychology is to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupations only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities" (p. 5). Before the development of positive psychology, psychologists and other mental health practitioners focused on treating their patients' mental illnesses and negative emotions within a disease framework, which focused on repairing the damage caused by their illness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This treatment method may have resulted because negative emotions cause severe problems for individuals and society (Fredrickson, 2006). Similarly, much of the research focusing on LGBTQ+ youth and young adults has highlighted their pathology, rather than their strengths; therefore, the concepts of positive psychology provide researchers with an alternative to the negative frameworks that perpetuate stigma and discrimination toward marginalized and minoritized groups, such as queer and trans* people (Hill et al., 2020).

Positive psychology emerged as a subfield within the discipline of psychology subfield to focus on the positive aspects of an individual's past, present, and future life experiences and the emotions associated with those experiences (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Specifically, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) were curious about the sources of strength people drew on to enhance their mental and emotional health. Oehme et al. (2019) have suggested that "just

as the brain can often be harmed by negative experiences, so too can it often be subsequently healed through positive experiences" (p. 96). Furthermore, interventions incorporating positive emotions as treatment and coping strategies treated the problems that resulted from negative emotions and helped build personal strength, resilience, and wellness (Magyar-Moe et al., 2015). As a result, LGBTQ+ college students develop positive coping behaviors that allow them to confront experiences of discrimination and victimization without internalizing those experiences. In turn, this has the effect of positively impacting the mental and emotional health of LGBTQ+ college students.

A Strengths-Based Approach

Anderson (2005) described the mindset that previously dictated the creation of educational programming as a deficit-remediation model which sought to diagnose and fix student "problems" to support their improvement in areas they were thought to be underprepared for. This approach has been applied to the experiences of LGBTQ+ students in higher education, which has the unintended consequence of obscuring the potential of LGBTQ+ students (Schmitz & Tyler, 2019; see also, Russell, 2005; Talburt, 2004). Despite the best intentions of faculty and student affairs professionals, developing programming around a deficit mindset demoralizes students, which inherently affects their motivation (Anderson, 2005). Ambrose et al. (2010) wrote, "motivation influences the direction, intensity, persistence, and quality of the learning behaviors in which students engage" (pp. 68-69). In other words, the strength of a person's beliefs in their abilities affects whether or not they attempt to cope with certain situations (Bandura, 1977).

Researchers in education, psychology, and social work have suggested a strengths-based approach to promote student learning and engagement in their learning environments (Lopez &

Louis, 2009). "The overarching goals of strengths initiatives," according to Soria and Stubblefield (2015), "are to increase students' strengths awareness as a foundation for increased self-awareness, engagement, confidence, and retention" (p. 627). Yet, student success is not only based on the completion of a degree program but also on finding value in their experiences on campus as they develop as people (Louis & Schreiner, 2012). Lopez and Louis (2009) suggested a tenet of strength-based approaches to education assumes there is potential in all students. It is the responsibility of the educator to discover and nurture this potential to foster the student's success.

Furthermore, strengths-based approaches focus on assisting individuals in viewing their strengths as an aspect of their identity that sets them apart from others (Soria & Stubblefield, 2015). Similarly, Zimmerman (2013) shared, "a resiliency paradigm orients researchers and practitioner to positive factors in youth [and young adult's] lives that become the focus of change strategies designed to enhance strengths" (p. 381). By thinking of intervention strategies in terms of resilience and strength, the mindset shifts from deficit-based thinking to growth-based thinking. A growth mindset allows LGBTQ+ college students the opportunity to explore their full potential without being limited by the expectations or assumptions of others.

The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions

The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998; 2000; 2001) is a foundational theory within positive psychology. In conceiving the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, Fredrickson (1998; 2000; 2001) suggested positive emotions could effectively counteract mental health problems when channeled into prevention, treatment, and coping strategies. The cultivation of emotional and psychological strength through positive emotions such as courage, optimism, self-compassion, and resilience can act as buffers against mental

illness and help individuals effectively cope with life stressors (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Similarly, the broaden-and-build theory seeks to understand how the benefits of positive emotions such as joy, interest, contentment, and love can be nurtured and grown within individuals (Fredrickson, 1998). Fredrickson (2001) noted positive emotions were worthy of cultivating to achieve psychological growth and improved physical and psychological well-being.

Furthermore, positive emotions broaden a person's thought-action repertoire (Fredrickson, 1998). In other words, positive emotions provide individuals with the opportunity to pursue thoughts and actions they may not have considered if they were responding out of fear or anger, for instance. Additionally, Fredrickson (2001) suggested, "these broadened mindsets carry indirect and long-term adaptive benefits because broadening builds enduring personal resources, which function as reserves to be drawn on later to manage future threats" (p. 220). Specifically, a broadened mindset has indirect and long-term adaptive benefits because they help cultivate more enduring and durable personal resources that can be drawn upon at any time (Fredrickson, 2006). These benefits are crucial in preventing mental and emotional distress, particularly in instances of victimization and discrimination.

Research and Evaluation

This section begins with a brief discussion of the various models used to describe LGBTQ+ identity development. Next, an explanation of Meyer's (1995; 2003/2013) minority stress theory is presented, along with exploring challenges LGBTQ+ students experience in their lives within educational and personal contexts. Descriptions of how LGBTQ+ students overcome these challenges will follow. Finally, strategies to cultivate positive coping strategies that foster resilience and self-compassion will be presented to assist LGBTQ+ college students with

successfully navigating the inter-and intrapersonal challenges present within the campus environment.

LGBTQ Identity Development

Chan et al. (2017) noted many LGBTQ+ youth and young adults are assumed to be heterosexual and cisgender based on restrictive assumptions surrounding gender and sexuality; therefore, many queer and trans* people are raised with hetero- and cisnormative values and expectations. Consequently, Olive (2012) noted, "as individuals struggle to accept their nonnormative sexual [or gender] identity, they often feel isolated and find the journey difficult" (p. 247). This may be because many LGBTQ+ youth lack queer and trans* role models to look up to as they are developing their own queer or trans* identity (Chan et al., 2017). In other words, when LGBTQ+ youth and young adults lack positive queer and trans* representation, it can be difficult for them to accept and affirm their sexual orientation or gender identity. As a result, Chan et al. (2017) commented that LGBTQ+ youth and young adults might experience difficulty incorporating a healthy sense of their queer or trans identity within a heteronormative and gender restrictive world.

Models of LGBTQ+ Identity Development

Previous models of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) identity development focused on the coming out process, or the process in which individuals begin to disclose their sexual orientation to others (Olive, 2012). The models described by Bilodeau and Renn (2005) are referred to as homosexuality identity formation (Cass, 1979; 1984), gay identity acquisition (Troiden, 1979), and self-labeling or defining self as homosexual (Savin-Williams, 1989). These models begin with a stage where individuals attempt to hide their sexuality by deploying multiple defensive strategies and mechanisms to conceal their true feelings (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). As a result,

Greene and Britton (2012) suggested conflicts concerning LGBTQ+ identity development may cause increased difficulty with emotional expression and regulation, increased levels of shame, disempowerment, and internalized homophobia. Bilodeau and Renn (2005) noted this period of concealment lasts for an unspecified amount of time but may harm the mental and emotional well-being of LGB individuals as they attempt to minimize their same-sex or gender attraction. Eventually, many individuals recognize and accept their feelings of same-sex or gender attraction, which is usually accompanied by a period of experimentation where individuals begin to normalize the emotions, feelings, and behaviors they associate with their sexual orientation (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005).

Conversely, progressing through the stages of LGBTQ+ identity development may not resolve the shame associated with expressing a marginalized sexual identity (Greene & Britton, 2012). For example, Bilodeau and Renn (2005) observed several models that noted the end of a first relationship could trigger an identity crisis where the negative feelings initially associated with one's sexual orientation can return. As a result, LGBTQ+ individuals must reengage in the process of accepting their non-heterosexual feelings to reintegrate their lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity as a part of their sense of being, indicating that the coming-out process is fluid rather than a linear process with a clear start and end (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; see also Cass, 1979, 1984; Savin-Williams, 1989; Troiden, 1979).

It is essential to note the models presented by Bilodeau and Renn (2005) do not address the challenges lesbian, gay, and bisexual adolescents encounter as they begin to acknowledge their sexual orientation while also navigating the challenges of growing up. Furthermore, by focusing on the experiences of LGB individuals, these models ignored the experiences of transgender identity development. Consequently, Olive (2012) suggested older models of

identity development for LGBTQ+ people are no longer relevant because of the myriad of diverse coming-out experiences within the LGBTQ+ community. As a result, it is beneficial to view the development of an LGBTQ+ identity as occurring along multiple paths, which can be influenced by environmental and social factors, which D'Augelli (1994) referred to as a life-span development model of LGB identity development (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). Similarly, Guittar and Rayburn (2016) suggested "coming out is not a process to be completed, but a career to be managed" (p. 339).

Additionally, coming out does not start with a single moment or have a clear end for those disclosing their LGBTQ+ identity. In other words, the coming out process takes work and can include successes and setbacks. An individual's coming out process is ever-evolving and ever-changing, as they work to incorporate various aspects of their identity together over their lifetime. Hill et al. (2020) emphasized that LGBTQ+ students can undertake many paths that allow them to thrive based on their various identities and experiences. Similarly, Meyer (2003/2013) suggested possessing more complex identity structures may lead to better health outcomes.

It is critical to note that identity development for LGBTQ college students is occurring while they are developing their identity as an adult, and all the challenges accompanying that process. Luk et al. (2018) declared the developmental period between late adolescence and young adulthood, preferably before 11th grade, was a critical time for intervention to prevent depressive symptoms for adolescents with minoritized sexual orientations and gender identities. The increased vulnerability resulting from a marginalized sexual or gender identity can add excess stress to LGBTQ+ students that their heterosexual, cisgender peers do not experience. This increased stress will be discussed in the next section.

Challenges of LGBTQ+ Students

Multiple factors contribute to increased mental and emotional distress for LGBTQ+ students despite greater visibility and acceptance in society. This section explores some of these challenges, such as experiences of discrimination and victimization, and hostile campus climates. First, an overview of Meyer's (1995, 2003/2013) minority stress theory is presented.

Minority Stress. Meyer (1995) stated, "when [an] individual is a minority person in a stigmatizing and discriminating society, the conflict between [them] and the dominant culture can be onerous, and the resultant minority stress significant" (p. 39). There are three sources of minority stress relevant to the queer and trans* community: (a) stressful events and conditions; (b) expectations of victimization due to stressful events and conditions resulting in hypervigilance; and (c) the internalization of negative societal attitudes toward queer and trans* people (Meyer, 1995; 2003/2013). Experiences of heterosexism, cisgenderism, homophobia, and transphobia put LGBTQ+ students at an increased risk for adverse outcomes (Woodford et al., 2018). Furthermore, Kniess et al. (2016) suggested the pervasiveness of internal and external sources of homophobia constitutes a form of oppression for all members of society. Although not explicitly stated in the literature, transphobia can be interpreted to function the same way. As a result, stigma and prejudice based on a person's sexual orientation or gender identity can bring about stressors LGBTQ+ people will experience every day simply because of their sexual orientation or gender identity (Meyer, 2015). Consequently, LGBTQ+ people are conditioned to expect discrimination and victimization from members of the dominant culture due to their sexual orientation or gender identity (Meyer, 1995; 2003/2013).

Identity Disclosure. The expectation of violence or victimization may lead many LGBTQ+ students to remain closeted or not disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity,

to pass as heterosexual or cisgender (Kniess et al., 2016). Similarly, Mathies et al. (2019) proposed LGBTQ+ college students might conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity out of fear of harm or internalized feelings of homo- or transphobia. As a result, choosing when to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to peers or in the classroom forces LGBTQ+ students to spend extra time and energy they could use toward their studies or settling into college life (Alessi et al., 2017). The suppression of LGBTQ+ identity perpetuates systems of oppression for all LGBTQ+ people; however, integrating and identifying with aspects of their marginalized sexual orientation or gender identity has a positive impact on the physical and mental health outcomes of LGBTQ+ individuals (Fine, 2011; Kosciw et al., 2015; Meyer, 2015; Schmitz & Tyler, 2019).

Even as colleges and universities acknowledge queer and transgender students as members of their campus communities, few institutions gather and maintain data on LGBTQ+ students, rendering them invisible within the overall framework of the college or university (Legg et al., 2020). Legg et al. (2020) suggested the evolving language surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity makes it difficult for colleges and universities to maintain accurate and up-to-date data. Thus, the responsibility falls on the student to disclose their stigmatized sexual orientation or gender identity. This can negatively impact queer and trans* students as they attempt to balance the demands of emerging adulthood (such as increased freedom and responsibility resulting from living on their own) with engaging with new peers in an environment with the potential to be hostile toward their sexual orientation or gender identity (Alessi et al., 2017); therefore, LGBTQ+ college students need to have a space to explore their identity as they seek to reconcile their queer or trans* identity in the context of college.

Discrimination and Victimization. As a result of minority stress, LGBTQ+ youth and young adults experience increased levels of adversity within social and educational contexts. Wilson and Liss (2020) observed anticipation of discrimination and victimization causes LGBTQ+ students to feel unsafe within their environments, such as on a college campus. The expectation of discrimination and victimization can manifest as mental health disparities for LGBTQ+ college students (Wilson & Liss, 2020). Kahn et al. (2018) noted LGBTQ+ youth face an assortment of stressors such as targeted harassment and bullying based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, rejection from their peers and family members, and feeling like they do not belong.

Kosciw et al. (2018) found more than half of students identifying as members of the LGBTQ+ community felt unsafe at their school because of their sexual orientation. Almost 45% of students felt unsafe because of how they expressed their gender identity (Kosciw et al., 2018). Furthermore, only 13% of LGBTQ+ youth and young adults reported hearing positive messages about the LGBTQ+ community in their schools (Kahn et al., 2018). Even as acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community has increased, victimization and discrimination still occur in the form of microaggressions (Nadal, 2011; Seelman et al., 2017). Sue et al. (2007) described microaggressions as brief, everyday exchanges meant to convey negative messages to members of minoritized groups based on their membership within that group. For example, using the word "gay" to describe something as wrong is a microaggression as it conveys something undesirable about being gay. As a result, LGBTQ+ individuals may internalize these messages. Singh (2018) noted internalized experiences of anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination can trick LGBTQ+ students into believing they are less worthy than straight, cisgender people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In turn, these experiences have a significant impact on the health and well-

being of LGBTQ+ students by producing excess stress based on their marginalized and minoritized sexual and gender identities.

For example, in a study focusing on the stress experienced by young transgender women and men who engage in sexual acts with other men due to their minoritized status, Sarno et al. (2020) found individuals who experienced frequent victimization based on their sexual orientation also experienced more repetitive focus on the distress caused by those experiences, which could have a long-lasting impact on the health and well-being of people with minoritized sexual orientations or gender identities. Similarly, Nadal et al. (2011) suggested "that constantly experiencing discrimination in overt and covert forms may lead to a form of trauma" (p. 33). By viewing victimization as a traumatic event, student affairs professionals can begin to understand how victimization can put trans* and queer students at increased risk for experiencing adverse mental health effects, such as depression and suicide ideation (Woodford et al., 2018).

Campus Climate. When subtle forms of victimization and discrimination occur on campus or in the classroom, they indicate a hostile campus climate for LGBTQ+ students, undermining their well-being and severely impacting their academic and social development (Mathies et al., 2019). Rankin (2005) defined *campus climate* as the attitudes and beliefs members of the campus community have toward the inclusion of, and respect for, the needs, abilities, and potential of individuals or groups on campus. For LGBTQ+ students, a hostile campus climate is associated with lower levels of self-esteem, higher perceived levels of stress, increased anxiety and depression symptoms, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Nadal et al., 2011; Seelman et al., 2017). On college campuses, barriers to inclusion most often occur in social groups, which can become pockets of heterosexism and homophobia within an otherwise accepting and inclusive campus community (Kniess et al., 2016). As a result of feeling unsafe or

uncomfortable in the education environment, LGBTQ+ students are more likely to avoid specific spaces of activities where they feel unwelcome; therefore, their ability to fully engage and participate in the academic and social environments within their school is inhibited (Kosciw et al., 2018). Similarly, systemic and institutional inequalities affected trans* students' efforts to persist and cultivate resilience (Nicolazzo et al., 2017). Furthermore, a lack of visibility for students with marginalized sexual orientations or gender identities inhibits their sense of belonging within the campus community (Vaccaro & Newman, 2016).

A hostile campus climate can also be communicated by a lack of institutional policies and support services inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity. Nondiscrimination policies excluding sexual orientation and gender identity signal a lack of commitment to the inclusion of LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff within the campus community (Pitcher et al., 2018). In other words, exclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity from nondiscrimination policies can communicate that LGBTQ+ stakeholders within the campus community are not as crucial as their heterosexual, cisgender peers and colleagues. This can further compound the adverse outcomes for LGBTQ+ individuals on campus. Furthermore, Pitcher et al. (2018) noted while nondiscrimination policies inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity cannot prevent discrimination, a lack of policies and practices protecting LGBTQ+ individuals demonstrates they are not valued members of the campus community. In other words, a lack of inclusive policies and a hostile campus climate communicate to LGBTQ+ students they do not belong, which can have a significant impact on their mental and emotional health. Thus, it becomes imperative for student affairs professionals to assist LGBTQ+ students with building their emotional muscles to withstand the effects of discrimination and victimization on campus.

Overcoming Challenges

Despite, or in spite of, the adversities they experience, the majority of LGBTQ+ college students continue to thrive by utilizing a variety of strengths and resources, such as self-compassion and gratitude, that allow them to persist and sustain resilience amidst adversity (Bry et al., 2018). Increasing emotional capacity and resilience is like building a muscle: it takes time and intentionality, as well as focusing on core components, such as connection, wellness, healthy thinking, and meaning (American Psychological Association, 2012). These components act as a buffer against adversity and provide LGBTQ+ students with resources to utilize if and when they feel overwhelmed by adversity. It is essential to understand that focusing on how an individual can be resilient is not the same as assuming an individual should be resilient; therefore, the focus on resilience should move away from a focus on individual responses to stress to how communities respond resiliently (Meyer, 2015). This section seeks to explore the mediating effects of resilience in LGBTQ+ students.

Being Out. Singh (2018) advocated for LGBTQ+ people to define their sexual orientation or gender identity with words that fit their own identity as the process of claiming their identity contributes to resilience. As noted in the previous chapter, resilience refers to an individuals' ability to adapt to adverse circumstances. Nicolazzo (2017) suggested, "that resilience might not necessarily be something that one has or does not have (e.g., an ability) but a practice," and understanding resilience as a practice "allows [for] a more complex and nuanced understanding of [resilience], as one may be able to practice resilience with varying degrees of success" (p. 88). Nicolazzo's description of resilience highlights the importance of remembering that being resilient does not preclude someone from experiencing hardship in their life, and

resilience is not simply a personality trait that some people possess while others do not (see also American Psychological Association, 2012).

As such, claiming a marginalized or minoritized gender or sexual identity as a part of their identity is essential to resilience for LGBTQ+ students because it requires individuals to affiliate themselves with their sexual orientation or gender identity group, which allows them to draw on resilience and social support from the broader LGBTQ+ community (Meyer, 2015). Schmitz and Tyler (2019) found, "many LGBTQ young adults […] believed that their identity provided them with experiences that helped them develop their own social awareness and sense of empathy toward others" (p. 718). As a result, LGBTQ+ young adults viewed their sexual or gender identity as a modifier that assisted them in navigating different types of relationships and develop a sense of self in relation to other people and social contexts (Schmitz & Tyler, 2019). Additionally, because sexual orientation or gender identity disclosure involves substantial risk to safety and well-being, the decision to disclose this information may be reflective of personal resilience (Kosciw et al., 2015).

Furthermore, when LGBTQ+ students are allowed to reflect on the positive characteristics of their identity, they experience thriving (Hill et al., 2020). This positive reflection assists LGBTQ+ young adults with developing the emotional awareness to refute self-criticism by invoking feelings of self-compassion to prevent the internalization of stigma (Vigna et al., 2018). Additionally, being open about their sexual orientation or gender identity allows LGBTQ+ individuals to feel more honest in their relationships with others because they no longer felt they needed to hide who they were, conceal their actions, or disown their relationships (Levitt et al., 2016). Coincidentally, Feinstein and Marx (2016) posited claiming a minoritized sexual orientation or gender identity contributed to an individual's capacity for insight, self-

awareness, and empathy, which allowed them to be more authentic in their everyday lives. As a result, LGBTQ+ students may emphasize LGBTQ+-specific connections in their personal and educational lives (Hill et al., 2020).

   Living in Community. Vaccaro and Newman (2017) noted that the transition from high school to college dramatically alters a young person's sense of belonging as they leave behind family and friends they have relied on for support for most of their lives. Bissonette and Szymanski (2019) suggested peer communities in college can moderate the link between minority stressors and depression by acting as buffers to heterosexism on campus. For example, queer and trans* people create social support systems based on their identities comprised of individuals who are similar to themselves and "chosen families" made up of people they consider to be family (Feinstein & Marx, 2016). Incidentally, queer and trans* students who have integrated their sexual orientation or gender identity into their overall identity can serve as role models to younger LGBTQ+ students (Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019).

   Snapp et al. (2015) found as youth progress from adolescence into emerging adulthood, they draw on support from their friends, peers, and community. For example, Bry et al. (2018) found that acknowledging they had a support network they could rely on if they were struggling was seen as a positive way for LGBTQ+ students to cope with discrimination and rejection. Additionally, seeking out support was a way to guard against the effects of heterosexism rather than a way to challenge it (Bry et al., 2018). Consequently, Bissonette and Szymanski (2019) suggested "increasing positive peer-group relations could increase LGBQ students' resilience in the face of internalized heterosexism" (p. 315). Accordingly, Bry et al. (2018) recommended

LGBTQ+ college students facing discrimination should seek social support from networks where they can freely be themselves.

Similarly, Pitcher and Simmons (2020) contend LGBTQ+ students have survived and thrived in hostile campus environments "because of their efforts to create connection, community, and kinship networks" (p. 483). Hill et al. (2020) affirmed positive campus climates support the experience of positive emotions, which allow LGBTQ+ students to thrive. Similarly, Singh et al. (2013) found trans-affirmative communities on campus were essential for the resilience and self-advocacy of trans* students. For example, Nicolazzo et al. (2017) found spaces conducive to forming kinship groups amongst trans* students served not only as spaces of comfort and support but also as spaces to cultivate activism toward justice and equity for the trans* community. Although not explicitly stated, the same could hold for LGB students. Being in a community provides queer and trans* students the opportunity to draw upon the strength and resilience of the broader community to combat the effects of stigma and discrimination, and effect change within their overarching campus community.

Engaging in Activism. Ceary et al. (2019) suggested understanding one's values is crucial to understanding what makes college students resilient. The day-to-day enaction of one's core values is vital to fostering resilience and allows students to create pathways away from stress (Ceary et al., 2019). For example, Goldberg et al. (2020) hypothesized trans* students engaged in activism on campus in response to prejudice was a way to enhance their perceptions of personal agency and self-worth; however, the data indicated while this activism was seen as an adaptive response to discrimination, it also tended to lead to burnout due to internalized negative messaging and structural resistance to change. Nevertheless, trans* student activists persisted because of a desire to improve their campuses and the world more generally for future

students (Goldberg et al., 2020). This may be because LGBTQ+ students used their gender and sexual identities to advocate for their ideals and beliefs about identity and social acceptance, similar to earlier LGBTQ+ rights activists (Schmitz & Tyler, 2019). Engaging in advocacy and activism allows LGBTQ+ young people to develop more profound confidence in their identities, which in turn can assist in developing their sense of resilience. Thus, it becomes imperative to equip queer and trans* students with the skills to counteract the effects of burnout and fatigue, both academically and socially.

Cultivating Resilience

There is a great need to cultivate protective factors within LGBTQ+ college students to counteract the adverse health outcomes of sexual orientation- and gender-related stigma (Johns et al., 2019). Mindfulness can be used to cultivate protective factors against stigma and prejudice and feelings of self-compassion and resilience. Neff (2003) defined *self-compassion* as "being touched by and open to one's own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one's suffering and to heal oneself with kindness" (p. 87). In other words, self-compassion involves being mindful of inadequacies, failures, and pain and responding to them with a nonjudgmental understanding. In some ways, LGBTQ+ young adults already incorporate concepts of mindfulness into their daily lives. This section explores how mindfulness has been used as an intervention and prevention strategy is presented.

Cultivating Resilience Through Mindfulness

Rogers (2016) described mindfulness as "the act of paying attention to your present-moment experiences with an attitude of compassionate curiosity" (p. 12). In other words, mindfulness allows a person to be with their thoughts, emotions, and sensations in their body without becoming overly reactive or overwhelmed by what is happening within their

environment and within themselves. Practicing mindfulness promotes mental and emotional wellness within individuals but has recently emerged as a viable and effective intervention method for people coping with mental illness (Zoogman et al., 2017). Furthermore, Vidic and Cherup (2019) suggested incorporating mindfulness practices into the academic curriculum can assist students with overcoming the challenges they face in their daily lives so they can focus on taking care of their health and well-being.

Similarly, Johnson et al. (2015) suggested it is essential for educators and student affairs personnel to consider ways they can teach students how to use regulatory strategies in the learning environment, in addition to helping them cultivate resilience. For example, it may be beneficial to pair college students who are struggling to adjust to the college environment, either academically or socially, with peers who model aspects of resilience as a way to cultivate resilience in all students (Johnson et al., 2015). As a result, mindfulness-based programs have been implemented at schools such as Duke University (Koru Mindfulness Program; Rogers, 2016), the University of Pennsylvania (Penn Resilience Program; Oehme et al., 2019; see also Seligman et al., 2007), and Florida State University (The Student Resilience Project; Oehme, 2019).

Concerning LGBTQ+ students, Iacono (2018) suggested mental health vulnerabilities within LGBTQ+ youth and young adults can be eased by utilizing mindfulness practices. Similarly, Bry et al. (2018) noted mindfulness was an effective method for helping LGBTQ+ young adults cope with general life stressors when combined with other self-soothing techniques. Furthermore, mindfulness can help LGBTQ+ college students "cultivate new insights about themselves that can foster identity construction [and] exploration" (Iacono, 2018, p. 162). Likewise, Vosvick and Stem (2019) found that mindful acceptance and self-esteem influenced

the association between perceived stress levels and mental and emotional well-being. It is worth noting that mindfulness appeared to buffer the effects of stress on psychological well-being at low-to-moderate levels of stress more effectively than at higher levels of stress (Vosvick & Stem, 2019). This finding suggests that mindfulness practice may not be as effective at combating stress caused by multiple systems of oppression; however, Vigna et al. (2018) posited "how one copes with adversity may be more influential on mental health than the amount of adversity experienced" (p. 920). This idea is consistent with Sarno et al.'s (2020) findings regarding the impact rumination has on the mental and emotional well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Student affairs professionals can impact college students' resilience and mental well-being by creating programs that teach positive coping skills for managing adversity and stress. For example, interventions focused on instilling self-compassion within female undergraduate students sought to equip participants with the agency to treat themselves with compassion when they experienced suffering (Smeets et al., 2014). Similarly, Shatkin et al. (2016) found a positive correlation between stress levels and improved mental health in students who participated in a semester-long resilience course. They found a sense of resilience was fostered within students by identifying and encouraging their strengths and incorporating positive psychology principles such as gratitude.

Neff (2003) noted there are three components to self-compassion: (a) self-kindness, (b) common humanity, and (c) mindfulness. Practiced together, these three aspects of self-compassion can increase the ability to engage in resilience. This type of intervention provided people with the tools to cope with adversity positively and create a barrier between them and the stressors of college. For example, Singh (2018) suggested the inner dialogue that occurs

regarding various aspects of a person's identity (such as sexual orientation or gender identity) can significantly impact their ability to stand up for themselves and their identities. Responding to the inner critic with kindness can foster inner resilience and improve communication with others. Additionally, self-compassion can enhance the feelings of compassion and concern for others by highlighting the shared human experience (Neff, 2003). These feelings are further improved through mindful awareness and skills LGBTQ+ college students can carry with them long after leaving college.

Summary

The excess stress experienced by LGBTQ+ college students resulting from the stigma associated with their marginalized and minoritized sexual orientations or gender identities, often referred to as minority stress (Meyer, 1995; 2003/2013), harms the mental and emotional well-being of LGBTQ+ college students (Alessi et al., 2017; Mathies et al., 2019; Nadal et al., 2011; Sarno et al., 2020; Seelman et al., 2017; Wilson & Liss, 2020; Woodford et al., 2018). The instances of victimization and discrimination LGBTQ+ students experience in educational settings contributing to this excess stress are well documented (Kahn et al., 2018; Kosciw et al., 2018; Mathies et al., 2019), as are the consequences of the victimization and discrimination perpetuated against the LGBTQ+ community on college campuses (Alessi et al., 2017; Kniess et al., 2016; Kosciw et al., 2018; Mathies et al., 2019; Nadal et al., 2011; Nicolazzo et al., 2017; Seelman et al., 2017; Singh, 2018; Vaccaro & Newman, 2016; Wilson & Liss, 2020). Yet, LGBTQ+ college students continue to show up as their authentic selves by utilizing various strengths and resources that promote resilience (Asakura, 2019; Bry et al., 2018).

There are a variety of aspects of queer or trans* identities that amplify the resilience of LGBTQ+ college students, including being open about their sexual orientation or gender identity

(Feinstein & Marx, 2016; Hill et al., 2020; Meyer, 20105; Kosciw et al., 2015; Levitt et al., 2016; Schmitz & Tyler, 2019; Singh, 2018), being in community with other queer or trans* people (Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019; Bry et al., 2018; Feinstein & Marx, 2016; Nicolazzo et al., 2017; Pitcher & Simmons, 2020; Singh et al., 2013; Snapp et al., 2015), and engaging in activism to effect change within their communities (Ceary et al., 2019; Goldberg et al., 2020; Schmitz & Tyler, 2019). Student affairs professionals can leverage these resources to assist LGBTQ+ students with cultivating the resilience needed to counteract the adverse health outcomes associated with LGBTQ+-related stigma (Johns et al., 2019).

Utilizing the principles of positive psychology and employing Fredrickson's (1998; 2000; 2001) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, a strengths-based approach can strengthen LGBTQ+ students' capacity for resilience. Mindfulness, or awareness of present-moment thoughts and experiences, can be used as a preventive intervention for LGBTQ+ students coping with mental illness (Iacono, 2018; Singh, 2018; Zoogman et al., 2017), and to deal with the stressors of being a college student (Bry et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2015; Shatkin et al., 2016; Smeets et al.2014; Vidic & Cherup, 2019; Vosvick & Stem, 2019). Mindfulness-based interventions are growing in popularity as people see the benefit mindful awareness has on mental and emotional well-being. Through mindfulness- and strengths-based practices, student affairs professionals can help LGBTQ+ college students cultivate feelings of resilience that allow them to succeed academically and socially in achieving their goals and aspirations.

Conclusion

Research has shown that LGBTQ+ college students experience significant stressors during periods of intense mental, emotional, and identity development. Yet, as Asakura (2019) noted, LGBTQ youth continue to show up as their authentic selves and take on adversity to

persist in achieving their academic and social goals. This may be because LGBTQ+ youth disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity at earlier ages. As a result, mental health interventions that are affirming of the lives of queer and trans* students and that serve to address stressors that are specific to the LGBTQ+ community are required for the cultivation of resilience of LGBTQ+ youth and young adults (Iacono, 2018; see also Craig & Austin, 2016; Kelleher, 2009). Specifically, interventions that address internalized homo- and transphobia, experiences of victimization, and the hypervigilance that results are needed to cultivate a sense of resilience within LGBTQ+ college students. The cultivation of resilience can be facilitated through mindfulness practice. It is important to note that any mindfulness practice geared toward LGBTQ+ young adults incorporates aspects of trauma-informed principles. The following chapter outlines a mindfulness-based program for cultivating resilience in LGBTQ+ college students.

Chapter Three: Project Description

Caring for myself is not self-indulgence. It is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.

-Audre Lorde, *A Burst of Light: and Other Essays*

Introduction

Mental health disparities between LGBTQ+ college students and their straight, cisgender peers have been well documented. Furthermore, the root cause of these outcomes has been attributed to the stressors that LGBTQ+ young adults experience because of their marginalized sexual orientation or gender identity (Meyer, 1995; 2003/2013). While previous research has focused exclusively on the causes and the associated outcomes of these disparities, recent research about LGBTQ+ college students has begun to focus on how they remain resilient in the face of adversity. Thus, this project aims to present a mindfulness-based resiliency workshop that provides LGBTQ+ college students with the tools and resources to counteract the effects of heterosexism and cisgenderism that may be present within their environments.

This chapter begins with a description of the various components of the workshop, including the concepts of resilience and mindfulness practice will be presented to the participants. The rationale will also be provided for the inclusion of various activities and instructional methods used to convey the material, and copies of lesson materials will be provided in the appendices. Next, methods for evaluating the participants' level of resilience prior to and after participating in the workshop will be discussed. There will also be an exploration of suggested approaches to determine if the program is successful. Then, implementation plans will be discussed, including future possibilities for this program and additional research that should be undertaken to better understand and foster resilience in

LGBTQ+ college students. Finally, conclusions derived from the workshop will be explored about the published research on LGBTQ+ college student resilience.

Project Components

The focus of this project is a mindfulness-based resiliency program for LGBTQ+ college students. Over a semester, students will have the opportunity to participate in a 10-week mindfulness workshop facilitated as a partnership between university counseling services and the campus LGBTQ+ resource center. Individuals with a background in mindfulness instruction and trauma-informed mental health practices would be ideal as facilitators for this program. For example, clinical interns or graduate assistants could facilitate this program to acquire experience working with LGBTQ+ college students. Furthermore, a partnership between these two campus resources expands access for LGBTQ+ students to community and mental health resources.

As stated in chapter one, the program presented in this project is preventative by providing LGBTQ+ college students with the tools and techniques to cope with the stressors associated with being a college student while being an LGBTQ+ person. The program is composed of a series of exercises that will be completed as journal prompts and group discussions. This section provides details of what will be presented within this workshop on mindfulness and resiliency and the rationale of why specific instructional methods and exercises are being utilized. The first lesson focuses on introductions and establishing ground rules that will govern participating in the program.

Introductions and Ground Rules

Participants need to know who they are in community with, especially since there may be instances when participants share information about themselves or their experiences they may not feel comfortable sharing with people they do not know. As such, students will be asked to

share the name and pronouns they want to be addressed by within the group and the name of a queer or trans* individual they draw inspiration from. This person can be a celebrity, a historical figure, a literary character, an activist, or someone they look up to within their local LGBTQ+ community. By sharing their LGBTQ+ inspirations, students expose each other to individuals they may not have been familiar with previously or find deeper connections with peers who share similar interests and passions.

After personal introductions have taken place, participants will be asked to develop a community agreement that will govern the work undertaken within the group. Creating a community agreement for a collective mindfulness practice helps promote a safe environment for everyone to practice and lets participants know what to expect when engaged in practice with the community (Treleaven, 2018). For example, Treleaven (2018) proposes offering these standards to the group for discussion: (a) what is shared in the group, stays in the group, (b) participants should share from their own experience, and avoid offering unsolicited advice, and (c) participants should ask before sharing a personal story about trauma to avoid triggering other participants. Participants are also invited to share their expectations of the group regarding communication, respect, and dignity. The goal of working together to create a set of community norms is not about creating strict rules but rather about setting intentions and boundaries for the collective group as they work together to cultivate resilience within themselves and as a whole (Trealeaven, 2018).

After the first meeting, students will be asked to participate in a brief mindfulness exercise that asks them to focus on their breath. By asking students to focus on their breath, they are introduced to a foundational practice of mindfulness known as breath awareness meditation (Rogers, 2016). Kabat-Zinn (1994) wrote it helps to have an anchor to tether awareness when the

mind starts to wander. As such, the breath is an ideal place to focus attention because it is always present and constantly changing (Rogers, 2016). A sample practice that can be used in group settings is available in the appendices. While breath awareness is not the only type of meditation, it is the most commonly practiced form and offers an easy entry into the world of meditation and mindfulness (Rogers, 2016). This is a low-intensity practice that allows participants to ease into mindfulness and begin cultivating a sense of accomplishment within their practice.

Lesson One: What Does it Mean to be Resilient and Mindful, Anyway?

The first lesson following personal introductions and establishing community standards will focus on what it means to be resilient and mindful. First, participants will use the analogy of a weather forecast to describe how they feel at that moment. For example, a student may say they feel "partly sunny with a chance of rain" to express feelings of cautious optimism and vulnerability or sadness. This exercise aims to assist participants in developing a language to identify and talk about their emotions, which is a crucial component of mindfulness practice.

Once everyone has shared their forecasts with the group, an overview of the concepts of resilience and mindfulness will be presented. As mentioned in the previous chapters, there is a misconception of what it means to be resilient and mindful. For example, there is a misconception that people are born with or without resilience; however, this thought process has been challenged by research presented in the previous chapter. Furthermore, this initial presentation provides the opportunity to share some insights about mindfulness, such as (a) mindfulness practice involves learning new ways to observe life events and experiences; (b) it takes practice, and (c) people develop essential insights into how life works through mindfulness (Rogers, 2016). Additionally, both Kabat-Zinn (1994) and Rogers (2016) acknowledged that while mindfulness has its roots in Buddhist religious traditions, the practice of mindfulness is not

inherently religious or spiritual. Making this information known is a way of easing students who may have a history of religious trauma into mindfulness practice. As a result, this presentation seeks to round out these concepts and to lay the groundwork for what will be undertaken in future lessons. After the presentation, participants will have the opportunity to participate in an extended version of the mindfulness exercise they learned about in the previous meeting. The goal is to extend the practice to allow the participants to set incremental, achievable goals. Engaging in continued practice develops the critical skills of mindfulness that will help students eventually achieve mastery (Ambrose et al., 2010). The next lesson will focus on assisting participants with integrating their sexual orientation and gender identity with other dimensions of their identity.

Lesson Two: Containing Multitudes

Singh (2018) stated, "Being able to name your own sexual orientation with words that fit your own identity contributes to resilience, and the same applies to your gender identity and gender expression" (p. 13). In other words, LGBTQ+ individuals can claim their identity by experimenting with or challenging societal notions about gender identity/expression and sexual orientation. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ people are not defined solely by their sexual orientation or gender identity. They are a sum of all of their identities, such as racial or ethnic background, religion or spiritual practice, social class, ability, or national origin. As such, this lesson seeks to assist participants with exploring and defining their LGBTQ+ identity (with the understanding that this identification will morph and change over time) and other parts of their identity that they might feel are the most salient pieces of them as people.

Before engaging in the discussion about identities, participants will be asked to share one thing they think people should know about them if they truly understand them. After everyone

has had the chance to share, students will be shown a list of various sexual orientations and gender identities that they can use to define their sexual and gender identities. Additionally, they will be offered a chart with multiple other aspects of social identity. The goal is to provide the participants with language that feels appropriate to them to define their identities on their terms. For example, a student might identify as a straight, female-to-male transgender man, while another might identify as an asexual, cisgender woman. Each of these identities can be further enhanced or complicated by other aspects of their identity. For example, the straight, transgender man could also be a first-generation immigrant with a Latinx ethnic identity, or the asexual cisgender woman might practice Judaism. Participants will have the option to share the pieces of their identity and engage in how they impact their ability to move freely (or not) in the world. The point is that participants should begin to think about how different aspects of their identity intersect and how they can draw strength from the various pieces of their identity.

After this lesson, participants will be provided with a list of positive affirmations to affirm their identities as LGBTQ+ people. Some affirmations may include: "LGBTQ people deserve respect, love, and understanding from their families, friends, and communities"; "being free to be yourself as an LGBTQ person can make you very happy"; or "because LGBTQ people have to deal with challenges related to being LGBTQ, they often have strengths and resilience that help them in other areas of their lives" (Singh, 2018, p. 24). Participants will be encouraged to choose an affirmation or affirmations that resonate the most with them and repeat them daily.

The next lesson will deal with identifying internal and external negative messaging and how to counteract them.

Lesson Three: Identifying Negative Messages

As mentioned in the previous chapter, LGBTQ+ youth and young adults experience negative messages about LGBTQ+ people from multiple sources such as family, peers, and society. These negative messages are harmful, especially when LGBTQ+ youth and young adults internalize the messages they are receiving. This lesson aims to identify negative messages that are forced on LGBTQ+ people and attempt to reframe them. Additionally, there will be techniques shared on how to counteract negative self-talk. To start, participants will be asked to share one thing they could share with everyone they met. Once everyone has shared, the discussion will move to identifying negative messages about the LGBTQ+ community. As a group, the participants will be asked to share what they were taught to believe about the LGBTQ+ community as they were growing up. They will then be asked to share what they want to believe about being queer or trans. For example, participants might identify messages they received about same-sex couples parenting children but may someday affirm their desire to be a parent. Again, this becomes an opportunity for the participants to employ the positive affirmations about queer and trans* identity presented in the previous lesson. Internalizing negative messages about their identities can cause LGBTQ+ youth and young adults to become self-critical. The following exercises will help them counteract these messages and treat themselves with kindness and compassion.

First, Neff (2011) suggests a hugging practice. A hugging practice involves giving yourself a gentle hug when you feel bad about yourself to calm and soothe yourself. This practice helps individuals develop the habit of comforting themselves physically in times of

suffering and stress (Neff, 2011). Next, Neff (2011) suggests steps to changing critical self-talk. Those steps include (1) notice when you are critical of yourself, (2) try to soften that critical voice within yourself, and (3) reframe the observations your inner critic is making more positively and productively.

Similarly, Tomasulo (2020) suggests that individuals consult their kind selves. This practice involves setting up two chairs across from each other. One chair will be where your negative self sits, while your inner friend sits in the other chair. Sitting in the negative chair, participants will verbalize some of the negative thoughts and criticisms they have about themselves. Next, participants will move from the negative seat to sit as their inner friend and speak from this role. Individuals can move between the chairs as often as possible and are encouraged to note their experiences in their journals after completing the exercise. In the next lesson, participants will learn more about their worth as individuals.

Lesson Four: Know Your Worth

Singh (2018) noted that LGBTQ+ youth and young adults are rarely taught about the value and contributions of LGBTQ+ people within society during their elementary and secondary education. So, when they reach college, they may have a distorted view of their worth; therefore, the topic of this lesson focuses on helping LGBTQ+ students acknowledge their value and worth. To start, participants will be asked to share what they believe their gift to others is and where they feel that gift came from. By sharing what they consider their gift to be is, LGBTQ+ students begin to acknowledge the value they bring to the world. This lesson builds on the concept of the inner critic presented in the previous lesson; however, this lesson requires participants to know their inner critic. Singh (2018) recommends naming the inner critic (which she also refers to as a gremlin) and identifying the messages the inner critic delivers that

diminish the participants' self-worth. Additionally, students will be invited to consider how being overly critical of themselves causes them to feel.

By naming the inner critic, participants can acknowledge and develop a relationship with this part of themselves (Singh, 2018). Similarly, Neff (2011) noted, "The only way to truly have compassion for yourself is to realize that these neurotic ego cycles are not of your own choosing, they are natural and universal" (p. 19). In other words, everyone has an inner critic that delivers false messages to them, but developing a relationship with the inner critic that is based on compassion can help to quiet those messages. After all, when individuals develop compassion for their inner critic, they are developing compassion for themselves.

After participants have named their inner critic and identified some of the negative messages they receive from their inner critic, participants will be asked to identify thoughts that make them feel good about who they are or motivate them to create their sense of happiness. Singh (2018) noted identifying these thoughts is not about simply staying positive or ignoring negative feelings. The purpose of this exercise is to be intentional about identifying motivating thoughts and internalizing them so they can be drawn on to drown out the voice of the inner critic (Singh, 2018). Additionally, participants will be asked to identify aspects of their character they draw strength from and identify moments when these strengths have been put into action (Tomasulo, 2020). Tomasulo (2020) notes finding new ways to employ character strengths acts as a safeguard to depression, bolsters resilience, and stimulates feelings of hope. These motivating thoughts and character strengths can also manifest themselves as personal mantras the participants can use to draw power from when they are struggling with their inner critic. After jotting down a few personal mantras, participants will have the opportunity to share them with the group so others can hear them to see how they land with them. Now that the students have

learned more about cultivating their self-worth, they will learn how to stand up for themselves in the next lesson.

Lesson Five: Standing Up for Yourself

Singh (2018) stated, "standing up for yourself is about developing healthy communication skills and knowing how to take actions that can help you advocate for yourself in a variety of settings" (p. 93). Furthermore, there are three elements that are necessary when standing up for yourself (1) you believe there is value in your perspective, (2) you believe your perspective is right, and (3) you feel supported when standing up for yourself (Singh, 2018). In the previous lesson, students learned how to stand up to the inner critic. In this lesson, students will learn how to stand up for themselves and communicate their needs in various settings. This lesson aims to provide participants with the tools to externalize experiences of discrimination or victimization rather than internalizing them. To start, participants will be asked to share what they believe is the most informative way of communicating.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to share their thoughts on informative ways of communicating, participants will be asked to think of a time where they experienced heterosexism or cisgenderism. It is important to note that participants should be encouraged not to choose an overly traumatic event, which may trigger negative responses to this exercise (Treleaven, 2018). After selecting an event, participants will be asked to recall their thoughts and how they felt at that moment. Without the skills to reframe these experiences, participants may dwell on the negativity of the incident and internalize those feelings, which affects their ability to stand up for themselves. Rogers (2016) noted this bias toward negativity increases stress by shaping how life is experienced in the moment, influencing how the event is recalled, and how

future experiences are anticipated. Singh (2018) suggests reframing the thought patterns associated with discrimination and victimization to counteract this negativity bias.

To accomplish this task, individuals need to be able to identify negative thought patterns in the moment and shift toward a more empowered way of thinking. For example, if someone is walking down the street, holding hands with their partner, and a person passing by yells an anti-LGBTQ+ slur at them, they might wonder what is wrong with them and experience feelings of fear, sadness, and anger. To reframe this thought, they would shift from thinking something is wrong with them to think about how that was a terrible thing for that person to do and that they did not deserve that treatment. This allows individuals to shift the focus of the event from themselves to the other person. Thus, they avoid internalizing the negative feelings associated with the event (Singh, 2018). In turn, participants begin to develop the skills to stand up for themselves and express their perspective. In the next lesson, students will learn the value of affirming and enjoying their body.

Lesson Six: Affirming Your Body

The negative social attitudes that LGBTQ+ people internalize tend to play out in how they think and feel about their bodies (Singh, 2018). This lesson focuses on assisting LGBTQ+ students with developing a healthy relationship with their bodies and viewing their bodies in a kind, loving way. Participants will be prompted to think about how they feel about their bodies and the messages they have received from within the LGBTQ+ community. Next, participants will be asked to think of one negative thought they have had about their body and who or what have been the primary sources of those negative messages. Following this step, participants will be asked to identify a body-positive thought they would like to cultivate to replace the body-negative thought and think of someone they believe can support them in developing this more

body-positive thought process. Singh (2018) suggests allowing participants to continue with this exercise for as long as they like. At the end of this lesson, students will be invited to participate in a body scan meditation. A body scan is a mindfulness practice that focuses awareness on the present moment in a nonjudgmental way by bringing attention to sensations within the body (Rogers, 2016). In the next lesson, students will learn about the importance of building relationships and forging communities.

Lesson Seven: Building Relationships and Community

As mentioned in the previous chapter, peer relationships and communities can moderate the relationship between heterosexism and depression by acting as a buffer against victimization and discrimination. Similarly, Singh (2018) noted interpersonal relationships could challenge or support the everyday mental health and well-being of LGBTQ+ students. This lesson requires participants to think about the positive and negative relationships in their lives and where they feel they can draw support. Like lesson five, participants may want to avoid overly complicated relationships to avoid triggering traumatic experiences. To start, students will be asked to share their definitions of what family means to them with the group. The definition of family can vary within the LGBTQ+ community, from families of origin to chosen families (Singh, 2018). It is vital to affirm the definitions of family that are presented within the group.

Once the definitions of family have been shared, students will be asked to inventory their relationships. Relationship groups could include family, extended family, friendships, classmates, co-workers, and teammates. Some of these relationships may be supportive, and some of them may not. The point is that students can identify the relationships that are present within their lives. Once they have identified the communities that they are a part of, students will be asked to think about what types of communities they would like to be a part of as an

LGBTQ+ person, what resources they would need to build this community and steps they could take to start building this community on campus. Additionally, students could create a map of their relationships and decide which relationships they wish to strengthen and disengage from. This is also an opportunity for students to develop boundaries for the various types of relationships they engage in. Singh (2018) notes that creating boundaries within relationships is beneficial for LGBTQ+ people to express how they value themselves.

To end this lesson, students will have the opportunity to engage in a traditional meditation practice called *loving-kindness meditation*. Neff (2011) describes loving-kindness meditation as a practice "designed to develop goodwill toward ourselves and others" (p. 201). Feelings of goodwill and compassion are invoked through the repetition of phrases that are directed toward various individuals (Neff, 2011). For example, phrases that could be used could include: *May I be happy, may I be healthy, may I be safe, may I feel peaceful and at ease, may I love and accept myself exactly as I am.* In practice, students would offer loving-kindness to themselves before expanding their circle to include people who have impacted them somehow, strangers, and a person with whom they have a complicated relationship (Hanson & Hanson, 2018). As in previous lessons, students should be encouraged not to choose people they have extremely difficult relationships with when starting out with loving-kindness meditation. This can trigger feelings of trauma and distress. In the next lesson, students will learn about the importance of various support resources.

Lesson Eight: Knowing Where to Go

While the previous lesson focused on building relationships and community, this lesson focuses on sharing support resources on campus and in the greater community. These resources could be LGBTQ+-specific, or they could be resources that students could use to gain support in

other areas of their lives. This process can be beneficial for LGBTQ+ students in strengthening ways they seek support that they may not usually consider (Singh, 2018). Additionally, students need to identify support sources that will affirm their sexual orientation or gender identity. These support services could include mental health and career counseling, assistance with food and housing insecurity, or social support groups on a college campus. In the broader community, this could include affirming health care services or LGBTQ+ community centers. Knowing where to go can be especially helpful for first-year students or students not from the area surrounding campus.

Lesson Nine: Getting Inspired to Make Change

In describing how feeling hopeful and inspired affects queer and trans people, Singh (2018) stated,

Feeling hopeful as a queer or trans person helps quell the threats to your resilience, as you have a strong idea or expectation that not only will something good happen, but you also deserve good things to happen in your life. (p.165)

Furthermore, cultivating hope as an LGBTQ+ person helps create a shield against discrimination and serves as a reminder of their expectations and aspirations (Singh, 2018). In this way, hope becomes an action queer and trans people can undertake to grow their resilience. Thus, this lesson focuses on cultivating hope and using hope as a catalyst to create change, whether internally or externally. To start, participants will be asked to describe an experience they had that made them realize they had matured. Once everyone has the opportunity to share their

experiences, the group will participate in various exercises meant to cultivate hope and inspire them to make change.

First, participants will be prompted to think about the challenges LGBTQ+ people encounter as they attempt to cultivate hope. Next, they will be asked to think about how their multiple identities influence how they grow hope. Finally, students will be prompted to think about opportunities they have to cultivate hope as an LGBTQ+ person, how developing hope can help them see their value, and the support they need to build a sense of hope in their lives. Singh (2018) suggests that feelings of hope and inspiration influence each other. The more hope a person cultivates, the more they can be inspired, and the more inspiration they experience, the more hope they can experience.

The students will be asked to consider the sources of inspiration they shared during the first meeting. They will be prompted to think about what inspiration means to them and when they feel the most inspired. Next, they will be asked to think about the sources of inspiration in their lives that inspire them to express their individuality as a queer or trans person. To end this lesson, students will be asked to think about how they can use their inspiration and hope to create change within their community, whether on- or off-campus. In the final lesson of this program, students will be asked to reflect on their growth.

Lesson Ten: Growing and Thriving

Rogers (2016) states that young adulthood is often the first time that young people get to make their decisions on their own. It is characterized by a period of growth and change for many people. This lesson is meant to serve as a culminating experience that allows the students to reflect on what they have learned about themselves and how they can use this knowledge to thrive. To start, participants will be asked to share what they have learned about themselves

throughout the program. Singh (2018) notes that thriving means that an individual is flourishing and are feeling successful and prosperous. Furthermore, thriving does not mean that students will not experience adversity, but they will not be taken off course when encountering challenges (Singh, 2018). As a culminating practice, students will be encouraged to write a letter of advice to their younger selves. The letter's focus should be on supportive techniques that stimulate their growth as a person composed of intersecting identities. Students will have the option to write these letters anonymously to leave them for future program participants. The following section will present information on how this program will be evaluated.

Project Evaluation

The increased awareness of resilience as a protective factor against adverse mental health outcomes has led to the development of tools meant to measure levels of resilience. Two scales that would be beneficial for this program are the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; Connor & Davidson, 2003) and the Scale of Protective Factors (SPF-24; Ponce-Garcia et al., 2015). Each scale contains questions about 25 (CD-RISC) and 35 (SPF-24) items, respectively. Questions cover areas of resilience ranging from adaptability to perseverance to protective factors such as social relationships and confidence (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Ponce-Garcia et al., 2015). It would be valuable to have participants complete these scales at the beginning of the program to assess their initial levels of resilience, and again once they have completed the program to determine if their levels of resilience have increased as a result of their participation. As students participate in this program, they will be asked to keep a journal to document their thoughts and experiences as they progress through the various lessons. They can use this as an opportunity to reflect on the initial results of the resilience surveys and observe how their sense of resilience changes over the semester. The last journal prompt will ask students to think about

ways they have changed since they started participating. The goal of student reflection on this journey is to encourage them to see how they have changed due to their participation in this resilience program through self-reflection and provide them with the opportunity to review the practices that resonated with them the most.

To gauge the program's efficacy, the students will be asked to complete a retrospective evaluation that asks them to consider the knowledge and understanding they have gained as a result of their participation in the program. Students would be asked questions about their understanding of resilience and their LGBTQ+ identities from when they started the program and after the program. For example, students would be asked, *At the start of this program, I had an idea of what it meant to be resilient,* and *After this program, I have an idea of what it means to be resilient*. Regarding LGBTQ+ identity, students would be asked questions regarding accepting their LGBTQ+ identity at the beginning and conclusion of the program. These surveys would be sent to the participants at the program's conclusion and would be completed anonymously.

Another measure of the program's efficacy would be the retention of students. A short-term goal would be weekly participation, and a long-term goal would be for students to return as participants after initially completing the workshop. As mentioned in the previous chapter, providing students with the opportunity to share their skills with others allows them to develop a sense of mastery, which may influence their levels of resilience. Furthermore, continued

participation facilitates the growth of a peer network of resilience and provides first-time participants with resilience role models.

Plans for Implementation

This program would be most beneficial for first-year queer and trans students; therefore, recruitment efforts should focus on social groups that cater to this group of students. Potential participants could be identified through their participation in programs offered by the campus LGBTQ+ resource center, other social justice centers, and their utilization of campus mental health resources. Information about this workshop should be made available through the campus LGBTQ+ resource center and campus mental health resources websites. With this in mind, this program should be done in collaboration with university counseling services, particularly with mental health professionals who have experience working with trauma (Treleaven, 2018). Treleaven (2018) suggests it is imperative to screen for trauma with a pre-questionnaire to ensure that everyone participating in the mindfulness practice feels safe and secure. This not only begins to build the relationship between teacher and practitioner but also allows the opportunity to suggest further resources that may be beneficial to the student.
The goal would be that once students have completed the program, they would be able to serve as mentors of resilience to other students who chose to participate in a later cohort of this program.

While much of the research surrounding mindfulness practice in higher education has focused on the general student population, it would be beneficial for researchers to explore how mindfulness practice can benefit LGBTQ+ students. Similarly, little research has been done about LGBTQ+ people and mindfulness practice in general; therefore, this is an area that warrants further exploration. Studies focused on mindfulness in higher education have been

dominated by a deficit-based approach; therefore, it would be beneficial for researchers to explore the ways mindfulness can be used to cultivate positive emotional states, such as resilience, in all college students. While this project focuses on LGBTQ+ college students, this program could be adapted for use with other marginalized and minoritized student populations to create more equitable environments on campus.

Project Conclusions

Hanson and Hanson (2018) noted that mental resources such as determination, self-worth, and kindness provide individuals with the ability to cope with adversity and rise to challenges in pursuing opportunities. That is, these resources make individuals resilient. Furthermore, the struggles and triumphs of the LGBTQ+ community over the last 50 years have demonstrated that resilience is a defining characteristic of the queer and trans* community. LGBTQ+ students practice resilience in various ways, and this practice should be encouraged by student affairs professionals to assist LGBTQ+ students with their growth as they mature into young adults. While research has shown how LGBTQ+ college students practice resilience, more research needs to be done to find ways to assist LGBTQ+ students with cultivating resilience. Singh's (2018) work provides student affairs and mental health professionals with a roadmap in developing resilience within queer and trans students. The implementation of this program offers student affairs professionals the opportunity to influence the academic and social journeys of LGBTQ+ college students. Through their participation in this workshop, LGBTQ+ college students can harness the transformative power of resilience to impact their mental and emotional well-being significantly so they may achieve their dreams.

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Appendix

Sample Meditation

Settle into a comfortable posture, either seated or lying down. Feel a sense of ease within your body. When you're ready, gently close your eyes or lower your gaze. Let's take a few deep breaths together: in through the nose and out through the mouth. Invite the shoulders, the jaw, and the belly to soften. Release any tension you may be carrying from your day, and let your body relax into a comfortable posture. Take a few more deep breaths before allowing your breath to return to its natural rhythm. Notice where you can feel the sensation of breathing most clearly. There's no right place where you should be feeling your breath. Just notice what feels right for you. You might notice a coolness in your nostrils as you inhale or warmth as you exhale. You might notice the rise and fall of your belly or chest. Whatever feels right for you, focus on that space. Let your attention settle on that space, and observe your breath with an attitude of relaxed, nonjudgmental curiosity. Count ten breaths. Each inhale and exhale counts as one breath. Breathe in, breathe out, one. Breathe in, breathe out, two. Keep going for ten breaths.

As you breathe in and out, don't try to change or control your breathing. Just allow it to be. Your mind might begin to wander, and that's okay. When that happens, don't be too harsh on yourself. Without judging yourself, just bring your attention back to your breath, and begin counting again. Stop when you've completed ten breaths. Place one hand over your heart and one hand on your belly to feel a sense of gratitude for all your body does, without you even knowing. Slowly open your eyes, or raise your gaze, and bring a smile to your face. Thank your body for all it does for you. This will conclude this meditation.

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The signature of the individual below indicates that the individual has read and approved the project of Luke Madden in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of M.Ed. in Higher Education, College Student Affairs Leadership.

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Karyn E. Rabourn, Project Advisor   April 28, 2021

Accepted and approved on behalf of the   Accepted and approved on behalf of the
M.Ed. in Higher Education Program   Ed. Leadership and Counseling Dept.

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