Author: Lane, Marcus

Title: Conflicting Identites: Life of LGBT Students at UIUC

About the Author: I am a freshman enrolled in Rhet. 105. I plan on double majoring in Psychology & Communication.

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Abstract: My research questions dealt with the issues of identity faced by LGBT students here on the UIUC campus. Specifically, I wanted to better understand how these students identified within themselves and both in the larger campus. Also, I wanted to know how the campus recognized and supported the LGBT community. Is UIUC a tolerant campus? In order to answer these questions, I used a series of observations at the LGBT office located at Illini Union, I conducted interviews with both LGBT and straight students, and I conducted research from different texts relevant to the issues I was trying to learn about. My conclusions were extremely varied. All of the people that I interviewed had a different perspective of the campus. I assumed this was based on the fact that all students will have a different experience and background which could possibly shape their views.

Initial Exercises: I had decided that this would be a good group meeting to attend for one of my observations because of the various types of people there. I assumed it would be different age groups and races there. I arrived at the Illini Union (the place where many student organizations meetings take place) around 6:45 and went up to the LGBT office. This office is located on the third floor of the building. I purposely arrived early in order to get an idea of what the office what like. Outside of the office was a table filled with many brochures, flyers, and other information detailing events and support for the LGBT community here on campus. I found this table to be very helpful and I helped myself to some for further research. The meeting was scheduled to begin at 7, and I as I entered the office I saw three people inside. I noted that the room seemed to be very gay friendly; there was a huge rainbow flag on the wall, a couch, television, a computer, a fridge, and a table. There was a wide array of media as well. There was a bookshelf filled with books and magazines. There was a variety of VHS and DVD’s as well. I was introduced to the leaders of the group, Conor and Alissa. Conor is a graduate student and Alissa is an undergrad student here at
University of Illinois. They both identify as gay and lesbian, respectively. There was also one other student there, a senior named Brooke. They were all very welcoming and friendly. Eventually, 3 or 4 more people entered the room and the meeting began around 7:10. We all went around and said our name and major. After this, the group had an awkward silence. Alissa asked the group if anybody had anything they wanted to share with the group. Brooke volunteered and explained her situation with regards to her major. She is going to be an elementary teacher and talked about her fears of not getting a job when it was found out she was a lesbian. A girl than went on to comment that it is “fucked up”, she seemed very frustrated at the thought. At this point, I thought of how this could be something I could address in my research, the frustration or inequality that comes with being gay. After this conversation, the group than began talking about different topics such as music and personal things. I thought this was interesting that the group did not just focus on “gay issues” but everything else as well. This made me think that perhaps this group was more than just for “coming out”, it was there to provide a place where one can be comfortable in their own skin and do not have to worry about being gay or anything like that. The meeting was over at 7:50 and people started to leave. Overall, I thought this meeting was short but it seemed that everyone enjoyed it. I talked to Conor & Alissa after the meeting and just discussed briefly what I was trying to do. They were very helpful and told me to just let them know if I need any help or anything. I thanked them and left the office.

For my second field-work, I decided to interview the director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, Leslie Morrow. I figured that this would be a very useful, informative interview that would help me a lot in both my research and in the actual writing of my paper. I found her email address from the LGBT office and E-mailed her on a
Monday. I got a quickly response on the following day setting up the interview for a Thursday. I was very happy that she was so swift with her letter: I assumed that it would be more timely. So, we decided to meet at the LGBT office on Thursday at 2 o’clock. Throughout the next couple of days, I was trying to come up with some questions to ask her that would be both informative and intelligent to ask her. I finally came up with a list of questions to ask her. I wanted to get her opinions about the passing of the referendum, her thoughts about the LGBT community and campus community, and to see how she felt things could be improved. I was feeling kind of both excited and nervous about meeting her. So, when the day finally approached, I was ready to get it started. I arrived at the office around 1:50 and had a sit. There were 3 people in the office. Two of them were watching something on television, and one was eating her lunch. Leslie came out around 5 minutes later, and asked me back to her office. I started off telling her about my project and what I was trying to accomplish, then I asked her to sign the IRB consent forms. Then, I started with some basic questions about her just to break
the ice. At that time, she received a phone call. It seemed like it was personal, so I excused myself and went back into the main room. During this time, I decided to look around the office and observe some of the posters and other decorations. Around 5 minutes later, she came back out and apologized. After this, I progressed with my questions. Throughout the whole process, she seemed very positive and optimistic regarding the issues and had great hope for the future. The whole interview lasted around 20 minutes and I think that it is going to be very useful as I am doing my research. She also extended her assistance if I ever need anything else throughout my whole research. I felt that this interview went well, and I have so much information that I think will be very beneficial to me. Some of the main points that I took from this interview was the fact the future is looking very bright for the LGBT students. She plans on working hard to make the campus more inclusive regarding ALL students. She wants to provide many resources for all students to allow them to have something they can relate to or feel comfortable at.

For my third fieldwork, I decided to do another observation. This
occurred on April 1, 2009 during noon to 1 PM. This observation took place in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered office located in the Illini Union. This was my field site, so I decided it would be good to just sit there on a regular day without a specific activity planned. It was just to get a feel for the office on a day-to-day basis. I arrived around noon, in between classes with my book bag and laptop on hand. When I walked in, I saw Leslie (director) sitting down with her assistant eating their lunches. There were also two girls sitting at the table. One was doing homework while the other was also eating lunch. Being here at lunch time, I got the impression that this is a place where anyone can just come to relax. On the television, was an America’s next top model style show. As I entered, everyone politely acknowledged me. Leslie recognized and asked me how the research was coming. She reminisced on her own undergrad career. She then told me to ask if I needed any additional help. I sat down on the couch and pulled out my laptop and proceeded to look over some notes for my next class. This was the atmosphere for the next half hour or so. Around 12:30, Leslie excused herself to her office and the assistant left for his class. During this time, I looked around the office in more detail. I looked at the books and grabbed a few for my own research! As I mentioned, this office offers a lot of books for LGBT students. It was a wide variety. Then, it was time for me to leave for class. So, I said good-bye to the two girls who were sitting down at the table and
was on my way. During this low-key observation, some of things that I noted were how laid-back and calm everyone was in the office. It seemed that viewed this office as a place just to relax and do the small things. Also, it is a very diverse office. The director is an African-American woman, while the three students were of all different ethnicities. Overall, I felt this observation gives me a better and view of the LGBT office on an “ordinary” day.

**Question:** How does the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community on campus influence and educate the student population and what are the goals and expectations. At the time of this writing, I am not sure what angle or way I want to discuss this issue. But, after searching through IDEALS, I saw that there was not much research based on the community. I feel that researching will be unique and is something that is an important part of the campus.

In terms of methods, I plan to interview the director of the LGBT office first to get her insights and opinion. Also, I think it would be beneficial to discuss the possible outcomes of the UIUC election and how it will benefit the office. In addition, I think it would be good to get insights from LGBT students to discuss and see the different viewpoints on the issue. Finally, I plan on using sources such as newspapers and journals to get an idea in a larger since and see how this issue is playing out across the country, and also read some books discussing homosexuality and college life. It could be interesting to compare and contrast with the UIUC campus.

In terms of a field site, I feel that the office at the Union would be a great place to observe and conduct some of my interviews. This is the place where all of the various meetings take place. Also, it would be good to observe how members of the community act in an environment where they are the majority.

More or less, I want to learn about how this culture identifies both personally and around the whole campus. I think this will lead to a very interesting view on a culture that sometimes get pushed aside here on campus.

**Plan:**

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=36330257&site=ehost-live>. This was a combination of a study and literature comparing African-American students views of gay and lesbian students to those views of white students. It discusses the struggles and issues that gay students face on a daily basis. It then goes into discussing its reasoning of why Black students tend to be more homophobic than Whites. It argues that due to the religious upbringing that black students have, they tend to be more accepting of gays. However, it takes a survey at a midwestern university and finds that this is not necessarily true. The results were inconclusive, meaning that it is not clear as which race is specifically more homophobic. Also, it says that those who are more educated, more liberal usually have a more positive view of homosexuals.

I think this article is going to be great for my research, it is very detailed and does a good job of giving examples. I think as I am writing, I can draw back on this study and try to relate it to
our campus. When I am talking about identity, I could possibly
talk about the cultural divide and how homosexuality is viewed
different in each one. I can also go into religion, gender,
socioeconomics, there is a lot I can take from this article. I feel
that this article actually challenges my own personal views and
can surprise a lot of people. I know for a fact that many people
assume if one is religious, they do not support gays, but this
article says that this is not always the case. it gives a very well-
rounded view of the situation.

Daily Illini, ed. "Illinois Civil Union Act should be accepted by law
<http://www.dailyillini.com/opinions/2009/03/11/illinois-civil-
union-act-should-be-accepted-by-law-and-society>

This article taken from the student newspaper is an editorial in
which the staff gives their opinions regarding civil unions here
in the state of Illinois. It discusses how a new act has recently
passed the house, and will be sent to the general assembly. It
then goes on to discuss other issues involving inequality such
as women rights and civil rights. It is obvious this article is pro-
rights and hopes for it to be passed in this state. I think this
source will be very useful to me when I discuss identity and the
perspective of the LGBT students here on campus. I could
possibly reference this article when I interview a student and
get their opinion on it. I think that many LGBT students will like and support this article and what it is suggesting. Also, I could use this article to discuss or make mention of the gay issue around the state as a whole, not just the campus setting.

Evans, Nancy. *Beyond Tolerance: Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals on Campus*. Lanham: University P, 1991. I thought this book published in 1991 was a bit outdated for the most part. I think things have become more liberal since this came out. However, this book still had some relevant material and things. It read as a manual, it explained things in great detail. It gave professional definitions for words such as, "homosexual", "bisexual", and other words like that. Also, I think the time period really shows in this book. For instance, it spends a great amount of time discussing AIDS, giving advice and tips on dealing with LGBT people. Also, I noticed that this big had activities in it. This is what made me refer to it as a manual. For example, there are an abundance of group activities meant to promote tolerance and diversity, and it also offers diversity questions and surveys for the reader to take. In terms of my project, I think I could be able to use some of the questions from the book for my personal interviews and to keep them in the back of my mind as I am interviewing people. Also, I think that by reading this book, it will give me information that I
might not have thought of and stuff that I can in my paper.

Harris, Mary B. School experiences of gay and lesbian youth the invisible minority. New York: Harrington Park P, 1997. This book was older, around 12 years, but a lot of the information was very relevant. For example, some of the experiences of gay youth in high school is still around in today's society. Also, this book also takes personal stories from various youth and connects it to the subject of each individual chapter. As well, it uses local and national cases concering LGBT issues and different surveys and studies. In terms of my project, I feel that this book touches bases with the kind of research that I am trying to do. It is giving the LGBT role in the larger community and displaying the feelings and emotions that comes along with it. I think that it gives me some ideas of where I would like my paper to go and also some good, credible information to cite. I agree with this source, because I feel it is being honest while not trying to be preachy or anything. It is just calling things as they are.

**Discuss:** The University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign is a large, diverse university with over 42,000 students. Students come to the university from all walks of life: there are various cultures, backgrounds, religions, and beliefs here in
Champaign-Urbana. However, there is a majority population here on campus. According to information taken from the Division of Management Information, out of 31,173 undergraduates’ total who attend the university, 18,976 of them are Caucasian. It is apparent that, while the school has a wide range of students, there is definitely a disproportionate ratio of ethnic diversity on this campus. Also, there is not just a lack of ethnic diversity on campus. There is a heterosexual majority on this campus. However, even though this is the case, it is important to recognize the minorities in regards to sexuality as well. This population includes the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) population.

In her book, “School Experiences of Gay and Lesbian Youth: The Invisible Minority”, Mary B. Harris (1997) argues that “the experiences of gay and lesbian students need to be framed within a larger societal context where both heterosexism and homophobia are understood as social constructs that perpetuate patriarchy” (Harris 52). But, do heterosexism and homophobia exist on this campus? Are they obvious, or more subtle? How do
students identify within their communities, both on a small scale as well as within the larger university community? Does the campus, which includes faculty and administration recognize and support the LGBT community? These are some of the questions that are being asked in this research. Throughout this paper, I will interview, observe, and research the LGBT community here on campus and specifically try to come up with some possible answers to these questions. I will also draw on previous research and facts taken from various media outlets.

It is important to define what is meant by the terms “heterosexism” and “homophobia.” Heterosexism is defined by Harris as, “the belief that everyone should be heterosexual” and homophobia is, “the fear of being gay and hatred of gays and lesbians.” (13) Another term that is pertinent to this research is heteronormativity. This is the assumption that what is “normal” is heterosexuality and stigmatizes those who do not fit the heterosexual role. This term was coined by Michael Warner in 1991. When considering the daily lives of LGBT students on the UIUC campus, are these terms relevant? Does the campus
embrace heterosexuality over other lifestyles? As part of the background for this study, it is important to understand the social, political, and educational atmosphere for LGBT students. According to the 2006 Campus Climate Project Summary of students here at University of Illinois, 55% of the surveyed students said that issues related to LGBT individuals, homophobia, and heterosexism were never addressed in their academic classes (Rankins and Associates, 2006 2). This prompts the question as to whether this topic is just not important or is not relevant here to students at Illinois. To answer these and the rest of my questions, my research involved the following methods: I did observations at the LGBT resource office located at the Illini Union, I interviewed students whom will all remain anonymous through the use of pseudonyms, these students were selected randomly. Basically, I just wanted to get a feel for the campus and to get the opinions of those who attend the school. The LGBT office is located at Illini Union, which is a building that hosts student affairs here on campus. Outside of the office on a table, I noticed a flyer entitled “Guide to Sources in LGBT Studies.” I found this to be very
interesting because I was not aware that there was so much 
literature available in this area. Also, all of these titles are 
available in our library. I came to realize that there is so 
much literature and research that it would be very easy to 
have a class dealing with LGBT issues. As of the time of this 
writing, there is not such a class. As I entered the office for 
the first time, I was surrounded by a room filled with social 
justice posters. There was a media center, which contained 
VHS and DVD collections. There was a small kitchen area 
which contained a fridge and dining table. There was a large 
couch containing some rainbow pillows and a couple of 
lounge chairs. On first glance, this space seems very 
welcoming and open. I also thought of the term proud. I 
noticed a bookshelf filled with books and magazines. It 
contained such a wide range of titles, ranging from self-help books and romantic novels to current issues. The office 
offers an extensive collection of resources and media. This 
could clearly be an office of great utility to LGBT students at 
the University of Illinois; however, the office is located on 
the third floor of the Illini Union, so if one does not actively 
seek this place out, one would likely never know that it
exists.

Another question that is central to this research is how LGBT students identify themselves here at Illinois. Are they free to be themselves or do they construct multiple identities based on the social climate here at Illinois? It is important to recognize what the dominant culture is here. As noted, the University of Illinois is a predominantly white, heterosexual campus. In her book *Beyond Tolerance*, Nancy Evans (1991) argues that college is a time in individual’s lives that many developmental issues occur, and says that, “LGBT issues complicates these developmental challenges and adds an additional set of complicated issues that must be resolved” (Evans 1). I was intrigued what was meant by the phrase “complicated issues.” I assumed that it would deal with the issues of coming out to fellow students and coming to terms with one’s own self. I found a very useful brochure from the LGBT office that detailed the process of coming out. It is put together by the Human Rights Campaign and it mentions that, “sexual orientation and gender identity are important pieces of you, but they do not have to define you.” I thought this passage was very
significant because not only does it say how sexual orientation and gender identity are important, but there is more to an individual than just that. With respect to Illinois, it seems that many students choose to identify by things such as major, Greek or non-Greek, race, gay or straight, but I think that, while all of these are components of a person, there is more to them. As a matter of fact, on March 18, 2009, I attended the coming out support group that is held each week. This is a group that provides a friendly, social atmosphere where anyone can go and just discuss any issues that they may be having. I arrived and immediately felt very welcome. The group went around and said their names. The group leaders were both students here. I thought it was a great resource for students who may not have anyone that they could talk to. I also noticed how they discussed a wide range of issues as the meeting progressed. They did not just focus on “gay” issues; they talked about popular culture, classes, and careers. As mentioned above, they all shared something in common, but they varied in just about everything else. The group had different tastes in music, social activities, and majors. They
were all individuals, seemingly not defined by any one characteristic or belief.

When it comes to being an LGBT individual on the campus as a whole, how can the atmosphere be described? It seems that many students feel comfortable and safe at the LGBT office at the union. However, what about the rest of the campus? Is the campus supportive? Does the campus encourage and celebrate issues related to the LGBT community? In the campus climate report, the students who were surveyed said that they felt the safest in the Illini Union, classroom buildings, Krannert Center for Performing Arts, and the campus libraries (Rankins 3). All of these are public places in which the majority of students will find themselves at some point during their time at Illinois. Also, the majority of these places do have some form of an authority figure in the vicinity to prevent or stop possible altercations. The majority of LGBT students reported that “derogatory” remarks by other students were the most typical form of harassment. When I read this statistic, it made me wonder if the university can really control what individual students may say or think. Does the fact that
students may make certain disrespectful comments mean that the university simply does not care? I decided to look on the university’s diversity website for more information. On this site, statements regarding diversity and inclusiveness from the Chancellor can be found. Richard Herman describes the campus as being “a more open and inclusive campus than ever before.” This is an arguable statement. Everyone will have a difference of opinion. The university may feel that they are open and inclusive, but it is important to take a closer look and see the actions that the university administration takes that would support this statement. At the end of the day, the administration of any large institution cannot control the students and their own personal beliefs. The university can however, attempt to educate students on tolerance and being respectful to those who are different from them. This could be viewed as similar to teaching about racism and gender, and treating them equally. For instance, all throughout one’s education, the system attempts to teach us about interacting with races that are different from us. We also learn that males and females are equal and should be treated the same. Leslie Morrows, the
LGBT director suggests that students here at Illinois should take a diversity course. This course would teach students valuable communication skills and interacting with those who are different. She adds that students need to be prepared to enter the work field and be able to talk to people. She says in the real world, there are going to be people who are different and it is vital to be able to interact with them. While everyone should be allowed to express their opinions and beliefs, it is important that every student feel safe and comfortable in their learning environment. The Rankins survey asks for “more representation and action from University Administration.” I would argue that the university believes that it is making an effort to be inclusive and open, but the LGBT community feels that it can do better. Also, I thought that it would be interesting and beneficial to get some input from students who identify as heterosexual. I interviewed two students, Calvin and Karen. I asked them their opinions of how they felt the atmosphere was like for LGBT students here on campus. Karen believed that it was a good environment and argued that there “were a lot of social groups and the campus is good for
“As suggested by her statement, her opinion seems to be on par with Herman’s perception of life on the campus. On the other hand, Calvin says he views the campus as “not accepting.” When asked to explain further what he meant, he said that from previous interactions with students in the residence hall, he just views students as being not accepting, but not the campus itself. So, I think these statements just prove how everyone is going to have different opinions regarding the campus. Next, I asked their personal opinions of LGBT students. Both of them said they were supportive and would be good friends with students who identified as LGBT.

It is possible that there could be some changes for the better in the LGBT community in the near future. On March 3 and March 4, 2009 students voted and passed ‘Referendum D.’ This referendum increased the student fee by one dollar. With this referendum passing, both LGBT & women’s programming will receive more funding. This passed 48% to 42% during the election. Many are optimistic about this victory. Before this victory, the office of LGBT resources did not receive funding such as the cultural
houses on campus. What is meant by ‘cultural houses’ are organizations that serve as both a social and educational resource for minority students here on campus. The director of the LGBT office, Leslie Morrows believes that this will do wonders. When I interviewed her, she seemed very optimistic about the future. She describes it as being way over due and says that she plans on implementing more programs to reach out to the community, in particular the transgender community. Some of her ideas include adding gender neutral bathrooms around the campus, more support groups, and groups to reach out to the straight community as well. Also, Morrows would like to work with the admissions department and the registrar to have more options available on the application for admission here at Illinois. For example, allowing students to have the option of choosing their gender expression. She also says that this will help “enrich” options for true diversity. I think that it will be very exciting and interesting to see what the future holds now that this referendum has passed. There should be more extensive programming and it will be intriguing to see when the next climate report is released and to see what the
results could possibly explain.

Identity, is a word that is defined as being, “the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else.” This definition taken from the Oxford English Dictionary both compliments and challenges the opinion of the students that I have interviewed on campus. In one of my interviews, I talked with a student who identified as bisexual. Trent (pseudonym) says that his sexual orientation is “just a part of who I am, it is not who I am.” He also adds that he was not aware of the LGBT resources available on campus. He says that he “would not be interested in going and would be really uncomfortable.” This statement made me wonder if his feelings are due to the campus. Or, it is very possible that it could be due to his background, such as family life and actions in the past. There are many reasons that could be attributed to his feelings. But, his decision underscores his individuality, which for him is part of his individuality. This interview made me wonder if his responses would have been different if he was ‘out.’ It is likely that there is a substantial correlation between being open and being comfortable with your
sexuality. For this reason, I decided to interview Vincent, a freshman who is openly gay. I met Vincent while doing an observation for my research. When asked about his opinion of the atmosphere regarding the LGBT community on campus, he says that, “it is a very tolerant campus, and I have never had any problems.” He is involved with the LGBT community, including going to events such as Pride, which is the weekly meeting. He also does discussion panels. These are when a group of usually three students answers and gives presentations regarding LGBT issues in various classes. He commends the LGBT office on its programs and activities aimed at the community. When asked about the LGBT population, he says that, “it is a big population, not on the outside, but there are a lot of people in the community.” Basically, he was saying that there are many people in the community who are not out. I found this statement significant and important. Why are there so many people who are not out?

As mentioned above, Trent said that he feels that his sexuality does not define him, so he does not feel that he needs to be completely open. While it is true that
one’s sexual identity does not define him or her, it is a part of a person and it shapes relationships and the ability to be one’s self. If he is not completely out, there is a part of himself that he is hiding away. As a matter of fact, I found a statement that read, “most of us find that it feels far better to be open and honest than to conceal such an integral part of ourselves.” This was found in the “Coming Out” brochure sponsored by the Human Rights Campaign. I found this statement to conflict with Trent’s statement and made me question how comfortable he is in his skin. This instance brings up the question of how many people on campus are on similar situations. Trent could possibly be just one of the many students who are in the same position. They are not ‘out’ on campus. But, are there specific reasons for this? Does the U of I campus foster a heteronormative atmosphere that makes it difficult to come out? In her book, Evans says, regarding campus life that, “both formal and informal activities are designed for a heterosexual world” (83). The effect of this is LGBT students feeling isolated and not feeling part of the campus community. While the U of I does offer resources aimed at LGBT students, maybe they
should be more publicized and spread throughout campus.

UIUC is a campus with over 1,000 registered student organizations (RSO), which are various cultural, social, and service groups. These consist of volunteer groups, Greek life, and racial/gender groups. There are also some LGBT groups. The ones that I have observed throughout the process of my research involved “Pride”, which is the main LGBT group that discusses issues around the country and on campus. It also hosts various educational and social gatherings here on campus. There is also the “Coming Out” support group which acts as a forum in which students can discuss any issues relating to their life and the problems and process of coming out. There are other LGBT groups that I was not able to observe, but most of these were specific to certain groups within the community. Some of these include Transgendered students, students of color, and things of that nature. After hearing Trent’s comment about not being aware of these resources and not wanting to get involved, I entered these meetings trying to get a feel for them. I attended the Pride meeting during which they were voting for the executive board for the following year. I was disappointed to see that there were only around 10-15 people in attendance. As a matter of fact, for some of the positions, there was not any competition. I couldn’t help but wonder if the LGBT community here just did not care. Here is a chance to get involved and make a difference, yet there was a lackluster turnout. As mentioned earlier, Vincent did say that there was a big community here. Is the reason that they do not get involved is based on a lack of publicity? Or, is it just because they all have their social network and are indifferent about a formal group? But, I then remembered that this is a student campus. Sometimes, there is not a huge turn-out for many academic/social clubs. On a positive note, the following week there was an event hosted at the Union. It brought two cast members from MTV’s The Real World, J.D. Ordonez & Katelyn Cusanelli. The popular show follows young adults living together through their day-to-day life. Ordonez is an openly gay man, while Cusanelli was the first transgendered person to be on the show. I felt that this would be an excellent observation to see, both for their experiences, and to see the turn-out from the community. I went with two of my friends and arrived around 15 minutes early. People started to show up, I saw some familiar faces from the group, and some people that I just knew from around the campus. According to the Daily Illini, “Roughly 150 students and community members came to listen to the pair share experiences of being transgender and gay” (Failla). The atmosphere of the room was very positive; the two cast members were very lively and joking with the audience. The presentation lasted around an hour, and afterwards there was a ceremony available in which everyone was able to interact and meet the two cast members. It was a very positive
evening, and it seemed everyone had a good time.

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender community here at University of Illinois is a very complex one filled with unique individuals. Throughout the process of my research, I have encountered numerous people who have shared with me their opinions and ideas regarding life for LGBT students on campus. I have been met with both positive and negative feedback that both supports and contrasts with my research taken from various resources including texts, newspaper articles, and scholarly journals. Here on campus, there are an abundance of groups targeted towards the community, both social and informative. However, throughout my research, interviews, and observations, I found that the community may not utilize them as much as they could. But, as I mentioned, just as the Illinois campus is full of various types of people, the same could be said for the LGBT community. While some students choose to open and out with their sexuality, others feel that it is not important or a defining feature of them. From interviews with both heterosexual and LGBT students, I have found that the opinion regarding the campus’s outreach to the community is mixed as well. Some think it is favorable while others feel that there is room for improvement. Overall, I found this to be the overwhelming census regarding the LGBT community. Everyone is going to have different opinions and experiences during their undergraduate career here at Illinois. But, it is important to ensure that everyone has the potential and ability to feel safe and part of the campus community at large. Through my research, I believe that Illinois is a campus that attempts to be inclusive, but there are still strives and improvements that could be made.
Reflect: Rhetoric 105 is a required course of all freshmen at the University of Illinois that do not test out of it by a mean of high ACT score or AP credit from high school. I always considered myself to be an adequate writer; I took Honors English all throughout my high school career. I actually do enjoy writing so I was not dreading this class. Obviously, my goals for this class were to get a good grade, but I also really wanted to build my explanation/analysis when I did formal papers. What I mean by this is essentially explain the “so what” of an argument. This is something that I had trouble with in high school. I think that throughout the course of the semester, I was able to improve this skill. Something that I am really proud of was my second reading response. I believe that the question asks if there was
“voluntary conformism” at Illinois. Looking back on this response, I notice that I utilize quotes from the text and use them to both support and prove my argument that I was trying to make. Also, I notice that I am not vague: I go into detail with what I am trying to talk about. I remember receiving this paper and being very proud because it was my first check plus response and I received a lot of good comments. I feel that this response helped me to get a good idea of the kind of detail and integration that is necessary to do well.

I consider writing as a process to mean and include everything from the beginning planning stage all the way until turning in the final paper. To me, I think of the individual conferences that we had with Kristin over the semester. This is a process because we come to her with our ideas and initial drafts; we then receive her feedback and suggestions and make changes to make the paper more effective. This is a very long process because it involves crafting and shifting ideas so not only answers the prompt, but argues a bigger purpose. I would define composition as being a text that informs or argues a view with substantial reasoning. I come to this definition based on this semester
and the kinds of papers that we have written. All of them asked us to pick a side and make an argument for it. They also asked us to be able to back up her arguments with logical reasoning be it using critical thinking or sources. On the 1st day of class, when it was announced that this class would ethnographically based, I was not sure what to think. I was not sure if it would make the class harder or more work, but I actually ended up liking it a lot. I would define this as research that involves one completely emerging themselves in their work. This was definitely the case for the research project. For the past month and a half, I have been so involved in the LGBT community here at Illinois. I was constantly searching for different events, trying to find different resources, and interviewing various people. I think that this is epitome of what is meant by Ethnographic research. But, I think the project helped me greatly with my writing skills and combing secondary research with ethnographic based research. Actually, I did enjoy writing this paper because I found the topic very interesting.

Something that I really appreciated in this course was the fact that we were able to choose topics that were
interesting and relevant to us. The first two inquiries that we wrote were tolerable because we had some freedom to choose. I especially enjoyed the second one which required us to do a compare and contrast of two different artifacts related to the university. I think this assignment really helped me a lot. Through the feedback I got from Kristin, I learned about how different images can have similar messages but could be interpreted in so many ways. My paper dealt with the inclusive statement found in the residence halls and the one that is found online. Basically, I discussed the language and style it was written in, and argued how it could be meant for different audiences. Also, we had different short responses to articles. I actually found these to be more challenging than the inquiries. This due to the fact that we had limited time to think about what we wanted to write, and did not have as much of a length to write down our thoughts. It forced us to be precise and concise in a limited space.

I feel very lucky to have taken this specific course. When signing up, I thought that I would just be taking a class that would teach me how to write essays while integrating different sources. However, I felt that this semester has helped me so much. We did so much more than just write papers, I actually learned some valuable stuff. I really appreciate the fact that we
learned about racism, diversity, and equality and applied them to the college setting. I found this to be such a useful thing to learn especially being a freshman. Also, it seems that this specific course connected to a lot of my other classes. For instance, my instructor for my media class last semester was actually an Anthropologist so she offered me valuable feedback on my papers and making sure I was using good ethnographic research. Also, I am going to be a Resident Advisor next year, so all of these different things that we have learned I feel I could apply to certain situations with different residents. I would describe my journey in this class as being optimistic and useful. The topics and issues that I have learned about I feel I could really apply to future classes and many situations. I really appreciated how Kristin always mentioned scholarly research and made the class seem intellectual. It was not just a general education requirement, but a class where she challenged us to think about issues and voice our opinions. I can honestly say that I got something valuable from this class, which is something that I can’t say for many classes. I enjoyed the writing that we had to do, the assigned readings were interesting, and I never felt overwhelmed. Something else that I noticed and liked about this class is how everything that we worked on throughout the semester was linked together. It all had a purpose and added up to form a big picture. For example, it seemed like all of our inquiries added up to the research project. Each one taught us a certain technique that we would eventually use on the research project. Also, in the beginning, I thought it was different for us to read a book. But, essentially, the things that we read about in “My Freshman Year”, we did with our own research. So, it was kind of cool to see how it all ended up. Overall, I was very pleased with my Rhet. Class and I enjoyed it a lot.

Recommendations: Based on my findings, I found that the reactions and the opinions of the UIUC campus are extremely mixed. Everyone has a different view which I feel is based on each individual’s background and their previous experiences before coming to campus. My recommendations for the university is to try to be more representative of ALL the students of this campus and attempt to come up with programs, resources, and
support for all of the students.