

The Complexities of Being LGBTQ+ in the Workplace. R. A. Beal¹. ¹Los Alamos National Laboratory
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Introduction: With the passing of marriage equality and SCOTUS inclusion of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the gay rights movement has come a very long way, but there is still a very long way to go. There is still confusion over what rights LGBTQ+ folks have, and why LGBTQ+ rights are an important topic of conversation in the workplace. These and many other LGBTQ+ issues and solutions will be discussed in this presentation.

The Lavender Scare

There was a time period in US history where it was not as safe to be an LGBTQ+ person. The Lavender scare was a time period in the 1950s of mass firing of suspected homosexuals from government employment. Homosexuals were thought to be national security risks and communist sympathizers, and they could be blackmailed for being LGBTQ+ [1]. There was zero evidence to back this assertion. Executive Order 10450 set security standards for federal employment which prevented homosexuals from working for the federal government. As a result, approximately 5,000 LGBTQ+ people were fired from federal employment (including private contractors and military personnel) [1]. Denial of employment or security clearances continued well into the 1970s. Even as recent as 10 years ago, while applying for a federal security clearance, applicants have been asked questions about their preferences and if other people knew.

Why are LGBTQ+ folks still being left out

According to Maslow, there are 5 levels of human need: Physiological, Safety, Love and belonging, Esteem, and Self-actualization. LGBTQ+ folks are still facing discrimination in employment, housing, healthcare, safety, and belonging. If a person's needs aren't being met, they are not living up to or performing to the best of their abilities.

"People who identify as LGBTQ are leaking out of the scientific pipeline in similar ways to women and those from minority ethnic groups." [2]. Studies suggest that LGBTQ people are less represented in STEM fields than expected, feel uncomfortable in their department, and many are not out to colleagues [3-10]. Diversity programs consistently leave out LGBTQ people, and research on LGBTQ people in STEM is very limited, and LGBTQ people in STEM report more negative workplace experiences [3-10].

Currently, there are still 12 states that don't have protections for LGBTQ+ workers [11]. While Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited

discrimination based on sex, it was not until 2020, that the LGBTQ+ community was included.

Despite these advances, across the country 12 states do not have protections against hate crimes, 26 states don't have protections for transgender healthcare, and 26 states don't offer housing anti-discrimination [11]. Internationally, there are still only 31 countries with marriage equality. There are still 69 countries where homosexuality is criminalized and 9 where homosexuality is punishable by death [11].

Solutions Management must support and provide tangible action for the LGBTQ+ community in order to attract and retain LGBTQ+ folks in the workforce. Representation matters. Members of the LGBTQ+ community in leadership positions fosters a sense of connection. By including LGBTQ people in diversity initiatives and ensuring that individuals from under-represented groups connect with other members of those groups creates and enhances a collective sense of belonging. In addition, a continued focus on developing and implementing clear anti-discrimination/harassment policies is essential for preventing discrimination in the workplace. And finally, at the individual level, writing to local and state representatives about LGBTQ initiatives and issues can bring positive change to the community.

Conclusions: LGBTQ+ folks will find it difficult to perform or achieve to the best of their abilities in the workplace when concerns over their basic human needs that are not being met.

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