Bay Area LGBTQ+ Millennials: The Newest Generation Leading the Gay Civil Rights Movement

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ABSTRACT

Bay Area LGBTQ+ Millennials: The Newest Generation Leading the Gay Civil Rights Movement

by Sara Hall-Kennedy

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that influenced their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. Another purpose of the study was to explore and describe the recommendations LGBTQ+ millennials have for the future of the national gay civil rights movement.

Methodology: A qualitative analysis of the data from a combination of both social movements and symbolic interactionism theoretical perspectives was conducted. Data for this study was generated through the synthesis and triangulation of the thematic coding of 12 interviews conducted by the researcher and artifacts collected from Bay Area LGBTQ+ events.

Findings: The findings indicated that LGBTQ+ millennials’ lived experiences are unique and their familial, social, cultural, and personal acceptance are determinants of their identity making processes. LGBTQ+ millennials are motivated to participate in the gay civil rights movement by the sacrifices of their LGBTQ+ elders and the desire to maintain equity through representation and visibility. Interviewees recommended that the national gay civil rights movement become more inclusive and move towards a “queer movement” that prioritizes equity for trans, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming people of color.
Conclusions: The researcher concluded that where an LGBTQ+ identified person is raised, their ability to form positive relationships, and their compassion for LGBTQ+ youth has an effect on their identity making processes. LGBTQ+ millennials value the role that their social, intellectual, and political capital play in influencing the equity in LGBTQ+ legislation. They are willing to take on leadership roles in policymaking, leading the gay civil rights movement into the 21st century by establishing a more inclusive agenda that is equitable for all members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Recommendations: The study should be replicated with other generations in the Bay Area of California. Further research should be conducted exploring mental and medical healthcare systems and transphobia. The findings from this study could be utilized to educate LGBTQ+ activists on LGBTQ+ millennials’ desires for the mission, vision, and agenda of the queer movement.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Sam, a transgender identified millennial, grew up in a traditionally Christian family as Steven. She was referred to with he/him pronouns until about a year ago when she began hormone therapy and taking estrogen in order to start transitioning from male to female. Sam shaves her face regularly in order to hide the ongoing and unwanted hair growth that continues to torment her daily. She dresses in androgynous, tightly fitted clothing, a leather jacket and skinny jeans with a studded belt, a wrist cuff for swagger. Sam ensures that her makeup is perfect before going out in public. She keeps shoulder length jet black hair with the hopes of growing it out someday when she completes her transition and is able to introduce herself to the world as Sam.

Sam presents with a fragile, feminine, slender frame, standing about 5’ 2” on her tippy toes and weighing about 110 pounds soaking wet. Her arms are covered in tattoos representing what she refers to as “the struggle.” There’s a faded portrait of an archangel perched perfectly on her shoulder on the outside of her arm, perhaps protecting her from the demons and evil spirits of the world. About 4 months ago, she was taken to a psychiatric crisis residential home due to a psychotic break—a continuous struggle with suicide attempts and ideations, PTSD from multiple sexual assaults, bullying, harassment, and being disowned by her family for simply wanting to embody her gender identity. Her arms and wrists display the scars of her history of wanting to eliminate pain that stems from a lifetime of feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness. She is timid and modest. Her insecurities eat her alive, possibly due to the anorexia and bulimia that she has experienced since she realized that the body she was brought into this world with did not match the body she wants to see when she looks in the mirror.
Sam moves slowly throughout her environment, trying not to be discovered, only wanting to be fully seen. This was natural for her, an everyday event. Almost like a game of logistically motivated maneuvers with the hope of finding some sort of peace in her life, or hope that would propel her into an alternate universe where she could be reborn—as Sam, as woman, as feminine, as female. She looks into your eyes as if to scream, “Help me find the answers and purpose to this life! Show me how to live, to feel alive, to feel wanted and worthy of breathing.” She speaks quietly as if to not disrupt the universe. Perhaps this is a defense mechanism, or a guard from the lack of humanity that the rest of the world has shown her.

When she arrived at the residential home, Sam had been homeless for over 5 years. Sam left home at 17 and lived on the streets of San Francisco where she sold her body, mind, and soul to survive. Eventually, she became addicted to opiates and heroine, popping prescription drugs, and regularly shooting up methamphetamines. She began cutting herself regularly to remind herself that she wasn’t dead yet. She masked the pain and hurt on the inside by self-mutilation and self-sabotaging any situation that may have helped to alleviate the immense torture occurring in her mind.

When Sam arrived at the residential home at the age of 24, she had experienced sexual assault multiple times and had tried to kill herself more times than one could count on all of their extremities. She was in the midst of recovering from a reoccurring eating disorder and had been diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder—understood generally as a mental disorder in which a person experiences a combination of schizophrenia symptoms, such as hallucinations or delusions, and mood disorder symptoms, such as depression or mania. Schizoaffective disorder is simply a catchall for people who are
exhibiting all of the madness of being bipolar and schizophrenia simultaneously or in patterns—displayed through a combination of behaviors that represent mania, depression, hallucinations, and delusional thinking.

Sam’s chronic homelessness was a product of being consistently denied housing in homeless shelters and treatment programs due to identifying as female. Because Sam presents as female, she requests to be housed in female quarters for safety and wellbeing. Unfortunately, many places she had been to for help denied her the opportunity for shelter because she was assigned male at birth—her ID and birth certificate both say that she is male; therefore, they refused to house her with other females. Sam later mentions that while she was incarcerated for a short period of time, she was raped due to being locked up in the male holding area after requesting to be put with the females or in a protective cell.

One month later, Sam was preparing to leave the residential house due to being accepted into a housing program for transitional aged youth where she could live for up to two years. They committed to housing her with the gender she presents as—female. The new program staff were openly apologetic about how she had been treated by other human services providers in the past. They promised her that they would do better, and did their best to reassure her safety.

The significant trauma of experiencing the struggles of institutionalized discrimination and social oppression that Sam has endured is not uncommon amongst transgender individuals. Sam’s experience was not unique to her. In fact, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons are disproportionately criminalized and discriminated against, and more likely to encounter adolescent homelessness than
non-LGBTQ+ people (Wood, 2017). In addition, in the U.S., LGBTQ+ youth are twice as likely as their heterosexual counterparts to commit suicide (Mereish, O'Cleirigh, & Bradford, 2014), and continue to struggle with ongoing sexual and gender identity issues into adulthood which may lead to depression and other significant mental health problems (Ahuja, 2016). Moreover, hate crimes, hazing, and bullying against members of the LGBTQ+ community occurs at a considerably high rate throughout the U.S. (Wood, 2017).

Institutional acceptance and systemic changes for members of the LGBTQ+ community are becoming reliant on the millennial generation due to the sheer amount of LGBTQ+ identified individuals being at an all-time high (Allen, 2017). Sam is a part of a large group of LGBTQ+ individuals attempting to be a part of the social changes occurring in the U.S. due to the ongoing gay civil rights movement. A Gallup poll in 2017 reported that seven percent of millennials (born between 1980 and 1998) in the United States identified as LGBTQ+, making up the largest demographic of LGBTQ+ identified persons (Allen, 2017). Recent data shows that this number is expected to continue to rise to 10 percent, due to the increased social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community over the last 20 years (Allen, 2017). Preventing ongoing institutionalized discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression is dependent on the participation of LGBTQ+ millennials in the gay civil rights movement (Quartey, Fraizer, & Miramontes, 2018).

Over the last decade, the prevalence of ongoing participation in the gay civil rights movement by LGBTQ+ millennials, and support from their heterosexual (straight) allies has led to significant political changes in the United States U.S. federal policies
such as the repeals of Section Three of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 2013 (Bosley, 2014) and the U.S. Armed Forces’ Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (DADT) policy in 2011 (Johnson, Rosenstein, Buhrke, & Haldeman, 2015). Since the repeal of DOMA, the number of LGBTQ+ Americans married to a same-sex partner rose from 7.9 percent prior to the Supreme Court’s decision to approximately 10.2 percent (Masci, Brown, & Kiley, 2017).

Correspondingly, in 2010, the Williams Institute estimated that there were 70,000 members of the U.S. military who identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. In 2014, the Institute also concluded that about 15,500 transgender Americans had been serving in the armed forces (Gates & Herman, 2014). This ultimately led to the Department of Defense (DoD) announcement to lift the ban that disallowed transgender service members to enlist and serve openly in the U.S. armed forces in July 2016 (Brook, 2015; Brown, Blosinich, Fine, Gao, Gordon, Kauth, & Shipherd, 2016; Hennigan, 2016). This was the final action taken by the Obama administration in renouncing the exclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in the U.S. military. Conversely, in 2017, the Trump administration overturned the DoD’s transgender inclusion policies (Hennigan, 2016).

The prevention of transgender persons from serving in the military has resulted in a public narrative that the future of LGBTQ+ Americans obtaining equality, personal safety, and institutional acceptance is uncertain (Davis & Cooper, 2017). This reversal of federal policies to protect LGBTQ+ individuals and their loved ones in the U.S. has ignited tensions amongst LGBTQ+ allies and heightened awareness throughout the gay civil rights movement (Quartey et al., 2018). Increased hate crimes and ongoing institutional discriminatory practices aimed at the LGBTQ+ community have led to mass
shootings like the Pulse Night Club in Orlando and the intentional destruction to the lives of LGBTQ+ folks like the Oakland Ghost Ship fire (Quartey et al., 2018). These events have demonstrated the need for LGBTQ+ millennials to mobilize and take their place in the gay civil rights movement. Essentially, LGBTQ+ millennials are the next generation of people to shift the priorities of the movement (Egan & Sherrill, 2005). LGBTQ+ millennials have grown up in environments that differ from their elders. Regardless, they have become new targets for the same forms of oppression and discrimination (Egan & Sherrill, 2005) their elders faced. LGBTQ+ millennials are tasked with determining the future of the gay civil rights movement, and are seeking cultural shifts towards equality rather than separatism. In essence, the participation of LGBTQ+ millennials in the gay civil rights movement will set its trajectory for the next 50 years (Quartey et al., 2018; Egan & Sherrill, 2005).

**Background**

The gay civil rights movement in the U.S. has propelled issues like marriage equality, workplace discrimination, LGBTQ+ youth suicidality, and military inclusion to the forefront of national politics (D’Emilio, 2016). The aforementioned inequalities felt by LGBTQ+ people across the U.S. and globally continue to be weapons that push LBGTQ activists and allies to take a more proactive, aggressive stance towards gaining equity and justice for their community members (D’Emilio, 2016). Over the last decade, the gay civil rights movement in the U.S. has gained a significant amount of support from advocates and allies wanting to implement fair and equal treatment of LGBTQ+ persons throughout all institutions of American society (Grzanka, Adler, & Blazer, 2015; Jones & Brewster, 2017). Heterosexual cisgender individuals, along with many religious-based
institutions, have publicly demonstrated their support for the LGBTQ+ community (Kane, 2013).

The commitment and dedication of LGBTQ+ allies, tenacity of LGBTQ+ individuals, and transformation of the gay civil rights movement in the U.S. has demonstrated how time, patience, persistence, and resilience have the opportunity to reduce oppressive political policy (D’Emilio, 2016; Jones, 2017). Over the past century LGBTQ+ individuals have endured an incredible amount of political governance over their bodies due to their sexuality, gender expression, and gender identity (Feinberg, 1993; Jones, 2017). Nonetheless, many LGBTQ+ people continue to dedicate their lives to ensuring that future generations of LGBTQ+ individuals will experience less hate, death, and criminalization than those before them (D’Emilio, 2016).

**LGBTQ+ Inequality in the United States**

Historically, the LGBTQ+ community in the U.S. has endured multiple versions of the same social and institutional inequalities. From the moment the pilgrims landed in Plymouth in the 1600s, homosexuality and same-sex love and attraction has been under attack (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012). However, significant radical shifts have occurred over the last four centuries with regards to the rise and fall of social movements revolving around sexuality, gender, and body politics (D'Emilio, 1992).

**Religion, Sexuality, & Body Politics**

Since the 16th century, religion has been the underlying form of governance of sexuality and women’s bodies in America (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012; Foucault, 1978). Over the last four centuries, the intertwining of religion, sexuality, and bodies has been on the forefront of many political activism and human rights movements, including the
agenda of the gay civil rights movement which aims to further equal protections for 
LGBTQ+ identified persons within the U.S. and throughout the world (Davis & Cooper, 
2017; Duncan, Mincer, & Dunn, 2017; Wargo, 2017; Wight, 2017). The repression of 
sexuality and gender limits access for LGBTQ+ people to power, education, and 
economic gains (Foucault, 1978). Furthermore, the politicization of sexuality and bodies 
significantly impacts the LGBTQ+ community and their rights to freely express their 
gender and sexuality in public spaces (Foucault, 1978).

In addition, current research indicates that LGBTQ+ identified people and women 
have been victims of regulations against their bodies and identity expression in the U.S. 
for hundreds of years (D'Emilio, 1992; 2002; 2014; D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012; 
Godfrey, 2016; Foucault, 1978; Duncan et al., 2017). Institutional discriminatory 
practices remain an ongoing issue for LGBTQ+ persons within their workplaces, local 
entertainment establishments, academia (Dragowski, McCabe, & Rubinson, 2016; Enke, 
2007), and the healthcare system, specifically for the aging LGBTQ+ community 
(Nemoto, Cruz, Iwamoto, & Sakata, 2015; Yang, Manning, Operario, & van den Berg, 
2015).

Warner (1999a) suggests that it is the expressive behaviors demonstrated by 
LGBTQ+ people that become politicized. LGBTQ+ people are more likely to be 
harassed, approached, and experience abuse or misconduct by law enforcement, as well 
as be targeted by hate crimes than their cisgender heterosexual counterparts due to their 
perceived identities (Stewart-Winter, 2015; Godfrey, 2016). Despite being aware of the 
consequences of being their authentic selves, at least nine openly transgender people
were recently elected to public office in historically conservative states like Virginia and Georgia (Sopelsa, 2017; Dentato, Orwat, Spira, & Walker, 2014).

**Gay Civil Rights Movement in the U.S.**

The gay civil rights movement became revolutionary during the mid- to late-1900s (D'Emilio, 1992). Institutionalized oppression of gays and lesbians has been documented as far back as post-World War I (D'Emilio, 1992; 2002; 2014). Events such as the formation of Mattachine Society in Los Angeles in 1950 and the Stonewall Inn Riots in 1969 marked the beginning of what is now understood as the gay liberation movement (D'Emilio, 1992). Significant judiciary victories leading to the legality of same-sex marriage and the repeal of DADT has encouraged LGBTQ+ activists in the U.S. to continue to evolve, innovate, and contribute to eliminating injustices and discrimination for queer people throughout the world (D'Emilio, 2014; 2016).

During the 1920s through 1970s an influx of gay and lesbian communities and subcultures throughout the U.S. and more visibility through media publications (D'Emilio, 1992). Many gay and lesbian activists joined the Civil Rights Movement in an effort to build a coalition of people fighting for equity and inclusion of all people regardless of gender, sexuality, or the color of their skin (D'Emilio, 1992; 2002; 2014). Likewise, the 1960s saw the makings of many gay activists who sought equal treatment in their workplaces and anti-discrimination policies against gay and lesbian individuals (D’Emilio, 2002). This led to protests in Washington D.C. and across the country to promote equity for the LGBTQ+ community (D’Emilio, 2002). The 1970s was a time when radicalized subgroups within the gay and lesbian subculture were forged in order to
keep the momentum of the 1960s going (D'Emilio, 1992; 2002; 2014; D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012; Sayer, 1995).

The 1980s introduced the AIDS crisis. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) devastated gay male culture and invaded their lives (Godfrey, 2016; Artavia & Anderson-Minshall, 2017). By the mid-1980s, AIDS was being described throughout the U.S. as ‘The Gay Plague’ and widespread fear grew amongst conservative politicians and homophobic groups (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012). The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) was formed in response to the social stigma that began to occur in the gay community (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012). The impact of the AIDS epidemic curtailed the momentum that the 1970s had brought to the gay civil rights movement, as it continued to recover from the aftermath of the AIDS crisis well into the mid-1990s (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012).

Throughout the early 1990s Congress enacted several anti-discrimination laws, which included protections for Americans based on their HIV-status (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012). In 1994, as a response to these major victories for LGBTQ+ people, the Republican party successfully campaigned a majority takeover in both the House and Senate, which led to the passing of Department of Defense Directive 1304.26 (Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (DADT)) in 1993, and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 1996 (Barclay, Bernstein, & Marshall, 2009; Bernstein, 2015; Bosley, 2014; D’Emilio, 2016; Meyer, 2011). In addition, over 70 percent of states in the U.S. followed up these laws with additional statutes that made workplace discrimination against LGBTQ+ persons legal for employers (Barclay et al., 2009).
The passing of DADT and DOMA in the 1990s served as a focal point for the gay civil rights movement in the 21st century. The Obama Administration repealed the DADT policy in 2011 and established the foundational protocols for removing the military transgender ban in 2016, while the U.S. Supreme Court determined DOMA to be unconstitutional and federally legalized same-sex marriage in 2015 (D’Emilio, 2016; Brook, 2015; Hennigan, 2016). However, in 2017 the Trump Administration reinstated the military transgender ban (Davis & Cooper, 2017).

**The Bay Area of California**

By the mid-1970s, San Francisco, California had become a mecca for gay liberationists, and a geographic hot spot for openly LGBTQ+ people (Milk, 2013). This set the stage for LGBTQ+ activists to begin running for public office with the intention of serving their communities and passing laws to protect LGBTQ+ people—key figures included Harvey Milk, Cleve Jones, Roma Guy, and Sally Gearhart (Jones, 2017). These men and women dedicated most of their lives to fighting for equity and justice for the LGBTQ+ community throughout the Bay Area. Their dedication to the gay civil rights movement was felt across the U.S. and continues to be a driving force for present day LGBTQ+ activists (D’Emilio, 2002; 2014; Jones, 2017; Milk, 2013).

Harvey Milk is well-known for being the first openly LGBTQ+ publicly elected official to serve in the U.S. (Milk, 2013). He led a grassroots campaign to defeat Proposition 6 (Jones, 2017), also known as the Briggs Initiative (Milk, 2013; Blumenfeld, 2012), which sought to prohibit California public schools from hiring gays and lesbians. The defeat of the Briggs Initiative was a pivotal moment in the history of California LGBTQ+ rights, and a shift in the gay civil rights movement towards starting grassroots
campaigns across the country (D’Emilio, 2002; 2014; Jones, 2017; Milk, 2013). The assassination of Harvey Milk on November 27, 1978 was a catalyst for future local and national marches against institutional injustices experienced by LGBTQ+ people (Jones, 2017).

**Heterosexual & Cisgender Allies**

The repeals of DOMA and DADT are two successful examples of institutional equality gained from decades of LGBTQ+ activism in the U.S. However, the struggle to obtain access and equity within heteronormative systems of oppression for the LGBTQ+ community remains at the forefront of the gay civil rights movement. In response to this systemic oppression, the gay rights movement has evolved to include the contributions of heterosexual (straight) LGBTQ+ allies, propelling LGBTQ+ activism into the 21st century in ways that the religious right has been unable to counteract (Grzanka et al., 2015; Jones & Brewster, 2017). Furthermore, the gay civil rights movement has recently been depicted as a united front consisting of people of all sexualities, genders, and religions. Heterosexual, cisgendered allies have joined their families, friends, and community members in the struggle for sexuality and gender equity which has resulted in a change in the scope and practices of LGBTQ+ millenial activists of the 21st century (Duncan et al., 2017; Grzanka et al., 2015; Jones & Brewster, 2017; Keleher & Smith, 2012; Montgomery & Stewart, 2012; Ratts, Kaloper, McReady, Tighe, Butler, Dempsey, & McCullough, 2013; Young, 2015; Young & McKibban, 2014).
LGBTQ+ Millennials

LGBTQ+ millennials experience less discrimination and hate in their lifetimes than the generations of LGBTQ+ persons who came before them, thus allowing them to be more open about their gender and sexuality (Keleher & Smith, 2012). Regardless, LGBTQ+ millennials have insisted in contributing to the gay civil rights movement, and have been recognized as starting the new youth movement for equity, fairness, and justice for all people (Blackburn, 2014; Blumenfeld, 2012; Drescher, 2014; Jackman, 2017; Klein, Holtby, Cook, & Travers, 2015; Lalor, 2015; Motta, 2016). Access to the internet and advancements in technology have revolutionized how LGBTQ+ millennials participate in the gay civil rights movement (Barclay et al., 2009; Bernstein, 2015; Cameron, 2017; Jackman, 2017; Phillips, 2014; Wargo, 2017). In addition, LGBTQ+ millennials have acquired a queer consciousness due to an influx of queer literature and authors, which has given LGBTQ+ individuals an understanding that they are seen (Duncan et al., 2017; Jackman, 2017; Lalor, 2015; Mock, 2014; Ratts et al., 2013; Rayner, 2018; Santich, 2016).

Theoretical Foundation

The ideologies of social movement theory reason that phenomena like the gay civil rights movement occur due to the commonalities, participation in, and shared social experiences that LGBTQ+ people encounter (Nynä & Lassander, 2015; Rhodes-Kubiak, 2013; Young, 1999). Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical foundation that is useful in exploring the identity making process for LGBTQ+ individuals (Wilson, 1996). According to Anderson & Snow (2001), identity is something that is developed over the course of a lifetime through the continuous examination of oneself. In addition, the
repetition of behaviors, attitudes, and norms contribute to the making of one’s identity, such as displays of emotion or repression of what one may think of as immoral (Anderson & Snow, 2001).

**Social movement theory.** Social movement theory suggests that the internet and widespread availability of social media have transformed the way that LGBTQ+ millennials are partaking in political activism (Nynäs & Lassander, 2015). Nynäs and Lassander (2015) describe social movements as social processes that involve the connection between social actors who are immersed in evident informal networks. Furthermore, social movements are initiated due to commonality and togetherness brought upon by the need for equality and social change (Nynäs & Lassander, 2015). According to Rhodes-Kubiak (2013), one way to describe this interactive simultaneous progression of similar ideals is activist citizenship—participating in the transformational change movement that matches your worth in society. From these frameworks, the gay civil rights movement that LGBTQ+ millennials are participating in is considered a social movement.

**Symbolic interactionism.** Distinctions of social worth are learned, communicated, and reinforced through relational processes due to stratification systems (Anderson & Snow, 2001). A sense of self is established when distinct identities are created and replicated through conscious social performances within stratification systems (Anderson & Snow, 2001). How we behave socially and how we are situated within the larger context of societal structures determines what we think about ourselves. Therefore, identity is perpetuated through patriarchy and other social hierarchies (Anderson & Snow, 2001). The combining of identities produces the complexities of
inequality for many LGBTQ+ individuals (Anderson & Snow, 2001). Moreover, experiencing the conflict of having to manage multiple identities is dependent on the existence of two factors: how the self is situated within societal structures, and the space in which an individual culturally occupies and has invested time within (Wilson, 1996).

**External Motivators & Identity**

Gushue and Hinman (2018) suggest that “external motivation (EM) is crucial to understanding how to structure policies” (p.143). External motivators are capable of unconsciously guiding the actions of an individual towards a specific way of thinking, such as participating in a hate crime, engaging in prejudiced behaviors, remaining silent when observing something that is not morally or ethically valued, and becoming a part of a group with similar beliefs (Mattan, Kubota, Dang, & Cloutier, 2018). Furthermore, individuals who appear to thrive on EM tend to lack the ability to think critically and self-reflect due to fear of rejection (Gushue & Hinman, 2018). This is especially challenging for individuals who abide by what they have learned through socialization rather than choosing to learn and grow organically through their own critical thinking (Gushue & Hinman, 2018). Matschke & Fehr (2017) found that EM is capable of manipulating and controlling an individual’s ability to establish a social identity when they have more than one competing identity. In essence, an incompatibility exists in one’s identity when external motivators promote negative consequences for choosing how to identify in certain social situations, such as being openly LGBTQ+ (Matschke & Fehr, 2017).
Internal Motivators & Identity

Matschke & Sassenberg (2010) argue “that the relation between avoidance strategies and disidentification is moderated by internal motivation” (p.892). An individual with low internal motivation will most likely engage in more avoidance strategies to overcome rejection, whereas an individual with high internal motivation will rely less on avoidance strategies to manage their emotions during a crisis (Matschke & Sassenberg, 2010). This can lead to incompatibility amongst identities for LGBTQ+ persons when navigating several different social identities while spending time with co-workers, classmates, family members, and friend groups (Matschke & Fehr, 2015; Matschke & Fehr, 2017; Cramer, Golom, Gemberling, Trost, Lewis, & Wright, 2018). These experiences of internal struggle may lead to inadequacies for LGBTQ+ individuals with regard to their sense of belonging, ability to be their authentic selves, and mental health complications (Matschke & Fehr, 2015; Matschke & Fehr, 2017; Matthews, Banerjee, & Lauermann, 2014). Consequently, these challenges pose unforeseen issues for marginalized adolescents as they figure out their identity. Matthews et al. (2014) argue that “identity can be a pathway toward understanding achievement motivation during adolescence” (p.2355). Researchers agree that the perceptions of one’s self as discovered throughout the identity development process in adolescence contributes to establishing a worldview, building social connections, and making sense of one’s environment (Matthews et al., 2014). Moreover, the negative impact of not obtaining societal acceptance of one’s identity can lead to an individual feeling like they have to hide their authentic selves from others—concealment motivation (Cramer et al., 2018).
Not having the ability to identify socially as one’s true self due to social stigma and backlash is an unfortunate reality for many LGBTQ+ people (Mohr & Kendra, 2011).

**Problem Statement**

The sociopolitical climate in the U.S. exemplifies resistance to LGBTQ+-affirming policies and support of equal rights and protections for LGBTQ+ persons (Quartey et al., 2018). The Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida, ongoing hate crimes across the country, and workplace discrimination against LGBTQ+ persons point to the need for continued social justice mobilization efforts from gay civil rights activists and their allies (Quartey et al., 2018). Since 2017, the incessant repeals of LGBTQ+ anti-discrimination policies in the U.S. have posed a safety and security risk for the LGBTQ+ community (Mereish et al., 2014; Taliaferro & Muehlenkamp, 2017).

For example, in October 2018, a memo was leaked that included plans for Congress to uphold a bill defining gender as the sex assigned to an individual at birth (male or female), and prohibiting recognition of any alternative gender identifiers from that point forward in an individual’s life (Green, Benner, & Pear, 2018). Additionally, a new DoD policy stating transgender individuals are no longer allowed to serve openly in the U.S. armed forces went into effect on April 12, 2019 (Hodges & Chang, 2019). The enactment and intentions of these policies pose significant negative consequences for the LGBTQ+ community. In addition, these policies highlight the importance of LGBTQ+ participation in the gay civil rights movement as the lives of LGBTQ+ people continue to be threatened by anti-LGBTQ+ administrative practices.

Despite over 50 years of the gay civil rights movement’s efforts to gain equity and inclusion, access to the institution of marriage and military inclusion, increase access to
public resources for the LGBTQ+ community, and establish anti-discriminatory policies (Jones, 2017), LGBTQ+ youth continue to experience suicidality at twice the rate of their heterosexual counterparts (Mereish et al., 2014; Bosley, 2014). In addition, LGBTQ+ persons continue to experience a significant amount of harassment and abuse in their workplaces, schools, and communities (Ahuja, 2016; D’Emilio, 2016; Dragowski et al., 2016; Sheridan, Zolobczuk, Huynh, & Lee, 2017). This problem has negatively impacted LGBTQ+ communities and their allies across the U.S. As a result, many LGBTQ+ people fear for their safety in public spaces, and as a group LGBTQ+ people experience the second highest rate of violent hate crimes against them such as rape, assault, and murder (Baker & Lucas, 2017; Croff, Hubach, Currin, & Frederick, 2017).

A possible cause of this problem is the inability of LGBTQ+ persons living throughout the U.S. to trust their state and local governments to implement policy that protects and provides security for them and their loved ones. Recent events such as the Pulse nightclub shooting in June 2016 (Croff et al., 2017), the ongoing bullying experienced by LGBTQ+ youth in schools (Taliaferro & Muehlenkamp, 2017), and the repeal of Executive Order 13672, which extended rights to federally contracted LGBTQ+ employees (Gates & Saunders, 2016), have reinforced this mistrust in the government’s ability to prioritize the lives and safety of LGBTQ+ individuals. Ibhawoh (2014) and Mayers (2018) agree, and insist that there is still the need for political activism to occur for the fight for basic human rights protections for LGBTQ+ persons both nationally and internationally. However, some researchers counter that the current state of the gay civil rights movement’s focus on identity (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, etc.) as a human right has limited the strategies of LGBTQ+ activism to assimilation tactics in an
attempt to participate in the status quo rather than alter the current state of systemic oppression directed at LGBTQ+ persons (Mertus, 2007). Mertus (2007) points to a need for an overhaul of the current state of the gay civil rights movement, and suggests that a more progressive approach should be taken by LGBTQ+ activists that focuses on “‘sexual rights,’ which may prove to be more successful than existing LGBT rights strategies” (p.1064). This strategy for change identifies an issue regarding the direction of the gay civil rights movement that may exist and could be addressed in a study on how LGBTQ+ millennial activists are contributing to the future of the movement.

Recently, millennials surpassed the Baby Boomers as the largest generation of voters in the U.S. (Fry, 2018) and in Texas alone, they will “make up approximately 33 percent of the electorate by 2022” (Tzintzún, 2018, p.40). This present reality emphasizes a need to understand the impact of the millennial generation on the future of legislative policy and American politics. Gates and Saunders (2016) point out how existing research emphasizes a need to examine the policy making strategies of all three legislative branches of power with regards to LGBTQ+ Americans, and that the daily “experiences of LGBT workers are not automatically” (p.34) rectified due to the changes in workplace protection laws for LGBT people. Although research exists regarding the effect of institutionalized discriminatory practices and policies enforced upon LGBTQ+ persons, no studies have been conducted regarding the participation of LGBTQ+ millennials in the gay civil rights movement fighting to overturn those laws (Quartey et al., 2018; Egan & Sherrill, 2005). The literature points to a gap in the research and a need for a study which investigates how the internal and external experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials have influenced their participation in the gay civil rights
movement, and explores their recommendations for strategies that may have an impact on the trajectory of the movement. This could shed some light on how to decrease social injustices experienced by LGBTQ+ people, as well as change discriminatory and anti-LGBTQ+ federal, state, and local policies.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that influenced their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. Another purpose of the study was to describe the recommendations LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement.

**Central Research Questions**

The principle research questions in this study were:

1. What are the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
2. What recommendations do LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement?

**Sub Questions**

1. What are the lived narratives of LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
2. What external motivators lead LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
3. What internal motivators lead LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
4. What factors of the LGBTQ+ identity have influenced LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?

5. What recommendations do LGBTQ+ millennials have for current or future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement?

**Significance of the Study**

LGBTQ+ communities throughout the U.S. experience systemic oppression, harassment, abuse, and marginalization at a disproportionately higher rate than their heterosexual counterparts. In fact, LGBTQ+ identified persons are more likely than non-LGBTQ+ persons to experience a form of abuse or discrimination at some point during their lifetimes (Loewy, 2017; Ng & Rumens, 2017; Pomeranz, 2017). These experiences are endured by LGBTQ+ people in their schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and public spaces (Ahuja, 2016; D’Emilio, 2016; Dragowski et al., 2016; Sheridan et al., 2017; Croff et al., 2017). Currently, there are still 28 states in the U.S. that do not have LGBTQ+ worker protections in place to ensure LGBTQ+ persons do not encounter discrimination in their schools and/or workplaces (Ng & Rumens, 2017). Subsequently, LGBTQ+ persons in these states live in fear of being fired and/or harassed on the job on the basis of their gender and/or sexual identity (Baker & Lucas, 2017). In addition, LGBTQ+ youth in America remain at a higher risk than their heterosexual counterparts for engaging in risk-taking behaviors such as substance use and unsafe sex, as well as experiencing significant mental health issues (Pomeranz, 2017). This further increases the likelihood that they will suffer from suicidality and/or non-suicidal self-harm during their adolescence (Ahuja, 2016; Mereish et al., 2014; Bosley, 2014; Taliaferro & Muehlenkamp, 2017).
Historically, there have been significant strides taken by the gay civil rights movement to curtail the aforementioned issues facing the LGBTQ+ community (D’Emilio, 2016). However, the contribution of LGBTQ+ millennials to the gay civil rights movement remains in its preliminary stages (Egan & Sherrill, 2005). Consequently, there is minimal data that provides an understanding for what is occurring in the gay civil rights movement with regards to the future safety and security of LGBTQ+ people, and the perceived role that LGBTQ+ millennials are taking within the fight for LGBTQ+ equity and equality. This study will fill the gap in the research regarding the understanding of the relationship between LGBTQ+ millennials and the gay civil rights movement. Policymakers may utilize this study to develop new local, state, and/or federal laws that condemn LGBTQ+ discriminatory practices throughout U.S. schools, workplaces, and public spaces. Furthermore, this study has the opportunity to incite conversations within institutions and organizations regarding how to create safer spaces for LGBTQ+ people. Lastly, this study will contribute to the academic body of knowledge in queer history and gender studies.

**Definitions**

*Bay Area of California.* For the purpose of this study, the Bay Area of California consists of the following counties: Solano, Napa, Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa, and Santa Clara.

*Cisgender (cis).* When a person’s gender identity matches their assigned sex at birth; non-transgender (Cava, 2016).

*Gay civil rights movement.* Known as a movement based on the premise of the politics of gender and sexuality, the gay civil rights movement gained visibility in the
U.S. during the riots at the Stonewall Inn in 1969. It has since transformed from a liberation front steeped in social radicalism, to several factions spread throughout the world seeking global intersectional systemic change for LGBTQ+ individuals (D'Emilio, 2014).

*Gender fluidity.* A person may identify as fluid when their gender expression does not match the traditional masculine or feminine definitions of what is male or female (Zamani-Gallaher, 2017). “Gender identity comprises a spectrum of how individuals identify that is multidimensional and not linear, but rather a continuum of maleness, femaleness, and gender identities not bounded by the twofold of male or female” (Zamani-Gallaher, 2017, p.91). This is also described as gender nonconforming.

*Heteronormative or heteronormativity.* The normalizing of institutions through the lens of heterosexual relationships (Duncan, Aguilar, Jensen, & Magnusson, 2019). “The endorsement of heteronormative attitudes may be associated with negative attitudes toward gender non-conformity” (Duncan et al., 2019, p.2).

*Identity & body politics.* The victimization of one’s identity due to institutionalized discrimination or regulations being assigned to their bodies and identity expression (Warner, 1999a; Foucault, 1978). Such as, women experiencing gender inequality and feminine behavior by men being considered unacceptable (Godfrey, 2016; Foucault, 1978; Duncan et al., 2017). The identities and bodies of LGBTQ+ people become politicized when their behaviors inherit political tension through expressive demonstrations (Warner, 1999a).
**LGBTQ+**. An acronym representing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (trans), and queer. For the purpose of this study, LGBTQ+ will represent any person who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and any other sexual orientation or gender identity besides heterosexual and cisgender (Cava, 2016).

**Millennial.** The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (2012) defined the millennial generation as people who were born between 1980 and 1999, and suggests that sources are inconsistent in that there may be “as many as 21 different birth spans referenced” (p.2) for this cohort. Pew Research (2019) utilizes a slightly smaller birth cohort to identify millennials, 1981 through 1996. Gallup (2015) views millennials as those born from 1980 to 1996. The United States Census Bureau (2015) found that there are 83.1 million millennials born between 1982 and 2000, which represent over 25 percent of the nation’s population. U.S. Pirg Education Fund (2014) aligns with the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), agreeing that millennials make up the nation’s largest generation; however, they reference this generation as Americans born between 1983 and 2000. Hence, for the purpose of this study, and ensuring the inclusivity of the entire birth year spectrum of the millennial generation, millennial will refer to any person born between January 1, 1980 and December 31, 2000.

**Queer & queer theory.** Queer is often synonymous with LGBTQ+ and utilized as a noun to describe groups of LGBTQ+ people (Gamson, 2000; Wagaman, 2016). Wagaman (2010) describes the “queer identity” as a way of identifying oneself as nonbinary and questioning “mutually exclusive categories that usually exist in hierarchical manner” (p.211) such as, the two-gender binary system. The underlying discourse of queer theory is the intertwining of the experiential history of LGBTQ+
people and the political nuances of social movements that they participate in (Gamson, 2000). “Queer world-making is a term in queer theory that highlights the dynamic processes of creating and claiming LGBTQ or queer identities in ways that are intended to impact the social environment” (Wagaman, 2016, p.211).

Sexual orientation. The way in which a person identifies who they are attracted to sexually, emotionally, physically, or psychologically such as, heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, etc. (Salomaa & Matsick, 2018).

Delimitations

The study was delimited to self-identified millennial LGBTQ+ persons born between January 1, 1980 and December 31, 2000 who reside in the Bay Area of California within the following counties: Solano, Napa, Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa, and Santa Clara.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters addressing the key variables related to supporting the purpose of the research and the research questions. Chapter I provides an introduction of what is to be expected in the study. Chapter II provides an extensive literature review as it relates to the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ activists and the history of the gay civil rights movement in the United States. Chapter III outlines the methodological approach utilized for the study, including the research instruments, data collection, and data analysis process. Chapter IV is a presentation of the research findings from the study, including qualitative data and thematic schemes collected from participants. In conclusion, Chapter V summarizes the study while providing answers to the research questions and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review is presented in six sections and serves as a basis for understanding the history of inequality experienced by LGBTQ+ identified Americans, as well as providing a broader picture of social justice movements and activism in the United States over the last 150 years that have influenced the current state of the gay civil rights movement. Furthermore, this literature review outlines more than a century of LGBTQ+ activism, activists, and their experiences of marginalization, discrimination, and oppression. The intention of detailing this information is solely for the purpose of educating the reader on the social justice movements and activism that have occurred throughout the U.S. leading up to present day LGBTQ+ activism in the Bay Area of California.

Section one identifies the different ways that civil rights activism has occurred in the U.S. and examines the social movements that have been generated throughout the country since the late-1800s. Section two focuses on LGBTQ+ inequality and injustice in the U.S. through an exploration of the politics of sexuality and identity. Section three details LGBTQ+ activism in the U.S., specifically considering the gay civil rights movement and the significant influence the Bay Area has had within the history of the movement. Section four is an introduction to the concept of millennial activism and isolates a vision of the role of LGBTQ+ millennials in the gay civil rights movement. Additionally, section four considers the impact that advocates and allies have on the outcomes of the gay civil rights movement and gaining social equality for LGBTQ+ persons. Section five is an introduction to the theoretical foundations that will be utilized to support the results of the study on the gay civil rights movement and the evolution of
the queer identity—social movement theory and symbolic interactionism. Section six highlights implications for future research on LGBTQ+ millennials and their presence in the Bay Area of California.

Civil Rights Activism & Social Movements in the United States

The various means and historical influences of the social activism, justice, and reform that has taken place in the United States is discussed in this section of the literature review. First, the literature identifies the different ways that civil rights activism has occurred in the U.S. and examines some of the key social movements that have been generated throughout the country since the late 1800s. Second, a context for 21st century social justice activism is provided by highlighting four primary social movements occurring at this time in the U.S.—Black Lives Matter (BLM), #MeToo movement and Women’s March, refugee solidarity and immigrant rights, and environmental justice. Third, an understanding is developed regarding social movement organizing and protests in the era of technology, social media, and access to mass media culture. Lastly, the link between social justice movements and LGBTQ+ equity is introduced to the reader to build upon the purpose statement and significance of the study.

Key Social Justice Movements

There have been many key social justice movements in the U.S. which have determined public policies based on the experiences of oppression in America—the Civil Rights Movement, Black social/political movements, native sovereignty, the gay civil rights movement, women’s rights and feminism, reproductive rights, Asian-American rights, religious socialism, labor movement, criminal justice reform, disability rights,
environmental justice, animal rights (Milkis & Tichenor, 2011; Saggers-Hakim, 2018; Boutcher, Jenkins, & Van Dyke, 2017; Stevenson, 2018; Wu, 2018; Tippett, 2018; Piper, 2013; Tyson, 2017). These movements are a timeline of the ways in which Americans representing marginalized populations have experienced inequity and been victimized by systems of oppression from the1860s to the 1990s (Saggers-Hakim, 2018; Boutcher et al., 2017; Stevenson, 2018; Wu, 2018; Tippett, 2018; Piper, 2013; Tyson, 2017). The following are brief descriptions of several social movements that have influenced how social justice activism is occurring in the United States in the 21st century.

**Civil rights movement.** The civil rights movement began in the late 1940s as a result of the passing of Jim Crow laws in the south in the late nineteenth century (Milkis & Tichenor, 2011) and “continued segregation, intimidation, and disenfranchisement” (Saggers-Hakim, 2018, p.448) towards African-Americans in the U.S. The societal limitations placed on African-Americans prevented access to “economic, political, and social advancements” (Saggers-Hakim, 2018, p.448). In 1964 and 1969, Civil Rights Acts were passed by the federal government as an attempt to increase accessibility to systems like education, politics, and healthcare for African-Americans (Saggers-Hakim, 2018; Clayton, 2018). One significant outcome of the civil rights movement was the passing of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, which gave African-Americans the right to vote in the U.S. (Andrews & Jowers, 2018; Clayton, 2018).

**Black social movements.** Prolific black social movements have been detailed dating back to the early nineteenth century (Solomon, 2019; Cromartie, 2018). A list of black social movements include a diverse group of cultures and ethnicities—(1900-1925) Pan-African Movement, Niagara Movement, National Association for the Advancement

The black freedom movement was a period of social justice movements that focused on the political and social advancement of black Americans, which included the civil rights movement, anti-Jim Crow movements, SNCC, NAACP, SCLC, BPM, BPP, and BAM (Solomon, 2019; Henderson, 2018). The BPM, formed by Malcolm X, was one of the most publicized radical movements of the black freedom movements, and was introduced to mainstream America in the early 1960s (Henderson, 2018). The purpose of BPM was to promote a cultural and political revolution that fought for black liberation throughout the world (Henderson, 2018).

**Extreme right movement.** The extreme right movement in the United States is most closely represented by white supremacy (Boutcher et al., 2017). The white supremacy movement was birthed in the south during the 1940s-50s as a direct response
to the federal support for the civil rights movement (Boutcher et al., 2017; Davis, 2017). Groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), Citizen’s Council, the House Un-American Activities Committee, and neo-Nazi National Socialist Party of America were formed from white supremacist ideology (Boutcher et al., 2017). According to Boutcher et al. (2017), by 1998, it is documented that there were “474 active white supremacist groups and, by 2016, 1,890 active groups” (p.688). Today, white supremacists have been known to identify as white nationalists, Christian extremists, members of the alt-right, and neo-Nazis (Giroux, 2017; Hartzell, 2018). These groups have participated in numerous protests over the last 70 years, some of which ended in violence and death (Boutcher et al., 2017). Most recently, in August 2017, a man who identified as having white supremacist views intentionally drove his car into a crowd of counter-protestors resulting in the killing of one and injury of at least 19 others (Hartzell, 2018). The extreme right movement—a.k.a. white nationalism, or alt-right—has established a reputation as a militarized culture that is waging war against women, Muslims, immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, women’s reproductive rights, LGBTQ+ military members and veterans, and minorities who represent lower socioeconomic strata (Giroux, 2017).

**Women’s suffrage & second-wave feminism.** Women’s rights in the United States has been documented for over 150 years and consists of three major movements—women’s suffrage, second-wave feminism, and #MeToo (discussed in *21st Century Social Justice Movements*) (Stevenson, 2018; Wu, 2018; Banaszak & Ondercin, 2016; Tippett, 2018; Just, Louise Muhr, Foroughi, Gabriel, & Fotaki, 2019). The women’s suffrage movement in the U.S. began around 1869 and progressed into the 1930s (Stevenson, 2018). Stevenson (2018) explains that prior to 1920, American women were recognized
as second-class citizens and the property of men, which led to an effort towards enfranchisement with the additional goal of gaining access into intellectual fields such as academia, literature, and art. In 1920, the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to The Constitution occurred granting white American women the right to vote and some of the same societal privileges as their male counterparts (Stevenson, 2018).

The women’s movement began to shift from women mobilizing to obtain equal societal privileges as men to a “fundamental rethinking of how gender structures hierarchy” within both institutions and personal lives (Wu, 2018, p.713). In the 1960s, the second-wave feminist movement emerged as its own entity (Wu, 2018). Second-wave feminists began organizing protests and mobilizing other groups seeking to change the status quo for the ways in which society viewed a woman’s worth with regards to race, class, gender identity, sexuality, and political ideology (Wu, 2018). Wu (2018) describes second-wave feminists as intellectual, free thinking women with the goal of ridding America of patriarchy and capitalism. Second-wave feminists are attributed with playing a pivotal role in several social justice causes from the 1970s thru the early 1990s including, the *Roe v. Wade* decision and reproductive rights, HIV/AIDS crisis, and LGBT rights (Banaszak & Ondercin, 2016; Wu, 2018).

One key concept that stemmed from the aforementioned women’s movements is the term intersectionality (Just et al., 2019). Radical black feminists who often experienced oppression and discrimination differently than their white women counterparts use intersectionality as a way to describe how gender intersects with race (Just et al., 2019). Since the 1970s, intersectional approaches to feminism have been applauded throughout women movements. However, some facets of bias and exclusion
remains in present day activism for women’s rights (as seen at Women’s March from 2017-2019) and autonomy with regards to class, ability, sexuality, age, ethnicity, culture, and race (Just et al., 2019).

**Labor movement.** The American labor movement stemmed from the Great Railroad Strike in 1877, which marked a pivotal turning point in the Industrial Revolution (Piper, 2013). Railroad workers mobilized and organized together in an attempt to improve their working conditions, increase wages, and gain political power (Piper, 2013). Several labor unions developed out of the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, which included the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1897 (Kimeldorf, 2013). By 1910, there were approximately 2.1 million union members within four key sectors of the labor force—mining, building trades, transportation, and manufacturing (Kimeldorf, 2013).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the United Farm Workers (UFW) in California, led by Cesar Chavez, became one of the most prominent examples of labor union organizing in American history (Pawel, 2013). Chavez’s leadership was a driving force behind the passing of the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA) in 1975, which “granted farmworkers the right to organize and protected union activity in the fields” (Pawel, 2013, p.154). Today, unions (i.e. Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Teamsters, UFW) have become the most significant organized force in the U.S. for establishing anti-discriminatory workplace policies and procedures, securing political power, improving and keeping working conditions safe, and increasing wages to match the amount of labor being produced (Bunnage, 2014). The American labor movement has become one of the largest organized movements in the country, consisting of people
from all national origins, genders, sexual orientations, colors, and socioeconomic statuses (Bunnage, 2014).

**Disability rights.** Research suggests that Americans living with disabilities have been working towards social acceptance and obtaining equity since the 18th century (Tyson, 2017). Some of the most publicized stories regarding the inhumane treatment of disabled Americans were the practice and promotion of eugenics—the forced sterilization of people with disabilities—in the early 1900s by Pennsylvania physicians, and the Tuskegee experiments on African-American men with syphilis (Tyson, 2017). Over the last century, disability advocates have made significant strides at securing rights to employment, housing, healthcare, and education (Tyson, 2017; Scotch, 2009; Russo, 2019; Greco & Giovanni, 2017).

Since disability rights pioneer, Mildred Scott, advocated and helped to enact the National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week in 1945, public policy and federal support has grown considerably for disabled Americans (Tyson, 2017). Throughout the 1900s, national organizations such as the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (ACCD) mobilized to bring awareness to disability rights (Scotch, 2009; Russo, 2019; Tyson, 2017). These activists and organizations were successful in gaining federal legislation such as Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), both of which changed the realities of how disabled Americans exist in, and access, societal institutions (Scotch, 2009; Russo, 2019; Tyson, 2017).

Scotch (2009) states that disabilities are “the intersection of biological attributes, cultural
constructs, and social opportunities” (p.17). This suggests that the status quo is a societal perception of both the internal and external contents of a disability.

21st Century Social Justice Movements

Social justice movements in the United States have become more evident and established a diverse array of participants due to social media platforms and the speed at which information is able to be disseminated and accessed—labeled as the Information Revolution (Russo, 2018). The Information Revolution has given life and mobility to several noteworthy social justice movements in the 21st century including Black Lives Matter (BLM), the #MeToo movement, the Women’s March, refugee solidarity, body movements, healthcare reform, education reform, reproductive justice, animal rights, immigrant rights, criminal justice reform, Fight for $15, the Occupy Movement, and environmental justice (Alexander, 2010; Cox, 2017; Darst & Dawson, 2019; Tripp, 2018; Mason, 2019; Just et al., 2019; Thomas, Smith, McGarty, Reese, Kende, Blinc, Curtin, & Spears, 2019; Elia & Tokunaga, 2015; Russo, 2018). This section highlights three influential social justice movements of the 21st century—BLM and criminal justice reform, #MeToo and the Women’s March, and the immigrant rights movement—that have informed new public policies and continue to shape the lives of marginalized populations in the U.S. with the support of technology and social media platforms (Russo, 2018; Cox, 2017; Swank & Fahs, 2013; Grantt-Shafer, Wallis, & Miles, 2019; Thomas et al., 2019).

Black Lives Matter (BLM) & criminal justice reform. BLM was brought into existence by Alicia Garza, Opal Tometti, and Patrisse Cullors on Facebook using the hashtag #blacklivesmatter after George Zimmerman was found not guilty for second-
degree murder in the killing of an unarmed black teen, Trayvon Martin, in Florida (Clayton, 2018). The emergence of BLM in July 2013 was a culmination of a history of violence and oppression that has been experienced by black bodies (Clayton, 2018; Saggers-Hakim, 2018). The purpose of BLM is to utilize social media networks and mobilized public protests to bring conversations regarding the disenfranchisement of black bodies to the forefront of everyday conversations and abolish the ways in which law enforcement treats people of color (Clayton, 2018; Cox, 2017; Saggers-Hakim, 2018).

Saggers-Hakim (2018) and Clayton (2018) argue that a relationship exists between the civil rights movements of the mid-1900s and BLM with regards to the criminalization of black lives by law enforcement and disproportionate influx of mass incarceration experienced by Black Americans in the U.S. In fact, BLM has been labeled as the civil rights movement of the 21st century for African-Americans (Saggers-Hakim, 2018). Beginning with slavery, then Jim Crow, to the war on drugs of the 1980s and 1990s, and now the penal system, black lives in America have been subject to hate crimes, bodily harm, and numerous deaths through multiple forms of systemic racial oppression (Alexander, 2010; Luk, 2018; Milkis & Tichenor, 2011; Burkhardt, 2019). BLM continues to mobilize and organize protests across the U.S. to demand an end to the police brutality and violence African-Americans have been enduring since slavery, with the need to establish a justice system that works towards protecting all Americans, especially the lives of young black men (Clayton, 2018; Saggers-Hakim, 2018).
#MeToo movement & Women’s March. Following the 2016 presidential election and the inauguration of Donald Trump in January 2017, an estimated 5 million people took part in 673 women’s marches both in the United States and throughout the world (Grantt-Shafer et al., 2019; Just et al., 2019). The purpose of the Women’s March was to bring attention to the misogynist, sexist culture that Donald Trump condoned throughout his life pre- and post-2016 presidential election (Grantt-Shafer et al., 2019). The Women’s March was birthed out of the motivation of two women with the intentions of being more diverse and inclusive than the women’s movements that took place in the previous 50 years (Grantt-Shafer et al., 2019). Although the Women’s March tasked a group of diverse women activists with ensuring an intersectional approach in the planning of the march, observations and interviews of the participants in Washington D.C. depicted a disconnect from the inclusivity that was expected and promised by organizers (Grantt-Shafer et al., 2019).

In the fall of 2017, as a follow-up to the narratives and themes of the Women’s March and the misogynistic, anti-feminist rhetoric espoused by President Trump throughout his presidential campaign and first months in office (Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019), several renowned actresses came forward accusing film producer Harvey Weinstein of sexual harassment and assault (Tippett, 2018). Less than two weeks later, Twitter users began posting tweets describing their own experiences of sexual assault and harassment using #metoo laying the foundation for what has become known as the #MeToo movement (Tippett, 2018). The #MeToo movement sparked a worldwide phenomenon that brought women together in solidarity for one common purpose: seeking personal and legal justice for their experiences of sexual assault and harassment (Tippett,
Since the start of #MeToo, Weinstein, television hosts Charlie Rose, Matt Lauer, and Tavis Smiley, actor Kevin Spacey, comedian Louis C.K., chefs Mario Batali and John Besh, several politicians, and many other prominent people in Hollywood have been accused of sexual assault and/or harassment, and as a result have resigned from their positions, and/or received public backlash within their industries (Tippett, 2018).

As evidenced by Rowe (2019), Just et al. (2019), and Grantt-Shafer et al. (2019), like the women’s movements of the 1900s, both the #MeToo movement and the Women’s March have been criticized as being an effort mobilized by privileged white women, and lacking the influence and leadership of people of color and other minority groups. Rowe (2019) argues, “the potential exclusions and complicities of #MeToo is twofold…white women must be aware of the work ‘black, brown, trans, queer, and other marginalized women/femmes are already doing’ and…know when to step in and when to step aside” (p.170). Women of color and non-cis women have an extra layer of fear that is involved with showing up to a public protest, due to the history of policing and oppression of their bodies (Grantt-Shafer et al., 2019). Moreover, the Women’s March may have utilized counter-Donald Trump narratives that eventually worked as an antithesis to their overarching goal of limiting Trump’s political and social power (Just et al., 2019). Subsequently, the Women’s March and #MeToo have failed to find committed followers where the primary focus is not on cis white women within both communities of color and social justice movements (Rowe, 2019; Just et al., 2019).

**Immigrant rights movement.** In 2005, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act (H.R. 4437) (Castro, 2018). Although the bill did not pass in the Senate, there was an
overwhelming sense of fear and concern regarding safety and security amongst undocumented immigrants already residing in the United States (Castro, 2018). As a result, nationwide immigrant rights marches began taking place in March 2006 to protest the restrictive legislation in Congress and put forth a call for an alternative bill that included a pathway to legalized citizenship for immigrants living permanently in the U.S. (Castro, 2018; Steil & Vasi, 2014). The marches continued for two consecutive months, with the most significant event taking place on April 10th, known as National Day of Action, which involved protests in over 140 cities in 39 states (Castro, 2018).

The immigrant rights movement has been prevalent in legislative discussions in the American government for decades (Steil & Vasi, 2014). However, the marches in 2006 were a catalyst for the current wave of immigrant rights activism and the mobilization over 13 years of protests that have followed (Castro, 2018; Steil & Vasi, 2014). With the support of social media, the immigrant rights movement in the U.S. has captured a global following, influencing a worldwide conscious effort towards adapting legislative policies that includes pathways to citizenship (Thomas et al., 2019). On local levels, legislation and legal protections, like sanctuary cities, have been put in place to support immigrant rights and to challenge federal policies that may result in the loss of safety or security for immigrants residing in U.S. (Steil & Vasi, 2014).

Social Justice Movements & LGBTQ+ Activism

LGBTQ+ activists have learned from, struggled alongside, and participated in many of the aforementioned civil rights and social movements in the U.S. (Milkman, 2017; Cisneros, 2018). LGBTQ+ people often participate in multiple social movements at one given time, due to facing multiple oppressions as members of other marginalized
populations (Ching, Lee, Chen, So, & Williams, 2018; Velez, Moradi, & DeBlare, 2015; Cisneros, 2018). Many LGBTQ+ people experience additional societal oppression and marginalization due to the intersection of their sexuality and/or gender with their race, culture, ethnicity, geography, and/or socioeconomic status (Ching et al., 2018; Velez et al., 2015; Cisneros, 2018; Swank & Fahs, 2013). Representations of activism with regard to intersectional identities are evidenced in the current work that LGBTQ+ millennials are doing within the following 21st century social justice movements (Milkman, 2017): reproductive justice, family rights, and women’s health (Gonzalez-Rojas, 2015), the labor movement and workplace rights (Kelly & Lubitow, 2014), the immigrant rights movement (Adam, 2017), BLM and the queer liberation movement (QLM) (Anderson-Nathe, DeFilippis, & Mehrotra, 2018), and #MeToo and the Women’s March (Miles, 2017).

Furthermore, the historical demonstration of social control on sexuality and gender expression/identity by predominately white men has further marginalized LGBTQ+ people of color (D’Emilio & Freedman, 2012). This history has the potential to exacerbate the tension amongst the multitude of identities that LGBTQ+ people of color experience while participating in racial, cultural, and/or ethnic social justice movements, causing additional mental, physical, and social difficulties (D’Emilio & Freedman, 2012; Mock, 2014). For example, LGBTQ+ people of color are more likely to be victims of violence than people who identify as white and LGBTQ+ (Meyer, 2008). Research evidences that 72% of transgender, gender-nonconforming, and non-binary identified individuals experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime (Coston, 2019). Thus, Meyer (2012) argues that it is essential to account for the overlapping of “multiple
systems of oppression” when attempting to understand the modes of “anti-queer violence” (p.868).

**LGBTQ+ Inequality in the United States**

LGBTQ+ inequality in the U.S. can be explained through the politicization of bodies, or governing of bodies. Regarding LGBTQ+ bodies, it is primarily women’s and transgender (trans) bodies that have become governed and politicized by societal regulations, such as reproductive rights and gender confirming surgery. The androgynous person, although criticized by societal norms and viewed as biologically atypical, is not considered to be governed, only policed by their environment.

According to Foucault (1978), it is the ever constant and consistent seeking of power and control by men over women that perpetuates patriarchy and hierarchical societal structures. Similarly, in Michael Kimmel’s article, *Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity*, he suggests that homophobia, could be considered a way to display power and control over another (2008). The attitude of men in positions of power regarding anything and everything that is not masculine is required to be negatively illustrated through their actions—masculinity is all that is not feminine (Kimmel, 2008). These actions may take the form of the degradation of women, homophobic gestures, attitudes, and behaviors against non-masculine men, and abuse against less feminine presenting women.

**The Politics of Sexuality**

Sexuality and women’s bodies in America have been marginalized, oppressed, and governed by religion since the arrival of English settlers in New England in 1625 (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012; Foucault, 1978). The entanglement of religion, sexuality,
and bodies has been present in modern societies since the rise of the Victorian bourgeoisie and puritanism (Foucault, 1978). In essence, this relationship has been upheld throughout the last four centuries of political activism and human rights movements, and is evidenced by current action being demonstrated by the far right’s continual endeavors to eradicate equal protections for LGBTQ+ identified persons within the U.S. and throughout the world (Davis & Cooper, 2017; Duncan et al., 2017; Wargo, 2017; Wight, 2017).

According to Foucault (1978), repression has been the fundamental link between sexuality, knowledge, and power since the Classical Era. Foucault (1978) further explains that the repression, prohibition, and silencing of sex is an extension of those in power to maintain control of the powerless. This condemnation of the option to speak about sexuality places LGBTQ+ persons beyond the reach of power and upsets the establishment of law (Foucault, 1978) if a person were to exhibit the rights afforded by the First Amendment’s freedom of speech regarding sexual content.

In addition to Foucault’s examination regarding the historical influences of the governing of sex and bodies, D’Emilio and Freedman (2012) have identified three patterns that appear to reoccur throughout the history of sexual politics in America. First, when new systems are forming and older systems appear to be breaking down, political movements attempting to change sexual ideas and practices seem to be more successful. Second, there is a consistent relationship to the inequalities that exist in body politics with regards to female sexuality and women’s resistance to the status quo of gender norms. Lastly, both symbolism and realism play a role in cultivating the politics of sexuality (D’Emilio & Freedman, 2012).
Identity Politics

It is documented that LGBTQ+ identified people and women have been victims of regulations against their bodies and identity expression in the U.S. for hundreds of years (Warner, 1999a; Foucault, 1978). This is evidenced by women experiencing gender inequality and feminine behavior by men being considered unacceptable throughout the history of America’s existence (D’Emilio, 1992; 2002; 2014; D’Emilio & Freedman, 2012; Godfrey, 2016; Foucault, 1978; Duncan et al., 2017).

Institutional discrimination continues to be prevalent within the experiences of LGBTQ+ people. Discrimination remains an ongoing issue for LGBTQ+ persons within their workplaces, local entertainment establishments, academia (Dragowski et al., 2016; Enke, 2007), and the healthcare system, specifically for the aging LGBTQ+ community (Nemoto et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2015). Additionally, federal and state policies regarding LGBTQ+ rights remain misaligned throughout the U.S. creating confusion for those effected by these policies, such as workplace discrimination, the military trans ban, and DOMA (Bosley, 2014; Brook, 2015; Davis & Cooper, 2017).

Warner (1999a) suggests that it is the body’s behavior that inherits the political tension, not the body itself, implying that it is the expressive behaviors demonstrated by LGBTQ+ people that becomes politicized. This is evidenced by the inconsistencies of laws that differ from state to state within the U.S., and the inherent struggle LGBTQ+ persons experience while attempting to navigate regulations against their bodies while moving across state lines. LGBTQ+ people are criminalized for unfamiliarity with varying state laws (Cook, 2001; Feinberg, 1993; Trans rights lawyer advocates, 2017). In fact, LGBTQ+ people are more likely than cis heterosexual persons to be harassed,
approached, and experience abuse or misconduct by law enforcement (Stewart-Winter, 2015). Moreover, LGBTQ+ people are more likely to be victims of hate crimes than their cisgender heterosexual counterparts due to their perceived identities (Godfrey, 2016).

Despite the consequences of being their authentic selves, LGBTQ+ people continue to show up as fully present throughout American society and politics (Dentato et al., 2014). In 2017, LGBTQ+ Americans have displayed their resilience and yearning for fair treatment within the law by running for political office and winning. At least nine openly transgender people were elected to public office in historically conservative states like Virginia and Georgia (Sopelsa, 2017). This evolution of LGBTQ+ American identity politics is within its early stages of implementation and it is too soon to understand the significance it entails.

**Opposition to LGBTQ+ Equity**

Opposition to LGBTQ+ equity is mostly affirmed through the beliefs of Fundamentalist Christian activists (Johnson, 2018; Burack, 2006; Fetner, 2005). Socialized patriarchal practices within American culture promote ideals of hypermasculinity, misogyny, and homophobia (Kimmel, 2008; Pascoe, 2005; Deeb-Sossa & Kane, 2007) to protect the values and morals that stem from Christianity. As the most practiced religion in America (Deeb-Sossa & Kane, 2007), Christianity is focused primarily on traditional family values and procreation (Warner, 1999b; Foucault, 1978; D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012). This has resulted in Christian activists using arguments against pedophilia and sodomy to gain political traction with transgender bathroom
segregation regulations across the country (Burack, 2006; Warner, 1999b; Fetner, 2005; George, 2018).

**Hypermasculinity, Misogyny, & Homophobia**

Kimmel (2008) and Pascoe (2005) both argue that homophobia is a direct consequence of hypermasculinity and misogyny. The masculine identity is birthed through the fragility of gender norms and continual socialization of reinforced misogynistic viewpoints (Kimmel, 2008). For men, masculinity and misogyny are learned from spending countless hours attempting to perfect the masculine persona they were ascribed from the moment they were labeled as males (Kimmel, 2008; Pascoe, 2005). Throughout childhood and adolescence boys are focused on upholding the ideal heterosexual, masculine image.

A combination of peer pressure and competition amongst men develops a standard of approval and acceptance by society for how men assert their masculinity (Kimmel, 2008). According to Kimmel (2008), heterosexuality is confirmed by constantly displaying anti-feminine behavior around peers and within public spheres that are based on a homosocial model of masculinity. In essence, men act out in specific ways when they are around other men in order to prove their masculinity and portray an image that is heterosexual (Kimmel, 2008). Their “real fear is not fear of women but of being ashamed or humiliated in front of other men, or being dominated by stronger men” (Kimmel, 2008, p.64). Moreover, being perceived as gay or actually identifying as gay threatens masculinity (Deeb-Sossa & Kane, 2007). Homophobia, then, is a man’s way of showing off how manly he thinks he can be in order to prove his masculinity to the rest of society (Kimmel, 2008). This can take place through engaging in sports, betting wars,
sexual dominance over another who is not masculine, or in political campaigns (Kimmel, 2008). This was observed by Harris (2006) in the 2004 presidential campaign between Bush and Kerry. During this election, the Bush campaign was able to depict Kerry in the media as less manly and more vulnerable, ultimately as a “sissy boy” and weak, which was the equivalent to effeminate and queer (Harris, 2006). This example is based on the ideology that heteronormativity is socially acceptable, and homosexuality, queerness, and unmanly behaviors are socially unacceptable and unworthy of social power and/or status (Harris, 2006).

Religion, Family Values, & Procreation

In the mid-2000s, approximately 76 percent of Americans identified as Christians, (Deeb-Sossa & Kane, 2007). As the most dominant religion in the United States, the Christian values of heterosexuality and patriarchy are systemically upheld socially, economically, and politically (Godfrey, 2012). Subsequently, Christians who oppose homosexuality argue that sexual norms and sexuality stem from Biblical context and are the word of God (Warner, 1999b; Foucault, 1978; D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012). Many Christians use the Bible verses Genesis 19 and Romans 1:26-27 to argue that homosexuality is a sinful act (Deeb-Sossa & Kane, 2007). They believe that sex for reasons other than procreation is shameful and should be criminalized (Warner, 1999b).

Sexual norms consist of having sexual relations for the sake of procreation and should not take place under any other circumstance. These norms exclude engaging in sexual activities for pleasure, homosexual sex acts, and any other variance from the heteronormative ideals of sex for procreation. Additionally, Godfrey (2012) argues that sects of fundamentalist Christianity oppose interracial sex and marriage, as well as same-
sex sexuality and marriage, due to the belief that moral and social worth are based upon societal sexual expression.

Far right and fundamentalist Christians have chosen forms of activism for ensuring that the traditions of heterosexuality, heteronormativity, and sex for procreation are demonstrated in the value and belief systems of the status quo American lifestyle (Johnson, 2018; Burack, 2006; Fetner, 2005). An example of this activism is Chick tracts, illustrated booklets created by Jack Chick, a conservative Christian artist, and first distributed by Chick Publications in the 1960s for the purpose of locating individuals who were sinners and helping them find their way back to God (Burack, 2006). In one specific tract, “The Gay Blade” (1972), the message of leaving the life of a sinner and immorality for eternal salvation with God is directed at homosexuality and homosexuals (Burack, 2006). Moreover, in 1998, as a response to homosexuality and same-sex attraction, the Christian Right and pro-family activist organizations such as the Christian Coalition began the “Truth in Love” campaign to encourage LGBTQ+ identified people to accept Jesus Christ and convert away from a lifestyle of sin (Fetner, 2005). Currently, the U.S. Supreme Court is deliberating about a religious freedom argument that supports the First Amendment Defense Act (FADA), which would allow nonprofits and private institutions the right to choose whether or not to provide services to LGBTQ+ persons (Johnson, 2018).

**Pedophiles, Sodomites, & Bathrooms**

Fundamentalist Christians believe sodomy is engaging in sex acts that are unnatural and not for the purpose of procreation (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012; Warner, 1999b; Deeb-Sossa & Kane, 2007). Any sex act between two people of the same sex is
considered sodomy because of the inability to procreate from that sex act (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012; Warner, 1999b). An example of how Christians combatted sodomy in the twentieth century was by displaying Chick tracts in public spaces such as bathrooms, laundromats, and phone booths, as a way of encouraging gay men to repent and become a follower of the Christian religion (Burack, 2006). The Chick tract, “Doom Town” (1989) follows the themes of recruitment into same-sex love and the sexual assault of children to show readers the reasons why homosexuality is against God’s will (Burack, 2006). There are illustrations of priests chasing boys and two men kissing in a display of sexual perversion (Burack, 2006).

The segregation of restrooms can be traced throughout American history, and opponents of all-gender bathrooms are concerned that the transition towards unisex toilets would cause peril to sex segregation regulations placed upon similar facilities (George, 2018). In addition, opponents cite economic considerations in keeping public buildings up to code, ensuring specific numbers are met with regards to gender-designated restrooms, and updating the signage for all restrooms and facilities (George, 2018). Twenty-first century Christian activists are working towards regulating bathroom usage by gender (George, 2018). The Christian argument stems from beliefs that homosexuality and transgender identity do not exist (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012), and same-sex attraction is a sin that must be corrected (Burack, 2006; Warner, 1999b; Fetner, 2005). In 2016, Christian activists supported North Carolina in passing a bathroom regulation law, H.B. 2, which prohibited people from using the bathroom that matched their gender identity, and mandated individuals to use the bathroom that matched the sex on their birth certificate (George, 2018).
**LGBTQ+ Activism in the U.S.**

During the mid to late 1900s, revolutionary events were occurring with regards to gay and lesbian activism within the U.S. The formation of Mattachine Society in Los Angeles in 1950 and the Stonewall Inn Riots (1969) marked the beginning of what is now understood as the gay liberation movement (D'Emilio, 1992). Significant judiciary victories over the last century have led to marriage equality and allowing LGBTQ+ individuals to serve openly in the U.S. armed forces. Nevertheless, LGBTQ+ activists in the U.S. continue to evolve, innovate, and contribute to eliminating injustices and discrimination for queer people throughout the world (D'Emilio, 2016).

**Gay Civil Rights Movement in the U.S.**

The gay civil rights movement in the U.S. was born out of a collaborative fight for equal rights and protections for LGBTQ+ identified people (D’Emilio, 1992). The historical events that occurred during the Stonewall Inn Riots in New York City in 1969 set the stage for activists’ demand for LGBTQ+ liberation across America (D'Emilio, 2002). The gay civil rights movement in the U.S. has spanned across four generations of LGBTQ+ activists. Over the last century the U.S. has witnessed LGBTQ+ activists’ resilience and dedication to transforming the scope and intentions of the gay civil rights movement (D'Emilio, 2016; Jones, 2017). Regardless of these efforts, LGBTQ+ communities throughout the U.S. remain a vulnerable population and continue to experience ongoing marginalization and discrimination (Wood, 2017).

The LGBTQ+ community in the U.S. has continued to build upon the gay liberation movement that stemmed from the Stonewall Riots and now refers to their political action as the gay civil rights movement (D'Emilio, 1992; 2002; 2014; D’Emilio,
Although still understood and viewed as a movement based on the premise of the politics of gender and sexuality, the gay civil rights movement has morphed from a liberation front steeped in social radicalism, to several factions spread throughout the world seeking global intersectional systemic change (D'Emilio, 2014).

The oppression of gays and lesbians in the U.S. can be traced to the early 1900s, post-World War I (D'Emilio, 1992). Although the 1920s and 1930s witnessed an influx of gay and lesbian communities and subcultures throughout the U.S., homosexual behavior and same-sex love was ultimately condemned in American society (D'Emilio, 1992). In the 1940s, gays and lesbians attempted to fight back against oppressive societal norms and display same-sex affection public as a sign of protest (D'Emilio, 1992).

During the 1950s and 1960s, gay life and subculture became visible across the country in media and publications like The Mattachine Society (gay publication) and the Daughters of Bilitis (lesbian publication) (D'Emilio, 1992; Meeker, 2001). The end of the 1960s were dedicated to joining the Civil Rights Movement and bringing together groups of individuals seeking to incorporate equity and inclusion of all people regardless of gender, sexuality, or the color of their skin (D'Emilio, 1992; 2002; 2014). Throughout the 1960s, gay activists, such as Frank Kameny, began to emerge as the voices of the fight for equity and justice (D’Emilio, 2002). Kameny was fired from his job as an astronomer for being gay and unable to obtain a security clearance. This motivated Kameny to become one of the first leaders of the gay rights movement prior to Stonewall (D’Emilio, 2002; Hart, Ramachandran, & Strader, 2012; Poindexter, 1997). Kameny was a pioneer in the beginnings of the gay rights movement, leading protests in Washington

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D.C. and across the country to promote equity for the LGBTQ+ community (D’Emilio, 2002).

The 1970s fed off the energy provided by people like Kameny and consisted of the formation of radicalized subgroups within the gay and lesbian subculture such as, the Metropolitan Community Church, the Gay Activists Alliance, Gay Academic Union (GAU), New York Gay Liberation Front (GLF), ONE Magazine, Inc., the Janus Society, the Women’s Liberation Movement, and the Society for Individual Rights (D'Emilio, 1992; 2002; 2014; D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012; Sayer, 1995). These groups formed out of a similar vision to bring equal and fair treatment to LGBTQ+ individuals in the U.S.

The Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) crisis in the 1980s sparked the beginning of an epidemic for gay men across the country. At the start of the epidemic, AIDS was most prevalent in gay male culture. Consequently, men who were having sex with men became targets for increased discrimination and were pushed further into the margins of society (Godfrey, 2012; Artavia & Anderson-Minshall, 2017). By the mid-1980s, AIDS was being described throughout the U.S. as ‘The Gay Plague’ and widespread fear grew amongst conservative politics and homophobic groups (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012). In response to the oppression and hate that occurred during this time, AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) formed chapters in major cities across the U.S. (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012). ACT UP served as a coalition consisting of LGBTQ+ persons and their allies with the sole purpose of confronting the conservative right and regaining the human rights of those being discriminated against due to their sexual orientation and/or AIDS status (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012). The forming of ACT UP and the reemergence of the gay civil rights movement towards the end of the
1980s was the beginning of an anti-discrimination and equal rights campaign that continues to motivate LGBTQ+ activism in the 21st century. In spite of the formation of ACT UP and its allies, the impact of the AIDS epidemic curtailed the momentum that the 1970s had brought to the gay civil rights movement. LGBTQ+ historians and psychologists have evidenced that the gay civil rights movement was recovering from the aftermath of the AIDS crisis well into the mid-1990s (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012).

The beginning of the 1990s was a demonstration of the resilience of LGBTQ+ communities and the gay civil rights movement. In 1990, the U.S government succumbed to the mounting pressure the gay rights movement and their allies put on them throughout the latter part of the previous decade. Congress enacted several anti-discrimination laws, which included prohibition of discrimination based on HIV-status in the Americans with Disabilities Act, a Hate Crimes Statistics Act which made it a crime to victimize people based on their sexual orientation, and the Ryan White Act which increased federal funding for medical care to people with AIDS (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012). These laws were a small victory for the gay civil rights movement and shifted momentum back into the favor of LGBTQ+ people and their allies.

In response to these major victories for LGBTQ+ people and the election of a democratic president in 1992, the Christian right began a push to gain the majority in the Congressional elections in 1994 through the funding of hyper-conservative Republican candidates (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012). Consequently, Republicans became the majority party in both the House and Senate, establishing a foothold on Congressional decisions for the remainder of the 20th century. This led to the passing of Department of Defense Directive 1304.26 (Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (DADT)) in 1993 (implemented in
February 1994) disallowing lesbian, gay, and bisexual identified individuals from serving openly in the U.S. armed forces, and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 1996 which states that the institution of marriage is between one man and one woman (Barclay et al., 2009; Berstein, 2015; Bosley, 2014; D’Emilio, 2016; Meyer, 2011). In addition, over 70 percent of states in the U.S. followed up these laws with additional statutes that made workplace discrimination against LGBTQ+ persons legal for employers (Barclay et al., 2009). Alternatively, the courts in Hawaii (1993), Alaska (1996), and Vermont (1999) declared DOMA unconstitutional and same-sex couples were given the opportunity to access the benefits of marriage (D’Emilio, 2016).

The passing of DADT and DOMA in the 1990s served as a focal point for the gay civil rights movement in the 21st century. The movement utilized the mobilization of LGBTQ+ people and their allies to generate a revolution towards the federal legalization of same-sex marriage (repeal of DOMA) and the repeal of DADT (Barclay et al., 2009; D’Emilio, 2016). In 2011, the Obama Administration repealed the DADT policy giving lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals the right to openly serve in the U.S. armed forces (Bosley, 2014; D’Emilio, 2016; Meyer, 2011). In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court determined DOMA to be unconstitutional and federally legalized same-sex marriage (D’Emilio, 2016). In 2015, the Obama Administration repealed the transgender military ban forcing the U.S. armed forces to allow transgender persons to enlist and serve openly as the gender of their choosing (Brook, 2015; Hennigan, 2016). However, in 2017 the Trump Administration reinstated the military transgender ban making it against the Uniform Code of Military Justice to serve in the U.S. armed forces as an openly
transgender person and denying the continuation of funds for gender confirmation surgery to active duty military personnel (Davis & Cooper, 2017).

**Bay Area LGBTQ+ Contributions**

*I ask for the movement to continue, for the movement to grow...after all it’s what this is all about. It’s not about personal gain, not about ego, not about power—it’s about giving those young people out there in the Altoona, Pennsylvania’s hope. You gotta give them hope* (Milk, 2013, p.249).

By the mid-1970s, San Francisco, California had become a mecca for gay liberationists, and a geographic hot spot for openly LGBTQ+ people (Milk, 2013). This set the stage for LGBTQ+ activists to begin running for public office with the intention of serving their communities and passing laws to protect LGBTQ+ people (Jones, 2017).

Over the last 50 years, the Bay Area of California—specifically the city of San Francisco—has been a home to many well-known LGBTQ+ activists who participated heavily in the gay civil rights movement. Four of whom have their names etched in the history of the movement as politicians, activists, and leaders within their communities beginning in the 1970s—Harvey Milk, Cleve Jones, Roma Guy, and Sally Gearhart (Jones, 2017). These men and women dedicated most of their lives to fighting for equity and justice for the LGBTQ+ community throughout the Bay Area. Their dedication to the gay civil rights movement was felt across the U.S. and continues to be a driving force for present day LGBTQ+ activists (D’Emilio, 2002; 2014; Jones, 2017; Milk, 2013).

Harvey Milk was an influential LGBTQ+ activist in U.S. history. He is well-known for being the first openly LGBTQ+ publicly elected official to serve in the U.S. (Milk, 2013). While living in the Castro District of San Francisco, he became one of the
last storefront politicians to win an election to public office in November 1977 (Jones, 2017; Milk, 2013). On November 27, 1978, Milk was assassinated in his office at the City Hall building only a few weeks after leading a grassroots campaign to defeat Proposition 6 (Jones, 2017). Proposition 6, also known as the Briggs Initiative, was championed by California State Senator John Briggs who wanted to ban LGBTQ+ persons from working in public education (Milk, 2013; Blumenfeld, 2012). The defeat of the Briggs Initiative was a pivotal moment in the history of California LGBTQ+ rights, and a shift in the gay civil rights movement towards starting grassroots campaigns across the country (D’Emilio, 2002; 2014; Jones, 2017; Milk, 2013). The death of Milk was a catalyst for future national marches on Washington for gay and lesbian rights (Jones, 2017). In October 1979, LGBTQ+ activists and allies from across the country participated in the first National March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights (Jones, 2017). The following month, Cleve Jones and over 40,000 other Milk supporters held a rally on the steps of City Hall in San Francisco to demand justice for LGBTQ+ victims of hate crimes on the one-year anniversary of Milk’s death (Jones, 2017).

**Millennial Activism**

Millennials in the U.S. are the new generation of policy makers and politicians. In 2008, millennials were attributed with voting in the first African-American president of the U.S.—President Barrack Obama (Shelley & Hitt, 2016). In the 2016 presidential election, millennials made up the largest group of voters at approximately 75 million people (Shelley & Hitt, 2016). In 2016, a majority of the states that Bernie Sanders won during the Democratic primary election was due to how many millennial Facebook followers he had in those particular states (Shelley & Hitt, 2016). As American politics
moves into the 21st century with the Trump Administration at the helm of the conservative political agenda, and the LGBTQ+ population experiences their first aging generation of elders, the gay civil rights movement has become more dependent on the involvement and participation of LGBTQ+ millennials and their allies in order to continue the fight for equity and inclusion (D’Emilio, 2014; 2016; Jones, 2017).

**Advocates & Allies**

Entertainers, professional athletes, and politicians have played significant roles in the exposure of the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in the U.S. and abroad. The election of Harvey Milk, media coverage of the lives of openly LGBTQ+ athletes like Billie Jean King and Greg Louganis, assassination of world-famous fashionista Gianni Versace, and Ellen DeGeneres’ coming out on national television both positively and negatively impacted the gay civil rights movement (D’Emilio, 2014). Subsequently, however, these events changed the mindsets and attitudes of the American populous, contributed to the equal access to the institution of marriage, and propelled the movement forward into the 21st century (D’Emilio, 2014; 2016). Furthermore, popular television series like Modern Family, The Fosters, and Transparent have generated more understanding of the challenges and commonalities LGBTQ+ individuals have in comparison to their cisgender heterosexual counterparts (Robinson & Alston, 2014). This exposure to the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals has given the millennial generation access into a previously impenetrable world for members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Since the passing of marriage equality and the repeals of DOMA and DADT, the gay civil rights movement has gained a significant amount of support from advocates and allies wanting to implement fair and equal treatment of LGBTQ+ persons throughout all
institutions of American society (Grzanka et al., 2015; Jones & Brewster, 2017). In particular, heterosexual cisgender individuals, along with many religious-based institutions have publicly demonstrated their support for the LGBTQ+ community (Kane, 2013). Additionally, for institutions that provide services such as education and healthcare, justice departments have established nuanced protocols for working with LGBTQ+ individuals in order to provide safer spaces and supportive working environments (Blackburn, 2014; Dragowski et al., 2016; Ratts et al., 2013; Shelton, 2015). Correspondingly, national legal supportive services have been established through organizations such as Lambda Legal, to provide LGBTQ+ people access to lawyers who more thoroughly comprehend the specific challenges LGBTQ+ individuals experience while attempting to navigate the U.S. judiciary system (Cook, 2001; Swank & Fahs, 2013; Trans rights lawyer advocates, 2017; Turk, 2013).

**LGBTQ+ Millennials in the U.S.**

LGBTQ+ millennials will not encounter the same sociopolitical challenges as their elders, and experience less discrimination and hate in their lifetimes than the generations of LGBTQ+ persons who came before them (Keleher & Smith, 2012). This phenomenon has enabled LGBTQ+ millennials to come out at earlier ages and contribute to the gay rights movement with less constraint, through technology and social media outlets (Vaccaro, 2009). The conversations that take place throughout internet channels have led to an increase in the quality and quantity of LGBTQ+ participation in 21st century activism (Cameron, 2017; Jackman, 2017; Wargo, 2017).

Researchers have indicated that LGBTQ+ millennial activism in the 21st century has evolved and taken on alterations from the social movements of the previous century.
due to the advancement in technology and the accessibility of the internet (Barclay et al., 2009; Bernstein, 2015; Phillips, 2014; Wargo, 2017). Social movements have become digitized due to the increasing accessibility and rapid relaying of information transmitted through the internet. LGBTQ+ millennials have altered and adapted their strategies of activism through the use of online forums and blogging on websites in order to disseminate information to the masses at a much faster pace, which enables them to keep up with the current political climate (Wargo, 2017). As a result, LGBTQ+ millennials are streaming and downloading excessive amounts of resources and knowledge through their mobile devices and computers. This has generated ongoing conversations regarding LGBTQ+ equity and social justice on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr, as well as blogs/websites such as Autostraddle, Everyday Feminism, The Establishment, and Black Girl Dangerous.

LGBTQ+ millennials have become involved in the gay civil rights movement by their mere existence due to coming of age in a time when the AIDS crisis was on the forefront of national political conversations. They have been recognized as starting the new youth movement for equity, fairness, and justice for all people (Blackburn, 2014; Blumenfeld, 2012; Drescher, 2014; Jackman, 2017; Klein et al., 2015; Lalor, 2015; Motta, 2016). LGBTQ+ millennials have acquired a queer consciousness that has changed the trajectory of the gay civil rights movement as it moves into the start of the third decade of the 21st century (Duncan et al., 2017; Jackman, 2017; Lalor, 2015; Ratts et al., 2013; Santich, 2016). An influx of queer literature and authors telling their stories, like Janet Mock, along with openly LGBTQ+ actors in television and film, like Laverne Cox, and innovation in television series, like Pose, has given LGBTQ+ individuals an
understanding that they are being seen (Mock, 2014; Rayner, 2018). This has created more space for the movement to be inclusive of issues, such as transgender rights (D’Emilio, 2016; Taylor & Haider-Markel, 2014; Trans right lawyer, 2017; Yang et al., 2015).

**Theoretical Foundation**

The ideologies of social movement theory reason that phenomena like the gay civil rights movement occurs due to the commonalities, participation in, and shared social experiences that LGBTQ+ people encounter (Nynäsh & Lassander, 2015; Rhodes-Kubiak, 2013; Young, 1999). The underlying discourse of queer theory is the intertwining of the experiential history of LGBTQ+ people and the political nuances of social movements that they participate in (Gamson, 2000). Together with social movement theory, queer theory can provide explanations for the progress of the gay civil rights movement and the involvement LGBTQ+ millennial activists have taken within the movement.

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical foundation that is useful in exploring the identity making process for LGBTQ+ individuals (Wilson, 1996). According to Anderson & Snow (2001), identity is something that is developed over the course of a lifetime through the continuous examination of oneself. In addition, the repetition of behaviors, attitudes, and norms contribute to the making of one’s identity, such as displays of emotion or repression of what one may think of as immoral—internalized homophobia (Anderson & Snow, 2001).
Social Movement Theory

Social movement theory suggests that the internet and widespread availability of social media have transformed the way that LGBTQ+ millennials are partaking in political activism that is influenced by the motivations of religiosity (Nynäs & Lassander, 2015). Nynäs and Lassander (2015) describe social movements as social processes that involve the connection between social actors who are immersed in evident informal networks. The social actors have a shared identity and engage in communal conflict with noticeably identified opponents.

Furthermore, social movements do not begin with strategized political processes. Rather, social movements are initiated due to commonality and togetherness brought upon by the need for equality and social change (Nynäs & Lassander, 2015). According to Rhodes-Kubiak (2013), one way to describe this interactive simultaneous progression of similar ideals is activist citizenship. In essence, one’s participation in a transformational change movement matches their worth in society as an activist. Likewise, participating in the status quo of societal norms and capitalism contributes to the ideals of social movement theory, particularly when the underprivileged experience is coercion in the form of power and domination over the other (Young, 1999). This is the case of the LGBTQ+ individuals who experience additional societal constraints such as racism, sexism, misogyny, and patriarchy (Wilson, 1996; Young, 1999).

**The gay civil rights movement.** From these explanations of the operationalization of social movement theory, the gay civil rights movement that LGBTQ+ millennials are participating in is considered a social movement. The internet and social media have furnished LGBTQ+ millennials with a platform for furthering their
discussions about how to mobilize and coordinate additional forms of action prior to physical conflict occurring (Nynäs and Lassander, 2015). This has changed the scope of thinking with regards to social conflict and revolutionized the gay rights movement in the direction of non-violent political action.

**Symbolic Interactionism**

Identity is socially constructed through interactions and relationships which manifest specific hegemonic social inequalities such as: racism, classism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, and transphobia (Anderson & Snow, 2001). In addition, the making of one’s identity is reflected within collective social interactions such as political activism, which may result in revolting against patriarchal institutions and hierarchical structures of oppression (Anderson & Snow, 2001). Anderson and Snow’s (2001) interpretation of the work of symbolic interactionist Erving Goffman examines how these relationships and exchanges revolve around the analyses of social interaction (See Figure 1).

*Figure 1. Symbolic Interactionism & Identity Making. (Anderson & Snow, 2001)*
In essence, the critical self-reflexive practice of scrutinizing our experiences, including dramaturgical reenactments of our interactions with others, is a way of revealing various forms of power within social encounters (Anderson & Snow, 2001). Through the process of self-evaluation, specific behaviors, which are influenced by social categories and labels, that represent our identities are appropriated and performed in response to hegemonic symbolic structural meanings and constructs of the status quo (Anderson & Snow, 2001).

The replication of behaviors essentially unfolds in the form of stigmatization which inculcates the individual’s identity. As a result, these stigmas negatively transform the embodiment of certain identities. According to Khanna and Johnson (2010), stigma is defined as an attribute that devalues one’s identity, and it is a social construct that varies situationally; it is not an objective reality, nor a fixed characteristic of an individual. In other words, stigma is constantly changing, evolving, and unique, and it maintains subjectivity through the creation of boundaries which are established during the act of symbolic interaction (Khanna & Johnson, 2010). In addition, societal constraints certify that we are only able to operate within the social conditions that are made available to us through heteronormative discourse (Rosenfeld, 2009).

These societal constraints are situated within the previously mentioned hierarchical systems of institutionally reinforced power which establishes stratification systems. Distinctions of social worth are learned, communicated, and reinforced through relational processes due to stratification systems (Anderson & Snow, 2001). When distinct identities are created and replicated through conscious social performances within stratification systems, a sense of self is established. Consequently, how we behave...
socially and how we are situated within the larger context of societal structures determines what we think about ourselves. Identity, then, is perpetuated through patriarchy and other social hierarchies (Anderson & Snow, 2001). This is how behaviors are practiced and cause the self-conceptualization of individual identities.

**The evolution of the queer identity.** The amalgamation of identities produces complexities of inequality for many individuals (Anderson & Snow, 2001). By inhabiting multiple identities, a person is forced into the constructs of experiencing intersectionality (Wilson, 1996). The intricacies in navigating which identities are most important to socially perform may adorn conflict within the self and other group affiliations (Wilson, 1996). For example, in the article, *How We Find Ourselves: Identity Development and Two-Spirited People*, Wilson (1996) examines the struggle of having to incorporate race and sexuality. According to Wilson (1996), sexual and racial identity development models cannot encompass intersectionality and maintaining multiple identities is motivated by cultural aspects of upbringing. In essence, experiencing the conflict of having to manage multiple identities is dependent on the existence of two factors: how the self is situated within societal structures, and the space in which an individual culturally occupies and has invested time within (Wilson, 1996).

**Implications for Future Research Regarding LGBTQ+ Millennials**

Institutional acceptance and systemic changes for members of the LGBTQ+ community are becoming reliant on the millennial generation due to the sheer amount of LGBTQ+ identified individuals being at an all-time high (Allen, 2017). In fact, a Gallup poll in 2017 reported that seven percent of millennials (born between 1980 and 1998) in the United States identified as LGBTQ+, making up the highest demographic of
LGBTQ+ identified persons (Allen, 2017). Subsequently, recent data shows that this number is expected to continue to rise to 10% due to the increased social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community that appears to have occurred over the last 20 years (Allen, 2017). Preventing ongoing institutionalized discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression is dependent on the participation of LGBTQ+ millennials in the gay civil rights movement (Quartey et al., 2018).

**LGBTQ+ Millennials in the Bay Area of California**

The inclusion of LGBTQ+ straight allies in the gay civil rights movement has increased the amount of political activism that is taking place in metropolitan geographic locations like the Bay Area of California. Therefore, the implications for future research in finding additional avenues for creating attitudinal changes and educating LGBTQ+ straight allies on how to become better activists are essential aspects of what the gay rights movement will evolve into as it moves into the next decade of political resistance (Grzanka et al., 2015).

Thus far, very little research exists on LGBTQ+ millennials and their participation in the gay civil rights movement, specifically in the Bay Area where LGBTQ+ subcultures thrive. LGBTQ+ millennials in the Bay Area are tasked with the hope and future of the gay civil rights movement. They exemplify what the future of the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California will become as the U.S. transitions into a new generation of public policy. Essentially, LGBTQ+ millennials in the Bay Area have inherited the responsibility of carrying the political torch for LGBTQ+ generations to follow.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Qualitative research is a descriptive analysis of an organic, naturalistic process where the researcher and the phenomena being studied essentially become intertwined (Patton, 2015). The researcher collects data through interviews, observations, fieldwork, and gathering historical documents. Qualitative methods have the opportunity to generate significant information regarding specific populations and cases (Patton, 2015). This emphasis on detail allows the researcher to find the richness in the data and focus on the process of developing meaning and understanding of their findings (Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002). In addition, the researcher is afforded the ability to approach fieldwork that is absent of predetermined categorical constraints of their analysis which essentially contributes to the vastness of the detailed findings brought about by qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2015).

Chapter III provides a description of the methodology and research design utilized in this study. The chapter reviews the purpose statement and the research questions that were presented in Chapter I. Chapter III identifies and defines the population, sample, and sample selection, the process of instrument development, steps which were taken to increase the validity and reliability of the findings, provides a detailed description of data collection and analysis processes, and the limitations of the study.
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that influenced their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. Another purpose of the study was to describe the recommendations LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement.

Central Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
2. What recommendations do LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement?

Sub Questions

1. What are the lived narratives of LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
2. What external motivators lead LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
3. What internal motivators lead LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
4. What factors of the LGBTQ+ identity have influenced LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
5. What recommendations do LGBTQ+ millennials have for current or future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement?
Research Design

The methodology applied to this study was qualitative research. Qualitative research is an effective methodological approach when conducting a phenomenological study regarding the phenomena of social movements and the experiences of LGBTQ+ persons (Patton, 2015). This is due to the nature of the findings giving life to the study through stories and artifacts regarding the personal history of LGBTQ+ individuals who are participants in the phenomenon of the gay civil rights movement. Qualitative data allows the researcher to tell a story about the variables in a study through descriptive analysis of interviews, artifacts, and observations (Patton, 2015).

A total of 12 interviews were conducted by the researcher to examine the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that have influenced their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California and describe the recommendations LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement. During the process of qualitative research, the researcher conducts in-depth interviews with study participants to collect data on the perceptions, opinions, and emotions of a person’s experiences (Roberts, 2010). A significant amount of authenticity and experiences of LGBTQ+ people would be lost if a quantitative approach was undertaken. Furthermore, a qualitative approach is most effective when conducting a narrative inquiry of the lives of LGBTQ+ millennial activists. The autobiographical interpretation of one’s personhood, growth, and personal history is the essence of narrative inquiry. This is best accomplished through interviews and observation by the researcher (Patton, 2015).
The research design was a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology provides language and meaning to empirical evidence in the form of descriptive narratives of lived experiences (Patton, 2015). Additionally, phenomenology allows the researcher to identify intense emotions and the true nature of specific events through the examination of a participant’s experiences of pain, suffering, or loss (Patton, 2015). Through the retelling of an experience that may have had a life-altering effect on the lives of the participants, the researcher gains access into particular human conditions and deeper understanding of a person’s consciousness (Patton, 2015). This collection and analysis of information-rich narratives through storytelling is the underlying focus of the phenomenological approach to research (Patton, 2015; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

**Rationale**

As the purpose of this study was to illuminate the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials in the Bay Area of California and their participation in the gay civil rights movement, a qualitative phenomenological research design was the best fit to ensure the researcher identifies the most information-rich narratives possible to answer the central research questions. Phenomenological studies address the lived experiences of individuals or groups of people and seek to identify and derive meaning out of those events (Patton, 2015; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). This study focused on the phenomena of the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials and the gay civil rights movement. The phenomenon studied may consist of an experience, emotion, relationship, or event that the person(s) of interest has participated in (Patton, 2015). In essence, phenomenology aims at uncovering the reasons for why people think, feel, judge, describe, remember, sense, and behave the way that they do through their
socialization (Patton, 2015). The intentional exploration of the researcher of how human beings, specifically LGBTQ+ millennials, develop their individual and shared worldviews allows for a comprehensive depiction of lived experiences as a phenomenon (Patton, 2015).

**Population**

The population of a study is the larger group for which the researcher is able to generalize the study’s results (Roberts, 2010). The population for this study was defined as the total number of LGBTQ+ millennials in the U.S. This number is unknown due to a lack of empirical data. However, it is estimated that there were approximately 11 million adults in the U.S. who identify as LGBTQ+ in 2018 (Fitzsimons, 2018). In July 2016, there were approximately 71 million millennials in the U.S. (Fry, 2018). The total number of estimated LGBTQ+ millennials in the U.S. in 2017 was estimated at 8.2% out of all Americans born between 1980 and 2000—totaling 5,822,000 LGBTQ+ millennials (Newport, 2018; Fitzsimons, 2018). The researcher was unable to identify this exact number due to the lack of research on LGBTQ+ millennials and inconsistencies in the last nationwide census data with regards to an LGBTQ+ identifier.

**Target Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) defined a target population as a group of subjects, individuals, or events that meet certain criteria that the researcher has identified to generate results for a study. The target population for this study was self-identified LGBTQ+ persons who were born between the years of 1980 and 2000, resided and/or worked in the Bay Area of California, and participated in, or worked for, a local LGBTQ+ group and/or organization. A 2015 Gallup poll found that the San Francisco
Metro area (including Oakland and Hayward) had the highest percentage of LGBT identified people in the U.S. from 2012-2014 at 6.2 percent (Newport & Gates, 2015). The significance of the total number of LGBT identified individuals in the Bay Area of California supported the selection of LGBTQ+ identified millennials as the target population for this study. For the purposes of this study, LGBTQ+ included any person who self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. Millennials were persons born between the years of 1980 and 2000. The Bay Area of California consisted of the following counties: Solano, Napa, Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa, and Santa Clara.

Sample

Data is collected from a group of participants or subjects which is referred to as a sample (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The sample for this study was generated through the non-probability sampling methods (Patton, 2015)—purposive, snowball, and convenient. Purposive sampling is applied to qualitative research to strategically collect information from diverse populations that provide substance to a study (Patten, 2009; Patton, 2015). Snowball sampling utilizes the network of one or two initial study participants to obtain additional volunteers who are interested in being interviewed for the purpose of the research (Patten, 2009; Patton, 2015). Convenient sampling is a way of selecting participants for a study based on the ease of their availability and access to them by the researcher (Patton, 2015). To identify a sample for this study, both convenient and purposeful snowball sampling was utilized. The sample for this study consisted of self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons who
were born between the years of 1980 and 2000, reside and/or work in the Bay Area of California, and participate in, or work for, a local LGBTQ+ group and/or organization.

**Sample Selection Process**

This study utilized purposive sampling strategies to identify volunteer participants to assist in a thorough analysis of a social phenomenon. Initially, the researcher identified interview participants through convenience sampling that targeted individuals who work for LGBTQ+ organizations located in the Bay Area of California. The researcher posted flyers soliciting participation throughout the Bay Area in locations where known members of the LGBTQ+ community would most likely socialize, such as LGBTQ+ Pride events, local hangouts, and organization gathering spots. Next, the researcher was contacted by several participants via phone and email to learn more about the purpose of the study and decide if they would like to volunteer as participants for the study. Then, the researcher utilized snowball sampling to identify additional participants for the study. An effort was made by the researcher to access participants from all nine Bay Area counties and all five of the LGBTQ+ identities.

Determining a valid sample size for qualitative research is essential to the reliability of the study’s outcomes. The sample size of a study is dependent on the information the researcher is seeking and the amount of credibility of the findings (Patton, 2015). Considering the aim of this study was to understand the relationships that exist between the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials and their participation in the gay civil rights movement, a sample size of 12 self-identified LGBTQ+ millennials was deemed sufficient to represent the demographic needed to induce significant information from in-depth interviews. The researcher adapted Virtue’s (2019) following
participant selection process:

1. A list of LGBTQ+ organizations that exists in the nine Bay Area counties (Solano, Napa, Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa, or Santa Clara) was generated.

2. The researcher contacted a representative from each organization to make a general announcement to their staff and volunteers regarding the need for potential participants in the study. A flyer (Appendix A) was distributed to each representative—in-person or through email correspondence—with contact information of the researcher for anyone who met the selection criteria.

3. An invite letter (Appendix B) explaining the purpose and intent of the research was sent by e-mail to the 12 participants selected to participate in the study utilizing purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling techniques.

4. If a potential study participant changed their mind or declined to be interviewed, a replacement was selected based on the selection criteria.

5. Each participant who agreed to be interviewed was provided with an informed consent form, an audio release form, and the participants’ bill of rights (Appendix C)

In order to qualify as a participant in this study, the participant needed to meet all four of the following sample selection criteria:

1. Be a resident of one of the following counties--Solano, Napa, Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa, or Santa Clara.

2. Self-identify as LGBTQ+. 

4. Self-identify as a participant in a local LGBTQ+ group and/or organization

**Instrumentation**

The researcher was the primary instrument utilized to collect data for this study which included the creation and deployment of the interview questions, as well as the analysis and interpretation of the data. To eliminate potential bias as an LGBTQ+ millennial identified person, the researcher tested for question objectivity and impactful body language prior to conducting interviews of participants by performing a field test of the interview protocol. Phenomenological studies depend on interviews to evoke emotional accounts of lived experiences to produce information-rich data (Patton, 2015). Throughout this process, the researcher remained highly engaged with the interviewees and maintained a protocol of preestablished semi-structured interview questions to increase the reliability of the findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Patton, 2015). This ensured that each participant was asked the same questions while creating space for individuals to share unique experiences upon further reflection. The interview questions (Appendix D) were developed through a synthesis of the theoretical frameworks examined in the literature review and the central research questions and sub questions. An alignment table (Table 1) was created to demonstrate the relationship between the research questions and the interview questions.
Furthermore, an expert panel of Brandman University research faculty was consulted to provide support and guidance for research design and content. The coordination and scheduling of interviews, interviewing of participants, data collection, coding, and thematic analysis was reviewed by the expert panel to minimize the potential for researcher bias. The researcher was assisted by a recording device during the interview process to maintain the authenticity of the conversation that occurred with the participants.

The design of the interview questions was intentionally aligned to the research questions. The researcher utilized exact terminology and context from the purpose statement and research questions within the development of the interview protocol to ensure all variables were addressed in the interview instrument. The interview questions were designed to be non-biased and sensitive to the participant’s emotional and psychological well-being without requiring the interviewee to choose a position. The interview was structured and organized in three sections, beginning with an introduction to provide personal background and demographic data, along with proof that the participant met the sample selection criteria, followed by an examination of the participant’s lived experiences as a self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or

### Table 1. Alignment Table

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions (RQ)</th>
<th>Interview Questions (IQ)</th>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>IQ12, IQ13, IQ14, IQ15, IQ17, IQ18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub Questions (SQ)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>SQ2</td>
<td>IQ9, IQ14</td>
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<tr>
<td>SQ3</td>
<td>IQ8, IQ13</td>
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<td>SQ4</td>
<td>IQ8, IQ9, IQ12, IQ13, IQ14, IQ15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ5</td>
<td>IQ16, IQ17, IQ18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
queer millennial, and concluding with an opportunity to gain an understanding of the participant’s involvement with their local LGBTQ+ group or organization as a member and/or activist. Interview standards and procedures were established and adapted from Virtue (2019) to increase study validity and reliability throughout the interview and data collection process. These consisted of the following:

1. Each consenting participant was introduced to the research project and an explanation of the interview procedures.

2. Information describing the rights of the participant as described by Brandman University’s Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) was shared with each participant and a written informed consent form was provided (Appendix C). The informed consent included an overview of the study, description of estimated time required, outline of potential benefits of the study, notification that an audio recording would be made, and assurance audio recordings would be maintained in a confidential manner.

3. The signed consent forms were retained in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s home.

4. All participants were offered the opportunity to ask questions about the study content or process.

5. Participants were informed the interviews would be audio-recorded and transcribed, and they would have an opportunity to review the transcripts to make any desired revisions for accuracy and clarity.

In addition, the researcher collected artifacts from Bay Area events and organizations targeted at LGBTQ+ millennials and the gay civil rights movement.
Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research depends on the consistency of the findings (Patten, 2009). A measurement is considered to be reliable when similarities exist throughout the results of a study utilizing the same measurement on each occasion (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The researcher ensured reliability of this study by developing semi-structured interviews which were employed the exact same way with each participant. Further, the researcher utilized a recording device throughout the entirety of each interview to confirm that the data collection process was accurate. To certify consistency in the transcription of each interview, the participant was given a copy and encouraged to make any changes necessary to their responses. Transcriptions of the recorded interviews was completed by the researcher within 72 hours of the interaction.

Phenomenological interviews completed during qualitative studies rely heavily on the ability of the researcher to collect, transcribe, analyze, and interpret the data fully (Patton, 2015). Moreover, Patton (2015) illustrates that conducting a variety of data collection methods such as, observations, interviews, and artifacts, enhances the reliability of qualitative studies. Artifacts from LGBTQ+ events and meetups held throughout the Bay Area during the data collection phase of the study were collected by the researcher to supplement the findings from the interviews. The process of data triangulation was applied to the interview transcripts and artifacts collected by the researcher to strengthen reliability of the results of the study (Patton, 2015). Triangulation decreases the vulnerability of errors occurring during the study by linking and analyzing multiple modes of evidence into more specific results (Patton, 2015).
The results of a study may be considered as reliable through a reflexive testing process of the collected data called intercoder, or interrater, reliability (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). Interrater reliability is demonstrated when multiple analysts of the same dataset develop similar or identical results (Lombard et al., 2002). To establish reliability of the data, the researcher solicited a peer qualitative researcher who was unrelated to the study to conduct a thematic analysis of the transcribed data collected from the first four interviews. Both the results from the peer and the researcher was compared for alignment.

In addition, the researcher conducted a field test of the interview questions and protocol which consisted of an objective observer and an interviewee who identified as an LGBTQ+ millennial. Both the observer and interviewee provided the researcher with feedback to calibrate the interview protocol and ensure minimal bias throughout the interaction. Upon completion of the field test, the researcher made changes to the interview questions and protocol based on the suggestions from the observer and interviewee.

Validity

Validity is a “judgement of the appropriateness of a measure for specific inferences or decisions… it is assessed depending on the purpose, population, and environmental characteristics in which a measurement takes place” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.179). To establish validity, it is imperative that a quality control process is performed by the researcher and trustworthiness maintained throughout the study (Patton, 2015; Roberts, 2010). Assessing for validity in qualitative
phenomenological research requires the careful examination of the data collection, analysis, and reporting processes being employed (Patton, 2015).

In qualitative research, validity is present within the results of the study when the content of the information generated through the data collection process is aligned to the constructs, or characteristics, of the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Patten, 2009). The constructs of this study were the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials, their identity making processes, and reflections of their participation in the gay civil rights movement. Validity is ensured when the constructs of the study are fully present and aligned to the findings of the study. To verify validity of the findings the researcher maintained alignment between the purpose of the study, research questions, and results by formulating questions related to the theoretical foundations (social movement theory and symbolic interactionism) which guided the research.

In addition, a matrix was established to track the fluidity of the interview question development and confirm alignment. The matrix was assessed and cross-checked by the study committee for any concerns, errors, or misalignment. The study committee consisted of three established qualitative research experts who hold doctorate degrees in education. Upon completion of the assessment, the researcher made any necessary adjustments and recommendations to the interview protocol suggested by the study’s committee members.

**Data Collection**

The researcher began the recruitment process of volunteer participants for the study upon receiving approval from the Brandman University Internal Review Board (BUIRB). BUIRB provides a review of the ethical components of the study to ensure the
overall safety of the participants is adhered to at all times throughout the research process. The researcher obtained the representative participation sample of the target population through: soliciting self-identified LGBTQ+ millennials throughout the Bay Area who are visibly active in the gay civil rights movement on social media, snowball and convenience sampling techniques, and personal interactions with Bay Area LGBTQ+ millennials. Data was collected from conducting in-person semi-structured interviews at a local neutral site within the county limits of the participant.

The combined approach of conversational interviewing and a standardized guided question format was deployed to provide the researcher with flexibility for probing and gaining lucrative information (Patton, 2015). This interviewing technique is useful for allowing the researcher to make appropriate deviations during an interview when the participant provides additional information that would enhance the purpose of the study and/or fill in gaps in the research that were unaccounted for at the onset of the study (Patton, 2015). The standardized guided questions were intentionally grouped in a sequence that directly aligned with the purpose statement and research questions of the study. In addition, the basic fundamental concepts of the theoretical frameworks of social movement theory and symbolic interactionism were utilized to guide the structure of the interview questions.

There were three sections of questions developed for the data collection of the study. The purpose of the first section was to gain information about the participant by requesting their personal background and demographic data, along with proof that the participant met the sample selection criteria. This information was essential to verifying the participant met the sample criteria for qualifying as a participant in study. Probing for
further information was unnecessary during this section of the interview due to the nature of the close-ended questions asked of the participant. The second section examined the participant’s lived experiences as a self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer millennial. This section built upon the identity making process described in Goffman’s symbolic interactionism and sought to solicit further understanding of the LGBTQ+ person’s lived experiences as it relates to their character and overall development of their personal and public persona. The third section was an opportunity for the researcher to gain an understanding of the participant’s involvement with their local LGBTQ+ group or organization as a member and/or activist. Throughout this section, the questions elicited information pertaining to the relationship of the participant’s lived experiences as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer millennial and their motivation for being involved in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. While engaging in sections two and three, the researcher probed with follow up requests for clarification or more information as necessary when a response was given that was deemed aligned to the purpose of the study. Each interview concluded with a final opportunity for the participant to share any additional information regarding their lived experiences in the Bay Area that would benefit the purpose of the study. Lastly, participants were requested to provide any artifacts they may have pertaining to the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area.

The interviews were recorded using an electronic audio recording device and were transcribed by the researcher within three days of the interaction. Each participant received a copy of the transcription of their interview to check for accuracy and provide
any necessary changes to their responses. The researcher engaged in a thematic analysis of the finalized transcriptions to identify existing patterns in the data.

The researcher ensured the confidentiality and safety of study participants by keeping all signed consent documents in a secure location. The identifying information from section one of the interview was not labeled with any names or birth dates. Any names, personal identifiers, exact locations, or information that may reveal an individual’s identity was kept anonymous in the reporting of the data and blacked out in the transcriptions. All participants were assigned letters in order to maintain steps taken for anonymity throughout the data collection and analysis processes.

**Data Analysis**

Qualitative phenomenological interviews produce purpose driven data that provides evidence for the researcher to develop common themes that occurred throughout their conversations with all participants (Patton, 2015). The researcher employed interim analysis techniques during the data collection process to support the thematic analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). This included taking notes of body language, environmental factors, and recognition of themes that may be occurring from previous interviews. Researcher notes from the interviews were cross-checked with the transcriptions and used as additional guides throughout the thematic analysis process.

The researcher conducted a qualitative phenomenological qualitative analysis of the data from a combination of both social movements and symbolic interactionism theoretical perspectives. Data for this study was generated through the synthesis and triangulation of the thematic coding of 12 interviews conducted by the researcher, the artifacts presented by participants at the time of their interviews, and the artifacts
collected from Bay Area LGBTQ+ Pride events between June 1, 2019 and December 31, 2019. The interviews were transcribed and coded by the researcher in preparation for further theoretical analysis. In addition, the researcher investigated and collected several pieces of artifacts concerning the experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials and the history of the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. The researcher utilized the datasets from the interviews and artifact collection in order to support qualitative inquiry into how LGBTQ+ millennials participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area.

Patton (2015) explains that analyst triangulation is a systematic process that increases the credibility of the study. The researcher triangulated the information from the interviews, the artifacts presented by participants at the time of their interviews, and the artifacts collected from Bay Area LGBTQ+ Pride events between June 1, 2019 and December 31, 2019 to establish themes that sought to explore and describe how the experiences of self-identified LGBTQ+ millennials relate to their participation in the gay civil rights movement. The researcher examined the data collected from the interview transcriptions a minimum of three times to observe patterns.

Upon completion of the triangulation process the researcher generated codes through an interpretation of the data based on the research questions, theoretical frameworks, and purpose of the study. To establish interrater reliability, the researcher solicited a peer qualitative researcher who was unrelated to the study to conduct a thematic analysis and develop their own codes of the transcribed data collected from the first four interviews. Both the results from the peer and the researcher was compared for alignment. From these codes, major themes were generated and categorized on the basis
of occurrence throughout the transcriptions. Categories support the researcher with conceptualizing the patterns that emerge during the data analysis process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The researcher continued to refine the categories and codes until major themes were identified. The themes derived from this analysis aimed at providing insight into the lived experiences of Bay Area LGBTQ+ millennials and their relationships with the gay civil rights movement. The results from the data analysis process are displayed in a table which includes a list of reported major themes, the number of sources, and frequency of occurrence (See Table 2). Each theme includes an explanation for its development.

**Limitations**

Limitations are a common feature of qualitative research and may negatively impact the results of a study (Roberts, 2010). Roberts (2010) suggests that qualitative researchers observe transparency when discussing limitations of a study to increase result credibility. There were four limitations present in this study. First, the data collected was limited to this particular geographic area and may not be generalized nationally across the U.S. To confront this limitation, it was not made a requirement for participants to be born in the Bay Area. Further, the researcher aimed to get participation from at least two self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals who met the sample criteria.

The second limitation to this study was the lead investigator, the researcher. The researcher self-identifies as a bisexual nonbinary individual born between the years 1980 and 2000 and lives in the Bay Area of California. This increased the possibility of bias during the data collection, analysis, and interpretation phases of the study. To address
this limitation, the researcher observed the following precautionary steps prior to conducting the first interview.

1. An expert committee reviewed the interview questions for alignment to the purpose statement, research questions, and theoretical frameworks.

2. A field test of the interview protocol was completed and critiqued for improvements by a qualitative research expert.

3. During the field test, the research expert was requested to monitor the researcher’s ability to remain neutral while speaking, as well as observe the researcher’s body language to reassure objectivity throughout the interaction.

4. The research expert provided feedback to the researcher regarding additional adjustments needed to ensure the psychological, physiological, and emotional safety of the participant.

The third limitation to the study was the possibility that participants may not have been forthcoming with some of their responses due to concerns for their own safety and confidentiality when discussing such personal aspects of their lives.

The fourth limitation to the study was that the researcher managed to only gain access to participants from three of nine counties considered to be a part of the Bay Area of California. Although the researcher made an attempt to recruit participants from all nine counties, the 12 participants in the study represent only three (Sonoma, San Francisco, and Contra Costa) counties. However, San Francisco and Sonoma counties represent the two largest LGBTQ+ metropolitan areas in the U.S. (Scott, 2010).
**Summary**

Chapter three described in detail the methodology deployed to explore and describe the relationship between self-identified LGBTQ+ millennials in the Bay Area of California and the gay civil rights movement. The purpose statement and research questions were reexamined for alignment, and a qualitative phenomenological research design overview was provided. The population, target population, and a detailed sample selection process was described. An outline of the instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis processes applied to the research was discussed. The chapter closed with a description and examination of the limitations of the study. Chapter IV presents the evidence and results from the study, and Chapter V discusses the major findings, conclusions, and recommendations for action and further research.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This qualitative study examined the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials and the parts of their identity making processes that have influenced their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. This chapter reviews the purpose statement and research questions, research methods and data collection procedures, population, sample, and demographic data of study participants. Chapter IV’s primary focus is on the presentation and analysis of the data collected in the study. Key findings are presented in the form of thematic analysis and frequencies as they relate to the study’s two central research questions and five sub questions.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that influenced their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. Another purpose of the study was to describe the recommendations LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement.

Central Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?

2. What recommendations do LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement?
Sub Questions

1. What are the lived narratives of LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
2. What external motivators lead LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
3. What internal motivators lead LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
4. What factors of the LGBTQ+ identity have influenced LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
5. What recommendations do LGBTQ+ millennials have for current or future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

A total of 12 interviews were conducted by the researcher to examine the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that have influenced their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California and describe the recommendations LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement. During the process of qualitative research, the researcher conducts in-depth interviews with study participants to collect data on the perceptions, opinions, and emotions of a person’s experiences (Roberts, 2010). A significant amount of authenticity and experiences of LGBTQ+ people would be lost if a quantitative approach was undertaken. Furthermore, a qualitative approach is most effective when conducting a narrative inquiry of the lives of LGBTQ+ millennial activists. The autobiographical interpretation of one’s personhood, growth, and personal history is the essence of
narrative inquiry. This is best accomplished through interviews and observation by the researcher (Patton, 2015).

The research design was a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology provides language and meaning to empirical evidence in the form of descriptive narratives of lived experiences (Patton, 2015). Additionally, phenomenology allows the researcher to identify intense emotions and the true nature of specific events through the examination of a participant’s experiences of pain, suffering, or loss (Patton, 2015). Through the retelling of an experience that may have had a life-altering effect on the lives of the participants, the researcher gains access into particular human conditions and deeper understanding of a person’s consciousness (Patton, 2015). This collection and analysis of information-rich narratives through storytelling is the underlying focus of the phenomenological approach to research (Patton, 2015; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

The researcher began the recruitment process of volunteer participants for the study upon receiving approval from the Brandman University Internal Review Board (BUIRB). BUIRB provides a review of the ethical components of the study to ensure the overall safety of the participants is adhered to at all times throughout the research process. The researcher obtained the representative participation sample of the target population through: soliciting self-identified LGBTQ+ millennials throughout the Bay Area who are visibly active in the gay civil rights movement on social media, snowball and convenience sampling techniques, and personal interactions with Bay Area LGBTQ+ millennials. Data was collected from conducting in-person semi-structured interviews at a local neutral site within the county limits of the participant.
The combined approach of conversational interviewing and a standardized guided question format was deployed to provide the researcher with flexibility for probing and gaining lucrative information (Patton, 2015). This interviewing technique was useful for allowing the researcher to make appropriate deviations during an interview when the participant provided additional information that would enhance the purpose of the study and/or fill in gaps in the research that were unaccounted for at the onset of the study (Patton, 2015). The standardized guided questions were intentionally grouped in a sequence that directly aligned with the purpose statement and research questions of the study. In addition, the basic fundamental concepts of the theoretical frameworks of social movement theory and symbolic interactionism were utilized to guide the structure of the interview questions.

There were three sections of questions developed for the data collection of the study. The purpose of the first section was to gain information about the participant by requesting their personal background and demographic data, along with proof that the participant met the sample selection criteria. This information was essential to verifying the participant met the sample criteria for qualifying as a participant in study. Probing for further information was unnecessary during this section of the interview due to the nature of the close-ended questions asked of the participant. The second section examined the participant’s lived experiences as a self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer millennial. This section built upon the identity making process described in Goffman’s symbolic interactionism and sought to solicit further understanding of the LGBTQ+ person’s lived experiences as it relates to their character and overall development of their personal and public persona. The third section was an opportunity
for the researcher to gain an understanding of the participant’s involvement with their local LGBTQ+ group or organization as a member and/or activist. Throughout this section, the questions elicited information pertaining to the relationship of the participant’s lived experiences as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer millennial and their motivation for being involved in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. While engaging in sections two and three, the researcher probed with follow up requests for clarification or more information as necessary when a response was given that was deemed aligned to the purpose of the study. Each interview concluded with a final opportunity for the participant to share any additional information regarding their lived experiences in the Bay Area that would benefit the purpose of the study. Lastly, participants were requested to provide any artifacts they may have pertaining to the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area.

The interviews were recorded using an electronic audio recording device and were transcribed by the researcher within three days of the interaction. Each participant received a copy of the transcription of their interview to check for accuracy and provide any necessary changes to their responses. The researcher engaged in a thematic analysis of the finalized transcriptions to identify existing patterns in the data.

The researcher ensured the confidentiality and safety of study participants by keeping all signed consent documents in a secure location. The identifying information from section one of the interview was not labeled with any names or birth dates. Any names, personal identifiers, exact locations, or information that may reveal an individual’s identity was kept anonymous in the reporting of the data and blacked out in
the transcriptions. All participants were assigned letters in order to maintain steps taken for anonymity throughout the data collection and analysis processes.

Population

The population of this study was the larger group for which the researcher was able to generalize the study’s results (Roberts, 2010). Population was defined as the total number of LGBTQ+ millennials. This number was unknown due to a lack of empirical data. However, it was estimated that there were approximately 11 million adults in the U.S. who identify as LGBTQ+ in 2018 (Fitzsimons, 2018). In July 2016, there were approximately 71 million millennials in the U.S. (Fry, 2018). The total number of estimated LGBTQ+ millennials in the U.S. in 2017 was estimated at 8.2% out of all Americans born between 1980 and 2000—totaling 5,822,000 LGBTQ+ millennials (Newport, 2018; Fitzsimons, 2018). The researcher was unable to identify this exact number due to the lack of research on LGBTQ+ millennials and inconsistencies in the last nationwide census data with regards to an LGBTQ+ identifier.

Target Population

The target population for this study was self-identified LGBTQ+ persons who were born between the years of 1980 and 2000, resided and/or worked in the Bay Area of California, and participated in, or worked for, a local LGBTQ+ group and/or organization. A 2015 Gallup poll found that the San Francisco Metro area (including Oakland and Hayward) had the highest percentage of LGBT identified people in the U.S. from 2012-2014 at 6.2 percent (Newport & Gates, 2015). The significance of the total number of LGBT identified individuals in the Bay Area of California supported the selection of LGBTQ+ identified millennials as the target population for this study. For
the purposes of this study, LGBTQ+ included any person who self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. Millennials were persons born between the years of 1980 and 2000. The Bay Area of California consisted of the following counties: Solano, Napa, Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa, and Santa Clara.

Sample

The sample for this study was generated through the non-probability sampling methods (Patton, 2015)—purposive, snowball, and convenient. To identify a sample for this study, both convenient and purposeful snowball sampling was utilized. The sample for this study consisted of self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons who were born between the years of 1980 and 2000, reside and/or work in the Bay Area of California, and participate in, or work for, a local LGBTQ+ group and/or organization.

This study utilized purposive sampling strategies to identify volunteer participants to assist in a thorough analysis of a social phenomenon. Initially, the researcher identified interview participants through convenience sampling that targeted individuals who work for LGBTQ+ organizations located in the Bay Area of California. The researcher posted flyers soliciting participation throughout the Bay Area in locations where known members of the LGBTQ+ community would most likely socialize, such as LGBTQ+ Pride events, local hangouts, and organization gathering spots. Then, the researcher utilized snowball sampling to identify additional participants for the study. An effort was made by the researcher to access participants from all nine Bay Area counties and all five of the LGBTQ+ identities.
Considering the aim of this study was to understand the relationships that exists between the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials and their participation in the gay civil rights movement, a sample size of 12 self-identified LGBTQ+ millennials was deemed sufficient to represent the demographic needed to induce significant information from in-depth interviews. In order to qualify as a participant in this study, the participant needed to meet all four of the following sample selection criteria:

1. Be a resident of one of the following counties--Solano, Napa, Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa, or Santa Clara.
2. Self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer.
4. Self-identify as a participant in a local LGBT group and/or organization.

**Demographic Data**

Demographic data on study participants were generated from questions 1-4 and 12 on the interview protocol. The results from those questions are represented as a table in Appendix E—Demographic. This table indicates the pronouns, county of residence, birth year, and sexual and gender identity of the participants, as well as the LGBTQ+ organizations participants were affiliated with, and recent LGBTQ+ focused events attended by participants in the Bay Area. The data was utilized by the researcher to indicate that each participant met the study’s sample selection criteria established in the methodology. There was a total of 12 study participants in this study from three Bay Area counties: Sonoma (8), Contra Costa (2), and San Francisco (2). Although an effort was made to gain participation from LGBTQ+ identified millennials in all nine counties indicated in the study participant criteria, the researcher was unable to obtain participants
from six counties in the Bay Area: Solano, Napa, Marin, San Mateo, Alameda, and Santa Clara. In addition, there were zero participants who indicated a birth year between 1994 and 2000. Therefore, these demographics will not be represented in the results of this study.

**Presentation & Analysis of Data**

The findings presented in Chapter IV were generated from the interview data obtained from the responses of 12 volunteer study participants. Participants were asked a total of 18 semi structured interview questions (see Appendix D) that were written to elicit information pertaining to the purpose of this study, research questions, and sub questions. The data collected from these interviews were transcribed and analyzed to determine major themes in the two primary foci of this study: (1) identity making and lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials, and (2) participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. The codes that emerged from the data were analyzed through the lens of the frameworks of Goffman’s symbolic interactionism, and social movement theory. These theoretical frameworks were utilized along with the responses of participants to address the primary research questions of the study regarding the identity making processes of LGBTQ+ millennials and their participation in, and recommendations for, the future the gay civil rights movement.

**Development of Major Themes & Frequencies**

*Table 2* depicts a list of the major themes, the number of sources in which each particular theme was identified, and frequencies of each reference to a theme that was generated during the coding process. Each theme is addressed according to the research question or sub question it is most closely aligned with. The researcher organized the
data according to its relationship to two essential components of the study: (1) identity making and lived experience, and (2) participation and recommendations for the future of the gay civil rights movement. This is followed by a presentation of themes relative to the research question and sub questions in each data set. Artifacts are referenced throughout the presentation of data to provide evidence and historical context for thematic development.

Table 2. Themes, Number of Sources, and Reference Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Analyzed</th>
<th>Major Themes</th>
<th>Number of Sources</th>
<th>Reference Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity Making &amp; Lived Experiences</strong></td>
<td>RQ1: What are the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?</td>
<td><strong>Theme 1</strong>: Challenges of Religion &amp; Conservatism</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td><strong>Theme 2</strong>: Geographic Location as a Determinant of LGBTQ+ Social &amp; Cultural Openness</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ1: What are the lived narratives of LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?</td>
<td><strong>Theme 1</strong>: Social, Cultural, &amp; Personal Acceptance</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ1</td>
<td><strong>Theme 2</strong>: Familial Relationships as a Determinant of Finding Identity</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ4: What factors of the LGBTQ+ identity have influenced LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights</td>
<td><strong>Theme 1</strong>: Call for Fairness &amp; Equity through Representation &amp; Visibility</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ4</td>
<td><strong>Theme 2:</strong> Leaving Home for Career &amp; Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Participation &amp; Recommendations for the Future of the Gay Civil Rights Movement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: What recommendations do LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement?</td>
<td><strong>Theme 1:</strong> Queering the Movement &amp; Stopping In-Fighting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td><strong>Theme 2:</strong> Run for Public Office &amp; Global LGBTQ+ Activism</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ2: What external motivators lead LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?</td>
<td><strong>Theme 1:</strong> Paying it Forward</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ2</td>
<td><strong>Theme 2:</strong> Current Administration &amp; LGBTQ+ Policy Rollbacks</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ3: What internal motivators lead LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?</td>
<td><strong>Theme 1:</strong> Empathy for the Struggle of Others</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ3</td>
<td><strong>Theme 2:</strong> Decrease Stigma for Generations that Follow</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ5: What recommendations do LGBTQ+ millennials have for current or future activists who participate in</td>
<td><strong>Theme 1:</strong> Intersectional &amp; Social Justice Approach</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identity Making & Lived Experiences as an LGBTQ+ Millennial

The identity making process and lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials living in the Bay Area of California was addressed in research question 1 and sub questions 1 and 4. A total of six themes were identified from the participant data as a part of the lived experiences and identity making processes of LGBTQ+ millennials living in the Bay Area of California. These six themes are analyzed and further dissected in the next three sections. Symbolic interactionism is utilized as a theoretical framework to provide additional analysis of how the identity making process is a unique experience for LGBTQ+ millennials.

**Research question 1.** The first primary research question of this study sought to answer, “What are the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?” Two themes were identified as lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that contributed to their identity making processes (see Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Lived Experiences of LGBTQ+ Millennials</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges of Religion &amp; Conservativism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic Location as a Determinant of LGBTQ+ Social &amp; Cultural Openness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 1: Challenges of religion & conservativism.** Nine of 12 interview participants shared examples of the challenge that their religious and/or conservative upbringing had on their identity making process. With a frequency count of 47,
LGBTQ+ millennials voiced their struggle with coming to terms with their sexual and/or gender identity. Participant A reflected on a time when she “would read the Bible, and the scriptures didn’t make sense” to her. “I grew up apostolic. I used to go to church and they would talk about how being gay was worse than being a murderer…and the rhetoric in church of how horrible of a person you are” (P-A). She continued that her “dad still would rather” her “be with a man” and her mom “seemed supportive” until she later “found out she believed it was a sin.” Moreover, she and her grandmother were close until she came out as a lesbian and their relationship changed. Their conversations became focused on religious beliefs. She mentioned that she had to stop communicating with her grandmother because whenever they would talk her grandmother would speak to her about:

Hell, and the damnation of her soul…for her it was because her biggest fear was going to hell, like that was worse than anything…even worse than creating this misery on Earth was having a lifetime of eternity of misery going to hell. And she really believed it so for me.

She later explained that the reason she stopped speaking to her grandmother was because she didn’t want to “subject” herself to those “kinds of conversations” and it “was hard because” she “idolized her.” She “didn't talk to” her grandmother “again until two days before she died.”

In the same way, Participant L described growing up in a “stressful” and “shameful” environment when it came to examining his sexual and gender identity. He explained,

Along with my race, my culture is also very Catholic, very Christian. You always
heard a lot about gay people going to hell, and it being a one-way ticket to hell. It's like no matter how good of a person you are, you're gay. You're done. So, it was like, am I gay? But then you were told you can't be because it's wrong. So that aspect I think, was also challenging.

These nine participants maintained that the trauma of being raised in a religious environment stunted their ability to come out at an earlier age and prevented them from being themselves in public and private spaces. As evidenced by Participant D’s example of how “growing up in Houston, Texas...to a Muslim family, conservative-ish…very closed-minded culture where...the information they had was limited around religion” increased the time he spent wearing “masks” while he was with his family.

Participant K “grew up super Christian and wasn't encouraged to think about anything at all related to sexual orientation or gender identity or sexuality.” Her Christian upbringing didn’t allow her to “date or anything. You're just supposed not date. Then if you're interested in somebody as marriage material, maybe you could start dating them.” She explained the challenges of not being able to explore this part of her like until later in her life.

I didn't think about anything related to any part of that part of my identity until I was 20 or 21…I was at college. Then I started to consider the possibility that I might be attracted to other women. Then, over the next couple of years, after that, I started kind of exploring that a little more…casually having sexual relations with women and other queer people. Then that kind of came to be when I was in grad school around like 23, 24. It was more certain and secure…just saying yeah, I'm queer.
By the same token, Participant I grew up in a “pretty conservative” area of rural Illinois. She explained how she “went to high school at the end of the 90s, early 2000s. People weren’t talking about LGBTQ stuff. The only messaging I got in high school was that it wasn’t okay to be gay.” She continued, “no one was out at school. I had one friend who came out as a lesbian, and it was such a big deal. That was enough of a messaging for me to be like, okay, I'm not that and I told myself that early on.” This led to her coming out “later in life around…28.”

Additionally, the fear of losing familial support encouraged all nine participants to keep their LGBTQ+ identities hidden until their early twenties. Several participants spoke about how the religious environment they were raised in caused them to adjust their time of coming out to family until later in life. Participant C emphasized that “when you're raised in an environment that's very Catholic and you're constantly being told that being gay is bad…internalized fear” is developed because of everything she had been told from her mom and the church. Participant B revealed an increase in anxiety when he had to come out to his “more conservative” father due to his “different beliefs” in how a man is supposed to behave.

**Theme 2: Geographic location as a determinant of LGBTQ+ social & cultural openness.** 12 of 12 study participants indicated a desire to remain in, return, or relocate to the Bay Area of California due to safety, social acceptance, and/or wanting to gain a queer community. There were eight participants who were born and raised in California, three of which left briefly and returned. Four participants relocated to the Bay Area from a different state, one of which was born and raised in a different country. All 12
participants exemplified the significance of safety that is involved with living as an out LGBTQ+ individual in the Bay Area. As evidenced by Participant C:

  We live in such a blessed bubble in the Bay Area that we really fucking forget how terrible it is out there. How for some people it is a lot harder… I feel very lucky that I live in a time where I can be out with my identity and that it's okay…I can go out on a date with a woman and it's fine.

Participant F was born and raised in the Bay Area. She admitted that she “was very fortunate to grow up where” she has “grown up.” When asked about her experience coming out to her family, she revealed, “I always grew up around it. Then with my parents growing up in San Francisco, and my grandma being a long-time resident…I never felt there was ever an issue.”

There was an underlying theme of a love for the Bay Area from the three participants who returned after leaving for several years. For example, Participant K maintained that “returning home provided a sense of comfort” for her after completing both her undergraduate and graduate degrees away from the Bay Area. Participant H explained how “leaving home” helped them let go of “expectations of feeling validated” for their identity. Upon returning to Sonoma County, they have been able to find some peace with who they are on a holistic level. Participant L emphasized the that there is a sense of “openness” that exist in the Bay Area which provides room for LGBTQ+ individuals to be whatever “feels right.”

Of the four participants who relocated to California, one grew up in Greece and moved to New York City in his twenties, one was born and raised in the Midwest, one was born and raised in upstate New York, and the other grew up in a rural part of Texas.
For all four of these participants, the Bay Area has provided a space of acceptance for them to continue exploring their sexual and gender identities. Being able to engage in socially acceptable queer events that take place in public spaces has encouraged personal growth for Participant D in unexpected ways. Such as, having the freedom from judgment in San Francisco “to really explore sexuality to that kind of extreme…like do I want to spank somebody’s ass in the middle of Folsom Street Fair” (P-D).

Five of 12 participants indicated that they grew up outside of California or in a conservative area of the state. Growing up in rural and/or conservative geographic areas poses a unique set of challenges for LGBTQ+ individuals that plays a role in their identity making processes. “I grew up in Greece. I was born and raised in the same place for 18 years. So, growing up in Greece in a completely different environment than here, a different culture. It’s a more closed society… It’s not that you will be out proudly” (P-B).

Additional limitations exist in these areas that can threaten the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals who choose to live openly. Making it extremely difficult to come out prior to leaving home. “I grew up in rural Pennsylvania…didn’t really have any gay role models or knew gay people at all (P-A).” The lack of access to social services also causes strain on the physical and emotional well-being of LGBTQ+ persons. “I think getting out of rural Pennsylvania was a big thing because I know a lot of my friends had babies really early and succumbed to other things, didn't have as many opportunities. I think it afforded me some really great opportunities (P-A).”

Moreover, participants who grew up in rural areas indicated significant issues with suicidality and mental health. Participant D explained:
I came out as gay when I was 19 at Baylor University, a Baptist University down in Waco, Texas…I mean thinking back at that time it was, it was highly uncomfortable…suicidal, almost to the point where I didn't think that I could live a life having so much anxiety like I would be locked up in my room and I felt guilt and shame and it was compound and there was no one to talk to.

He later stated, “I could tell I didn't really fit in…and I was fine with it up until a certain age where I think that I started recognizing I was losing attention and I was getting bullied.”

Although Participant J was born and raised in Sonoma County. There was a set of challenges that he was presented with from growing up in a “conservative” part of the Bay Area. He described his experiences of being bullied as a child for “being too feminine.” At one point in middle school, he was told that he was “going to get AIDS and someday die.” Several years later, in high school, a peer stated to Participant J that he wanted “to put all gay people on an island and kill them.” Participant J later stated, “I was very suicidal back then and just literally had no ability, no confidence, and no sense of self-worth.”

Sub question 1. The first sub question of this study sought to answer, “What are the lived narratives of LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?” Two themes were identified as lived narratives of LGBTQ+ millennials that contributed to their identity making processes (see Table 4).
The lived experience narratives from all 12 participants indicated that one factor that played a role in their identity development was a sense of resiliency from the struggle of obtaining overall acceptance of themselves.

When asked about their coming out process and learning how to accept themselves and their own identities, all three factors (social, cultural, and personal) played a part in their narratives. Participant B explained the significance of finding a social group that he felt connected to upon moving to the Bay Area:

Being part of a community that they are closer to you…that they understand you better and they probably have the same…taste…I mean that we like pretty much the same things…we pretty much have the same music idols, the same dancing moves, the same, you know, the way that we have fun, things that we like. I think this…and people that they understand me better…I can talk and make fun of them the way that I like and they will understand being gay man… I feel that as gay
that's a factor that I participate...that I have people that they understand my needs, and what I like better than other people.

He later explained that finding a local queer social networking group for professionals called, *Letter People*, enabled him to “find his people.” For him, this group has become his “family,” and he wants other LGBTQ+ people to have the same opportunity. He wants people to “find” him and his “friends” at *Letter People* “when they have not just a need of something, when they want to be part of something.” He continued, “If somebody wants to come out or realizes, I'm gay, I'm a gay woman, I'm a gay man, I'm whatever I am, I need to find my people. I want to be there for all of these people.”

Participant F agreed that finding a “hub to connect people,” such as *Letter People* and having “senior support, youth support, and minority support empowers people that don’t have a voice or need more resources.” Participant E affirmed that *Letter People* is “a group that helps create...more engaging social spaces for the [queer] community in Sonoma County.” Participant J spoke about spending time at *Positive Images (PI)*—an “LGBTQQIA youth” organization in Santa Rosa—as an adolescent. At *PI* he was able to “participate on education panels at local high schools.” The panels allowed him “to tell his story” and engage with people who may not have understood the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals. During these panels, he proclaimed,

> I’m normal like you...I'm just like you. I have human emotions. I have interests. I like these things. I play video games. I go out and I enjoy time with my friends...I do things like you. I think that's one of the most powerful things that you can do in terms of education is to give a human face to an issue because then that’s when empathy starts happening...that's what we saw happen...I mean we
did all these little surveys…we’d hand out before and after the presentation, and you would see the mind changes. You would see people through the panel sort of marking how people sort of changed my mind. ‘Now I know so much more about you gays’ (P-J).

Participant C emphasized how her “time living in San Francisco…dating and falling in love with someone…definitely assured” her “identity” and enabled her to engage more with the LGBTQ+ community.

Doing gay rights activism…I started to connect with people in a community and go out to gay parties…I started to be more out as a queer woman in this way that I hadn't been able to before. I'm really glad that I was not here [in Santa Rosa]. I'm really, really glad that I moved to San Francisco…that I came out in the city, because I had a fucking great time (P-C).

The narratives of nine of 12 interview participants referenced events in their lives that were difficult to navigate. These stories signified the resiliency that LGBTQ+ individuals form as a result of having to endure unique struggles with the acceptance of themselves personally or culturally. Participant A described her experience growing up in rural Pennsylvania as “really difficult” due to how it made her “feel, and “trying to make it through” that period of time. Participant C explored the nuance of coming out to parents in a Latin Catholic culture where LGBTQ+ individuals are less often accepted. When asked to reflect on her coming out story to her mother, she stated, “I started crying. And then she told me to stop crying. And then she told me that it was fine but that life...that part of my life should stay in San Francisco and that it was kind of this fucked up like I accept you, but I really don't.” Participant E voiced that being a queer woman
feels like she’s been having to “fight for everything,” and when she came out, there was “an extra layer of fighting for new things that she didn’t know she needed to fight for.”

Several participants disclosed that they were either married or in a long-term relationship with people of the opposite sex while coming out as LGBTQ+. This created another layer of self-awareness that needed to happen during their identity making process that posed additional challenges for them. Participant E explained,

I was married to a man in 2008. We divorced a year later; I came out pretty much that year…I don't think that I left my husband because I wasn't attracted to him, he's a very attractive person. I think that there's just a lot of disappointment there and a lot of damage and we just didn't work out…and after that whole span with men I wanted to explore women.

Similarly, Participant I revealed,

I was dating this guy, and he was really nice…there is nothing wrong with him. He was very handsome. He was sober. He was a gentleman; all of the things and I was so not into him. I was kind of like fuck…somethings not jelling here…it was like a little tiny voice at first…I was like maybe I should try dating women and maybe that's the thing…that's why it's not clicking…and the voice got a little bit louder.

Participant A added that she “was married to a man” when she had her “first queer experience.” She shared the moment that she informed her ex-husband that she didn’t want to be with a man. This was the beginning of her coming out story.

We were eating actually, he was home from a deployment…in between deployments, and we were having spaghetti dinner and that's when I came out.
He's like, ‘Oh, I know…I just didn't think you would figure it out for a few more years…you can date women.’ But the conversation changed…I was like, no, I figured it out. I want a divorce…that's when that conversation changed. He was like, ‘wait, what do you mean?’ Then he was upset. I was like, no, I figured it out…I’m doing something that I don't want to do…I don't want to be married to a man…that's not what makes me happy. I was kind of just going through the motions of life (P-A).

On a personal level, Participant D described what it was like to let go of cultural expectations and be able to accept himself and live an “authentic” life.

I think I had been so consumed with my identity as a gay man and my perspectives and definitions of that, that I was tentatively missing certain opportunities… the way I identify my sexuality has been less of like this proclamation to like, needing to let everyone know that I’m gay. And it's been more of like trying to just be as authentic as I can in any situation… then being able to be genuine to what I am outside of my definitions…by the time Middle School rolled around, is where I started putting on like the false mask and started to really represent myself inauthentically...then high school came around and I learned pretty strong mechanisms of, you know, shielding that part of who I was. But then I think over time, the faucet really intertwined with who I was, and I think, kind of lost how to be able to express that feminine side in that authenticity… there was deep fear in being in that group, but I knew that I had no other real choice because from freshman year to sophomore junior year, I developed like a really intense social anxiety… In Portland…I almost started to
withdraw from family I think because it was such an energy to have to try to like be this thing versus when I was with friends I could just be…there's no real masks involved…no energy sucking masks…there is such a need for their love and approval that it was always kind of the driving force.

Alternatively, participant L described a positive outcome of cultural acceptance from his family when he decided to come out as a gay man. “It's been great…my family's very accepting. I took the time to come out to my parents and my siblings, and talk to them about it. And after that I've just been gay.”

**Theme 2: Familial relationships as a determinant of finding identity.** 12 of 12 participants explained how their familial relationships were determinants in coming to terms with and finding their LGBTQ+ identity. Some experiences were overall positive like Participants E, F, G, K, and L. Participant E stated, “I didn't really have…a coming out experience…it's more generic…I told my brother, my dad, and then my mom and they're all like, ‘yep, that sounds right.’” Participant K came out to her parents and family while she was in graduate school in the Midwest. Her family, who remained in the Bay Area, was “super supportive” and “accepting.” Participant F described her experience coming out as “rebellious.” She asserted,

> I don't feel like I ever really had to come out because I am who I am. I don't feel like LGBTQ+ peoples should have to come out...straight people don't have to come out. Why is the assumption that everyone's straight first and then something happens in life where you become gay? I think to be rebellious; I didn't have a come-out story on purpose. I didn't…but I also had family members that didn't make drama out of it and just accepted it. I also felt like I wasn't going
to accept anything less. But past that you can't really control other people's emotions and feelings and reactions.

Participant G also mentioned having a positive experience of growing up and coming out in the Bay Area.

I typically felt pretty protected either, just in general with my own home situation and my mother, and then later just sort of in the more communal sense of people just seeing past your sexuality…people always had my back in that sense, because it was doing what was right…and I love that aspect of not only California culture, but just kind of modern youth culture. Especially in dance music and stuff like that…this idea of why would you make someone feel bad about themselves…what are you doing here? Get out of here…that's not welcome. I think that's kind of a bright spot…I think it was a good experience actually coming out I'd say overall (P-G).

However, some experiences were negative and continue to impact the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals into adulthood. Participant C had a difficult time getting her family to understand her queer identity due to her complicated upbringing and disconnect between her and her parents.

My parents met when they were pretty young, and they've always had a very tumultuous relationship. My dad would just disappear for months at a time. And that happened when I was in the second grade where he just like straight up disappeared…My mom didn't tell us where he was…my upbringing has been very chaotic. I was alone a lot with my sister and so I was kind of the one taking care of everything
These familial dynamics led Participant C to establish unhealthy relationships and made her coming out process challenging.

My dad and I get along… but it's this very twisted thing… my mom it's complicated. My relationship with my mom is something that I'm trying to improve as an adult, but it sucks… I feel like she's always wanted me to be someone different… my defense mechanism was to just continue to do everything the opposite of what she wanted me to, because that's how I could be me and survive… she was like, I love you, no matter what. But that is your life in San Francisco and I don't want anyone else knowing about it.

She described her relationship with her mom as “fucked up” and stated that she doesn’t “feel like she loves” her or “likes her” sometimes. She went on to depict her mom as “kind of fucked up.” She explained that when she told her mom about being in a relationship with another woman, she was “happy” and “in love for the first time.” Then she “started crying” because her mom wasn’t happy for her. She declared, “as a parent, you should be happy that your child is happy.”

Similarly, Participant D explained that when he came out to his parents, “it was like Don't Ask, Don't Tell… perpetuating the shame perpetuating the guilt.” He later realized that he “was lucky that they didn't disown” him, yet found himself being unintentionally distanced from them without having a conversation about it.

I definitely developed resentment towards my parents… being as vulnerable as I was to tell them my truth and for them to kind of disown… or to reject it is what it was… 100 percent… it felt like the rejection of my truth as much as I thought that… cool they didn't kick me out. That was supposed to be the I won, but it still
served as a rejection… I was fishing for their approval. But there was this… tug of war between them trying to give me their approval…to give me their acceptance…and that of what my parents’ values and perceptions were. I didn't realize that they were torn too.

An internalized “discomfort” and “fear” was established from the intensity of Participant D’s relationship with his parents. This made it difficult to “be authentic” in his social life and discouraged him from displaying his “feminine” side in public or around his family.

When he reflected further on his relationship with his mother, he stated:

In hindsight when I look at my life, I think some of the anger and my resentment I had towards my mom, for the role she played at that time...potentially created a big distaste in me for females, or for wanting to even pursue anyway… I thought I was close to all of them…But we weren't truly connected. They didn't know me. They didn't know the inner turmoil I was engaging in. I would voice it to them often looking for solace and maybe support, but they didn't have the tools or the information to even to give me that support (P-D).

When Participant H was asked about their familial relationships, they upheld that the cultural norms they grew up with played a significant role in the way their family reacted to their existence as a queer trans person. They mentioned how growing up in a “Japanese American” home posed unique challenges to being queer, such as internalized “guilt and shame.” They explained,

In our home…our dad would have narcissistic rages…our mom would pretend [they] were not happening or that it was normal behavior. He would come into the room and shame us for no reason...so the sort of role that I took on…and my
family has a lot to do with checking in with people after something like that had happened...affirming with my younger siblings that the thing had happened and that it did not feel comfortable. We didn't really talk about things with conscious language. We just sort of like drew funny cartoons at each other about irrationally angry men (P-H).

Later in the interview, they were asked about what it was like to come out to their family and explore their sexuality and gender identity further. At the time, they were put on birth control due to being told by their parents that “ovarian cancer runs in their family.”

I used to think that I would be fine if I didn't need validation from the outside. I recognized for myself that I am everything that I am for a very long time and I thought that I don't need other people to see or understand me. Which is basically like cosigning with oppressive forces to agree that I don't exist materially...so the times that I’ve decided to be visible are often the times that I’ve gotten push back.

I was a very out and self-aware person in the ways that I didn't fit from a young age and so instead of like, I'm in the closet from little to big...it's like little....And then around the time of like puberty, I feel like I'm pushed into not existing and then unfolding out from that point is when it was different. I wouldn't be disappointing them by being myself or like exploring sense of self accurately...I had to have the experience of trying to be cis during that time really believing...I've been put on birth control...it's correcting me (P-H).

They emphasized that they were suffering from a “brain injury” that was affecting their ability to recall information. This may have been the reason for a disconnection in their response to this question.
Sub question 4. The fourth sub question of this study sought to answer, “What factors of the LGBTQ+ identity have influenced LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?” Two themes were identified as factors of identity that have influenced LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California (see Table 5).

Table 5. Factors of LGBTQ+ Identity and Gay Civil Rights Movement

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call for Fairness &amp; Equity through Representation &amp; Visibility</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Home for Career &amp; Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
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Theme 1: Call for fairness & equity through representation & visibility. 12 of 12 participants agreed that they have a social responsibility for the fair and equitable treatment of the queer community through maintaining representation within media outlets and making their LGBTQ+ identities visible. This could be locally, nationally, and/or globally. All 12 study participants agreed that media representation and queer visibility are fundamental to the safety and security of LGBTQ+ individuals. Seeing oneself represented on television, in the movies, or in a positive light on social media platforms gives LGBTQ+ individuals a sense of belonging and self-worth.

Eight of 12 participants hold strong beliefs that LGBTQ+ equity is a human right and fairness exists when all humans have access to the same rights. Participant B stated that he wants “to have” his “rights established” and “and we need to preserve them.” Participant A emphasized that she has an “innate sense of what is right and wrong and that… we should help people that are most marginalized.” She continued:

My role in education…I’m consistently an out educator. I’m an out parent…so just kind of making myself visible, even when it doesn't always feel comfortable.
I come out at every opportunity that it does kind of make sense to come out, especially in education, especially with youth. I think it's really important that they see role models of different varieties...so that they somehow find someone that's like them or themselves...so that they then hopefully have that ability later to come out when they're ready.

She explained that seeing out LGBTQ+ people essentially “allowed” her more access to queer people.”

Participant C agreed on how visibility provides support for LGBTQ+ individuals when she described her experience of being influenced to be her authentic self after moving to San Francisco.

I was surrounded not just by other people my age who were gay...also politically involved and in the same mindset...I was able to interact with elders who I had admired...I made mentors and friendships where there were 20, 30 year age difference...I was able to have an experience that I'm really happy about...being able to be young and out and feel like myself and feel good and who I am and realizing that there wasn't anything wrong with me being gay or attracted to women or other folks.

Similarly, Participant D mentioned that through his “own exploration and unfolding” of the “internet” and “TV shows out at the time” like “Will and Grace” and “some other riskay things on TV at that time and I started identifying that this was tentatively who I was.” From this media representation, he was able to create “a definition of what it meant to be gay.” He continued, “there wasn't too many gay, lesbian students in school, there was like two or three, and I could definitely identify my relationship to them in the
sense of identifying with them.”

Participant F mentioned that she had a friend growing up that was comfortable with herself who presented as “butch” and “andro” who “started bringing her girlfriends over.” By having “more queer people coming around,” it made it easier to come out to family. Participant G revealed he had been around many LGBTQ+ people “growing up in the Bay Area” which enabled him to come to terms with his own sexuality at an earlier age. Participant H had a “trans-masculine” friend in elementary school that they were able to connect with and not feel “different.” Participant K unveiled that when she “started meeting other kinds of people and meeting other queer folks, or other people who identified as lesbians,” she had a “feeling of wanting to be friends with them” and “was drawn to them.” She also mentioned being able to see queer people “represented in the press” helped her understand that she could “represent” herself “in that way too.” An external factor that played a role in contributing to her current identity was “seeing yourself reflected in other people in the community.” Participant L experienced the “gender revolution” in New York City during his coming out. He was able to witness “such a beautiful range of so many different ways that people express themselves.” This enable him to “acknowledge his own experience” as a “gay man.”

Participant I disclosed how watching Los Angeles lesbians on The Real L Word in the late 2000s allowed her to see “actual loving relationships portrayed” on television.

I started watching that and watching the actual loving relationships that they sometimes portrayed on there…that was something that really made a light go off in my head of like, that's what I'm looking for. It's that companionship and connection that I was seeing between some of the women on that show. Then of
course, I watched *The L Word* after that...it was building up because I think my
own internalized homophobia had made me avert my eyes almost a little bit to
even exploring and watching a show like that. I wasn't giving myself the space to
even explore that in that really little way (P-I).

Participant J had a similar experience through the exploration of Myspace when he was
“in seventh grade.” He disclosed,

For the first time I got to meet openly queer people online who were absolute
strangers but my age...and realizing that they were functional and okay. Because
society implies, or it did...I feel it’s lessened a lot in the last decade...but society
sort of implies that we’re these dysfunctional people that do all these really weird
things and can't really live normal healthy lives (P-J).

**Theme 2: Leaving home for career & education.** Leaving home for college or a
job opportunity allowed eight of 12 participants to be more curious about their current
sexual and/or gender identity. The external factors involved with going away for college
enabled them to come to terms with their identities and come out to their friends and
family as LGBTQ+. For these participants, access to education is seen as a positive force
in becoming an active participant in the gay civil rights movement and understanding the
evolution of their own sexuality and gender identity. Such as, Participant K not thinking
“about anything related to any part of that part of [her] identity until she was 20 or 21”
when she “was at college.”

For Participant A, leaving upstate New York where she grew up in a lower
middle-class area and attending college in the city afforded her more opportunities for
personal growth and identity making. She stated that she received a “scholarship to go to
college” and was afforded the “privilege” of removing herself from “that socioeconomic piece” of her ascribed social circumstances. She also joined the Army Reserve under the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy and was able to have her “first queer experience” due to being away from home.

Participant B reflected on how he “left the house to go to the college and university” and still hadn’t told his family about his same-sex attraction and sexual experiences. He wouldn’t come out to his family until he returned home after finishing his studies.

I left home when I was 18 and I didn't tell my family yet, even though the signs were there, and I never denied anything. But then I was living out of my town for almost 10 years. I was doing my life where I was, and that was it. Then we never had the conversation. We didn't see each other very often (P-B).

Participant C described how her “time living in San Francisco...dating and falling in love with someone definitely assured” her of her “identity.” She continued that by engaging in “gay rights activism” she “started to connect with people in a community.” She was encouraged to “go out to gay parties and started to be more out as a queer woman in this way” that she “hadn't been able to before.” She was grateful and “glad” that she “moved to San Francisco” and “came out in the city, because” she “had a fucking great time.”

Participant D left a rural Texas town and “came out” at Baylor University, which identifies as a Baptist institution. He explained that at Baylor, “in 1999 to 2004 the university was completely excluding the LGBT groups on campus. They would wash away public sidewalk chalking and we didn't really have a space.” He later went to grad
school in Portland, OR, which is “relatively conservative.” Over “the past four years” he has been “uncovering more and more truth” of who he “thinks” he is. He stated that “being able to unlearn the masks that I've been wearing, whether it was in a Muslim family in Spring, Texas or in the gay community in Houston…going to Portland,” has been the most “authentic” he has been able to be in his life.

Participant G discussed a moment in his life when he was living away from home and felt “alone” and “far away” from people who loved him. This experience enabled him to discover more about his identity and how he wanted to show up in the world.

Coming from certain experiences that I had especially with drugs and feeling these moments of feeling really low and alone…I always maintained a job but I remember being like 19, 20…I lived in a very bad neighborhood in Richmond and I was DJing and partying…it was fun in that sense and I would have big parties at my house and a lot of friends and stuff but I had already been feeling really close to people and I remember having these moments feeling like my family was far away and I was disconnected from them…I was like coming down on drugs…I just felt really bad and alone. I somehow willed myself through those moments in a way and I think I remember getting out journals and writing down things like what I was thankful for…I still have my mom…I still have this…you're not really sure about your purpose or your direction, or what you're supposed to be doing…I think later it made me feel when I did see people on the streets…I can see how anyone could really end up there in a bad situation or what if some crisis happens and you just can't mentally pull through it and you lose your job and you lose your housing, and the next minute, maybe you're onto a worse drug or something.
Because that's what was available or that's what was cheaper…I really saw myself starting to have these really empathic feelings (P-G).

Participant H illustrated how leaving their family in Sonoma County and living in Washington allowed them to be exposed to a healthy way of living as an out queer person.

I lived in Washington for some time…over the process of not being constantly exposed to my family, I had processed that I don't want to live with them. I want to keep improving relationships, but I don't think that it's healthy for me to live with them. I was able to gain language around being a queer person and met other people who felt like they were trans…that they were trans like this to that solid point, but more like a fluid experience…I had seen a Wikipedia page about gender neutral language and other languages…I didn't go to the online spaces where people…I guess were forming positive community around queerness. I was like unaware of that. I grew up on an internet that was very terrible and the context that I would see people posting pictures of themselves as trans people were in spaces where it was self-deprecating and self-hating…of ourselves as freaks. It was strange to go to a place like a college town that felt like it was really informed by this completely different academia…then the internet where people had positive senses of self around being trans. I formed a sense of self around being trans since I was able to finally have company with others (P-H).

Participant I recalled how in her younger 20s before she “almost failed out of college” and “her parents cut her off” and told her “to go figure her shit out.” Through this experience, she was able to learn more about herself and what she envisioned her
ideal community to look and feel like.

I spent some of my younger 20s traveling around the country, seeing different bands, and going to music festivals. I was always looking for a community and a world that felt like it was right for me. Once I like figured out my queer identity, it was like all of the dots connected and I was like, oh, this is what I was looking for. This is me. I just didn't know…I didn't consider that part of myself before (P-I).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism was utilized as a theoretical framework to provide additional analysis of how the identity making process is a unique experience for LGBTQ+ millennials. As referenced in Chapter II, symbolic interactionism was a theoretical foundation that was useful in exploring the identity making process for LGBTQ+ individuals (Wilson, 1996). All 12 participants in this study referenced unique challenges and experiences that were associated with their identity making processes.

According to Anderson & Snow (2001), identity is something that is developed over the course of a lifetime through the continuous examination of oneself. All 12 participants shared their lived experiences of how they came to understand their LGBTQ+ identities. For several participants who came out to family and friends in their 20s, this happened over the course of their lifetime and continues to evolve. In addition, the repetition of behaviors, attitudes, and norms contribute to the making of one’s identity, such as displays of emotion or repression of what one may think of as immoral (Anderson & Snow, 2001). Hence, for those who came out sooner, the struggle involved with the evolution of their sexual and gender identity stemmed from their environment.
Participation & Recommendations for Future of Gay Civil Rights Movement

The participation of LGBTQ+ millennials and the recommendation for the future of the gay civil rights movement were addressed in research question 2 and sub questions 2, 3, and 5. A total of four themes were identified from the participant data as motivators for engaging in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. An additional four themes were identified from the participant data as recommendations for the future of the national gay civil rights movement. These eight themes are analyzed and explored in the next four sections. Social movement theory is utilized as a theoretical framework to provide additional analysis into how internal and external factors motivate LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California.

Research question 2. The second primary research question of this study sought to answer, “What recommendations do LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement?” Two themes were identified as recommendations that LGBTQ+ millennials have for the future of the national gay civil rights movement (see Table 6).

Table 6. Recommendations for National Gay Civil Rights Movement

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<th>Theme</th>
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<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Queering the Movement &amp; Stopping In-Fighting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run for Public Office &amp; Global LGBTQ+ Activism</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
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Theme 1: Queering the movement & stopping in-fighting. Half of the participants in the study indicated a need for the gay civil rights movement to be more inclusive and move towards a “queer rights movement.” They want the movement to prioritize trans and gender non-conforming equity. These participants indicated that there
has been a lot of “in-fighting occurring within the movement” that is “creating division” between the groups that make up the LGBTQ+ community. Participant C recommended that LGBTQ+ activists “definitely” need to “continue to fight” and not “forget the power of grassroots organization.” She stated,

We really forget the power…and people coming together…people organizing…people doing demonstrations and chaining…that's how the fucking HIV movement got the attention that it needed in order to have the government take the AIDS epidemic seriously…in order to have them start testing medications and actually being serious about it. The fact that it was all these people whose family members and friends were dying [that] came together and created ActUp and were like, fuck no, we're not gonna let this happen anymore…ActUp…they were very powerful. There was the ‘kiss in,’ which was a very famous one in New York…there was also one in which they stormed a church and they all laid down on the floor. They demonstrated at the International AIDS Conference in San Francisco. They fucking took over the Golden Gate Bridge during that same time. We forget that works…people power works. I think part of the recommendation I have is continuing to have these conversations…continuing to talk with others…continuing to identify our privileges, but also our struggles…continuing to not become complacent to the fight. [Not] just feeling like oh, by donating money we’re supporting the movement…because people power [and] grassroots organizing…being out there with a megaphone does work. It really does (P-C).

Participant H agreed in stating, “I think that we need to get out of the way of people who
know how to move forward.” They also recommended that “people need to really reflect on who they are and have a deep and articulate…sense of self and community.” They reiterated the importance of the LGBTQ+ community continuing to “recognize” that their “history has always been pretty militant.” They also reminded the researcher that “marriage” no longer fits into the narrative of the movement due to trans exclusivity, and this should not “misconstrued anymore as what a gay civil rights movement is because that…doesn't represent a lot of the people who have changed things through their actions, and words in the past.”

Participant J also affirmed this stance when he mentioned the similarities between the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s and the current state of the gay civil rights movement. He stated,

It makes me think of the Civil Rights Movement that was anti segregationist and the issues of people of color still highly relevant to this day. The Civil Rights Movement is sort of considered something that happened back then. But the issues of that community continue to remain, because there's a lot of issues that our society considers niche, or wants to suppress. I feel that's probably going to be our transition. Once we get our direct legal rights, then we have all these other issues that society will continue to ignore. We may not be fighting necessarily for legal change. We might be fighting for social change, or I might be fighting to make minor changes in policy to protect the LGBTQ+ community…that's gonna be a while from now. I think a lot of transphobic and homophobic issues are still pretty fresh and pretty raw. As the coming generations are raised in a society that's less homophobic and less transphobic the issues will still be there…even
right now…there's many other parts of the country where discrimination on employment grounds and housing is still sanctioned legally. That's still going to be a struggle (P-J).

Relatedly, Participant L suggested that the LGBTQ+ community “can't get comfortable” with the progress that has been made over the last 50 years and they need to remain vigilant in order to continue to gain access to rights and equity. He declared,

I think we can't settle. We can’t! I think that gay rights really only goes as far as people are able to access them, and I think that really goes for everything. Like any monumental changes to social policy or new individual liberties…anything like this…it really only goes as far as how much people can access them (P-L).

He stressed the importance of stopping the in-fighting that’s occurring within the LGBTQ+ community with regards to “cancel culture.” He stated, “I think it's the millennial political movements” that have demonstrated “you're cancelled, like you are out.” He continued to examine this idea further:

You are just not saying the right things, you are not up to speed on the latest whatever and you just offended a whole room of people. I don't think it's exclusively an issue that is going on in the current gay civil rights movement…I think it's something that's going on across the board with millennial politics. I think that there's a lot of times that instead of educating…people can be really aggressive, and they can end up dissuading people from wanting to be involved…like sometimes even people within our own community can make us feel like we're not good people…like we are ourselves homophobic or transphobic, or biphobic…or problematic…or even made to feel like we are the problem within
our own community...when we don't really mean to be...that's not an issue that's just in the LGBT movement. I think that it's an issue that's happening in several movements across the board (P-L).

Participant K agreed, “I’m really curious about unpacking the community and fighting that can happen in these in the future.”

Lastly, Participant G described an alternative approach for the movement to take and explored a more nonviolent, nonconfrontation, passive way for LGBTQ+ individuals to protest. He explained, “I'm a big believer in artistic protest…creative protest is attention attracting but nonviolent. I think that just pushes the conversation.” He continued, “more activist” should participate in a “type of scale art” or an art “that makes people feel good about themselves…I think that's where things like beauty” exist. He mentioned the importance of “living your truth…living in love or showing affection with friends,” and showing “public displays of affection.” He proposed that “all of these things are ways of changing the norms” and keeping “peace.”

**Theme 2: Run for public office & global LGBTQ+ activism.** Nine of 12 participants want LGBTQ+ individuals to run for public office and/or would like to see more global activism. This would allow for “more seats at the table” and the queering of politics (P-L). As Participant G indicated, “it’s happening now” with Buttigieg running for president. Participant D agreed:

The fact that you're having presidential candidates able to come out on stage and run for president is highly valuable. To see the direction we're going in… obviously, the fear is deeply instilled into our archetypes, that's just there…as this
generation gets a little bit older, we're going to be the in the legislative seats, we're going to be the ones that are taking the majority role.

Similarly, Participant E pointed out, “I think we're doing a good job in the sense of” coming out “culturally” and “socioeconomically.” She continued, “we've inserted ourselves into the mainstream...upped the culture and I can see more and more of us on TV and on social media talking about things and...normalizing things in way that this is not our choice, this is who we are.”

Participant B pointed out that he has “always been into politics as gay or non-gay.” As the Executive Director of a Bay Area Law Library, he believes “that everything around us has to do with politics” and suggested that LGBTQ+ people and their allies should become involved with the political decisions being made where they live.

Participant F agreed that LGBTQ+ individuals “need to be more active” and get involved in politics in order to “carry the torch into the future.” She continued, “they can take a leading role to invoke healing, to bridge the divide, and to conquer. They have the tools to effect change within the political realm in the movement.”

On a more macro, global level, there is a movement within the LGBTQ+ millennial community towards understanding that “we should help...people that are most marginalized” (P-A). This can take the form of immigration rights, participating in activism abroad for the equitable treatment of LGBTQ+ individuals, or securing the safety of those fleeing persecution in their home countries and seeking asylum in the United States. Participant I proposed that the movement take on this macro level approach to activism and join forces with protests taking place over other issues. She explained,
I think that this idea that LGBTQ people are everywhere, and in every instance how can we make sure that they feel safe and welcomed. I think about any issue that is coming up, whether it's climate change or homelessness...how are LGBTQ people effective within those issues? How can they be better supported? Because I think they often end up being left out or not considered. I think that part of it is looking at every issue as an LGBTQ issue. I think that moving beyond 'yay gay marriage is legal.' There's still so much more work that needs to be done in policy, specifically around trans people and how they're treated. The movement needs to focus on the needs and the rights of trans people because there's still so much...whether it's employment discrimination or access to affirming health care...so much that they're not getting and that's where the fire is right now (P-I).

Participant L agreed and offered and explored the possibilities that exist where the U.S. could provide support LGBTQ+ communities globally.

There’s atrocious LGBT+ discrimination in different countries and people are being killed and forced into sexually abusive marriages with people of the gender that they don't want to be with. Then [in] the United States where some of us have these freedoms...will not give them asylum or will not help them. That would be a situation where it's not something that is affecting us Americans, per se, but it's affecting our community (P-L).

Participant D pointed out that “we're recognizing that we're a deeply dysfunctional society globally.” He implied that older generations will have to leave politics in order for changes to occur for LGBTQ+ equity.
Some of these people are just gonna have to die off…some of their paradigms and programs are so instilled. And this is kind of a collective unconscious where they're just gonna have to die off for us to grow new roots…and that's what you're seeing happen (P-D).

**Sub question 2.** The second sub question of this study sought to answer, “What external motivators lead LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?” Two themes were identified as external motivators that lead LGBTQ+ millennials to become activists in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California (see Table 7).

Table 7. External Motivators of LGBTQ+ Millennial Activists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paying it Forward</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Administration &amp; LGBTQ+ Policy Rollbacks</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 1: Paying it forward.** 11 of 12 participants recognize the importance of paying it forward for what LGBTQ+ activists have accomplished with regards to equity, access, and safety for the queer community in the United States. With a frequency of 58, participants view the understanding of queer history in the U.S. as a vital tool for knowing the future of the gay civil rights movement. There is pain, struggle, and solace in recognizing the roots of the movement’s existence and those LGBTQ+ activists who came before them. Relatedly, Participant G recognized the significant “traumas” that LGBTQ+ individuals experience that lead to “addiction” and “homelessness.” He is motivated to be a “loving and accepting” person to these people. In agreement, Participant I stated, “there’s still a lot of work to do…young people are still dying by suicide here in [Sonoma County]. These are the stories that motivate me.” Participant J
is externally motivated to participate in the gay civil rights movement from growing up experiencing “a shit ton” of societal abuse, which made him feel “absolutely powerless.” He “needed to do something about it.” This led him to become a queer activist and speak out against bullying. For Participant L, it’s “all the ignorance and intolerance that motivates” him to work on trying to “get rid of it.” Like Participant G, he doesn’t want to continue seeing LGBTQ+ people “struggling to come out, homeless on the streets of the Castro,” or continuing to “be killed in different countries.”

Participant E mentioned feeling “inspired” to continue to participate in the gay civil rights movement by seeing her “friends” and other historical LGBTQ+ activists fight for equity. She also indicated, “fighting” with “family members motivates” her “to do more shit for what” she “believes in.” Participant F agreed that history is an external factor that “definitely motivates” her to participate in the movement. “Seeing everyone who's come before us who's put in a lot of work, a lot of struggle. They put their lives on the line…some of them have died because of it. There was a lot of sacrifice and an immense amount of pain, an immense amount of joy along the way” (P-F).

Participant A described her experience of not being allowed to be her authentic self as a young person and the external motivation of what it means to pay it forward to the generations that follow.

I think I grew up with that and I internalized it and I didn't want that for anyone else that you know…you are perfect in the way that you are, and perfect in that…everyone has good qualities and then things that are vices…there are things that we're always working on, but that you have a right to happiness and you have a right to a life the way that you want to live it regardless of your sexuality or
gender identity, and that no one has a right to take that from you, or make you feel less than (P-A).

Participant A also emphasized the need to ensure that the movement is “supporting queer, trans youth of color, and giving them the tools that they otherwise wouldn't be given based on their other marginalized identities or experiences.” She is focused on “investing in our youth because they're the ones that are going to have to live in this world that we either let happen or we work towards changing.”

Along this theme, Participant B stated that he wants “to make it easy and better experience for many other people.” He also suggested that there are privileges that exist for LGBTQ+ millennials and the following generations, and they can’t become comfortable; they need to remain “active.”

These two generations...gay kids...they are somehow privileged because they didn't have to fight for many things. They found many things ready, because the previous generation fought for this...And again...the same thing...I want the role of millennials to change... to be more activist...to be more active...not activist...active...because of activists in the previous generation...we got some rights. If we stay active, we will preserve these rights. In the past 15, 20 years we changed many things as gay activists...they achieved this... but we still have to preserve them until they become like stones that nobody can move.

Participant C agreed with the need to recognize “our elders and the work that they did.” She noted that it wasn’t “until recently that we've started to recognize Stonewall and the Compton Riots, that these were all things that happen and they were they all contributed to the advancement of LGBT rights now.” She continued:
So many of our elders are passing away, especially people that were there at Stonewall that were very instrumental in leading the LGBT movement. What I would love to see is for us to continue to share that history and remind the newer generations of where we come from…and that there's still a struggle. It is getting better when we think about where the gay rights movement started to now. The fact that kids now are learning LGBT history in schools… I think that it’s continuing to teach the history of those who passed, remembering our history, remembering why we're doing it and just continue fighting (P-C).

Participant D stressed the need for older generations to provide both physical and emotional safety for the younger generations. He posed that he would like “to do some work with the community” in finding the spaces where individuals are “able to identify their sense of unworthiness, or not belonging, through a route other than gay bars.” He explained,

There's so much harm that's being done in not getting to address this with the youth that's coming out. Then it bleeds into relationships, it bleeds into friendships…it's this unresolved early numbing…and that was definitely a huge part of my coming out (P-D).

He added that these types of safe spaces are a “necessity” for young queer people “to identify those underlying emotions” that often leads to “a strong numbing and self-loathing.” He felt that it was he has an “obligation to help” due to “the gay community has been such a pivotal part” of his “life experience.” He ended with explaining that the LGBTQ+ community “has been a savior” for him, he “owes them a lot,” and would like to “pay it forward.”
Theme 2: Current administration & LGBTQ+ policy rollbacks.

participants emphasized the need to continue to put pressure on the Trump Administration to keep the policies in place that provide equal rights and protections for LGBTQ+ people in the United States. This includes the legislation that is currently being reviewed in the U.S. Supreme Court that would eliminate workplace protections for LGBTQ+ identified federal employees. For example, Participant E declared that “this president, one-hundred percent” motivates her to participate in the gay civil rights movement. In agreement, Participant L maintained that “nowadays it’s Trump” that motivates him to continue to be an active voice in the movement.

Participant C recommended that LGBTQ+ activist remain vigilant in order to preserve the rights that exist for the community. She declared, 

All of the things that are happening now in our country. The fact that it seems oftentimes like we're regressing with the Trump administration. I feel like there's an even harder fight now…the Trump administration has made it a very stressful and worried time for us when we think about why rights could be reversed…because it's not just about gay marriage (P-C).

Participant A stressed, 

The legislation and all that…we're just being attacked consistently. It's like we took 10 steps forward, but we're taking like nine steps back and I just want to maintain that momentum of forward movement and not allowing to be pushed back to before…so many people have fought…blood, sweat, tears in their lives for us to be where we’re at…and just recognizing that history piece and that me being silent is a privilege…me being able to not be an advocate, not to speak out
is a privileged place to be…and to sometimes take a break and recharge, it's okay.

But otherwise, I need to put myself out there, and other people are putting their lives on the lines every day.

Participant B concurred that “under the current administration we all have to do something…we all have to move our asses and go out and not just vote but we have to bring people to vote because it's not enough.”

Participant K emphasized that since the 2016 presidential election, it’s been “really important” to continue to hold government officials “to the fire” and ensure that LGBTQ+ rights are not being taken away. She stated,

We cannot stop right now like now. Things are just too dire and too important right now, and the things that I personally wasn't paying enough attention to before are still happening…like people who were suffering before…who I wasn't paying attention to are still suffering now…everything feels more crucial…more dire right now. Pre 2016, it's not like everything was peachy. We talked about how everybody struggled hella hard for marriage rights and then kind of left other segments of the LGBT community in the dust…maybe slept on employment protections in a way that we shouldn't have…there's like that too. It's like 2016 everything got really shitty, but it wasn't all peaches before…it's all important. It's all really fucking important (P-K).

Sub question 3. The third sub question of this study sought to answer, “What internal motivators lead LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?” Two themes were identified as internal
motivators that lead LGBTQ+ millennials to become activists in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California (see Table 8).

**Table 8. Internal Motivators of LGBTQ+ Millennial Activists**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy for the Struggle of Others</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease Stigma for Generations that Follow</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37</td>
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**Theme 1: Empathy for the struggle of others.** Eight of 12 participants voiced a need for mental health awareness and the cultivation of a movement towards finding remedies for supporting the mental wellness of the LGBTQ+ community. LGBTQ+ individuals experience significantly high amounts of depression and anxiety that goes untreated into adulthood (see Chapter II). LGBTQ+ individuals often “self-medicate” and are “raised in bars” in the early stages of coming to terms with their identity. For example, Participant J mentioned that he “was suicidal” as an adolescent due to “being bullied” by peers. Participant G indicated that he “self-medicated as a teenager.” For him, this behavior continued into his “twenties to cope” with having to manage the pressures of coming to terms with his identity as a gay man.

Participant E explained, “we have internal struggles and internal demons, and we need to work them out.” She continued, “we need to fight” for “compassion” and “empathy” due to “patriarchy” in order to become a “part of a larger community.” She spoke about the innate feeling of being “an activist at heart,” which internally motivates her to participate in the movement.

Participant I described how her life may have had an alternate trajectory had she had a “positive role model” to show and tell her that she could be her true self and it was going to be okay. She expressed the importance of being that person for LGBTQ+ youth:
I think a lot about my time in high school…about how different my life might have been if I had come out and known this part of myself when I was in high school or even college…how much less lost I would have felt during that time. I think about what it would have been like to have had someone in high school who was like a role model…who was out, or just to see LGBTQ people portrayed positively in any light. I think a lot about that and how important it is for young people to have that and have access to that. I think for me, there was just a lot of feelings of not knowing myself. I trust that everything happens for a reason. I'm here. I'm where I'm supposed to be. But I do think about how life could have, would have been different or easier had I had access to the work that we do now when I was younger (P-I).

Participant K determined that “a lot of things” have internally motivated her to become active in the gay civil rights movement. She recognized that she is privileged in that she had a “pretty easy coming out process,” and wants to be able to support LGBTQ+ individuals that struggle with this. She explained,

On one level it's the need to protect me and my own…protect me and my partner. I want to be involved and I am involved in the civil rights movement because that's literally protection of me and my life…keep fighting for the rights that allow me to live and exist, and have a job, and have a home and not get kicked out. There's a held value that I have…one of my values is fighting for others for what has been given to me. I had a pretty easy coming out process…it's important to me to continue to fight for the rights of other people who haven't had that experience and to continue to build community for people who need it…who
haven't had the somewhat easier experience that I had. I'm also a driven person and I like to be doing stuff and be doing something. I can't just sit on my ass for too long. It's important for me to be involved. I'm a political person (P-K).

Two-thirds of the participants in this study empathized with the unique set of challenges that LGBTQ+ individuals experience throughout their lives. They indicated that a primary internal factor for participating in the gay civil rights moving was ensuring that younger generations of LGBTQ+ individuals would not have to endure similar life circumstances. For example, Participant H referred to their “existence” in public spaces as a “trans-masculine individual” as a way of empathizing for others like them.

Participant D empathized with the inability to adapt and cope during the coming out process within the LGBTQ+ community. He affirmed that LGBTQ+ individuals are “wounded” from the start of their identity making process and need to “find ways to heal” in order to be fully functioning members of their communities. He cited wanting to ensure that younger generations would not have to endure the same feelings of unhappiness, unworthiness, and brokenness that previous generations have had to experience.

I recognize that so much of our community is raised in the bar scene and alcohol consumption to be able to mask some of the shame that we haven't really been taught how to address. It was me and so many of my friends that were all in this environment, which again, you just think is normal. This is what it means to be gay. This is how our community interacts. This is how we find space to be who we are. In hindsight, it makes so much more sense to me that the behavior patterns that me and my partner had kind of with each other was a lot more
underlying woundedness…that we weren't healing and we were trying to find that healing in each other. As opposed to going deeper to understand our own issues of self-worth, and worthiness. Where I want to come in, especially with the community is to help them understand the importance of health...help them understand that their contribution to this world is so much more than their identification to their sexuality; that self-care and self-love doesn't just come with accepting your sexuality, it comes with taking care of the physical body… to accept ourselves at a deeper understanding, deeper level, without the addictions. That way we really give permission to the rest of the world to see this is a healed community. It's not just an out community, it's a deeply healed community (P-D).

**Theme 2: Decrease stigma for generations that follow.** 11 of 12 participants have become actively involved in the gay civil rights movement to ensure that the negative stigma of identifying as LGBTQ+ decreases for the generations that come after them. For example, Participant G explained how “holding the hand” of his husband in public is a form of activism that works towards destigmatizing relationships like his. He emphasized the need to be “honest with people” and show your “truth” in order to publicly acknowledge who you are as an LGBTQ+ person. This fights against “discrimination” in “workplaces” and throughout the queer community.

Participant A asked the question, “how do we help lead and support this next generation of queer youth who are making and breaking so many boundaries?” To answer this question, Participant D suggested that the LGBTQ+ community needs to start supporting each other and taking care of their own well-being in order to lead in the movement. He stated that many LGBTQ+ individuals are “in chronic pain…in
depression and anxiety” and need to begin to “heal the body and mind…to create enough separation from the wounded ego that drives the physical body to make choices into empowerment and good choices that serve that purpose of wellbeing and fulfillment and healing.”

Participant A revealed that she has a “need to speak up for those that are more marginalized in the community. Specifically, our trans family members…especially queer, trans women of color. They're the most marginalized, even among LGBTQ.” In agreement, Participant C referred to how “trans women are still being killed on a frequent basis.” She persisted, “there’s still attacks against gay people all throughout the nation. There's still a lot of discrimination. There's still a lot of places where people can’t be out holding hands.”

Participant F described the need to “be more of a voice” as a “queer woman” for LGBTQ+ people.” She explained how Letter People exists as a way for her to do this, and to “build more connections” within the queer community in Sonoma County. She is internally motivated to continue creating destigmatized safe, “queer friendly” spaces where LGBTQ+ professionals are able to form “true connections” that last. “A lot of it’s around senior support, youth support, minority support,” and “empowering people that don't have a voice or need more resources” (P-F).

Participant D maintained that destigmatizing LGBTQ+ individuals can be complicated and influenced by many internal factors. He grew up in a “family that was extremely homophobic” with the expectation of needing to be “an athlete and get married.” For him this created “anxiety and depression” and pushed him to remain “in the closet.” He recognized the pain and self-harm that stems from the “guilt, shame, and
fear” that many LGBTQ+ individuals experience and would like to minimize this stigma for younger generations.

Participant L would like to utilize his “privileges” to decrease stigmas for the LGBTQ+ generations that follow. He explained,

I think for me, it's acknowledging that I have privilege. I have a lot of privilege…just given…my upbringing… I understand that being able to live openly, being able to live in San Francisco being able to go to law school, being able to read, being able to Speak English…all of these things are privileges that I have. I know that a lot of my LGBT+ family, they don't have that. I think somebody mentioned this recently, it's like sometimes people think about the gay community nowadays and they think about the affluent, gay white men who live this perfect life, but that's one aspect of it. We have Modern Family portraying Cam and Mitchell…it's not a real portrayal of real people. At the same time, I see a lot of my LGBT+ family homeless on the side of the Castro…I see a lot of them undocumented, trying to get asylum, trying to come into the country because they're going to be killed in their country. Here I am in maybe one of the biggest cities in the world living...and embarking on this new career with all this opportunity…it's by sheer luck. I think what motivates me…is knowing that I was given something and I want to make sure that I do whatever I can to share what I can, to help those that need me. I think it's all that I've been given that makes me want to be part of a movement that helps other LGBT+ individuals succeed (P-L).
Sub question 5. The fifth sub question of this study sought to answer, “What recommendations do LGBTQ+ millennials have for current or future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement?” Two themes were identified as recommendations that LGBTQ+ millennials have for the current and future national gay civil rights movement (see Table 9).

Table 9. Recommendations for Current/Future National Gay Civil Rights Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intersectional &amp; Social Justice Approach</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow Millennials to Lead &amp; Diversify the Movement</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
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</table>

Theme 1: Intersectional & social justice approach. 10 of 12 participants stated that the future of the gay civil rights movement should take an intersectional and/or social justice approach to gaining equity for all humans. Participant K recommended the need for “more centering of marginal gender identities and transgender folks as a whole, because right now, in this in this political moment that feels like the segment of the community that's getting picked off.” She continued, “it’s these forces that are against us. [They] are choosing that part of the community to target and demonize…trying to divide us…that's a division tactic from right wing opposition (P-K).

What this means for Participant A is “being actively anti-racist, being actively anti-transphobia…thinking about our systems that we already have in place and really challenging our own systems of who we put to the front and not just who we put on our diversity posters.” This also translates to approaching activism from a “social justice lens…for queer youth and education (P-A).” She pointed out that queer people need to show up for “immigrant rights rallies,” because there are LGBTQ+ people in all other marginalized and oppressed demographics. She continued, “I need to actively work to
see it and work to not just be anti-racist, not just being kind of woke as a status but really actively pushing myself and checking myself and listening when other people check me and doing the work myself (P-A).” In agreement, Participant B affirmed the viewpoint of Participant A. He stated,

I fight for...not just for gay rights...I fight about any civil rights like race for example, if I see somebody in the street doing something bad against a colored person I will stand for this...I will say something...I'll do something immediately...about a poor person...about homeless...about anything (P-B).

Participant L indicated that queer Americans need to start “thinking more globally and more intersectionally about how we should all have access to the same freedoms. He exclaimed that there needs to be a “leveling of the playing field” to “make sure everybody has access to live freely and openly, not just those with privilege (P-L). He continued further:

I think that we need to know that there's more intersectionality in people's ability to access some of the rights that we have. It's remembering that...yes, we have achieved all these things but remembering that there are still people in our community who can’t access certain freedoms and that sometimes we need to do what we can to mobilize in that sense...have people be able to get the opportunity to live as freely as some of us do (P-L).

Participant C analyzed the “complexities” of having “multiple oppressed identities” and the innate challenges that exist for other queer folks like her. She spoke about “being oppressed for multiple complexities...being a woman...being Latina...being a queer person.” This multiplicity of identities has contributed to her recommendation
for the future of the gay civil rights movement. She would like the movement to be more inclusive of people who identify like her and take on a social justice approach.

Continuing to have conversations…to identify our privileges but also our struggles and…not become complacent…it's not just about gay marriage, it's about so much more. We have trans people in detention centers right now. We have schools that are expelling students for using a bathroom [of their choice]. Schools that are still misidentifying trans students. We forget the power of grassroots organization…we forget that works…people power works (P-C).

Theme 2: Allow millennials to lead & diversify the movement. 10 of 12 participants emphasized that it is essential to the future of the gay civil rights movement to allow millennials to take the lead and diversify the movement by ensuring that there are many different voices at the table when decisions are being made. For example, Participant I emphasized that “millennials have this opportunity within every area to step up and have a different solution.” She continued, “it's the same for the gay civil rights movement. [They have] fresh ideas, fresh perspectives, a lower tolerance for bullshit.” She stressed that millennials are able to “use technology” to “come up with new solutions or mobilize really quickly,” allowing them to engage in a broader range of activism.

Participant C agreed and explained,

Younger generations are really stepping up and they're more badass than we were...they're fucking doing work and they're stepping up in ways that it's really inspiring to see. It really is. It feels like it's a continuation of that struggle in that fight for rights that we've always had in us as gay people...they fucking inspire me all the time. They're breaking down stigmas and norms in ways that are like
whoa… I'm really inspired by the younger generations who are stepping up. Furthermore, Participant K stressed that she sees LGBTQ+ millennials playing “a huge” role in the future of the gay civil rights movement.” Participant E argued that “the youth are leading.” Her recommendation for the future of the movement was “to let the youth lead because they have energy and ideas…and if we could support them with guidance and financially, they can turn the future around” (P-E).

Participant B was inspired to take the lead himself. When asked about his recommendations for the future of the gay civil rights movement, he declared,

When people are trying to eliminate you, then this is beyond conservative or beyond different opinions. This is a war! When somebody is trying to eliminate you…to demolish you…then that’s a war. I'm not going to just stay there and be eliminated. No, I will fight back. I think it's time for us to fight back. My role is to open in my mouth and try to show people that they don't share the same ideas with me…to show them what I believe is the right thing…and try to make people go and vote.

Relatedly, Participant F expressed that she had “the same recommendations for the democrats” as LGBTQ+ millennials. She stated,

It’s fucking war time! We need to stop sitting back and taking the high road. I feel like a lot of the queer community is complacent, because they've gotten comfortable. And a lot of them get to experience a lot of privilege that a large subset of our queer community does not. But there needs to be some education within our community about the needs of people that have less.

She also described a need to be more inclusive within the movement and recognize that
there is healing that needs to occur within the queer community in order to move forward with a new agenda.

There's a lot of division within the LGBTQ+ community that we've experienced…and through Letter People, we're trying to diminish that more and more, but it's really, really tough. Because the education component needs to be there…needs to be strong…and the awareness level needs to be increased for people that have more privilege. I feel like we need to all be on the same page, on the same team. And in order to do that, we need to have empathy for one another and understand the struggles that each person goes through day to day…be more aware and outside of our own existence…and our own bubble and our own click of friends and look up and look at others around us…even go as far as to seek out that knowledge and to participate in helping others also seek out that knowledge, but then putting it into action to where we actually can bridge those divides…it's all about having equal representation…equal voice…and just being open to accepting the stories of every other person in the group. I feel like in order to start those conversations, there needs to be a lot of healing within our queer community. Then we can start talking about the hurt that each individual goes through and why. Then we can bridge the divides. Then we can be a stronger group all together. Then we can go after whatever agenda we decide we want to go after (P-F).
Social Movement Theory

Social movement theory was utilized as a theoretical framework to provide additional analysis into how internal and external factors motivate LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. As referenced in Chapter II, Nynäs and Lassander (2015) describe social movements as social processes that involve the connection between social actors who are immersed in evident informal networks. The social actors have a shared identity and engage in communal conflict with noticeably identified opponents. All 12 participants in this study had four shared identifiable features: 1) they were residents of one of the following counties--Solano, Napa, Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa, or Santa Clara, 2) they self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer, 3) they were born between January 1, 1980 and December 31, 2000, and 4) the self-identified as a participant in a local LGBT group and/or organization.

According Nynäs & Lassander (2015), social movements are initiated due to commonality and togetherness brought upon by the need for equality and social change. All 12 participants viewed themselves as actively engaging in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. Their narratives were examined and explored throughout the thematic analysis process. Young (1999) explained how participating in the status quo of societal norms and capitalism contributes to the ideals of social movement theory, particularly when the underprivileged experience is coercion in the form of power and domination over the other. This is the case of the LGBTQ+ individuals who experience additional societal constraints such as racism, sexism, misogyny, and patriarchy (Wilson, 1996; Young, 1999). The recommendation of taking
a diverse, intersectional, social justice approach to the future of the national gay civil rights movement in the United States suggests that LGBTQ+ millennials in the Bay Area of California experience oppression and marginalization due to multiple facets of their identities.

**Summary**

Chapter IV reviewed the purpose statement and research questions, research methods and data collection procedures, population, sample, and demographic data of study participants. Chapter IV’s primary focus was on the presentation and analysis of the data collected in the study. Key findings were presented in the form of thematic analysis and frequencies as they related to the study’s two central research questions and five sub questions. A total of 14 themes were identified for this study from the data analysis conducted by the researcher. There were six themes related to the identity making and lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials. These themes were generated from the responses to research question 1 and sub questions 1 and 4. The remaining eight themes related to the participation and recommendations for the future of the gay civil rights movement. These themes were generated from the responses to research question 2 and sub questions 2, 3, and 5. The theoretical frameworks of symbolic interactionism and social movement theory were utilized to support the main findings of the study. Chapter V discusses the major findings, unexpected findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

A total of 12 interviews were conducted by the researcher to examine the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that have influenced their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California and describe the recommendations LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement. The researcher began the recruitment process of volunteer participants for the study upon receiving approval from the Brandman University Internal Review Board (BUIRB). The sample for this study consisted of 12 self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons who were born between the years of 1980 and 2000, reside and/or work in the Bay Area of California, and participate in, or work for, a local LGBTQ+ group and/or organization.

There were three sections of questions developed for the data collection of the study. The purpose of the first section was to gain information about the participant by requesting their personal background and demographic data, along with proof that the participant met the sample selection criteria. The second section examined the participant’s lived experiences as a self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer millennial. The third section was an opportunity for the researcher to gain an understanding of the participant’s involvement with their local LGBTQ+ group or organization as a member and/or activist. Each interview concluded with a final opportunity for the participant to share any additional information regarding their lived experiences in the Bay Area that would benefit the purpose of the study. Lastly,
participants were requested to provide any artifacts they may have pertaining to the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area.

The interviews were recorded using an electronic audio recording device and were transcribed by the researcher within three days of the interaction. Each participant received a copy of the transcription of their interview to check for accuracy and provide any necessary changes to their responses. The researcher engaged in a thematic analysis of the finalized transcriptions to identify existing patterns in the data. All participants were assigned letters in order to maintain steps taken for anonymity throughout the data collection and analysis processes.

The researcher obtained the representative participation sample of the target population through: soliciting self-identified LGBTQ+ millennials throughout the Bay Area who are visibly active in the gay civil rights movement on social media, snowball and convenience sampling techniques, and personal interactions with Bay Area LGBTQ+ millennials. Data was collected from conducting in-person semi-structured interviews at a local neutral site within the county limits of the participant. The standardized guided questions were intentionally grouped in a sequence that directly aligned with the purpose statement and research questions of the study. In addition, the basic fundamental concepts of the theoretical frameworks of social movement theory and symbolic interactionism were utilized to guide the structure of the interview questions.
**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that influenced their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. Another purpose of the study was to describe the recommendations LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement.

**Central Research Questions**

1. What are the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
2. What recommendations do LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement?

**Sub Questions**

1. What are the lived narratives of LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
2. What external motivators lead LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
3. What internal motivators lead LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
4. What factors of the LGBTQ+ identity have influenced LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?
5. What recommendations do LGBTQ+ millennials have for current or future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement?
Major Findings

The major findings of this qualitative phenomenological study are organized and presented by the two primary research questions and five sub questions. The identity making process and lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials living in the Bay Area of California was addressed in research question 1 and sub questions 1 and 4. A total of six themes were identified from the participant data as a part of the lived experiences and identity making processes of LGBTQ+ millennials living in the Bay Area of California.

The participation of LGBTQ+ millennials and the recommendation for the future of the gay civil rights movement were addressed in research question 2 and sub questions 2, 3, and 5. A total of four themes were identified from the participant data as motivators for engaging in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. An additional four themes were identified from the participant data as recommendations for the future of the national gay civil rights movement.

Major Finding 1

The first primary research question of this study sought to answer, “What are the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?” Participants identified two major themes from their lived experiences as LGBTQ+ millennials that contributed to their identity making processes. First, LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California experienced challenges with religious and conservative views when growing up. Participants shared examples of the challenge that their religious and/or conservative upbringing had on their identity making process. LGBTQ+ millennials voiced their struggle with coming to terms with their sexual and/or
gender identity. The findings indicated that being raised in a religious household poses a unique set of circumstances for LGBTQ+ individuals. There is a sense of guilt, shame, and fear that is instilled in these individuals that becomes stressful to manage throughout their lives as they come to terms with their LGBTQ+ identities.

Moreover, the nine participants who identified with this theme maintained that the trauma of being raised in a religious environment stunted their ability to come out at an earlier age and prevented them from being themselves in public and private spaces. Also, the fear of losing familial support encouraged all nine participants to keep their LGBTQ+ identities hidden until their early twenties. Several participants disclosed that the religious environment they were raised in caused them to adjust their time of coming out and increased their anxiety about wanting to tell their families about their LGBTQ+ identities.

**Second, geography is a determinant of social and cultural openness for LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California.** All 12 participants indicated a desire to remain in, return, or relocate to the Bay Area of California due to safety, social acceptance, and/or wanting to gain a queer community. In addition, all 12 participants exemplified the significance of safety that is involved with living as an out LGBTQ+ individual in the Bay Area. There were eight participants who were born and raised in California, three of which left briefly and returned. There was an underlying theme of a love and recognition for the Bay Area from the three participants who returned after leaving for several years.

Of the four participants who relocated to California, one grew up in Greece and moved to New York City in his twenties, one was born and raised in the Midwest, one
was born and raised in upstate New York, and the other grew up in a rural part of Texas. For all four of these participants, the Bay Area has provided a space of acceptance for them to continue exploring their sexual and gender identities. They discovered that being able to engage in socially acceptable queer events that take place in public spaces throughout the Bay Area has encouraged personal growth in many ways.

Nearly half of the participants indicated that they grew up outside of California or in a conservative area of the state. Growing up in rural and/or conservative geographic areas poses a unique set of challenges for LGBTQ+ individuals that plays a role in their identity making processes. Additional limitations exist in these areas that can threaten the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals who choose to live openly. Making it extremely difficult to come out prior to leaving home. Moreover, participants who grew up in rural areas indicated significant issues with suicidality and mental health.

**Major Finding 2**

The second primary research question of this study sought to answer, “What recommendations do LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement?” Participants identified two significant recommendations that LGBTQ+ millennials have for the future of the national gay civil rights movement. **First, LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California recommended queering the movement by making it more inclusive of trans, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming individuals.** Participants also discussed the possibility of putting an end to the in-fighting that LGBTQ+ millennials identified as a current issue occurring in the gay civil rights movement. Half of the participants in the study indicated a need for the gay civil
rights movement to be more inclusive and move towards a “queer rights movement.” They want the movement to prioritize trans and gender non-conforming equity.

The findings emphasized the importance of understanding queer history and the progress that has been made over the last 50 years. Participants indicated that they would like to see more done to promote equity for trans people of color. There was an agreement amongst participants in moving beyond marriage equality to address discrimination in the workplace and housing sector. Participants stressed how remaining vigilant and continuing to fight for LGBTQ+ equity is how they will gain access to all rights.

**Second, participants indicated the importance of LGBTQ+ identified people running for public office and addressed the opportunity to engage in global LGBTQ+ activism.** Participants want LGBTQ+ individuals to gain more political representation in order to have a seat at the table and have their voices heard. LGBTQ+ millennials would also like to see the gay civil rights movement explore the idea of reaching more marginalized communities through engaging in political activism throughout the world. This can take the form of immigration rights, climate change, participating in activism abroad for the equitable treatment of LGBTQ+ individuals, or securing the safety of those fleeing persecution in their home countries and seeking asylum in the United States.

**Major Finding 3**

The first sub question of this study sought to answer, “What are the lived narratives of LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?” The lived narratives of LGBTQ+ millennials revealed two
themes that have contributed to their identity making processes. **First, participants specified the need for social, cultural, and/or personal acceptance as a primary factor in their coming out process and/or their need to want to be a part of the larger queer community.** The findings discovered that the desire for social connection, community, and personal acceptance are key to LGBTQ+ individual’s mental health and ideals of worthiness. When asked about their coming out process and learning how to accept themselves and their own identities, all three factors (social, cultural, and personal) played a part in their narratives. Participants referenced the locating of an LGBTQ+ social group as finding their new chosen family. There is a shared connectedness amongst the members of their groups that has enabled them to gain personal acceptance.

In addition, the lived experience narratives shared by participants indicated that one factor that played a role in their identity development was a sense of resiliency from the struggle of obtaining overall acceptance of themselves. Participants referenced events in their lives that were difficult to navigate. These stories signified the resiliency that LGBTQ+ individuals form as a result of having to endure unique struggles with the acceptance of themselves personally or culturally. Several participants disclosed that they were either married or in a long-term relationship with people of the opposite sex while coming out as LGBTQ+. This created another layer of self-awareness that needed to happen during their identity making process that posed additional challenges for them.

**Second, participants implied that familial relationships play a role as a determinant of finding identity for LGBTQ+ millennials.** Five participants shared experiences of coming out that were positive overall. However, seven participants
reported experiences that were negative and continue to impact their lives as open LGBTQ+ individuals into adulthood.

**Major Finding 4**

The second sub question of this study sought to answer, “What external motivators lead LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?” Participants identified several external factors as motivators that lead LGBTQ+ millennials to become activists in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. **First, LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California are externally motivated by the importance of paying it forward to the generations that follow.** LGBTQ+ millennials recognized the importance of paying it forward for what LGBTQ+ activists have accomplished with regards to equity, access, and safety for the queer community in the United States. Participants viewed the understanding of queer history in the U.S. as a vital tool for knowing the future of the gay civil rights movement. LGBTQ+ millennials are aware of the pain, struggle, and solace in recognizing the roots of the gay civil rights movement’s existence and those LGBTQ+ activists who came before them.

**Second, participants indicated that the current Administration and LGBTQ+ policy rollbacks that have been occurring since January 2017 is an external motivator to want to be more active in the gay civil rights movement.** LGBTQ+ millennials emphasized the need to continue to put pressure on the Trump Administration to keep the policies in place that provide equal rights and protections for LGBTQ+ people in the United States. This includes the legislation that is currently being reviewed in the
U.S. Supreme Court that would eliminate workplace protections for LGBTQ+ identified federal employees.

**Major Finding 5**

The third sub question of this study sought to answer, “What internal motivators lead LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?” Participants specified several internal factors as motivators that lead LGBTQ+ millennials to become activists in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. **First, participants mentioned their internalized empathy for wanting to minimize the struggle related to the identity making process of identifying as LGBTQ+.** Eight of 12 participants voiced a need for mental health awareness and the cultivation of a movement towards finding remedies for supporting the mental wellness of the LGBTQ+ community. LGBTQ+ individuals experience significantly high amounts of depression and anxiety that goes untreated into adulthood (see Chapter II). LGBTQ+ individuals often “self-medicate” and are “raised in bars” in the early stages of coming to terms with their identity. Participants shared how their life may have had an alternate trajectory had they not had a “positive role model” to show and tell them that they could be their true selves and it was going to be okay.

Two-thirds of the participants in this study empathized with the unique set of challenges that LGBTQ+ individuals experience throughout their lives. They indicated that a primary internal factor for participating in the gay civil rights moving was ensuring that younger generations of LGBTQ+ individuals would not have to endure similar life circumstances. Participants empathized with the inability to adapt and cope during the coming out process within the LGBTQ+ community. They cited wanting to ensure that
younger generations would not have to endure the same feelings of unhappiness, unworthiness, and brokenness that previous generations have had to experience.

**Second, participants specified a need to decrease the stigma in society that exists for LGBTQ+ identified people.** Participants have become actively involved in the gay civil rights movement to ensure that the negative stigma of identifying as LGBTQ+ decreases for the generations that come after them. Participants pointed out the need for legislation that works towards eliminating workplace, housing, and other types of societal discriminations for the LGBTQ+ community, specifically trans women of color. LGBTQ+ millennials suggested that the LGBTQ+ community needs to start supporting each other and taking care of their own well-being in order to lead in the movement. Participants maintained that destigmatizing LGBTQ+ individuals can be complicated and influenced by many internal factors that stem from a lifetime of mental health issues, guilt, shame, and fear.

**Major Finding 6**

The fourth sub question of this study sought to answer, “What factors of the LGBTQ+ identity have influenced LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California?” Participants identified several factors of identity that have influenced LGBTQ+ millennials to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. **First, LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California proposed a call for fairness and equity through the representation and visibility of LGBTQ+ people.** All 12 participants agreed that they have a social responsibility for the fair and equitable treatment of the queer community through maintaining representation within media.
outlets and making their LGBTQ+ identities visible. This could be locally, nationally, and/or globally. Furthermore, all 12 study participants inferred that media representation and queer visibility are fundamental to the safety and security of LGBTQ+ individuals. They cited how seeing oneself represented on television, in the movies, or in a positive light on social media platforms gives LGBTQ+ individuals a sense of belonging and self-worth. Several participants revealed strong beliefs that LGBTQ+ equity is a human right and fairness exists when all humans have access to the same rights. In addition, participants asserted that visibility provides a sense of support, safety, and security for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Second, participants acknowledged that leaving home for college and/or a job opportunity allowed them to be more curious about their current sexual and gender identity. The external factors involved with going away for college enabled them to come to terms with their identities and come out to their friends and family as LGBTQ+. For these participants, access to education is seen as a positive force in becoming an active participant in the gay civil rights movement and understanding the evolution of their own sexuality and gender identity. Participants pointed out how attending college in a city or different state afforded them more opportunities for personal growth and identity making.

Major Finding 7

The fifth sub question of this study sought to answer, “What recommendations do LGBTQ+ millennials have for current or future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement?” Participants identified two imperative recommendations that LGBTQ+ millennials have for the current and future national gay civil rights
movement. First, LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California recommended that the future of the movement should take an intersectional and/or social justice approach to gaining equity for all humans. Participants stated the need for advocacy centered around the trans, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary members of the LGBTQ+ community. Participants pronounced a fundamental need for the queer community to align itself with anti-racist, anti-transphobic, immigrant’s rights, and climate change efforts due to all of these movements having to do with social justice. Participants suggested that the LGBTYQ+ community should approach the gay civil rights movement as a fight for rights for all marginalized and oppressed communities because there are LGBTQ+ people involved in every campaign.

Second, LGBTQ+ millennials who participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California emphasized that it is essential to the future of the movement to allow millennials to take the lead and diversify the movement by ensuring that there are many different voices at the table when decisions are being made. Participants maintained that LGBTQ+ millennials are knowledgeable and have the skills to become the leaders of the future of the movement. Participants stressed that LGBTQ+ millennials have access to a broader range of technology and are able to mobilize in greater numbers more efficiently than the generations before them. They suggested that LGBTQ+ millennials take on more significant roles in the movement because they are already inspiring hope for queer youth. Participants also described a need to be more inclusive within the movement and recognize that there is healing that needs to occur within the queer community in order to move forward with a new agenda.
Conclusions

This study utilized phenomenological methodology which enabled the researcher to conduct qualitative inquiry into the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials in the Bay Area of California and their participation in the gay civil rights movement. The data collected revealed a multitude of complex challenges and narratives of the unique experiences LGBTQ+ millennials encounter throughout their identity making processes. Conclusions were generated based on the primary findings of the research presented in Chapter IV. These conclusions were driven and strengthened by the literature review and theoretical framework developed in Chapter II.

The literature review confirmed that the Bay Area of California has become a mecca for gay liberationist and a geographic hot spot for openly LGBTQ+ people (Milk, 2013). Over the last 50 years the Bay Area of California has become a home for many LGBTQ+ activists who continue to participate heavily in the gay civil rights movement (Jones, 2017). This has set the stage for LGBTQ+ activists to begin running for public office with the intentions of serving their communities and passing laws that served to protect LGBTQ+ people (Jones, 2017). The review also confirmed that preventing ongoing institutionalized discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression is dependent on the participation of LGBTQ+ millennials in the gay civil rights movement (Quartey et al., 2018). With the number of LGBTQ+ millennials continuing to rise and becoming the largest generation of LGBTQ+ identified persons (Allen, 2017), institutional acceptance and systemic changes for members of the LGBTQ+ community have become reliant on this demographic to lead the gay civil rights movement into the 21st century. Lastly, the review confirmed that the identity
making processes for many LGBTQ+ millennials produces unique complexities of inequality (Anderson & Snow, 2001). By inhibiting multiple identities, a person is forced into the constructs of experiencing intersectionality (Wilson, 1996). The intricacies involved with having to navigate which identities are most important to socially perform may adorn conflict within the self and other group affiliations (Wilson, 1996). Furthermore, sexual and racial identity development models cannot encompass intersectionality, and maintaining multiple identities is motivated by cultural aspects of upbringing. LGBTQ+ millennials who have experienced the conflict of having to manage multiple identities is dependent on the existence of two factors: how the self is situated within societal structures, and the space in which an individual invests time within and culturally occupies (Wilson, 1996).

Conclusion 1

Where an LGBTQ+ identified person is born and raised has an effect on their identity. The data collected from the interviews revealed that LGBTQ+ millennials experienced a unique set of challenges in their identity making processes if they were born and raised in rural, religious, and/or conservative geographic areas of the United States. Access to supportive services played a role for LGBTQ+ millennials who grew up in these environments. They were unable to locate safe spaces or establish a healthy social life that aligned with their identity. The data indicated that LGBTQ+ millennials who were raised in a religious household were compelled to leave home immediately after high school in search of finding themselves and discovering a chosen family and supportive community. Alternatively, the data also revealed that those participants who did not grow up in these environments experienced less challenges throughout their
coming out process, and more acceptance and support from their friends and families. It can be concluded that the environment in which an LGBTQ+ identified person is raised plays a significant role in shaping their identity.

Conclusion 2

LGBTQ+ millennials are willing to take on more responsibility and participate in the policy making processes with regard to the future of the national gay civil rights movement. The study revealed that LGBTQ+ millennials have a particular interest in queering the gay civil rights movement, stopping the in-fighting that is currently occurring within the movement, running for public office, and participating in global LGBTQ+ activism. LGBTQ+ millennials suggested that the queering of the movement would involve envisioning an agenda with a more trans focused framework. This would make the movement take on a queerer lens which would invite more people in and exclude fewer queer folks who exist in more marginalized communities of color. LGBTQ+ millennials indicated that they are willing to shoulder the burden of changing the direction of the movement by running for public office and taking on more significant roles as activists within the movement.

Conclusion 3

LGBTQ+ millennials rely significantly on their relationships during their identity making processes to cultivate a sense of self-worth and self-acceptance. The data collected revealed the importance of relationship building for LGBTQ+ millennials in their identity making processes, especially with their families. For many LGBTQ+ individuals, finding a sense of belonging to an alternative community is vital to their overall health. The literature supported this conclusion and concurred that a lack of self-
worth and self-acceptance often leads an LGBTQ+ individual’s mental health to suffer. This could result in a lifetime of living with anxiety, depression, guilt, shame, and fear. The data also revealed that an understanding of meaningful relationships can lead to the cultivation of healthy social, cultural, and personal acceptance. This conclusion is also supported within the literature review by the reference to how LGBTQ+ allies are commitment to advocating for LGBTQ+ equity and inclusion.

Conclusion 4

LGBTQ+ millennials have a deep sense of recognition for the history of the gay civil rights movement and the activists who have sacrificed to bring about the social changes that have occurred with regards to LGBTQ+ equity over the last 50 years. The data collected revealed that LGBTQ+ millennials are motivated by the actions of the queer activists who have fought for change since the Stonewall and Compton Riots in the 1960s. LGBTQ+ millennials indicated that they choose to participate in the gay civil rights movement because they understand the history of their people and want to ensure that the blood, sweat, tears, pain, and death was not in vein and still has purpose. The literature supported this conclusion with an in-depth outline of policy changes that have been established through the work of LGBTQ+ activists and the gay civil rights movement in the U.S. LGBTQ+ millennials recognized that there is still a lot of work to do with regards to LGBTQ+ rights and draw inspiration from their elders to continue to fight for equity.
Conclusion 5

LGBTQ+ millennials participate in the gay civil rights movement because they have compassion for, and an emotional connection to, people who are experiencing similar challenges with their identity making processes. The data collected revealed that although LGBTQ+ individuals have unique, personal lived experiences, they have a shared value of empathy and compassion for others. LGBTQ+ millennials indicated an innate need to provide support, safety, and security for LGBTQ+ youth. Participants shared a longing for connectedness that they were unable to experience that led them to becoming motivated to be there for the next generation of queer youth. The absence of an emotional connection to a support system during their identity making processes made them empathetic towards not wanting other LGBTQ+ individuals to endure similar experiences.

Conclusion 6

LGBTQ+ millennials value the roles that their social, intellectual, and political capital play in influencing the fairness and equitable properties of LGBTQ+ legislation. The data collected revealed that LGBTQ+ millennials are highly educated and seek career paths that will allow them to gain traction in their social and political status. LGBTQ+ millennials are not afraid to take risks and are valued professionally due to their resilience and intellect that stem from the challenges they experienced during their identity making processes. Participants referenced the use of social media and technology by LGBTQ+ millennials as tools that impact the organization and mobilization of mass movements. They also pointed out the endurance and energy LGBTQ+ millennials have to influence and level out the playing field in
politics. This is further supported by more and more LGBTQ+ millennials running for political office and competing such as, Democratic presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg. The literature review also supported this conclusion with references to Harvey Milk and the need for LGBTQ+ people to be fully present and represented at all levels of government.

Conclusion 7

LGBTQ+ millennials are concerned about the direction that the gay civil rights movement is heading and are interested in leading the cultivation of a more inclusive agenda that is focused on establishing equity for all members of the LGBTQ+ community. The data collected revealed a concern regarding the negative impacts of only having cis white males leading the gay civil rights movement. This lack of representation of the diverse membership that makes up the LGBTQ+ community can be problematic for several reasons. Participants voiced that the negative impact of a less inclusive agenda leaves trans, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary people of color further marginalized. In addition, participants indicated that having a cis-centered gay and lesbian agenda drives the movement towards assimilation politics like marriage, rather than generating new, more inclusive equitable policies for the entire LGBTQ+ community.

Implications for Action

This study presented an examination the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that have influenced their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. Further, this study described the recommendations LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights
movement. The research revealed major findings for the unique challenges LGBTQ+ millennials experience during their identity making processes, and the internal and external factors that have led them to participate in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. The major findings also indicated what recommendations LGBTQ+ millennials have for the future of the gay civil rights movement in the United States. The following implications for action are recommended based on the research conducted, literature review, primary findings of the study, and evocations of the participants.

1. LGBTQ+ communities in rural, religious, and/or conservative areas of the United States must build queer-centered coalitions to establish services that provide support and care to LGBTQ+ youth. LGBTQ+ individuals are exposed to additional challenges if they are raised in a religious and/or conservative environment due to the lack of resources that exist for LGBTQ+ individuals in these oftentimes isolated geographic locations. Through local coalition building, LGBTQ+ individuals have the opportunity to create their own unique safe spaces that allow for the processing of a similar set of circumstances. These communities help to reinforce and cultivate a positive sense of belonging that could be lost when trying to distance oneself from a religious belief or justify the immorality related to identifying as LGBTQ+.

2. More LGBTQ+ millennials must seek election in public office at the local, state, and national levels to steer the future of the gay civil rights movement. The literature pointed out the LGBTQ+ millennials are the largest queer generation thus far. By running for public office, and winning, LGBTQ+
millennials are poised to become the most notorious generation to ever participate in the gay civil rights movement. For this reason, it is absolutely necessary for LGBTQ+ millennials to establish and maintain as many seats at the table as possible. This will allow them to focus on the inclusive agenda that they have invested in to guide the future of the gay civil rights movement in the U.S., and represent LGBTQ+ communities globally.

3. Mental healthcare systems throughout the U.S. must establish and maintain programs that focus on providing wraparound quality of care to LGBTQ+ individuals to promote healing and self-love. LGBTQ+ require a high level of care from mental health professionals throughout their lives. Due to the significance of their unique circumstances of having to endure an identity making process that is inherently stigmatized, LGBTQ+ individuals have intimate experiences with feelings of unworthiness, guilt, and shame, as well as a fear of rejection. Local access to a holistic mental healthcare system that is well-versed in the treatment and care of LGBTQ+ individuals could be a lifesaving recommendation.

4. LGBTQ+ millennials must actively engage, or become involved in the gay civil rights movement to ensure current pro-LGBTQ+ policies remain in place. Since the 2016 election cycle, LGBTQ+ rights have been threatened. Only a few weeks into the Trump presidency, the entire LGBTQ+ information page from removed from the white house website. A year later, the trans military ban was reestablished. Today, workplace discrimination protections of LGBTQ+ federal employees are in the hands of the Supreme Court. If this
policy gets repealed, there will be a catastrophic impact on pro-LGBTQ+ policies nationwide. For these reasons, it is imperative that LGBTQ+ millennials remain actively engaged in the gay civil rights movement, especially in less LGBTQ+ saturated locales. Representation is a key factor in gaining allies and inspiring others to join the movement.

5. LGBTQ+ millennials must support and/or establish local organizations that have a mission and commitment towards community building for LGBTQ+ individuals to provide safe, welcoming, secure spaces for processing the unique obstacles LGBTQ+ individuals experience. LGBTQ+ millennials represent a cohort of the queer community that will most likely never exist again. LGBTQ+ millennials are expected to be the first generation to rise to 10 percent of the entire population. It is their responsibility to throw their support at the organizations that are enhancing the lives of LGBTQ+ youth and/or establish a space where LGBTQ+ individuals can build community and mobilize.

6. LGBTQ+ millennials must seek higher education degrees in fields that will allow them to achieve higher status at the local, state, and/or federal level to influence policies that effect the LGBTQ+ community. LGBTQ+ millennials are intellectual, academic, and take pride in being knowledgeable about politics and the world around them. By obtaining degrees in fields that allow them to infiltrate and influence policy making, LGBTQ+ millennials will be more likely to affect positive social change for the queer community and their allies. LGBTQ+ millennials have the drive and desire to be influencers and
transformational change makers at the local, state, and national levels.

Seeking higher education degrees in fields like criminal justice, social justice, law, management, international business, and public policy will establish greater political capital to gain access into politics.

7. LGBTQ+ millennials must lead the national gay civil rights movement in changing its name to “queer movement,” and updating its mission, vision, and agenda to a 21st century model that addresses the diversity of complex multiple oppressions that exist for all members of the LGBTQ+ community. LGBTQ+ millennials operate from a technological mindset and are driven by remaining up-to-date and current on all the information they have access to on the worldwide web. For this reason, LGBTQ+ millennials recognize the importance of being flexible and open to change with regards to social movements. Many of the current movements include hashtags—#metoo, #blacklivesmatter—and LGBTQ+ millennials are tasked with updating the gay civil rights movement to represent all the faces of queer culture. Changing the words “gay civil rights” to “queer” follows the theme of the hashtag by shortening the title while making it all-inclusive. The queer movement will have a mission, vision, and agenda that is developed by diverse voices from all members of the LGBTQ+ community, and will be the basis of solidifying LGBTQ+ equity in American culture and politics.
Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were made for further research:

- Replicate this study with other generations in the Bay Area of California.
- Replicate this study in other metropolitan cities throughout the U.S. that have a significant LGBTQ+ population.
- Replicate this study in rural/conservative geographic areas in the U.S.
- Replicate this study with LGBTQ+ millennials in other countries.
- Conduct a qualitative phenomenological study on anti-LGBTQ+ activists in the Bay Area of California.
- Conduct a qualitative phenomenological study on millennials who participate in other current global movements such as, #metoo or #blacklivesmatter.
- Conduct a study exploring the mental and medical healthcare systems and transphobia.
- Conduct a qualitative phenomenological study on LGBTQ+ millennial military veteran activists.
- The findings from this study could be utilized in a longitudinal study to further explore how LGBTQ+ millennials’ involvement in the gay civil rights movement changes over time.
- The findings from this study could be utilized to advance the future research on millennial activism.
• The findings from this study could be utilized to educate current LGBTQ+ activists on what queer millennials want as the mission, vision, and agenda of the gay civil rights movement.

• The findings from this study indicated the need to increase social, cultural, and personal acceptance of oneself. A follow-up study is needed with the same participants that focuses on access to quality mental healthcare in the Bay Area for LGBTQ+ millennials.

Concluding Remarks & Reflections

LGBTQ+ millennials are on the cusp of becoming the largest represented generation. We have been tasked with the burden of carrying the weight of decades of policy changes, riots, demonstrations, movements, and deaths. Yet, this study has shown that LGBTQ+ millennials have chosen to continue to fight for the same equity their elders were struggling to obtain over 50 years ago.

When I decided to conduct a study on a population that I belong to, there was concern over the inherent biases I would encounter along the way. I struggled trying to identify reasons for wanting to learn more about my peers. The inherent bias I held as the researcher of this study was that I represent the primary demographics of the study sample—bisexual nonbinary millennial living in the Bay Area of California—and want to make a difference in the world so that LGBTQ+ people will suffer less. These biases were described and addressed in the Limitations section of Chapter III.

The similarities that exist in the stories of the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials have much more to do with the environments in which they grew up in than their age and current geographic location. I grew up on an island in the middle of the
Pacific Ocean without access to media representation of what an LGBTQ+ person is or appears as. My knowledge of queer culture consisted of the homophobic slurs my father and brothers would use daily like faggot, homo, and mahu (used as slang in Hawaii after colonization to mean gay, drag queen, or butch lesbian), and the normalizing of hypermasculinity. When I moved to the Bay Area of California when I was 13, a part of me already knew that I was not heterosexual or cisgender. Still, not having the language or context to base this on, I chose to repress these parts of my identity. As an adolescent, I hid my bisexual identity by becoming so involved with my Catholic faith that I almost joined a convent out of high school. I also became extremely suicidal and depressed due to the guilt, shame, and fear of having to hide my truth. These factors of my identity are authentic to me, yet support the major findings of this study that indicated an LGBTQ+ person’s environment and access to support systems has an effect on their identity making process and is a determinant of their overall wellbeing.

From my lived experiences, I have found that my purpose, like many of the contributors to this study, is to ultimately find a way to spread love and kindness to not only the LGBTQ+ community, but to all people. What we have in common is our desire to ensure the next generations of LGBTQ+ people do not have to be afraid to be whoever they are, whenever they want to be that person. This is what motivates me and why I chose to conduct this study. The commonalities that I share with LGBTQ+ millennials consist of a vision for a world without hate that fosters acceptance for all people. Ironically, I have my religious upbringing to thank for allowing me to believe that we are all loved regardless of who we love.
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Interested in contributing to an academic research study on LGBTQ+ millennials in the Bay Area?

Please contact the researcher if you meet the following criteria and would like to participate in an interview:

- Self-identify as LGBTQ+
- Born between 1980 and 2000
- Are a resident of the Bay Area
- Participate and/or work in a local LGBTQ+ group and/or organization

Sara Hall-Kennedy 619.729.9691 shallken@mail.brandman.edu

The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that have influenced their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California, and to describe the recommendations LGBTQ+ millennials have for future activists who participate in the national gay civil rights movement.

Please email shallken@mail.brandman.edu for more information.
APPENDIX B – INVITATION TO PARTICIPANTS

Research Study Title: Bay Area LGBTQ+ Millennials: The Newest Generation Leading the Gay Civil Rights Movement

November _____, 2019

Dear Prospective Study Participant:

You are invited to participate in a study to uncover the unique experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that contribute to their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. The main investigator of this study is Sara Hall-Kennedy, Doctoral Candidate in Brandman University’s Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program. You were chosen to participate in this study because you have self-identified as a member of the millennial LGBTQ+ community and reside in a Bay Area of California county.

Approximately 12 self-identified millennial LGBTQ+ persons who reside in nine counties throughout the Bay Area of California will participate in this study. Participation should require about one hour of your time and is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

PURPOSE: This study will provide an understanding for what is occurring in the gay civil rights movement with regards to the future safety and security of LGBTQ+ people, and the perceived role that LGBTQ+ millennials are taking within the fight for LGBTQ+ equality. This study will contribute to LGBTQ+ research regarding the understanding of the relationship between LGBTQ+ millennials and the gay civil rights movement. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore and describe the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that have contributed to their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California.

PROCEDURES: If you decide to participate in the study, the researcher will interview you. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions designed to reflect on your lived experiences as a self-identified LGBTQ+ millennial person who is a participant in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area. The interview session will be audio-recorded and transcribed. You will also be asked to provide access to artifacts as it pertains to your experiences as an LGBTQ+ millennial person.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: There are minimal risks to your participation in this research study. It may be uncomfortable or emotionally/psychologically painful at times throughout the interview process to discuss personal experiences. It is your right to request to skip questions or stop the interview at any time without any consequences. It may be inconvenient for you to arrange time for the interview questions, so for that purpose online surveys may also be made accessible to accommodate your schedule.
POTENTIAL BENEFITS: This study will fill in the gap in the research regarding the understanding of the relationship between LGBTQ+ millennials and the gay civil rights movement. Policymakers may utilize this study to develop new local, state, and/or federal laws that condemn LGBTQ+ discriminatory practices throughout U.S. schools, workplaces, and public spaces. Furthermore, this study has the opportunity to insight conversations within institutions and organizations regarding how to create safer spaces for LGBTQ+ people. Lastly, this study will contribute to the academic body of knowledge in queer history and gender studies. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, activists and employers.

ANONYMITY: Records of information that you provide for the research study and any personal information you provide will not be linked in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study.

You are encouraged to ask questions, at any time, that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. You may contact me at (619) 729-9691 or by email at shallken@mail.brandman.edu. You can also contact Dr. Tamerin Capellino by email at capellino@brandman.edu. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study or your rights as a study participant, you may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

Respectfully,

Sara Hall-Kennedy
Doctoral Candidate, Brandman University
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA  92618

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE:  Bay Area LGBTQ+ Millennials: The Newest Generation Leading the Gay Civil Rights Movement

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR:  Sara Hall-Kennedy, Doctoral Candidate

TITLE OF CONSENT FORM:  Consent to Participate in Research

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:  This study is being conducted for a dissertation for the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program at Brandman University. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore and describe the unique experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that have contributed to their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California.

PROCEDURES:  In participating in this research study, I agree to partake in an audio-recorded semi-structured interview. The interview will take place in person in a private setting in the geographic area where I reside/work or by videoconference and lasts about an hour. During the interview, I will be asked a series of questions designed to allow me to share my experiences as a self-identified millennial LGBTQ+ person. I also agree to provide relevant artifacts that would provide insights into the experiences I have had as an LGBTQ+ person affiliated with the gay civil rights movement.

I understand that:

a)  The possible risks or discomforts associated with this research are minimal. It may be inconvenient to spend up to one hour in the interview. It may also be uncomfortable or emotionally/psychologically painful at times throughout the interview process to discuss personal experiences. However, the interview session will be held at a mutual site or at an agreed upon location, to minimize this inconvenience. Surveys will also be utilized depending upon participants scheduling availability.

b)  I will not be compensated for my participation in this study. The findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants.

c)  Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Sara Hall-Kennedy, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate. I understand that they may be contacted by phone at (619) 729-9691 or email at
shallken@mail.brandman.edu. The dissertation chairperson may also answer questions: Dr. Tamerin Capellino at capellino@brandman.edu.

d) I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.

e) The study will be audio-recorded, and the recordings will not be used beyond the scope of this project. Audio recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews. Once the interviews are transcribed, the audio and interview transcripts will be kept for a minimum of three years by the investigator in a secure location. After three years of the completion of the study, all hard copy documents and computer data related to the study participants will be destroyed via shredder or erased from electronic storage.

f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be informed and my consent re-obtained. If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research Participant’s Bill of Rights.

I have read the above and understand it and hereby voluntarily consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

_________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party  Date

_________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of Witness (if appropriate)  Date

_________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator  Date

Brandman University IRB October 9, 2019
Audio Release Form

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: Bay Area LGBTQ+ Millennials: The Newest Generation Leading the Gay Civil Rights Movement

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA 92618

I authorize Sara Hall-Kennedy, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate, to record my voice. I give Brandman University and all persons or entities associated with this research study permission or authority to use this recording for activities associated with this research study.

I understand that the recording will be used for transcription purposes and the information obtained during the interview may be published in a journal/dissertation or presented at meetings/presentations.

I will be consulted about the use of the audio recordings for any purpose other than those listed above. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising correlated to the use of information obtained from the recording.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to the outlined terms. I hereby release any and all claims against any person or organization utilizing this material.

____________________________________  ____________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party  Date
BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant’s Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her/them.
4. To be told if he/she/they can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she/they has/have and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she/they wishes/wish to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

Brandman University IRB

Adopted

November 2013
Research Study Title: Bay Area LGBTQ+ Millennials: The Newest Generation Leading the Gay Civil Rights Movement

Opening Statement: [Interviewer states:] Thank you for participating in this study. I realize that your time is valuable and very much appreciate your willingness to be interviewed. To review, this is a phenomenological qualitative study that seeks to explore and describe the unique experiences of LGBTQ+ millennials that have contributed to their participation in the gay civil rights movement in the Bay Area of California. The questions are written to elicit this information.

Interview Agenda: [Interviewer states:] I anticipate this interview will take about an hour today. As a review of the process leading up to this interview, you were invited to participate via letter, email, or phone, and signed an informed consent form that outlined the interview process and the condition of complete anonymity for this study. We will begin with reviewing the Letter of Invitation, Informed Consent Form, Brandman University’s Participant’s Bill of Rights, and the Audio Release Form. Then after reviewing all the forms, you will be asked to sign documents pertinent for this study, which include the Informed Consent and Audio Release Form. Next, I will begin the audio recorder and ask a list of questions related to the purpose of the study. I may take notes as the interview is being recorded. If you are uncomfortable with me taking notes, please let me know and I will only continue with the audio recording of the interview. Finally, I will stop the recorder and conclude our interview session. After your interview is transcribed, you will receive a copy of the complete transcripts to check for accuracy prior to the data being analyzed. Please remember that anytime during this process you have the right to stop the interview. If at any time you do not understand the questions being asked, please do not hesitate to ask for clarification. Are there any questions or concerns before we begin with the questions?

Introduction

1. Please identify your pronouns.
2. What county do you currently reside in?
3. What year were you born?
4. What is your sexual and gender identity?
5. Please share a bit about the evolution of your sexual and gender identity. How long have you identified as this person?

Lived Experiences as an LGBTQ+ Millennial

6. Tell me a bit about your upbringing. Where did you grow up?
7. What were your relationships like with your parents/siblings?
8. What internal factors of your experiences have contributed to your current identity as (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) millennial?
9. What external factors of your experiences have contributed to your current identity as (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) millennial?
10. Are you currently living as an “out” individual?
If yes, tell me a bit about your coming out story.

11. Was there an event that contributed to your coming out?
   o If yes, tell me a bit about the event.

**Participation in the Gay Civil Rights Movement**

12. Do you belong to or participate in any LGBTQ+ clubs, groups, or organizations in the Bay Area?
   o If yes, which ones?
   o How long have you participated in these clubs, groups, or organizations?
   o Tell me a bit about your participation in these clubs, groups, or organizations?
   o What factors of your experiences as a (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) millennial have contributed to your participation in these clubs, groups, or organizations?

13. What has internally motivated you to become a participant in the gay civil rights movement?

14. What has externally motivated you to become a participant in the gay civil rights movement?

15. Have you participated in any political events in the Bay Area concerning the rights of LGBTQ+ people?
   o If yes, what events?
   o Where did the event take place?
   o What was your role in the event?

16. Please describe your thoughts about the current state of the gay civil rights movement. How do you see your role in this movement?
   o What factors of your (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) identity have contributed to your participation in this role?

17. What recommendations do you have for the future of the gay civil rights movement in the U.S.?

18. What role do you see LGBTQ+ millennials having in the future gay civil rights movement?

**Conclusion and Invitation to Share Project Artifacts**

This is a time to share any additional insights, comments, and reflects you may have about your experience as a (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) millennial.

Do you have any artifacts that you are able to share that would provide insight into your experiences as a member of the LGBTQ+ community?
## APPENDIX E – DEMOGRAPHIC

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<th>Participant ID</th>
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<td>Rainbow Community Center (Contra Costa County)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A, K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonoma County Pride (Sonoma County)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>B, C, D, E, F, H, I, J, K, L</td>
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<td>Russian River Pride (Sonoma County)</td>
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<td>B, C, D, E, F, H, I, J, K, L</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBTQ Summit 2017 (Sonoma County)</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take Back the Night (Sonoma County)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans Day of Visibility Picnic (Sonoma County)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>H, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brew (Sonoma County)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco Pride (San Francisco County)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>C, E, F, G, K, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ActUp (San Francisco County)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lyric (San Francisco County)</td>
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<td>Saint James Infirmary (San Francisco County)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence (San Francisco County)</td>
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<tr>
<td>World AIDS Day (San Francisco County)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mission Neighborhood Health Center (San Francisco)</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS Foundation (San Francisco County)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive Resource Center (San Francisco County)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SF Frontline Workers Organization (San Francisco)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women’s March (Throughout Bay Area)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trans March (Throughout Bay Area)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans Day of Remembrance (Nationwide)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trans Life (Nationwide)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Policy Marches (Nationwide)</td>
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<td>Dyke March (San Francisco Pride)</td>
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<td>Planned Parenthood (Northern California Region)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autostraddle (Online Queer Women’s Community)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Panel-State of the LGBTQ Movement (SF)</td>
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<td>Legal Aid at Work (San Francisco)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBT Lobbying Day (Sacramento)</td>
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<td>C, L</td>
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<tr>
<td>UndocuQueer (San Francisco)</td>
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<td>C</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Note: Participants were allowed to state more than one pronoun, sexual identity, gender identity, and organization/event/club during their interviews.*