

2010-2011

LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL TRANSGENDER  
PEER MENTORING PROGRAM (LGBTMP)  
QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT REPORT

by

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## ABSTRACT

The LGBT Peer Mentoring Program (LGBTPMP) at the University of Southern California (USC) strives to improve of the overall student development of the mentee participants. For this assessment study, researchers developed four constructs to evaluate mentee development. The constructs included: (1) psychological and emotional support, (2) support for setting goals and choosing a career path, (3) sexual and gender identity, and (4) health and wellness through occupational engagement. This study utilized a mixed methods approach to uncover the development of mentee participants through pretest/posttest online survey and interviews. For the purpose of this report, the quantitative results from the online survey are examined.

The findings explain significant developmental achievements with three of the constructs: psychological and emotional support, support for setting goals and choosing a career path, and sexual and gender identity. However, improvement for the health and wellness through occupational engagement construct are suggested along with general programmatic recommendations for the LGBTPMP and changes to the online survey instrument.

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Established mentoring programs for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students have traditionally focused on only student sexual and gender identity development, or more commonly known as the ‘coming out’ process. However, the LGBT student demographic is changing and many students today are more affirmed with their LGBT identities at earlier ages and some are already out when they attend colleges and universities. The USC LGBTPMP established a mentoring program that not only considers the coming out process for a mentee but also focuses on the development of a mentee’s multifaceted identity including support for setting goals, career decisions and health and wellness. LGBTPMP created an assessment protocol to evaluate the overall developmental experience for mentee participants and assess corresponding areas of student development.

The LGBTPMP assessment addresses the following:

- 1) identify the specific needs of traditionally underserved students, such as LGBT students,
- 2) facilitate better program development and implementation to meet the diverse needs of students,
- 3) add to the evidence-based practice mentoring research, and
- 4) to develop an LGBT-specific mentoring instrument that will be a template for other student affairs practitioners to support students in a variety of education settings.

## METHODOLOGY

Quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews were developed to assess four areas of research: (1) psychological and emotional support, (2) support for setting goals and choosing a career path (Nora and Crisp, 2007; Crisp, 2009), (3) sexual and gender identity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Cass, 1979; D’Augelli, 1994), and (4) health and wellness through occupational

engagement (Jackson et al, 1998; Law et al, 1998; Wilcock, 1998). To address the needs of LGBT students and the mentoring literature, we utilized two different theoretically rich disciplines, student development and occupational science. We used two mentoring construct domains identified by Nora and Crisp (2007) and validated by Crisp (2009): (1) psychological and emotional support, and (2) support for setting goals and choosing a career path. The third domain is identity development with a focus on sexual and gender identity as theoretically supported by Chickering & Reisser (1993), Cass (1979), and D'Augelli (1994). The last domain is health and wellness through occupational engagement (Jackson et al, 1998; Law et al, 1998; Wilcock, 1998).

Surveys and interviews were conducted with mentees in the program, whom are undergraduate and graduate student participants that self-identify as LGBT or questioning. Mentees were encouraged to complete an online 5-point Likert scale survey upon entering and exiting the program (see Appendix A). Additionally qualitative interviews were recorded with each mentee during their entrance interview to better understand the experiences and perceptions of students who receive mentoring. For the purpose of this report, the quantitative data is analyzed with the anticipation of the qualitative analysis to follow.

## PROPOSED ANALYSIS

Researchers used a mixed methods research approach to analyze the four theoretically supported mentoring construct domains. The goal for the assessment is to examine the mentee's development as an individual, as an overall mentee group, and result in an evaluation of the mentoring program. Following the recommendations made by Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2006), researchers strengthened their findings by incorporating data analysis triangulation in a multi-stage model including: data reduction, data display, data correlation, data consolidation, data

comparison, and data integration (p. 491).

Researchers performed a t-test statistical analysis of quantitative data, comparing pre and posttest survey items to assess the group differences and progress. To increase research credibility and conformability, a researcher, a graduate student in the Postsecondary Administration and Student Affairs Program at the USC Rossier School of Education, unaffiliated with LGBTPMP conducted the analysis. Data analysis occurred during the summer, once all of the data was gathered during the academic year.

## RESULTS

This section will explore the pretest and posttest results from the quantitative surveys administered to the LGBTPMP mentees in the 2010-2011 academic year. Mentees were provided a link for an anonymous survey after admittance into the LGBTPMP, which occurred after their entrance interview. Consequently, mentees were provided a posttest survey after their exit interviews. The survey was voluntary, therefore resulting in an unequal amount of participants for pretest and posttest. Eighteen of the mentee participants completed the pretest survey and seventeen participants completed the posttest.

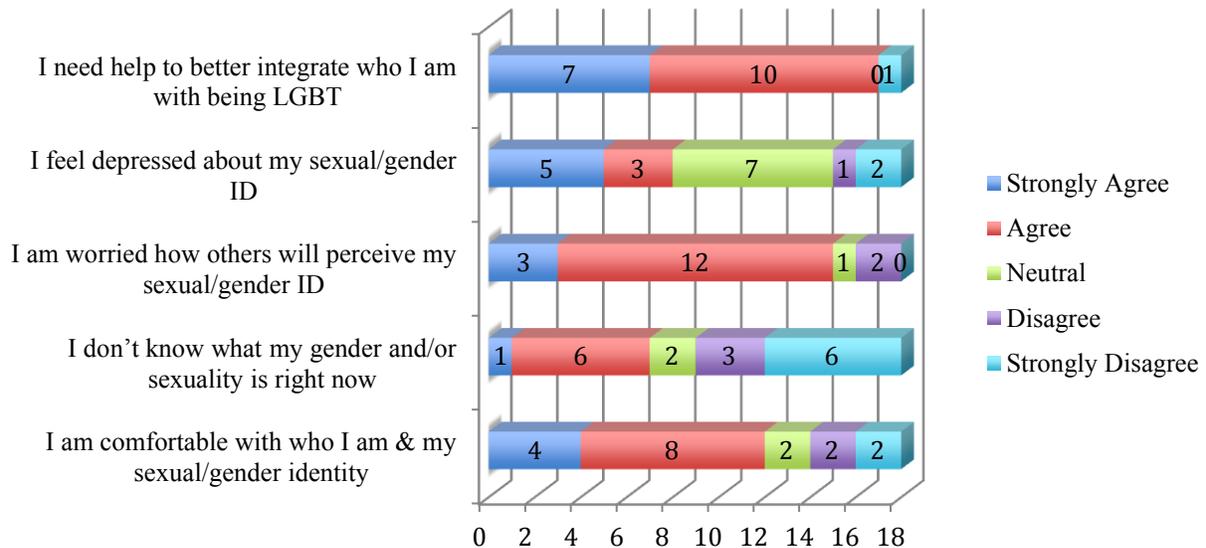
In addition, for reporting purposes, the researcher combined agreement responses for “strongly agree” and “agree” into a combined agree analysis. Consequently, the researchers combined the disagreement responses for “strongly disagree” and “disagree”. This rationale will help to understand the general response rates for individual questions from the survey. The actual results including every response option will be represented in the figures for this section.

### *Sexual and gender identity development*

The pretest results from the sexual and gender identity development domain presented significant findings about integration, anxiety, comfort and depression (Figure 1). Almost all of

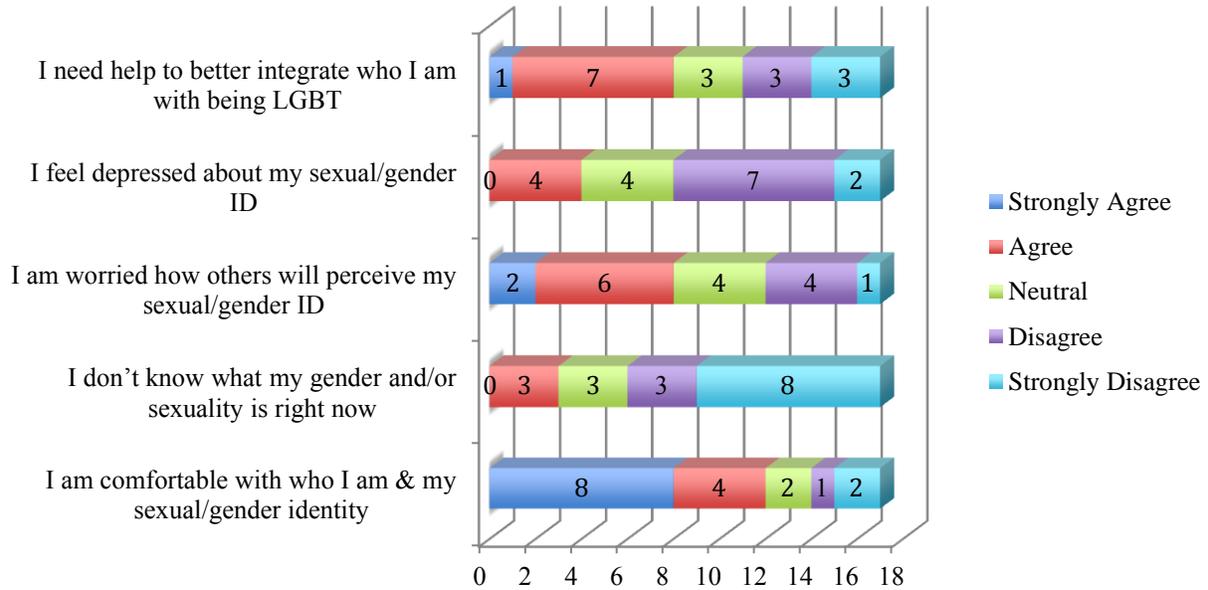
the mentees ( $n=17$ ) admitted they needed further assistance with the integration of their LGBT identity, with 94% in agreement with the statement: I need help to better integrate who I am with being LGBT. A 80% majority ( $n=15$ ) of mentees felt worried about how others would perceive their sexual/gender identity while 67% ( $n=12$ ) of mentees agreed to feeling comfortable with their sexual/gender identity. About half of the mentees ( $n=8$ ) admitted to feeling depressed about their sexual/gender identity.

**Figure 1**  
**Pretest: Sexual and Gender Identity Development**



In the posttest, mentees displayed improvements with integration, depression, and comfort (Figure 2). A fewer number of mentees 47% ( $n=8$ ) agreed they needed help integrating their LGBT identity in the posttest, as compared with 94% ( $n=17$ ) from the pretest. Significant differences also occurred with mentees whom reported “feeling depressed” and “being comfortable” with their sexual/gender identity, with 23% ( $n=4$ ) and 70% ( $n=12$ ) respectively.

**Figure 2**  
**Posttest: Sexual and Gender Identity Development**

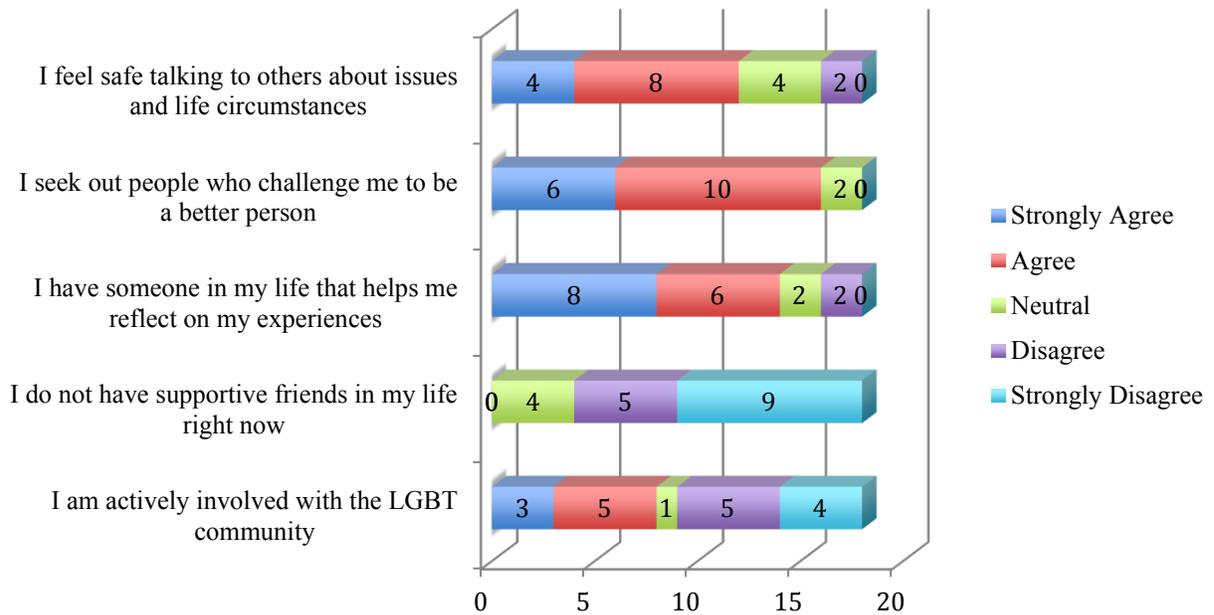


The findings for the sexual and gender identity development cluster indicate that by the end of the LGBTPMP mentees feel they have better integrated their sexual/gender identity, as evident with 17 mentees in pretest and 8 mentees in posttest responding to the statement: I need help to better integrate who I am with being LGBT. There is a decline with feelings of depression as compared to when mentees entered and ended the program, with 44% ( $n=8$ ) in pretest and 23% ( $n=4$ ) in posttest representing a difference of 21%. There was not a major change from the pretest and posttest of mentees feeling comfortable with their sexual/gender identity, but there were more mentees that “strongly agree” ( $n=8$ ) with comfort from the posttest as compared to the pretest ( $n=4$ ). Additionally, respondents who express “worry over how others will perceive my sexual/gender identity” dropped from 83% ( $n=15$ ) in the pretest to 47% ( $n=8$ ) in the posttest.

### *Social, psychological, and emotional support*

The pretest results for the social, psychological and emotional support cluster showed that a majority of mentees felt safe and supported by their peers (Figure 4). About 67% ( $n=12$ ) of mentees agreed that they felt safe talking to others about issues and life circumstances. In addition, about 89% ( $n=16$ ) seek out others that challenge them to be a better person. Additionally, 80% ( $n=14$ ) agreed to the following: I have someone in my life that helps me reflect in my experiences. In terms of involvement about 44% agreed ( $n=8$ ) to being active in the LGBT Community, while 50% disagreed ( $n=9$ ).

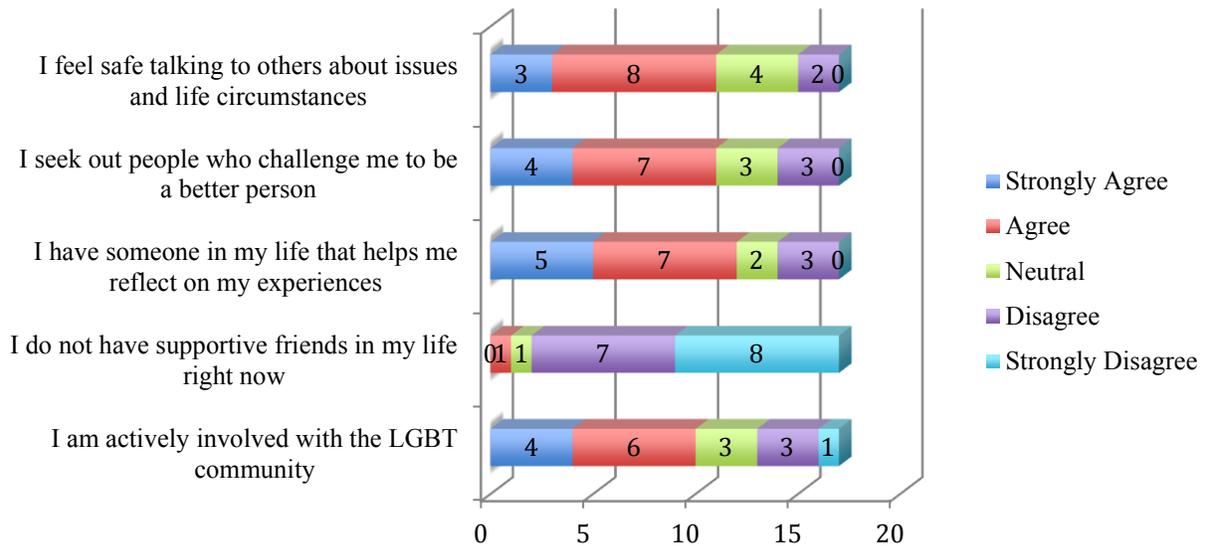
**Figure 3:**  
**Pretest: Social, Psychological, and Emotional Support**



The posttest results indicated the mentees surrounded themselves with supportive peers (Figure 5). About 64% of respondents agreed with the following areas: feelings of safety ( $n=11$ ), seeking out people to challenge them ( $n=11$ ), and having someone in their life ( $n=12$ ). To further indicate the supportive nature of peer groups, 88% ( $n=15$ ) of mentees disagreed with the question: I do not have supportive friends in my life right now. The involvement rate

remained consistent with a 58% ( $n=14$ ) agreement to being involved with the LGBT Community.

**Figure 4**  
**Posttest: Social, Psychological, and Emotional Support**



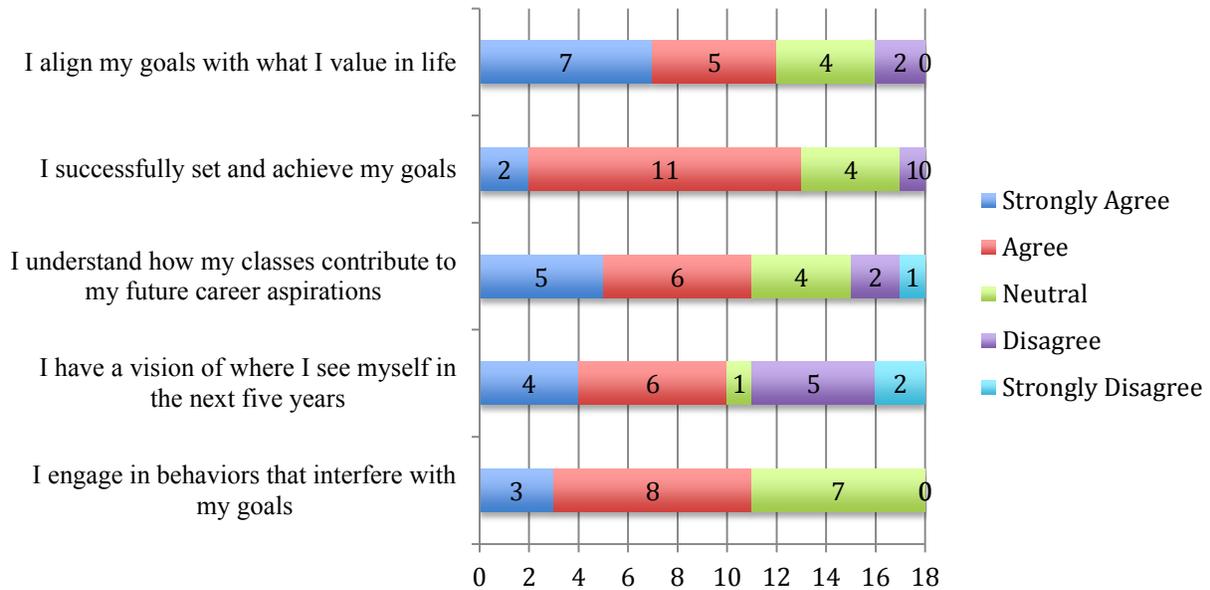
Results from the posttest for the social, psychological and emotional support construct are somewhat similar to those in the pretest with an increased involvement in the LGBT community of 58% ( $n=10$ ). In the posttest, mentees that seek out people that challenge them to be a better person decreased to 64% ( $n=11$ ) as compared to 88% ( $n=16$ ) in the pretest. There were no significant changes between pretest and posttest results for mentees that feel safe talking to other about issues as well as mentees that indicated they did not have supportive friend in their lives.

*Support for setting goals and choosing a career path*

The support for setting goals and choosing a career path construct had a 66% agreement rating for two statements in the pretest: I align my goals with what I value in life ( $n=12$ ), and I successfully set and achieve my goals ( $n=13$ ) (Figure 7). A 55% ( $n=10$ ) majority of mentees agreed they had a vision for themselves in five years, while 38% ( $n=7$ ) did not have a 5 year

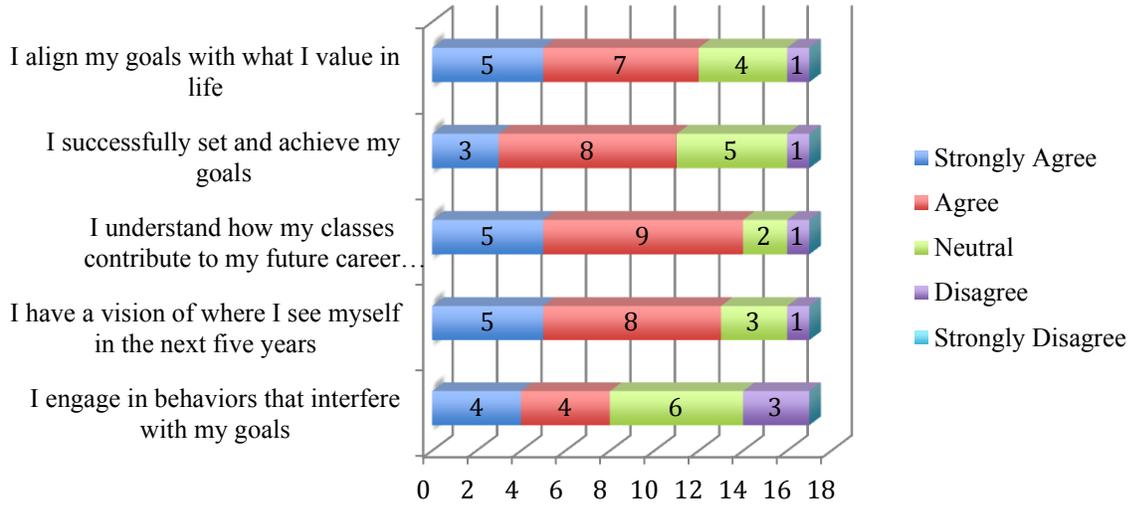
vision. In addition, about 61% ( $n=11$ ) of mentees agreed that they engaged in behaviors that interfered with their goals; with a 38% ( $n=7$ ) neutral agreement. A similar 61% ( $n=11$ ) agreed that they understand how their classes contribute to their future aspirations.

**Figure 5**  
**Pretest: Support for Setting Goals and Choosing a Career Path**



The posttest, similar to the pretest results, showed a mentee agreement of 64% with two questions: I align my goals with what I value in life ( $n=12$ ) and I successfully set and achieve my goals ( $n=11$ ) (Figure 8). A significant 76% ( $n=13$ ) increase of mentees agreed to having a vision of where they see themselves in the next five years, which represents an increase from the pretest results. Another increase was evident with 82% ( $n=14$ ) of mentees that agreed to understanding the significance of classes in future goals. When asked about behaviors that interfere with goals, about 47% agreed ( $n=8$ ), while 17% ( $n=3$ ) disagreed.

**Figure 6**  
**Posttest: Support for Setting Goals and Choosing a Career Path**

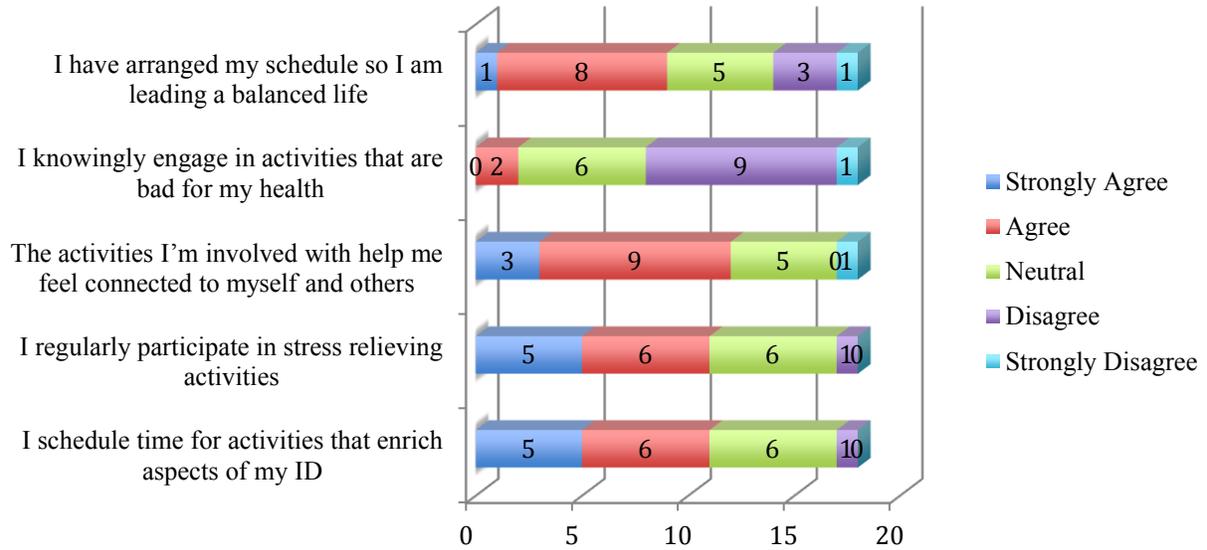


About 82% ( $n=14$ ) of mentees agreed to the following question: I understand how my classes contribute to my future career aspirations. This represents a 20% increase from the results in the pretest. Fewer students agreed that they engaged in behaviors that interfered with their goals posttest: 61% ( $n=11$ ) agreed in the pretest, while 47% ( $n=8$ ) agreed posttest.

*Health and wellness through occupational engagement*

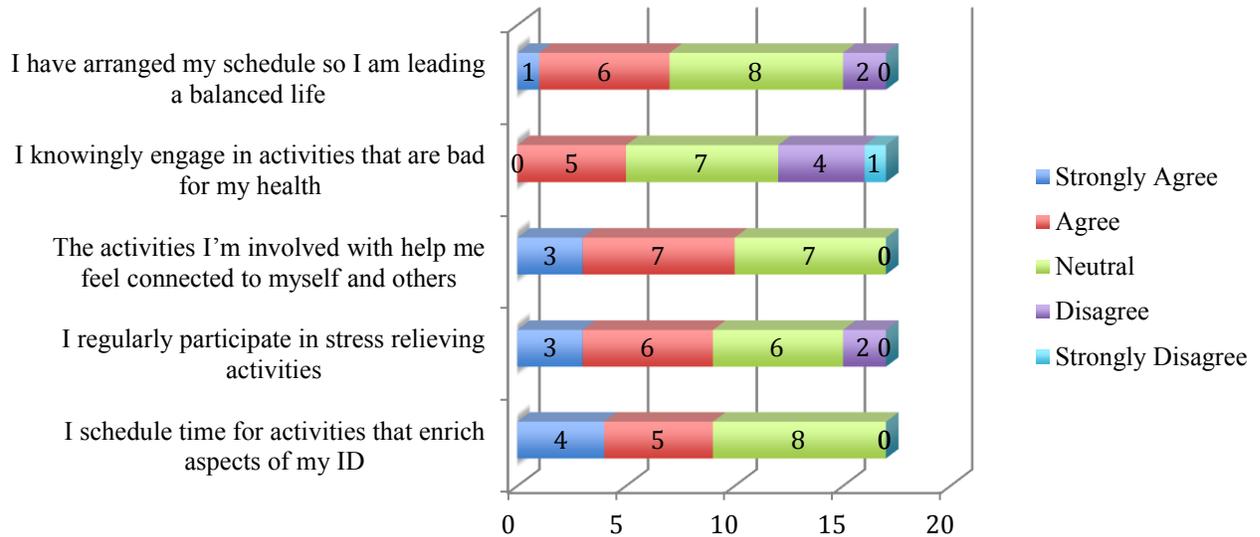
The health and wellness through occupational engagement pretest results showed a common agreement of 60% with three questions: The activities I’m involved with help me feel connected to myself and others ( $n=12$ ); I regularly participate in stress relieving activities ( $n=11$ ); and I schedule time for activities that enrich aspects of my identity ( $n=11$ ) (Figure 10). About 55% of respondents disagreed ( $n=10$ ) to participating in activities bad for their health while 33% ( $n=6$ ) were neutral.

**Figure 7**  
**Pretest: Health and Wellness through Occupational Engagement**



The posttest results, similar to the pretest results, showed a common agreement of 55% with three questions: The activities I'm involved with help me feel connected to myself and others ( $n=10$ ); I regularly participate in stress relieving activities ( $n=9$ ); and I schedule time for activities that enrich aspects of my identity ( $n=9$ ) (Figure 11). When asked: I knowingly engage in activities that are bad for my health, there was a split in result with about 29% ( $n=5$ ) of mentees that disagreed and agreed while 41% ( $n=7$ ) were neutral.

**Figure 8**  
**Post program: Health and Wellness through Occupational Engagement**



There were few significant changes in the pretest and posttest results for the health and wellness through occupational engagement construct. However, there was regression with the question: I knowingly engage in activities that are bad for my health. In the pretest, 11% ( $n=2$ ) of mentees reported they engaged in unhealthy activities, while the posttest revealed a 29% ( $n=5$ ) agreement rate.

## DISCUSSION

Mentees in the LGBTPMP, based on results from the pretest and posttest, improved their understanding and integration of their sexual/gender identities within their lives. In addition, mentees gained support and insight for setting goals and making career choices. The mentees also increased their confidence and self-awareness of their sexual/gender identity along with a greater sense of comfort with themselves regardless of how others perceived them.

Additionally, mentees understood the significance of their education in relation to their life goals as evident when many reported having a better vision of what they want to achieve in

the next five years of their lives. A significant finding for the USC LGBT programs and services is the increased involvement with the LGBT community for mentees when they completed the LGBTPMP. Overall, three of the four constructs were successful in the development of mentees; they included: psychological and emotional support, support for setting goals and choosing a career path, and identity development with a focus on sexual and gender identity.

The construct that needs to be reevaluated for the LGBTPMP is health and wellness through occupational engagement. In fact, many statement results from the pretest and posttest received neutral ratings. Many mentees, for example, neither agreed nor disagreed to being involved with activities that help relieve stress, enrich their identity, or help connect them with others. In addition, there was little to no change in the posttest results within this construct. An area for concern is that there was a small increase in the amount of students who reported engaging in activities that were bad for their health, suggesting that this is an area that needs to be addressed.

## IMPLICATIONS

The largest implication from this assessment is the discovery that LGBTPMP mentees attain a tremendous amount of support for their coming out process. LGBTPMP improves the mentee understanding and confidence of their sexual and gender identity. Most students enter the program with confusion or qualms about their identity, and as a result they exit the program with significant positive changes. Mentees are also finding assistance with their development and support for goals and choosing a career path. They are able to envision and make goals for their future and take steps towards that future.

However, another implication of this study is that LGBTPMP needs to improve in assisting mentees with their health and occupation wellness. This construct showed the least

positive change and some regression as well. While students may feel adequately equipped to work through their sexual and gender identity issues, they do not seem sufficiently supported to learn and maintain healthy living habits. LGBTPMP should be providing more emphasis on this area of student development.

## LIMITATIONS

This being the initial assessment study for the LGBTPMP, there are several limitations to the assessment to consider for future LGBTPMP assessment efforts. The limitations outlined presented difficulties when analyzing the data and could have also improved the analysis. The discovered limitations include:

- Inability to link pretest and posttest to a single respondent
- Requirement for survey respondents
- Identical questions in pretest and posttest
- Clarity of scale ratings

### *Inability to link pretest and posttest*

A major limitation in the survey analysis was not being able to link pretest and posttest results to specific respondents. If given the opportunity an in-depth analysis of the results could help determine whether individual mentees developed further than others. Such analysis could identify specific mentors whom require additional training in providing mentorship to mentees or it could also be used as a method to provide additional resources to individual mentees about any of the four constructs. The tracking pretests and posttests to specific respondents would allow researchers to understand the degree of change in individual students.

### *Requirement for survey respondents*

For the survey results there were two different amounts of respondents for the pretests and posttests, which weakened the comparison analysis for the results. For example, the amount of mentees who participated in the pre and post surveys varied: pretest ( $n=18$ ), posttest ( $n=17$ ). This difference skewed the results and did not provide a perfectly symmetrical comparison.

### *Identical pretest and posttest questions*

Another limitation was that the pretest and posttest statements were exactly the same. Having the same statement may have hindered the responses from the posttest results because mentees may not have understood that they needed to respond to the questions within the context of the mentoring relationship. For future surveys, posttest statements can be worded differently to explicitly state how the LGBTPMP has contributed to personal growth. For instance, the a posttest statement could state: As a result of participating in the peer mentoring program, I align my goals with what I value in life. Adding this component would explicitly clarify whether a change occurred as result of the program because there could have been external factors outside of the LGBTPMP that could have affected the results.

### *Clarity of scale ratings*

Another limitation was the Likert scale and the statements. The scale was measured beginning with a score of 1 which signified a strong agreement to 5 which indicated strong disagreement. However, since the statement rationale varied, a score of 1 did not always indicate something positive or negative; it simply showed that the respondent strongly agreed to the statement. However, since statements varied, interpreting numbers required researchers to look at the individual statement. Establishing positive or negative statement themes may assist with this limitation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The quantitative data from this study helps to understand how LGBTPMP is assisting mentees with their personal development and presents areas for improvement. From the survey results, it is clear LGBTPMP development of sexual/gender identity development is successful and the current practices addressing this area can be continued. In addition, the results showed that mentees felt adequately supported socially, psychologically, and emotionally. LGBTPMP also helped students gain a better sense of direction and vision for their future. Below are recommendations for improvement, which include:

- Mandatory survey for all mentee participants
- Develop a substantial health and wellness programming plan

### *Mandatory survey*

A problem that affected the results from attaining a complete depiction of mentee participants is that the pretest and posttest survey were not mandatory. As a result, the amount of respondents varied from pretest to posttest, which did not create appropriate samplings reflective of actual mentee participants. It is recommended that in the future the survey component of this assessment is made mandatory for each mentee participant. The pretest can be incorporated with the mentee application and included in the exit interview.

In addition to the mandatory survey, the surveys should not be anonymous and instead confidential and only accessible to the assessment researchers. Either a coded identification or simply names can be added to the survey for researchers to complete individual assessments for mentee participants. This individual as well as group sampling will allow researchers to comprehend possible implications for individual development as well as the overall group.

### *Health and wellness programming*

The construct that needs the most improvement is health and wellness. To make this construct relevant, it is imperative the LGBTPMP create a series of mentee meetings that emphasize health and wellness; possibly a partnership with USC Health Promotion and Prevention Services. The LGBTPMP can possibly sponsor a hike, trainings for running fundraisers, or volunteer at community events. Such programmatic changes may foster a sense of community and provides examples of healthy living.

The LGBTPMP could also sponsor a few group discussions with mentees about healthy living for LGBT youth such as dating, safer sex practices, and cultural competency. These discussions would allow mentees to deconstruct and understand why they might engage in unhealthy activities that can interfere with their life goals.

### CONCLUSION

This study serves a first step to improve the LGBTPMP and the development of the mentees based upon the four constructs. The LGBTPMP is doing a good job with providing support for the following constructs: sexual/gender identity development, psychological and emotional support, and support for career setting and goals. Additional emphasis and analysis with the health and wellness construct will help the LGBTPMP. The proposed recommendations and an annual assessment will allow the LGBTPMP to fulfill its goal of supporting students in all four identity development constructs to create a more enriching identity development experience for LGBTPMP mentees.

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## APPENDIX A

### Pre and Post Online Survey

Note: This survey is currently in a researcher format. This is not the student version.

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1 = Strongly agree

2 = Tend to Agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 =Tend to Disagree

5 = Strongly disagree

Sexual and gender identity development construct domain:

1. I am comfortable with who I am and my sexual and/or gender identity.
2. I don't know what my gender and/or sexual identity is right now. (Reverse score)
3. I am worried about how others perceive my sexual and/or gender identity. (Reverse score)
4. I feel depressed about my sexual and/or gender identity. (Reverse score)
5. I need help to better integrate who I am with being gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender. (Reverse score)

Social, psychological and emotional support construct domain:

6. I am actively involved with the LGBT community.
7. I do not have supportive friends in my life right now. (Reverse score)
8. I have someone in my life (e.g. friend, family member) that helps me to reflect on my

experiences.

9. I seek out people who challenge me to be a better person.

10. I feel safe talking to others about my issues and life circumstances.

Support for setting goals and choosing a career path construct domain:

11. I engage in behaviors (e.g. procrastination) that interfere with achieving my goals.

(Reverse score)

12. I have a vision of where I see myself in the next five years.

13. I understand how my classes contribute to my future career aspirations.

14. I successfully set and achieve my goals (e.g. educational, financial, career, etc.).

15. I align my goals with what I value in life.

Health and wellness through occupational engagement construct domain:

16. I schedule time for activities that enrich one or more aspects of my identity.

17. I regularly participate in stress-relieving activities.

18. The activities I am involved with help me to feel connected to myself and others.

19. I knowingly engage in activities that are bad for my health. (Reverse score)

20. I have arranged my schedule so that I am leading a balanced life (e.g. studying, sleeping, exercising, socializing, relaxing, etc.).