

Chapter 7

The LGBTQ+ Movement Towards Equity: Historical Perspectives and Social Justice Implications

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ABSTRACT

This chapter will describe the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) movement, and the impacts on terms, laws, health, and social justice. First, this chapter will explore historical movements from the 1960s to the present day, outlining specific historical events that changed the discourse for many in LGBTQ+ communities. Next, the author will describe important terms and the changes in terminology over the years. Third, this chapter will discuss the lack of federal protection laws and identify states that have protection laws. Lastly, the author will connect state protection laws and the issues that face young students who are transgender.

INTRODUCTION

Freire (1970) describes the power to name oneself as the power to change oneself. This chapter will explore the historical perspectives, as well as the evolution of names and terminology related to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer (LGBTQ+) movements and community, focusing specifically at the start of the Gay Liberation Movement. Next, this chapter will illuminate the social changes, medical developments, and current state and federal protection laws. Lastly, this chapter will explore the discrimination faced by those who are considered “other” in the dominant culture, specifically in education.

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Historical Perspectives

A common misnomer in American history is the assumption the LGBTQ+ community is a contemporary development or that being transgender is a new phenomenon. Considerable historical documentation exists that details many persons as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, even if this specific terminology was not used.

There are abundant accounts of white settlers meeting Native persons, whose (in the settlers' opinions) gender was identified as non-traditional in Native American tribes (Byard, 1997). In some tribes, tribal members identified this non-traditional gender as being of "two-spirit," meaning a person who may display characteristics of both genders. According to Green (2004), "The term 'two-spirit' is usually considered specific to the Zuni tribe. Similar identity labels vary by tribe and include 'one-spirit' and 'wintke'" (p. 10).

Many cite Christine Jorgensen as the first transgender woman residing in the United States to undergo sex reassignment surgery (or gender reassignment surgery), but as Meyerowitz (2017) detailed, there were many before her who were sensationalized in a variety of international newspapers. "Stories of 'sex reversals,' 'sex changes,' and 'sexual metamorphoses' had appeared in American newspapers and magazines since the 1930s" (p. 159). Jorgensen had to travel to Denmark to have her surgery after taking hormone pills prescribed to her. Upon her return to the United States, she pursued a career in the limelight, singing, dancing, and being true to her authentic self. Jorgensen was the first transgender woman, in modern times, to find fame after her transformation.

It is impossible to continue this discussion on the history of the LGBTQ+ movement without discussing the civil rights and women's rights movements of the 1960's. Stewart-Winter (2015) describes the civil and women's rights movements as a "process of consciousness raising" (p. xvi). Through this consciousness raising, there was a palpable shift in the narrative among women, people of color, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities.

The "invention" of homosexuality in the United States was specifically tied to race, racism, and oppression with the increasing and often simultaneous policing and legislating of both racial and sexual boundaries and the emergence of their accompanied bifurcations, in other words, "Black" or "White," "heterosexual" or "homosexual" (Ferguson, 2004; Somerville, 2000). The same can be said regarding queer theory. Persons who are LGBTQ+ did not just come into existence, but when and how did the term "Queer Theory" originate? "Queer theory results from a particular break that has occurred unevenly in Western Europe and United States since World War II" (Turner, 2000, p. 3). Turner speculated that the moral degradation of Nazism, the post war economic boom, and political dynamics after World War II might have set the stage for civil rights movements, specifically tied to woman and gay men.

Post World War II America was a tumultuous time. Conservatives wanted to hold tight to law and order; seeing Lesbian, Trans, and Gay clubs and activities as fringe and against tradition and law, police brutality and harassment was heightened. The counter-narrative to the dominant culture's history led to first transgender riot in 1966, three years before The Stonewall Riots in 1969. The Compton Cafeteria Riots were the first move towards equity. This area "was one of only a few neighborhoods where trans women and drag queens could live openly. Yet they were still regularly subject to police harassment and arrested for the crime of 'female impersonation'" (Pasulka, 2015, p. 1). According to Stryker (2008) this was the first known instance of a revolutionary queer resistance to police harassment in United States history. Compton Cafeteria still remains the lesser known of the riots during the LGBTQ+ movements. Stonewall is often referred to as the start of the *Gay Liberation Movement* (Cruikshank, 1992; D'Emilio,

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