Research in LGBTQ Psychology Example

Up until relatively recently, there has not been much concrete research in LGBTQ psychology. Past practices were typically harsh on the mental and sometimes physical state of individuals in the community. An example of this is a practice known as “aversion therapy” where patients would be given chemicals where they would vomit if a picture of their partner was shown along with getting an electric shock to their genitals while they looked at gay pornography or cross-dressed, however, times have thankfully changed. The most recent change was in 2013 when the DSM-5 changed the term Gender Identity to Gender dysphoria in order to not put anyone in the LGBTQ community under the mental disorder umbrella, but there is still room for improvement. This leads me to the question: what is the future of LGBTQ psychology? In an attempt to answer this, I will discuss intersectionality and privilege in regards to the community’s future, the applications of LGBTQ psychology, and the future directions the field should develop.

Before the above question can be answered, the terms intersectionality and privilege must be defined. Intersectionality was first coined by black feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 and it attempts to identify how interlocking systems of power affect those who are marginalized in society because of either their race, gender,
sexual orientation, or disability. Understanding intersectionality involves the examination of the way in which different identities can produce unique individual experiences of privilege. Privilege, which is more discussed today, is the benefits that are given to certain groups of people, particularly the dominant groups like white people, heterosexual people, or those in the upper to middle class. Both terms help us to better understand the complexities in relation to gender, sexuality, race, and societal class, however, research needs to continue to go beyond these terms. Research should develop different accounts of how dominant group members experience being the dominant group.

In other words, research in LGBTQ psychology has mainly focused on minorities or the “usual suspects” and does not explicitly analyze how race and social class affect the lives of dominant groups who also considered themselves part of the LGBTQ community. UK psychologist Adrian Coyle, a key researcher in the field of LGBTQ psychology argues that is important that we move beyond the focus on the “usual suspects” and sexuality in a primary lens, and should instead take into consideration the interactions of different social positions in the lives of all LGBTQ people.

LGBTQ psychological research provides researchers with practical ways of creating change in the world, understanding people's lives, and reflecting on the ways in which social and psychological norms can be important to the lives of diverse groups. A few key areas of applied LGBTQ psychology that will be discussed are social and developmental psychology. Social psychology research focuses on measuring and understanding the attitudes of one group of people towards another group and developing ways to go against negative and prejudice attitudes. Social psychological research has been important is understanding how forms of marginalization operate, and how they impact the lives of homosexual individuals. It is essential that this work resumes in the future so that researchers can continue to find effective ways to challenge the social marginalization of LGBTQ people and not assume that all LGBTQ people hold the same views.

Developmental psychology is another vital area in which psychologists have made important interventions. Two researchers, UK Susan Golombok and US Charlotte Patterson, opened the path towards a more inclusive
approach to developmental psychology by publishing texts that featured LGBTQ families and parents. Also, their work highlighted the many assumptions that heterosexuals make about how children develop under same sex households. Before their contributions, psychological research on homosexual parenting were not positive, making it seem as though same sex partners were unfit to raise their own child and there was even a ban that was placed so lesbian and gay parents could not foster or adopt children. However, Golombok and Patterson’s study is an example how research on lesbian and gay parenting have improved and is moving in the right direction.

Lastly and most importantly, the future directions of LGBTQ psychology needs to be analyzed. One aspect that needs to continue to develop is the representation of diversity. It is important to keep researching analytic approaches that ensure that diverse groups of LGBTQ people are represented. The research tools being used and the employed frameworks should reflect the actual worldviews of individuals in the LGBTQ community rather than only reflecting a white, male middle-class understanding of the world. There is also a need to develop a genuine international approach