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Diversity and inclusion strategies for LGBTQ + students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in higher education: a scoping review

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ABSTRACT

LGBTQ + students from diverse ethnic backgrounds studying in higher education institutions (HEI) continue to face high levels of marginalisation due to the intersections of their identities. These students have distinct needs and require specialised support that are currently not being met. This scoping review aims to consolidate literature of diversity and inclusion strategies implemented by HEIs to support LGBTQ + students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. It also strives to determine the degree to which these strategies have been evaluated and their level of efficacy. This study utilised Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) scoping review framework, yielding 28 relevant publications. The diversity and inclusion strategies outlined in the studies for this scoping review include tangible strategies such as dedicated queer inclusive spaces on campus, and support services such as mentoring, counselling and peer programmes. While diversity and inclusion strategies exist in HEI, they are sporadic, lack theoretical grounding, and are often inaccessible to LGBTQ + students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This scoping review calls for HEI diversity and inclusion efforts to be reimaged through a queer and intersectional perspective. This scoping review can inform policy, practice, and enhance understanding of diversity and inclusion strategies in HEI.

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Diversity; inclusion; LGBTQ+; diverse ethnic backgrounds; inclusion strategies; higher education; scoping review; intersectionality

Introduction

There is a dearth of research exploring support strategies for queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) globally. Over the last decade, HEIs have been ramping up queer inclusion efforts in the last five years, such as providing queer-specific spaces on campus and queer support services (Roffee and Waling 2018). However, research shows that they continue to struggle with funding issues, low staff buy in, and universities paying 'lip service' (Hastings and Mansell 2015, 124). Various researchers (Duran 2021; Hastings and Mansell 2015; Roffee and

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Waling 2018) indicate that the impact of this is felt among queer students experiencing harassment, microaggressions and discrimination within their HEI environment. Hastings and Mansell (2015) cited at least 49.5% of queer students having experienced negative treatment from their peers, and 10.4% experienced discrimination by HEI staff. Other studies also identified a higher prevalence of mental health issues among women (Eisenberg et al. 2007), LGBTQ+ students (Boyle and McKinzie 2021; Lipson et al. 2019), and students with multiple intersecting identities (Lipson et al. 2019).

To respond to these issues, diversity and inclusion units in universities have started to employ queer inclusion programmes as a strategy (Duran 2021; Roffee and Waling 2018). These strategies aim to improve the visibility for queer students in HEI and reduce levels of homophobia and discrimination against queer students (Roffee and Waling 2018). Ally programmes, queer inclusive email footers on faculty and professional staff accounts, Pride flags on campus as well as on promotional materials (Katz et al. 2016) have proven to have positive social well-being and health outcomes (Katz et al. 2016). There is also evidence suggesting that such strategies help reduce violence and discrimination towards queer communities on campus (Vera Cruz 2015).

However, the promise of inclusion does not extend to all queer students, in particular students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in HEI. 'Diverse ethnic backgrounds' is a term that we use in this paper to describe a group within a specific country or community whose national or cultural tradition differ from that of the majority population of the country in which they reside. In the US, this term may be known as 'people of colour (POC)' or 'ethnic minority' and in Australia, referred to as 'culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)' or 'international'.

Vaccaro and Mena (2011) found that although co-curricular spaces such as queer lounges, clubs, pride, and ally organisations within the university are important, queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds report feeling excluded from them (Bhattar 2019; Duran 2021; Roffee and Waling 2018). Sometimes, instances of racism, exclusion and abuse committed within the queer communities and spaces themselves are even overlooked (Duran 2021; Pham 2020; Roffee and Waling 2018). This form of alienation can have a significant impact on the self-esteem, academic outcomes, and general well-being of queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, who continue to face marginalisation and displacement despite queer inclusion efforts in HEIs (Roffee and Waling 2018).

Through a queer and intersectional lens, this review aims to identify the strategies that diversity and inclusion staff employ to support LGBTQ+ students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in HEIs. It is important to investigate why queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds continue to face exclusion, as it brings into question the efficacy of diversity and inclusion strategies currently operating in HEIs. This scoping review identifies these strategies and to ascertain the extent to which these strategies have been evaluated in universities in western countries, in particular Australia, United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and New Zealand.

Theoretical perspective

In this paper, we deploy queer and intersectional theory as hermeneutic resources capable of providing a critical framework for analysis and discussion. Queer theory

emerged in the late 1980s as a body of criticism on issues concerning genders, sexualities, and subjectivities within gay and lesbian scholarship in fields such as literary criticism, politics, sociology, and history (Bernini 2020). Queer theory, a fluid lens that draws upon several theories, was deployed by several of the studies included in this scoping review. It broadly challenges the normalisation of heterosexuality and treats sexuality as a socio-historic construct. Queer theory is never fully owned, but always deployed and redeployed to attend to urgent issues that become problematised (Butler 1990). In the context of this study, Queer theory serves as a critical analytic and interpretive resource; a lens which guides the focus and research questions of this scoping review.

Crenshaw (1991) describes intersectionality as a framework in which race, class, genders, and other individual characteristics ‘intersect’ with one another and overlap. Intersectionality is currently widely deployed as an academic lens; a collective effort of social justice, equity, and human rights; working for and with the communities that are at the intersections of multiple marginalised identities (Crenshaw 1991). At its crux, Intersectionality is about the interrogation of power and deconstruction of the status quo that uphold inequity (Bowleg 2017). Several studies identified in this scoping review leveraged an intersectionality framework in order to advance a social justice agenda and inform systemic change within the HEI inclusion space. Intersectionality can be used as a critical approach and analytical tool to explore how cultural, sexual, racial, and religious differences intersect to shape identity construction on and off campus. For instance, Duran (2021) investigated how queer students of colour at Historically White Institutions (HWIs) construct and embrace their identities.

The majority of the studies included in this scoping review deployed either Queer Theory (Graham 2019; Kemp-DeLisser 2013; Misawa 2010; Roffee and Waling 2018) or Intersectionality (Bhattar 2019; Duran 2021; Linder 2019; Scharrón-Del Río 2020; Tillman-Kelly 2015; Yang 2020). Queer theory and intersectionality allowed for a critical approach and as an analytical tool, helping reveal hidden power dynamics and highlighting the experiences of LGBTQ+ students from diverse ethnic backgrounds; for instance, how experiences of homophobia, transphobia, and racism can compound to create unique challenges. Deploying queer theory in the analysis also helped illuminate how traditional gender discourses and expectations can shape interventions, and how adopting more fluid and diverse understandings of gender and sexualities may lead to more effective and inclusive interventions.

Method

In choosing the methods for this review, multiple types of reviews were considered. One option was to do a systematic review, which is a rigorous way to synthesise the available evidence on a particular research question using a predefined and transparent methodology (Gough et al. 2020). Systematic reviews have strict inclusion and exclusion criteria, and they assess the quality of the included studies. While the results are typically presented as a meta-analysis, there are various kinds of reviews that are defined as ‘systematic’ which do not involve a meta-analysis (Nunn and Chang 2020). Systematic reviews are commonly used to offer a synopsis of the existing evidence that pertains to research questions (Nunn and Chang 2020).

Another option is comprehensive reviews, or narrative reviews, a more traditional form of literature review that aims to provide a summary and critical evaluation of the existing literature on a topic (Onwuegbuzie and Frels 2016). Comprehensive reviews may not follow a strict methodology, yet aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the available evidence, including both empirical studies and theoretical perspectives (Onwuegbuzie and Frels 2016). Comprehensive literature review challenges and expands understanding of the literature review process by highlighting a reflexive process that is informed by ethics and subjected to methodological scrutiny.

Scoping reviews provide an overview and indication on the extent of coverage of literature on a specific topic (Munn et al. 2018) and are utilised to address knowledge gaps in the absence of a previous comprehensive review (Munn et al. 2018). A scoping review was chosen for the present topic because although LGBTQ + diversity and inclusion strategies are well documented in recent literature, research about LGBTQ + students from diverse ethnic backgrounds HEI is an under researched and underdeveloped area. Furthermore, scoping reviews are beneficial for investigating emerging evidence when it is uncertain what other, more specific questions can be formulated and answered effectively by a more precise systematic review. Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage methodological framework was employed for this paper. The five stages of the methodological framework are (1) identifying the research question, (2) identifying the relevant studies, (3) study selection, (4) charting the data, and (5) collating, summarising, and reporting results. A detailed description of the implementation of this framework in the present review is outlined below.

Stage 1: identifying the research question

This scoping review was guided by the research question, *what strategies do diversity and inclusion staff employ to support LGBTQ + students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in HEIs?* A sub-question was also posed: *to what degree have these strategies been evaluated?*

In this paper, 'LGBTQ+' or 'Queer' includes diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and/or sexes. Sexual orientations refer to one's identity relating to the gender or genders to which one is sexually attracted. Gender identity refers to one's internal identification of gender as woman, man, or non-binary, and this may not accord with the gender associated with the sex they were ascribed at birth. Therefore, transgender, and non-binary people may also have sexual orientations that are heterosexual, lesbian/gay, bisexual, or queer (Mejia-Canales and Leonard 2016). When we refer to students from 'diverse ethnic backgrounds', this extends to both migrant students who have travelled from their country of origin in pursuit of higher education, as well as domestic students from a minoritised ethnic background.

Stage 2: identifying the relevant studies

Three databases were used to identify the literature: ERIC, SCOPUS, and GOOGLE SCHOLAR. Author 1 developed search terms to identify articles relevant to the research questions. The key terms for the search were diversity OR inclusion, lgbt OR queer OR lesbian* OR gay, strateg* OR intervention*, higher education OR universit* OR tertiary OR college*, ethnic minority OR people of colour OR CALD OR international.

This scoping review considered research within peer-reviewed journals and grey literature within the last decade that involved LGBTQ + students currently in HEI. The authors recognised the complexities of the LGBTQ + acronym, which is often misrepresented as a monolithic group, and as such were cognizant of reflecting diversity in the ways of expressing the variation of identities across a spectrum.

The original search was conducted by the first author between 15th April 2021, and 15th May 2021. The second search came on the 15th June 2021, and no additions were made to the data set. A total of 1866 papers were identified: 57 in ERIC, 933 in SCOPUS, and 876 from Google Scholar. After removing any duplicates and the articles that were marked as ineligible, 1610 article abstracts were extracted and entered into a spreadsheet, along with other information which included the author's name, year of publication, and journal title. Each title was reviewed by the first author and during the review, 1461 articles were excluded due to irrelevance to the research question, or it did not include LGBTQ + students (see [Figure 1](#)).

Stage 3: study selection

This scoping review included qualitative, and mixed methods publications. There was a growing body of emerging grey literature that was important to consider. As such, this review also included academic dissertations. Consideration was given to search time-frames, as many changes occurred within socio-political landscape involving LGBTQ + rights and marriage equality.

For the study selection, we adopted the PRISMA checklist for scoping reviews using the 'population, concept, context' (PCC) screening criteria (Munn et al. 2018), and the results are presented in [Figure 1](#):

P – Population: LGBTQ + students from diverse ethnic backgrounds

C – Concept: Diversity and/or inclusion strategies to support students from diverse ethnic backgrounds

C – Context: Higher education institutions (universities, colleges, tertiary institution) within any western country (or region) that are comparable in terms of having English as a native language and having comparable socio-economic bearing (Australia, United Kingdom, United States, Canada, New Zealand).

The studies that met the criteria for PCC ($n = 149$) were included for abstract screening out of a total of 1866 studies. 102 articles were excluded as selection criteria was not met. After a member check by author 2, a total of 47 articles were retrieved for full-text screening. After a screen by all authors, 20 articles were further excluded due to not meeting the selection criteria. 27 articles were included for the review. The reference list of all identified texts was reviewed to ensure that no relevant literature was missed out. At this stage, Author 1 included one more article to the selection, bringing the total to 28 articles.

Stage 4: charting and summarising the data

Author 1 developed a data spreadsheet that included the key details from the 28 final full-text articles and organised them under the following headings: author names, year of

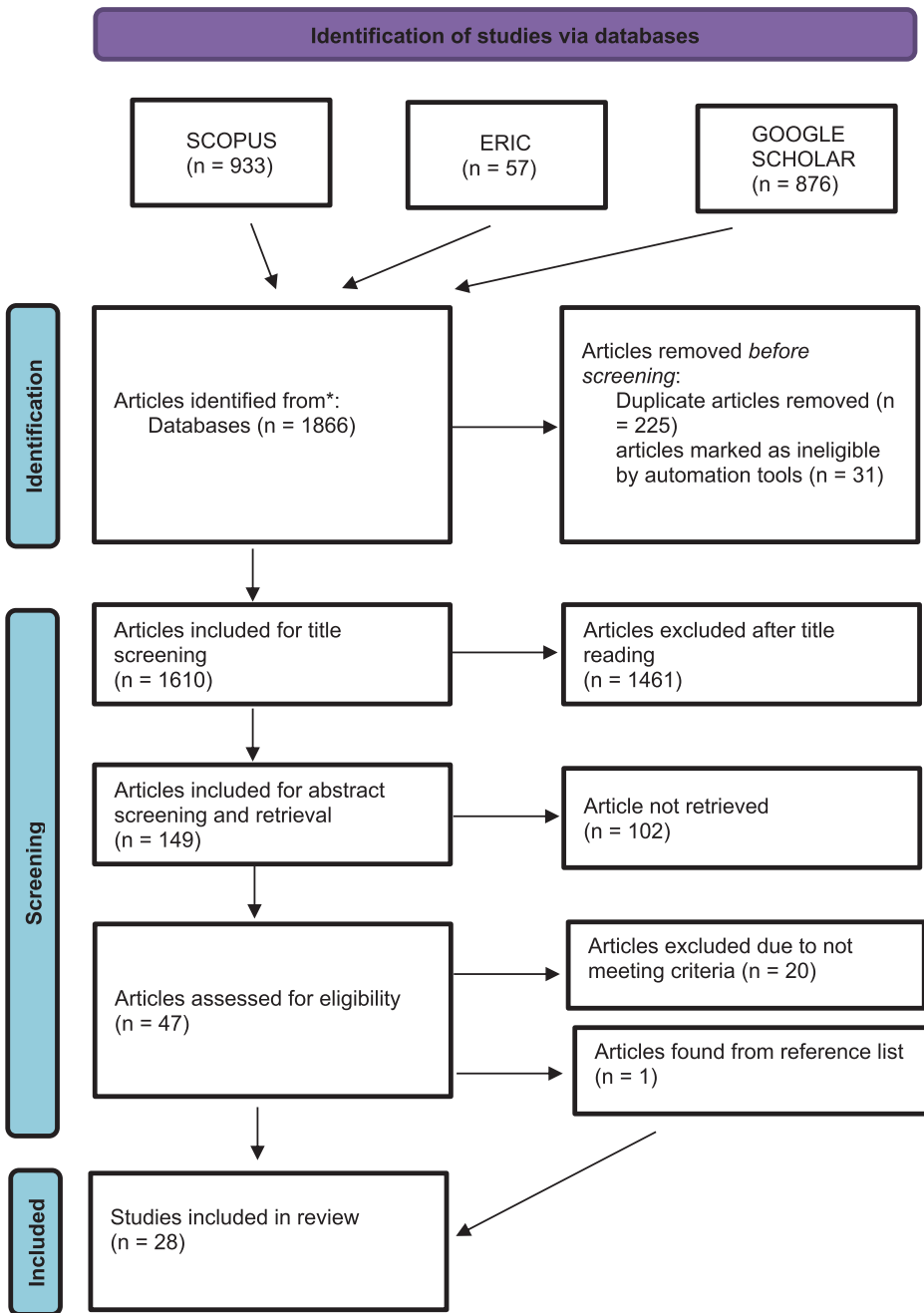


Figure 1. Prisma chart.

publication, location of study, key aim/s of the study, the study design/s used, sample size, aims, and conclusions. The summary table was then tested by all authors to check a random sample of the completed data that was presented in an Excel sheet. This entailed authors running the search terms independently, to ensure that the same results

Table 1. Overview of studies selected for scoping review.

Author(s), year, country of sample	Study design, sample size, (theoretical framework – if any)	Aim	Conclusions
Asquith et al. 2019, Australia	Survey, semi-structured interviews and document audit, $n = 3106$ staff and students	To examine the interpersonal, educational, and socio-cultural perspectives about sexuality and gender diversity on an Australian university campus.	HEI in study does not create an inclusive space for students with diverse sexualities. Campus and spaces are generally safe, but sexuality and gender diverse students experience heterosexist and cissexist discrimination, which can have negative ramifications on their workplace and learning experiences.
Bhattar and Victoria 2007, United States	Scholarly personal narrative, dialogue, $n = 2$	To discuss the contradictions related to being both gay in Asian American society and Asian American in the predominantly White, gay society.	They provide information to the higher education and student affairs administration community to consider creating a healthier environment for Asian American gay men.
Bhattar 2019, United States	Phenomenology, interviews, journal notes, screening questionnaire, $n = 3$ (Intersectionality)	To explore perceptions of sense of belonging in academic and social contexts at West Coast University for Indian international LGBQ students in the United States	Factors influencing belonging for Indian international LGBQ students were lack of awareness among domestic peers and faculty, lack of visibility of Indian international LGBQ identities and communities, English language requirements and lack of institutional funding support. Students did not feel it possible to express their intersectional identities on campus.
Duran 2021, United States	Critical narrative inquiry, $n = 12$, (Critical theory, Intersectionality)	To explore resilience of queer students of colour at a predominantly white institution	Family, student organisations, and connections on campus positively influenced queer students' resilience. Oppressive ideologies on campus, a lack of institutional actions, and siloed identity groups served as risk factors. There is also a complex relationship between mental health and resilience for Queer Students of Colour.
Ferfolja et al. 2020, Australia	Online survey, semi-structured interviews, and a document audit of university online material, $n = 2395$	To explore participants' perceptions and attitudes to sexuality and gender diversity on campus.	Support services on campus is not visible or accessible and is exclusionary of ethnically minoritised students. Researchers recommend 'queering' the policies and course curricula and strengthening the visibility and accessibility.
Fernandes 2018, United States	Non-experimental, ex post-facto, $n = 30274$	To examine the relationships between gender identity, sexual orientations, race/ethnicity, risk and resilience factors, and college adjustment in a sample of treatment-seeking students at	Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer/questioning students displayed higher risk factors than their heterosexual peers.

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Author(s), year, country of sample	Study design, sample size, (theoretical framework – if any)	Aim	Conclusions
		four-year institutions nationwide	
Flores and Sheely-Moore 2020, United States	Case study, $n = 1$, (Relational-cultural Theory)	To apply and to highlight ways counsellors can infuse RCT when working with LGBTQ + college students of colour.	Counsellors need to infuse RCT strategies when working with LGBTQ + students of colour.
Goode-Cross and Tager 2011, United States	Interviews, audit, $n = 8$	To explore factors contributing to the persistence of African American gay and bisexual men at a PWL.	Racial identity was more salient for participants than their sexual orientations when looking for social support. Participants were uncomfortable using lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) resources.
Graham 2019, United States	Interviews, $n = 10$, (Queer Theory)	To explore mentoring relationships with queer students of colour.	Being openly queer posed an identity-based risk for students' ability to access mentoring relationships, and their risk increased their perception of resiliency and prosocial behaviour.
Grice 2020, United States	Qualitative inquiry, semi-structured interviews, $n = 8$	To explore the perceptions of TGNC students attending Carnegie Mellon University, and highlight strategies used by the college to support TGNC students.	Binary gender configurations on campus, as well as the cultural engagement around gender identities creates obstacles for the TGNC on campus. This includes inadequate access to bathrooms, housing, and other physical structures of support for this community.
Kemp-DeLisser 2013, United States	Phenomenology and scholarly personal narrative, interviews, $n = 2$, (Queer of Colour)	To explore the multiple dimensional experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer students of colour.	Racism and homophobia are experienced by queer students of colour.
Kulick et al. 2017, United States	Survey, $n = 460$	To explore the gap on racialised dynamics of community engagement and protective mental health for LGBTQ + communities.	For White LGBTQ students, engaging in student leadership appears to weaken the heterosexism-depression link. However, for LGBTQ students of colour, engaging in LGBTQ-specific spaces can strengthen the association between sexual orientations victimisation and depression.
Linder 2019, United States	Critical Intersectional Review, $n = 0$, (Intersectionality)	To explore how educators can effectively support and guide learning and development among students from minoritised groups, including students of colour, women, and LGBT students, who frequently engage in activism	Educators who strive to support student activists can connect student activism to student learning and development. They can also develop a power conscious framework to manage the multiple and conflicting roles on campus.
McCoy 2018, United States	Semi-structured interview, $n = 1$, (Critical Theory)	To examine queer, and transgender students of colour experiences with cultural centres at a predominantly white university.	Students who live at the intersections of race, gender, and sexual orientations still have a difficult time finding places on campus where they can be exist without

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Author(s), year, country of sample	Study design, sample size, (theoretical framework – if any)	Aim	Conclusions
Mejia-Canales and Leonard 2016, Australia	Research Report, semi structured interviews, $n = 4$	To review Australia's domestic and international legal obligations to sexual and gender identity minorities young people who are recently arrived, refugees or seeking asylum	experiencing racism, heterosexism, transphobia, and gender bias. Recently arrived same sex attracted, sex and gender diverse (SSASGD) young people have difficulty accessing a wide range of services like essential services such as housing, education and employment and support services in the migrant, multicultural, youth and LGBTI sectors. Access to key service sectors and supports are imperative.
Misawa 2010, United States	Critical Review, $n = 0$, (Critical Race Theory, Queer Theory)	To explore how educators can enrich learning and build stronger learning communities giving voice to LGBTQ+ students of colour using QRP.	QRP is a fruitful framework for educators to empower LGBTQ students of colour to examine stereotypes and to promote inclusion and belonging.
Mosley et al. 2019, United States	Content analysis, $n = 139$, (SAMHSA's Eight dimensions of wellness and bi + POCI visibility framework)	To explore the extent to which wellness support centres' web-based messages (such identity-based group offering across centres, counselling staff interest listed in biographies, counselling centre-based resource lists) erase or affirm bi + POCI.	Strategies include wellness support centres, but disparate affirmation was offered to POCI as compared to LGBT students through staff biographies. Minority-serving institutions provide better affirmation for LGBT-identified POCI through their web-based resource lists than historically White institutions.
Outlaw Barmore 2019, United States	Phenomenology, interviews, $n = 6$, (Multidimensional identity model)	To understand experiences of African American lesbians who attended a historically black college or university.	African American Lesbians are found to shift identities, depending on situation of setting. Recommendations were made for counsellor educators to be able to increase understanding of the unique need to a group that identify with at least 3 marginalised identities.
Pham 2020, United States	Archival analysis and interviews, $n = 26$	To examine queer-identified undergraduate women's searches for same-sex sexual partners at two LGBTQ-friendly universities in the United States, and to explore 'sexual geographies' implemented by colleges as inclusion strategies.	'Queer capital' is needed to fit into marked LGBTQ+ campus communities and spaces. Perceptions of queer community spaces as exclusionary or inaccessible contribute to 'alternative queer geographies' such as online spaces where queer students can build 'queer competence' beyond marked LGBTQ campus spaces.
Ramirez Munoz 2020, United States	Semi-structured interviews, $n = 5$	To examine how safety and inclusion affect the academic success LGBTQ Latinx students, specifically feelings	To improve inclusion and campus climate for LGBTQ Latinx students and offer more representation for LGBTQ

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Author(s), year, country of sample	Study design, sample size, (theoretical framework – if any)	Aim	Conclusions
		of safety and inclusion, by identifying the factors that may hinder their academic success.	students of colour so they feel supported and continue to achieve their educational and career goals.
Reeves-Blurton 2019, United States	Interviews, observation, Survey, $n = 55$	To examine the ways positive LGBTQ + identity development, cultural capital accrual and community engagement through a structured mentoring programme fosters resilience and buffers the experience of minority stress and associated negative outcomes for these students.	Queer support services and mentoring within HEI lacks intersectional consideration and requires reimagining in order to mitigate issues.
Rodriguez Jr. 2017, United States	Case study, interviews, $n = 14$, (Critical-Cultural)	To explore the experiences of Latinos and LGBTQ individuals at a predominantly white institution.	Although a predominantly white institution may discuss inclusion on campus, other factors on campus and in the administration can prevent full inclusion of minority students from occurring, hence it is important for these groups to take suggestions from minoritised students on how to improve inclusion on campus.
Roffee and Waling 2018, Australia	Qualitative exploratory, phenomenology, interviews, $n = 16$, (Feminist and queer theory)	To explore ways universities can respond to LGBTIQ + undergraduate students, including cultural and linguistically diverse students	Students indicated university-level gaps in service provision and failures to support them in their attempts to access or create opportunities for accessing information regarding sexual and mental health to improve inclusion. Queer visibility is imperative in creating a positive experience for LGBTIQ + members of a campus community.
Scharrón-Del Río 2020, United States	Reflective, $n = 1$ (Decolonising, Intersectionality)	To consider how LGBTQAI + studies and academia can expand to better include people with multiple marginalised identities	Transcending binary discourse to deconstruct the multiple layers of colonisation is important for liberatory praxis, and to support scholars with multiple marginalised identities.
Sullivan and Day 2021, Australia	Content/document analysis, $n = 0$, (Decolonising queer Indigenous standpoint)	To investigate the ways in which QGD Indigenous Australian students are included or excluded in the Australian higher education space.	QGD Indigenous Australians are still excluded and support services inaccessible. No indication or communication of safety and inclusion exists for queer indigenous students within indigenous student support spaces.
Tillman-Kelly 2015, United States	Grounded theory, interviews, focus groups, $n = 13$, (Intersectionality)	To increase our understanding of the ways in which LGBQ college students of colour understand, navigate, negotiate, and enact sexual identity label adoption and	Findings highlight implications for research, policy, and theory about sexuality disclosure for LGBQ students. The three areas of concern are: motivation for disclosure, impetus to conceal

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Author(s), year, country of sample	Study design, sample size, (theoretical framework – if any)	Aim	Conclusions
Worthen 2018, United States	Survey, $n = 1940$, (Intersectionality),	To examine attitudes of LGBT students utilising an intersectional framework with special attention to racial, ethnic, and sexual identities.	one's sexuality and sexual identity, and additional factors that influence disclosure. Results indicate that racial, ethnic, and sexual identities play a significant role in southern college students' LGBT attitudes, and these patterns are further complicated by interacting cultural experiences with religiosity, patriarchy, and family dynamics.
Yang 2020, United States	Qualitative narrative inquiry, interview, $n = 3$, (Intersectionality)	To document the experiences of SEA lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) college students.	Highlights the misconception that all AAPI excel in academics and thrive economically. Conversely, SEA subgroups are living in poverty and do not graduate high school at the same rate of their AAPI counterparts.

Notes: *: Grey literature; TGNG: Transgender and Gender-nonconforming; RCT: relational-cultural theory; PWI: predominantly White institution; QRP: Queer Race Pedagogy; POCI: People of Colour; SEA: Southeast Asian; AAPI: Asian American Pacific Islanders.

populated. No disagreement occurred at this stage. The results are reported below, first as an overview in Table 1, then reported thematically thereafter.

Results

Stage 5: collating, summarising and reporting results

Per stage 5 of Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework, we organised the relevant findings into headings, prioritising the results based on relevance to our research questions and focussing on the intervention strategies that exist and the extent to which they have been evaluated. In Figure 1, pertinent data such as authors, study design, sample size, aims and outcomes were included. All data are then reported under headings in the sections following: (1) Diversity and inclusion strategies and interventions, (2) Role of theory in diversity and inclusion strategies and policy, and (3) Results of Evaluations.

Study demographics

The methodologies employed by the included studies were varied. Of the reviewed studies, 19 were qualitative, 7 were mixed methods and 2 were non-empirical (theoretical and narrative). All 28 studies in this scoping review included participants from diverse ethnic backgrounds, but from a total of 38,313 participants across all the studies, 38,260 were classified under various iterations of 'people of colour' or 'ethnic minority'. The other demographics were as follows: LatinX ($n = 19$), Indian ($n = 3$), Asian American

($n = 19$) and African American ($n = 16$). Although this approach resulted in important insights being gathered, it left varied and distinct cultural experiences underexplored.

The 19 qualitative studies provided descriptive and richer data on how students experienced these diversity and inclusion efforts in relation to their ethnic identities. Interviews were a dominant method with 17 studies using them. Next choice was Surveys, with 5 studies employing them. 4 studies employed content or document analysis, and another 4 employed Theoretical or reflective methods. Only 1 study conducted a focus group. From a theoretical perspective, Intersectionality was the framework most used, with 7 studies employing the lens. 4 studies used Critical Theory, and another 4 used Queer Theory. 2 studies used Decolonising lens. Other theories employed were Relational-Cultural Theory with 1 study; Feminist Theory with 1 study; Critical Cultural Theory with 1 study; SAMHSA's eight dimensions with 1 study, and Multidimensional Model with 1 study. 11 out of the 28 studies did not include the theoretical frameworks used (if any).

Approximately 50% of the articles also excluded participant ages. Therefore, the results should be interpreted carefully, seeing that there is evidence pointing to the fact that younger undergraduates experience university life differently than a mature-aged student, with attrition rates higher in mature-aged students than in younger university students (Ramsay, et al. 2007).

Diversity and inclusion strategies and interventions

The literature reports several different strategies that are deployed within higher education institutions in Western countries. Below we share the two most frequently occurring diversity and inclusion strategies, and then later share results around the use of theory to make a critical difference.

Queer inclusive spaces

Several reviewed studies discussed the role of queer inclusive spaces employed in HEI as an inclusion strategy (Ferfolja et al. 2020; McCoy 2018; Mosley et al. 2019; Pham 2020; Roffee and Waling 2018). Queer inclusive spaces are dedicated spaces within the HEI campus that are carved out for LGBTQ+ students to convene or seek support services. Each of the studies considered various iterations of queer inclusive 'spaces', which were referred to as LGBTQ+ 'resource centres', 'wellness centres' (Mosley et al. 2019), 'cultural centres' (McCoy 2018) or 'queer lounges' (Roffee and Waling 2018). In addition to the physical spaces on campus, queer inclusive spaces also consist of online platforms that affirm LGBTQ+ identities, through university social pages and campus online communities (Ferfolja et al. 2020; Pham 2020).

No formal evaluations on the efficacy of queer inclusive spaces as a formal strategy for queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in HEI were undertaken by any of the studies mentioned above. However, anecdotally, Pham (2020) acknowledged that these places can be a supportive space for queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Several studies posit that HEIs are not always proactive in providing affirming spaces for minoritised groups with multiple intersections (Ferfolja et al. 2020; Mosley et al. 2019; Roffee and Waling 2018). For instance, Mosley et al. (2019) discovered that while

the HEI provided affirmation to people of colour and Indigenous people (POCI) and LGBTQ+ students separately through their web-based resource list, there was no acknowledgement of these identities concurrently existing, and LGBTQ+ students with intersecting identities felt no sense of belonging in either space. Roffee and Waling (2018) found that even queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds experience marginalisation in these spaces, particularly due to their ethnicity. This sheds light on the racism that is still found in what is meant to be an inclusive space within the university.

Support services

Mentoring and peer programmes, which are free programmes offered to HEI students in order to increase student engagement and promote well-being, are strategies that currently exist and continue to be recommended by current research to support inclusivity in HEI contexts (Kemp-DeLisser 2013). Such support services also appear to be available for LGBTQ+ students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. For instance, Duran (2021) outlined that LGBTQ+ community members from diverse ethnic backgrounds rely heavily on kinship with ‘chosen family’, so peer support programmes have had success. Flores and Sheely-Moore (2020), on the other hand, propagate the use of relational-cultural theory-based interventions (RCT) and formal counselling to support LGBTQ+ college students to counter any hostile HEI climate. Relational-cultural theory (RCT) as a contemporary theory, it is a relational and egalitarian approach to counselling that empowers and fosters empathy in LGBTQ+ clients (Flores and Sheely-Moore 2020). Flores and Sheely-Moore (2020, 73) suggest that because people from marginalised groups such as LGBTQ+ students of colour exist in spaces steeped in systems of oppression, they face ‘chronic disconnection from their authentic selves and others’. Hence, the goal of introducing RCT in HEI is to help students from marginalised background ‘recognise and overcome psychosocial manifestations of systemic oppression and to foster change by empowerment’ (Flores and Sheely-Moore 2020, 73).

As most of the suggested counselling interventions are emergent or being piloted in HEI spaces (Flores and Sheely-Moore 2020; Kemp-DeLisser 2013), they have not been evaluated. However, positive LGBTQ+ identity development, cultural capital accrual and community engagement through a structured mentoring programme fosters resilience, and even buffers the experience of minority stress and its associated negative outcomes (Reeves-Blurton 2019).

Role of policy in diversity and inclusion strategies

In unpacking the diversity and inclusion strategies employed in HEIs, several studies (Duran 2021; Flores and Sheely-Moore 2020; Sullivan and Day 2021) revealed that while considerations were made to affirm marginalised people within queer spaces, such as Indigenous affirming messages in LGBTQ+ resource centres (Flores and Sheely-Moore 2020; Sullivan and Day 2021), these resources or spaces were typically siloed, disregarding the complexities, needs and experiences of people at the intersections of multiple identities (Duran 2021).

Rodriguez Jr (2017, 89) further outlined how the role of language in policy documents, emails, and formal HEI spaces excludes queer students of colour, with many participants

feeling as if ‘only White and heterosexual students were considered family’. Rodriguez Jr’s (2017) study also pointed to disparities between the students’ lived experiences versus HEI’s formal inclusion policies. In documenting experiences of in/exclusion, (un)safe places, visibility in public online documents, and the auditing campus-based services available to support queer individuals, Ferfolja et al. (2020) also found the services to be especially exclusionary of queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. As such, Ferfolja et al. (2020) recommended proactive and strategic endeavours on the part of the institution such as ‘queering’ the policies. The term ‘queer’ is sometimes used as a verb ‘to queer’ or ‘queering’, which is used to describe changes or shifts that deviate from heteronormative culture or dominant state processes (Ahmed 2006). Other important institutional changes include increasing the representation of queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds and ensuring accessibility of any support structures in place to foster a sense of belonging (Ferfolja et al. 2020).

Some studies included in this scoping review also echoed the importance of active reformations within the institution and urged diversity and inclusion staff to consider underpinning diversity and inclusion strategies through the use of theory that can inform and drive policy reform (Flores and Sheely-Moore 2020; Misawa 2010; Scharrón-Del Río 2020). One such recommendation is Misawa’s (2010, 32) idea of employing Queer Race Pedagogy (QRP) to support inclusive teaching in HEI. QRP draws from Critical Race Theory and Queer Theory to empower queer students through ‘counter-narratives’ and ‘examining stereotypes in terms of positionality’. Through ‘counter narratives’ and ‘examining stereotypes’, educators cleave away from the heteronormative status quo, and this will allow sexual minorities of colour to reflect, think critically and help them to connect in class through different positionalities such as race and sexual orientations (Misawa 2010; Scharrón-Del Río 2020).

Scharrón-Del Río (2020, 301) urges educators and HEIs at large to promote intersectional research, protect students from tokenisation, compensate marginalised faculty for doing ‘diversity work’, and institute formal policies to support diversity and inclusion work within the HEI that takes on ‘anti-oppressive and liberatory’ approaches. Kemp-DeLisser (2013) urges communication of justice and equity to be evident in policy; and to include formalised programmes such as public lectures, addresses by campus officials, and to cleave space for cultural exchange, which plays a role in influencing behaviour and improving campus climate.

Multiple studies (e.g. Fernandes 2018; Outlaw Barmore 2019; Yang 2020) utilised research-informed approaches to support the importance of theoretical insights for driving better strategies to support queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in HEI. The results from these studies suggest that LGBTQ+ students from diverse ethnic backgrounds were found to display higher risk factors when it comes to adjusting on campus compared to their white heterosexual peers (Fernandes 2018). The absence of intersectional considerations to support LGBTQ+ students from diverse ethnic backgrounds is problematic (Yang 2020). Yang (2020) revealed that their participants, who were from Southeast Asian descent, viewed ethnicity as central to their identity, which in turn affects the way they view education, gender roles, and sexual orientations. Outlaw Barmore (2019) also echoed this in their study of African American lesbians, who viewed their ethnicity to be more important than their LGBTQ+ identity.

Therefore, it is important to ground diversity and inclusion work in HEI through an intersectional lens.

Discussion

This scoping review sought to identify strategies used by diversity and inclusion staff in HEI for LGBTQ+ students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and to better understand the impact and efficacy of these strategies. The findings of this research indicate that HEIs use queer inclusive 'spaces', both physically and online, to affirm LGBTQ+ identities. However, such spaces remain exclusive or elusive to many students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. As outlined by Mosley et al. (2020), HEIs are not always proactive in providing affirming spaces for minoritised groups with multiple intersections, leaving queer students with intersecting identities with no sense of belonging in either space. Moreover, queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds are often excluded from the broad narrative about queer inclusions because matters of race and community are often omitted from conversations about queer wellbeing (Misawa 2010). Additionally, queer spaces on campus may not provide similar feelings of inclusion, belonging and safety for queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds as they do for queer white students; and in some instances, these queer spaces appear to be just as exclusionary as non-queer spaces (Duran 2021; Roffee and Waling 2018).

While Pham (2020, 234) positively acknowledged that these queer spaces on campus are affirming and help build community for queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, she contends that 'queer capital' is needed for one to fit into these spaces. Pham (2020) defines 'queer capital' as fitting the mould of what the community defines as being 'queer' through one's dress sense or ethnicity; and this benchmark alienates some queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Pham (2020, 234) posit that queer spaces in HEI being exclusionary or inaccessible for ethnic minoritised students will contribute to the production of 'alternative queer geographies', such as informal online spaces where queer students can build 'queer competence' beyond marked LGBTQ+ campus spaces. This presents an issue for diversity and inclusion staff in HEIs, as students are forced to look outside of the HEI to foster a sense of belonging, which then has implications for student wellbeing and retention. Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, such spaces were integral for fostering a sense of belonging and connection, yet the lack of intersectional online HEI queer spaces will likely continue to further alienate queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. In another study that addresses the exclusion of queer students of colour from campus queer spaces, Ramirez Munoz (2020) suggested allocating space within these campus centres for queer students of colour to foster a sense of community and belonging. Ramirez Munoz (2020) believes that these spaces will enable them to engage in conversations about the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and sexual identities, and this should be extended to online HEI spaces as well. Such considerations are particularly important in 2020 and 2021, as students have been studying off-campus for the better part of those years.

Support services such as mentoring, peer programmes, and counselling are also strategies that appear to help LGBTQ+ students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, but such support structures are sporadic and often generalised. Access to key services, particularly ones targeting migrant, multicultural, youth and LGBTQ+ students, if such service even

exist, is difficult in HEI (Duran 2021). It is crucial to set up referral pathways to allow for LGBTQ + students from diverse ethnic backgrounds to access the range of services they need, as many students are not aware of the existence of such resources (Bhattar 2019; Duran 2021; Roffee and Waling 2018). Roffee and Waling (2018) highlighted gaps in service provision and reiterate the need to support students in their attempts to access targeted support, particularly for students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, who may negotiate and understand queer visibility differently than their LGBTQ + counterparts. Sexual identity may be an especially complex issue with queer people from diverse ethnic backgrounds due to cultural, religious, and safety issues (Tillman-Kelly 2015) with many people being selective with revealing their sexual identities as they perceive little benefit from disclosing their sexuality (Outlaw Barmore 2019; Roffee and Waling 2018; Tillman-Kelly 2015).

While there is evidence of some attention being paid to provide support services for marginalised groups, the issue remains that these services are siloed and do not account for students with multiple 'marginalised' identities (Duran 2021; Flores and Sheely-Moore 2020; Sullivan and Day 2021). However, there is growing evidence pointing to the fact that LGBTQ + students from diverse ethnic backgrounds do not even access these support strategies available to them in HEI due to invisibility or cultural incompatibility (Outlaw Barmore 2019; Roffee and Waling 2018; Tillman-Kelly 2015). While the focus of this review is LGBTQ + students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, it is notable to point out the dearth of research involving trans and nonbinary students in HEI – and by extension, research involving trans and nonbinary students of colour. An exception is in Nicolazzo's (2016) book. Nicolazzo's (2016) work highlights how language, categories or labels employed in diversity and inclusion strategies in HEIs can have implications. It also outlines the importance having knowledge and understanding of each person to create a unique and personalised foundation that caters to individual student needs.

Therefore, the role of theory in diversity and inclusion practice in HEI is crucial (Misawa 2010). In the absence of critical understanding about how heteronormativity, power and privilege intersect and interplay, HEI practitioners, despite their best efforts, maintain the status quo that contributes to the oppression of queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in HEI (Duran 2021). Through the development of a strong theoretical, power conscious intersectional framework, HEI practitioners can foster strategies for managing multiple and conflicting roles on campus and create appropriate support to learning and sense of belonging for queer students (Linder 2019). In the absence of a systematic application of theory to underpin diversity and inclusion work for queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in HEI, the use of informal support strategies persists. This presents a problem as such work is usually facilitated by academics or practitioners through the individual queering of curriculum or engaging in diversity work within their practice (Scharrón-Del Río 2020). This means that such work is sporadic and presents as a burden to individual academics or practitioners as they are engaging in unpaid diversity and inclusion work.

Suggestions for future research

This scoping review provides insights and offers practical suggestions to reorient LGBTQ + inclusion efforts in HEI. Reforms that are urgent include underpinning

diversity and inclusion with an intersectional lens, creating a safe space for queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds to engage in intersectional dialogue, and offering adequate and targeted intervention strategies for students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. These recommendations have been outlined in academic studies as far as over a decade ago (Bhattar and Victoria 2007; Misawa 2010), however, the literature over the last ten years have illuminated that these issues have persisted. It is important to examine why this is the case, and we suggest that future research exploring the perceptions of both queer students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in HEI, as well as staff who work in the diversity and inclusion spaces in HEI is warranted.

The international literature discussed earlier in the paper (Duran 2021; Misawa 2010; Vaccaro and Mena 2011) suggests that LGBTQ+ students from diverse ethnic backgrounds and trans students may need forms of supplementary and targeted support on top of the general diversity and inclusion efforts for LGBTQ+ student community at large. However, without understanding the specific needs and strengths of these students, as well as challenges and limitations faced by HEI staff leading the diversity and inclusion effort, it is impossible to formulate these supports. Urgent research is needed to facilitate these improvements, particularly because the awareness on the current support services available on campus are often overlooked by both staff and students (Bhattar 2019; Duran 2021; Roffee and Waling 2018). Such research also highlights the fact that queer research within HEI spaces have been predominantly viewed through cis, white, abled, and middle to upper-class privileged lenses (Roffee and Waling 2018), which may have created a knowledge gap (Duran 2021) around the lived experiences of queer people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This can be detrimental because privileges that come with being cis, queer, and white provide a certain kind of protection that is not afforded to others from queer and diverse ethnic backgrounds (Duran 2021, 125). Hastings and Mansell (2015) also iterate the importance of HEI's duty of care for students and staff from varied cultural backgrounds.

Research on the experiences of queer individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds in HEI, in particular, that of trans and nonbinary students' needs to be undertaken more broadly and urgently to amplify a group of people who are mostly invisible within queer HEI discourses. Duran (2021), Renn (2010) and Roffee and Waling (2018) have also called for research in this field to be expanded upon, particularly in an intersectional capacity.

Limitations of this scoping review

All the studies in this scoping review were published in English, which may leave out relevant research conducted in other languages. The studies were also mainly conducted in Anglophone Western developed countries. The term 'diverse ethnic backgrounds' was adapted in this review to represent many ethnic backgrounds, as many of the studies within this niche field had likewise done. However, we acknowledge that this may conflate experiences, neglecting to account for the cultural nuance. Additionally, most of the articles in our studies conflated LGBTQ+ identities, and this can be limiting for us to understand the impact that HEI inclusion strategies may have on each identity group. However, several of the included studies explored the experiences of L, G, B, T, Q separately (Bhattar 2019; Goode-Cross and Tager 2011; McCoy 2018; Mosley et al.

2019; Outlaw Barmore 2019) and this allowed for greater insights into the needs of each identity group.

There was also a lack of variety in the study design and data collection methods of the included studies, and over a third of the included studies did not appear to underpin their study with a theoretical framework.

Conclusion

To our knowledge, this review is the first to explore diversity and inclusion in HEI for LGBTQ+ students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The findings suggest that while there are some intervention strategies catered to LGBTQ+ students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in HEI, they are sporadic and rarely accessed. Formalised strategies such as queer spaces, mentoring, and peer-led programmes run by diversity and inclusion departments appear to lack intersectional consideration, and LGBTQ+ students from diverse ethnic backgrounds are not comfortable accessing them. Some strategies outlined in the studies such as queering of the curriculum and theorisation for policy reform, are not instituted by diversity and inclusion departments or faculties within universities. Instead, support strategies are explored by disparate number of stakeholders ranging from student-led groups to individuals working within HEIs. HEIs should focus on implementing an intersectional queer support system, and access to support systems needs to be streamlined. Policy reform is also integral to ensure that diversity and inclusion practitioners are given the tools needed to adequately implement the strategies. HEIs need to urgently facilitate these changes to ensure the success of LGBTQ+ students from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

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