1. Purpose

This paper introduces and examines The Legacy Project (TLP), a community-based, multicultural, educational resource that transforms the commercial heart of Chicago’s LGBT community into a physical and virtual space commemorating ethnically and racially diverse LGBT historical figures. TLP consists of the Legacy Walk (TLW), an outdoor installation comprised of biographies etched onto bronze plaques, and an extensive research-based website, [legacyprojectchicago.org](http://www.legacyprojectchicago.org). For education professionals, parents and students, the website also hosts the Legacy Project Education Initiative (LPEI), [legacyprojectchicago.org/Education\_Initiative.html](http://www.legacyprojectchicago.org/Education_Initiative.html). This site contains a teacher’s guide, lesson plans, a question bank, PowerPoints, a multimedia overview of LGBT historic contributions, and a guide to TLW.

2. Design/methodology/approach;

This paper will summarize the design, approach, and implementation of TLP components and then analyze findings from questions administered to LPEI participants. Significantly, LPEI resources rely on James A. Banks’ multicultural instructional strategies and Benjamin S. Bloom’s schema for critical thinking. Banks described four stages in the development of multicultural curriculum, while Bloom defined intellectual growth along a continuum from literal understanding to complex inferential abilities.

Data from three student groups who used various TLP resources reveal the changing understanding of participants concerning some key LGBT issues. Participants ranged from college students preparing to be teachers in urban settings, to high school students from both urban and rural areas. Two groups provided feedback in 2012, while a third group will provide feedback in April 2013.

3. Findings if paper is empirical;

Our work reveals participants increased knowledge of, and developed positive attitudes about, LGBT historical figures. Participants also generated strategies to counter anti-gay bullying, affirmed the need for greater legal protection and support for LGBT persons, and concluded that curricula should be inclusive of LGBT history. These preliminary findings will be augmented by additional responses in April 2013.

4. Research limitations/implications;

The variety and size of the sample, and the resultant data offers useful information though participants used different TLP components, have different levels of education and have different educational goals. These qualitative findings can guide further development of TLP, TLW and LPEI. Additionally, the achievements of TLP cross cultural and geographical boundaries by serving as a model or framework for other real and/or virtual exhibitions and educational efforts that seek to develop the inclusion of diverse groups.

5. Originality/value of the paper.

This paper explores TLP’s resources and their unique multicultural focus. TLP materials seek to transform understandings of history and culture by documenting diverse LGBT achievements. Though white gay men dominate the center of Chicago’s LGBT community through commercial nightlife venues, establishments inaccessible to youth under 21, TLP’s multicultural content can speak to all of the LGBT community, free of charge, without regard to age, class or status, by redefining sexuality in public space and online. Many youth in Chicago are Latino or African-American, and many lack sufficient resources. Some are also part of the sex industry. TLW can reach such youth locally, while the websites of TLP and LPEI can reach national or international audiences. TLP’s redefinition of public space, and its virtual framework can also serve as a model to other communities or institutions seeking to build understanding and advocacy for all. The paradigm shift from a culture of silence and discrimination to multicultural LGBT visibility through TLP provides an opportunity to counter hetero-normativity in real space and online.

Keywords:

LGBT history

LGBT exhibition

multicultural history

space

heteronormativity

sexuality