A Grounded Theory Study of Sociocultural and Psychosocial Factors that Influence the

Construction and Deconstruction of Heteronormative and Heterosexist Worldviews

A DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

SUBMITTED TO THE

FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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May 2009

Acknowledgements

There are many people who played a significant role during my educational journey. It would be impossible to acknowledge all of the family members, friends, teachers, colleagues, peers, researchers, and authors who have influenced my own personal, academic, and professional development. There are, of course, some people who I must recognized because without their tremendous support, encouragement, patience, and love, I would not be at this wonderful crossroads in my life.

My lifelong partner, Mike Nylund; and my mother, Mary Howe; have been my foundation. Both Mike and mom offered and gave me support like no other person has or could. They often knew I needed them before I knew. Mike has made me the "luckiest guy in the world" because of our commitment to each other. Mom has always been a source of inspiration and guidance. I am honored and grateful that they are a significant part of my life.

I have been hesitant to acknowledge others because of a fear of missing someone significant in the acknowledgement. I feel compelled, however, to thank humbly the following people for their part in making the Ph.D. process manageable, meaningful, and successful:

- Jayson Richardson, Ph.D., University of North Carolina,

- Laura Koch, Ph.D., University of Minnesota,

- Melissa Anderson, Ph.D., University of Minnesota,

- Robert K. Poch, Ph.D., University of Minnesota,

- Mary Z. Anderson, Ph.D., Western Michigan University,

- Donna Talbot, Ph.D., Western Michigan University,

- Wanda Viento, Ph.D., Mankato State University,

- The Ex-Pat Group from Harper College, and

- The many friends who have shown support.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the psychological developmental process of learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews and the sociocultural influences that encourage or discourage transition to more affirming beliefs toward same-sex sexual orientation. Given the purpose, a sample of participants who could speak to their experiences with learning and unlearning anti-gay biases was needed. Thus, professionals working in higher education institutions who were members of divisions of professional associations with an emphasis in social justice, diversity, or multiculturalism were invited to participate. The sample was developed from one or more of the following professional organizations: American Psychological Association (APA), American Counseling Association (ACA), and American College Personnel Association (ACPA).

This grounded theory study consisted of two phases: (1) questionnaires and (2) interviews. The questionnaire provided a breadth of common experiences among the participants, while the interviews provided a deeper understanding of these experiences. Two models emerged from structured coding procedures: (1) Psychosocial Interaction Model of Heterosexism (PI) and (2) Personal Development Model of Heterosexism (PD). The PI model illustrates interaction processes among significant associations (i.e., individuals, social groups, and institutions), life experiences, and personal meaning making that were influential when developing and changing core beliefs about same-sex sexual orientation. The PD model outlines psychological stages of personal development when learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews from early childhood to adulthood.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Little research on the psychological development of heterosexist subjects has been conducted, thus making it difficult to determine the amount of assistance required by someone working through heterosexism. Heteronormativity, referred to by Mary E. Hylton (2005), assistant professor in the School of Social Work at University of Nevada, as "the privileging of heterosexual relationships and identities…as the norm by which all others are evaluated" (p. 69), has profound influence on the emotional well-being and identity development of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students. Abbott and Liddell (1996), prominent researchers in college student development, found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual college students often experience loneliness, tension, and harassment as well as lack of equality and resources. This type of stress often interferes with personal identity development and academic achievement (D' Augelli, 1993). Sherrill and Hardesty (1994) found that approximately one-third of college students who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual drop out of at least one college because of harassment or discrimination. Many lesbian, gay, or bisexual students living in a heteronormative climate often experience depression and report fewer reasons to live (Waldo, Hesson-McInnis, & D'Auelli, 1998). Obviously, many students who do not identify as heterosexual feel emotionally threatened, rather perceived or real, because of a climate of insecurity.

Physical threats and acts of violence are also a reality for many lesbian and gay college students. For example, Herek (1998) found that lesbians and gay men are the most frequent targets of hate crimes in the U.S. An accurate number of violent incidences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students is impossible to determine because many victims do not report hate crimes, and the legal definition of hate crimes vary from state to state.

All lesbian, gay, or bisexual students' experiences are not the same, of course, nor do students react the same to similar experiences. Unwelcome experiences are not limited to students who are marginalized because of their sexual orientation. Students who identify as heterosexual, for example, but are perceived as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, can also experience some degree of fear because of these perceptions. Furthermore, lesbian, gay, and bisexual students that identify with other marginalized identities (e.g., student of color, students with disabilities, etc.) may experience additional isolation and threat.

Although attitudes toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons are becoming more affirming, "…heterosexual allies are critically important in the fight for social justice" (Evans & Broido, 2005, p. 43). There has been much focus in the literature on identity development about the psychological and physical harm that heteronormative climates can create for lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. There has been little research, however, on how one learns and unlearns a heteronormative worldview. To date, I could find no models that have been empirically tested that describe the psychological and social processes of learning and unlearning biases against sexual minority groups. As Herek (2000) states,

> "To date, the prevalence and correlates of sexual prejudice have received the most attention. Relatively little research has been devoted to understanding the dynamic cognitive processes associated with antigay attitudes and stereotypes, that is, how heterosexuals think about lesbians and gay men. Nor has extensive systematic inquiry been devoted to the underlying motivations for sexual prejudice or the effectiveness of different interventions for reducing sexual prejudice" (p. 21).

Without such knowledge, meaningful steps in changing attitudes and behaviors could have less impact at a much slower progress.

These statistics are only a mirror of the disturbing life events that many lesbians, gay men, and bisexual persons encounter on a daily basis. They are victims of a climate that encourages anti-lesbian, anti-gay, and anti-bisexual ideologies that, in turn, promote violent behaviors. The data motivate me to investigate the personal process of the learning and unlearning of heterosexism.

Overview of the Study

Three common terms found in the literature and this study on anti-gay biases are heteronormativity, heterosexism, and homophobia. No common definition of these terms exists, which could create confusion for those reading this study. The following are definitions of the terms as used in this study:

- *Heteronormativity:* refers to "the privileging of heterosexual relationships and identities…as the norm by which all others are evaluated" (Hylton, 2005, p. 69) and is embedded in individual, cultural, and/or institutional levels.

- *Heterosexism*: a form of oppression where it is believed that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality should be the only moral and ethical sexual orientation. Heterosexism is a tool to maintain the power norm in the United States (Pharr, 1997).

- *Homophobia:* fear, hatred or dislike of same-sex sexual attraction, lesbians, gay men, and bisexual persons.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the psychological developmental process of learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews and the sociocultural influences that encourage or discourage transition to more affirming beliefs toward same-sex sexual orientation. Specifically, this study will investigate how and to what extent do churches, schools, media, family, friends, and other sociocultural factors play a part in the psychological process of learning and unlearning non-affirming biases of same-sex sexual orientation and to what extent does this affect the knowledge and assistance of professionals in U.S. institutions of higher education. The primary research question of this study is as follows: *How do sociocultural factors foster and hinder the psychological processes of learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews of professionals in U.S. higher education institutions*?

An analysis of literature on how one learns and unlearns biases yielded three relevant fields of study to consider when investigating heteronormativity and heterosexism: (1) social oppression, (2) social identity development, and (3) personal identity development. The literature on these topics is both broad and deep, ranging from general processes and influences of all populations of people to micro-analyses of small group interactions of specific cultures. Researchers on social oppression are often concerned with how individuals and social groups impact and are impacted by the mistreatment of others. Scholars, whose primary investigations are on the influences of social or cultural group membership on individual emotions and behavior, are usually concerned with the development of social identity while personal identity scholars focus on how individuals define themselves as individuals. Often focused on the group that is most negatively impacted (i.e., targeted, out group, oppressed, non- and dominant), researchers attempt to provide a more clear

understanding of the social constructs of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and gender. A dearth of literature, however, exists on the development of heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews through the lens of social oppression, social identity, and personal identity.

By understanding the psychological developmental process of learning and unlearning heterosexism and the sociocultural factors that impede or foster this process, professionals in higher education can assist students, parents, and others to work through issues about same-sex sexual orientation or lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. For example, if a father is concerned about his daughter being gay, the education professional can assess where this person is in the process of overcoming heterosexist ideologies and what sociocultural factors influenced the father in his negative thoughts, feelings, and behavior toward lesbian persons. The professional could then process these factors with the father and assist in raising awareness of more lesbian-affirming affiliations or organizations, like churches. Also, studying a client's cultural group affiliations (e.g., race, ethnicity, etc.) can ascertain how affiliations or organizations shape ideologies. The higher education professionals will need to consider this information if my research substantiates patterns within groups. By considering these patterns, this assistive relationship can move along more efficiently and quickly.

A grounded theory methodology was used to guide this investigation since a psychological developmental theory of learning and unlearning heterosexism was to be investigated. Heterosexism is that phenomenon to be investigated and, through data collection and inductive analysis procedures, the psychological developmental process and sociocultural factors that foster or impede this process might be determined. Given the

research question, I needed participants who could speak about their experiences with learning and unlearning anti-gay biases. Thus, I conducted a study that included professionals who are members of divisions of professional associations with an emphasis in social justice, diversity or multiculturalism. The sample was developed from one or more of the following professional organizations: American Psychological Association (APA), American Counseling Association (ACA), and American College Personnel Association (ACPA).

Chapter Two of this study will provide an analysis of the literature on social oppression, social identity development, and personal identity development. Chapter Three will present the methodology used to collect and interpret the data to answer the study's research question. Chapter Four will discuss in detail the findings of the analysis followed by Chapter Five, which will present the themes in the data analysis and future opportunities for inquiry.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

I begin the review of literature with a discussion on definitions and conceptual models found in the literature of first social oppression followed by social identity development, and finally, personal identity development. Next, I discuss the importance and limitations of these models, and the discourse in the literature of higher education's roles and responsibilities of influencing the development of identity and worldviews while creating campus environments that are both welcoming and safe. This analysis is concluded with a view of current trends and future opportunities in the inquiry of social oppression and identity development.

Definitions and Conceptual Models of Social Oppression

In this section, I review the prominent definitions of social oppression found in the literature. I then present two conceptual models that attempt to represent the operational processes of social oppression. Citing contributions of multiple authors, I show connections and similarities among many theories of social oppression.

Definitions of Social Oppression

Goodman (2000) defines social oppression as "…domination, the ability for one social group to systematically control, manipulates, and uses other people for its own ends" (p.13). The author goes on to state that "prejudice + social power = oppression" (p.16). Goodman's definitions of oppression focus on the privilege of some groups to disadvantage other social groups. Freire (1993) writes that oppressors (dominate groups) use dehumanizing and silencing tactics through social institutions, like education, to disadvantage the oppressed

(non-dominate groups). Hardiman and Jackson (1997) continue the development of a definition of social oppression by focusing on the relationship of the agent group (oppressor) and the targeted group (oppressed) They believe that conditions of social oppression exists when the following key elements are in place:

- The agent group has the power to define and name reality and determine what is normal, real, or correct.

- Harassment, discrimination, exploitation, marginalization, and other forms of differential and unequal treatment are institutionalized and systematic. These acts often do not require the conscious thought or effort of individual members of the agent group but are rather part of business as usual that become embedded in social structures over time.

- Psychological colonization of the target group occurs through socializing the oppressed to internalize their oppress condition and collude with the oppressor's ideology and social system. Freire (1970) refers to this as the oppressed playing host to the oppressor.

- The target group's culture, language, and history are misrepresented, discounted, or eradicated and dominant groups' culture is imposed.

Social oppression usually occurs gradually over time, is often unconscious, and is embedded in institutions and culture that continue the cycle.

Conceptual Models of Social Oppression

     To understand and present the working dynamics of social oppression, Hardiman and Jackson (1997) present a model, *Social Oppression Matrix*, which attempts to define the

context, processes, and application of oppression. Oppression, according to the model, occurs on three levels: individual, institutional, and societal, or cultural. Individuals are affected and have an effect on changing the system. In this context, "…individuals are socialized, punished, rewarded, and guided by institutions that maintain and perpetuate oppressive structures" (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997, pp. 18-19). Institutions (e.g., family, religion, schools, higher education, government, etc.) often maintain a system of oppression through operationalizing unequal treatment through policies, practices, rules, and procedures. Like institutions, cultures set standards, usually based on the those of a dominant group, that establish unequal treatment through norms, values, symbols, myths, rituals, traditions, ceremonies, and language. Hardiman and Jackson, like Freire, believe that a reciprocal relationship occurs among individuals, institutions, and culture to maintain an oppressive system, e.g., individuals impact institutions and culture; institutions and culture impact individuals.

Individuals participate in this relationship through conscious and unconscious means. Hardiman and Jackson (1997) describe these means as the following:

> *"Conscious* processes involve knowingly supporting the maintenance of
> social oppression through individual, institutional, and social, or cultural
> attributes. *Unconscious* processes represent unknowing or naïve collusion
> with the maintenance of social oppression and occur when the target or agent
> comes to accept the dominant logic system and justifies oppression as normal
> or part of the natural order" (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 19).

The conscious and unconscious means are applied through attitudinal and behavioral levels. Attitudinal level refers to the conscious or unconscious beliefs, stereotypes, and philosophies

of an individual. Behavioral level refers to the actions taken by individuals to maintain an oppressive system. A faculty member (individual) in an engineering department might believe (consciously or unconsciously) that women are not good at math (attitudinal) and advises female students to consider other majors (behavior), for example. As years pass, the percentage of male students admitted into the program disproportionately outweighs the percentage of female students who had similar academic qualifications (institutional). Both female and male faculty members and students in the department generally don't recognize this discrepancy and, when pointed out by others, brush it off by saying, "women aren't interested in engineering" (cultural). An academic culture that disenfranchises one group over another could have broader implication on pedagogy, curriculum, research, policies, hiring, promotion, and tenure.

Goodman, Freire, Hardiman, and Jackson present a broad framework of how social oppression is formed and maintained through systemic institutional and cultural channels. Harro (2000) presents a model of "…how the socialization process happens, from the sources it comes, how it affects our lives, and how it perpetuates itself" (p. 15). She states, "This socialization process is pervasive (coming from all sides and sources), consistent (patterned and predictable), curricular (self-supporting), self-perpetuating (intra-dependent), and often invisible (unconscious and unnamed)" (p. 15). The model, *The Cycle of Socialization*, captures how individuals, institutions, and culture use reinforcement tactics, like punishments and rewards, to maintain the cycle of socializing oppression.

Harro (2000) begins the model by asserting that people are born into this world with no feelings of prejudices or biases. Similar to John Locke's (1690) *tabula rasa*, Harro believes that children are neither good nor bad at birth but are shaped through experiences.

Immediately upon birth, however, children are exposed to mechanisms that teach "how to"

behave and what to think. From pink or blue blankets, Barbies or toy trucks, and nursery

rhymes of "sugar and spice and everything nice" or "snips and snails, and puppy dog tails,"

children are socialized into a culture of differences. Bandura (1986) states that symbolism

(e.g. language, dress, attitudes, etc.) "…transforms transient experiences into internal models

that serve as guides for future action" (p. 18). Through a series of reinforcements and

enforcements (i.e., rewards and punishments), Harro and Bandura suggest that individuals

begin to model behavior that best fits the immediate environment. Harro (2000) writes,

> "Regardless of the content of the teaching, we have been exposed, without
>
> initial question, to strong set of rules, roles, and assumptions that cannot help
>
> but shape our sense of ourselves and the world. They influence what we take
>
> with us when we venture out of our protected family nits into the larger world
>
> of other institutions" (Harro, 2000, p. 17).

As children get older and enter into other social institutions (e.g., schools, religion, clubs,

etc.), they begin to learn more about how to behave, including what groups to like and what

groups not to like. Harro (2000) continues,

> "The media (television, the Internet, advertising, newspapers, and radio), our
>
> language patterns, the lyrics to songs, our cultural practices and holidays, and
>
> the very assumptions on which our society is built all contribute to the
>
> reinforcement of the biased messages and stereotypes we receive" (p. 18).

Bandura believes that by observing symbols in their surrounding environment, storing and

recalling these experiences, acting out modeled behaviors, and being reinforced (rewarded or

punished), people learn directly and indirectly not only how to behave or what to think but

also develop a sense of themselves (identity) in context to their cultural group(s) through the beliefs and actions of others (Feist and Feist, 1998).

According to Harro's *Cycle of Socialization* model, the results of socialization, reinforcements, and enforcements maintain a system of oppression where targeted groups internalize self-hatred and helplessness while agent groups remain unconsciously or consciously aware of their permutation of the cycle (Harro, 2000, p. 19). As these results continue, members of target and agent groups come to a decision whether or not to take action to stop the cycle. Bandura (1986) postulates that a decision to take action depends on the degree of *collective efficacy*, which refers to the confidence level one might have that a groups' combined efforts will make a needed change. Bandura implies that the higher degree of collective efficacy; the higher the probability of action. He does, however, recognize that social conditions can decrease a sense of collective efficacy. If punishments continue to outweigh the rewards, people "rather than developing the means for shaping their own future, grudgingly relinquish control to technical specialists and to public officials" (Bandura, 1995, p. 37). Freire (1993) refers to this type of decision as *prescription,* where "…the behavior of the oppressed is prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor" (p. 47). When this phenomenon occurs, the cycle of oppression continues.

<center>Definitions and Concepts of Social Identity Development</center>

In this section, I review the prominent definitions of social identity development found in the literature. I present concepts that are most commonly used to distinguish theories of social identity. Citing contributions of multiple authors, I attempt to show connections and similarities among many theories of social identity development.

Definitions of Social Identity Development

According to Tajfel (1981), social identity is "…that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from his or her knowledge of membership to a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to it" (p. 255). There are three key concepts to *Social Identity Theory (SIT):* (1) categorization, (2) social comparison, and (3) self-concept. Categorization implies that individuals naturally categorize themselves and others into known schemas, e.g., social groups. Once placed, individuals begin comparing their social groups to other social groups. Self-concept and esteem depends in part on how individual social groups are "ranked" with other groups and how much meaning is attached to a particular group or groups.

A White female Christian faculty member in a department of engineering, for example, might identify as White and Christian, but not have much emotional attachment to those social groups. Being a female faculty member (categorization), however, might be extremely salient to her, which could have more significant impact on her self-concept than being White and Christian. If a person places more significance in being a member of a targeted group, she may internalize the oppression, which will indubitably lower self-concept and increase self-hate. In the case of the engineering department, a female faculty member in the department might experience unfair treatment because of the department's culture of favoring males (social comparison). In turn, she might experience emotional distress and feelings of inadequacy (self-concept) and decide to leave the department.

Concepts of Social Identity Development

Brewer (2001) expands on Tajfel's theory by adding four critical distinctions of defining social identity: (1) person-based social identities, (2) relational social identities, (3) group-based social identities, and (4) collective identities. According to Brewer, definitions that focus on person-based social identities explore the inner psychological processes of an individual in a social context (e.g., who am I as a member of a cultural groups?). Relational social identities are embedded in societal roles (e.g., who am I as a parent, co-worker, etc.). Brewer states that "…relational identities reflect the influence on the self-concept of societal norms and expectations associated with occupying particular roles or social positions, and the nature of the specific interpersonal relationships within which that role is carried out" (p. 118). Group-based social identities focus on the integration of self with a larger social group (e.g., who are we?). Finally, collective identities focus on the integration of the self with a larger social group, similar to group-based social identities, but also focused on the extent to which an individual makes change and shapes the future direction of the social group (e.g., who are we and how successful are we?).

Continuing with the example of the engineering department, the female faculty member might have a very high self-concept outside of the department (person-based social identity), but have a very low sense of self-worth as a colleague, teacher, or researcher (relational social identity). She might then come to realize she no longer feels part of the department (group-based social identity) and cannot make significant change to help the department move forward (collective identity), so she makes a decision to leave the department.

Definitions and Conceptual Models of Personal Identity Development

In this section, I present definitions and models of personal identity development. Some established examples of scholarly work that have contributed to models which attempt to describe the stages of identity development of individuals in non-dominant groups are Cross, 1978; Poston, 1990; Downing & Roush, 1985; and Cass, 1979. Less attention, however, has been given to the identity development of individuals in majority or dominant groups. Work from Helms (1984) and others have contributed to models that describe psychological transitions from believing that the White race is superior to believing that all individuals, no matter what group affiliations, are valuable and needed. Historically, these models have attempted to represent the development of a single identity (e.g., race or gender, etc.) not multiple identities (e.g., race and gender). Recently, more attention has been given in literature to advance the knowledge of identity development by considering multiple identities. Jones and McEwen (2000) broke ground with their research and model on multiple dimensions of identity. This attention in turn has also advanced the understanding of sociocultural influences on identity. Cross, Poston, Downing and Roush, Cass, Helms, Jones, and McEwen greatly contributed to the knowledge of identity development through their models, which provide a representation of how individuals develop while negotiating through social oppression. These models are described below.

Definitions of Personal Identity Development

There is no agreement on a single definition of *identity* between the fields of psychology or sociology. Researchers and theorist within each field often do not agree on a definition either. For example, Erik Erikson, a developmental theorist, is often contributed to

defining identity as a developmental crisis that needs achieved where a person experiences a "sense of sameness and continuity" (Feist & Feist, 1998, p. 241). Other developmental researchers, however, are beginning to expand this definition of identity by including emotions. "The identity status approach and other popular measures of identity exploration and commitment, for example, primarily tap cognitive and behavioral aspects of identity" (Fischer, Yan, & Stewart, 2003, p.482). The discourse within the literature, however, goes much deeper than a definition. The disagreement stems from fundamental beliefs of what makes an individual *an individual*.

The on-going discourse in social psychology literature exemplifies the deeper connections within the inquiry of identity. For example, some researchers in social psychology are calling for a single definition or theory that combines concepts from both social identity and personal identity. Stets and Burke (2000) writes, "We think that a merger of identity theory with social identity theory will yield a stronger social psychology that can attend to macro-, meso-, and micro-level social processes" (p. 234). This declaration of a uniformed social psychology is not new. Since the 1970's, much resistance to this merger can be found in the literature. Historically, theorist and researchers "…work within traditional boundaries, use conventional paradigms, and interpret results with established theories" (Higgins, 1992, p.491). Over the past decade, however, the concrete walls between and within psychology and sociology on identity development have become more transparent and placid, allowing for various epistemologies and theoretical frames to converge and conceptualize new meanings of identity development (Amiot, Sablonnière, Terry, & Smith, 2007). Burke (2006) cautions, "In advancing identity theory beyond its current boundaries, identity theorists must remain open to new ways of thinking about and testing identity

processes" (p. 105). To sustain this congeniality, however, old ways of thinking and behaving need to be monitored carefully.

A fair amount of literature has focused on identity development of individuals in non-dominant and dominant cultural groups. The literature, some empirical and some not, often relies heavily on stage models of development. As Chavez and Guido-DiBrito (1999) state, "Most identity development models and theories trace their roots to either the psychosocial research of Erik Erikson (1959, 1980), the identity formation studies of Marcia (1980), or the cognitive structural work of Jean Piaget (1952)" (p. 41). Identity development models often begin at a naive stage where biases and cultural judgments are not part of conscious thought. The models continue with an awakening of differences, acknowledgement of biases, and to a better understanding of identity in context with one's own culture to other cultures.

Conceptual Models of Single Personal Identity Development

Cross (1971) developed a stage model of identity called *Black Identity Development*. In stage one (Pre-Encounter), Cross believes that many Black people have bought into "Whiteness." Individuals in this stage feel that race rarely plays a part in their daily lives and has little or nothing to do with succeeding in U.S. society. The term "White-washed" often refers to people of color in this stage who seek approval of the White majority and assimilate to White middle class expectations. Internalizing the negative Black stereotypes is often a characteristic of this stage.

In stage two (Encounter), people often transcend into this stage after an event of racism or other injustice has occurred. At this point, many people begin to question their beliefs about justice and race in the U.S. This new realization of an unjust society forces

them to reexamine their own thoughts about their specific culture and cultural identity. This new realization transcends the person into stage three (Immersion or Emersion).

At this stage, Black people surround themselves with people who are members of their specific cultural group. They are proud to be Black and find ways to present this pride. According to Cross (1971), trusting White people is very difficult in this stage. Black people become increasingly interested in their own history and the future of their cultures. The term "Blackness" is identified as one's worldview and is focused primarily on sociocultural factors in Black communities.

After living shared experiences with members of their own cultures, people become more secure in their racial identity. Cross calls this stage Internalization. Although surrounding themselves with members of their cultural group, Black people can now establish meaningful relationships with White folks. Many people who identify with this stage can also begin to assist other oppressed, targeted groups by becoming allies and building coalitions. Cross (1971) terms the final stage Internalization-Commitment, where people become more "grounded" in their commitment to their own identity and building coalitions. Their worldview has been expanded to sociocultural factors of many cultures.

Considering people who identified with two or more racial identities, Poston developed the *Biracial Identity Development Model* in 1990. Children in stage one of this model, Personal Identity, have a sense of self that is not based on group membership or identity. As biracial children develop, however, they feel pressure from other social groups to choose one racial orientation over the other. A biracial identity most likely will not form because of the dualistic thinking of most youth. Thus, the youth in this stage choose one racial identity orientation over the other.

In stage three (Choice of Group Characterization), individuals are "…pushed to choose an identity, usually one ethnic group" (Poston, 1990, p. 153). Often people experience alienation in this stage. People in stage three (Enmeshment or Denial) often feel self-hatred, confusion, and guilt due to choosing one identity and denying other aspects of the self. Poston believes that these feelings need to be resolved before transcending into the next stage. Persons, however, in stage four (Appreciation) begin to understand and appreciate more than just one racial identity and broaden their group memberships. Although these people may still identify with the identity chosen in stage two, they begin to explore and value the racial heritage of both parents. Finally, in stage five (Integration), they identify with racial orientations that are a part of their selves. They also appreciate other ethnic cultures while embracing their own.

Downing and Roush (1985) developed the *Feminist Identity Development for Women* model by using a large part of the Cross (1971) *Black Identity Development* model. The authors describe the first stage (Passive Acceptance) of identity development by asserting that women accept the sex roles established by the power norm. They also believe that men are superior and the established sex roles are for the good. Stage two of the model (Revelation) is defined by a series of events and injustices that assist women in questioning the established sex roles and begin to feel anger and guilt. Men are often perceived negatively. In stage three (Embeddedness-Emanation), the authors state that women develop close relationships with other women who affirm their new identity. Women begin to see how established gender roles affect others (e.g., heterosexism). They begin to have selective and cautious interactions with men. Women then develop a positive feminist identity and see men as individuals in stage four (Synthesis). Finally, they are ready to take action against

sexism and the established gender roles in stage five (Active Commitment), where men are considered equal but different.

In 1979, and revised in 1996, Cass developed an identity development model, *Homosexual Identity Development*, which attempts to describe the experiences of lesbians (to a lesser extent) and gay men as they come to terms with their sexual orientation. In stage one (Identity Confusion), lesbians and gay men question their own sexual orientation by privately addressing thoughts and feelings of same-sex attraction. Individuals often rationalize these thoughts and feelings as "a phase." In stage two (Identity Comparison), individuals accept that they are lesbian or gay. Persons in this stage, however, have a tremendous fear of others knowing about their thoughts and feelings of same-sex attraction. As the individuals become more accepting of their own thoughts and feelings of being lesbian or gay, Cass writes that they enter into stage three, Identity Tolerance. In this stage, they seek out others who share thoughts and feeling of same-sex attraction, but are still hesitant to tell others about themselves.

As these individuals interact with lesbians and gay men, acceptance of their own sexual orientation begins to develop. In stage four (Identity Acceptance), they begin to seek out intimate relationships with the same gender and to selectively tell others that they now identify as lesbian or gay. They begin to "pass," which is choosing not to disclose her sexual orientation or tell others that she is not lesbian. This passing usually occurs when the person does not feel physically or emotionally safe. As they continue to accept their identity, passing soon stops. Cass (1979) describes this stage as Identity Pride, where the individuals are proud to be lesbian or gay and abandon all passing. Individuals often develop an "us against them" attitude and behaviors. Finally, in stage six (Identity Synthesis), lesbians and gay men begin

valuing people from all sexual orientations. They abandon the "us against them" attitudes and behaviors and integrate their sexual orientation identity with other identities.

An example of an identity model that attempts to describe the experiences of members of a dominant group is the *White Racial Identity Development* by Helms in 1990. In the first stage (Contact), White people have bought into the negative stereotypes of people of color and are unaware of their own White privilege. People in this stage often structure their lives to interact with White folks and have limited interaction with people of color. As they progress through the model, they enter Disintegration (Cognitive Dissonance). Helms believes that many White people who transcend into this stage experience anxiety, shame, and guilt after recognizing their racist ideologies and White privilege. This discomfort can cause denial and avoidance of speaking about racism. In continuing transcendence while in this stage, however, White people begin to realize their own behaviors and ideologies in maintaining a racist system.

White folks will experience much resistance when speaking out about racism because of pressures to maintain racist ideologies and White privilege. This pressure and resistance causes individuals in this stage (Reintegration) to feel alienated from other White folks, which may lead to a reshaping of their acceptance of racial ideologies. During this stage, many White people will begin to blame people of color for their feelings of alienation.

White people, however, begin to reexamine their racial biases and question their own Whiteness. In stage four (Pseudo-Independent), they begin to look beyond themselves and begin to criticize the system that maintains White privilege. Although they begin to abandon their racist ideologies, they still may have behaviors that maintain a racist system. They wish to develop friends and relationships with people of color, but may experience rejection from

people of color because of behaviors influenced by White racial biases and suspicion from people of color. They may also experience rejection from other Whites who hold onto racist ideologies.

As the individuals continue to acknowledge and address their racial biases, in stage five (Immersion or Emersion), they are ready to find a new definition of being White. They will look for more accurate information about the history of White culture and look for White allies who work against racism. In the final stage (Autonomy), White people have internalized this new meaning of being White in the United States. They are capable of recognizing racial biases and behaviors and often have the skills to confront racism. Coalitions with people of color can be made more easily because many of the racial biases and behaviors have been examined, challenged, and replaced with anti-racist ideologies.

Conceptual Models of Multiple Personal Identity Development

Historically many identity development models represent a single identity (e.g., race or gender, etc). Jones and McEwen (2000), paraphrasing Trickett, Watts, and Birman (1994), state that "…more recent research draws attention to the importance of considering the influences of dimensions such as race, culture, social class, and sexual orientation, as well as the need for examination of the sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts in which identities are constructed" (p. 405). Jones and McEwen through their research "…attempted to advance a more complex understanding of identity and present a model of multiple dimensions of identity development" (p. 407). In their work, they developed a conceptual model, *Multiple Dimensions of Identity*, to represent identity development. Briefly, outlined below, their model postulates that saliency of an identity depends on the context.

1. The core is a person's sense of self. It represents the "valued personal attributes and characteristics" (Jones, 1997, p.383). Jones often refers to the core as the *inner self*. Kind, loving, spirited are words that often describe the core.

2. Intersecting circles represent one's significant identity dimensions, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, class, etc. These circles also indicate that no one identity can "…be understood singularly; it can be understood only in relation to other dimensions" (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p.410).

3. Jones and McEwen (2000) use dots to represent the significant of the identity. The closer the dot is to the core; the more significant that particular identity is salient with the individual.

4. The dimensions become more salient when one interacts with family, social institutions, culture, etc. For example, if one is a target of racism, then racial identity becomes more salient than others (in general).

The authors emphasize that "Influences of sociocultural conditions, family background, and current experiences cannot be underestimated in understanding how participants constructed and experienced their identities" (p. 410).

Amiot, Sablonnière, Terry, and Smith (2007) added to the discussion of models representing multiple personal identities through their development of the *Four-Stage Model of Social Identity Development*. Unlike Jones and McEwen (2000), these authors present a developmental approach of the integration of social identities to oneself. In stage one (Anticipatory Categorization), individuals begin analyzing the "fit" of a potential group with their current beliefs of self. The belief about one's self is projected onto a group with anticipation of becoming a successful member of that group. Stage two (Categorization)

represents a change from one social group to another, but individuals still predominately identify with original social group. The authors continue,

> "At this stage, distinct social identities are recognized, and differences (in terms of values, norms) among social identities become highly salient, which reinforces the person's own social characteristics and his or her sense of belonging to the original social group" (Amiot, Sablonnière, Terry, & Smith, 2007, p. 373).

Personal identities become more salient if individuals in this stage experience unfavorable differential treatment because of their group membership (p. 373).In the third stage (Compartmentalization), they begin to recognize their other social groups and identify with them. The more contact they have with other social group they belong to, the more likely they are to accept that they are also a part of this social group. In the final stage (Integration), "…individuals come to recognize that multiple and distinct social identities are simultaneously important to their self" (p. 375).

Knowledge Gained and Limitations of Identity Development Models

In this section, I present contributions that identity development models have provided in research and practice. I then discuss some of the limitations of the models that were reflected in the literature. Understanding the contributions and limitations noted in the literature helped inform my suggestions of future research considerations.

Knowledge Gained by Identity Development Models

Identity development models provide many important considerations to understanding the development of identity by looking at common themes that intertwine through the models. Identity models present a general progression (naiveté to acceptance) that many individuals move through as they grapple with their own and other's cultures. Although not explicitly stated in the above models, the importance of real or perceived personal rewards and punishments that individuals may experience as they develop through the stages is implied in all the models. As persons move through the various stages, an internal discourse is consistently challenging beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. The authors above speak to the importance of peers inside and outside of cultural groups to transcend from one stage to the next. Finally, another common theme in identity models are feelings of shame, guilt, anger, and pride by members of both dominant and non-dominant groups as they come to terms with their identity.

Limitations of Developmental Models

Although identity development models are often used in counseling supervision, training, counseling individuals, teaching, and conducting and interpreting research, many limitations need consideration when using or discussing identity development models. First, most models do not address the intersection of multiple identities or within-group differences. For example, racial identity development models often do not examine the issues of how these models differ between men and women. Single identity development models radically simplify the human experience and "…create an incomplete and, therefore, inaccurate picture of multiple layers of identity and oppression" (Reynolds & Pope, 1991, p.

175). Next, identity development models that are often used in research (including this study) are specific to only people who have lived in the United States in a particular era. The social climate of an era can greatly influence identity of an individual or group of people. Moreover, there is often a more positive value judgment placed on the "higher" stages of one's development, which could be construed that the person is mentally and emotionally "healthier" when at a higher stage in the development. Furthermore, often the developmental models do not look at how sociocultural influences foster or hinder the process of the individual development. These models do not address how the identity development of a helping professional, teacher, or researcher could influence the use of the models. Finally, considering only one identity development model theory for each cultural group is limiting. Although the limitations listed above are generalized to most developmental models, specific models may have other limitations not addressed in this discussion. Although much attention has been given to identity development in scholarly literature, much more empirical research on the representation of the nuances, intersections, and multitudes of identity within the stage models need to occur.

Washington and Evans (1991) defined an ally as "a person who is a member of the 'dominant' or 'majority' group who works to end oppression in his or her personal and professional life through support of, and as an advocate with and for, the oppressed population" (p. 195). Their research focuses on the stages or process that heterosexuals go through to become allies in the workplace by using mentors to foster the transitions. Their stage model assumes that the ally knows at least some of the problems of lesbians, gay men, and bisexual persons and wishes to help with these problems.

Analysis and Trends in the Study of Social Oppression and Identity Development

More and more research in the study of identity is focusing on identity in context to the environment and the experiences within one's environment. Lee Knefelkamp (2006) stated in her keynote address at the Learning and Diversity Conference of American Association of Colleges & Universities that developing an identity can be seen then as a "…constant process of learning, an upheaval, a challenge, a set of meaning making opportunities of increased complexity and demands for increased complexity" (http://www.aacu.org/podcast/feed/98/knefelkamp.mp3). As increasing diversity of students, faculty, and staff, come into and interact within institutions of higher education, diverse perspectives are shared and the marketplace of ideas continues. Individuals gain new insights, paradigms, perspectives, and knowledge that can challenge one's worldview. Knefelkamp goes on to state that "Identity is formed and negotiated in a series of encounters with others, and the encounters with others produce an encounter with one's self" (http://www.aacu.org/podcast/feed/98/knefelkamp.mp3). Past beliefs that once grounded one's identity can be shattered by experiencing others.

The transition from developmental perspectives that are focused primarily on psychological transcendence to more developmental-constructive perspectives that broaden the focus to influences of social interactions seem to be a growing trend in the literature of identity development, particularly in studies of diversity and college students. Researchers are learning that studies which consider identity in relation to one's own culture, interactions and experiences with others, and self reflection processes to these interactions, provide a much richer contribution to the knowledge of identity development of persons in dominant

and non-dominant groups. More attention, however, needs to be given to the construction of identity through a lens of social oppression.

A Conceptual Model of Social Oppression and Identity

The *Social Oppression Matrix* model describes how social oppression *operates* through conscious and unconscious processes that influence attitudes and behaviors on individual, institutional, and societal, or cultural levels. The *Cycle of Socialization* model describes how social oppression is *maintained* through socialization and enforcements (reinforcements). *Social Identity Theory*, then, postulates how people become to know themselves by interacting within various social groups that are influenced by the operation and maintenance of social oppression.

The mechanism of a pendulum clock might provide a good analogy for this conceptual model. A pendulum clock relies in part on the interaction between (1) the operation of the pendulum and gears that (2) regulate the movement of the pulleys and weights. Winding the clock maintains this interaction, which keeps the hands and chimes working in sync. If social oppression was a pendulum clock, the gears and pendulum would represent the *Social Oppression Matrix* (operational), the pulleys and weights would represent *Social Identity Theory* (regulated), and the process of winding the pulleys and weights would represent *Cycle of Socialization* (functioning).

Responses to Heteronormative Campus Climates

In my review of literature, I could find no empirical research that studied the life-long psychological development of heterosexist people, gay or non-gay, who transitioned out of heterosexist ideologies. This lack of research can have severe consequences for institutions

of higher education. Although colleges and universities are experiencing more and more students who freely share their identity, lesbian and gay college students remain fearful on many campuses because of little or no indication of affirmation. While college campus personnel can turn to identity development models to help develop and tailor programs for diverse students, staff, and faculty, models on overcoming heterosexism were not found in the literature. Thus, creating programs, policies, and procedures to lessen the impact of heterosexism is challenging.

As heteronormative climates that devalue persons who do not identify as heterosexual continue to alienate, many institutions are responding to heterosexism and homophobia by providing student organizations for sexually marginalized students and allies. The primary goal of this alternative is to provide peer support for lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. Although student organizations are increasing on college campuses (Beemyn, 2004), these organizations may or may not be recognized as institutionally supported organizations. Some institutions will allow gay students to use facilities, for example, but will not recognize the group as a formal student organization.

The purpose of other policy alternatives identified in the literature is to change institutional policies and procedures to create an affirming environment for faculty, staff, and students who do not identify as heterosexual. For example, in 1996, fifty-seven colleges and universities offered same-sex couples domestic benefits packages (Rivard, 2003). In 2001, an estimated 360 colleges and universities offer benefits to same-sex couples (Euben, 2001). An objective of these alternatives is to send a message to campus constituents that all persons' are welcome, with no regard to sexual orientation.

Other alternatives provide educational training and awareness to promote a supportive climate where heterosexist ideologies can be identified and challenged. Often these programs are labeled by the terms "Safe Zone" or "Safe Place" that display a symbol to show affirmation toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. The programs vary from formalized training that offer continuing education credit to informal training that may provide written literature only.

Legal challenges have also moved institutions of higher learning to reconsider their positions that create a campus climate that devalues persons who do not identity as heterosexual. For example, the Montana Supreme Court ruled in December 2004 that the University of Montana System must provide domestic partner benefits to their employees who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (American Civil Liberties Union, 2004). Legal challenges, however, have assisted in managing the condition and issues of a heteronormative climate but have not resolved the problem.

The social movement of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons of the 1980's continued by paving its way into and from the walls of the ivory towers. More and more sexually marginalized persons on college campuses made their historically invisible presence more visible by raising awareness of the injustices on individual, cultural, and institutional levels of higher education institutions (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2000). In turn, decision-makers on college and university campuses realized that their campus climates were not affirming to persons who do not identify as heterosexual and began developing policies to attempt to change this climate. The injustices caused by a heteronormative climate that devalues persons who do not identify as heterosexual still permeate within and outside the

walls of the ivory towers, so the movement to dismantle this harmful power to gain social equity, basic civil liberties, and valued recognition continues.

Future Research Opportunities

As presented in this analysis, more work needs to be done to more fully understand the psychological development of learning and overcoming heterosexism and the sociocultural factors that impede or foster this development. Through understanding this process, helping professionals can assist clients in working through issues they might have about same-sex sexual orientation or lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. By considering these patterns, the helping relationship can move along more efficiently and quickly. Increasing the knowledge of the development of heteronormative and heterosexist worldview can have a profound impact on the research and practice of individuals and organizations working to decrease the impact of oppression and in doing so, the following topics of future research should be considered.

Sociocultural Factors that Influence Heteronormative and Heterosexist Worldviews

Both social identity and personal identity theories and models emphasize the significant influences that social interactions have on socialization, meaning making, and construction of worldview and identity. Religion, culture, organizations, family, formalized education, media, and other sociocultural factors provide a stage for social interactions to perform. Very little empirical research, however, has identified the most influential sociocultural factors that contribute to the learning and unlearning of heteronormativity and heterosexist worldviews. Investigating these factors can assist in the understanding of how they become influential and lead to targeted, more effective means of deconstructing the influences of oppression while

strengthening the influences of liberation. The following questions can begin to guide the development of a research agenda:

- What are the most significant sociocultural factors that foster or hinder the development of heteronormativity and heterosexist worldviews?

- How do sociocultural factors become significant and lose significance to the development of heteronormativity and heterosexist worldviews?

- How do sociocultural factors maintain this significance throughout a person's lifespan?

Social Identity Processes that Influence Heteronormative and Heterosexist Worldviews

Researchers and practitioners in sociology, social psychology, and other fields of study interested in human interaction have provided much insight on how social identities are formed, influenced, and shaped through membership and interactions of dominant and non-dominant groups. Although the understanding of how membership plays a role in the development of biases and prejudices is increasing, much more work needs to be done to fully understand the interplay of in- and out-group membership, meaning making, identity, and the development of worldviews. The investigation of social group membership and interactions on the influence of heteronormativity and heterosexist worldviews is even sparser in scholarly journals. Investigating how the interplay shapes heteronormativity and heterosexist worldviews can provide invaluable knowledge to develop effective tools for researchers and practitioners who wish to change the influence of the sociocultural factors that foster oppression of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. The following questions can begin to guide the development of a research agenda:

- How does group membership help foster or hinder the development of heteronormativity and heterosexist worldviews?

- How does being a member of a dominant group (or a non-dominant group) influence the development of heteronormativity and heterosexist worldviews?

- How do the interactions among social groups influence the development of heteronormativity and heterosexist worldviews?

Personal Identity Processes that Influence Heteronormative and Heterosexist Worldviews

Research on identity development has provided a wealth of insight on the psychological processes of understanding identity. The development of specific models that attempt to demonstrate the movement of understanding one's self in relation to one's own social group(s) has been very useful in the practices of organizational development, education, and psychology. There is no empirical model, however, of the psychological process of learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews. Developing such a model could prove to be just as useful as the established identity development models and assist with overall deconstruction of oppression. The following questions can begin to guide the development of a research agenda:

- What is the psychological process of learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews?

- What life events (critical incidents) foster or hinder the movement through the psychological processes and what makes these events salient?

- How does one negotiate the saliency and incongruity among personal beliefs, identity, and significant others when dismantling heteronormativity and heterosexist worldviews?

Chapter Three: Methodology

In this chapter, I present a discussion on the qualitative paradigm followed by my conceptual framework, including my personal assumptions, epistemology, and theoretical frame. Following this discussion, a presentation of qualitative methodology that was used in this study is presented, including the selection of participants, incentives to participate, data collection and protection procedures, risks to participants, protection of participants, informed consent process, data analysis procedures, trustworthiness of the study, and methodological limitations.

The Qualitative Paradigm

The primary purpose of this study is to gather and analyze the participants' personal stories of their experiences with learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews. The primary research question of this study is as follows: *How do sociocultural factors foster and hinder the psychological processes of learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews of professionals in U.S. higher education institutions*? The research question of this study is exploratory in nature. Thus, qualitative research methodologies fit nicely. Merriam states:

> "Qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities-that the
> world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal
> interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of
> interpreting rather than measuring. Beliefs rather than facts form the basis
> of perception. Research is exploratory, inductive, and emphasizes processes
> rather than ends. In this paradigm, there are no predetermined hypotheses,

no treatments, and no restrictions on the end product. One does not

manipulate the variables or administer a treatment" (Merriam, 1998, p.17).

This study investigated the current beliefs of the participants and how their beliefs changed

over time. Through a qualitative research design of written and verbal story-telling,

participants discussed how their beliefs were formed as children, life experiences that shaped

their worldview, and significant others who played a role in their beliefs today.

A grounded theory methodology is appropriate for this study because there is little

research and no empirical theory or model found in the literature on the personal process of

developing and overcoming heteronormativity and heterosexist worldviews. Creswell (1998)

states that "The centerpiece of grounded theory research is the development or generation of

a theory closely related to the context of the phenomenon being studied" (p. 56). Strauss and

Corbin continue this definition of grounded theory by stating:

> "One that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it
>
> represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified
>
> through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that
>
> phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in
>
> reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then
>
> prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that
>
> area is allowed to emerge" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 263).

Creswell (1998) cautions the researcher using grounded theory on the following concepts:

- The investigator needs to set aside, as much as possible, theoretical ideas or notions

  so that the analytic, substantive theory can emerge.

- Despite the evolving, inductive nature of this form of qualitative inquiry, the researcher must recognize that this is a systematic approach to research with specific steps in data analysis.

- The researcher faces the difficulty of determining when categories are saturated or when the theory is sufficiently detailed.

- The researcher needs to recognize that the primary outcome of this study is a theory with specific components: a central phenomenon, causal conditions, strategies, conditions and context, and consequences. These are prescribed categories of information in the theory (p. 58).

The beauty of grounded theory is that the theory is created through the participants' voices by the researchers protecting themselves from established theories while following a regimen of coding procedures that allow for the theory to form. Thus, the researchers do not *start* with concepts of an established theory and map those concepts to the themes that emerge from the participants. Instead, a theory emerges; then, established theories are applied. Creswell (2004) continues by stating that "Strauss and Corbin (1990) are clear that one collects and analyzes data before using theory in a grounded theory study" (p. 86). Creswell speaks of his own experience using grounded theory by stating,

> "I have refrained from advancing a theory at the beginning of my grounded theory research, generated the theory through data collection and analysis, posed the theory as a logic diagram, and introduced contending and contrasting theories with the model I generate at the end of my study" (Creswell, 1998, p. 86).

Thus, in qualitative research (and particularly in grounded theory), researchers must not only guard against an ambitious theoretical frame, but also their own biases and assumptions. Creswell (1998) states "…qualitative researchers approach their studies with a certain paradigm or worldview, a basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guide their inquiries" (p. 74). Being aware and knowledgeable of their worldview or epistemology, researchers can situate themselves in their own work but also allow for other viewpoints because of this awareness. Allowing the readers to know how the researcher is situated will give more insight into the findings, more information to judge the work, and raise the trustworthiness of the study because of the transparency of the researcher. Arminio and Hutgren (2002) share their concerns by stating that "Unfortunately for some researchers, students, and reviewers, the epistemological and theoretical underpinnings of a study remain a mystery" (p. 451). The authors continue by advising researchers that "Goodness requires that epistemology and theoretical underpinnings be explained and examined" (2004, p. 451). Creswell (1998) continues the discussion by stating that "the researcher may elect to use ideological perspectives to draw attention to the needs of people and social action" (p. 78). I choose to include my assumptions, personal epistemology, and theoretical framework to provide transparency for the reader and for fairness toward the participants whose voices I am representing in this study.

Conceptual Frameworks

Assumptions

My assumptions assisted me in maintaining my interest in the topic, developing the

research protocol, collecting the data, analyzing the data, and presenting the findings. I

acknowledge the following assumptions:

- Heterosexism is a form of oppression that is grounded in biases, judgment, and

  ignorance.

- Heterosexism has a negative impact on individuals both who use this form of

  oppression and who are the targets of this oppression.

- For those individuals who work through heterosexism, learning or unlearning

  heterosexist ideologies is generally a developmental process in which we are

  socialized as children to believe that heterosexism is the only moral sexual

  orientation; however, as adults we begin to unlearn these beliefs to affirm all sexual

  orientations

- Being a White gay male who grew up poor in the U.S. will influence my decisions in

  every phase of this study.

Epistemology

A constructivist epistemology helped set a road map and make meaning of all stages

of this inquiry. A constructivist epistemology holds "the view that all knowledge, and

therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being

constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed

and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p.83). Specifically, I used

a constructive-developmental lens to guide the process of this study. A constructive-developmental lens considers the interaction between individuals and their cultural context but expands this notion on how a person changes over time (Kegan, 1982; 1994). My epistemology played a significant role in developing my theoretical perspective that guided the methodology for data analysis to my conclusions.

Theoretical Framework

The lens I use to make meaning, construct knowledge, and determine truth is consistent with critical theory generally. More specifically, I draw upon feminist and queer theoretical frameworks. Critical theory framework is "…concerned with questions of power, control, and epistemology as social constructions with benefits to some and not to others" (Muffoletto, 1993, p. 4). Critical theory suggests that reconstruction of societal structures is needed to decrease or eradicate oppression. A critical theory framework can assist me when constructing meaning around the data so that the findings can add to the knowledge in the literature on social oppression. Critical theory researchers design research protocols that dismantle power structure and allow for collaborative construction of knowledge. A qualitative research design that provides a venue so voices can be heard and also gives participants authority to make decisions is reflective of a critical theory perspective.

I also utilize concepts from feminist theory to assist me as I construct my knowledge. For this study, the following definition of feminism is salient:

"Feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression…Defining feminism as a movement to end sexist oppression is crucial for the development of theory

because it is a starting point indicating the direction of exploration and

analysis" (hooks, 2000, p. 240).

Researchers who use feminist principles are concerned with "the empowerment of women

and transformation of patriarchal social institutions through research" (Cook & Fonow, 1990,

p. 72). During this study, I was cognizant of my biases and privileges of being a male,

particularly when (a) listening to female participants and (b) determining the meaning of

their experiences.

I also use concepts from queer theory to construct my theoretical framework. Queer

theory is concerned with the deconstruction of heterosexuality as the normative (Broido &

Manning, 2002, p. 441). Abes and Kasch (2007) expand the importance of this theory by

stating that "…queer theory critically analyzes the meaning of identity, focusing on

intersections of identities and resisting oppressive social constructions of sexual orientation

and gender" (p. 619). Queer theory also assumes that *heteronormativity*, which is a

worldview that heterosexuality is the basis of society, is a form of oppression that is

prevalent in the U.S and other countries. As a researcher using queer theory perspectives, I

am concerned with investigating how heteronormativity has played a part in the

psychological development of a person and what sociocultural factors assisted or impeded

the process of developing a heteronormative worldview.

Qualitative Methodology

In this section, I cover the procedures used in the protocol for the study, including

selection of participants, selection of participants to interview, selection criteria for choosing

interview participants, incentives for participation, data collection and protection procedures,

risks to participants, protection of participants, informed consent process, data analysis procedures, trustworthiness of the study, and methodological limitations.

Locations and Timeline of Study

This study began at Western Michigan University in 2002 under supervision of a faculty member, Mary Z. Anderson, Ph. D., who was also a licensed psychologist. Dr. Mary Z. Anderson supervised the development of the research question, methodology, and application to the human subjects' protection board, University of Western Michigan Human Subjects Institutional Research Board (HSIRB). I collected data in two phases: (1) questionnaires and (2) interviews as approved by HSIRB. The questionnaire provided a breadth of common experiences among the participants, while the interviews provided a deeper understanding of these experiences. After the data were collected, I began the coding procedures and interpretation of the data with the guidance of Dr. Mary Z. Anderson.

In 2003, I moved from Michigan to Minnesota, where I transferred to the University of Minnesota. At Minnesota, I continued the work of interpreting the data to conclude the findings under the supervision of Melissa Anderson, Ph.D., Professor of Higher Education, in the Department of Educational Policy and Administration, where I was admitted as a doctoral student in the Ph.D. track in Higher Education. Dr. Melissa Anderson supervised the application processes that were established by HSIRB at Western Michigan University and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Minnesota. After the Review Boards granted approval for this project, I used the data to complete the study and fulfill the curriculum requirements in the academic program in Minnesota.

Questionnaire Protocol

A written questionnaire (see Appendix C) was developed that consisted of three parts: (1) a check list to determine demographic information of the participants and open-ended questions to determine (2) significant associations and (3) experiences that influenced the construction and deconstruction of heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews. The demographical information asked participants to identify personal characteristics, (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation), preferences (i.e., religious and political affiliations), and attainment (i.e., current income and education level). This information was used to determine if (1) adequate representation of diversity was achieved with the sampling procedure and (2) differences existed within various groups. The information was also used as one criterion for selection of interview participants.

The sections that asked open-ended questions were designed to illuminate themes among the participants that influenced learning and unlearning of biases toward same-sex sexual orientation. The participants were asked to discuss the most significant people and institutions that influenced their beliefs over their lives and experiences that challenged assumptions. Participants were also asked to include approximate age ranges with their stories. This information was collected to determine if people, institutions, and experiences were common over specific periods of life.

Selection of Participants for Questionnaire

I sent a cover letter, questionnaire, and contact card to 500 professionals working in higher education institutions whose membership in professional organizations suggested that they were supportive of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people or interested in social advocacy. I

asked each organization to provide a general random sample from their membership list of specific divisions of each organization. The number of participants from each division who were invited to participate is provided below in parenthesis. The organizations do assess fees for the release of their members' information. I paid these fees.

American Psychological Association (APA) Division Members:

- Lesbian, Gay Issues (25)
- Ethnic Minorities (50)
- Gender Issues (50)

American Counseling Association (ACA) Division Members:

- Association for Lesbian, gay, and bisexual Issues in Counseling (25)
- Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (50)
- Counselors for Social Justice (50)

American College Personnel Association (ACPA) Division Members:

- Standing Committee for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Awareness (50)
- Standing Committee for Multicultural Affairs (100)
- Standing Committee for Women (100)

At the time of the request, ACPA could not generate random samples due to a transitioning period in updating their computers and software. A total membership list of specified committees, however, was generated, which increased the total of the desired sample of 250 members. I selected only 250 members from the membership lists. The members not selected in the invitation were not invited to participate in the study.

I requested that the total sample from APA be 425 members in case there was a need to resample due to a low response rate from APA members. I selected only125 from this 425 for the initial invitation. The additional 300 members were not invited to participate. Increasing the number of members in the initial request would have been more effective and cost efficient if I had to resample.

After lists were received from ACPA and APA, I selected subjects from each organization by a random sample method. The membership list of each organization was sorted in alphabetical order and numbered. Subjects were selected at intervals of five, beginning with number 3, until the desired number was reached. The names in the sample were then removed from the lists and coded. The lists were destroyed after a satisfactory sample from each organization was determined. The code sheet and the lists of remaining names were secured in a locked file cabinet in the supervising faculty office at Western Michigan University.

Interview Protocol

I conducted 17 individual, semi-structured interviews. The questions asked the participants to reflect and comment on explore specific periods of their life that were most salient when learning and unlearning heterosexist and heteronormative biases (see Appendix D). By the use of interviewing techniques, I investigated the responses from the completed questionnaires. I used note-taking and audio recording during the phone interviews which were conducted from my home. Interviews were approximately 45-60 minutes in duration. I purposely selected interview participants who completed the questionnaire and contact card. When selecting participants for the interviews sample, I considered questions (see "Selection

Criteria for Interview Participants") that would assist me in choosing participants who could provide detailed information about their process of learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist ideologies.

Selection Criteria for Choosing Interview Participants

To determine if a participant should be invited to participate in the interview process, I considered the following questions as I read the completed questionnaires:

1. Is there a personal awareness of heterosexist ideologies and an ability to articulate the ideologies?

2. Is there information that would be beneficial to explore in more depth?

3. If patterns arise after analyzing the results of the surveys, do comments closely mirror the patterns of the overall results?

4. Is there an anomaly in experiences that would benefit the study after explanation?

Incentives to Participate

Each invitation to participate included a sticker of a pink triangle, representing the pride in the lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities. Those invited were allowed to keep the sticker whether they participated or not.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic information was completed by each of the 87 respondents to the questionnaire, which is a 17.4 percent total response rate. All participants worked in a higher

education setting and identified as being allies to lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. The sample from the completed questionnaires consisted of 25 percent participants of color (i.e., Black, African American Non-Hispanic; American Indian, Alaskan Native; Chicano, Mexican American, Hispanic' Asian, Pacific Islander; Biracial or Multiracial), 75 percent female, 75 percent heterosexual, and 56 percent age forty or younger. The interview sample consisted of 29 percent participants of color, 53 percent female, 65 percent heterosexual, and 64 percent age forty or younger.

Data Collection and Protection Procedures

After obtaining approval from the Western Michigan University's institutional research board for the protection of human subjects, I began the process of recruiting subjects by mailing the cover letter, questionnaire, and contact card to previously identified groups. An additional mailing was sent to subjects who did not respond to the initial invitation.

The invitation to participate in the questionnaire phase of the study included a cover letter stating the purpose of the study and the process of returning the completed questionnaire. The cover letter stated that "completion and return of the survey indicates informed consent to participate in the study." A self-addressed and stamped envelope was provided to return the completed questionnaire. I paid all fees associated with the invitation.

A contact card for the respondents to complete if they were interested in participating in the interview process was also included in the mailing. Only participants who wished to participate in the interview process completed the contact card. The contact card was self-addressed and stamped.

Following the initial data collection, I chose 17 respondents who completed the survey and agreed to participate in the interview process by returning a contact card. When selecting participants for the interview sample, I considered the questions (see "Selection Criteria for Interview Participants") that assisted in choosing participants who could provide detailed information about their process of learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist ideologies. I sent a cover letter and a consent form to each participant in the interview sample. The consent form for the interview stated that the participant's signature indicates that she or he had read the purpose and requirements of the study and that she or he agreed to participate in the interview process.

I called each participant who was mailed a cover letter and consent form to ask about continued interest in the interview process. During each phone conversation, I answered any questions they had about the study and interview protocol. If participants wished to participate in an interview, I arranged a day and time for the interview. Participants signed and returned a consent form to me in a self-addressed, stamped envelope included in a mailing. No interviews occurred without the signed consent form.

The interviews assisted in clarifying information that participants had written and to allow me to gain more insight about my research question. The individual interviews were voluntary. Although my preference would have been to conduct these interviews face-to-face, I conducted all interviews by phone because of time and financial constraints. All interviews were audio-taped, and participants were reminded of this before beginning the interview. Both the cover letter and consent form stated that the interviews were to be audio-taped and participants who did not feel comfortable with being audio-taped could not participate in the interview.

To protect the data, all records were kept under lock and key. Each participant received a number, which was placed on all documents. A code sheet that matched the names to the numbers was stored separately from the research materials. The contact cards were stored separately from the questionnaire and interview results. After the audio-tapes had been transcribed, the tapes and transcription document were stored separately under a lock and key. All original research materials are stored in a locked file cabinet in the supervising faculty office at Western Michigan University. The typed transcripts were de-identified where any information about specific names, places, universities, colleges, etc. that participants may have reported were replaced with more general terms (e.g. "city in the Midwest" instead of "Chicago, IL") so that no identifying data could be traced to the participants. After transferring to the University of Minnesota, a request was submitted to and approved by the Institutional Review Board to allow my advisor, Dr. Melissa Anderson, access to the de-identified transcripts so that the project could be adequately supervised.

Risks to Participants

Although the risks were very low, there were some risks that the participants could have experienced by completing the questionnaire or interview. For example, if the participant was gay and disclosed this or other sensitive information in writing or during the interview, this disclosure could have put the participant at jeopardy if an unauthorized person read the material. Reflecting on past experiences, viewpoints, and opinions could have caused some discomfort, which is another potential risk of participating in this study. Although the risks for participants were minimal, measures were taken to protect the subjects (see "Protection of Subjects").

Protection of Participants

The cover letter stated that participation in this study was voluntary and participants could withdraw at any time. The primary risk of the participants was that others could possibly find out the responses to the questions. I assured participants of confidentiality in results of the questionnaire and interview. Although I needed their names so I could conduct follow-up conversations and mailings, I outlined in the initial cover letter how I would protect their confidentiality. I used pseudonyms and other methods to hide the participants' identity and took measures to protect confidentiality of data (see "Confidentiality of Data").

If the participants' experienced discomfort and needed support while completing the questionnaire, they were encouraged in the cover letter to contact the supervising faculty or me. Our phone numbers were included in the cover letter. We would have assisted participants in finding a helping professional in their area if needed. Participants were expected to have worked through some of the reasons that would have caused them discomfort because participants had chosen to be members of professional organizations that work to combat heterosexism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression. I did not anticipate then that participants would need assistance for their discomfort during the completion of the survey or interview. No participates asked for support during the questionnaire or interview phases of the study.

Informed Consent Process

For the consent protocol for the questionnaire phase, I sent a detailed cover letter to all participants that explained the research process and their rights during this process. The

cover letter stated that completion and return of the questionnaire indicated informed consent to participate in the study.

For the consent protocol of the interview, I sent a detailed cover letter and a consent form to the subjects in the interview sample. The consent form for the interview stated the requirements to participate in the study. In the cover letter, participants were instructed to sign the consent form. Participants who completed and returned the consent form were called and asked about their continued interest in the interview process. I used the "Consent Document Development Checklist" from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University when developing all consent documents.

Data Analysis Procedures

After transcribing the results of the narrative questionnaires and interviews, the first procedure I used in the data analysis was completing *open coding* where "…conceptual labels are placed on discrete happenings, events, and other instances of phenomena" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). The authors continue by stating, "To uncover, name, and develop concepts, we must open up the text and expose the thoughts, ideas, and meanings contained therein. Without this first, analytic step the rest of the analysis and communication that follows could not occur" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 102). I developed two code libraries, one for the questionnaires and the other for the interviews. I conducted a line-by-line analysis of first the transcripts from the returned narrative questionnaires followed by the transcripts of the interviews by using a highlighter to show common concepts, which later became categories. For example, "parents" was a common theme in both the questionnaire and

interview data. Each time the participants wrote or said something about parents, I referenced this statement under that category within the respective code libraries.

The next procedure that I used was *axial coding*, which is "…the process of reassembling the data that was fractured during open coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 124). In this phase, categories are related to their subcategories to begin explaining the phenomena. As more and more data was collected, additional categories were added and the amount of text referenced under each category became large, making it easier to see connections among the categories and subcategories. For example, the text under the "parents" category also included other subcategories (e.g., "mom," "dad," "conservative," "liberal," etc.) as more data became available. Many of the subcategories were removed and became their own category, equal to "parents." Broader super-categories then formed that encompassed categories. For example, categories of "parents," "friends," and "school" were placed under the super-category of "significant associations." The categories in the two separate libraries were very similar because the interview participants were selected from the questionnaire transcripts.

After axial coding, I utilized *selective coding* by "…selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). What I identified as *super-categories*, Strauss and Corbin called *core categories*. I first identified super-categories from the questionnaire transcripts and then from the interview transcripts and coded them to their respective libraries. Finally, I combined the super-categories of both libraries to form one super-category library. Combining the two libraries,

while maintaining the unique themes from the separate libraries, gave me a richer picture of the participants who completed both the questionnaire and interview processes.

Through the combined super-categories, I began developing the schema by drawing process diagrams. Strauss and Corbin (1998) state the following about drawing diagrams during the selective coding phase of the analysis, "Diagramming is helpful because it enables the analyst to gain distance from the data, forcing him or her to work with concepts rather than the details of the data" (p. 153). After several rounds of drafting a diagram, considering my conceptual framework, revisiting the data, reviewing scholarly literature, and consulting with my advisors at Western Michigan University and the University of Minnesota, a theoretical model began to form to answer my research question: *How do sociocultural factors foster and hinder the psychological processes of learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews of professionals in U.S. higher education institutions?*

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure credibility, after the interview phase, I asked two other researchers (external auditors) to review the models that were developed for clarity. To ensure trustworthiness of the study, I also worked closely with my advisors who supervised the project at Western Michigan University and the University of Minnesota. I also immersed myself in the data for many months to ensure that I had exhausted the analysis (prolonged engagement). Finally, triangulation procedures were used by examining my own experiences, relevant research, and the participant responses when analyzing the data and building the theory and model.

The questionnaire was given to two individuals to gain feedback about the questionnaire and protocol before submitting to the Western Michigan University's human subjects review board and implementing the questionnaire phase. Changes were made based on the comments of the participants in the pilot study. The same two participants completed an interview process to gain insight on the interview questions and protocol before submitting to the University's human subjects review board and implementing the interview phase. No changes were made based on the comments of the participants.

Methodological Limitations

Limitations to grounded theory arrive as the study progresses. One limitation, however, is that grounded theory research derives new theory and does not look at how the theory is implemented. This study might produce a psychological developmental process of learning and unlearning heterosexism. Implications of this process, however, will not be investigated. Further research will be needed to determine how this study can benefit future research.

Chapter Four: Findings

In Chapter Four, I present an overview of two models, (1) Psychosocial Interaction Model of Heterosexism (PI) and (2) Personal Development Model of Heterosexism (PD) that emerged from themes in the participants' stories of learning and unlearning heteronormativity and heterosexism. I then discuss the four praxes of the PI through the participants' statements followed by the six stages of the PD.

Overview of the Psychosocial Interaction Model of Heterosexism and Personal Development Model of Heterosexism

After analyzing the data from the qualitative questionnaires and interviews, I noticed that themes formed during the rigorous coding procedures described previously. The themes established the development of two models, *Psychosocial Interaction Model of Heterosexism (PI)* and *Personal Development Model of Heterosexism (PD)*, which attempt to demonstrate processes involved in the development of and transition from heteronormative and heterosexist ideologies. The PI illustrates interaction processes among significant associations (i.e., individuals, social groups, and institutions), life experiences, and personal meaning making that were influential when developing and changing core beliefs about same-sex sexual orientation. The PD outlines psychological stages of personal development when learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews from early childhood to adulthood. The PI is more closely aligned with social identity development, while the PD is more closely aligned with personal identity development.

Psychosocial Interaction Model of Heterosexism

As I read and listened to participants' stories, themes among the experiences began to unfold. Through these themes, a model emerged to represent common psychosocial experiences that shaped the construction of understanding differences in sexual orientation. As Figure 1 demonstrates, four praxes developed from the participants' responses: (A) Conforms to Dominant Beliefs, (B) Experiences Salient Events, (C) Examines Alternatives to Preconceived Beliefs, and (D) Reconciles Discord. In addition, the following four sub-praxes formed under the Examines Alternatives to Preconceived Beliefs praxis: (C.1) Emerging Alternative Beliefs, (C.2) Degree of Dissonance, (C.3) Degree of Support, and (C.4) Degree of Safety. Many common life events challenged the initial understanding and perceptions of the participants, particularly those who constructed a bias against persons who were or believed themselves to be lesbian, gay, and bisexual. These life events encouraged discourse where participants experienced meaning making and reflection of their relationships with significant people and social groups in their lives that ultimately lead to decisions of reconstructing or maintaining prior messages and beliefs.

Praxis A: Conforms to Dominant Beliefs

The lack of knowledge and visibility of diversity in sexual orientation, derogatory remarks about lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons, and the prevalence of cultural symbols of heterosexuality helped shape a heteronormative worldview for the participants. All participants spoke of being surprised to learn about same-sex sexual orientation for the first time in elementary or high school. Each had heard words like "fag" or "queer" used to

ridicule and bully, but stated that they did not initially know what the words meant. None of the participants, however, could identify the first time they heard about opposite-sex relationships. As one participant said, "Most of us who identify as heterosexuals have never thought about our sexuality and have been socialized in contempt of compulsory heterosexuality." Participants who identified as heterosexual stated that exploring their own sexual identity was not considered by them or reinforced by others because heterosexuality was so prevalent in their lives. Groups that hold the social power often do not need to consider their own identities or the identities of others, which is a privilege within itself. "Thus, the "hidden" privileging of heterosexuality reinforces the absence or foreignness of homosexuality" (Evans, 1999, p. 8).

Individuals, social groups, and institutions significant in the lives of the participants (significant associations), as well as cultural canon (messages and actions), strongly influenced the development and maintenance of biases against lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. As Figure 2 demonstrates, common sociocultural associations that fostered the development of the heteronormative environment and heterosexist ideologies of the participants included athletics, media, music, parents, peers, religion, and schools. These associations are represented as a circle to show the cyclical nature of influence that significant associations had on individual participants. Common messages and actions by the associations that fostered heteronormativity and heterosexism noted by the participants included being silent and silencing, establishing traditional gender roles, equating same-sex sexual behavior as immoral or disgusting, talking only about heterosexual sex, teasing and bullying, saying and rewarding non-affirming messages about non-dominant groups, and saying and rewarding non-affirming messages about lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons.

FIGURE 1: PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERACTION MODEL OF HETEROSEXISM

A. Conforms to Dominant Beliefs	B. Experiences Salient Events	C. Meaning Making and Discourse: Examines Alternatives to Preconceived Beliefs (Risk-taking, Knowledge-Building, and Reflection)				D. Reconciles Discord

		C.1. Emerging Alternative Beliefs	C.2. Degree of Dissonance	C.3. Degree of Support	C.4. Degree of Safety	
Heteronormative or heterosexist worldviews are constructed and maintained through the interplay among significant associations.	Salient Events occur; individuals become aware of differences or their internal sense of goodness is challenged; individuals examine the degree of importance of each event.	Individuals learn diverse opinions and beliefs about same-sex sexual orientation. Alternatives to prior messages and beliefs are formed.	Individuals examine roles with and within associations and personal target and dominant identities and begin questioning self and others.	Individuals examine the level of support for each emerging alternative.	Individuals examine the level of safety of each emerging alternative belief to determine possible ramifications.	Individuals make resolution, decision, or action through the exploration B, C, and D.

A. Conforms to Dominant Beliefs   B. Experiences Salient Events   C. Meaning Making and Discourse: Examines Alternatives to Preconceived Beliefs (Risk-taking, Knowledge-Building, and Reflection)   D. Reconciles Discord

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These messages and actions from the associations were powerful influences in developing

the participants' beliefs and biases about same-sex sexual orientation.

FIGURE 2: CONFORMS TO A DOMINANT BELIEF

Although the above sociocultural associations were common among participants,

these same associations also hindered the non-affirming ideologies. The degree of influence

that the participants awarded to or experienced with the associations played a significant role

with shaping the worldview of the participants. The degree of influence between individual

participants to associations was dependent on many factors, particularly age of the

participant, geographical proximity to the association, and type of relationship with the

association. Generally, associations were most significant when participants were children,

lived with parents and were in school, and had little social power or influence. The more

significant the association was to a participant, the more influential. For example, one

participant stated,

"Interestingly, my dad was a Catholic priest when he met my mother, and so, his view of Catholicism to my brother and me kind of talked about why he disagreed with some tenets of the church and the homosexuality issue was one of them".

During childhood, this participant received many affirming and non-affirming messages about same-sex sexual orientation. Her parents, particularly her father, were very significant in her life and helped shape an affirming worldview of differences, including same-sex-sexual orientation, even though the church (another significant association) was sending a different message. Sociocultural associations were often at odds with one another amongst the participants. For example, one participant stated, "my parents looked down on that [same-sex sexual orientation], but my education, values and reading (I love to read) made me realize that the gay community needs our support." As participants got older, new associations became significant while previous associations became less significant, as this participant demonstrates:

"Nothing has changed my beliefs since my 30's. For the most part my community has been higher education since I entered in 1975 to attain my B.A. I would say that the higher education community, which I am still a part of, was supportive in helping me develop and continue developing my values and beliefs".

Praxis B: Experiences Salient Events

Participants spoke of life events that began the process of challenging their preconceived, non-affirming beliefs regarding same-sex sexual orientation. Landreman, Rasmussen, King, and Jiang (2007) called such events "Critical Incidents." The authors define critical incidents as "the significant events, interactions, and experiences that serve as catalysts for self-reflection and subsequent meaning making, as well as for the decision by individuals to seek continued or additional engagement in diverse experience or environments" (p. 283). Events common to the participants included meeting someone who was lesbian, gay, or bisexual, meeting an ally, reading about same-sex sexual orientation, attending diversity or multicultural workshops, taking a class, hearing or witnessing acts of hate or bias, experiencing personal act of hate or bias, understanding one's own differences or identity, onset of HIV or AIDS, and being teased or bullied. All participants in this study could identify an event that began a personal journey for them to explore the messages and internal beliefs about same-sex sexual orientation.

Participants often mentioned the significance of determining how important the event, and in turn, the change in belief, would be for them and significant others. The event seemed to be salient if the participant could associate with at least one of the following criteria:

1. The opinions or behaviors of significant associations about the event were opposing to the participants' sense of goodness;

2. Participants' own identity or beliefs were challenged by the event;

3. Significant associations perceived or would perceive the event as significant; or

4. Participants or significant associations were harmed by the event.

If the participant associated with two or more of the criteria, the event seemed to be most salient. The degree of influence a significant association had on the participant also played a role when determining saliency of an event. Thus, the more the participants could identify with the event, the more significant the event became, as illustrated by this participant's reflection of a salient event: "…when my boyfriend (5 years – college and first year of grad school) came out. Suddenly, the issue was personal, and I had to deal with it in a new and extremely difficult way."

The participants' sense of internal goodness or a sense of what was right and wrong played a significant role in determining saliency of an event. For example, participants spoke of friends and family members who were teased because they were perceived as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. When asked how the teasing made them feel, many responded similarly to the following participant responses: "just that it you know wasn't right," "but in my heart, you know I'm like, you don't treat people negatively, and that teasing was wrong and the beliefs that people who teased others were wrong beliefs." An event (e.g., a friend being teased) caused a collision between significant associations' perceived or real beliefs and behaviors (e.g., teasing a friend) and the sense of goodness of the participants. Although the participants may have fostered heteronormative or heterosexist ideologies, harming another person (e.g., teasing) went against their internal sense of goodness. The collision or internal discourse ultimately threatened the participants' established heteronormative worldview after much discourse.

The negotiation among the event, the perceived beliefs of significant associations, and the salient identities of each participant caused much internal and external discourse, particularly for those whose parents and religious leaders were

non-affirming to lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. For example, a male participant stated:

> "Well, it was at 29 when I had my first experience with another man, which was simply a kiss, actually…When I first realized that the thing that I had not understood for 29 years of my life, was what people call gay, that was extremely difficult for me, so much so to the point where I had contemplated suicide. In addition to that, I mean I was really – I guess because so many of messages came from the church, of people who were very – my mother for example is a very religiously devout woman. I knew how she felt and people like her in the church and because I had been raised in the church for the most part, I took those negative perceptions as real. That, you know, this is wrong, I'm going to hell, I would call tele-evangelists and ask them to pray for me and stuff like that. I mean it was a real traumatic time, for about the first year".

For the male participant, the most significant associations (his mother, religion, and the people in his church) at a critical time in his personal development viewed same-sex sexual orientation as an abomination. When a salient event occurred (a kiss from a male), he relied on the messages and actions from the associations to inform his worldview. The messages from the significant associations and the participant's internalization of these messages collided with his developing gay identity. This inner turmoil, however, caused self-reflection that ultimately challenged the belief systems he internalized from the associations. The participant represents his experiences best:

"…from further exploring that and going on from that, and in all the trauma I

went through from it, it just made me seriously consider what are my beliefs.

Why do I have these beliefs? Where do these beliefs come from? So I mean I

started examining very closely, as I said much of it was tied, much of the

negative I felt about myself was the result of what I believed biblically or

religiously".

Generally, if the participants thought that an event would be salient to significant

associations, the event then became salient to the participants. For example, one participant

shared a story of "…four navy men or marine men who were beaten to death outside of Fort

Bragg, North Carolina...because they walked by a gay bar, I don't even know if they were in

the gay bar, but they walked by it, and they were in uniform." This event was very salient to

her because she knew it was salient to her father who was a military officer. At the same

time, the event also challenged her sense of goodness. The participant states, "I couldn't

understand why it [same-sex sexual orientation] was such a bad thing and why people were

being basically persecuted and killed, murdered, because they just chose a different

lifestyle." The event (i.e., four-men being killed) was not directly relevant to the participant.

She did not know the men or anyone affiliated with them. The event, however, became

salient to her because of her close connection with the military and her sense of goodness.

Finally, participants found an event salient if the event could have or did harm a

significant association. For example, a participant stated,

"He [brother] knew now that I did have friends who were lesbian, gay, and

bisexual, and he knew that it [talking negatively about gay or bisexual people]

was offending me as well as offending them, and so I think that put a name

with it and it changed it for him, but at first, he just blew it off, like, 'well,

what's the big deal, it's not like you're gay.'".

In this incident, both the participant and her brother found events that were salient. The participant found the event (talking negatively about gay and bisexual people) salient because she felt that her brother's behavior was unfair and harmful to her friends (significant associations). The brother learned that he was hurting his sister (significant association) through his actions and stopped talking negatively about gay and bisexual people in front of her. According to the participant, the brother also became more affirming to lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons because she confronted him (event).

Although four broad themes that seemed to make an event salient for the participants are presented (i.e., the opinions or behaviors of significant associations about the event were opposing to the participants' sense of goodness, participants' own identity or beliefs were challenged by the event, significant associations perceived or would perceive the event as significant, or participants or significant associations were harmed by the event), there are many other factors and nuances that determine if an event is salient. Determining these factors and nuances was not part of the scope of this research project.

Praxis C: Meaning Making and Discourse: Examines Alternatives to Preconceived Beliefs

After an event challenged their worldview, participants spoke of increased external and internal conflict. Many beliefs and ideologies were uprooted, including beliefs regarding significant associations, religion, and their own identity and sense of goodness. Participants struggled with the alternative messages and beliefs that were imposed on them from the salient event, degree of dissonance among self and perceived congruency of significant

associations, degree of support if committed to new emerging belief(s), and degree of safety if committed to new emerging belief(s). The degree of saliency, dissonance, support, and safety were common themes when participants reflected upon the discourse.

Sub-Praxis C.1: Emerging Alternative Beliefs

Balancing confounded messages, preconceived and emerging beliefs, and one's own sense of goodness with the perceived beliefs of significant associations created confusion about same-sex sexual orientation. For example, one participant stated, "I think I became aware of homosexuality at age 16. I received vague, confusing messages that gays and lesbians were different in a negative way and these messages came primarily from my family and peers." This type of statement was common among the participants. Many participants stated that religion, parent, school, and other significant associations were telling them to treat people with respect while these same associations were condemning lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. Another participant stated the following:

> "I remember hearing words, you know, bad words, being hurled at people,
> early in elementary school and junior high school. You know fag and other
> kinds of, calling someone gay was a bad thing. But I don't know that I knew
> exactly what that meant. I think when I really learned and knew what same-
> sex sexual orientation was I was 10 and my mother came out as a lesbian".

This participant experienced much silence around same-sex sexual orientation, which also created confusion once she learned that her mother was a lesbian. As another participant stated, "But yet in my home and at church I was told it [same-sex sexual orientation] was

wrong and that's not something that a good Christian girl accepts. So I was really sent a lot of conflicting messages."

To help clarify the mixed messages, understand various viewpoints and beliefs, and ultimately develop their own beliefs, participants often learned (actively and passively) more about alternative beliefs, their own identity, and sexual orientation. Most participants, however, did not seek out information unless the degree of saliency and dissonance (perceived or real) between the self and significant associations were high. The participants who identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, or who had at least one close relative or friend who was lesbian, gay, or bisexual, reported that they took active steps to learn more about same-sex sexual orientation. For example, a male participant who identified as gay stated:

"I then started reading the scriptures myself, that people always use to

condemn homosexuality. I started reading them myself; in fact I can

remember a conversation. As I said previously, my mom's a religious devout

person and I remember when I first told her that I was gay, and we had a

conversation and I remember her saying all these scriptures that I had already

read and thought about myself and telling her, 'Well Momma, the Bible

doesn't say anything about being homosexual. It says something about

homosexual acts.'".

This participant received confusing messages from significant associations about the Bible and same-sex sexual orientation. He read the source material to help make meaning of the passages, reducing the confusion of messages. He also knew that when he came out to his mother, she would refer to the Bible, so he took steps to respond to the dissonance between him and his mother. Struggling with his own sexual identity and anticipating the conversation

about the passages in the Bible with his mother were very salient events for him. Thus, he was eager and active to learn more, which ultimately helped him understand his own identity and reduce the dissonance of beliefs between him and his mother.

Participants who identified as heterosexual and did not have a close relative who was lesbian, gay, or bisexual did not mention actively seeking out information unless it was for professional or academic reasons. The following response from a participant was typical of the responses from participants who did not find an event highly salient:

"I got further interested in the issue as more students identified themselves as homosexual. I have been reading some articles and books on homosexuality and watching a lot of debates on the issue".

Each participant became more actively involved in learning how to support lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons as they became more educated. As heterosexual participant stated, "Through study, reading, teaching and life experience, I have become aware of dynamics of centralized oppression (e.g. heterosexism) and continually work to change my own oppressive believes and behaviors." Thus, taking a class or attending a seminar in the workplace on same-sex sexual orientation often became an event that challenged participants' beliefs, reduced the confusion of messages, and motivated participants to learn more.

Sub-Praxis C.2: Degree of Dissonance

The degree of congruency between the emerging beliefs of the participants and the beliefs of the significant associations was very prominent for most participants as they reconsidered their beliefs about same-sex sexual orientation. Participants often spoke of

being concerned that their beliefs were different from many of their significant associations as they began overcoming heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews. Considering their position, status, and role within each significant association, participants often measured their perceived beliefs of significant associations against the new emerging belief(s) about sexual orientation. Many participants also considered their own personal identities as they considered the degree of dissonance among their significant associations. The participants experienced confusion because of conflicting messages and beliefs. To help reduce this confusion, participants often took steps to learn more about the new belief(s), their own identity, and sexual orientation. This knowledge was also used to determine the degree of dissonance as participants asked others questions about their new emerging belief(s) or same-sex sexual orientation.

Understanding one's own position, status, or role with significant associations was a considerable influence on committing to an affirming belief about same-sex sexual orientation. Many participants spoke of their roles (e.g., sister, friend, male, female, athlete, etc.) and status (e.g., being the only one, jock, a child, etc.) with and within their significant associations as they were speaking about learning and unlearning biased beliefs. One participant stated, "My sister, who came out at 24 after my parents died, expected only acceptance from me." This participant perceived her role to be a sister but also a "parent" who needed to provide support. This expectation helped the participant to restructure some of the internalized, non-affirming messages to more affirming beliefs. Another participant spoke of a gay co-worker and her attempt to understand his situation:

"But, he can't be as expressive as he wants to be, I mean especially if you

want to work in this environment, in this community. And my sister's in the

same position. You know, you just have to keep your mouth shut. And you

know, not advertise it".

The participant felt somewhat powerless to help because her position with the significant

associations (work and community) would have little influence given that the degree of

dissonance of beliefs is so wide and different.

Understanding gender roles was also prominent for participants as they began to form

affirming beliefs about same-sex sexual orientation. For example, one participant discussed

her challenges as she was committing to an affirmative belief:

"Part of it [struggle with the influence of the church] was the explicit

expectation of gender roles and the dynamic between the sexes [i.e. woman as

help to man; man head of the household.]. Heterosexuality was so ingrained in

how the Bible was read, taught, and life's challenges (e.g. avoiding sexual

temptation was always discussed as a youth and always in regard to the

opposite sex.)".

The degree of dissonance between the emerging belief of the participant and the current

belief of the significant association (i.e., church) was very high. As the participant struggled

with the new emerging beliefs, she considered her role and identity as a girl or woman, which

was largely defined by her church. The discourse of the new emerging belief, internalized

messages about the role of girls or women, and the church's position on sexual orientation

ultimately leads to reconsidering the significance of the church and the degree of dissonance

between her and the church regarding same-sex sexual orientation.

Similar to gender, participants often spoke of considering their own personal

identities as they worked to understand same-sex sexual orientation. As one participant, who

identified as a Black female, stated, "Growing up, sexuality wasn't discussed at all, at least not directly. It was assumed in my family, elementary school (Catholic and private) and among my friends that girls liked boys and vice versa." She continued by stating, "The Black community, in my opinion, does not openly discuss homosexuality, especially the males." As she got older and began asking others about same-sex sexual orientation, she received non-affirming messages from many significant associations, including her parents. Understanding issues of race, however, assisted her with being more tolerant of differences. She stated,

> "I think a major part of my views are influenced because of my opinions about race. I don't want people to treat me different because I am a Black woman; therefore, I try not to treat others differently because of race, gender, or sexuality".

Another participant, who identified as a white, deaf female, stated the following:

> "The White culture is so broad that I cannot tell you anything useful about the White culture. However, being a member of the deaf or hard of hearing community-I feel that because we struggle with issues of isolation from the whole society, we are better able to relate with the gay community".

This participant had to have some understanding of what it meant to be deaf in a hearing culture to better understand issues of same-sex sexual orientation. The participant goes on to state that "I believe that my advocacy of gay issues have become stronger because of my interactions with students and members of the deaf community."

Another participant who identified as a Native American female stated, "Some individuals in my family are very heterosexist, but they are also experiencing issues of discomfort with their own biracial identity or acculturation." This participant made a

connection among other identity and oppression issues to heterosexism. She then goes on to state that "Sometimes it helps to think when one is oppressed in other ways to see the perception and be understanding of others." This participant felt that she had worked through many issues of her own identity which helped her understand the oppression of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. This understanding also helped her be more accepting.

Sub-Praxis C.3: Degree of Support

Determining the degree of support while participants reconsidered their beliefs about same-sex sexual orientation was another prominent theme in the stories of the participants. Some participants spoke of taking little action, while others sought out help in many different ways. The following themes from the stories aided in determining the degree of support required as participants made meaning and reflected on prior messages and beliefs:

1. the role or status of the participant and degree of influence of significant associations,

2. the degree of saliency of the event that challenged prior biased beliefs,

3. the perceived support from the immediate environment.

As stated earlier, age of the participant, geographical proximity to the association, and type of relationship with the association helped determine the degree of influence that the significant association had on the participant. Authority figures during the participants' childhoods, of course, played an influential role in shaping worldviews. The more significant the association was to a participant, the more influential. The more dependent on the support of a significant association, for example, the more influential the association was to the participant. Participants often mentioned that they learned early not to question authority, so

seeking support from an authority figure that had strong biases against same-sex sexual orientation proved to be problematic for participants who wanted to make meaning of the messages they had received. As one participant stated:

> "In my early 20's I first began to understand homosexuality as an orientation, not a deviation. Prior to this time I saw it as an abnormality. As a Catholic student who attended only Catholic schools up to college, I was taught that it was an abnormality and morally wrong—i.e. sinful".

This participant's church and school (significant associations) were very influential in shaping her beliefs. The messages she received from the associations were not affirming to same-sex sexual orientation. Given the high degree of influence and belief(s) about same-sex sexual orientation of the significant associations, mixed with the subordinate status of the participant as a child, she learned not to question the messages she received. Once she was older and moved away from the church, she was able to question these messages.

Participants also spoke similarly of significant associations with a high degree of influence and who were supportive of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. These associations helped shape a more affirmative worldview for the participants. One participant stated, "I was at a women's college, we were all teachers, we were all really about just people's rights and human rights." While another participant shares a similar sense of togetherness, "we [students] made a lot of alliances, so when we did a takeover of the college administration, you know, there was everyone there, sort of collective allies." As individuals, the participants did not feel a high degree of influence, but collectively with their significant associations, the participants felt very supportive in reconstructing their prior beliefs to more affirming ones.

The saliency of the event that began an internal and external discourse of prior messages also influenced the motivation of the participants to determine the degree of support. The more salient the event, the more likely the participants were to ask for and find assistance. One participant shared a story about an event during his first year as an undergraduate student:

"I mean, you know I liked him (gay roommate) as a good friend and I defended him to other people and you know, he was expelled from college for his gay lifestyle and I started a petition saying that was wrong. So, yea, so pretty much as soon as I knew about it, I was affirming, yes".

Prior to this event, the participant described himself as ambivalent to gay issues because of the messages he had received throughout his life. The salient event helped the participant take action to determine the level support his campus would provide him and help his roommate.

Sub-Praxis C.4: Degree of Safety

As participants experienced discourse through meaning making and reflection, they consistently considered the degree of safety if prior beliefs changed. The higher the degree of influence of a significant association, the more consideration the risk involved was given. For example, the participant who organized the petition after his roommate was expelled stated:

"But, when I started my petition in support of my roommate, somebody, like the Dean of Students or something, came to me, in this really kind of threatening way and said, 'you know, I think you should withdraw this

petition. You don't know what you're dealing with, and that you could get in

big trouble for this.' ...so I withdrew my petition".

Although the event was highly salient--enough to determine support for his beliefs--the status

of the participant (student) and the high degree of dissonance between his newly forming

belief and significant associations (e.g., college administration) decreased the degree of

safety to the level where the participant withdrew his petition.

Another participant, who identified as lesbian, also expressed similar fears when

grappling with the discourse:

"I remember thinking, well, if I was a lesbian, I would lose everything. I

would lose my friends, lose my family, and lose my faith. That kind of stuff.

So good thing I'm not. I was not at the point self-identifying but knew that

there would be consequences based on what things people said".

This participant felt the degree of safety did not outweigh the support given the high degree

of dissonance among her own beliefs and emerging identity and the beliefs of other

significant associations.

Praxis D: Reconciles Discord

An unyielding sense of goodness gave reason for the participants to continue through

the discourse as they taught and learned, lead and followed, challenged and were challenged.

Participants identified several salient events that fostered and hindered restructuring of

heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews. Continued exposure to affirming salient events

played a significant role in increasing the support over the risk of changing one's beliefs, and

in turn, dismantling non-affirming biases toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. The

following affirming salient events were most common in the participants' stories in no particular order:

- meeting and becoming familiar with allies,

- meeting and becoming familiar with lesbian, gay, or bisexual persons,

- exploring own personal identities,

- hearing affirming messages about same-sex sexual orientation and non-dominant groups, especially from parents, religious leaders, and teachers, and

- learning about same-sex sexual orientation and non-dominant groups through workshops and courses.

Continued exposure to non-affirming salient events played a significant role in increasing the risk over support of changing one's beliefs and maintaining heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews. The following non-affirming salient events were most common in participants' stories:

- experiencing silence around the topics of same-sex sexual orientation (specifically) and sex (generally),

- existing in environments that create and foster traditional gender roles,

- hearing non-affirming messages about same-sex sexual orientation and non-dominant groups, especially from parents, religious leaders, and teachers, and

- receiving rewards and support for non-affirming behavior toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons.

Personal Developmental Model of Heterosexism

As the Psychosocial Interaction Model of Heterosexism (PI) illustrates the influences among significant associations, life experiences, and meaning making, the Personal Development Model of Heterosexism (PD) outlines psychological stages of transitioning in and out of heteronormative and heterosexist ideologies. Themes from the participants' stories could be generally categorized into the following developmental experiences: early childhood, childhood, adolescence, undergraduate college experience, graduate college experience, and professional experience. As in any stage model, however, there were exceptions. The PD outlines general patterns formed from the participants' stories and does not attempt to represent individual differences when learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist ideologies. The following psychological stages were identified through the participants' stories:

Stage One: *No Awareness of Same-Sex Sexual Orientation or Behavior*

Stage Two: *Awareness of Same-Sex Sexual Orientation and Behavior*

Stage Three: *Conforms to a Heterosexist and Heteronormative Worldview*

Stage Four: *Personal Revelation and Passive Acceptance*

Stage Five: *Active Disassociation of Heterosexist Ideologies and Heteronormative Worldview*

Stage Six: *Reconciliation*

Stage One: No Awareness of Same-Sex Sexual Orientation or Behavior

In this stage, persons live in a compulsory heterosexual environment and are unaware of diversity in sexual orientation. They have no knowledge of lesbian, gay, and bisexual

people. Measures are taken by significant associations to ground and maintain others in heteronormativity. By establishing gender roles, forming expectations about relationships and marriage, and being silent about same-sex sexual orientation, parents, family, and media in particular are very significant in this stage of heterosexualizing the surrounding environment and developing a heteronormative worldview. Examples of common statements from the participants that reflect this stage follow: "I was pretty sheltered," "Gosh, it [realizing same-sex sexual orientation] would have to have been very late in my life," and "A naïve teen in the late 60's and early 70's, I was ignorant of homosexuality,"

Stage Two: Awareness of Same-Sex Sexual Orientation and Behavior

In this stage, persons become aware of same-sex sexual orientation and behavior and begin questioning these newly found differences. As they begin to ask questions and express confusion, significant associations often give messages to dehumanize lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. As in stage one, parents, family, and media are significant. Peers, however, also play a significant role in developing heteronormative and heterosexist ideologies. Through teasing, bullying, ridicule, misinformation, and silence, messages are sent that same-sex sexual orientation and behaviors should not be affirmed. Examples of common statements from the participants that reflect this stage are: "No one ever talked to me about homosexuality," "not acceptable behavior," and "[Gay, lesbian and bisexual people] are immoral/deviant."

Stage Three: Conforms to a Heterosexist/Heteronormative Worldview

At this stage, persons are grounded and socialized to heterosexist ideologies, experience pressure to conform to heterosexism, and learn not to challenge heterosexism. Parents, family, media, and peers remain significant influences on establishing and maintaining worldviews. Social institutions, particularly religious institutions and schools, also become influential. Generally, heterosexist ideologies are not seen or challenged; persons continue a heteronormative worldview. Many participants spoke of incidents where non-affirming behavior toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons were supported by family and peers. Similarly, participants spoke of persons who were supportive toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual people and who were often ridiculed, bullied, and called 'gay' and 'fag.'

Peer pressure for conformity is a significant driving force in this stage. Stepping outside of established gender roles is often discouraged (e.g., male person called 'fag' or 'sissy' if he does not perform as well as other males), which also assist with establishing and maintaining a heteronormative and heterosexist worldview. Affirmation toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual people often leads to silencing. Persons often feel a sense of sadness, helplessness, insecurity, and hurt because of the harmful treatment toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual peers (or those who appeared to be) combined with being silent (not challenging) when hearing or seeing non-affirming remarks and behaviors. Participants who played sports, particularly in high school and college, received many negative messages regarding same-sex orientation or behaviors. Examples of common statements from the participants that reflect this stage are as follows: "Also, I have reacted negatively to some of the bigoted, hateful comments by preachers, etc., but learned not to be," "As a Catholic student who attended only Catholic schools up to college, I was taught that it was an abnormality and morally

wrong," and "…hearing boys taunt others with pejorative terms like 'homo' and 'queer (during grade school)."

Stage Four: Personal Revelation and Passive Acceptance

At this stage, persons begin to see lesbian, gay, and bisexual people as people, not "objects of distain," as one participant described. Individuals usually enter this stage after a critical incident that helped persons experience multiple ways of considering sexual orientation. These salient events often became significant associations, meeting lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons, for example. Taking diversity-related courses and experiencing positive encounters with lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are significant factors in transitioning to this stage. After awareness of differences or oppression or experiencing an act of personal oppression, they then begin to understand other forms of oppression (e.g., heterosexism). Members of targeted groups begin to make connections with own oppression and identity. For example, some participants began to re-examine, deconstruct established gender roles. Often individuals want to learn more about same-sex sexual orientation and other diverse groups. They often feel somewhat insecure or unsettled because of the reexamining of messages and personal identity. Participants also experienced confusion and anxiety about not knowing appropriate, affirming language associated with same-sexual orientation; how to be an ally or advocate; or specific information about lesbian, gay, and bisexual cultures.

Although not yet an ally, persons in this stage are working through their own biases and misconceptions about same-sex sexual orientation by examining their heterosexist ideologies and challenging them. As they transition out of this stage, they are actively

listening for new information about same-sex sexual orientation, and may also read, attend workshops, etc. about lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues to gain additional knowledge. Examples of common statements from the participants that reflect this stage are: "In college, I met my first gay man. My first couple of years of even being aware they existed," "Fortunately for me, I find myself surrounded by a number of heterosexual allies, who either challenge heterosexism with me or on their own. This has given me faith that my beliefs about social change, which includes stopping heterosexism, have impact on those around me," "You know I think asking my gay friends what life is like for them, and having that dialogue and talking to them about being Black and American, trying to compare our lives or contrast them on that aspect to see minority and majority cultures," and "I am very comfortable around gay men, but only subconsciously so around gay women I don't know well…I have not been an activist in this area."

Stage Five: Active Disassociation of Heterosexist Ideologies and Heteronormative Worldview

At this stage, individuals continue to journey through heterosexist ideologies and begin to examine their own heterosexual privilege and challenge their own heterosexist biases. Parents, family, media, and peers become less significant although religious beliefs are still challenging. College classmates and friends, as well as colleagues at work, become much more significant influences in overcoming heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews. Actively seeking out information about lesbian, gay, and bisexual cultures, the individuals begin to take action in challenging heterosexism. They are learning how to confront, educate, and raise awareness around the oppression of same-sex or either-sex

sexual orientation cultures. They begin to think about how clients or students might be impacted from heterosexist ideologies and how heterosexist ideologies have influenced their own professional practice.

As persons transition out of this stage, heterosexism is no longer just an issue; but personal. Participants spoke of often feeling and showing anger toward others who demonstrate heterosexist and homophobic ideologies. They also felt shame and regret about past heterosexist ideologies and behaviors. Examples of common statements from the participants that reflect this stage are as follows: "I still have some room for improvement in breaking away from heterosexism," "Coming into student affairs, I met more individuals who were homosexual and decided that I needed to become more educated on the subject," "Through study, reading, teaching and life experience, I have become aware of dynamics of centralized oppression e.g. (heterosexism), and have worked to change my own oppressive believes and behaviors," and "Only when I started working around a host of people who openly identified as "gay" was I then able to truly see them as regular people with the same types of desires, concerns, and goals as myself, 26 years old (today)."

Stage Six: Reconciliation

At this stage, individuals understand the oppression of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people and often work on individual, cultural, and institutional levels to eradicate heterosexist ideologies. Many often understand the intersections of oppressions and work to end the oppression on several levels. Individuals often have resolved many past feelings of anxiety, guilt, sadness, and shame and are content with affirming feelings toward same-sex sexual orientation. Persons identify as an ally or advocate and often have visible signs to

show their affirmation. Examples of common statements from the participants that reflect this stage are: "Since then, I have worked with many out people and consciously have better wanted to understand the out process and what I can do to serve as an ally-both personally and professionally," "I was trained to be an ally and wanted to be a resource."

Interplay of Psychosocial Interaction Model of Heterosexism and Personal Development Model of Heterosexism
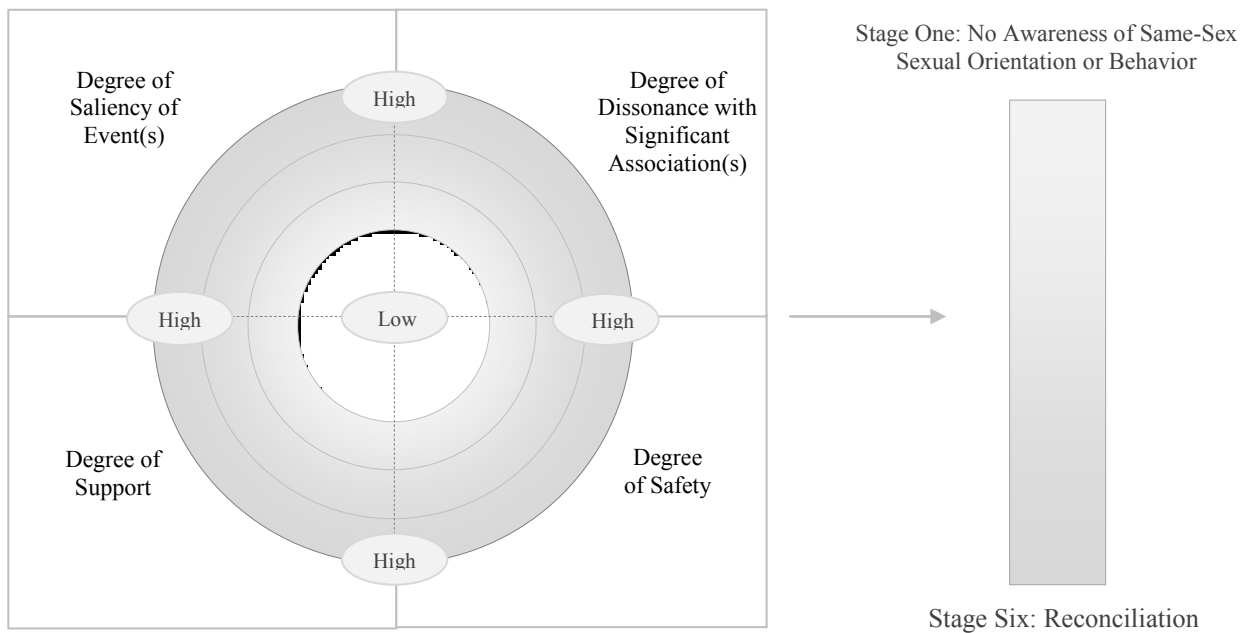
The Psychosocial Interaction Model of Heterosexism demonstrates how individuals dynamically begin to consider how a commitment to new belief(s) could impact their relationships with or within significant association(s) by examining the saliency of significant events (importance), dissonance (disagreement), support (allies), and safety (security from the potential loss of status, roles, finances, religious doctrine, and relationships, etc.). By examining the importance of and personal roles with and within associations, understanding their own target and dominant identities, learning about sexual orientation, and questioning (testing) self and others, individuals experience much internal and external discourse with self and significant association(s) depending on the degrees of influence.

As demonstrated by Figure 3, high degrees of saliency, support, safety, and dissonance with significant associations often leads to more meaningful risk-taking, knowledge-building, and reflection. This meaning making often leads to a commitment to emerging affirmation by deconstructing preconceived beliefs and ultimately transgressing through the stages of the Personal Development Model of Heterosexism. Generally, the degrees of saliency of significant events and dissonance with significant associations act as

motivators. The higher the degree of saliency, the more the participants were likely to engage in meaning making.

FIGURE 3: PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERACTION LEADING TO PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Degree of Saliency of Event(s)

Degree of Dissonance with Significant Association(s)

High

High

Low

High

Degree of Support

Degree of Safety

High

Stage One: No Awareness of Same-Sex Sexual Orientation or Behavior

Stage Six: Reconciliation

Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications

This chapter begins with a summary of each chapter of this manuscript. A discussion on how the findings of this study substantiates and adds to existing research on social interaction and power is followed by the implications for theory, policy, and procedures of the findings are then presented, followed by limitations of the study, and direction for future research.

Summary of Chapters

In Chapter One, I presented evidence of an unwelcoming climate that many lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons face on college campuses. I also established the need for more research on heteronormativity and heterosexism so that meaningful change can occur on individual, institutional, and cultural levels. Finally, I outlined my research questions and gave a brief overview of the methodology used in this study.

In Chapter Two, I presented my epistemology of the theoretical framework that guided this study. I then discussed theories and conceptual models prominent in the literature of social oppression, social identity, and personal identity development. I offered the typical responses of higher education to combat non-affirming climates for lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, which was followed by future research opportunities that could add to the limited body of knowledge on heteronormativity and heterosexism.

In Chapter Three, I outlined the research protocol I used in this study. Presenting my conceptual framework, including assumptions, epistemology, and theoretical frame, I provided an overview of the experiences, beliefs, and knowledge that I brought to this

project. I then outlined the qualitative methodology used, including selection of participants, data collection, analysis, and protection, and trustworthiness and limitations of the study.

In Chapter Four, I gave an overview of two models, (1) Psychosocial Interaction Model of Heterosexism (PI), and (2) Personal Development Model of Heterosexism (PD), that formed from themes in the participants' stories of learning and unlearning heteronormativity and heterosexism. The PI illustrates interaction processes among significant associations (i.e., individuals, social groups, and institutions), life experiences, and personal meaning making that were influential when developing and changing core beliefs about same-sex sexual orientation. The PD outlines psychological stages of personal development when learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews from early childhood to adulthood.

Discussion

In Chapter Two, I presented the following three areas of future research opportunities in the studies of personal worldview development:

- Sociocultural Factors that Influence Heteronormative and Heterosexist Worldviews,

- Social Identity Processes that Influence Heteronormative and Heterosexist Worldviews, and

- Personal Identity Processes that Influence Heteronormative and Heterosexist Worldviews.

I argued that some research exists on sociocultural factors, social identity processes, and personal identity processes on the development of worldviews of individuals, but the current

research is sparse on how these factors and processes influence heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews. In this section, I hope to begin a dialogue on the prominent theories and models of social interaction and personal development by considering how the findings in this study add to and complement the existing knowledge.

Revisiting the Social Oppression Matrix Model

As stated in Chapter Two, Hardiman and Jackson (1997) offer a framework on the context, processes, and application of oppression. Oppression, according to the model, occurs on three levels: individual, institutional, and societal (cultural). Individuals are affected and have an effect on changing the system. In this context, "…individuals are socialized, punished, rewarded, and guided by institutions that maintain and perpetuate oppressive structures" (pp. 18-19). Institutions (e.g., family, religion, schools, higher education, government, etc.) often maintain a system of oppression through operationalizing unequal treatment through policies, practices, rules, and procedures. Like institutions, cultures set standards, usually based on the those of a dominant group, that establish unequal treatment through norms, values, symbols, myths, rituals, traditions, ceremonies, and language. Individuals participate in the relationship between institutions and culture through conscious and unconscious means. Hardiman and Jackson (1997) describe these means as the following:

> "*Conscious* processes involve knowingly supporting the maintenance of
> social oppression through individual, institutional, and social (cultural)
> attributes. *Unconscious* processes represent unknowing or naïve collusion
> with the maintenance of social oppression and occur when the target or agent

comes to accept the dominant logic system and justifies oppression as normal

or part of the natural order" (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 19).

The conscious and unconscious means are applied through attitudinal and behavioral levels. Attitudinal levels refer to the conscious or unconscious beliefs, stereotypes, and philosophies of an individual, while behavioral levels refer to the actions taken by individuals to maintain an oppressive system.

Findings in this study seem to support the usefulness of the model by Hardiman and Jackson (1997). Participants spoke of how their schools and places of worship (institutions) influenced their development of construction and deconstruction of worldviews. Participants also spoke about the influential power of media and pervasive symbols in culture that amplify heteronormativity. Finally, significant others, particularly parents, peer, teachers, and religious leaders, greatly shaped the participants' environment and experiences to foster the construction of heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews. Participants conveyed how they supported the system of oppression during their childhood to young adult years, but began to challenge the system as they moved out of graduate school and into their professional careers.

Although the findings in this study support the overall meaning of the Social Oppression Matrix model, the findings can also enhance this model. The matrix, for example, does not represent specific individuals, behaviors, institutions, or cultural aspects that significantly influence people's worldviews across a lifespan. Considering questions of *who* the most influential figures were, *how* they maintained their influence, and *when* they were most influential (in particular) is critical to a deeper understanding of the processes of constructing and deconstructing heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews. By exploring

these questions with the participants, greater nuances of the matrix among influential people, their behaviors, and cultural cannon helped inform the findings of this study, so the finding of my study will add to the existing models and theories of social oppression.

Considering the Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence

In their classic work on influence, John R. P. French and Bertram H. Raven (1959) proposed bases of social power, which were defined as the resources that build capacity for agents to influence targets. Raven (1990) states that "Essentially, our approach proposes that there are six bases of power, resources which an influencing agent can utilize in changing the beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors of a target: promise of reward, threat of punishment (coercion), legitimacy, expertise, reference (or identification), and information (persuasion)" (p. 495). Raven expands on the bases of power through the development of the Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence. In this model, Raven begins the journey of understanding how people of power maintain their influence. According to the model, the agent assesses the available power resources, identifies the relevant social groups, determines the elements that might prohibit the use of her or his influence, and prepares for and implements the final stage of the model, choosing the most appropriate base(s) of influence depending on her or his motivation or end goals. A teacher (agent) (legitimacy), for example, may tell students (targets) who are acting inappropriately that she will fail them on a test (threat of punishment), no matter their academic abilities, if the students' behaviors do not change (agent's motivation) to match the teacher's wishes. The teacher, after assessing the situation, decided to use threat of punishment and legitimacy to influence the students. This study on heteronormativity and heterosexism found that influential people who harbor

heterosexist ideologies often use their influence to operationalize their beliefs through systems of rewarding those who share similar opinions and punishing those who do not. This finding is consistent with French and Raven's theory on power.

Considering an Identity Approach to Power

Although the Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence does offer a model on how agents maintain their influence, this model has limitations. Simon and Oakes (2006) believe that the definition of social power used by French and Raven (1959) is too limiting. According to Simon and Oakes, the definition of social power in literature often implies or explicitly states "power over" an individual or group. The authors exert that "…the base definition of social power cannot restrict the process to ideas about 'power over', but must start with specification of the nature of social 'energy', then consider its production and consequences" (p. 113). Simon and Oakes prefer the following construct of social power primarily because it implies differential identities, power relations, and contributions between those persuading and those being persuaded, "A (a person or group) has power insofar as it recruits human agency in the service of its agenda" (p. 113).

Simon and Oakes (2006) shift the conversation from having "power over" someone or a group to having "power to" influence others in a direction prescribed by the persuader. This persuasion "…can be produced through both *consensual* processes (influence) and *conflictual* processes (coercion)" (p. 115). The type and degree of resources and capitol to expend are determined by the process the protagonist uses. Simon and Oakes (2006) generally believe the protagonist will use a variety of resources in greater amounts and more often if the conflictual process is chosen. The authors state the following:

"Most power relations involve a mix of conflictual power and consensual power, and the composition of the mix depends largely on the psychological salience of the protagonists' identities as A and B and the salience of their shared identity at a higher level of social inclusiveness or organization" (Simon & Oakes, 2006, p. 117).

In other words, the protagonist determines the type of process (i.e. conflictual or consensual) to use based on the degree of dissonance between the protagonist's perceived beliefs of the target's willingness to accept the proposed agenda and how closely the protagonist identifies with the target. The authors' position is that the greater the dissonance is between the protagonist's beliefs about the target's willingness to accept the agenda and the degree of identification the protagonist feels toward the target, the more likely the protagonist will use conflictual power. To use the example from above, a teacher may tell students who are acting inappropriately that she will fail them on a test, no matter their academic abilities, if the students' behaviors do not change to match the teacher's wishes. The teacher (protagonist), after assessing the situation, felt that she could get the students (targets) to behave the way she wanted (agenda) by simply agreeing to read a book to them (consensual). In this example, the teacher determined the students wanted to be as engaged as the teacher (identification) and used a less threatening form of power (consensual) to get the students to behave as desired (agenda). This study supports the Simon and Oakes relational model by considering how influential people often cite other people and cultural symbols to support their interpretation of cultural norms, expectations, and doctrine and may also create symbols to legitimize their beliefs and opinions to recruit others toward their agenda of heterosexist and homophobic ideologies.

Contrasting French and Raven with Simon and Oakes

In the previous examples of the teacher and students, one can see how the theory of social power presented by French and Raven contrasts with the theory developed by Simon and Oakes (2006). French and Raven (1959) focused much of their theory on how agents use specific types of power as tools to exert power over individuals or groups. One could argue that their theory is a model of input – output. The agent takes in data (teacher sees the students behaving badly), exerts a treatment (threatens students with their grades), and desired outcome is achieved (students behave more appropriately). Simon and Oakes focused their theory on the relationship between the protagonist and the target. Their model of social interaction can be explained partially by the construct of *loose coupling*, which Raeff and Benson (2003) define as:

"…the freedom of entering into, and exiting from, the interaction process. Furthermore, while interaction partners are involved in that mutual process of interacting, they can change their goal orientations, modes of participation, and the complementarily of their conduct with that of the partner(s) at any instant" (Raeff & Benson, 2003, p. 25).

Simon and Oakes (2006) see social power more as consensus building than exerting dominance over another person or group. Like in the theory presented by French and Raven, the protagonist wants a desired outcome, but Simon and Oakes believe that the outcome is achieved more fluidly when both the protagonist (the teacher) and targets (students) have a role in not only determining the outcome (type of behavior) but how the outcome will be achieved (reading a book).

Considering Meaning Making and Self-Authorship

Baxter Magolda, Abes, and Torres (2008) state that "Reliance on external authority for one's belief, identity and relations with others is typical in the late teens and early twenties (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Kegan, 1994; King and Kitchener, 1994; Parks, 2000)" (p. 188). Baxter Magolda (2001) defines this type of worldview as *Following External Formulas,* where people look externally to shape their worldview and believe there is an authority that should tell them how and what to believe. Torres and Baxter Magolda (2004) also found, in a longitudinal study of Latino/a undergraduate students, the following:

"Participants who were following external formulas lacked an internal basis for evaluating knowledge claims; they relied on external authorities to define their beliefs, making them vulnerable to ethnic stereotypes. Similarly, their lack of awareness of their own values and social identity, the lack of coordination of components of identity, and the need for others' approval combined to yield an externally defined identity" (Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 343).

Pizzolato (2005) describes Baxter Magolda's term, *The Crossroads*, "…as a place of discontent where participants felt a need to work toward self-definition" (p. 625). Pizzolata expands on the concept of *The Crossroads* by stating the following:

"The Crossroads may be a compilation of experiences that culminates in a provocative moment. This provocative moment represents an experience that resulted from jarring disequilibrium on the student's part in terms of her or his ways of knowing. The provocative moment, unlike other experiences that collectively comprised The Crossroads, led to commitment to, rather than only

recognition of the need to turn inward in a search for self-definition. Until this provocative moment, students cycled through experiences that left them contemplating such a search and feeling dissatisfied with following formulas, but not acting to relieve their dissatisfaction in a way that helped them construct a new way of knowing" (Pizzolato, 2005, p. 625).

Similar to Pizzolata's (2005) concept of *Provocative Moments*, Landreman, Rasmussen, King, and Jiang (2007) found their study participants generally experienced salient events that acted as a catalyst to internal discourse. In turn, this discourse helped participants gain a different perspective on human diversity. The authors call these events *Critical Incidents*, which are "significant events, interactions, and experiences that served as catalysts for self-reflection and subsequent meaning making, as well as for the decision by individuals to seek continued or additional engagement in diverse experiences or environments" (Landreman, Rasmussen, King, & Jiang, 2007, p. 283). Conceptually, little difference may be apparent between the terms *Provocative Moments* and *Critical Incidents*. The authors, however, are meaning two distinct events with their terminology. Pizzolata defines *Provocative Moments* as events that create commitment and actions; Landreman, Rasmussen, King, and Jiang use the term *Critical Incidents* to denote events that create discourse. The culmination of critical incidents, then, leads to provocative moments.

Generally, the participants in my study did not make as sharp of a distinction as those described above. Participants often described events that helped them become aware of differences on a more insightful level, challenged their internal sense of goodness, or gave them motivation to take action against heteronormative and heterosexist behavior. In this study's findings, individuals examined the *degree of saliency* of each event to self and

perceived importance to significant associations, which created a crossroads where participants began exploring previous messages and beliefs about same-sex sexual orientation and, for many participants, other traditionally marginalized groups. For purposes of this study, I chose not to use the terms *Critical Incidents* or *Provocative Moment* to describe the participants' experiences, and instead used *Salient Events*, which is defined as highly meaningful experiences that create conditions for internal discourse that could lead to a change in beliefs and behaviors depending on the degree of saliency to the individual. *Salient Events* can be defined as *Critical Incidents* plus *Provocative Moments*.

As discussed in Chapter Four, participants often mentioned the significance of determining how important the event, and in turn, the change in belief, would be for them and significant others. The event seemed to be salient if the participant could associate with at least one of the following criteria:

1. The opinions or behaviors of significant associations about the event were opposing to the participants' sense of goodness;

2. Participants' own identity or beliefs were challenged by the event;

3. Significant associations perceived or would perceive the event as significant; or

4. Participants or significant associations were harmed by the event.

If the participant was associated with two or more of the criteria, the event seemed to be most salient. The degree of influence a significant association had on the participant also played a role when determining saliency of an event. Thus, the more the participants could identify with the event; the more significant the event became. Peers, then, were a very significant influence on the participants, particularly during high school. Clearly, the participants in this study experienced a crossroads as described by Baxter Magolda and

worked through internal discourse to challenge and reframe their own heteronormative and heterosexist ideologies.

Design of Influence: Influential Figures, Legitimizers, and Operationalizers

This study also adds to the body of knowledge on power by considering how agents use power differently over the targets' lifespan. Influential figures often use various "tools" to legitimize and operationalize their heterosexist and homophobic ideologies. Targets often experience interplay among influential figures (who) using legitimizers (how) and operationalizers (how) differently at certain milestones over their lifespan (when).

For this study, *influential figures* are specific individuals and social groups that were prominent during specific times in the lives of the participants and had perceived or real credibility. One could consider influential figures as sources of power who significantly played a role in the development of the worldview of others. Parents, peers, teachers, and religious authority were the most common influential figures in this study. *Legitimizers* are specific cultural and institutional symbols and ideologies used by influential figures to shape conscious and unconscious beliefs. This cultural canon often gives credibility to the influential figures and acts as conduits of right and wrong and good and bad, which shapes what to believe and not to believe. As Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) state, "Legitimacy justifies the organization's role in the social system and helps attract resources and the continued support of constituents (Parsons, 1960). In this light, legitimacy is itself a resource" (p. 177). Participants, for example, defined how religious documents, such as the Bible, influenced their beliefs about same-sex sexual orientation. *Operationalizers*, on the other hand, are used by the influential figures to reinforce the legitimizers through specific behaviors. Influential

figures often combined legitimizers and operationalizers to enhance their influence. The Bible, law, and rules were often used by influential figures with the participants of this study. The participants often spoke about how the Bible and other religious symbols (legitimizers), for example, were not challenged because of threats of damnation (operationalizer) from a religious authority (influential figure), who interpreted meaning of the passages believed to be condemning same-sex sexual orientation.

The findings of this study suggest that heteronormativity and heterosexist ideologies are primarily constructed and maintained by influential people who exert power over targets through their early adulthood. As targets get older and more resourceful, agents use sources of power that are more influential than coercive when attempting to influence targets' worldviews.

Using a developmental lens of Following External Formulas, The Crossroads, and Self-Authorship provides one description of an internal meaning making process between the self and external world when negotiating heterosexism. Considering sense of goodness and degree of saliency of events, congruency, safety, and support for one's developing or grounded positions provide additional possibilities of how heteronormativity and heterosexism are mantled and dismantled through risk-taking, knowledge-building, and reflection. By considering the tools used to recruit others provides one hypothesis of how people negotiating heterosexism legitimize and operationalize heteronormativity and heterosexism. The consideration of legitimizers and operationalizers will hopefully spark a national dialogue on the dynamic nature of the matrix when considering the construction and deconstruction of heteronormativity and heterosexism.

Predominant Influential Figures and Legitimizers and Operationalizers

In this section, I discuss the predominant influential figures (i.e., parents, peers, teachers, and religious authority) most often considered by the participants. I evaluate how the influence of each figure changed over the lifespan of the participants, focusing on three lifespan periods shared by the participants: elementary and high school, undergraduate college, and graduate school. During each period, I will discuss how the influential figures used legitimizers and operationalizers to influence the development and maintenance of heteronormativity and heterosexism.

Power of Parents. Influence of parents on the development and maintenance of children's worldview is very well documented. Basow states, "Parents serve as the initial and major socializing agents in society" (1992, p. 129). Floyd, Stein, Harter, Allison, and Nye (1999) continue:

> "The considerable consistency in the findings for both parents,
> together with the significant correlations between the measures of
> relationships with mothers and fathers, corroborates other research
> (e.g., Holtzen et al., 1995), which indicates that relationships with
> both parents are important influences on the adjustment of adolescents
> and young adults" (Floyd, Stein, Harter, Allison, & Nye, 1999, p.
> 719).

A common theme in the participants' stories in this study was the influence parents had on the participants' beliefs about same-sex sexual orientation during elementary and high school. Participants often spoke about how their parents' negative attitudes toward same-sex

sexual orientation were a predominant influence on their development of heteronormative

and heterosexist ideologies. Floyd, Stein, Harter, Allison, and Nye found that "…when the

respondents perceived that their parents had relatively negative attitudes toward the

youth's sexual orientation, they also demonstrated relatively poor relatedness and less

conflictual independence from each of the parents" (p. 719). Their research is also consistent

with the findings of this study. Most participants stated that they tried to talk with their

parents about same-sex sexual orientation but encountered resistance, such as silence and

anger. This resistance played a predominant role in the development of a non-affirming

worldview of the participants because of the significant influence parents have on a child's

development.

The findings in this study suggest that parents were most influential in shaping and

maintaining heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews of their children before they

entered college. Participants in this study often expressed the need to fit in and looked to

others to define their beliefs and actions during elementary and high school.

The power of parents, however, became less influential as the participants became situated in

their undergraduate experience.

Even though their mothers may have held non-affirming biases, most participants

described their mothers' beliefs as much more accepting of same-sex sexual orientation than

their fathers' beliefs. The following statement from a male participant summarizes a common

theme in this study: "My father had more negative beliefs about homosexuality, especially

gay men -- they were deviant, unacceptable, and to be avoided. My mother was more

accepting and understanding." This study's finding is consistent with the research of Floyd,

Stein, Harter, Allison, and Nye (1999) who state "…youths showed higher levels of

relatedness with their mothers, and the mothers conveyed more positive attitudes regarding sexual orientation than the fathers did" (p. 719).

Discussions between the participants and their parents about same-sex sexual orientation often did not occur at all or occurred after the participants reached early adulthood. Parents, who were non-affirming to lesbian, gay, or bisexual persons, also tended to have non-affirming biases toward other cultural groups. This silence created confusion and mistrust for many participants toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. Participants often mentioned that their mothers did not speak at all about same-sex sexual orientation. When mothers did, however, they normally referenced religion as being the primary concern for their non-affirming comments, Participants often mentioned hearing derogatory remarks from their parents (fathers, in particular) about people from various racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. This finding is consistent with the findings of Cunningham, Nezlek, and Banaji (2004) who state "Those who hold negative attitudes toward one disadvantaged group also tend to hold negative attitudes toward other disadvantaged groups" (p. 1341). How each parent expressed these biases was quite different. Fathers, who were more concerned about maintaining traditional gender roles than mothers, were often described as using language that dehumanized lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons in the form of threats, derogatory jokes, and name-calling. Same-sex sexual behavior, for example, violates the traditional gender roles, and fathers would often show this dissatisfaction by calling gay men "sissies" and lesbians "butch."

Power of Peers. The influence of peers on the development and maintenance of worldviews, particularly during adolescence, is also well documented. Tate (2006) states:

"It is widely accepted that membership in peer groups is a powerful force

during adolescence. These groups provide an important developmental point

of reference through which adolescents gain an understanding of the world

outside of their families" (Tate, 2006, p. 215).

A common theme in the participants' stories was the influence their peers, particularly during

high school, had on their development of heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews. For

many of the participants, because of the silences their parents exhibited during childhood,

they first heard of or fully understood same-sex sexual orientation and the associated terms in

high school. Non-affirming statements and behaviors toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual

persons were common when peers would speak about same-sex behavior or orientation.

Participants in this study, however, generally stated that they neither understood nor

remembered participating in the name-calling or harassment toward peers who were or

believed to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Most participants, however, mentioned that they

were afraid to speak against the non-affirming behavior because of pressure to fit into the

predominant social groups who often initiated the name-calling and harassment.

As participants entered their later years of their undergraduate experience, the power

of peers became less influential. Participants met other students with differing points of

views, met students who identified as lesbian, gay, and bisexual, were exposed to curriculum

that fostered critical analysis, and reflected on their own identities. The participants'

development of a worldview became less reliant on the external and more focused on shaping

their own internal belief, values, and perspectives.

Power of Teachers. Teachers have a direct and indirect influence on the development and maintenance of heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews of their students, particularly in junior and high schools. Thornton (2003) found that teachers often do not confront homophobic behavior in schools. Thornton states:

> "Some teachers may be afraid of being labeled 'gay' if they correct
>
> students for bigoted behavior. Disturbingly, some teachers appear to
>
> agree with condemnations of perceived departures from 'normal' sex
>
> roles; girls must be 'feminine' and boys must not be 'effeminate.'
>
> They may ignore, and sometimes even encourage, harassment of
>
> students perceived to be gay. Administrators and teachers may counsel
>
> harassed students to avoid 'flaunting' their allegedly deviant behavior,
>
> in effect, blaming the victim" (Thornton, 2003).

Participants spoke of remembering teachers who laughed at derogatory jokes, participated in teasing of students, and ignored bullying of students who identified or were perceived of being lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Teachers who choose textbooks, use language, and teach curricular topics that represent only heterosexual relationships, and do not present contributions from sexual minorities, disenfranchise those students who are struggling with their sexual identity or identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Teachers who knowingly or unknowingly act on their heteronormative or heterosexist ideologies have a profound influence on the development and maintenance of heteronormative and heterosexist ideologies of their students.

Teachers can also provide tremendous support for lesbian, gay, and bisexual students with proper training and support from the school system and their colleagues. Espelage,

Aragon, Birkett, and Koenig (2008) found that "Although many sexual minority students indicate high rates of these negative outcomes, students receiving support from parents and schools reported significantly less depression-suicidal feelings or less alcohol-marijuana use." McGillivray and Jennings (2008) state:

"For some time, scholars have been warning that negative attitudes

toward LGBT people are prevalent among preservice and licensed

teachers and that teachers are unprepared to affirm and address the

needs of LGBT students and families. Moreover, attempts to remedy

this situation are largely absent from many teacher preparation

programs" (McGillivray & Jennings, 2008).

Without this training and support, many students who are targets of heteronormative, heterosexist, and homophobic behaviors will experience physical, psychological, spiritual, and emotional distress. Rivers (2001) found that homophobic teasing, assaulting, and name-calling were often used by adolescent students toward their peers who identified as gay or lesbian. Swearer, Turner, Givens, and Pollack, (2008) found that "boys who are bullied by being called gay experience greater verbal and physical bullying than boys who are bullied for other reasons."

Power of Pastors. The influence of religious leaders, influential figures, significantly helped shaped the heteronormative and heterosexist worldview of the participants, particularly during childhood through early adulthood. Smith (1996) states:

"Religion provides life, the world, and history with meaning, through a sacred

reality that transcends those mundane realities. But in doing so, religion

establishes a perceived objective reality above and beyond temporal life, the

world, and history that then occupies an independent and privileged position

to act - through those who believe the religion - back upon the mundane

world. That which is sacred and transcends temporal, earthly reality also

stands in the position to question, judge, and condemn temporal earthly

reality. In this way, the ultimate legitimator of the status quo can easily

become its ultimate judge" (Smith, 1996, p. 6).

Smith recognizes the power that religion has on the development of identity and worldview.

Tucker and Potocky-Tripodi (2006) continue by suggesting a correlation of this power to

antigay attitudes. The authors state "Specifically, studies have found that the participants

who score high on measures of antigay attitudes also tend to be those who are the most

religious." Although some of the participants in my study remembered hearing specific

messages from their religious leaders, most participants knew the church frowned upon

same-sex sexual orientation and behavior but could not remember any specifics remarks from

any of their church leaders. Religious leaders often sent inconsistent messages about

appropriate behavior, helped establish and maintain traditional gender roles, and fostered a

culture within the institution that favored heterosexual people over all others.

<div align="center">Implications for Policy and Practice</div>

Based on this study's findings, criteria that helps determine equity and

political feasibility of given alternatives are imperative to consider. Addressing the

marginalization of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons on many campuses in the U.S.,

honoring diversity of thought and opinions, and upholding rights and privileges (e.g.,

freedom of speech and religious choice) of all individuals are central when determining alternatives that promote equity. The policy and practice implications outlined in this section are transformative in nature. Challenging biases, shifting resources, and changing policies and procedures can inspire motivation among stakeholders to take action that can create a welcoming and safe environment or a political arena that makes the climate for lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons even more unwelcoming. Thus, policies and practices that do not have the capacity to be sustained during political challenges should not be considered as appropriate alternatives.

Policies and practices that attempt to resolve the problem of a heteronormative and heterosexist campus climate devalues those who do not identify as heterosexual and must be redistributive in nature. To change the college experience and campus environment for many lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons, policies must shift resources or power from to cultural groups who are affirming. Practices, then, must be considered to make the abstract goals and objectives a reality. Policy mechanisms are instruments often used to ensure that established goals and objectives are met.

Implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of any policy and practice should identify major and secondary stakeholders early in the development process and involve as many stakeholders as relevant. Senior administrative staff should lead the effort and send clear messages of the institutional commitment to the alternative. A precise implementation plan should be determined and articulated with campus stakeholders and actors. All administrators should consistently monitor progress toward achieving the outcomes and goals. The monitoring should not only include program monitoring but assessing staff's

satisfaction, motivation, and follow through. Processes to hear opposing voices should also be implemented to inform the assessment of the monitoring process. Evaluation of the programs should be a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods and include both satisfaction and persistence of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, staff, and faculty.

The findings of this study suggest that comprehensive, long-term strategies are needed if change in heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews and organizational cultures is to occur. All institutions of higher education should strive for the following three broad outcomes to improve the experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, staff, and faculty on campus:

- Students, faculty, and staff continually examine and challenge biases within themselves and peers;

- All persons, including those who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, experience a supportive and safe learning, working, and living environment; and

- Institutional policies and procedures are inclusive and do not marginalize any cultural groups, including sexual minority.

Based on this study's findings, any strategy being designed or re-imagined to dismantle heteronormativity and heterosexism and achieve the above outcomes should consider the following critical elements:

- the intersections of multicultural and diverse identities that make up the self and the collective tapestry within institutions of higher education;

- the psychological pathways of transitioning in and out of heteronormative and heterosexist ideologies and behaviors;

- the catalytic and sustainable influence of salient events on meaning making processes;

- the critical need of examining the degree of dissonance among the self's sense of goodness, significant associations, and cultural canon when assessing the degree of safety and support for maintaining or changing heteronormative or heterosexist ideologies;

- the importance of risk-taking, knowledge-building, and reflection during meaning making processes; and

- the identification of influential figures and the tools they use to legitimize and operationalize heteronormativity and heterosexism.

These critical factors reflect themes from the participants' life stories of learning and unlearning heteronormative and heterosexist ideologies. They are grounded in the belief that heteronormativity and heterosexism is constructed and can be deconstructed. If policies and practices are informed and shaped by these factors, the outcomes mentioned above could possibly be achieved on college campuses, thus changing the harmful experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, staff, and faculty.

Policy makers and practitioners can play an important role in developing policies and initiatives that will challenge heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews by exposing students, staff, and faculty to a variety of perspectives. This framework would validate individuals' existing beliefs while supporting the continuation of the individuals' development through heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews. Attempts to create an affirming environment for faculty,

staff, and students who do not identify as heterosexual can be strengthened if policy makers consider a developmental lens when designing and enacting the policies.

Limitations of Study

Although measures were taken to decrease the limitations of this study, some limitations were identified. All participants were born before 1977. Many participants mentioned historical events (mostly in the decade of 1990), such as the military's rule on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and television shows like "Will and Grace" as providing provocative moments that challenged their non-affirming beliefs about lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. Thus, those people who were too young to remember these events were not part of this study. Of the 87 participants, 84 had obtained a master's degree or higher while the remaining three held a bachelor's degree while working toward a master's degree during the time of the study. All participants were born and had always lived in the United States. Finally, although I am comfortable with the overall diversity in the sample, not all cultural groups were represented. Although the sampling procedure was purposely designed to yield these demographics, readers of this study should take caution when considering the usability of the study.

Limited resources and time constrained the design of the methodology and data analysis of this study. Ideally, I would have had more resources to recruit more participants in the questionnaire and interview phases of this study, which might have had an impact on the outcome of the findings. Limited resources and time also prohibited me from engaging the participants after the initial analysis of the data was concluded. By checking my findings with the participants could have had an influence on the outcome of the findings.

Specific to the Personal Development Model of Heterosexism (PD), there are limitations to this developmental model, similar to other developmental models as mentioned in Chapter Two. The PD, for example, does not address the intersection of multiple identities or within-group differences. Although much attention has been given to identity development in scholarly literature, much more empirical research on the representation of the nuances, intersections, and multitudes of identity within the stage models need to occur; the PD is no exception.

Directions for Future Research

Although this study's findings add to the existing body of knowledge in fields of study, such as education, sociology, and psychology, additional scholarly opportunities illuminated through the data analysis that require further investigation. The internal belief of what is ethical and just vs. the messages of morality that are often imposed and work against this sense of goodness would be beneficial to explore for a greater understanding of meaning making processes. How does one develop a sense of goodness that stands against influential figures who attempt to threaten and change the gauge of goodness, for example? The concept of choice was a common theme in the participants' stories. As mentioned in Chapter Four, participants and their significant associations often began to reconcile their internal discourse between non-affirming and affirming messages as they began to answer questions about the origins of sexual orientation for themselves. Here lie rich opportunities to explore the meaning making processes of understanding identity, behavior, and a sense of goodness.

Learning that individuals could be both agents and targets of oppression had a profound influence on the participants' worldview, particularly when a personal identity was

threatened. Why do people who identify with a dominant group sometimes disengage from that group after being physically assaulted because of a bias against a perceived or real identity, for example? A further investigation on how one becomes critically aware following a salient event that created a hyper recognition of multiple identities within oneself would add to the findings of this study and contribute to the field of social psychology particular.

As mentioned in the Limitations of Study section, the participants of this study attended college. Curricular and co-curricular experiences during college exposed them to diversity of thoughts and people, which provided many salient events that aided in the deconstruction of heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews. College campuses also provided resources for many participants to build knowledge and take risks when confronting heteronormative and heterosexist ideologies within oneself and experienced by others. How do people who are non-affirming to same-sex sexual orientation and do not attend college deconstruct heteronormative and heterosexist worldviews, for example? A research project similar to this study, using a sample of people who did not attend college, could provide deeper understanding of the personal development and significant socio-cultural factors that help foster a more affirming worldview toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons.

Conclusion

Students, staff, and faculty on college and university campuses across the United States come with a diverse array of personal experiences that have shaped their values, beliefs, and behaviors. This diversity of experiences and ideologies make institutions of higher education a marketplace of ideas where differing opinions can be shared to promote tolerance, which can grow into acceptance until differences can be celebrated (Euben, 2001).

Unfortunately, the experience for many lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, staff, and faculty does not reflect celebration, or acceptance, or tolerance. The condition of campus climates of many institutions of higher learning values heterosexuality and sets cultural norms, policies, and reward systems that foster the condition. This "heteronormative" climate often devalues those who do not identify as heterosexual, causing many to feel alienated, marginalized, and emotionally and physically threatened. Many colleges and universities, however, have recognized that a heteronormative climate that devalues persons who do not identify as heterosexual as a problem and are taking action. Policymakers in many institutions of higher learning have taken a variety of alternative approaches to resolving the problem. Many of the alternatives, however, have managed the condition but, by no means, resolved the problem.

The ideologies of heterosexism, a form of oppression where it is believed that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality should be the only moral and ethical sexual orientation, is often interwoven through many policies, procedures, and standard daily operational functions on all levels of institutions of higher learning. Cultural metaphors, ceremonies, and symbols used inside and outside of the college classrooms are often grounded in heterosexism, which can create communities of intolerance that hinder civility and common purpose. A survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice (2001) found that nearly all college students in the U.S. report hearing derogatory comments toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons on a daily basis. The report goes on to say, "…the use of such language creates an atmosphere that permits conduct to escalate from mere words to stronger words to threats and, ultimately, to violence" (p. 10). Campus culture, then, can be unwelcoming to say the very least.

Leadership is a key factor to ensuring the organizational conditions are good for successful cultural change. Organizational cultures are "historically rooted, socially transmitted set of deep patterns of thinking and ways of acting that give meaning to human experience, that unconsciously dictate how experience is seen, assessed, and acted on" (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 8). When working together or against one another, cultures within an organization can have a profound impact on human relations, political canals, and institutional structures, largely influencing institutional change and its processes. Leadership needs to recognize the importance of culture when determining involvement in the planning process. As Mintzberg (2000) states "Leaders should lead in such a way where everyone on the journey helps shape the organization's course" (p. 107).

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Appendix A: Notification from Human Subjects Institutional Research Board at Western

Michigan University

Date: February 4, 2002

To: Mary Anderson, Principal Investigator

Andy Howe, Student Investigator

From: Mary Lagerwey, Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 02-01-08

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "The Process of

Developing and Overcoming Heterosexist Ideologies" has been approved under the

expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The

conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan

University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You

must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek

reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if

there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the

conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair

of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: February 4, 2003

Appendix B: Notification from Institutional Research Board at University of Minnesota

TO : andyhowe@umn.edu,

The IRB: Human Subjects Committee determined that the referenced study is exempt from review under federal guidelines 45 CFR Part 46.101(b) category #4 EXISTING DATA; RECORDS REVIEW; PATHOLOGICAL SPECIMENS.

Study Number: 0903E62391

Principal Investigator: Andy Howe

Title(s):
A Grounded Theory Study of the Sociocultural and Psychosocial Factors that Influence the Construction and Deconstruction of Heteronormative and Heterosexist Worldviews

_____

This e-mail confirmation is your official University of Minnesota RSPP notification of exemption from full committee review. You will not receive a hard copy or letter.
This secure electronic notification between password protected authentications has been deemed by the University of Minnesota to constitute a legal signature.

The study number above is assigned to your research. That number and the title of your study must be used in all communication with the IRB office.

If you requested a waiver of HIPAA Authorization and received this e-mail, the waiver was granted. Please note that under a waiver of the HIPAA Authorization, the HIPAA regulation [164.528] states that the subject has the right to request and receive an accounting of Disclosures of PHI made by the covered entity in the six years prior to the date on which the accounting is requested.

If you are accessing a limited Data Set and received this email, receipt of the Data Use Agreement is acknowledged.

This exemption is valid for five years from the date of this correspondence and will be filed inactive at that time. You will receive a notification prior to inactivation. If this research will extend beyond five years, you must submit a new application to the IRB before the study?s expiration date.

Upon receipt of this email, you may begin your research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at (612) 626-5654.

You may go to the View Completed section of eResearch Central at http://eresearch.umn.edu/ to view further details on your study.

The IRB wishes you success with this research.

Appendix C: Questionnaire

Please mark the item that best describes you (personal data collection):

a. Race/Ethnicity:

- ❑ Black, African American Non-Hispanic

- ❑ American Indian, Alaskan Native

- ❑ White, Caucasian Non-Hispanic

- ❑ Chicano, Mexican American

- ❑ Hispanic

- ❑ Asian, Pacific Islander

- ❑ Biracial/Multiracial

- ❑ Other (please specify) _____

b. Age:

- ❑ 24-30

- ❑ 31-40

- ❑ 41-50

- ❑ 51-60

- ❑ 61-65

- ❑ 66-99

c. Individual Annual Income

- ❑ Less than $8,999

- ❑ $9,000-$21,999

- ❑ $22,000-$36,999

- ❑ $37,000-$56,999

- ❑ More than $57,000

d. Religious Affiliation (please specify) _____

e. Political Affiliation

- ❑ Democrat

- ❑ Republican

- ❑ Independent

- ❑ Green Party

- ❑ Non-Affiliated

- ❑ Other (please specify) _____

f. Education Level

- ❑ Some College Coursework, No College Degree

- ❑ College or University Degree

- ❑ Graduate Degree

g. Gender

- ❑ Male

- ❑ Female

- ❑ Non-Specific

h. Sexual Orientation

- ❑ Homosexual

- ❑ Bisexual

- ❑ Heterosexual

- ❑ Non-Specific

II. Please identify the items below that had the most influence on your beliefs about gay people. Rank in order those that apply--the lower the number the greater the influence.

___ Parents   ___ People Specific to Your Race/Ethnicity

___ Political Affiliation   ___ Education

___ Cultural Values and Norms   ___ Media

___ Other Family Members   ___ Literature/Non-Fiction

___ Religious Beliefs

___ Peers: Opposite Gender

___ Peers: Same Gender   ___ Other: _____

Of the top three chosen, what messages did you receive from the person or groups about homosexuality?

III. Please describe your personal process of developing views/opinions of homosexuality. A blank sheet has been provided for your convenience. Your responses may be hand written or typed. You may be as detailed as you would like. Please consider the following in your responses:

a. Describe your current views/opinions about homosexuality and heterosexuality.

b. Describe your personal process of developing viewpoints about homosexuality. Please begin with your earliest memory of learning about difference in sexual orientations and

proceed through your life span. Please include age ranges of each significant

development. More specifically, please consider the following:

1. When did you become aware of homosexuality? What were the messages you

    received about homosexuality and homosexual people? Who or what gave you these

    messages?

2. Consider your current views/opinions about homosexual people. Have you always

    had these views/opinions? If not, please describe how your views/opinions have

    changed; how, when, and why do you feel the change occurred?

c. In your narrative, please discuss how people within your culture and community groups

    played a part in assisting or hindering your current view/opinion.

    Please include age ranges in your discussion of this developmental process.

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1. When did you become aware of sexual differences? Describe.

2. Please describe a time or period in your life when you felt that heterosexuality was the only "right" sexual orientation? If you no longer believe this, describe the process of change.

3. Please describe a time or period in your life when you questioned if heterosexist attitudes where just and right? What were your thoughts and actions during this time?

d. Please describe a time or period in your life when you could explain and believe (without judgment) the benefits of heterosexuality and homosexuality in society?