Finding Purpose: Identifying Factors that Motivate Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender College Student Engagement at a Two-Year Institution

A Dissertation
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

Jeffrey A. Anderson

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENTOF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Darwin D. Hendel
Andrew Furco
Co-Advisors

August 2016

© Jeffrey A. Anderson, August 2016

Acknowledgements

There are a number of individuals who deserve recognition for the various ways they helped to make the completion of this document possible.

My academic advisers, Dr. Darwin Hendel and Dr. Andrew Furco. I am incredibly blessed to have had you both as my advisers. Your support, wisdom, compassion, and the occasional tough love made this experience not only possible but worthwhile. Thank you.

Dr. Hendel, Dr. Furco, Dr. David Weerts, and Dr. Kevin Murphy – I have tremendous respect and admiration for each of you, and can't say enough about how thankful I am for having worked with you. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that you have been the dream committee, and I sincerely hope that our paths will continue to cross in the future.

My mentor and friend Anne Phibbs. I felt like we were old friends from the day we met. You have helped to open many doors for me. Thank you for every word of encouragement, and every hearty chuckle.

To all of the students, fellow advisors and instructors, and each of the many leaders who participated in the University of Minnesota's innovative 2012 GLBTA Leadership Year. When I was in the early stages of my dissertation, you inspired, taught, and motivated me. In the time we spent together I learned more about myself and my own identity. You are all rock stars – Thank you.

My dear friend, colleague, and fellow Mankato State alum, Penny Rosenthal. You gave me faith that I could do this whole thing in the first place.

To all of the scholars I have met through Dr. Hendel's dissertation finishers group. Your dedication, achievement, and support were often the boost I needed to get this done.

To my late family - my parents James and Ferne, and my brother Jay. I love and miss you.

Finally, to my LGBTQIA+ brothers, sisters, and non-binary siblings throughout history. You have fought tirelessly for the rights that I enjoy today as a Queer American. I intend to continue your fight for justice.

Dedication

I dedicate this to my husband Leo. Thank you for your unwavering love, support, patience, and friendship throughout this journey. Whenever I was feeling a bit unglued, you held me together. I look forward to seeing where life takes us as we begin this new chapter together. I love you!

Abstract

In recent decades, the lives of gay Americans have been pushed to the center stage of political and cultural debate. Bearing the brunt of much of this discourse are high school and college-aged LGBT youth. In spite of, and perhaps in response to, the attacks they often experience, LGBT college students are investing energy in campus activities such as queer student groups and organizations. This study sought to identify, through both qualitative and quantitative methods, the factors that motivate students at a two-year community college to become involved in a campus LGBT student organization. An anonymous survey was completed by 31 students with varying levels of involvement with the student organization. Five dominant themes, Community, Identity, Safety, Education, and Civic Engagement, were identified as motivators for ten students that participated in interviewed for the study. In addition, faculty and staff were interviewed with the goal of deciphering how closely administrative views of campus climate matched those of student study participants, with discussion framed by the five motivation themes. The results of this study provide a glimpse into the lives of queer students at a two-year institution, a population that is vastly under-represented in existing empirical literature. Queer development theories and literature that explores topics such as college student engagement, cultural diversity, and campus climate are applied to the study results. The findings' implications for higher education professionals are presented, along with recommendations for researchers who seek a greater

understanding of queer students at two-year institutions and what motivates them to be involved in campus activities that are tied to their orientation and identity.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

CHAPTER I

Forward

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students, like students from other non-majority groups, have a long and tragic history of marginalization and discrimination at colleges and universities. As student populations in higher education have become increasingly diverse in recent decades (despite increased homogeneity and segregation in the K-12 school system (Orfield, 2009)), many of these institutions have sought to shape environments that can reduce the marginalization and increase acceptance of LGBT and other students from non-majority populations. However, findings from research studies have found that such efforts fall short if they do not give proper consideration to multicultural differences among students. Quaye, Tambascia, and Talesh (2009) assert that the unique needs of racial/ethnic minority students require theoretical frameworks that specifically address their backgrounds and identities.

Involvement in multicultural student organizations can help students of color find community on predominantly White campuses, helping students feel that they are not invisible, and that they indeed matter (Cabrera, Norea, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999). Cabrera et al. (1999) studied 1,139 White and 315 African American incoming first-year students from 18 four-year colleges and universities, and concluded that feeling disengaged from one's academic institution can lead to dissatisfaction, detachment, isolation, and a higher risk of decreased persistence among minority students. While this study

may not necessarily be generalizable to other minority populations, there are likely to be common experiences among non-majority groups that make such research relevant to a discussion of the relationship between student engagement and academic success.

Existing research on LGBT youth suggests that one of the negative consequences of experiences in grades 7 to 12 is the lack of a sense of personal safety due to students' actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity (results from some of the prominent research on this subject are explored in Chapter II). Considering this finding, students who enter college are likely to have some level of apprehension regarding personal safety, which can have negative repercussions on factors such as academic performance, involvement, and persistence.

The allocation of resources designated to help LGBT students to feel safe in expressing all of their personal identities on campus has been an ongoing and often political challenge for many colleges and universities (von Destinon, Evans, & Wall, 2000). Studies on the factors that motivate LGBT students to persist in higher education are scant, and yet there are some studies suggesting that LGBT students are indeed engaged in LGBT related activities on college campuses.

Background

The issue of stereotyping has been a central theme in the study of non-dominant and marginalized groups. For example, Steele (1997) sought to

determine the negative influence of societal stereotypes on the academic performance of women and African American college students, working from a core assumption that individuals must have academic achievement integrated into their self-identity in order to avoid struggling with unsustainable achievement motivation. If female students, for example, internalize the stereotype that women are naturally poor at math, they must overcome that stigma in order to achieve at their full potential. Among Steele's conclusions: 1) Such stereotypes, over time, can hinder academic performance, and in the long term, interfere with identity development itself; and 2) "If more favorable graduation and persistence rates are to be realized, a situation in which American Indian college students perceive the freedom to express any ethnic identity they chose (whether it be traditional or assimilated) should be encouraged" (p. 34).

Quaye et al. (2009) assert that non-majority college students benefit from academic climates that give thoughtful consideration to cultural identities, backgrounds, and societal stereotypes. Campus climate seems to play a key role in the academic success of diverse student populations, since a campus that is perceived to be unwelcoming or prejudiced could arguably lead to such students' disconnection with the institution (2009). With this in mind, motivating diverse student populations to become engaged may rely, to some degree, on institutional efforts to create a climate that is affirming and welcoming of all identities (Kuh, 1993).

One non-dominant group which has developed a growing focus is sexual minorities. Individuals are considered to have "sexual minority status" if "one engages in same-sex sexual behavior, has enduring emotional or sexual attractions to the same sex (usually termed sexual orientation), or claims a same-sex identity as gay, lesbian, or bisexual" (Russell, 2003, p. 1241). Early models and theories on homosexual identity development began to emerge in the 1970s, around the same time of the American Psychological Association's (APA) historical declaration that homosexuality is neither an illness nor a sexual deviance (APA, 2012). After years of living in silent fear, gays and lesbians witnessed the rise of the "gay movement" at the end of the 1960s. Although this movement gained momentum throughout the decade, it is most often associated with the legendary riots that began on June 27, 1969 at New York's Stonewall Inn.

Today, the APA states that to identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual is completely healthy and normal. The first studies to include large-scale and generalizable samples of adolescents' experiences as sexual minorities began to emerge in the late 1990s.

A historical look at queer life on campus. In his writings about pre-Stonewall life, Blumenfeld (2012) reflects on growing up gay and experiencing name-calling in grade school in the 1950s. Blumenfeld, a retired Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Iowa State University, recalls frequently hearing names like "sissy", "fairy", and "pansy" being directed at him in

grade school from other children on the playground. His parents brought him to a child psychologist who attempted to instill in him more “masculine” behaviors, in efforts to prevent him from growing up homosexual. The presiding societal message about homosexuality at the time was that it was abnormal, and not something to be discussed.

Upon entering college, Blumenfeld saw no gay or lesbian student groups, organizations, or even pro-gay library materials. In 1970, a campus newspaper article about a group called the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) caught his attention, a moment which turned out to be a milestone in finding and claiming his own identity. The GLF was founded in 1969 by gays and lesbians in New York’s Greenwich Village in response to the historic Stonewall riots. Throughout the early 1970s, the GLF would serve as a major catalyst for the growing gay movement (Feather, 2007).

Legal protection. While recent years have seen great strides towards increased equality for queer citizens, discrepancies remain in the ways in which federal and state laws protect the rights of straight people versus individuals of other sexual orientations and identities. Laws that restrict full equality to sexual minorities arguably reinforce the social acceptance of treating queer people differently than non-queer people.

Data from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) illustrates how current laws treat LGBT persons differently than non-LGBT people (Human Rights Campaign, 2016). State laws protecting individuals from losing their job based on their

sexual orientation (real or perceived) or gender identity vary across the country. According to the HRC, gender identity protections exist in 16 states plus D.C., while 34 states have no such legal protection[1]. The number of states with job protection based on sexual orientation is only slightly higher, with 21 states and D.C. providing protection, and 29 states still providing no protection.

According to a report from the HRC, between January 1 and February 19, 2016, more than 175 anti-LGBT bills had been filed across the country, 44 of which specifically target the rights of transgender people, which is more than twice the amount of anti-transgender bills filed in 2015 (Human Rights Campaign, 2016). Of the 44 bills introduced in 2016, 29 restrict transgender people from equal access to public restrooms. Perhaps the most notorious of these restroom bills is North Carolina's HB2, which was signed into law in March, 2016. The HB2 law dictates that people may only use public restrooms that correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth (Berman, Larimer, & Horwitz, 2016). This increase in anti-LGBT legislation appears to be a backlash from political conservatives in response to recent legal victories for LGBT Americans.

Marriage equality. Prior to the 2012 election, six U.S. states (Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont) and the District of Columbia granted same-sex couples equal marriage rights (Human Rights Campaign, 2012). Ballot measures in Maine, Maryland, and

[1] Exceptions exist in Florida and New York in some cases. Data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reports that, out of 6,624 reported single bias incidents in 2010, 1,528 (19.3 percent) were due to bias against the victim's sexual orientation (FBI, 2011).

Washington all resulted in victories for proponents of marriage equality in 2012, and in the first half of 2013, Rhode Island, Delaware, and Minnesota passed legislation legalizing marriage for same-sex couples.

Organizations such as Focus on the Family and the National Organization for Marriage have lobbied and campaigned to promote marriage as consisting solely of one man and one woman. Supporters of such groups and others who oppose LGBT rights frequently use a "pro-family" or religious stance to support their positions. Between 1998 and 2012 the efforts of such groups contributed to constitutional amendments defining marriage being placed on ballots in 31 states. Each of these was passed by voters, with the exception of Minnesota, which became the first state to strike down such a ballot initiative (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2012).

In 2013, in the case of *Windsor v. United States*, the Supreme Court struck down the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which had prevented same-sex married couples from any legal recognition or benefits granted to heterosexual couples. Through this historic decision, the Court "declared that gay couples married in states where it is legal must receive the same federal health, tax, Social Security and other benefits that heterosexual couples receive" (Barnes, 2013, para. 3). Two years later, on June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court ruled that marriage is a constitutional right, and that all existing state bans were no longer valid ("Gay Marriage," 2015).

Anti-gay violence. The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs reports that in 2011 30 reported murders were due to anti-gay bias, an increase of 11 percent over 2010, more than any year since 1989, the first year the organization began collecting data (Anti-Violence Project, 2012). This percentage dropped to 18 reported homicides in 2013, but rose 11 percent to 20 reported deaths in 2014. (Anti-Violence Project, 2015). Among the 2014 homicide victims, 55 percent were transgender women, and 35 percent were gay or bisexual men (2015). As long as legal discrepancies in the treatment of queer citizens exist, negative consequences (e. g., cultural marginalization and hate crimes), will be experienced and witnessed by LGBT students at our country's colleges and universities.

Definition of Terms

This section provides definitions of terms that will be used within the study.

Ally (or A): An ally to LGBTQ communities can be defined 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" (Washington & Evans, 1991, p. 195).

Cisgender: Someone who identifies as cisgender has a personal and gender identity that matches their birth sex.

Genderqueer: This is a relatively new term, defining individuals "whose gender identity is neither man nor woman, is between or beyond genders, or is

some combination of genders" (Gender Equity Resource Center, 2013.). Some (but not all) genderqueer individuals may also identify as transgender.

Intersex: The definition of intersex is complex. As the Gender Equity Resource Center (2013) explains, "Intersex people are born with "sex chromosomes," external genitalia, or internal reproductive systems that are not considered "standard" for either male or female. The existence of intersexuals shows that there are not just two sexes and that our ways of thinking about sex (trying to force everyone to fit into either the male box or the female box) is socially constructed" (para. 45).

LGBT: Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, with "LGB" referring to sexual orientation.

Queer: The term queer began to emerge in the late 1980s as a word of empowerment for some in the LGBT community (Dilley, 2005). At the time a majority of those who identified as queer were young gay and lesbian activists who sought to challenge restrictive and repressive sexual orientation and/or gender identity norms within society. Since then, the term "queer" has taken on multiple meanings, including personal, social, and political (APA, 2014).

Queer has also been used as an umbrella term, under which identities including LGBT, I (intersex), A (ally), Q (questioning, or in some cases, queer) all reside. Meem, Gibson, and Alexander (2010) define queer as a term for "those whose sexualities, sexual practices, or erotic and affectional investments lie outside the mainstream of normative heterosexuality" (p. 184). For the purposes

of this research, the term “queer” will be used in reference to all non-straight sexual orientations and identities.

School Climate: School climate generally includes “school culture, mood, the degree to which people get along, respect for differences, motivation, pride, and vision” (Biegel & Kuehl, 2010, p. 10).

Sexual Orientation: Sexual orientation is defined as “an often enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions of men to women or women to men (heterosexual), of women to women or men to men (homosexual), or by men or women to both sexes (bisexual)” (American Psychological Association, 2014). Sexual orientation also includes one’s personal and/or social identity based on sexual attraction, and membership in a community of others who share those attractions and behaviors.

Student Activist: Students who “see a need for change either in the institution or in the broader society” (Ropers-Huilman & McCoy, 2011, p. 258).

Transgender: Transgender, the “T” in LGBT, refers to gender identity rather than sexual orientation. This may explain why so much research on queer students overlooks transgender student experiences. However, the commonalities in social and political struggle between LGB and T individuals warrant, in my opinion, the inclusion of transgender under the queer umbrella.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to uncover potential factors that motivate LGBT college students and their allies to become engaged in activities pertinent

to LGBT communities, both on- and off-campus, at a two-year institution. Colleges and universities can increase the potential for student engagement by working towards a campus climate that is affirming and inclusive of student identities that also encourages both on- and off-campus participation in student activities (Kuh, 1993). Engaging diverse students in experiences such as campus student groups has been shown to contribute to positive feelings about the college experience, helping students feel more connected to their academic institution and creating a sense of belonging (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001).

Research Question

The following question guides the study:

What are the issues and campus factors that motivate queer students and their allies to become involved in campus activities such as student groups at a two-year college?

Significance of Research

This study emerged from a pilot study that I conducted in spring, 2014, which investigated a set of questions pertaining to student involvement in a queer student organization at a two-year community college. The pilot study brought to the fore a series of questions that warranted deeper analysis of issues that emerged from my focus group with students.

This study has potentially important implications for higher education in terms of understanding what motivates queer students to be involved at a two-year institution. Based on the results, there is a possibility that this information

could be used in efforts to increase recruitment and retention of the queer student population, in addition to creating opportunities for meaningful college experiences for queer students and their allies.

One of the more compelling factors behind my choice to study students at a community college is the low rate at which community college students (including queer students) transfer to and graduate from four-year institutions. According to Bailey and Morest (2006), only 18 percent of students who begin their college careers at community colleges complete a bachelor's degree within eight years. While it is not realistic to assume that all community college students are interested in completing a bachelor's degree, those students that are meeting their academic goals have a certain level of motivation that is helping to move them forward.

Student groups and organizations can be used to considerable advantage by community colleges in face of budget cuts and the variety of challenges experienced by at-risk populations that frequently attend two-year institutions (Carmody Roster, 2013). From the results of her study, Carmody Roster concluded "significant associations were found between students' enrollment type (part-time of full-time), age, gender, first-generation status, race and their levels of engagement and relationships with others on campus." (2013, p. 107).

Are colleges and universities prepared for the particular qualities and challenges that queer students bring as they enter two-year colleges? How does campus climate contribute to the formative college years of queer

undergraduates at two-year colleges? In exploring such questions surrounding this topic, this research will highlight key gay and lesbian identity development models, examine the queer pre-college experiences, explore the potential role that intersecting identities play in the individual student experience, discuss studies on the role campus climate plays in the lives of queer students, as well as strategies, both current and emerging, that may hold promise in addressing the needs of queer students in two-year institutions.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

In this chapter I review literature that informs the topic of queer college students. I begin with an overview of queer identity development models and theories, which I consider to be the necessary starting point for any research on queer college students. Other subsets of research include the pre-college experiences of queer youth, campus climate, the potential role of empirical research, and the impact of involvement and engagement on the lives of queer college students and college students in general.

Much of the existing research on LGBT individuals focuses on lesbian, gay, and (to a lesser degree) bisexual identities, largely overlooking transgender and queer identities. The word "queer" is unique in that, in addition to being a term to define one's identity, it is also considered to include a more pronounced political component than LGB or T identity (Dilley, 2005; Rhoads, 1994), making the term particularly relevant to the topic of leadership activities and queer student development.

As asserted earlier, queer students entering college have unique needs. In addressing these needs and their relevance to higher education, this chapter explores several key queer identity development theories, the impact of traumatic pre-college experiences (such as bullying) on queer students, and matters relevant to queer college life and campus climate. This section concludes with a discussion on campus climate, including admissions practices related to queer

students, the emerging study of intersecting multiple student identities, student leadership and engagement, and viewing higher education as an agent of social change.

Identity Development Theory

In reference to college student development, *identity* is generally defined as a student's "personally held beliefs about the self in relation to social groups" (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009, p. 577). This includes ways in which students express their relationships with social groups, including those based on race/ethnicity, faith or religious affiliation, as well as sexual orientation or gender identity. Identity, according to Torres et al. (2009) is a social construct, wherein a student's "sense of self and beliefs about one's own social group as well as others are constructed through interactions with the broader social context in which dominant values dictate norms and expectations" (p. 577). Through this approach to identity development, identity is "socially constructed and naturalized in temporal and cultural contexts" (Torres et al., 2009, p. 581).

Identity formation theories specific to queer college students are relatively scarce, and many theories and models seem incomplete or outdated. As Cass (1984) states, "the concept of homosexual identity is important to understanding the homosexual perspective" (p. 165), and therefore, I present the existing theories and studies on queer identity development.

Homosexual identity formation. The four-stage model championed by Troiden (1989) is premised on the belief that homosexual identity is a choice, an

assumption that has since been refuted scientifically. While Troiden acknowledges that gay or lesbian individuals may have pre-disposed same-sex attractions, he puts considerable emphasis on the role of early socialization and the individual's interaction with her/his environment in determining whether someone eventually chooses to adopt a homosexual identity. In addition, Troiden's consistent use of the word "homosexual" when referring to gay or lesbian people is outdated, especially if compared with more current literature on queer identity. Troiden's model is non-linear, meaning that individuals may move back and forth between the following four stages:

Stage 1: Sensitization – This stage occurs before puberty. Troiden makes the assertion that social experiences from childhood play a role in an individual's self-perception as homosexual later in life (1989).

Stage 2: Identity Confusion – Troiden's second stage begins in adolescence, when gay and lesbian individuals "begin to reflect upon the idea that their feelings, behaviors, or both could be regarded as homosexual" (1989, p. 52). The idea that they might be gay conflicts with previous self-images, and they can no longer assume a heterosexual identity.

Stage 3: Identity Assumption – During this stage the gay or lesbian individual begins the process of coming out, both to themselves and to the gay community. As Troiden describes, "the homosexual identity becomes both a self-identity and a presented identity, at least to other homosexuals" (1989, p. 59). Many gays and lesbians in this

stage work through the negative stigma of being gay by becoming engaged within the gay community. Troiden refers to this process as "group alignment" (1989, p. 62).

Stage 4: Commitment – This stage sees the individual experiencing both self-acceptance and comfort with their own identity and role as a gay or lesbian person. During this stage an individual might enter into a same-sex romantic relationship (Troiden, 1989).

Troiden developed his theory through a set of studies he conducted in the 1970s and 1980s, which perhaps provides some explanation for Troiden's assumptions and choice of language, both of which seem conflicting with a more contemporary understanding about the role of nature versus nurture in determining sexual orientation. If Troiden's study were replicated today, I expect that the model might look quite different. For example, the average age at which young people are identifying as queer (a subject covered in more detail later) has declined since Troiden published his model. This shift alone could potentially change Troiden's original stage-based model. Indeed, Bilodeau and Renn's (2005) research concludes that today's traditional-aged students enter college having already begun the process of coming out, many having self-identified as "out" prior to graduating high school (p. 26). This more recent research disputes Troiden's suggestion that the "coming out" stage occurs at a later time in a queer person's life.

Homosexual identity acquisition model. Similar to Troiden, Cass (1979, 1984) identifies a set of progressive stages of LGBT identity formation and development. However, unlike Troiden, Cass's Homosexual Identity Acquisition model (1979), one of the earliest LGBT identity stage models, is composed of six stages (rather than four, as in Troiden's model), and movement from one stage to the next occurs largely out of a need to resolve cognitive dissonance. The six-stage model, I believe, allows for a more nuanced understanding of identity formation, as the individual in Cass's model moves through a process of rejecting facets of a past identity that she or he may now associate negatively with majority culture. Such rejection is necessary in order to move forward towards full personal acceptance of a new identity within a non-majority culture or cultures (Cass, 1984).

Stage 1: Identity Confusion - The individual begins to sense that their actions, thoughts, and/or feelings "may be defined as homosexual" (Cass, 1984, p. 147). This realization can generate much confusion as the individual questions past identity(s) of sexual orientation. This stage shares similarities with Troiden's Stage 2, Identity Confusion;

Stage 2: Identity Comparison - During this stage the individual may experience feelings of alienation, since the possibility of having a homosexual identity brings to light the differences between the self and those who identify as non-homosexual (Cass, 1984);

Stage 3: Identity Tolerance - The individual begins to seek community out of a feeling of necessity, in order to meet social, sexual, and emotional needs. The individual opens to the idea of *tolerance*, in contrast with truly *accepting* one's identity (Cass, 1984);

Stage 4: Identity Acceptance - As a result of meeting others who identify as homosexual, the individual begins to develop a more positive view of homosexuality, gradually building a network of homosexual friends (Cass, 1984, p. 151);

Stage 5: Identity Pride - While this stage can be very self-affirming, with a growing loyalty to the gay community (with which the individual now fully identifies), it can also include rejection of all things seen as heterosexual. This process can stir up feelings of anger over the societal stigmatization of homosexuals, which may also lead to confrontations with non-homosexuals as a means of promoting equality (Cass, 1984, p. 152); and

Stage 6: Identity Synthesis - In this stage the individual is likely to retain some of the anger and pride of Stage 5, but is able to express feelings with more emotional maturity. Identity can now be seen as multi-dimensional, with sexual orientation as but one facet. The *good homosexual* versus the *evil heterosexual* mentality eventually dissipates (Cass, 1984).

Cass (1984) tested the validity of her stages using a cross-sectional study. A questionnaire was developed based on the hypothesis that "where individuals were allocated into stages, on some external measure, those at a particular stage would acknowledge the profile of *that* stage (rather than those of other stages) as being the most accurate account of their current functioning" (1984, p. 153). Predicted response patterns were compared with the actual response patterns of study participants.

Cass obtained study participants by contacting them personally through a variety of sources (1984), so the design of her study did not require random selection of participants. Of the 227 individuals that agreed to participate, 178 (78.4%) completed and returned the anonymous survey, 109 of them identifying as male, and 69, female. Respectively, 103 and 63 were able to place themselves into one of the six stages (Cass, 1984). The remaining 12 participants were excluded from final analysis, as they reported fitting into more than one stage (1984).

Model of lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity development. D'Augelli's (1994) framework consists of six identity *processes* (rather than stages, as with Cass's model), which generally work independently of one another over the life span of the individual. The process of developing a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity, according D'Augelli, requires the individual to separate herself or himself from a societally imposed heterosexual identity while forming a new non-heterosexual identity (1994). To incorporate transgender identity development,

Renn and Bilodeau (2005), who studied the relationship between queer college students and leadership activities, modified D'Augelli's model and proposed the following six processes:

1. Exiting Heterosexual and/or Traditionally-Gendered Identity – For many students this process occurs prior to involvement in an LGBT student organization (Renn, 2006);
2. Developing a Personal LGBT Status – Within this process, LGBT students in leadership roles often experience personal growth and a commitment to their own LGBT identity (Renn, 2006);
3. Developing an LGBT Social Identity – Substantial growth is experienced by student leaders in this process the more that they "became known in LGBT student circles and across campus as LGBT people" (Renn, 2006, p. 1);
4. Becoming an LGBT Offspring – The point at which the individual begins coming out to one's family members (Renn, 2006);
5. Developing LGBT Intimacy Status – This process becomes most relevant for student leaders when leadership roles overlap or conflict with intimate relationships; and
6. Entering an LGBT Community – D'Augelli asserts that of the six processes, LGB individuals experience this process least often, due to the potential personal risk involved. However, in Renn and Bilodeau's study,

this process "played a clear role in students' identity development" (Renn, 2006 p. 2).

Bilodeau and Renn's (2007) data collection consisted of interviews focused on student involvement in queer activities both on and off campus, as well as non-queer specific leadership and other leadership activity both on campus and within the community. In terms of diversity, the group of subjects interviewed (n = 15) included seven men, five women, three female-to-male transgender students; whose ethnicities and races were distributed as follows: eight White, two Black, one biracial, one international, two Latina/o, and one White Jewish student (Bilodeau & Renn, 2007, p. 311). Participants also varied in regards to year in school, with one first-year student, four sophomores, four juniors, and six seniors.

Audio recordings of all interviews were transcribed independently by both authors, and then analyzed following a grounded theory approach. The authors noted inherent limitations to their study, since it relied upon self-reported reflections from individuals through the process of interviews. While the sample size of the study was small, Bilodeau and Renn's research provides unique perspective on the formation of queer student identity, and the results provide some useful insight into the experiences of queer college students.

The diverse makeup of Bilodeau and Renn's (2005) subjects, I believe, is one of the study's strengths, especially considering the intersecting and/or multiple identities of subjects (which will be discussed in more depth later in this

paper). While the sample size of 15 students is undeniably small, the results of the study are worthy of consideration within the context of a discussion on queer college student experiences.

Non-heterosexual male collegiate male identity typology. A weakness of some queer identity models is that they often mimic models designed to outline the identity development of heterosexual students. Just as in heterosexual communities, there are traditional as well as non-traditional models to describe non-heterosexual communities (Dilley, 2005). Dilley examines this issue in his research, developing a typology that uses three elements in defining identity for non-heterosexual men: 1) senses, 2) experiences, and 3) sensibilities (2005, p. 61). It is worth noting that, unlike the previous models discussed here, Dilley's work focused specifically on the identity of gay college students.

Dilley's study focused solely on men, which could be considered a weakness in terms of sample heterogeneity, however, from an *historical* perspective, it still serves as a useful contribution to the body of research in this field. The longitudinal study took a unique and broadly based approach to the collected oral histories of gay men reflecting upon their lives on campus, covering every year between 1945 and 1999. Subjects were selected largely through the researcher's own networking with various groups, social clubs, and academic institutions. Dilley's method was to interview 57 men who were undergraduates between 1945-1999, with each participant representing a different year within the time span.

Dilley (2005) asserts that over time, for men, multiple non-heterosexual identities have existed on college campuses. Dilley constructs six different identity types to examine ways in which the non-heterosexual male participants in his study self-identified during their undergraduate years in college, dating back to the 1940s (2005, p. 58). Dilley's "Non-Heterosexual Male Collegiate Male Identity Typology" includes the following terms: *Homosexual* - used by students from the 1940s to the late 1960s, *Gay* - late 1960s to the present, *Queer* - late 1980s to the present, *Closeted* - 1940s to the present, *"Normal"*- which was used by students from the 1940s up to the present by students who self-identified as heterosexual despite engaging in homosexual activity, and *Parallel* - used by students from 1940s to the present. Those who identified as Parallel considered themselves as "straight" when in "non-homosexual" settings, and "non-heterosexual" when in non-straight situations or contexts (2005, p. 62).

Interestingly, in Dilley's "Non-Heterosexual Male Collegiate Male Identity Typology" only one of the six identities, "Homosexual", is no longer used as an identity among the non-heterosexual participants interviewed for the study. Only those who attended college from the 1940s to the late 1960s self-identified as "homosexual", suggesting that, at least when it comes to self-identity within gay communities, the word homosexual is used less frequently than in past decades.

The *differences* among Dilley's six identity types provide a useful glimpse into the evolution of college life for non-heterosexual men over a 55-year span, and some of the changes are striking. Many men who identified as Homosexual,

for example, reported fears of dire consequences if their sexual orientation were to be made public, including expulsion from college, arrest, or some form of humiliation through publicity (such as newspapers) (Dilley, 2005). In bold contrast, Gay identity during college for some participants meant being involved in some capacity with local communities, campus groups, or political movements, all activities that could likely make a student's sexual orientation public.

The contrasts in identities exhibited in Dilley's study have implications for colleges and universities concerned with the role of engagement in the development and well-being of queer students. For example, based on Dilley's Typology, the experiences of a student who self-identifies as "gay" while in college are likely to be considerably different from a student who identifies as "closeted". If a college or university promotes itself as one that celebrates a definition of diversity that includes queer communities, then it could be argued that such an institution should be investing adequate attention, energy, and resources into the development of all students, including those from queer communities. If a queer student at such an institution remains closeted due to concerns over campus safety, for example, then it could certainly be questioned whether the diversity claim of that institution is genuine, sincere, or even entirely true.

Gay students, according to Dilley's all-male study (2005), view gay identity as an actual social construct, which is in line with the definition of identity (discussed earlier) as offered by Torres et al. (2009). Understandably, the social

interactions of *Gay* identified students with their campus communities differed considerably from those who identified as *Homosexual* or *Closeted* while in college. Gay students in Dilley's study were much more integrated into campus life than other non-heterosexual groups (2005).

In addition to its potential use as an historical piece, Dilley's research is important in that it can serve as a reminder of the inevitability of social change. While some who are active in current queer movements experience frustration from what they may see as a slow pace of change (Brauer, 2012), Dilley's research offers testimony of change that has indeed occurred (at least for non-heterosexual men) in the past half century. Brauer's essay (discussed in more depth later) about the changes she witnessed at the University of Vermont is one example of how institutional evolution towards increased inclusiveness can occur (2012). Knowing that just 40 years ago being openly gay was considered a crime, for example, could provide hope that positive change towards equality *is* happening, and that a brighter future for queer citizens exists in this country.

Earlier in this review I discussed the unique cultural experiences and histories that racially and ethnically diverse students bring to college. Much in the same way, young queer people have pre-college experiences, shared cultures and histories of their own that can have a significant impact on their college years. The subject of queer pre-college experiences is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

Pre-College Queer Student Experiences

How are pre-college experiences relevant to a discussion on queer college students? Queer students in the K-12 system frequently encounter feelings of tension, fear, and loneliness as well as an inequity of available resources at school (Abbott & Liddell, 1996). The disdain, public scorn and mistreatment of queer U.S. citizens have a variety of social repercussions, a prominent example being bullying in K-12 schools. While it may be common for incoming freshmen to approach college life as a "fresh start," many queer students may enter college with anxiety and fear, viewing it as yet another learning institution that could be potentially dangerous and unpredictable to them. Topics discussed within this section on the middle and high school experiences of queer youth include the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) longitudinal study on bullying, queer students and suicide risk, and the potential relationship between student activism and increased self-efficacy.

Middle and high school bullying. For K-12 students who may be easy targets for bullies, personal safety is a major concern. For the purposes of this research, I will be using Biegel and Kuehl's (2010) definition of bullying, which is "behavior ranging from name-calling, threats, and social exclusion to serious criminal acts of libel and repeated physical attacks. Pervasive bullying is perhaps best seen as a type of peer harassment and mistreatment, and it continues to negatively affect persons of every race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual identity" (p. 43).

Considering the statistics on the experiences of queer middle and high school youth (discussed in the next section), being apprehensive about college is reasonable. As such, if queer college students grapple with issues of safety or feeling as if they are on the margins of the campus community, college and university administrations concerned with issues of student attrition and completion rates should pay close attention to the quality and availability of services offered to queer student populations.

GLSEN's annual school climate survey. To measure queer students' perceptions of school safety, the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) has been conducting a longitudinal study since 1999, surveying 7,898 middle and high school students between the ages of 13 and 21 (GLSEN, 2014). Of the available research on school bullying experiences of queer youth, the GLSEN study is one of the most informative, extensive, and current.

The GLSEN survey asks participants to respond to questions based on their individual recollections of the previous school year. Among the more striking figures from the GLSEN 2013 data (GLSEN, 2014):

- 74.1 percent of queer students heard the word "gay" used negatively (e.g., "that's so gay") frequently or often at school, and 90.8 percent reported feeling distress over the use of this language;
- 74.1 percent of queer students reported being verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation, and 55.2 percent because of their gender expression;

- 32.6 percent of queer students reported being physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) because of their sexual orientation, 22.7 percent because of their gender expression;
- 16.5 percent were physically assaulted (e.g. punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) due to their sexual orientation, 11.4 percent because of their gender expression;
- 56.7 percent of those students who were harassed or assaulted did not report incidents to school staff, most believing that little to no action would be taken, or that reporting it could actually make things worse;
- Among students who did report being harassed or assaulted, 61.6 percent reported that school staff took no action to remedy the situation, or they told the student to ignore it.

These data provide a useful insight as to the challenges non-majority students face on account of their identity, multiple identities, or in some cases, identity as *perceived* by peers.

The 2013 data from GLSEN's longitudinal study of queer middle and high-school students reveal differences in student school experiences when it comes to safety and victimization, based on sexual orientation and gender expression across the following racial/ethnic group categories: White or European American, Hispanic or Latino, Black/African American, Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander, and multiracial (2014, p. 83) (see Table 1).

Table 1

Student Experiences of Safety and Victimization at School Across Racial/Ethnic Groups

	Feel Unsafe %		Verbal Harassment %		Physical Harassment %		Physical Assault %	
n = 7378	SO	GE	SO	GE	SO	GE	SO	GE
White or European American (68.1%)	55.6	38.1	50.1	36.8	18.5	15.4	8.3	5.6
Hispanic or Latino (any race) (14.7%)	49.8	37.9	49.8	36.2	17.3	13.5	8.2	6.4
Black or African American (3.3%)	50.0	33.3	47.9	35.2	14.6	10.1	5.4	3.8
Asian or Pacific Islander (2.7%)	47.2	30.7	32.2	25.9	10.6	8.1	5.0	3.0
Multiracial (8.9%)	57.0	38.0	54.2	39.5	21.0	15.0	10.8	8.0

Note. SO = Sexual Orientation, GE = Gender Expression. Numbers listed are percentages. (source: GLSEN, 2014, pp. 82-87).

According to the authors of the GLSEN study, what remains unknown from these results are the factors that may explain the differences across racial/ethnic groups. The authors speculate that "it may be that racial/ethnic differences are partly a function of the varying characteristics of schools that youth attend", or that "these differences may be related to how race/ethnicity

manifests itself within the school's social network or to other issues with peers, such as how out students are about their LGBT identity" (2012, p. 87).

One recommendation from this study is the need for further research to examine the causes for such racial/ethnic differences in the school experiences of queer youth (GLSEN, 2012). GLSEN also notes that despite reported differences by racial/ethnic identity, significant numbers of queer students reported hostile school experiences related to their sexual orientation and gender expression, regardless of their race or ethnicity.

Bullying and suicide risk among queer students. A key question Robinson and Espelage (2012) sought to answer in their study was "Does the higher rate of victimization by bullying explain the elevated risk levels of LGBTQ-identified youth?" (2012, p. 309). Their study had a large sample consisting of 11,337 students from 30 Wisconsin schools in Dane County, Wisconsin, grades 7-12. Data were collected anonymously in 2008-2009 through an online survey completed by 3,031 middle school (grades 7-8), and 8,306 high school (grades 9-12) students, among which a total 588 (5.2%) self-identified as queer. To obtain queer identification, the survey asked students to identify themselves as "gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning, transgender, or none of the above" (p. 310). Students considered "heterosexual identified" (n = 10,749) were those who answered "none of the above" in addition to choosing none of the L, G, B, T or Q categories. The survey included 117 items on topics including "sexual identity, suicide, sexual behavior, drug usage, bullying, and victimization." (p. 310).

Among the study's findings:

- Queer-identification is a significant predictor of increased risk for suicide ideation, suicide attempts, and unexcused absences;
- In terms of unexcused absences, those who are queer-identified were "100% more likely to skip school than are heterosexual-identified peers with similar demographics" (p. 313). Demographics include factors such age, race, gender, and socioeconomic status;
- When demographic and victimization profiles were similar between heterosexual-identified and queer-identified students within the same school, queer-identified students were "3.3 times as likely to think about suicide", "3.0 times as likely to attempt suicide", and "1.4 times as likely to skip school." (p. 313).

Based on the results of their study, Robinson and Espelage (2012) concluded that, even after accounting for peer victimization differences, there is strong evidence that disparities exist in the level of risk between queer-identified and heterosexual-identified students. The researchers also suggest that this research may be useful in current policy debates regarding in-school discussions of sexual identity and bullying, as well as a more supportive learning environment for sexual minorities" (2012, p. 316).

Queer victims of bullying are reportedly at an increased risk of poor performance in school, often due to higher levels of absenteeism. For example, a study of a representative sample of 4,159 Massachusetts public high schoolers

(grades 9-12) found that one quarter of queer youths reported having missed school in the past month, when compared to just 5 percent of non-LGBTQ students (Garofalo, Wolf, Kessel, Palfrey, & Durant, 1998). Considering that low high school performance can limit a student's college choices and options, increased absenteeism could clearly put queer students at a disadvantage before they even begin applying to colleges.

Sexual orientation victimization (SOV). Another study (D'Augelli, Pilkington, & Hershberger, 2002) examined student victimization in high schools based on sexual orientation, including direct experiences of both the victims of bullying and the witnesses of victimization (p. 148). Participants in this study were drawn from "social and recreational groups" in the United States and Canada, plus one youth group from New Zealand (D'Augelli et al., 2002, p. 150), the breakdown of groups of participants were as follows: 28 youth groups from 20 U.S. states, eight youth groups from five Canadian provinces, one youth group in New Zealand, and 20 college or university queer student organizations (15 U.S. and 5 Canadian) (D'Augelli et al., 2002, p. 150).

Approximately 1,000 surveys were mailed to individuals who had been designated to distribute surveys to their groups. A total of 552 surveys were returned, resulting in a final sample of 350 youths aged 21 and younger, the breakdown of self-identification was as follows: 56 percent male (83% of whom identified as gay, 16% bisexual but "mostly gay", 1% bisexual), and 44 percent

female (64% self-identifying as lesbian, 24% bisexual but "mostly gay", 12% bisexual) (D'Augelli et al., 2002, p.151).

The study examined the "experiences of a geographically diverse sample of youths with Verbal and Physical Sexual Orientation Victimization (SOV) in high school, as well as their fears of victimization in school" (D'Augelli et al., 2002, p. 150). Among the study's findings:

- 59 percent reported verbal abuse, while 11 percent reported having experienced physical assault;
- Males (15%) were physically assaulted more often than females (7%);
- Higher incidences of SOV were reported by those who were more publically open about their sexual orientation, or who had a "history of more gender atypical behavior" (p. 148);
- Fear of verbal abuse at school was higher among males; 34 percent males and 20 percent females reported being "very or extremely afraid" of verbal abuse (p. 158). Twenty-five percent of males and nine percent of females reported being "very or extremely afraid" of physical attacks at school (p. 158).

Participants in the study reported being aware of their same-sex attractions around age ten or eleven (median age for males being 10; median age of 11.1 for females) (D'Augelli et al., 2002). According to Cegler (2012), recent studies (Ryan, 2009, Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003, Ryan & Futterman, 1998) indicate the current coming out age as being between 13.5 and 16 years, while in

the 1970s the average age was closer to the mid-20s. This change could possibly be attributed to the United States' evolution towards more accepting views of queer people, thus increasing the comfort level for embracing one's sexual or gender identity at an earlier age (i.e. pre-college) (Patton, Kortegast, & Javier, 2011). This reported decline in the average age at which students are coming out, may be changing the queer college student demographic, and as a result, past developmental models, while still providing an essential foundational understanding, should be used with some caution, or at least not relied upon as the sole means of explaining the depth of queer student experiences (Patton et al., 2011).

School activism and self-efficacy. Taines (2012) conducted a study of urban youth from financially disadvantaged public high schools to determine whether involvement in school activism had an impact on self-efficacy. The Taines (2012) study investigated factors that can impact whether disadvantaged students graduate from high school, let alone make it to college. While the study suffers from a small sample size, it does shed some light on the role that engagement, in this case activism, can play in raising student esteem and self-efficacy. Although the study was not queer specific, it raises the question of whether political engagement and/or activism is beneficial for queer youth who may be dealing with similar feelings of alienation within their schools. Further research is warranted, I believe, to determine whether Taines's (2012) study may

be generalized to other diverse student populations that may feel alienated by their learning institution.

Thirteen students were interviewed for the study. Each was involved in the Mobilize 4 Change School Activism Program, a two-year program that engages urban students in the process of working to improve their own educational system (Taines, 2012). After getting to know each participant personally and gaining their trust, Taines proceeded to interview them all before, during, and after their experience with the activism program (2012).

Taines's findings reveal that, at least in this study, activism indeed has an impact on factors such as individual self-efficacy, more specifically political self-efficacy (2012). Prior to beginning the program all students were at various levels of what Taines calls a "continuum of alienation" (2012, p. 78). At the conclusion of the two-year program, the students who responded most favorably to the experience were those who, at the onset of the program, were at the lower end of the alienation continuum (meaning they experienced lower levels of alienation). Those students who were experiencing extreme levels of alienation within the educational system retained high levels of alienation, powerlessness, and isolation (Taines, 2012).

The effects of negative queer student pre-college experiences can last well into college. For students fortunate enough to have strong support networks in high school (e.g., Gay-Straight Alliance), the experience of college may, in contrast, be quite daunting and overwhelming depending on the support and

resources available to queer college students at their particular institution. The following section will highlight issues related to campus climates and queer college students, including topics of student leadership and engagement, multiple identities, and college admissions practices.

Queer College Student Life

Based on 2011-2012 numbers from the National Center for Education Statistics, there are 4,706 two and four-year degree granting institutions in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). According to the Consortium of Directors of LGBT Resources in Higher Education, only 176 campuses (3.7%) in this country currently staff at least one half-time person whose work focuses mainly on services for queer students (Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals, 2012).

Queer students that attend colleges or universities that provide little or no queer services or programming may perceive that they are not valued at their institution of choice. Schueler, Hoffman, and Peterson (2009) found that students in campus environments that are non-responsive to their needs run the risk of becoming disengaged. College can be a time of profound self-discovery for many young people, but not always a positive experience for non-majority students, especially if they attend institutions that may appear to cater primarily to the needs of majority populations. Despite the strides towards public acceptance of queer communities in recent years, it is not hard to picture queer

college students struggling with their non-majority status, especially if they feel being pushed to the margins of their college campuses.

Student leadership and engagement. If engagement (in this context of leadership I am referring to campus, community and/or civic engagement) promotes positive outcomes for students overall (e.g., such as increased retention or higher self-efficacy), it is feasible that engagement could have similar success, perhaps in varying degrees, with different subsets of a campus populations. Student populations relevant to this discussion could be any groups considered "at-risk" or non-majority. This portion of the paper will explore some of the empirical research pertaining to the role of leadership and engagement in college student development.

"Student involvement", as defined by Astin (1985), refers to "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 36). The quality and level of student involvement, such as participation in student organizations, frequent interaction with faculty, and time spent on campus, correlate directly with learning (1985). Astin's involvement theory holds particular value for policy makers within higher education. The effectiveness of any policy or practice within education, reports Astin, depends upon its capacity to increase student involvement (1985, p. 36). Astin believes that, within the field of psychology, involvement has similarities to motivation. Involvement, however, goes beyond a mere psychological state to something that is more measurable, more subject to direct observation within empirical

studies (1985, p. 36). While Astin's research does not specifically address queer student development, it does place emphasis on the importance of student involvement during college, which I believe has application to the study of the queer college experience.

There is general evidence that college students who take on leadership roles experience some level of development and learning as a result of their involvement (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). There are also indications that students involved in various student organizations, including those related to identities (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation) experience positive outcomes that are tied to identity development (Renn, 2006). Indeed, Renn asserts that there are both leadership and psychosocial identity outcomes for queer students who take on leadership roles within queer-related student organizations.

Renn (2007) studied the relationship between queer students and leadership activities, providing a brief overview and critique of existing models that examine Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) identity and highlighting gaps that could be opportunities for future research. Two research questions served as the basis for Renn's article:

1. "What variations exist among the gender and sexual orientation and leadership identities of students who lead LGBT campus groups?" (p. 312); and
2. "In what ways if any do gender and sexual orientation and leadership identities interact for these students?" (p. 312)

While the existing development models presented previously can be useful in identifying a stage where an individual may be in terms of their sexual identity, most models do not account for the variation that may exist among queer individuals *within* the different stages (Renn, 2007, p. 312). Renn's study illustrates how different students' identities may vary within the same stage. For example, Renn makes a distinction between "gay" and "queer". A student that self-identifies as "queer" might respond to campus administration in ways that may be considered more radical than a student who identifies as "gay" (p. 313). As other researchers have indicated (Dilley, 2005, Rhoads, 1998) definitions of "queer" often contain a political or activist component that may not be as prevalent for someone who identifies solely as LGB or T. Renn used Dilley's (2005) definition of "gay", which is cited as follows:

> "Gay – publicly acknowledged/announced feelings/attractions; often involved within institutional systems to create change. Publicly socialized with other non-heterosexuals" (p. 313).

Identities that Renn examined within her article are: (1) LGBT, (2) Queer, (3) Leader, and (4) Activist (2007). Many of the participants in Renn's study take on more than one identity, identifying not only as "gay" or "activist", for example, but in many cases "gay activist" or "queer leader" (p. 319). Through their personal experiences in leadership activities, these students reported having come to view their sexual orientation or gender identity as inseparable from their roles as leaders and activists (2007).

Renn expanded upon Dilley's work to include women, bisexual men and transgender students, labeling this new category "LGB(T)" (p. 319). Most queer development models are based on studies of lesbian and gay individuals, often failing to include transgender. One explanation for this omission of transgender is that it refers to *gender* identity rather than sexual identity/orientation. However, it could be argued that transgender individuals, being part of the queer community, experience similar stigma and marginalization from society and its institutions, and as such should be included in theories and models pertaining to LGB identity development. For this reason, Renn's study does stand out above other identity theories that exclude transgender students.

While existing empirical research conducted on queer college students offers a glimpse into gay student life, there remains a gap in understanding the role that student engagement can play in the personal development of queer students. Renn and Bilodeau (2005) pose the following question: "What, if any, is the relationship between involvement in leadership of an LGBT student organization and student outcomes related to (1) leadership development and (2) LGBT identity?" (p. 343).

Using the Leadership Identity Development (LID) model (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005), Renn and Bilodeau (2005) explored the relationship between queer students and campus engagement in queer issues to identify the development of leadership qualities in queer students, based on the level and type of their engagement. The LID model was developed using the

leadership identity development theory as a foundation, a theory that integrates student development and leadership perspectives to address “a research gap on student leadership development” (Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, & Mainella, 2006, p. 401). The LID model (Komives et al., 2005) consists of the following six stages:

Stage 1: Awareness – Student is able to see leadership that is happening around them, but does not identify self as a leader (Komives et al., 2005);

Stage 2: Exploration/Engagement – Intentional involvement in groups begins, which helps to build self-confidence and develop personal skills (Komives et al., 2005);

Stage 3: Leader Identified – Student views individual accomplishment as important, takes on different roles within groups (Komives et al., 2005);

Stage 4: Leadership Differentiated – Develops more complex understanding of leadership, learning group and team skills. Begins to see that leadership is more than a title (Komives et al., 2005);

Stage 5: Generativity – Student begins to contribute to the learning of others, perhaps through a mentoring role. Increased commitment to personal passions occurs, as well as responsibility for sustaining groups/organizations (Komives et al., 2005); and

Stage 6: Integration/Synthesis - At this stage leadership is considered a lifelong developmental process. Student interested in leaving things better than they were at the start of their involvement with group/organization. Is able to apply learning from one context to another (Komives et al., 2005).

Renn and Bilodeau (2005) reported that queer student activities provide a context allowing for development across all of D'Augelli's six processes (2005). The researchers concluded that greater involvement in queer issues does indeed lend itself to the development of a positive identity for queer students. Some points of interest from the study:

- Some students speak of similar intersections between their involvement activities, the process of coming out, and their ability to identify role models (Renn & Bilodeau, 2005). For example, one student commented on how much easier it is to be "out" since she has started surrounding herself with others who are already out themselves. The concept of "community", I believe, may be shown to be a key component in the identity development of queer students. This affirms research on the concept of belonging as a human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1943).
- Peers can play a key role in getting students involved, which in turn can facilitate development of queer identity (Renn & Bilodeau, 2005). Thus, having visibly out queer students on campus can be necessary to the

formation of community. Without queer student peers it may be very difficult for "questioning" students, for example, to find their link to queer community on- or off-campus.

While queer student organizations play a role in student identity development throughout all of D'Augelli's framework, the study by Renn and Bilodeau (2005) showed that process six, *Entering an LGBT Community*, is particularly relevant to queer student leadership (Renn, 2006). Interestingly, D'Augelli himself asserts that many queer individuals never even reach process six, often over concerns with personal safety, supporting the argument for safe campus climates for *all* students, faculty and staff.

The role of campus climate. Why should colleges and universities be concerned about creating a positive college experience for queer students? According to Rankin (2005), queer individuals, be they employees or students, often encounter feelings of marginalization on today's college campuses. As more colleges and universities attempt to present a campus culture that celebrates of the value in cultural diversity, the more these institutions may feel increased pressure to address issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Biegel and Kuehl (2010) define the term *school climate* as generally encompassing "school culture, mood, the degree to which people get along, respect for differences, motivation, pride, and vision" (p. 10). If colleges and universities are not keeping up with society by creating a more welcoming

climate for queer individuals, what might be the consequences for these students? What are the implications for higher education? The next portion of this chapter will explore, in part, the evolution of campus climate for queer students over the past (roughly) 50 years, along with some key issues relevant to improving campus climates for queer students.

For students that have experienced anti-queer sentiment prior to college, there may be deeply rooted issues of low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, anxiety and learned helplessness, and in some cases (as exhibited in the GLSEN study) the belief that reporting incidents of bullying or harassment is futile. As previously mentioned, queer students continuing on to college may be starting their college years with an intuitive sense that they are part of the out-group, unsupported, or unsafe.

Campus climate study. According to Rankin (2005), the past two decades of research on campus climate show that college campuses, in general, demonstrate downright hostile attitudes towards queer members of the overall campus community, including students, faculty and staff (Rankin, 2005, p. 20). Rankin cites existing literature to identify what she considers as "predictors of positive attitudes toward LGBT people" on campus, listed as follows: (1) Knowing someone who is LGBT (Maleney, Williams, & Geller, 1997; Norris & Kaniasty, 1991); (2) Being comfortable with one's own sexual identity (Simoni, 1996); (3) Being female (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1997); (4) Not being a first-year student (Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, & Robinson-Keilig, 2004; Malaney, Williams, &

Geller, 1997); and (5) Resident assistants and other student affairs staff appear to be more sensitive to the issues and concerns of LGBT students than the rest of the general student, staff, or faculty populations (Brown et al.)(Rankin, 2005).

Rankin's (2005), study was designed to measure, on a national level, the campus climate for LGBTQ people by examining the following:

1. Experiences of queer people on campus;

2. How queer persons perceive campus climate for queer people; and

3. Perceptions of queer people of their institution's response to queer issues and concerns (Rankin, 2005, p. 18).

Participants in the study, including 1,669 self-identified queer persons, came from 14 campuses, 10 public and four private colleges or universities. While it may seem safe to expect attitudes towards sexual minorities to be more evolved at the college level than high school, the results of Rankin's (2005) study reveal levels of hostility towards queer people are actually similar to the GLSEN research on middle and high school students. Despite the increased complexity of thought that is expected at the college level, Rankin's (2005) study suggests that perceptions of climate issues for queer people do not necessarily evolve between K-12 and college. Some highlights of Rankin's study are as follows (2005):

- More than one-third of queer undergraduate respondents (36%) report having experienced harassment within the past year;

- The most common form of reported harassment is derogatory remarks (89%), with other types including:
    - Spoken harassment or threats (48%)
    - Anti-LGBT graffiti (39%)
    - Pressure to hide one's gender or sexual identity (39%)
    - Written comments (33%)
    - Physical assaults (reported by eleven respondents);
- Of those who were harassed, 79 percent said the source of harassment was students;
- 20 percent feared for their physical safety based on either their sexual orientation or gender identity;
- 73 percent of faculty, 73 percent of staff, 74 percent of students, and 81 percent of administrators described the climate on their campus as being homophobic towards queer people (p. 18).

Rankin (2005) suggested that findings illustrate a need for intervention strategies specifically aimed at campus student populations. The fact that an overwhelming majority of faculty, staff, students, and particularly *administrators* believe that their campus climate is homophobic certainly seems to indicate environments that are not welcoming towards queer students. This supports the notion, I believe, that queer students are at academic risk compared to non-queer students who generally have never feared for their own safety based solely on their sexual orientation or gender identity. In fact, a majority of respondents

saw the campus climate as being quite different for non-queer people, describing it as follows: friendly (93%), concerned (75%), and respectful (80%) (Rankin, 2005).

Multiple perspectives approach to assessing campus climate. In their assessment of campus climate issues for queer college students, Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, and Robinson-Keilig (2004) surveyed self-identified queer students, non-identified queer students (which the researchers labeled "general students"), faculty, staff, and residence hall assistants at a Midwestern, Canadian, state research university. Brown et al. (2004) contend that in most studies on campus climate, queer students report feelings of "fear and hypervigilance" as a result of experiencing harassment and discrimination due to their sexual orientation (p. 8).

Brown et al. (2004) go beyond the perspective of queer students to include the views, opinions and concerns of the broader campus community. In this respect, this study was rather unique, since there appears to be scant research that measures the attitudes of faculty and staff towards queer student issues. Whether positive or negative, the attitudes expressed by faculty, staff, and other members of the campus community play a role in shaping the climate (e.g., safe versus hostile) towards queer and other students.

Brown et al. (2004) used a multiple perspectives approach in their study of campus climate as experienced by queer students. Perspectives were collected from the following, with sample size representing actual survey return rate: (1) a stratified random sample of general undergraduate students (n = 253); (2)

residence hall assistants (*n* = 105); (3) a stratified random sample of faculty from undergraduate colleges (*n*=126); and (4) a random sample of student affairs staff (*n* = 41). The return rate for the survey was quite high among all four groups, the lowest participation being 82 percent (general undergraduate students).

The study used three distinctly different surveys for the following groups: (a) general students and resident hall assistants; (b) faculty and student affairs staff; and (c) queer students (Brown et al., 2004). All non-queer participants completed an additional survey to help determine attitudes toward queer issues. Campus climate was then assessed using the following survey items: (a) knowledge level about queer concerns, history and culture; (b) involvement level in queer programs and events; (c) perceptions of anti-queer attitudes on campus, and (d) graffiti sightings.

The results of the study show that perceptions of campus climate for queer students varied among the different groups surveyed (Brown et al., 2004). Personal characteristics of respondents correlated with their attitudes, experiences, behaviors, and perceptions of campus climate. Of all the groups surveyed, queer students reported the most negative views of campus climate. Based on these findings, Brown et al. recommended creating opportunities for dialog among different campus community groups in order to achieve a more mutual understanding among the different groups (2004).

Improving campus climate for queer students. Schueler, Hoffman, and Peterson (2009) identified four major issues that colleges and universities

must address in order to create a safe and welcoming campus climate for queer students.

Invisibility – Feeling invisible on campus can serve as an obstacle to developing a positive self-concept. The absence of queer student centers on most campuses contributes to this invisibility (Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenberg, 2002). Additional factors that can impact queer student visibility: (1) A lack of openly out members of faculty, staff, and administration who can act as positive role models with whom students can identify (Sanlo, 1998; Yescavage & Alexander, 1997); and (2) a lack of resources on campus for queer students (Rankin, 2003).

Multiple Social Identities – As already mentioned, the study of multiple identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation) is an emerging area of research relating to queer students. When such identities clash with socially contextual influences such as family background and life experiences (Abes & Jones, 2004; Jones & McEwen, 2000), students may feel pressured to choose one identity over others, rather than feel free to openly express or explore all of their identities.

Homophobia - Perlesz, Brown, Lindsay, McNair, deVaus and Pitts (2006) define homophobia as “the fear and loathing of those identifying as lesbian, gay, or bisexual often accompanied by feelings of anxiety, disgust, aversion, anger and hostility” (p. 183). Homophobia can present itself on campus both in and outside of the classroom. Unfortunately, the data and studies cited by Schueler

et al. (2009) regarding various forms of campus homophobia were not particularly current (most statistics pre-date 2003). Still, it is important to recognize that the role that homophobic attitudes play in violence against queer students. Homophobic attitudes are more prominent in collegiate athletics than elsewhere on campus, with virtually no positive queer role models for student athletes, often contributing to athletes hiding their sexual orientation out of fear of retaliation from peers and coaches (Salkever & Worthington, 1998). An additional concern regarding homophobia on campus is the problem of *internalized homophobia*, which Schueler et al. (2009) described as a manifestation of the fear of homosexuality that resides within the larger culture in which queer individuals are raised. This internalized fear in queer students can result in homophobic mistreatment of themselves, others, or both (Obear, 1991; Palma & Stanley, 2002).

Heteronormative Culture – Perlesz et al. (2006) define heteronormativity as "the uncritical adoption of heterosexuality as an established norm or standard" (p. 183). Society sends the message that heterosexuality is normal and right, and any other orientation is abnormal and wrong. Similarly, gender is determined and assigned at birth, with little room for questioning. These messages feed into fears such as homophobia and transphobia, which in turn can make the very personal search for sexual and gender identity a rather frightening process for queer individuals. Colleges and universities that do not provide services for queer students (e.g., through the creation of queer students

centers) may be perpetuating a heteronormative campus climate that can be an unwelcoming place for anyone considered outside of "the norm" (Schueler et al., 2009).

Due (in part) to institutionalized homophobia and heterosexism[2] in U.S. society, many higher education institutions struggle with their capacity to adequately support queer students, faculty and staff (Patton et al., 2011). Thus, millennial students, who in general tend to have high expectations when it comes to services, may find some colleges and universities to be blatantly unwelcoming towards queer students, despite what the institutional admissions or promotional materials may say about embracing diversity (Patton et al., 2011).

Intersecting multiple identities. As previously mentioned, an emerging area of research in the study of queer college students regards the complexities involving multiple intersecting identities (race, socio-economic status, disability to name just a few). As with any diverse student populations on campus, issues faced by queer students are multifaceted and "require approaches that do not treat them as a monolithic group" (Schueler et al., 2009, p. 77). In fact, the study of intersecting multiple identities may well be one of the most challenging and complicated areas of study concerning identity formation, sexual orientation, and gender identity. For example, a student who is Hmong, first generation in college, and lesbian will likely have a notably different college experience than a

[2] "Heterosexism is the system by which heterosexuality is assumed to be the only acceptable and viable life option and hence to be superior, more natural, and dominant." (Perlesz et. al. (2006, p. 183))

White, transgendered student who lives with a hidden disability. The impact from the intersection of these multiple identities in each of these examples can be very significant, yet, one could imagine, potentially challenging for students, institutions, and researchers. At the same time, the capacity for learning and knowing about oneself and others within a campus community that nurtures the understanding of all identities is potentially limitless. I would argue that any college or university that strives to embrace diversity is missing opportunities for growth if they are not encouraging and inviting all members of the campus community to celebrate each of their individual identities.

Queer students of color, those who are differently abled, or those of lower income status face additional challenges even within structures that may typically be queer friendly. For queer students with multiple intersecting, or even conflicting identities[3], finding a place to fit in can be an unexpected struggle (Patton et al., 2011). Thus, an ongoing challenge for colleges and universities aiming to create welcoming environments for queer students is to consider how the uniqueness of identity dualities can affect queer students and their individual student development in different ways. This is an area of study that warrants greater attention than existing studies provide.

College and university admissions policies and practices. The number of institutions that are actively seeking to recruit new queer students as

[3] An example of a conflicting identity might be a queer activist who is also active with a religious group, organization, or church that is overtly intolerant of queer communities.

part of their campus diversity efforts has slowly been increasing in recent years (Schueler et al., 2009). In 2009 Dartmouth College began outreach to students who specified interest in queer community on their admissions applications, and in 2010 the University of Pennsylvania began similar outreach to queer students (Jaschik, 2010). Unfortunately, the amount of literature on this emerging trend remains scant (Cegler, 2012).

Not only does this admissions practice have the potential for easing some queer uncertainty (and likely anxiety and fear as well) over the climate of a given learning institution, but it also can send an affirming message to potential students that *all* students are a valued part of a truly diverse campus community. This practice also has implications for the issue (discussed earlier) of queer students feeling invisible on campus (Schueler et al., 2009).

Beyond the Department of Education's required tracking of race and ethnicity, many college and university admission offices also track factors such as disability, first-generation status, and socio-economic status (Rigol, 2003). In 2002, a college fair in Boston made history by becoming the first documented program to actively target queer students in college recruitment efforts (Cegler, 2012). Only as recently as the past few years have colleges begun to directly seek out queer students in student recruitment practices (2012).

In addition to this "active" recruitment of queer students, many institutions are participating in "passive" methods of recruiting (Cegler, 2012). Campus Pride, for example, is a third-party organization that rates the campus climate of

colleges and universities for prospective students (Campus Pride, n.d.). Institutions can voluntarily take Campus Pride's assessment, after which they are given a rating from one to five stars which, if they choose, is then published on Campus Pride's website (www.campuspride.org). Institutions may also request to not have their assessment results listed (Cegler, 2012).

Supporters of the queer student experience may find encouragement in the efforts of organizations such as Campus Pride. Campus Pride is a non-profit, primarily volunteer-run organization staffed by student leaders and organizations seeking to create safer and more equitable campus environments for queer students (Cegler, 2012). It is an example of students taking initiative to create the change that they believe is necessary for themselves and for future generations of queer students.

The institution as an agent of social change. History has shown that higher education can often serve as a breeding ground for social change (Astin, 1985; Levine, 1980; Williams & McGreevy, 2004). Considering the historical milestones of social change that involved engaged college students (e.g., Free Speech, Civil Rights, Vietnam War demonstrations, and the Women's Movement), the potential for higher education to create a culture where significant, positive change in the lives of queer college students certainly exists. The larger outcome of such change may contribute to the eventual breakdown of existing sociocultural barriers that prevent queer persons from being treated as equal citizens in this country.

Campus queer allies. Washington and Evans (1991) define *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). Wall, Washington, Evans, and Papish (2000) discuss the critical function that colleges and universities can play in helping students unlearn negative stereotypes or mistruths about sexual orientation, through the facilitation of LGBTQ awareness programming geared at college students**.** Prior to the development of any such programs, assessment is recommended to determine characteristics of the audience, but perhaps more importantly, the current campus climate (Wall et al., 2000).

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) has been collecting data on the attitudes of incoming first-year college students since 1966, through the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey. Among the findings from the 2012 CIRP Freshman Survey is an increase in student support for same-sex marriage, which rose from 71.3 percent in 2011 to 75 percent (HERI, 2012). This rise in support of marriage equality among youth in the United States, I believe, is a sign that colleges and universities are seeing historical numbers of potential allies on their campuses.

This change in student attitudes towards marriage equality as seen in the 2012 CIRP data, in my opinion, suggests that the time is ripe for increased ally training and/or programming on college campuses. Such training "typically

includes discussion on characteristics of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students, including their identity development, special counseling and helping skills to assist them, and resources for referral" (Mueller & Cole, 2009). Engaging students in discussion on sexual orientation, including heterosexual identity development, can be helpful to students faced with issues related to sexual orientation, such as living with a gay roommate, dealing with homophobia in others, or questioning their own sexual orientation (2009). In addition, I believe that increasing opportunities for LGBTQA discussion and education for the entire campus community increases potential for greater understanding and appreciation of diversity, which in turn could contribute a safer campus climate, not to mention wider societal acceptance and understanding of queer individuals and families.

Empirical research. How does empirical research fit into a discussion on queer college life and campus climate? In the absence of empirical research and data, the creation of policy and laws protecting students (as well as faculty, staff, and queer communities in general) may tend to rely more heavily upon opinion rather than facts. Although the role of research in swaying policy decisions has been "largely unrealized" (Welner, 2000, p. 8), empirical facts carry far more weight in terms of accountability than public opinion. Welner (2000) presents four ways in which research in social science can impact the end result of litigation

1. A researcher can testify as an expert witness in a case, applying their own research to the known facts of the case (Welner, 2000);
2. A researcher can file a *Brandeis Brief* [4], in which case an argument would be presented that the court should take research into account (Welner, 2000);
3. Social science research can influence and change popular opinion (examples have been seen in cases on race, ethnicity and sexual orientation), which can have an indirect impact on elections, which then affect the "ideological makeup of courts," (Welner, 2000, p. 19); and
4. Changes in popular opinion can seep into the interpersonal interactions judges have in their daily lives, which can impact the ways in which they approach a case (Welner, 2000, p. 19).

There are examples of institutions creating initiatives to make their campuses more inclusive for queer students. One such example is the University of Vermont (UVM), which, according to Bauer (2012) has been listed as one of the United States' best universities in terms of "adopting practices, policies, and structures that are inclusive of people identifying as LGBTQ" (Windmeyer, 2011). Social change, while often painfully slow (especially for those pushing for change), can build momentum towards a pivotal moment when public support begins to swell. At UVM the pivotal moment for a more queer-friendly campus

[4] Welner cites Rosen (1972) to define *Brandeis Briefs*, which is defined as "Amicus briefs that present appellate courts with social science arguments, as opposed to legal arguments." (Welner, 2012, p. 9)

began with the hiring of a tenure-track faculty member who was able to bring queer issues into focus and convince others of the importance of the issues and how they affected the campus community (Brauer, 2012). Within the span of approximately five years, UVM managed to establish an LGBTQA center on campus, approve its first queer-focused undergraduate course, adapt its non-discrimination and harassment policies to include sexual and gender identity, and begin offering a minor in Sexuality and Gender Identity Studies (Brauer, 2012).

Scholars who conduct research within higher education are a largely untapped resource for social change on campus, particularly related to the court systems and the creation of policy (Welner, 2012). Citing *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), Welner asserts that legal scholars generally view decisions of the court to be "powerfully influenced by public opinion" (2012, p. 8). However, despite the power of public opinion, empirical research can be very influential when it comes to decision-making in legal matters (2012).

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Existing research on the relationship between queer college students and their motivation to engage in on- or off-campus activities relevant to queer communities or causes, although scant, suggests that being involved in such activities produces beneficial outcomes for this population of students. As noted in the previous chapter, a gap exists in current literature regarding the role that student engagement can play in the personal development of queer students, especially in the context of two-year institutions. The purpose of this study is to identify factors that motivate queer college students and their allies to become involved with queer student organizations or activities that support LGBTQ issues at a two-year college. In doing so, this study aims to contribute new scholarly knowledge on the subject.

Personal History and Lens Through Which I Approach This Study

I approached this study as someone who identifies as queer, an activist, and as a queer activist. I believe my experience as a college student has been enhanced through my personal engagement in on- and off-campus activities, student groups, and political activism. The topic of my Master's paper in 1996, for example, was college student activism, both its history and the state of student activism at the time. As a doctoral student I was fortunate to be involved as an instructor and adviser for the GLBTQA Leadership Year, which culminated in a May session trip in 2010 with 18 undergraduate students who travelled on a

bus to meet with queer leaders and organizations in Chicago, Pennsylvania, New York City, and Washington, D.C..

Through these experiences, as well as the coursework I have completed, I have become a staunch proponent of student engagement, particularly for student populations that might be considered “at-risk”, including first-generation students, and students with disabilities (both groups with which I personally identify), or any non-majority population on college campuses. The topic of bullying and queer youth resonates with me, as I personally experienced bullying due to my perceived sexual orientation as a K-12 student, even though I did not self-identify as gay or queer until I was an adult. I believe that the time that has lapsed since my early school years has provided me with a helpful perspective that includes empathy for those who bullied me. I am now able to see that these individuals were young people grappling with their own issues, such as low self-esteem, an unhappy family environment, or perhaps even uncertainty of their own sexual identity.

While I expect that my personal experiences as a queer person allow me some advantage in regards to understanding the experiences and perspectives of study participants, I suspect that generational differences require that I challenge myself to see student stories through their eyes, not my own. Just as my generation, Generation X, differs from Baby Boomers (the preceding generation), Millennial students have qualities that set them apart from Generation X. These differences, as well as similarities that are certain to exist,

while not at the forefront of this research, are qualities that I watched with interest throughout the course of the study. Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility as a researcher to challenge my preconceptions and assumptions in order to interpret the data for what they are, not for what I think they might or should be.

Case Study

A number of institutional characteristics have been shown to correlate with engagement among college students. Examples of such characteristics include smaller institutional size. Although some community colleges are quite large, research indicates that both student engagement and positive student/faculty relationships are more likely at smaller colleges (Astin, 1993; Chickering & Gamson, 1987), creating a sense of belonging at their institution through engagement activities within the institution, and helping commuter students feel connected (as opposed to disconnected).

For this research, I first conducted a pilot study with members of a queer campus organization at Midwest Community College[5], a two-year institution located in a suburban area. The institution was first accredited as a community college in 1974, and in 1996 received accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission as a community and technical college. The college offers over 60 areas of study, including 40 occupational-technical programs, with an annual enrollment of over 21,000 students.

[5] Midwest Community College is a pseudonym for the institution used for this study.

As part of the Midwest Community College's Student Life Program, there are currently around 25 different clubs and organizations in which students can get involved. According to promotional materials from the college (i.e. website and brochures), the school has a strong commitment to student involvement as a part of its mission. For example, since the inception of its service-learning program in 2000, over 13,000 students have participated, and currently there are approximately 2,000 enrolled students who participate in service-learning each year.

During the pilot stage of this research, a conversation with a student affairs professional at the study institution revealed that the college's current president is committed to creating and sustaining programs that contribute to a thriving diverse community at the college. This commitment played a pivotal role in the allocation of funds needed to create the college's LGBTQ center, which officially opened in early 2014.

One of the founders of the LGBTQIA Club[6], the queer student organization at the study institution, participated in the pilot focus group. According to this student, the group was created in 2011 with no available funds, no club president, and no official campus meeting space. The few students that started the club soon grew to a larger group that was allotted an official space for meetings, assigned and advisor, and granted official student group status.

[6] LGBTQIA Club is a pseudonym for the club, to protect the confidentiality of student participants.

Clearly, this group of college students was motivated to be involved in something they deemed worthy of their time and effort. Uncovering the motivation behind this effort, again, is a key element of this study.

Methods

Within qualitative research, according to Yin (2003), case studies can have a variety of applications: "The most important is to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies" (p. 15). In addition, case studies can reveal considerable detail from multiple information sources: "Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (Creswell, Hanson, Clark, Plano, & Morales, 2007, p. 245).

This case study used mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative, to collect data. The methods used were, for the most part, sequential. The pilot focus group was the first qualitative data collected, informing the decision to move forward with this study. The pilot was followed by the distribution, both electronically and in paper form, of an anonymous questionnaire (quantitative and qualitative). Questionnaire participants were students involved, to varying degrees, in a queer student organization at the study institution. A couple of months into the questionnaire collection process, the collection of data through individual interviews (qualitative) was initiated with students who, on the

questionnaire, had indicated their willingness to be interviewed. The collection of questionnaires continued in conjunction with the interview process until ten student interviews had been completed. Finally, interviews were conducted with faculty and staff at the study institution, providing a supplemental set of qualitative data.

One inherent assumption when using a case-study method is that the example being studied is somehow "typical of a broader phenomenon" (Vogt, 1993, p. 30). While it is possible that either a questionnaire or interviews alone could provide revealing and insightful data, it is my belief that the use of both strengthens and lends credibility to the study. I also anticipated from the onset of the study that some connections would emerge between the individual experiences of students as told through their stories during interviews, both with the data from the completed questionnaires and with existing research.

Considering that the goal of the study was to identify factors that motivate students to be engaged in queer-related activities at college, I used grounded theory to analyze the qualitative interview data. Grounded theory methodology builds "an inductively derived theory grounded in the actual data and informed by the area under study" (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 42). The interviews used a constructivist approach to grounded theory, which works from an understanding that meaning is constructed rather than discovered (Crotty, 2005). Using the example of this study, constructivism assumes that students may construct different meanings from the same experience. As such, interviews can

very well produce a rich variety of perspectives from a group of students with a shared college experience. Another benefit of using this constructivist approach is that subjects are studied in a setting that is natural to them (Charmaz, 2000).

Instrumentation and Procedures

There are three components of my research, the first of which is the pilot focus group conducted with students from the study institution. The focus group was followed by data collection through the distribution of a questionnaire and interviews conducted with students, faculty, and staff at the study institution.

Pilot Focus Group

Prior to the development of an online questionnaire and interview questions, a 60-minute pilot focus group was conducted with five students from the study institution who identified as being involved in LGBTQ activities at the college. The students were recruited by a student affairs professional at the study institution in the spring of 2014. The invitation to participate in the focus group was announced at two of the LGBTQIA Club's weekly meetings. The purpose of this preliminary focus group was to hear from students themselves about the issues that currently motivated them to be involved in the student group, in addition to some background information such as where they grew up and what their previous educational experiences were like.

The pilot focus group provided an opportunity to assess the appropriateness and validity of the preliminary questionnaire and interview protocol. For example, during the focus group, the students in the focus group

emphasized the role (negative and positive) that a high school Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) played in their decision to seek involvement with a queer organization at college (A GSA can be defined as "any club that works to make their school safer while specifically addressing anti-LGBT behavior" (GLSEN, n.d.)). Upon learning this, I added a question pertaining to the influence of GSAs to the online questionnaire. I also learned from this focus group that each of the participants self-identified as "queer", as opposed to gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. Learning this not only helped to shape my understanding of how these students see themselves, but it also influenced my decision to use the term "queer" instead of "LGBTQ" throughout this paper.

Quantitative Data Collection

For the first round of data collection, a 14-item questionnaire was given to all members of the queer student organization at the study institution (see Appendix A). To broaden the potential pool of survey participants from the institution, the survey was distributed to students enrolled in an Intro to LGBTQ Studies course offered on campus. Students were given the option of completing the questionnaire either online or in paper form. The rationale of offering these two options was to maximize the potential return of completed surveys, and an online option was thought to be a better option for any non-members of the student group who chose to participate.

In order to potentially increase the return rate of questionnaires, snowball sampling was used to recruit additional questionnaire participants, wherein

student group members were asked to invite fellow students at the college, including those who may not have a history with the student group, to complete the questionnaire. A queer self-identity was not a requirement for participation, since allies are considered valued members of the queer community. Finally, flyers were posted on campus bulletin boards, with tear-off tags including the url for the survey.

One of the goals of administrating an anonymous questionnaire was to provide data that would allow me to assemble a heterogeneous group of students for individual interviews. Upon approval from the University of Minnesota's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I worked with the advisor of the queer student group at the research institution, who aided in distributing the voluntary questionnaire to students during the weekly meeting of the LGBTQIA Club. Given the nature of the trusting relationship the advisor shares with this particular group of students, there was potential for an increased positive influence on student understanding of the questionnaire's importance, and ultimately their choice to participate.

Another purpose of the student questionnaire was to identify enough participants from which to assemble a sample for the individual interviews. The instrument itself was rather concise, in hopes that the short time commitment required to complete the questionnaire may serve as an incentive for potential student participants. As an added incentive, I randomly selected two participants to receive a $25 retail gift card.

The questionnaire's 14 questions were initially developed to gather demographic data from participants, and were later revised based on the information gathered from the pilot focus group. As mentioned earlier, for example, it was during this focus group that several students in the focus group noted the impact that their experiences with and perceptions of a high school GSA (both positive and negative) had on their decision to become involved with the queer student group at their institution, which is why two of the questions on the questionnaire pertain to student experiences with GSAs.

The questionnaire requested that participants share general information about themselves, including name, age, cumulative credits completed at college, selected field of study (if they have one), in addition to asking their sexual orientation and gender identity. The questionnaire concluded by asking students whether they would be interested/willing to participate in a one-hour individual interview.

Qualitative Data Collection

Focus group. The data collected from the pilot focus group was not intended to serve as a primary data source. However, since the focus group data was substantive enough to support the other collected data sources, it is included as supporting data for this research.

Student interviews. From the pool of completed questionnaires (n=31), 10 students agreed to take part in individual 60-minute interviews, which were conducted at the study institution. The individual one-hour interview process was

structured by a set of eight questions (see Appendix B), with the intent of collecting individual student stories that could identify themes that would reveal motivating factors for student engagement.

Staff interviews. My qualitative data collection also included four one-hour interviews with selected student affairs staff and faculty at the college. Individuals were invited for participation based on their professional role at the institution. Specifically, individuals who were held administrative or faculty positions were eligible to participate in the interviews. Each interview consisted of four questions that addressed the following topics: current campus climate for queer students; institutional commitment to diversity; perceptions of the impact of the campus LGBTQ Student Center, and pivotal moments that identify a shifting climate towards a more inclusive environment for queer students at the college.

Student Demographic Information

The racial/ethnic identities of the survey participants, 10 of whom participated in individual interviews, is shown in Table 2. Sixty-five percent of the students who participated (n = 20) identified as White/Caucasian, which is

Table 2

Racial/Ethnic Identity of Survey Respondents (n = 31)

Race/Ethnicity	*n*	%
White/Caucasian	20	65
African American or Black	4	13
Multi-Racial	3	10
Hispanic or Latino, any race	2	6
Asian or Pacific Islander	2	6
Middle Eastern or Arab American, any race	--	--
Native American, American Indian or Alaska Native	--	--

Mean ($\bar{x}$)	2.4	--

representative of the institution's 2015 demographics, which indicate that 38 percent of those enrolled are students of color.

Table 3 describes characteristics of the 10 students who were interviewed. Among those who participated in interviews, three identified their gender as male, two as female, while two identified as genderqueer, two as questioning, while one declined to specify. At the time of the interviews, six participants were current members of the LGBTQIA Club, two were former members (one of whom left the club due to graduating), and two were non-members. All but one of the participants had decided upon a major at the time of the interview.

Analysis

Orcher (2005) identifies three coding techniques employed whenever using a grounded-theory approach: open coding (step one), axial coding (step two), and selective coding (step three). The raw digital interview recordings were

Table 3

Characteristics of Student Interview Participants (*n* = 10)

Gender ID	Sexual Orientation	LGBTQIA Club member
Male	Gay	Yes
Male	Gay	Yes
Male	Gay	Yes
Genderqueer	Lesbian	Former
Genderqueer	A-romantic	Former
Female	Straight	Yes
Female	Queer	Yes
Questioning/trans	Bisexual	No
Questioning/unsure	Bisexual	No
Declined	Bisexual	Yes

transcribed with the assistance of Dragon Dictate voice transcription software. Interview transcripts were then analyzed line-by-line, highlighting recurring themes using different colored highlighters (open coding). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), "It is through careful scrutiny of data, line by line, that researchers are able to uncover new concepts and novel relationships and to systematically develop categories in terms of their properties and dimensions" (p. 71). Identified themes and related sub-categories became the categories used to analyze quantitative data (axial coding). Questionnaire categories and interview categories were analyzed and reported separately.

Statistical software Qualtrics was used to organize qualitative survey data. Percentages for demographic questionnaire data with variables measured at the nominal level (i.e., sexual orientation, gender identity) were organized according to response category. Means and standard deviations for equal interval data were calculated for four items.

The third step in analyzing data in grounded theory, selective coding, is often referred to as "developing a story line" (Orcher, 2005, p. 163). Once categories and sub-categories had been identified and logged, I drew diagrams to have a visual means of discovering relationships between the categories. The goal behind this diagram process was to articulate a theoretical model that would identify interrelationships between the emergent constructs. It is this theoretical model that would ultimately allow me to begin answering my research questions.

CHAPTER IV

Results and Findings

In Chapter IV, I present summaries of three sets of data, beginning with the results from the online survey students completed, followed by an overview of the results of my interviews with students, with some additional results from the initial focus group. The last section discusses findings from the interviews conducted with faculty and staff at the study institution.

Before launching into the results and findings, here again is the research question that guides this study:

> What are the issues and campus factors that motivate queer students and their allies to become involved in campus activities such as student groups at a two-year college?

Overview of Survey Results

A 14-item survey, accessible both online and in paper form, was created to collect demographic and other data from students associated with the LGBTQIA Club at Midwest Community College. Systematic coding was used in the analysis of students' responses to the survey's open-ended questions, which brought to the fore the following themes: Personal Meaning in Club Involvement, the Influence of High School GSAs on Current Involvement, and Reasons for Queer Student Involvement in LGBTQIA Activities.

Within each theme, we see similar comments that individual students made independently when asked the same question. In many cases, the

emergent themes are aligned with issues raised in the extant literature. However, in some cases, new and different themes emerged that provide further insights into student involvement in LGBTQIA clubs and associations.

Personal meaning in club involvement. The survey results provide insight into potential factors that motivate queer student involvement at a two-year institution. For example, when participants were asked to describe what involvement in the LGBTQIA Club means to them, a range of responses ($n = 27$) illustrate the personal meaning that students gained from their Club involvement.

Among the responses, the notion of safety and the importance of having a safe space for queer students on campus was the most common ($n = 9$). Examples that specifically reference safe space include the following:

- It's a place where I can be when I need a safe space on campus which puts me more at ease.
- LGBTQIA Club makes me feel like I have a safe place to go to. :). It makes me feel comfortable and accepted.
- Creating safe spaces on campus where anyone can find refuge from judgement [*sic*].
- My involvement with LGBTQIA Club means a safe space, supporters.
- Having a group of support is incredibly important. I personally know the isolation many LGBTQ+ people feel when there isn't a group around and prevailing societal intolerance flourishes (though it seems to be waning thanks to groups like these).

Other respondents ($n = 7$) identified advocacy and education (which includes self-education and informing the public) as being of personal value. A sampling of these responses include:

- It's a venue to advocate for LGBT+ people.
- I am happy to support the activities that LGBTQIA Club brings to campus, I feel that supporting equality in all forms can only be a positive thing.
- Raising awereness [*sic*] and acceptance.
- Understanding people's problems and how they connect to me.

Regarding personal meaning derived from club involvement, some respondents (n = 6) were more indifferent in their responses. Some representations of these less enthusiastic responses include:

- Not sure.
- Barely anything. Just showed up to the center at school a few times.
- Minimal.
- I went to one event, a meet and greet barbeque, put on by the LGBTQIA Club at the beginning of fall semester. I wanted to sort of test the water and scope out how the atmosphere at the club may be. I didn't stay for very long, and I didn't get a chance to talk to any of the members of the club, but I did not feel safe… I feel that overall they place more value on straight allies than actual [*sic*] LGBT students. Frankly, I am not terribly interested in going back.

The influence of high school GSAs on current involvement. The decision to include two questions on high school GSAs in the survey was partially based on a discussion that occurred during the initial pilot focus group. During this discussion, which was impromptu and unsolicited, students expressed relatively negative opinions about the Gay-Straight Alliances at their high schools. One student reported having no GSA at his school, while another explained that his once active high school GSA has since folded. Table 4 shows

survey participant responses to the question of whether their high school had a GSA, any identified "Safe Space" for LGBTQ students, any other programming for LGBTQ students, and whether their school had any policy(ies) that protected LGBTQ students from bullying.

A function of the LGBTQIA Club in recent years, according to one focus group participant, was to reach out to high school GSAs. A fellow participant noted that such outreach has become "pretty difficult, because the GSAs are kinda going downhill. We put out a lot of contact this year to try to do the same thing that we did last year, and we got little to no response from most of the high schools."

Table 4

Existence of High School GSAs or Related Programming

Question	Yes *n*%	No *n*%	Unsure *n*%	Total Responses
Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA)	51.6	41.9	6.5	31
"Safe Space" (i.e. a space on school grounds identified as "safe" for LGBTQ students and allies)	23.3	60.0	16.7	30
Other programming for LGBTQ students	10.0	66.7	23.3	30
Policy(ies) protecting LGBTQ students from bullying	20.0	46.7	33.3	30

Based on the information gained from this discussion, student opinions of and experiences with GSAs and related pre-college programs certainly seemed relevant to the research question and factors that may motivate student club involvement in college.

The survey results do shed some light on the influence that high school policies and programs such as GSAs may have on queer students and their interest in seeking involvement in college groups such as the LGBTQIA Club. For example, a majority of the 31 survey takers indicated that such programming had either "no influence" (*n* = 18) or "minimal influence" (*n* = 6) on their choice to become involved. It is worth noting, however, that nearly half of survey respondents (*n* = 14) claimed no existence of a GSA at their high school, while two indicated that they were unaware of any GSA presence at their school (see Table 5).

Table 5

Reported Influence of GSA High School or Related LGBTA Programming on Choice to Become Involved with LGBTQIA Club

Answer	*n*	%
No influence	18	58
Minimal influence	6	19
Some influence	2	6
Notable influence	--	--
Moderate influence	1	3
Considerable influence	3	10
Extreme influence	1	3
Total	31	100
SD		1.84

Reasons for LGBTQIA Club involvement. Survey participants were asked to rate the personal level of importance that four different factors have on their own involvement with the LGBQTIA Club. These four factors are Educational, Personal, Opportunities for Political Engagement, and Finding Community/Friendships. As Table 6 shows, Personal Reasons had the highest mean ($\bar{x}$ = 4.03) of all of the options. It is noteworthy that while interview participants had the opportunity to share specifics regarding their personal reasons for involvement in the LGBTQIA Club, survey participants did not. With this under consideration, the possibility exists that Personal Reasons could be related to any of the other three reasons for involvement, or virtually anything for that matter.

Table 6

Ratings of the Importance of Various Reasons for Club Involvement (*n* = 31).

[a] Reason for Involvement	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD
Personal Reasons	4.03	1.14
Finding Community/Friendships	3.97	1.35
Educational Reasons	3.13	1.26
Opportunities for Political Engagement	2.87	1.26

[a] Responses coded on a six-point scale (from 1 = Not important to 6 = Extremely important).

The data collected through the survey provides some understanding as to who is choosing to be involved in activities such as the LGBTQIA Club, and what may be motivating them to do so. In the overview of the student interviews provided in the following section, a greater depth of information and more personal detail than what was provided by the survey results alone is presented.

Overview of Student Interviews

Ten students, with varying levels of association with the LGBTQIA Club ranging from minimal involvement to those holding executive positions, participated in individual interviews. From the data analysis process (as described in Chapter III), and based upon frequency with which topics were mentioned by participants during the interviews, five dominant themes were identified. Additional topics that students discussed throughout the interviews, but with considerably less frequency than the five primary themes, also emerged. These topics will be addressed following review of the primary five themes.

Five Dominant Themes

Coding from the analysis of the interview transcriptions revealed five dominant themes that help explain the reasons and purposes of student engagement in LGBTQIA clubs and associations: Community. Safety, Identity, Education, And Civic Engagement. This section reviews the top five emergent themes from the student interviews, presented in no particular order (with the exception of the most prominent theme of Community, which is presented first): Community, Safe Space, Identity, Education, and Civic Engagement. The theme

of “Community”, as used here, refers to the process of seeking like-minded individuals, friendships, or relationships. The themes of “Safe Space” and “Education”, (discussed below) address topics such as campus climate and physical space (such as the LGBTQ Center, for example), which relate to the concept of community but are more specific than the broader theme of “Community”.

Community. All but one of the 10 participants said that finding community and/or relationships played a role in their getting involved. In explaining the role that personal reasons played in deciding to become involved, five of the 10 participants specified community as a primary personal reason for involvement. Keith explained the role that seeking community played for him:

> My personal reasons were probably curiosity more than anything, because I had friends and they’re not LGBT but they’re like friends and we had a certain sense of camaraderie, but I guess I just wanted to see what the LGBT community was actually like, because of course when you’re from a small town you just hear all this hearsay and stuff, and really felt it was a false representation of the group and the community, so I decided to check it out for myself…I know everybody in LGBTQIA Club, and I’ve always known everybody (in the club) since I started going to the group…I think that the tight-knit relationships that we have is really important, and I think it’s what (has) made LGBTQIA Club work or not work.

Three additional students commented on how the opportunity to find community and establish relationships played a major role in their initial involvement. Chris, one of these students, stated:

> It was one of the primary reasons why I’ve enjoyed LGBTQIA Club, to find greater community, find friendships, find people who have similar experiences and share those experiences and learn from each other. Finding people to relate to.

This desire to find like-minded people on campus was echoed by Bob, who said, “Part of the reason I did go for the LGBTQIA Club was that there was a group of people who were on the same wavelength as me and understood that.”

A number of students (n = 6) pointed to the notion of finding their own personal community on campus, and the benefits of having a social outlet and source of support. Susan explained:

> I know there was kids in our group with parents who didn’t know, and some of them may have even been afraid because of repercussions to let their parents know, and just to have a group like that to be a part of, that understands, and that can be there for you and encourage you, I think that’s a big part…maybe we help other people. Times have changed a lot, and it seems more accepting but there’s still kids that can’t confide to their parents and if they can have a group who would help them, not necessarily make that step but be there just to listen.

Midwest College, in Keith’s opinion, is succeeding in its efforts to create a more inclusive campus: “It’s important to be inclusive to all groups, and I think Midwest College does that especially well.” Part of the college’s diversity efforts has included the creation of a new staff position, with responsibilities that include advising the LGBTQIA Club. Three students spoke fondly of the relationship they have developed with the club’s new advisor, citing him as a vital resource. Keith, for example, believes that having this advisor is a major benefit of LGBTQIA Club membership. “An advisor,” Keith stated, “that I can just talk to whenever I want…He helps with everything.” This is noteworthy because it speaks to the institution’s commitment to cultural diversity, and the time and other resources the college has dedicated to creating the LGBTQ Student

Center, which included the new position whose responsibilities included advising the LGBTQIA Club.

When asked what other aspects of involvement in the LGBTQIA Club are important in understanding the role such an organization plays at a two-year community college, Barbara reflected upon her own academic history:

> OK so I'll use my own personal story as kind of a background here, but I did not do so well in high school. I dropped out and got my G.E.D.. So, I wasn't fitting in in high school. At a two-year institution people are, tend to be in poverty, they tend to be minorities, they already feel like they don't fit into the college experience. Adding on another level of sexuality will further disenfranchise them if there is not a group on campus that they can go to, to find community, safety and support, to be able to move on to the next step in their life.

Meeting fellow queer students on campus can help to normalize the experiences that come with being seen as different by their peers, based on sexual identity. "It's nice," Bob said, "to be in a place, at least for, you know, an hour and a half, two hours a week, that, you know, you mesh with these people for the most part. There's not many other venues for LGBT people aside from bars."

Danny spoke similarly about the value of finding friends who share the common experiences that come from having a queer identity. Danny explained how finding the LGBTQIA club helped him to develop such friendships:

> I myself am bisexual, and I know a lot of, a big portion of my friends are LGBT in some way, so this is something that's important to me. As soon as I say that there was a club (on campus) I thought that's something I need to do because I think everywhere else I've gone…I haven't met too many friends from here until going to the club.

Laurie described how her own queer circle of friends dispersed after high school, adding that their absence has left her wanting to seek community in her new surroundings. Laurie stated:

> I really really really would like to have more in-person community with LGBT community, because most of the people (like those in high school), we're all actually like, really gay, and like super non-binary…It would be really great if I could find more friends that are like that, because it's exhausting being around straight people all the time. So the idea of more non-straight, non-cis friends is very appealing.

To identify as non-straight in a predominantly straight environment, as these students explained, can be an isolating experience. Barbara succinctly summed up her thoughts on the topic when she said, "There's a lot of things that heterosexual people cannot relate to."

Safety. Safety was another dominant theme throughout the student interviews. In my conversations with participants, the idea of "safe space" was manifested in several ways: the LGBTQIA Club itself was identified as a safe space, but feelings of safety were also experienced in the physical space of the LGBTQ Student Center, and to a lesser degree, the campus at large.

Physical Space. The LGBTQIA Club has a physical space where they conduct weekly meetings. It is a shared campus space that is not designated exclusively for the LGBTQIA Club, but it is reserved for them for the purpose of their meetings. Having a designated space matters, according to Rose, because it can increase visibility on campus. As Rose explained:

> When I was in high school there wasn't a GSA (Gay/Straight Alliance) room. It was just one of the teacher's classrooms and I think it moved sometimes depending on who was running it, etc. In LGBT studies class

> (at Midwest Community College) someone was saying in their school their GSA constantly moved, and people didn't know where it was because they had to move it to keep it safe, so they never had a physical space.

In reflecting upon her initial motivations for joining the LGBTQIA Club, Susan stated:

> Um, just to find a group of people, like, where I could be myself kinda. I came out later in life so I didn't really know many people and I decided to start college. I needed a change…I didn't know many people so that helped…A safe place.

Danny, in discussing his personal reasons for getting involved, expressed his thoughts about having a place on campus where he feels safe. "It's important," Danny explained, "just that there is a safe space for people like me and people like me and people like my friends to be in. I've been in environments where it's not so welcoming and accepting." Danny came from a religious and politically conservative family, so for him the LGBTQIA Club itself has been a valued space where he has felt free to be himself:

> Just being part of the community, finding a place that's safest, that's different from my more conservative family. I'm not out to all of them, or out to most, but I plan to rectify that soonish.

LGBTQ Center. Two-year institutions do not typically have space on campus specifically for queer student populations. The LGBTQ Center at Midwest Community College, one of the first at a two-year institution in the state in which the institution is located, represents the college's commitment to cultural diversity and the dedication of individuals at the college who have fought for such a space (this will be covered in more detail in the overview of my interviews with faculty and staff). Although the center's space itself is quite small, its importance

in terms of being a safe space for queer students, is immense. Rose stated the following about the Center:

> I feel like the Center is a really big thing. I think it's just great that there's just an actual physical space that, like, you can walk in, you can sit down, and there's resources and there's all that, and it's there and you can go there any time.

Shirley, a straight ally, initially considered the space off-limits to individuals like herself who do not identify as queer:

> I kind of view it as a sacred space. They know they can go there and be safe. That's the one spot that they're guaranteed on campus where nobody's going to judge anybody, where nobody's going to hurl insults around. Having an outsider come in who they don't know, how is somebody supposed to know that you're safe or that you are an Ally until you prove it, you know?

Rose attended a Q&S fall barbeque but the atmosphere at the event did not match her expectations. "Since it wasn't really what I was looking for," Rose states, "I didn't really go back." Rose acknowledged that while she has not participated much in LGBTQIA Club meetings or events, she does believe the LGBTQ Student Center plays an important role in contributing to a more welcoming campus climate.

Campus at large. The sense of safety that can be experienced within the space of the LGBTQIA Club can extend to outside of doors of a weekly club meeting. The ability to recognize individuals on campus who represent safety is something Laurie sees as important. "I have been able to identify some people who are probably queer," she explained, "because I've seen them at events, and

I'm like, hey – you're probably OK. It's kind of like scoping and seeing who is probably involved (with the club) and feeling safe around them."

In identifying what he sees as important aspects of involvement at a two-year institution, Danny continued on the topic of safety:

> Well, I think definitely the fact that it's a safe place to be. There's definitely, on a lot of campuses, there's some negativity, and there are the stereotypical frat boy people, and I guess that doesn't necessarily apply to a two-year institution…You know, (there are) those types of people at many campuses and unfortunately you gotta deal with those people, they're in your classes. So it's great that there's a place where you don't necessarily have to deal with those people and you're with people that support and accept you.

It was Laurie's opinion that one benefit of attending a smaller institution is the potential for a safer environment. "At a smaller (college)," Laurie said, "if you get a good community growing and keep bringing more people in, you could create a really strong community at a smaller location, to make it safer."

A few students (n = 3) commented on the "close-knit" feeling of a community college when compared to larger institutions. "I think definitely a smaller community is a lot less intimidating," Rose stated. "They might be closer knit because they're small. I feel like it would be easier to show up and walk in. Because it's a commuter campus (and) people aren't all in the same place all the time, I think if you have an LGBTQIA Club it's your hub, and even if people are changing and if you might be leaving soon, or whatever, there's always this thing you can go back to."

Speaking on the benefits of attending a two-year institution, rather than a larger, four-year college, Shirley also discussed how a smaller college size can

create opportunities for a greater sense of community for everyone, not just students. "I think that maybe because this is a more close-knit, smaller campus community," Shirley said, "faculty and staff are kind of interconnected in different ways."

Education. One of the questions in the interviews asked students to comment on the role that Education played in their decision to become involved with the LGBTQIA Club. It is worth noting that, while the existence of this question likely contributed to the frequency of responses on the topic, Education was mentioned by participants in response to other questions as well. Considering that references to Education were multi-faceted, the following discussion is broken into the three sub-categories of Self Education, Public Education/Advocacy, and the subject of Pronouns and Other Self-Identifiers.

Self-education. One potential benefit of joining a campus organization such as the LGBTQIA Club is the opportunity to learn about topics relevant to queer communities and the lives of other queer students. In their interviews, two students declared education as a primary benefit of being involved in the LGBTQIA Club. Shirley, for example, described her experience as an ally who has learned a considerable amount about privilege:

> Personal benefits I view as just being more educated, being able to be more solid and firm in my beliefs. Also I have to address the privileges that I have seen, that I have over other people, and remind myself that I have to use that to further others' causes and my own cause. That's probably one of the biggest things. I can sit here as a white woman in a heterosexual relationship and name off all the privileges that society gives me that a lot of people don't have.

Keith also described his desire to find a more accurate picture of what queer communities looked like. "I want to learn," Keith said, "what (the queer community) is really like, or at least a better representation of it than my small town representation." Commenting on what he has learned through his experiences with the LGBTQIA Club, Keith added, "I think it's really helped expand my umbrella just a teeny bit."

Two students commented on the educational opportunities they have been afforded as members of the LGBTQIA Club. Among such opportunities, attending the Midwest Bisexual Lesbian Gay Transgender Ally College Conference (MBLGTACC) (the largest LGBTQ college conference in the country, informally known as "the big gay conference") was cited as especially positive. Bob discussed his own experience of attending the conference:

> I've gotten to have a lot of opportunities that wouldn't exist otherwise. And once again it's just really nice to be in a group of people who are all here for the same goal. The one last year was big but because it was in such a big venue you didn't really get to feel how many people were there, but this one was on a college campus, the one just a couple months ago. And it was just…these are all people from around the country who are my age and are putting in time and effort to better the community, for not just us but for our children.

Bob also reflected upon what he personally has learned throughout his time with the LGBTQIA Club:

> I feel like I have learned a lot about my community because of the LGBTQIA club. That wasn't something that was initially part of the deal. Like, I wasn't thinking, 'Oh, I'll learn so much history and lean all about these different kind of people.' Three years ago I didn't understand the difference between transgender and transsexual. That's something I'm kind of proud of myself now that, as a member of a community I do know

> these things, so I guess from that point of education, which is really more of just not being ignorant to fact.

Paul has appreciated all that he learned as a result of his involvement with LGBTQIA Club. "Something that motivates me," Paul explained, "is to continue to educate myself." Chris described his educational motivations with a particular sense of urgency. "Education-wise," he said, "I'm preparing myself for when I am going to face hostilities and stuff like that. As a large portion of the world hates us, a large portion of the world would just kill us without batting an eye."

Public education/advocacy. Another opportunity that comes with involvement in a group such as the LGBTQIA Club is educating the public and advocating on behalf of queer communities, and on current issues impacting queer people. Bob was quite direct explaining just how important advocacy work has been to the LGBTQIA Club. "(Our) main goal for LGBTQIA Club," Bob said, "is to advocate for the community. I'm here to be focused and to fight for rights because nobody else is doing it for us."

On a more personal level, Bob discussed the role that advocacy played in motivating him to seek out involvement as a student:

> I had always wanted to advocate for myself at least, and I feel that one of the best ways to do that is to just talk, and you know, just by sharing my experiences with other people helps remove some of the stigma that is involved with being a member of the LGBT community. And once I actually did, like, get in the setting I did find that it was easier for me to do that, and it was something that actually really excited me and I was passionate about. If there's one thing I've learned in my entire life, it's that if you want something you have to fight for it. So, I've never been one to just sit back and just, like, let things happen.

When asked about the role that education has played in her motivation to seek involvement, Rose stated, “I guess to some extent I was coming to this to see if I can help educate other people.” She elaborated by sharing what she saw as a responsibility of allies to educate others:

> You take what you’ve learned and you educate people around you because you have that ability now, and you have that opportunity now to really make a difference on that level. That’s what being an ally is, and you can do that. I guess I would say being an ally your responsibility is to educate other people and to call out other people when you see bigotry. You have the privilege to move through society fairly easily on that retract, so you can make those changes where (non-straight individuals) may not be able to.

An example of one of the advocacy activities in which LGBTQIA Club has participated is to meet with queer groups at other colleges, to share ideas and provide assistance in strengthening their organizations. As Chris explained:

> We’ve gone to a number of other campuses a couple of times and met with their other groups that were struggling. Ours was much stronger at the time. We were there to offer some guidance and support, to hopefully help them move their club in the right direction, because they’re facing oppression from the council of the school, like their executives don’t want this on campus, or they don’t fund it or give any room for it, etc.

Four interview participants commented on the importance of educating the public on the usage of terminology related to sexual orientation and gender identity. At the time that Chris started becoming involved he was taking an Introduction to LGBT Studies course offered on campus:

> I saw a lot of advocacy work that can be done and I guess I’m still educating myself so that maybe one day I can continue to educate others on proper terminology, battling negative opinions and then correcting those I guess, to put it bluntly.

Pronouns and other self-identifiers. Regarding pronouns and other identifiers, three students commented on what they saw as neglect within the club itself in regards to addressing or acknowledging non-mainstream, non-straight sexual identities. Keith described his own experience within the LGBTQIA Club:

> "Every negative thing I've heard about my identity as Asexual/A-romantic, every criticism I've ever got, every negative I've heard has come from inside the club, which has been pretty negative."

I asked if these criticisms were said directly to his face, to which he replied:

> "Oh yeah. *Only* to my face, which has been like – eek! – thanks, guys. One of my friends, he said, "you just need to find the right guy, or girl," and I'm like, I'm not sexually attracted to anybody. It's not just finding the "right person". So yeah, that was one of the difficulties."

Paul also discussed pronouns within the context of wanting to become better educated on queer issues:

> "I'm definitely interested in the social issues that involve the LGBT communities, but I would say it's one of the main factors that is making me kind of, that motivates me today because my identity is pretty firm. The notion of pronouns; pronouns are a big one."

Identifying as part of any non-majority group often means being faced with the task of repeatedly explaining one's sexual identity. This expectation of educating others is something that Rose described as becoming tiresome:

> "I guess there's an education piece of, people don't always (pause), having to educate people because they don't understand what's going on. It can be kind of taxing to constantly explain to people and sort of be their walking encyclopedia…I mean, I guess it's just kind of tiring sometimes…it's not so much that we are invited to educate people, it's more that sometimes it is expected of us because people feel entitled to ask questions of us like, "explain yourself, explain your identity."

Civic Engagement. Six participants discussed being involved in activities that were not directly related to LGBTQIA Club, but connected to the larger LGBTQ community, such as attending the annual Pride Festival or volunteering for events off campus. Barbara, for example, mentioned attending the MBLGTACC conference (cited previously by other students as a benefit of involvement), in addition to being on the planning committee for an annual state LGBTQ conference that had recently been hosted by the college. Only one student said that he had not participated in any LGBTQ-related activities outside of LGBTQIA Club.

Although not always political, Civic Engagement often involves some political component. To be certain, most Civic Engagement that has ties with queer communities has some inherent level of political motivation. Despite this, seven interview participants reported having little to no interest in "politics or political involvement". Two of these students stated that being below voting age was a factor in their lack of political involvement. Shirley, who was one of three students who expressed an interest in politics and considers herself a "news junkie", had this to say about why she thinks queer students do not seem to spend much time thinking about politics:

> "People kind of see politics as having to be legislation, or having to be something to do with voting, or civic engagement or protesting, but it's not. It's everything. Everything that you do is somehow decided at a political level…think that next year (2016) it will be really important to be engaged politically."

Danny argued that, despite student disinterest in politics, simply being openly queer is itself a political act:

> "They don't want to be involved in politics as much, and that's just who they are and I understand that. But whether they know it or not, it is inadvertently political in a way."

It may be that the term "politics", for whatever reason, evokes negative feelings for students, resulting in a desire to distance themselves from their perception of the political system. However, based on the actions described by this group of students, particularly in regards to the state Marriage Amendment, it certainly appears that these young people are indeed engaged in activities that could be considered political.

Marriage amendment. LGBTQIA Club membership was considerably higher in 2012, a time when there was a proposed amendment to the state constitution on the ballot for the November general state election. Known officially as "Amendment 1" ("Amendment 1," 2012), the amendment, which would have banned same-sex marriage in the state constitution, became the first of its kind in the country to be defeated by voters. One student who joined during the activity surrounding the amendment was Chris, who stated the following:

> I became more comfortable with (my identity), and at the time there was a lot of civil rights movements going on, like "vote no", stuff like that. I wanted to get more involved with that. (LGBTQIA Club was) doing a lot, and I wasn't really aware of any other clubs, any other groups doing anything to work on that. That's kind of what got me involved.

Paul acknowledged the role that the amendment played in motivating him to become involved with LGBTQIA Club:

> The marriage amendment was going on. I remember hearing people talk about that well before I was even in the club. I thought, 'Huh. I don't have any opinions about this really, aside from my usual Catholic ones.' So I thought, interesting, maybe I should go and educate myself a little more about queer issues.

Susan remembered the energy she personally felt as a result of being involved with fighting the marriage amendment as a member of LGBTQIA Club:

> The amendment…during that time…We all went down to the Capitol. I remember that. Not all of us, but a big group of us went down. Yeah, that was pretty cool.

Identity. For the student interview participants, Identity appears to be intricately connected to the other four themes, in that the processes involved in these themes seem to promote or facilitate queer student development. Susan, for example, shared her thoughts on how the LGBTQIA Club can provide students with the opportunity, perhaps for the first time, to be their authentic selves:

> There are cultures that are a lot less open, where the kids have to take on different roles within the family. It's not an option at that point, you know, and it puts strain on them, but then to see in the LGBTQIA Club how they can be themselves – it's really cool because they can't do that at home, because it's a whole other culture…There's still people where you might, if it's not your parents it might be another family member where you have to be hush-hush about it.

Susan's comments raise an important point about the key role identity plays for queer college students. In Cass's Homosexual Identity Acquisition model (1979), Acceptance (stage 4), the individual develops a more positive view of homosexuality when they meet others who share a homosexual identity. As they develop a more affirming identity they gradually build a network of queer

friends. Thus, through involvement with student groups like LGBTQIA Club, students are able to find a community of support, while simultaneously developing a stronger sense of identity.

According to Paul, who said, "I was looking for a place to identify," the search for his own identity is what motivated him to join the LGBTQIA Club:

> At the time I was kind of like, "Am Bi, what am I?" I knew I was queer. I knew I wasn't gay but I thought, "Well, I'm *something*." I was looking for a place to kind of, like, figure that out.

The opportunity and freedom to explore his identity is something that Paul considered a benefit of involvement with the LGBTQIA Club:

> Countless, I guess…learning, figuring out how to identify, having friends who are queer, being more accepting of my queer identity and queerness, leaning more about queer issues, becoming a better queer person. I feel like the LGBTQIA Club community gave those to me, and then I took and ran with those.

Paul also discussed the notion of intersectionality, which is defined here as the process that occurs when there are multiple, intersecting individual identities (for example, someone who identifies as a bisexual, cisgender female, and international student will view experiences through a lens that is unique due to the intersection of those identities):

> Community colleges like Midwest College are very diverse, so you got a lot of people. I think it's important that people are exposed to it, you know, so that there is a community for them in their club. I think the opportunity to discuss intersectionality is pretty valuable. For example, the LGBTQIA Club when I joined was super diverse…I almost felt zeroed out as a white male.

Bob provided his own perspective on intersectionality and experiencing discrimination, or as he framed it, being a "minority within a minority":

> I feel that, I mean, a lot of us are already so, we are a minority so that when you include us as a minority within a minority, as you know, a few people who are willing to advocate for ourselves, you know it's, I don't know how to explain it. It's not always the most uplifting experience because when you think about it, the reason we have a need for this club in the first place is because we're discriminated against on a daily basis, whether we like it or not.

Chris, while commending Midwest Community College's efforts to address the needs of a diverse student body (especially being a smaller, two-year institution), had the following to say regarding intersectionality:

> A number of our members faced a lot of discrimination and prejudice on our campus before. I've never faced anything like that, but they were also minorities within minorities. They were of different ethnicities, so they were facing things from their other peers, from other classmates and stuff like that, from other people within their community. So they were facing these things.

Additional topics. Outside of the five main themes outlined above, there were additional topics discussed by participants, albeit with less frequency. An overview of these topics is provided here, since they add useful insight and further understanding of individual student experiences with the LGBTQIA Club. The first of these topics is the role that some students believed the LGBTQIA Club played in providing them with Academic Purpose at a commuter institution, followed by a look at Interpersonal Conflicts Within the LGBTQIA Club, and student views on, and experiences with, Religion.

Academic purpose. Five respondents referenced the purpose that the LGBTQIA Club has given them in regards to their academics, particularly on days when they may feel less motivated to attend class. Involvement in

LGBTQIA Club is, at times, the reason that they make their way to campus. Chris, for example, knew that getting involved would benefit him in this regard:

> I wanted to be more involved within, on campus, with student clubs and activities because the whole idea behind the commuter college, going in just for the classes and then leaving. There's a lot more on campus that you can do besides just going to classes. There's a lot of activities, a lot more people to meet, a lot more things to do. So I looked to LGBTQIA Club as one of those ways to anchor me, at least for a couple more hours each day.

Danny recognized the role that involvement in LGBTQIA Club could play in his own college persistence. "Whenever I go (to LGBTQIA Club meetings)," Danny shared, "it makes me feel motivated to continue being a student here, because I know there's a community here for me." Bob, who had little interest in attending college, shared similar sentiments:

> In general, it was nice to get involved with something. You know, I wasn't super into school, and so it was just kind of nice to have just a club to go to in general. It was nice just to have an afterschool activity. When I did decide to go to Midwest College, part of me wanted to be here more often, but the other part of me didn't want to, just because I didn't want to go to college. I end up drawing that line when I joined LGBTQIA Club because I really did enjoy it."

Connecting with fellow queer students on campus, in Rose's opinion, can correlate with improved attitudes towards school. As she explained:

> I guess with (my) academic career, I mean, if I had a support group I think it would be easier to be in school. I think if I had a support group that was my community, my people, then I think that would help me to feel better about being in school.

Keith commented on how involvement LGBTQIA Club has helped to balance out the dread of attending class. "If you have something else to come here for," Keith said, "then going to class isn't so bad. I get to see my friends,

then I have to go to class but who cares about that – I get to see my friends! Yay!!"

Interpersonal conflicts. The subject of infighting and other conflict among members was raised by a number of participants ($n = 8$), making it reasonable to consider such conflict as a deterrent more than a motivator in terms of club involvement. I believe there is value in exploring club involvement from this angle.

Barbara, who generally spoke of her club experience in positive terms, offered the following:

> I would say definitely the arguing between the exec board. It doesn't change. I mean, maybe we'll have different arguments, but it's just the clash in the ideas, and it's caused, I mean, you can feel the tension when you walk in the room some days.

When asked if she thought the tension was just part of the nature of student organizations, Barbara replied, "I think with us it's the individuals."

Bob also acknowledged the tension, stating:

> If there's been any struggle with LGBTQIA Club, it's getting a lot of people to just like each other. It's not always the most uplifting experience, because when you think about it, the reason we have a need for this club in the first place is because we're discriminated against on a daily basis, whether we like it or not. And so that in itself can set up the club to be kind of a downer.

Although Keith's experiences with LGBTQIA Club have generally been positive, he has been fully aware of tense moments:

> Ugh. It has been a storm of crap this whole time. It's the personal relationships part – good, good, very good – but sometimes bad. Very bad, to put it very bluntly. And I remember…a very tense situation, it was like choking you, the air, because everybody was so upset.

No relationship between group tensions and low membership was established as a part of this study, nor was it a goal of the study. However, in terms of motivating factors, the negative impact of club infighting on membership is worthy of consideration. In Keith's opinion, the tensions within the club have contributed to declining numbers in membership:

> And so it was just this big, like, infighting thing, and it was actually starting people to leave the group because the tension between the leaders was just horrible. It was that choking feeling again, where every LGBTQIA Club meeting was this bubbling of anger underneath everybody's business.

Another source of conflict within the LGBTQIA Club is cliques. Chris shared his thoughts on this problem, stating:

> That was a huge problem when I was first going in and it's still a huge problem. There was three separate groups in that room and it's like, I'm not, I don't know any of you. I don't know where I fit. I'll just sit here and try to make conversation. It's intimidating…It's difficult to break down those barriers, to break down those walls to just have an open space. That's something we're all working on, and it's a reason why our attendance has died down so much in the past year. It's become so isolated. While intended to be completely open, it's very isolated.

Religion. Religion has its history of creating societal challenges for queer communities in this country. Chris shared his views on the oppression that queer individuals have experienced from religion:

> I knew at the time (that I joined LGBTIA Club) there were a lot of things that were oppressing us, like religion. A lot of us deal with a lot of hate from religion, and I've also been on that spectrum and have also faced that.

Shirley, whose Catholic upbringing led to negative personal feelings surrounding religion, expressed her views on the topic:

> When people believe (their religious convictions) to their very core, that this is what God wants them to be like, this is what God says, God says that anybody who identifies as gay or lesbian, or heaven forbid trans, they deserve nothing. Not even respect or human decency.

Shirley's work as an ally and activist has extended to her home life, where she aims to remain cognizant of how her children are to being exposed to negative messages about the LGBTQ community. Shirley reflected on the moment when her children began to express a curiosity about church and an interest in attending:

> We waited a long time, years even, until we found a church that was accepting, that was open…We want to make sure that no matter what activities our kids want to get involved in, it's inclusive and that they recognize the need for that inclusivity.

Paul explained how his religious upbringing led to having to deal with his own internalized homophobia:

> I was raised Catholic, and my family, the idea of homosexuality was frowned upon to say the lease. My parents, their ideas that homosexuality's a sin and all this other things, I didn't know about any other options. I was homophobic.

Chris shared his viewpoint on how he has seen religion create conflict within the LGBTQIA Club:

> A number of people within the group just despise religion for obvious reasons, but there are also another number of people within the group that are religious, so these are a number of things that we have to (work with). It's very difficult.

Overview of Staff/Faculty Interview Results

In addition to the interviews I conducted with students from Midwest College, I also interviewed three upper level staff and one member of the faculty

(for a complete list of interview questions see Appendix C). Overall, the findings uncover a view of campus climate by faculty and staff that is similar to that of students, but with the added perspective of those who are in the position of making the decisions that potentially shape and impact campus climate and the lives of those who are a part of this diverse campus community.

In contrast to the deductive approach used in my review of the student interview transcripts, I used an inductive process with the faculty and staff transcripts, highlighting responses that corresponded with the five themes of Community, Safe Space, Identity, Education, and Civic Engagement.

Community. In varying degrees, discussions that related to each of the five themes included some mention of the LGBTQ Center on campus, with the general consensus being positive. All four interview participants, however, disclosed what they saw as ongoing issues that the college still needs to address in order to foster a stronger sense of community and support. In his discussion on the current campus climate for queer students, staff, and faculty, Fred offered the following example:

> I know there are pockets of prejudice and bad stuff that happen still to students as well as faculty and staff. I know an instance of just a year ago, somebody leaving a really inappropriate nasty note for a faculty member, and so that stuff, that anonymous stuff does happen.

Responding to the same question regarding current campus climate, Kate offered her perspective:

> I would describe it as kind of a mixed bag, but maybe improving over time. I've been here (for several years), and I would say the last couple of years (have) shown some kind of improvement and maybe could say movement

> or growth or more institutional support for LGBTQ students and faculty and staff in a way that prior to that it just wasn't. It was on some of our radars, but in terms of the full campus climate and especially administration's embrace, if you will, wasn't very much there until maybe the last couple of years.

Midwest Community College has demonstrated its commitment to cultural diversity. However, some of the comments in these interviews hint at a hierarchy when it comes to equity and an inconsistent delegation of resources to different minority populations on campus. In her reflections on institutional support for queer populations on campus, Cindy stated:

> I think there are pockets that are very supportive of those communities…I think most of the college is very good at saying they are supportive, but sometimes when push comes to shove, or I don't know – I think there's a difference between being supportive and being an ally, and I think that there are a lot of people that are supportive and not a lot of people that are allies. 'Cause I think when it comes to like, putting money behind things, or 'Hey, we might piss some people off because we say XYZ,' I think there's a majority of people that will rather just avoid the issue altogether and not stand up for it.

Cindy provided an example of the challenges behind a recent victory for transgender people on campus:

> All-gender bathrooms…You know, I think everybody was like, yeah this is a good idea and it came time to actually do the work behind it and they're like, okay we don't want to make this happen. Isn't this wrong like this, shouldn't we have it like this, what is this saying to this population? Does that make sense? In some ways I want to call it lip service but it's not necessarily lip service because I feel like they're coming from a good place. It's just I don't think that there's just a separation between those two I think.

Safety. All four participants appeared to be in agreement that, while there is still work to do, considerable strides have been made on campus, particularly

in the time since the LGBTQ Center opened. Fred commented on the changes he has witnessed since the opening of the Center:

> Since we…actually opened a physical space for LGBTQ students, it's made a huge difference in terms of, I think, visibly showing our commitment to supporting those students and trying to create a more inclusive environment. So my sense is that (the current campus climate for queer students) is fairly good.

Kate expressed her belief that the college's website does not do a sufficient job in highlighting recent efforts to improve the climate for queer individuals on campus. "It shows," Kate explained, "that we, hopefully students think it shows, that we care about these issues, we care about them, we're trying to meet their needs." However, in terms of visibility, she added, "I think that it's still not as visible as it should be." In our interview, Kate said the following regarding safety and how the institution markets itself as a welcoming place for Queer students and staff:

> I would not say that it's perfect, but it's much improved from how it was even three years ago, let alone five or 10, so that's good. On the other hand, I think there's been a tendency from the college side of things to be like, 'Well, we've got our center, can we just stop talking about this now?'. So like, we did it, we're done, you got your restrooms, you got your center.

Just as queer students commented in their interviews on the importance of having safe space(s) on campus, faculty and staff appear to face similar challenges. I asked Fred if he thought Midwest Community College felt like a safe place for faculty and staff to be openly out at work. Fred replied:

> I think it's mixed. I think there are pockets of places where a few people feel more accepted, especially on the faculty side. I'll hear people talk about that and others where's it's not so much. I think if you talked with faculty that are out they would say "I've got my places where I feel safe, and other places where I don't." From my observation, I might be wrong

> on this, my sense is that it's more faculty to faculty, that's where there's the feeling of unsafeness about peers, as opposed to students or…I've never gotten a sense of administration/faculty issues that way, but that's sort of my sense of where, or there are just cultural things we don't even recognize that are creating negative environments. I can't tell you what that is, but I think they are out there.

In the case of Midwest Community College, it appears that attempts to create institutional change also instigated a period of outcry on campus. As Cindy explained:

> When we first opened our LGBTQ Center there were several situations that came up that first six months specifically, six months to a year, about just how LGBTQ students were treated by other students, by other groups, by other professors, all this different stuff, and I was like, why is all this stuff happening right now? We've never heard of any of this stuff before and for a while I thought we were doing something wrong, and thing I'm like, you know, I think we're actually doing something right because having (this new advisor position) and having the center I think is allowing students a place where they feel safe expressing that these things are happening. I think they were happening all along, but they just didn't feel comfortable coming forward that they were occurring. And so, I think that outcry when that first happened was because they're feeling comfortable and they're feeling empowered, and they're feeling proud of who they are.

Helping to foster pride in queer students, faculty, and staff is arguably a thoughtful strategy in combating feelings of unsafety among this population. Feeling safe to fully disclose one's sexual orientation or gender identity at work or school is a subject that shares a fair amount of overlap with the theme of Identity.

Identity. Rick commented that, from what he has witnessed, queer youth are coming out at increasingly younger ages. Where 30 years ago students began coming out during their college years, Rick himself has seen students coming to college having already begun this process. Rick explained:

> A lot of the students I have at this point now are coming out of high school to start at Midwest College. Most of them are out, and maybe not out to their whole family, and they're probably out to their parents. They're maybe at least out to a family member or two, maybe not their parents, maybe it's their siblings, you know? That necessarily wasn't true five years ago, 10 years ago, 20 years. So I think there's a pretty serious shift going, but that to me says that we're being successful in some way in the work that's happening.

When asked if he thought the opening of the LGBTQ Center had opened the door for more faculty and staff to come out, Rick provided his thoughts:

> I think it's more a trajectory thing. To be honest, the United[7] piece really brought people to the forefront. I think a lot of people decided it was time to be visible. I think that played a factor.

I followed up by asking Rick how supported a campus staff or faculty member might feel if they decided to come out at work in the current climate. Rick replied:

> Most people, to be honest, would be supportive. There's always going to be people that aren't supportive. The vast majority are supportive or at least neutral, but there are some folks on campus that try to express concerns.

Education. In my conversations with faculty and staff, discussion pertaining to Education tended to focus mostly on Advocacy and Public Education. The institution has made efforts to educate the campus community on issues that concern queer communities represented on campus, but as previously mentioned, there are member of the campus community who are resistant to such change.

Public education/advocacy. Relatively recent changes at Midwest Community College have likely resulted in a more inclusive climate for queer

[7] United for All Families was a political organization that fought for the right of all to marry, regardless of sexual orientation.

students, faculty, and staff. Kate commented about the reluctance she has witnessed in response to any campus initiative designed to educate on the needs of queer students on campus:

> I can't just say, "Oh, everyone's happy and everything's great," because I think that stuff is still happening. There's also, I think, resistance to us having LGBTQ stuff on campus, so my understanding is that (the LGBTQIA Club advisor) gets emails all the time from people who are not very nice about some of the programming and things that happen. I've been involved in some stuff where things come back where you find out from faculty and staff that they're uncomfortable or upset that something happened, or whatever. So to me, even though these things are happening, and there does seem to be some institutional or administrative support for these things, there's definitely not across the board support for these things. There's definitely resistance to this stuff. I would say this place is very heteronormative, and so there are people who, now that we're talking about some of this stuff, go like, "What? Why do we have to talk about this? Why show I go to a training or professional development thing about this? This doesn't affect me." So there's that.

Richard also talked about faculty and staff response to various campus initiatives, stating:

Yeah, there's a lot of initiatives, but no – I think that there's probably a group that, for varying interests or various reasons there that actively oppose sometimes. They like it if it's a good marketing piece, or it makes the college look really good this way or that way or whatever, but when it's actually getting at the core of it there's sometimes a lot of pushback.

Kate recalled personal experiences with students who believe there remains a need for education and advocacy:

> So we had these things, and we now had these structured, relatively recently, that I have to believe, and I've heard from students that they make a difference. Like, it's important to them that we have a center, or it's important to them that we have an Intro to LGBTQ studies class in the Gender Studies program…It's important to them that these things are there, but I still continuously hear stories from students about being in a class, or somebody says something that is offensive, and the instructor doesn't act, or doesn't take care of it.

Cindy echoed Kate's statements, citing the absence of campus allies when she first started in her position. "There were people," Kate explained, "that were trying and were advocating and advocating, but weren't getting anywhere. Like, it was like banging their head against a wall."

Civic Engagement. For Midwest Community College, being a public institution, there is a fine line between advocacy and activism that those in leadership positions but monitor closely. For example, due to political implications, the institution itself was not legally permitted to take an official stance on the state Marriage Amendment. Faculty and staff, on the other hand, could speak out against the bill, but not as representatives of the college. Unfortunately, a consequence of such a policy is a sense among queer populations on campus that their institution's proclaimed support of queer communities is, as Cindy framed it, merely lip service.

The data collected through student participation in the survey and individual interviews, combined with the views of faculty and staff views obtained through additional interviews, I believe, provide a solid base from which answers to my research questions can be found. The following chapter will use the collected data, while revisiting the existing literature, to respond to the research questions upon which this study was built.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

In this chapter I use the study's two research questions to guide a discussion on my findings and how they either support or conflict with existing literature. I will discuss the importance of this study, highlight what I see as possible limitations of the study, and conclude with implications for practice and my recommendations for future research.

The purpose of this study was to determine what motivates queer students at a two-year community college to be involved in a campus LGBTQIA student organization. The personal lives of these students can be wrought with profound challenges at school, home, and from society itself. The commuter culture of community colleges often provides little incentive for extra-curricular involvement, especially for those students who may be working outside of school, or have other responsibilities such as supporting a family.

This study was guided by the following research question:

What are the issues and campus factors that motivate queer students and their allies to become involved in campus activities such as student groups at a two-year college?

Discussion of Findings

This section will discuss the results of the study as they relate to the research question. The results will be reviewed according to the five motivational themes of Community, Safety, Identity, Civic Engagement, and Education.

Community. Five of the 10 students I interviewed identified finding a queer campus community as a factor that motivates them. Similarly, a survey question that asked students to rate four items by level of importance (from "not important" to "extremely important") elicited 16 "extremely important" responses (out of 31 completed surveys) for the item "Finding Community/Friendships".

It is clear that "finding community" is a prominent factor that motivates students at Midwest Community College to seek involvement in activities such as LGBTQIA Club. Seeking community, according to some prominent LGBT development theories, is vital to the development of queer identity. For example, in stage three of Cass's Homosexual Identity Acquisition Model (1979), Identity Tolerance, individuals begin seeking community in order to meet social, sexual, and emotional needs. Renn and Bilodeau (2006) found that the sixth process of D'Augelli's Model of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Development, Entering an LGBT Community, "played a clear role in students' identity development" (Renn, 2006 p. 2).

Carmody Roster (2013), reported that only 10 percent of the community college students in her study indicated that their college provided ""very much" support for their social needs" (p. 109). My study did not specifically ask Carmody Roster's question, but the general sense I got from students was that the LGBTQIA Club provided considerable support for their social needs, a view that was also held by the faculty and staff that were interviewed. Kate, for example, offered the following faculty/staff perspective regarding community: "I

would say the last couple of years (have) shown some kind of improvement and maybe could say movement or growth or more institutional support for LGBTQ students and faculty and staff in a way that prior to that it just wasn't."

Safety. The notion of "safety", and feeling safe on campus, has been shown to be a strong value for the queer students I interviewed for this study. Having what they consider to be a "safe space" may in fact be a contributing factor to their persistence and success in college. Research indicates that many queer college students experience verbal harassment and physical assault prior to college. For example, GLSEN (2014), reported that 74.1 percent of queer students are verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation, and 55.2 percent based on their gender expression, while 32.6 percent of queer students reported being physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) because of their sexual orientation, and 22.7 percent because of their gender expression.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), an individual's need to feel safe is considered the most basic of human needs. If a college or university places value in creating a learning environment that is conducive to the process of self-actualization, then it is essential that the safety of *all* students, faculty, and staff is a priority.

In my interview with Danny, he commented on finding a place that feels safer than his family environment. "It's a safe place to be," Danny explained. "There's definitely, on a lot of campuses there's some (anti-gay) negativity, and there are the stereotypical frat boy people, and I guess that doesn't necessarily

apply to a two-year institution…It's great that there's a place where you don't necessarily have to deal with those people, and you're with people that support and accept you."

This brings to light an important point in terms of queer identity development. Having a space where students feel free to explore their identity may in fact be necessary if they are to move on to stage four of D'Augelli's model, during which students begin to come out to members of their family. The result of not having safe space(s) on campus may hinder queer student identity development.

A study by Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, and Robinson-Keilig (2004) concluded that attitudes expressed by faculty and staff play a role in shaping the climate (e.g., safe versus hostile) towards queer and other students on campus. The generally positive views of the campus climate expressed in interviews with faculty and staff for this study could indicate that administrative efforts have resulted in a more equitable experience for queer students at Midwest Community College.

Faculty and staff, due to the nature of their roles on campus, are privy to a different understanding of the college campus than most students. In this study, for example, all faculty and staff participants provided examples from Midwest Community College's history that they believe contributed at one time to a campus environment that was less queer friendly than the current climate. Two interview participants discussed having personally witnessed interpersonal

challenges between faculty on campus, instances that they believe are a part of ongoing tensions. One example of such tension is a reluctance from some faculty to participate in campus initiatives such as diversity training, which includes sexual orientation and gender identity.

Identity. Identity, from the construct of college student development, can be defined as a student's "personally held beliefs about the self in relation to social groups" (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009, p. 577), including social groups based on sexual orientation or gender identity. In my interviews with students it seemed apparent that the need to find and/or affirm one's identity is strong.

In the first process of Renn and Bilodeau's (2005) modified version of D'Augelli's Model, students often begin to discard heterosexual orientations or more traditional gender identities prior to becoming involved with LGBT student organizations. Among the students I interviewed, those who cited the search for identity as a motivator for seeking involvement were quite confident that they no longer identified as heterosexual. Being engaged with the LBGTQIA club helped them to explore their identity, a process which is defined in D'Augelli's model as Developing a Personal LGBT Status (Renn, 2006).

Civic Engagement. The data from my interviews, survey, and the initial focus group portray this particular group of students as being considerably indifferent when it comes to political involvement. The actions of these students, however, can paint a different picture. For example, a discussion on the topic of

social change during the pilot focus group elicited the following response from one of the participants:

> After I got more involved in (LGBTQIA Club), after I got a sense for how the community was along with my LGBTQ studies classes, I learned how very important a lot of the things are that we do here. And, I wanted to be more and more a part of that to create a change and, yeah. Contribute to the community more so.

Although some of the students who participated in individual interviews did not consider themselves to be completely "out", most of them appeared to embrace their identity and express pride in being part of the community. Gay rights have historically been used in politics as a wedge issue, contributing to the demonization and marginalization of queer communities. Renowned gay rights activist Harvey Milk once said, "Coming out is the most political thing you can do." ("12 Things Proving Harvey Milk," 2015). Danny, one of the interview participants, similarly noted that, despite the disinterest some people may express towards political action, being queer "is inadvertently political."

It is no coincidence, in my opinion, that LGBTQIA club membership rose to nearly 50 students in 2012, the same year when the Marriage Amendment was on the state election ballot. Chris, an interview participant, stated, "There was a lot of civil rights movements going on, like "vote no", stuff like that. I wanted to get more involved with that. (LGBTQIA Club was) doing a lot…That's kind of what got me involved." For Midwest Community College Students like Chris who sought opportunities to fight the amendment, the LGBTQIA Club gave

them a chance to engage with others in the community, through volunteering with phone banks or making a group visit to the State Capitol.

The process of "group alignment", which is in stage four of Troiden's Homosexual Identity Formation model (1989, p. 62), is defined as a time when many gays and lesbians in this stage work through the negative stigma of being gay by becoming engaged within the gay community. From a queer student identity development stance, the civic engagement activities described by student participants could certainly be considered a valuable experience for queer students who, according to queer development theory, are likely to be dealing with some level of stigma based solely on their orientation or identity.

Education. Student interviewees approached the theme of education in terms of the value they place in educating themselves on queer issues, as well as the importance they place on educating the public and advocating for queer communities.

Astin (1985) defines "student involvement" as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 36). Participation in student organizations and time spent on campus, correlates directly with learning (1985). Considering that Midwest Community College is a commuter campus, involvement, according to Astin's definition, can be particularly beneficial to queer students, since it can give them incentive to spend more time on campus. I believe Danny summed this up nicely in his interview when he said, "Whenever I go (to LGBTQIA Club meetings) it makes me feel

motivated to continue being a student here, because I know there's a community here for me."

The process of educating others can, in itself, be a learning opportunity for students. Within stage 5 of the leadership identity development (LID) model (Komives et al., 2005), Generativity, engaged students begin to contribute to the learning of others, sometimes through a mentoring role. Students may also feel a responsibility for sustaining groups or organizations. By taking on a role in a student organization like LGBTQIA Club, students may actually be benefiting from education out of the classroom.

The interviews that I conducted with faculty and administrators revealed a general agreement that Midwest Community College is actively concerned with the personal and academic success of its queer student population. Since campus employees are likely to have a longer history with the institution than students, they are also more likely to have witnessed or experienced changes to campus climate that have occurred over time. Three of the interview participants spoke of the efforts of a specific member of the faculty who has invested time and resources into rectifying inequities have had a negative impact on queer communities on campus. The efforts of this faculty member, they believe, have led to more recent administrative actions that are now contributing to positive changes that may ultimately improve the educational experience for all students, but in this case queer students in particular.

Importance of the Study

Research on queer student engagement at two-year institutions is scant when compared to research on four-year institutions, which is a primary reason why I chose a two-year college for this study. When I first began searching for literature on the queer college student experience, I could find no empirical research on queer student life at two-year institutions. In addition, there is a lack of studies regarding factors that motivate queer student involvement in general, at two- or four-year schools. Considering how vital community colleges are within higher education, it seemed apparent to me that a study on this topic would be an overdue contribution to this area of research.

In spite of great strides towards equality that queer communities have witnessed in recent years, attitudes towards those who identify as LGBTQ in the United States remain hostile at times, if not violent. Within the first four months of 2016 alone, nearly 200 anti-LGBT bills were introduced in 34 states across the country, many under the guise of “religious freedom” (Human Rights Campaign, 2016).

Attempts to socially demonize any minority can understandably have negative effects on those who are the target of such marginalization. As such, another important reason for me to conduct this study was to contribute in some way to the understanding of what motivates college students to become involved in activities relevant to their identity. Why would students who are socially stigmatized want to face the potential of increasing the visibility of their identity on

campus? Focusing my study on queer students at a smaller, two-year institution, I believe, makes this question even more compelling.

Limitations of Study

One limitation of the study pertains to the survey, and a question that asked participants to rate the importance of "personal reasons" in their decision to become involved with the LGBTQIA Club. Of the four possible reasons for involvement listed (education, community/relationships, personal reasons, political engagement), personal reasons was ranked the highest. In retrospect, I believe that I should have either been more specific in terms of what I meant by "personal reasons", or provided a space for participants to specify what their personal reasons were. By not being more specific I may have missed an opportunity for richer data on this particular question. The limitation of this survey question was not an issue with the interviews, however, since participants were given the opportunity to explain what their reasons were.

Another potential limitation with my study is inherently connected with the regional demographics of the institution I chose for this research. Midwest Community College is located in a state that has a history of being politically liberal, which is not to say that all of the students come from liberal cities or towns, or that their families of origin are not conservative. In fact, several of the students that I interviewed came from conservative backgrounds. However, I do think that if this study had been conducted in a more traditionally conservative

state, I may have seen different results. As such, the generalizability of my results should be taken under consideration.

Finally, I should note that Rose, one of my interview participants, alerted me to an error in my survey. Rose pointed out that me that "Pansexual" is a sexual orientation, as opposed to a gender identity, as I had mistakenly listed on the survey. This oversight on my part is a shortcoming of the survey, and something I would correct if I were to ever repeat the study.

A Proposed Model

Through the process of reviewing my study results, it occurred to me that the experience of seeking out and becoming involved in a queer student organization, as it was described in my interviews with students, share similarities with Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT) (1957). Cognition, as defined by Festinger, is "the things a person knows about himself, about his behavior, and about his surroundings" (p. 9). According to the main principles behind CDT, individuals experience cognitive dissonance when they must choose between attitudes or behaviors that are contradictory. In order to move beyond the discomfort caused by this dissonance, the individual must change or remove the attitude or behavior that is causing the conflict.

The proposed model provides a visual means of framing the findings of my study. The model posits that the discomfort students feel from the dissonance that comes from the introduction of the motivating factor which may

ultimately propel them towards action. I will use the motivating factor of Identity to illustrate:

- Student begins to question their sexual orientation or gender identity (motivating factor, Identity, is introduced);
- The student's need or desire to explore their identity has gotten to the point of discomfort, to where student feels compelled to resolve or eliminate uncomfortable feelings (dissonance);
- Student seeks out and/or becomes involved with queer student group in efforts to explore identity (action).

This application of CDT to the theme of Identity can be seen in Troiden's Homosexual Identity Formation model. Within the model's second stage, Identity Confusion, the individual experiences conflict when the idea that they might be gay is in conflict with previous self-images. The conflict results in the individual no longer able to assume a heterosexual identity. In this scenario, a queer student at Midwest Community College may seek involvement with the LGBTQIA Club as a way to remove the internal conflict and develop new attitudes that affirm their identity.

A statement made by one of the participants in the focus group can be used to further illustrate my proposed model. The following quote comes from a discussion on politics and political involvement:

> In the area that I live it's very very church-y, just from like, my street you can see probably like four church steeples. I think there a few varieties (of faiths). I don't (belong) to them, so I don't know. But I mean, during the "yes for inequality", I guess you'd say, vote, there were so many "Vote Yes" little yard signs, bumper stickers around where I live that it was really starting to negatively affect my emotions, and I felt like if I didn't do anything to counter it I would succumb to like, crazy bouts of depression. Because that's just the way that I am. So, I did the phone volunteering

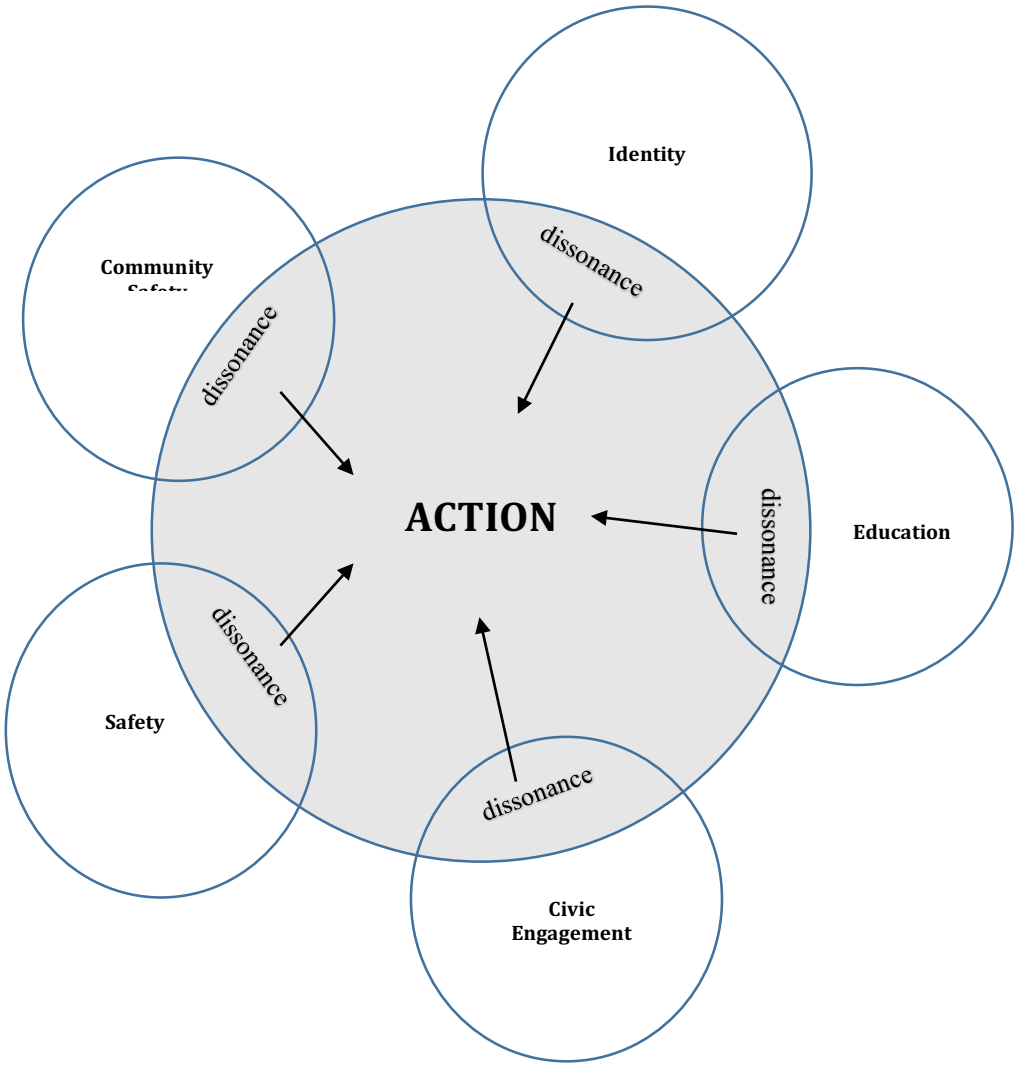
> mostly due to the area that I live in, and seeing all the representation of the other side, and even just simple things like getting your friends who weren't going to vote to go vote make big differences, and trying to do that as much as I could.

In this example, the appearance of all the "Vote Yes" signage in this student's conservative hometown triggered the motivating factor of Civic Engagement. The student acknowledges the dissonance he experienced from the negative emotions and fearing an onset of depression. As a result, by volunteering with phone banks and educating the public about the upcoming election, the student found a useful outlet to combat the cognitive dissonance he was feeling.

My proposed Queer Student Engagement Motivation Model (see Figure 1) is intended to compliment the study findings by introducing the idea that CDT may play role in the motivation of queer students to become involved in groups such as the LGBTQIA club. Dissonance, as experienced by students according this model, is not necessarily the same for each motivating factor. For example, the motivating factor of Safety is likely to contain a certain level of fear, propelling the student to seek environments or resources that will increase feelings of safety. On the other hand, the factors of Education or Civic Engagement may be motivated more by a sense of urgency, or wanting to make a positive contribution to the Queer community(s). Thus, the motivating factors that create dissonance may have uniquely different qualities, but the end result of each is a move towards Action.

Figure 1

Queer Student Engagement Motivation Model



Implications for Practice

Research on campus climate suggests that college environments that affirm and celebrate all identities may have non-majority populations that are more engaged (Kuh, 1993). Quaye et al. (2009) assert that non-majority college students benefit from academic climates that give thoughtful consideration to cultural identities, backgrounds, and societal stereotypes. The results of my study should, at the very least, provide food for thought for any two-year institutions interested in the value of creating engagement opportunities for queer students on their campuses.

The results of my study have implications for *all* members of campus communities, including faculty and staff. For example, advisors and counselors who work with students who may show signs of dealing with inner conflict due their sexual orientation or gender identity, should be trained in how, when, and where to refer students for additional campus support. At Midwest Community College, an appropriate referral for such a student might include looking into the LGBTQIA Club.

A number of student interview participants discussed the challenges they faced as a result of group infighting and cliques within the LGBTQIA Club. Conflict such as that described by some of the interview participants could potentially discourage students from being involved. "It doesn't change," Barbara explained. "I mean, maybe we'll have different arguments, but it's just the clash of ideas, and it's caused…I mean, you can feel the tension when you walk in the

room some days." Bob shared his own opinion about the conflicts within the group:

> If there's been a struggle with LGBTQIA Club, it's getting a lot of people to just like each other…it's bold personalities, and I don't know – I can't speak for anybody else. I don't know what else is going on in other peoples' lives but…a very emotional group. I don't know how to explain it. It's not always the most uplifting experience, because when you think about it, the reason we have a need for this club in the first place is because we're discriminated against on a daily basis, whether we like it or not. And so that in itself can set up the club to b kind of a downer.

Keith noted how he thinks conflict has contributed to declining club membership:

> It was just this big, like, infighting thing. And it was actually starting people to leave the group because the tension between (members) of the group, myself included, was just horrible. It was that choking feeling again, where every LGBTQIA Club meeting was this bubbling of anger underneath everybody's business.

Cabrera et al. (1999) concluded that minority students who feel disengaged may grapple with dissatisfaction, detachment, isolation, and a higher risk of decreased persistence. For professionals who advise or work in some capacity with queer student groups, the subject of inner-group conflict should be a concern, considering that groups like the LGBTQIA Club can be so closely connected with personal identity development. If infighting results in students leaving the group, it may be helpful to encourage these students to debrief or discuss their experience with a club advisor in a space that is neutral and non-threatening.

It may seem commonplace for colleges and universities to promote the espoused value of "diversity" at their institutions, but in reality, institutional

definitions of diversity vary across college and university campuses, and may be restrictive or exclusionary depending on other espoused institutional values (i.e. religion).

Recommendations for Future Research

First and foremost, I recommend more research within the context of two-year institutions in general. As the cost of college continues to rise, community colleges are posed to assume a higher profile and increased influence within higher education.

One inherent assumption when using a case study method is that the example being studied is somehow "typical of a broader phenomenon" (Vogt, 1993, p. 30). The results of this study, I expect, may be generalized to represent queer college student motivation at two-year institutions that have similar characteristics. For example: institutional size, mission, attention and resources available to diverse student populations, institutional stance on the role diversity may influence the college experience and/or campus climate – these are all factors that could help determine whether the results are generalizable. For institutions that do not have profiles similar to the college used for this study, I think further research may be necessary to compare/contrast the motivation levels and experiences of queer students at those institutions with students who participated in this study.

I would like to see this study replicated in a more conservative region of the country, perhaps even at an institution that has a reputation for being

unfriendly towards LGBTQ people. At such an institution I would expect that there could be challenges in finding study participants, but I believe that replicating the study in such an environment would potentially shed light on the impact of sustaining a welcoming campus climate that is more welcoming.

There are two-year colleges that genuinely welcome and support queer students on their campuses, yet for whatever reason do not provide adequate funding for resources such as a LGBTQ Student Center, or meeting space for a queer student group. I recommend that future empirical research explore whether the allocation or availability of institutional funds for queer student organizations has any correlation with student motivation to be involved with groups like LGBTQIA Club. If queer students that have access to more institutional resources display higher levels of motivation, for example, than students at institutions with little to no resources allocated for queer student programming, then it could be argued that further research is indeed warranted.

Research indicates that both student engagement and positive student/faculty relationships are more likely at smaller colleges (Astin, 1993; Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Engagement activities within the institution can help foster a sense of belonging for students. This certainly has implications for community colleges, most of which do not benefit from on-campus housing that keeps students closer to campus. I recommend future research on whether any relationship between queer community college students and campus

engagement has an impact on student success and retention rates for this population.

Similarly, I recommend future research on whether there is any correlation between availability of resources for queer students at two-year institutions and queer student persistence and/or academic achievement. In answering this question, I would recommend a longitudinal study that tracks the progress of student participants, including their plans after leaving the institution. Such a study would likely benefit from monitoring groups of students from multiple two-year institutions, including one with sufficient resources and support, and one without. This methodology could help determine whether resources and support play a significant role in queer student motivation, as well as its importance in the academic and vocational success of this student population. A key issue with such a study would involve those students who transfer to four-year institutions. For these students, the process of determining the influence of multiple institutions could prove to be complicated.

As noted earlier, my Queer Student Engagement Motivation Model is rooted largely in Festinger's (1957) theory of Cognitive Dissonance. A question that might be explored more deeply by future research is whether engagement, such as involvement in a student club, reduces dissonance, or if it is the process of seeking to reconcile dissonances that results in club participation. While I suspect that both are potentially true, I believe that further study on the model is warranted.

One last recommendation regards the topic of intersectionality, which is an emerging field of study within higher education, and one that is certainly relevant to the lives of queer college students. I did not include questions on intersectionality in my survey or interviews, although the topic still surfaced during a few interviews. Queer students with multiple intersecting identities may find fitting in to be an unexpected challenge (Patton et al., 2011). I suspect that where intersecting identities exist, the struggle for acceptance continues beyond college. I consider intersectionality to be extremely relevant in conversations that relate to any non-majority group that faces marginalization, be it on- or off-campus, which is why my recommendations include future research on the impact of intersectionality on queer college students.

Conclusion

The findings of this study identified five dominant themes that motivate queer students at a two-year community college to be involved in a campus student group based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These findings provide an understanding of queer student engagement at two year institutions that is largely absent from existing empirical research on queer college student life.

In my opinion, colleges and universities that promote a climate welcoming of queer identities are responsible for creating campus environments that support students in the development of each of their individual identities, including sexual orientation and gender identity. In doing so, I believe, institutions increase the

opportunity for positive college experiences for all, rather than just some students.

As higher education institutions deal with more issues of diversity, and LGBTQ resources are more a part of that discourse on diversity, institutional leaders need to consider how they create spaces where their queer students can thrive and be successful. It is also clear from this research that context plays an important role. The cultural attitudes within the region, the type of institution, the nature of the student body, the attitudes of institutional leaders, and the historical precedents of the institution all influence the ways in which these issues manifest. There is no one path that fits for all contexts, even within similar types of institutions (not just two-year colleges). One size does not fit all.

The demographic information that was provided on the study institution's website confirmed that the questionnaire sample closely represented the ethnic diversity of the institution overall. Unfortunately, the institution's demographic data does not include statistics on sexual orientation or gender identity. While the absence of this information is not surprising, I hope that as cultural acceptance of LGBTQ populations increases, we may witness efforts by colleges to collect such data for inclusion in the reporting of student demographics.

It is my recommendation that future research on queer two-year college students take the results of this study into consideration, as they are likely applicable and relevant. It is my hope that queer college student engagement will grow as an area of empirical study. The application of any knowledge gained

from such research has the potential to create positive change for students and the colleges and universities that seek to understand and meet the unique needs of both queer students and institutions they attend.

References

Abbott, E., & Liddell, D. (1996). Alienation of students: Does sexual orientation matter? *The College Student Affairs Journal, 16*(1), 45-55.

Abes, E. S., & Jones, S. R. (2004). Meaning making capacity and the dynamics of lesbian college students' multiple dimensions of identity. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(6), 612-632.

About century college (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.century.edu/about

American Psychological Association (2014). *Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender*. Retrieved from http://apa.org/topics/lgbt/index.aspx

Anti-Violence Project (2012, October 10). *2011 report on intimate partner violence in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and HIV-affected communities in the U.S. released today*. Retrieved from http://www.avp.org/resources/avp-resources/100

Anti-Violence Project (2015, June 9). *National Report on Hate Violence Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and HIV-Affected Communities Released Today.* Retrieved from http://avp.org/storage/documents/Reports/MEDIARELEASE_2014_NCAVP_HVREPORT.pdf

Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college: Four critical years revisited.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. W. (1985). Involvement: The cornerstone of excellence. *Change, 17*(4), 34-39.

Bailey, T., & Morest, V. S. (2006). *Defending the community college equity agenda.* Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press

Barnes, R. (2013, June 26). *Supreme Court strikes down key part of Defense of Marriage Act.* Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/supreme-court/2013/06/26/f0039814-d9ab-11e2-a016-92547bf094cc_story.html

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin, 117*(3), 497-529.

Berman, M., Larimer, S., & Horwitz, S. (2016, May 9). *North Carolina, Justice Dept. file dueling lawsuits over transgender rights.* Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/05/09/north-carolina-justice-dept-face-monday-deadline-for-bathroom-bill

Biegel, S., & Kuehl, S. J. (2010). *Safe at school: Addressing the school environment and lgbt safety through policy and legislation.* Retrieved from http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/Biegel_LGBT.pdf

Bilodeau, B. L., & Renn, K.A. (2005). Analysis of LGBT identity development models and implications for practice. *New Directions for Student Services*, *111*, 25-39.

Blumenfeld, W. M. (2012, September 25). *Reflections on pre-stonewall LGBT university life.* Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/warren-j-blumenfeld/reflections-on-pre-stonewall-lgbt-university-life_b_1906312.html

Brauer, D. (2012) Graphing institutional change toward more inclusive environments. *Diversity and Democracy: Civic Learning for Shared Futures, 15*(1), 8-10.

Brown, R. D., Clarke, B., Gortmaker, V., & Robinson-Keilig, R. (2004). Assessing the campus climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) students using a multiple perspectives approach. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(1), 8-26.

Cabrera, A. F., Nora, A., Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella, E., & Hagedorn, L. S. (1999). Campus racial climate and the adjustment of students to college: A comparison between White students and African-American students. *Journal of Higher Education*, *70*(2), 134-160.

Campus pride. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.campuspride.org

Carmody Roster, E. (2013). *Student organizations on community college campuses: An examination of engagement levels of community college students* (Doctoral Dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3600926)

Cass, V. C. (1979). Homosexual identity formation: A theoretical model. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *4*(3), 219-235.

Cass, V. C. (1984). Homosexual identity formation: Testing a theoretical model. *The Journal of Sex Research, 20*(2), 143-167.

Cegler, T. D. (2012). Targeted recruitment of GLBT students by colleges and universities. *Journal of College Admission*, Spring 2012, 18-23.

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 509-535). Thousand, CA: Sage.

Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1999). Development and adaptations of the seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *New directions for teaching and learning*, no. 80, 75-81.

Cianciotto, J., & Cahill, S. (2003). Education Policy: Issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth. New York, NY: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute.

Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals (2012). *Higher education LGBT support services map*. Retrieved from http://lgbtcampus.memberclicks.net/lgbt-support-services-map

Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Clark Plano, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs: Selection and implementation. *The Counseling Psychologist, 35*, 236-264.

Crotty, M. (2005). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

D'Augelli, A. R. (1994). Identity development and sexual orientation: Toward a model of lesbian, gay, and bisexual development. In E. J. Trickett, R. Watts, & D. Birman (Eds.), *Human Diversity: Perspectives on people in context* (pp. 312-333). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

D'Augelli, A. R., Pilkington, N. W., & Hershberger, S. L. (2002). Incidence and mental health impact of sexual orientation victimization of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths in high school. *School Psychology Quarterly, 17*(2). 148-167.

Dilley, P. (2005). Which way out? A typology of non-heterosexual male collegiate identities. *The Journal of Higher Education, 76*(1). 56-88.

Feather, S. (2007, November 21). *A brief history of the Gay Liberation Front, 1970-73*. Retrieved from http://libcom.org/library/brief-history-gay-liberation-front-1970-73

Federal Bureau of Investigation (2011, November 14). *FBI releases 2010 hate crime statistics*. Retrieved from http://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-releases-2010-hate-crime-statistics

Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) (2014). The 2013 National School Climate Survey Executive Summary: Key Findings on the Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools. New York.

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) (2012). The 2011 National School Climate Survey Executive Summary: Key Findings on the Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools. New York.

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) (n.d.). *Get the facts about GSAs.* Retrieved from http://glsen.org/participate/gsa/about-gsas

Gay marriage in the US supreme court (2015, June 29). Retrieved from http://gaymarriage.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=006193

Gender Equity Resource Center (2013). *Definition of terms.* Retrieved from http://ejce.berkeley.edu/geneq/resources/lgbtq-resources/definition-terms

Human Rights Campaign (n.d.). *An overview of federal rights and protections granted to married couples.* Retrieved from http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/an-overview-of-federal-rights-and-protections-granted-to-married-couples

Human Rights Campaign (2016). *HRC Legal director answers members' questions on anti-lgbt state bills*. Retrieved from http://www.hrc.org/blog/listen-hrc-legal-director-answers-members-questions-on-anti-lgbt-state-bill

Human Rights Campaign (2016). *Maps of state laws and policies*. Retrieved from http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/maps-of-state-laws-policies

Human Rights Campaign (2014). *Marriage center*. Retrieved from http://www.hrc.org/campaigns/marriage-center

Human Rights Campaign (2012). *State laws and legislation*. Retrieved from http://www.hrc.org/laws-and-legislation/state/c/workplace

Human Rights Campaign (2016). *Anti-transgender legislation spreads nationwide, bills targeting transgender children surge.* Retrieved from http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//files/assets/resources/HRC-Anti-Trans-Issue-Brief-FINAL-REV2.pdf

Jaschik, S. (2010, February 26). *Outreach to Gay Applicants.* Retrieved from http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/02/26/gay#sthash.X7tyjNzB.dpbs

Jones, S. R., & McEwewn, M. K., (2000). A conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity. *Journal of College Student Development, 41*(4), 405-414.

Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J., (2006). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative research in higher education: Fundamental elements and issues*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Komives, S. R., Owen, J. E., Longerbeam, S. D., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, J. E. (2005). Developing a leadership identity: A grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development. (46)*6, 593-611.

Komives, S. R., Longerbeam, S. D., Owen, J. E., & Mainella, F. C. (2006). A leadership identity development model: Applications from a grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development. (47)*4, 401-418.

Kuh, G. D. (1993). Ethos. *Liberal Education, 79*(4), 22-32.

Levine, A. (1980). *When dreams and heroes died*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Maslow, A.H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, *50*, 370-396.

Meem, D. T., Gibson, M. A., & Alexander, J. F. (2000). *Finding out: An introduction to LGBT studies.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Minnesota Amendment 1 Same-Sex Marriage Ballot Measure Fails. (2012, November 7). Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/07/minnesota-amendment-1-results-2012_n_2050310.html

Mueller, J. A., & Cole, J. C. (2009). A qualitative examination of heterosexual consciousness among college students. *Journal of College Student Development, (50)*3, 320-336.

Obear, K. (1991). Homophobia. In N. J. Evans & V. A. Wall (Eds.), *Beyond tolerance: Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals on campus* (pp. 39-66). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Orcher, L. T. (2005). *Conducting research: Social and behavioral science methods*. Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.

Orfield, G. (2009). *Reviving the goal of an integrated society: A 21st century challenge.* Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project at UCLA.

Palma, T. V., & Stanley, J. L. (2002). Effective counseling with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients. *Journal of College Counseling, 5*(1), 74-79.

Pascarella, E.T., & Terenzini, P.T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Patton, L. D., Kortegast, C., & Javier, G. (2011). LGBTQ millennials in college. In Bonner, F. A. II, Marbley, A. F., Hamilton, M. F. (Eds.), *Diverse Millennial Students in College: Implications for Faculty and Student Affairs* (pp. 175-192). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Perlesz, A., Brown, R., Lindsay, J., McNair, R., deVaus, D., & Pitts, M. (2006). Family in transition: Parents, children and grandparents in lesbian families give meaning to "doing family". *Journal of Family Therapy, 28*, 175-199.

Quaye, S. J., Tambascia, T. P., & Talesh, R. A. (2009). Engaging racial/ethnic minority students in predominantly White classroom environments. In S. R. Harper & S. J. Quaye (Eds.), *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations* (pp. 156-178). New York, NY: Rutledge.

Rankin, S. R. (2003). *Campus climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people: A national perspective*. New York, NY: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute.

Rankin, S. R. (2005). Campus climates for sexual minorities. *New Directions for Student Services, 111*, 17-23.

Renn, K. A., & Bilodeau, B. L. (2005). Leadership identity development among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender student leaders. *NASPA Journal, 42*(3), 342-367.

Renn, K. A. (2006). Identity and leadership development in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender student organizations. *Concepts & Connections: A Publication for Leadership Educators, 14*(1), 1-3.

Renn, K. A. (2007) LGBT student leaders and queer activists: Identities of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identified college student leaders and activists. *Journal of College Student Development, 48*(3), 311-330.

Rhoads, R. A. (1998). *Freedom's web: Student activism in an age of cultural diversity*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Rhoads, R. A. (1994). *Coming out in college: The struggle for identity.* Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Rigol, G. W. (2003). *Admissions decision-making models: How U.S. institutions of higher education select undergraduate students.* New York, NY: The College Board.

Robinson, J. P., & Espelage, D. L. (2012). Bullying explains only part of LGBTQ-Heterosexual risk disparities: Implications for policy and practice. *Educational Researcher, 41*(8), 309-319.

Ropers-Huilman, R., & McCoy, D. L. (2011). Student change agents as citizens in contemporary universities: Achieving the potential of engagement. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, (27)*3, 257-272.

Russell, S. T. (2003). Sexual minority youth and suicide risk. *American Behavioral Scientist 46*, 1241-1255.

Ryan, C. (2009) Supporting families, healthy children: Helping families with lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender children. San Francisco, CA: Marian Wright Edelman Institute, San Francisco State University. Retrieved from http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/files/English_Final_Print_Version_Last.pdf

Ryan, C., & Futterman, D. (1998). *Lesbian and gay youth: Care and counseling*. New York, NY: Columbia Press.

Salkever, K., & Worthington, R. L. (1998). Creating safe space in college athletics. In R. L. Sanlo (Ed.), *Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender college students: A handbook for faculty and administrators* (pp. 193-202). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Sanlo, R. L. (Ed.) (1998). *Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender college students: A handbook for faculty and administrators* (193-202). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Sanlo, R. L., Rankin, S., & Schoenberg, R. (Eds.) (2002). *Our place on campus: Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender services and programs in higher education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Schueler, L. A., Hoffman, J. A., & Peterson, E. (2009). Fostering safe, engaging campuses for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students. In S. R. Harper & S. J. Quale (Eds.), *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations* (pp. 61-79). New York, NY: Routledge.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, *52*(6), 613-629.

Sutton, M. E., & Kimbrough, W. M. (2001). Trends in Black student involvement. *NASPA Journal, 39*(1), 30-40.

Taines, C. (2012). Intervening in alienation: The outcomes for urban youth of participating in school activism. *American Educational Research Journal*, *49*(1), 53-86.

Torres, V., Jones, S. R., & Renn, K. A. (2009). Identity development theories in student affairs origins, current status, and new approaches. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(6), 577-596.

Troiden, R. R. (1989). The formation of homosexual identities. *Journal of Homosexuality, 17*, 43-74.

12 quotes proving Harvey Milk still gives us hope (2015, May 22). Retrieved from http://www.advocate.com/politics/politicians/2015/05/22/12-quotes-proving-harvey-milk-still-gives-us-hope

Vogt, W. P. (1993). *Dictionary of statistics and methodology: A nontechnical guide for the social sciences.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

von Destinon, M., Evans, N. J., & Wall, V. A. (2000). Navigating the minefield: Sexual orientation issues and campus politics. In N. J. Evans & V. A. Wall (Eds.), *Toward acceptance: Sexual orientation issues on campus* (pp. 371-388). Lanham, MD: United Press of America, Inc.

Wall, V. A., Washington, J., Evans, N. J., & Papish, R. A. (2000). From the trenches: Strategies for facilitating lesbian, gay, and bisexual awareness programs for college students. In N. J. Evans & V. A. Wall (Eds.), *Toward acceptance: Sexual orientation issues on campus* (pp. 157-189). Lanham, MD: United Press of America, Inc.

Washington, J., & Evans, N. J. (1991). Becoming an ally. In N. J. Evans & V. A. Wall (Eds.), *Beyond tolerance: Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals on campus* (pp. 153-167). Alexandria, VA: American College Personnel Association.

Welner, K. G. (2012). Scholars as policy actors: Research, public discourse, and the zone of judicial constraints. *American Educational Research Journal, 49*(1), 7-29.

Williams, P. R., & McGreevy M. R. (2004). Student activism at Ithaca college: Reflections on management and leadership. *New Directions for Higher Education, 128,* 61-72.

Windmeyer, S. (2011). *LGBT-friendly campus climate index*. Retrieved from http://www.campusclimateindex.org

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Appendix A

Student Involvement Questionnaire

The following questions are designed to help determine your level of involvement in LGBTQIA Club activities on your campus, issues relevant to queer communities, both on- and off-campus, and what factors may motivate you to be involved.

1. Not counting the current semester, how many total credits have you earned at this college and other colleges you may have attended? (Check one)

   _____ (1) None
   _____ (2) 1-14 credits
   _____ (3) 15-29 credits
   _____ (4) 30-44 credits
   _____ (5) 45-60 credits
   _____ (6) Over 60 credits

2. Have you selected a field/major of study? (Check one)

   _____ (1) No
   _____ (2) Yes
   _____ (3) If yes, what is your major? _____

3. What is your age?

   _____ (1) 18-23
   _____ (2) 24-29
   _____ (3) 30-35
   _____ (4) 35-40
   _____ (5) 40+

4. Please describe what your involvement with LGBTQIA Club means to you:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. On the following scale, how would you rate your current level of involvement with LGBTQIA Club activities over the past year? (Check one)

_____ (1) Not at all involved
_____ (2) Minimally involved
_____ (3) Moderately involved
_____ (4) Very involved
_____ (5) Extremely involved

6. How do you identify your sexual orientation? (Check the one that best fits)

_____ (1) Lesbian
_____ (2) Gay
_____ (3) Straight
_____ (4) Bisexual
_____ (5) Queer
_____ (6) Questioning/unsure
_____ (7) None of the options above apply to me. I identify as (please specify): _____
_____ (8) Decline to state

7. What is your gender identity? (Check the one that best fits)

_____ (1) Transgender
_____ (2) Pansexual
_____ (3) Male
_____ (4) Female
_____ (5) Genderqueer
_____ (6) Questioning/unsure
_____ (7) None of the options above apply to me. I identify as (please specify): _____
_____ (8) Decline to state

8. What is your racial/ethnic identity? (Check all that apply)

_____ (1) White/Caucasian
_____ (2) Hispanic or Latino, any race
_____ (3) African American or Black
_____ (4) Asian or Pacific Islander
_____ (5) Middle Eastern or Arab American, any race
_____ (6) Native American, American Indian or Alaska Native
_____ (7) Multi-Racial

9. Which of the following were present in the high school from which you graduated during the majority of time you were enrolled at the school?

	Yes	No	Unsure
a. Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA):	_____	_____	_____
b. "Safe Space" (i.e. a space on school grounds identified as "safe" for LGBTQ students and allies):	_____	_____	_____
c. Other programming for LGBTQA students:	_____	_____	_____
d. Policy(s) protecting LGBTQ students from bullying:	_____	_____	_____

10. To what extent did a Gay Straight Alliance, Safe Space, LGBTQA programming, or anti-bullying policies in your high school influence your decision to become involved in the LGBTQIA Club at Midwest Community College? (Check one)

_____ (1) No influence
_____ (2) Minimal influence
_____ (3) Some influence
_____ (4) Notable influence
_____ (5) Moderate influence
_____ (6) Considerable influence
_____ (7) Extreme influence

11. Listed below are four possible reasons for being involved with LGBTQIA Club. For each of the four items listed please check the level of importance to you that applies best:

	Not important	Minimally important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Considerably important	Extremely important
(1) Educational Reasons	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
(2) Personal Reasons	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
(3) Opportunities for political engagement	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
(4) Finding community/friendships	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

12. Please comment here about any other extra-curricular activities outside of LGBTQIA Club (pertinent to LGBTQA issues/causes) in which you have been involved, on- or off-campus, while enrolled at Midwest Community College:

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. Would you be willing to participate in a one-hour interview to discuss your experiences as an involved/engaged college student?

_____ (1) Yes
_____ (2) No

Please submit completed questionnaires to the attention of:

Student Involvement Coordinator, Room W.1216, West Campus

Thank you for your time!

Appendix B

Student Interviews: Questions

1. When and how did you first become involved in LGBTQIA Club?
2. How would you describe what motivated you to become involved?
3. I would like to hear your thoughts about your reasons for becoming involved in LGBTQIA Club. I will do this be asking about four different kinds of reasons for becoming involved.

   a. Tell me about the role personal reasons played in your decision to become involved?
   b. Tell me about the role educational reasons played in your decision to become involved?
   c. Finally, tell me about the role finding community/relationships played in your decision to become involved?
   d. Tell me about the role politics or political involvement played in your decision to become involved?

4. Tell me about other reasons that led you to become involved that we have not yet discussed?
5. What, if any, benefits have you experienced since being involved with LGBTQIA Club?
6. What, if any difficulties have you experienced since being involved with LGBTQIA Club?
7. What other aspects of involvement in LGBTQIA Club do you think are important in understanding the role such an organization plays at a two-year community college?
8. In what types of activities related to LGBTQ issues or concerns outside of LGBTQIA Club have you participated, either on or off campus?
7. Does the size of a community college (compared to a larger four-year institution) play a role in your choice whether to be involved with LGBTQIA Club?

Appendix C

Staff Interviews: Questions

1. Please describe your perception of the current campus climate for LGBTQ students on campus.
2. How would you describe the institution's current commitment to diversity, including LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff?
3. In your opinion, is there an identifiable moment that was pivotal in terms of a shifting climate towards a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ students at Century?
4. What is your perception of the impact of the new LGBTQ Student Center, for LGBTQ students, as well as the institution as a whole?

Appendix D
Informed Consent Form
Pilot Focus Group

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH
Pilot: Factors that Motivate LGBTQA College Students at a Two-Year Institution

You are invited to be in a research study of motivation levels of LGBTQA College Students. You were selected as a possible participant because of your involvement with the LGBTQIA Club. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Jeffrey A. Anderson, PhD Candidate at The University of Minnesota - Twin Cities.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following:
Participate in a focus group discussion pertaining to your affiliation with the LGBTQIA Club. Conversations will be recorded for research purposes only, and the meeting will last approximately 60 minutes.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only I will have access to the recorded session, which will be erased upon the completion of the research study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Midwest Community College or The University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Jeffrey A. Anderson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact me at (612) 275-2440, or via email at ander034@umn.edu. My academic

advisers are Dr. Darwin Hendel (612) 625-0129 and Dr. Andrew Furco (612) 624-6876.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Appendix E
Informed Consent Form
Student Questionnaire

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH
Questionnaire: Factors that Motivate LGBTQA
College Students at a Two-Year Institution

You are invited to be in a research study of motivation levels of LGBTQA College Students. You were selected as a possible participant because of your involvement with the LGBTQIA Club. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Jeffrey A. Anderson, PhD Candidate at The University of Minnesota - Twin Cities.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following:
Complete a brief survey pertaining to your affiliation with the LGBTQIA Club.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only I will have access to the survey data, which will be erased upon the completion of the research study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Midwest Community College or The University of Minnesota.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Jeffrey A. Anderson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact me at (612) 275-2440, or via email at ander034@umn.edu. My academic advisers are Dr. Darwin Hendel (612) 625-0129 and Dr. Andrew Furco (612) 624-6876.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Appendix F
Informed Consent Form
Student Questionnaire

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH
Interview: Factors that Motivate LGBTQA
College Students at a Two-Year Institution

You are invited to be in a research study of motivation levels of LGBTQA College Students. You were selected as a possible participant because of your involvement with the LGBTQIA Club. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Jeffrey A. Anderson, PhD Candidate at The University of Minnesota - Twin Cities.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following:
Complete a one-hour interview pertaining to your affiliation with the LGBTQIA Club.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only I will have access to the survey data, which will be erased upon the completion of the research study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Midwest Community College or The University of Minnesota.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Jeffrey A. Anderson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact me at (612) 275-2440, or via email at ander034@umn.edu. My academic advisers are Dr. Darwin Hendel (612) 625-0129 and Dr. Andrew Furco (612) 624-6876.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.