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**Gay Male Identity in the Context of College: Implications for Development, Support, and
Campus Climate**

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

James M. DeVita

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Dedication

To my parents,

James and Judy DeVita

my mentor,

Dr. Terrell L. Strayhorn

and all my friends who supported me throughout my program.

Acknowledgements

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Abstract

This dissertation includes three articles that explore the relationship between gay identity and the college environment. The college environment has been shown to affect students' attitudes, beliefs, and personal development in various ways, including aspects of individuals' identity and attitudes towards social and political issues in society. D'Augelli's (1994) lesbian-gay-bisexual (LGB) identity development framework provides both *a priori* knowledge of issues associated with gay identity and a lens through which findings are analyzed in each of the articles included in this dissertation. The first article examines the relationship between first-year college students' personal characteristics and their attitudes towards same-sex relationships. Given the importance of peers as "valued others" to gay individuals, as well as the role that students play in establishing campus climate, the first article has implications for how the college environment is experienced by gay individuals. The second article explores the identity development of Black gay male college students. This article attempts to test the applicability of D'Augelli's framework for racial minorities and for contemporary college students who also identify as gay. The third article included in this dissertation focuses on the representations of gay male college students in the online community called Facebook. Since representations are expressions of identity, this article has significance for understanding how gay male college students internalize information about their gay identity and selectively represent that identity to others. Considered together, these articles hold significance for researchers who study LGB individuals in higher education and administrators who work with LGB individuals on college campuses. Additionally, a revised theoretical framework that accounts for the findings discussed within these three articles is presented in the final chapter.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Overview of the Study

This study contributes to our understanding of the relationship between gay identity and the college environment. The college environment has been shown to affect students in various ways, including aspects of identity development, such as self-esteem, personal stability, and comfort with one's sense of self, racial identity, and sexual orientation (Astin & Panos, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). A recent review of research on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students and queer theory in higher education supports the need to enhance theoretically-based research on gay populations in the context of college (Renn, 2010). In particular, "few . . . studies deal at all with diversity of race, ability, or social class within LGBT identities or communities; White, able-bodied, and middle-class are assumed norms" (Renn, p. 135). In an attempt to address some of the limitations of research on LGBT students, this study includes three articles that explore the relationship between gay identity and the college environment through the lens of D'Augelli's (1994) lesbian-gay-bisexual (LGB) identity development framework. Since D'Augelli's framework accounts for the influence of historical, social, and cultural contexts on gay identity, it provides an appropriate framework to examine the relationship among gay identity, the college environment, and a diverse set of factors (e.g. racial identity, socioeconomic status, and personal attitudes) (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005).

As will be described in greater detail below, the three articles are focused on: (a) the relationship between first-year college students' personal characteristics and attitudes towards same-sex relationships, (b) the gay identity development of Black male college students, and (c) gay male college students' representations of self in the online community called Facebook, respectively. Each article is organized and presented as a completed study, which include the

following sections: purpose of the study, research question(s), literature review, method(s), findings, discussion, and implications or recommendations. In the final chapter of the dissertation, a summary of findings across the three articles is presented as are implications for research and practice on gay identity in the context of college. Chapter five also includes a revised theoretical framework that accounts for findings across the three articles. The current chapter continues with a review of literature associated with the overall purpose of the study, a summary of D'Augelli's theoretical framework, a summary of the three articles, including research questions, and a list of relevant definitions.

Literature Review

Identity Development and the College Environment

Identity development is arguably the most important task that students face while enrolled in institutions of higher education. Although “we may not know for years that a single lecture or conversation or experience started a chain reaction that transformed some aspect of ourselves. . . [nor] easily discern what subtle mix of people, books, settings, or events promotes growth” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 43), it is clear that college affects the identity development of students regardless of the particular setting, context, or personal attributes of the individual (Astin & Panos, 1969; Chickering & Reisser; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Chickering and Reisser identified seven aspects of identity development that can be influenced during college:

- (1) comfort with body and appearance, (2) comfort with gender and sexual orientation, (3) sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context, (4) clarification of self-concept through roles and life-style, (5) sense of self in response to feedback from valued others, (6) self-acceptance and self-esteem, and (7) personal stability and integration. (p. 49)

These seven aspects of identity development are also influenced by the pre-college characteristics and experiences that students bring with them to college (Astin & Panos; Chickering & Reisser). Thus, understanding identity development within the context of college requires a comprehensive and theoretically-based approach that examines a multitude of factors (Chickering & Reisser).

While Chickering and Reisser (1993) and other researchers, notably Astin (1999) and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), emphasize that all college students encounter issues related to identity development during college, specific populations encounter unique challenges when compared to their peers. For example, female college students (e.g., Jones, 1997) as well as those historically underrepresented students (URMs), such as African Americans (e.g., Cross 1971, 1995; Jackson 2001) and Latinos (e.g., Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001), are likely to experience identity development trajectories that are different from their male and White peers (e.g., Hardiman, 2001; Helms, 1990, 1992). This is due, in part, to the marginalization that women and racial/ethnic minorities face both in society and on college campuses throughout history. Women and racial minorities, for example, were once excluded from higher education altogether or provided separate institutions with disparate opportunities (e.g., Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 2005).

LGBT Identity and the College Environment

LGBT populations have encountered similar stigma related to their identity that has often relegated them to marginalized status. Stereotypes as well as verbal and physical harassment and violence towards LGBT populations are well documented in the medical fields (American Red Cross, 2000; Eldridge & Barnett, 1991; Howard, 1997), in American society as a whole (Clark, 1999; Human Rights Campaign [HRC], 2006; National Gay & Lesbian Task Force [NGLTF],

2008), and produced “chilly climates” on our college campuses (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1997; Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Madon, 1997; Rankin, 1998; Rhoads, 1997). Among LGBT populations, gay male undergraduates are more likely than lesbians to face harassment and discrimination (Hinrichs & Rosenberg; Kite & Deaux, 1986; Stevens, 2004), especially from their straight male counterparts (Engstrom & Sedlacek; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Kite & Whitley, 1996; LaMar & Kite, 1998; Sakalli, 2002). Thus, this dissertation focuses on the identity development of gay male college students.

Researchers have, indeed, linked the stigma associated with identifying as a gay male to issues of identity development. For example, stereotypes about homosexuality are as prevalent on college campuses as they are in society, producing high incidence of negative consequences for gay men that includes verbal and physical abuse (Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Kite & Deaux, 1986; Stevens, 2004). Additionally, gay men have reported higher levels of alcohol use, were more likely than their straight peers to feel isolated and lonely, and also express difficulty maintaining friendships when compared to their straight peers (Longerbeam, Inkelas, Johnson, & Lee, 2005). These negative experiences impact gay male undergraduates’ identity development in several ways. One issue is that “coming out. . . [is] less of a stage or developmental process than an assessment of environment” (Evans & Broido, 1999, p. 666). In unwelcoming environments, such as the campus residence halls that Evans and Broido studied, disclosure of gay identity is less likely to occur because gay individuals can feel unwelcome or even unsafe. In addition to issues of “coming out,” students in another study expressed continuously experiencing homophobia and heterosexism on campus (Lopez & Chism, 1993). The pervasive climate around sexual orientation keeps many gay college students “closeted” and forecloses the developmental process at self-disclosure, at best (D’Augelli, 1994; Rhoads 1994, 1997). Rhoads

(1994) concluded that “little has changed. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual students still face harassment and discrimination, and their experiences are still largely excluded from the classroom” (p. 35). Over a decade later his statement accurately reflects the general landscape for gay students on many college campuses.

The presence of more college students who openly identify as gay (as well as lesbian and bisexual [LGB]) demonstrates the need for a better understanding of the issues they encounter related to identity development. In the last 30 years, the average age of disclosure for LGB individuals has dropped from between 19-22 years old, to about 16 years old (Gro, Bimbi, Nanin, & Parsons, 2006; D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993), indicating that individuals are more likely than ever to openly identify as gay when they arrive on campus. Exact numbers of individuals who identify as gay (or LGBT) are difficult to identify, but a popular statistic, which is occasionally criticized as an under-estimate, is that 10% of the entire population is gay (Icard, 1986; Robison, 2002). Additionally, some reports state that over 40% of people have a close friend or relative who identifies as gay (Neidorf & Morin, 2007), and that approximately 25% of high school students are likely to be affected by a friend or relative who identifies as gay (Association of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Counseling Issues in Alabama [ALGBICAL], 1999). Taken together, these reports suggest that a critical mass of gay-identified individuals is present in the United States. On college campuses, the 10% rule has been used by researchers as the best estimate of gay-identified students (e.g. Icard, 1986; Sanlo, n.d.). Given that over 18 million students were enrolled in college in the United States in 2009 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2008), the 10% estimate would yield over 1.8 million gay-identified college students in the United States. This is a staggering statistic that

highlights the need to better understand the issues these gay college students encounter, particularly related to identity development.

LGBT Identity Development

Indeed, several attempts to conceptualize identity development for gay individuals do exist (Cass 1979, 1984; D'Augelli, 1994; Fassinger, 1991; Savin-Williams, 1988, 1990; Troiden, 1988). Cass (1979) designed a stage-wise model of gay identity development based on “several years of clinical work with homosexuals” (p. 219) in Australia. She applied concepts from racial identity development models to frame a six-stage model that begins with identity confusion and resolves with identity synthesis. Cass (1984) later applied her theoretical framework in a meta-analysis of literature in the fields of psychology and medicine to determine how gay identity has been defined. She ultimately concluded that although “identity is a cognitive construct. . . the study of homosexual identity should allow us to consider the whole question of *human identity* (italics original)” (p. 121). She failed, however, to produce a revised framework that accounts for external factors such as social and historical influences.

Other conceptualizations of gay identity development share several traits with Cass' framework (Fassinger, 1991; Savin-Williams, 1988, 1990; Troiden, 1988). For example, these researchers relied primarily on their interactions with homosexual individuals during clinical experience to formulate an organizational framework. Additionally, these frameworks attempt to position homosexuality as a normal developmental state that emerges at different points in life, depending upon the individual, but typically results from some “crisis” during development. The reliance on clinical experiences reveals a methodological flaw shared by these frameworks: the use of personal reflections by adults during psychological interventions (Cass 1979; Fassinger, 1991; Troiden, 1988). One limitation is that adults may not be able to accurately recall

their experiences at earlier in life, or have constructed the experiences they share with a clinician to reflect their status as adults rather than their ~~“true”~~ developmental process. Thus, relatively little is known about gay identity development as it occurs at earlier stages in life (Ryan & Futterman, 1998). Additionally, individuals who seek out clinical support may not represent the full range of gay individuals present in society. Therefore, generalizability about the identity development of all gay individuals is limited with such samples. Studies that employ sound methodological techniques and empirical analyses can address these issues (Ryan & Futterman).

D’Augelli’s (1994) lesbian-gay-bisexual (LGB) identity development model was based on both an empirical study conducted of gay male college students (D’Augelli, 1991) and his prior work and experiences with homosexual populations both on and off-campus. The framework proposed in his model deviated from Cass’ (1979) by describing gay identity development as a life-long process that is shaped as much by the individual’s choices as by the context in which he develops. His focus on a human diversity perspective allows D’Augelli’s model to account for ~~“the~~ intersections and complexities of non-heterosexual identity” (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005, p. 28). The framework is organized through six processes: (1) exiting heterosexual identity, (2) developing a personal lesbian-gay-bisexual identity status, (3) developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual social identity, (4) becoming a lesbian-gay-bisexual offspring, (5) developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual intimacy status, and (6) entering a lesbian-gay-bisexual community¹. While D’Augelli’s (1994) framework provides an opportunity to explore gay identity in a variety of contexts, his model has been applied in a limited number of empirical studies, particularly within higher education.

¹ D’Augelli’s LGB identity development framework is described in greater detail under the section title ~~“Theoretical Framework”~~ below.

Theoretically-Based Research on LGB Students in Higher Education

Research on LGB students in the field of higher education can be characterized as sparse according to several researchers (Dilley, 2005; Ryan & Futterman, 1998). Rhoads (1994) commented that —the vast majority of the more than 200 works [he] examined focus on campus environments and on students' attitudes toward gay students; few actually study the experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students" (p. 39). Rhoads' claim is supported by several edited volumes that rely heavily upon anecdotal evidence about issues LGB students encounter during college (Cramer, 2002; Evans & Wall, 1991; Howard & Stevens, 2000; Sanlo, Rankin & Schoenberg, 1998; Rhoads, 1994; Wall & Evans, 2000; Windmeyer & Freeman, 1998). Among these publications, only Wall and Evans include a section devoted to research on LGB students in college and that section contains merely two of the 17 chapters included. Equally problematic is the virtual absence of research that is grounded in a theoretical framework of LGB identity development. In fact, only five such publications were uncovered in higher education; one publication on lesbian undergraduates that utilized Cass's (1984) model (Peterson & Gerrity, 2006), two other publications that employed D'Augelli's (1994) framework (Love, Bock, Jannarone, & Richarson, 2005; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005), and two additional publications that attempted to develop frameworks that describe gay identity development (D'Augelli, 1991; Stevens, 2004). The paucity of empirical research on LGB students that utilizes existing theoretical frameworks is especially troubling given that Bilodeau and Renn (2005) conclude that at least one framework, D'Augelli's, —has the potential to represent a wider range of experiences than the theories relating to specific racial, ethnic, or gender groups" (p. 28). Thus, although the tools exist for advancing our knowledge of LGB students and issues in higher education, gaps in the research literature persist.

Gap: Peers perceptions of issues associated with sexual orientation.

Several factors related to gay identity development are among the gaps that exist, including: (a) perceptions of others, (b) race/ethnicity, and (c) representation and/or construction of the self. Chickering and Reisser (1993), for example, state that “sense of self in response to feedback from valued others” is yet another important aspect of identity development. For college students, peers, faculty members, mentors, and family members may all play a role in identity development. D’Augelli (1994) places a similar emphasis on the role that “valued others” play in developing one’s gay identity, emphasizing the influence of peers, family members, and other gay-identified individuals. Thus, integrating others’ perceptions is a critical step of identity development, particularly for gay individuals. While research on college students suggests that predictors of negative attitudes towards homosexuals include sex (Herek, 2000; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Kurdek, 1988; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994; Nelson & Krieger, 1997), religious affiliation and conviction (Herek; Herek & Capitanio; Lottes & Kuriloff), political affiliation (Herek; Herek & Capitanio), racial identity (Herek & Capitanio), and socioeconomic status (Herek & Capitanio), little is known about first-year students’ attitudes. Astin and Panos (1969) conclude that the outcomes gained from college are often heavily influenced by the characteristics and attitudes a student brings with him to college. Thus, it is important to better understand the perceptions of first-year college students towards issues of sexual orientation and the attributes that affect those perceptions in order to appreciate their impact on gay students’ identity development.

Gap: Relationship between racial identity and sexual orientation.

One criticism about the literature on gay identity development is that the issues faced by individuals with multiple identities have been largely ignored (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Stevens,

2004; Renn, 2010). This is particularly true for students of color who also identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (Renn). Although studies have been conducted on Latinos (Cintrón, 2000) and women of color (Ferguson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000), research on other groups, most notably gay African American men, has relied largely upon anecdotal evidence (Harris, 2003; Wall & Washington, 1991; Washington & Wall, 2006) with few exceptions (Strayhorn, Blakewood, & DeVita, 2008; Strayhorn, DeVita, & Blakewood, 2010). Icard (1986) conducted a meta-analysis of research on gay males and Black males in order to develop a discussion of issues related to gay Black men that could be useful for practitioners in the field of social work. He concluded that:

There appears to be two distinct types of race and sex identity formations that take place among black gays. One type, gay blacks, consist of those men who identify more with the gay community. Another type, black gays, is comprised of those men who place more emphasis on the black community. Some black gays develop mostly inadequate techniques to merge their racial identity with their sexual identity. (p. 91)

ICard's conclusions point to the need for a better understanding of the issues Black or African American gay males encounter, especially during their identity development. Strayhorn, Blakewood and DeVita's study of Black gay male undergraduates draws a similar conclusion, but is focused on the challenges this population faces during college rather than on their developmental trajectory. Thus, theory-based research on Black gay male undergraduates' developmental experiences is needed in order to extend previous lines of inquiry.

Gap: LGBT representations of self.

Despite increasing popularity, research on virtual spaces and online mediums, whose aims are to foster interactive participation among people (Wilson & Peterson, 2002), is limited. These online mediums have become popular for people from all identity and affinity groups, but

have been particularly powerful for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) populations (Woodland, 1999). The significance of online communities for LGBT populations lies in not only the ease of access to information available and ability to communicate with individuals of similar identities (Woodland), but also in the ambiguous nature of identity representation for individuals online (Donath, 1998; Wilson & Peterson). This ambiguity allows LGBT individuals to utilize online spaces to explore aspects of identity without the threat of “coming out” face-to-face to other individuals. However, in online communities, individuals who choose to self-identity as gay are representing that identity publicly. In addition to comfort with one’s sexual orientation, Chickering & Reisser (1993) pointed out that “comfort with body and appearance” and “sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context” (p. 49) are important aspects of identity development. The online profiles of gay male undergraduates reveal how these individuals represent themselves, particularly with regards to their body, appearance, and sense of self. Therefore, the construction and representation of self in an online community is a second aspect of identity development that this study will explore.

Theoretical Framework

The first identity development theory focused on sexual orientation utilized a linear, stage-based approach to describe how an individual’s internalized feelings progressed from denial to acceptance, resolving in identity synthesis (Cass, 1979, 1984). This model has been criticized for its failure to explain the fluidity and backtracking associated with the “coming out” process (Eldridge & Barnett, 1991; Stevens, 2004), as well as the reliance on a small sample of White males (Ryan & Futterman, 1998; Wall & Washington, 1991; Washington & Wall, 2006). A framework of gay identity development based on “psychological views of identity function[s] to reinforce heterosexist privilege. . . [and labels] any deviations from [heterosexuality]

“unnatural,” “disordered,” or “dysfunctional” (D’Augelli, 1994, p. 314). Thus, an alternative model of gay identity development was needed that positioned homosexuality as a “normal” developmental process parallel to heterosexual identity.

D’Augelli (1994) designed a framework of gay identity development that accounts for the social contexts of an individual’s development over his entire life. By applying a human development view to gay identity, this model emphasizes *interindividual differences in the development of intraindividual behavior* (italics original). . . suggest[ing] a continuum of sexual feelings and experience. . . [that are different] at certain phases of life. . . in certain kinds of families. . . in certain communities. . . and at certain historical times” (pp. 321-322). In other words, D’Augelli’s model builds upon a psychologically based model of gay identity development by accounting for external social factors as well as internal influences. Thus, D’Augelli’s model is applicable to the current study because while multiple contexts and social factors will be explored, the individual’s internal processes are also important.

D’Augelli (1994) discussed six aspects of identity, or processes, that should be accounted for when studying the lives of gay males from human development perspective. Additionally, the social and cultural contexts in which gay men live mediate these processes, which is evident by three sets of factors that shape how individuals will experience the six processes: (a) personal subjectivities and actions, (b) interactive intimacies, and (c) sociohistorical connections (D’Augelli). Although the three sets of factors may explain individual variances in gay identity development, D’Augelli’s model is focused on the six developmental processes he identified: (1) exiting heterosexual identity, (2) developing a personal lesbian-gay-bisexual identity status, (3) developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual social identity, (4) becoming a lesbian-gay-bisexual offspring, (5) developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual intimacy status, and (6) entering a lesbian-gay-bisexual

community. As Bilodeau and Renn (2005) appropriately summarize, “An individual may experience development in one process to a greater extent than another; for example, he or she may have a strong LGB social identity and an intimate same-sex partner, but not have come out as LGB to family (become an LGB offspring)” (p. 29). Such variations across individuals may be explained through the three sets of factors that D’Augelli provides as context to the six processes; however, D’Augelli fails to discuss explicit connections between those factors and individual perspectives of the processes associated with LGB identity development. Figure 1.1 presents D’Augelli’s LGB identity model, including the three sets of factors and six identity development processes².

Statement of the Problem

LGB students are disclosing their identity earlier in life, forcing colleges and universities to address issues related to their identity development and support. Unfortunately, the campus climate for LGB students is best characterized as “chilly,” with pervasive homophobia and heterosexism that often results in harassment and discrimination. Negative campus climate is equally troubling for openly-identified LGB students as it is for those struggling through the process of “coming out.” Some institutions have begun offering specialized services aimed at ameliorating the climate for LGB students. While notable, the relative lack of empirical evidence on LGB students in higher education, particularly research grounded in theory is problematic for developing future initiatives and advancing our understanding of the issues LGB students encounter. Thus, the current study seeks to address this limitation by using theoretically-based research to study specific gaps in the literature on gay identity and the college environment. The

² All tables and figures in this chapter will be included in the Appendix One recommended by the Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines for Multi-part Dissertations at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

respective gaps previously identified (peers' perceptions of issues associated sexual orientation, the relationship between racial identity and gay identity, and LGBT representations of self) will be addressed through three articles, each one addressing a specific gap and providing suggestions for both practice and theory. These articles are summarized below.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to contribute to our understanding of the relationship between gay identity and the college environment by conducting three related studies that address specific gaps in research. Specifically, this study will examine the following three gaps that exist related to gay identity development: (a) perceptions of others, (b) race/ethnicity, and (c) representation and/or construction of the self.

Article Summaries and Research Questions

Although no theoretical framework can provide a perfect explanation of the phenomenon studied, a well developed theoretical framework can “tell an enlightening story about some phenomenon. . . that gives you new insights and broadens your understanding of the phenomenon” (Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. xvii). The three articles in this dissertation rely heavily upon D'Augelli's (1994) LGB identity development model to provide such insights about the phenomenon of gay identity development in the context of college. In Chapter Two, D'Augelli's model serves as a priori knowledge of gay identity and influenced the selection of variables included in the analysis of relationships between first-year college students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships and personal characteristics. In Chapter Three, the applicability of D'Augelli's model for examining the gay identity development of Black gay male undergraduates (BGMUs) is tested, and attention is paid to potential issues with contemporary applications of the framework as well. In Chapter Four, D'Augelli's framework provides a basis

for interpreting gay male college students' representations of self in the online community known as Facebook. As will be shown through the analysis and discussion sections of these chapters, D'Augelli's LGB identity development model has the power to enlighten our understanding of the phenomena studied, but also has its limitations.

Chapter two: First-year students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships.

The lack of information regarding college students' attitudes towards homosexual relationships is notable, especially considering the significant role that adolescents play in the personal development of their peers (D'Augelli, 1994; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996). D'Augelli, for example, stresses that since affectional interests and sexual behaviors are often constructed away from family monitoring, peer beliefs and evaluations take on heightened meaning. The influence of peers may be particularly significant during the first-year of college, and has been shown to affect a student's openness to diversity and challenge, such as issues related to sexual orientation (Pascarella et. al.). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to discern which characteristics, if any, among religious affiliation, racial identity, socioeconomic status, sex (gender), and political views are related to first-year college students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships using a large nationally representative sample of students drawn from the 2004 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) database.

Research Question 1: Which characteristics, if any, among religious affiliation, racial identity, socioeconomic status, sex (gender), and political views are related to first-year college students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships?

Research Question 2: Which characteristics, among religious affiliation, racial identity, socioeconomic status, sex (gender), and political views hold the strongest relationship with first-year college students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships?

Chapter three: Black gay male undergraduates.

Previous researchers who studied identity development during college have called for more research on the ways in which race/ethnicity and sexual orientation affect identity development (D'Augelli, 1994; Stevens, 2004; Wall & Washington, 1991; Washington & Wall, 2006), particularly for individuals who identify as double-minorities such as Black gay males. Several authors suggest that because gay identity development theories have focused primarily on White males, gay individuals who identify as racial minorities may experience gay identity development differently from their White peers (Stevens; Wall & Washington; Washington & Wall). Stevens, for example, proposed that race/ethnicity can interact with sexual orientation, religion/spirituality, and gender to produce either congruence or conflict among these various aspects of identity. To address this very issue, the present study will apply D'Augelli's (1994) gay identity development model to examine the experiences of Black gay male undergraduates, thereby achieving two research purposes: (a) testing the applicability of D'Augelli's model as a framework for understanding the experiences of gay male undergraduates who identify as racial minorities, and (b) testing the usefulness of D'Augelli's framework, originally developed in 1994, for studying contemporary gay populations.

Research Question 1: How do Black gay male undergraduates experience gay identity development in the context of college?

Research Question 2: Is D'Augelli's gay identity development model an effective framework for understanding the gay identity development of non-White gay college students?

Research Question 3: Is D'Augelli's gay identity development model an effective framework for understanding the gay identity development of contemporary college students?

Chapter four: Gay male representations of self in facebook.

Despite numerous studies and publications on individuals who identify as gay and a few studies about LGBT individuals' use of the internet and blogs (e.g., Poon, Ho, Wong, Wong, & Lee, 2005; Weinrich, 1997; Woodland, 1999), no studies have explored how gay individuals *represent* themselves in online communities. Therefore, this study will focus on how gay men use images to represent themselves in online communities. The online community most accessible for the present study is Facebook (www.facebook.com), which provides multiple sources of information, including both images (or pictures) and text developed by the user or student. Facebook was developed as a social networking site for college students and only recently lifted the restriction of an "edu" email address (i.e., college or university) for membership (Rosmarin, 2007). Thus, it provides a rich pool of possible participants enrolled in colleges and universities across the country.

Research Question 1: How do gay male college students represent their gay identity in online communities using images and text?

Research Question 2: What relationship, if any, exists between gay male college students' representations of self and D'Augelli's gay identity development framework?

Organization of the Study

The current study is a non-traditional dissertation format, which seeks to present individual articles in a unified presentation, as described in the *Guide to the Preparation of Theses and Dissertations* available through the Graduate School at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. According to these guidelines, this study is organized around five chapters.

Chapter One introduces the study and includes the following sections: background and context, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and organization of the study. Chapter

Two is an article about the attitudes of first-year college students towards same-sex relationships and the attributes that influence those attitudes. Chapter Three is an article about the experiences of Black gay male undergraduates that applies D'Augelli's gay identity development theory as a framework for analysis. Chapter Four is an article about gay male college students' representations of self in an online community. Chapter Five briefly summarizes the findings from the three articles included in chapters three, four, and five, before expounding upon the implications for research and campus administrators, and presenting a revised theoretical framework.

Definitions

This section provides a list of terms related to LGB issues in higher education and their respective definitions. Most terms are defined using examples from the researcher's work on LGB issues as an administrator in higher education. Where noted, some terms have been defined using definitions published by other researchers in the field.

Bisexual – person is one who has significant emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men and women.

Chilly climate – “the aggregated impact of a host of micro inequities and forms of systemic discrimination that disadvantage women in academic environments” (Crombie, Pyke, Silverthorn, Jones, & Piccinin, 2003, p. 52).

Coming out – the ongoing or continuous process of disclosing one's identity as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

Gay – a man who has significant emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions primarily to other men.

Heterosexism – a system of oppression rooted in the assumption that heterosexuality is inherently normal and superior to any other sexuality, and in the presumption that everyone is heterosexual.

Homophobia – fear and hatred of, and/or discomfort with people who love and sexually desire members of the same sex.

Lesbian – a woman who has significant emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions primarily to other women.

Transgender – individuals who transgress gender in some way, or whose gender identity does not match up with the physical sex they were assigned at birth.

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Appendix One

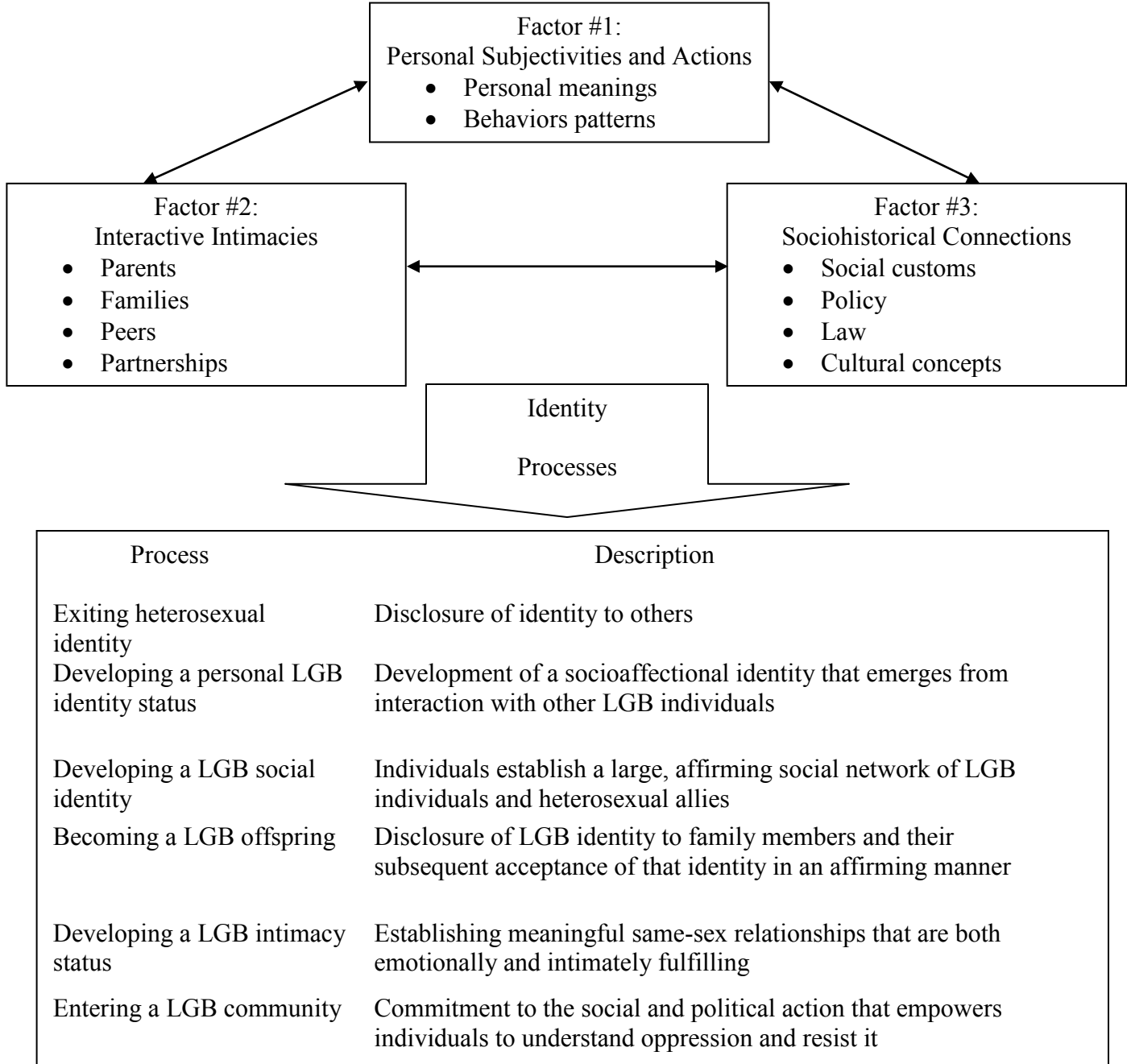


Figure 1.1 LGB Identity Development Model

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

**Chapter Two: Examining the Factors that Predict Attitudes Towards Same-Sex
Relationships for First-Year College Students: A National Study**

Abstract

This article examines the relationship between first-year college students' personal characteristics and attitudes towards same-sex relationships using data collected during the 2004 wave of *The Freshman Survey*, a national dataset from the Cooperative Institutional Research Project (CIRP) at the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). All five personal characteristics (religious affiliation, racial identity, socioeconomic status, sex, and political orientation) were found to have a statistically significant association with attitudes towards same-sex relationships. Results suggest that first-year college students' who hold more liberal political orientations, as well as those who are female, are more likely to hold more positive or affirming views towards same-sex relationships. Findings across all personal characteristics and implications for campus administrators are discussed by the author.

Introduction

Issues related to homosexual relationships have become prominent in American society over the past two decades. According to the Human Rights Campaign ([HRC], 2008) these issues include parenting and adoption rights, marriage and civil unions, and healthcare funding, among others. While several states have taken steps toward advancing rights for homosexual couples, such as initiatives to support same-sex marriage (e.g., Connecticut, Massachusetts), civil unions (e.g., Vermont, California, New Jersey, New Hampshire) or domestic partnerships (e.g., Oregon, Washington, District of Columbia), many other states (e.g., Colorado, Tennessee, California) have enacted legislation that prohibits such rights (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force [NGLTF], 2008). Thus, although human rights for gay and lesbian people have garnered more attention recently, national support for homosexual or same-sex relationships in the United States is, at best, inconsistent and uneven.

The most recent and glaring example of uncertain support for same-sex relationships is the political battle for gay marriage in California. The passage of Proposition 8 during the 2008 presidential election overturned gay marriage rights that had been conferred to same-sex couples by the California Supreme Court just five months earlier. A great deal of debate about how and why such a proposition passed has resulted (Morain & Garrison, 2008; Silver, 2008). Pollsters, bloggers, and pundits alike point to older and more religiously convicted voters, as well as African American state residents as those who supported the constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage rights in California (Moore & Garvey, 2008; Silver). All of the finger-pointing in California reveals the limited information currently available about the demographic profile of individuals who support or oppose civil rights for homosexuals, which in turn can be used to identify initiatives, if any, that could be enacted to advance efforts for such rights. One arena in which there is very limited information is American higher education, although it is often hailed as one of the most politically liberal —spaces” or segments of society (Dewey, 1900).

Colleges and universities often mirror the issues prevalent in society, and issues related to sexual orientation and equal rights are no exception. For instance, there are, on average approximately 2400 sexual harassment and assault reports based on one’s sexual orientation in the United States each year (National Coalition for Anti-Violence Programs [NCAVP], 2008). Just as many sexual harassment reports of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) people on college campuses are expected to occur, according to national reports (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation [GLAAD], 2008). In response to the discrimination and harassment faced by gay and lesbian college students (Rankin, 1998), approximately 300 colleges and universities have established resource centers designed to support LGBT students (Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals, 2008). Additionally,

professional organizations and researchers have identified several best practices, including non-discrimination clauses and same-sex partner benefits, which some institutions have implemented (e.g., University of Michigan), but many have yet to even formulate them (Dean, 2006; Windmeyer, 2006). Despite institutional efforts such as LGBT resource centers and campus policy changes such as partner benefits, research suggests that negative personal attitudes towards homosexuals persist on college campuses (Vaccaro, 2006), especially attitudes towards gay civil rights (Crawford & Solliday, 1996; Herek, 2000).

While it is clear that issues related to sexual orientation are prevalent in society and on college campuses, it is less clear what factors are related to individuals' attitudes towards homosexuals and same-sex relationships. A study conducted after the 2004 Presidential election found that political views, racial identity, religious affiliation, and educational attainment were among the significant variables that influenced an individual's attitudes towards homosexual relationships as well as their decision to vote for President Bush (Lewis, 2005). However, this study focused on all adults of voting age not traditionally-aged college students who represent another important segment of American society and a potentially "influential" constituency in presidential elections (Sears, 1986). Meanwhile, research on college students suggests that predictors of negative attitudes towards homosexuals include sex³ (Herek, 2000; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Kurdek, 1988; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994; Nelson & Krieger, 1997), religious affiliation and conviction (Herek; Herek & Capitanio; Lottes & Kuriloff), political orientation (Herek; Herek & Capitanio), racial identity (Herek & Capitanio), and socioeconomic status (Herek & Capitanio). While valuable, these studies are based on small, single institution samples

³ Since this study focuses on the differences between men and women, sex will be used to indicate the biological sex assigned at birth. This distinction is intended to point out the difference between sex and gender, as the latter provides for deviations from a binary conceptualization (i.e., male-female).

that have limited generalizability and are largely unrepresentative of diverse institutional types. Large, national studies are needed that allow for generalizability and inclusion of diverse institutional types since institutional type has been associated with student outcomes (e.g., attitudes) and the impact of college on students (Flowers, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Additionally, these prior studies have failed to explore racial identity beyond White versus Black, revealed conflicting results between males and females (Crawford & Solliday, 1996; Herek), and failed to explore the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) of various aspects of identity (e.g., sex, race, political orientation, religion).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to discern which characteristics, if any, among religious affiliation, racial identity, socioeconomic status, sex, and political views are related to first-year college students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships using a large nationally representative sample of students drawn from the 2004 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) database.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer two specific research questions:

Research Question 1: Which characteristics, if any, among religious affiliation, racial identity, socioeconomic status, sex (gender), and political views are related to first-year college students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships?

Research Question 2: Which characteristics, among religious affiliation, racial identity, socioeconomic status, sex (gender), and political views hold the strongest relationship with first-year college students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships?

Literature Review

The election of George W. Bush to a second term as President in 2004 coincided with the passing of constitutional amendments in 13 states to prohibit same-sex marriage (Lewis, 2005). Following the election, speculation arose about the relationship between these two outcomes, with ~~may~~ analysts emphasiz[ing] religious and cultural divides in the electorate and the importance of the religious right and same-sex marriage in motivating President George W. Bush's base to get out and vote" (p. 195). Although this conclusion was later refuted (Lewis), proponents of same-sex marriage were left with many unanswered questions about *why* marriage rights for same-sex couples were vehemently opposed by Americans in several states. Religious affiliation, race/ethnicity, sex, political orientation, and socioeconomic status were among the variables identified in popular media as attributes that relate to whether an individual is likely to support or oppose same-sex marriage (Lewis; Moore & Garvey, 2008; Morain & Garrison, 2008; Silver, 2008). For example, exit polls showed that Black and Latino voters claimed to vote in favor a ban on same-sex marriage at higher rates than White voters (Silver). Meanwhile, columnists speculated that because anti-same-sex marriage campaigns claimed potentially

negative effects on schools, churches, and children, certain groups (i.e., racial minorities, low socioeconomic classes, and political conservatives) voted in favor of a ban on same-sex marriage (Moore & Garvey; Morain & Garrison).

While conjecture persists, Lewis' (2005) work is the only study that has employed empirical methods to determine the relationship between personal attributes and attitudes towards same-sex marriage. Lewis' study examined the relationship between voting for President Bush, the incumbent Republican candidate, and several personal attributes (e.g., political attitudes, religious affiliations, sex, educational levels, among other characteristics) as well as adult voters' attitudes (e.g., opinions of same-sex marriage, the war in Iraq, and performance of the economy) following the 2004 Presidential election. He found several significant relationships among the variables studied, most notably that more negative, or less accepting, attitudes towards same-sex marriage were associated with an increased likelihood to vote for President Bush.

Some research in the field of psychology has explored individuals' attitudes towards homosexual individuals, same-sex relationships, and even gay parenting. The majority of this work has been conducted using college students as participants, which is relevant to the current study. Some researchers conclude that society as a whole is becoming more tolerant and accepting of homosexual individuals (Herek, 2000; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994), and through their experiences in college, heterosexual students develop greater levels of tolerance for homosexual individuals and issues related to sexual orientation (Crawford & Solliday, 1996; Kurdek, 1988; Lottes & Kuriloff; Nelson & Krieger, 1997). For example, Nelson and Krieger surveyed 190 undergraduate students enrolled in intro-level psychology courses to explore differences in attitudes towards homosexuality following a gay and lesbian peer panel. The authors

administered a survey pre- and post-intervention (i.e. panel) and found that overall students developed more accepting attitudes following their exposure to gay and lesbian peers through the panel discussion.

In contrast, researchers also conclude that a considerable number of students holds negative views of homosexual individuals, and a much larger proportion is reluctant to provide same-sex couples with rights equal to those of heterosexual couples (Crawford & Solliday; Herek; Kurdek; Lottes & Kuriloff; Nelson & Krieger). Herek, for example, found that “Most Americans favor giving same-sex domestic partners limited recognition (e.g., employee health benefits, hospital visitation rights), but most oppose legalizing same-sex marriages” (p. 20). A statement that, in a way, foreshadowed the current climate for gay marriage, which is at best uneven and uncertain in the United States with several states, such as California, facing legal battles over the issue (Human Rights Campaign [HRC], 2010).

Specifically within the context of higher education, researchers have found that males hold significantly more negative views of homosexuals than females (Astin, 1987; Kurdek, 1988; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994; Stevenson, 1988), and that biases and prejudice continue to negatively affect perceptions of same-sex couples and their ability to be effective parents (Kurdek). In addition to sex, religion was a predictor of attitudes towards homosexuals in terms of both religious affiliation (Lottes & Kuriloff) and religious conviction (Cotten-Huston & Waite, 2000; Crawford & Solliday, 1996). For example, students who reported higher levels of religious conviction were more likely to hold negative views of homosexuals (Cotton-Huston & Waite; Crawford & Solliday). Political orientation (Herek; Herek & Capitanio, 1996), racial identity (Herek & Capitanio), and socioeconomic status (Herek & Capitanio) were also found to be significant predictors of attitudes towards homosexuals and same-sex relationships among

college students, with students who hold conservative political beliefs, identify as Black, and belong to lower socioeconomic statuses holding more negative attitudes of homosexuals than their peers. Interestingly, Greek affiliation, measured by membership in a fraternity or sorority, was found to hold no statistical relationship to an individual's attitudes towards homosexuals (Lottes & Kuriloff). These studies support the conclusion that college students' personal attributes, such as religious affiliation and conviction, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity, are related to attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex relationships. While noteworthy, none of these studies focused on first-year students' attitudes whose experiences tend to be different from upperclassmen.

Conceptual Perspectives

This study was shaped by *a priori* knowledge of three sets of literature on sexual orientation in the context of college. This literature provides a lens through which the author frames the study and makes meaning of the findings, conclusions, and implications. Although there is no single theoretical framework that drives the selection of variables and analysis, these conceptual perspectives provide structure and a theoretical grounding to the study that is critical to the analysis and discussion included below.

Sexual Orientation in the Context of College

Colleges and universities are institutions that simultaneously reflect society's values and challenge them—and issues related to sexual orientation are no exception. Some institutions of higher education have responded to the social stigma associated with sexual orientation and the harassment faced by gay men and lesbians by developing resource centers, providing educational programming, and extending benefits to employees in same-sex relationships (Croteau & Lark, 1995; Dean, 2006; Sanlo, 1998; Schoenberg, 1991; Tierney & Rhoads, 1993; Windmeyer, 2006).

These efforts are enacted not only to support gay and lesbian faculty and students, but also to influence the attitudes of heterosexual students through educational and social programming. For example, Hinrichs and Rosenberg (2002) found that among college campuses with similar mission and demographics, the more supportive environments, such as those with programming that addressed LGBT issues, had students who were also more accepting of homosexuals. Additionally, research on the purpose of LGBT-focused resource centers reveals that education with the intent of improving campus climate was a driving force behind the creation of such centers on several college campuses (Ritchie & Banning, 2001). Exposure to homosexual individuals and issues related to sexual orientation has been shown to significantly impact perceptions of heterosexuals in individuals from diverse backgrounds (e.g., different racial groups and socioeconomic statuses) (Herek, 2000; Herek & Capitanio, 1996). The first year of college may be a time when heterosexual students are most sensitive to these influences. Indeed, one study found that interactions with peers, coursework, and living on-campus had a significant effect on first-year college students' openness to diversity (Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996). Thus, by focusing on attitudes towards same-sex relationships that students have during their first-year of college, this study controls for some of the confounding effects of college. In other words, understanding the attitudes first-year students hold toward same-sex relationships and the characteristics that influence those attitudes will not only deepen our understanding of college students' perceptions about sexual orientation and the factors that influence those perceptions, it may also provide insights about how to enhance the effects of college on such attitudes.

Impact of College on Sociopolitical Attitudes

Astin's (1993) study of *What Matters in College* revealed that while students' sociopolitical attitudes, such as support of equal rights for gays and lesbians, tend to change slightly as they progress through college, students' political orientations do not shift significantly as students move towards graduation. The shift that does occur can be attributed to increases in liberalism and social activism that are associated with the values of other individuals at their respective institution. Exposure to issues of diversity through coursework and extracurricular involvement also contributes to a modest shift towards more liberal attitudes. Shifts in sociopolitical attitudes reported by Astin are reinforced by Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) extensive review of the impact of college on students, which provides additional evidence that college does, indeed, affect students and their perceptions. Pascarella and Terenzini posit that the effect of college on attitudes towards diversity, such as issues of sexual orientation, is enhanced by increased exposure to individuals from diverse groups and engagement with issues of diversity (e.g., racism). There is conflicting evidence, however, that while attitudes towards homosexuality may change slightly during college, the likelihood that heterosexual students will engage their non-heterosexual peers remains largely unchanged by college. Although some research exists on first year college students' attitudes towards issues of diversity (e.g., Pascarella et. al., 1996), and other researchers have found that attitudes towards homosexuality become more accepting when comparing first year students to seniors (e.g., Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994; Nelson & Krieger, 1997), no studies have focused on first year students attitudes towards same-sex relationships and the personal attributes that influence those attitudes.

Gay Identity Development in the Context of College

D'Augelli's (1994) gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) identity development model is based on both an empirical study conducted on gay male college students (D'Augelli, 1991) and his prior work and experiences with homosexual populations both on and off-campus. The framework proposed in his model deviated from Cass' (1979) stage-based approach by describing gay identity development as a life-long process that is shaped as much by the individual's choices as by the context in which he develops. His focus on a human diversity perspective allows D'Augelli's model to account for "the intersections and complexities of non-heterosexual identity" (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005, p. 28). The framework is organized through six processes: (1) exiting heterosexual identity, (2) developing a personal lesbian-gay-bisexual identity status, (3) developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual social identity, (4) becoming a lesbian-gay-bisexual offspring, (5) developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual intimacy status, and (6) entering a lesbian-gay-bisexual community. D'Augelli's framework emphasizes the role that "valued others" play in developing one's gay identity. For college students, faculty members, mentors, family members, and peers (the focus of the present study) may all play a critical role. Thus, integrating or reconciling the opinions of others with one's thoughts and feelings is a critical step of identity development, particularly for gay individuals.

The literature on gay identity development (e.g., D'Augelli's GLB identity development model) informs the current study by providing support for the significant role that peers play in shaping the campus climate for LGBT students. While the current study focuses on examining first-year students' attitudes toward same-sex relationships, the students who hold less accepting attitudes, for example, are likely to contribute to a negative climate around LGBT issues. In other words, although the current study contributes to the literature on first-year students and their

attitudes and perceptions, the attitudes and perceptions of first-year students have implications for the ways in which LGBT students experience the climate on-campus. The literature on gay identity development, in part, also frames potential implications for campus administrators.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative design with statistical methods to analyze secondary survey data provided to the researcher by administrators at the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), headquartered at the University of California, Los Angeles. Secondary analyses, which are widely used and respected in the field of higher education, allow for complex analyses of large samples (Thomas & Heck, 2001). Additionally, since these datasets typically provide a sample representative of the population they are focused on, these datasets often allow researchers to generalize their findings and provide implications that can be meaningful to a diverse group of institutions (Thomas & Heck).

Instrumentation

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) disseminates *The Freshman Survey* to approximately 700 institutions and 400,000 college students each year. The instrument “gathers information on student background characteristics, attitudes, values, educational achievements, and future goals” (Sax & Harper, 2007, p. 673). In addition to numerous demographic variables, participants are asked questions about their behaviors and attitudes during their first-year of college. A sample question includes: “For the activities below, indicate which ones you did during the past year;” response options include “Discussed politics” and “Socialized with someone of a different racial/ethnic group.” Another sample item is: “Please indicate the importance to you personally of each of the

following;” response options range from “Helping others who are in difficult” to “Developing a meaningful philosophy of life” (CIRP 2004 Instrument, n.d.). The survey explores a broad range of student characteristics, including educational aspirations, social and academic experiences during college, and students’ values and attitudes towards various social and political issues (CIRP Overview, n.d.; Pryor, Hurtado, DeAngelo, Blake, & Tran, 2009). For example, data about attitudes towards same-sex relationships is collected on the CIRP Freshman Survey; the only national survey identified that collects such information, which was the primary reason the instrument was selected by the researcher for use in the current study.

The CIRP *Freshman Survey* uses a complex stratified sampling design that minimizes standard errors through a large normative sample (CIRP Reliability and Validity, n.d.). In order to improve the precision of the instrument, researchers revise the order and wording of questions on the instrument over time and make changes to the stratification scheme and institutional weights as needed (CIRP Reliability and Validity, n.d.; Pryor et. al., 2009). The institutional weight variable accounts for the diversity of baccalaureate institutions nationwide in terms of type (four-year vs. university), control (public vs. private), selectivity, and religious affiliation. . . applying it to the sample correct[s] for the biases indicated but [does] not inflate its size” (Sax & Harper, p. 674). The weight variable also accounts for disparities between male and female student participation rates and success in college (Pryor et. al.).

Researchers not associated with HERI are restricted to survey waves that are at least three years old (personal communication with Linda DeAngelo, April 27, 2009). While the 2005 dataset is available, the 2004 wave of the CIRP Freshman Survey was selected because it also provides the opportunity to compare findings to the conclusions drawn by Lewis’ (2005) study of adult voters from the 2004 presidential election. Approval to use the 2004 dataset was received

by the researcher from a HERI representative on April 23, 2009, and the dataset was received by the researcher for use in early August 2009. A copy of the email confirmation can be found in Appendix 2.5.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable measures first-year students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships; the composite was computed using responses to two survey items: "Same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status" and "It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships." Each individual question used to compute the dependent variable was coded from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 4 ("Strongly Agree") on a 4-point Likert scale. The latter question was reverse coded so that higher scores were consistent with more positive attitudes toward same-sex relationships. The composite measure was computed by summing student responses on the two survey items, which yielded a summated scale score ranging from 2 to 8.

Control Variables

Several control variables were included in the first step of the regression analysis: (a) age, (b) parents' educational attainment (two variables: father's and mother's education), (c) ACT composite scores and SAT subject scores (Math and Verbal), (d) average high school GPA, (e) students' citizenship status, (f) type of high school attended, and (g) institutional type (twenty-one institutional categories). Age was coded from 1 = 16 or Less to 7 = 55 or More. Both father's and mother's education was coded from 1 = Grammar (School) or Less to 8 = Graduate Degree (Earned). The dataset allowed ACT composite scores and SAT subject scores in Math and Verbal to be entered using their true value, thus they were continuous variables. Type of high school was coded using six values: 1 = Public, 2 = Public Charter, 3 = Public Magnet, 4 =

Private Religious, 5 = Private Independent, and 6 = Home School. The final control variable, Type of Postsecondary Institution, was coded using twenty-one categories that account for institutional type (e.g., Public University and 4-year College) and enrollment levels (e.g., low and high). Table 2.1 presents these coding values.

Independent Variables

The independent variables included in the second step of the regression analysis were students' self-reported: (a) race/ethnic identity, (b) religious affiliation, (c) sex, (d) socioeconomic status (as reported by parental income), and (e) political orientation. In the original dataset, race was measured dichotomously (1 = not present, 2 = present) across nine variables: White/Caucasian, Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian American/Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Mexican American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, Other Latino, and Other. Race was re-coded into five dichotomous variables (0 = not present, 1 = present) in order to facilitate analysis and align with the major race and ethnic categories identified by the U.S. Census Bureau: White/Caucasian, Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Asian American/Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic/Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Religious affiliation was measured using a 20-point Likert scale named "Student's Religious Preference" in the original dataset. The variable was re-coded into five dichotomous variables: Christian (non-Catholic, non-Mormon), Catholic, Jewish, Islamic, and Buddhist/Hindu; these categories represent the major religious traditions that could be explored using the dataset (e.g. Genia & Shaw, 1991; Tisdell, 2003). Similar to race/ethnicity, each of these dichotomous variables was coded with two categories, (0 = not present, 1 = present). The remaining predictor variables were included in the analysis as they appeared in the original dataset: Sex was coded as 1 ("male") and 2 ("female"); Parental income

was coded from 1-Less than \$6,000 to 14-\$200,000 or more; Political orientation was coded from 1(=Far Right”) to 5 (=Far Left”) on a 5-point Likert scale. A coding table that includes all variables included in the analysis is presented in Table 2.1⁴.

Data Analysis

Prior to analysis, a relative weight variable was calculated and applied to the dataset. The relative weight variable was calculated by dividing the weight variable included with the dataset by its mean to preserve original sample sizes as recommended by others (Strayhorn, 2009). After the relative weight was applied, data were analyzed using hierarchical linear regression with multiple predictors. Hierarchical linear regression provides multiple models that allows for variance to be measured at multiple levels of analysis (Keith, 2006; Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006). Thus, a two-step regression analysis was conducted. In the first step of the regression analysis, the control variables described above were entered into the regression model. Then in the second step of the regression analysis, all independent variables described above were entered into the model.

To explore the relationship between first-year students’ attitudes and significant factors identified in the regression analysis, tests of significance (e.g., t-test, ANOVA) were conducted as post-hoc analyses. Two post-hoc analyses were conducted: an independent samples t-test to examine the differences by sex between males and females, and a one-way ANOVA to test for differences among the five categories of political orientation. These post-hoc analyses provide additional information for discussing the significant relationships that were uncovered during the regression analysis.

⁴ All tables in this chapter will be included in the Appendix Two as recommended in the Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines for Multi-part Dissertations at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Multicollinearity, which “refers to high correlation among the independent variables” (Huizingh, 2007, p. 309), complicates interpretation of a regression analysis with multiple predictors because the impact of a single independent variable cannot be isolated from the effects of other variables (Vogt, 1999). Collinearity results reveal that multicollinearity was not an issue for this analysis as all Variation Inflation Factor (VIF) statistics were under 10 (Huizingh).

Findings

Hierarchical regression results suggest that factors in the final regression model (i.e., race/ethnicity, religious affiliation, sex, socio-economic status, and political orientation) account for 31% of the variance in first-year students’ attitudes —above and beyond” the 4% explained by background traits alone, $F(25, 31300) = 682.68, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.35, R^2\text{-change}=0.31$. The relationship between independent variables and first-year students’ attitudes towards same-sex relationships differs across variables, and will be discussed in the five sections below (See Table 2.2).

Religious Affiliation

Hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted to measure the relationship between religious affiliation and first-year students’ attitudes towards same-sex relationships. The final model was statistically significantly related to first-year students’ attitudes towards same-sex relationships, $F(25, 31300) = 682.68, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.35$, indicating that factors in the final regression model accounted for 35% of the variance in students’ attitudes. Six of the seven variables were statistically significant predictors of students’ attitudes. Specifically, negative associations were found for three religious affiliations: Christian (non-Catholic and non-Mormon), $b = -0.73$, Islamic, $b = -0.77$, and Mormon, $b = -1.53$, indicating that students who identified as Christian, Islamic, or Mormon tended to report less positive attitudes towards

homosexuality. Specifically, they tended to disagree with the statement about same-sex marriage and agree with the statement about laws prohibiting homosexual relations. Positive associations were found between first-year students' attitudes towards homosexuality and variables indicating no religious affiliation, $b = 0.50$, Jewish, $b = 0.42$, and Buddhist/Hindu, $b = 0.36$. In other words, students who identified as no religious affiliation, Jewish, and/or Buddhist/Hindu tended to report more positive attitudes towards homosexuality. Interestingly, identifying as Catholic was negatively associated with attitudes towards same-sex relationships, $b = -0.09$, but the relationship was not statistically significant, $p = 0.07$.

Racial Identity

Three racial identity categories were found to be statistically significantly related to attitudes towards same-sex relationships: White/Caucasian, Black/African American, and Latino/Hispanic. Positive relationships were found between attitudes towards same-sex relationships and identifying as White/Caucasian, $b = 0.07$, and Latino/Hispanic, $b = 0.14$. Thus, White/Caucasian or Latino/Hispanic students in the sample tended to report more positive or more accepting attitudes towards same-sex relationships than their peers. In contrast, a negative relationship was found between attitudes towards same-sex relationships and identifying as Black/African American, $b = -0.20$, indicating that Black/African American students in the sample tended to report more negative or less accepting attitudes towards same-sex relationships. While White/Caucasian and Latino/Hispanic students tended to agree with the statement about same-sex relationships, Black/African American students were more likely to agree with the statement about laws prohibiting homosexual relationships. No statistically significant relationship was found between either Native American/American Indian or Asian/Pacific Islander students in the sample.

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status was significantly and positively associated with first-year students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships, $b = 0.01$. In other words, first-year students who hail from higher income families tended to hold more positive or accepting attitudes towards same-sex relationships than their peers from lower income families. Specifically, students from low income families tended to disagree with the statement about same-sex marriage and agree with the statement about laws prohibiting homosexual relations.

Sex

Sex was a significant predictor of attitudes towards same-sex relationships with females holding more positive or accepting attitudes than their male counterparts, $b = 0.72$. An independent samples t-test was conducted to provide further evidence of differences by sex. Results indicate that the mean score on attitudes towards same-sex relationships for males ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 2.04$) was significantly lower than the mean score for females ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 1.98$), $t(275157) = -106.80$, $p < 0.001$. Thus, females tended to agree with the statement about same-sex marriage and disagree with the statement about prohibiting homosexual relationships. Table 2.3 presents these results.

Political Orientation

Political orientation was another significant, positive predictor of attitudes towards same-sex relationships, $b = 0.97$, indicating that those who responded as ~~5~~“Far Left” on political orientation tend to hold more positive or accepting attitudes towards same-sex relationships than respondents who identified themselves as ~~4~~“Far Right.” A one-way ANOVA analysis, which was conducted to provide further evidence of differences among the five categories of political orientation revealed significant differences among all categories $F(4, 265183) = 16025.88$, $p <$

0.001. As presented in Table 2.4, means vary significantly across the political spectrum with highest values associated with Far Left and lowest mean score associated with Far Right. In sum, students who hold more conservative political views tended to agree with the statement about laws prohibiting homosexual relationships, while students with more liberal political views tended to agree with the statement about same-sex marriage.

Relationships among Variables

Recall that the primary research question for the current study is: which characteristics, if any, among religious affiliation, racial identity, socioeconomic status, sex, and political orientation are related to first-year college students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships? The previous sections answered this question by identifying the variables under each of the five characteristics that were statistically significantly related to attitudes towards same-sex relationships. An additional question that is germane to the current study is: which characteristics among religious affiliation, racial identity, socioeconomic status, sex, and political orientation hold the strongest relationships with attitudes towards same-sex relationships? The answer to this question provides insight about the characteristics that may be manipulated or leveraged to produce the largest shifts in first-year students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships.

Among the variables included in the analysis, political orientation has the strongest relationship with attitudes towards same-sex relationships, $\beta = 0.41$. Partialing out the effects of all other independent variables, political orientation had the strongest association with the dependent variable, partial $r = 0.43$. Sex, $\beta = 0.17$, and a religious affiliation as Christian, non-Catholic and non-Mormon, $\beta = -0.17$, have the second strongest relationship with attitudes towards same-sex relationship. Partialing out the effects of all other independent variables, sex held the second highest association with the dependent variable, partial $r = 0.20$, with females

reporting more positive or accepting attitudes towards same-sex relationships than their male peers. A review of partial correlations reveals that the relationship between all other independent variables and the dependent variable were less than half the strength of sex and less than one-quarter the strength of political orientation. The variables with the weakest relationship between characteristics and same-sex relationships is racial identities, which range from $\beta = -0.03$ to $\beta = 0.01$, and socioeconomic status, $\beta = 0.02$.

Discussion

These findings confirm that first-year students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships are related to their personal attributes, specifically religious affiliation, racial identity, sex, socioeconomic status, and political orientation. All five categories contained factors that were statistically significant; however, some variables hold more practical significance than others. Before discussing the implications of the relationships uncovered, it is important to note that these relationships are similar to those found by other researchers who studied attitudes towards same-sex relationships among college students (Crawford & Solliday, 1996; Herek, 2000; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Kurdek, 1988; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994; Nelson & Krieger, 1997) and adults (Lewis, 2005; Moore & Garvey, 2008; Morain & Garrison, 2008; Silver, 2008). Thus, findings from the current study confirm that attitudes towards same-sex relationships are associated with the five demographic categories described above. However, this study also reveals that the relationship between some variables and attitudes towards same-sex relationships differ from commonly held beliefs and the conclusions drawn by other researchers.

Religious Affiliation

Among the seven religious affiliations included in the analysis, six of those factors held a statistically significant relationship with students' attitudes. Students who responded that they

had no religious affiliation, a Jewish affiliation, and a Buddhist or Hindu affiliation, had more liberal attitudes towards same-sex relationships. That is, those who identified with these religious affiliations tended to agree or strongly agree with statements that same-sex relationships were acceptable. Lottes and Kuriloff's (1994) found that college students who identified as Jewish held more accepting views of homosexuality when compared to their Protestant and Catholic peers. Lewis' (2004) research on adult voters following the 2004 election of President Bush support the conclusion that individuals who identify as Jewish, as well as those who are affiliated with no religion, hold more liberal or accepting attitudes towards same-sex relationships. Although no studies were uncovered that examine the relationship between Buddhist or Hindu religious traditions and attitudes towards homosexuality, some literature suggests that cultures where these religious traditions are prominent are more accepting of individuals who do not conform to traditional notions of sexuality and gender identity (e.g. Cabezon, 1992). Although limited research is available on the relationship between these religious affiliations and attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex relationships, the current study supports those studies and suggests that college students who identify with no religious affiliation, as Jewish, Buddhist or Hindu hold more liberal attitudes towards same-sex relationships than students with other religious affiliations.

In contrast, students who identified themselves as Christian (non-Catholic, non-Mormon), Mormon, and Muslim, tended to reject the idea that same-sex relationships should be affirmed in society. These findings are consistent with Herek's (2000) conclusion that some fundamentalist religions and certain Christian congregations encourage "hostility to homosexuality" (p. 21) as a means to reinforce membership in that religious affiliation. Similarly, Lottes and Kuriloff (1994) state that because "male homosexuality historically has been condemned more consistently

within [certain] religious. . . institutions” (p. 35), college students raised in households that belong to those religious traditions are likely to develop hostility towards gay males. In one study, nearly two-thirds of men and over half of women who identified as Mormon believed that homosexuality was wrong (Schwanberg, 1993). Although no studies were uncovered where Muslims were surveyed about their attitudes towards homosexuality, some researchers suggest that male homosexuality is inconsistent with the tenants of Islam, which leads to its rejection by Muslims (e.g. Halstead & Lewicka, 1998). Thus, findings provide additional support for the conclusion that students who identified as Christian (non-Catholic, non-Mormon), Mormon, and Islamic hold less accepting attitudes towards same-sex relationships and homosexuality.

While interesting, these relationships do not tell the whole story and results should be interpreted with caution. For example, several researchers have found that religious conviction, defined by personal commitment to a religious affiliation and regular engagement in religious activities mitigates the impact of religious affiliation on college students’ attitudes towards same-sex relationships (Cotton-Huston & Waite, 2000; Crawford & Solliday, 1996). Similarly, Lewis (2004) found that adult voters who attended church services every week, were more supportive of President Bush and less accepting of same-sex marriage. Therefore, religious conviction, which was not measured in the current study, could impact the relationships between religious affiliations and attitudes towards same-sex relationships for college students. One finding the current study that conflicts previous research, is that no statistically significant relationship was found between students who identified themselves as Catholic and attitudes towards same-sex relationships. Lottes and Kuriloff (1994) found that Catholics and other Christians held similarly negative views of same-sex relationships, and Lewis concluded that Catholic voters were also less accepting of same-sex marriage. While several findings confirm the relationships identified

in prior research, religious affiliation as a variable in the current study has limited practical significance when examining first-year students' attitudes. Future research, however, could examine the effect of religious conviction on attitudes towards same-sex relationships to determine if level of commitment to a religious affiliation enhances this effect.

Racial Identity

The relationship between first-year students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships and racial identity can be characterized as uncertain. For example, White/Caucasian and Latino/Hispanic students were more accepting of same-sex relationships than their Black/African American peers. Conflicting results about the differences between Black and White individuals' attitudes towards homosexuality have been shown in other studies (Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Lewis, 2004). Herek and Capitanio found that despite personal contact with individuals who identify as gay, Black individuals' attitudes towards homosexuality were equally negative when compared to Black individuals who had no contact with gay men. However, significant differences in attitudes towards homosexuality were found for White individuals in the same study, with those who had personal contact with gay men expressing more positive attitudes. The myth that African American communities are more homophobic and unlikely to support same-sex partnerships (Constantine-Simms, 2000; Hutchinson, 2000), was used as the rationale for the success of Proposition 8 in California, which resulted in the denial of marriage rights for same-sex couples (Moore & Garvey, 2008; Morain & Garrison, 2008; Silver, 2008). Lewis, however, found that despite the importance of same-sex marriage as a political issue during the 2004 election, identifying as Black held a negative, statistically significant relationship with the decision to vote for President Bush. In other words, the belief that the Black community is more homophobic does not align with the intentions of Black voters surveyed, since Republican Party

candidates were more vocal in their opposition of equal rights for LGBT individuals (Lewis). Considered together, these studies reveal a complicated association between Black racial identity and attitudes towards same-sex relationships.

Despite statistically significant relationships for White/Caucasian, Latino/Hispanic, and Black/African American racial identities and attitudes towards same-sex relationships for first-year college students in the current study, the relative strength of these relationships contributes to uncertain conclusions about the effect of racial identity on those attitudes. When compared to other factors and when the effects of other variables were partialled out, racial identity had almost no effect on attitudes towards same-sex relationships. The assumption that racial identity can predict an individual's views towards homosexuality, and specifically same-sex relationships, is inaccurate for first-year college students. A study of Mexican adults found that although race/ethnicity was associated with attitudes towards homosexuality, the effect of race/ethnicity was mitigated by other factors, such as beliefs about traditional gender roles, political orientation, religious conviction, and personal contact with gay men and lesbians (Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006). Thus, similar to the possible effect of religious conviction on the relationship between religious affiliation and attitudes towards same-sex relationships, other variables or personal attributes may supersede the effect of the relationship between racial identity and attitudes towards same-sex relationships. Simply put, racial identity cannot predict the likelihood that a first-year college student will be more or less accepting of same-sex relationships.

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status, as measured by parental income, was also statistically significantly related to attitudes towards same-sex relationships for first-year college students. The positive

direction of the relationship indicates that as parents' income increases, level of acceptance for same-sex relationships increases as well. Herek and Capitanio (1996) found that although no differences existed among individuals from different socioeconomic statuses who had no contact with gay men, among individuals who had personal contact with gay men, those from higher socioeconomic statuses held more positive views of homosexuality and same-sex relationships. Similar to religious affiliation and racial identity, however, examining socioeconomic status as an isolated variable has limitations. For example, the difference between the highest level of income, over \$250,000, and the lowest level of income, under \$25,000, would yield only a one-quarter point difference on the 8-point attitudinal scale. Since these values represent maximum variance among the 14 groups across this variable, practical significance of differences by socioeconomic status is limited. Although this analysis confirms that socioeconomic status has an effect on attitudes towards same-sex relationships, its effect is minimal, though supported by findings from one other study (Herek & Capitanio).

Sex

This analysis confirms that males hold more negative perceptions of homosexuality than females (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1997; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Kite & Whitley, 1996; LaMar & Kite, 1998; Sakalli, 2002). The relationship between sex and attitudes was one of the strongest in the final model, and differences by sex revealed that women, on average, scored over three-quarter points higher than their male counterparts. Prior research has established that these negative perceptions are likely to result in discrimination and harassment of gay men by heterosexual males (Engstrom & Sedlacek; Kite & Deaux; Kite & Whitley; LaMar & Kite; Sakalli), especially on college campuses where more than half of gay and lesbian students report being harassed because of their sexual orientation (Rankin, 1998). Findings from this study

reveal that in addition to overt acts of discrimination, such as harassment, males are more likely than females to bring attitudes with them to college that could result in covert discrimination, such as supporting initiatives that deny same-sex couples benefits currently provided to heterosexual couples. Unlike the variables previously discussed (e.g. religious affiliation, racial identity, and socioeconomic status), differences by sex warrant additional attention.

Expectations association with gender may play a role in the significant relationship between sex and attitudes towards same-sex relationships. For example, LaMar and Kite (1998) attribute the differences in attitudes between men and women to the belief that ~~me~~ may have more to lose if they overstep their gender-role boundaries by accepting homosexual behavior. Women, in contrast, may be allowed greater gender-role flexibility and, hence, may be allowed to hold more tolerant attitudes toward genderrole violators” (p. 2). Similarly, Engstrom and Sedlacek (1997) concluded that:

[T]he attitudes of male students in a wide variety of collegiate settings were consistently more negative toward gay men than toward lesbian women. Specifically, male college students felt uncomfortable, intolerant, and less accepting. . . when reacting to situations requiring them to interact with gay males in public. . . and were ‘devastated’ by the idea that a sibling could be involved in a same gender relationship. (p. 572)

Thus, males experience social pressures because of their gender that not only impact their attitudes towards homosexuality, but that also provoke different perceptions of individuals who identify as homosexual by gender (e.g. gay men and gay women [lesbians]). The finding that sex has a significant relationship with attitudes towards same-sex relationships for first-year college students is supported by prior research, which also reveals that expectations about gender are prevalent in society and influence males’ perceptions of homosexuality. In order to understand the impact of males’ attitudes, more attention should be given to how expectations associated

with gender identity are experienced by male college students, particularly when exploring issues related to sexual orientation.

Political Orientation

The strongest relationship was found between political orientation and attitudes towards same-sex relationships. Not surprisingly, individuals who aligned themselves with a liberal political orientation also held more accepting views of same-sex relationships. This finding is consistent with current social and political movements where individuals from less conservative states and municipalities tend to be more willing to support same-sex partner benefits and marriage or domestic partnership rights for homosexual couples (HRC, 2010; NGLTF, 2008). It is also consistent with research on voters from the 2004 presidential election, which found political views to be strongly associated with perceptions of same-sex relationships (Lewis). One study on first-year students' attitudes claims that the issue of same-sex marriage has a polarizing effect that draws students away from "middle-of-the-road" political views (Vara-Orta, 2007). Findings from this study provide support for a sharp divide between students who define themselves as conservative and those who define themselves as liberal. Since the 2004 wave of the database was used in analysis, the vast majority of these students would have had only one opportunity to vote in a presidential election. The fact that at this early stage in their lives as active citizens they hold such distinct political views and that these political views provide the most salient predictor of attitudes towards same-sex relationships, indicates that considerable attention should be given to examining this relationship.

One possible reason why political orientation is a polarizing factor in attitudes towards same-sex relationships for first-year college students is that "antigay attitudes have become increasingly central to conservative political and religious ideologies since the 1980s" (Herek,

2000, p. 19). Herek also states that —political ideology and party affiliation have also come to be strongly associated with sexual prejudice, with conservatives and Republicans expressing the highest levels [of antigay attitudes]” (p. 20). Thus, the current study supports conclusions drawn by prior research that a conservative political orientation is associated with more negative or less accepting attitudes towards same-sex relationships. Additionally, Herek and Capitanio (1994) found statistically significant differences on attitudes towards homosexuality among individuals who identified with liberal, moderate, and conservative political ideologies, regardless of personal contact with gay men. Although personal contact decreased negative attitudes for all three political ideologies, those conservatives‘ who had personal contact held more negative attitudes towards homosexuality than liberals who had no personal contact (Herek & Capitanio). This study provides further support for the polarizing effect of political orientation on attitudes towards same-sex relationships, and highlights the need to better understand how this relationship impacts first-year students‘ beliefs about homosexuality both on-campus and in society as a whole.

Implications and Recommendations

Research on the affect of college in general (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), on the campus environment for LGBT issues (Herek, 2000; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Ritchie & Banning, 2001), and on gay identity development (D‘Augelli, 1994), indicates that the individuals present on campus and the campus climate have an impact on how students experience college and change from those experiences. When exploring LGBT issues within the context of college, it is critical to understand the attitudes that students bring with them in order to anticipate how these individuals will impact campus climate. Thus, this study sought to discern which characteristics, if any, among religious affiliation, racial identity,

socioeconomic status, sex, and political views are related to first-year college students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships. As findings indicate, all of these attributes are related to first-year students' attitudes, although some variables (e.g., political orientation and sex) hold stronger relationships than others.

The finding that religious affiliation, racial identity, and socioeconomic status have weak relationships with attitudes towards same-sex relationships for first-year college students is noteworthy. In fact, it challenges popular assumptions about the personal attributes that influence views on same-sex relationships. For example, the national debate about Proposition 8 in California focused on the role that religious affiliation and racial identity, specifically conservative religious groups and African Americans, played in its passage (Moore & Garvey, 2008; Morain & Garrison, 2008; Silver, 2008). However, campus administrators should be cautioned against relying on the myths perpetrated by popular media about the connection between religious affiliation, racial identity and attitudes towards homosexuality, for such reliance is misguided. Although future research and campus initiatives should continue to examine the intersection of religion, race, and socioeconomic status with sexual orientation, this study suggests that sex and political orientation demand special considerations at this time.

Throughout his discussion of gay identity development, D'Augelli (1994) described the role that stereotypes about sexual orientation in affecting the identity development of gay individuals. Many of these stereotypes are focused on expectations of gender, such as the myth that gay males embody an inverted gender identity that is effeminate. The pervasiveness of this myth is demonstrated in the relationship between gender and attitudes towards same-sex relationships and supported by prior research on differences between men and women. Thus, educational and social programming that attempts to ameliorate the effects of negative

stereotypes about sexual orientation should encourage male participants, in particular, to examine the myth of that homosexuality is inextricably linked to an inverted gender identity. Such initiatives could focus on a revolutionary model of sexual orientation that explores multiple continuums of identity where perceptions about biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation would present a more fluid representation of gay identity. Programs aimed at creating dissonance about conceptions of gender identity and expression for males in general would also be beneficial for shifting attitudes towards homosexuality.

Initiatives focused on political orientation for college students need to directly confront their polarizing effect on attitudes towards same-sex relationships. Students should be challenged to explore how their viewpoints have been influenced by personal factors, such as their parents' opinions, and social factors, such as the pervasiveness of heteronormative social structures and popular media. Additionally, research in higher education should critically examine these factors as well and provide suggestions on the role that academic and social programs could play in challenging students' attitudes towards homosexuality. Programs that provide opportunities for honest, open discussion among students from different political orientations about issues like gay marriage, partner benefits and adoption rights for same-sex couples could be successful at blurring the divide between politically liberal and conservative individuals. Academic courses and interactive experiences, such as service learning projects, that focus on the rights and privileges denied to same-sex couples are initiatives likely to accomplish this goal as well.

Campus administrators must consider how these distinct viewpoints affect the climate around LGBT issues and what initiatives are currently offered, or can be offered, that not only foster welcoming environments for LGBT students, but also encourage students to challenge the attitudes they hold when they arrive on campus. These initiatives should include a component

that examines the role that gender and political orientation play in shaping students' perspectives about sexual orientation. For example, educational programs that encourage students from conservative political orientations to engage in discussions with students from liberal political orientations about LGBT-related issues should be promoted on-campus. Debates about gay marriage or adoption rights of same-sex parents could be facilitated by faculty members who align with conservative and liberal ideologies, respectively. LGBT and ally organizations could also use this information to identify possible allies for engaging in campaigns to raise awareness about LGBT-related issues, or to invite other campus entities for collaborative initiatives.

Limitations

There are several limitations that should be addressed. First, the survey instrument, *The Freshman Survey*, relied upon self-reported data from participants. When participants cannot ascertain the meaning of a question or the information requested on the survey is seen as vague or ambiguous, the generalizability of findings from that survey may be limited (Pike & Kuh, 2005). However, numerous scholars conclude that self-reported data have merit (Astin, 1993; Kuh, Hayek, Carini, Ouimet, Gonyea, & Kennedy, 2001; Kuh, Vesper, Connolly, & Pace, 1997; Pace, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Pike, 1995), and "In reality, all questionnaire surveys, whether locally produced or nationally published, rely on some type of self-reported information" (Gonyea, 2005, p. 74). Thus, although self-reported data are a limitation to the current study, it is unlikely that the generalizability of the findings should be questioned.

A second limitation is that the variables included in the analysis were limited to those available in the dataset. Socioeconomic status, for example, was measured by a single variable in the current study: parent's level of income. Other researchers, such as Walpole (2003), utilized a composite variable to measure socioeconomic status that included parent's level of income,

father's education, mother's education, father's occupation, and mother's occupation in measuring socioeconomic status. In the current study, father's and mother's education was used as a control variable, and father's and mother's occupation was not available for analysis; therefore, socioeconomic status was measured using a single variable. Additionally, although some research on the relationship between religion and attitudes towards homosexuality indicates that both religious affiliation and conviction are related to attitudes, religious conviction was also not available for analysis. Future research could include additional measures of socioeconomic status, as well as a variable that examines the relationship between religious conviction and attitudes towards same-sex relationships.

Another limitation to the current study is that the 2004 wave of the dataset was used for analysis. Since researchers not affiliated with HERI are restricted to datasets that are at least 3 years old, the author selected the 2004 wave in order to facilitate comparisons between first-year college students and adult voters during the year of a Presidential election. Since several waves of the survey have been collected since 2004, the findings presented here may not represent the relationships that exist for college students today.

Despite the limitations described above, this study reveals that the personal attributes of first-year college students (e.g., religious affiliation, racial identity, socioeconomic status, sex, and political orientation) are associated with attitudes towards same-sex relationships. Findings underscore the importance of research within the context of college that not only describes how students perceive meaningful social issues, such as rights for LGBT individuals, but also assists administrators and policymakers in identifying students to direct initiatives.

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Appendix Two

Table 2.1 Coding Table

Variables	Coding Values
Age	1 = 16 or Less; 2 = 17; 3 = 18; 4 = 19; 5 = 20; 6 = 21 -24; 7 = 25 - 29; 8 = 30 - 39; 9 = 40 - 54; 10 = 55 or More
Father's Education	1 = Grammar or Less; 2 = Some High School; 3 = High School Grad; 4 = Postsecondary; 5 = Some College; 6 = College Grad; 7 = Some Grad School; 8 = Grad Degree
Mother's Education	1 = Grammar or Less; 2 = Some High School; 3 = High School Grad; 4 = Postsecondary; 5 = Some College; 6 = College Grad; 7 = Some Grad School; 8 = Grad Degree
ACT Composite	Continuous Variable
SAT Math	Continuous Variable
SAT Verbal	Continuous Variable
Average High School GPA	1 = D; 2 = C; 3 = C+; 4 = B-; 5 = B; 6 = B+; 7 = A-; 8 = A or A+
US Citizenship	1 = No; 2 = Permanent Resident; 3 = Yes
Type of High School	1 = Public; 2 = Public Charter; 3 = Public Magnet; 4 = Private Religious; 5 = Private Independent; 6 = Home School
Institutional Type (College)	9500 = Pub Univ-low; 9501 = Pub Univ-med; 9502 = Pub Univ-high; 9503 = Priv Univ-low; 9504 = Priv Univ-med; 9505 = Priv Univ-high; 9506 = Pub 4yr Coll-low; 9507 = Pub 4yr Coll-med; 9508 = Pub 4yr Coll-high; 9509 = Nonsect 4yr-low; 9510 = Nonsect 4yr-med; 9511 = Nonsect 4yr-high; 9512 = Nonsect 4yr-vryhigh; 9513 = Cath 4yr-low; 9514 = Cath 4yr-med; 9515 = Cath 4yr-high; 9516 = Oth Rel 4yr-vrylow; 9517 = Oth Rel 4yr-low; 9518 = Oth Rel 4yr-med; 9519 = Oth Rel 4yr-high; 9520 = Pub 2yr; 9521 = Priv 2yr

Note: vrylow, low, med, high, vryhigh refer to the enrollment size of the institution

Table 2.1 Coding Table (cont'd)

Variables	Coding Values
Caucasian/White	0 = Not Present; 1 = Present
African American/Black	0 = Not Present; 1 = Present
American Indian/Native American	0 = Not Present; 1 = Present
Asian American/Pacific Islander	0 = Not Present; 1 = Present
Latino/Hispanic	0 = Not Present; 1 = Present
Christian (non-Catholic, non-Mormon)	0 = Not Present; 1 = Present
Catholic	0 = Not Present; 1 = Present
Mormon	0 = Not Present; 1 = Present
Jewish	0 = Not Present; 1 = Present
Islamic	0 = Not Present; 1 = Present
Buddhist or Hindu	0 = Not Present; 1 = Present
No Religious Affiliation	0 = Not Present; 1 = Present
Sex	1 = Male; 2 = Female
Parental Income (SES)	1 = Less than \$10,000; 2 = \$10,000 - \$14,999; 3 = \$15,000 - \$19,999; 4 = \$20,000 - \$24,999; 5 = \$25,000 - \$29,999; 6 = \$30,000 - \$39,999; 7 = \$40,000 - \$49,999; 8 = \$50,000 - \$59,999; 9 = \$60,000 - \$74,999; 10 = \$75,000 - \$99,999; 11 = \$100,000 - \$149,999; 12 = \$150,000 - \$199,999; 13 = \$200,000 - \$249,999; 14 = More than \$250,000
Political Orientation	1 = Far Right; 2 = Conservative; 3 = Middle of the Road; 4 = Liberal; 5 = Far Left

Table 2.2 Attitudes Towards Homosexuality: The Final Model

Variables	Mean (<i>M</i>)	Standard Deviation (<i>SD</i>)	Unstandardized Coefficients (<i>b</i>)	Standardized Coefficients (β)		Partial Correlations
Age	3.33	0.58	-0.03	-0.01		-0.01
Fathers Education	5.32	2.01	0.00	0.00		0.00
Mothers Education	5.24	1.87	0.03	0.03	**	0.03
ACT Composite	24.04	4.39	0.02	0.04	**	0.03
SAT Math	583.61	91.15	0.00	-0.01		-0.01
SAT Verbal	571.62	94.59	0.00	0.08	**	0.06
Average HS GPA	6.20	1.50	-0.09	-0.05	**	-0.06
U.S. Citizenship	2.95	0.27	0.25	0.02	**	0.03
Type of High School	1.63	1.30	-0.03	-0.02	**	-0.03
Institutional Type (College)	9506.56	5.09	-0.01	-0.02	**	-0.02
Caucasian/White	0.76	0.43	0.07	0.01	*	0.01
African American/Black	0.10	0.30	-0.20	-0.03	**	-0.03
American Indian/Native American	0.02	0.14	0.09	0.01		0.01
Asian American/Pacific Islander	0.01	0.09	0.06	0.00		0.00
Latino/Hispanic	0.02	0.15	0.14	0.01	*	0.01
Christian (non-Catholic, non-Mormon)	0.43	0.49	-0.73	-0.17	**	-0.08
Catholic	0.27	0.45	-0.09	-0.02		-0.01
Mormon	0.02	0.12	-1.53	-0.06	**	-0.07
Jewish	0.02	0.15	0.42	0.04	**	0.03

Table 2.2 Attitudes Towards Homosexuality: The Final Model (cont'd)

Variables	Mean (<i>M</i>)	Standard Deviation (<i>SD</i>)	Unstandardized Coefficients (<i>b</i>)	Standardized Coefficients (β)	Partial Correlations
Islamic	0.01	0.09	-0.77	-0.03	** -0.03
Buddhist or Hindu	0.02	0.13	0.36	0.02	** 0.02
No Religious Affiliation	0.17	0.37	0.50	0.10	** 0.05
Sex (gender)	1.55	0.50	0.72	0.17	** 0.20
Parental Income (SES)	8.73	3.17	0.01	0.02	** 0.02
Political Orientation	3.07	0.84	0.97	0.41	** 0.43

** - $p < 0.01$, * - $p < 0.05$

Table 2.3 T-Test Results: Males and Females

Variables	Sample (<i>N</i>)	Mean (<i>M</i>)	Standard Deviation (<i>SD</i>)
Males	112904	5.18	2.04
Females	152255	6.00	1.98

Table 2.4 ANOVA Results: Political Orientation

Variables	Sample (<i>N</i>)	Mean (<i>M</i>)	Standard Deviation (<i>SD</i>)
Far Right	5780	3.91	1.97
Conservative	58247	4.29	1.90
Middle-of-the-Road	122880	5.65	1.89
Liberal	69417	6.72	1.68
Far Left	8864	6.81	1.80
Total	265188	5.64	2.05

Appendix 2.5 Approval Notification

April 27, 2009

Dear James,

The HERI Data Access Committee has approved your proposal entitled ~~First Year College~~ Students perceptions of same-sex relationships: The impact of religious affiliations, political views, sex and racial identity," with one change. Per our email conversations you will be using the 2004 TFS instead of the 2005 TFS and dataset will be limited to 8000 students as per your request and specifications.

Please note the following:

1. You are approved to conduct only the research described in your proposal. Any additional research must be applied for and approved of by the Higher Education Research Institute before any research takes place.
2. You are responsible for obtaining local institutional research board approval for your research.
3. We ask that you provide HERI with a copy of your research product (published paper, conference presentation, dissertation, etc.)
4. You will be asked to sign a research agreement before we will provide you with access to the data.

This data access is granted for a period of one year from when you actually receive the dataset. After a year, we will require a status update and will grant another year extension

if necessary. After two years, your access expires. If you need to extend access at that time you must reapply for another proposal review.

6. As a graduate student principal investigator, your data access fee is 250.00

In closing, please contact Serge Tran, our Associate Director for Data Management and Analysis, to work out the details of your data access. Best of luck with your research, and we look forward to your results.

Sincerely,

Linda

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Chapter Three: Deconstructing D'Augelli's Gay Identity Development Model and Its Applicability to Black Gay Male Undergraduates at Predominantly White Institutions

Abstract

This article examines the gay identity of Black gay male college students at predominantly White institutions. Additionally, this study tested the applicability of D'Augelli's (1994) lesbian-gay-bisexual (LGB) identity development framework for non-White individuals and contemporary gay populations. Findings suggest that D'Augelli's LGB identity development framework has limited usefulness for examining the gay identity development of Black gay male college students in the 21st century due to several notable limitations (i.e., the intersection of gay identity with other aspects of identity). The implication of these findings for theory, research, and practice are discussed in greater detail by the author.

Introduction

The current educational landscape for Black⁵ males is disquieting as less than half earn high school diplomas, and even fewer enroll in post-secondary education (Cuyjet, 2006). Those who persist to college face numerous obstacles to success, such as a lack of supportive relationships with peers, faculty members, and administrators at predominantly White institutions ([PWIs] Strayhorn, 2008), which impede their likelihood for both social and academic integration in college that directly influences retention (Tinto, 1993). A staggering number of Black males, over two-thirds, leave prior to completing their college degree. And only 14% of Black males have earned an undergraduate degree by age 29 compared to over 30% for their White male counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Indeed, the Black male crisis in higher education “mirrors a troubling pattern found in other social domains of American society (e.g., criminal justice system and workplace)” (Jackson & Moore, 2008, p. 847), which demonstrates the need to examine the experiences of Black males in various contexts.

⁵ The term “Black” will be used throughout this paper to refer to individuals whose ancestral origins lie in Africa or the diaspora; this includes those who describe themselves as African American and/or Black.

Considerable research in higher education has attempted to understand the developmental issues, such as the psychological and emotional transitions associated with identity formation, various identity groups encounter during college, including racial minorities. For instance, Cross (1971, 1995) and Jackson (2001) each developed theories of racial identity development that have been useful for researchers as they seek to understand how Black students develop during the college years. In Cross' Nigrescence model, individuals progress through five stages of identity development that begins with a pre-encounter phase during which individuals are unaware of their racial identity and resolves with a stage of pride in their racial identity that is linked to their commitment to fight against racism in society. Individuals progress through stages in the model by a series of encounters that heighten their awareness about race and its consequences (Cross). Numerous studies have employed Nigrescence theory to study Black college students (e.g., Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan, & Andrews-Guillen, 2003; Wilson & Constantine, 1999). Not only have researchers studied identity development among Black college students in general but some have focused on specific subpopulations.

Recent research on Black college students tends to focus on specific experiences such as mentoring (e.g., Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007) or on specific subpopulations like Black males, including the social and academic factors that impact their success in college (e.g., Cuyjet, 2006; Davis, 1994; Strayhorn, 2008). Only recently have researchers begun to explore the heterogeneity of experiences within Black student subpopulations such as Black men (e.g., Harper & Nichols, 2008), in an effort to identify ~~how~~ within-group differences and distinctions among individuals of the same race influence daily interactions as well as experiences with and perceptions of each other" (p. 200).

Prior research on within-group heterogeneity of Black male undergraduates has several major foci. For instance, some scholars have studied differences between Black male high-achievers (i.e., grade point average of 3.0 or above) and low-achievers (e.g., Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008). Others have focused on specific subpopulations such as Black male student-athletes (e.g., Messer, 2006) and gay men (e.g., Strayhorn, Blakewood, & DeVita, 2008). Surprisingly, examining gay identity development through the lens of D'Augelli's (1994) theory is one aspect of the Black male experience that has yet to be explored for college men (Wall & Washington, 1991; Washington & Wall, 2006).

Despite several theories that attempt to explain the developmental trajectories of gay men both within the context of college and throughout their lives (Cass, 1979, 1984; D'Augelli, 1994; Fassinger, 1991; Savin-Williams, 1990; Troiden, 1988), the higher education literature on the identity development of Black gay male undergraduates (BGMUs) is surprisingly sparse (Bieschke, Eberz, & Wilson, 2000). Though researchers in education (e.g., McCready, 2004; Strayhorn et. al., 2008; Wall & Washington, 1991; Washington & Wall, 2006) and psychology (e.g., Hutchinson, 2001; Icard, 1986; Wilson & Constantine, 1999) have studied the experiences of BGMUs, an ERIC review supports the limited availability of research on gay identity development for this population. For example, an ERIC search using the terms "gay identity development" and "African American" yielded just one publication, *Preventing Prejudice: A Guide for Counselors, Educators, and Parents* (Ponterotto, Utsey, & Pedersen, 2006); a similar search for "gay identity development" and "Black" yielded no results. The limited use of existing gay identity development theories to Black male subpopulations can be attributed, in part, to criticisms that they fail to consider the unique issues faced by individuals with multiple social identities (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Stevens, 2004), such as students of color who also identify as

lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB). Although studies have been conducted on gay Latinos (Cintrón, 2000) and gay women (i.e., lesbians) of color (Ferguson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000), research on other groups, most notably BGMUs, has relied largely upon anecdotal evidence (Harris, 2003; Wall & Washington, 1991; Washington & Wall, 2006) with few exceptions (Strayhorn et. al., 2008). In sum, research has focused primarily on Black students' experiences, turning more recently to subpopulations such as Black men due to their crisis in society and higher education. Some researchers have begun to study within-group heterogeneity for Black men, although very little focuses on BGMUs. Research on BGMUs that does exist has failed to explore gay identity development among that group.

Purpose

The purpose of the present study is to use D'Augelli's (1994) gay identity development model to examine the experiences of BGMUs. Two primary research purposes inform the study: (a) testing the applicability of D'Augelli's model as a framework for understanding the experiences of BGMUs, and (b) testing the usefulness of D'Augelli's framework, originally developed in 1994, for studying contemporary gay populations.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer three specific research questions:

Research Question 1: How do Black gay male undergraduates experience gay identity development in the context of college?

Research Question 2: Is D'Augelli's gay identity development model an effective framework for understanding the gay identity development of non-White gay college students?

Research Question 3: Is D'Augelli's gay identity development model an effective framework for understanding the gay identity development of contemporary college students?

Literature Review

Although gay identity development among college students has been studied in several fields, most notably psychology (e.g., D'Augelli, 1994; Herek, 2003; Herek & Capitanio, 1996), the field of higher education has produced comparatively little research on gay identity development using D'Augelli's theoretical framework, as only two such studies were uncovered and both applied it in conjunction with other aspects of identity, religion and leadership development, respectively (Love, Bock, Jannarone, & Richardson, 2005; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005). The paucity of research in this area is further surprising given the model's complexity and strength; that is, D'Augelli's model provides a frame that can account for "the intersections and complexities of non-heterosexual identity" (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005, p. 28) unlike some other models (e.g., Cass, 1979, 1984).

There are other limitations to the literature on BGMUs. The few studies that address issues related to gay identity development for BGMUs tend to rely on participants from a single institution, all of which are PWIs (e.g., Harris, 2003; Strayhorn et. al., 2008). Additionally, these articles focus on issues for campus administrators, and college choice and retention, respectively,

without specific focus on issues of identity development that BGMUs encounter. Finally, these articles fail to utilize a gay identity development framework. Thus, while several authors speculate that BGMUs experience gay identity development differently than their White peers (Harris; Icard, 1986; Stevens, 2004; Wall & Washington, 1991; Washington & Wall, 2006), no empirical studies of BGMUs' identity development were found.

Support for addressing this gap is identified in the literature on Black males in college as well. For example, Harper and Nichols' (2008) work on Black male collegians revealed how socioeconomic status, physical characteristics, and gender produce "racially homogenous viewpoint[s]" among their participants (p. 200). They utilized Celious and Oyserman's (2001) Heterogeneous Race Model, which "stresses the importance of recognizing how within-group differences and distinctions among individuals of the same race influence daily interactions as well as experiences with and perceptions of each other" (Harper & Nichols, p. 200). As Herek (2003) points out, although "sexual orientation is integrally linked to the close bonds humans form with others to meet their personal needs for love, attachment, and intimacy. . . [it] is [also] closely related to important personal identities, social roles, and community memberships" (p. 274). Thus, there is an expectation that sexual orientation may influence the identity development experiences of BGMUs, although it is unclear whether and how race/ethnicity and gender will shape the experiences of men in this group. Even more so, Celious and Oyserman's work suggests that there are important nuances among gay individuals that are shaped by race and gender that deserve attention. Thus, the current study will address these gaps by applying D'Augelli's framework to a multi-institutional sample of BGMUs, and expand upon prior work (e.g., Harris, 2003; Strayhorn, et. al., 2008) by examining the identity development experiences of BGMUs.

Research on Gay Identity Development in College

There are, however, several empirical studies of gay identity development during college. These studies provide evidence of the importance of several aspects of gay identity development, including relation to and significance of: (a) coming out or disclosure (Lopez & Chism, 1993; Rhoads, 1995); (b) interpersonal and environmental factors (Dilley, 2005; Longerbeam, Inkelas, Johnson, & Lee, 2005); (c) homophobia and heterosexism (Lopez & Chism; Peterson & Gerrity, 2006); (d) the influence of setting or environment (Case, Hesp, & Eberly, 2005; Evans & Broido, 1999; Harris, 2003; Rhoads, 1997); and (e) intersection of other aspects of identity, specifically religion and leadership identity, with sexual orientation (Love, Bock, Jannarone, & Richardson, 2005; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005). Although each of these studies contributes important knowledge about gay identity development among college student populations, the following review will focus on studies with particular relevance to the current study.

Rhoads (1997) conducted an ethnographic study of 40 gay and bisexual male college students from a single institution, and applied a cultural framework of “points of tension” (p. 465). He found that identity serves as a bonding mechanism for his participants; that is, gay identity serves to unify the males as a common subculture within the larger LGBT⁶ community. In fact, this study challenged “the assumption that lesbian, gay, and bisexual students share quite similar experiences [which] has led to overgeneralizations about their lives and has compromised the quality of scholarship on such populations” (p. 460). According to Rhoads, research on gay populations, both in the context of higher education and beyond, should focus on more localized explorations, or specific sub-groups within the LGBT community whose experiences are likely to vary because of shared aspects of identity.

⁶ LGBT is an acronym used to denote lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. It is intended to be an inclusive term that is often used to discuss membership in a larger community of non-heterosexual individuals (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network [GLSEN] website, 2010).

One such localized population is BGMUs. Harris (2003) employed what he has characterized as a “cross-case analysis methodology” (p. 48), in which he collected data through formal and informal interviews, online discussion boards and other media (e.g., billboard postings and websites) in order to understand the experiences of BGMUs at a PWI. Harris found that BGMUs feel isolated and unwelcome because of their identities as minorities in terms of both race and sexual orientation, and concluded that institutions need to address issues related to campus climate and develop specialized programs to address the unique concerns of BGMUs. A limitation of his study, however, was his failure to distinguish between participants who self-identify as gay and individuals who have sex with other men, as exemplified in his reference to the “down-low” phenomenon. Since men who have sex with other men and/or those on the “down-low” may not choose to identify as gay (King & Hunter, 2004), Harris has imposed a label on his participants that ignores the significant differences that exist between individuals who self-identify as gay and those who engage in same-sex behaviors but reject or resist public identification. Goode-Cross and Good (2009), for example, relied on behavior (i.e., men who have sex with men) in lieu of self-identity (i.e., gay or homosexual) in a recent study of African American male undergraduates. This distinction is important because males who openly self-identify as gay tend to view their sexual orientation as a more salient aspect of identity (e.g., Strayhorn et. al., 2008) than those who prefer to keep their identity hidden or private (Goode-Cross & Good). Thus, while Harris’ study is an interesting starting point for discussion of issues related to the identity of BGMUs, the notable limitations previously identified impact its usefulness for exploring gay identity development.

Applied Gay Identity Development Framework

Three studies about gay and lesbian college students have employed gay identity development models as frameworks for analysis. Peterson and Gerrity (2006) examined identity development issues in 35 lesbian undergraduates at a large institution in the northeast region of the country. Participants completed a series of questionnaires, which were distributed as packets in residence halls, and focused on three aspects of identity: internalized homophobia, lesbian identity, and self-esteem. The sample was predominantly White, but well distributed in terms of year enrolled in college (e.g., first-year or senior). Several interesting findings were identified, including that lower levels of internalized homophobia were associated with higher levels of lesbian identity development as operationalized by Cass' (1984) theoretical framework. Cass' model includes six stages that begins with identity confusion and resolves at identity synthesis. Individuals can fail to progress beyond any of the stages, resulting in identity foreclosure at the particular stage. Peterson and Gerrity used a revised version of Cass' (1996) model in their analysis, which included several potential pathways through which lesbians could navigate. Peterson and Gerrity also found a positive relationship between self-esteem and lesbian identity development, indicating that participants whose lesbian identity was more advanced also expressed higher levels of self-esteem. One contribution of Peterson and Gerrity's work is that although Cass' model of identity development was useful, it could not fully describe the experiences of lesbian college students included in the study. Thus, their research supports the need for developing or using other identity development models when conducting research on gay men and lesbians.

A second study employed gay identity development theory to explore the intersection of spirituality and gay identity development (Love, Bock, Jannarone, & Richardson, 2005). Love

and colleagues conducted in-depth interviews with 12 college students, five males and seven females, and identified three categories of sexual-spiritual interaction: reconciliation, non-reconciliation, and undeveloped spiritual identity. These categories, which emerged from an application of D'Augelli's (1994) gay identity development framework, refer to participants' attitudes about the relationship between their sexual orientation and their spirituality.

Reconciliation relates to resolved feelings with the conflict between sexual orientation and spirituality, while an undeveloped spiritual identity refers to individuals who have failed to examine the relationship (Love et. al.) Analysis revealed that while all 12 participants had exited heterosexuality and established both personal and social gay identities, some variation existed among the participants with regards to their gay intimacy status, disclosure to parents, and involvement in the gay community. One important conclusion that can be drawn from the study is that sexual identity interacts with other social identities (i.e. gay identity) in ways that complicate developmental processes. Although limited to Whites, the study also demonstrates the usefulness of employing D'Augelli's model when studying gay identity development among college students.

A third study that utilized a gay identity development framework examined the student leadership development of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students. Using a sample of participants at a national LGBT student leadership conference, Renn and Bilodeau (2005) studied the influence of leadership experiences on the LGBT identity development of their participants. The authors utilized qualitative case study methods, relying primarily on interviews and observation of conference activities, and recruited seven participants from a single institution. Renn and Bilodeau concluded that the processes outlined in D'Augelli's (1994) model were associated with the leadership experiences of the LGBT students they

studied. Thus, one contribution of Renn and Bilodeau's work is that D'Augelli's model was a useful framework for exploring the gay identity development of LGBT student leaders, and given the racial diversity of their sample, it even adds support for using the model with gay students of color. Although the authors found that their data aligned with D'Augelli's model, they also identified several notable limitations, including the intersection of other social identities (e.g. race and gender identity), that the model did not fully explain. Similar to the work of Love and colleagues (2005) cited above, Renn and Bilodeau's study supports the applicability of D'Augelli's framework when studying LGBT populations, but also provides insights about potential limitations to the theory's applicability.

Theoretical Framework

To examine the experiences of BGMUs, it was necessary to identify an empirically-derived explanation of gay identity development that could be used to achieve the study's purpose; D'Augelli's (1994) model was chosen for this purpose. D'Augelli's lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) identity development model is based on both an empirical study conducted on gay male college students (D'Augelli, 1991) and his prior work and experiences with homosexual populations both on and off-campus (D'Augelli, 1994). His framework deviated from Cass' (1979, 1984) by describing gay identity development as a life-long process that is shaped as much by the individual's choices as by the context in which he develops. D'Augelli's framework addresses critiques of Cass' linear, stage-based approach that fails to explain the fluidity and backtracking associated with the "coming out" process (e.g., Eldridge & Barnett, 1991; Stevens, 2004). Moreover, his model attempts to position homosexuality as a "normal" developmental process parallel to heterosexual identity (D'Augelli, 1994).

D'Augelli's (1994) framework of gay identity development accounts for the social contexts of an individual's development over his entire life. By applying a human development view to gay identity, this model emphasizes *interindividual differences in the development of intraindividual behavior* (italics original). . . suggest[ing] a continuum of sexual feelings and experience. . . [that are different] at certain phases of life. . . in certain kinds of families. . . in certain communities. . . and at certain historical times" (p. 321-322). In other words, D'Augelli's model builds upon a psychologically based model of gay identity development by accounting for external social factors, such as family and community, as well as internal influences, such as personal beliefs and attitudes.

The framework outlines six aspects of identity that should be examined for gay individuals that are influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which the individual lives (D'Augelli, 1994). The six processes are: (1) exiting heterosexual identity, (2) developing a personal lesbian-gay-bisexual identity status, (3) developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual social identity, (4) becoming a lesbian-gay-bisexual offspring, (5) developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual intimacy status, and (6) entering a lesbian-gay-bisexual community. The processes are summarized in Table 3.1⁷. As Bilodeau and Renn (2005) appropriately summarize, "An individual may experience development in one process to a greater extent than another; for example, he or she may have a strong LGB social identity and an intimate same-sex partner, but not have come out as LGB to family (become an LGB offspring)" (p. 29). This example demonstrates the usefulness of D'Augelli's model in identifying variations among individuals and across contexts.

⁷ All tables in this chapter will be included in the Appendix Three as recommended by the Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines for Multi-part Dissertations at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Although little to no research has been conducted, to date, employing D'Augelli's model to study BGMUs, the theory offered two major advantages in the present study. First, prior research has shown that it is applicable to studies of LGBT college students in various contexts (e.g., lesbian college students, gay college students' spirituality, and LGBT student leaders). Second, since the model accounts for the social and cultural contexts in which gay individuals live, it may allow for differential experiences associated with race to be identified and addressed. In many ways, the theory influenced the study in terms of the questions asked, the data collected, and the methods for analysis, all of which are described in the next section.

Methodology

This article is a secondary analysis of qualitative data from a larger study (Strayhorn, Blakewood & DeVita, 2008), whose methodology most closely resembled case study. The phenomenon explored in this study is gay identity development, which is accomplished by collecting data from several cases, the BGMUs. Merriam (1998) identified several criteria that define a case study, including that (a) the study focuses on a particular phenomenon, (b) an in-depth description of the phenomenon is presented, and (c) that the cases studied are intentionally selected in order to provide the reader with unique insights about the phenomenon. Since no particular method of data collection or analysis is privileged when using case study as a methodology the use of case study allowed for interviews to be the primary method of data collection (Merriam). Case study can also be utilized for ~~cross~~-analysis. . . that goes beyond a categorical or taxonomic integration of the data" (p. 187) and allows for theory to be tested or developed. Thus, case study was an appropriate methodology for framing the study since testing the applicability of D'Augelli's (1994) model was a central purpose of the present study.

Site and Sample

Participants were selected for this study because their narratives could be used by the researcher to develop a rich, thick description (Guba & Lincoln, 1981) of the shared experiences (Moustakas, 1994) of gay Black male college students at PWIs. This was accomplished by ~~–~~“criterion sampling,” where specific conditions are developed by the researcher in order to identify select participants (Creswell). Participants who met all of the following criteria were included in the study: (a) enrolled as a full-time undergraduate student at a four-year, degree-granting institution of higher education; (b) of traditional age for undergraduate students (18-24 years old); (c) self-identify as African American or Black; and (d) self-identify as gay or homosexual.

Data were initially collected by a team of researchers (Strayhorn et al., 2008), including a faculty member and two graduate students, one of whom was the author of this article (DeVita). The author played an integral role⁸ in collecting data for the other study but is solely responsible for the analysis presented in this manuscript. Thus, the data analysis process in the present study is best characterized as an analysis of secondary qualitative data (Schatz, 1993).

Participants were recruited in three stages. First, an initial pool of participants was selected from a single institution where the researcher(s) had a previously established relationship with the leader of an LGBT-related student organization. Using the four criteria described above, the leader of the organization identified six potential participants who were provided with the principal investigator's (PI) email address. All six participants contacted PI

⁸ In collaboration with PI, the author (DeVita) wrote the Institutional Review Board Proposal, developed the interview protocol, and recruited participants for the study. He also conducted six of nine interviews by himself and participated in two additional interviews with all three members of the research team. Additionally, the author completed data analysis and coding in the current article, participated in numerous discussions about findings from the study, and has presented on the study at national and international conferences on several occasions with the other members of the research team.

and expressed interest in participating in the study. Then, the PI contacted students to schedule one-on-one interviews. Through subsequent emails, participants selected a convenient time to be interviewed and the researcher with whom they preferred to be interviewed. This latter decision proved interesting as five of the six participants selected the researcher who self-identified as White and gay, while the sixth participant selected the Black male researcher. None of the participants chose to be interviewed by the heterosexual female researcher, although she did participate in two interviews that were conducted by all members of the research team.

In the second stage of data collection, additional participants were recruited using “snowball sampling” (Patton, 2002), where existing participants identified other individuals who may be willing to participate in the study. This process yielded one additional participant from the initial institution. The third stage of participant recruitment can also be characterized as “snowball sampling” since the researchers identified two additional participants from discussing their findings at conference presentations. Attendees at conference sessions volunteered to serve as “gatekeepers” at their home institutions, thereby providing an opportunity to recruit additional participants from a diverse range of institutions for the study. Although saturation was reached at about the sixth interview, a total of nine participants from two PWIs located in the southeast and northeast regions of the United States were interviewed in order to ensure redundancy. Table 3.2 presents a summary of the participants, referred to by pseudonyms, some of which were selected by the participants and others assigned by the author.

Data Collection

To collect data, the researchers conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with each participant. These interviews lasted approximately 45-160 minutes and were tape recorded for accurate transcription and data analysis. In some cases, ambiguities were resolved by conducting

member checks, such as follow-up correspondence with the interviewee via email or in-person. Data collected during the interviews were based on a semi-structured interview protocol that included questions about each participant's respective background, schooling experiences, and notable people, places, or circumstances that they believed influenced their overall experience and identity development. Questions were designed to prompt rich, thick reconstructions of the identity development process for BGMUs. Each interview began with an open-ended question that asked the participant to "tell me about your experiences as a Black (or African American) gay male undergraduate." Additional questions and probes were asked by the researcher(s) to "dig deeper" about specific topics that emerged. See Appendix 3.3 for a copy of the interview protocol. Following the interview, participants were sent a link to an online questionnaire that collected demographic information about the participant, including his personal attributes, experiences, as well as information about his parents, such as their current occupation and educational background.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this manuscript was conducted by one member of the research team (DeVita), although the entire team participated in data collection. Analysis proceeded in two stages. First, transcripts were coded using "sociologically constructed" codes, which are those developed by the researcher (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), through a process that most closely resembled "open coding" (Creswell, 2007). During this initial phase, broad categories were identified about all data related to issues of gay identity development. Any data that addressed other experiences or information that did not relate to gay identity development were set aside for future analyses. In the second phase of coding, these broad categories were refined using a "constant comparative" method (Glaser & Strauss, 1999), during which transcripts were re-read

with particular attention devoted to the relationships across themes and the framework proposed by D'Augelli (1994). During this second stage of coding, a series of themes were identified that could be compared to the six processes identified by D'Augelli. Additional themes that do not correspond to those six processes are discussed as limitations of D'Augelli's framework.

Trustworthiness and Quality

In order to ensure trustworthiness and quality, several steps were taken by the author. First, the team of researchers involved in data collection was asked to review the conclusions of the author and provide feedback about the codes developed and their relationship to themes from D'Augelli's (1994) framework. This triangulation of researchers provided "confirmability and dependability" (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) of the author's analysis. Additionally, the final coding scheme was shared with two participants in order to confirm, through member checking, that the themes identified by the researcher were appropriate representations of the participants' experiences. The themes were derived from and supported by the actual words of our participants, which was critical since I sought to "give voice to those who have been marginalized" (Glesne, 2006, p. ix). Finally, throughout the ongoing process of data collection and analysis, I discussed presuppositions, preliminary ideas, and interpretations with multiple peer debriefers; individuals with expertise in qualitative research, Black, and/or gay male issues who are either student affairs professionals or researchers in higher education. This process occurred in several contexts, including classroom discussions, conference presentations, and informal meetings with graduate students and faculty members.

Findings

Exiting Heterosexual Identity

As previously outlined, there are six components to D'Augelli's (1994) model. The first is exiting heterosexuality. Exiting heterosexuality ~~in~~volves personal and social recognition that one's sexual orientation is not heterosexual. . . [and] also means telling *others* that one is lesbian, gay, or bisexual" (D'Augelli, p. 325). In order to be eligible to participate in the study, all participants had to identify themselves as gay. Thus, all of the BGMUs included in the study had personal recognition of their sexual orientation at the time they were recruited to participate. Additionally, participants discussed their experiences disclosing their sexual orientation to others. ~~Coming out~~" stories were meaningful to several participants as well.

One participant, Desmond, remembered how his mother confronted him about his sexual orientation after she discovered evidence of it when he was young:

I would print off the [gay pornographic] pictures and stuff them in my pillowcase to look at at night. But when my mom found out she was furious. . . She said, ~~Would~~ you ever put a man's penis in your mouth?" And I told her she didn't want to know the answer to that question (laughing)...and she was like, ~~I~~ should have your dad come up here and whip your ass."

Desmond's story exemplifies a negative aspect of the exiting process (or disclosure) for the males in the study, which occurred primarily when they were forced to identify as gay by others. When participants were involuntarily forced to disclose their sexual orientation (i.e., ~~outed~~"), the disclosure experience was often accompanied by negative feelings towards others. In Desmond's case, his mother's remark about a father who has been absent from his life further intensified the negative emotions associated with his involuntary disclosure. Other participants described similar experiences when being ~~outed~~" by others.

In contrast, Sidney, described his experience voluntarily disclosing his sexual orientation to friends during high school who were also struggling with their gay identity development. This disclosure was a “unique and interesting experience” for him because he was able to process issues related to his disclosure with others going through a similar experience:

I did have a couple of gay friends in high school, starting around sophomore year. That's when I first started, like, coming to terms with being gay and dealing with all the issues. And they were dealing with it, too. And it was a unique and interesting experience. But other than, like, one or two, maybe, three, I didn't have that many gay friends in high school. And that period of my life only lasted about two years and then, for various reasons, it dissolved. And I knew gay people, but I didn't know at the time they were gay.

Disclosure of his sexual orientation to others allowed Sidney to build connections with other individuals engaged in a similar process of exiting heterosexual identity and development.

Several other participants found supportive friends who also disclosed their sexual orientation following the participants' disclosure. The ongoing process of disclosing one's identity, or “coming out,” allowed some participants to build connections with other gay-identified individuals.

Developing a Personal Gay Identity Status

There are two aspects to what D'Augelli (1994) characterizes as developing a personal gay identity status. The first relates to the social nature of sexual orientation, which means that individuals learn what it means to be gay (e.g., behaviors, attitudes, and attributes) by coming into contact with other gay males (D'Augelli). Once an individual identifies as gay, he begins the process of finding other individuals who identify as gay in order to understand what it means to be gay. As previously described, Sidney began this process during high school; however, many participants did not begin this process until they arrived in college. Terrance described how he established relationships with other gay males during his first year of college:

I think the only real challenge that I had was probably freshman year; I wasn't exactly out then with anybody and my roommate was basically your straight, jock-type boy. But we had a suite-mate and he came out probably in March or April of that year. So then me and him started hanging out more and more. And then over the summer we said, "Oh we're going to live together," and ended up living together. And we've lived together every year except for last year.

Terrance's openly gay roommate provided him with another gay male with whom he could "hang out" and even share living space. His story demonstrates a process that was shared by several participants where an initial meeting between gay males in college develops into a prolonged and affirming friendship.

The second aspect of developing a personal gay identity status refers to challenging of internalized myths about homosexuality that individuals hold because of the heterosexist assumptions that are embedded in the main fabric of society. D'Augelli (1994) identifies several stereotypes, such as gay males are promiscuous and unable to form meaningful relationships and that they are incapable of effectively raising children. These myths are debunked through personal interactions with gay individuals who transgress the stereotypes. Few participants described relationships where they confronted myths that changed their perspective about their sexual orientation. However, Leon's story reveals how he encouraged his friends to confront myths about gay Black males:

[One success I've had is] helping [my friends] be aware and know that, I mean, that there's nothing wrong with [being gay,] there's nothing wrong with being who I am. It's not a fad; it's who [I am]. Some people say it's a lifestyle, it's just a choice. It's not. It's just me. It's me—not a lifestyle. I mean, it's a lifestyle in that it's me. That's how I describe it. It's just who we are.

Leon took pride in encouraging his friends to think about his sexual orientation as an identity that describes who he is rather than a choice he made to be attracted to other men. Few participants described relationships with others that mirrored Leon's, not only in terms of taking pride in his gay identity, but also in his role as educator about the meaningfulness of gay identity to his core

self. In other words, Leon was one of the few participants who embodied a well developed ~~personal~~ gay identity status” (D’Augelli), based on the model’s definition.

Developing a Gay Social Identity

The third component of D’Augelli’s framework relates to the development of a network of people who are affirming of a gay male’s identity. Through an on-going, lifelong process, gay men are able to establish a network of people who are affirming of his sexual orientation, —~~that~~ is, the people in [the network] actively, continually, and predictably treat [him] as. . . gay” (D’Augelli, 1994, p. 326). For all participants, the network was a mix of individuals who identify as gay, although mostly male, and others who identify as heterosexual, but mostly female. In other words, the networks that the BGMUs established during college were primarily [White] gay males and heterosexual females. Desmond, for example, described his network as:

And, my friends. Most of my friends are heterosexual, Black females and I have like two Black gay male _associates.‘ One of them I met online and one of them I met through Mike. Oh, and there’s Mike...the object of my affection (laughing)...yea right, but I’m not over him yet. He probably isn’t my support right now because he’s ridiculous and selfish...but when we were dating he was there for me.

Desmond’s statement represents the complex relationships present within the support network of many participants in the study. His network consisted of a diverse group of individuals that was common across participants, including heterosexual females, gay males, and a romantic interest.

Although Desmond’s network is exemplary in terms of the gender and sexual orientation of other participants’ networks (e.g., his network consisted of predominantly heterosexual females and homosexual males), he was one of few participants who had predominantly Black individuals in his support group. Terrance’s network was similar to most of the other participants. He described his network as:

One [friend] is biracial, and I want to say that another is Black and the rest are all White. . . I have quite a few girls that I'm really close with. I mean I talk to them quite a bit. Like we always go out for dinner and stuff like that. . . And then I have a couple of friends back home that I talk to and hang out with whenever I go home. . . My sister and I are very close – I don't know how, even though there are 12 years apart between us. I think it's just because, I don't know... we were close because she was still at home when I was born. My brother, he was like going to college when I was born, so we're not that close.

Terrance's network, like many of the participants, consists primarily of gay White males and heterosexual White females. Additionally, Terrance had a closer relationship with his sister than his brother. All of the participants, in fact, described more supportive relationships with their female relatives than with their male relatives.

Becoming a Gay Offspring

Disclosure of an individual's sexual orientation to his family is an important aspect of a gay male's identity development. The response by family members to such disclosure is often complex with different members responding in unique ways to an individual's disclosure, which forces a gay male to constantly (re)negotiate relationships among his family members (D'Augelli, 1994). The burden often falls on the gay male to ultimately assist his family members in developing a supportive, affirming network among his family. As previously mentioned, the reactions and levels of acceptance among family members varied dramatically among the sample. Because of his gay identity, Sidney describes his relationship with his parents as a performance, which has complicated his relationship with them:

[Some of my friends are] like –How can you not be close to your parents? Doesn't it eat you up inside from wanting to tell them?" and I'm like –No." I mean, we've never been particularly like really close. It's always been more like-- I don't want to say a show-- but it's been more like playing a part; like I play the part of the son who has not been to jail, has not gotten a girl pregnant, has not done drugs, has not done all these things. You know, I make the good grades, I go to college, I'm pursuing something with my life, you know? That's the son they want. They want me to come home and talk about like great things I'm doing and how I'm not getting in trouble and then that's fine.

Sidney's story represents the burden that some gay males shoulder because of their family's ambiguous or even negative response to their gay identity. In Sidney's case, he mitigates his parents' reaction by performing "the good son" and avoiding confrontations about his sexual orientation.

Some of the participants, however, had to negotiate relationships with parents who were openly hostile about their sexual orientation. Lawrence reflected on one interaction with his father:

And one day I was taking the groceries with my mom and mom said "hold my purse" so I hold her purse. He got off the lawnmower and walked up to me and [said] don't ever hold your mom's purse again. So it's kind of up and down with him. . . Oh yeah and then. . . I don't think it's been like a positive experience with my family because every now and then my sister will call me [a fag].

Lawrence, similar to other participants discussed earlier, involuntarily disclosed his identity when his family found his online profiles. Although his family knew about his sexual orientation and did not disown him, it clearly strained his relationships with all of his family members, but particularly his father, who confronted Lawrence's behavior on multiple occasions.

Few of the participants described relationships with family members that were affirming of their gay identity. One of the more surprising stories was Blake's, who despite having a father who identifies as gay described his mother as the primary support within his family:

In my room I have posters of half-naked guys on my walls. So I told [my mother] before we got to my room. And she was "Oh." She didn't really blow up at me, but I think that's because she's already dealt with it once with my Dad, because my Dad is gay too. . . And we've never even really talked about the being gay thing with each other. Like when I came out, he asked me if my mother blamed him for me being gay. And it's like, yeah, I knew that... that I even remember as a child like him asking me, "Why don't you ever play with her?" Because I don't like girls. I remember saying that when I was like 5. He told me that he told my mom when I was like 5 too that he's gonna be gay; this was before he even told her that he was. Me and him – I just don't care to be around him, care to know him that much.

As Blake's story represents, all of the participants have complicated relationships with their family members because of their gay identity that demonstrates the issues associated with becoming a gay offspring.

Developing a Gay Intimacy Status

The establishment of same-sex relationships is another aspect of gay identity development. Stereotypes about gay men, such as the belief that they are hyper-sexual and unable to form committed relationships, contribute to the difficulties associated with developing a healthy, gay intimacy status (D'Augelli, 1994). The lack of "cultural scripts directly applicable to . . . gay [men]" and the denial of access to "social and cultural apparatuses for heterosexual bonding" (p. 327), exemplify the social structures that further complicate this aspect of gay identity development. Yet, all the BGMUs in the study were able to discuss their interest in pursuing relationships with males. Sidney, for example, said "since I hadn't had a real relationship, oh, yeah, I was, like, I'm going go to college. There are going to be a lot of people there. I'm going to have more opportunities for romantic involvement and what not." Simply put, these BGMUs came to college with the intention of "coming out" and then seeking romantic relationships with other males.

Although college was viewed by the participants as an environment where romantic relationships could be explored, many participants expressed difficulty establishing such relationships. This difficulty was associated with the participants' attraction to White males, which most participants expressed. Lawrence said:

It's just so much easier for me to be attracted to White guys than African Americans. . . I guess I've been going by this [idea] where I just love [preppy guys] or whatever. But you don't find too many Black guys like that. . . A [lot] of my friends say I'm still White [even though I'm actually] Black. But who knows.

It's just easier to find White guys [that are preppy, so] I'm attracted to White guys.

Although the BGMUs in the study, such as Lawrence, were primarily attracted to White guys, they reported difficulty finding White males who were attracted to them. Blake attributes this to the fact that he's ~~intimidating~~, I think, to them, so they won't speak to me if I go out." During the process of member checking, one participant clarified that his attraction to White males was not necessarily because of their race, but rather because they are more likely to be ~~preppy~~" and open about their sexual orientation. Regardless of the reason for an attraction to White males, such an attraction indicated that some BGMUs in this study had difficulty finding and establishing meaningful relationships.

Entering a Gay Community

The final aspect of D'Augelli's (1994) gay identity development model focuses on a commitment to the social and political movements associated with a gay identity (i.e., the fight for equal rights). Some gay individuals choose to abstain from political and social action; however, those who become empowered develop a heightened awareness of their oppression and engage in movements that fight against the forces that hold them down (D'Augelli). Several participants became engaged in political and social action through campus organizations. Betsy, a Black gay male at a private institution, described his extensive involvement in LGBT organizations:

I knew that I was going to be out in college, and I wanted to, I was always interested in like these issues and educating students about, you know, issues that pertain to diversity. . . and then I started breaking down and I just started crying and that was the first time where I was just, like, sitting and like really thinking back of everything I had been through and that was a thrilling experience and it helped me grow out of the process and right after that orientation program. . . the first thing I did is I joined [LGBT Organization]. . . and I became a historian of that organization.

Several participants became involved in campus organizations in order to become involved in political movements associated with the LGBT community (e.g., same-sex marriage rights) that would improve the conditions for gay men both on-campus and in society as a whole. Although few students were able to articulate a connection between their personal experiences and involvement as Betsy did, several participants were motivated to become involved in political and social activism through student organizations.

In contrast, a few participants found campus organizations to be sources of conflict and unsupportive. Although some individuals reported finding friends through meetings and activities sponsored by the LGBT organization on-campus, a few participants, such as Lamont, reported that the organizations' focus was "trivial" or not responsive to his interests:

I have lots of friends in [LGBT Organization]. I would be in [LGBT Organization], but I have a class at the same time. I don't really do a whole lot, like with the things that they're doing. I definitely support what they're doing and I'm very [thankful], but I feel like sometimes the things they find offensive are trivial to me.

Lamont's reluctance to get involved in the actions of the LGBT organization on-campus may be due to what D'Augelli (1994) characterizes as an individual who views his sexual orientation as a "purely private matter" (p. 327). However, it may also indicate that he is simply disinterested in becoming involved in the social and political actions of the organization, a view that was expressed by other participants, most notably Terrance, who believed that it is up to other individuals to engage in that work.

Limitations of D'Augelli's Framework

The analysis and discussion above demonstrates the usefulness of D'Augelli's (1994) framework for examining the identity development of BGMUs. The six components of D'Augelli's framework provide both structure for analysis and discussion and an effective tool

for exploring the various aspects of identity development of BGMUs. However, there are several limitations that have been discussed that warrant further discussion. Each of these limitations relates to another aspect of identity that intersects with gay identity for these males. These intersections are significant because they affect the ways these participants make meaning of their gay identity. In other words, the intersection of masculinity, racial identity and religion with sexual orientation affect how these BGMUs understand and make meaning of their gay identity development.

Intersection of masculinity and sexual orientation.

Several references to the intersection of masculinity and sexual orientation have been discussed in the analysis of other themes. Although D'Augelli (1994) addresses the relationship between gender expression and sexual orientation for gay males through his mention of myths about inversion, he fails to give appropriate attention to the pervasiveness of gender and expectations of masculinity. Issues of masculinity were shared by every participant in various contexts, including relationships with roommates and family members and the activities and interests of the participants. Additionally, all participants discussed expectations of masculinity when comparing themselves to other BGMUs. Terrance, for example, talked about a Black gay male he saw on campus as a "Fina... like a girl pretty much. That's what [we] use for a girl. And when I see that I'm ... I kinda stop and like, "Am I like that?" Because I really don't want to be like that." Terrance's reaction to an effeminate Black gay male on campus is representative of what all the participants claimed: that they are more masculine than the typical BGMUs they encounter. Despite interests in activities like cheerleading and opera (see Table 3.2), the participants were protective of their masculinity. Similarly, perspectives on masculinity influenced participants' attraction to other Black males. Blake, for example, characterized gay

Black males as “either 6’4” and 275 or they were 5’8” and 150 pound swishy little queens. And it was like, neither one of those are things I want.” In other words, Blake viewed gay Black males as representing distinct masculinities that failed to align with his ideal of an attractive male. These examples, when considered along with those previously discussed, represent the extent to which masculinity intersects with sexual orientation in this study.

Intersection of racial identity and sexual orientation.

The intersection of racial identity and sexual orientation was an important theme expressed by participants. Unlike masculinity, D’Augelli’s (1994) framework fails to include any reference to racial identity and its relationship with sexual orientation. Yet, issues associated with non-White populations, particularly Black, and gay identity are well documented across disciplines (Bohan, 1996; Conerly, 2001; Constantine-Simms, 2001; Hutchinson, 2001). All participants addressed these issues in the stories they shared, which often alluded to the performance of racial identity as a transgression from stereotypical Black behaviors. Blake talks about being one “of the Whitest Black boys you could ever meet” and how he assumed the role of “that person that will make the Black joke” around his gay friends. For Blake, gay identity encouraged him to deny and even act hostile towards his racial identity. Sidney attributes his similarly negative attitudes towards his racial identity to his socialization in predominantly White communities:

Oh, white. For most of my life, the way I’ve just been raised and the situations I’ve been in, the groups and the interests I’ve had and what not. It’s just put me around more white people. It’s just the way it’s been for me.

One consequence of these views, as was discussed during the development of a gay intimacy status, is that participants expressed attractions primarily to White males. These examples

represent the complex relationship that exists between racial identity and sexual orientation for BGMUs.

Intersection of religion and sexual orientation.

Although religion was significant for only a few participants, those who did discuss it described the critical role it played in their gay identity development. Betsy's statement exemplifies the significant effect of religion on sexual orientation for a few of the participants:

I always knew that something was wrong, that somehow my identity was going to clash with this church or with this faith or religion, but I didn't know what it was at the time when I was young. So, I grew up in a really conservative Christian home, and I was basically, like, my faith was really, it was integral part of my identity. Now, when I started realizing that I was gay throughout my high school career, I had a really hard time trying to reconcile my faith and my sexuality if that makes any sense. And to this day it's still a struggle.

For Betsy, the tensions between his religious orientation and his gay identity are difficult to reconcile. Thus, similar to masculinity and racial identity, religion changed the ways in which participants experienced their gay identity development. Additionally, D'Augelli's (1994) framework fails to address the intersection of religion with gay identity as well.

Significance for Theoretical Framework

This paper contributes to our understanding of identity development for gay male collegians by testing the usefulness of D'Augelli's (1994) gay identity development framework for: (a) examining the identity development of BGMUs, and (b) examining the identity development of contemporary gay populations. Analysis suggests that although D'Augelli's framework was useful for studying the gay identity development of BGMUs, it has notable limitations that impede its applicability. Similar to racial identity development models (e.g., Cross, 1971, 1995), which focus exclusively on race and its role, D'Augelli's model was too focused on gay identity and failed to fully account for the intersection of other aspects of

identity. It should be noted, however, that all six components of D'Augelli's model provided meaningful insights into the participants' gay identity development. In fact, the six aspects of gay identity development identified by D'Augelli's framework were useful at all stages of research, including shaping the design, providing the researcher with *a priori* knowledge of participants' experiences, and organizing themes for analysis and discussion.

However, there are notable limitations to its usefulness. First, D'Augelli's framework failed to provide a means for describing all of ~~the~~ intersections and complexities of non-heterosexual identity" (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005, p. 28) for the BGMUs in this study. The intersection of sexual orientation with masculinity, racial identity and religious affiliation, was significant to the participants, who identified the effect of other aspects of identity on their gay identity development. The ability to draw clear connections between these various aspects of identity suggests that a gay identity development framework should account for the intersection or overlap of multiple aspects of identity. D'Augelli's reliance on a human developmental framework allows for flexibility to consider the multiple social contexts in which an individual experiences his identity, but stops short of discussing the reciprocal impact of other aspects of identity on gay identity development. For example, none of the six processes in the model provide an opportunity to examine the unique social and cultural experiences associated with racial and ethnic minority identities. A revised framework could address this limitation by providing a seventh component called ~~negotiating~~ "negotiating the intersections of gay identity and other identities" that would give space to examine these issues. As Leon poignantly commented, ~~hopefully~~ "there's a way to figure out how [to] address Black issues [after we] maybe [address] homosexuality issues first before we can try to combine them because sometimes they may overlap."

Another limitation is that although the framework alludes to myths about gay individuals and the lack of gay role models in popular media, which D'Augelli identifies as a lack of "social and cultural apparatuses" or "cultural scripts" (p. 327), the nature of these myths and their presentation in popular culture has changed in contemporary society. It should be noted that D'Augelli acknowledges the need to reexamine the ever-changing context around issues of gay identity in society, stating that "a life-span development can. . . reflect complexities of lesbian, gay, and bisexual lives and [allow for] analysis of how these lives will change in the future" (p. 331). But, he fails to adequately discuss how the myths that both he discusses and their contemporary mutations are related to other critical issues in society. For example, perspectives on same-sex relationships, their acceptance in society and portrayal in the media are related to political affiliations, religious commitments, and geographical contexts, among other factors (Crawford & Solliday, 1996; Herek, 2000; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Kurdek, 1988; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994; Nelson & Krieger, 1997). Thus, the myths perpetrated by the media and internalized by individuals are influenced by a variety of factors that are not exclusively based on sexual orientation. An enhanced discussion of these myths would provide a more developed context to examine the issues gay individuals face in society today.

Implications for Practice

Findings from the current study have several implications for student affairs professionals. First, the identity development of BGMUs reveals that although BGMUs share similarities with other gay male college students, as well as with other Black male college students, there are aspects of their identity that raise unique challenges for supporting this population. For instance, relationships with family members (especially fathers) are particularly tenuous for BGMUs and the conceptualization of masculinity for BGMUs appears to be

problematic. In order to provide support to BGMUs, LGBT and Black cultural centers on campus should find ways to either collaborate regularly or be explicit about addressing issues related to the intersection of race and sexual orientation. As Strayhorn, DeVita, and Blakewood (2010) concluded in their work that focused on the challenges and supports for BGMUs in college, “One possible reason for this is that the organizations tended to focus on one aspect of the young men’s identity only without bridging multiple concerns” (p. 133). Thus, administrators should be intentional about developing initiatives that will allow multiple identity concerns to be addressed. Safe zone trainings or other LGBT focused educational programming should include a component that addresses the intersection of race and sexual orientation. Similarly, Black cultural centers should host programs, such as guest speakers or discussion groups, that focus on issues of sexuality and masculinity for BGMUs. Such initiatives will undoubtedly require a collaborative approach that encourages cooperation among administrators, student organizations, and other campus stakeholders who work with BGMUs.

Campus administrators must also be aware of the significant role that gender identity and expression plays in the lives of BGMUs. Beyond fraternities, few initiatives on college campuses focus on the experiences of males. Programs that are focused on males are typically associated with health concerns (e.g. Courtenay, 1998) or engaging males in rape prevention (e.g. Foubert & Newberry, 2006). Despite the fact that males have been shown to hold more negative views of homosexuality (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1997; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Kite & Whitley, 1996; LaMar & Kite, 1998; Sakalli, 2002), issues related to the intersection of sexual orientation and expectations about gender for males has been largely ignored in higher education. Colleges and universities should provide opportunities for males to critically reflect on how masculinity is socially constructed and reinforced, which could occur both inside and outside of the classroom.

Interdisciplinary courses could be developed that focus on the construction of masculinity historically and culturally. Such courses should be developed by scholars who engage in research on masculinity, sexuality, and/or issues of race in society, and could be offered as core components or electives in various academic programs, such as history, psychology, sociology, and educational leadership. For example, a course or program on Black masculinity, which has been linked to homophobia and negative attitudes towards homosexuality (e.g. Ford, 2008; Lemelle & Battle, 2004), would encourage discussion of issues related to gender identity and expression in the Black community for both gay and straight individuals alike.

Another implication relates to the role that external support systems, especially parents and siblings, play in the lives of BGMUs. Family members are often sources of both support and conflict for gay males, since family members often respond differently to disclosure of one's gay identity (D'Augelli, 1994). For BGMUs in this study, female relatives tended to be more accepting and supportive than male relatives, even in cases when the male relative (e.g. father) was also gay. Family visit days, academic breaks, and other instances when students engage with family members, could be especially stressful for BGMUs whose families reject or express disdain for their sexuality. Administrators should consider providing additional supports to BGMUs to manage and reflect upon these relationships. Support groups, mentorship relationships with LGBT faculty and staff members, and counselors trained to work with LGBT populations could provide such opportunities for support.

Conclusion

The current study provides support for employing D'Augelli's (1994) LGB identity development model when studying non-White, gay college students' identity development in the 21st-century. However, it also points out the limitations of this framework, notably that social

and cultural contexts significantly impact identity development of non-White, gay college students and that these contexts should be explicitly addressed. Indeed, multiple social identities (e.g., race, sexual orientation, religion, and gender) are negotiated in unique ways by specific subpopulations.

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Appendix Three

Table 3.1 LGB Identity Development Processes

Process	Summary
Exiting heterosexual identity	Personal and social recognition of a homosexual orientation; includes disclosure of identity to others; continuous process affected by the openness of one's sexual orientation
Developing a personal LGB identity status	Development of a socioaffectional identity that emerges from interaction with other LGB individuals; individuals also begin to challenge heterosexist assumptions
Developing a LGB social identity	Individuals establish a large, affirming social network of LGB individuals and heterosexual allies
Becoming a LGB offspring	Disclosure of LGB identity to family members and their subsequent acceptance of that identity in an affirming manner
Developing a LGB intimacy status	Establishing meaningful same-sex relationships that are both emotionally and intimately fulfilling
Entering a LGB community	Commitment to the social and political action that empowers individuals to understand oppression and resist it

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

Table 3.2 Summary of Participants (N = 9)

Pseudonym	Major	Minor	Clubs & Activities	Mother's Occupation	Father's Occupation	Career Aspiration
Terrance	Spanish	Dance	Dance Company	Office Manager	Shift Supervisor	Business or Education
Leon	Vocal Performance	Theatre	Campus Theater	State Internal Revenue Specialist	Owner of Construction Company	Musical Theater Performer
Blake	Finance Journalism & Electronic Media and French	Accounting	Cheerleading Orientation Leader, College Democrats Fast Food and Retail Employee	House Manager	Manager	Coach for Cheerleading
Lamont	Architecture	N/A	Democrats	Nurse	Manager	Media Management
Lawrence	Public Relations and Psychology	Japanese	NAACP, Honor Societies Campus Theater and	Self-employed	IT Specialist	Business or Architecture
Desmond	Opera	Dance	Opera LGBT & Black Student Groups	County Health Inspector	City Clerk's Office	Public Relations
Sidney	N/A	N/A	LGBT Student Organization	N/A	N/A	Opera Singer
Betsy	International Foreign Politics	N/A		Minister	Minister	Fashion Design
Elliott				N/A	N/A	City planning

Note: N/A indicates that the information is not available

Appendix 3.3 Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This group interview should take approximately 45-90 minutes. As noted on the consent form, we will audio record this interview. I will also take notes during and after the interview to capture your main ideas. I am happy to allow you an opportunity to review the field notes for clarity and accuracy of information at the end of the interview. All of my field notes will be written using a pseudonym. You may choose a pseudonym or I will select one. Do you have a pseudonym that you would like for me to use?

Let me introduce myself. I am James DeVita, a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling.

Please take a look at the informed consent form. Do you have any questions regarding the procedure or IRB informed consent form? If not, please sign and date the form and place it in front of you.

Let's begin the interview.

1. What expectations, if any, did you have upon arriving at college? Have they changed? If so, in what ways?
2. Tell me about your successes and challenges in college so far.
3. At the present time, how much and in what ways would you say college has influenced or changed you?
4. How do you feel as a gay African American male student at [this institution]? Tell me about how these identities play out for you as a student.

5. So far, are you happy with your decision to attend [this institution]? Would you choose to attend [this institution] again if you could go back and make that decision?
6. Describe your support system. (who and how) Tell me about a time when you've relied upon these supports.
7. How often do you think about your race as a Black student at [this institution]? How often do you think about your sexual orientation as a student at [this institution]?
8. If you met a prospective gay African American college student, what advice would you give him about college?
9. What factors have contributed to your success in college thus far? What factors have made it difficult for you to be successful in college thus far?

**Chapter Four: Gay Male College Students' Representations of Self in Online
Communities: A Visual Ethnographic Analysis of Facebook Profiles**

Abstract

This article utilizes visual ethnography to explore how gay male college students use images and text to represent themselves in the online community known as Facebook. Beyond describing these representations across three themes (relationships with others, [un]dressing the body, and personal interests and activities), the author discusses possible interpretations of these representations using D'Augelli's (1994) lesbian-gay-bisexual (LGB) identity development framework. Findings suggest that both negative and positive stereotypes about gay males are important to understanding how gay male college students represent themselves to others online. The author argues that as online communities become more important as spaces where gay males receive messages from other gay males about how to perform their gay identity, researchers and administrators alike should be aware of the messages that online representations send about gay identity.

Introduction

Sexual orientation has emerged as an identity that defines and unifies individuals in society today. Despite an extensive and contentious history as a mental illness, gay⁹ identity now connects some gay individuals together as a cohesive minority group with an evolving political agenda and sense of community (Garnets & Kimmel, 2003). Considerable research has sought to explore the development of lesbian and gay individuals, especially youth and college students (Cass, 1979, 1984; D'Augelli, 1994), negative stereotypes faced by those who openly identify as gay (Herek, 2003; Savin-Williams, 2003), and the intersections of racial identity with gay identity (Cintrón, 2000; Dubé, Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2001; Holmes & Cahill, 2005; Wall

⁹ Since this article focuses on gay males, the term "gay" will be used throughout in order to maintain consistency. The author acknowledges that although other terms, such as sexual orientation and homosexual, may be more appropriate in certain instances, "gay" provides a consistent term that is also associated with the theoretical framework used in the study (D'Augelli, 1994).

& Washington, 1991), among many other topics. Despite this work, many questions about how gay identity development and experiences associated with gay identity remain unanswered.

A stereotype commonly held by many individuals in society is that a *feminine* gender identity is the same as a *gay* sexual orientation. Some research confirms that straight individuals view gay males as having either positive feminine characteristics, such as having a soft voice or being well groomed, or negative male characteristics, such as being promiscuous or rude (Madon, 1997). These findings contrast gay males' self-perceptions about gender identity, at least for some gay males. Connell (1992) found that some gay men view themselves as embodying a traditional male identity, since they engage in masculine behaviors like playing sports and working with heavy machinery. Further complicating our understanding of gay identity are developmental theories that vary significantly in focus, from the internal acceptance of one's gay identity and its consequences in a heterosexist society (Cass 1979, 1984) to community engagement and social activism as a means of socializing of gay individuals to the gay community (D'Augelli, 1994). These varied conceptualizations of gay identity provide somewhat conflicting, but effective frameworks for exploring diverse aspects of identity related to sexuality.

The rapid development of the internet over the past two decades has facilitated the rise of websites and interactive communities (e.g., blogs and online chat rooms) whose aims are to foster virtual interaction among people (Wilson & Peterson, 2002). Among college students, the use of online communities, especially Facebook, has skyrocketed in recent years (Aleman & Wartman, 2009). These online mediums have become popular for people from all identity and affinity groups, but have been particularly meaningful for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) populations (Woodland, 1999). The significance of online communities for LGBT

populations lies in not only the ease of access to information available and ability to communicate with other gay-identified individuals of similar identities (Woodland), but also because individuals can choose to disclose as much or as little of their identity as they wish while online (Donath, 1998; Wilson & Peterson). For LGBT individuals, the ambiguity around identity in online spaces contributes to “the freedom to explore new aspects of their selves and of the LGBT communities with which they want to identify” (Woodland, p. 78). One study uncovered that focuses on LGBT individuals’ use of online spaces found that these individuals utilize the internet to (a) explore identity, (b) access information, and (c) find an audience to share their feelings and experiences (Woodland). Though informative, Woodland’s study reflects the limited research available on LGBT individuals’ online.

Indeed, some studies have explored representations of self through internet homepages (Papacharissi, 2002) and teenagers’ blogs (Huffaker & Calvert, 2005), as well as the development of social capital for college students in online communities (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). While notable, these studies employed quantitative methods, such as surveys, to explore online or virtual representations, and were not focused on LGBT individuals. Through innovative research methods, such as ethnographic techniques, research on LGBT individuals’ use of online communities could expand to include other explorations of identity, such as how individuals represent themselves in these virtual spaces (Aleman & Wartman, 2009; Wilson & Peterson, 2002). Such techniques ignore not only the text individuals posted online, but also other aspects of online profiles, such as images or photographs.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe how gay male college students use images and text to represent themselves in the online community known as Facebook. Additionally, this

study will apply D'Augelli's (1994) gay identity development model in order to interpret gay males' representations.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer two specific research questions:

Research Question 1: How do gay male college students represent their gay identity in online communities using images and text?

Research Question 2: What relationship, if any, exists between gay male college students' representations of self and D'Augelli's gay identity development framework?

Visual Ethnography

The focus of this study calls for a qualitative methodology, because I intend to produce a "rich, thick" description of the individual from the individuals' representations. Images, such as pictures, are particularly powerful ways to represent culture. Pink (2006) stressed that "if visual images and technologies are part of the research project, they will play a role in how both researcher and informant identities are constructed and interpreted" (p. 21). Visual ethnography is an especially appealing methodology for this project, since images from online profiles were retrieved and interpreted. In this study, I hypothesize that gay males, like other individuals, select images and texts as performances of self, and that these performances are created from "personal and cultural resources of visual experience and knowledge. [Individuals] thus compose images that they intend to represent particular objects of meanings; moreover they do so in particular social and material contexts" (Pink, p. 27). Visual ethnography is an effective method for exploring gay male college students' representations of self online, because it (a) provides methodological support for using both images and text as data, (b) posits those data as intentional representations by the individual, and (c) allows the researcher to consider the social and cultural

context of the individual's representations. Additionally, visual ethnography suggests an appropriate method, ethnographic content analysis (Grbich, 2007), for analyzing self-selected visual representations in online profiles.

The Researcher

The decision to employ visual ethnography as a methodology requires the researcher to be explicit about the groups and interests the [researcher] wishes to serve as well as his or her biography. One's race, gender, class, ideas, and commitments are subject to exploration as part of the ethnography" (Noblitt, Flores, & Murillo, Jr., 2004, p. 21). Thus, the current section will explore my positionality and epistemological orientation. These revelations are intended to provide the reader with an understanding of how I subjectively (co-)constructed my findings in the current study.

Positionality

Gay identity development, and the subsequent disclosure of an individual's gay identity, is a lifelong process (D'Augelli, 1994). Although my development as a gay male has been shaped by many experiences in my life, my involvement in dance has had the most significant impact on my gay identity development. Thus, through an abbreviated exploration of my experiences as a dancer and its relationship to the development of my gay identity, I describe my positionality to this research project: a study of gay male representations of self in the online community known as Facebook.

I recall many fond memories from my early experiences in dance. The joy of mastering a double pirouette and a grande jeté, the feel of shiny costumes that draped my body as I performed for family and friends, and the praise from teachers after demonstrating a new step; these are the memories that make me smile. They are also the memories and feelings that kept

me involved in the activity as I matured, despite a burgeoning anxiety about being an adolescent male involved in dance. While most boys practiced sports after school, I practiced ballet. While some boys socialized with brothers, fathers, and male classmates, I spent hours with my sister, mother, and female classmates. When the football teams dressed in pads and helmets, I wore tights and make-up. I was constantly confronted with challenges about my masculinity and sexuality because of the activity I enjoyed.

For a great deal of my childhood, these differences went largely unnoticed by both me and my male peers. I enjoyed my experience in dance and developed excellent technical skills by the time I reached middle school. As a male dancer, in fact, I was strongly encouraged, both emotionally and financially, by many individuals to stay involved with dance. By age 13, I was offered dance classes free-of-charge in exchange for my commitment to perform with several dance companies. My prowess as a dancer was a celebrated, yet somewhat surprising development, as I had initially been placed in dance in order to correct developmental issues with my feet and legs I had from birth. Regardless of the impetus for my involvement in dance, the opportunities that dance afforded me highlight my unique characteristic inside of dance class: my male identity.

My experiences at dance, however, were not what lead me to question my involvement as I entered my teenage years. Rather, it was my classmates that performed on the field, not the stage that raised doubts in my mind. ~~Male dancer~~ signaled ~~effeminate male~~ and consequently ~~gay male~~ to my classmates. Admittedly, I had adopted some effeminate characteristics, even early in my childhood. The graceful movements privileged during dance had made me equally more graceful in my everyday movements; similarly, I was more attuned to my emotions than

my male peers. Thus, my gender expressions were undoubtedly more feminine, or at least less stereotypically masculine, than was expected of males my age.

By the time I entered high school, I began to appreciate and accept that my behaviors were more effeminate, or more precisely less masculine, than my peers. While I was comfortable with that characterization of my gender identity, I was unwilling to accept the association with sexuality that typically accompanied inverted gender expressions: a gay identity. Although never verbally or physically harassed about my sexual orientation during high school, occasional teasing and taunting made me aware of others' perceptions. I responded by performing the role of a straight male to the best of my abilities. Ironically, dance made this performance easier. Since I was the only male in my age group enrolled in dance at two different dance studios, the close relationships I developed with female dancers simply evolved into romantic ones. The ongoing process of denying my sexual identity to my classmates allowed me to convince myself of my heterosexual identity and considerably stunted my development as a gay male.

Further denial of my gay identity was promoted by the physical prowess I developed through dance. The fact that I had never touched a soccer ball before Junior Varsity soccer tryouts did not prevent me from making the team and earning a starting position. Strong legs, outstanding balance, and agile quickness made me a natural on the soccer field. What I lacked in skill, I made up for through disciplined practice and high expectations—traits developed through my time in dance. Soccer quickly became an additional source of pride and pleasure; simultaneously, I learned how to better blend in with my male heterosexual peers. A slightly more masculine presence quieted whispers about my sexual orientation and perpetuated my self-denial. I marvel that I did not know then what I know now: that I am (and was) gay.

Epistemological orientation.

My gay identity development trajectory has undoubtedly shaped my orientation to research, particularly when studying sexual orientation. Reflecting on these experiences, the epistemic approach that best resonates with me at this time is a constructivist approach. This is due, in part, to the fact that —social constructivists think [sexual orientation] is culture-dependent, relational and, perhaps, not objective” (Stein, 1990, p. 325). This conceptualization of sexual orientation is appealing, because gay identity development, for me, has been and continues to be an on-going, ever-evolving process influenced by environmental and contextual factors. Additionally, as my positionality reveals, gay identity is dependent upon how an individual is viewed by others, how he views others, and how he subjectively internalizes and embodies his gay identity.

Beyond sexual orientation, however, the constructivist paradigm remains intriguing to me because although individual experiences are privileged over universal truths, shared experiences across individuals can also be described. Hatch (2002) states that:

Constructivists assume a world in which universal, absolute realities are unknowable, and the objects of inquiry are individual perspectives or constructions of reality. While acknowledging that elements are often shared across social groups, constructivist science argues that multiple realities exist that are inherently unique because they are constructed by individuals who experience the world from their own vantage points. (p. 15)

This approach is appealing because although I appreciate the range of experiences that exist for individuals, I also believe that there are common realities or shared experiences that exist among individuals. Similarly, Creswell (2007) tells us that social constructivists attempt to understand their world by relying on the perspectives of individuals with whom they live alongside. Thus, a constructivist framework privileges the participants’ contribution to the research process. While I will undoubtedly be a part of the research process, the primary focus will be on the participants’

representations of self, or more specifically on the ways they represent their identity through images and text. Although constructivist researchers must position themselves by pointing out aspects of their background that shape how they structure and interpret their findings, they attempt to develop codes or themes by observing patterns within the data reviewed (Creswell). The decision to allow findings to emerge from the data collected and experiences of the participants is another appealing aspect of a constructivist epistemology. This appeal is highlighted by the application of my theoretical framework, which I plan to explore posteriori, or after I have completed an initial stage of coding my data.

In terms of methodologies, constructivist researchers rely heavily on “naturalistic qualitative methods” (Hatch, 2002). One naturalistic method is ethnography. Hatch, for example, describes ethnography as a methodology that examines culture through the experiences and voices of informed insiders. Ethnographic researchers look for patterns within the data that provide insights about how culture works and enhance narrative interpretations with tables, figures, and images where appropriate (Creswell, 2007). Given my interest in exploring aspects of culture, my reliance upon participants’ perspectives, and desire to juxtapose multiple sources of data (e.g., text and images), ethnography matches well with my epistemic framework. Visual ethnography, in particular, allows me to align my positionality and epistemic orientation with a unique, yet rigorous research method. In sum, the approach I take in this study is constructivist, the method utilized is visual ethnography, and data is analyzed using ethnographic content analysis.

Theoretical Framework

D’Augelli (1994) designed a framework of gay identity development that accounts for the social contexts of an individual’s development over his entire life. By applying a human

development view to gay identity, this —model emphasizes *interindividual differences in the development of intraindividual behavior* (italics original). . . suggest[ing] a continuum of sexual feelings and experience. . . [that are different] at certain phases of life. . . in certain kinds of families. . . in certain communities. . . and at certain historical times” (pp. 321-322). In other words, D’Augelli’s model builds upon a psychologically based model of gay identity development by accounting for external social influences as well. For example, D’Augelli emphasizes the role that context plays in the lives of gay men, which includes where they live, play, work, and the culture that pervades those environments. This model aligns with a constructivist orientation because gay identity according to D’Augelli’s model represents a culture that includes the individual, his socialization to his gay identity, and connections to other individuals who identify as gay. D’Augelli described six aspects of identity, called processes, that are mediated by social and cultural contexts: (1) exiting heterosexual identity, (2) developing a personal lesbian-gay-bisexual identity status, (3) developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual social identity, (4) becoming a lesbian-gay-bisexual offspring, (5) developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual intimacy status, and (6) entering a lesbian-gay-bisexual community (see Table 4.1¹⁰). Thus, D’Augelli’s model is applicable to the current study because while the individual’s internal processes will be explored, the social contexts associated with participants’ representations are also important.

Methodology

Setting and Participants

Online communities provide individuals with multiple opportunities to (re)connect with other individuals who share similar interests, want to traverse geographical limitations, or desire

¹⁰ All tables and figures in this chapter will be presented in Appendix Four as recommended by the Thesis and Dissertation consultant at the Graduate School at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

a romantic connection (Rosen, 2007). In order to become a member and interact with others, individuals must create a profile, which uses images, texts, external links and other information to present identifying information for others to view. The profiles are ~~in~~interactive, inviting viewers not merely to look at, but also to respond to, the life portrayed online” (Rosen, p. 15). Rosen continued that profiles are ~~an~~modern self-portraits. . . [that] offer opportunities for both self-expression and self-seeking” (p. 15). Since individuals select or create the information they desire to use as online representations themselves, the characterization of profiles as self-portraits is highly appropriate, but also intriguing as sources of data for understanding how individuals represent themselves. Moreover, online communities are spaces where identity can be performed by individuals (Aleman & Wartman, 2009; Rosen). Thus, Facebook profiles were selected as the setting for data collection because they provide a rich source for images and texts that are representations of self.

Once an individual has created a profile in Facebook, he¹¹ can begin connecting with other individuals who become known as ~~fr~~riends.” Through his profile, a user invites friends and connects with other individuals through email, online chat rooms, images, text, and video posts (Aleman & Wartman, 2009; Rosen, 2007). Once the relationship between ~~fr~~riends” has been established, all aspects of both users’ profiles are available to review. Thus, the researcher utilized his existing Facebook profile to recruit participants for the current study.

Sampling

Participants were selected using ~~er~~riterion sampling” (Creswell, 2007), which provides the researcher with a set of criteria for selecting participants. All participants had to meet the following criteria: (a) self-identified as male, (b) self-identified as gay, (c) enrolled as a full-time undergraduate student, or a recent graduate (within two years), at a college or university in the

¹¹ Masculine pronouns will be used throughout this paper since the study is focused on gay males.

United States, and (d) be between the ages of 18-24. Online profiles provided an opportunity to verify that these criteria have been met prior to collecting data from the participants. Each individual was sent an email within Facebook asking them to participate. After agreeing, a consent form was sent through a second email, which could be returned via email or regular mail. Once a participant granted access by accepting me as a ~~friend~~,” his profile was available immediately for data collection.

Using the criteria described above, 22 individuals agreed to participate in the study. Participants represented a diverse range of racial identities and ethnicities, including White or Caucasian (n=13), African-American or Black (n=3), Hispanic or Latino (n=3), Asian-American or Pacific Islander (n=2), and Interracial (n=1). Participants’ ages ranged from 19 to 24-years-old at the time data were first collected from their profiles in spring 2009, although the average age of participants was 22.3 years old. The majority of participants (n=20) attended 4-year institutions at the time of data collection, but institutions were more diverse in terms of both type and location with approximately 64% of participants enrolled at private institutions, and exactly half of participants enrolled in the Southeast and Northeast regions of the United States. Half of all participants described their political views as either ~~Liberal~~” or ~~Very Liberal~~,” and the remaining participants described their political views as everything from ~~Moderate~~” and ~~Progressive~~” to less traditional characterizations, such as ~~Don’t Worry, Be Happy~~” and ~~Eh~~.” Additionally, participants’ majors represented the diversity available on college campuses, including Business, Sociology, Art, Theater, and Psychology. Table 4.2 provides an overview of the participants. It should be noted that although a great deal of information can be shared on Facebook profiles, such as siblings, current location, favorite books and quotes, etc., the

information shared about participants in Table 4.2 was limited to the information that was available on the majority of participants' profiles.

Way to Capture Data

Data were captured, or collected, by reviewing images and text posted on the profiles of gay male users on Facebook. Profiles contain both visual images and textual representations that were collected and used in analysis. These ~~information rich~~ (Patton, 2002) sources of data provide for interpretation of gay male representations on Facebook. The process of data collection and analysis is based on an emergent qualitative methodology known as visual ethnography, which ~~stress[es]~~ collaboration, not solely between Principal Investigator and informants, but also between the visual and textual and the producers of images and words" (Pink, 2006, p. 11). Pink emphasized that:

images can act as a force that has a transformative potential for modern thought, culture and society, self-identity and memory and social science itself. By paying attention to images in ethnographic research and representation it is possible that new ways of understanding individuals, cultures and research materials may emerge. (p. 13)

Thus, data were captured by accessing participants' representations of self using both pictures and text in their Facebook profiles.

Although Facebook profiles contain a diverse set of images, text and occasionally links to videos, the data reviewed were intentionally limited to participants' self-selected images and text on the primary profile page. This information includes profile images that are the first pictures seen by prospective and current ~~friends~~ and text that individuals have chosen to upload. Since other information posted on an individual's profile may be ~~tagged~~ or manipulated by other individuals, such data were not included in this study. The 22 profiles reviewed for the study yielded 1125 profile images for analysis, with a range from 1 profile image for the participant

with the fewest number of profile pictures to 125 for the participant with the most profile pictures. The average number of profile images posted by a participant was approximately 51. Thus, despite limiting the images reviewed to profile images only, a robust set of pictures was available for analysis. In addition to images, profiles contain various textual representations that assisted with analysis. The text available on participants' profiles varied significantly, including everything from favorite movies and quotations to educational and professional backgrounds. The quantity and nature of text was different for each participant, with some participants including only contact information or geographical locations and others providing information on their family members, likes and interests, background information, and links to videos, websites, and online networks. As will be described in greater detail below, the text available on participants' profiles was used to provide clarifying information when ambiguity about profiles images was encountered. Thus, when text was used to clarify an image's meaning, the specific quote will be included in discussion. Table 4.3 presents a summary of the images coded under each theme and sub-theme by participant.

Analysis and Coding

Document analysis (Merriam, 1998) and narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) were used to code and analyze the participants' images and text that they posted on their profiles. This process carefully considered all of the data collected, including images and text, where available. Pink (2006) pointed out that:

Any experience, action, artifact, image or idea is never definitively *just one thing* but may be redefined differently in different situations, by different individuals and in terms of difference discourses. . . [Thus,] the *'ethnographicness'* of any image or representation is contingent on how it is situated, interpreted and used to invoke meaning and knowledge that are of ethnographic interest. (p. 19)

Similarly, Hatch (2002) emphasized that one advantage of analyzing artifacts, such as images, is that they do not impact their social context; however, the primary disadvantage of such analysis is that the researcher must infer or interpret meaning because the context is ambiguous. In addition to text available on participants' profiles, the author's positionality provides some contextual evidence for this study.

Data analysis proceeded in three stages. During each stage, sociologically constructed codes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), which are those created by the researcher, were developed and refined. First, all images from the participants' main profile images were reviewed and coded. The initial coding process most closely resembled open coding (Creswell, 2007), where broad categories are determined. When the meaning of images was ambiguous for the researcher, text available on the participants' profile was reviewed as a means to provide context for the codes produced during the analysis of images. The images whose meaning remained ambiguous following the review of profile text were excluded from further analysis. During the second stage of analysis, all images assigned to thematic categories were re-reviewed by the researcher in order to refine the themes developed during the first stage. The subsequent refinement of themes utilized a constant comparison method of coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1999), where the content and context of individual images and the linkages across images were examined (Grbich, 2007). Questions like (a) "what is this image of?," (b) "what is the context of its production?," and (c) "how does this image reflect or depart from dominant cultural values?" (Grbich, p. 157) drove this process. This process of data analysis is closely aligned with a reflexive approach to analyzing images because no image or set of images can be considered a complete representation of culture (Pink, 2006). In other words, alternative meanings should always be considered when analyzing visual representations. During the third stage of analysis, the themes developed during

the two initial stages were interpreted by the researcher. Specifically, the researcher asked two questions about each theme: “what is the most obvious reading of [these] images?” and “what alternative readings can be made?” (Grbich, p. 157). Additionally, D’Augelli’s (1994) LGB identity development model was applied during the third stage of analysis in order to help determine the “obvious” and “alternative” readings of the images called for in ethnographic content analysis (Grbich)¹².

Ten sub-themes were identified during the initial coding process where all images were reviewed. During the second stage of analysis where images were re-reviewed and themes refined, the ten sub-themes remained unchanged, although 87 of the 1125 images or approximately 8% of all images were excluded because of ambiguous meanings. The ten sub-themes were then organized under three broader themes: relationships with others, (un)dressing the body, and personal interests and activities, with three, three, and four sub-themes organized under each category, respectively. In the final stage of analysis, during which interpretation of the thematic categories occurred, the ten sub-themes were examined for “obvious” and “alternative” readings. This process was assisted by the application of D’Augelli’s (1994) LGB identity development framework where explicit relationships across the six aspects of the framework were connected to specific sub-themes. This final stage of analysis provided connections between the themes I developed during the initial stages of coding and an empirically developed theoretical framework of gay identity development. The organization of themes and sub-themes are represented in the coding map below (see Figure 4.4).

¹² The terms “obvious” and “alternative” will be utilized throughout the findings and discussion of this article as a way to present the author’s interpretations. The term “obvious” does not imply that the author believes that every reader of these images would understand their interpretation as he did. Rather, the use of the term “obvious” is intended to demonstrate his reliance on Grbich’s (2007) analytical techniques when developing his interpretations. Simply put, the interpretations presented are “obvious” only to this author at this time.

Interpretations and Discussion

This section of the article presents my interpretations of the images organized under the themes and sub-themes developed during the analytical process described above. In addition to relying on my positionality and personal experiences as a gay male, my interpretations rely upon what Grbich (2007) calls ethnographic content analysis, which “seeks to identify the signifiers/signs within the visual images and to understand the accepted meanings within the culture in which they are located” (p. 156). In order to develop both “obvious” and “alternative” readings of the images as prescribed by Grbich, D’Augelli’s (1994) theoretical framework on LGB identity development was also utilized in analysis. Thus, this section will present obvious and alternative readings of the themes and sub-themes developed by the researcher using examples of images from participant profiles, quoted text from the profiles where appropriate, and reference to D’Augelli’s framework and other literature on gay identity.

Relationships with Others

Relationships with others are important elements of several processes included in D’Augelli’s (1994) gay identity development framework. In fact, four of the six processes rely on relationships with others: (a) “Exiting heterosexual identity,” which requires individuals to “come out” or disclose their sexual orientation to others, (b) “Developing a LGB social identity,” where individuals establish a supportive network of gay and heterosexual individuals, (c) “Becoming a LGB offspring,” which describes the negotiation of gay identity with family members, and (d) “Developing a LGB intimacy status,” where individuals establish same-sex relationships that are both emotionally and sexually fulfilling (D’Augelli). While reviewing images, I coded three sets of images, or sub-themes, as relationships with others. These three

sub-themes describe different types of relationships with other individuals that appear to be important to gay male college students.

Intimate interactions with men.

A widely held definition of “gay” relies upon the sexual attraction of a male to other males and engagement in sexual behavior between two males (Constantinople, 2005; Freud, 1905; Kinnish, Strassberg, & Turner, 2005; Lippa & Arad, 1997; Sell, 1997). While gay identity is now conceived of as more than behavior (Cass 1979, 1984; Coleman, 1987; D’Augelli, 1994), intimate interactions between males remain a component of gay identity, because “sexual orientation is integrally linked to the close bonds humans form with others to meet their personal needs for love, attachment, and intimacy” (Herek, 2003, p. 274). D’Augelli, for example, describes the need for individuals to develop a gay intimacy status, and Coleman discusses the significance of affectional and sexual relationships with members of the same sex as significant for individuals who identify as gay. Thus, an obvious reading of several profile pictures is that males were intimately engaged with each other.

Across the 22 participants’ profiles reviewed, I coded 81 images from 10 participants as representing intimate interactions with men. Nearly all of the 10 participants whose profiles contained images coded as intimate interactions with men listed “in a relationship” under the demographic information included on the profile. Although my analysis was supported by the information that participants were “in a relationship,” the only images that were coded as intimate interactions with men were those that contained two males engaged in intimate or sexualized behaviors with each other. For example, images were coded as intimate interactions with men when they contained two males: (a) kissing each other, (b) embraced and gazing into each other’s eyes, and (c) holding each other romantically (e.g., arms wrapped around bodies).

Given the proximity of their bodies and the placement of body parts (e.g., lips, arms, and hands), my obvious reading of this set of images is that these males are engaged in an intimate relationship with each other; a relationship that suggests the study's participant is developing his gay intimacy status (D'Augelli, 1994). Images depicting intimate interactions with men on the main profile page of participants, challenges heterosexism perpetuated through the virtual absence of same-sex couples in society by providing highly visible examples of committed same-sex relationships (D'Augelli). The prevalence of these images, which appear on approximately half of all profiles, suggests that some gay male college students are not only comfortable representing their intimate relationships publicly, but also that their community supports "personally adaptive" (p. 327) conceptualizations of relationships that challenge the stereotype of the sexually promiscuous gay male who is unable to commit to a monogamous relationship.

My obvious reading of the images coded as intimate interactions with men assumes that the men in the pictures are in a romantic relationship with each other; an assumption supported by the fact that most of the participants stated they were "in a relationship" on their profiles. A possible alternative reading is that the images have been posted by the participants as a means to simply disclose their identity. As previously discussed, behavior is a common definition of homosexuality for gay males (Constantinople, 2005; Freud, 1905; Kinnish, Strassberg, & Turner, 2005; Lippa & Arad, 1997; Sell, 1997). Intimate interactions with other men could be posted on profiles as a way to publicly "exit heterosexuality" (D'Augelli, 1994). Simply put, these images could be a way for participants to express their gay identity or to tell others that they are gay. Such disclosure is significant since it represents an opportunity for these gay males to

–consistently and publicly [be] identified with a non-heterosexual label” (D’Augelli, p. 325), something previously unavailable to gay men in society.

Sexualized interactions with women.

A similar, but contrasting set of images to those representing gay males in intimate interactions with other men, is a set of images that depict gay males in sexualized interactions with women. I coded a total of 40 images across 10 participants as sexualized interactions with women. Examples of these images include: (a) a male participant positioned between two females while dancing sexually, (b) a male participant shoving his head between a female’s breasts, and (c) a male participant kissing a female’s neck while her legs are wrapped around his waist. Not all images of men and women together were coded as sexualized interactions with women. Images that contained a male and female together, but where they were not in close proximity and intimately engaged, were coded as a different sub-theme (friends and family) that will be discussed below.

My obvious reading of these images is that the male participants are attempting to challenge heterosexist norms by blatantly violating expectations about their sexual behavior. The pervasiveness of heterosexism is discussed by D’Augelli (1994) in several processes of his gay identity development framework. For example, when “exiting heterosexual identity,” gay men must repeatedly announce and continuously reaffirm their gay identity to others, because “the pervasiveness of heterosexist assumptions” (p. 325) suggests that all men are heterosexual by default. Heterosexist assumptions include myths about homosexuality, such as an inverted gender identity for gay men (e.g. that gay males are effeminate) and that gay men are sexually promiscuous (D’Augelli). By posting images of sexualized interactions with women on their profiles, the gay male participants in this study may be attempting to debunk the myth that they

hold an inverted gender identity by embodying a highly masculine behavior (e.g. simulating sexual interactions with the opposite sex). However, they may simultaneously be reinforcing the stereotype that they engage in hyper-sexualized behaviors that prevent them from maintaining committed relationships (D'Augelli). For me, the images of men in sexualized interactions with women represent the dichotomy of these two stereotypes about gay identity. Thus, while they encourage consumers of these images to question assumptions about gender identity for gay men, they also provide familiarity about gay men's expected overtly sexual behavior.

An alternative reading, however, is that these images are celebrations of the supportive social networks of these gay males. The ~~lifelong~~ process [of developing a social identity]. . . has a profound effect on personal development. Ideally, one's social network is *affirmative* (italics original); that is, the people in it actively, continually, and predictably treat the person as lesbian, gay, or bisexual" (D'Augelli, 1994, p. 326). If the women in these images are part of the social network of these gay males, then what I have interpreted as sexualized interactions may not be sexualized, but simply examples of friends engaging in celebratory behaviors. Indeed, other studies have found that heterosexual females often provide supportive friendships to gay males (Herek & Capitano, 1996; Strayhorn, Blakewood, & DeVita, 2008). Therefore, these images could be examples of meaningful personal relationships that have been maintained despite the gay male's sexual orientation or actually strengthened because of the disclosure and acceptance by the female friend (D'Augelli).

Friends and family.

The third sub-theme that is organized under the theme ~~relationships with others~~" is friends and family. This sub-theme is the largest set of images with a total of 287 pictures across 17 participants. I coded any image that depicted a gay male participant and another individual or

group individuals as friends and family as long as other codes or sub-themes were not represented in the picture. It should be noted that because I created exclusive codes, some images assigned other codes contained representations that could have been assigned as friends and family as well, but were not. For example, if an intimate interaction with another man or a sexualized interaction with a woman was represented in the image, it was coded as that respective theme rather than as friends and family. Another sub-theme, illicit behavior, occasionally contained multiple individuals so that it could have been coded as friends and family. However, I wanted to make a distinction among these sub-themes, so the only images coded as friends and family were those where other individuals were present with the gay male participant and no other codes were represented. Text on several profiles (e.g. names of siblings) confirmed that individuals in participants' profile images were representations of family members.

My obvious interpretation of images coded as friends and family is that they represent two aspects of gay identity development for the participants in this study: ~~de~~“developing a gay social identity” and ~~be~~“becoming a gay offspring” (D'Augelli, 1994, p. 326). As described above, supportive social networks are important to the identity development of gay males. In order to be a supportive network, it should contain people who allow gay individuals to be open about their sexual orientation and appreciate rather than tolerate his gay identity (D'Augelli). Similarly, family members should also be affirming of an individual's gay identity if they are going to become part of a gay male's support network (D'Augelli). The prevalence of images depicting gay male college students with friends and family members may indicate the significance that these relationships and support networks hold for these gay males. Moreover, since gay males are more likely to feel isolated from others, especially their peers (Longerbeam, Inkelas,

Johnson, & Lee, 2005), these images suggest a level of comfort with and support from others that I did not expect to find.

Alternatively, although these images can be viewed as representations of friends and family, they may not be associated with the gay identity development of these participants. Several researchers have established that relationships with peers and family members are significant to all college students (Astin & Panos, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Thus, these images may represent participants' identity as college students rather than their identity as gay males.

(Un)Dressing the Body

My background as a dancer has made me attuned to the body, particularly the ways it can be used to represent attitudes, emotions, and aspects of culture. Researchers who engage in performance ethnography "acknowledge the fact that culture travels in the stories, practices, and desires of those who engage it. . . and those who seek understanding of other cultures and lived experiences are offered a body-centered method of knowing" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 411). Although this study is focused on visual ethnography, performance ethnography provides support for the relationship between the body and culture that influenced my coding and interpretation of images on participants' profiles. The representations of the body presented in this set of images are linked to the development of a "personal gay identity status," during which gay men "learn how to be gay" (D'Augelli, 1994, p. 325) by coming into contact with other gay males. During these interactions, gay men must also develop an understanding of the myths about being gay that are present in society and determine how they will either challenge or incorporate those stereotypes into their personal identity (D'Augelli). Because I view representations of the body as embodiments of gay identity, my obvious interpretations of the

sub-themes under (un)dressing the body are associated with the development of personal gay identity status.

Masculine expressions and performance.

As previously alluded to under the sub-theme sexualized interactions with women, one stereotype that gay males encounter is the myth of gender inversion (D'Augelli, 1994). Since the idea that all gay males embody a feminine gender identity is indeed a myth, I expected to find participants who used masculine expressions to represent themselves online. Overall, 52 images on 10 participants' profiles were coded as masculine expressions and performance. Examples of images that I coded as this sub-theme include: (a) males who appear intimidating in their images (e.g., tough, hardened, and unemotional), (b) males who appear rugged (e.g., militaristic or outdoorsy), (c) males who embody a punk or alternative style (e.g., adorned with tattoos and piercings), and (d) males who appear to be athletic (e.g., well muscled bodies and/or engaged in physical activity). My obvious reading is that these men are demonstrating their masculinity, thereby challenging stereotypes about gay males as effeminate that are prevalent in society (D'Augelli; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1997; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Kite & Whitley, 1996; LaMar & Kite, 1998; Madon, 1997; Sakalli, 2002). According to this interpretation, these images suggest that some gay males develop a personal gay identity status that aligns with traditional expectations of masculinity. This finding is noteworthy since gay males are stereotypically viewed as effeminate and even "dainty" or "soft" (Madon, p. 672).

A possible alternative reading is that these gay males have selected images where they appear more masculine so that they will be more sexually appealing to certain other gay males. That is, they chose these images in order to be seen as attractive to other gay males and possibly signal their preferred role in same-sex relationship. Freud (1905) believed that gay males will

attempt to dress and act in a manner that will attract sexual partners. This interpretation of the images suggests that these males are reinforcing the stereotype that gay males are hyper-sexual (D'Augelli, 1994; Madon, 1997). Indeed, same-sex relationships that are intimately fulfilling are an important aspect of gay identity (D'Augelli; Coleman, 1987).

Exposed bodies.

A total of 68 images across 13 profiles were coded as the sub-theme exposed bodies. Images were coded as exposed bodies because the males literally exposed their bare upper bodies in these pictures. The 13 participants who exposed their upper bodies in their profile pictures shared the physical characteristics of thin, yet well toned bodies, and little or no body hair. Similar to the images that represented masculine expressions and performance, the images that depict exposed bodies suggest an association with the development of a personal gay identity status (D'Augelli, 1994). My obvious interpretation of these images, then, is that they depict a sexualized representation of self that affirms the stereotype about gay males as hyper-sexualized beings (D'Augelli; Madon, 1997). For gay males, “this personal status functions as a mobilizing force, bringing along with it directives for action” (p. 325). Thus, for these gay males, representations of self with images of half-naked bodies may be how they have internalized messages about their gay identity and chose to embody that identity. In other words, it is possible that gay males are socialized to perform a sexually charged identity from messages they received from other gay males (D'Augelli).

An alternative interpretation of these images is that these images, like the masculine expressions and performance images described above, suggest representations that will be more sexually appealing to certain other gay males. Rather than being about a personal gay identity status, these images could be about attracting other males for intimate relationships (Freud,

1905). Once again, the link between gay identity and male-male sexual behavior may provide insights into the meaning behind this set of images (Constantinople, 2005; D'Augelli, 1994; Freud; Kinnish, Strassberg, & Turner, 2005; Lippa & Arad, 1997; Sell, 1997).

Clothing and style.

The second most frequent codes belong to the set of images that I called clothing and style. Overall, 153 pictures on the profiles of 12 participants were coded as clothing and style. Although a diverse range of pictures belong to this sub-theme, the images share several characteristics in that they represent: (a) a particular style of dress (e.g., preppy, formal, or contemporary fashion), (b) males who appear posed for a picture as opposed to being “caught in the moment,” and (c) a complete look that includes clothing, hairstyle, and in some cases, jewelry, which imply that the combinations were intentional.

Similar to the other sub-themes organized under the theme (un)dressing the body, my obvious interpretation of the clothing and style sub-theme is that gay males' clothing and style may be a construct of their identity that establishes a connection between themselves and others who identify as gay (D'Augelli, 1994). Madon (1997) found that several stereotypes about gay males were associated with how they dress; for example, more than half of the participants in his study stated that gay men embody the following characteristics: “wear earrings, artsy looking, fashionable, well groomed, wear flashy clothes, wear tight pants, good dressers” (p. 672). Overall, these characteristics appear to be positive in nature. Thus, I was not surprised to find clothing and style represented on several participants' profiles. Since positive stereotypes may not necessarily be harmful to the group of people to which they relate (Madon), and given that gay identity is learned through social interactions (D'Augelli), it is possible that the embodiment

of positive stereotypes, such as clothing and style, is one way that gay males affirm their gay identity, or what D'Augelli calls their ~~personal~~ gay identity status" (p. 325).

Alternatively, images that I have coded as clothing and style may be less about the adornment of the gay body and, instead, about the performance of the college-aged male in contemporary American society. The performance of masculinity has been changed by the birth of the ~~metrosexual~~, "or ~~young~~, urban, straight men [who] are appropriating certain elements of style and culture from the gay community and marketing executives" (Flocker, 2003, p. xiii). The rise of the metrosexual has blurred the distinction between gay and straight men's performance of gender and become especially popular among younger generations of males in Western societies (Flocker; Miller, 2005). The ~~metrosexual~~ has complicated my interpretation of this sub-theme in the same way that it has precipitated uncertainty about expectations of masculinity. Simply put, although clothing and style may be an important representation to the participants in this study, I am hesitant to conclude that it is important to their identity as *gay* male college students when clothing and style has become an important aspect of identity for gay and straight males alike.

Personal Interests and Activities

Similar to the previous theme, (un)dressing the body, personal interests and activities are related to the socialization of gay males to their gay identity. As previously described, gay men learn what attributes and attitudes define a gay identity by interacting with other gay men (D'Augelli). My own experiences ~~—coming out~~ have provided me with a belief about where these interactions take place, which is often in spaces where gay males share interests and activities. D'Augelli alludes to some of these spaces when he states that:

Gay men shape their own development out of necessity in a heterosexist culture that provides no routine socialization practices for them. Because of this historical

need. . . gay men have created social institutions that provide socialization experiences. For example, the primary structure for urban gay men has been the gay bar, while earlier cohorts of gay men were socialized in urban bathhouses designed for multiple, anonymous sexual partnering. (p. 322)

D'Augelli's statement is significant for two reasons. First, it provides examples of the types of institutions that have been developed by gay men to facilitate socialization (e.g. gay bars and bathhouses). Additionally, it demonstrates that the context of these institutions shifts over time. Although bathhouses were once popular sites where gay males were socialized, the HIV/AIDS epidemic forced them to virtually disappear (D'Augelli). The relative visibility of gay men in multiple social locations today has likely provided more opportunities for socialization than were previously available. On college campuses, for example, the proliferation of LGBT resource centers is one example of the institutions available to gay males today (Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals, 2009; Croteau & Lark, 1995; Dean, 2006; Sanlo, 1998; Schoenberg, 1991; Tierney & Rhoads, 1993; Windmeyer, 2006).

Female and gay pop icons.

One interest that appeared to be shared by some of the participants was an affinity for female and gay pop icons. A total of 105 images across nine participants represented this code. Examples of images coded as female and gay pop icons include pictures of: (a) female pop icons (e.g. Cher, Judy Garland, Lucille Ball, and Madonna), and (b) gay male pop icons (e.g. Elton John and the hosts of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*). Profile text confirmed that these participants celebrated female and gay pop icons with lists of favorite musicians that include Cher, Britney Spears, Mariah Carey, and Rufus Wainwright, and lists of favorite television shows and movies that include *Will and Grace*, *Sex and the City*, *Desperate Housewives*, and *Brokeback Mountain*, among others.

My obvious reading of this sub-theme is that an interest in female and gay pop icons is shared among some gay males. Although images were represented on less than half of the profiles reviewed, text that listed female and gay pop icons was found on 15 of the 22 profiles. This suggests that a noteworthy group of gay college males share this interest. It is possible that the media, which depicts female and gay pop icons, is a source of socialization for gay male college students today. Some researchers have found a link between representations of gay males in the media and messages that gay males internalize about their gay identity (Campbell, 2005; Gross, 2001). Although other characteristics, notably racial identity (Campbell), influence how gay representations in the media are incorporated into gay identity, the availability of gay representations in the media has provided the “social and cultural apparatuses” (D’Augelli, 1994, p. 327) necessary for socialization (Gross). While one of D’Augelli’s critiques of society in 1994 was that because of heterosexism few positive examples of homosexuality existed in the media, images posted by some of the gay male college students in this study (most of whom were under the age of 6 in 1994) suggest a different role for the media today.

Such a shift would be notable. However, an alternative reading of these images suggests that female and gay pop icons may relate simply to the disclosure of one’s gay identity rather than the role that the media plays as a socializing agent. For example, given the prevalence of the stereotype about gay males embodying a female gender identity (D’Augelli, 1994; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1997; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Kite & Whitley, 1996; LaMar & Kite, 1998; Madon, 1997; Sakalli, 2002), gay males could be utilizing images portraying female pop icons as a means to publicly disclose their homosexuality (D’Augelli). The inclusion of images depicting gay pop icons further supports this conclusion, since these artists’ sexuality is likely to be known. In other

words, female and gay pop icons could simply be one way for gay male college students to let other know that they identify as gay.

Artistic abilities and interests.

Another set of images shows some gay males engaged in artistic activities, particularly the performing arts of dance, musical performance, and acting, and the fine arts of painting and drawing. Eight participants posted a total of 96 images that I coded as artistic abilities and interests. Some of these participants, such as D.S., J.M., and J.P., were enrolled in or had completed degrees in majors like Art and Theater. Additionally, several participants listed their favorite activities on their profiles as things like twirling, acting, singing, and cheerleading. Thus, this sub-theme includes images that relate to activities and interests that are either overtly artistic (e.g. dance, acting, and painting) or have an artistic quality to them (e.g. twirling and cheerleading). It should be noted that the few participants who posted themselves playing sports or engaged in athletic activities were coded as masculine expressions and performance, a sub-theme discussed above.

My background in dance led me to believe that I would find other gay males who not only held interests in artistic activities, but who would post images of their involvement on their profiles. Thus, I was not surprised to find that some of the gay males, particularly those who studied the arts during college, posted images of themselves engaged in these activities on their main profile page. During my involvement in dance, I met many other gay males who shared my interest and found the environment to be supportive of my identity. In fact, dance has been and continues to be one of the context in which I always feel comfortable disclosing and expressing my sexuality. Not surprisingly, then, my obvious interpretation of the images of artistic abilities and interests posted on the gay male profiles I reviewed is that they represent spaces where gay

males have (a) been socialized to their gay identity, and (b) developed supportive networks of individuals who affirm their gay identity (D'Augelli, 1994). I propose that socialization occurs through artistic interests and activities because other gay males are actively involved in these activities, thereby providing opportunities for interactions among gay males. The number of participants who have selected artistic images to post online suggests that such opportunities may exist. In order for these interactions to occur, however, the gay males involved in these activities must be open about their sexuality. Thus, I propose that these activities provide supportive networks for gay men, because if they did not, gay males would likely keep their identity hidden and opportunities for interactions would be severely limited.

However, similar to the female and gay pop icons discussed earlier, involvement in artistic activities is associated with a feminized gender identity that is a stereotypical characterization of gay men (D'Augelli, 1994; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1997; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Kite & Whitley, 1996; LaMar & Kite, 1998; Madon, 1997; Sakalli, 2002). Madon found that over half of the participants in his study found gay men to be “artsy looking, melodramatic, and artistic” (p. 672). Additionally, when asked about counterstereotypes, the same participants listed traits like “act macho, athletic looking, and tough” (p. 673). One possible alternative reading of this sub-theme is that displaying images of artistic abilities and interests is one way to publicly disclose one's gay identity. Another alternative reading may be that these abilities and interests stem from a lifelong involvement in them or relate to their academic pursuits (e.g. college major or club activities). In other words, these images may not be tied directly to the gay identity of these participants.

Illicit behavior.

Recall that one of the ways in which gay males are socialized is through gay bars (D'Augelli, 1994). Indeed, several researchers have found a link between gay men and drinking behavior (Bux, 1996; Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; Stall & Wiley, 1998), and gay bars have been popular in urban areas even prior to 1900 (Chauncey, 1995). My initial socialization to gay culture occurred, in part, in the gay bars of West Hollywood, California. Thus, I expected to find images that portrayed illicit behaviors, such as drinking and smoking, on the profiles of gay male college students. In fact, I was somewhat surprised that only 12 participants posted such images of themselves. The 110 total images coded as this sub-theme, however, represent the third most represented sub-theme overall. Examples of these images included participants (a) drinking beer, margaritas, or wine, (b) smoking cigarettes, and (c) playing drinking games (e.g. beer pong) or engaging in high-risk drinking behaviors (e.g. keg stands). Images that appeared to depict groups of friends at a party, but did not contain alcoholic beverages, were coded as friends and family (a sub-theme previously discussed).

My obvious interpretation of these images is that they represent the socialization of gay males to gay culture. That is, illicit behaviors, which have been shown to be associated with gay men (Bux, 1996; Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; Stall & Wiley, 1998), are learned by gay males from other gay males in spaces like gay bars (D'Augelli, 1994). The relatively high incidence of these images on profiles, as well as frequent reference to alcohol, cigarettes, and even illegal drugs (e.g. marijuana) on several participants' profiles suggests that illicit behavior is associated with the identity of gay male college students. However, similar to other sub-themes discussed, it is uncertain whether illicit behaviors refer to the *gay* identity of these participants or their identity as college students. A possible alternative interpretation privileges the relationship

between college students and illicit behavior over the relationship between gay men and illicit behavior. Indeed, several researchers have found that college students engage in risky drinking behaviors (e.g. Fenzel, 2005; Durkin, Wolfe, & Clark, 1999; Weschler, Dowdall, Davenport, & Castillo, 1995) and drug abuse (e.g. DeBord, Wood, Sher, & Good, 1998; Pollard, Freeman, Ziegler, Hersman, & Goss, 2000). DeBord and colleagues found that although drug use was similar between gay and straight students, alcohol use was higher for gay males when compared to their straight peers. Thus, at least one study supports the possibility that illicit behaviors are associated with the participants' identity as gay males.

Another possibility is that illicit behavior is tied to their identity as both gay males and college students. These behaviors may, in fact, allow gay male college students to "fit in" in multiple contexts: with their heterosexual counterparts while enrolled in college and their gay male peers while interacting in predominantly gay male settings. These multiple social settings may provide gay men with an opportunity to not only learn more about gay behaviors and attitudes, but may also provide these individuals with "a large and varied set of people who know of the person's sexual orientation and are available to provide social support" (D'Augelli, 1994, p. 326). Indeed, the prevalence of illicit behaviors on gay men's profiles suggests that these behaviors are significant to their personal and social identity development.

LGBT and ally symbols.

The final sub-theme that I found among the gay male college student profile images reviewed was LGBT and ally symbols. This sub-theme was found on exactly half of the participants' profiles, with a total of 46 images representing the code. All images coded as this sub-theme contained the symbol of an LGBT and ally organization or a universal LGBT symbol, including: (a) Human Rights Campaign's (HRC) yellow equal sign with a blue background, (b) a

Rainbow flag, (c) a pink triangle, and (d) a red AIDS ribbon. In most cases, the gay male participant was shown with the symbol in the image, but a few images were pictures of the symbol only.

My obvious interpretation of these images is that they represent the gay male participants' entrance into a gay community, which "involves the development of commitments to political and social action" (D'Augelli, 1994, p. 327). Although some individuals may choose to never make commitments to such action, due largely to the risks associated, the individuals who desire to confront the inequalities present in society can do so by participating in the organizations that several males have depicted on their profiles (D'Augelli). Although some heterosexual individuals believe that most gay individuals are active in sociopolitical movements associated with gay identity (Madon, 1997), some choose not to engage in such initiatives (D'Augelli). The relatively high number of profiles that contain these images suggests that certain gay male college students have a desire to confront current issues associated with sexual orientation in society (D'Augelli). Such commitment is encouraging for individuals engaged in political movements like the ongoing debate about gay marriage (Human Rights Campaign [HRC], 2008; National Gay and Lesbian Task Force [NGLTF], 2008).

Alternatively, gay male college students may post images of LGBT and ally organizations on their main profile pages as a way to publicly disclose their sexual orientation. The popularity of these symbols suggests that observers will be able to identify these individuals as gay. Thus, they possibly represent that an individual has exited heterosexuality and disclosed his gay identity to others (D'Augelli, 1994). Similar to my alternative readings of other sub-themes, the presence of LGBT and ally symbols on the profiles of gay male college students may simply be about disclosing one's identity to others.

Implications for Research and Practice

The use of online communities has exploded in recent years, especially among college students. Yet, little empirical research has explored the ways in which individuals represent themselves within these communities. This study focused on gay males' representations of self in an online community known as Facebook and focused on the messages that gay males share with others through the images and text posted in their online profiles. This information is important for understanding how gay males view themselves as well as the aspects of identity they use to represent themselves to others. Throughout the analysis, several possible implications for research and practice in higher education emerged.

First, several interpretations appeared to be associated with stereotypes about gay identity. Sigelman and Tuch (1997) pointed out that stereotypes are formed in the absence of face-to-face interactions, meaning opinions are formed based on limited information from other sources. And, those beliefs often shape future expectations and one's own "reality," at least in part. Similarly, Madon (1997) concluded that positive and negative stereotypes alike can affect an individual's perception of self as well as others' perceptions of him. One concern D'Augelli (1994) identified was that gay men have few examples of well developed, successful gay men in society that they can look to as role models. Thus, stereotypes become one way in which gay males learn about identity, and depending on their content (e.g. gay men are incapable of being monogamous versus gay men are fashionable), may provoke developmental dissonance in the individual (D'Augelli). This study suggests that future research should explore gay male college students' representations of self in greater depth, particularly the association with stereotypes about gay men.

Given the relative youth of these participants, the willingness to publicly disclose their sexual orientation on their Facebook profiles is notable. However, since individuals tend to be “coming out” at younger ages today than in previous generations (Grov, Bimbi, Nanin, & Parsons, 2006; D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993), it is critical that gay male college students understand the implications of how they represent themselves to others as the messages they send will become part of how younger gay males are socialized. In other words, the availability of information on online profiles could provide messages about what it means to be gay, essentially serving as the “constructs defined by [the] proximal community of . . . gay men” (D’Augelli, 1994, p. 325) that is crucial to developing a personal gay identity status.

Administrators who work with gay male college students should encourage them to critically reflect upon how they represent themselves to others. Additionally, administrators should encourage individuals who are struggling with their gay identity development (e.g. who remain closeted or are currently “coming out”) to become critical consumers of messages about gay identity. Although neither endeavor is straightforward, engaging in dialogues about these issues is an important place to start.

Finally, campus administrators could use gay male college students’ profiles as a way to identify potentially risky behaviors and provide specialized support to either individuals or groups of students. For example, if an administrator finds that several gay males are engaging in high-risk drinking behaviors, he or she could develop a program that focuses on healthy drinking behaviors. Another example, the presence of images of contrasting representations of gender identity may suggest that an initiative that examines the intersection of gender and sexual orientation may be meaningful to students. Indeed, administrators should develop and implement educational programs that encourage reflection about the ways in which gay males represent

themselves online, as Facebook profiles are reviewed by individuals both on- and off-campus to determine acceptability for employment and to collect evidence in legal disputes, such as divorce cases (Aleman & Wartman, 2009; Italie, 2010; Lenard, 2006).

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Appendix Four

Table 4.1 LGB Identity Development Processes

Process	Summary
Exiting heterosexual identity	Personal and social recognition of a homosexual orientation; includes disclosure of identity to others; continuous process affected by the openness of one's sexual orientation
Developing a personal LGB identity status	Development of a socioaffectional identity that emerges from interaction with other LGB individuals; individuals also begin to challenge heterosexist assumptions
Developing a LGB social identity	Individuals establish a large, affirming social network of LGB individuals and heterosexual allies
Becoming a LGB offspring	Disclosure of LGB identity to family members and their subsequent acceptance of that identity in an affirming manner
Developing a LGB intimacy status	Establishing meaningful same-sex relationships that are both emotionally and intimately fulfilling
Entering a LGB community	Commitment to the social and political action that empowers individuals to understand oppression and resist it

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

Table 4.2 Summary of Participants (N = 22)

Participant	Race/Ethnicity	Age	Inst. Type	Inst. Mission	Inst. Location	Political View	Major
K. K.	API	24	4-year	Private	NE	Very Liberal	Unknown
R. L.	White	24	4-year	Private	NE	Moderate	Psychology
C. H.	White	22	2-year	Public	SE	Other	Business
D. S.	White	24	4-year	Private	NE	Eh	Art
J. P.	Black	24	4-year	Private	SE	Unknown	Hispanic Studies
J. M.	White	22	4-year	Private	NE	Very Liberal	Art & Biology
						Socially Liberal,	
C. B.	White	22	4-year	Public	SE	Fiscally Moderate	Advertising
J. W.	White	23	4-year	Public	SE	Liberal	Unknown
J. R.	Inter	21	4-year	Private	SE	Liberal	Music Ed
						Liberal, yet	
J. B.	White	20	2-year	Public	SE	Conservative	Unknown
V. D.	Black	23	4-year	Public	SE	Very Liberal	Finance & Accounting
N. W.	White	20	4-year	Public	SE	Liberal	Theater & Musicology
						Don't Worry, Be	
M. A.	White	19	4-year	Public	SE	Happy	Business
M. H.	API	23	4-year	Private	SE	Liberal	Unknown
						Cadera Inquieta y	
A. M.	Latino	22	4-year	Private	NE	Moral Distraida	International Studies & Chinese
I. M.	White	23	4-year	Private	NE	Moderate	Sociology & Latin American Studies
J. A.	Latino	23	4-year	Private	NE	Liberal	Sociology & Latin American Studies
W. B.	White	24	4-year	Private	NE	Liberal	English & Political Science
T. B.	Black	23	4-year	Private	NE	Unknown	English & Art History
C. S.	White	21	4-year	Private	NE	Progressive	Geography & History
N. A.	Latino	23	4-year	Private	NE	Liberal	Unknown
J. P.	White	21	4-year	Public	SE	Liberal	Theater

Note: Inst. is an abbreviation for Institution

Table 4.3 Image Themes and Sub-themes by Participant

Participant	Profile Pictures	<u>Relationships with Others</u>			<u>(Un)Dressing the Body</u>		
		Intimate Interactions w/Men	Sexual Interactions w/Women	Family & Friends	Masculine Expressions & Performance	Exposed Bodies	Clothing & Style
K. K.	48	2	0	8	1	1	14
R. L.	23	0	1	4	0	0	0
C. H.	66	3	5	16	2	10	0
D. S.	42	1	0	0	5	0	0
J. P.	92	4	8	13	7	5	10
J. M.	29	0	0	12	5	2	0
C. B.	72	0	5	30	0	0	0
J. W.	104	12	5	50	0	5	7
J. R.	59	0	0	22	8	0	0
J. B.	43	3	5	2	0	5	8
V. D.	15	0	0	3	0	3	0
N. W.	34	0	0	8	4	0	18
M. A.	125	42	0	20	0	5	0
M. H.	8	0	0	0	0	0	8
A. M.	65	0	0	7	0	12	22
I. M.	12	0	5	0	2	0	0
J. A.	40	10	4	0	8	3	10
W. B.	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
T. B.	82	0	0	45	10	5	10
C. S.	38	2	0	10	0	2	22
N. A.	20	2	1	7	0	0	10
J. P.	107	0	0	30	0	10	14
TOTAL	1125	81	40	287	52	68	153
AVERAGE	51.14	3.68	1.82	13.05	2.36	3.09	6.95

Table 4.3 Image Themes and Sub-themes by Participant (cont'd)

Participant	<u>Activities & Interests</u>			LGBT & Ally Symbols	Excluded Images
	Female & Gay Pop Icons	Artistic Abilities	Illicit Behavior		
K. K.	2	5	10	1	4
R. L.	3	2	7	0	6
C. H.	12	0	10	0	8
D. S.	0	30	6	0	0
J. P.	6	15	4	0	20
J. M.	0	4	0	2	4
C. B.	10	0	15	4	8
J. W.	0	0	16	6	3
J. R.	5	0	8	6	10
J. B.	0	0	20	0	0
V. D.	0	4	0	3	2
N. W.	0	0	0	0	4
M. A.	35	10	0	12	1
M. H.	0	0	0	0	0
A. M.	15	0	5	4	0
I. M.	0	0	4	1	0
J. A.	0	0	5	0	0
W. B.	0	0	0	0	0
T. B.	0	0	0	3	9
C. S.	0	0	0	0	2
N. A.	0	0	0	0	0
J. P.	17	26	0	4	6
TOTAL	105	96	110	46	87
AVERAGE	4.77	4.36	5.00	2.09	3.95

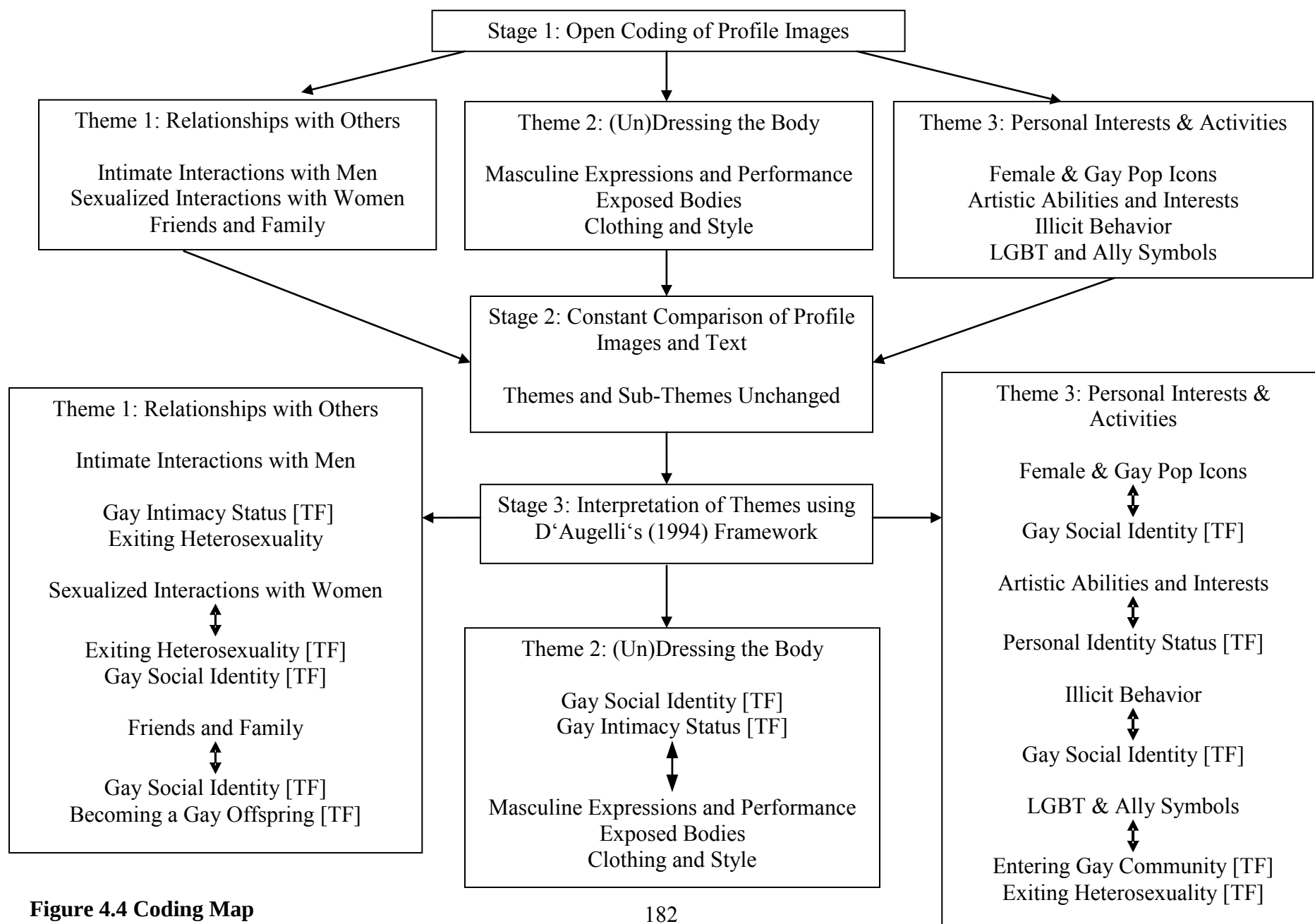


Figure 4.4 Coding Map

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Implications

Summary

This chapter focuses on the implications for theory, practice and research that were found across the three studies presented in chapters 2, 3, and 4. The three articles discussed different aspects of gay identity development for college students, focusing specifically on male undergraduates; however, the three chapters utilized a common theoretical framework, D'Augelli's (1994) gay identity development model. Thus, the theoretical implications discussed in this chapter relate to D'Augelli's framework and its usefulness and limitations for: (a) studying gay male undergraduates, (b) examining the experiences and identity development of non-White gay populations, and (c) describing the experiences and identity development of contemporary gay populations. A revised version of D'Augelli's framework based on the conclusions drawn in the articles will also be presented in this chapter. Finally, several implications for practice and research are presented in this chapter as well. These implications are related to the strengths and limitations of the theoretical framework as well as findings that were common across the chapters of the dissertation.

Implications for Theory

Summary of Gay Identity Development Theory

The first identity development theory focused on sexual orientation utilized a linear, stage-based approach to describe how an individual's internalized feelings progressed from denial to acceptance, resolving in identity synthesis (Cass, 1979, 1984). This model has been criticized for its failure to explain the fluidity and backtracking associated with the "coming out" process (Eldridge & Barnett, 1991; Stevens, 2004), as well as the reliance on a small sample of White males (Ryan & Futterman, 1998; Wall & Washington, 1991; Washington & Wall, 2006). A framework of gay identity development based on psychological views of identity function[s]

to reinforce heterosexist privilege. . . [and labels] any deviations from [heterosexuality] unnatural, disordered, or dysfunctional” (D’Augelli, 1994, p. 314). Thus, an alternative model of gay identity development was needed that positioned homosexuality as a ~~normal~~” developmental process parallel to heterosexual identity.

D’Augelli (1994) designed a framework of gay identity development that accounts for the social contexts of an individual’s development over his entire life. By applying a human development view to gay identity, this ~~model~~ emphasizes *interindividual differences in the development of intraindividual behavior* (italics original). . . suggest[ing] a continuum of sexual feelings and experience. . . [that are different] at certain phases of life. . . in certain kinds of families. . . in certain communities. . . and at certain historical times” (pp. 321-322). In other words, D’Augelli’s model builds upon a psychologically based model of gay identity development by accounting for external social factors as well as internal influences. Thus, D’Augelli’s model is applicable to the current study because while multiple contexts and social factors will be explored, the individual’s internal processes are also important.

D’Augelli (1994) discusses six aspects of identity, or processes, that should be accounted for when studying the lives of gay males from human development perspective. Additionally, the social and cultural contexts in which gay men live mediate these processes, which is evident by three sets of factors that shape how individuals will experience the six processes: (a) personal subjectivities and actions, (b) interactive intimacies, and (c) sociohistorical connections (D’Augelli). Although the three sets of factors may explain individual variances in gay identity development, D’Augelli’s model is focused on the six developmental processes he identified: (1) exiting heterosexual identity, (2) developing a personal lesbian-gay-bisexual identity status, (3) developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual social identity, (4) becoming a lesbian-gay-bisexual offspring,

(5) developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual intimacy status, and (6) entering a lesbian-gay-bisexual community. As Bilodeau and Renn (2005) appropriately summarize, “An individual may experience development in one process to a greater extent than another; for example, he or she may have a strong LGB social identity and an intimate same-sex partner, but not have come out as LGB to family (become an LGB offspring)” (p. 29). Such variations across individuals may be explained through the three sets of factors that D’Augelli provides as context to the six processes; however, D’Augelli fails to discuss explicit connections between those factors and individual perspectives of the processes associated with LGB identity development. Figure 5.1¹³ presents D’Augelli’s LGB identity model, including the three sets of factors and six identity development processes.

Usefulness of D’Augelli’s Framework

Findings across the three studies confirm that D’Augelli’s (1994) framework is useful theory for studying LGB populations in the context of college, including non-White, gay male college students. D’Augelli’s model provided meaningful insights in all three studies, which focused on issues associated with attitudes towards same-sex relationships for first-year college students, the gay identity development of Black gay male college students, and representations of gay male college students, respectively. In fact, the six aspects of gay identity development identified by D’Augelli’s framework were useful at all stages of research, including shaping the design, providing the researcher with *a priori* knowledge of attitudes and experiences associated with gay identity, and organizing variables and themes during analysis and discussion.

Specifically, the framework provided insights into the gay identity development of Black gay

¹³ All tables and figures in this chapter will be included in Appendix Five recommended by the Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines for Multi-part Dissertations at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

male undergraduates (BGMUs) in Chapter Three and shaped both the “obvious” and “alternative” interpretations I identified in Chapter Four. Although I found D’Augelli’s framework to be applicable in all three studies, as Anfara and Mertz (2006) suggested, there are limitations to all frameworks and D’Augelli’s LGB identity development model is no exception. These limitations will be discussed in greater detail below.

In terms of the applicability of the framework, however, it is important to note specific examples of how the framework influenced the three articles included in this dissertation. D’Augelli (1994) believed that a human developmental framework allows for flexibility to consider the multiple social contexts in which an individual experiences his identity. This dissertation provides support for his belief by demonstrating that the framework is a valuable lens for examining gay identity across contexts. Recall that the focus of Chapter Two was first-year college students’ attitudes towards same-sex marriage and the personal attributes that affect those attitudes. In Chapter Two, D’Augelli’s framework established the significance of peers as “valued others” whose personal attributes impact campus climate around issues related to LGBT issues. The framework structured the analysis and discussion of Chapter Three and revealed relationships across the narratives of BGMUs. Recall that all six processes that D’Augelli outlines were found among the gay identity development of BGMUs in Chapter Three. In Chapter Four, the framework was invaluable as a tool for interpreting images and text that gay male college students used to represent their gay identity online. Since interpreting images can be especially problematic, D’Augelli’s framework provided a theoretically-based method for both analyzing data and identifying relationships across themes. Thus, this dissertation supports the conclusion that D’Augelli’s gay identity development theory is a useful framework for

conducting research on gay identity across individuals with diverse identities, especially non-White gay males, as well as within the context of the contemporary college or university.

Limitations of D'Augelli's Framework

Although the framework was useful across multiple contexts, several notable limitations of the model were exposed across the studies as well. There are three specific limitations that need to be addressed, each of which will be discussed in greater detail below. The first relates to the lack of detail about the myths and stereotypes associated with gay identity development, particularly in contemporary society. Although they are alluded to in the six processes that D'Augelli (1994) described, he failed to provide a detailed discussion or process for how individuals respond to the myths and stereotypes they experience. As D'Augelli speculated, a second limitation is that society's attitudes and representations of gay identity have changed in the last two decades since the framework was developed. The shifts that have occurred affect both the myths and stereotypes about sexual orientation and the sources that reinforce them. A third limitation of the framework is the failure to appropriately discuss the intersection of other aspects of identity with sexual orientation. Specifically, racial identity, religion, and conceptualizations of gender and masculinity warrant further discussion. This section provides an overview of these limitations and concludes with a proposal of a revised model.

Negotiating myths and stereotypes.

Several myths and stereotypes about gay identity are described in D'Augelli's (1994) framework, which he uses to support various processes; however these descriptions lack specificity and fail to fully examine the complexities associated with each stereotype. One example is myth that gay men are promiscuous and cannot maintain monogamous relationships, which D'Augelli relies upon to support the process of developing a gay intimacy status. He

attributes the perpetuation of this stereotype to the lack of representations in society of gay males in committed relationships, and also comments on the legal barriers of heterosexist society (i.e., the limitation of marriage to heterosexuals) (D'Augelli). A more in-depth discussion and appreciation of the forces that perpetuate stereotypes and the structures that reinforce their power in society would provide meaningful insights into how gay males process and internalize messages about same-sex relationships. For example, the issue of gay marriage is fraught with conflicts about aspects of identity, such as religion, race, and political affiliations that interact with debates about the legal definitions of marriage and constitutional amendments. This complexity is affirmed by the study conducted in Chapter Two, which found that various aspects of identity, most notably political affiliation and gender, are associated with attitudes towards same-sex relationships for first-year college students. Thus, the issue of gay marriage demonstrates that stereotypes about same-sex relationships are complicated and include issues around multiple aspects of identity that individuals must negotiate.

The process of negotiation requires individuals to decide how they will respond to stereotypes about their sexual orientation. With regard to the stereotype that gay males cannot establish healthy relationships, an individual may choose among the following: to engage in the battle for equal rights, to internalize the stereotype and engage in promiscuous behavior, or to develop an individualized response that incorporates various aspects of their personal attributes and experiences, among other options. Since a human developmental framework provides for ~~in~~interindividual differences in the development of intraindividual behavior” (D'Augelli, 1994, p. 321), responses are expected to vary across individuals. Thus, D'Augelli's framework provides the opportunity to examine variations, but does not address the implications associated with different responses. He does, however, mention that ~~the~~ risk of loss of employment, housing,

family relations, and so on is still fundamental to the *psychological* processes of identity, and these realities cannot be left out” (p. 330). Yet, these risks are conspicuously left out of a discussion of how individuals negotiate the various processes included in the framework. As D’Augelli states, “Identity is heuristically conceived as a dynamic process of interaction and exchange between the individual and the many levels of social collectives during the historical period of. . . his life” (p. 330). Building on this statement, the framework could be revised to include an element of individual negotiation within each of the six processes. Within each process an ongoing cycle of negotiation could be included. This cycle should include three components that are constantly negotiated and renegotiated by the individual: (a) learning myths and stereotypes perpetuated through social and cultural apparatuses, (b) the internalization of these messages by individuals, and (c) the embodied response by the individual to these messages. The revised model is presented in Figure 5.2 and discussed in greater detail below.

Shift in social context.

Similar to the discussion of myths and stereotypes, D’Augelli’s (1994) framework acknowledges the need to reexamine the ever-changing context around issues of gay identity in society. He stated that “a life-span development model can. . . reflect complexities of lesbian, gay, and bisexual lives and [allow for] analysis of how these lives will change in the future” (p. 331). According to the human developmental framework, the social context of identity development is bounded by time and location. Thus, individuals will encounter issues that are distinct from others who have come of age at different historical and physical locations. Since the framework was developed in 1994, or 16 years prior to the studies included in this dissertation, differences in the social context of participants were anticipated and, indeed, found. D’Augelli presents the potential for contextual differences as such:

The processes of lesbian, gay or bisexual identity formation are very different for a 20-year-old in 1994 than they were for a person aged twenty in 1974. In the twenty years spanning the two lives, major events have occurred in lesbian-gay history, events that *fundamentally* restructure the processes of identity development. The changes have been dramatic—from mental illness to alternative life-style to sexual variation to diverse minority. (p. 328)

A similar script can be written to contrast two 20-year-old individuals born in 1974 and 1990. Consider the following examples: a gay male born in 1974 would be enrolled in high school at the height of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, which provoked a distinct backlash that was particularly evident for gay men (American Red Cross, 2000; Howard, 1997), while a gay male born in 1990 would be enrolled in high school during a period of time when 13 states and the District of Columbia adopted laws that broaden the rights afforded to same-sex partners (National Gay & Lesbian Task Force [NGLTF], n.d.); a gay male born in 1974 would have just graduated from college when University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard was fatally beaten because he was gay (Clark, 1999), while a gay male born in 1990 would be enrolled in college when Congress approved an amendment to the federal hate crime law to ~~include~~ include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability" (Eleveld, 2009, p. 1); a gay male born in 1974 would have been able to choose among just 17 institutions that supported LGBT resource centers, while his counterpart born in 1990 would have had the opportunity to choose from nearly ten times as many institutions with these support mechanisms when applying to college (Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals, 2009). The social context around issues of sexual orientation has changed and will continue to change, as D'Augelli predicted. The characterization of this shift as a limitation to the framework is perhaps inaccurate, because the framework allows for flexibility over time; however, a revised framework could address the continuous presence of contextual

shifts by insisting that its application be framed in the social context of the individuals being studied. In other words, a revised framework that requires a priori knowledge of the issues associated with gay identity, especially the myths and stereotypes perpetuated through social and cultural apparatuses, could be useful. The revised framework, which accounts for this stipulation, is discussed in greater detail below.

Intersection of sexual orientation and other aspects of identity.

Other aspects of identity were influential across all three studies included in this dissertation. In Chapter Two, which examined the personal attributes that influence first-year students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships, sex and political affiliation were shown to hold strong relationships with first-year students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships. For the BGMUs who participated in the study presented in Chapter Three, expectations of gender and masculinity, racial identity, and religion were shown to affect their gay identity development in unique ways that could not be accounted for by D'Augelli's framework. Chapter Four revealed that stereotypes about gender identity and masculinity may play a significant role in shaping the gay male college students' representations of self online. Although D'Augelli (1994) comments that his framework ~~insists~~ on addressing diversity—so that crucial dimensions that were once off the diagonal,⁶ such as gender, race, ethnicity, and class, are considered fundamental to an analysis of sexual orientation as well as other aspects of human development” (D'Augelli, p. 331), the studies included in the dissertation confirm that it fails to fully address the intersections of gay identity and other aspects of identity as some authors suggested it could (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). In other words, D'Augelli's LGB identity development framework is as limited in its applicability to non-White gay individuals as racial identity development frameworks (e.g., Cross, 1971, 1995) are to the same population.

Examples of this limitation were particularly glaring in the study of BGMUs. Issues reconciling gender identity and expectations of masculinity were shared by every participant in the study, most notably when comparing themselves to other BGMUs. Given that issues associated with gender and masculinity in the Black community are well documented across disciplines (Bohan, 1996; Conerly, 2001; Constantine-Simms, 2001; Hutchinson, 2001), it was not surprising to find that BGMUs discussed the intersection of racial identity and sexual orientation during their interviews. The nature of these discussions, however, was somewhat surprising as participants alluded to the performance of racial identity as a transgression from stereotypical Black behaviors, more aligned with the performance of gay (and White) identity. Finally, some participants described tensions between their religious orientation and gay identity as difficult to reconcile. Thus, similar to masculinity and racial identity, religion changed the ways in which participants experienced their gay identity development. Chapter Three illustrates the need for additional attention to the intersection of various aspects of identity with sexual orientation. In order to accomplish this, a seventh process could be added to the framework called “Negotiating the intersection of identities.” This additional process would warrant an explicit recognition of the role that other identities play in shaping gay identity development.

A Revised Framework

The three limitations of D’Augelli’s (1994) gay identity development framework described above provide a model for revising the framework. The revised model includes three changes, which correspond to the respective limitations previously discussed. Since the limitations are discussed in detail above, this section will briefly summarize the revisions and describe how the changes strengthen the framework. A visual depiction of the revised model is presented in Figure 5.2.

Knowledge of Myths and Stereotypes in Contemporary Society

The revised framed makes an explicit connection between contemporary issues related to gay identity by positioning knowledge of myths and stereotypes relevant to the context being studied as a prerequisite to its application. This revision calls for those interested in using the framework to acquire adequate knowledge of the “social and cultural apparatuses” (D’Augelli, 1994, p. 327) that define gay identity in historical and physical context in which the framework will be applied. This knowledge is important because the social context is continuously shifting across time and place. Simply put, the messages available to individuals about gay identity change from year-to-year and place-to-place. This a priori knowledge provides the information necessary to interpret experiences across processes and findings across participants, variables, or studies. Researchers can acquire such knowledge by reviewing interdisciplinary research on LGB populations, engaging in fieldwork or research on LGB populations, and summarizing messages about gay identity that are prevalent in society and presented by the media.

Seventh Process: Intersections of Identity

The second revision is the inclusion of a seventh process called “Negotiating the intersection of identity.” This additional process accounts for the impact of other aspects of identity that were found among the three studies. Although D’Augelli’s (1994) framework mentioned the potential effects of other identities on gay identity development, it failed to provide an explicit opportunity for those intersections to be discussed or examined. The addition of a seventh process demands that these intersections be explored. As depicted by the dashed, multi-directional arrows in Figure 5.2, all seven processes are related to one another and may overlap in terms of the stereotypes, experiences, and interpretations across processes. This

seventh process provides a necessary focus on the affect that other aspects of identity have on gay identity development.

Process Negotiations

The negotiation of myths and stereotypes associated with gay identity by the individual prompted the third and final revision. Three “process negotiations” are depicted at the center of the revised framework, which is meant to indicate that these negotiations occur in each of the seven processes. The three “process negotiations” comprise an ongoing cycle where individuals learn messages about gay identity, selectively internalize those messages, and then selectively embody them. Moreover, the cycle honors D’Augelli’s (1994) original intent of considering development over an individual’s lifespan, because messages are constantly learned and negotiated by individuals as they mature and as their social context shifts. This revision also introduces the individual’s agency into the framework, which allows for the “intraindividual differences” (p. 321) that D’Augelli also describes to be discussed in terms of personal choices. Thus, the strengths of this revision are that it: (a) establishes an explicit relationship between contemporary myths and stereotypes and each of the seven processes, and (b) provides opportunities to examine the process that individuals negotiate with regards to their identity development.

Implications for Research and Practice

There are four major themes that emerged across the three articles included in this dissertation. The four themes are: (a) deconsexualizing gay identity, (b) challenges of gender expressions and masculine stereotypes, (c) polarizing effect of political affiliations, and (d) inaccurate myths about sexual orientation. These themes, which are shaped by the myths and stereotypes about sexual orientation in society, hold implications for research and practice

associated with gay identity in the context of higher education. When internalized and embodied by gay males, stereotypical representations of gay identity have a dual-detrimental effect that perpetuates the stereotypes in the society, thereby revealing the failure of gay males to challenge myths about gay identity, while providing cultural cues to other gay males about what it means to be gay. Thus, when stereotypes are reinforced via embodiment by gay males, they maintain heterosexist privilege and are normalized as appropriate aspects of gay identity. The following discussion summarizes the four themes, examines their impact on research and practice, and provides suggestions based on their significance for gay identity development.

Deconsexualizing Gay Identity

The stereotype that gay males are hyper-sexual was described by D'Augelli (1994) as one myth that exists in society. In the study of gay male representations on online profiles discussed in Chapter Four, sexually charged representations were shown in various contexts: between men and other men, between men and women, as exposed bodies, and in explicit textual references. When viewed and interpreted by others, these representations provide opportunities to further perpetuate the myth that gay men cannot form relationships comparable to their heterosexual peers. These representations by gay males of gay males demonstrate the pervasiveness of stereotypes about sexual orientation and point to their potentially damaging effects on initiatives related to same-sex partnerships, such as current debates around gay marriage occurring in several states (Human Rights Campaign [HRC], 2010; National Gay and Lesbian Task Force [NGLTF], 2008). Moreover, these representations perpetuate the myth that gay males are hyper-sexualized beings. The challenge to researchers and administrators alike is to deconsexualize gay identity; that is, to frame gay identity as dependent upon something other than sexual relationships and activities. This task is complicated by a couple factors. First, traditional

definitions of sexual orientation relied primarily on the sexual behaviors of individuals (e.g., Freud, 1905). Gay men were labeled as gay because they had sex with other men. Although modern definitions of homosexuality have been expanded to include other dimensions, such as social, biological, affectional, and emotional aspects (e.g., Coleman, 1987; D'Augelli), sexual behavior persists as a means by which gay males come to view themselves as gay. For example, several BGMUs in Chapter Four recalled the times they first realized they were sexually attracted to other men, and when sexually graphic materials led to them being exposed as gay. Although gay identity is multi-dimensional, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to completely detach the sexualized aspect of gay identity from definitions and discussions of the identity.

However, researchers and administrators can challenge the seemingly inextricable link between sexual behaviors and gay identity. First, researchers should appropriately define the focus of their studies when working with gay populations. For example, studies of gay identity should include a description of how participants were selected that delineates between self-identification as gay and engaging in same-sex behaviors, because the former relates to the construction of identity using multiple dimensions while the latter limits identity to a sexualized construct. A good example is the ways in which Harris (2003) and Goode-Cross and Good (2009) recruited participants to their respective studies. While the former labeled his participants as “gay” whether or not they self-identified as such, the latter intentionally limited their sample to “~~me~~ who have sex with other men” in order to distinguish between behavior and identity. Such distinctions are important when studying gay populations. Additionally, administrators should encourage students to reflect upon what it means to identify as gay, paying particular attention to the emotional, social, psychological, and cultural factors associated with gay identity.

Educational programs for gay students that provide opportunities to process their interpretations and representations of gay identity would be especially meaningful. Finally, language about sexual orientation should be re-conceptualized to challenge myths about gay identity.

Terminology that removes the word “sex” could be an initial step, such as using “gay” in place of homosexual. One study found, in fact, that individuals respond more positively when asked about equal rights for “gays and lesbians” than for “homosexuals” (Hechtkopf, 2010). As this example illustrates, language is a powerful tool that can significantly affect individuals’ perspectives of identity.

Challenges of Gendered Expressions and Masculinity

The myth that gay males embody an inverted gender identity is another stereotype that has been perpetuated in society and was found across the three studies in this dissertation.

Several participants in Chapter Four, the article that examined gay male college students’ representations of self in Facebook, used images and text on their profiles that reinforced an association between female popular icons, feminized activities, and gay male identity. These representations possibly depict the internalization of the stereotype about gender inversion that gay males experience socially, thereby reinforcing these stereotypes (D’Augelli, 1994).

Similarly, several BGMUs in Chapter Three engaged in stereotypically feminized behaviors, yet contrasted their gender identity with other BGMUs that were viewed as hyper-feminine. Issues associated with perception of masculinity were prevalent among the BGMUs studied.

Additionally, the finding that males hold more negative views of same-sex relationships in Chapter Two suggests that issues associated with masculinity and gay identity affect first-year students’ attitudes towards homosexuality. Recall that this finding reinforced what other researchers have found as well.

As these examples represent, stereotypes about gender and masculinity for males were found to be salient for gay males. The pervasiveness of the inverted gender identity myth for gay men was demonstrated throughout the three articles included in Chapters Two, Three and Four. Thus, educational and social programming developed and implemented by campus administrators that attempts to ameliorate the effects of negative stereotypes about sexual orientation should encourage male participants, in particular, to examine the myth that homosexuality is inextricably linked to an inverted gender identity. Such initiatives could focus on a revolutionary model of sexual orientation that explores multiple continuums of identity where perceptions about biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation would present a more fluid representation of gay identity. Programs aimed at creating dissonance about conceptions of gender identity and expression for males in general would also be beneficial for shifting attitudes towards homosexuality. Since researchers often rely on dichotomous variables framed as masculine-feminine and heterosexual-homosexual that fail to consider the complexities associated with gender identity and sexual orientation, respectively (Sell, 1997), and dichotomous definitions operate within a heterosexist framework that allow a normal-deviant dichotomy to exist (D'Augelli, 1994; Herek, 2003), there is a need to explore ~~in~~ greater detail the relationship among the dimensions of orientation as understood by the individual" (Kinnish, Strassberg, & Turner, 2005, p. 181). Researchers should conceptualize sexual orientation along continuums similar to those described above in order to appropriately frame gay identity and fully examine its complexities. Thus, an implication of the gendered stereotype about sexual orientation is that both administrators and researchers should utilize continuum-based definitions of sexual orientation that challenge the gender-sexuality dichotomy.

Polarizing Effect of Political Affiliations

Findings from Chapter Two provide support for a sharp divide between students who define themselves as conservative and those who define themselves as liberal. Since the 2004 wave of the database was used in analysis, the vast majority of these students would have had only one opportunity to vote in a presidential election. The fact that at this early stage in their lives as active citizens they hold such distinct political views and that these political views provide the most salient predictor of attitudes towards same-sex relationships, indicates that considerable attention should be given to examining this relationship. Campus administrators must consider how these distinct viewpoints affect the climate around LGBT issues and what initiatives are currently offered, or can be offered, that not only foster welcoming environments for LGBT students, but also encourage students to challenge the attitudes they hold when they arrive on campus. These initiatives should include a component that examines the role that gender and political orientation play in shaping students' perspectives about sexual orientation.

Initiatives focused on political orientation for college students need to directly confront their polarizing affect on attitudes towards same-sex relationships. Students should be challenged to explore how their viewpoints have been influenced by personal factors, such as their parents' opinions, and social factors, such as the pervasiveness of heteronormative social structures and popular media. Additionally, research in higher education should critically examine these factors as well and provide suggestions on the role that academic and social programs could play in challenging students' attitudes towards homosexuality. Programs that provide opportunities for honest, open discussion among students from different political orientations about issues like gay marriage, partner benefits and adoption rights for same-sex couples could be successful at blurring the divide between politically liberal and conservative individuals. Academic courses

and interactive experiences, such as service learning projects, that focus on the rights and privileges denied to same-sex couples are initiatives likely to accomplish this goal as well.

Inaccurate Myths about Sexual Orientation

The final theme identified across the articles included in this dissertation is that several inaccurate myths about sexual orientation exist that need to be challenged. In Chapter Two, the finding that religious affiliation, racial identity, and socioeconomic status have weak relationships with attitudes towards same-sex relationships for first-year college students is noteworthy. In fact, it challenges popular assumptions about the personal attributes that influence views on same-sex relationships. For example, the national debate about Proposition 8 in California focused on the role that religious affiliation and racial identity, specifically conservative religious groups and African Americans, played in its passage. In contrast, findings from the study of BGMUs presented in Chapter Three indicate that racial identity and religious beliefs do impact gay identity development for college students. Although this reveals that a relationship exists between different aspects of identity and sexual orientation within the individual, researchers and administrators should be cautioned against assuming that groups of students (e.g., racial minorities and religious groups) share a common perspective of LGB individuals. A distinction must be made between the roles that identities play in framing an *individual's* experience and how those identities affect *group* perspectives. For example, although racial identity was influential for BGMUs, the relationship between first-year college students' attitudes towards same-sex relationships and racial identity was relatively weak. Although you should recall that White/Caucasian and Latino/Hispanic students were found to hold more accepting attitudes towards same-sex relationships while their Black/African American peers were found to be less accepting. Thus, future research and campus initiatives

should focus on: (a) challenging the myths and stereotypes about sexual orientation that exist in society, (b) localized explorations of identity, and (c) relationships across social and cultural representations of identity and the experiences of individuals.

Conclusion

In sum, this dissertation accomplishes two goals. First, although D'Augelli's (1994) LGB identity development model was shown to be useful when studying gay college students, there are notable limitations to the framework that suggest a revised framework is needed. Simply put, a theoretical framework that focuses on gay identity development while ignoring the intersections of other aspects of identity, cannot account for the unique experiences and development of non-White gay college students. Similarly, the shifting social climate associated with issues of gay identity limit the applicability of D'Augelli's framework by introducing mitigating aspects that a theory development nearly 20 years ago could not anticipate. A revised model, such as the one proposed in Figure 5.2, may provide a more useful framework for examining multiple aspects of identity while privileging gay identity development.

Second, the dissertation provides several implications for student affairs practice. Findings from Chapter Two could be utilized by administrators who support LGB students to identify potential allies. For example, female college students who are aligned with a liberal political orientation, as well as those whose parents earn higher levels of income and who identify as Jewish, Buddhist/Hindu, or with no religious affiliation, may be especially open and supportive of LGB issues on college campuses. Additionally, campus administrators can use findings from each of the studies included in this dissertation to develop campus programs that meet the needs of specific populations (e.g., non-White gay males). Collaborative initiatives that encourage a holistic approach to support are especially important for administrators to develop

and implement. Moreover, academic and social initiatives should work collaboratively as well, since many issues identified in this dissertation (e.g., constructions of gender and masculinity) are complex and require innovative programs that cannot be accomplished by either student affairs or an academic department alone. Finally, administrators should encourage students, particularly males and gay males, to reflect upon the multiple aspects of their identity and how those aspects are developed throughout college and into their adult life. Students must learn to think critically about how the messages they receive, internalize, and choose to embody. Administrators could utilize students' online representations to discern how to tailor programs and initiatives to meet the needs of specific groups of students.

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Appendix Five

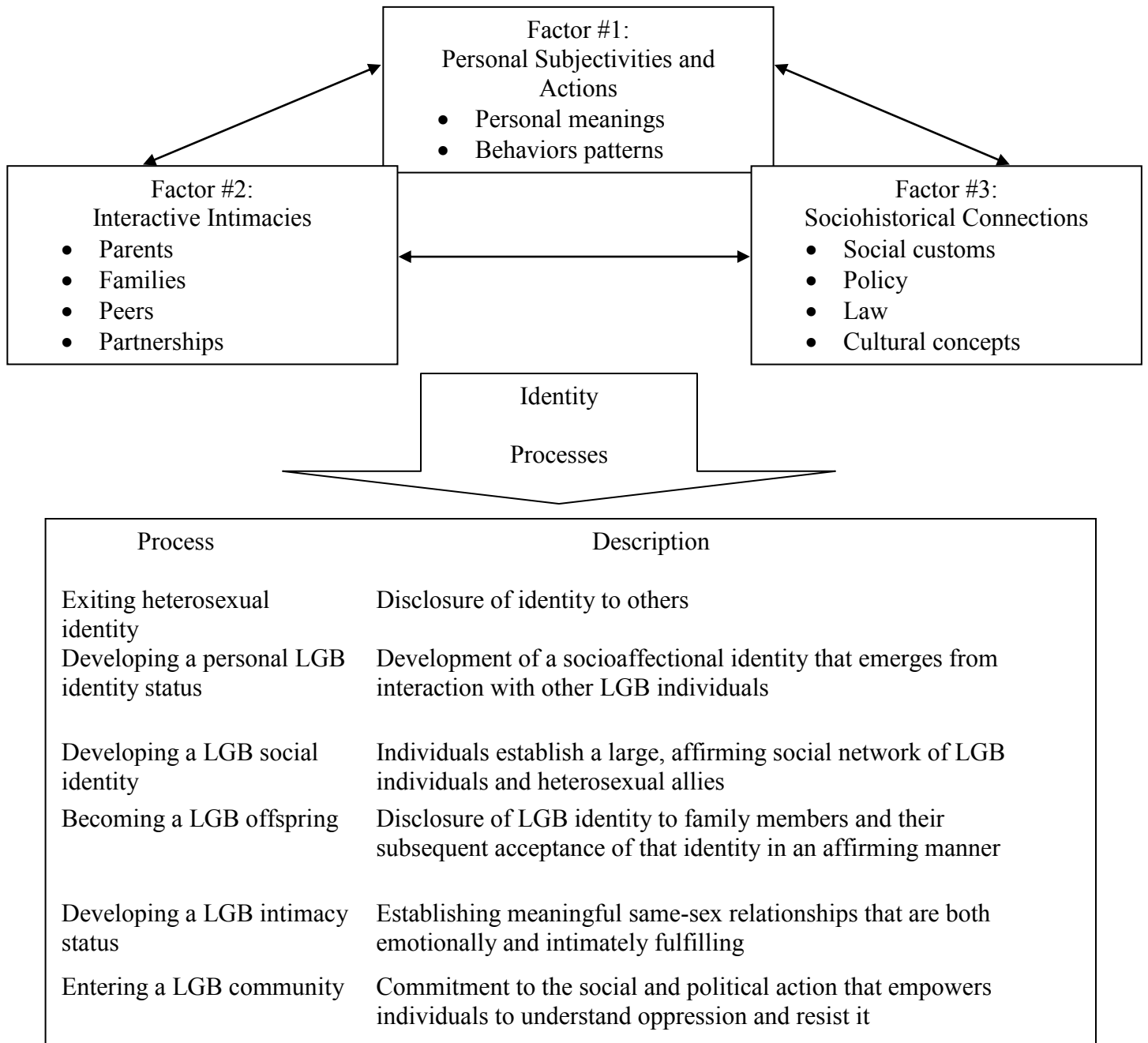


Figure 5.1 LGB Identity Development Model

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

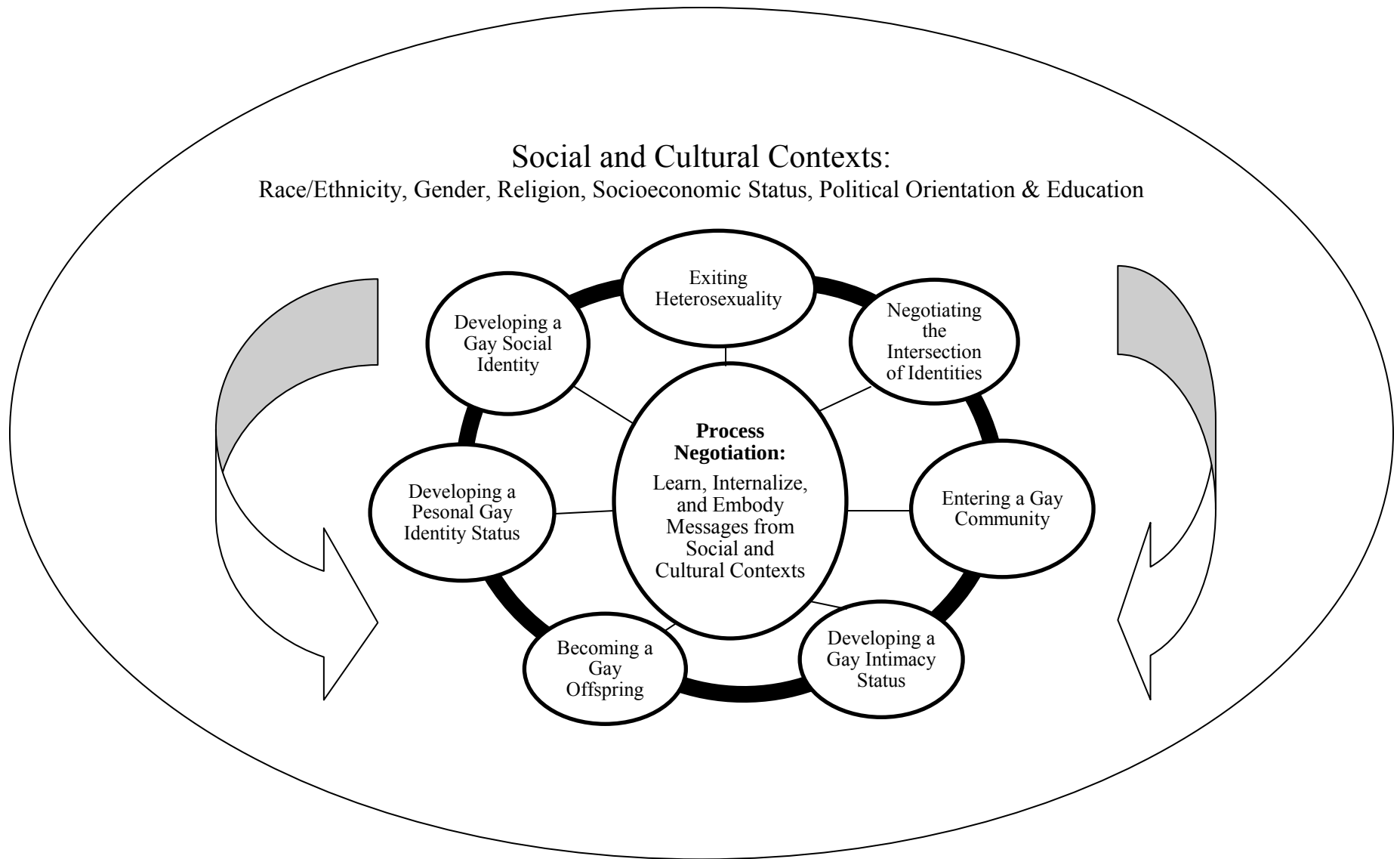


Figure 5.2 Revised Gay Identity Development Framework

Vita

James M. DeVita was born in Sayre, PA and grew up in Owego, NY where he graduated from Owego Free Academy in 1996. James received his BA degrees (2000) in History and Sociology-Anthropology from Colgate University, and his MS degree (2007) in College Student Personnel and PhD in Higher Education Administration (2010) from The University of Tennessee in Knoxville (UTK). James' prior professional experiences include serving as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Initiatives Coordinator and Assistant Director of the Center for Leadership and Student Involvement at Colgate University. During his doctoral studies, James served as a Research Associate for the Center for Higher Education Research and Policy (CHERP) at UTK, where he also served on the Commission for LGBT People and assisted with the development of the Safe Zone training program and LGBT and Ally Resource Center. Additionally, James was an adjunct instructor in the Dance Program at UTK and served as the Co-Director of the UT Dance Company from 2008-2010.

James has been actively involved in numerous national and international organizations in Higher Education and Student Affairs, including the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), College Student Educators International (ACPA), and the American Education Research Association (AERA). He has collaborated on several research publications and grant projects, most recently publishing "African American Males' Student Engagement: A Comparison of Good Practices by Institutional Type" in the *Journal of African American Studies*, "Measuring the Impact of a Summer Bridge Program on Underrepresented Minorities' Academic Skill Development" in NASPA's *NetResults*, and "Factors Affecting the College Choice and Retention of African American Gay Male Undergraduates" in the *NASAP Journal*. His dissertation, titled "Gay Male Identity in the Context of College: Implications for

Development, Support, and Campus Climate,” included three distinct articles that utilize multiple regression, case study, and visual ethnography, respectively, to examine the gay identity development of college students.

James has co-taught graduate courses titled “The College Student” and “Statistics for Applied Fields I.” He has also taught undergraduate courses in College Success and Counselor Education. His primary research interests include: LGBTQ issues in higher education, the intersections of gay identity with other aspects of identity (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, and religion), research pedagogy in graduate preparation programs, and issues of transition, access, and retention for targeted populations in higher education. James will be joining the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Iowa State University in Fall 2010 as a faculty member in the master’s program in Student Affairs.