

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Issues in Higher Education

Qualifying Paper

Shaun Travers

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

December 2006

### Abstract

A review of the scholarly literature regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues in higher education settings is presented. Methodological issues in the literature are discussed, including the accessing populations, sampling concerns and sexual identity labels. Five major themes are reviewed in the literature including campus climate issues, the student affairs practice of working with LGBT students, issues related to multiple identities, emerging LGBT identity development models, and empowerment. Areas for further research are reviewed.

## Introduction

An exhaustive review of the research and scholarship on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Centers in higher education yields only two empirical studies. Indeed, scholars lament the lack of research on LGBT college students in general (Bieschke, Eberz & Wilson, 2000; Croteau & Talbot, 2000; Rankin, 2006; Sanlo, 2004) at best referencing a “modest body of scholarship” (Renn & Bilodeau, 2005, p. 342). Absent empirical investigation, university leaders rely on intuition, emotion and popular knowledge when addressing concerns regarding sexual orientation and gender identity across campus life.

Beyond the research on LGBT Centers specifically (Ritchie & Banning, 2001; Sanlo, 2000b), scholarship regarding LGBT higher education students stands worthy of review. In examining the current state of research regarding the topic five major, overlapping categories emerge. These include LGBT campus climate issues (Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, & Robinson-Keilig, 2004; Evans & Broido, 2002; Evans & Herriott, 2004; Nauta, Saucier & Woodard, 2001; Rankin, 2003; Sears, 2002; Waldo, 1998), the student affairs practice of working with LGBT students (Beemyn, 2005; Beemyn, 2003a; Meyer, 2004; Sanlo, 2000; Sanlo, 2004), issues related to multiple identities (Clark, 2005; Harley, Nowak, Gassaway, & Savage, 2002; Love, Bock, Jannarone & Richardson, 2005; Valadez & Elsbree, 2005; Yeung & Stompler, 2000; Yeung, Stompler & Wharton, 2006), emerging LGBT identity development models on college campuses (Abes & Jones, 2004; Konik & Stewart, 2004; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005a; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005b; Stevens, 2004; Tomlinson & Fassinger, 2003) and empowerment (D’Augelli, 1998;

Meyer, 2004; Stevens, 2004). As with many emerging fields, the bulk of the work explores experience through qualitative analysis.

In addition, there are fundamental challenges to discovering the experiences of LGBT people. Methodological issues include accessing populations, sampling concerns and sexual identity labels. These methodological realities impact the quality of current research. They also inform the directions for further study.

Although limited, several important findings advance our understanding of LGBT Centers and people in higher education. Researchers have developed and tested LGBT identity development models (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). Studies show that involvement in college life positively affects LGBT students' identity development (Konik & Stewart, 2004). Further studies indicate that campus climate affects students' social and emotional development, as well as their academic performance (Waldo, 1998). Experience suggests and research confirms that LGBT people experience at best benign, and at worst hostile, campus climates (D'Emilio, 1990; Rankin, 2003).

In 1992, there were fifteen staffed LGBT Centers on college campuses; in 1996 thirty such places had been established (Gose, 1996). In 1998 Matthew Shepard, a young college student, was brutally beaten and died on a Wyoming fence post near his campus. Subsequently, there was a rise of LGBT campus activism. Now over 100 staffed LGBT Centers exist on college campuses throughout the nation (LGBT Consortium, 2006). This timing may speak volumes about nature of university leaders' response to the needs of LGBT people. Reactions to this violence, including the desire to avoid such occurrences on home campuses, may have fueled the creation of many LGBT Centers. However, the continuance of LGBT Centers now depends on objective evidence of their

ability to support the academic mission of colleges and universities. This review examines the empirical research regarding LGBT people in higher education. Further, it establishes a base of understanding and suggests directions for basic research into the effectiveness of LGBT Centers in higher education.

### *Overview*

More than 60 campuses have established LGBT Centers in the last ten years (Consortium, 2006; Ritchie & Banning, 2001; Sanlo, 2000b). The professional staffs of these Centers engage in the practice of working on LGBT issues on campus. To what degree is that work informed by empirically evaluated practices? Few strategies have been rigorously investigated. Of the studies that have been completed, many do not relate directly to the services provided by most campus LGBT Resource Centers. This student affairs field evolves into a profession as more and more LGBT Center staff members continue to seek guidance in daily practice.

Two books provide direction to the work of LGBT Center Directors. *Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Colleges Students; A Handbook for Faculty and Administrators* (Sanlo, 1998) and *Our Place on Campus: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Services and Programs in Higher Education* (Sanlo, Ranks, & Schoenberg, 2002) serve Directors of LGBT Centers well. The titles provide accurate descriptors of the books' purpose and contents. Chapter written by scholars and practitioners in the field provide practical guidance and reference to this emerging area. Few other student affairs fields have investigated their practices regarding LGBT students empirically.

First, this paper will examine the call to do the work of LGBT Centers. Next, an overview of the methodological challenges will be discussed, including the enigmatic nature of defining sexual orientation. After this, five themes present in the literature will be highlighted. Then voices that have been heard, and those that have not, will be highlighted. In conclusion, future areas for research will be discussed.

*The call to do this work*

The call to do the work of LGBT Center is twofold. The first relates to violence and harassment. Researchers not specifically investigating LGBT people documented harassment and violence towards, and suicide within, the LGBT higher education community (Carr & Ward, 2006). Carr and Ward recommend the creation and strengthening of LGBT Centers on campuses in response to this violence. The second, broader layer of the call comes from within the LGBT higher education community. Nationwide, LGBT Center work links with many campus social justice movements (D'Augelli, 1989; Sanlo, Rankin & Schoenberg, 2002). The presence of violence and harassment, as well as the desire for inclusion and justice, precludes the creation of Centers. Therefore, LGBT Centers and their establishment are not predicated on the idea that they will directly support the academic mission of the institution. They exist to reduce violence and harassment, and as an effort to provide inclusion and promote social justice.

Academic missions of institutions drive all students, including LGBT students. However, levels of academic achievement within the LGBT student community are unknown. Neither GPA measures, graduation rates, levels of acceptance into graduate schools, nor other achievement measures have established the academic performance of

LGBT students. No empirical studies have been found that address these issues.

However, the focus for all student affairs fields has been made clear. Student affairs work centers on student learning and supporting the academic missions of the institution (American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1997).

LGBT Directors are then situated in unique positions as scholar-practitioners. Directors have an unexplored field to empirically investigate successful student learning and academic achievement strategies. National and institutional level campus climate surveys discuss the environmental impacts of colleges and universities on LGBT constituents (Rankin, 2003). Results of these surveys indicate a gap in how heterosexual and non-heterosexual students experience the higher education environment. There may be an academic achievement gap for LGBT students as well. Institutions of higher education can investigate their academic impact on LGBT students. The data collection and analysis would be groundbreaking.

There are no national or state-wide data sets regarding LGBT achievement gaps in either K-12 or higher education (J. W. Koschoreck, personal communication, March 27, 2006). However, achievement gaps in communities of color have been empirically shown (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2006). LGBT people come from all racial/ethnic backgrounds. Logical extension suggests an achievement gap within the LGBT community. Achievement gaps affect LGBT people of color in the same way they affect heterosexual people of color. LGBT Directors must address the racial achievement gap in order to serve LGBT student of color. This, and many other issues, link these

communities. Social justice goals, including the reduction of achievement gaps, lead to the establishment of Centers. This connection strengthens the call to do this work.

### *Methodologies*

There are weaknesses related to the methods by which LGBT people in higher education are studied. The most salient issue for quantitative research concerns sampling bias. Every study reviewed noted this. All quantitative studies reviewed utilized a convenience sample or snowball method to reach LGBT people. In brief, easily accessible participants are contacted to participate. This is the definition of a convenience sampling. In the snowball method, these participants agree to reach out to similar others to participate. In these cases, the similarity is sexual orientation. This snowball method achieves a high rate of return. This return amount ensures some ability to statistically analyze the data. However, there is no clear sense of the size of LGBT populations (Pruitt, 2002). Creswell (2005) discusses the snowball method in detail. Most importantly, Creswell notes that this nonprobability sampling method makes statistical generalizability to a population impossible. The quantitative studies reviewed discussed this limitation extensively. However, as described in Jaeger (1988), substantive generalization is possible even when statistical generalization is not possible.

Substantive generalization refers to two areas: the *respondent* and the *responses* (Jaeger, 1988). *Respondents* must understand and interpret the questions correctly, and answer them honestly. The *responses* must be recorded and interpreted accurately. For a study to have substantive generalizability, both the respondents and the responses must be trustworthy.

Overall methodological design provides a key criterion to evaluate empirical studies. For most studies of LGBT people statistical generalization is not possible. The convenience and snowball sampling method causes this. Inherent difficulties exist in randomly accessing LGBT populations on college campuses. Homophobia, fear of having sexual orientation revealed, lack of trust in research and researchers, and the harassment and violence towards LGBT people contribute to this inaccessibility. Therefore, substantive generalizability carries the bulk of the weight towards credibility and usefulness of quantitative analyses of the LGBT experience. That is, researchers make the case for the honesty of their respondents and accuracy of the responses.

The qualitative studies reviewed also utilized either convenience or snowball methods of determining participants. However, within the methodological framework of qualitative studies these approaches do not inherently create limitations. Snowball sampling and convenience sampling provide a richer, thicker source of data for the qualitative researcher.

Documenting the experiences of LGBT people on campus has proven to be a challenge for many reasons. Sampling methods confound researchers, especially in quantitative methodologies. In qualitative and quantitative investigations the labels *lesbian*, *gay*, *bisexual* and *transgender* as sexual identity markers present particular problems. Both Eyermann and Sanlo (2002) and Rankin (2003) discussed the methodological challenges related to sexual identity labels. It is difficult to capture a sample of the population of interest. The most common strategy employs the traditional labels of homosexual and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender. This method, however, may unintentionally leave out many within traditional college-age populations. The

nature of the coming out process causes this. A student may be able to articulate feelings of attraction to the same-sex. However, the labels lesbian, gay and/or bisexual may not have been adopted.

The adoption of a sexual identity label has been theorized to be both a stage in the coming out process (Cass, 1979) as well as an ongoing process in sexual identity development (D'Augelli, 1994). Regardless of the label's role in identity development, labels confound methodological construction of research into sexual minority constituents on campuses. Researchers must make difficult decisions on how they will ascertain the sample of the population. That sampling effects statistical and substantive generalizability to the diverse community of LGBT people.

Rankin (2003) articulates the multitude of labels that LGBT people in higher education utilize. The author expands on the inherent white construction of the *lesbian*, *gay*, *bisexual* and/or *transgender* sexual identity markers in particular. Little research exists regarding non-white sexual minority populations on college campuses. The issue of sexual identity labels increasingly has relevance for researchers attempting studies which bring to the forefront previously marginalized populations.

Recent writings regarding this issue call for a fundamental change of nomenclature. Greenfield (2005) posed a theoretical challenge to the label *sexual orientation*. The author argued that by its very definition, sexual orientation as a sexual identity marker supports heteronormative hegemony. In other words, *gay*, *lesbian* and *bisexual* are used only in deference to a presumed heterosexual/straight world view. This hegemonic world view assumes the dominance of straight people and the subjugation of others. Greenfield indicated that these markers should be replaced by a less value-laden

and more accurate descriptor. “Relational orientation” (p. 309) is recommended.

However, labels within relational orientation are not posed. Scales of relationships take their place, describing degrees of sexual, emotional and romantic attraction to one or both genders. This theory builds on the original work of Klein (1993) on bisexuality and the complexity of sexual orientation.

The Klein (1993) Sexual Orientation Grid measures seven components of sexual orientation: attraction, behavior, fantasies, emotional preference, social preference, lifestyle and self-identification. The grid uses a 1-to-7 scale, with one representing an exclusively heterosexual persuasion and seven representing an exclusively homosexual one. The Klein Grid also measures each of these components over three different time periods, namely past, present and ideal. This analysis allows for more nuances when defining sexual orientation. How a person perceives his or her sexual orientation may change over time, and Klein advocated for a less restrictive approach to labeling human sexuality.

There are ongoing and evolving ways that non-heterosexual communities understand and define themselves. Sampling methods must account for this. Quantitative studies may be challenged by this defining process. Qualitative studies enhance the understanding of it. Much recent research employed multiple methodologies in attempt to reconcile these competing factors.

An analysis of this research revealed five broad categories: campus climate, student affairs practice-related issues, multiple identities interactions, LGBT identity development models and empowerment. These categories provide a framework for understanding the literature. The analysis reveals voices that have been amplified and

those that have gone unheard. The categories also provide insight into opportunities for future research.

### *Campus Climate*

Climate surveys provide broad assessments of campus LGBT life (Beemyn, 2005; Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, & Robinson-Keilig, 2004; Rankin 2003). Assessments have ranged from national perspectives (Rankin, 2003) through campus specific (Brown, et al., 2004) to identity specific surveys (Beemyn, 2005). Authors of recent studies preferred mixed methodologies, including both qualitative and quantitative measures. Quantitative data was analyzed statistically. These data were then supplemented by qualitative information provided in the form of “free response” (Rankin, 2003, p. 51). The qualitative data highlighted the quantitative findings. The qualitative data provided a human voice beyond the investigators. Additionally, the investigations themselves can prove to be altering for those who experience campus climate surveys (Evans & Herriott, 2004). The process of participating in climate surveys can affect individuals’ perceptions of the climate, self-awareness and behavior (p. 316). All climate surveys indicated LGBT people experience varying degrees of discrimination and harassment on college campuses due to perceived or actual sexual orientation (Rankin, 2003).

Most campus climate surveys viewed a broad spectrum of the population. However, a recent research study on LGBT campus climate first narrowed the field of investigation to education professors. Sears (2002) employed a quantitative analysis across many institutions. The researcher determined the specific lens faculty utilized to evaluate the campus climate. In contrast, other recent studies sought to *describe* what was actually happening in regards to campus climate (Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, &

Robinson-Keilig, 2004; Rankin, 2003). Sears (2002) analysis represents a conscious attempt to *determine* what factor was most salient for faculty. LGBT faculty perceptions of campus climate were most affected by interpersonal interactions (Sears, 2002). These interactions were with other faculty in their unit.

This research attempted to identify the particular factors that determine campus climate for specific groups. Further, the findings may suggest specific appropriate actions. For example, interventions, aimed at improving interpersonal relationships among faculty, could change campus climate for LGBT faculty.

As indicated earlier, LGBT Centers were established to address harassment and violence, and to move towards inclusion and social justice. Most Centers' current interventions could be described as chicken feeding strategies. In other words, programming and outreach is broadly conceived and presented with offerings dispersed like feed. Self-selected participants walk in and take part. Few efforts target specific audiences or needs.

Sears' (2002) study illustrated the potential for more narrowly targeted interventions. A scholarly approach to programming would have a specific goal in mind. Such targeted strategies can be measured and evaluated to determine their effectiveness. Sears (2002) study illustrated a direction for a targeted, narrow intervention. An intervention that affects the interpersonal relationships among the faculty may change campus climate for LGBT faculty. Designing studies in this way may help inform LGBT Centers' practice.

*Student affairs practice-related issues*

Along with campus climate, current research considers student affairs practice-related issues. In this case, practice refers to the work of higher education units separate from LGBT Centers. For example, Nauta, Saucier, and Woodard (2001) and Tomlinson and Fassinger (2003) examined career development issues, the purview of campus Career Centers. Nauta, Saucier, and Woodard (2001) contrasted LGB and heterosexual interpersonal influences on academic and career development decisions. They found LGB students perceive they receive less support and guidance regarding academic and career decisions. Tomlinson and Fassinger (2003) examined lesbian women on campus. As campus climate becomes more positive for LGBT people, so do lesbian students' vocational development. Within career services, some LGBT research has been conducted.

Evans and Broido (2002) researched lesbian and bisexual women in residence halls. This qualitative discourse articulated the homophobia and heterosexism present in residence halls (Evans & Broido, 2002). General campus climate measures often reveal this as well (Rankin 2003). Evan and Broido (2002) proposed measures for addressing the residence hall environment, including increased visibility of sexual orientation issues and education provided by residence life staff members.

These three studies (Evans & Broido, 2002; Nauta, Saucier, & Woodard; 2001; Tomlinson & Fassinger, 2003) inform the practice of other relevant student affairs units, including Career Centers and Residence Life. These units are accountable for providing services appropriate to sexual minority communities. These research findings tangentially affect the work of LGBT Directors. Directors work with LGBT students as

they develop personally and organize themselves. The next two sections on multiple identity interactions and LGBT identity development address this work more specifically.

*Multiple identities interactions*

Development of other identities parallel sexual orientation development. Ability (Harley, Nowak, Gassaway & Savage, 2002), Greek (Yeung & Stomblor, 2000; Yeung, Stomblor & Wharton, 2006), and spiritual identities (Love, Bock, Jannarone & Richardson, 2005) have all been examined. These multiple identity interactions inform the work of LGBT Centers.

Harley, Nowak, Gassaway and Savage (2002) suggested that LGBT people with disabilities face a difficult dilemma. On one hand, these individual may receive an accommodation for a disability. On the other hand, these individual may experience discrimination regarding sexual identity. This inquiry was expository in nature. It was rhetorical and less reflective of disciplined inquiry. However, the theoretical underpinnings made a logical connection. LGBT students with disabilities have one marginalized identity that has been legislated for accommodation. LGBT students with disabilities have another identity that continues to be the target of harassment and discrimination. This bifurcated treatment leads to complex identity negotiation within these individuals.

In contrast, the privileges that come with joining an all male fraternity can be combined with the experience of being a sexual minority. Yeung and Stomblor (2000) and Yeung, Stomblor and Wharton (2006) investigated this phenomenon. The researchers examined young men in gay fraternities. These students' lives were explored through rigorous, qualitative methodologies, uncovering troubling connections between

masculine hegemony and the construction of gay identity. Within a fraternity setting, replications of masculinity become definitions of gay identity (Yeung & Stompler, 2000; Yeung, Stompler & Wharton, 2006). One marginalized identity (sexual minority status) and one privileged identity (masculinity) created a marginalized identity validated by sexist behavior.

Love, Bock, Jannarone, and Richardson (2005) examine a different intersectionality. These researchers plumbed the depths of spirituality in connection with sexual orientation. The struggles of identity negotiation were categorized as reconciliation, non-reconciliation and undeveloped (p. 193). Reconciliation indicated an intense struggle that had come to conclusion. The conclusion allowed for the student to retain and meld both a faith based identity and a developed sexual identity. Non-reconciliation implied the same struggle between sexual and spiritual identity, but without a conclusion that allowed for melded identities. Sexual identity came to the foreground. Spirituality remained in conflict. The final category, undeveloped, indicated no struggle and no melded identities. These students lived two separate lives, one of faith (or lack thereof) and one of sexual identity. These categories illustrated the complex identity interactions for LGBT students' spirituality.

All of these authors examined similar phenomenon through a qualitative lens. Multiple identities interplayed within the development of LGBT college students' lives. Research often highlights racial/ethnic identity as an area of specific interaction. As was previously discussed, sexual identity markers have been described as racially white constructs (Rankin, 2003). LGBT identity development models begin to address racial/ethnic identity.

*LGBT identity development models*

Recent research examined sexual minority identity development regarding its obvious foil, heterosexuality. Konik and Stewart (2004) provided a quantitative analysis of sexual identity development and global identity development through the lens of compulsory heterosexuality. The study had an exclusively white sample. However, it was well constructed and methodologically sound. The study provided strong evidence that the lived experience of white LGBT identified people increases their overall identity development. This pace of development was accelerated beyond their heterosexual counterparts. In other words, white LGBT students were more psychologically developed than their straight counterparts. Additionally, overall psychological development was achieved more quickly. This is particularly powerful given the context of compulsory heterosexuality. Sanlo, Rankin and Schoenberg (2002) describe compulsory heterosexuality as:

... a systematic set of institutional and cultural arrangements [which] exists that rewards and privileges people for being or appearing to be heterosexual while establishing potential punishments or lack of privilege for being or appearing to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. (p. 7)

Although observational and cross-sectional in design, Konik and Stewart's (2004) composition addressed the weaknesses of the type of study (and this study in particular) frankly. The methodological strengths of the study lend powerful weight to the findings. The results are only generalizable on substantive grounds. They indicate that the struggle of being a member of the white LGBT community actually spurred global psychological

identity development beyond that of heterosexual counterparts (Konik & Stewart 2004, p. 836). This held true even for closeted members of the community (p. 838).

On methodological grounds this study was of the highest quality. The authors clearly explained the methodology, its strengths and weaknesses, and the applicability to other settings. The instruments used were both reliable and valid. A free response mechanism was also utilized. The mixed-methods design informed conclusions drawn from the primarily quantitative analysis. Konik and Stewart (2004) also enumerated numerous areas for further research. Longitudinal designs, an ethnically diverse sample, and an examination of the issue across wider socio-economic strata all are potential areas for new research. The authors also point to other literature which supports the conclusions drawn from the cross-sectional approach. Issues of validity regarding the sample, which always occurs with the snowball method, are addressed by the researchers.

With this said, Konik and Stewart's (2004) transparency regarding all of the issues of reliability, validity and methodology make the study one of the most sound regarding sexual identity and college students. That the struggle of being a member of the LGBT community actually spurred psychological identity lends itself naturally to questions to other oppressed identities.

This advanced development may be especially prescient for members of communities of color that Konik and Stewart (2004) did not examine. Valadez and Elsbree (2005) illuminate the role of Latino culture and queer culture, and the role the queers of color play on negotiating the crossing between cultures which the researchers, as faculty members, have played. The narrative inquiry revealed complex, sophisticated descriptors of the experiences and roles that "queer coyotes" (p. 174) played within an

educational setting. Queer coyotes are the parallels to the trans-border coyotes that bring immigrants across the physical border from Mexico to the United States. *Coyotes* refers to the people who transport immigrants across the U.S. – Mexican border in violation of U.S. federal law. Trans-border coyotes help those crossing the border through difficult and complex terrains. As faculty in schools of education, these *queer* coyotes were uniquely placed to guide multiple members within the higher education community (other faculty as well as staff and students) through the terrain of multiple identities.

Clark (2005) provided a qualitative insight into the lives of three people of color through intersectional analysis methodology. Intersectional analysis “enables race and gender and socioeconomic class, etc., to be woven together in a complex, competing and synergistic, complementary and cacophonous, ultimately tapesterial manners toward the chrysalis or more exacting sociopolitical realities” (p. 46). In other words, the qualitative design provided for rich, complex description. The author utilized the data to clearly articulate the intricate nature of identity intersection. The study explored the lives of one Latino, one South Asian and one African American. Clark’s findings positioned LGBT people of color as uniquely able to address social justice both in the academy and in an emerging global society.

Valadez and Elsbree’s (2005) piece and Clark’s (2005) study were the only recent articles that specifically highlighted the voices of a particular group of people of color to the exclusion of all others. Beyond these two studies, the empirical literature reviewed invariably did one of three things regarding race/ethnicity. If it was quantitative in nature, it either examined only white people because not enough people of color returned the instrument (for example Konik & Stewart, 2004), or it lumped all people of color

together to achieve statistical viability (for example Rankin, 2003). Both of the examples cited noted the weakness within their study. If it was a qualitative study, it provided a so-called balanced perspective by having relatively equal numbers of white people and people of color (for example Stevens, 2004).

The Stevens (2004) research placed seven white experiences against an apparently generalizable person of color experience within the college environment. Seven participants were white, one was black, one Filipino, one Latino, and one person of a mixed white and Latino heritage. This qualitative approach does not address the issue of perceived generalizable person of color experience. Although every scholar acknowledged the difficult choices, these paths lead to a continued dead-end silencing of particular queers of color within the literature. White experience is highlighted as the predominate LGBT experience. People of color experience counterpoints white normativity.

The role of leadership development and LGBT identity development emerged as an area of inquiry (Renn & Bilodeau, 2005a, 2005b). The studies examined the intersection of leadership development and LGBT identity development. In contrast to all other authors who have recently examined identity development (Abes & Jones, 2004; Meyer, 2004; Stevens, 2004), Renn and Bilodeau “propose conceiving [of] student leadership itself as a way to develop [LGBT] identity.” (2004, p. 68). For the first time in the literature the potential for dialogical point and counterpoint to the ideas proposed regarding LGBT identity development is seen.

Whereas Abes and Jones (2004), Meyer (2004) and Stevens (2004) all see the potential for intersection among developing identities, none have posited that the

development of one may actually catalyze another. Stevens (2004) did see an interaction between multiple identities, as did Abes and Jones (2004). However, both authors examined pre-existing, marginalized identities (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity). Meyer (2004) studied the concept of leadership identity development only through examining group communicative behavior. This analysis did provide insight into the function of identity intersection (LGBT identity and student leader identity) as a developmental piece among the subjects. The nexus of Renn and Bilodeau's (2005) work on leadership development and Meyer's (2004) work on organizational development is certainly an area ripe for future research.

### *Empowerment*

LGBT student organizations have been active on campuses since 1968 (Beemyn, 2003b). However, only one empirical study of LGBT student organizations has been recently completed (Meyer, 2004). The findings parallel another study that focused on the identity development of gay men on campus (Stevens, 2004). The common term offered by both Meyer and Stevens was "empowerment" (Meyer, 2004, p. 508; Stevens, 2004, p. 198). D'Augelli (1989) first discussed issues of empowerment and the LGBT community on campus. A deeper examination of these three studies illuminates this key category.

D'Augelli (1989) examined the development of the visibility of lesbians and gay men on one campus in particular. The author utilized an interpretive analysis approach. D'Augelli examines historical events from a specific framework. In this case, the framework was power and empowerment. D'Augelli primarily described empowerment as a theoretical construct. The framework provided an analytical tool to understand the

development an LGBT organization. It was used to describe the changing policies of the university administration towards LGBT people. In summary, D'Augelli positioned empowerment as coming from institutions that "treat... people with mutual respect, acknowledge their needs and strengths, and change in ways that promote development" (1989, p. 135).

Stevens (2004) utilized empowerment as the central theme of gay men's identity development. The concept of empowerment was drawn from grounded theory which explained development through a college environment. Steven interviewed eleven undergraduate male students. Those selected for study maximized the variation of the sample. The words and stories were analyzed using constant comparative analysis, the primary form of data interpretation and coding in grounded theory.

Finding empowerment emerged as core category of the study. All other observed phenomenon revolved around this central tenet. Empowerment was an "inner strength" (Stevens, 2004, p. 198) that initially fluctuated, but over time was solidified inside individuals. The positioning of empowerment internally allowed for less environmental influences to have negative impacts.

In contrast, but also developed through a grounded theory approach, Meyer (2004) positioned empowerment on one end of a spectrum of tension for LGBT organizations (the other being disempowerment). In this study, the researcher employed a broader ethnographic approach. Data collection included participation in meetings, document examination, observation of events and in depth one-on-one interviews. The data analysis followed a similar approach to the aforementioned Stevens (2004) study.

Empowerment as understood by Meyer was also an internal, and often expressed itself as “individual expression of identity” (2004, p. 508). The disempowerment from the other end of the spectrum was described as externally created. However disempowerment was created by two elements: political visibility and political action. In other words, the practice of being out in public created situations and environments that were disempowering. The tension creating between empowerment and disempowerment was navigated by disclaiming traditional sexual identity markers: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender. The methodological concerns regarding accessing this community mentioned previously, especially in terms of these markers, may provide ways to address this tension.

Analyzing these three concepts of empowerment reveals some interesting comparison and contrasts. First, empowerment seems to continue to be a key theme of LGBT identity and LGBT organizational development on campuses. D’Augelli (1998) centers empowerment in the institution. In contrast, Stevens (2004) centers empowerment in the individual. Meyers (2004) synthesizes these two views into a spectrum, with empowerment being internal, disempowerment coming from external situation, and the spectrum being navigated by students daily.

Given the nature of interpretive analysis and grounded theory methodology, this concept of empowerment appears to be on the cusp of describing phenomena that may be well served by other methods of inquiry. Where does empowerment lie? If empowerment is a key to both individual development among gay men, and also a key factor in the development of LGBT organizations, how then do Directors of LGBT Centers empower their students and organizations? What methods and strategies can be

put in place that give power to students, and then provide evidence that they actually were empowered? How do LGBT Centers and their Directors empower individuals and institutions? How is the empowerment-disempowerment spectrum navigated for positive growth and change? These questions have yet to be answered in the literature. This key category allows for deeper scholarly discourse on the subject, and positions empowerment as an area in need of further inquiry.

*Voices heard/ voices unheard*

Along with empowerment, Stevens (2004) also provided a gendered counterpoint to a study of lesbian identity completed by Abes and Jones (2004). Narrative inquiry methodology (see Evans & Broido, 2002) led the researchers in the lesbian study. However, both Stevens and Abes and Jones were purposeful in their sampling of participants. This intentional sampling privileged and balanced voices of marginalized communities within marginalized communities. In this instance, the voices are people of color and women within the LGBT community. Both investigators revealed the complex interplay of sexual orientation identity development with other identities (race/ethnicity, religion/spirituality, gender). The sophistication of sampling that qualitative analysis allows provided for richer, more descriptive theory.

Both Stevens (2004) and Abes and Jones (2004) attempted to discover the complexities and permutations of sexual orientation development within the college environment. Separately, both of the articles unveiled ways that lesbians and gay men understand their identity development and found this process to parallel other developmental processes. These are important and ground-breaking studies. However, there are missing voices within these two articles that lead to further potential research

areas. What is the bisexual experience in relation to identity development? Where does transgender experience fit in to the process? Directors of LGBT Centers understand all four letters within the acronym of their Centers' name. However, more must be done to illuminate these particular communities. Although Beemyn (2003a) described strategies to address the needs of transgender college students, all interventions are anecdotal. No articles were found that address the specific experiences of bisexual people in higher education communities.

### Summary and Areas for Future Research

The current state of the literature covered a number of areas. The call to do LGBT Center work is grounded in two things. The first is the need to reduce violence and harassment. The second is the desire for inclusion and social justice. Two specific methodological challenges have been examined. Sampling issues are relevant, and generalizability is a concern. Issues related to sexual identity markers will continue to challenge researchers.

Five broad categories are present in the literature. *Campus climate* studies have been reviewed, and will certainly continue to be explored. *Student affairs practice related issues* were discussed. In particular, residence hall environments and career development have been examined. *Multiple identities interactions*, including ability, Greek life related issues, and spirituality have been researched. *LGBT identity development models* were reviewed. LGBT identity development as it relates to global identity development was extensively discussed. The interactions of multiple areas of racial identity, and the unique place of leadership development as it intersects LGBT identity, are all at the beginning stages in the body of literature. A key category,

*empowerment*, was revealed. The concept has a strong theoretical base. It was also uncovered through analysis of individual and group identity processes. It is an important aspect in understanding LGBT work

Given all of these findings, this review has found no empirically proven strategies to intervene in LGBT students lives. This is perhaps due to the complex nature of identifying as a member of the LGBT community, as well as the continued fear in collecting this demographic information from populations. Additionally, there is no data that points to the achievement gap of LGBT students. No empirical link between the communities of color and the LGBT communities has been made. New research could study numbers of LGBT people that are present in a normal distribution of the population. Logical extensions could highlight the achievement gaps that may be affecting LGBT students of color.

The work of LGBT Directors is new. Therefore, the scholarship in the field is also new. Because many of the scholars within the field are also practitioners, the level of production of scholarship has been slow. Much has been theorized about human sexuality. Much has been written about sexual identity development. Little of it pertains to the day-to-day work of LGBT Directors in the field.

As institutions of higher education continue to support Centers on campuses, their effectiveness will be evaluated. Are LGBT Directors making a difference academically? If so, can they provide evidence for it? And if they can, will the sample used be only white? Will only gay and lesbian experiences be highlighted, to the exclusion of bisexual, transgender and other unlabeled communities? Too many of the quantitative studies reviewed point to this reality. Communities of color (presumably heterosexual)

are often pitted against the (presumably white) LGBT communities. Many campuses experience the tangible tension that this match-up creates. African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans students have the greatest academic achievement gaps. If closing that academic achievement gap becomes a focus of institutions of higher education, where does this leave the LGBT community? Only by working together in specific, concrete ways will success for everyone be achieved.

## References

- Abes, E. S., & Jones, S. R. (2004). Meaning-making capacity and the dynamics of lesbian college students' multiple dimensions of identity. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(6), 612-632.
- American College Personnel Association and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. (1997). *The principles of good practice for student affairs*. Washington, DC: Authors.
- Beemyn, B. (2003a). Serving the needs of transgender college students. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education, 1*(1), 33-50.
- Beemyn, B. (2003b). The silence is broken: A history of the first lesbian, gay, and bisexual college student groups. *Journal of the History of Sexuality, 12*(2), 205-223.
- Beemyn, B. G. (2005). Trans on campus: Measuring and improving the climate for transgender students. *On Campus with Women, Spring*(34), 1.
- Bieschke, K. J., Eberz, A. E., & Wilson, E. (2000). Empirical investigations of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual college student. In V. A. Wall & N. J. Evans (Eds.), *Toward acceptance: Sexual orientation issues on campus* (pp. 29-57). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

- Bilodeau, B. L., & Renn, K. A. (2005). Analysis of LGBT identity development models and implications for practice. In R. Sanlo (Ed.), *New directions for student services* (111th ed., pp. 25-39). New York: Wiley Periodicals, Inc.
- Brown, R. D., Clarke, B., Gortmaker, V., & Robinson-Keilig, R. (2004). Assessing the campus climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) students using a multiple perspectives approach. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(1), 8-26.
- Clark, C. (2005). Diversity initiatives in higher education: Deconstructing "the down low" - people of color "comin out" and "being out" on campus: A conversation with Mark Brimhall-Vargas, Sivagami Subbaraman, and Robert Waters. *Multicultural Education, 13*(1), 45-59.
- Croteau, J. M., & Talbot, D. M. (2000). Understanding the landscape: An empirical view of lesbian, gay, bisexual issues in the student affairs profession. In V. A. Wall & N. J. Evans (Eds.), *Toward acceptance: Sexual orientation issues on campus* (pp. 2-28). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- D'Emilio, J. (1990). The campus environment for gay and lesbian life. *Academe, 76*(1), 16-19.
- Dilley, P. (2004). LGBTQ research in higher education: A review of journal articles, 2000-2003. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education, 2*(2), 105-115.

- Evans, N. J., & Broido, E. M. (2002). The experiences of lesbian and bisexual women in college residence halls: Implications for addressing homophobia and heterosexism. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 6(3-4), 29-42.
- Evans, N. J., & Herriott, T. K. (2004). Freshmen impressions: How investigating the campus climate for LGBT students affected four freshmen students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45(3), 316-332.
- Gose, B. (February 1, 1996). The Politics and Images of Gay Students. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 42(22), A33-A34.
- Harley, D. A., Nowak, T. M., Gassaway, L. J., & Savage, T. A. (2002). Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender college students with disabilities: A look at multiple cultural minorities. *Psychology in the Schools*, 39(5), 525-538.
- Konik, J., & Stewart, A. (2004). Sexual identity development in the context of compulsory heterosexuality. *Journal of Personality*, 72(4), 815-844.
- LGBT Consortium (2006). Retrieved September 23, 2006, from <http://www.lgbtcampus.org>
- Love, P. G., Bock, M., Jannarone, A., & Richardson, P. (2005). Identity interaction: Exploring the spiritual experiences of lesbian and gay college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46(2), 193-209.

- Meyer, M. D. E. (2004). "We're too afraid of these imaginary tensions": Student organizing in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender campus communities. *Communication Studies*, 55(4), 499-515.
- National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2006). Retrieved November 19, 2006, from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>
- Nauta, M. M., Saucier, A. M., & Woodard, L. E. (2001). Interpersonal influences on students' academic and career decisions: The impact of sexual orientation. *Career Development Quarterly*, 49(4), 352-362.
- Pruitt, M. V. (2002). Size matters: A comparison of anti- and pro-gay organizations' estimates of the size of the gay population. *Journal of Homosexuality* 42 (3), 21-29.
- Rankin, S. (2003). *Campus climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people: A national perspective*. Washington, DC.: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute.
- Renn, K. A., & Bilodeau, B. L. (2005a). Leadership identity development among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender student leaders. *NASPA Journal*, 42(3), 342-367.
- Renn, K. A., & Bilodeau, B. L. (2005b). Queer student leaders: An exploratory case study of identity development and LGBT student involvement at a midwestern research university. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, 2(4), 49-71.

- Ritchie, C. A., & Banning, J. H. (2001). Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender campus support offices: A qualitative study of establishment experiences. *NASPA Journal*, 38(4), 482-494.
- Sanlo, R. L. (2004). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual college students: Risk, resiliency, and retention. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice*, 6(1), 97-110.
- Sanlo, R. L. (2000a). Lavender graduation: Acknowledging the lives and achievement of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41(6), 643-647.
- Sanlo, R. L. (2000b). The LGBT campus resource center director: The new profession in student affairs. *NASPA Journal*, 37(3), 485-495.
- Sanlo, R. L., Rankin, S., & Schoenberg, R. (2002). *Our place on campus: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender services and programs in higher education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Sanlo, R. L. (1998). *Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender college students: A handbook for faculty and administrators*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

- Sears, J. T. (2002). The institutional climate for lesbian, gay and bisexual education faculty: What is the pivotal frame of reference. *Journal of Homosexuality, 43*(1), 11-37.
- Stevens Jr., R. A. (2004). Understanding gay identity development within the college environment. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(2), 185-206.
- Tomlinson, M. J., & Fassinger, R. E. (2003). Career development, lesbian identity development, and campus climate among lesbian college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 44*(6), 845-860.
- Valadez, G., & Elsbree, A. R. (2005). Queer coyotes: Transforming education to be more accepting, affirming, and supportive of queer individuals. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 4*(3), 171-192.
- Waldo, C. R. (1998). Out on campus: Sexual orientation and academic climate in a university context. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 26*(5), 745-774.
- Yeung, K., & Stomblor, M. (2000). Gay and greek: The identity paradox of gay fraternities. *Social Problems, 47*(1), 135-152.
- Yeung, K., Stomblor, M., & Wharton, R. (2006). Making men in gay fraternities: Resisting and reproducing multiple dimensions of hegemonic masculinity. *Gender & Society, 20*(1), 5-31.

