

Understanding Gay Identity Development Within the College Environment

Richard Allen Stevens Jr.

Using grounded theory methodology, the experiences of 11 self-identified gay male college students were explored to understand how the environment contributed to the exploration and development of a gay identity. One central category (finding empowerment) and 5 integrative categories (self-acceptance, disclosure to others, environmental influences, individual factors, and exploring multiple identities) emerged from the research. Findings suggested that one's sexual identity is complexly integrated and often at odds with other aspects of the individual's identity.

Identity development for gay men in college is often a significant aspect of their lives (Rhoads, 1997). Their sexual identity development is often very prominent and occurs within the context of their college experience. For some gay men their sexual identity development occurs simultaneously and in conjunction with race, gender, and religious identity development. An anonymous student said, "I am a gay man. I am going to be coming out. So I'm gonna have to deal with who am I going to tell and when and why, and who am I going to associate with, and what am I going to do" (Stevens, 1998). This article explores gay identity development within a college environment through the use of the grounded theory methodology.

Since the late 1970s, theories have emerged that address gay and/or lesbian identity. Among those models, several have

garnered attention in higher education including Cass (1979, 1984), D'Augelli (1994), Fassinger and Miller (1996), McCarn and Fassinger (1996), Minton and McDonald (1984), and Troiden (1988, 1989).

Cass's (1979, 1984) Homosexual Identity Model provided a context of homosexual identity and its dependence on the individual's interpersonal environment through six stages: identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis. Her model was linear and did not include movement back to earlier stages. She acknowledged the possibility of identity foreclosure. Troiden (1988) based some of his research on Cass, but described his four-stage model as a horizontal spiral that progresses both up and down and back and forth. D'Augelli (1994) provided a life span approach to sexual orientation identity development and emphasized six developmental tasks: exiting heterosexual identity, developing a personal gay identity status, developing a gay social identity, becoming a gay offspring, developing a gay intimacy status, and entering a gay community. He used the concept of "developmental plasticity" (p. 320) or responsiveness to environmental factors and "interindividual differences," (p. 321) which stressed the unique developmental situations for each person. The work of Fassinger and Miller (1996) and McCarn and Fassinger (1996) provided more detailed explanations of how one develops a gay identity as an individual

Richard Allen Stevens Jr. is Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at Shepherd College.

and as a member of a gay community. Fassinger and Miller's (1996) research purported that a person may experience four stages (awareness, exploration, deepening/commitment, and internalization/synthesis), but that he may not move through development as an individual at the same pace he may as a member of a community.

These models provide a broad understanding of the developmental process for gays and lesbians. However, current sexual orientation models do not readily address religious, cultural, ethnic, or racial dimensions as they relate to the development of a gay identity. A few studies provide insight into gay identity development among racial and ethnic populations (Chan, 1989, 1995; Garcíá, 1998; Loiacano, 1989; Robertson, 1997; Wooden, Kawasaki, & Mayeda, 1983), and overwhelmingly, this research reveals the struggle to integrate sexual identities with other dimensions of self. The literature also suggests indicators that identity development occurs on several dimensional levels and in conjunction with other dimensions of identity (Jones, 1997; Reynolds & Pope, 1991).

In addition to the identity process itself, environmental contexts are important to fully understand gay identity exploration. Although all students must navigate the college environment, gay students must also assess these environments for specific contextual issues concerning homophobia and heterosexism (Evans & Broido, 1999). These students must assess the environmental norms and then figure out how they fit or do not fit into their new environments. Perceptions of the environment provide one consideration when the student decides to disclose his gay identity. Current environmental models do not make recommendations on how to address minority issues in

regard to the majority environment and the incongruency that is usually inherent. Moos (1986) and Strange (1996) both posit that the dominant characteristics of a community are reflected by the dominant components in the environment. As gay men are a minority the incongruence in the environment addressing sexual orientation is generally evident.

Conyne and Clack (1981) provided a contextual model with which to reflect gay identity development. They described the environment as consisting of three components: physical, social, and institutional. Interactions can occur between two of the components and when all three interact it is described as the ecological climate. The real or perceived supports and barriers in any of these areas provide the context for individuals when assessing institutional support and/or homophobia/heterosexism.

In her research on environments, Fassinger (1991) stated that a college environment could be open, hostile, or null to gay and lesbian students. Null environments were first discussed in feminist literature and describe an environment lacking either positive or negative indicators (Freeman, 1979). Open environments invited discussion and presentations around the issues of gender, race, or sexual orientation. A hostile environment regarding sexual orientation covertly and overtly promoted and tolerated homophobia and heterosexism. For gay and lesbian students, a null environment, in many ways, was similar to a hostile environment (Fassinger). The societal stigma attached to sexual orientation could be so strong that an environment that did not actively promote and support positive actions, services, and programs, suggested that status quo is acceptable (Fassinger).

Lopez and Chism (1993) provided the most cited and useful examination of one

specific environment—classroom settings for gay men and lesbians. They found from these interviews regarding classrooms and instructors that “demeaning comments about gay and lesbian students [were] especially harmful.” (p. 98). Supportive comments on gay issues were helpful. Large classes made students wary because of the many unknowns associated with the setting—unknown people and questions of receptivity by the professor. Upper level courses were viewed as more receptive. Self-identified gay or lesbian instructors created a comfortable environment for the students in Lopez and Chism’s study.

Professors were important factors in classroom learning, and participants believed it was the instructors’ responsibility to create a nurturing atmosphere and to confront homophobic or antigay behavior (Lopez & Chism, 1993). Connelly (2000) concurred with this statement and offered a more explicit look at the types of classrooms (explicit marginalization, implicit marginalization, implicit centralization, and explicit centralization) that gay and lesbian students experienced.

In another study of environments for gay men, Rhoads (1994) conducted a 2-year ethnographic study where he examined the coming out experiences of 40 gay and bisexual college men. He addressed several themes: coming out, personal changes related to coming out including visibility issues, and negative experiences associated with coming out and their ties to harassment and discrimination (Rhoads, 1994). Rhoads (1994, 1997) suggested that the perceived freedom of choice in college, the diminished constraints of high school norms, and the visibility of gay social networks provided environments in which these men felt more comfortable exploring and disclosing their

gay or bisexual identities. However, by coming out as gay or bisexual men, they subjected themselves to direct homophobic attacks. Decisions about when and where to disclose became integral to the never-ending process of coming out because of the perceived or real issues of homophobia. The improved sense of self, self-confidence, and “state of honesty” (Rhoads, 1995, p. 70) were counterbalanced with pervasive heterosexism and homophobia in residence halls and classrooms.

Evans and Broido (1999) also conducted qualitative research that addressed the coming out process for college students in the residence halls. Through transcribed interviews with 20 men and women, 10 themes emerged from the raw data. Included in the themes were the influence that the college environment had in the coming out process, the fluidity of identity, and that identifying oneself as gay, lesbian, or bisexual depended on the setting, which included the place and the people.

In summary, the literature on sexual identity formation and the intersections of identities has grown in recent years; however, researchers must continue to explore the multiple dimensions of an individual’s identity. Research illustrates how cultural taboos and familial expectations carry great weight with many individuals and, in most cases, are contradictory to values that promote a healthy gay identity. As students come to terms with their homosexual identity, they must also explore how this identity connects or does not connect to who they are as racial, ethnic, and religious individuals. Many choose to hide facets of their identity depending on their assessment of the environment and how welcoming or not it seems to be (Evans & Broido, 1999).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to use critical incidents in the college environment to explore gay undergraduate students' identities and how these incidents interact with other dimensions of these men's identities. Flanagan (1954) developed the concept of critical incidents and the technique to explore them. This technique allowed a researcher to explore past incidents through the current interpretation by the participants. Critical incidents were the experiences that differed from what was defined as normal, expected events by the participants. Critical incidents were key in developing concepts and categories within the grounded theory paradigm. Rhoads (1997) supported this exploration, stating: "So little is known about the campus lives of gay students that making recommendations for the enhancement of their educational experiences is a hit-or-miss proposition" (p. 276). The students' voices, multiple identities, and stories provided the raw data for this grounded theory and subsequent recommendations. The initial research questions began this process and assisted in bounding the study.

1. What critical incidents have contributed to gay male identity development in college?
2. What meaning do the men attach to these incidents?
3. How does the college experience influence identity formation of these men?
4. In what ways do other dimensions of identity intersect with sexual orientation and the college environment?

METHOD

Recent examinations of sexual identity development suggest that students can move

through and revisit several stages of development as they explore their sexual orientation within the context of new environments (D'Augelli, 1994; Fassinger & Miller, 1996; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). Although these models of sexual orientation development addressed self-awareness and movement toward self-acceptance, few researchers have examined the specific influences that the environment contributes to individual and group identity development.

A qualitative approach provided a mechanism to understand the interconnections between students and their environment. With this approach, these gay men identified important characteristics and events that were personally meaningful to them. As a result, the author examined gay identity development in college using grounded theory. Grounded theory explicitly creates a plausible theory that is grounded in the data itself (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This method allows the exploration of the topic as it evolves throughout the research as opposed to testing a priori hypotheses based on previous research (Brown, Stevens, Troiano, & Schneider, 2002).

Qualitative methods such as grounded theory use techniques to impress upon the researcher and others that the product is worthy of examination—trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba proposed the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as ways to operationalize these applied criteria of trustworthiness—"truth value," applicability, consistency, and neutrality. Brown et al. (2002) addressed trustworthiness in grounded theory and reviewed how Lincoln and Guba's concepts apply to this type of research.

Participants

Eleven undergraduate male students attending a large mid-Atlantic university near a major metropolitan area were the participants for this study. The campus undergraduate population was racially diverse with significant White, African American, Asian American, and Hispanic American populations. The campus had support programs for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students and a full-time employee dedicated to sexual orientation issues. All participants self-identified as gay and had attended the university for at least 2 semesters by the final interview. These students provided the information-rich cases necessary for thick description around the phenomenon, a criterion for trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All other characteristics (i.e., age, transfer status, race, religious affiliation, etc.) of the informants were used to maximize variation of the sample. The strategy of maximum variation sampling provides information-rich informants around the identified characteristics important in this research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Ages ranged from 18 to 26. Seven of the men identified themselves as White or Caucasian. One male identified himself as White and Latino; one as Black; one as Filipino American; and one as Latino. At the time of the research, 3 men lived in the residence halls and 8 identified themselves as commuter students (6 had lived on campus previously, and 2 were transfer students). One participant lived with his gay father. Another participant's foster family was two gay men. Eight of the participants had identified themselves as gay prior to attending the university.

Procedures

Individual Interviews. This study included

three rounds of interviews by the author with each of the selected informants. Each interview lasted approximately 75 minutes and was audiotaped and transcribed the author. A transcript of each of the individual's own interviews was provided to the participant for review, comments, and additions.

Because this study was exploratory, broad open-ended questions were used to elicit initial thoughts around the phenomenon. This initial interview set a tone of trust with each participant through introductory questions. Questions for subsequent interviews were generated through the data analysis of previous interviews. Each initial interview was preceded by a brief overview of the study and with the completion of a consent form.

The second interview built on the emerging concepts and categories developed through the coding of the first round of interview data and the discussion with the peer debriefers, one gay undergraduate and two heterosexual graduate students, who served as a sounding board for the researcher. Peer debriefers provide credibility to the emerging theory as one construct of trustworthiness. This round of interviews provided breadth to a few new topics, but began to search for detail and description around the emerging concepts.

The third interview round searched for final details of the developing categories and emerging theory. The final interviews provided final details of categories' properties and dimensions. Concern for confidentiality and the one-on-one nature of this presentation provided ample reason to explore the emerging model in depth with each of the participants. General feedback about the emerging theory and its integrative and central categories was solicited and

audiotaped. This step provided individual feedback regarding the conceptual model without the peer pressure of a focus group or a breach in confidentiality. It was also an opportunity to synthesize the participants' experiences and provided closure to the process for each of them.

Focus Groups. A final, optional focus group for participants was offered. The focus group was optional to protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals. The purpose of the focus group was to discuss the emerging themes of the theory being developed, to provide a forum for dialogue among the participants, and to discuss any final questions as a group. It was also a time to present the conceptual model with its modifications and recommendations from the participants' comments during the final round of interviews. This process assisted in the final development of the theory.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a necessary component of grounded theory. This analysis is a simultaneous procedure used with data collection and provided the bases for subsequent data collection and, at the same time, the development of categories and their properties and dimensions. This constant comparative analysis is the primary form of data interpretation and coding in grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To understand the coding procedures, it is useful to understand the overarching purposes of grounded theory. The goals are to: build rather than test theory; provide researchers with analytic tools for handling masses of raw data; help the analysts to consider alternative meanings of phenomena; be systematic and creative simultaneously; and identify, develop, and relate the concepts that are the building blocks of theory

(Strauss & Corbin, p. 13).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) use three types of coding to actualize data analysis in grounded theory: open, axial, and selective coding. In open coding, researchers develop concepts that convey meaning to words, thoughts, and phrases from the raw data, and also develop concepts into abstract categories. In this process they carefully examine the participants' words and phrases to develop a theory around the phenomenon. These "in vivo" words and phrases generate the concepts and categories that eventually compose themes for an emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Axial coding also includes the continued development of properties and dimensions for the developing categories begun in open coding. Axial coding includes identifying conditions, actions/interactions, and consequences associated with a category and looking for cues as to how categories relate to one another. Selective coding is the stage where a "central category" is selected from existing categories and should "account for considerable variation with categories" (Strauss & Corbin, p. 146). During selective coding saturation, the nonemergence of new properties, dimensions, or relationships, is reached. NUD*IST (Nonnumerical Unstructured Data—Indexing, Searching, and Theorizing) Vivo (NVivo) was used to assist with the organization of data. NUD*IST provided the current researcher a tool to review and rethink the coding completed during various stages of the research, enabling the researcher to link notes and interpretations directly to a particular code word or phrase.

FINDINGS AND EMERGING THEORY

The words and stories of 11 self-identified gay men illustrated a dynamic, ongoing

process of gay identity development. The process of identity exploration and acceptance varied with each participant, but positive, supportive incidents increased comfort in the integration of their gay identity within the college environment. This researcher found that integration occurred at multiple levels within the university environment and for some participants comfort with their sexual identity permeated all of the experienced subsettings (i.e., classroom, residence hall, dining hall) in the university environment. Each new setting, novel situation, and/or different players created a new environment that the participants had to assess using past experiences, perception, and sense of empowerment.

True to the grounded theory methodology, the researcher developed a conceptual model of gay identity development consisting of one central category (finding empowerment) and five integrative categories: (a) self-acceptance; (b) disclosure to others; (c) individual factors; (d) environmental influences; and (e) multiple identities exploration. This author developed the categories through the exploration of common themes and negative cases to explain contested domains. Grounded theory requires that these contested areas be fully explored and explained in order to develop the conceptual model (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Integrative categories are the conditions, actions/interactions, and consequences that lead to the central category or phenomenon of the study. These categories are often called key or subsidiary categories (Brown et al., 2002; Jones, 1997). Central to the grounded theory methodology is the integration and connection of the various categories. *Theory*, as defined by Strauss and Corbin, is "a set of well-developed concepts related through statements of relationship,

which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena" (p. 15). The remaining paragraphs describe the model, its categories, and their connections to one another. Figure 1 visually illustrates how the categories relate to one another. This conceptual model illustrates a cycle through which the men passed. It does not, however, reflect the number of times a person moved through each of the categories.

Self-Acceptance

Self-acceptance, the self-acknowledgment and an initial incorporation of one's gay identity, or coming out to self was one entrance point into the emerging model. The process included a recognition of being different, an assumption that it was a phase through which to progress, a cessation of lies and secrets, abandonment of heterosexual privilege, and a coming to terms with one's gay identity. The men reflected on liking other males, but did not have a word for it. One participant stated, "I didn't have a word, but I knew . . . that I like guys."

Some of the participants believed that an attraction to males was a phase that led participants to avoid telling others and a denial of their sexual identity. One participant said, "I thought maybe it was just a phase or something that I was going through. I didn't really think about it much. I just thought it was part of sexual exploration." Some participants experimented sexually with other males even while they had girlfriends, passed as heterosexual to others, and struggled with relinquishing heterosexual privilege. These men had to sort out the societal beliefs about homosexuality that they had internalized: confusion about what they knew about themselves conflicted with the heterosexist norms; and confusion about

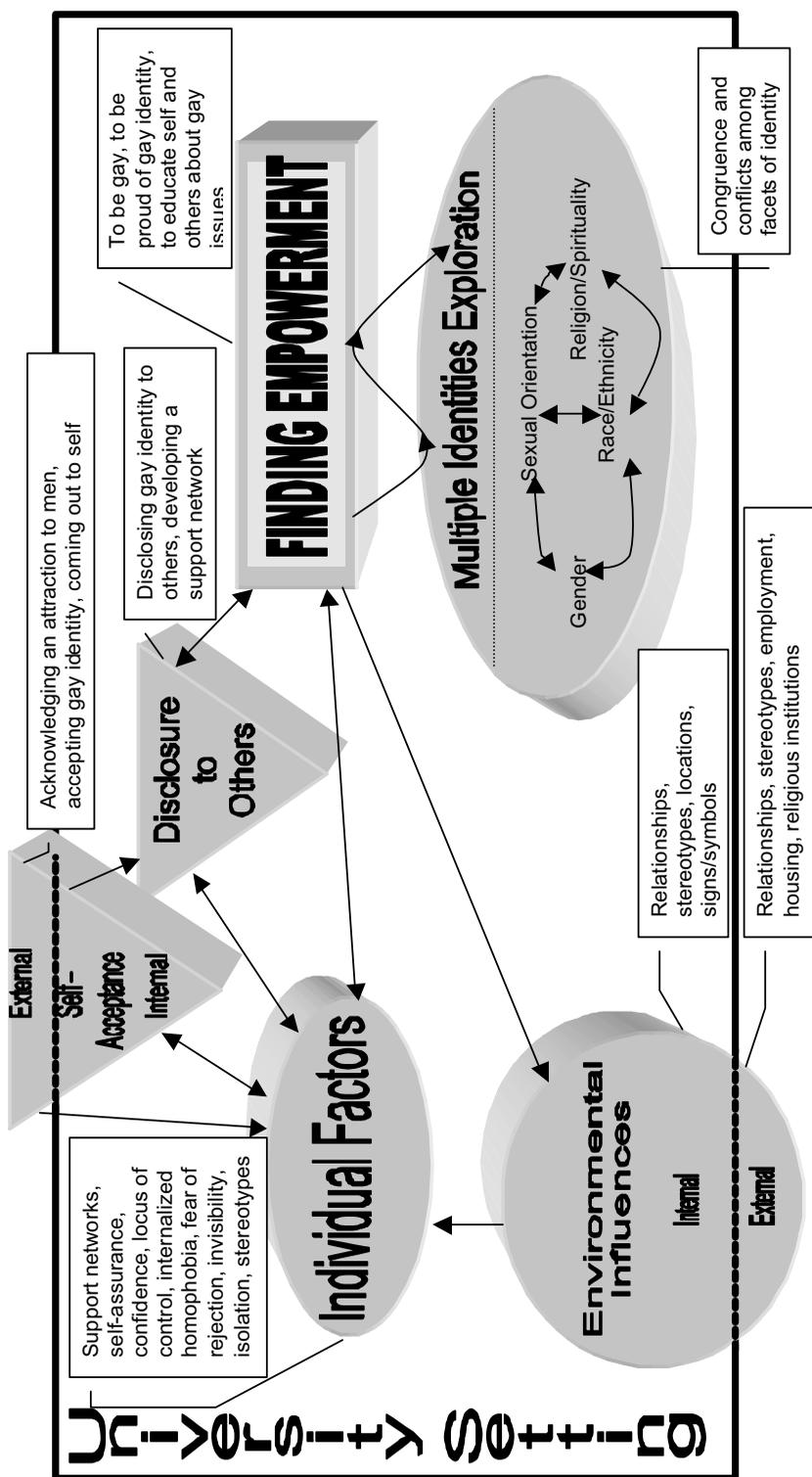


FIGURE 1. Conceptual Model of Gay Identity Development Within a College Environment

being emotionally attracted to women, but physically attracted to men. Internalized homophobia, a self-hate regarding one's sexuality, created a fear about appearing too effeminate and/or of being perceived as gay by others in the environment. Marcelo stated:

I used to have this feeling that I guess I would describe it as about being gay. I didn't really want to be identified as like other members of the community. I was scared of . . . I guess it's a lot of what you would describe as internalized homophobia. I was scared of being perceived as too effeminate.

Steve had this to say:

Being in the closet there was a lot of guilt. I mean there was a lot of negative emotions that went along with it. I was scared. I didn't want people finding out about me. I didn't know how people would react. I had a lot of problems with it. I had horrible depression because I didn't know what was going on.

Secrecy, lies, and a fear of being "discovered" were manifest in those individuals who had begun to explore their gay identity and felt they might be gay. A paranoia concerning other people's perceptions crept into their lives. Oftentimes it directly related to a sense of internalized homophobia. One student declared:

I didn't know anyone else who was gay except the very, very obvious ones, and I didn't want to associate with them because they were mainly mocked upon or harassed, and I didn't want to place myself in that position.

The almost simultaneous decision to self-accept and the assessment of individual factors blurred the starting point for the participants. Self-acceptance of one's gay identity also led to disclosure to others. In fact, the first disclosure to another person

often solidified their gay identities. For these participants, disclosure to others was never reported to have occurred before self-acceptance of a gay identity.

Disclosure to Others

Disclosure to others is the verbal or written acknowledgment of one's gay identity. The term *coming out* refers to the process of disclosure to others, but often includes both self-acceptance and disclosure to others and the often hazy line between the two. Most significant of the various disclosures were first disclosures and disclosure to parents. Both played important roles as environmental influences, and although parents and other family members were not internal to the university setting, they were nonetheless powerful influences in the lives of these men while in college.

Individual recipients of first disclosure were close friends, other sexual minorities, or both. The perceptions from these men were that these individuals could better understand who they were, their situation, and would not reject them for revealing this previously hidden piece of their identity. They often knew other people who were gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Disclosure to someone who was gay, lesbian, or bisexual greatly reduced the fear of rejection because that person was part of the same community and experienced similar feelings. The informants valued empathy given by these sexual minorities because many of them had had similar experiences. First disclosures were never with family members unless that family member was also a sexual minority. Fear of rejection from family, a part of one's core identity and source of unconditional support, hounded these men. Guilt about hiding their identity also increased with individuals who were

known longer and subsequently increased the difficulty in disclosure. Kevin said, “My parents have always been supportive of me in my academic endeavors and in my athletic endeavors, but not necessarily in my sexuality. But at the same time, they haven’t posed as much of a resistance as I would consider other parents have. They’ve been accepting, but they haven’t necessarily been supportive.” Steve shared:

To finally say something and to finally tell people, I felt as though I was kind of betraying them, that I had just lied and for me, it was good and bad. I felt that I had lied for so long that I gave up and I couldn’t lie to anybody anymore. And I had to be honest. It felt good to tell the truth. But it also felt bad and I felt guilty for having to keep it from them for so long.

Patrick stated:

One of the last sort of circle of people that you come out to is your parents or guardians, which are usually the most significant figures in life, once you’re out to them and they’re somewhat accepting and you know how they feel about the issue, you have nothing to hide from them anymore. It makes coming out to other people much . . . easier.

Disclosure to others also developed the immensely important support network that was integral to finding empowerment, the central category of this grounded theory. A support network included friends, family, faculty, staff, and peers who provided balance to the ever-present homophobia and heterosexism in the university setting. These individuals created a more welcoming environment through their supportive, nondiscriminatory, inclusive words and actions. They often acted as sounding boards

to whom the participants could confide and vent frustrations.

Individual Factors

Individual factors were defined as the assessment of personal supports and liabilities. Chief among these individual factors were perceived support networks; confidence and self-assurance; personally held stereotypes; feelings of rejection, isolation, and invisibility; and internalized homophobia. Many of these factors were part of a continuum where feelings of rejection, isolation, and invisibility decreased as perceived support networks, self-assurance, and confidence increased. Individual factors were not only the personal beliefs and values held by these men, but also the processing center for external stimuli, such as the critical events they experienced and reactions from other people in the environment. Individual factors linked closely to self-acceptance and disclosure to others.

Support networks were generated through disclosure to others including heterosexual allies as well as other sexual minorities. These networks often included accepting family members, faculty, and university administrators. When assessing whether to come out to another person or group of people, participants often used their awareness of support networks. This networking was by far the most powerful for these men in determining this empowerment. Kevin imparted, “It was not until I started developing more gay relationships and friendships that I realized that I needed these, and they helped me and they strengthened me. I think that had a lot to do with that transformation.” Rhiannon stated, “Let me get a strong support network of people who can support that, who can give me support as I am dealing with this stuff. Once I had that

support network in place, it made a difference.” Mark communicated, “There are straight people that are alliance people around and there is a big support base here on this campus. It just took me time to find it.”

Self-assurance and confidence created a sense of comfort that led to feelings of empowerment in the participants. All men had particular situations where they were more self-assured. Familiar surroundings, supportive individuals, and feelings of power increased this self-assuredness.

Participants’ personally held stereotypes about others in the environment and their perceptions of what they believed others thought about gay men played an integral role in disclosure, finding empowerment, and exploring their gay identity with other dimensions of who they were. These stereotypes included how the participants viewed other gay men. For those men who had experiences with particular groups, acknowledgment of the stereotype for what it was, was much more readily articulated. One student reflected, “I think that I realized when we were talking that I have a lot stereotypes, and I have a lot of like negative feelings. I didn’t realize how strong they were before about stereotypes in the community and about the way people interact.” Stereotypes included racial and religious groups. Religious groups, and particularly religious institutions, were viewed as homophobic and self-righteous. Effeminate gay men, those who held attributes commonly associated with women, were often pariahs in the gay community. They were shunned because other gay men, including some of the participants, did not want to be associated with the societal stereotype or be accused of being effeminate themselves. Comfort with one’s own sexual identity decreased the likelihood of marginalizing

other gay men.

Stereotypes regarding campus groups also found their way into the perceptions of the participants. Participants mentioned fraternities and athletics most often, describing both groups as hypermasculine and heterosexually focused. Fraternity houses and athletic teams were unpopular environments for gay men. Personal experiences often supported the stereotype attached with the group. Some of these experiences also often conflicted with the well-known stereotypes. However, many of the participants used brief experiences or the stereotypes with no real experiences to judge and/or avoid particular situations.

Another of the negative individual factors experienced by the men in this study was fear of rejection. Rejection was often associated with negative reactions to disclosure and often meant the emotional disconnection from close friends and family. Mentally, the men struggled with not knowing what the consequences of such rejection would be. Most lessened the impact of this barrier by developing a support network of peers and other relations to soften the blow of rejection that often did not even materialize.

Students of color also felt rejection within the gay community. Racism attached to the stereotype of the “ideal” gay man did not often fit the description of any men of color. The exception occurred with White men who found certain men, often Asian and Latino, as exotic. The men of color in this study never felt they were exotic or fit the description of the exotic. This fact often led to feelings of rejections from both communities—the gay community and the community of color with which they associated. Joe (who described himself as mulatto) shared:

You feel rejected in some way because most of this gay population looks for White guys, like guys that have blond hair and blue eyes. You kind of feel left out a little bit. And you don't feel as attractive or as desirable as another person would feel.

David, who is African American stated:

I walk into the cafeteria and the Black athletes sit in front of the doors, and sometimes I'll come in there in my effeminate wear and immediately I can hear the hussafuss [talk about him and his attire].

Feelings of rejection often led to a sense of isolation and invisibility, just as support networks decreased this isolation and invisibility. One form of isolation was often tied to a lack of disclosure to others and issues of self-acceptance. This feeling of isolation occurred when the participants felt like they were the only gay person. Isolation also occurred in students of color who often searched for other gay men of their race with whom to interact. This most often occurred with the men who had explored their racial identity more extensively.

Internalized homophobia, or "loathing being gay or suspecting that you are or trying to deny it to yourself; having hatred toward yourself for that," as one participant described it, was present to different degrees in all of the participants and had previously existed more intensely in them. Some participants experienced this internalized self-hate more often and more strongly than other men in this study. Depression, despair, and suicide ideation resulted from severe cases of this internalized self-hate. Acceptance of a gay identity helped decrease the intensity of these feelings; however, all men still occasionally felt pangs.

The balance of supports and barriers

were often influenced by the reactions of individuals in the environment to the disclosure of the participant's identity. These reactions, in turn, either created additional supports or created barriers based on the positive or negative results. Positive reactions often encouraged further disclosure to others. Negative reactions often discouraged disclosure to certain people or in certain environments.

The processing of supports and resources evident in individual factors played a pivotal role with another integrative category, self-acceptance, and the central category, finding empowerment. A positive outlook and comfort created by the perception of more supports than barriers in the environment, provided the men with the fodder to feel empowered in that environment which could be a classroom, a residence hall, or the entire university.

Environmental Influences

Environmental influences manipulated and set a context for individual factors. Influences included both those external and internal to the university setting. The research highlighted only the external influences that were provided as critical incidents for the participants. Environmental influences included relationships; locations; signs, symbols, and resources; discrimination; and stereotypes.

Relationships included all the people with whom the participants interacted—parents and other family members; faculty, staff, and employers; friends including boyfriends; roommates; other sexual minorities; and other students. The influence that each of these individuals had on the participants varied from person to person, but often influence was measured in trust and power perceived by the participant himself and

demonstrated by words and actions. The greater the trust the participant placed in an individual, the more influence this person had in the life of the participant. Likewise, the greater power (financial control, grade assignment) perceived by the participant in an individual, the more influence this person had. Marcelo stated, "It's important for me to hear a teacher address lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) issues in a very unbiased, nondiscriminatory, and also supportive way." David commented, "I would hope that if you say it you mean it. It has a power and presence for you the teacher, it has significance."

Participants frequently mentioned locations such as classrooms, housing, clubs and organizations, and places of employment as environmental influences. Many of these places were seen as welcoming and hospitable, whereas others were viewed as inhospitable, unwelcoming, and even threatening. With few exceptions (bedroom and personal space), comfort in particular locations had more to do with the people in them and the stereotypes attached to them than the actual physical space. Thomas stated:

With the RAs, I'm out to them, and I can tell them things about my boyfriend and stuff like that. But you know, off-campus work, people ask me what I did last weekend, and I can't really tell everything because I'm not sure how they'll take it or if it'll mess up any advancement opportunities.

Marcelo shared, "I felt very comfortable being out here also. I [saw] the safe space stickers a lot and I [knew] there [were] other staff and student workers in the office who were gay, open, and it was fine." Variables such as room size, location on or off campus, and population size varied from one parti-

icipant to another. Most men preferred more intimate locations—smaller spaces with fewer people for personal discussions and larger, more populated situations when they wanted to be less visible.

Several men appreciated the various ways that individuals, offices, departments, and even the university as a whole could demonstrate their support for gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals to be a visible, involved part of the campus community. They included the creation of an equity office for LGBT university members, a non-discrimination policy, and the development of the Safe Space program. Comfort in a particular environment also increased when symbols of gay pride, such as pink triangles and safe space cards, were seen on doors and worn by people as well as other demonstrations of support. Ed declared, "I certainly would feel comfortable if I saw a Safe Space sticker on the door. I like those a lot. I'm very glad that the university has a safe space program."

Signs and symbols also caused these men discomfort. Vandalism, destruction of gay-related materials, disturbing hate-filled letters in student publications, and antigay actions at support rallies illustrated to these participants that the university was not wholly a safe environment to be out as a gay man.

Discrimination from personal experience and stories from other men in the gay community were also powerful environmental influences for the participants. Perceptions regarding societal heterosexism and homophobia and their potential existence on the campus often contributed as an additional dimension of discrimination. Overt and covert discrimination based on sexual orientation were parts of the participants' university experiences, and no

university group or individual was exempt from the possibility of discriminating against the informants, although these men saw it most often in other students. Discrimination manifested itself in the form of hateful words and verbal abuse through the use of epithets, physical harassment, vandalism, and even violence.

Stereotypes, especially gay-associated ones, prevailing in the environment played important roles in the participants' perceptions of the environment. These stereotypes, as compared to personally held ones, were not always ones embraced by the participants, but were known to them nonetheless. Their own perceptions were often influenced by other people's stereotypes rather than their personal experiences.

Finding Empowerment

Finding empowerment for these men was the central category, also known as the core category, and served as a focal point of the emerging grounded theory. It was the center upon which all other categories manifested themselves. It pulled the categories together "to form an explanatory whole" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 146). It appeared frequently in the data and was abstract enough for further research and explained variations in conditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Empowerment was an inner strength in these men that initially fluctuated often given specific environmental conditions, but moved them to an inner strength that weathered more and various environmental situations. Finding empowerment contained both the internal feelings and motivations of the individual as well as the actions associated with these feelings. Finding empowerment moved men from merely accepting who they were as gay men to embracing this identity and possibly to integrating this

identity dimension with self as a whole. Ongoing disclosure and reassessment of individual factors moved these feelings of empowerment from a more contextual sense to a less contextual one. Securing power and recognizing one's locus of control were essential components to finding empowerment. This aspect, too, moved from an environmentally influenced or situational understanding given particular environmental conditions to a more internally based understanding where the participant had a self-awareness about the skills and knowledge he had to control a situation regarding his own needs and those of the gay community in general, regardless of the environmental conditions. Kevin spoke of his own process and explained that it was "not just [being] comfortable walking around campus, but actually being self-confident and self-loving." Steve explained, "I'm pretty out in every situation. If you don't have to keep it a secret and you don't keep hidden from people, it's so much easier." He went on to state:

Integrating it into who I was before was difficult transition, but once I started to do it, it became a lot easier. . . . I think a lot of it has to do with my experiences at [institution's name]. They taught me that it's okay to be gay. I don't have to lie.

The internal components included a comfort in being gay in the university environment, pride in one's gay identity, and the continuation of self-education and the education of others around gay issues such as heterosexism and homophobia, dispelling stereotypes, and equal rights including domestic partner benefits. Activism in several forms (e.g., demonstrations, panels, and newspaper articles) was a central part of gay identity empowerment. Not all the

participants had a strong sense of empowerment in the college environment, although all felt empowerment in at least one subculture in the university setting. Others had secured a more internal sense of empowerment that transcended the setting. This empowerment provided the pride to feel good about who they were and to educate themselves and others about their gay identities and the gay community. Empowerment allowed these men to disclose to less accepting people and in more difficult situations. Empowerment strengthened the individual factors for these men. Empowerment and the education of others affected the environmental influences such as correcting stereotypes and reducing heterosexism and homophobia.

Exploring Multiple Identities

The men in this study needed to have a sense of empowerment before they could truly explore how their sexual orientation intersected with other dimensions of their identity. This empowerment did not mean that the men would choose to explore these multiple identities or that they would have explored all of them. In fact, these men did not always explore how their sexual orientation intersected with other facets of their identities. However, exploration of these intersections provided a sense of empowerment for these men regarding their sexual orientation. Although all five integrative categories served as conditions for the central category, exploring multiple identities was firstly a consequence or result of experiencing the central category—empowerment—and then a consequence due to interaction of empowerment and exploring multiple identities. All the participants had explored some facets of their identities. Sexual orientation and gender were the most

commonly explored. However, students of color, and to a lesser extent White participants, had examined the intersection of their sexual orientation and race in numerous situations, and religion and sexual orientation had been explored by some of the participants as well. Identity intersection exploration ranged from no exploration to recognition of the conflicts and congruencies with their identity intersections, but limited actions to resolve issues, to immersion and reflection of an intersection or intersections that included formal courses, activism, and sometimes rejection of that former identity dimension. Nevertheless, exploring how their sexual orientation intersected with these other dimensions of identity had only occurred after the students self-identified as gay and they felt empowerment within that segment of their identity.

Exploration did not always lead to integration for the participants. No participant had fully integrated all of his various identity dimensions. Some men had resolved some of these identity intersections through foreclosure. Some had resolved particular identity integrations through reflection and acceptance, simultaneously identifying with multiple dimensions of identity. Joe stated, “I think [my sexual identity was] woven in, but I don’t think it’s an excellent job. I think it’s pretty patchy in some places.” Some had compartmentalized their identity and used their internal assessment of a particular environment to share how their sexual orientation and another facet or facets of their identity intersected.

Energy and time that each participant was able to dedicate to different intersection explorations often helped explain where the participants were. Men of color spent more time on their race and sexual orientation. The irrelevance of an identity dimension—race

with most of the White participants, religion for the nonreligious—also contributed to the lack of interest and limit of exploration by participants. Identity intersections included sexual orientation and race/ethnicity, sometimes with religion and gender as mitigating factors; sexual orientation and gender; and sexual orientation and religion.

Category Integration and the Conceptual Model

In addition to understanding the integrative and central categories, it is important to understand how each category connects to the other categories directly and indirectly. Figure 1 provides a visual model and contains directional arrows to illustrate the important relationships. The explanation that follows describes the model.

The thick border represents the boundaries of the university environment. Two categories—self-acceptance and environmental influences—had external and internal components. These categories include a dotted line of the university boundary to represent how these external aspects influence the participants and their gay identity development while in college. The dotted border illustrates the complexity of identity development and how variables are not always limited to a particular environment. This conceptual model illustrates a cycle through which the men passed. It did not, however, reflect the number of times a person moved through each of the categories.

Self-acceptance of one's sexual orientation was one point where some participants entered the model. Participants who had entered the college environment already identifying as gay began in the external section of self-acceptance. A unidirectional arrow moving from the external section of self-acceptance to individual factors illus-

trated movement into the university setting. There is a strong possibility that the arrow was bidirectional, but the research did not explore how university experiences might assist men in finding self-acceptance after college. The men in this study had found self-acceptance before or during college.

Self-acceptance within the university setting (internal section) was not necessarily a starting place for the men who did not self-identify as gay until after beginning college. Reflections of individual factors often provided the impetus to self-accept their gay identity. The almost simultaneous decision to self-accept and the assessment of individual factors blurred the starting point for the participants. The two-way arrow illustrates the reciprocity of these two integrative categories. Self-acceptance of one's gay identity also led to disclosure to others. In fact, the first disclosure to another person often solidified their gay identities. For these participants, disclosure to others was never reported to have occurred before self-acceptance of a gay identity.

Individual factors, the assessment of personal support and liabilities, linked to several of the other integrative categories. Connections to the self-acceptance category have already been explained. Individual factors also linked closely to disclosure to others. The balance of supports and barriers were often influenced by the reactions of individuals in the environment to the disclosure of the participant's identity. These reactions, in turn, either created additional supports or barriers based on the positive or negative results. Positive reactions often encouraged further disclosure to others. Negative reactions often discouraged disclosure to certain people or in certain environments. This fact is suggested by the bidirectional arrow illustrated in Figure 1.

The processing of supports and resources evident in individual factors played a pivotal role in two of the other integrating categories, self-acceptance and disclosure to others, and the central category, finding empowerment. The processing assisted the men in their decisions to come out to themselves and to others. It was also integral to finding empowerment for the participants. A positive outlook and comfort created by the perception of more supports than barriers in the environment provided the men with the fodder to feel empowered in that environment. This could be a classroom, a residence hall, or the entire university.

Finding empowerment for these men was the pivotal category. This provided the pride to feel good about who they were and to educate themselves and others about their gay identities and the gay community. Empowerment allowed these men to disclose to less accepting people and in more difficult situations. Empowerment strengthened the individual factors for these men. The two-way arrows leading from finding empowerment to disclosure to others and individuals factors depict this fact. Empowerment and the education of others affected the environmental influences such as correcting stereotypes and reducing heterosexism and homophobia. The unidirectional arrow leading to environmental influences shows this relationship.

The men in this study needed to have a sense of empowerment before they could truly explore how their sexual orientation intersected with other dimensions of their identity. This empowerment did not mean that the men would choose to explore these multiple identities or that they would have explored all of them. In fact, these men did not always explore how their sexual orientation intersected with other facets of their

identities. However, exploration of these intersections provided a sense of empowerment for these men regarding their sexual orientation, thus a bidirectional arrow.

Summary

Sexual identity development is a complex process. It is not linear; the participants often moved back and forth and through the grounded theory model multiple times and expressed varying degrees of empowerment given the contextual nature of the environment. Rhiannon shared, "People go between the different stages forward and backward depending on the situation, depending on who they're dealing with." Self-acceptance of his gay identity, supportive individuals, and environments free of homophobia and heterosexism and inclusive of diversity provided the conditions—causal, intervening, and contextual—necessary for each participant to find his sense of empowerment to be gay. Recognizing his locus of control and supports also often led to the possibility of exploring how his sexual orientation intersected with other facets of his identity. Some men moved their feelings of empowerment from the context of the environment to a more cerebral place inside themselves that defied the context. This internal sense of empowerment, however, did not eliminate some environmental assessment for safety purposes.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The critical incidents in the lives of these men centered on ongoing disclosure of their gay identity and assessment of their surroundings. Critical incidents for these men included self-acceptance, disclosure to others with particular emphasis on first disclosures and disclosure to parents, experiences with homophobia and heterosexism, and situ-

ations (i.e., classrooms, athletics, organizations, and residence halls) where sexual orientation was a welcome or unwelcome topic of discussion.

Experiences with heterosexism and homophobia on the campus were often critical incidents for the participants. Their experiences with these prejudicial actions influenced when, how, or even if they would disclose their gay identity to others. Prejudice was a frequent occurrence in university settings, including classrooms and residence halls, and has been reported in several studies (Evans, 2001; Evans & Broido, 1999; Rhoads, 1995, 1997; Simoni, 1996). Negative attitudes based on heterosexist and homophobic behaviors have been reported in faculty (Hogan & Rentz, 1996), student affairs staff (Croteau & Lark, 1995), and students (D'Augelli, 1989; D'Augelli & Rose, 1990; Simoni). Reynolds (1989) also reported that gay students perceived the university setting more negatively than their heterosexual counterparts. The participants in this study experienced similar homophobic and heterosexist attitudes in faculty and students, which often created negative experiences for the participants while attending the university. Although participants encountered negative attitudes regarding their sexual orientation in the university setting, they also experienced positive incidents in this environment. Supportive words and actions played important roles when maneuvering through the environment.

The college environment was a central focus of this grounded theory. The search for stories and incidents centered on the college experiences for these men. Although no participant was isolated solely in the college environment, it played a pivotal role in the men's sexual orientation development.

College incidents assisted several men in accepting their sexual minority status. It allowed all of the men to disclose, to varying levels, their sexual identity to others in the environment. By disclosing this identity to others, they developed further their freedom to be themselves and to explore what that meant in the university setting. High structural diversity (visible racial/ethnic and gender differences) and a general openness to difference, illustrated through words and actions of people in the college setting, provided a way for men to consider disclosure and identity exploration.

Clearly the press of the university environment was instrumental in the gay identity development of this study's participants. People and their words and actions were the most influential for these men. Evans and Broido (1999) found similar responses in their research on the coming out process in residence halls. The congruence of positive words and pro-gay actions provided situations in which these men felt more comfortable to disclose their gay identities and to be visible in the setting where the behaviors occurred.

The university environment that these men experienced contained negative attitudes including homophobic acts and heterosexist attitudes and behaviors. For men of color, racist attitudes complicated their developmental process because they often had to maneuver through homophobic tendencies in racial communities and racial prejudice in gay communities. Wall and Washington (1991) spoke to this phenomenon as did Chan (1989), Garcíá (1998), and Loiacano (1989).

Every environment that the participants discussed brought new experiences and significant insight, but the classroom played a particularly pivotal role for the informants. The classroom was a place where the men

felt less powerful because the professor was in control of situations in most instances. Although the men addressed ways that the professor could empower them as gay men, the class was often still uncomfortable because the students in them were unknown and class size frequently large, cold, and unwelcoming. Little discussion occurred in these classroom settings, which increased the participants' discomfort. Staff attitudes, actions, and words played important roles in individuals' assessment of a particular environment including classrooms, residence halls, and other campus spaces. Other researchers have provided similar findings (Evans, 2001; Evans & Broido, 1999).

The degree to which sexual orientation intersected with other dimensions of identity was the degree to which the men chose to recognize these intersections. They existed for all of the men; however, many of the participants had not chosen to explore these different aspects of their identity. Men of color in this study had more actively explored how their race and sexual orientation intersected. Gender and definitions of masculinity and femininity often had all the men of this study questioning and redefining their own definitions to avoid the feminine stereotypes often associated with a gay identity. Religious institutions and their often inflexible values that included homosexuality as a sin caused the most introspection by the men in this study.

This grounded theory suggested that for these men sexual identity development was not a linear path down which they traveled only once. The participants acknowledged that they recycled through the various aspects of the model based on new experiences—new situations, new individuals. Cass (1979, 1984) and Minton and McDonald (1984) indicated that identity formation

followed a more linear path even though it was a lifelong one. The “difference” that the men felt in the current study could be described as incongruence with the environment, or internal feelings. However, the incongruence did not always lead to action, although an aggregation of incidents did often have this result. Minton and McDonald spoke of specific tasks that, if “managed” properly, would lead to synthesized gay identity. Their conceptual model only addressed gay identity, which they clearly separated from gay behaviors. D’Augelli (1994) and Fassinger and Miller (1996) suggested that gay identity development is a process in which men recycle through various stages. The contextual nature of the environment contributed to recycling. The current research supported a similar recycling pattern through the components of the emerging theory, although this investigation did not include separate branches (individual and member of a community) as was done in Fassinger and Miller (1996). New experiences with new people and in new places contributed to this back-and-forth movement.

Over half of the participants in this study had disclosed their gay identity prior to coming to college. The men of this study who had disclosed their gay identity in high school were searching for welcoming settings that would permit sexual identity acceptance and further exploration. If the belief is that a majority of gay men are not self-identifying until *after* they come to campus, then college campuses may be less prepared for the number of gay men who are already out.

Limitations of the Study

The exploration of gay identity is a complex process that cannot be fully studied in one

research project of 11 participants. The given university environment with its size, location, and general awareness of gay issues influences individual perceptions and empowerment. Another university, different in size or geographical situation, may provide additional considerations and increased understanding of the phenomenon. In addition, the participants were all self-identified gay men. This research does not claim to address experiences of lesbians, bisexual women, bisexual men or transgendered individuals, nor does it explore men who are still negotiating an initial acceptance of their gay identity. Racial diversity, although included in this study, was at times limited to one voice for each race. Socioeconomic status and disability status were not incorporated due to the lack of diversity in these areas.

Implications for Educators

These findings provide many opportunities for educators including faculty, staff, and administrators to create more hospitable environments for gay men. Hospitable environments more readily allowed participants to disclose their gay identity and to explore what it means to be out and gay on the campus. The words and actions of the people in the university setting played pivotal roles in the environmental assessment by these men. Implications for educators in creating this more hospitable environment: (a) become more knowledgeable about sexual orientation; (b) include sexual orientation in definitions and discussions of diversity (Crouteau & Lark, 1995) and

use same-sex examples in the classroom; (c) display safe space signs and other indicators of support (Evans & Broido, 1999); (d) recognize the value of have visible gay and lesbian faculty and staff (Crouteau & Lark; Evans & D'Augelli, 1996); (e) confront homophobic and heterosexual behavior (Crouteau & Lark) and respond to harassment, violence, and vandalism based on sexual orientation in the same manner as racial incidents and sexual harassment; (f) include sexual orientation in demographic questions on survey instruments; (g) consider how students may share their sexual orientation through narrative or journal as a more private way to disclose their identity.

This study was an exploratory project to provide an understanding of the critical incidents in a college environment that influence a gay identity. The results generated a plausible theory of identity development that directly and indirectly connected five integrative categories to one central category. The research provided an opportunity to hear the voices of gay men and their narratives, and the findings highlighted the contextual nature of gay identity exploration. The research provided an examination of gay identity and its relationship with other dimensions of identity. The theory generated an additional perspective by which to explore gay identity, the influence of the environment, and multiple identity intersections.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Richard Allen Stevens Jr., PO Box 3210, Shepherdstown, WV 25443-3210; rstevens@shepherd.edu

REFERENCES

- Brown, S. C., Stevens, R. A., Jr., Troiano, P., Schneider, M. K. (2002). Exploring complex phenomena: Grounded theory in student affairs research. *Journal of College Student Development, 43*, 173-183.
- Cass, V. C. (1979). Homosexual identity formation: A theoretical model. *Journal of Homosexuality, 4*, 219-235.
- Cass, V. C. (1984). Homosexual identity formation: Testing a theoretical model. *Journal of Sex Research, 20*, 143-167.
- Chan, C. S. (1989). Issues of identity development among Asian-American lesbians and gay men. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 68*, 16-20.
- Chan, C. S. (1995). Issues of sexual identity in an ethnic minority: The case of Chinese American lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people. In A. R. D'Augelli & C. J. Patterson (Eds.), *Lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities over the lifespan: Psychological perspectives* (pp. 87-101). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Connelly, M. (2000). Issues for lesbian, gay, and bisexual students in traditional college classrooms. In V. A. Wall & N. J. Evans (Eds.), *Toward acceptance: Sexual orientation issues on campus* (pp. 109-130). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Conyne, R. K., & Clack, R. J. (1981). *Environmental assessment and design: A new tool for the applied behavioral scientist*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Croteau, J. M., & Lark, J. S. (1995). A qualitative investigation of biased and exemplary student affairs practice concerning lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues. *Journal of College Student Development, 36*, 472-481.
- D'Augelli, A. R. (1989). Homophobia in a university community: Views from prospective resident assistants. *Journal of College Student Development, 30*, 546-552.
- 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.
- D'Augelli, A. R., & Rose, M. L. (1990). Homophobia in a university community: Attitudes and experiences of heterosexual freshmen. *Journal of College Student Development, 31*, 84-91.
- Evans, N. J. (2001). The experience of lesbian, gay and bisexual youths in university communities. In A. R. D'Augelli & C. J. Patterson (Eds.), *Lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities and youth: Psychological perspectives* (pp. 181-198). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, N. J., & Broido, E. M. (1999). Coming out in college residence halls: Negotiation, meaning making, challenges, supports. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*, 658-668.
- Evans, N. J., & D'Augelli, A. R. (1996). Lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people in college. In R. C. Savin-Williams & K. M. Cohen (Eds.), *The lives of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals: Children to adults* (pp. 201-226). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace.
- Fassinger, R. E. (1991). The hidden minority: Issues and challenges in working with lesbian women and gay men. *Counseling Psychologist, 19*, 157-176.
- Fassinger, R. E., & Miller, B. A. (1996). Validation of an inclusive model of homosexual identity formation in a sample of gay men. *Journal of Homosexuality, 32*(2), 53-78.
- Flanagan, J. C. (1954). The critical incident technique. *Psychological Bulletin, 51*, 327-358.
- Freeman, J. (1979). How to discriminate against women without really trying. In J. Freeman (Ed.), *Women: A feminist perspective* (2nd ed.). Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield.
- García, B. (1998). *The development of a Latino gay identity*. New York: Garland.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Hogan, T. L., & Rentz, A. L. (1996). Homophobia in the academy. *Journal of College Student Development, 37*, 309-314.
- Jones, S. R. (1997). Voices of identity and difference: A qualitative exploration of the multiple dimensions of identity development in women college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 38*, 376-386.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Loiacano, D. K. (1989). Gay identity issues among Black Americans: Racism, homophobia, and the need for validation. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 68*, 21-25.
- Lopez, G., & Chism, N. (1993). Classroom concerns of gay and lesbian students. *College Teaching, 41*(3), 97-103.
- McCarn, S. R., & Fassinger, R. E. (1996). Revisioning sexual minority identity formation: A new model of lesbian identity and its implications for counseling and research. *The Counseling Psychologist, 24*, 508-534.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Minton, H. L., & McDonald, G. J. (1984). Homosexual identity formation as a developmental process. In J. P. De Cecco & M. G. Shively (Eds.), *Bisexual and homosexual identities* (pp. 99-104). New York: Haworth Press.
- Moos, R. H. (1986). *The human context: Environmental determinants of behavior*. Malabar, FL: Krieger.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Reynolds, A. J. (1989). Social environmental conceptions of male homosexual behavior: A university climate analysis. *Journal of College Student Development, 30*, 62-69.
- Reynolds, A. L., & Pope, R. L. (1991). The complexities of diversity: Exploring multiple oppressions. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 70*, 174-180.
- Rhoads, R. A. (1994). *Coming out in college: The struggle for a queer identity*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Rhoads, R. A. (1995). Learning from the coming-out experiences of college males. *Journal of College Student Development, 36*, 67-74.

- Rhoads, R. A. (1997). Implications of the growing visibility of gay and bisexual males students on campus. *NASPA Journal*, 34, 275-286.
- Robertson, D. V. (1997). I ask you to listen to who I am. In S. Jacobs, W. Thomas, & S. Lang (Eds.), *Two-spirit people: Native American gender identity, sexuality, and spirituality* (pp. 228-237). Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Simoni, J. M. (1996). Pathways to prejudice: Predicting students' heterosexist attitudes with demographics, self-esteem, and contact with lesbians and gay men. *Journal of College Student Development*, 37, 68-78.
- Stevens, R. A., Jr. (1998). *Ethnographic interview interpretation*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Maryland, College Park.
- Strange, C. C. (1996). Dynamics of campus environments, In S. R. Komives, D. B. Woodard, Jr., and Associates, *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (3rd ed., pp. 244-268). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Troiden, R. R. (1988). *Gay and lesbian identity: A sociological analysis*. Dix Hills, NY: General Hall.
- Troiden, R. R. (1989). The formation of homosexual identities. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 17(1), 43-73.
- Wall, V. A., & Washington, J. (1991). Understanding gay and lesbian students of color. In N. J. Evans & V. A. Wall (Eds.), *Beyond tolerance: Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals on campus* (pp. 67-78). Alexandria, VA: American College Personnel Association.
- Wooden, W. S., Kawasaki, H., & Mayeda, R. (1983). Lifestyles and identity maintenance among gay Japanese-American males. *Alternative Lifestyles*, 5(4), 236-243.