CONCEPT MAPPING AND DESCRIBING THE SOURCES OF
IMPACT ON BLACK GAY COLLEGE STUDENT IDENTITY
DEVELOPMENT AT 4-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. My family understood the importance of an education, which resulted in my being a first-generation college student. My friends, mentors, and the influential Student Affairs staff members whom I have met throughout my college years will always be amazing.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ............................................................................................................................ ii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................ iii

LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................... vii

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................ viii

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................ ix

**Chapter 1: CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE STUDY** ................................. 1

- Purpose of the Study ........................................................................................................ 3
- Definition of Terms ........................................................................................................ 4
- Background of the Problem .......................................................................................... 5
- Review of the Literature ............................................................................................... 7
  - Review of Identity Development Models ................................................................. 8
    - Chickering and Reisser ............................................................................................ 9
    - Erikson .................................................................................................................... 11
    - Marcia .................................................................................................................... 13
    - Cross ...................................................................................................................... 14
  - Review of Sexual Identity Development Theories ..................................................... 16
    - Cass ....................................................................................................................... 16
    - D’Augelli ............................................................................................................... 18
    - Comparison of Cass and D’Augelli Models ......................................................... 20
    - Coleman ............................................................................................................... 21
    - Troiden .................................................................................................................. 23
    - Fassinger .............................................................................................................. 24
  - Student Perceptions About Gay Students in College ................................................ 25
  - Studies on Gay Racial Minorities ............................................................................. 26
    - Rhoads ................................................................................................................... 27
    - Stevens .................................................................................................................. 28
    - Eliason ................................................................................................................... 29
    - Renn and Bilodeau ............................................................................................... 30
    - Tremble, Schnieder, and Appathurai ..................................................................... 31
  - Literature on the Black Gay Experience ................................................................... 32
    - Icard ....................................................................................................................... 33
    - Boykin ................................................................................................................... 33
    - Loiacano ............................................................................................................... 35
    - Crawford ............................................................................................................... 37
    - Roberts ............................................................................................................... 39
    - Richardson, Meyers, Bing, and Satz ................................................................. 39
    - Herek and Capitanio .............................................................................................. 40
  - A Review of Critical Incidents and Concept Mapping Methodology .... 41


Significance of the Study and Research Questions ........................................43

**Chapter 2: METHOD**..................................................................................45

Participants ........................................................................................................45
  Phase One .................................................................................................45
  Phase Two ...............................................................................................45
Raters ..................................................................................................................46
Measures ............................................................................................................46
  Critical Incident Technique .....................................................................47
  Paired Comparisons Questionnaire .......................................................48
Procedures ........................................................................................................48
  Participant Selection ...............................................................................48
    Phase One ...............................................................................................48
    Phase Two ...............................................................................................51
  Measure Administration ........................................................................51
    Phase One ...............................................................................................51
    Phase Two ...............................................................................................52
Data Analysis ...................................................................................................52
  Phase One ...............................................................................................52
    Theme Development ............................................................................52
    Overarching Themes ............................................................................53
  Phase Two ...............................................................................................53
    MDS ..................................................................................................54
    Clustering ...........................................................................................55

**Chapter 3: RESULTS** ...................................................................................56

Phase One ........................................................................................................56
  Categories ...............................................................................................56
  Year of Occurrence .................................................................................64
  Eventual Effect of Experience on Sense of Self ......................................66
Phase Two ........................................................................................................67
  Research Question ..................................................................................67
  Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) ..........................................................67
  Hierarchical Cluster Analysis .................................................................70

**Chapter 4: DISCUSSION** ............................................................................73

Findings in Relation to Research Questions ...................................................73
  College Experiences That Black Gay Men Perceived as Influential on Identity .................................................................73
  Perceived Effect of Experiences .............................................................76
  Conceptual Categories of Experiences ...................................................77
  Cluster Analysis ......................................................................................78
Limitations of the Study ..................................................................................80
  Participant Selection ...............................................................................80
  Validity of the Categories .......................................................................82
Directions for Future Research ......................................................................82
Implications for Practitioners .........................................................................85

REFERENCES ....................................................................................................87
APPENDICES

A. IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODELS .................................................92
B. SEXUAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODELS ..............................93
C. COLLEGE YEARS EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE ..................94
D. COLLEGE YEARS EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE
   DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ..................................................95
E. RANDOM PAIRED CATEGORY PLACEMENT CHART .................96
F. COLLEGE YEARS EXPERIENCE CONCEPT SIMILARITY
   RATING SCALE (CSRS)...............................................................97
G. PHASE ONE PARTICIPATION EMAIL REQUEST ......................106
H. PHASE TWO PARTICIPATION EMAIL REQUEST .......................107
I. RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET .........................108
J. COMBINED GROUPS SIMILARITY MATRIX ..............................111
K. INCIDENTS ARRANGED BY OVERARCHING CATEGORIES ....112
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: College and University Participants ....................................................49
Table 2: Incidents Overarching Categories .......................................................65
Table 3: Dimension Values................................................................................68
Table 4: Categories in Clusters..........................................................................71
LIST OF FIGURES

**Figure 1:** Euclidean distance model .................................................................69

**Figure 2:** Dendrogram using Ward method .........................................................70

**Figure 3:** Concept map with named clusters .........................................................72
ABSTRACT

This study examined two primary research objectives: (a) to identify the factors that traditional-age (18- to 22-year-old) Black gay college men at 4-year institutions perceived to have affected their identities, and (b) to determine how Black gay college men conceptually organized those factors of impact. Phase One of this study collected 101 experiences through the College Years Experience Questionnaire (CYEQ) from traditional-age Black gay college men. The CYEQ used the critical incident technique to collect written student descriptions about particular experiences that had influenced their sense of identity. Participants were also asked to rate their experiences on a 7-point scale to discover whether the experience was positive and uncovered the eventual effect on their sense of self. A team of three doctoral raters identified 13 categories from the 101 experiences.

In Phase Two of the study the 13 categories were used for the Paired Comparison Questionnaire in which 15 students rated the similarity of each possible pair of the 13 categories, using a scale of 1 (not at all) to 10 (very much). Using multidimensional scaling, the Phase Two responses were further analyzed and illustrated on a two-dimensional concept map that graphed the experiences for Black gay college men. The dimensions used to plot the coordinates of the 13 categories were named (a) External Challenges of Gay Identity versus Internal Challenges of Gay Identity, and (b) Gay Identity Clarifications versus Gay Identity Confusion. The hierarchical cluster analysis was used to develop five clusters to describe the categories contained in each cluster.

The 13 categories from Phase One correlated with previous research that addressed identity development for Black gay men and validated the results. The
clusters explained the support or lack of support that Black gay men receive from their institutions. The study reviewed limitations and presented recommendations for future research, and discussed implications for higher education practitioners.
College is one of the most crucial times for students because they experience positive or negative incidents that affect their identity. These experiences can shape their future existence as individuals and can influence their political attitudes, personal opinions, and perceptions about others. In fact, there are several identity development theories that attempt to explain the development process for student subgroups. The theories address how students develop their identity within particular domains and create a lens through which cognitive, affective, and behavioral actions are filtered (Fassinger, 1998). The theories also help higher education professionals to understand diverse student populations. However, the theories do not report particular experiences that influenced identity, which is an important consideration in understanding students.

Identity development theories interpret how student perceptions and attitudes may change while in college, which explains why higher education professionals commonly use them to serve student populations. Chickering’s seven vectors of development (Chickering, 1969), for example, comprise the most widely applied psychosocial theory in student development because they examine personal and interpersonal lives. The vectors are dimensions or areas of growth that help to explain the development for college students.

A review of the development process from vector one to vector seven will help to explain the progression for students that occurs during college. For instance, competence (vector one) derives from an ability to cope with problems as well as to learn how to achieve desired goals. Developing integrity (vector seven) explains the
equivalence among beliefs, actions, and personal values (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Although higher education professionals may utilize Chickering’s vectors to understand student development, it is important to consider the unique experiences of each student. These experiences can influence development and can create development stages or dimensions not mentioned by Chickering.

Erikson’s eight stages of psychosocial development comprise another psychosocial theory to explain student development: oral-sensory, muscular-anal, locomotor, latency, adolescence, young adulthood, middle adulthood, and maturity (Erikson, 1959). Within each stage, the person chooses between two possible outcomes. Each possibility challenges the person to make a choice that affects life experiences and ultimately identity development (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).

The adolescent stage (stage five) in Erikson theory describes that the choices that students make can change their identity. For example, homosexual students may choose to come out to their friends in college but not disclose their homosexuality to their parents. The chosen resolution with this conflict can influence how they develop (Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2003). The theories of Chickering and Erikson help to explain how students may develop into their identity while in college, but it is crucial to remember that variations exist and not all students will progress exactly as the theories predict.

The identity development models set the groundwork to understand students while in college, but it is important to acknowledge that experiences that students perceive to influence their sense of self will contribute to the knowledge base of identity development. Students have multiple identity characteristics that lead them into different situations and, as a result, they have different experiences that shape
their lives (Fassinger, 1998). The identity development may not be similar for all students, but the realization about diverse personal experiences will help to understand student populations on college campuses, which initial identity development studies may not consider.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the college experiences that influence the development of Black gay college men. Tremble, Schneider, and Appathurai (1989) wrote that gay minority youth experience hardships that are not experienced by their friends, families, and colleagues, which can lead to negative choices in life. Gay youth may turn to drugs and alcohol to cope with hardships. In fact, the National Coalition for LGBT Health (2006) found that lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) people were 40% to 70% more likely to smoke than non-LGBT people, one of the highest smoking rates affecting a subpopulation within society. The American Cancer Society (2003) reported that tobacco kills approximately 30,000 gay and lesbian people each year in the United States. Tremble and other authors further urge that research about racial minorities within the gay population is imperative to provide effective services to this population within higher education.

In Phase One of the present study critical incident reports document the experiences of Black gay men. The study used Flanagan’s (1954) research about critical incident technique to collect written student descriptions about particular experiences that influenced their development. The incidents were rated on a continuum based on similarities and then coded to eliminate redundancies. A workable set of conceptualized experiences emerged from the similarities and were
identified for further analysis. For example, involvement in gay organizations may be a conceptualized experience that has a positive role in academic success. In all, 101 critical incident reports were collected from undergraduate Black gay college men.

In Phase Two of the study the finalized conceptual experiences were charted in a paired comparison questionnaire as similar categories and given to 15 students from Phase One. A paired comparison questionnaire listed the conceptualized experiences and the students rated how they related to each experience, using a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 10 (very much).

The student responses from the paired comparison questionnaire were further analyzed through the clustering method to create a concept map (Tracey, Lichtenberg, Goodyear, Claiborn, & Wampold, 2003) to uncover similar responses from the paired comparison questionnaire and graph the similarities. This process is called concept mapping. Tracey et al. wrote that concept mapping answers, “How do people in general (of particular groups of people) construe some aspect of experience?” (p. 237). This methodology is unique because it identifies the college experiences for Black gay men that influenced their identity development.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and acronyms used in this study describe particular subgroups within the gay community.

*Bi sexual* refers to people who have sexual and/or romantic desire for someone of the opposite gender as well as those of the same gender.

*G ay* describes homosexual men but also includes people who have sexual relationships with the same gender.
Lesbian exclusively describes homosexual females.

LGBT refers to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities.

MSM describes men who have sex with men.

Same gender loving describes people who have sexual, emotional, and romantics desires for someone of the same gender.

Transgender is an overarching term applied to a variety of persons, behaviors, and groups whose self-identified gender identity does not match their assigned gender (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Background of the Problem

Although empirical research on Black gay men is limited, there is a great deal of mainstream media focusing on the experiences of this population. The mainstream media has recently focused on Black gay men due a fascination with the “down low,” sparked by author J. L. King (2004). King wrote about his experiences and those of other Black men who self-identify as heterosexual but engage in homosexual sex. In response to King’s findings, other Black authors such as Boykin (2005) have written that the “down low” experiences are not only a Black male issue but are also prevalent among men and women of all racial backgrounds.

Black Entertainment Television (BET) aired a 1-hour documentary called “The Down Low Exposed” (Neal, King, & Hinds, 2006) that focused on the experiences of Black men on the “down low” as well as out Black gay men. The show featured informal conversations with these men about topics ranging from conflicts with religion to family perceptions. The Washington Post documented informal conversations with Black gay men about what it means to be Black and
gay in America today (De la Cruz & Kattar, 2006). In this online documentary Black gay men talked about how their environment, such as the church, Black community, and family, taught them that homosexuality was wrong, which prevented their coming out.

The informal discussions and documentaries presented a glimpse into the experiences that have shaped the identities of Black gay men. Neither of the men featured were in college, and the information presented from the interviews was not challenged by formal research. However, the men presented their own perspectives that research should consider when researching Black gay men. For example, a common theme was the lack of support from the family once the men came out of the closet or as they witnessed friends and family members come out.

The Black gay community has begun to mobilize through recent Black gay pride celebrations, Black gay literature (e.g., Boykin, 2005; Smith, 2005), Black gay mainstream media specials (e.g., Neal et al., 2006), and the creation of the first Black gay magazine (Clik). One can argue this mobilization as a community requires empirical research to be aware of the needs of this rising segment of the gay population. The Black gay population is growing and wants recognition in society, which can lead to representation on college campuses. For higher education professionals to provide adequate services for Black gay men, more empirical research is needed.

Empirical research about Black identity development exists through different models (e.g., Cross, 1971, 1978; Phinney, 1990) but these researchers have neglected to explain particular experiences that affect identity development. This study presents the experiences that directly influence identity. For example, Cross’s (1978) nigrresence model of Black identity development explored how
Black people encompass Afrocentric ideals and, as a result, are against the dominant White culture. The Black gay experience is omitted from Cross’s explanation of Black experiences, even though Cross attempted to describe the psychological and behavioral characteristics determined by Black experiences with societal oppression (Torres et al., 2003).

The empirical research about Black identity development models (e.g., Cross, 1971, 1978; Phinney, 1990), gay identity development models (e.g., Cass, 1979, 1984; D’Augelli, 1991a, 1991b; Fassinger, 1998; Troiden, 1993), and Black gay men (e.g., Crawford, 2002) do not address the unique experiences that influence the lives for Black gay college men. This lack of research is an omission in the literature because these people may experience additional hardships because they are perceived as a double minority. One can argue that the oppression of Black gay men is greater and that these unique experiences are important to explore in future research. It can also be argued that higher education professionals can benefit from further research on Black gay men to learn how to work with these people.

Review of the Literature

In the literature about college student development, researchers and theorists consistently refer to student identity development models such as Chickering’s seven vectors. Chickering’s theory and similar theories are sources that foreshadow what this study may uncover from the concept mapping process. For example, the critical incident reports may describe similarities resembling Chickering’s vectors and dimensions about development. In addition, understanding previous research and theories can lead to relevant implications for further research.
This literature review incorporates mainstream media attention and popular reviews about the personal experiences for Black gay men, as well as formal research literature. An analysis of personal perspectives of Black gay men can explain how students develop racial and sexual identity. A review of existing gay identity development theories serves as a basis to explain the commonly used presumptions about gay students in higher education. It is important to examine the critiques of the existing theories and research to discover and understand the experiences of Black gay students.

Although the empirical research describing the experiences of Black gay college men is limited, this review presents the little extant research about the Black gay population. Due to the lack of research, facts and perceptions about Black gays in mainstream media are presented. This review also includes a description of the methods used for this study (i.e., critical incidence and concept mapping techniques).

**Review of Identity Development Models**

For this study it is important to review a few identity development models because they serve as a basis of reference as this study explores student experiences. For example, experiences revealed in the study’s critical incident reports may resonate with the stages in the development models. The development theories suggest that students develop new identities in college due to their exposure to diverse opinions and perspectives. A few identity development models are provided and offer additional information about the theories, including particular steps within the models.
Chickering and Reisser

Chickering and Reisser (1993) wrote about seven vectors or dimensions of development to explain the development of students throughout college. A student’s thought and decision-making process stimulate progression through the seven vectors. Without stimulation, a student cannot move forward to another vector but instead may move backward through the vector progression process (Chickering & Reisser). The seven vectors are (a) developing competence, (b) managing emotions, (c) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, (d) establishing identity, (e) developing mature relationships, (f) developing purpose, and (g) developing integrity (Evans et al., 1998).

The achieving competence (vector one) is important because students establish coping strategies and develop competency. Chickering (1969) cited that Within vector one there are three types of competencies for students: (a) intellectual competence, (b) physical and manual skills, and (c) interpersonal competence. These competencies reflect the student’s readiness to make decisions, move forward with actions, and establish consequences that affect development. For example, the competencies create changes in the student’s life that influence identity development and help to navigate through the other vectors (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). As students create competency, they develop their identity.

The managing emotions (vector two) dimension addresses a student’s ability to manage key emotions and broaden the range of emotions. For instance, students manage their emotions when debating an opposite viewpoint in a classroom discussion and will broaden their emotions when engaging in an intellectual dialogue with opposing viewpoints.
Moving through autonomy toward interdependence (vector three) describes how students examine their independence and interdependence. An example may be that students disengage from parental guidance and make their own decisions.

The establishing identity (vector four) dimension addresses how students come to terms with multiple identities, such as sexual orientation and racial identification. For instance, students who have reached this vector may come to terms with their homosexuality and proclaim their homosexual identity to others. The students have experienced many significant changes that have helped to establish their current identification, but this development will continue throughout their lifetime.

Chickering’s developing mature relationships (vector five) may help to understand gay students because the students’ interpersonal relationships may change as they identify with their same-gender attractions. For instance, peers may not accept the students’ gay friends due to their homosexuality and, as a result, the gay students may need to seek out new friendships. Chickering wrote that increasing student diversity requires that students develop tolerance to establish intimate relationships. If students are unsuccessful in creating tolerance, it becomes more difficult for them to develop substantial interpersonal relationships (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Tolerance levels may be important considerations in reviewing experiences of Black gay men because they may experience a lack of tolerance in college that can be difficult to handle. The 2005 National School Climate Survey for the K-12 education system revealed that 75.4% of students had frequently or often heard derogatory remarks such as “faggot” or “dyke” at school (Kosciw & Diaz, 2005). One can argue that the reported intolerance on high school campuses may also be
prevalent on a college campus. This may build extra anxieties in college and Black students may turn to self-destructive behaviors to overcome anxiety. For example, the climate survey found that LGBT students were 5 times more likely than the general population to skip school because of safety concerns.

In addition to establishing tolerance, students develop a purpose (vector six) for themselves that will guide their life choices in a more specific direction. An illustration may be that students ask themselves, “Who am I going to be?” rather than, “Who am I?” Students begin an internal search to find purpose in their lives, such as vocational interests and aspirations.

In developing integrity (vector seven), students create their own values and beliefs system to guide further life choices. Students make decisions based on their belief system (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). In fact, Chickering and Reisser argued that, within vector seven, students are compelled to reexamine their identity due to incidents that they may experience, and the challenge becomes whether the students maintain their integrity.

Erikson

Another theorist whose research may aid in understanding the experiences of Black gay men is Erikson (1959), who developed one of the best-known theories of personality. Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development describes the impact of social experiences across the lifespan. This theory is crucial to understand as this study moves forward to explore the experiences of Black gay men in college. One of the main characteristics about this theory is ego identity formation. Ego identity is the self-representation that people have of themselves.
The ego identity represents a connection to the psychological health of a person; for example, a person’s ego must achieve integrating functions in order for that person to establish a stable identity. The lack of a stable identity represents a failure to achieve ego identity, which results in ego diffusion. It is important to acknowledge that ego identity is largely unconsciously determined and, as a result, is difficult to measure.

Each stage in Erikson’s theory contains two possible outcomes in that people make a choice, and due to the choice, become competent to handle particular situations. Some people can progress through the theory and some can remain the same. Erikson’s eight stages are (a) oral-sensory (trust versus mistrust), (b) muscular-anal (autonomy versus shame and doubt), (c) locomotor (initiative versus guilt), (d) latency (industry versus inferiority), (e) adolescence (identity versus role confusion), (f) young adulthood (intimacy versus isolation), (g) middle adulthood (generativity versus stagnation), and (h) maturity (ego integrity versus despair; Schultz & Schultz, 1987). People feel confident about themselves and have a sense of mastery if they continue to progress through each stage. However, a person who does not progress will feel a sense of disappointment and may feel a sense of inadequacy. In Erikson’s view, these conflicts are centered on either developing a psychological quality or failing to develop that quality (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The stages depict an entire life, from infancy to maturity.

Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development explains the competencies that people develop as they progress through life and make choices that influence how they develop. Erikson’s work may foreshadow findings for Black gay men. Although this study reviewed actual experiences that influenced identity development, psychosocial development is important to understand.
Marcia

Erikson wrote about psychosocial development spanning from childhood through mature adulthood (Torres et al., 2003). In Erikson’s adolescence stage (fifth stage), adolescences develop their sense of their identity. However, adolescents still struggle with internal questions that affect their development. Adolescents may have questions about who they are and their role in the world, such as what they want to do when they grow up. James Marcia (1966) focused on this adolescence stage and explored development along two dimensions: exploration and commitment (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Marcia used these two dimensions to assign people to their identity. The commitment dimension focuses on the decisions that adolescents make that can result in “stability, continuity, and comfort” (p. 24). The exploration dimension describes the decisions that adolescents make, but for this study the dimension can be used to mark the decisions that students make while in college. This exploration dimension may resonate with gay students because these students make a decision to affirm their homosexual identity.

Marcia (1966) addressed the dimension as well as other aspects of identity development relating to the dimension with his identity status model. The stages in this model are (a) diffusion, (b) foreclosure, (c) moratorium, and (d) identity achievement. In diffusion (stage one) the person has not explored or committed to life goals. In the foreclosed identity (stage two) the person becomes committed to goals after exploring opportunities. In the moratorium (stage three) the person remains in a state of exploration and, as a result, has not committed to a goal. In achieved identity (stage four) the person makes a commitment to a goal or goals.
Marcia’s diffusion and moratorium stages describe how people search for identity by trying to find answers in life. People often remain uncommitted to a goal to continue their search for answers in the diffusion and moratorium stages, but in foreclosure and achievement stages they are committed to a goal.

In the moratorium stage people may experience a crisis, which triggers them to search for a meaning for their existence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Possible examples are gay students who may realize that they have same-gender attractions and, as a result, begin to find meaning associated with their same-gender attractions. Through this search for meaning, identity further develops.

**Cross**

The Cross (1971) model of psychological nigrescence is the most cited model of racial identity development; it reveals the developmental process for Black men. The model describes Black identity through five sequential stages that are reactionary to the social and environmental circumstances: (a) pre-encounter, (b) encounter, (c) immersion-emersion, (d) internalization, and (e) internalization-commitment.

In the pre-encounter stage Blacks believe that racism is abolished and society is oblivious to skin color. Blacks consider themselves color blind in this stage. Encounter (stage two) is triggered by a positive or negative event that occurs due to their skin color. If the event is negative, the encounter can force them to become conscious about racism and ponder how racism influences their lives. They may view themselves as a target for racism. The immersion and emersion stage (stage three) occurs in two simultaneous phases in which people explore their Black culture and develop a positive self-concept. In this stage Blacks begin to
explore social networks within the Black community and develop distrust for the White community due to their recent encounter with racism (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). In this stage some Blacks actively explore their own history, culture, and family background. In internalization (stage four) Blacks develop a positive opinion about the Black culture and integrate this new affirmation into their existence. As a result, they achieve inner security and self-confidence with their Blackness and are able to establish relationships with Whites. In internalization and commitment (stage five) Blacks continue their involvement with the Black community and view their ongoing support as helping to advance the Black community.

The Cross model serves as a reference to understand what it means to be Black and how people develop a Black identity. Black gay men in the immersion-emersion stage, for example, may question their understanding of being Black and gay (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). A racist experience in the gay community may lead a Black gay man to re-evaluate how he identifies with the gay community. This lack of support can also be true for homophobia experienced in the Black community.

Cross’s developmental model provides useful information to assist with critical incidents because some incidents may describe some of the above mentioned stages. For example, the incidents may describe similar attributes described in these models, and perhaps the categories will correlate with the stages. Appendix A presents the identity development model proposed by Cross and other theorists (e.g., Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Cross; 1971; Erikson, 1959; Marcia, 1966).
Review of Sexual Identity Development Theories

Higher education professionals refer to psychosocial sexual identity development models (e.g., Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1985; D’Augelli, 1991a; Fassinger, 1998; Troiden, 1993) to explain the development process for gay and lesbian persons. Reviews of the theories are relatable to the experiences of this study’s participants. For instance, some of the categories developed from the critical incident reports may resemble stages from gay student development theories. The literature about development for gay men can assist in interpreting experiences for Black gay men. This section provides a brief description of gay student development theories as well as additional comparisons and contradictions between the theories.

Cass

A majority of research about gay student development utilizes the work of Cass (1979, 1984). In fact, the Cass model is the founding theory about homosexual identity development and, as a result, it serves as the foundation for many theorists. It is also used to educate higher education professionals about gay and lesbian college students. Although Cass’s model is one of the oldest dealing with sexual identity development, the progressive stages still have relevance in understanding homosexual student experiences.

The Cass stages are (a) identity confusion, (b) identity comparison, (c) identity tolerance, (d) identity acceptance, (e) identity pride, and (f) identity synthesis. The stages take into account “the significance of both psychological and social factors” (Cass, 1979, p. 220) for the individual. It is crucial to understand that the Cass model is based on two assumptions: (a) One acquires identity through
development processes, and (b) one’s behaviors are a result of interactions with others and their environments (Cass, 1979).

In identity confusion (first stage) people begin to question their sexuality and discover that they have same-gender attractions. They internally acknowledge their homosexual thoughts but do not share this revelation with others. In identity comparison (stage two) they begin to recognize differences from their heterosexual counterparts. They may feel conflicted to seek interactions with other homosexuals. In identity tolerance (stage three) they begin to tolerate their homosexuality but remain unsure as to whether they want to interact with other homosexuals. A gay student, for instance, who develops friendships with other homosexuals may experience negative reactions from others, such as friends and families, due to his/her homosexual friends. The negative comments may affect the person’s comfort with his/her own homosexuality. In identity acceptance (stage four), people accept their homosexual identity and begin to tell a few selected people. They share this information only with people whom they trust and do not voluntarily reveal this information to others. At this stage they begin to interact with other homosexuals and may decide to act on their homosexual feelings. Gay students, for instance, may go to a LGBT social event to interact with other gay students. In identity pride (stage five) they are proud of their homosexuality and choose to interact only with homosexual people and not with heterosexuals. They completely emerge themselves in the gay community; for example, they may move to a gay residential area and associate only with gay friends. Synthesis (stage six) describes how people are comfortable in telling others, regardless of their sexual orientation, about their homosexuality and enjoy interacting with all people, regardless of their sexual identity.
In the final stage gay students become more comfortable in interacting with their heterosexual counterparts (Cass, 1979). For example, they begin to form friendships and alliances with heterosexual people. In this stage they may want to contribute to the campus LGBT community and serve as a mentor for other gay students who are struggling with their homosexuality. They may choose to become leaders in their campus LGBT organizations to implement changes to help other gay and lesbian students (Evans et al., 1998).

The Cass model explains the experiences of homosexuals throughout their lifetime. In the final stage gay people become comfortable with their own homosexual identity. The Cass stages are linear because people are allowed to progress from one stage to another in a hierarchical order. According to Cass, people cannot move backward along the stages nor revisit previous stages. Cass’s stages are important for gay and lesbian researchers because they explain behaviors in certain stages of life.

D’Augelli

D’Augelli (1991a, 1991b) presented another homosexual identity development model to explain how people navigate through their sexual identity development and their self-identity. D’Augelli’s six stages are (a) exiting heterosexual identity, (b) developing a personal lesbian/gay/bisexual identity, (c) developing a lesbian/gay/bisexual social identity, (d) becoming lesbian/gay/bisexual offspring, (e) developing a lesbian/gay/bisexual intimacy status, and (f) entering a lesbian/gay/bisexual community (1991a). In this theory people are able to move from one stage to another, either in or out of chronological order, contrary to Cass’s model.
The exiting heterosexual identity (stage one) is the point at which people realize their same-gender attractions. In developing a personal lesbian/gay/bisexual identity (stage two), they develop a lesbian/gay/bisexual identity. In developing a lesbian/gay/bisexual social identity (stage three) they begin to explore homosexual community networks and friendships. Furthermore, the lesbian/gay/bisexual offspring (stage three) explains how they decide to tell their friends and family members about their homosexual identity and, as a result, deal with the ramifications of this disclosure. For example, friends and family members may not accept a person’s new identity declaration of being homosexual and consequently decide not to associate with the person. In developing a lesbian/gay/bisexual intimacy status (stage four) they develop intimate same-gender relationships but find the invisibility of same-gender relationships frustrating. In stage five, entering a lesbian/gay/bisexual community, they become active in the homosexual community.

It is important to mention that the key factors in the formation of identity are the unique and individualized experiences that can influence the development process. The experience can be detrimental as people navigate through these stages. For example, people bring forth their own perceptions and feelings about sexuality that their family teaches to them, which can drastically affect their coming out process. A student may choose to come out to friends while away at college but choose not to tell parents. Such students are developing internally about their sexuality and externally with friends but not with family. These limitations can affect development within the stages.
Comparison of Cass and D’Augelli Models

The D’Augelli model is different from the Cass model because D’Augelli’s stages are fluid and Cass’s stages are linear. One can argue that a linear sexual identity model limits the development progression for homosexuals because it does not present flexibility. For example, students may come to terms with their homosexuality but, after some time, they can become confused about their gay identity. Practically, confused students will not move forward with development and will instead move backward. They will return to the identity confusion stage in Cass’s model, but the model does not explain situations in which students can return to a previous stage. The D’Augelli model explains that students can move back and forth within the stages. Evans et al. (1998) classified the D’Augelli model as developmental plasticity due to its flexibility throughout the stages.

The D’Augelli model explains that external factors, such as social networks and environmental settings for gay students, affect their development. D’Augelli’s model suggests that sexual development is responsive to the environment. D’Augelli clearly articulates the concept of influential environments but Cass neglects to emphasize its importance. Instead, one can argue that Cass explains the internal emotions and challenges through which people go while they develop but does not consider how the environment can modify the development process. The environment can include life changes, social networks, and personal relationships. For example, negative reactions by family and friends to a gay person’s coming out can hinder that person’s identity development.

D’Augelli elaborated that external relationships with family, friends, and colleagues can influence identity development (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). The D’Augelli model explains that people shape their identity to coexist with their
already established environmental context. For example, students attending a religion-affiliated college may not come out to all friends on campus but do so only with selected people. Instead, the Cass model suggests that the environment shapes the person. For example, people may come out later in life to parents because they are not dependent on their parents and are removed from their parents’ financial support. As a result, the environmental context has changed and they feel more comfortable to share their gay identity with their parents. Even though the theories are different, each supports the idea that external factors create unique experiences.

**Coleman**

Although the Cass and D’Augelli models explain gay identity development, it is important to explore alternative perspectives. Coleman (1985) created a model to educate psychotherapists about interactions with gay clients. This model is also useful for higher education professionals who work with gay students. The Coleman model has similar progressive stages to those of Cass and D’Augelli to explain the emersion of same-gender attractions. Coleman’s five-stage model includes (a) pre-coming out, (b) coming out, (c) exploration, (d) first relationships, and (e) identity integration.

In pre-coming out (stage one) gay people are not conscious of their same-gender attractions because they have strong resistance against their unwanted sexual attractions. They feel different from others but do not know why they are different. The coming out stage (stage two) explains how they become conscious or semiconscious of their same-gender attractions and, as a result, they begin to share this realization with a selected group of people. They are still somewhat confused about homosexual identity. In exploration (stage three) they begin to interact with
other homosexuals and develop a better self-image. In the first relationships stage (stage four) they develop relationships based on their physical and emotional attractions. In the final stage, identity integration (stage five), they merge their private homosexual identity with their public image and are satisfied with being homosexual in public. They also feel comfortable to tell others about their sexual orientation.

Coleman’s model is similar to D’Augelli’s model in that Coleman’s stages are fluid. Students do not experience the stages in a chronological order but rather can move among the stages. In addition, Coleman argues that people may work within multiple stages simultaneously. For instance, their identification can be at the coming out stage and at the same time at the first relationships stage (Coleman, 1985).

Coleman’s pre-coming out stage is similar to Cass’s identity confusion stage because in both stages gay people are not completely aware of their same-gender attractions. This confusion about their attractions can lead them to develop negative attitudes associated with their same-gender feelings. Coleman wrote that conflicted gay people might have “behavioral problems, psychosomatic illnesses, suicidal attempts, or various symptoms” (1985, p. 33). Such destructive behavior can influence identity development in gay students. In fact, these negative responses may detour students from acknowledging their gay identity, which will present additional problems to hinder development. The present study reviews experiences that may or may not correspond with Coleman’s assertions.
Troiden

Troiden’s (1993) homosexual formation model is based on research by Cass. The stages are (a) sensitization, (b) identity confusion, (c) identity assumption, and (d) commitment. Sensitization (stage one) occurs in early adolescence when gay people become aware that they are different from peers due to their same-gender attractions. These people may feel marginalized for being different from their peers. In identity confusion (stage two) they struggle with their homosexual feelings and experience inner turmoil about their sexual identity. Identity assumption (stage three) describes a stage at which they begin to self-identify with their same-gender attractions and declare their homosexuality to others. In commitment (stage four) they accept their same-gender attractions and become committed to a homosexual lifestyle. At this stage they are content but external factors can still challenge the commitment to the gay identity (Troiden).

The external environmental settings can play a major role in identity development because gay people may or may not disclose their gay identity based on possible responses from certain people. Troiden classified homosexual identity into three dimensions: (a) a self-identity, (b) a perceived identity, (c) a presented identity, or all three (Troiden, 1993).

The homosexual identity is a self-identity when people see themselves as homosexual in relation to romantic and sexual settings. It is a perceived identity in situations where people think or know others view them as homosexual. It is a presented identity when people present or announce themselves as homosexual in concrete social settings. (p. 194)

Gay people may feel comfortable to disclose their gay identity in one setting but not in another. They may not feel comfortable sharing their gay identity at a religious group meeting because they fear rejection from the group. For example, a Black student raised in a Baptist religious background may choose not
to disclose his or her homosexuality at a Baptist student organization meeting because peers at the meeting may not accept homosexuality due to their religious opinions.

Many homosexual identity development researchers view the final stages in most of the above mentioned models as self-identification as homosexual (Eliason, 1996). Progression to this identity can be difficult because gay people need to become comfortable with their gay identity. Eliason found that people with gender-atypical behavior (i.e., behavior associated with the opposite gender) were more likely to recognize their homosexual identities at an earlier age than those with more gender-typical behavior (i.e., behavior associated with their gender). For example, a male who has feminine characteristics is likely to come to terms with his homosexuality earlier in life than a male with masculine characteristics.

**Fassinger**

Fassinger (1998) explored sexual identity development as it relates to group membership identification. Fassinger’s model is inclusive of demographics and racial differences among homosexuals. The model mentions the differences associated with coming out by members of racial groups. For example, it may be difficult for students with Black backgrounds to disclose their homosexuality to the family due to the hypermasculinity associated with being a Black male.

The Fassinger model includes (a) awareness, (b) exploration, (c) deepening/commitment, and (d) internalization/synthesis. Each phase corresponds to the feelings and actions that happen internally with a person as well as the developments for external group membership identification. In awareness (phase one) gay people discover that others have sexual orientations that are different from theirs. In
exploration (phase two) they begin to explore their same-gender attractions. Deepening/commitment (phase three) occurs when they develop deeper understandings about their gay identity and, as a result, become committed to gay identity. In internalization/synthesis (phase four) they have fully accepted gay identity and they express their identity to others.

The external group identifications address how gay students may interact in various group settings. For example, Black gay students may act differently in a group setting with other Black people than in a gay setting. Most of the other models do not consider racial dynamics. The group dynamic explanation is helpful in examining the experiences of Black gay college men. Appendix B presents the stages proposed by Fassinger and the other theorists (e.g., Cass, 1979, 1984; D’Augelli, 1991a, 1991b; Troiden, 1993) in which gay students develop their identities.

**Student Perceptions About Gay Students in College**

For the current study it is important to examine student attitudes toward gay men. Student attitudes about gay peers may contribute to influential experiences for gay students. In Engstrom and Sedlacek’s (1997) study participants who identified as African American expressed a more negative attitude toward gay men and lesbians than did other racial groups. The study randomly sampled about 224 heterosexual students at a large southeastern university, and only 18 participants identified as African American. Male students expressed more homophobic feelings than their female counterparts. The heterosexual men were uncomfortable with the mere suggestion of situations involving gay men, such as being invited to a gay bar, seeing two gay men hold hands, or even working with a gay class member on a
project. The men also stated that they would not be happy if a male sibling were gay. However, in a contrary discovery, the participants expressed their outrage against physical assaults or hate crimes attacking gay students.

Herek and Capitanio (1995) reported that respondents who indicated that they knew at least one gay person possessed more positive attitudes about gay men than did respondents who did not know a gay person. One can assume that the more accepting the study body is toward gay people, the more positive experiences gay students may experience on campus. Although students enter the university with their own presumptions about gay people, the university may provide educational opportunities to promote tolerance and acceptance. It will be significant to investigate the ways in which Black gay students indicate that campus experiences have influenced their identity development.

**Studies on Gay Racial Minorities**

To understand the student critical incident reports, it is important to review previous studies about gay racially diverse people. The previous studies may be similar to the findings from this study. Although there is little literature on racially diverse gays, the studies reviewed in this section have substantial findings relatable to Black gay men.

A few models deal with gay identity development simultaneously with racial identity development. As a result, some valuable information is absent from studies that address gay identity development. Black gay men, for instance, may develop differently than White counterparts due to their multiple identities. This section highlights findings about racially diverse gay people.
Rhoads

Rhoads (1997) studied the experiences of gay and bisexual students at a large research university in a 2-year ethnographic study. He interviewed about 40 males who were gay, bisexual, and in the closet. (The term in the closet refers to persons who have not publicly made their homosexuality known to others.) From interviews and observations Rhoads discovered commonalities in their experiences that influenced their identity development while in college. The commonalities included coming out, visibility, and issues of harassment and discrimination.

Many of the participants explained that the coming out process had drastically changed their lives because they had acknowledged their homosexuality and told others. As a result, peers and friends on campus had changed how they interacted with their “out” gay friend. Participants reported discrimination and homophobia from people on campus, which affected how they felt about safety and social relationships with other campus members.

Rhoads merely explained and described the experiences that the gay students experienced on campus. It is unfortunate that this study neglected to cite the racial demographics of the participants because it would have been helpful to review how the experiences of racially diverse students differed from those of White students. For instance, racial demographics could have shown whether discrimination was highly experienced by diverse gay students versus White students. Although the particular experiences of racially diverse students were not blatantly mentioned, the study identified key concepts experienced by gay college men at a large research university. The present study about Black gay men also uses large research universities. In fact, it may be discovered that Rhoads’s three
commonalities (coming out, visibility, and issues of harassment and discrimination) may be similar experiences for the Black gay men used in this study.

*Stevens*

Stevens (2004) wrote about critical incidents in college that influenced gay identity for students in the college environment. Stevens interviewed 11 self-identified gay college men. Stevens discovered the different experiences for racially diverse gay students, which is helpful for the present study about Black gay men.

Stevens found that the level of acceptance of gay students on each college campus had a major influence on gay identity development for the participants. The acceptance levels, for example, predicted how and when gay students chose to disclose their homosexuality to others on campus. Stevens found that the acceptance levels among peers and family influenced development. For instance, students with high anxiety to disclose their homosexuality to family members had delayed success in college (Stevens, 2004). The anxiety to disclose their gay identity to the family affected their work in college.

Stevens (2004) found that the racially diverse students had different experiences than their White counterparts, which was different as they came to terms with gay identity. For instance, Stevens found that racially diverse students felt rejection from both the gay community and racial minority communities on campus. The gay minority students had higher feelings of isolation due to lack of support and rejection from both communities. Stevens found that identity development was different for racially diverse gay men because they had to deal with two hardships: homophobia from their racial communities and racism from the gay
community. “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” (p. 202). Stevens presented a new validation for future research about racially diverse gay men in their racial and gay identity development simultaneously affecting their development.

It is important to acknowledge Stevens’s study because, unlike the standard gay identity development models, he acknowledged the complications for racially diverse gay men. Some studies and theories categorize all gay participants in a homogeneous subgroup where racial identity is not an issue, but Stevens argued that racial demographics is a major issue that affects development. Stevens’s findings validate the student population used for this study, Black gay college men, because their experiences in college are unique and important to recognize.

_Eliason_

Eliason (1996) addressed the importance of acknowledging the difference in experiences of racially diverse gay students. After reviewing sexual identity development models (e.g., Cass, 1979; D’Augelli, 1991a, 1991b; Troiden, 1993) and gay-related studies, Eliason discovered a gap in the research about racially diverse gays, noting that a majority of the research involved White, middle class, and well-educated men. Eliason wrote that these models and studies were biased because they did not present the dissimilar experiences of racially diverse gays. Eliason argued that existent gay identity development models and studies do not resonate for racially diverse gay people. The present study challenges Eliason’s
argument as the experiences of Black gay college men are revealed through the
critical incident reports.

*Renn and Bilodeau*

Renn and Bilodeau (2005a, 2005b) wrote about the hardships that racially
diverse gays may deal with in their development. They termed the identification
with a racial and gay identity as a *dual identity*. Renn and Bilodeau explored two
factors that affect racially diverse gays: student involvement and mentorship. Both
of these factors had a positive effect on identity development in racially diverse
gays.

Renn and Bilodeau (2005a, 2005b) analyzed factors that affect gay students.
They found that racially diverse gays had difficulty in connecting with their racial
communities and organizations on campus. For example, two participants in their
study explained similar experiences. The participants found it difficult to identify
with their racial communities due to preconceived notions (e.g., stereotypes and
presumptions) about gay people. As a result, the racially diverse gay students had
peers from their racial communities who did not want to associate with them
because of their personal prejudices about gay people.

Renn and Bilodeau’s (2005a, 2005b) study confirmed that students of color
experienced difficulties in finding acceptance among gay and racial communities.
This lack of acceptance may be an incident that Black gay men experience while in
college, which is why reviewing Renn and Bilodeau’s study is important. The
findings suggest that additional research about racially diverse gay students is
needed to understand personal experiences in college and provide adequate support.
Tremble, Schnieder, and Appathurai

Tremble et al. (1989) investigated how racial identity affects the development of gay young people as well as the how this dual identity affects their families. They identified three areas of concern for racially diverse gays: (a) coming out to family members, (b) support networks to rise above racism in the gay community, and (c) difficulties in balancing gay and racial identities. They interviewed 10 young people between the ages of 16 and 21 to explore their relationships with parents and discover other cultural norms among their racial identities. The goal of the study was to discover how social stigmas of cultural structures and mainstream society affected the coming out process for the gay participants.

For the first identified area, coming out to family members, participants presented similar experiences and feelings that existed when they knew they were gay. For example, a majority of the participants discussed that once they admitted their same-gender attractions to themselves, they had a high anxiety to disclose their gay identity to their families. The researchers concluded that racially diverse gay participants were in constant conflict with themselves, their families, and their cultures.

Moreover, the study cited struggles that the participants experienced with regard to their families. The participants confessed that their parents were often confused about what it meant to identify as gay and the parents blamed mainstream society for the child’s gay identity. The racially diverse gay participants also explained that their parents assumed that being gay was a White characteristic because they did not know any people from their racial community who were gay. However, many of the racially diverse gay participants described that, as time passed, their parents became accepting of their gay identity and loved them.
The second identified area indicated that racially diverse student participants developed support networks to rise above racism in the gay community. Participants explained that it was difficult to find visible gay role models from their own racial group. The lack of role models suggests that racially diverse gay students struggle to find a sense of belonging and, as a result, find it difficult to balance their gay and racial identities because they lack mentorship. The third area identified in this study explained the difficulties in balancing gay and racial identities because racially diverse students lacked mentors and a support network.

Tremble et al. (1989) concluded found that racially diverse gay students had more difficulty in attaining acceptance by family and peers than did their White counterparts. However, each family unit is unique and may react differently to a child’s gay identity. The reaction by family and peers is an experience that influences identity development of students because positive and negative reactions from the family affect the students’ choices and decisions in college. For example, if the family disowns the child financially and emotionally due to homosexuality, the hardships for the student may affect academic success and the student may have to leave college.

The studies cited in this section describe the possible experiences for racially diverse gay students that may be found in the critical incident categories for this study. For example, racially diverse gay students are in conflict with their gay and racial identity, which can have an adverse effect on their identity development.

_Literature on the Black Gay Experience_

The literature that describes the experiences of Black gay men is limited. Therefore, this section’s research borrows from popular literature that shares the
opinions, experiences, and perceptions about Black gay people. The empirical research presents studies that represent specific circumstances for gay persons who are Black. This section does not include empirical research that describes specific Black gay experiences while in college because such research does not exist. Each study is relevant because it exposes circumstances with which Black gay men may deal, such as social stigmas, discrimination, homophobia, and health precautions.

**Icard**

Icard (1986) wrote about his own observations in dealing with oppression of Black gay men. He asserted that Black gay men experience homophobia from the Black community and racism from the gay community. Icard contended that White counterparts in the gay community perpetuate racist attitudes, while the Black community is dominated by a hypermasculine approach that enables homophobia. In addition, Icard wrote that Black gay people do not receive the same positive support and feedback as their White counterparts in the gay community or as their heterosexual counterparts in the Black community. The lack of support makes it even more difficult for Black gay people to navigate through their identity development due to the racism and homophobia. Icard’s belief about the negative circumstance from the gay and Black communities is not supported by empirical evidence; rather, it is his assumption through personal experiences. However, these assumptions may be evident in the experiences of Black gay men while in college.

**Boykin**

Although research (e.g., theories and studies) has expanded for racially diverse populations, there still needs to be additional research about specific racial groups and their experiences in the gay community (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). Such
future research can test Icard’s assumptions. However, the search for literature depicting the Black gay experience mentions one author consistently: Keith Boykin. Boykin is a mainstream author who writes about his own experiences without using qualitative or quantitative techniques. He writes from personal experiences and previously published studies about the Black community. Admittedly, there is criticism from empirical researchers against mainstream authors due to a lack of empirical evidence and specific data sets.

Boykin is a creditable source of information about the Black gay experience due to his own life experiences being a Black gay man. He has a list of noteworthy accomplishments that support his creditability to write about Black gay issues. For example, he is a Harvard Law School graduate and worked for 2 years as a special assistant and director of specialty press for President Clinton. He served as Clinton’s liaison for African American and LGBT media.

Boykin (1996) confirmed Icard’s assumptions as he wrote about the blatant homophobia in the Black community and racism in the gay community. He also acknowledged the lack of support from the heterosexual Black community, who refuse to understand or sympathize with Black gay people. Instead, the mindset of the Black community is that homosexuality is a White issue due to media images and stereotypes. These Black gay people do not have a support network and the Black community chooses not to support them. Boykin wrote that the Black community might feel that Black gay people have made a choice to identify with the gay community by coming out and have discarded their connection to the Black community. One can argue that gays may encounter the same racism as their straight counterparts; it can also be argued that gays must struggle more with discomfort among their own racial community due to existing homophobia.
Boykin (1996) wrote that Black gays who are comfortable with both their racial identity and their gay identity could be viewed as pioneers for setting new imagery within the Black community about what a gay person may look like. These pioneers also challenge perceptions about heterosexual and homosexual Black men. Boykin’s assertions and experiences address the validity of traditional homosexual models, theories, and studies that do not consider racial, ethnic, and cultural experiences of their gay populations. In addition, his comments serve as a possible foreshadow of what may be seen in the experiences of the Black gay college men participants in this study.

Loiacano

Among the limited empirical research for Black gay students, Loiacano (1993) coordinated an exploratory study with three Black gay men and three Black lesbian women to discover identity development issues. All except one participant had a Bachelor’s degree. Loiacano interviewed participants with a six-question questionnaire. The questions correlated with existent gay identity models such as Cass, Troiden, and Coleman. The questions addressed awareness about same-gender feelings, coming out experiences, and external experiences of being gay in the Black community.

The study revealed three thematic areas: (a) finding validation in the gay and lesbian community, (b) finding validation in the Black community, and (c) the need to integrate identities. In finding validation in the gay and lesbian community (theme one), the participants expressed experiences of discrimination from the gay community due to their racial identity. One example was from a participant who mentioned that he did not receive adequate service at gay bars. This participant
explained that he was often neglected at the bar counter while the White customers were acknowledged before him. This inequality in service saddened the participant because he assumed that the gay and Black communities were both fighting against inequality (Loiacano, 1993). This lack of customer service for the Black participant can be interpreted as racist and a common occurrence for Black persons in gay settings.

Finding validation in the Black community (theme two) explained participants’ experiences homophobia and/or discrimination from the Black community. For example, one Black lesbian participant and gay participants explained how they never interacted with other Black gay people; therefore, they never had role models and a social support network to seek for comfort. One participant mentioned that, when going to gay activities, he never saw Black gay people. Another participant expressed his continual struggle for validation, which made it difficult for him to move past the scrutiny of others. As a result, discrimination from both the gay and Black communities led some participants to seek their own support networks (Loiacano, 1993).

In fact, the need to integrate identities (theme three) showed that the Black gay and lesbian participants began to create their own Black gay support networks to help themselves and others in their position. The networks also helped them to cope with the struggles and hardships that their dual minority identities presented. Rhoads (1997) would argue that Black gay role models can help these participants with their identity development because a lack of mentorship may hinder the identity development for them.

In Loiacano’s (1993) findings the participants deeply desired acceptance from the Black community. Some participants, for example, feared that their
identification with the gay community or coming to terms with their gay identity might compromise their acceptance in the Black community. It is clear that the participants feared negative consequences of coming out. As a result, some Black gay people may choose not to disclose their gay identity to heterosexual Black people. For instance, the lack of support from the Black community may make Black gay students reluctant to disclose their homosexuality (Battle, Bennett, & Shaw, 2004). The Black community is obviously an important facet of identity development for Black gay people, which researchers should consider in future studies. The homophobia that Black gays experience from their own community can add a dimension to their development that is often neglected.

Crawford

Crawford (2002) argued that, as long as Black gay men kept their gay identities a secret, the Black community would tolerate them. This struggle to keep their identity a secret can have a long-lasting psychological effect. Crawford found that, due to this pressure, some Black gay men might keep their gay identity a secret and lead a double life as heterosexual for the Black community and homosexual for the gay community. The Black men who secretly engage in gay sex may use their sexual encounters as a means of escape from the pressures associated with their double life. These men may engage in risky sexual practices to combat their feelings. Crawford advocated for interventions from both the Black and gay communities to teach these men self-respect and coping strategies to deal with the anxiety associated with their double lives.

The hardships that Black gay men and women may face in society and among their own Black community can be detrimental to their identity
development. Crawford (2002) found that African American gay and bisexual men (AAGBM) made choices and experienced hardships that drastically affected their identity development. Crawford discovered that social pressure for AAGBM to view their identity as a singular construct; as a result, they feel pressure to choose between race/ethnicity and sexuality. For example, he found in the AAGBM experience the following: (a) substance abuse problems (higher rates than heterosexual counterparts), (b) high suicide rates, (c) depression and anxiety disorders (higher rates than heterosexual counterparts), and (d) minimal decreases of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

Crawford (2002) assumed that gay persons who come to terms with their racial and gay identity would have higher self-esteem and greater life satisfaction and that Black gay men who engaged in social participation in the Black and gay communities would have higher self-esteem. He asserted that, as Black gay men become comfortable with their gay identity, they take safer sex precautions and avoid risky sexual behavior. However, the homophobia from the Black community and racism from the gay community prevent Black gay men from coping with their dual identities. The difficulties identified by Crawford can affect identity development in Black gay college men. Crawford’s research serves as a reference as students explain their experiences through critical incident reports.

Crawford (2002) wrote about the negative consequences that Black gay men experience from the Black and gay communities and captured the struggles and social pressures for these men experience. However, Crawford examined Black gay men in general and did not specifically address the influential experiences for Black gay men in college. Therefore, there needs to be more research to understand Black gay men in college.
Roberts

It is important to explore the perspectives of the heterosexual Black community to understand why they choose not to accept their homosexual counterparts. Roberts (1994) argued that Black men’s masculinity is based upon a hypermasculine attitude. He wrote that heterosexual Black men are not accepting toward Black gay men because heterosexual Black men view their relationships with other men as a competition to determine who is more masculine. Due to gay stereotypes, Black gay men cannot be considered masculine because they are viewed as feminine, with stereotypical female characteristics such as shopping and cooking. As a result, they lose all masculinity in the eyes of heterosexual Black men.

Heterosexual Black men also have homophobic viewpoints because of their high esteem for male friends. This high esteem and close friendship among Black males is typically an emotion reserved for family members; therefore, to accept a gay friend would be similar to accepting a gay relative (Roberts, 1994). Black heterosexual men do not tolerate having a Black gay friend through these standards nor a Black gay family member. Roberts contended that Black heterosexual men perpetuate homophobia due to their perceptions about masculinity.

Richardson, Meyers, Bing, and Satz

Another important assertion about Black gay men experiences was presented in an epidemiological study by Richardson, Meyers, Bing, and Satz (1997) that addressed hardships for Black gay men. These hardships are important to consider when exploring the experiences of Black gay men in college. For example, a hardship for Black gay men is that they have higher rates of substance use than their White counterparts. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicated that the suicide rate among Black boys and young men
increased to 105% between 1980 and 1995 (CDC, 1998). The levels of depression and mood anxiety disorders have elevated among Black gay men as compared with their White gay counterparts or their Black heterosexual counterparts (Richardson et al.). The latter assumes being male, Black, and gay can be a major hardship due to homophobia experienced by both the Black and gay communities. This homophobia and struggle to find acceptance can be a major determinant for substance abuse, depression, or suicide.

_Herek and Capitanio_

Herek and Capitanio’s (1995) study investigated perceptions about Black homosexuality through a two-wave telephone survey with a national sample of 391 Black heterosexual adults and White heterosexual adults. The survey’s primary focus was U.S. adult attitudes about AIDS. The study aimed to understand the personal perceptions of the gay and bisexual population in relation to AIDS prevention and outreach. Herek and Capitanio wanted a comparison study between the attitudes of Black and White heterosexuals toward homosexuality because such research is limited. They found that 74.1% of the Black respondents agreed that sex between two men was wrong, leading to the assumption that the Blacks represented in this sample were not accepting of homosexuality.

Herek and Capitanio (1995) also reported that Black respondents were less likely to have anti-gay attitudes than White counterparts. A national survey conducted by Marsiglio in 1993 (as cited in Herek & Capitanio) found no significant differences in expressions of disgust about male-to-male sex. When posed with the statement, “I think male homosexuals are disgusting,” the percentages were similar: 57.4% of Blacks agreed with the statement, 41.4% of Blacks disagreed, and 58.4%
of Whites agreed. The averages were based on a Likert-type scale that combined agree strongly and agree somewhat responses as well as calculated disagree comments. From the findings it is clear that gay men face discrimination and anti-gay attitudes from both Black and White heterosexuals. However, Black heterosexual men are more negative toward gay men than White male counterparts.

From this sample, Herek and Capitanio’s (1995) study statistically supports the assumptions made by authors such as Icard, Boykin, and Loiacano that homophobia is evident in the Black community. The study showed that homophobia is obviously triggered by the negativity toward gay people.

**A Review of Critical Incidents and Concept Mapping Methodology**

The critical incident technique developed by Flanagan (1954) is a qualitative research method used to solve practical problems. Flanagan developed this technique to understand change in particular situations. Many organizations and organization stakeholders have used it because it helps to evaluate consumers’ expectations and perceptions as well as evaluate quality. Critical incident research involves the collection of brief, written, factual reports describing particular actions, experiences, and responses to specific situations. People who actually experience the situation may write the actual incident reports. An incident is critical when it helps to resolve a problem or situation. The incident describes a situation that had a lasting impact on the participant’s development; it can either be an effective or ineffective outcome (Fivars & Fitzpatrick, 2006). Critical incidents identify and describe the actions that people take in a variety of situations, but the researcher who is requesting the incident report determines the specific situations.
Proposals must include a clear, concise statement of the purpose or aim of the study; specifications for the types of data to be collected; plans for selection of the population to be sued; guidelines for observing, interpreting and classifying critical incidents, plans for analyzing data and for interpreting and reporting results. (p. 1)

Clarity is vital for the critical incidents because they are analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Researchers have an obligation to interpret the experiences of their subjects accurately. From the critical incidents researchers can discover new strategies to address the perceived problem and enhance existing programs and services.

Concept mapping is a methodological approach to code key categories and elements of information from participants. Goodyear, Lichtenberg, Tracey, Claiborn, and Wampold (2005) explained that concept mapping focuses on the knowledge gained by individuals and groups. Goodyear and his colleagues expressed that concept mapping studies answer the question, “How do people in general (or particular groups of people) construe some aspect of experience?” Through these experiences, concept mapping uses a “multidimensional scaling and cluster methods” (p. 237) to map the similarities between information concepts. The clusters of information create general themes from the interviews and the paired comparison questionnaire uses these themes. Then the questionnaire asks participants to rate themselves in relation to their personal similarities with the categories on the questionnaire. For example, each theme on the questionnaire can ask, “How does this term relate to you?” The participant respond using a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 10 (very much), and the responses are summarized and mapped onto dimensions on a concept map. Although this methodology section is unique, it is valid in identifying similar concepts from the design’s mixed methods finding approach.
Significance of the Study and Research Questions

A lack of research about student experiences presumably explains why higher education professionals create assumptions about students based upon existing identity development models. It is important to understand that current research may not mention the unique experiences for student subgroups such as racial minorities.

The belief that students’ sense of identity is developed during the college years is widely accepted; what has not received as much attention is the influence of race, ethnicity, other social categories, or the interrelationship of multiple identities on the development during the college years. (Torres et al., 2003, p. 14)

One can conclude that previous research is incomplete because the experiences of student subgroups are missing.

Rhoads (1997) wrote that research about gay student college experiences is limited, which is a gap in the literature that future research should explore. Icard (1986) also found that research about the Black gay experience is limited and stated that future research should include influences experienced while in college. The present study explored the experiences of Black gay students to discover through their own perspectives and opinions what factors had influenced their identity development.

This study provides information about the experiences of underrepresented gay people, particularly Black gay men, and contributes to the limited research about gay student experiences. An assumption is that the experiences of these men presents new perspectives to consider. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors do traditional-age (18-22) Black gay college men at 4-year institutions perceive to have affected their identities?
2. What conceptual maps do Black gay college men use to organize theses factors?
CHAPTER 2
METHOD

This chapter describes the methods used in this study. It addressed the study’s participants, raters, measures, recruitment strategies, and procedures.

Participants

Phase One
Sixty-nine undergraduate men participated in the first phase of this study. Thirty-two (46.4%) of the 69 men who completed the first section provided information in the second incident section of the CYEQ. Thirty-five (50.7%) identified themselves as Black, 24 (34.8%) as African American, and 10 (14.5%) as multiracial. With regard to sexual orientation, 45 participants (65%) identified as gay, 12 (17.4%) as bisexual, and 11 (16%) as either same-gender loving, down low, homosexual, or queer. Their mean age was 20.75 years (SD = 1.3 years).

All of the men were pursuing an undergraduate degree at a 4-year educational institution. The colleges and universities spanned the United States. The participants were of freshman to senior class standing to guarantee that they had been exposed to the college environment: 35% were freshmen, 23% were sophomores, 21% were juniors, and 22% were seniors.

Phase Two
In Phase Two 15 participants completed the Paired Comparison Questionnaire. These participants were a subset of the original participants from Phase One. Their mean age was 20.8 years (SD = 0.77 years) with an age range from 20 to 22.
The second phase participants were from 4-year institutions across the United States. A majority (n = 6, 40%) were from one university: University of Southern California. Nine (60%) participants were juniors and 6 (40%) were seniors.

Raters

The raters for this study were three doctoral students (one of whom was the author) at a large private university: a White/European female, a White/European male, and a Mexican American male. Two of the raters self-identified as gay and one self-identified as lesbian. All of the raters were familiar with the mixed-methods technique utilized for this study, and they had completed all necessary coursework in their doctoral program.

All raters participated in mock rating sessions that used data collected from a CYEQ pilot experiment. A trained faculty member, well versed with the critical incident technique and concept mapping, supervised the raters. The raters coded the incidents and eliminated possible redundancies among the reports.

Measures

This study utilized two measurement strategies. During Phase One Flanagan’s (1954) critical incident technique was used to collect experiences that had occurred during college that the respondents stated had had a direct impact on their identity development. A paired comparison questionnaire was developed for the second phase of the study, using Phase One categories. This questionnaire collected data that would be used for the multidimensional scaling (MDS) and cluster analysis to create the conceptual map that participants used to organize the experiences.
Critical Incident Technique

Phase One used the CYEQ (appendix C) based on Flanagan’s (1954) critical incident technique. The CYEQ asked participants, through an online survey collection program, to reflect on a personal experience while attending college. In addition, participants could record at least one incident or experience that had affected their sense of self.

Participants were asked to recall significant experiences, either negative or positive, that had had a dramatic affect on them while in college. The CYEQ asked participants: (a) to describe a particular incident, (b) to mention whether other people were involved, and (c) to explain why the incident was important to them. Participants were also asked to rate on a scale of 1 = very negative to 7 = very positive the degree to which the experience was positive and the eventual effect that the experience had on their sense of self.

Demographic information about the participants was also collected (appendix D). This information included open-ended questions about sexual orientation identification, age, ethnicity, class standing in school, and the name of the college or university. The final questions on the CYEQ asked participants whether they would like to participate in the second phase of the study; they could provide their email address to receive further notification about the second phase.

Eleven doctoral students created the initial CYEQ and piloted it two times to test the questionnaire and they gathered feedback from pilot participants. The first pilot participants were doctoral students who were members of the research team. Participants for the second pilot were colleagues of the doctoral students. The pilots allowed the doctoral students to improve the CYEQ. Participant feedback initiated discussions among the students, resulting in some changes to the CYEQ.


**Paired Comparisons Questionnaire**

Raters created 13 categories from the responses from Phase One critical incident data. These categories were used to create the paired-comparison questionnaire, the College Years Experience Concept Similarity Rating Scale (CSRS). Each of the 13 categories was paired with each of the other categories, creating a 78-item questionnaire. The placement of the paired categories for the CSRS was determined by using a random number table (appendix E). The CSRS was emailed to 15 Phase One participants via an online survey program.

Participants were provided descriptions of the 13 categories before taking the CSRS to understand the meaning behind each category and they were instructed to rate the similarities between the categories on a 6-point scale of 1 = *not at all alike*, 2 = *not alike*, 3 = *slightly alike*, 4 = *somewhat alike*, 5 = *alike*, 6 = *very much alike* (appendix F).

**Procedures**

**Participant Selection**

**Phase One**

Four-year colleges and universities across the United States were used to recruit participants for this study. The 121 colleges and universities registered with the National Consortium of Directors of LGBT Resource in Higher Education were solicited to send the CYEQ questionnaire to their students. The consortium is a members-only community for colleges or universities with paid staff working at higher education-based LGBT, programs, or offices.

Thirteen percent (*n* =16) of the consortium colleges and universities had participants who completed the CYEQ (Table 1). None of the consortium sites was
Table 1

*College and University Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colleges and universities</th>
<th>Incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Southern California(^a)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California, Los Angeles(^a)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepperdine University</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Michigan University(^a)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California State University, Northridge</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia State University</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio University(^a)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Arkansas at Little Rock</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown University(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo State College</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark College</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell University(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emory University(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina Central University</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific University</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Monica Community College</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syracuse University(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Southern University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas State University</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne State University</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California, Santa Barbara(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Maryland, College Park(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Southern Mississippi</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wisconsin-Madison(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wisconsin-Parkside</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale University</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xavier University of Louisiana</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Institute of Atlanta</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California State University, Los Angeles</td>
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<tr>
<td>California State University, Northridge</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morgan State University</td>
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<td>New York University(^a)</td>
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<td>Oregon State University(^a)</td>
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<td>San Francisco State University</td>
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<td>University of Michigan(^a)</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Mississippi</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*College and Universities that are registered with the National Consortium of Directors of LGBT Resources in Higher Education.*
required to forward the Internet link for the CYEQ, but all 121 sites received the link via the consortium listserv. Overall, 57% \((n = 58)\) of the incidents were from consortium colleges and universities.

Black gay leaders from across the United States assisted in the collection of 43% \((n = 43)\) of the incidents. Black gay activists such as, but not limited to, Keith Boykin, Jasmyne Cannick, Herndon Davis, Jeffrey King, and Deondray Gossett assisted in soliciting participants. Similar to the consortium colleges and universities, the leaders sent the CYEQ announcement (appendix G) on their interactive blog sites and listservs. The support from Black gay leadership helped the author to recruit participants for this sample selection.

One hundred eighty-six persons accessed the online version of the CYEQ. Of those who accessed the questionnaire, 154 (82.8%) completed the demographic section and 69 (37.1%) completed the first incident section. Thirty-two of the 69 persons (46.4%) who completed the first section provided information in the second incident section of the CYEQ. This resulted in 101 critical incidents.

The CYEQ announcement was available for participants online through an electronic online survey. Due to the nature of the sampling selection, it was important to have the CYEQ available online to guarantee that participants could complete the questionnaire in a private space. The CYEQ included a brief description about the study and the purpose. It was also a strategy of the author to include in the announcement that this research was the first of its kind for Black gay college students. The online link allowed the participants to remain anonymous and provided a confidential method if participants were interested in participating in Phase Two.
Phase Two

The final question on the CYEQ asked the Phase One participants whether they were interested in participating in the second phase of the study. Participants who were interested type their email address in the text box. Forty-five of the 69 Phase One participants (65.2%) provided an email address, which indicated that they wanted to participate in the second phase of the study. When the CSRS became available, the author emailed to 30 participants, chosen at random, an announcement about the CSRS (appendix H). Fifteen participants (50%) completed the CSRS.

Measure Administration

Phase One

The CYEQ (appendix C) was adapted to an online format through a survey service to guarantee greater participation due to the specific sampling selection. The author provided the registered consortium colleges and universities as well as the Black gay leaders the solicitation email announcement (appendix G) to send to their listservs or post on their blogs. The email included the Web address where the CYEQ could be accessed. When potential participants logged in to the survey, they were provided an opportunity to read the Research Project Information Sheet (appendix I) or they could proceed directly to the questionnaire.

The CYEQ remained available through the online survey service until at least 100 incidents had been obtained. Incidents were deemed usable if the respondent completed the description of an experience while in college.
**Phase Two**

The CSRS (appendix F) was adapted to an online format through a survey service to guarantee greater participation. Thirty Phase One participants (selected at random) who had provided an email address for Phase Two were sent a CSRS announcement (appendix H) by the author. The CSRS remained open until 15 usable responses had been received. A response was deemed to be usable if the respondent completed the entire 78-item questionnaire. When 15 useable response sets were received, CSRS was closed on the service.

**Data Analysis**

**Phase One**

**Theme Development**

After the CYEQ was closed, the author downloaded the responses from the service and generated a spreadsheet file that contained all of the incidents and the demographic information (sexual orientation identification, age, ethnicity, standing in school, and name of college or university), point in college at which each incident occurred, and the positive experience and effect self-rating for each incident. The experiences, along with each experience’s Internet Protocol (IP) address, were transferred to a word processing document and given to the raters for category development.

Using the word processing document, the raters independently generated a list of categories found in the incidents. The raters read each incident and listed the category that they believed it represented. All the categories generated were placed on individual lists. The raters then met as a group to review their category creations. The categories were reviewed and similar categories were recorded, while the
remaining categories were discussed to understand the rater’s rationale. The raters reexamined the remaining categories as a group and developed categories that represented the corresponding incidents. The raters fortunately developed similar category ideas, which may be because the raters were familiar with LGBT student experiences. The raters were all researching an aspect of the LGBT student experience while in college. When the categories were created, the raters developed and approved 13 general categories from the 101 incidents.

**Overarching Themes**

The categories were assigned to the Phase One incidents by the raters. Raters read the incidents and assigned one of the 13 categories as the category that best represented the incident. The individual assignments were compiled by the author and raters either in person or by telephone to discuss the results. The raters agreed to have a majority rule approach in discussing category assignments. However, if all raters assigned an incident a different category, then the incident was reexamined by the group and assigned a category that all raters accepted.

**Phase Two**

After Phase Two data collection, the similarity ratings of each participant were arranged into a separate similarity matrix. Each of the 13 categories was listed both vertically and horizontally in the matrix. The similarity scores (6-point scale) given by individual Phase Two participants for each paired comparison were entered in the appropriate cells below the diagonal. These data served as the basis for the concept mapping analyses.

The similarity ratings by each participant were subjected to both nonmetric multidimensional scaling and hierarchal cluster analyses of the combined group
similarity matrix (appendix J) to depict the structures that participants used in thinking of the sources of impact that college had on their identity development. All analyses employed the computer statistics program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences™ (SPSS).

**MDS**

With MDS, Kruskal and Wish (1978) recommended not to interpret more dimensions than the number of elements (in this case, category) divided by 4. Thus, for example, participant A, who generated eight categories, should have no more than two dimensions. In addition, because its representations are spatial, MDS is not generally useful with more than three or four dimensions.

Choosing the optimal number of dimensions is not always easy. The relative fit of the MDS solution to the data serves as the primary selection criterion. The common indicator of fit is stress\(^1\), which is the square root of the normalized residual sum of squares. Values of 0 indicate a perfect fit of the model to the data, and larger values indicate a lesser fit. Kruskal and Wish recommended that a one-dimension solution with a stress < .15 suggests that this solution is the best representation. Failing this, the study examined solutions with more dimensions. The “elbow” in the stress fit values examined in a manner similar to the scree test in factor analysis. Kruskal and Wish recommended the cutoff of stress < .10 as a criterion of adequacy in deciding on the elbow; in other words, does the elbow adequately account for the data by being below the .10 threshold?

After this fit criterion, Kruskal and Wish (1978) recommended interpretability, ease of use, and stability as other criteria to use in selecting dimensions.
Interpretability refers to the solution that makes the most sense conceptually. Fewer dimensions are preferable because they depict the structure more simply.

**Clustering**

Clustering analysis explores whether the data are better depicted with a discrete, rather than dimensional, representation. Clustering focuses on differences of “type,” in contrast to MDS’s differences of “amount,” and examines how the categories generated were qualitatively different. The similarity matrix was examined using both hierarchical clustering and add-tree clustering methods. The two methods involve different assumptions, a presentation of which is beyond the scope of this paper; however, by using both and looking for commonalities, it was presumed that the process would yield more confidence in structures. The rates focused more on hierarchical clustering, using Euclidean distance and Ward’s method of linkage, with complete linking as an added check.

The selection of the number of clusters is rarely clear (Borgen & Barnett, 1987), and selection procedures range from informal to statistical. Given the study’s focus on interpretability and ease of use, the informal approach was used. The logic is similar to that of the scree test in factor analysis. Hierarchical clustering presents the data in the form of a dendrogram, which is a representation of the distance of each category from each other category. The fusion coefficient (i.e., the value of the distance parameter listed in the clustering dendrogram for each number of clusters) is examined for an “elbow,” as in MDS, using the criteria of interpretability and ease of use to yield the final cluster representation.
CHAPTER 3
RESULTS

Results from each of the two phases of the study are reported in this chapter. Phase one incorporated a qualitative approach to identify categories of impacts that Black gay men had experienced. Phase Two employed quantitative data to depict a cognitive map of these students’ experiences.

Phase One

Categories

The three raters grouped the 101 CYEQ responses into 13 categories of experiences that participants had found to be significant in their identity development during college. The 13 categories are described in the material that follows, along with illustrative examples.

Coming out to self: Eleven of the 101 incidents were grouped in this category, the second greatest number of incidents. Participants mentioned that the college experience was a time in their lives when they were coming to terms with their gay identity and their attractions to other men. Some mentioned that they came to terms with their gay identities after a romantic relationship with women.

I first realized that I had to live my life for me it had become overwhelmingly evident that I was not into women. I decided one night after coming back from my home town where my girlfriend was still residing that I would no longer subject her to my unhappiness. . . . She did not appeal to me the way that the guys did that I noticed on campus.

I got a massive crush on this [male] TA teaching one of the discussion sections I attended. I wasn’t really expecting to get a crush on another guy, so it was a bit of a surprise and betrayal from what I had assumed I would like. So, I mulled about it for the 5 five years or so, and recently got more or less comfortable with my sexuality.
Third year of school, a fellow classmate (a girl) expressed an interest in me, I declined. She was a classmate whom I knew only from one semester in college. I considered her a good friend. This was the “nail in the coffin” in terms of me deciding that the opposite gender was not in fact where I would find happiness.

I really liked a girl and she turned me down . . . . After calming down my anger, I realized I only wanted to date her to fit in more and be normal. However, I couldn’t even see myself want to have sex with her. It helped me realize I can be who I am and I don’t have to lie to myself.

My incident occurred when a fellow female student attempted to seduce me after I gave her a message. I realized that I did not get any pleasure out of it or her. Afterwards, I realized that I could no longer pretend to enjoy the company of a female.

I was never completely satisfied or content with women, so I’d experiment with men whenever I wasn’t dating a woman. Many would probably consider me to be a down low brother but I declared my privacy by maintaining my discretion. Eventually (jr. year), I got sick and tired of living for others and pretending to want the opposite sex . . . so I broke up with my last girlfriend and pursued a man. I’m happier now with more peace.

*Experiencing a gay romantic relationship for the first time.* Seven of the 101 responses were placed in this category. These experiences were concerned with participants’ initiating dating or romantic relationships with other men. Some participants mentioned that having a romantic relationship with another man helped them come out to others about their gay identity.

I had my first date with another guy. He was really cute and smart; he was one of my co-workers at Abercrombie and Fitch. He is Salvadorian and did I mention cute! We had dinner and saw a movie. This experience has opened me up to dating and being myself.

Another important experience was meeting my first boyfriend while a freshman in college. The experience was important because it was my first time being in same-sex relationship that was out in the open in the sense that we both had friends who knew we were a couple. This relationship also became the catalyst for my eventually coming out to my parents.

My sophomore year of college, I met my boyfriend. Before then I was not out. He changed me in so many ways, for the better. I am more aware of myself and my surroundings.
Some participants also mentioned that this romantic relationship validated their gay identity by feeling at ease and comfortable being romantic with another man.

The first time I was fully intimate with another guy changed completely changed my life. When I was next to him, and communicated with him, I felt as if I was finally interacting with another human being in the way the uniquely meant for me. When I held him, and he held me, it felt better than the way it had with my ex-girlfriend. This was very important for me, because it affirmed that my longings were more than mere desires, they were necessities for me.

*Having a gay sexual encounter.* This was one of two categories that contained 10 incidents. In this category, participants mentioned having had sexual encounters with other men. This was different from the gay romance category in that the experiences were explicitly sexual, without romantic expectations with the sexual partners.

I was at Band Camp with football players. . . . I knew I liked guys but never acted on them until I was in college. . . . To make a long story short, here was a jock and a band student exploring what was told a taboo in our lives.

I had sex with the head of the GLBTA, and after realizing he slept around a lot and that he was just using me for sex, I realized that I was having sex with men to get them to like me.

Some students reported that they participated in anonymous sexual encounters with other men.

I was approached by a guy in the shower; caught him eyeing me, we went back to his room. The experience was hot and intense.

During the summer of 2006, I had lost my virginity to a guy I had met online. He doesn’t go to USC, nor is he a college student. It was impromptu but not entirely. Extensive talking online had occurred beforehand.

I was “propositioned” anonymously. . . . The guy (I’m not 99% sure he was another male undergraduate student) contacted me by email, which he probably got from the student directory.

*Experiencing a gay community that was unfriendly or rejecting.* Six responses were classified in this category. These experiences concerned
participants not feeling that they “fit in” with gay peers on campus. As a result, the participants felt uncomfortable in socializing with other gay students on campus.

My first off-campus party with members of the local gay male community exposed me to a very homogenized view of what was desirable among these men. I therefore felt extremely out-of-place, awkward and undesirable.

When I first came out of the closet, I tried to make friends with other gay males in the community, [by whom] I was rejected. At the time I was overweight, had no sense of style and very low self esteem, and my one gay friend discussed how many gay men will not be friends with someone they are not attracted to in some way.

*Having sexual identity affirmed in classroom, campus center or local community.* In the six responses in this category participants described having experienced a positive climate for gay students in the classroom, on campus, or in the surrounding community.

I took a brain and behavior course from a Doctor of Neurophysiology. One day in class, he went on a long tirade about how homosexuality was not a choice. He presented dozens of studies that had empirical evidence that the brains of gay men and transgender people are not the same as everyone else’s (lesbian women’s brains tended to be normal when compared to their heterosexual counterparts). Here it was! The evidence I had been looking for my whole life! Scientific proof that I wasn’t strange.

Participants also reported a positive climate for their gay identity on campus.

I was elected to our student senate in September of my freshman year. The experience was memorable because it provided me with lifelong mentors, opportunity to experience real government at work, develop a passion for politics, and gave me a sense of purpose early in my college career.

Incidents in this category concerned a positive climate from the surrounding community.

I had a plan when I came to New York to accomplish my dreams and goals. Starting right when I turned 18. I became active in New York’s unique nightlife scene, building connections in fashion, press, and club music for my budding career.
Experiencing a challenge to one’s masculinity. Only three incidents comprised this category. These incidents concerned experiences in which participants needed to reinforce their masculinity due to their gay identity.

There was this guy who I immediately became friends with. It was completely platonic, but he kept saying things to me in a joking manner about how I was not man enough like him, because I didn’t like basketball or I would prefer bowling over basketball, and that I needed pussy because I was tense.

During my sophomore year I lived in university sponsored housing, I had a friend fall asleep on my bed in my room. The next day my three roommates started calling me a “homo.” It started to get real ugly on campus in general for me.

I always found myself trying to project the stereotypical Black male in all his bravado and hip-hop attire. I thought, of course, if I projected this person, my sexuality would never be questioned. Although I was in a meaningful relationship with a man during my freshman year, I still told myself that I needed to prescribe to the heterosexual norms set around me, and so I found myself constantly giving off a hard exterior.

Encountering unexpected adversity (independent of sexuality). The nine incidents in this category concerned personal struggles that had affected respondents’ identity while in college.

I couldn’t pay my tuition and I had to leave school for a semester. It was negative; however, I was able to know what I wanted to do at school and no longer helpless in my own life. I could come back, pay tuition, get the student loan I needed, and resume studies.

I had to leave school when I was lacking tuition; I was more worried about what people thought of me instead of my education. Then I had to understand that my education belonged to me, no one else. It gave me ownership.

I was a true junior at the university and that was the year that my father took his life at home. I had to withdraw that semester. His death was very difficult to overcome, as he never knew of my true self.

I lost a dear person in my life. His death was very hard to deal with because the part of him that I knew was the part I had to hide from his family because they did not know about his sexuality.

My experience was struggling academically during my first semester. This experience taught me that I’m not in college for other people. I’m here for myself and to better myself.
Having a direct experience with discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or race. This was the category with the greatest number (16) of incidents. Participants’ experiences were of either homophobia or racism.

The negative experience that I had was based on a classroom discussion. Somehow, one of the students was always bringing up sexual orientation. We were discussing public policy in general and before I knew it, my fellow students brought up their interpretations on the Bible. I have no idea how this happened but the classroom turned on me. Somehow this got back to my off campus employer and I was fired for being incompatible with the company.

I’m a victim of gay bashing but I was silent about my sexual orientation. I’m praying to God.

I have always been surprised by the number of Black people that just say things like sweet, or gay, or soft, etc. There are people who don’t even know me and don’t want to take the chance to get to know me.

Black students destroyed all of the posters that had queer people in Black history on them.

I pride myself with my unique sense of dressing and most of the straight boys at my school hate it but one day when I was getting my ass handed by some stupid guys . . .

I was hanging out with a few of my friends drinking in the dorms when they wanted to go to another party that was happening. I was told by the people hosting the party that I wasn’t welcome because I am a gay Black man and because of that, I scared them.

My SHADES (LGBT people of color) support organization that I started at Ohio University hosts the National Day of Silence every year, and I sent out a mass email informing the school of the event, we received a lot of support, but I personally receive a good number of negative emails in response. I was called a faggot and a nigger in one of these; I traced the email back and found out that it came from a person who I speak to from time to time since we lived on the same floor in our dorm.

Coming out to friends and family. Eight incidents comprised this category. Category incidents concerned telling friends and family about their gay identity.

Recently I admitted to my best friends (1 who is male, 2 females) that I was attracted to and sexually active with males. This was very important to me because they are my best friends, and my sexual preference is something I have to keep from my family.
Being honest with my fraternity about my sexuality. I had to have individual conversations with almost everyone in the brotherhood. This was important so they could understand who I am as a person. The long-term effect is that they understand me, who I’m dating, and aren’t in the dark. It has made our relationships more honest.

I came out, to the surprise of everyone, during a round table discussion about race, gender, and sexuality.

I decided to tell two different people that I was gay because they were my friends and I no longer wanted to hide it from them.

Receiving friendly support from a formal LGBT campus center or organization. Ten incidents fit in this category. In these incidents, participants experienced acceptance and support from friends through involvement with a formal LGBT campus center or student organization.

An experience that affected my life would probably be when I attended a gay alliance meeting at school with my close friend. I then realized I could be myself (gay) publicly without feeling scared. The importance of the experience was a forever changing. From that point on I was able to gradually feel comfortable in my own skin.

During my sophomore year I felt intensely lonely and isolated, which made me consider leaving SC. I talked to different people who offered advice that didn’t influence me to reconsider until I talked to the staff in the CBCSA office and they suggested I get involved with the Black community at SC. I took that advice and found that it helped me to create a sense of belonging.

Before beginning my freshman year at Yale, I applied to participate in an early orientation program for minority students. Essentially, the program allows you to come to campus a few weeks prior to the start of the freshman semester to become acclimated to the college setting. I found it personally impacting since I was the first in my family to attend college.

I think that all throughout college I didn’t care to think about my forming my own identity. However, I think that going to my university’s gay/lesbian/queer center for the first time marked the beginning of my journey into self-discovery.

Recently I attended a call out for the beginning of a new student LGBTQA group. There were both staff and students involved. Staff and students represented the entire LGBTQ spectrum. This experience was significant to me because it gave me the opportunity to sit with like-minded people and voice my concerns for the LGBTQ community on campus, and gave me an outlet for group association.
Making a conscious decision to remain closeted about one’s sexual identity.

The seven incidents in this category concerned respondents making a conscious decision to avoid public disclosure about their sexuality and choosing not to acknowledge their gay identity to others. They chose instead to stay closeted in certain social settings.

I remember a time when students in class were discussing homosexuality and I was scared to speak up and defend the subject matter of being found out about my sexuality.

I had not come out at this time. My background was very religious, where even though I knew I was gay, I just wanted it “out of me.” My family was strongly Baptist, and I even went to a Baptist university for my undergraduate studies (not because I was gay, but it did make me even more determined to hide my sexuality).

I was very active with a number of organizations on campus, including the Association of Black Students and Baylor Chapter of the NAACP. . . . I remember one guy was so afraid of being seen talking alone with me he kept looking over his shoulders to make sure no one saw him. I later found out from a friend that there was a rumor on campus about all the Black students who were suspected of being gay, and I was on the list. . . . I worried about everything after that because Baylor has a policy on the books that being openly gay is grounds for removal from the university. Imagine that.

Challenging other’s beliefs about homosexuality. The four incidents in this category concerned participants challenging preconceived notions about gay people through their friendships and discussions or simply being out on campus.

During my freshman year I was one of the few openly gay students on my campus of 1,100 students. People had a lot of questions for me, seeing as how I am a minority in more than one sense.

Being told by a classmate who hailed from a small conservative town that I changed his perception about who/what gay people are. This classmate was someone who was in two of my classes in the same semester and someone I collaborated with on a project.

Having a positive gay role model. The three incidents in this category concerned participants experiencing exposure to inspirational gay peers and develop mentor relationships with other Black gay people.
I met the president of GLBTSA (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Straight Alliance). He was a Black gay male as well. He introduced me to other gay people on campus.

I went to New York to visit a friend of mine who is very out. We have been friends since high school and he invited me down so I could see what I was missing. He is one year older and works in PR. We went to a gay club and I had what I can definitely call the best time of my life!

These 13 categories are summarized in Table 2, which includes the mean values for the year in college that the experience occurred, the positive values for the incidents, and the values for the eventual effects on the sense of self. An explanation for the values is reported in the following sections.

**Year of Occurrence**

Table 2 provides the mean for year of occurrence for each category of incidents. They ranged from a low of 1.71 (freshman year) for *Experiencing a Romantic Relationship* to a high of 3.29 (junior year) for *Deciding to Remain Closeted*. Three categories had a mean of 2.0 for their years of occurrence: *Having Sexual Identity Affirmed*, *Experiencing Discrimination*, and *Having a Positive Gay Role Model*, and three categories had a mean below 2.0: *Experiencing a Romantic Relationship*, *Experiencing an Unfriendly Community*, and *Receiving Support*. *Challenging Others’ Beliefs about Homosexuality* has a clear mean of 3.0. Five categories had a mean value ranging between 2.0 and 3.0: *Coming out to Self*, *Having a Sexual Encounter*, *Experiencing a Challenge to Masculinity*, *Encountering Unexpected Adversity*, and *Coming out to Friends/Family*. *Deciding to Remain Closeted* is the only category with a mean above 3.00 (3.29) as its mean for year of occurrence.

The experiences that tended to occur earliest were *Experiencing a Romantic Relationship* (1.71) and *Experiencing an Unfriendly Community* (1.83). The
Table 2

*Incidents Overarching Categories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>College year $^a$</th>
<th>Positivity rating</th>
<th>Impact rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having a positive gay role model</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.00 1.73</td>
<td>7.00 0.00</td>
<td>7.00 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having sexual identity affirmed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.00 1.55</td>
<td>7.00 0.00</td>
<td>7.00 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving support</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.90 0.99</td>
<td>6.6 0.70</td>
<td>5.8 1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming out to friends/family</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.75 1.04</td>
<td>6.00 1.20</td>
<td>6.50 0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing a romantic relationship</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.71 0.76</td>
<td>5.86 1.68</td>
<td>6.71 0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging others’ beliefs about homosexuality</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.00 1.41</td>
<td>5.00 1.63</td>
<td>6.25 0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing an unfriendly community</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.83 0.98</td>
<td>4.5 1.76</td>
<td>3.83 1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a sexual encounter</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.3 1.25</td>
<td>4.3 1.57</td>
<td>5.30 1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming out to self</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.27 1.01</td>
<td>4.36 1.50</td>
<td>6.18 0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encountering unexpected adversity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.80 1.03</td>
<td>3.7 2.36</td>
<td>5.00 2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing a challenge to masculinity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.33 1.53</td>
<td>3.67 3.05</td>
<td>3.67 3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deciding to remain closeted</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.29 0.95</td>
<td>2.86 2.60</td>
<td>4.71 2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing discrimination</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.00 1.21</td>
<td>2.25 1.98</td>
<td>3.44 2.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$1 = freshmen, 2 = sophomore, 3 = junior, and 4 = senior.

Experience that occurred later in college was *Deciding to Remain Closeted* (3.29).

Appendix K contains the responses reporting the actual incidents collected for each of the eight categories.
Positive Value Rating

Participants were asked two questions about each reported incident. The first request was to rate “the degree to which you experienced this incident or experience as positive” on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = very negative to 7 = very positive. The second request was to rate “the eventual effect this incident or experience had on your sense of self,” using the same 7-point scale.

As shown in Table 2, six categories of experiences were perceived as positive, with mean values ranging from 5 to 7 on the 7-point scale. The categories with the highest mean values for positive experiences were Experiencing a Romantic Relationship (5.86), Coming out to Friends/Family (6.00), and Receiving Support (6.60). Four categories of experiences were perceived as negative: Experiencing Discrimination (2.25), Encountering Unexpected Adversity (3.70), Deciding to Remain Closeted (2.86), and Experiencing a Challenge to Masculinity (3.67). Experiencing Discrimination received the most negative rating and was the largest category with the most experiences collected in Phase One. The categories with mid-level perceptions on the 7-point were Having a Sexual Encounter, Coming Out to Self, and Experiencing an Unfriendly Community.

Eventual Effect of Experience on Sense of Self

The differences between the mean for ratings of positivity and for eventual impact were not great. In fact, three of the mean values were similar: Experiencing a Challenge to Masculinity (3.67), Having Sexual Identity Affirmed (7.00), and Having a Positive Gay Role Model (7.00). The mean value for the most positive eventual effect was 7.00 and the lowest value for the eventual effect was 3.44 for Experiencing Discrimination, which also had the lowest mean value for the initial incident question.
Eight categories (Coming Out to Self, Experiencing a Romantic Relationship, Having a Sexual Encounter, Encountering Unexpected Adversity, Experiencing Discrimination, Deciding to Remain Closeted, Challenging Others’ Beliefs about Homosexuality, and Coming Out to Friends/Family) were rated more positively than the value for the initial experience. Two categories (Experiencing an Unfriendly Community and Receiving Support) were rated more negatively than the value for the initial experience. Although the mean values varied, it is important to consider that differences between the initial incident and eventual effect questions were not great.

Phase Two

Research Question

The research question that guided Phase Two of this study was, What conceptual map do Black gay college men use to organize their experience of these categories of experiences? Similarity data from the CSRS were analyzed using both MDS and cluster analysis. Results of each are reported in this section.

Multidimensional Scaling (MDS)

The MDS solutions were examined initially for both three-dimensional and two-dimensional solutions, which had stress values of .16 and .26, respectively; the RSQ values (variance accounted for) were .75 for the three-dimension solution and .57 for the two-dimension solution. Despite the stress and RSQ indicators that the dimensional solution was better, the result of the two-dimensional solution was employed for the concept map. Table 3 illustrates the dimension weights for
Table 3

*Dimension Values*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Dimension (x)</th>
<th>Dimension (y)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coming out to self</td>
<td>SELF</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing a gay romantic relationship for the first time</td>
<td>ROMANTIC</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a gay sexual encounter</td>
<td>SEXUAL</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing a gay community that was unfriendly or rejecting</td>
<td>UNFRIEND</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having sexual identity affirmed in classroom, campus center or local community</td>
<td>AFFIRMED</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing a challenge to one’s masculinity</td>
<td>MASCULIN</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encountering unexpected adversity (independent of sexuality)</td>
<td>ADVERSIT</td>
<td>-1.65</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a direct experience with discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or race</td>
<td>DISCRIMI</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming out to friends and family</td>
<td>FRIENDSF</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving friendly support from a formal LGBT campus center or organization</td>
<td>SUPPORT</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>-1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a conscious decision to remain closeted about one’s sexual identity</td>
<td>CLOSETED</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging other’s beliefs about homosexuality</td>
<td>CHALLBLF</td>
<td>-1.27</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a positive gay role model</td>
<td>ROLEMODE</td>
<td>-1.05</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

two-dimensional solution for the 13 categories. The two-dimensional weights for the categories are plotted in the Euclidean distance model, as shown in Figure 1.
The interpretation of dimensions is an important task in understanding the meaning of the data. These data suggest that participants in this study separated receiving friendly support from a formal LGBT campus center of organization at one end of Dimension 1 and encountering unexpected adversity (independent of sexuality) at the other end, while the other categories fell between the two ends. Therefore, Dimension 1 seems to demonstrate internalized clarification of gay identity and confusion of gay identity. The dimension was labeled “Gay Identity Confusion vs. Gay Identity Clarification.”

The two extremes of Dimension 2 were experiencing a gay community that was unfriendly or rejecting and experiencing a gay romantic relationship for the first time. For this dimension raters interpreted unfriendliness as a challenge to gay identity and romantic relationships as contentment with gay identity, labeling the dimension “Challenges to Gay Identity vs. Contentment with Gay Identity.”
Hierarchical Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis examines the manner in which categories might be aggregated into larger categories, allowing raters to identify similarities and patterns from the data. The dendrogram (Figure 2) depicts the hierarchical clustering and represents the distance of each category from the other categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE Label</th>
<th>Num</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closeted</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ChaliBlf</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FriendsF</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoleMode</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adversit</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfriend</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculin</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrmi</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Dendrogram using Ward method.

At point 10 on the dendrogram a five-cluster solution is evident, and this solution was utilized for the concept map, as it seemed to make conceptual sense. It is important to mention that receiving friendly support from a formal LGBT campus center or organization was an outlier to the cluster analysis and remained independent. The categories that formed each cluster are listed in Table 4.
Table 4

*Categories in Clusters*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Personal perspective</th>
<th>Validation</th>
<th>Interpersonal affirmation</th>
<th>Divided identities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADVERSIT</td>
<td>CHALLBLF</td>
<td>ROLEMODE</td>
<td>ROMANTIC</td>
<td>DISCRIMI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFRIEND</td>
<td>CLOSETED</td>
<td>SEXUAL</td>
<td>AFFIRMED</td>
<td>MASCULIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SELF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FRIENDSF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Raters named the five clusters based on the categories represented within each cluster. In Cluster One participants experienced conflict with peer groups on campus and dealt with some personal difficulties not related to their sexuality. The cluster was named *Conflict*.

Cluster Two categories dealt with a personal choice that participants made that involved the disclosure of their sexuality as well as choosing to challenge others’ beliefs about homosexuality. These categories explained the personal decisions of participants; this cluster was named *Personal Perspective*.

The categories in the third cluster represented incidents in which participants sought validation for their sexuality through role models, friends, and family, as well as through sexual encounters. The validation helped participants to come to terms with their sexuality. This cluster was named *Validation*.

The fourth cluster was named *Interpersonal Affirmation* because the categories explained the affirmation that participants had toward their sexuality, whether through a romantic relationship or in the classroom.
In the fifth cluster the categories dealt with experiences in which participants had difficulties in dealing with their attributes and expectations associated with their dual identities: Black and gay. This cluster was named *Divided Identities*.

The two-dimensional MDS and cluster analysis results are presented in the concept map shown in Figure 3.

*Figure 3. Concept map with named clusters.*

Dimension 1 used gay identity confusion versus gay identity clarification and Dimension 2 used gay identity versus contentment with gay identity. The points were plotted and the five clusters (Conflict, Personal Perspective, Validation, Interpersonal Affirmation and Divided Identities) are circled and named.
CHAPTER 4
DISCUSSION

This study focused on Black gay college men, a minority student population whom researchers have neglected. It had two research objectives: (a) to identify the factors that traditional-age (18-22 years old) Black gay college men at 4-year institutions perceived to have affected their identities, and (b) to determine how Black gay college men conceptually organized those factors of impact.

In this chapter the findings are discussed in relation to those two research questions that guided the study. The study’s limitations, directions for future research, and implications for higher education practitioners are also presented.

Findings in Relation to Research Questions

*College Experiences That Black Gay Men Perceived as Influential on Identity*

This study’s results suggest that Black gay college men experience the same types of discrimination that Black gay men experience from mainstream society. The greatest number of incidents that Black gay college men reported concerned *Having a direct experience with discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or race*. Consistent with previous research about Black gay men, participants reported having experienced both racism from the LGBT community and homophobia from the Black community (Battle et al., 2004; Boykin, 1996; Crawford, 2002; Eliason, 1996; Herek & Capitanio, 1995; Icard, 1986; Loiacano, 1993; Roberts, 1994; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005a, 2005b; Richardson et al., 1997; Stevens, 2004; Tremble et al., 1989).
One might expect that college students on a college campus would be liberal and would accept a peer’s gay identity, yet the incidents suggested otherwise. Based on the findings, Black gay men can experience discrimination and homophobia regardless of their settings. Not surprisingly, participants rated these experiences as quite negative.

The participants reported as significant events the experiences of coming out to self and to others (in the Coming out to self and Coming out to friends and family categories) that were similar to what has been reported in previous research involving sexual identity development. Although the sexual identity development models were primarily based on experiences of gay White men and not gay Black men, the results suggest that these models are valid for them: the process of coming to terms with one’s sexual identity is similar for men, regardless of their ethnicity. Although there may be different external factors involved for ethnic gay men (e.g., cultural expectations; expectations surrounding masculinity), these study results suggest that the internalized self-exploration by Black gay men is similar to what the existent sexual identity development models describe.

One category of coming out focused on self-negotiation of sexual identity, which corresponded to what was mentioned in the homosexual identity development theories (Cass, 1979, 1984; Coleman, 1985; D’Augelli, 1991, 1991b; Fassinger, 1998; Troiden, 1993). For instance, the first three stages of the Cass model (identity confusion, identity comparison, and identity tolerance) explain the developmental progression that people undergo internally and externally as they acknowledge or question their same-gender attractions.

The other type of coming out (Coming out to friends and family) was more typically associated with the term; it concerned declaring one’s sexual identity to
others. Participants described their anxieties when debating whether to come out to friends and families, especially for those associated with hypermasculine organizations (e.g., fraternities, athletics, religious affiliations). Participants attempted to find tolerance or acceptance for their gay identity, which is similar to characteristics associated with identity acceptance in the Cass model and becoming a lesbian/gay/bisexual offspring in the D’Augelli model.

Previous research relating to experiences of Black gay men in society correlates with the research from this study with regard to sexual identity development and discrimination. Although there is no specific previous research about the experience for Black gay college men, this study demonstrates that they are likely to experience discrimination on college campuses. In addition, their sexual identity development may not be different from that of others, regardless of ethnicity. However, external factors may pose difficulties for Black gay college men, including religion, family values, and a sense of masculinity.

Another crucial element to consider when reviewing the reported discrimination incidents is the positivity score that participants ascribed to them. Having a direct experience with discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or race was rated as negative ($M = 2.25$). After experiencing racism from the gay community, a respondent reported, “This event was important because I realized that racism was in society and in what was suppose to be the ‘gay community.’ The long-term effect was feeling no sense of commitment to the ‘gay community.’” This incident occurred in the third year of school and received extremely negative ratings for positivity; the student felt neither support nor validation from the campus gay community. From this experience, the student did not feel supported or validated from the campus gay community. Black gay college students may need extra
The creation of a supportive campus climate for Black gay college students is important when dealing with issues of discrimination, since many discrimination experiences are unreported. If these students acknowledge that there is a safe place for them on campus to share their experiences regarding discrimination, in the form of a LGBT resource center or campus cultural center, then appropriate intervention strategies can be generated. The main issue for college campuses is to end these incidents of discrimination for Black gay men.

**Perceived Effect of Experiences**

Incidents of discrimination and homophobia (*Making a conscious decision to remain closeted about one’s sexual identity and Having a direct experience with discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or race*) were perceived as negative (scores of 3.5 or below) yet were given neutral scores for their impact on identity. This is an interesting finding because the impact on identity remained neutral although the incidents were clearly negative. Participants clearly experienced negative incidents but they did not agree that the incidents had affected their sense of self.

In contrast, the remaining 11 categories had positive mean values for impact average scores for two categories (*Having a positive gay role model and Having sexual identity affirmed in classroom, campus center or local community*) received the highest possible mean score (7.00) for positivity and impact. Six categories (*Having a positive gay role model, Having sexual identity affirmed in classroom campus center or local community, Receiving friendly support from a formal LGBT*
campus center or organization, Coming out to friends and family, Experiencing a gay romantic relationship for the first time, and Challenging other’s beliefs about homosexuality) had a mean value of at least 5 for positivity. The categories with neutral positivity rating between 5.00 and 3.50 mean score were Experiencing a gay community that was unfriendly or rejecting, Coming out to self, Having a gay sexual encounter, Experiencing a challenge with one’s masculinity, and Encountering unexpected adversity (independent of sexuality).

**Conceptual Categories of Experiences**

The second research question concerned the conceptual maps that Black gay college men implicitly use to organize their experiences. On the obtained concept map, the first dimension (gay identity confusion vs. gay identity clarification) contained Receiving friendly support from a formal LGBT campus center or organization on one side of the map and Encountering unexpected adversity (independent of sexuality) on the other. This indicates that Black gay college men experience a range of experiences, from those in which their homosexual identity is confusing to those in which it is clearer. The progression is also evident in the homosexual identity development models.

In the second dimension (challenges with gay identity vs. contentment with gay identity) Experiencing a gay community that was unfriendly or rejecting is on one side and Experiencing a gay romantic relationship for the first time is on the opposite end. This dimension illustrates some of the challenges (external and internal) that participants encountered due to their gay identities and the contentment that participants eventually had with their gay identities, either through campus services or personal relationships. The continuum is similar to the identity
development models reviewed in chapter 1. Some participants had grown through their experiences in college to have a stronger sense of identity.

**Cluster Analysis**

The 13 categories of participant experiences were reduced to five clusters in the cluster analysis.

The *Personal Perspective cluster* was concerned with the personal decisions to challenge others’ views about homosexuality or to remain closeted about sexuality in certain situations. This cluster explains the personal prerogatives, whether they are vocal or not, to take a personal stance about gay identity. Based on previous research (Boykin, 2006; Crawford, 2002; Icard, 1986; Loiacano, 1993), Black gay men may choose to remain closeted due to cultural issues and they may not want to confront others for fear of exposing their gay identity to others. These categories provide the personal perspectives of the participants that they make their own choices on how to deal with being Black gay men.

The *Validation cluster* deals with participants seeking validation for themselves from friends, family members, or role models, or even through sexual encounters. The homosexual identity development models (Cass, 1979, 1984; Coleman, 1985; D’Augelli, 1991a, 1991b; Fassinger, 1998; Troiden, 1993) address the coming out process for gay people and the importance for them to feel validated by others. Although this can be a difficult process for some students, the need for validation is important to feel a sense of belonging.

The *Conflict cluster* describes genuine personal struggles that participants experienced while in college. Many of these conflicts were directly related to being gay, but others were independent of sexuality. The *Experiencing a gay community*
that was unfriendly or rejecting category explains how participants were confronted by unfriendly peers and struggled to build friendships. Some authors (Boykin, 2005, 2006; De la Cruz & Kattar, 2006; Icard, 1986; King, 2004) have noted that some Black gay men struggle to meet people in new environments due to other people’s internalized homophobia and racism.

The **Interpersonal Affirmation cluster** is the opposite of the Conflict cluster, including positive categories that assisted participants to feel comfortable with their sexuality. Each category presented personal affirmations by participants in relation to their gay identities, such as the establishment of romantic relationships or classroom discussion that supported gay issues. As a result, this cluster illustrates experiences that are consistent with being gay due to positive reinforcement. This is seen through a need to find a positive group identification with others who are the same as themselves (Fassinger, 1998; Johns & Probst, 2004; Porter & Washington, 1979; Savin-Williams, 2005; Sullivan, 1998).

The **Divided Identities cluster** addresses the contrasts between the dual identities that Black gay men represent. The **Having a direct experience with discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or race** category explained injustices that these participants had encountered from their own Black and gay community, whereas the **Experiencing a challenge to one’s masculinity** category described a need to prove masculinity to Black peers due to their sexuality.

Among these categories, a clear divide resonated among the expectations by these participants regarding their Black and gay identities. Neither the gay nor the Black communities were satisfied with the dual identities of these participants and, as a result, the participants struggled with separation in both communities. This was a common theme from authors who wrote about the experiences of being Black and
gay (Battle et al., 2004; Boykin, 2005, 2006; Crawford, 2002; De la Cruz & Kattar, 2006; Icard, 1986; Loiacano, 1993; Neal et al., 2006; Porter & Washington, 1979; Soule, 2006). Although the authors did not write about college experiences, it is clear that Black gay men experience this divide regarding their dual identities, regardless of their environment.

It is important to mention that the category *Receiving friendly support from a formal LGBT campus center or organization* category was an outlier and did not cluster with any other category. This category was unique because it addressed support that the participant received from the college community, whether from a LGBT center or a student organization. It is crucial for campuses to provide supportive services (e.g., mentoring programs, discussion groups) for students to assist with their identity development.

Limitations of the Study

Two types of limitations are addressed in this section: (a) participant selection, and (b) validity of the findings.

*Participant Selection*

A limitation to this study was the manner in which participants were selected, raising the question of whether this sample therefore represented the undergraduate Black gay men population generally. Many participants were recruited from LGBT resource center listservs across the country by the National Consortium of LGBT Resource Center Directors. Therefore, students who were recruited were or may have been active with their campus LGBT student services. Based on this recruitment, the raters assumed that a majority of the participants had received some form of support from or validation by their campus.
Moreover, some participants were recruited from Black student organization listservs. These student organizations were selected at random and were asked to forward an email announcement with the survey link to their constituents. However, this request process presented some complications. For example, one Black organization did not feel comfortable forwarding the study announcement if the primary researcher was not Black. This organization requested the racial identity of the primary researcher and, once they learned that it was a “first-generation college student who identified as Mexican American, the organization agreed to forward the request to members, but there is no confirmation that the announcement was actually sent.

As a result of this particular incident, a new strategy was used when sending this study’s announcement to additional Black organizations. Instead of a direct request from the primary researcher, prominent Black gay leaders in Los Angeles and New York areas were recruited to assist in recruiting participants.

A majority of participants attend Predominantly White Institutions (PWI). In fact, the announcement was forwarded to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) but none of these students participated. The HBCU student experiences would have provided interesting perspectives, since many of the HBCUs do not have formalized LGBT centers or support groups.

Another limitation in the participant selection process was the decision to include only students who had completed their junior and senior years in college. The rationale was that these students would have more holistic experiences in college when describing their experiences via the CYEQ. In addition, including only juniors and seniors may have helped in collecting rich, thick experiences because, at this point in their college lives, the participants may have been through
more experiences as a Black gay person than underclassmen would have had. Cass and other homosexual development theorists explain the importance of identity acceptance for gay students; as students progress along their gay development and college careers, they may have enough acceptance of their gay identity to feel comfortable to complete the CYEQ. However, the delimitation to juniors and seniors presented difficulties in recruitment. As mentioned above, it was difficult to find Black gay participants; to filter that into a smaller minority presented a tough and long recruitment process.

**Validity of the Categories**

The validity of the categories created from the reported incidents survey data could be called into question. The rater team of three doctoral students analyzed the experiences into categories but their interpretations of the experiences may have been different from what the participants intended.

A verification process of the interpretation of the experiences might have helped in the creation of the 13 categories, especially for the positivity and impact ratings. Such verification might have altered the categories and clusters.

**Directions for Future Research**

Based on the results of this study, three areas for future research could be helpful in furthering understanding of the experiences of Black gay college men: (a) investigate outcomes of the experiences, (b) compare and contrast the experiences of Black gay college men with other racial gay student communities, and (c) examine correlations between Black identity development and gay identity development.
The CYEQ presented two questions that asked participants to describe their college experiences: *What do you think was important about this experience or incident, and why?* and *What you believe the long-term effect to have been on your sense of who you are?* These questions asked participants not only to describe the experience but also to explain how it had affected their sense of self.

However, the study did not utilize the descriptions for the long-term effect on sense of self that were in some cases included with the experience description. That would be an important kind of data for future researchers to use, having the potential to create new conclusions about the effects that the experiences had on the participants’ identity development.

The second area for future research is to compare and contrast the experiences of Black gay college men with those of other racial gay student communities. Studies modeled after this study could research the college experiences for other racially diverse gay college men and compare and contrast multiple concept maps for each racial group. Eaton (2007) conducted this same study but for gay students, and a majority of his respondents identified as Caucasian. In his results, the experiences were very similar to those obtained in this study. Major category differences were this study’s *Having a direct experience with discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or race, Experiencing a challenge to one’s masculinity, and Experiencing a gay community that was unfriendly or rejecting*, which could be associated with racism and cultural attitudes toward masculinity. These between-studies similarities create a greater question about what the experiences are for other racially diverse students.

The third area for future research is to examine the correspondence between Black identity development and gay identity development. From the *Divided*
Identities cluster, the conflict between Black and gay identities was clear but Black gay men may hinder their Black identity development because they may not connect with the Black community due to homophobia. This aspect of having to choose a community can be explored by correlating Black identity development with gay identity development. For instance, these men may never reach the Cross stage of internalization because they may not form a positive opinion of the Black community. In the end, these Black gay men may not integrate into the Black community. Questions are then presented about their Black identity: Does this make them less Black? Are they not fully developed into their Black identity? Often, the Black gay men may feel that they have to choose between the Black community and gay community and, depending on acceptance by either community, their choice may help or hinder their development.

These questions could be answered through further research about the correlations between Black and gay identity development. Although the two processes might seem on the surface to be different, they are actually similar. For instance, research by Cross and Cass has evident thematic similarities, such as having pride for one’s identity and being confused about one’s Black or gay identity. These similarities are also found in most identity development theories, but a compilation of a Black and gay identity development through experiences in college could be a possible revelation for future research. The impact of being a double minority on a college campus, one minority visible through skin color and the other invisible by sexuality, can be studied to advance understanding of the experiences of Black gay men.
Implications for Practitioners

The most important implication for practitioners is to acknowledge that Black gay men exist on their campuses. The stereotypes often associated with hypermasculine Black men dominate the presumptions about Black gay men, as evident in Experiencing a challenge to one’s masculinity. These men are strong, masculine Black men and, therefore, it is presumed that they cannot be gay. This cultural stereotype only hurts the gay community and perpetuates homophobia and racism. Practitioners should become aware of the experiences of Black gay men in order to provide adequate services to address their needs.

The research presented about racial minorities in the gay community (e.g., Rhoads, Stevens, Eliason, Renn and Bilodeau, and Tremble, Schnieder, and Appathurai) addressed the feelings of isolation often associated with Black gay men due to homophobia from the Black community and racism from the gay community. The issues addressed in Having a direct experience with discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or race, which was the largest group of experiences, clearly affected the college experiences of Black gay men. If these men do not have a support network from either the gay community or the Black community on campus, where can they find support?

At the 2007 conference of the University of California Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Association (UCLGBTIA), LGBT students came together in a Queer People of Color Forum and addressed racism and homophobia with which they consistently deal. The students spoke about how they did not feel represented by the LGBT organizations on their college campuses or nationally. In another meeting at this conference, the student affairs professionals who work as front-line managers (e.g., program coordinators) for LGBT student
services talked about how they found it difficult to reach out to LGBT students of color. A reason for this difficulty is that neither they nor the directors of their LGBT centers typically are people of color.

From the research and the experiences reported by the participants in this study, it is clear many Black gay men do not feel accepted or supported by their campus resources. Practitioners must remember that LGBT people are diverse; they come from many cultural groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, religious affiliations, and so forth. It is important to acknowledge this diversity and provide support through programs, events, and services that address this intersection of identities to show the inclusion of diversity in LGBT student services. The University of Southern California, for example, sponsored a Black QueerStory event in which Black gay leaders from the past were remembered, present leaders were honored, and future leaders within the community were acknowledged. The event highlighted current and future leaders from the campus as well as local Los Angeles Black gay leaders.

It may be helpful for LGBT student services to take a multicultural approach to their programming to guarantee that Black men as well as LGBT students of color feel included and represented. Collaboration with the Black student organizations or cultural centers could foster this inclusivity.

Directors or managers of LGBT student services must be educated about the diversity issues within the Black gay community to be able to educate others about current concerns for this population. It is as simple as searching the Web and reading Black gay blogs or reading recent mainstream or empirical research, but most important, talking confidentially with Black gay students to learn about their experiences on campus.
REFERENCES


Battle, J., Bennett, N., & Shaw, T. C. (2004). From the closet to a place at the table: Past, present, and future assessments of social science research on Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender populations. *African American Research Perspectives, 10*(1), 9-26.


APPENDIX A

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODELS

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<td>Model of Psychological Nigrescence</td>
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<td>Diffusion</td>
<td>Preencounter</td>
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<td>Muscular-anal (autonomy vs. shame and doubt)</td>
<td>Foreclosure</td>
<td>Encounter</td>
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<td>Moratorium</td>
<td>Immersion-Emersion</td>
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<td>Latency (industry vs. inferiority)</td>
<td>Identity Achievement</td>
<td>Internalization</td>
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<td>Young Adulthood (intimacy vs. isolation)</td>
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<td>Developing Integrity</td>
<td>Middle Adulthood (generativity vs. stagnation)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Maturity (ego integrity vs. despair)</td>
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## APPENDIX B

### SEXUAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODELS

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<td>Internalization / Synthesis</td>
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APPENDIX C

COLLEGE YEARS EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Developing a sense of who we are occurs across time and in many situations. But college often is unique in the ways it can affect that sense of self. Moreover, there often are particular incidents or experiences that stand out as having been particularly influential.

Think back over your experience as a college student and identify one incident or experience that had particular influence on your sense of who you are. This could have been either positive or negative.

Please describe that incident or experience in a few sentences. Be sure to indicate (a) what that incident or experience was, (b) if another person or persons were involved in this incident or experience, describe them and their relationship to you, and (c) what do you think was important about this experience or incident, and why? (d) what you believe the long-term effect to have been on your sense of who you are?

At what point in your college experience did this incident or experience occur (please check one)?

- Freshman year ___
- Junior year ___
- Sophomore year ___
- Senior year ___
- Other (please specify) _________________________

Please respond to the questions below by circling the number that best represents your answer.

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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th>The eventual effect this incident or experience had on your sense of yourself</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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</table>

Source: Prepared by Vincent Eugene Vigil.
APPENDIX D

COLLEGE YEARS EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

What is your sexual orientation? _____________

Age: _______ Gender: ___________________

Ethnicity: _______________

Standing in School: _________________

Name of College or University: ________________________________
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</table>
APPENDIX F

COLLEGE YEARS EXPERIENCE CONCEPT
SIMILARITY RATING SCALE (CSRS)

Welcome
Hello, this is Vincent E. Vigil. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Southern California’s Rossier School of Education. First, I would like to thank you for participating in Phase One of my dissertation study about the college experiences of Black gay, bisexual, or same gender loving males.

Secondly, thank you for expressing an interest in participating in Phase Two of this study. This portion is fast, quick and easy. You just need to click on appropriate boxes. Please click on your first instinct; there is no need to overanalyze your choices.

Your participation in Phase Two will help me understand your opinion about specific categories created by a research team. The categories are based on the previous experiences collected from Phase One. The following webpage describes the thirteen categories created by a research team.

I would greatly appreciate your participation in this final step of my study.

Please know that this survey is also anonymous and your contributions will enable me to conduct quantitative analyses of the experience categories. The findings of this study will help develop intervention strategies to better serve college students like you.

If you wish to view a copy of the stamped approved version, please contact me at vincenev@usc.edu

USC IRB #: UP-06-00355

Categories
1. Coming out to self: Students come to terms internally with their gay identity after experimenting sexually with women.
2. Experiencing a gay romantic relationship for the first time: Students initiate dating or attempt to have a romantic relationship with other men.
4. Experiencing a gay community that was unfriendly or rejecting: Students feel they did not “fit in” with their gay peers on campus and some students mentioned they felt uncomfortable socializing with other gay students because they were the only Black gay student among the group.

5. Having sexual identity affirmed in the classroom, campus or local community: Students experience a positive climate for gay students either in the classroom, on campus or in the surrounding community.

6. Experiencing a challenge to one’s masculinity: Redefining their masculinity due to their sexual identity.

7. Encountering unexpected adversity (independent of sexuality): Dealing with personal struggles that may hinder academic achievement, i.e. some students explained how they had to take a semester off due to financial struggles.

8. Having a direct experience with discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or race: Students experience either homophobia or racism on campus or off campus.

9. Coming out to friends and family: Telling family and friends about their gay identity.

10. Receiving friendly support from a formal LGBT campus center or organization: Feeling accepted and supported by friends, through involvement with a formal LGBT campus center or student organization

11. Making a conscious decision to remain closeted about one’s sexual identity: Students make a conscious effort not to acknowledge their sexuality and avoid public acknowledgement of sexual identity, and students have an internal debate about whether or not to come out. As a result they decide to remain closeted.

12. Challenging others’ beliefs about homosexuality: Students challenge peers’ preconceived notions about gay people either through friendships, discussions or simply being out on campus.

13. Having a positive gay role model: Students experience exposure to inspirational gay peers and develop friendships with other Black gay people.

**Demographic Information**

Age: __________

Standing in school: __________

What is the name of your college or university: __________
**Instructions**

Now that you have read the 13 categories, we are interested in assessing how similar you view them.

Look at each question (1 to 78) below. Notice that the categories are paired together. Each line has 2 categories from the total 13. Please rate the extent to which you view these two categories as similar using the scale below:

1 = not at all alike  
2 = not alike  
3 = slightly alike  
4 = somewhat alike  
5 = alike  
6 = very much alike

For example:
If we ask you about “coming out to self” and “having a gay sexual encounter”  
If you think that they are very much alike, you would circle 6.  
If you think that they are only slightly alike, you would circle 3.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Categories</th>
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<th>3</th>
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<th>5</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1 “coming out to self” &amp; “coming out to friends and family”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 “having a direct experience with discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or race” &amp; “having a positive gay role model”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 “encountering unexpected adversity (independent of sexuality)” &amp; “having a positive gay role model”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
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<td>4 “encountering unexpected adversity (independent of sexuality)” &amp; “receiving friendly support from a formal LGBT campus center or organization”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 “having sexual identity affirmed in the classroom, campus or local community” &amp; “making a conscious decision to remain closeted about one’s sexual identity”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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**Thank you**

Thank you for your assistance with my dissertation study. I expect to finish this research by June 2007. If you would like to learn about the study results, feel free to e-mail me at vincenev@usc.edu. Again, thank you for participating in this important research.
APPENDIX G

PHASE ONE PARTICIPATION EMAIL REQUEST

Subject: Help Further the Research of Black Gay College Men

As you may know, the research about Black gay men is slim to none, especially Black men in college. My name is Vincent Vigil (vincenev@usc.edu) and I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at the University of Southern California. My dissertation study attempts to uncover the college experiences that influence the development for Black gay, bisexual, same gender loving men.

The goal of this study is to uncover how unique experiences affect these men’s lives while in college. I hope that through this research, colleges and universities can better serve this minority population. Please help me to expand the research for Black gay college men.

If you are a Black man in college (either a junior or senior) and identifies as either gay, bisexual, same gender loving or on the down low, please participate in this study. This study is anonymous and is no longer than 30 minutes. Click here http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=218282538076

USC UPIRB # UP-06-00355

Vincent E. Vigil
Ed.D. Candidate
Rossier School of Education
University of Southern California
Subject: Help with Phase Two for Research of Black Gay College Men

Thank you for participating in Phase One of my study and for volunteering to help with Phase Two. This is Vincent Vigil and I would like your assistance again with my study. As a reminder, my dissertation study attempts to uncover the college experiences that influence the development for Black gay, bisexual, same gender loving men.

The goal of this study is to uncover how unique experiences affect these men’s lives while in college. I hope that through this research, colleges and universities can better serve this minority population. Please help me to expand the research for Black gay college men.

Please participate in this study. This phase is anonymous and is no longer than 30 minutes. Click here http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=569423349867

USC UPIRB # UP-06-00355

Vincent E. Vigil
Ed.D. Candidate
Rossier School of Education
University of Southern California
INFORMATION SHEET FOR NON-MEDICAL RESEARCH

Sources of Impact on College Students’ Development: Describing and Mapping Their Experiences.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Rod Goodyear, Ph.D. and a research team, from the Rossier School of Education, Ed.D. Program, at the University of Southern California. The results of this research study will contribute to a dissertation.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are in one of the targeted college student subgroups who are the focus of this study. This is a two phase study and 100 responses are necessary from each subgroup for Phase One. In each case, 15 participants from Phase One, who indicate interest in continuing, will participate in the second phase of the study.

Your participation is voluntary and you must be at least 18 years old to participate. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

We are asking you to take part in a research study because we are trying to learn the sources of impact (either positive or negative) that students in the targeted subgroups perceive to have affected their sense of who they are (i.e., their personal identity). We also are interested to learn the manner in which students organize these categories of experiences in their thinking. That is, the “cognitive map” they impose on them.

Completion and return of the questionnaires will constitute consent to participate in this research project.
PROCEDURES
In the first phase of the study, you will be asked to reflect on your experience as a college student and identify one incident or experience that has affected your sense of who you are. The College Years Experience Questionnaire (CYEQ) asks you to describe what the incident was, if another person or persons was/were involved, why the incident was important to you, and what you believe the long-term effect has been. The questionnaire also asks for basic demographic information. The questionnaire should take you approximately one-half hour to complete.

If you would like to participate in Phase Two of this study, you can click on the continuation option.

If selected to continue to Phase Two and wish to participate, you will be asked rate the similarities of the categories of sources of impacts from the CYEQ on a scale of one to six (1=not at all alike; 6=very much alike). Similar to CYEQ, this paired comparison questionnaire is (called the College Years Experience Concept Similarity Rating Scale; CSRS) will be posted on a web-based survey, depending on your preference. If you participate in this phase of the study, the web address will be emailed to you along with instructions for completing the CSRS. The CSRS should also take about one-half hour to complete.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
There are no anticipated risks to your participation. You may be inconvenienced from taking time out of your day to complete the questionnaires. It also is possible that in recounting an incident that was especially important to you, you may find yourself experiencing uncomfortable memories.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY
You may not directly benefit from your participation in this research study. However, there are potential benefits to the higher education community. Specifically, it could be important to higher education professionals who work to ensure that the college environment maximizes the opportunities to foster optimal student development.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION
You will not receive any payment for your participation in this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY
No information that is obtained in connection with this study can be identified with you. Contact information that is supplied by Phase One participants will be stored with a password on the online survey site.
The data from this study will also be stored in a password protected computer and/or survey site. Only members of the research team will have access to the data associated with this study. The data will be stored for three years after the study has been completed. After the three year period, the data will be destroyed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS
You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the University Park IRB, Office of the Vice Provost for Research, Grace Ford Salvatori Hall, Room 306, Los Angeles, CA 90089-1695, (213) 821-5272 or upirb@usc.edu.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS
If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the highlighted member of the research team:
Tony Arguelles – arguelle@email.usc.edu
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Michelle Stiles – mstiles@email.usc.edu
Surendra Verma – surendrv@email.usc.edu
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Kimberlee Woods – woodsk@email.usc.edu

Rod Goodyear, Ph. D. - goodyea@usc.edu
Rossier School of Education
University of Southern California
WPH 1100A
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0031
(213) 740-3267

Date of Preparation: July 5, 2006 – Info Sheet USC UPIRB # UP-06-00355
# APPENDIX J

## COMBINED GROUPS SIMILARITY MATRIX

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APPENDIX K

INCIDENTS ARRANGED BY OVERARCHING CATEGORIES

Having a direct experience with discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or race (DISCRIMI)

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<th>Year of Occurrence</th>
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<th>Impact</th>
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<td>During my college years, I went to predominately Caucasian/White majority gay clubs because I had no knowledge of any gay clubs owned by African Americans in the area. When in the Caucasian majority clubs, the white males would rarely look at me or speak to me which influenced me to feel less than a person. This event was important because I realized that racism was in society and in what was suppose to be the “gay community.” The long-term effect was feeling no sense of commitment to the “gay community.” I feel very strong for bettering the conditions for African Americans “in the life,” but no sense of commitment to the overall gay agenda.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>As a business economics major, I am frequently surrounded by conservative individuals. I remember hearing incredibly negative remarks made about homosexuals within a group of folk in a finance class. This indicated to me that, as homosexuals, we must continue to fight for equitable treatment and respect. Despite our right to express ourselves, we must at all times remember that we do have something to prove and that we must earn and demand respect. This experience amongst others encouraged me to speak to other gay youth about the way they conduct themselves and the potential professional and personal limitations that can be placed on them. We must exert our influence and rise to levels of managerial excellence so as to dispel the rumors that homosexuals will not be respected and cannot perform as well as heterosexuals in traditionally masculine fields such as finance and economics.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Greek Fraternities and knowing the underline rules stays NO GAYS. being on campus and seeing the interest meeting flyers and knowing that I could not be a part of this. I knew this was the one thing on the campus I could not join not cause I was femine or flamboyant. but of the principle and the fact i was out of the closet and was not retreating.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The negative experience that I had was based on a classroom discussion. Somehow sexual orientation was always being brought up by one of the students. We were discussing public policy in general and before I knew it my fellow students brought up their inter-</td>
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</table>
pretations on the Bible. I have no idea how it happened but the classroom turned on me.
Some how this got back to my off-campus employer and I was fired for being incompati-
ble with the company. I looked into it and found that there was nothing I could do about
being fired in the state of Georgia. I pushed my orientation underground got another job
and finished school. Over the years I've seen more people fired for trumped up reasons,
but actually because they decided to be open about their sexual orientation. It isn't worth
losing everything you work to achieve. I'm in Law School now and it is important for me
to get a decent job, it won't happen if I decide to make my sexual orientation an issue and
I don't intend to work for little more than minimum wage after the money I'm spending.

Sophomore
Wayne State University

My experience at Central State made aware how Homophobia the Black College because
was no support groups or counseling for Black LGBT student most of the guys on Down-
Low so I was on the Down-Low on Campus. I transfer to Miles College in Birmingham. I
experience extreme Homophobia on Campus. I was sexual Harass by another guys on
Campus, I'm a victim of Gay-bashing but I was silence about my sexual orientation I'm
praying to God to Deliver out of at that school. It open me about how Black man very
insure cure about their sexual. God deliver out. my going to Black College it was open
my eyes. I'm still a struggle college student dealing with pass.

Senior
California State University, Northridge

I took a psychology development course that was completely unorthodoxed from the
start. It was taught by a Chinese woman who was very radical in her approach to the
course. The university was very displeased with the way she taught her course. While
should have been learning about Pavlov, we instead were learning about social and race
relations as it applied to psychology. There was lab after the class where we sat around in
a circle and spoke candidly about race and phobias. It got VERY honest because every-
one in the class trusted each other. My boyfriend and I of 7 years took the class together.
Some school mates knew as roommates while others knew us as cousins. My boyfriend
and I had a different story depending on who we were talking to at the time, so everyone
had a different explanation/definition of our relationship. Then one day, on the last day of
the lab, all of us were supposed to go around the circle and express what we had gotten
out of the course. My boyfriend went before I did. He admitted to the other students that
he was gay, but he didn't out me with him. About 7 other students went after him, then it
was my turn. I beat around the bush a long time and them admitted that I had been in a 7
year relationship. It was terrifying, yet gratifying both at the same time. Everyone's reac-
tion went from, Oh My God, to that is so cool. There were some people who said nothing
at all. In the class was another extremely alpha male african american man in the class.
We had befriended him, and played the “hard” role when around him. He was the one I
was most afraid to find out about us. As it turns out, he was one of the most easy-going
about it; however, hanging out with him after class lessened. All in all I think had more to
do with him socially than him personally. Personally he had no problem with it, but after
we came out publicly, he didn't want anyone to think that he himself was gay. Other girls
in the class wanted to ask questions which we welcomed, no matter how ignorant they
were. African american women in the class were deeply disappointed, but didn't reject,
but rather tried to get to the bottom of why we were the way we were. One thing that I'm so happy of, is that most of the students had become really close to us. We were strait by all appearances, so they never pre-judged us. It blew their minds that we were not only gay, but had been in a 7-year committed relationship. I also got to express my disdain with the notion that being gay is a choice. I explained that if I had to choose who I was, I would've chosen the most socially accepted persona that was available. But went further to say that I was proud of who I am. It was one of the most pivotal moments in my life.

Freshman 1 2
University of Wisconsin - Parkside
I have always been surprised by the number of Black people that just say things like sweet, or gay, or soft, etc. There are people who don't even know me and don't want to take the chance to get to know me. We had comedian Bruce bruce come to campus one year and he made fun of this rather effeminate guy and everyone laughed. No one questioned Bruce they just laughed. The object of amusement was less then enthused.

Freshman 1 1
University of Wisconsin - Parkside
Black students destroyed all of the posters that had queer people in black history on them.

Freshman 6 6
Texas State University
I pride myself with my unique since of dressing and most of the Str8 boys @ my school hate it but one day when I was getting my ass handed to me by sum stupid guys a football player came up and told me I looked kool and those guyz leave me alone now.

Sophomore 1 3
Pacific University
I was hanging out with a few of my friends drinking in the dorms when they wanted to go to another party that was happening. I was told by the people hosting the party that I wasn't welcome because I am a gay black man and because of that, I scared them. I was more shocked than offended at the time that people thought like that, and then I became angry. I believe that this experience was important for me because it opened my eyes to the discrimination that still exists in this world that I didn't experience a lot of where I am from. I think I will just be more cautious about the areas I choose to live in the future.

Freshman 2 6
Ohio University
My SHADES (lgbt people of color) support organization that I started at Ohio University hosts the National Day of Silence every year, and I sent out a mass email informing the school of the event, we received a lot of support, but I personally receive a good number of negative emails in response. I was called a faggot and a nigger in one of these, I traced the email back and found out that it came from a person who I speak to from time to time since we lived on the same floor in our dorm. It was at this point that it really hit me, I have already grown up having to deal with racially discriminatory issues and now another layer of prejudice was being added to my sweet cake of life. For a short while I felt I was all alone once again like I felt when I first came to realize my sexual orientation, but I got
over it and it motivated me to reach out, teach and open the eyes of close minded individuals with my positive attitude and involvement on campus.

Freshman 5 7
Ohio University
The LGBT Programs Center puts out “Faces of Pride” posters and I decided to participate and have my face put up on every floors of every dorm and college as a gay male. As a result I experienced a few “friends” avoid me and stopped wanting to hang out with me because they didnt want others to think they themselves were gay. This was saddening to me, but on the other side of the rainbow, I had at least 100 people approach me saying how much they admired me and appreciated me being myself, also there were a few individuals who came to me and actually came out to me...

Junior 1 2
University of Southern California
I went to a black party on campus with some friends. I really didn’t know any of the people there because I am not really involved with the campus black community, but I soon realized why. Everyone was staring at me and some of the guys were laughing after making some comments. I didn’t know what was their problem, but my only guess is because I am openly gay on campus.

Freshman 2 6
University of California, Los Angeles
My freshman year at school, my roommate was not cool with the fact that I am gay. He made a huge drama to try to get out of the room with me. It sucked.

Sophomore 2 4
University of Southern California
On my campus, we don’t have many black students so I am one of a few. You can tell you are a minority when you go to parties and you’re the only black guy there. One time, I heard some of the white kids tried to jump a black group of kids for no apparent reason. I stay away from the parties unless it’s people I know.

Freshman 1 1
California State University, Los Angeles
My first year on campus, the campus gay students of color group had a multi-cultural LGBT program on campus and all the fliers were taken down by people overnight.
Coming out to self (SELF)

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University of Southern Mississippi
My incident occurred when a fellow female student attempted to seduce me after I gave her a massage. I realized that I did not get any pleasure out of it or her. Afterwards I realized that I could no longer pretend to enjoy the company of a female.

Sophomore 4 6
University of Southern Mississippi
I first realized that I had to live my life for me it had become overwhelmingly evident that I was not into women. I decided one night after coming back from my home town where my girlfriend was still residing that I would no longer subject her to my unhappiness. She was never perfect in my eyes. It hit me over the head that she was not for me simply because she was a female. I loved her, not as my companion, but as a friend. I was intimate with her only because I felt obligated to be intimate with her. She did not appeal to me the way that the guys did that I noticed on campus. That night, when I decided to break up with her and discontinue my need to satisfy my family and my mother, was the night that I believe opened me up to possibility that I could be happy and free to be me.

Sophomore 3 7
University of Maryland, College Park
I got a massive crush on this (male) TA teaching one of the discussion sections I attended. I wasn't really expecting to get a crush on another guy, so it was a bit of a surprise and betrayal from what I had assumed I would like. So, I mulled about it for the last five years or so, and recently got more-or-less comfortable with my sexuality.

Junior 5 6
University of California, Santa Barbara
The experience with the greatest impact on my sense of identity in college has been my involvement with the department of Residential Life on the campus and the diversity/identity training that employees of the department receive. Others involved were fellow staff members who participated in the training with me, and who served as support and mentors as I began to think about and discover more of my identity during the training. Particularly of great help to me was a (gay) friend and mentor who provided me with the comfortable space to share feelings that I never shared with anyone before. The experience gave me the space to open up with myself and truly be honest about who I was and how my identity has been shaped through the course of my life. The long-term effect of this experience has been to allow me to slowly come to be honest with myself, and my friends about who I am, and what I believe.
Freshman University of Southern California
I had a crush on a guy of the same gender. This second guy was straight, but was a very good friend, possibly my very best friend during my first year at USC. This finally proved to me that I was indeed attracted only to people of the same gender. After my first year in college, and after this experience, I certainly became aware of who I am and never looked back...

Junior University of Southern California
In my third year of school, a fellow classmate (a girl) expressed an interest in me, I declined. She was a classmate whom I knew only from one semester in college. I certainly considered her a good friend. This was the “nail in the coffin” in terms of me deciding that the opposite gender was not in fact where I would find the most happiness. Even now, a few years later, when I look back on avoiding a heterosexual relationship with this girl, I have no regrets and am thankful that I made the choice to not deceive women.

Sophomore Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
When I started attending college I identified as being gay, but never felt that that really defined me or what and who I was/am. Recently I had a girlfriend for about 5 months which led me to identify as queer instead of bisexual or gay. My ex girlfriend was a 24 yo white female, who had already graduated from Smith College. She is very intelligent and driven, and in many ways successful. She and I have remained friends since our break up. This experience was important because it helped me to realize that there is more grey area in sexuality than just being gay, straight, or bi. I feel as though I am just different. When love finds me, it will be with a person. Not necessarily one of either sex more specifically. In the long-term I think that this realization has and will help me with my confidence knowing that there is no right or wrong way to live my life.

Freshman Pepperdine University
For a while I thought I might be Bi. I really liked a girl and she turned me down. She said she didn't date bi men. After calming down my anger, I realized, I only wanted to date her to fit in more and be more normal. However, I couldn't even see myself or want to have sex with her. It helped me realize I can be who I am and I don't have to lie to myself. Long-term, it helped me become more comfortable with the fact that I may have liked her, but enough to want to have sex with her. I got over it really quick. It was probably best she turned me down anyway.
said “Is it the way you talk to your guy friend? That seems gay”. Since then, I started to explore myself, to identify myself, and figured out that Kai was not gay. Damn it! (LOL)

Junior 4 7
University of California, Los Angeles
My last date with my girlfriend was due to me realizing I was gay. I had been as some people say on the ‘down low’ for a while but never wanted to face my sexual attractions. I had to stop dating a woman because I wanted a man.

Senior 6 6
University of Southern California
All my life I had a dream about my life, I was going to get married and have children, but while in college I learned more about the homosexual lifestyle. I became a supportive ally my junior year, which had a profound affect on me because I learned about the gay community. I slowly began to question my sexuality and realized I was gay.

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<td>Senior 5 6</td>
<td>University of Maryland, College Park</td>
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Having a gay sexual encounter (SEXUAL)

I was never completely satisfied or content with women, so I'd experiment with men when ever I wasn't dating a woman. Many would probably consider me to be a down low brother but I declared my privacy by maintaining my descretion. Eventually, I got sick and tired of living for others and pretending to want the opposite sex. I began to journal and those exercises allowed me to embrace my own truth; so I broke up with my last girlfriend and pursued a man. I'm happier now with more peace.

I was attending a gays night out with friends. I decided to stay the night at the house of one of the friends. We were drunk but decided to do some ecstasy and we got intimate. That’s all I remember but neither of us talk about it anymore he has a girlfriend and so do I. He is in love with his girl and I like my girl more everyday, but I still think about that time. I’m not sure if it was good enough for me to be full out gay but I did like it.

After getting mildly injured in a traffic accident, I popped into some irc chats during my convalescence with a male character and hooked up text-style with some other guys who were online, then this girl, to see what it might be like. Random internet people who like to hit on new users. Although I had a pretty good time with most of the guys, and the quality of the netsex with the girl ranked in the middle third, it was definitely not as fun for me. I decided it would probably suit me better to get a internet boyfriend rather than an internet girlfriend for the near future.
After the death of my father, I then began to experiment sexually, as I was still a virgin at 21 yrs old. Some of those experiences where negative and others, not so. Most, however, where with anonymous strangers met in bars and parks, etc. The aftermath was not as positive as they shaped me to have difficulty in re-focusing my sense of self and value.

I was at Band Camp with Football players my freshman year in college, I knew I liked guys but never acted on them until i was in college..To make a long story short here was a jock and band student exploring what was told a taboo in our lives..we both walk away better people because we now know that it is the same gender that we have come to appreciate in our lives and love..he was later kick off the football team but reinstated the following year and I lost my scholarship and had to move to another college.

I was approached by a guy in the shower; caught him eyeing me, we went back to his room. The experience was hot and intense.

During the summer of 2006, I had lost my virginity to a guy I had met online. He doesn't go to USC, nor is he a college student. It was somewhat impromptu but not entirely. Extensive talking online had occurred beforehand. I had approached the situation cautiously and with an enormous amount of thinking over whether I felt that it was time for me to experience the loss of my virginity to another guy versus the potential consequences of that action. Essentially a weighing of emotional benefits versus emotional and--possibly--physiological consequences. I had consulted a number of my closest friends about the decision and prayed that I make the best one, while being well-informed. So I had decided that it was time and that the circumstances of the situation (though a bit ambiguous due to the nature of online dating) were relatively safe... a gut instinct, perhaps, or maybe even spiritually guided. Afterward, the worst-case scenarios that I had envisioned were never realized and the experience really opened up my perspectives on the issue of virginity loss and how that affects one's outlook on relationships and such. To my surprise, I did not attach sexual intimacy with love which seemed to have been a natural--or simply naive--reaction that I held. The experience was a fulfillment of a need that certainly leveraged me closer to my current emotional state. Before, depression and negative thoughts of not being wanted among other issues were plaguing me on a constant basis. After, those issues no longer bother me as much.

I was “propositioned” anonymously when I was a freshman (18 years old). The guy (I'm 99% sure he was another male undergraduate student) contacted me by email, which he probably got from the student directory, but we never met personally (as far as I know).
This was significant because it was my first sort of “homosexual occurrence,” and came at a time when I just starting to become curious. The long-term effect was a negative one, because his advance was so unexpected, and because it was anonymous. I became mistrustful of his motives. I had this horrible feeling that I was being pranked, or worse, deliberately baited. It was 1999, and I knew that gay bashings were a very real possibility. The experience made me extremely hesitant to open up concerning my sexuality.

Freshman
Brown University
During freshman year, myself and another student (as openly gay as myself) flirted and spent a lot of time together. Around Thanksgiving, we finally kissed. For two days, it was bliss, but after that he approached me and told me that nothing could ever happen between us because he had no one else to turn to. I was shocked into loneliness and depression, and spent the rest of the year pining over my best friend. I learned so much about how I needed to have a developed sense of self before trying to “make myself whole.” In essence, I had to realize that I was already whole before entering any relationship.

Junior
University of Southern California
I had sex with the head of the GLBTA, and after realizing he slept around a lot and that he was just using me for sex, I realized that I was having sex with men to get them to like me. I also realized that a lot of gay men see me as a large penis because I am black. After this experience I started making friends and dating people who liked me for who I am and I realized I have a lot to offer other than sex.

Receiving friendly support from a formal LGBT campus center or organization (SUPPORT)

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During my first year as an undergrad at WMU (I attended another college as a freshman prior to WMU), I learned of an organization for gay students on campus. I was too afraid to walk right in to the room, so I hovered in the hallway. Later a saw a couple of African American males who I did not know and had never seen, go into the room. Seeing them enter the room without fear gave me courage to enter. One of the males looked overtly gay and the other did not. Seeing them helped me to feel that I was not alone. That night I met them and began a friendship. This incident was the start to me accepting myself as a same-gender affectionate man.
Sophomore 6 6
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
I met the president of GLBTSA (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Straight Alliance). He was a black gay male as well. He introduced me to other gay people on campus. This really allowed me to see that there were other facets to the gay community than sex. This experience has let me become open and comfortable with who I am.

Freshman 7 7
Yale University
Before beginning my freshman year at Yale, I applied to participate in an early orientation program for minority students. Since graduating, the program has broadened to become an early orientation program for all entering freshman. Essentially, the program allows you to come to campus a few weeks prior to the start of the freshmen semester to become acclimated to the college setting. I found it personally impacting since I was the first in my family to attend college. I met many of my closest college friends in this program—friends, many of whom (like myself) eventually came out as gay men while in school. In a way, we all became a tremendous source of support for one another at what as a liberal but nevertheless still traditional Ivy League campus.

Freshman 7 7
Art Institute of Atlanta
During my freshman year, I made a lot of friends. Well, my birthday came up a couple of months after the start of the first semester. My roommates, even though they didn’t have a lot of money or knew me well at all, they threw me a great birthday party with everyone we knew there. It was the first time anyone outside of my family ever thought enough of me to throw me a b-day party. It made me feel like I was important in this world.

Senior 5 6
University of California, Los Angeles
I think that all throughout college I didn't really care to think about my forming my own identity. However, I think that going to my university's gay/lesbian/queer center for the first marked the beginning of my journey into self discovery.

Freshman 7 5
Oregon State University
At Oregon State we have a queer week. During queer week I had went to a Drag show that was on campus and was able to see how man gay and bisexual and lesbians where on the campus. At first I thought I was alone but I soon realized that I was not. After I saw so many that were like me I started to talk with others just like me and make me feel like my sexual orientation was ok.

Sophomore 7 6
Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis
Recently I attended a call out for the beginning of a new student LGBTQA group. There were both staff and students involved. Staff and students represented the entire LGBTQA
spectrum. This experience was significant to me because it gave me an opportunity to sit with like minded people and voice my concerns for the LGBTQA community on campus, and gave me a outlet for group association. Considering long-term benefits, I am not sure how this will affect me. I hope that I will develope friendships with some or many of these people.

Junior 7 5
Brown University
While sitting with a new freshman last year, the conversation got around to sexuality and he emphatically stated “I'm so happy that you're gay. And I really mean it. I'm happy that you are a homosexual man.” It was absolutely mind-blowing, simply because I'd always viewed my sexuality as a problem, rather than something to be proud of. And that a friend of mine found that a quality that he was truly happy about changed my life.

Freshman 7 7
Santa Monica Community College
An experience that affected my life would probably when I attended a gay alliance meeting at school with my close friend. I then realized I could be myself (gay) publicly with out feeling scared. The importance of the experience was a forever changing. From that point on I was able to gradually feel comfortable in my own skin.

Sophomore 6 4
University of Southern California
During my sophomore year I felt intensely lonely and isolated which made me consider leaving SC. I talk to different people who offered advice that didn't influence me to re-consider until I talked to the staff in the CBCSA office and they suggested I get involved with the black community at SC. I took that advice and found that it helped me to create a sense of belonging. What I realized is that having a community of people you identify with is a huge part of your success and happiness in college. In the long-term I think that this experience taught me that confidence can be found in welcoming environments.

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<td>I couldn’t pay my tuition and I had to leave school for a semester. It was negative; however, I was able to know what I wanted to do at school and no longer helpless in my own life. I could come back, pay tuition, get the student loan I needed, and resume studies. Overall, it was one of the best things that happened to me. I was more afraid of what people would have thought of me.</td>
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Senior
University of California, Los Angeles
I worked in residential life as a hall director. The department head during that year was in my personal opinions based on experience, an unethical individual who had a tremendously negative impact on student and staff alike. The year culminated with my choosing not to continue in the role as a senior despite my joy for the job – and in my decision not to pursue student affairs as a career. This event provided me with first hand knowledge regarding the importance of personal and professional ethics and equitable treatment on all levels. This negative experience changed me in many ways but most importantly it lit a fire within me showing that I must argue and fight for this, and it is our responsibility to represent those who cannot represent themselves.

Junior
University of Arkansas of Little Rock
I was a true Junior in at the university and that was the year that my father took his life at home. I had to withdraw that semester. His death was very difficult to overcome as he never knew of my true self. I attempted to return to the university in Spring of 1985, but was unable to focus and had to withdraw. I eventually returned in Fall and am succeeding. The long-term effects of his death have at times shattered my confidence and my experiences in trying to develop love relationships with other gay men.

Sophomore
University of Mississippi
This was my Sophomore year, I was dating a DL brotha, and I thought he really cared for me, but he would never bring me around any of his friends so I confronted him one in front of his friends and he tried to kill me...Never date a man or boy on the DL because if he only wont to see you in the dark than you have no business with him in the first place.

Junior
University of Wisconsin-Madison
I had to leave school when I was lacking tuition; I was more worried about what people thought of me instead of my education. Then I had to understand that my education belonged to me, no one else. It gave me ownership.

Senior
Buffalo State College
During school, I lost a dear person in my life. His death was very hard to deal with...because the part of him that I knew wat the part I had to hide from his family because they did not know about his sexuality. It hurt because I couldn't morn the way I wanted to for fear they would suspect we had be together. I remember deciding in that funeral service that my family would know about the man I was with...I would hate to pass and have somone sit unable to cry and say how they felt about me because I was scared to share my sexuality.
Sophomore 1 1
University of Southern California
The issue of alcohol is used by nearly every college student except me. I'm afraid to because of the unloosening it does. People dumb stuff when they drink and reveal more than they should, but for me, I can't reveal myself to others for what I want. Everyday, I see with my eyes in others that desire I want, fascinated by their appearances, but I can only see, and not touch. Once I've touched, I've transgressed and alcohol would do that to me.

Freshman 5 7
University of Michigan
My experience was struggling academically during my first semester. This experience taught me that I'm not in college for other people. I'm here for myself and the better myself. I think this experience has made me more independent and goal oriented.

Sophomore 2 5
Santa Monica Community College
Trust, an emotion I was very loose with as well as drinking while on a trip in Los Vegas. While in Vegas I was their with some friends, friends who I trusted. However the trust was not mutual. I start drinking way more than my body could handle and they attempted to take advantage of the situation. However one friend came through and stopped anything from occurring.

Junior 4 7
University of Southern California
I was studying finance and hated it, but didn't get out of it because I was afraid to make decisions on my own. After having a breakdown because of failing grades, I realized I had to start doing what I wanted to do. I changed my concentration to business communications, which was one of the best decisions I have ever made. After this I realized that I was afraid to make decisions on my own, and that I am a lot stronger than I thought.

Coming out to friends and family (FRIENDSF)

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| North Carolina Central University
Recently I admitted to my best friends (1 who is male, 2 females) that I was attracted to and sexually active with males. This was very important to me because they are my best friends, and my sexual preference is something I have to keep from my family, but it is a part of me, and i am more able to be myself at college, so I wanted the key people in my life to be aware. It was also important because it brought me a little out of the denial phase. As far as long-term effect it has made me more comfortable with my sexuality, and my friends are actually more comfortable with it than i am, so it showed me that my friends were more than friends, but my family, and that they would support me.

Senior 7 7

124
California State University, Northridge
Coming out to my faculty and peers. I came out to the surprise of everyone during a round table discussion about race, gender, and sexuality. The conversation was very touching and many of my classmates shared very private emotions and experiences in their lives I had grown very close to my classmates during this course. When it was my turn to talk I opened up about my sexuality and my reasons for being closeted on campus. Many of my classmates cried because they were touched by the admission. Right after me my boyfriend came out and admitted we were a couple. The experience actually brought us all closer together. Our coming out offered my classmates and faculty an opportunity to challenge many of the stereotypes they held about gay men. It helped build my confidence as a man, not just gay man.

Senior 7 7
Clark College
Went to a gay bar and ran into some classmates who are gay. We all talked about being gay in Atlanta with all the hot men here.

Junior 4 6
University of California, Santa Barbara
I think particularly of the moment in which I “came out” to my close friend and mentor. I simply told him that one of the band members was “fine,” and that was my way of telling him that I was attracted to men. This person was a close friend and also a co-worker with whom I had had a growing friendship for a number of months. The experience was important because it was the first time that I admitted being attracted to men to any close friend. The long-term effect is that it was in that moment that I began to work on being more and more comfortable with revealing information about my sexuality to others.

Sophomore 7 7
Pepperdine University
Being honest with my fraternity about my sexuality. I had to have individual conversations with almost everyone in the brotherhood. This was important so they could understand who I am as a person. The long-term effect is that they understand me, who I'm dating, and aren't in the dark. It has made our relationships more honest.

Sophomore 7 7
Pepperdine University
When I finally came out to my closest friend here at college. It was probably one of the more difficult things because we are so close and I was unsure of how she would take it.

Junior 5 5
University of Southern California
I decided to tell two different people that I was gay because they were my friends and I no longer wanted to hide it from them. The first friend that I told was a Christian and their response consisted of intense shock followed by them telling me about what God and Jesus Christ can do for a homosexual. It was what I expected and I felt as if after telling her this our relationship was not the same because I felt as if she would look at me from then on as a sin sick homosexual who needed to be saved. The other friend I told
responded by telling me that they kinda already knew and they accepted with no con-
ditions or lectures, it felt good. What I think is important about these two incidents is that I
realized the huge impact outside affirmation has on your identity. I'm glad this happened
because it allowed me to learn how to surround myself with people who will accept me
unconditionally rather than compromising who i am to fit in. In the long run I will be
more confident in who I am and try not to allow the opinions of others to affect seeing
myself in a healthy light.

Freshman 5
Emory University
The most influential period was my coming out at college. I had recently lost my best
friend at college because of rumors that we were a couple, but I had the support of the
freshman women in my class who helped me cope. Later my friend, himself, came out,
but it was this experience that provided me the strength to then come out to everyone on
campus and to my family and friends at home.

Making a conscious decision to remain closeted about one’s sexual identity (CLOSETED)

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| Before I could actually admit to my family that I was gay I tried church, confessions,
depriving myself from sex, promiscouity with women and considered suicide. In the
thought of dying I began to cry because I knew I'd hurt more people than I could imagine.
This moment represents the first time I took ownership of my genuine feelings and inti-
mate yearning for a man. I quickly made a list of my wants but experience has taught me
not to hold my breath for my Ideal gay Black Man as a partner.

Sophomore 1
Texas Southern University
I remember a time when students in class were discussing homosexuality and I was
scared to speak up and defend the subject matter of beinf found out about my sexuality.

Sophomore 1
North Carolina Central University
I was hanging out with a lot of people, all who were gay or bisexual (i didn't know at the
time), and i had not come out to anyone yet, but one of my friends who was in the group
knew. After a lot of drinking he made a comment about me being gay. I don't know for
sure why the experience is so important to me, but it is something that i would never
forget. I do remember feeling very ashamed and I did isolate myself from the friend. As a
long-term effect I do kinda keep my business to myself, and I did deny my sexuality
longer because of it.

Senior 1
Syracuse University
I found out that my uncle was HIV positive, only after he had been so ashamed to let anyone know that his immune system had been completely compromised. My uncle was a black, gay man. As am I, but we were both closeted, and I was so closeted I wouldn't even let him know for fear that my whole family would find out. I guess that was his fear as well, for he soon became hospitalized and died in March 2000. I had not come out at this time. My background was very religious, where even though I knew I was gay I just wanted it “out of me.” My family was strongly Baptist, and I even went to a Baptist University, Baylor University, for my undergraduate studies (not because I was gay, but it did make me even more determined to hide my sexuality). After my uncle died however, everything changed. I heard the comments from family almost blaming him for being infected. Attacking his sexuality and “those nasty gays” exactly as he feared. It broke my heart, at first. Then, it angered me. I knew then that I was going to come out. But it would be another six months before I did. I knew of no one who was black and gay and had no one to turn to. I felt a lot of guilt after my uncle died because I could have helped him and he could have helped guide me in my coming out process. But I wouldn't be silent anymore, in hopes that it could help someone else not make the same mistake.

Junior 1 5
Syracuse University
I was very active with a number of organizations on campus, including the Association of Black Students and Baylor Chapter of the NAACP. My self-esteem was very low back then, but joined in hope of making new friends. There was something odd about the interaction with the people I knew. Outside of meetings there was almost an invisible wall around me and some of the other students. I remember one guy was so afraid of being seen talking alone with me he kept looking over his shoulders to make sure no one saw him. I later found out from a friend that there was a rumor on campus about all the black students who were suspected of being gay, and I was on the list. I suspected it was after two girls I knew had made obvious interest in my and I showed absolutely none in them. The rumor mill was fast and strong in such a small community of color on such a (then) small campus. I worried about everything after that, because Baylor has a policy on the books that being openly gay is grounds for removal from the university. Imagine that.

Senior 7 7
California State University, Northridge
The incident was being caught telling contradicting stories about the nature of me and my boyfriend's relationship. We often told people we were cousins or brothers. One day we told differing stories to the same person and had to attempt to cover it up. That's when I realized that I was tired of pretending to be someone that I wasn't. I learned that I would never be comfortable as long as I feared other peoples perception and judgment of me. I learned to let go and be who I really am in spite of others. I am much more fulfilled and balanced as a person.
Senior 3 4
University of Southern California
This year, I have a single dorm room and a T3 internet connection. I download a fair amount of gay porn. I left one video on the desktop instead of moving it directly to a folder as I usually did, and left the room for something. One of my friends/hallmates came into the room and apparently “discovered” the porn clip. He made a non-threatening comment about finding it, but I still became totally paranoid he would tell our other hallmates what he'd found, and I'd be outed. I think I avoided him for the next four or five days, and we never mentioned it again.

Experiencing a gay romantic relationship for the first time (ROMANTIC)

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<td>I had my first date with another guy. He was really cute and smart; he was one of my co-workers at Abercrombie and Fitch. He is Salvadorean and did I mention cute! We had dinner and saw a movie. This experience has opened me up to dating and being myself.</td>
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<td>I had a horrible break up with an ex. We had personality differences; and it was extremely difficult for me. I always wanted to project this image that we were a functioning couple. But it wasn't that way.</td>
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<td>Another important experience was meeting my first boyfriend while a freshmen in college. The experience was important because it was my first time being in same-sex relationship that was out in the open in the sense that we both had friends who know we were a couple. This relationship also became the catalyst for my eventually coming out to my parents. I think the fact that the relation was with another black man, who was also a freshman at the time, was also significant. We came from similar working/middle class backgrounds and Yale was a far stretch from any experience any of our relatives and friends from back home had had.</td>
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|                    | A guy also from USC had established contact with me through Facebook during the second semester of Freshman year in 2005. We had talked online with each other for about three to four weeks before even meeting in-person. I was physically attracted to him at first and after some time for talking I had begun to make some sort of emotional connection. After this period, we met in-person and soon thereafter socialized like normal friends with added sexual benefits. He was the first guy that I've ever had serious sexual contact with so the relationship set a precedent that had positive and negative
implications that I painfully discovered 3-4 months later. I assumed that we were in a closed relationship, which I had misinterpreted. Whatever relationship we had was broken off upon that realization. He has asked me if I would take everything back if given the chance. I gave it thought and decided I would not because, in spite of the dangerous emotional state that I was in, it was an inevitable incident that I learned from and grew in my understanding of intimate relationships and what is reality and what is not. Without that wreck of an experience, aside from others since then, I certainly would not have achieved the much more stable and learned emotional state I'm in today, almost two years later.

Freshman 7
University of Southern California
I had my first boyfriend and first date. I realized that night that I had a lot of misplaced rage. I was angry that everyone (it seemed) around me could freely express their sexuality, find love, and fall into it. Turns out I was confined by my own cowardice. We broke up several months later, but if I had to pinpoint the moment where I let go of my suffocating, all encompassing shame it would be that on that date, when he held my hand in the concert hall.

Sophomore 7
Pepperdine University
My sophomore year of college, I met my boyfriend. Before then I was not out. He changed me in so many ways, for the better. I am more aware of myself and my surroundings.

Sophomore 6
Xavier University of Louisiana
The first time I was fully intimate with another guy changed completely changed my life. When I was next to him, and communicated with him, I felt as if I was finally interacting with another human being in the way the uniquely meant for me. When I held him, and he held me, it felt better than the way it had with my ex girlfriend. This was very important for me, because it affirmed that my longings were more than mere desires, they were necessities for me.

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Experiencing a gay community that was unfriendly or rejecting (UNFRIEND)

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I transferred to Ferris State University a predominantly White university in Big Rapids, MI it was a very liberal school it had a LGBT Student groups on Campus it all white gay Students. all the Black gay student was scared to go. I went but I feel like a outsider, on campus at Ferris State you saw a like openly White gay/lesbian Students hand hands/kissing on campus. but most Black Brothas was on D.L only in our school's gospel Choir called Ferris State Gospel Choir you saw a lot openly Black gay men. but I love my Ferris State
Freshman 3 1
Cornell University
In thinking about my sense of self being affected, I'm forced to recount a social experience rather than an academic one, so I hope that's ok. My first off-campus party with members of the local gay male community exposed me to a very homogenized view of what was desirable among these men. I therefore felt extremely out-of-place, awkward and undesirable. This experience eventually lead to a lower self-esteem and a kind of “take whatever I can get” attitude, because I couldn't make room for what I looked like with what they were looking for. Slowly, that poor sense of myself is shifting and becoming more positive, but I will never forget what that felt like and I still think that because of it there are circles that I will never feel good enough to travel in - no matter how many people tell me how attractive I am.

Junior 3 3
University of California, Los Angeles
Well, as an undergrad student in Los Angeles, I don’t really have a lot of friends or ways to connect to the social aspect of the college experience. It is also very difficult to connect with other black students who were not gay. So as a result I have feelings of alienation. Which has been a ongoing problem.

Freshman 6 6
Ohio University
When I first got here I met a lot of gay people and a lot of them were upperclassmen. I heard a lot about the gay culture here from some of my straight that go here. Many of my friends told me that I was just going to be a slut and lose my virginity and end up getting a STI. I wasn’t sure how I was going to react, either lose my morals or stick with them and not become the slutty gay freshman. So I got and still am getting many offers to sleep with or fool around with allot of guys on campus and I say no. And it showed me that i can keep my morals while in college and not go with the flow of things.

Freshman 3 4
University of Southern California
When I first came out of the closet, I tried to make friends with other gay males in the community, of which I was rejected. At the time I was overweight, had no sense of style and very low self esteem, and the one gay friend that was aforementioned discussed how many gay men will not be friends with someone they are not attracted to in some way. Feeling horrible, I went on a diet, ate right, and lost nearly 40 pounds. When I came back next year, amazingly all the ones who had shunned me before wanted to be my best friend. This has always caused to never fully trust any other gay male, because I feel there is some motive behind every action.

Sophomore 7 5
University of Southern California
I attempted to go to a local gay party. The straight women were friendly, but the gay men were not. I never hung out with these people again. It was a positive experience because I learned that people are shallow and are going to dislike me because of my appearance.
Having sexual identity affirmed in classroom, campus center or local community (AFFIRMED)

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<td>University of Arkansas at Little Rock</td>
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<td>In my freshman year I took a class for my architecture major called concepts and theory. The class really taught me to look at the underlying symbols and situations that really occur in the real world and not to judge others based on appearances alone. The book I had to read really helped me with these ideas. The book basically was a collection of essays by Jewish philosophers using architecture as a metaphor. It really helped me, and so did the professor, to mature significantly in a year's time. Now I definitely do not believe in God, but I believe that we are basically the creators of our own destiny, in a sense, we are gods in our own particular right. And I also changed my major because of it. Social Work is definitely now what I want to do, I really want to help people, and if I can, help gay black men in particular in school.</td>
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<td>Xavier University</td>
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<td>I was elected to our student senate in September of my freshman year. The experience was memorable because it provided me with lifelong mentors, opportunity to experience real government at work, develop a passion for politics and gave me a sense of purpose early in my college career.</td>
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<td>California State University, Northridge</td>
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<td>I took a brain and behavior course from a Doctor of Neuropsychology. One day in class he went on a long tirade about how homosexuality was not a choice. He presented dozens of studies that had empirical evidence that the brains of gay men and transgendered people are not the same as everyone else's (lesbian women's brains tended to be normal when compared to their heterosexual counterparts). Here it was! The evidence I had been looking for my whole life! Scientific proof that I wasn't strange. Scientific proof that I had no choice in my sexuality. I fell in love with the class, the teacher, and neuropsychology after taking this course.</td>
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<td>Going to school with a large gay community has made a huge impact on my educational experience. Being able to make friends that have similar interest and a common ground has and is having a very positive effect on me and my over mental health.</td>
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<td>Freshman</td>
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<td>New York University</td>
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| As stated before, I had a plan when I came to New York to accomplish my dreams and goals. Starting right when I turned 18 (last year) I became active in New York's unique
nightlife scene, building connections in fashion, press, and club music for my budding career.

Freshman 7 7
Texas State University
I think the experience that I had that really influenced the way that I am is when I started going to clubs and realizing I'm fabulous. I was sitting in this club rain and I saw these Guys BUCKIN' and like now that's all I do. so yah

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Challenging other's beliefs about homosexuality (CHALLBLF)

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<td>Senior</td>
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| University of Southern California
Being told by a classmate who hailed from a small conservative town that I changed his perception about who/what gay people are. This classmate was someone who was in two of my classes in the same semester and someone I collaborated with on a project. This incident not only changed one person's stereotypical perceptions about being homosexual, but also allowed him to see that no matter what persuasion one may be they need not fit into a box. The long term effect this has had on me is that I allowed me to take ownership of myself as a gay man, and helped me to realize that I need not subscribe to a certain persona or ideology simply because I identify as gay.

Freshman 3 3
Morgan State University
There was this guy who I immediately became friends with. It was completely platonic, but he kept saying things to me in a joking manner about how I was not man enough like him, because I didn't like basketball or I would prefer bowling over basketball, and that I need some pussy because I was tense. Eventually I just stop acknowledging his existence because he kept trying to emasculate me.

Junior 5 6
Cornell University
In being interviewed by a friend of mine for a paper he was writing, he asked me to chronicle my experiences with a particular group on whose executive board he sits. This friend of mine is a white bisexual (I think) male, not that it matters tremendously and we are just friends. During the course of this interview, he noticed a trend in my speaking about the group which downplayed my involvement in the active shaping and assistance of the group. His comments made me realize that I was only categorizing “involvement” as direct involvement with the executive process and completely ignoring the other things that I ended up doing for the organization on a yearly basis. This ended up changing my view on being involved somewhat and allowing me to realize that you don't necessarily always need to be a leader in every situation to be helping to make a difference, despite the propaganda that is so prevalent in the black community about successful black men being few and the superb importance of being a leader. After a while, it had become my battle cry and if I wasn't leading it, then I obviously wasn't a part of it.
During my freshman year I was one of the few openly gay students on my campus of 1100 students. People had a lot of questions for me, seeing as how I am a minority in more than one sense. It was a good experience for me because it allowed me to educate people and I also learned a little bit about culture outside of urban and large suburban areas. I know this isn't a specific incident, but it had a big impact on me, and that was that people generally want to know the unknown, whether it is to not be scared of it anymore, or because they are truly interested.

Experiencing a challenge to one’s masculinity (MASCULIN)

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<td>During my sophomore year I lived in university sponsored housing, I had a friend fall asleep on my bed in my room. The next day my three room mates started calling me a “homo”. It started to get real ugly on campus in general for me. It wasn't until I screwed a girl in the room that weekend that it stopped. I moved out into a dumpy apartment off campus at the end of the school year. I never got too close with any of the guys after that. I really do have a hard time making male friends. I've become very private about my life in general.</td>
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| Senior             | 7          | 7      |
| Buffalo State College |        |        |
| I always find myself trying to project the stereotypical black male in all his bravado and hip-hop attire. I thought of course, if I projected this person, my sexuality would never be questioned. Although I was in a meaningful relationship with a man during my Freshman year, I still told myself that I needed to prescribe to the heterosexual norms set around me, and so I found myself constantly giving off a hard exterior. After sharing with my mother that I was gay in my sophomore year of undergrad things got better, I started thinking less and less about the norms set in place and allowed myself to be seen with doing things that would make someone suspect that I could be in fact gay. It was a battle, I had the support of my family, who never questioned or teased me, but I had black culture constantly reaffirming my weakness in being gay. The second semester of my junior year I went abroad to London. It was in Europe that I had embraced my sexuality and come to terms with what I felt was expected of me by others. I found that in Europe I was never subjected to knowing the things that straight black men should know or do for that matter. There was a sense of freedom in my identity; I was allowed to display the many sides of me and became so comfortable in that space. My return to America wasn't exciting, I knew I had to finish my education here and continue my studies over here as it would be too costly abroad. But I have remained comfortable in my skin, just as I did abroad. I've embraced who I am. I don't feel the need to share my sexuality with everyone, but I know that I am gay. I still worry about what some may perceive, but at the end of the day I'm happy just knowing how far I've come in loving everything that is me.
Senior
Emory University

Another was during senior year when I used an example that included a same sex couple during class. Even though I was out to most classmates, the hesitation from the professor resonated throughout the room I was fearful that the revelation would influence my grade but after the incident it only bolstered my truth.

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Having a positive gay role model (ROLEMODE)

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<td>University of California, Los Angeles</td>
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| I went to New York to visit a friend of mine who is very out. We have been friends since high school and he invited me down so I could see what I was missing. He is one year older and works in PR. We went to a gay club and I had what I can definitely call the best time of my life! It lasted about two hours but the atmosphere and the people were amazing, freer than LA and very secure in who they were. People in New York generally seem to be less taken up with what others do just so long as you stay out of their personal space. Here UCLA is a little more conservative and very few blacks attend this school. In LA in general the gay community is a synonym for the white/asian gay community and that is reflected at UCLA. I felt like in New York there was a tangible black gay community - brothers that would talk up to you on the street, the clubs, the parties - generally the support was definitely felt. Now I feel like it is possible to be both black and gay and enjoy my youth without having to have sex with girls as a front. Fucked up really - even ironic - but I just felt like image mattered less when I was in NY than it does when I am in LA. Image being straight image. Even doing this survey I feel like I should hold back so I don't come off as being too gay or whatever - ah fuck it.

Freshman
University of California, Los Angeles

The Chair of the African Student Union came out as a Lesbian my freshman year giving me the courage to come out myself. The actual process of coming out however, was propelled by my attendance and a conference for the United States Student Association which I later took an active role in - mainly around queer people of color issues. It has allowed me to be comfortable with my identity, but that process is still ongoing.

Freshman
University of Southern California

Being in college are my first experience with any sort of contact with other gay men and women. I had known I was gay for a few years but then, but always had convinced myself that I would just live a life not acting on it and hiding it from my friends and family forever. I remember specifically making my first gay friend, and I was so envious of him because he could be completely open and had such pride and no regrets pertaining to the fact that he was gay, and it was inspirational for me. He was the reason I started to come out to people, because I wanted that sense of freedom. As for long-term effects, it has
caused me to never hide who I am to anyone, because it just feels too good to be able to truly be who I am.