DISSERTATION

# A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF GAY MALE UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AT A JESUIT CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Submitted by

James M. Willette

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Doctoral Committee:

Advisor: Linda Kuk

Sharon Anderson
Lisa Miller
Malcolm Scott

# ABSTRACT

## A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF GAY MALE UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AT A JESUIT CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to understand how male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay experience marginality and mattering at a Jesuit Catholic university. There were 28 Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States as of this writing, each with its own varying approach towards the treatment of gay and lesbian students. Much like the state of the Catholic Church in the era of Pope Francis, many Jesuit colleges and universities struggle with the philosophical contradiction between maintaining a distinctly Catholic identity and creating a campus climate that reflects the Jesuit values of care and social justice.

Using Schlossberg's (1989) theory of marginality and mattering in college environments as the theoretical framework, data were collected from fourteen participants through semi-structured interviews, which took place at a Jesuit Catholic university in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. Data were then analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis, which yielded three cross-case superordinate themes and ten sub-themes. The three cross-case superordinate themes—*Identity; Campus Climate, and; The Church and the Institution*—described key elements of participants' experiences as male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay at a Jesuit Catholic university and how these students experienced marginality and mattering on-campus. Each of the three main themes was then used as a lens to explore how participants experienced marginality and mattering.

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# DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, Michael and Lori Willette.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will who am I to judge?
>
> --Pope Francis

Pope Francis made history in March 2013 when he became the first Jesuit elected to the papacy. Following his election, Pope Francis continued to make history with statements that suggested a radical shift in well-established doctrine concerning the treatment of gays and lesbians by the Catholic Church. Only four months after his election, the 266th pontiff and leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics (Connor, 2013) made what some considered to be a revolutionary statement about the issue of gay clergy when he remarked that he is not in a position to pass judgment on those who identify as gay. Months later, Pope Francis signaled that the Catholic Church may be willing to consider some types of same-sex unions, but reinforced that marriage would continue to be reserved for heterosexual couples (Norman, 2014). At the October 2014 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family, Pope Francis asked the bishops in attendance to consider adopting language affirming that gays and lesbians "have gifts and talents to offer the Christian community" (Erdo, para. 50; Robinson, 2014). The proposed language sparked instant controversy among Catholic clergy and laity (Winfield, 2014) and, although it was not approved in the final vote, the fact that such language was ever under consideration marked a noteworthy departure from decades of reticence and rejection.

There is much debate about the amplitude and sincerity of the Catholic Church's ongoing consideration of the treatment of gays and lesbians. As Robinson (2014) pointed out: "He's not changing doctrine or policy yet, but Pope Francis is at least making the Church acknowledge the complexities of modern life" (para. 1). This nod towards change marked a stark contrast to the approach of Francis's predecessor Benedict XVI, who was a staunch adherent to doctrine in the mold of Pope John Paul II. Benedict XVI doubled-down on the notion of homosexual identity

and acts as sinful and argued that homosexuality should be regarded as an "intrinsic moral evil" (Benedict XVI, 2005), while reinforcing the practice of excluding gays and lesbians from formal roles in the Catholic Church. It is therefore understandable why Pope Francis's controversial actions sparked such a heated debate in the media and within the Catholic Church itself: in the 2,000-year history of the papacy, no pontiff had ever signaled a progressive shift towards the treatment of gays and lesbians.

In many ways, Jesuit Catholic colleges and universities in the United States are a microcosm of the Vatican itself. As the Catholic Church debated the doctrinal meaning of Pope Francis's statements in 2013 and 2014, educators at Jesuit Catholic institutions wondered what, if any, impact a Jesuit pope might have on Jesuit higher education (Garanzini, 2013). As of 2014 there were 28 Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States, each with their own varying approaches towards the treatment of gay and lesbian students (O'Loughlin, 2013). Much like the state of the Catholic Church in the era of Pope Francis, many Jesuit colleges and universities struggle with the philosophical contradiction between maintaining a distinctly Catholic identity, which still holds homosexual acts as sinful and a homosexual identity as "intrinsically disordered" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992, sec. 2357), and creating a campus climate that reflects the Jesuit values of care and social justice. As Martin (2014) pointed out: "Everybody knows that same-sex marriage and homosexual acts are contrary to Catholic moral teaching. Yet, that same teaching also says that gay and lesbian people must be treated with respect, sensitivity and compassion" (para. 1). This contradiction is felt by faculty, staff, and students at Catholic and Jesuit Catholic colleges and universities, who often perceive that a Catholic institution's religious identity is a barrier to the inclusion of gay and lesbian students (Hughes, 2008; Love, 1997, 1998; Taylor & Mahoney, 2011; Yoakam, 2006).

Despite having been caught between competing Catholic values, many Jesuit Catholic campuses have moved towards greater inclusion of gay and lesbian students on their campuses, a move that reflects the generally inclusive attitudes of American Catholics towards homosexuals. Jones and Cox (2011) noted that 73% of American Catholics surveyed supported employment non-discrimination laws for gays and lesbians; 56% believed that sexual activity between two consenting adults of the same-sex is not a sin, and; 43% supported marriage equality. These levels of pro-gay support matched or exceeded that of the general public at the time of the survey. In many ways, the growing inclusion and support of gay and lesbian students at Jesuit Catholic universities is a reflection of the sea change underway concerning the inclusion and support of gays and lesbians in the dominant American culture. As a result, many Jesuit Catholic universities now allow the formation of lesbian, gay, and bisexual student groups on-campus; host coming out celebrations and drag shows, and; have started to include sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policies (O'Loughlin, 2013).

Notwithstanding this immense progress, homophobia still exists on many Jesuit Catholic campuses. In 2007, a gay male undergraduate student at an east coast Jesuit Catholic university was verbally attacked and physically assaulted by fellow students (Taylor & Mahoney, 2011). In 2013, homophobic slurs were scrawled over the walls of a building at a Jesuit Catholic university where a lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender student group meets (Landergan, 2013), while at a Jesuit Catholic university in the Pacific Northwest, a closeted gay student-athlete anonymously reported to his campus newspaper that he was fearful to come out on campus because of the homophobic climate he experienced, having frequently heard anti-gay slurs from other student-athletes (Hedberg, 2013). Gay and lesbian students at Jesuit Catholic universities are thus receiving conflicting messages about their inclusion on campus; moreover, those gay and lesbian

students who themselves identify as Catholic also receive conflicting messages in church. According to Jones and Cox (2011), 70% of American Catholics believe that "messages from America's places of worship contribute a lot (33%) or a little (37%) to higher rates of suicide among gay and lesbian youth" (p. 12). In general, gay and lesbian college students experience much higher rates of harassment, discrimination, bias language, fear for physical safety, and feelings of discomfort than their heterosexual peers at colleges and universities across the United States (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfield, & Frazier, 2010). Furthermore, religiously-affiliated college students who identify as openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual are more likely to reject their faith than their heterosexual peers, which has been shown to negatively impact mental health (Wagner, Serafini, Rabkin, Remien, & Williams, 1994).

No demographic has struggled more in its relationship with the Catholic Church than gay men, a likely result of multiple misinterpretations of biblical prohibitions against sexual acts between men (Boswell, 1980), a decades-long sexual abuse scandal where young boys were most often the victims at the hands of male priests (Cameli, 2012), and the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, which called upon American Catholic clergy to care for the ill while simultaneously condemning gay men's identities (Stahl, 2009; Vitillo, 2005). For many gay men, decades of shame and rejection have caused them to feel as though they must choose between their faith and their sexual identity, with as many as 69% choosing to abandon their faith due to its perceived incompatibility with being gay (Wagner et al., 1994).

In addition to the potentially negative impacts of faith abandonment on mental health, male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay experience disparate levels of support and inclusion across the 28 Jesuit Catholic universities in the United States. There is a distinct dearth of research pertaining to the experiences of these students and to what extent they

experience mattering and marginality (Schlossberg, 1989) on-campus. A greater understanding of these students' experiences may be a critical component of creating campus climates that foster their positive development and overall wellness. What is known about the experiences of male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay at Jesuit Catholic universities is limited to a paucity of research and isolated media reports. Whether Pope Francis's perceived shift in tone toward gays and lesbians will impact campus climate for male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay is yet unknown. As campus environments have a powerful impact on student development and learning (Schlossberg, 1989; Strange & Banning, 2001), educators need to understand the lived experiences of male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay at a Jesuit Catholic university.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to understand how male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay experience marginality and mattering at a Jesuit Catholic university.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Schlossberg's (1989) theory of marginality and mattering in college environments. The theory built on Astin's (1977, 1984) student involvement theory and Rosenberg and McCullough's (1981) work on mattering as a factor in the mental health of adolescents. Schlossberg (1989) asserted:

> The creation of environments that clearly indicate to all students that they matter will urge them to greater student involvement...Clearly, institutions that focus on mattering and greater student involvement will be more successful in creating campuses where

> students are motivated to learn, where their retention is high, and ultimately, where their institutional loyalty for the short- and long-term future is ensured (p. 15).

Schlossberg (1989) described marginality as a sense of not fitting in, a lack of belongingness, or feelings of being excluded. Schlossberg (1989) posited that feelings of marginalization occur during periods of transition; such a transition occurs when a gay or lesbian student enters the college environment. Conversely, Schlossberg (1989) described mattering as the sense of being significant or important to somebody else. Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) proposed four dimensions of mattering: attention, the feeling of being noticed; importance, the perception that someone else cares; ego-extension, the perception that others "will be proud of our accomplishments and saddened by our failures" (Schlossberg, 1989, p. 13), and dependence, the feeling of being needed (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981; Schlossberg, 1989). Schlossberg later suggested a fifth dimension: appreciation, "the feeling that [one's] efforts are appreciated" (Schlossberg, 1989, p. 13).

Using Schlossberg's (1989) theory of marginality and mattering, the researcher explored how being a male undergraduate student who identifies as openly gay at a Jesuit Catholic university contributed to his lived experiences on-campus. The use of Schlossberg's (1989) theory helped to balance this exploration by focusing on how gay male students may have both positive experiences (mattering), and negative experiences (marginality), while avoiding an excessive portrayal of gay students as having what Taulke-Johnson (2008) described as "wounded identities" (p. 131).

## Research Questions

The literature review revealed few studies pertaining to the experiences of undergraduate male students who identify as openly gay at Jesuit Catholic universities; thus, the following three research questions guided this study:

1. What are the lived experiences of undergraduate male students who identify as openly gay at a Jesuit Catholic university?
2. How do undergraduate male students who identify as openly gay experience marginality at a Jesuit Catholic university?
3. How do undergraduate male students who identify as openly gay experience mattering at a Jesuit Catholic university?

## Definition of Terms

The following terms were used throughout the study:

Closeted – Homosexual people who have not disclosed their sexual orientations;

Gay – A male who identifies as homosexual;

Homophobia – Fear, hatred, or negative attitudes towards homosexuals (Weinberg, 1972);

Homosexual – An individual who is sexually or romantically attracted to people of their same biological sex;

Ignatian – Refers to Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order, and used as an adjective to describe Jesuit spirituality (Traub, 2010);

Jesuits – An order of Roman Catholic priests founded by Ignatius of Loyola in 1540. The Jesuits are also called the Society of Jesus (Traub, 2010);

Lesbian – A female who identifies as homosexual;

Marginality – The feeling of not fitting in or being accepted (Schlossberg, 1989);

Mattering – "[T]he feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate, or experience us as an ego-extension" (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 165);

Openly gay – Refers to a man who is sexually and/or amorously attracted to other men and who has adopted the label "gay" to describe his sexual orientation. A man who is "openly gay" has disclosed his gay identity to others and makes no effort to conceal his gay identity.

Out – Shorthand for "out of the closet", a term commonly used to describe a homosexual person who has partially or totally disclosed his or her homosexual identity. Also refers to someone who is "openly gay."

Salience – The extent to which an individual is aware of a held social identity and the individual's perception of the impact of said social identity in his or her daily life.

## Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to participants who were undergraduate male students at a Jesuit Catholic university who identified as openly gay. The study did not include individuals who identified as heterosexual, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning; graduate students, or; gay men who were closeted.

## Limitations of the Study

The major limitations of this study were the exclusion of first-year students and the limited number of participants who identified as Catholic or formerly Catholic. No first-year students responded to requests for study participants. First-year students may have reported different experiences related to their recent transitions to campus than their older peers. Similarly, few Catholic or formerly Catholic participants responded to requests for study participants. The inclusion of more Catholic or formerly Catholic participants may have shed

more light on how these students make sense of their unique experiences on-campus. Each of these limitations influenced the possible future application of the findings.

## Significance of the Study

This study fills a gap in the literature concerning the experiences of male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay at Jesuit Catholic universities. The limited research that currently exists illuminates the challenges educators on Jesuit Catholic campuses face when attempting to create campus environments that foster a sense of mattering while simultaneously balancing conflicting messages from the Catholic Church about human sexuality. Despite years of progress, homophobia still exists on Jesuit Catholic campuses. This study aimed to help higher education administrators and student affairs professionals at Jesuit Catholic universities to understand the lived experiences of these students, which may inform efforts to develop affirming policies, programs, and practices that minimize marginalization and foster a sense of mattering.

## Researcher's Perspective

Willis (2007) asserted that qualitative researchers must make every effort to acknowledge their biases and values. My identities and professional history were potential biases in this study. I am an openly gay man working in Jesuit Catholic higher education. I converted to Catholicism with my family when I was ten years old and practiced for about eight years, during which time I came out as a gay man and then subsequently abandoned my Catholic faith. I now identify as agnostic and do not actively practice any religion. I have worked with the queer community in higher education for the last ten years. My personal and professional experiences working and living within the queer community have given me an historical and social context through which I was able to access and build rapport with participants in the study.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature related to this study. The review begins with an examination of the role of biblical interpretation on attitudes towards homosexuals, followed by an exploration of the origin and impact of Catholic Church doctrine and its perspective on homosexuality. Literature related to campus climate then provides context about the campus experiences of homosexual students, including the limited literature related to the spiritual and religious experiences of gay, lesbian, and bisexual college students. Lastly, literature related to gay, lesbian, and bisexual identity development theory and intersectionality theory is examined.

## Homosexuality and the Bible

Translations of the few biblical passages that allude to homosexuality have strongly influenced attitudes, law, and policy towards gays and lesbians since the 14th century and have provided the foundation for Catholic thought on the issue (Boswell, 1980; Cameli, 2012; McNeill, 1993). Yet an equivalent to the English word "homosexual" did not exist in ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, and the word did not appear in any version of the Bible until the 1946 Revised Standard Version (Boswell, 1980; Cannon, n.d.; Kennedy Townsend, 2012; Pickett, 2002). Notwithstanding its relatively recent addition to biblical text, debate about the rights, protections, and inclusion of gays and lesbians within Christian communities and in the public square has relied heavily on a subjective analysis of scripture. Interpretation of biblical text at any given point in history is dependent upon the meaning its translators have construed in light of the political realities of their time. The original biblical scrolls have been translated hundreds if not thousands of times over the past two millennia through multiple linguistic, cultural, and political lenses, with each translation tailored to its contemporary cultural context

(Boswell, 1980; Stone, 2010). McKnight (2014) pointed out that the "Bible you carry is a political act" (para. 1), highlighting how biblical translations have always been subjected to the agendas of those in power. The Bible has been translated in an effort to shape and implement political agendas, to empower some, and to oppress others for over 2,000 years (Stone, 2010). Boswell (1980) noted the powerful influence of Western culture on Catholic biblical translation and its impact on attitudes towards homosexuals starting around the 14th century. Yet as McNeill (1993) pointed out, the Bible is "historically and culturally limited, so that one cannot merely transpose a text of Scripture to the contemporary circumstances of life" (p. 36). Nevertheless, the few ancient verses that allude to homosexuality have no doubt fueled the debate about rights, privileges, and protections of gays and lesbians in the United States in both religious and secular contexts.

Accounting for the complexity and subjectivity of biblical translation is critical to understanding the role of scripture in Catholic moral theology (McNeill, 1993). Biblical translation is an intricate process that has resulted in a plethora of vastly different editions over time. While translators have used several strategies to decode the Bible, there are two primary methods: formal equivalence (word-for-word) translations, which aim for a direct translation with limited subjective interpretation, and; dynamic equivalence (phrase-for-phrase or concept-for-concept) translations, which allows translators the flexibility to pursue maximum reading comprehension for a given linguistic or cultural context (Floor, 2007; Wallace, 2008). The process of translation is made more difficult when there is no word in the target language to match a term found in the source text. The origin of the word "homosexual" in the 1946 Revised Standard Version of the bible is an excellent example of this added challenge. The concept of homosexuality as an identity did not exist in biblical times, yet two Greek words, *malakoi* and

*arsenokoitai*, which first appeared in St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 6:9), were interpreted by some 19th and 20th century translators as being related to homosexuality or homosexual acts (Bailey, 1955; Boswell, 1980; Cannon, n.d.; Hanks, 2011; Lull, 2005; McNeill, 1993). St. Paul was said to have invented the word *arsenokoitai* by creating a neologism, combining two existing Greek words that appeared in the Old Testament: *arseno*, meaning to lie with or to bed, and *koitai*, meaning alongside another man (Cannon, n.d.; Greenberg, 1988; Hanks, 2011; Lull, 2005; Mayhall, 2007; Robinson, 2013).

The first edition of the Revised Standard Version (RSV) in 1946 was the first to translate *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* into the single word "homosexual" (McNeill, 1993). Biblical scholars and theologians have argued that this translation was grossly inaccurate or, at the very least, misinterpreted (e.g. Bailey, 1955; Boswell, 1980). Bailey (1955) first criticized the translation as failing to account for the differences between homosexual identity and homosexual acts. Boswell (1980) argued that *malakoi* referred to the concept of being unrestrained or uncontrolled, while *arsenokoitai* should be interpreted as referring to male cult prostitutes. Hanks (2011) argued that the word *arsenokoitai* referred to sexual abuse, while others have pointed out that different translations of the Bible interpreted the word to mean anything from pedophile to pederast to prostitute (e.g. Boswell, 1980; Robinson, 2008). McNeill (1993) contended that *malakos*, the root word for *malakoi* in Greek, meant "morally weak or lacking in self-control" (p. 52). Boswell (1980) and McNeill (1993) both pointed out that although there was no word in ancient Greek to refer to a person with a homosexual identity as it has come to be understood in the modern era, several other Greek words existed to describe people who engaged in consensual homosexual activity. Thus, the term *arsenokoitai* was more likely referring to a man who engages in sexual activity with children or male prostitutes rather than adult males who

have consensual sexual relations with other adult males (Bailey, 1955; McNeill, 1993). Boswell (1980) and McNeill (1993) argued that St. Paul could have chosen a more accurate Greek word if he had meant to describe homosexual adults engaging in consensual sexual acts. However, Greenberg (1988) disagreed with Boswell's (1980) argument, citing several instances in ancient Greek texts in which *malakoi* referred to a young man who engages in consensual receptive anal intercourse. Yet Greenberg (1988) conceded that the term may more specifically refer to male cult prostitutes. In summary, the debate about the 20th century translations of *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* point out the difficulty in relying on biblical translation as a basis for Catholic Church doctrine related to gays and lesbians.

## Homosexuality in the Catholic Bible

As of 2014 there were more than 100 English versions of the Bible (Institute for Religious Research, 2010). The version of the Bible approved by the Vatican for use by American Catholics is the New American Bible Revised Edition, referred to by its abbreviation, NABRE or more simply as the *Catholic Bible* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011). The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2011) called the 2011 version of the NABRE, "the culmination of nearly 20 years of work by a group of nearly 100 scholars and theologians, including bishops, revisers and editors" (para. 1). The 2011 NABRE is considered to be a formal equivalence translation, in contrast to its more dynamic 1970 predecessor, in an effort to promote readability while maintaining fidelity to the original text (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011; Zapor, 2011).

The NABRE contains 71 books, 1,074 chapters and 27,570 verses (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2014). The number of passages that explicitly refer to homosexual acts pales in comparison to the overall length of the document. There is

disagreement in the literature about exactly how many references to homosexuality exist in the Bible, but most biblical scholars consistently agree on seven passages: Genesis 19, Judges 19, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 in the Old Testament, and Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and 1 Timothy 1:10 in the New Testament (Bailey, 1955; Lull, 2005). It is important to point out that six of the seven passages refer only to homosexual acts between men, one passage refers to sexual acts between two women, and there are no references to the concept of an intrinsic homosexual identity (Bailey, 1955; Greenberg, 1988; Lull, 2005; McNeill, 1993).

The seven aforementioned passages are sometimes referred to as the "clobber passages" because they are often the verses cited by Christian fundamentalists as justification for anti-homosexual attitudes and policies (Calimlim, 2012; Robinson, 2012). Yet the literature related to biblical translation reveals significant controversy related to the interpretation of these passages, with much disagreement as to whether or not the seven clobber passages were referring to homosexuality as it has come to be understood in the modern era (Bailey, 1955; Lull, 2005; Mayhall, 2007; Calimlim, 2012).

**The Clobber Passages**

Although interpretation of the clobber passages is highly subjective and bound by time and cultural contexts, the passages have undoubtedly influenced Catholic doctrine related to homosexuality in the modern era (Boswell, 1980; McNeill, 1993). Lull (2005) argued that the first descriptions of heterosexual unions (Adam and Eve) in Genesis 1-2 and Mark 10:7-8 accounted for the first biblical prohibitions of homosexual relations, but most scholars have pointed to Genesis 19, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, as the first and most influential clobber passage (McNeill, 1993). In the passage, two angels visit Lot in the city of Sodom to warn him of the city's impending destruction. During the angels' visit, the men of Sodom

demand that Lot bring the two angels out so that they can have intercourse with them; as punishment for their request, the men are blinded by a bright light. Sodom and Gomorrah are later destroyed for a number of sins, one of which has been controversially interpreted to include homosexual acts (Gen. 19:1-11 New American Bible Revised Edition). While the passage could be interpreted as prohibiting any and all sexual activity between two men, many biblical scholars have argued that the passage actually prohibits xenophobia and sexual violence, while others have interpreted the passage to prohibit sexual acts between men and angels (Bailey, 1955; Cannon, n.d.; Lull, 2005). Nevertheless, Genesis 19 has strongly influenced attitudes towards homosexuals to the extent that the term for a citizen of Sodom (Sodomite) was later adapted to refer to a male who engages in same-sex anal sexual acts (sodomy). Bailey (1955) argued that there are several issues with the translation and interpretation of the story of Sodom, such that it "has no direct bearing whatever upon the problem of homosexuality or the commission of homosexual acts" (p. 28). Like Genesis 19, Judges 19 tells a similar story of sexual exploitation of visitors or guests. In the passage, a group of men demand they be given permission to force themselves sexually upon a male visitor. Rather than comply with the demands of the men from the town, the host forces his "concubine" outside, where she is repeatedly raped by the men throughout the evening (Jud. 19:22-25). This passage reiterates the pronouncement from Genesis 19 that forcible sex with male guests is prohibited, but does not make any prohibitive statements against consensual homosexual acts between two consenting males or forcible heterosexual intercourse (Lull, 2005; McNeill, 1993).

The next allusion to homosexual acts occurs in the Holiness Code. The Holiness Code is a collection of versus in the Old Testament book Leviticus that shaped ancient Hebrew law related to sexual behavior as well as a number of other activities pertaining to cleanliness,

agriculture, diet, and textiles (Boswell, 1980). Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are very likely the two most frequently cited biblical passages that have been interpreted to prohibit same-sex sexual acts between two men. Greenberg (1988) argued that when Leviticus was written, Hebrew anxiety related to sexual offenses was extensive as pressure to procreate and expand the Hebrew population was a priority at the time, thus resulting in a set of laws that defined violations as "abominations" punishable by exile or death. Yet despite the fact that the severe punishments described in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are the most frequently invoked consequences of the Holiness Code, Boswell (1980) pointed out that the other regulations contained in the Holiness Code pertaining to polygamy, tattoos, diet, acceptable fabrics, mixed-field sowing, and cross-breeding livestock are rarely, if ever, invoked. Boswell (1980) also argued that the sexual morality provisions of the Holiness Code referred not to acts considered to be evil, but more so to practices that were considered unclean, an argument soundly rejected by Greenberg (1988). Greenberg (1988) noted that the Hebrew word for abomination, *toevah*, appeared throughout Leviticus and applied to any behavior that the Hebrews saw as forbidden by Yahweh, arguing that the Holiness Code viewed each law as equally incontrovertible. Nevertheless, Boswell (1980) pointed out that Christians abandoned their fidelity to the Holiness Code more than 2,000 years ago, rendering arguments to its validity in a Christian context invalid. Further, Bailey (1955) argued that Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 most likely referred to the Hebrew rejection of behaviors believed to align with idolatry, cult prostitution, and magic, viewing homosexual acts as "typical expressions of the ethos of heathenism which Israel must renounce no less than religious and cultural syncretism with the nations which bow down to idols" (p. 60). McNeill (1993) and Hanks (2011) echoed Bailey's (1955) assessment of the purpose of homosexuality's inclusion in the Holiness Code as a prohibition of idolatrous activities. Boswell (1980)

concluded: "...the arbitrary enforcement of only one section of the Hebrew Holiness Code by people not abiding by all its other laws is a ridiculous double standard" (p. 42).

St. Paul, writing in Romans 1:26-27, made the first reference to homosexual acts in the New Testament. Romans 1:26-27 is the only passage that appears to prohibit same-sex sexual activity between two men or two women (Robinson, 2013). In the passage, St. Paul seems to assert a total prohibition of all same-sex sexual behavior; however, Boswell (1980) argued that St. Paul was referring to heterosexual people who were engaging in homosexual activity against their natural heterosexual tendencies, thus interpreting the passage to be a prohibition of acting in opposition to one's inherent nature. Lull (2005) conceded that St. Paul's likely intent was to prohibit all same-sex sexual activity, but argued that "we are under no obligation to simply privilege Paul's culture's concepts of human sexuality as eternal truths" (p. 3). Nevertheless, Calimlim (2012) noted that the Catholic Church has often cited Romans 1 as justification for its conservative stance on homosexuality.

In the NABRE's translation of 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, St. Paul wrote: "Do you not know that the unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor boy prostitutes nor practicing homosexuals, nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10). In the original Greek text, St. Paul uses the aforementioned terms *arsenokoitai* and *malakoi*, which were translated into the word "homosexual" in the Revised Standard Version in 1946 and later in the NABRE. Several biblical scholars have pointed out problems with this translation. Robinson (2008) noted several different translations of the two terms across twenty-five English versions of the Bible, including the words: catamites, sodomites, boy prostitutes, effeminate men, men who have sex with men, and men who lie with mankind, among others. Notably,

Boswell (1980) pointed out that there were many other Greek words that St. Paul could have chosen to use to describe adult men who chose to engage in consensual sexual acts with other adult men. The lack of specificity in the translation of *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* calls into question St. Paul's original intent, thus leading to multiple interpretations across different version of the Bible.

The final passage that appears to refer to homosexual acts occurs in 1 Timothy 1:9-10. In the NABRE translation of the passage, St. Paul wrote: "...law is meant not for a righteous person but for the lawless and unruly, the godless and sinful, the unholy and profane, those who kill their fathers or mothers, murderers, the unchaste, practicing homosexuals, kidnapers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is opposed to sound teaching" (1 Tim. 1:9-10). Robinson (2011) pointed out that this passage was again interpreted to refer to homosexuals due to the appearance of the word *arsenokoitai*. Boswell (1980) again pointed out that, similar to 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, St. Paul could have chosen a more accurate Greek word to describe adult homosexual men who engage in consensual sexual acts with other adult homosexual men. Cannon (n.d.) asserted that St. Paul meant to refer to men who have sex with male prostitutes, while Greenberg (1988) posited St. Paul's apparent condemnation of homosexual acts is, upon closer analysis, actually a condemnation of all lustful behavior. Hanks (2011) observed the complexity of the translation controversy: "the lack of scholarly consensus regarding the meaning of the relevant terms in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 is infamous" (pp. 22-23).

The controversy surrounding interpretation of the clobber passages raises an important question: how is it that some fundamentalists selectively choose which biblical passages apply to life in the modern era and which can be dismissed as anachronistic? For example, Levitican law prohibits the mixing of crops and fabrics, consumption of shellfish, and certain kinds of

haircuts, yet most Christians do not honor these more obscure sections of the book. Many activists began to combat the use of the clobber passages in the gay rights culture wars of the 1990s and 2000s. Inevitably, the debate entered the mainstream: in a popular clip from the 1990s NBC television show, *The West Wing*, the fictional President Bartlett derided a talk radio host who cited Levitican law as justification for anti-homosexual attitudes and policies. When the talk radio host cited Leviticus 18:22 as an argument against the President's liberal agenda, he replied:

> Touching the skin of a dead pig makes one unclean, Leviticus 11:7. If they promise to wear gloves, can the Washington Redskins still play football? Can Notre Dame? Can West Point? Does the whole town really have to be together to stone my brother John for planting different crops side by side? Can I burn my mother in a small family gathering for wearing garments made from two different threads (Sorkin, 2000)?

Fundamentalist Christian arguments against pro-homosexual attitudes and policies often dismiss inconsistencies in the application of Levitican law as irrelevant because various translations of the Bible seem to condemn homosexuality elsewhere and the Holiness Code was never intended to apply to non-Jews (Boswell, 1980). Yet the most logical answer found in the literature regarding how some Bible verses have come to be selectively cited as justification for anti-homosexual attitudes and policies is that the complexity and inconsistency of biblical translation over the past two millennia, augmented by the cultural contexts of a given time, have allowed selective, politically convenient interpretations to take hold. Consequently, the clobber passages have served as an important part of the foundation of Catholic teaching on sexual morality.

## Catholic Teaching Regarding Homosexuality

In contrast to the Protestant faith, which asserts that the Bible is the sole source of religious truth ("Scripture and tradition," 2010), official Catholic teachings on all matters are derived from three sources: sacred scripture and tradition, the Magisterium, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church, 1992; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994). Sacred tradition refers to the oral teachings of the original apostles, which overlap with scripture and which have been passed down through the generations by Catholic bishops (Pope Paul VI, 1965). The oral teachings of the apostles are considered to be divine revelation and are so revered by the Catholic Church that Pope Paul VI ordered that "both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence" (Pope Paul VI, 1965, para. 9). Taken together, sacred scripture and sacred tradition are considered by Catholics to comprise the Word of God (Pope Paul VI, 1965). The task of interpreting and disseminating the official Word of God to the world's Catholics is the responsibility of the Magisterium, which is the official teaching office of the Catholic Church (Storck, 2001). The teaching authority of the Magisterium is held solely by the Pope and the bishops of the Catholic Church (Most, 1990).

The Magisterium periodically releases documents related to Church teaching on moral issues such as abortion, divorce, and homosexuality. These documents are typically released following gatherings of bishops, called synods, in which matters of Church teaching and morality are debated and voted upon by members of the Magisterium. Beginning in 1975, there have been two primary Vatican documents that address the issue of homosexuality in addition to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church, 1992; Yip, 1997), which include: *Persona Humana: Declaration of Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics* (Catholic

Church, 1975) and *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (Ratzinger, 1986). These documents have been used to guide Church teaching at the diocesan level and have resulted in the periodic release of additional supporting documents by the Vatican.

In its first official stance on homosexuality, the Church released *Persona Humana: Declaration of Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics* (Catholic Church, 1975). In the document, the Church acknowledged that the "human person is so profoundly affected by sexuality that it must be considered as one of the factors which give to each individual's life the principal traits that distinguish it" (para. 1). The document was the first time that the Church officially entered into a moral debate about homosexuality in its 2,000-year history when it declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved of" (sec. viii). The document called upon the Church to nevertheless treat homosexuals with "understanding and sustained in the hope of overcoming their personal difficulties and their inability to fit into society" (sec. viii) while hypothesizing that homosexuality either arises from environmental factors or from innate, pathological factors and forbidding all types of non-procreative sexual activity for all persons regardless of sexual orientation.

In the decade after the release of the *Persona Humana* document, the AIDS crisis ravaged gay communities in cities across the United States, reshaping the Catholic conversation about homosexuality. In the early 1980s a striking increase in the incidence of the relatively rare cancer Kaposi's Sarcoma among homosexual men was reported in the media for the first time (Altman, 1981), leading to the discovery of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). In the years that followed, the HIV/AIDS crisis would reach epidemic levels, claiming more than 20,000 lives (primarily those of gay men) in the United States by 1986 (American Foundation for

AIDS Research, 2014). That year, as more dioceses struggled to provide care for the HIV/AIDS-afflicted, the Vatican released the *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (1986). The letter, written by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger who would go on to become Pope Benedict XVI, reaffirmed the Church's stance that a homosexual identity was regarded as "intrinsically disordered" (sec. 3) but took it further to declare that all homosexual acts represented an "intrinsic moral evil" (sec. 3). The letter clarified that a same-sex sexual orientation was not itself considered sinful, but that to act on any homosexual inclination was not acceptable. The letter condemned violence against homosexuals, but reiterated that homosexuality is nevertheless disordered. Despite the onslaught of the AIDS crisis at the time (Philadelphia Inquirer, 1986), Ratzinger (1986) condemned homosexuals and their supporters: "Even when the practice of homosexuality may seriously threaten the lives and well- being of a large number of people, its advocates remain undeterred and refuse to consider the magnitude of the risks involved" (sec. 9). The letter called for homosexuals to live chastely, thus avoiding sinful and harmful same-sex sexual acts. The letter went on to ask bishops to nevertheless "support, with the means at their disposal, the development of appropriate forms of pastoral care for homosexual persons. These would include the assistance of the psychological, sociological, and medical sciences, in full accord with the teaching of the Church" (sec. 17). McNeill (1989) called the Ratzinger (1986) letter a "giant step backward" for the Church (p. xiv) and posited that the letter led to increased feelings of self-hatred and internalized homophobia after its release.

Following the release of Ratzinger's (1986) letter, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops released a documented titled *Called to Compassion and Responsibility: A Response to the HIV/AIDS Crisis* (1988). American bishops, recognizing the brutality of the

HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States, called on American Catholics to "reach out with compassion to those exposed to or experiencing this disease" (sec. 1). The document did not depart from Vatican doctrine, maintaining a call for chastity among gay men; however, the bishops called for more education, testing, and care for those affected by or at-risk of HIV/AIDS infection. In a document ten years later, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops released *Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997), which called for parents to accept their gay children and recognized the role of the Church in the HIV/AIDS epidemic:

> The Church also recognizes the importance and urgency of ministering to persons with HIV/AIDS. Though HIV/AIDS is an epidemic affecting the whole human race, not just homosexual persons, it has had a devastating effect upon them and has brought great sorrow to many parents, families, and friends. Without condoning self-destructive behavior or denying personal responsibility, we reject the idea that HIV/AIDS is a direct punishment from God (sec. 5).

Though approved for dissemination in the United States by a Vatican official, the *Always Our Children* message struck a more compassionate tone than any previously released Vatican documents.

The primary text used by the Magisterium to disseminate Catholic doctrine is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), which is a summary of the foundational teachings and moral theology of the Catholic faith (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994). According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (1994), the Catechism is divided into four pillars: Creed (a set of beliefs), Sacraments (rituals), Commandments (laws), and the

Our Father (the primary prayer of the Catholic Faith). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) was finalized and approved by Pope John Paul II on June 25, 1992 and serves as the definitive guide to the Catholic faith and the foundation of its moral theology (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) mentions homosexuality seven times and always in relation to the Church's call for chastity for anyone not joined in a heterosexual marriage. It claims: "Among the sins gravely contrary to chastity are masturbation, fornication, pornography, and homosexual practices" (Catholic Church, para. 2396). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) serves as the embodiment of the Magisterium's opinion of homosexuality, and it once again highlights a paradox within Church doctrine:

> The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided (Catholic Church, para. 2358).

Vatican documents released beginning in 1975 and in the midst of the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s revealed a doctrinal paradox: on the one hand the Church maintained its fervent opposition to homosexual acts, while on the other hand it called for compassion and pastoral care of homosexual people, a philosophy akin to the old adage: *love the sinner, hate the sin*. Echoes of this paradox are arguably still seen today on Jesuit Catholic campuses as they struggle to maintain a distinctly Catholic identity while at the same time affirming and supporting gay students. Meanwhile, this paradox and the mixed messages conveyed by the Church leave many LGBTQ people to "view orthodox religious believers as perpetrators of oppression" (Hodge, 2005, p. 207).

## Campus Climate

Gay students have become increasingly visible on college and university campuses (Rhoads, 1997). There is, however, limited literature pertaining to the on-campus experiences of these students, particularly at religiously-affiliated institutions. Further, literature pertaining to the experiences of gay college students at Catholic, and particularly Jesuit Catholic, institutions is very limited, which evidenced the need for further study.

Campus climate plays an important role in shaping the experiences of gay students. Rankin (2005) defined campus climate as: "the cumulative attitudes, behaviors, and standards of employees and students concerning access for, inclusion of, and level of respect for individual and group needs, abilities, and potential" (p. 17). There is a clear connection in the literature between campus climate and gay identity development. For instance, one of the key elements of D'Augelli's (1994) life span theory of homosexual identity development is its emphasis on how environmental factors influence identity development and the coming out process. In another example, Evans and Broido (1999) studied the coming out experiences of gay students living in residence halls and identified three factors that encouraged gay students to come out: supportive people on campus, a supportive campus climate, and visible gay role models (p. 663).

A safe and welcoming campus climate is essential to the development of a positive gay identity. The literature related to campus climate illustrates the clear connection between an affirming and supportive environment, and student achievement and wellness (e.g. Evans & D'Augelli, 1996; Rhoads, 1997; Stevens, 2004). The campus environment is instrumental in fostering or hindering the development of gay college students, while marginalization experiences can hinder gay students' academic achievement, retention, and their development of

positive social connections (Rankin, 2003; Schlossberg, 1989; Stevens, 2004; Strange & Banning, 2001).

**Campus Climate Studies**

A common strategy used by colleges and universities to assess the campus environment is a campus climate study, which is usually administered via a survey instrument that is distributed to students, faculty, and staff to measure the attitudes and behaviors of the community regarding diversity and equity issues (Rankin, 2003; Renn, 2010). The results of these surveys can help educators to develop strategies to address climate issues. Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, & Robinson-Keilig (2004) described campus climate studies as useful tools to determine programs and policies that enhance students' experiences and to help move a community "beyond tolerance of GLBT students (i.e., just 'putting up with') and toward their empowerment" (Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, et al., 2004, p. 9).

Campus climate studies are typically conducted at the institutional level or have small sample sizes, which limits the generalizability of their findings but still often provides useful information at the local level (Rankin, 2010). In an example of a broader campus climate study, Rankin, Weber, Blumenfield, and Frazer (2010) conducted a comprehensive study that surveyed more than 5,000 faculty, staff, and student participants to assess campus climate at institutions across the United States. The results indicated that a majority of lesbian, gay, and bisexual respondents experienced far greater instances of harassment, discrimination, bias language, fear for physical safety, and feelings of discomfort than their heterosexual peers (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfield, et al., 2010). As a result of the study, Rankin (2005) called for the creation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) resource centers; inclusive practices such as domestic-partner benefits for faculty and staff, non-discrimination policies, and bias

incident response protocols, and; educational initiatives on campus such as awareness trainings to help shift anti-gay attitudes. In an earlier study, Evans and Broido (1999) called for institutions to address the environmental influences that can impact the identity development process and to create more welcoming living and learning environments, particularly in residence halls, citing the impact that a safe environment has on the development of a positive gay identity.

**Positive experiences on-campus.** It is important to note that many students who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual have positive college experiences and do not report overt homophobia on-campus. Taulke-Johnson (2008) found that many students reported positive and supportive environments in which to explore and express their identities and cautioned against an excessive portrayal of gay students as having "wounded identities" (Taulke-Johnson, 2008). Renn (2007) studied the experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual student leaders and activists and found that involvement in leadership and activist activities contributed to a greater sense of self-efficacy and purpose and led to an increase in students' disclosure of their sexual orientation on-campus.

## Campus Climate at Religiously-Affiliated Institutions

While campus climate studies have helped to illuminate the experiences of gay college students, most studies found in the literature were conducted at secular institutions. Research reporting the experiences of gay students at religiously-affiliated institutions, and particularly at Catholic institutions, is very limited and typically only applicable at the local level. It is important here to note the vast differences between the numerous religiously-affiliated colleges and universities regarding the issue of sexuality; some institutions certainly hold more conservative views and others more progressive views (Love, 1997). Love (1997) pointed out

the diversity of religiously-affiliated institutions and acknowledged that these institutions have perspectives and philosophies on gay issues that vary widely. For example, Yarhouse, Stratton, Dean, and Brooke (2009) found that most gay students in their study reported feeling that the campus climate on Christian campuses was negative, with much of these feelings attributed to their campuses having "statements of faith" that encourage heterosexual marriage and discourage homosexual behavior. Wentz and Wessel (2012) reported that gay and lesbian students attending a Christian college perceived a hostile environment, having been the targets of homophobic slurs, harassment, and violence. Conversely, some religiously-affiliated campuses have LGBTQ-supportive policies, non-discrimination statements, meeting spaces, visible LGBTQ faculty and staff role models, and programs that affirm gay students on their campuses (Getz & Kirkley, 2006; Love, 1997; Seattle University, 2014).

**Campus climate at Catholic universities.** Studies conducted at Catholic universities almost universally point out that the institution's Catholic identity acts as a barrier to creating welcoming and affirming environments for gay students, faculty, and staff (Hughes, 2008; Love, 1997, 1998; Taylor & Mahoney, 2012; Yoakam, 2006). At the same time, many faculty and staff members at Catholic institutions support and affirm gay students "because of, not in spite of, their faith and beliefs" (Taylor & Mahoney, 2012, p. 3). In a study conducted at a small Catholic college, Love (1997) noted that students experienced these contradictions and paradoxes first-hand on campus. Many students perceived the institution as focused on service and care, yet gay students on campus still experienced hatred, harassment, isolation, and loneliness (Love, 1997). Love (1997) also identified positive paradoxes in his findings, such as unexpected support for LGBTQ students from the office of Campus Ministry. Love (1998) later found that many faculty and staff members at a Catholic college were "willing to depart from

church views on birth control, premarital sex, and divorce, but not on homosexuality" (p. 311). Love's (1997; 1998) studies highlighted the contradiction that many students at Catholic institutions experience: a Catholic identity calls for an institution to be supportive and welcoming of LGBTQ students while simultaneously discouraging homosexual behavior.

Most of the limited campus climate studies found in the literature that pertain to Catholic colleges and universities were conducted in the 1990s and early 2000s before the rapid acceleration of legislative and judicial gay rights victories that began around 2010 in the United States. Additional research is needed to determine what, if any, impact these social and legal movements have had on the experiences of gay students at Catholic universities.

***Campus climate at Jesuit Catholic institutions.*** The Jesuits are an order of Roman Catholic priests who belong to the Society of Jesus and whose primary missionary activity is education, having founded several K-12 and post-secondary institutions throughout the world (Loyola University Maryland, 2014). As of 2014 there were 28 Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States (Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, 2014). Jesuit education is characterized by its focus on *cura personalis* (care of the whole person), service, social justice, and reflection (Loyola University Maryland, 2014). These central tenets of Jesuit education have led many Jesuit colleges and universities to develop programs and practices that are seen as inclusive and affirming of gay students, such as resource centers, non-discrimination policies, "coming out" celebrations, drag shows, and funding for student clubs (Spencer, 2013). These programs and practices differentiate Jesuit universities from many of their more conservative Catholic sister institutions and reveal a deep cultural divide between them. This cultural divide has led some conservative Catholics to question whether the Jesuits have moved away from their Catholic identity. One president at a conservative Catholic university speaking about Jesuit

universities remarked: “I feel sorry for those universities. I think they’ve lost their moral bearings, and I think they’ve lost their Catholic identity when they water it down to the point where everything’s true” (Faw, 2013).

Despite the emergence of gay-affirming programs and policies on several Jesuit campuses, anti-gay sentiment, harassment, and violence still exists at many of these universities. In one week in 2009, two separate students at a Jesuit university on the east coast were attacked and targeted with anti-gay slurs on campus (Johnson, 2009). The university community rallied in support of the students but the acts raised questions about whether the university was doing enough to support gay students (Johnson, 2009). In 2011, the president of a Midwest Jesuit university withdrew an employment offer after discovering that the candidate for an academic dean position was an out lesbian (Weisberg, 2011). Gay students at the same institution reported ongoing harassment and intimidation in an institution-level climate study later that year, and one student reported that he was removed from a leadership position of a Christian student group because he was gay (Weisberg, 2011a; Weisberg, 2011b).

With the exception of isolated mass- and campus-media reports of anti-gay harassment at Jesuit universities (e.g. Hedberg, 2013; Landergan, 2013), peer-reviewed studies illuminating the experiences of gay students at these institutions are extremely limited. Additionally, published studies related to campus climate at Jesuit universities took place before the election of the first Jesuit pope. It is unclear from the literature what, if any, difference Pope Francis’s apparently progressive shift in tone has made in the experiences of gay college students.

## Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Development Theory

Identity development is an important part of gay men’s college experiences (Evans & Broido, 1999; Rhoads, 1997). Educators on Jesuit Catholic campuses must have an

understanding of students' developmental challenges in order to offer support and to create welcoming and safe campus environments (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, and Renn, 2010; Love, 1997; Stevens, 2004). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity development theories describe different perspectives on the ways gay students move through stages and phases of development. Renn and Bilodeau (2005) pointed out that most of the early theories proposed linear stage progressions similar to psychosocial models such as Erikson's (1968) stages of psychosocial development. Later theories described developmental phases as non-linear, circular, and fluid to reflect the complexity of human development (e.g. D'Augelli, 1994).

**Stage theory approaches.** In the 1970s and 1980s, around the same time the Catholic Church took its first strong stances on homosexuality, stage theories describing the development of lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity emerged, with most theories first modeling the development of gay men. The early stage theories shared similar characteristics, proposing that gay adolescents move through sequences of developmental tasks to resolve identity confusion, adopt a gay identity, and move towards increasing levels of self-disclosure through the coming out process (e.g. Cass, 1979, 1984; Coleman, 1982; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Minton & MacDonald, 1983; Troiden, 1979, 1988). Stage theories fall within two general categories: sociological and psychological (Evans, Forney, Guido, et al., 2010). Theories with a primarily sociological lens focus on a person's identification with a gay community, social roles, stigma, or the coming-out process (Evans, Forney, Guido, et al., 2010, p. 307). Psychological theories focus on "internal changes, such as growing self-awareness, formation of a gay/lesbian/bisexual self-image, and personal decisions about identity management" (Evans, Forney, Guido, et al., 2010, p. 307).

Though many of the early theories differed in the number of stages they proposed, Cass (1984) pointed out that most theories at the time shared a common feature: "Almost uniformly, identity formation is conceptualized as a developmental process marked by a series of changes, growth points, or stages along which certain experiences can be ordered" (pp. 145-146). In the majority of lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity development theories, individuals start out in an initial stage where they reject their homosexual feelings, then progress sequentially through stages of gradual self-acceptance and disclosure to others—that is if they progress at all. Levine and Evans (1991) echoed Cass's (1984) assessment of the commonalities of lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity development theories, describing four general phases shared by the early models: "first awareness, self-labeling, community involvement and disclosure, and identity integration" (Evans, Forney, Guido, et al., 2010, p. 307).

***Cass's (1979) model.*** Cass (1979) proposed a six-stage model of gay identity formation arguing that the identity development process is dependent upon the interaction between a person and his or her environment. Cass's (1979) model described the six stages as linear and sequential, but also pointed out that an individual could choose not to progress any further through the stages at any given point, a concept Cass (1979) referred to as "identity foreclosure" (p. 220). Cass's (1979) six stages included identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis. Movement from one stage to the next is precipitated by a number of different cognitive, environmental, and biological factors (Cass, 1979; Evans, Forney, Guido, et al., 2010).

Cass (1984) later developed two instruments to test the six-stage theory: the Homosexual Identity Questionnaire and the Stage Allocation Measure (Evans, Forney, Guido, et al., 2010). Studies utilizing the instruments provided some evidence for the six stages and their sequence;

however, the data suggested a lack of clear distinction between some of the stages (Cass, 1984). Cass (1984) acknowledged that the data from the 1984 study could have suggested a four-stage theory rather than the original six-stage theory, but nevertheless she did not abandon the original six stages (Cass, 1984).

***Other stage theories.*** Similar stage theories emerged following Cass (1979, 1984) with comparable linear structures that began with the individual questioning his or her identity and eventually progressing towards full identity acceptance, disclosure, and assimilation. Coleman (1982), for example, proposed five-stages that focused extensively on the coming-out process: pre-coming out, coming out, exploration, first relationship, and identity integration (Coleman, 1982). Troiden (1979, 1988) proposed four-stages that emphasized the psychological, rather than the sociological, components of identity development: sensitization, identity confusion, identity assumption, and commitment. Unlike Coleman (1982), Troiden (1988) emphasized that identity development occurs "against a backdrop of stigma" (Troiden, 1988, p. 106) and is characterized by increasing self-acceptance over time. Savin-Williams (1998) proposed eight chronological stages that emphasized a person's experiences with romantic relationships and sexual experiences. Savin-Williams (1998) acknowledged that the stages could take place in any order to account for the complexity and individuality of identity formation. Savin-William's (1998) stages included an awareness of same-sex attraction, the occurrence of the first same-sex and opposite-sex sexual experiences, the acquisition of a lesbian, gay, or bisexual label, disclosing to non-family, the first same-sex romantic relationship, disclosure to family, and the development of a positive lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity.

McCarn and Fassinger (1996) developed a unique stage theory of lesbian identity development that was later validated for gay men (Fassinger & Miller, 1997). McCarn and

Fassinger (1996) proposed that identity formation occurs in a four-phase process on two corresponding branches: group identity development and individual identity development (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). McCarn and Fassinger's (1996) theory proposed that a person could be in different phases of development on each of the two branches and that backtracking or cycling through each process could occur (Evans, Forney, Guido, et al., 2010; McCarn & Fassinger, 1997). McCarn and Fassinger's (1996) theory was also unique in that disclosure of one's sexual orientation to others was not required in order to achieve identity integration (Evans, Forney, Guido, et al., 2010; McCarn & Fassinger, 1997).

A review of these prominent stage theories illustrates their shared features, with most individuals beginning at a pre-questioning or questioning phase, moving through various stages of crisis and acceptance, and generally having a finite endpoint in which identity is fully integrated and wide disclosure to others occurs.

**Criticisms of stage theory.** While stage theories provide a framework that can be widely understood by a broad audience of educators (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005), there are several criticisms and limitations that exist, particularly with Cass's (1979) theory. Evans, Forney, Guido, et al., (2010) pointed out that Cass's (1979) theory was developed in a social and political context that is much different from the more progressive views that have emerged over the past three decades and that a contemporary revision may be necessary. Further, current research suggests that identity integration can occur without a stage that includes anger towards heterosexuals, a stage that was prevalent in many of the early theories (Evans, Forney, Guido, et al., 2010). Bilodeau and Renn (2005) noted that linear theories fail to account for the complexity of individuals' unique developmental journeys and other identity differences such as race, gender, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and religion. Bilodeau and Renn (2005) also pointed out

that bisexuals, people of color, and women experience identity formation differently than gay men and cautioned against generalizing stage theories to these populations without further investigation.

A further limitation of identity development stage theories is that most were tested with small samples or not empirically studied at all. When the theories have been tested, the studies typically focused on adults' recollections of identity formation rather than on the experiences of adolescents or college students (Bilodeau & Renn, 2010; Evans, Forney, Guido, et al., 2010). While many gay college students arrive on campus far along in their identity development and coming out processes (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005), others find the college environment conducive to exploring identity issues for the first time (D'Augelli, 1994; Rhoads, 1997). Identity development stage theories provide educators with a conceptual framework through which to understand the unique experiences of gay college students, but the theories' general adherence to linear stages and limited empirical validation with college populations is problematic in their general application.

**Life span approach.** In contrast to the earlier stage theories, D'Augelli (1994) rejected the linear notion of identity development, proposing a life span theory that reflected the complexity of the process. D'Augelli (1994) later applied the theory to college students, becoming one of the few researchers to apply lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity development theory in a collegiate setting (Evans & D'Augelli, 1996). D'Augelli's life span theory differed from stage theories in that it reflected the complex interactions between biological and environmental factors while acknowledging that identity may be fluid or fixed at various times in a person's life (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; D'Augelli, 1994).

Approaching sexual orientation identity development from a human development perspective, D'Augelli (1994) argued that development does not stop with the conclusion of a fixed developmental stage, but that "individuals develop and change over the entire course of their life spans" (D'Augelli, 1994, p. 319). D'Augelli (1994) posited that identity development involves three sets of variables: personal actions and subjectivities, which involves the individual's feelings about his or her sexual identity and the meaning ascribed to it; interactive intimacies, which involves the person's relationships with family, friends, and romantic partners, and; sociohistorical connections, which involves the laws, customs, norms, and policies found in a given location at a given time (D'Augelli, 1994; Evans, Forney, Guido, et al., 2010). D'Augelli's (1994) theory proposed that these three sets of variables more accurately reflected the fluidity and individuality of identity development than the more restrictive stage theories. In contrast to stages, D'Augelli proposed six interactive and independent processes that could repeatedly occur at any point over the life span: exiting heterosexuality, developing a personal gay identity status, developing a lesbian, gay, or bisexual social identity, becoming a lesbian, gay, or bisexual offspring, developing a lesbian, gay, or bisexual intimacy status, and entering a lesbian, gay, or bisexual community (D'Augelli, 1994). Bilodeau and Renn (2005) pointed out that individuals may experience development in some of D'Augelli's six processes and not others.

**Summary of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Development Theory**

Each of the theories described here presents a different perspective on the psychological development of lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity and the complex environmental and social factors influencing the process. Understanding the developmental challenges gay students face

can help educators to understand their experiences more fully (Evans & Broido, 1999, p. 663; Evans, Forney, Guido et al., 2010, p. 319; Stevens, 2004, p. 185).

## Intersectionality

In addition to the development of a sexual orientation identity, many college students also become more aware of other social identities they hold and how those identities interact with one another. Intersectionality is a sociological concept that concerns the ways in which one's various social identities such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation interact with systems of oppression and privilege (Macionis & Gerber, 2011). Rooted in critical race theory, queer theory, and Black feminist theory (Hunting, Grace, and Hankivsky, 2015), intersectionality was first examined in depth by legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw with her analysis of the intersection of race and sex from a Black feminist perspective (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw (1989) pointed out that the politics of oppression are structured "so that struggles are categorized as singular issues" (p. 167), which reinforces oppressive social structures and negates the realities inherent in holding multiple oppressed identities. McCall (2005) noted that this social stratification was reflected in research related to race and gender and failed "to account for lived experiences as neglected points of intersection" (p. 1780), which necessitated the emergence of intersectionality theory. At the heart of intersectionality theory is an effort to acknowledge and legitimize the experiences of those who hold multiple oppressed social identities, yet few models exist to explore and study intersections of identity.

In response to a lack of models through which to examine intersecting identities among college students Jones and McEwen (2000) developed the "Model of multiple dimensions of identity" (Jones & McEwen, 2000). The model is set inside a large circle and has three main components: at the center of the circle are the students' cores, which are their personal

attributes, characteristics, and identity. Participants in their study used words such as "intelligent, kind, a good friend, compassionate, independent" (p. 409) to describe their cores. Orbiting around the core on intersecting pathways are the students' social identities such as race, class, gender, religion, and sexual orientation. These identities are located at various and dynamic distances from the core based on the extent to which the student perceives them as salient. Jones and McEwen (2000) noted: "The circles intersect with one another to demonstrate that no one dimension may be understood singularly; it can be understood only in relation to other dimensions" (pp. 409-410). Lastly, the circle in which the model is set represents students' contextual influences such as their family, current experiences, and career paths (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Later, Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) revised and redrew the model to incorporate the additional influence of a meaning-making filter, arguing that individuals filter contextual influences such as "peers, family, norms, stereotypes, [and] sociopolitical conditions" (p. 7) when making sense of their social identities. They argued: "Incorporating meaning-making capacity into the model provides a richer portrayal of not only *what* relationships students perceive among their personal and social identities, but also *how* they come to perceive them as they do" (p. 13).

The significance of the Jones and McEwen (2000) model and the revised model (Abes, Jones, and McEwen, 2007) is that they provided the first frameworks in the student development literature through which to understand the identity intersection experiences of college students. The models also place significance on a student's personal identity rather than their socially-constructed identities, which tends to give students more agency over the ways in which they choose to define themselves and the meaning they ascribe to their identities: "The participants in this study wanted to be understood as they understood themselves and as the totality of who they

were, rather than be understood through externally imposed labels and by a singular dimension" (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p. 412). Though the models are helpful in visualizing and understanding the relationships between students' social identities, critics such as McCall (2005) pointed out that there "has been little discussion of *how* to study intersectionality, that is, of its methodology" (p. 1771). McCall (2005) also called into question "the artificiality of social categories" (p. 1778) and questioned whether identities should be categorized to begin with. McCall (2005) suggested that qualitative approaches such as narrative and case study research are effective modalities through which to explore the complexity of multiple identities.

## The Religious and Spiritual Experiences of Gay College Students

While undergoing significant identity development related to sexuality, most college students simultaneously experience some kind of spiritual or religious struggle during their college years, questioning their beliefs, disagreeing with their families, or sensing a disconnect from their religious traditions (Astin, Astin, Lindholm, Bryant, Szelenyi, & Calderone, 2005; Rockenbach, Walker, & Luzader, 2012). For many gay college students, religion is a topic that creates a great deal of discomfort and even a sense of profound loss (Love, Bock, Jannarone, & Richardson, 2005; McNeill, 1988; Ritter & O'Neill, 1989), while for other gay college students, religion is an important and positive component of their identities (Love, 1997). Buchanan, Dzelme, Harris, and Hecker (2001) pointed out that gays and lesbians are often forced to "choose between their sexual orientation and their religious and spiritual beliefs" (p. 435). Wagner, Serafini, Rabkin, Remien, and Williams (1994) noted that this choice is especially true for gay Catholics, whose participation in the Church could result in developmental delays. While not universally true for all gay adherents, Ritter and O'Neill (1989) noted that organized religions have a history of castigating gays and lesbians: "Representatives and followers of traditional

religion have often hurt lesbians and gay men by weaving a moral and historical tapestry of guilt, shame, and repression rather than by providing a validation and inspiration for their inherent goodness" (p. 9). Barnes and Meyer (2012) echoed these findings, noting that "exposure to nonaffirming religion is associated with higher levels of internalized homophobia" (p. 513).

Despite the importance of religion and spirituality in the lives of college students, few studies have been conducted to explore the spiritual and/or religious experiences of gay college students. Love et al. (2005) found that some gay and lesbian students are able to achieve what they termed "reconciliation" (p. 199) of their sexual orientation identities and religious and/or spiritual identities. Reconciled students reported that their spiritual or religious identities gave them strength, a sense of self-acceptance, and integration of their sexual orientation and spiritual and/or religious identities. Other participants were described as either having "nonreconciled identities" (Love et al., 2005, p. 201), in which they were actively experiencing a sense of dissonance between their sexual orientation and religious and/or spiritual identities, or "undeveloped spiritual identities" (Love et al., 2005, p. 202), in which they had either actively or passively rejected consideration of religious or spiritual issues. Ritter and O'Neill (1989) described the relationship between many gays and lesbians and religion as one characterized by marginalization and shame, pointing out the many losses gays and lesbians often face, including: "their feelings of not belonging to church, family, society, or the workplace; the loss of friends and loved ones to AIDS" (p. 12). Given the emphasis many college students place on their religious and/or spiritual identities and the consequences of turmoil that may emerge, Love (2005) emphasized the importance of engaging gay and lesbian college students in conversations about religion and spirituality on-campus.

## Marginality and Mattering

Schlossberg's (1989) theory of marginality and mattering in college environments was the theoretical framework for this study. The theory built on Astin's (1977, 1984) student involvement theory and Rosenberg and McCullough's (1981) work on mattering as a factor in the mental health of adolescents. Schlossberg (1989) asserted that a sense of mattering leads to increased student involvement and, therefore, greater retention and satisfaction. Conversely, Schlossberg (1989) described marginality as a sense of not fitting in, a lack of belongingness, or feeling excluded. Schlossberg (1989) noted that marginalization may occur during periods of transition, such as the transition that occurs when a student enters the college environment.

Schlossberg (1989) described mattering as the sense of being significant or important to somebody else. Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) proposed four dimensions of mattering: attention, the feeling of being noticed; importance, the perception that someone else cares; ego-extension, the perception that others "will be proud of our accomplishments and saddened by our failures" (Schlossberg, 1989, p. 13), and dependence, the feeling of being needed (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981; Schlossberg, 1989). Schlossberg later suggested a fifth dimension: appreciation, "the feeling that [one's] efforts are appreciated" (Schlossberg, 1989, p. 13). To date, no research has been done on how openly gay male undergraduate college students at Jesuit Catholic universities experience marginality and mattering, which provided further evidence for the necessity of this study.

## Literature Review Summary

For many openly gay male undergraduate college students, college provides the first opportunity to develop a positive gay identity while exploring and discerning questions of religion and spirituality. Literature related to biblical interpretation, Catholic doctrine, campus

climate, lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity development theory, intersectionality theory, and the role of religion and spirituality was examined in order to provide the context needed to better understand the lived experiences of openly gay male undergraduate college students at a Jesuit Catholic university.

What is known about the openly gay male undergraduate student experience at Jesuit Catholic institutions is that despite the emergence of gay-affirming policies and practices on many campuses, too many gay students still experience anti-gay attitudes on their campuses. A common theme on Jesuit Catholic campuses is the feeling among faculty and staff that a Catholic identity is a barrier to creating supportive and affirming practices, causing a deep cultural divide between and within many Catholic institutions and highlighting a challenging contradiction. The paucity of research dedicated to understanding the lived experiences of openly gay male undergraduate students at Jesuit Catholic institutions evidenced the need for this study.

# CHAPTER 3: METHOD

This chapter describes the rationale for the research design that was used in this study. The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to understand how male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay experience marginality and mattering at a Jesuit Catholic university. This study was conducted using a constructivist paradigm and a qualitative design. The constructivist paradigm asserts that individuals make meaning of their own relative experiences, and that meaning is dependent upon the context within which their experiences take place (Crotty, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; 2013). Constructivism proposes that there is no singular reality that defines human experience but rather that there are multiple realities. Knowledge is therefore co-constructed between the participant and researcher (Crotty, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). A constructivist paradigm is appropriate for a study in which participants are asked to make meaning of their experiences through a structured interaction with a researcher.

Qualitative methods are well-suited for a study using a constructivist paradigm (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2012) noted that qualitative inquiry is appropriate when "the literature might yield little information about the phenomenon of study, and you need to learn more from participants through exploration" (p. 16). A qualitative approach was therefore used for this study.

## Methodology

The design for this qualitative study was phenomenology. Phenomenology is a qualitative approach that studies the essence of human experience with a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2005) noted that phenomenology as a method of inquiry is rooted in the philosophical work of German mathematician Edmund Husserl, who

proposed that “experience should be examined in the way it occurs, and in its own terms” (p. 12). Thus, a phenomenological study is “one that focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience” (Patton, 1990, p. 107).

This study specifically utilized a phenomenological approach called interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Interpretative phenomenological analysis is a specific iteration of the phenomenological approach rooted in hermeneutics. IPA is “committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences” (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005, p. 1). IPA acknowledges the interpretive role of the researcher in the meaning-making process, recognizing that “access to experience is always dependent upon what participants tell us about that experience and that the researcher then needs to interpret that account from the participant in order to understand their experience” (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005, p. 3). Using Schlossberg’s (1984) theory of marginality and mattering as the theoretical framework for this study, I analyzed how participants ascribed meaning to their lived experiences as gay men on a Jesuit Catholic campus. IPA further enabled me to focus on participants’ unique experiences as male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay at a Jesuit Catholic university while acknowledging the role I assumed in interpreting and presenting the essence of those experiences.

**Research Site**

This study included male undergraduate participants who identified as openly gay and attended a Jesuit Catholic university. There were 28 Jesuit Catholic colleges and universities in the United States as of this writing (Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, 2014). According to the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (2014), the 28 Jesuit Catholic colleges and universities are located across 18 states and the District of Columbia and “range

from major research universities to comprehensive universities, from smaller colleges and universities that combine the liberal arts and professional studies to one strictly liberal arts college" (para. 1). One Jesuit Catholic university located in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States served as the research site and will be referred to throughout the study as "Pacific Northwest University."

**Pacific Northwest University.** Pacific Northwest University is a mid-sized, urban, Jesuit Catholic university in the Northwestern United States with an approximate total enrollment of 7,400 students. The institution includes sexual orientation and gender identity in its non-discrimination and harassment policies as well as its equal opportunity employment statement. Additionally, the institution has an LGBTQ student group and a queer men's discussion group. The institution's Office of Multicultural Affairs has a dedicated drop-in space for LGBTQ students; a half-time graduate assistant position dedicated to working with the LGBTQ population on campus, and; lists several campus and community resources for the LGBTQ community on its Office of Multicultural Affairs website.

**Research Participants**

Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2005) noted: "Because IPA is an idiographic approach, concerned with understanding particular phenomena in particular contexts, IPA studies are conducted on small sample sizes" (p. 49). Purposeful sampling strategies were used to identify 14 participants at Pacific Northwest University. Patton (1990) characterized purposeful sampling as the selection of rich cases, which are "those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (p. 169). The specific purposeful sampling strategies that were used to identify the participants were homogenous sampling and snowball sampling. Creswell (2012) noted that in homogenous sampling "the

researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics" (p. 208). Each participant was selected based on his identification as a male undergraduate student who identified as openly gay. Because the purpose of this study was to examine the on-campus experiences of openly gay male undergraduate students at a Jesuit Catholic institution, the extent to which a participant identified as "out" or "openly gay" had to include disclosure of his gay identity to any faculty, staff, and/or students in the campus community. The extent to which each participant was out was determined via a question on an intake survey. In order to recruit participants, I sent a referral letter via email (Appendix A) to staff members in the Division of Student Development at Pacific Northwest University who support LGBTQ students as part of their professional responsibilities. The contact information for these gatekeepers was freely available on the university's website. At Pacific Northwest University the contacts were the Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the Resident Directors in the Housing department, the Director of Campus Ministry, and the Director of the Counseling Center. The recruitment letter to each gatekeeper included information about the study and the time commitment involved. Gatekeepers were asked to forward the referral letter to potential participants, who were then asked to contact me for more information about the study.

Once the participants were identified I contacted each of them with a recruitment letter via email (Appendix B). The recruitment letter described the purpose of the study, provided an overview of what types of questions were to be asked in the interview, requested that participants forward my recruitment letter to other potential participants they may know, and provided an informed consent form (Appendix C) with all of the information regarding the study and the participant's rights and confidentiality information. Participants were asked to return their

completed consent forms via email and were notified that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were compensated with a $10.00 Amazon gift card for their participation, which was sent to each of them via email at the end of their interviews.

**Data Collection**

Following the receipt of participants' informed consent forms, the first data were collected via an intake survey (Appendix D), which included questions about participant demographics (e.g. gender identity, sexual orientation, degree of outness, religion, race, ethnicity, class year, and major). The intake survey also provided an opportunity for each participant to select a pseudonym, which was used throughout the study to protect confidentiality. Participants were then contacted to schedule a single 60-90 minute semi-structured interview using a 13-question interview protocol (Appendix E). Interviews were conducted in-person at a location that was convenient and comfortable for each participant. I then conducted a single, 60-90 minute, semi-structured interview with each participant, which was audio recorded using a digital recording device. In addition to audio recording, I took field notes during each interview to record my observations and to note any follow up questions.

Semi-structured interviews were used to allow me an opportunity to ask follow up questions and to enable participants to speak freely. Barriball and While (1994) noted that semi-structured interviews are "well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers" (p. 330). Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2005) pointed out that semi-structured interviews allow for the collection of the "rich data" required for an IPA study (p. 56), while reinforcing the importance of participants being able to "tell their own stories, in their own words" (p. 57). A semi-structured interview protocol allowed participants to

authentically discuss their experiences as male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay at a Jesuit Catholic university while also allowing them to freely discuss any experiences outside of college that they believed to have influenced their experiences on-campus. Data that could potentially identify a participant or the research site were omitted from the final manuscript.

**Data Analysis**

Once interviews were completed, the audio recordings were transcribed and checked for errors. Transcripts were emailed to participants with an invitation for them to add to, clarify, or redact any statements they made. Participants were given 7 days to respond to this invitation; one participant responded with additional comments. Data were then analyzed using the IPA data analysis framework described by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2005). While the steps in IPA are intended to be flexible, inductive, and iterative (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2005), the process included six specific steps that were followed in order to analyze the data in this study: step one was a close reading and re-reading of the transcripts, step two involved the initial data reduction by noting "anything of interest" (p. 83) in the participants' accounts; step three identified an initial list of within-case emergent themes; step four identified connections between within-case emergent themes; step five repeated steps one through four for each case, and; step six identified cross-case superordinate themes by identifying emergent theme patterns and recurrences across cases that captured the essence of participants' lived experiences with the phenomenon. Each of the six steps involved in an IPA study are described in greater detail below.

**Step one: Close reading of the transcripts.** Following the six step data analysis framework described by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2005), I first read each transcript twice

while listening to the audio recordings and reviewing any field notes that I wrote during each interview in order to immerse myself in the data. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2005) suggested that IPA researchers should initially take note of the most memorable parts of each interview and "bracket them off for a while" (p. 82) in order to not miss any subtle information the participant may have shared that might otherwise have been overshadowed by the interviewer's initial reactions. According to Tufford and Newman (2010), bracketing is a "method used in qualitative research to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of preconceptions that may taint the research process" (p. 80).

**Step two: Initial reduction and notation.** The second step involved highlighting noteworthy passages and writing exploratory notes, questions, and reflections on the hard copies to start the data reduction process. The initial notes included descriptive comments such as key words, phrases, and events; linguistic comments, such as metaphors, and; conceptual comments, in which I reflected on my interpretation of the participants' statements in order to identify emergent themes (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2005). Next, I imported each transcript into NVivo and used the software to further identify word and phrase repetitions within each interview. In addition to using NVivo to organize the data, I also transferred the highlighted passages and exploratory comments to an Excel workbook, which helped me to visualize and further categorize the data in advance of the third step in the data analysis process.

**Step three: Identifying emergent themes.** Next, I identified a list of preliminary emergent themes within each case by analyzing the highlighted passages and exploratory notes on each transcript. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2005) noted that the primary purpose of this step is to "produce a concise and pithy statement of what was important in the various comments attached to a piece of transcript" (p. 92). Emergent themes were identified by looking for the

"interrelationships, connections, and patterns" (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2005, p. 91) in the exploratory notes within each case.

**Step four: Identifying within-case emergent theme connections.** Once the initial list of emergent themes was compiled for each case, I sorted the corresponding transcript extracts chronologically alongside the preliminary emergent theme labels and looked for connections between the initial within-case emergent themes. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2005) described this step as "looking for a means of drawing together the emergent themes and producing a structure which allows you to point to all the most interesting and important aspects of your participant's account" (p. 96). In order to identify connections between the initial within-case emergent themes, I used two strategies described by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2005): abstraction and numeration. Abstraction is "putting like with like and developing a new name for the cluster" (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2005, p. 96); numeration is "the frequency with which emergent themes appear throughout the transcript" (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2005, p. 98). Through this process I was able to identify emergent themes that appeared to be similar, related, or of "relative importance" (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2005, p. 98) to the participants and clustered them together. I then renamed the cluster with a final within-case emergent theme label.

**Step five: Repeating steps one through four for each case.** After developing a final list of within-case emergent theme labels for each case, I repeated steps one through four for each of the remaining cases before moving on to step six, in which cases were analyzed for patterns and recurrences across cases.

**Step six: Identifying patterns and recurrences across cases.** After repeating the process of reading the transcripts, conducting initial notation, identifying an initial list of

emergent themes, and identifying connections between emergent themes, the final step was to identify emergent theme patterns and recurrences across cases that would result in a final list of cross-case superordinate themes. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2005) noted that "there is no rule for what counts as recurrence" (p. 107) and that the researcher must determine what constitutes a cross-case superordinate theme. After compiling all of the within-case emergent themes, I compared cases to identify patterns and recurrences across cases. Within-case emergent themes that were observed in at least 75% cases (11 out of 14) were identified as cross-case superordinate themes. Once the cross-case superordinate themes were identified, they were clustered by putting like themes together into groups of sub-themes and were then given a main theme label that described each cluster. The cross-case themes and sub-themes that emerged as a result of this final step were presented and discussed in chapters four and five.

## Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the standard by which the quality, replicability, and rigor of qualitative research is determined. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria through which researchers can assess trustworthiness in a qualitative study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (p. 301).

**Credibility.** Credibility refers to the extent to which the design of the study engenders results that accurately describe the phenomenon, particularly from the perspectives of the participants (Brown, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 1986; Shenton, 2004). Credibility was established through peer debriefing with selected colleagues in student affairs in order to discuss my initial reactions and to solicit their feedback following each interview. No personally identifiable information about participants or research sites was shared during the peer debriefing process. I also conducted member checks with participants by

checking in with them throughout the interviews about their interpretations of the questions, reflecting back what I heard them say, asking follow up questions, and asking them to review their interview transcripts for any errors, additions, or omissions.

**Transferability.** Transferability refers to the extent to which the researcher provides sufficient information to enable others to evaluate whether the research is applicable in other contexts (Brown, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 1986; Shenton, 2004). Transferability was established through thick description of the research site and participants as well as through numerous quotes to support the conclusions that were described in the results section.

**Dependability and confirmability.** Dependability refers to the extent to which consistency and stability in the research process and methods have been demonstrated. Confirmability refers to the extent to which the data represents the experiences of the participants rather than those of the researcher (Brown, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 1986; Shenton, 2004). Dependability was established by a thorough description of the methods; confirmability was established by the audit trail I kept that tracked the entire research process. The audit trail included raw data, field notes, reflexive notes, intake forms, and process notes stored by the researcher on hard copy, Excel, and NVivo.

**Authenticity**

A qualitative study can also be evaluated by examining its authenticity, which consists of five criteria: fairness (presenting a complete and balanced view that is informed through negotiation with participants), ontological authenticity (being open about the purpose of the study and sharing emergent themes with participants through reflection), educative authenticity (expanding the researcher's and participants' understanding of the phenomenon), catalytic

authenticity (effecting change as a result of the study), and tactical authenticity (empowering participants to take action as a result of participation in the study) (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 1986).

In the present study, I emphasized fairness, ontological authenticity, and educative authenticity. Fairness was achieved by following an informed consent procedure with each participant, engaging in member checking at the end of each interview, and by soliciting participants' feedback on their interview transcripts. I pursued ontological authenticity by being open and transparent about the purpose of the study with participants and by engaging in dialectical conversations about emergent themes to ensure that the findings accurately reflected participants' experiences with the phenomenon. Finally, I focused on educative authenticity by engaging in dialogue with participants to help them make sense of their experiences as male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay at a Jesuit Catholic university.

## Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the primary data collection instrument and data analyst in an IPA study (Creswell, 2012; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2005). As a co-constructor of meaning with participants, it is important for me to disclose any preconceived personal experiences and biases I will bring to the study. Willis (2007) argued that qualitative researchers must recognize "biases and values to the best of your ability and acknowledge them" (p. 210). Having been an out gay male higher education administrator for the past ten years has given me context through which I was able to access and build rapport with participants in the study. While I have not had a personal experience of being a male undergraduate student who is openly gay at a Jesuit Catholic university, I have had an opportunity to work with students who do identify as such while working at a Jesuit Catholic university in an administrator role for the past four years. My work

with these students has helped me to have an anecdotal understanding of their experiences that helped me to build rapport and trust with them.

# CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter reports the findings of the study. The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to understand how male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay experience marginality and mattering at a Jesuit Catholic university. Using semi-structured interviews, data were collected from 14 participants who identified as gay male undergraduate students at a Jesuit Catholic university. The 14 participants, who each selected a pseudonym for use in this manuscript, included:

- Aaron, a Junior psychology major who identified as white and a non-denominational Christian;
- Anthony, a Senior string performance major who identified as white and Catholic;
- Brad, a Sophomore music major who identified as white and Agnostic;
- Chris, a Junior computer science major who identified as white and Agnostic;
- Dirk, a Senior international business major who identified as white and had no religious or spiritual affiliation;
- Jake, a Junior political science major who identified as white and Jewish;
- Jordan, a Junior accounting major who identified as Asian and formerly Catholic;
- Jose, a Sophomore who was undeclared and identified as Latino and Catholic;
- Joseph, a Sophomore physics major who identified as white and had no religious or spiritual affiliation;
- Luke, a Senior economics major who identified as white and as being brought up in a Jewish family;
- Nik, a Senior environmental studies major who identified as Latino and as being raised Catholic;

- Pierre, a Sophomore strategic communications major originally from Haiti who identified as Black and non-denominational Christian;
- Renly, a Senior ultrasound major who identified as Asian and Christian/Shinto, and;
- Rudy, a Junior sports and exercise science major who identified as white and formerly Catholic.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis methods were used to identify ten cross-case super-ordinate themes. Once identified, the ten cross-case super-ordinate themes were clustered into the following three main theme categories: identity, campus climate, and the Church and institution. The theme *identity* had three sub-themes: lack of gay identity salience, coming out as a non-event, and intersections of identity. Next, the theme *campus climate* had four sub-themes: attitudes towards gay men, gay role models and heterosexual allies, resources and programming, and marginalization experiences. Lastly, the theme *the Church and the institution* had three sub-themes: attitudes towards the Catholic Church, canonical subjectivity, and institutional identity incongruence.

Once the three main themes and ten sub-themes were identified, I returned to the original text of the transcripts to organize participants' responses by theme and to choose quotations that best reflected each theme and the essence of participants' experiences. The pseudonyms that participants chose during their interviews were used to report the findings.

**Theme: Identity**

The first main theme that emerged, *identity,* was comprised of three sub-themes: lack of gay identity salience, coming out as a non-event, and intersections of identity. In their responses, participants reported that, although important, sexual orientation was thought of as their least salient identity. Many participants reflected during our post-interview debriefs that their

interviews were the first time they had thought out loud about how their identities impacted their experiences as college students. Participants attributed this lack of saliency to their perceptions of a positive campus climate, a perception of a large population of out gay students on-campus, having almost universally been out of the closet either prior to or just upon arrival to campus, and an awareness of other, more salient identities that intersected with their gay identities.

**Sub-theme: Lack of Gay Identity Salience**

Most participants reported that sexual orientation was their least salient identity. They attributed a lack of salience of their gay identities to their perceptions of a positive campus climate, recognition of their privileged identities, and having been out of the closet prior to arriving on-campus. Several participants reported that they rarely thought about being gay during their day-to-day lives and, as Dirk reported, when his identity has come up with other students, faculty, or staff at the university, "People don't make that big of a deal of it here…You could tell people, 'Oh, I'm gay', and people would be like, 'That's cool. I don't know what you want me to do with that information'". Luke pointed out that gay students are likely to think more about other aspects of identity than sexual orientation: "I would say with most people, it comes second or third to whatever they are otherwise. I don't know if that makes sense but I think that's what I love about [Pacific Northwest University], that it's not the first thing." From Rudy's perspective, the university's climate helped him come "to terms with the okay-ness of my sexual orientation. It could have been disastrously combative at other universities." He added:

> It's something I've come to accept because I feel like I have a lot of privileges in other categories of my life. One, to limit myself to only the sexual orientation category while I spend the majority of my life moving through the world thinking of that box that I put

> myself in, I do have to step out and look at all of my privilege and recognizing that I could have it a whole lot worse.

For Jake, the large number of out gay male students at the university contributed to a lack of saliency because, to him, a gay identity is seen as a privileged identity on-campus:

> Having such a large community really helps because, I don't think we're a majority, but we have some voice in deciding privilege and what's privileged and what's marginalized in the sense that there's just so many of us that it would be hard to marginalize the third of campus or whatever we are.

**Sub-theme: Coming Out as a Non-Event**

With the exception of one participant who came out during his senior year of college, all of the participants had come out prior to coming to college or immediately upon arrival, which made their coming out experiences in college feel like non-events. As Joseph reported, "It was never really an option for me to not be out. I came out when I was a freshman in high school. It would have been weird for me to not." Similarly, Jake was out to his friends and family in high school and when he came to college he quickly assessed that the university was a safe place in which he could immediately come out to his peers:

> The first thing I noticed was that there were a lot of out people already…it's a very queer-friendly neighborhood, so I felt safe in the physical environment. Also, just a lot of the Orientation Advisors and the folks who were introducing me to the [Pacific Northwest University] experience were visibly out or gay or affirming and supportive so just the culture of my fellow students was the thing that most enabled me to feel comfortable being an out person…I never even questioned if I would be out when I came

> to college just because I was already out in high school, and so it was easy, for me at least.

Luke pointed out that the disclosure of his sexual orientation to others on-campus was typically met with ambivalence: "It was more that if people asked I was like, yeah, but it wasn't like I advertised it or stuff like that. I think it's just easier to meld in and you get the feeling that nobody really cares." Jordan added that he has never felt a need to conceal his identity on-campus:

> I don't tell everybody but I just assume it's known and if it's not known then they could ask me and I'll be honest…Yeah, I don't try to hide it but I don't try to tell the world because I feel being gay is a small portion of my identity. It is part of my identity but not a large portion.

For Pierre, the times when he felt the need to explicitly disclose his gay identity to others on-campus were generally positive experiences: "It just was said a few times and then heard and then understood, but it was never met with hostility. It was actually…a lot of crazy and overjoyed celebration."

**Sub-Theme: Intersections of Identity**

Many participants were highly aware of the various identities they held and the socially constructed marginalization and privileges within them. During the interviews, participants reflected upon the meaning of race, religion, and gender and how those identities intersect with their gay identities. Jake, a white Jewish student, observed that while his experiences on-campus as a white gay man have been one of inclusion it "might be different for gay men of color." Brad noted his awareness of his gender identity and expression as it relates to his perception of being gay: "Being strong, being masculine, super masculine, is not necessarily associated with being

gay. At least for me." Jordan added, "Even within the queer community…I have much more privilege than let's say a trans individual." Pierre reflected on how the religion of his upbringing impacted how he thinks about the intersections of his identities:

> Now I find it very confusing and challenging with my sexuality because guilt is still around it. There's a lot of shame, a lot of concern surrounding my blackness, my gayness, and then my maleness. That's a whole mess in its own.

For most participants, the lack of salience they experienced with their sexual orientation identities was counterbalanced by an awareness of the intersections of their identities and how those intersections impacted their experiences on-campus, particularly intersections of sexual orientation and race, and sexual orientation and religion.

*Sexual orientation and race.* Many of the participants who identified as students of color noted that because sexual orientation is an invisible identity, their racial identities were most salient in their daily lives. For Renly, an Asian-American student from Hawaii, race was the determining factor in his experiences with marginalization on-campus:

> I wouldn't say that my experience with being marginalized was from being gay but more of being Asian or minority…Just by perceiving or by appearances you can't really tell a person's sexuality in most cases. It was more about being a minority and being oriental and specifically people confusing Chinese, Japanese, Korean people [and] doing stereotypical Asian jokes and stuff.

Pierre, a black student originally from Haiti, reflected on how his racial identity prevented him from feeling like he fit in with the gay community on-campus: "In the gay community, it was a whole new experience of, 'you're not from this part of the country. You're very rough around the edges, and you're black. You're not exactly what we imagined." He added:

> When you're a minority, there is just a permanent aspect, a permanent part of your plate that is taken up by just existing. When you encounter who's various privileges and accesses to life just go around you and you feel like, 'Okay, their plates are empty. They can just hop on, hop off.' They didn't have to bear this weight. It's like walking to an interview, I will always wear my blackness no matter what I do, how I dress, how I smell, it is always going to be a thing.

Jordan, an Asian-American student, reflected on his concerns about the university's recent efforts to combine its Multicultural Affairs department, which serves students of color and LGBTQ students, with its International Student Services offices. Jordan envisioned potentially negative impacts for gay international students from the merger:

> Here you're taking two very marginalized identities and you're mashing it together. Let's say you're an international student and you know you're gay but you can't be out because let's say, family reasons and what not, and you go to this one space and, even thinking in the past as a closeted person, if I were ever slightly affiliated with a gay club or gay organization, I would run the opposite direction.

For participants who identified as students of color, race and its interaction with sexual orientation was a stronger influence on daily experiences on-campus than sexual orientation on its own, even within their interactions with other gay men on-campus. Pierre reflected on his dating experiences with white gay men:

> It's this double-whammy…you're only desired because someone sees you on Grindr or at a party and they [say], 'Oh, you're black. Okay, I'm feeling up to the challenge of taking your rumored super large member or your lips or your hands.' I was just, 'Stop, these are just parts that I…I just have these the same way you have yours.

*Sexual orientation and religion.* Participants' experiences with religion varied greatly, with many stating they were either agnostic or had no religious affiliation, while others had been raised with one religion and either abandoned their faith or assumed a new religion in adulthood. Some of the participants who changed or abandoned the faith of their childhoods did so because they discovered a contradiction between their sexual orientation and religious identities. For those participants who identified as Catholic or formerly Catholic, religion was a source of contradiction and confusion when attempting to reconcile faith and sexual orientation. Jose reflected that as a child he "felt like going to church was a chore and I hated it." As an adult, Jose said that although he still identifies as Catholic, his gay identity has made him think critically about whether the religion of his childhood was still a good fit:

> I don't like the concepts they're trying to preach except certain things. It's mostly been my history…that I always felt that I've been forced to go instead of it's my choice. I do still identify with being Roman Catholic. I feel like I do follow some beliefs, I guess I want to say, but very loosely though.

Anthony's experience was unique among all of the participants. Anthony decided to become Catholic after coming out and after coming to college, and his commitment to his faith was so profound that after graduation he plans to become a Jesuit priest. He reflected: "This past winter break, I was like, 'Oh yeah, I'm totally going to become a Jesuit.' It wasn't like an epiphany moment. It wasn't anything big. It was just obvious." When Anthony spoke about his gay identity and his Jesuit Catholic identity, he admitted that he feels some inherent tension between how the Church regards homosexual acts versus homosexual identity:

> In reconciling…sexuality with becoming Jesuit, it's very interesting because I've always heard that argument…the way to not be sinful as someone who is a homosexual [is] by,

> it's like the act of doing sexual things that is sinful and not being homosexual, and so I've always heard that. It's not part of my reason for becoming Jesuit at all, but it's kind of like that thing that comes with it…Celibacy is used as a way to avoid sin, which I think is just literally awful.

When asked how he makes sense of the intersection of his gay and Jesuit Catholic identities given his understanding of biblical teaching surrounding homosexuality, Anthony said that to him they are one in the same:

> The Jesuits are kind of defined by their actions and they promote that. Action is an inherent thing to people. You can't just be a person and not have action, and so the action of doing sexual things that are gay is just as inherent as being gay. You can't disassociate the things. That's definitely how I make sense of it.

Catholic and formerly Catholic participants reported that they make sense of the seemingly contradictory interaction between their sexual orientation and religion by recalling the teachings of the Church they learned growing up. Jose recalled the time when his mother took him to see a Catholic priest just after he came out:

> He was basically telling me everything that the church believes according to his perspective. What he was telling me is that it's okay to be gay but you can't act on it though. He was like, 'If you're gay, you were born that way and that's fine but we still don't believe that you should be acting on those feelings,' and that marriage is only for a man and a woman.

For some Catholic participants, accepting celibacy as the only way to reconcile their contradictory identities has caused them to consider abandoning their Catholic faith altogether. Jose, who still identified as Catholic at the time of the study, realized:

The thing is, I'm not down for the structured religion my parents want me to be down for, you know. I don't know if that means church in general or if it's just their church. I know that there are churches that are beginning to accept gayness as a whole and not just half of it."

## Theme: Campus Climate

The second main theme that emerged, *campus climate*, is comprised of four sub-themes: attitudes towards gay men; gay role models and heterosexual allies; resources and programming, and marginalization experiences. Participants overwhelmingly described their perceptions of the climate on-campus for gay male undergraduate students as accepting, inclusive, and affirming. They attributed the positive campus climate to a number of factors, including the number of openly gay faculty and staff on-campus, the visibility and advocacy of heterosexual allies, and the availability of resources, events, and programming. Paradoxically, most participants also described instances in which they had experienced marginalization on-campus despite describing their overall college experiences as generally positive.

### Sub-Theme: Attitudes Towards Gay Men

Participants overwhelmingly described student, staff, and faculty attitudes towards gay men as accepting, inclusive, and affirming, which led to the perception of a positive campus climate. Aaron pointed out that he has "never felt called out or singled out for being a gay student…I think there's some significant, active acceptance around campus and especially representation." While some participants felt that students, faculty, and staff on-campus felt ambivalence towards the presence of gay students on-campus, most participants felt that attitudes towards gay men were similar to Aaron's notion of "active acceptance." Anthony and Pierre both noted that they also experienced positivity from the Jesuits they had interacted with on-campus. Pierre observed: "The Jesuits get this right. They teach you how to think and feel in

duality and in fluency with your handling [of] a situation." Chris echoed this sentiment with his belief that attitudes towards gay men were positive because of, rather than in spite of, the university's Jesuit Catholic mission:

> The mentality of the school's mission, of having a devotion for justice, I feel like that is a big driving force…we have such a passion for social justice in the grand scheme of sexuality, race, all those different areas. Sexuality just kind of falls into there, and so because the institution's so devoted to that, I feel like it's a very powerful thing.

Luke described student attitudes towards gay men as ambivalent, but noted how his perception of students' ambivalence eased his ability to be himself on-campus: "They're just like, 'Okay, big deal.' I don't know if that pulls from the diversity of where our students come from but yeah, it was just a lot easier to be okay with it and just be normal."

Renly and Rudy both pointed out that the city in which the university is located has a reputation of being a politically liberal city, which they believe contributes to the positive attitudes towards gay men they have experienced on-campus. Rudy reflected on the role the city played in his college choice process: "Just the idea of being in [this city], which is a very liberal city as well as a place that kind of seems to be on the forefront, like the frontier of social justice and equality." Rudy discovered, however, that although he generally feels that attitudes towards gay men on-campus are positive, he feels that there are limitations: "I feel like they try to be an inclusive as possible, but heteronormativity, especially sexual practices, is very much the norm."

**Sub-Theme: Gay Role Models and Heterosexual Allies**

One of the consistently positive components of campus climate that participants discussed was the presence of a large number of openly gay faculty and staff role models on-campus and the sense that heterosexual faculty and staff were generally allies to the gay

community. Participants reported that having gay role models on-campus contributed positively to their perception of an inclusive campus climate. Aaron, speaking about the impact of openly gay male faculty and staff on campus, said: "I think that high representation has been really important and valuable to me." Anthony added that the presence of out gay faculty and staff had a normalizing effect for him: "These people are successful and happy and they're just normal people. We're all just normal people." For Chris, having an out gay male faculty member in his academic program was a meaningful experience but he wished that the professor would be more vocal about his sexuality in order to encourage more gay faculty to come out:

> I feel like the power of being a married, out gay professor at this school could be a very powerful tool. It's a powerful thing being a student at a Jesuit institution when you're an out gay male, but being a professor at one, actually hired by the institution, that's on a whole 'nother field. I feel like having him be more open about that would be a very positive thing for this institution, just because I also know there are other gay professors at this school, but none of them are really huge voices in the gay community.

For Jake, the visibility of out gay male faculty and staff helped him to feel understood: "I feel like they understand me. They understand my perspective more, and I feel like there's another layer of support that wouldn't be there if there weren't many openly gay faculty and staff."

When reflecting upon support from faculty and staff, participants generally reported that they perceived heterosexual faculty and staff as allies. Chris pointed out: "Some faculty are very adamant about being allies." Jose faced many obstacles during the academic year and found strong support from one faculty member who was aware of his sexuality and issues in his personal life and expressed concern for his wellbeing:

> There is this one teacher who knew of my situation and I saw her. I was crossing the street a little bit off-campus. I saw her and I hadn't seen her since first quarter. This was maybe a month ago, and she gave me a hug and asked me how are things. I was like, 'Things are good.' She was like, 'How are things really? Be honest.' Then I told her everything, what's going on. That was one moment, probably the only moment that sticks out in the head where I'm like 'Wow, this professor actually cares'.

Whether from openly gay male faculty and staff or from heterosexual allies, participants reported that their experiences were strongly influenced by university employees. Joseph observed: "I would say that for me, my general sense of campus climate has been more impacted by the people who work for the university than by other students."

**Sub-Theme: Resources and Programming**

Participants named several resources and programs on-campus that contributed to their perceptions of a positive campus climate. Participants mentioned the health center, multicultural affairs office, dean of students' office, residence life, counseling, and campus ministry as offices in which they would seek support. Participants also discussed how having clubs, events, and programs on-campus specifically geared towards the inclusion and support of gay students helped them to feel safe on-campus. One campus program that was frequently mentioned by participants as a positive event was the annual drag show that is sponsored by a student-led club on-campus. Jake pointed out that the drag show, one of the university's largest annual events, has drawn criticism from outside organizations such as the Cardinal Newman Society, a national organization which advocates for conservative Catholic values. Despite objections from conservative Catholics, the university continues to support the drag show each year. Jordan recalled the drag show as his most memorable experience at the university related to his

sexuality: "The idea and philosophy and the concept behind [a] Jesuit university promoting this drag show and having a large portion of the school show up to the drag show was quite impressive." Jake pointed out that although the university allows the drag show to happen each year, it was only recently that a university photographer came to capture the event on film:

> That's because they emailed them a billion times saying this is the largest student-run event, and you should really send someone. I feel like I'm supported at this Jesuit Catholic institution, but at the same time I feel like the institution is closeting me and hiding me from the outside world because they're afraid that if they're openly transparent about the support they offer that they're going to get into trouble with the Cardinal Newman Society with angry Catholics who are unaffiliated or who went to [this university] 55 years ago.

Despite the university's hesitation to publicize the event, Joseph found that the drag show provided a safe space in which he was able to further explore his identity:

> I think the drag show was really awesome. I went to the drag show last year in drag for my first time ever. I mean, my legs…everything from this part of my body down looked great. I wore the best shoes; I borrowed my friend's dress. It was gorgeous.

In addition to highly visible programs and events like the annual drag show, participants discussed several other resources and programs on-campus that helped them to feel included and safe. Aaron talked about the significant support he has found through programs in campus ministry: "Some of the most surprising and important ones have been support from within campus ministry from where I have interacted with them, from the intersections [of identity] dialogue group to the new student retreat and the search retreat." Joseph pointed out that the university "does a lot of things right in terms of making sure there are inclusive spaces for LGBT

students on-campus." Jordan recalled having a very positive experience in the student health center:

> Going to get STD tested, the nurse practitioner was very well knowledgeable, very well understanding on sensitive subjects. I mean, talking about STDs between gay males is quite different than heterosexual male or heterosexual relationships in general. She was very knowledgeable. She was very friendly, wasn't awkward. She didn't have any judgments against it and she just had a plethora of resources that I was able to use and really resonate with.

Participants also pointed out how some posters and marketing for various offices or programs that were inclusive of gay men helped them to feel safe on-campus. Renly mentioned how he noticed that posters advertising online sexual misconduct training had two men on it and thought: "Oh that's nice, they're trying to be more diverse in their advertisement. It's nice to see the gay propaganda everywhere." Joseph recalled walking past the chapel on-campus and seeing a poster proclaiming LGBT inclusion: "One of my first experiences at [the university] was walking past the chapel and there was a sign that they have a special liturgy for LGBT students: 'You belong here, you're welcome.' So cute. That was cool."

**Sub-Theme: Marginalization Experiences**

Despite describing the climate for gay male undergraduate students as generally positive at the university, participants also recalled experiencing marginalization that varied by source and intensity. Some participants attributed their experiences with marginalization to simply their existence as gay men, an identity that has been historically marginalized in the United States. Other participants wondered if their experiences with marginalization were a result of the university's Jesuit Catholic ethos, while others felt that the university's religious affiliation

positively impacted campus climate. No participants reported persistent, pervasive, violent, or severe harassment or bias experiences at the university. Rather, marginalization experiences were generally described as covert, such as jokes, heteronormativity in programs and classes, and social exclusion at the fitness center. For instance, Aaron mentioned that he felt that his gay identity was sometimes "poked fun at" while Pierre felt that the message he received from the university about his sexual orientation identity was "let's fix you." Several participants described the sense that the university merely tolerated the presence of gay students because of the university's proximity to a historically gay neighborhood, while another participant felt that the university only made resources available for gay men in order to retain them for revenue purposes rather than because of its professed commitment to social justice.

Several participants who had earlier described feeling included and safe because of the availability of resources at the university also contradictorily pointed out their perception of a lack of resources for gay men, particularly resources related to sexual wellness and sexual assault. Joseph recalled feeling excluded during a required sexual misconduct training he attended during orientation:

> Last year I was a freshman. You had to go to a big presentation on sexual assault during Welcome Week. I actually ended up leaving. It was one of the worst days of my life. I was so excited to come to [the university]. There were a lot of reasons that this presentation was bad; the worst for me is that it was 100% about straight people…Not only did they not include any type of non-heterosexual relationship in that dialogue, but to me it felt like sexual violence in the queer community was actively being dismissed as not a problem.

Joseph also added that he attended a study abroad training where a video about sexual violence was shown: "All of them were straight couples, which is interesting because sexual assault is a huge problem, especially if you're going abroad and in an unfamiliar place."

Aaron said that he felt "disappointed in the resources or education of others" and thought that training for faculty and staff around sexual orientation and coming out was insufficient:

> When you're a gay student who's coming out for the first time to people or family or whatnot, that can be really stressful, but it's not really recognized by professors or staff or anything as something that's excusable in terms of due dates and academic progress and whatnot.

Jake, who had mostly reported his experience on-campus at being one of safety and inclusivity, recalled heteronormative experiences in the classroom that he brushed off as "the world we live in". He recalled:

> There are times when I just like, 'Okay, that professor was just so fucking heteronormative' and, yeah, I'm not going to have a wife. And I know your example on the board involves a man and a wife and two children, but that's not what my family is going to look like, and it's not what my family currently looks like.

Participants generally felt safe in all physical locations on-campus with the exception of the fitness center. Most participants reported that they felt socially excluded from the fitness center because they perceived the atmosphere as hyper-masculine or hostile. In Brad's experience, "It's just overwhelming to see so much masculinity when I'm not necessarily in that same mindset." Even Rudy, who works at the fitness center and teaches fitness classes, said that although his employment at the gym has helped to ease his anxiety he still has "a shield up a little bit".

When it came to the religiously affiliated spaces on-campus such as the chapel, campus ministry office, or prayer spaces, participants either did not utilize them because of a lack of interest or affiliation, or they felt safe when doing so. Participants who attended mass or other activities in the campus chapel generally felt safe and welcomed there, with one noteworthy exception. Joseph, who perceived campus attitudes towards gay men as generally positive, noted that he felt marginalized by the university's refusal to allow same-sex marriages in its chapel:

> In terms of LBGT students and other people on-campus feeling safe and included…I think in general [Pacific Northwest University] creates an environment that makes students and affiliates feel safe. There are distinct places where they really fail. I think I would definitely go so far as to say that not allowing same-sex marriages in the chapel is a failure of the university.

**Theme: The Church and the Institution**

The third main theme that emerged, *The Church and the Institution,* is comprised of three sub-themes: attitudes towards the Catholic Church, canonical subjectivity, and institutional identity incongruence. The university's Jesuit Catholic foundation and its perceived relationship with the Catholic Church played an influential role in participants' experiences, even for those participants who did not identify as Catholic or formerly Catholic. Participants had varied attitudes towards the Catholic Church that were based upon their preconceived opinions about Catholic teachings on homosexuality and their knowledge of the Church's complicated historical relationship with gay men. Many participants stated that although they understood the relationship between the Jesuits and the Catholic Church, they felt that the Jesuits and the Catholic Church were independent entities. Some participants pointed out their perspective that the institution's Jesuit identity existed without any fidelity to core Catholic beliefs. Most

participants felt that the Catholic faith and its biblical roots could be interpreted selectively, which helped them to make sense of the incongruence many of them perceived to exist between the institution's inclusion of gay students and the Catholic Church's historical tradition of viewing same-sex sexual acts as sinful. Most participants perceived the Catholic Church and its teachings regarding homosexuality as marginalizing, but believed that the Jesuits rejected that narrative and actively sought to affect positive change within the Church.

**Sub-Theme: Attitudes Towards the Catholic Church**

While most non-Catholic participants regarded the Jesuit order positively, their experiences and opinions about the Catholic Church and its teachings regarding homosexuality were largely negative. Jake believed that for Catholics, "the general consensus is that gay relationships are bad. I know some Catholics who don't agree with that, but they're in the minority." He added:

> It's funny, I'm not Catholic but I feel like I understand Catholicism so much better than a lot of people around here. Maybe it's what I'm choosing to see, but I see Catholicism as a religion of love and acceptance, but so many people don't.

Pierre experienced Catholic teachings regarding homosexuality as "fire and brimstone" and said that he experienced a "consistent discomfort" on-campus, while Renly felt that "a general understanding is that… the Catholic approach or attitude is that [homosexuality is] not natural." He added, "[E]ven though, I don't think Jesus ever mentioned it in the Bible or Jesus mentioned it at all." For Joseph, the university's Catholic foundation had a direct impact on his daily experiences as a gay male undergraduate student: "A lot of the things that I deal with here that I think are ultimately rooted in Catholic tradition, like, everything on-campus being heteronormative."

For Chis, his negative impressions of the Catholic Church caused him to reject religion and to avoid people who identify as religious: "As soon as somebody would tell me that they were Christian or Catholic, I would have an immediate negative reaction towards that person, just because of those experiences growing up." Chris added that after he came to the university and experienced Jesuit education positively, his attitudes towards the Catholic Church changed: "I came here and I realized there are divisions of Catholicism, such as the Jesuits, that are more accepting and passionate towards justice and the whole person, regardless of different identities that you hold."

Participants who identified as Catholic generally reflected the sentiments of their non-Catholic peers; however, they also expressed hope that the Catholic Church and its approach to homosexuality would evolve over time. Jose reflected that even though the Church itself may evolve its members might reject a change in tradition:

> I feel like it's going towards the right steps. Whether or not everyone is going to agree with where the Church is going, that's different. For example, my grandma, she knows the Church and it's supposed to be a specific way and just because all of a sudden it's 2015 and they're starting to change it or 2020. Let's say in five years they change everything, she [would say] 'That's the Church I grew up with, I'm sticking with those values, that's what I was taught.'

Anthony's understanding of the Catholic Church's attitude towards homosexuality is that the Church separates homosexual acts from a homosexual identity. As someone who is taking steps to become a Jesuit, Anthony has had to reconcile his sexuality with his faith:

> I've always heard the argument…the way to not be sinful as someone who is a homosexual is by, it's like the act of doing sexual things that is sinful and not *being*

> homosexual, and so I've always heard that. It's not part of my reason for becoming a Jesuit at all, but it's kind of like that thing that comes with it and you're like, 'Well, I guess, whatever. Safe either way now. It doesn't really matter.

For Jordan, who is formerly Catholic, the Church "doesn't necessarily accept homosexuality", but added that he is hopeful that the Church will evolve to become more accepting:

> As the new generation comes in, religion has [to] become more modernized and I think they realize that they themselves have become more modern as well because within religion, there are contradictions. Although they understand that they realize that more and more people are realizing those contradictions…so they have to give a little or take a little.

**Sub-Theme: Canonical Subjectivity**

Participants made sense of the perceived incongruence between Catholic orthodoxy and their positive experiences at a Jesuit Catholic university by their acceptance of canonical subjectivity--a practice of selectively interpreting and applying Biblical verses and the laws of the Church--as an approach towards religious practice. As Jordan pointed out: "I think the school resonates with Catholicism in a way that again it picks and chooses what it wants to use as its faith. Similar to an individual who picks and chooses particular parts of the religion." Nik believed that the Jesuits rejected Biblical orthodoxy regarding homosexuality in order to help the Catholic faith survive in the modern world, calling it "survival Catholicism." Aaron felt that canonical subjectivity allowed the university to offer support to gay students in spite of its Catholic ethos:

> I'm aware of the very carefully guarded and nuanced responses that you can receive specific to the Catholic faith…It all comes down to interpretation and how adherent the person is to traditional Catholic and Biblical orthodoxy. I guess it also depends on the person. I know that our Campus Ministry staff is very accepting and supportive.

Nik was raised Catholic and attended a Jesuit high school. He no longer identifies as Catholic but still sees his Jesuit educational background as an important part of his identity. For Nik, his college experience allowed him several opportunities and resources to explore the intersections of religion and sexuality. He pointed out that from his perspective, the university's Catholic identity was less important than its fidelity to its Jesuit mission:

> I'd say 34% of our student body is Catholic, but I don't really see 34% attending church every Sunday. The great thing about [Pacific Northwest University] is, whether you're religious or not, there are so many different offices that you can go to, to either explore your sexuality and it's connection to faith, in general. Or maybe you feel gay and you want to be, you do feel as a sense of religious intuition in you. There's so many different outlets for you to explore that…I personally think you can have that Jesuit mission without the whole religion part of it.

Renly believed that the university's Catholic ethos required it to "uphold this stigma, but it does so very lightly" in its interpretation of Catholic canons and Biblical verses. He added: "People can interpret things very differently. People can interpret the Bible however they want."

For participants who identified as Catholic or formerly Catholic, canonical subjectivity helped them to reconcile what they viewed as a conflict between their sexuality and faith. Aspiring Jesuit Anthony viewed the Church and its teachings as "dynamic" and observed that there are liberal and conservative wings of the Church and that its teachings have evolved over

time: “The church doesn’t teach the same way it did 300 years ago. I don’t know, but there’s always been branches of the Church that teach different things more liberal or more conservative.” For Jose, who has struggled with his faith since coming out, selecting the parts of the religion that align with his sexuality has helped him to make sense of the incongruence between being gay and being Catholic: “I think you can still be a part of something but acknowledge that you don’t agree with every single thing about it.”

**Sub-Theme: Institutional Identity Incongruence**

As Nik reflected: “There are times where I go to class and I forget I go to a Jesuit institution, it’s not until I see a cross,” adding, “I personally think you can have that Jesuit mission without the whole religion part of it.” Like Nik, many participants disassociated the university’s Jesuit identity from its Catholic ethos. Many believed that the university’s lack of fidelity to the literal Biblical and social teachings of the Catholic Church compromised the saliency of the institution’s Catholic ideology; they consistently viewed “Jesuit” and “Catholic” as mutually exclusive, with Jesuit being the equivalent of “not religious”. Aaron observed: “It doesn’t feel like the Catholic stance is really enforced or present,” which to him led to greater inclusion of gay students on campus.

Participants described their perceptions of the relationship between the Jesuits at the university and the Catholic Church at-large as characterized by tension. Dirk felt that the institution would reject the Catholic Church’s teachings on homosexuality if it could: “If they had a choice they would just say whatever, but they still want to be tied to Catholicism and the ideas attached to it.” For Chris, one of the reasons the university rejects the Catholic Church’s teachings on social issues is because of the Jesuit focus on educating the whole person:

> Educating the whole person is one big thing at this school, and I think taking into account the whole person, they include different parts of who we are, not just 'you are a Catholic student,' 'you are an agnostic student,' 'you are an atheist student,' then going from there. It's educating all the parts: what your religion is, what your race is, what your sexuality is. Taking all those factors into account to make you a better you.

Some participants viewed the institution's inclusion and support of gay students and its rejection of an orthodox Catholic identity as evidence of a broader shift in mainstream Catholic thought about homosexuality, particularly with the election of Pope Francis, the first Jesuit Pope. Nevertheless, Anthony was quick to point out that change in a 2,000-year-old institution would not happen overnight:

> Pope Francis is literally the coolest, but the Church has lived through many Popes. One Pope can't singlehandedly change the direction of the Church, and so while he's here, it's probably going to remain to be pretty awesome and hopefully he can inspire people to continue to make it awesome.

Ultimately, participants experienced the incongruence between the Jesuit identity of the institution and the Catholic foundation upon which the Jesuit order was built as positively impacting their experiences as out gay male undergraduate students on campus. As Dirk observed about the Jesuits: "Some of the denominations are very anti-gay, but the Jesuits are like, 'It doesn't matter as much as long as you're leading a moral life still. It doesn't matter what your sexual orientation is.'" Participants viewed the university's lack of fidelity to the Catholic Church as freeing it to be able to create a safe, accepting, and inclusive campus climate for all students. Nevertheless, as Jake pointed out, echoes of Catholicism still impacted his daily experiences on-campus: "I feel like the institution tries to make me valued in every way, but it's

a small little asterisk when it comes to the gay part of me, which is all of me." He added: "It's hard because it puts me in a position of constantly questioning what this institution is."

## Summary of Findings

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to understand how male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay experience marginality and mattering at a Jesuit Catholic university. Fourteen participants at one Jesuit Catholic university were interviewed about their experiences at the university. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis methods, three main themes and ten cross-case sub-themes were identified that described participants' experiences at the university.

Participants discussed the importance of their salient and non-salient identities and how their identities impacted their daily experiences on-campus. Their gay identities were reportedly their least salient, in that they could generally move through their college experiences without frequently encountering overt marginalization on-campus. Nevertheless, participants discussed how the Jesuit Catholic ethos of the university often required that they negotiate the tensions that arise as they navigate campus as gay men or gay men of color.

Participants overwhelmingly described their daily experiences with campus climate as safe, accepting, and inclusive. They felt that attitudes towards gay men on-campus were consistently positive, and that the university offered programs, events, and resources to meet most of the needs of gay men. The most meaningful resources at the university were reported to be visible out gay male staff and faculty members and heterosexual faculty and staff allies. Despite their largely positive experiences, participants nevertheless reported that they experienced marginalization on-campus. A perceived lack of resources related to sexual health and sexual assault, social avoidance at the gym due to feelings of persistent discomfort, and a

need for more extensive training for those faculty and staff who have not had experience working with gay students all contributed to a sense that the university's support and inclusion was limited.

Participants had largely negative attitudes about the Catholic Church and its approach towards homosexuality, but regarded the Jesuit order and the Jesuits on-campus positively. They made sense of the perceived disconnect between the Church and the institution by pointing out their belief that the Jesuit order selectively interprets the Bible and other foundational teachings of the Catholic faith in order to focus on educating the whole person and thus creating a positive campus climate. Nevertheless, participants perceived a lack of saliency of the institution's Catholic identity and generally regarded "Jesuit" and "Catholic" as mutually exclusive concepts.

# CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

> What people have to understand is that religion is far more a matter of identity than it is just a matter of beliefs and practices.
>
> --Reza Aslan

This study set out to understand how male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay experience marginality and mattering at a Jesuit Catholic university. Three research questions guided this study: what are the lived experiences of undergraduate male students who identify as openly gay at a Jesuit Catholic university; how do undergraduate male students who identify as openly gay experience marginality at a Jesuit Catholic university, and; how do undergraduate male students who identify as openly gay experience mattering at a Jesuit Catholic university? Schlossberg's (1989) theory of marginality and mattering in college environments was the theoretical framework for this study. Data were collected from fourteen participants through semi-structured interviews, which took place at a Jesuit Catholic university in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. Data were then analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis, which yielded three cross-case superordinate themes and ten sub-themes. The three cross-case superordinate themes—*Identity; Campus Climate,* and; *The Church and the Institution*—described key elements of participants' experiences as male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay at a Jesuit Catholic university and how these students experienced marginality and mattering on-campus. This chapter will revisit the use of the theoretical framework, provide a summary of each of the three cross-case superordinate themes, relate the findings to the literature review, discuss how participants experienced marginality and mattering through the lens of each theme, and offer implications for practice and future research.

## Use of Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Schlossberg's (1989) theory of marginality and mattering in college environments, which built on Astin's (1977, 1984) student involvement theory and Rosenberg and McCullough's (1981) work on mattering and mental health. Throughout the data collection and analysis processes, I relied on Schlossberg's (1989) definitions of marginality and mattering. Schlossberg (1989) described marginality as a sense of not fitting in, a lack of belongingness, or feelings of being excluded. Schlossberg (1989) described mattering as the sense of being significant or important to somebody else. In this discussion, I related participants' responses to Schlossberg's (1989) definitions of marginalization and to Rosenberg and McCullough's (1981) four dimensions of mattering: attention; importance; ego-extension, and; dependence, as well as Schlossberg's (1989) fifth dimension: appreciation. Using this framework the researcher explored how being a male undergraduate student who identifies as openly gay at a Jesuit Catholic university contributed to his lived experiences on-campus through the lens of each of the three cross-case superordinate themes—*Identity; Campus Climate,* and; *The Church and the Institution.*

### Identity

Identity development is a critical part of gay men's college experiences (Evans & Broido, 1999; Rhoads, 1997), which was clearly reflected in participants' responses. The first main theme, *identity,* described how participants thought about their sexual orientation, gender, race, and religion or spiritual affiliation in relation to their attendance at a Jesuit Catholic university. The *identity* theme had three sub-themes, which included: lack of gay identity salience, coming out as a non-event, and intersections of identity. Many participants reflected that their interviews during this study were the first time that they had given substantial thought to their gay identities

since coming out. They also noted that the coming out process itself was seen in many ways as a non-event because they neither experienced negative reactions from their on-campus peers, faculty, or staff, nor did they feel ostracized or othered. Participants largely felt that their gay identities were welcomed and affirmed and in many ways felt that a gay identity was a privileged identity on-campus because they did not usually have to think about being gay on a day-to-day basis.

Participants' descriptions of their identity development journeys reflected the general pattern of most early stage theories, which typically include four phases: "first awareness, self-labeling, community involvement and disclosure, and identity integration" (Evans, Forney, Guido, et al., 2010, p. 307). Most participants recognized their gay identities well before arriving on-campus for the first year of college, and all but one participant had come out before or immediately upon arriving to college. Almost all participants had disclosed their identities to family and friends and had a solid network of other sexual minority friends upon arriving at the university. Having a well-established identity prior to college helped ease participants' transitions and helped to allay some of their concerns about what it would be like to be an out gay man on a Jesuit Catholic campus. For most participants, their gay identities were described as already well integrated with the rest of their lives, which caused most of them to report that sexual orientation was now their least salient identity. Coming out on-campus was generally met with reactions ranging from ambivalence to affirmation, yet as they reflected on their experiences it was clear that holding a gay identity still played a meaningful role in whether or not a participant felt he mattered or had experienced marginalization on-campus. Many participants reported that when their gay identities came up in conversation, they felt that the subject was minimized, that their gay identities were ignored, or that other identities were seen as

more important. Notably, Cass (1979) described identity development as dependent upon the interaction between a person and his or her environment. An environment of ambivalence towards students' gay identities was not experienced by participants as equivalent to an environment of active acceptance. Participants' sense of the university's ambivalence towards their gay identities likely contributed to their lack of gay identity salience, which in turn could have the harmful effect of precipitating identity foreclosure, described by Cass (1979) as the point at which a person chooses not to progress any further through the identity development process. While most participants were far along in their identity development processes, D'Augelli's (1994) life span model is a reminder that identity development is fluid and that "individuals develop and change over the entire course of their life spans" (p. 319). Creating a campus environment of active acceptance rather than ambivalence is an important component of encouraging positive identity development.

Overall, participants reported a lack of gay identity salience, which they attributed to their perceptions of a positive campus climate, the number of out gay students, faculty, and staff on-campus, and having already come out prior to their arrival at the university. While participants mostly viewed the unspoken acceptance of gay men on-campus as privileging their gay identities, two key components of mattering are the feelings of being noticed and appreciated (Schlossberg, 1989); it is worth considering whether or not implicit acceptance contributes or detracts from a feeling of being noticed and thus an overall sense of mattering. While mattering requires active attention and appreciation of individuals and their identities, participants reported feeling like they fit in on-campus even in the absence of explicit acceptance.

*Intersectionality.* In their criticism of stage theories, Bilodeau and Renn (2005) noted that linear theories tend to ignore the complexity of multiple identities such as race, gender,

socioeconomic class, religion, and ethnicity. As participants reflected on their awareness of and experiences with their identities, white students were more likely to report feeling like they mattered in the absence of explicit acceptance, while students of color reported greater saliency across all of their identities and marginalization that they attributed to race. Intersectionality—the idea that one's various social identities such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation interact with systems of oppression and privilege (Macionis & Gerber, 2011)—was clearly more salient for participants of color than for white participants. For students of color, race was their most salient identity because it is a visible identity that they felt impacted their daily lives in a way that their gay identities did not. Students of color understood how the interaction between race and sexual orientation impacted their experiences differently than their white peers. Much like the "Model of multiple dimensions of identity" (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007), which placed significance on a student's personal identity rather than their socially-constructed identities, participants of color "wanted to be understood as they understood themselves and as the totality of who they were, rather than be understood through externally imposed labels and by a singular dimension" (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p. 412). Participants of color were more likely to talk about how they experienced their social identities such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. Participants of color generally reported greater feelings of marginalization than their white peers, particularly when it came to feeling like they did not fit in with the gay community on-campus, which they viewed as a white-dominant community. Holding salient and interacting social identities that have been historically marginalized was at the forefront of the college experiences of participants of color.

*Sexual orientation and religion.* For many college students, religion is a subject that causes a great deal of discomfort and often a sense of loss (Love, Bock, Jannarone, &

Richardson, 2005; McNeill, 1988; Ritter & O'Neill, 1989), or greater feelings of internalized homophobia (Barnes & Meyer, 2012), which was certainly reflected in the experiences of many participants. Participants who were Catholic or formerly Catholic generally reported that they experienced constant feelings of contradiction and confusion. Participants reflected on their childhood experiences with religion and how their coming out processes led to dissonance in their religious worldviews. The Catholic and formerly Catholic participants reported that attending a Jesuit Catholic institution helped them to make sense of the perceived contradiction between their sexual orientation and the teachings of their faith by helping them to see their religion more as an identity than a set of canonical laws that must be followed literally. As Love et al. (2005) pointed out, "reconciliation" (p. 199) of one's sexual orientation identity and faith identity is possible when faith becomes a source of strength, self-acceptance, and an opportunity to integrate their faith with their sexual orientation.

Even though most Catholic participants felt welcomed and accepted by the campus community and affirmed by the Jesuit community on-campus, most reported a lack of reconciliation between their faith and sexual orientation because they felt they no longer fit in with their families' religious beliefs. One noteworthy exception was Anthony, who became Catholic while in college, reconciled his faith and his sexual orientation through a lens of Jesuit social justice, and now plans to pursue becoming a Jesuit priest after graduation.

The *identity* theme was at the heart of participants experiences. Even those participants who reported a lack of salience with their gay identities understood how their identities impacted their daily experiences on-campus. Students of color and students who identified as Catholic or formerly Catholic faced complex challenges at the university in their journeys to find

communities in which they could feel a sense of belonging and would allow them to exist as authentic, whole persons.

**Campus Climate**

The second main theme, *campus climate,* described how participants thought about campus attitudes towards gay students and the support and resources available to them. Rankin (2005) described campus climate as: "the cumulative attitudes, behaviors, and standards of employees and students concerning access for, inclusion of, and level of respect for individual and group needs, abilities, and potential" (p. 17). The *campus climate* theme had four sub-themes: attitudes towards gay men; gay role models and heterosexual allies; resources and programming, and; marginalization experiences. Participants overwhelming described the climate on-campus with words like "positive", "welcoming", "affirming", "safe", "inclusive", and "accepting". Nevertheless, as participants reflected on their experiences they universally could recall selected memories of feeling marginalized on-campus even though few would describe their overall experiences as negative. For many participants, their interviews were the first time in which they realized that some of their experiences were actually marginalization experiences, like when Joseph felt excluded from a sexual assault awareness program on his first day of college.

A welcoming and safe campus climate is a key factor in the development of a positive gay identity (Rhoads, 1997). Participants described attitudes towards gay men as generally positive, inclusive, and affirming. Love (1997) pointed out positive paradoxes in a study of gay students' experiences at a Catholic university, one of which was unexpected support from the office of Campus Ministry. In the present study, several participants noted that they felt equally affirmed by the Jesuits and Campus Ministry staff on-campus. While most participants

perceived a sense of ambivalence towards their gay identities, at least one participant experienced a sense of active acceptance from others at the university. Participants pointed out their perception of the institution's mission as oriented towards social justice, which in their opinion attracted like-minded faculty, staff, and students to join the university. Several participants also pointed out that the university is located in a historically gay neighborhood in a city with a politically progressive reputation. All of these characteristics of the university led participants to expect a positive campus climate.

An important component of mattering is the perception that others care and will have pride in a person's accomplishments (Schlossberg, 1989). One of the most meaningful sources of this kind of mattering was the presence of a large number of openly gay faculty and staff role models on-campus and the sense that heterosexual faculty and staff could be counted on as allies to the gay community. Getz and Kirkley (2006) pointed out that having visible LGBTQ role models is an effective strategy with which to combat intolerance at a religiously-affiliated university. Nearly all of the participants named one or more out gay faculty or staff on-campus with whom they felt a sense of connection. Participants reported that the presence of out gay male faculty and staff had a normalizing effect for them and helped them to feel a sense of belonging on-campus. Importantly, one participant even noted that his experience has been shaped more by his interactions with university employees than his interactions with his peers.

Nearly all participants reflected on the positive impact of resources and programming on their college experiences as out gay male undergraduate students. The annual drag show came up in almost every interview as evidence that the university cares about its gay students. Several participants pointed out that the drag show happens each year despite pressure from outside conservative Catholic groups and a lack of active support from the Jesuits on-campus, which led

them to feel that the university saw them as important enough to withstand external pressures. Visible affirmations of support also contributed to participants' feelings of inclusion, such as depictions of gay couples in campus advertising.

Despite participants' overwhelming endorsement of the university as having a positive campus climate, every participant was able to recall at least one instance in which he had experienced marginalization on-campus. Participants' anecdotal recollections of marginalization experiences were reflective of the few examples found in the literature (e.g. Hedberg, 2013; Landergan, 2015) in that these examples are usually isolated and have not been widely studied in Jesuit Catholic university environments.

Marginalization experiences were generally reported to be covert in nature; no participant reported overt bias, homophobic language, assault, or other obvious abuse as a result of his identification as a gay male undergraduate student on-campus. Rather, marginalization experiences were described as instances in which the participant felt excluded, like he did not fit in, or like he did not belong. Participants described marginalization in the form of jokes, heteronormativity in programs or classes, and social exclusion at the fitness center. One participant's recollection of a heteronormative sexual assault presentation during his first few days on-campus was at the heart of his constant questioning about whether or not he actually fit in on-campus. Another participant felt excluded during a study abroad training session that talked about relationship safety abroad but was not inclusive of same-sex relationships. Some participants felt that the university made efforts at inclusion out of financial dependence on gay students, which contributed to feeling a lack of appreciation, an important component of mattering. Most participants felt socially excluded from the fitness center because of what they perceived as a hyper-masculine and heteronormative environment, but it is difficult to know

whether the university's Jesuit Catholic identity played a role in their experiences at the fitness center or if their experiences are simply representative of the stereotypical gym culture at-large in the United States.

Some participants felt that their experiences with marginalization were a result of the university's Jesuit Catholic foundation, while others felt their experiences with marginalization were minimized by the very fact that the university is Jesuit Catholic. Love's (1997; 1998) studies highlighted similar contradictions that many students at Catholic institutions experience: a Catholic identity—and particularly a Jesuit Catholic identity-- calls for an institution to be supportive and welcoming of LGBTQ students while simultaneously discouraging homosexual behavior. While most participants felt safe and included in most areas of campus including classrooms, residence halls, and administrative offices on-campus, there was one noteworthy exception. Many students pointed out that the university's refusal to allow same-sex wedding ceremonies in its on-campus chapel represented a stark contradiction. Participants felt that the university's social justice mission and its efforts to include gay male students were anathema to its exclusion of same-sex weddings and caused them to call into question the authenticity of the university's inclusion of LGTBQ students, faculty, and staff.

The *campus climate* theme played a central role in participants' experiences as openly gay male undergraduate students. Campus climate had an impact on the extent to which participants felt a sense of mattering through their perceptions of campus attitudes towards their gay identities, the presence of gay role models and heterosexual allies, and the availability of resources and programming. Campus climate also had a powerful impact on the extent to which a participant felt marginalized by feeling excluded from being able to access the on-campus

chapel for same-sex wedding ceremonies and feeling left out of important educational programs and resources, particularly those related to sexual wellness, relationships, and safety.

**The Church and the Institution**

The third main theme, *The Church and the Institution,* described how participants thought about the influence of the Catholic faith on their experiences attending a Jesuit Catholic university. This theme also described how participants made sense of the incongruence between Catholic teachings about homosexuality and their generally positive experiences on-campus. The *Church and the Institution* theme had three sub-themes: attitudes towards the Catholic Church, canonical subjectivity, and institutional identity incongruence.

Pope Francis made headlines in 2013 with his now famous "who am I to judge" statement (Robinson, 2014) and participants understood that the views of the Catholic Church appear to be changing, albeit slowly, as society evolves on the issue of homosexuality. Participants' attitudes towards the Catholic Church varied widely, whether they identified as Catholic, formerly Catholic, another faith, or as having no faith affiliation. Participants' perspectives were based on their level of exposure to the Catholic faith prior to attending college and on what they had learned about the Catholic faith from their experiences on-campus. Most participants pointed out that the relationship between the Catholic Church and gay men was historically complicated and characterized by marginalization. One participant experienced Catholic teaching as "fire and brimstone," while several participants reflected that their perceptions of Catholicism encouraged them to reject religion altogether. At the heart of their attitudes towards the Catholic Church was the sense that their gay identities were not congruent with mainstream Catholic teachings about homosexuality and that Catholic belief was antithetical to gay inclusion. While Catholic participants typically reported similar feelings, they

were also more hopeful that the institution would change, particularly given some of the seemingly progressive messages they had heard from Pope Francis. But despite Pope Francis's apparent shift on the topic, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), which serves as the primary teaching document of the Church, has not been amended from its 1992 version.

Perhaps one of the most meaningful findings in this study was participants' notion of canonical subjectivity. Canons are the laws of the Church and define its acceptable beliefs, texts, and practices. While the Vatican views the Church's canons as incontrovertible law (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, n.d.), participants viewed canons as subjective. Even the foundational text of the Church, the Bible, can be viewed as a subjective representation of belief. Boswell (1980) noted that the original Biblical texts have been translated thousands of times over the past 2,000 years. The word "homosexual" did not even appear in any version of the Bible until 1946 (Boswell, 1980; Cannon, n.d.; Kennedy Townsend, 2012; Pickett, 2002), and Biblical translation has frequently and selectively been used to advance political agendas (Stone, 2010). Canonical subjectivity can thus be described as a practice of selectively interpreting and applying Biblical verses and the laws of the Church. The inconsistency and selectivity of Church teaching served as the background to participants' struggles to understand their place in the ongoing culture war between the Church and the gay community. Participants made sense of what they described as incongruence between Catholic orthodoxy and their generally positive experiences as gay students at a Jesuit Catholic university through their acknowledgment that religion can be subjective. Participants overwhelming perceived the Jesuit order—and particularly the Jesuits on-campus—as subscribing to canonical subjectivity, which permits them to include and affirm LGBTQ students. Participants felt that "Jesuit" and "Catholic" were not synonymous, which allowed space for the university to create a brand of Catholicism that works for all members of

the campus community. For several participants, it seemed that the university's apparent rejection of the Catholic Church's anti-gay canons led to a feeling of importance and thus to a greater sense of mattering. This was especially true for those students who identified as Catholic or formerly Catholic, for whom canonical subjectivity helped them to make sense of a lifetime of dissonance between their sexual orientation and religious identities. Many participants said that they often forgot that the university identified as Jesuit Catholic, which led to a sense of incongruence between the Jesuit mission of the university and its underlying Catholic faith. Participants generally felt that this perception of incongruence benefitted their experiences as openly gay undergraduate men on-campus, noting that it freed the institution to be able to create safe spaces and have events like the drag show.

For most participants, *The Church and the Institution* theme was constantly in the background of their experiences on-campus, raising questions about the extent to which they actually mattered to the university. While it was easy for some to forget they attend a Jesuit Catholic university, others were keenly aware of a constant feeling of being othered by the university because of its Catholic foundation. One participant described this feeling as a "small little asterisk when it comes to the gay part of me," while others used the term "thin line" to describe the balance the university must strike when navigating the incongruence between its Jesuit social justice mission and fidelity to its Catholic ethos.

## Implications

The results of this study may be useful for higher education researchers, student affairs administrators, and prospective gay male undergraduate students seeking insight into what it might be like to attend a Jesuit Catholic university themselves. The study has potentially immediate utility for the research site on which it was conducted; the university is currently

engaged in a campus climate study, the results of which will be presented during the 2015-2016 academic year. The researcher will offer to share the results of this study with the research site to complement its campus climate study efforts and to offer some insight into the experiences of openly gay male undergraduate students who attend the university. The results of this study showed that campus climate was at the forefront of participants' experiences at the university; other Jesuit Catholic universities should consider small- or large-scale climate studies in order to examine areas of strength and areas of improvement.

In addition to highlighting the importance of campus climate studies, the present research also pointed to the importance of affirming hiring practices at Jesuit Catholic universities. The visible presence of out gay faculty and staff role models was one of the single most powerful influences in how participants felt about their experiences at the university. Additionally, faculty and staff who were well versed in issues of LGBTQ equity proved to be instrumental in determining participants' level of comfort. Other similar universities should consider offering ally trainings for faculty and staff in order to broaden these students' bases of support.

Participants pointed out the importance of visual evidence of support on-campus. This finding suggests that Jesuit Catholic universities should consider reviewing posters, flyers, program advertisements, and campus signage to assess such visuals for their levels of inclusion. Several participants in the present study felt more positive about the climate on campus for openly gay male undergraduate students when they saw signs outside of the Campus Ministry office and chapel that directly welcomed and affirmed LGTBQ students in those spaces. Participants also pointed out that some posters related to sexual health and wellness featured same-sex couples, which led to feelings of inclusion. It should be pointed out that these simple gestures did not go unnoticed by participants and went far in cultivating feelings of affirmation.

Similarly, participants took notice of the extent to which same-sex sexual behavior and relationships were included in programs and events on campus. While nearly all participants pointed out that the drag show sent a powerful message of inclusion, most also felt that programs related to sexual health and sexual violence pointedly left them out. Jesuit Catholic universities, which emphasize care of the whole person, should consider intentionally including gay male students' relationship and sexual wellness concerns in these programs in order to avoid the perception that the university "loves the sinner, but hates the sin."

## Future Research

This study examined how male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay experience marginality and mattering at a Jesuit Catholic university. Future research that examines the experiences of individuals who identify as lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning could greatly expand the literature on this subject. Further, research that explores the experiences of graduate students, first-year students, faculty, staff, and administrators who identify as sexual orientation minorities on Jesuit Catholic campuses could benefit researchers and administrators in higher education.

In the present study, data were collected and analyzed from 14 participants on a single research site. There were 28 Jesuit Catholic institutions of higher education in the United States as of this writing, all of which offer varying levels of support for their LGTBQ students and are located in regions of the country with diverse and varying dominant political views. Given the variances in institution size, region, and demographic compositions, future multisite research projects could make a meaningful contribution to the literature and expand our understanding of sexual orientation minority students' experiences at Jesuit Catholic universities. Recommended designs for future research in this area include comparative case studies, which allow for in depth

analysis of rich cases, and visual ethnography, which may be useful in exploring and analyzing the impact of religious symbols juxtaposed with symbols of LGBTQ support on the experiences of sexual minority students at Jesuit Catholic universities.

## Summary

The purpose of this dissertation was to understand how male undergraduate students who identified as openly gay experienced marginality and mattering at a Jesuit Catholic university. Fourteen participants at one Jesuit Catholic university in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States were interviewed about their experiences. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis methods, three main themes and ten cross-case sub-themes were identified that described participants' experiences at the university. The three main themes—*Identity; Campus Climate,* and; *The Church and the Institution*—described important elements of participants' experiences as male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay at Jesuit Catholic university and how these students experienced marginality and mattering on-campus. Chapter 5 discussed each of the three main themes and examined how participants experienced marginality and mattering through the lens of each theme.

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# APPENDIX A

# REFERRAL LETTER

March 1, 2015

Sample Gatekeeper
Sample Email Address

Dear XXXX:

My name is James Willette and I am a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University in the School of Education. We are conducting a research study on the experiences of male undergraduate college students who identify as openly gay and who attend a Jesuit Catholic university. The title of our project is *A Phenomenological Study of Gay Male Undergraduate Students' Experiences at a Jesuit Catholic University.* The Principal Investigator is Dr. Linda Kuk in the School of Education. We are contacting you to ask you to refer possible participants to us for the study.

Participants will complete a brief demographic survey and participate in a 1-2 hour audio-recorded interview to discuss their experiences as male undergraduate students who identify as gay at a Jesuit Catholic university. Participation will take approximately 1-2 hours and will take place at a time that is convenient for the participant. In addition to their participation in a 1-2 hour recorded interview, the investigators would like participants to participate in an activity called member checking after the initial data analysis is complete. Member checking involves reviewing the interview transcript to ensure its accuracy and will involve no more than 1 additional hour. Participation in this research is voluntary. Participants will be compensated with a $10.00 Amazon gift card.

Participants who decide to participate in the study may withdraw their consent and stop participation at any time without penalty. If you know individuals who fit the research criteria and may be interested in participating in this research, please forward them this message and ask them to contact James Willette at 206-457-9461 or james.willette@colostate.edu. Potential participants may also contact Dr. Linda Kuk, Principal Investigator, at 970-491-5160 or linda.kuk@colostate.edu. If you or any potential participants have any questions about participant rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

Thank you for your consideration and assistance. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Linda Kuk, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

James Willette, M.Ed.
Doctoral Candidate

# APPENDIX B

# PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

March 1, 2015

Sample Participant
Sample Email Address

Dear XXXX:

My name is James Willette and I am a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University in the School of Education. We are conducting a research study on the experiences of male undergraduate college students who identify as openly gay and who attend a Jesuit Catholic university. The title of our project is *A Phenomenological Study of Gay Male Undergraduate Students' Experiences at a Jesuit Catholic University.* The Principal Investigator is Dr. Linda Kuk in the School of Education. You have been identified as a potential research participant because you were referred to me by XXXX as someone who fits the criteria for the study.

We invite you to join the study by completing a brief demographic survey and participating in a 1-2 hour audio-recorded interview to discuss your experiences as a male undergraduate student who identifies as gay at a Jesuit Catholic university. Participation will take approximately 1-2 hours and will take place at a time and location that is convenient and comfortable for you. In addition to your participation in a 1-2 hour recorded interview, the investigators would like you to participate in an activity called member checking after the initial data analysis is complete. Member checking involves reviewing the transcript to ensure its accuracy and will involve no more than 1 additional hour. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You will be compensated with a $10.00 Amazon gift card.

If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty. I have attached the consent form for this research to give you more information about the study. If you would like to participate in this research or have any questions, please contact James Willette at 206-457-9461 or james.willette@colostate.edu. You may also contact Dr. Linda Kuk, Principal Investigator, at 970-491-5160 or linda.kuk@colostate.edu. Additionally, if you know any other individuals who may be interested in participating in this study, please feel free to forward them this letter. If you or any potential participants have any questions about participant rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu ; 970-491-1553.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Linda Kuk, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

James Willette, M.Ed.
Doctoral Candidate

# APPENDIX C

## CONSENT FORM

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study**
**Colorado State University**

**TITLE OF STUDY:**
*A Phenomenological Study of Gay Male Undergraduate Students' Experiences at a Jesuit Catholic University*

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**
Linda Kuk, Ph.D., Associate Professor, School of Education, email: linda.kuk@colostate.edu; phone, 970-491-5160.

**CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**
James Willette, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, email: james.willette@colostate.edu; phone, 206-457-9461.

**WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**
You have been identified as a potential research participant because you identify as a gay male undergraduate college student who is currently attending a Jesuit Catholic university.

**WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?**
The principal investigator, Dr. Linda Kuk, is the Director of the College and University Leadership program and an Associate Professor in the School of Education at Colorado State University. Dr. Kuk is the primary advisor to the co-principal investigator Mr. James Willette. This study is being conducted for Mr. Willette's doctoral dissertation.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**
The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of male undergraduate students who identify as openly gay at a Jesuit Catholic university.

**WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**
The study will consist of a brief (about 10 minutes) online demographic survey and a 1-2 hour audio-recorded interview that will take place at a time and location that is convenient and comfortable for you. You will also be asked to review your interview transcript for accuracy about one week after your interview, which should take no more than 30 minutes. Your total time commitment will be no more than 3 hours.

**WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?**
Each research participant will be asked to complete a brief online demographic survey and participate in a 1-2 hour audio-recorded interview. During the interview, you will be asked questions about your experiences at your university, what it is like to be gay at your university, your opinions about the university's inclusion and/or exclusion of gay men, and, if applicable, your personal religious/spiritual beliefs. Participants will also be asked to review their transcripts for accuracy about one week after the interview.

**ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**
You should not participate in this research if you are not openly gay, or do not consent to have your comments recorded for research purposes.

**WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?**
You may experience discomfort when discussing certain experiences related to sexual orientation. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. While each research participant will have a concealed identity, it may be possible for others to identify each participant through their responses. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

**ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**
Participation in this study will not directly benefit participants; however, the study itself may be useful to individuals and educators with an interest in LGBTQ research.

**DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?**
Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?**
We will keep all research records that identify you private, to the extent allowed by law. Each research participant will choose a pseudonym that will be used to discuss and analyze information that is provided during the formal interview. We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records and these two things will be stored in different places. The coded list that links you to your data will be destroyed when the final manuscript is completed.

You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, we may be asked to share the research files with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes. In addition, the law may require us to show your information to a court OR to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child, or you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

It is the intent of the investigators to publish the study in the Co-Investigator's dissertation and in a professional journal. When we write about the study to share with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

**WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**
Research participants will receive a $10.00 Amazon gift card for participating in this study. Your identity/record of receiving compensation (NOT your data) may be made available to CSU officials for financial audits.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?**
The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

**WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the co-principal investigator, Mr. James Willette at 206-457-9461 or james.willette@colostate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

**WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?**
Each interview will be audio-recorded. Participants will be asked to engage in member checking after the conclusion of each interview, which will involve reviewing interview transcripts for accuracy. Only the researchers will have access to the audiotape files. The audiotapes will not include your name, and will be destroyed once the transcript of the interview has been finalized.

Please acknowledge that you are willing to participate in member checking after the initial interview by checking the following ____ and initialing here _____.

To indicate your consent to participate and acknowledge that you have read the information stated, please type your name and date below, and return this consent to the researcher via email. Receipt of this consent from you acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 3 pages.

_____ _____
Name of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

James Willette_____ _____
Name of person providing information to participant Date

# APPENDIX D

# INTAKE SURVEY

**Research Study Intake Survey**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. Please fill out the information below. Your responses will remain confidential throughout the entire research process. If you have any questions about this form please contact the co-principal investigator, James Willette, at james.willette@colostate.edu or 206-457-9461.

Name (Your name will not be appended to the responses you provide during the interview)

Pseudonym (Please select a first name that you would like to have used in the manuscript)

Major/Minor

Current Class Year

Please Respond to the Following Demographic Questions

Gender

Male

Female

Transgender

Gender Non-Conforming

Preferred Pronoun

Sexual Orientation

Gay

Bisexual

Straight/Heterosexual

Lesbian

Queer

Questioning

I have disclosed my sexual orientation identity to the following (select all that apply):

Friends

Immediate Family

Extendend Family

Faculty/Teachers

Employer

I am not out to anyone

Race (please specify)

Religious/Spiritual Affiliation (if applicable)

Best time and day of the week for a 60-90 minute interview.

| | Interview Availability | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Early Morning (8am-10am) | Mid-Morning (10am-12pm) | Afternoon (12pm-5pm) | Evenings (5pm-9pm) |
| Mondays | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Tuesdays | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Wednesdays | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Thursdays | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Fridays | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Weekends | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

Preferred Interview Location:

I would like to be interviewed in the researcher's office on-campus (Douglas 116).

I would like to be interviewed at a different location of my choosing (please specify):

Please click below to finalize and submit this form. You will be contacted via email to finalize the date, time, and location of your interview.

# APPENDIX E

# INTERVIEW GUIDE

*Participant Interview Guide*

1. How did you decide to come to this university?
2. What did you think it would be like to be an out gay man on campus at your university? How did you reach these conclusions?
3. After arriving on campus, when and how did you decide to come out? To whom did you come out and how did they respond?
4. What is your understanding of Catholic teachings on homosexuality? Does your campus seem to reflect or reject those teachings?
5. To what extent is your university inclusive of gay men? How would you describe other students' attitudes towards your sexual orientation?
6. How would you describe the university's attitude towards your sexual orientation?
7. Tell me about your religion or spirituality growing up. Do you follow the same practices today? How do you think about religion or spirituality in relationship to your sexuality?
8. Tell me about a time when you felt like you didn't fit in on campus. Are there places or people you avoid?
9. How does your university talk about sexuality with students and how do they include same-sex sexual behavior in those conversations?
10. Tell me about a person on campus (faculty, staff, or student) who cares about you or is proud of you. Tell me about someone on campus who appreciates you.
11. Who are your openly gay role models on campus?
12. What advice would you give to a gay student who is thinking about coming to your university next year?

13. What else would you like to share about how you experience being gay at your university?

# APPENDIX F

# IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Colorado State University
*Knowledge to Go Places*

Research Integrity & Compliance Review Office
Office of the Vice President for Research
321 General Services Building - Campus Delivery 2011 Fort Collins, CO
TEL: (970) 491-1553
FAX: (970) 491-2293

## NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

| | |
|---|---|
| **DATE:** | April 06, 2015 |
| **TO:** | Kuk, Linda, Education |
| | Kamberelis, George, Education, Willette, James, Education |
| **FROM:** | Swiss, Evelyn, Coordinator, CSU IRB 2 |
| **PROTOCOL TITLE:** | A Phenomenological Study of Gay Male Undergraduate Students' Experiences at a Jesuit Catholic University |
| **FUNDING SOURCE:** | NONE |
| **PROTOCOL NUMBER:** | 15-5686H |
| **APPROVAL PERIOD:** | Approval Date: April 06, 2015 Expiration Date: April 05, 2016 |

The CSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled: A Phenomenological Study of Gay Male Undergraduate Students' Experiences at a Jesuit Catholic University. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol. This protocol must be reviewed for renewal on a yearly basis for as long as the research remains active. Should the protocol not be renewed before expiration, all activities must cease until the protocol has been re-reviewed.

If approval did not accompany a proposal when it was submitted to a sponsor, it is the PI's responsibility to provide the sponsor with the approval notice.

This approval is issued under Colorado State University's Federal Wide Assurance 00000647 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under CSU's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

IRB Office - (970) 491-1553; RICRO_IRB@mail.Colostate.edu
Evelyn Swiss, IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1381; Evelyn.Swiss@Colostate.edu

Evelyn Swiss

Swiss, Evelyn

Approval to recruit 15 participants from Seattle University with the approved recruitment and consent materials. The above-referenced project was approved by the Institutional Review Board with the condition that the approved consent form is signed by the subjects and each subject is given a copy of the form. NO changes may be made to this document without first obtaining the approval of the IRB.
RICRO NOTE: Submit the letter of cooperation from Seattle University as an amendment once received.

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| | |
|---|---|
| **Approval Period:** | April 06, 2015 through April 05, 2016 |
| **Review Type:** | EXPEDITED |
| **IRB Number:** | 00000202 |

# APPENDIX G

# SITE COOPERATION LETTER

April 13, 2015

James Willette
Division of Student Development
Seattle University

**Re: Protocol # 15-5686H**

Dear James,

Our IRB reviewers have read carefully your protocol **15-5686H: *"A Phenomenological Study of Gay Male Undergraduate Students' Experiences at Jesuit Catholic Universities,"*** submitted to and approved by the IRB at **Colorado State University**.

We concur that the protocol meets the necessary standards of human subjects protections, and we hereby cede oversight of this research project to **Colorado State University**. Be sure that you submit a continuing review request to CSU if your project will continue beyond the approval date of **April 5, 2016.** I ask that you keep the Seattle University IRB informed of any continuation/renewal as well as possible modifications to the protocol, and let us know also when the data collection is completed.

If you have additional questions or if I can be of further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact the IRB at any time. Thank you for coordinating between the SU and CSU IRBs, and best wishes with your research protocol and dissertation.

Sincerely,

Michelle DuBois, PhD
IRB Chair

Email: mdubois@seattleu.edu
Phone: (206) 296-2585