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An examination of campus climate for LGBTQ community college students

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An examination of campus climate for LGBTQ community college students**Abstract**

This study examines campus climate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) undergraduate students at community colleges. Data for the study originates from Rankin, Blumenfeld, Weber, and Frazer's (2010) *State of Higher Education for LGBT People*. We analyzed both quantitative data generated from closed-ended survey questions and qualitative data gleaned from open-ended survey questions.

Results suggest that classroom climate plays a large role in determining students' perceptions of campus climate. Findings also indicate that first-generation LGBTQ students experience a more hostile campus climate. Based on the findings, we offer recommendations for future research and potential best practices for working with LGBTQ community college students.

An examination of campus climate for LGBTQ community college students

Community colleges are increasingly enrolling larger numbers of students. According to the U. S. Digest of Education Statistics, fall enrollment at public two-year institutions grew from 5,697,388 in 2000 to 7,218,038 in 2010 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011, Table 199). A substantial proportion of that growth occurred between fall 2007 and fall 2009 when annual enrollment rates increased dramatically compared to historical trends (Phillippe & Mullin, 2011). The American Association of Community Colleges estimated that the 1,132 two-year colleges enroll 45% of all U.S. undergraduates as of fall 2009 (AACC, 2013).

In their chapter examining student marginalization at community colleges, Harbour and Ebie (2011) discussed that two-year institutions have enrolled a high percentage of historically marginalized students. When discussing ways to establish a more equitable learning environment, they suggested identifying specific examples of student marginalization on campus. While recent scholars have explored the experiences of marginalized students in community colleges [e.g., racial/ethnic minorities (Greene, Marti, & McClenney, 2008; Laden, 2004; Maxwell, 2007); students with disabilities (Garrison-Wade & Lehmann, 2009); women (Bernerd, 2010; Cox & Ebbers, 2010); first generation students (Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Terenzini, 2003)], there is an absence of literature examining the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community college students

The academic and social success for LGBTQ students is grounded in a healthy and affirming campus environment that embraces gender and sexual minority individuals (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010). However, the dearth of research examining LGBTQ

students at two-year institutions¹ leaves scholars and practitioners without empirical evidence to substantiate this claim at community colleges. Our purpose is to add to the literature examining the experiences of LGBTQ community college students through this empirical study.

Literature Review

Characteristics of Community College Students

Scholars identify community colleges as “people’s colleges” or “democracy’s colleges,” because they have historically provided access to higher education to students who otherwise would not attend college (Valdez, 2002). Historically and contemporarily, many community colleges are diverse and large numbers of marginalized and underserved students access higher education through community colleges (Bailey & Morest, 2006; Bragg, 2001; Cohen & Brawer, 2008). According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2013), community college students represent 45% of all undergraduate students yet enroll 56% of all Hispanic students and 49% of all Black students. A larger proportion of community college students are also low-income. Mullin (2012) reports that of all undergraduate students living in poverty in 2007-2008, community colleges enrolled 1.7 million (41%) of them. Mullin also argues that despite that community college students are younger than they were 20 years ago, many are not classified as “traditional” college students. For example, 20% of community college students are employed, 44% are enrolled part-time, and 61% live with their parents, proportions much higher than students enrolled in universities and other sectors of higher education.

In a recent edition of *New Directions for Community Colleges* (NDCC), the editors argued, “...in order to truly be the ‘people’s college,’ community colleges must continually reexamine their environment to ensure that all who attend are welcomed in to an inclusive

¹ We recognize that not all community colleges are classified as two-year institutions and not all two-year institutions are classified as community colleges but we use these two terms interchangeably to refer to students in our sample who self-reported enrolling at a two-year institution.

environment” (Cox & Watson, 2011, p. 3). Though community colleges are heralded as having commitments to open access, diversity, and social mobility (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Griffith & Connor, 1994), they have also been criticized “for failing to acknowledge or adapt to the diversity in their student populations, resulting in stubbornly low transfer rates and consistently high dropout rates” (Shaw, Rhoads, & Valdez, 2002, p. 3). This debate is far from settled, but is relevant to the degree that LGBTQ students in community colleges are marginalized because of their identity and “as a result of individual behaviors, institutional policies and practices, and social beliefs and conditions that they cannot control” (Harbour & Ebie, 2011, p. 7).

Community Colleges and LGBTQ Students

LGBTQ community college students are understudied in the higher education literature, and only six articles on LGBTQ community college students were published as of 2005 (Ivory, 2005). By 2011, Zamini-Gallaher and Choudhuri (2011) noted that no additional empirical, theoretical, or applied publications have appeared in the literature since Ivory’s (2005) publication. The most attention given to the LGBTQ population in community colleges appeared in a 2012 special edition of the *Community College Journal of Research and Practice (CCJRP)*. The guest editor, Ronni Sanlo (2012), noted that, “Few community colleges acknowledge the presence of LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff on their campuses, and there is extraordinarily little data or documented experiences of this population” (p. 47). Though limited, existing empirical evidence on LGBTQ community college students suggests that they are marginalized as a result of discriminatory attitudes and behaviors (Franklin, 1998), unwelcoming classroom environments (Nelson, 2010), and a lack of LGBTQ programming and resources (Manning, Pring, & Glider, 2012).

Despite the absence of empirical research on LGBTQ community college students, a relatively robust literature exists on LGBTQ students in four-year institutions. In a recent review of LGBTQ research in higher education, Renn (2010) identified three strands of LGBTQ scholarship: visibility, campus climate, and identity and experiences. Most relevant to this study is work related to campus climate and student experiences. The most comprehensive data on campus climate and student experiences, and the data used for this study, are from *The State of Higher Education for LGBT People* (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010). Overall, these results support previous national surveys (Rankin, 2003) that report relatively high levels of anti-LGBTQ perceptions and experiences on college campuses.

Classroom Experience and LGBTQ Students

The classroom is an important learning space for students. This is particularly true for community colleges, which are predominantly commuter campuses where students' interactions with other students and faculty are predominately classroom-based. The extent to which students are marginalized in the classroom can have consequences on student development and learning (Evans, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). For nontraditional and marginalized students, validating practices inside and outside the classroom (i.e., introducing inclusive language, creating community standards) can also contribute to student involvement and ultimately student persistence (Barnett, 2011; Rendon, 1994).

Although there is little empirical research examining the effect of classroom experiences on LGBTQ student learning, development, and persistence, research on the influence of classroom climate on women and racial/ethnic minorities often suggests that the classroom climate can be unwelcoming toward women and students of color and can reduce student participation and deflate students' self-esteem (Constantinople, Cornelious, & Gray, 1988; Hall

& Sandler, 1982; Crawford & MacLeod, 1990; Trujillo, 1986). Ultimately, an unwelcoming classroom environment can have detrimental effects on desired student outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

This study is framed through the theoretical body of literature examining campus climate. The research is clear that students who endure harassment and/or discrimination suffer, while those who experience a welcoming and warm climate are more likely to have positive outcomes (Milem, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo, 2006; Umbach & Kuh, 2006). For example, female students, students of color, and LGBTQ students offer that they experience less than welcoming climates which research shows negatively influences their learning, development, and persistence (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Brady & Bruce, 1994; Chang, 2002; Fischer & Hartmann, 1995; Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998; McCormack, 1998; Serex & Townsend, 1999; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001). Based on the literature, issues of inequality exist and persist on college campuses (Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan, & Andrews-Guillen, 2003).

Colleges and universities remain largely hostile environments for LGBTQ students due to homophobia, transphobia, heterosexism, and cisgenderism. The literature on LGBTQ college students suggests that these individuals generally perceive the campus climate as less inviting, or chillier, than their peers (Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, & Robinson-Keilig, 2004; Evans & Broido, 2002; Garber, 2002). LGBTQ students experience campus differently because of their sexual identity, gender identity, and/or gender expression. Such disparities in campus climate for these students may prevent them from achieving academic success and/or integrating into the campus community (Rankin, 2003). These students are more often victims of harassment and violence than their peers (Rankin, 1998, 2003a; Waldo, Hessen-McInnis, & D'Augelli, 1998). Rankin

(2003b) revealed that LGBTQ students fear for their physical safety, hide or conceal their sexual identity, and feel that discussing their sexual and gender identities to faculty and staff may have aversive consequences. LGBTQ students who disclose their sexual and/or gender identity more openly experience harassment at higher rates than those students who do not.

In response to this less than inclusive climate, many institutions developed more LGBTQ inclusive policies, developed LGBTQ education/awareness programs, and created LGBTQ Resource Centers (<http://www.lgbt.campus.org>). One would assume that these changes would improve the climate for LGBTQ students. However, in a recent study, Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, and Frazer (2010) found that one quarter of the LGBQ respondents and one third of transgender respondents had experienced harassment or violence on campus because of their sexual or gender identity. Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that about a third of the LGBTQ students seriously considered transferring to another college or university, hoping to locate a more nurturing climate. These findings were supported by another recent study conducted by Woodford, Howell, Silverschanz, and Yu (2012). The study examined heterosexist language (“that’s so gay”) and its impact on GLB students. The results indicate that heterosexist language was one of many mechanisms through which heterosexism was enacted and communicated anti-gay sentiment towards GLB people. The results also suggested that hearing “that’s so gay” is significantly and negatively associated with GLB students’ well-being.

Terminology

Throughout the manuscript, we often refer to study participants with the acronym “LGBTQ” or a related derivative. This acronym represents both sexual identities (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer) and gender identities (e.g., transgender, gender queer). Sexual and gender identities are unique and different dimensions of a person. Sexual identity is sometimes referred

to as affection, orientation, or sexuality (UC Berkeley Gender Equity Resource Center, 2012). Common sexual identities include gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, same gender loving, woman loving woman, man loving man, and pansexual, among many others. Gender identity refers to a person's inner sense of being a man, woman, both, or neither. The internal identity may or may not be expressed outwardly, and may or may not correspond to one's physical characteristics (UC Berkeley Gender Equity Resource Center, 2012). A cisgender person conforms to gender-based expectations of society, and a transgender person is someone whose psychological self differs from the social expectations for the physical sex he/she/ze were born. Using LGBTQ as an acronym to represent all sexual and gender minorities is limiting for several reasons, including eliminating other non-normative identities and conflating sexual identity with gender identity. However, for the purposes of this study, we consciously decided to use this term as a sense of collectivity and solidarity for the under-represented and under-studied undergraduate students at two-year colleges.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of LGBTQ community college students. Specifically, we examine the influence of selected demographic variables (person of color, low-income, first-generation) and factors (classroom climate, curricular issues, campus responses, campus resource use) on LGBTQ student's perceptions of campus climate at two-year institutions.

Methods

Data Collection and Sample

Data for this study originate from Rankin, Blumenfeld, Weber, and Frazer's (2010) *State of Higher Education for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender (LGBT) People*. Data collected

for this project replicated and improved upon the sampling procedures used in the only other national LGBTQ national study which yielded the largest sample of LGBTQ people to date (Rankin, 2003). Specifically, non-probabilistic chain-referral sampling was employed – a method that is commonly used when sampling-related information is lacking (Semaan, Lauby, & Liebman, 2002). Invitations were distributed via known LGBTQ listservs and organizations (e.g., Consortium of Higher Education for LGBTQ Resource Professionals, Campus Pride, Intersex Society of North America, National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, National Center for Transgender Equality). To ensure inclusivity of LGBTQ youth of various racial identities, invitations were also extended to organizations that focus specifically on these youth (e.g., Hetrick-Martin, A La Familia, Mosaic, Spectrum). Similarly, outreach to LGBTQ spirituality groups was also included (e.g., Integrity, Al-Fatiha Foundation). Participating institutions included colleges/universities from all Carnegie Basic Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education and from all 50 states.

Of the 5,149 people who participated in the national survey, all undergraduate students from two-year institutions ($n = 102$, 2.0%) were selected, eliminating those who did not satisfactorily complete pertinent items.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was created using questions from Rankin's (2003) study. The final survey contained 96 questions and several additional open-ended questions designed to allow respondents to provide commentary. The survey was designed for respondents to provide information about their campus experiences, their perceptions of the climate on their campus, and their perceptions of institutional actions including administrative policies regarding LGBTQ issues and concerns on campus. These dimensions were derived from the authors' work

examining the campus climate at over 100 college campuses. Questions were worded in a non-biased and non-leading ways to prevent guiding participants toward any particular responses. These precautions helped support the overall validity of the instrument (Rankin et al., 2010).

The reliability of the survey was tested by examining the internal consistency of responses (Rankin et al., 2010). It was found that “responses to selected questions about overall campus climate for various groups and those that rate overall campus climates on various related scales were statistically significant, thus indicating a relationship between all selected pairs of responses” (Rankin et al., 2010, p. 40). For example, there was as significant relationship between items assessing the positive climate for LGBTQ persons and lack of homophobia on campus ($r = .720$).

Study Constructs

Variables and factors were selected based on our theoretical understanding of campus climate and a review of literature on community college students. Several demographic characteristics were included in the analysis that directly related to undergraduate student populations at two-year institutions. These three variables – person of color, low-income, and first-generation – were all coded binarily into the dataset.

We developed factors to represent major constructs in the study: classroom context (classroom climate and curricular issues) and campus context (campus responses and campus resource use). These factors have been linked to campus climate in prior literature. We used principal axis factoring (PAF; Thurstone, 1935, 1947) to create these factors, with oblique rotation to improve the meaningfulness and interpretation of the extracted factors. Given the interrelatedness of the factors in the study, oblique rotation was selected. Specifically, we used Promax rotation in order to obtain a solution that provided the best factor structure with the

lowest possible correlation among factors (Pett, Lackey, & Sullivan, 2003). Cronbach's (1990) coefficient alphas were calculated to assess the reliability of factors, with values ranging from 0.89 to 0.96 (Appendix 1). Campus climate, the dependent variable for this study, was created through PAF ($\alpha = .92$). Low scores on the campus climate factor indicate positive campus climate, and high scores correspond to negative campus climate.

Data Analysis

For this study we employed a mixed methods design to offer both quantitative information and to give voice to the data through analyses of the qualitative comments provided by survey participants. Our approach first involved an analysis of the quantitative data generated from closed-ended survey questions and then an analysis of qualitative data from open-ended survey questions. This approach is what Creswell (2003) identified as a concurrent triangulation strategy, and it is used "when a researcher uses two different methods in an attempt to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings in a single study" (p. 217). Thus, we sought to use quantitative results to guide our analysis of qualitative data.

For the quantitative analysis, we first ran descriptive statistics for the demographic variables and factors to determine characteristics and experiences of LGBTQ undergraduate students at two-year institutions. To better understand the influences of the demographic variables and factors on campus climate, we employed a hierarchical multiple regression analysis, with campus climate serving as the dependent variable. The independent variables were entered into three separate blocks: demographic variables, classroom context, and campus context.

For the qualitative analysis, we selected ten open-ended questions from the survey that were conceptually related to community college student experiences. We used a deductive

approach (Creswell, 2003) and searched for key words associated with campus climate. We restricted our key word search to open-ended responses from community college students and coded data according to the statistically significant findings based on the quantitative analysis.

Limitations

As with all empirical studies, there were limitations to our research design. First, the results cannot be generalized to all LGBTQ students as (1) the sample is not representative of all community colleges and (2) since there is currently limited information on the true population of LGBTQ college students we have no way of identifying if our sample is representative . Employing survey methodology to examine LGBTQ individuals is decidedly difficult, particularly when considering data collection, sample size, and yield. Data were collected through snowballing and community outreach, and the small sample size of community college students limited the strength of our interpretation of results. Last, because the data were analyzed post-hoc, we were unable to control for other factors that might explain the experiences of LGBTQ students at two-year institutions. It is important to consider these limitations when interpreting results, though these limitations do not exclude us from garnering meaning from the findings.

Results

Table 1 details demographic variable proportions for students at two-year institutions. Within our sample of LGBTQ community college students, about one-third were people of color, 40% were low-income students (income under \$25,000), and almost one-quarter were first-generation students.

[Insert Table 1]

Table 2 includes means and standard deviations for factors created through PAF. Because the factors were standardized during PAF, the mean scores are all 0.00 and the standard deviation values are all close to 1.00.

[Insert Table 2]

The hierarchical regression analysis model with all independent variables explained 45.3% of the variance in campus climate ($p < 0.001$). Within demographic variables, only first-generation status ($\beta = -0.105$; $p < 0.05$) significantly related to a more negative campus climate. Among classroom context, a chillier classroom climate significantly related to a negative classroom climate ($\beta = 0.651$; $p < 0.001$). No other demographic variables or factors significant related to campus climate for LGBTQ students at two-year institutions. In other words, classroom climate (operationalized as student's perceived safety, comfort, feeling welcomed in the classroom, LGBTQ inclusive curriculum) was the strongest predictor of students' overall campus climate. Table 3 summarizes these results.

[insert Table 3]

Qualitative data illuminated similar stories regarding the influences of campus climate for LGBTQ students. Several students discussed the influence of classroom experiences on overall campus climate. For example, when asked what the campus could do to improve the climate for LGBTQ people, two community college students specifically suggested improving the classroom experience. One said "And it [the institution] could add more LGBTQQ curriculum and literature." In the response to another question, a respondent elaborated by saying, "I have realized that my school is an ok school in sense of attitude towards LGBTQ but the fact that we have no LGBTQ resources or curriculum is a little upsetting..." This student not only directly

addresses curricular concerns, but also highlights the lack of resources on campus for LGBTQ students relative to LGBTQ student needs.

Our analysis of open-ended questions confirms that many students do not feel supported by faculty. For example, when asked if they would recommend the institution to a prospective LGBTQ student, one respondent said, “I wouldn’t because many of the faculty do care about the students, but I think the LGBTQ issue hits a little too personal for any of the faculty to truly feel comfortable in that kind of supportive role. So if someone I knew was looking for a supportive school, I wouldn’t recommend it.” In response to a question about improving the campus climate for LGBTQ students, another community college student said, “More accountability for teachers to keep class discussion from building up to more hostile anti-LGBT stuff. It’s not like everyone has to be pro-LGBT, but sometimes homophobia can really take over a discussion!” When asked why they considered leaving the institution, one community college student said, “I considered leaving for a number of reasons but the most pertinent was the obvious allowance of derogatory language towards gays by campus faculty. No one cared to stop the use of term ‘That’s so gay.’” These qualitative data point to the unique influence that faculty have on LGBTQ students’ perception of the classroom environment and, by extension, the campus climate.

Students’ commentary and results from the quantitative data suggest that community colleges have campus climates that are not supportive of LGBTQ students, particularly manifested through classroom experiences and faculty interactions. The qualitative data also reveal a more nuanced narrative of LGBTQ community college student experiences. For example, one respondent said, “Most of the professors on campus are very open and positively contribute to the climate and talk to students about everything.” Another respondent described a negative experience with a secretary on campus and the subsequent support they received from a

faculty member. The respondent then noted that, “I sat through almost 2 hours of her [the secretary] telling me what a bad person I am. I didn’t want to be there anymore, but after telling the faculty advisor of our club about this situation, he dealt with it and I felt better knowing I had support and people who cared about me.” These data provide evidence of experiences contradictory to the previous quotes and suggest both unsupportive and supportive experiences from community college faculty. Evidence of supportive faculty experiences is promising and actually support the claim that ‘faculty matter,’ but the quantitative data suggest the average classroom experience of LGBTQ community college students is unsupportive.

Discussion

Results from our study suggest a strong relationship between campus climate and classroom climate for LGBTQ students at two-year institutions. In other words, what students experience within the classroom and among faculty largely governs and predicts their attitude and perceptions of campus climate. These results support existing literature on LGBTQ student experiences in four-year institutions which suggest that these students feel isolated (Rankin, 2003) and consider campus as chilly or not inviting (Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, & Robinson-Keilig, 2004; Evans & Broido, 2002; Garber, 2002). Although we did not directly observe students’ developmental and academic outcomes in this study, evidence on the relationship between students’ campus experiences and desirable student outcomes suggests LGBTQ community college students’ learning, development, and persistence may be at risk (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Brady & Bruce, 1994; Chang, 2002; Fischer & Hartmann, 1995; Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998; McCormack, 1998; Serex & Townsend, 1999; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001). Moreover, evidence from this study shows that the

classroom environment, in particular faculty interactions, are influential in students' overall perception of the campus environment.

From the research on community colleges, we know that these institutions have historically served underrepresented student populations with open access and a strong emphasis on diversity (Bailey & Morest, 2006; Bragg, 2001; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Harbour & Ebie, 2011; Griffith & Connor, 1994; Valadez, 2002). However, there is a scarcity of research examining LGBTQ students in these specific institutional contexts (Sanlo, 2012; Zamini-Gallaher and Choudhuri, 2011). While one may hope that values of equity and diversity are a hallmark of community colleges that extend to all underrepresented and marginalized students, including LGBTQ individuals, our findings reveal inequities and perceived hostile campus and classroom environments for LGBTQ students.

Students discussed the lack of inclusivity for LGBTQ issues and identities in the curriculum at two-year colleges. Students at two-year institutions felt on average that their curriculum included fewer lectures, readings, and presentations by and about LGBTQ individuals. According to one student's qualitative response, the absence of LGBTQ curricular issues was upsetting to her. Findings from our study parallel Shaw, Rhoads, and Valdez's (2002) claim that community colleges have failed to adapt to a growing and changing diversity in their student populations. While the curriculum at two-year institutions may have adapted to encompass other marginalized identities, our data suggest LGBTQ topics are largely absent in the curriculum.

Numerous students in our study felt that faculty were either indifferent or openly did not support LGBTQ issues. Students described faculty as indifferent to getting to know students personally, and that LGBTQ topics made faculty uncomfortable. However, qualitative findings

revealed mixed perceptions of support from faculty, with some students claiming that LGBTQ issues are too personal for faculty, and others saying that professors positively contribute to the climate and engage students in personal conversations. Despite this seemingly contradictory evidence, the results support the claim that faculty are important to students' experience, whether positive or negative. Similar to existing research on faculty and student interactions in community colleges, our findings suggest that faculty play a significant role in the classroom experience, particularly when validating nontraditional and marginalized students (Barnett, 2011; Rendon, 1994).

Potential Best Practices

Recently, scholars have called upon community colleges to reexamine the inclusiveness of their environments (Cox & Watson, 2011). Our study illustrates the experiences for LGBTQ students at two-year institutions, and based on our results we recommend that community colleges examine their specific institutional contexts to discover to what extent they welcome and affirm LGBTQ students. To start, we recommend that two-year institutions conduct climate and resource assessments for all diverse communities, including for LGBTQ individuals.

Colleges may consult the *Campus Climate Index* through Campus Pride (www.campusclimateindex.org) to gauge their campus' offerings against other colleges and universities. Administrators may also consider reporting their *Campus Climate Index* scores to Campus Pride so that prospective students can learn more about their institution. Few community colleges participate in national climate index studies, which severely limits the insight for all constituents, including students, faculty, administrators, and scholars.

Community colleges should also analyze their curriculum to see if it represents the diversity of their student population, and whether LGBTQ issues are present. Additionally,

academic administrators should determine what support and/or training is available for faculty to learn about and become more familiar with LGBTQ issues in the classroom. Academic personnel may partner with LGBTQ personnel or consult LGBTQ higher education associations to learn how to best incorporate LGBTQ and other minority communities across curricula.

The literature on community college faculty suggests that large proportions are part-time (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). These faculty typically tend to feel detached from their college, have little participation in institutional governance, and have high levels of dissatisfaction with employment benefits and job security (Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006). Faculty dissatisfaction and disengagement at community college might explain some observed differences in our study. For example, faculty might not feel motivated to support students' identities in the classroom. Or, because part-time faculty may have to balance other jobs or are poorly compensated, part-time faculty might not have the time to thoughtfully integrate LGBTQ issues in the curriculum. Two-year institutions should closely examine the responsibilities of faculty (part-time and full-time) and determine if they have a fair balance to accommodate students' holistic development, both inside and outside of the classroom. If faculty members do not have time or resources allotted to provide advisory support to students, community colleges must fill in this void with some other service or alteration to faculty responsibilities.

According to the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals' website, there is only one community college listed as having an LGBTQ center, office, or personnel. Faculty may not be aware they are creating an unwelcoming classroom experience for LGBTQ students, and the absence of a designated campus professional or resource center to educate faculty and the campus may exacerbate this issue. Though community colleges may have fewer student services and co-curricular offerings than four-year institutions (in part due to

lower fiscal resources), administrators should pay attention to this disparity and create social spaces for LGBTQ students to meet one another. For example, colleges may consider having a specific session for LGBTQ students at the welcome orientation, or a weekly luncheon for LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff to congregate.

Future Research

Synthesizing our findings into the broader context of community college and LGBTQ student research poses great possibilities, largely because so few scholars have examined this specific student constituency at two-year institutions. Future researchers should continue to examine this unique student population at community colleges. Specifically, scholars must investigate the differences in curricular and co-curricular LGBTQ offerings and resources at community colleges, and how and if they influence students' sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, and ultimately learning and academic success. Additionally, future studies should ask how and if faculty support of LGBTQ issues influences LGBTQ community college students' classroom experiences. As recognized by our findings, faculty interactions and the curricular component of a LGBTQ students' community college experience are both particularly important. Finally, future research should link LGBTQ community college students' perceptions of campus climate to key student learning, development, and success outcomes.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables

Variable	<i>N</i>	%	Missing	Total	Coding
Person of color	34	33.3	0	102	1 = POC; 2 = White
Low-income	41	40.2	2	102	1 = under \$25K; 2 = \$25K and above
First-generation	23	22.5	4	102	1 = first-generation; 2 = not

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Factors

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Missing	Total	Coding
Classroom climate	0.00	0.97	6	102	low score is positive classroom climate, high score is negative classroom climate
Curricular issues	0.00	0.96	9	102	low score is good/inclusive curriculum, high score is bad/non-inclusive curriculum
Campus responses	0.00	0.97	5	102	low score is good campus response, high score is bad campus response
Campus resource use	0.00	0.96	6	102	low score is low use, high score is high use
Campus climate	0.00	0.98	3	102	low score is positive campus climate, high score is negative campus climate

Table 3
Campus Climate Regression Analysis

Variable	β	β	β
Person of color	-0.052	-0.073	-0.062
Low-income	0.444	0.335	0.371
First-generation	-0.321	-0.133	-0.105*
Classroom climate		0.670***	0.651***
Curricular issues		-0.007	0.005
Campus responses			0.009
Campus resource use			0.102
<i>R</i> ²	0.024	0.457	0.453
<i>F</i>	1.692	15.448***	11.194***

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Appendix 1

Principal Axis Factoring and Coefficient Alphas

Item	Loading	Cronbach Alpha
Classroom Climate		
		$\alpha = .89$
Perceived safety in classroom buildings	.65	
Overall comfort with classroom climate	.69	
Classroom climate welcoming for women who are GLBQ	.80	
Classroom climate welcoming for men who are GBQ	.93	
Classroom climate welcoming for people who are gender variant	.86	
LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum		
		$\alpha = .94$
Classes include lesbian issues in class lectures	.83	
Classes include readings about lesbian issues	.85	
Classes include gay male issues in class lectures	.69	
Classes include readings about gay male issues	.73	
Classes include bisexual issues in class lectures	.82	
Classes include readings about bisexual issues	.74	
Classes include gender variant issues in class lectures	.75	
Classes include readings about gender variant issues	.73	
Classes include readings about homophobia/heterosexism	.80	
Institutional Support		
		$\alpha = .91$
Academic dean/unit head supports sexual identity issues/concerns	.77	
Department head/direct supervisor supports sexual identity issues/concerns	.87	
Faculty support sexual identity issues/concerns	.70	
Academic dean/unit head supports gender identity/expression issues/concerns	.81	
Department head/direct supervisor supports gender identity/expression issues/concerns	.90	
Faculty support gender identity/expression issues/concerns	.76	
Resource Usage		
		$\alpha = .96$
Walked into the Office of LGBTQ Student Services	.89	
Made telephone, instant message, or e-mail contact with LGBTQ Office staff	.88	

Attended a meeting of an LGBTQ organization on campus	.74	
Attended an LGBTQ or Allies-focused event or program	.86	
Read e-mail updates from LGBTQ Student Services	.88	
Visited the LGBTQ Student Services web site	.88	
Used the LGBTQ Student Services library and lounge	.90	
Requested resources/referrals from LGBTQ Student Services	.91	
		Campus Climate
Overall comfort with campus climate	.63	$\alpha = .92$
Campus climate dimension: friendliness	.84	
Campus climate dimension: concern	.64	
Campus climate dimension: cooperation	.85	
Campus climate dimension: improvement	.81	
Campus climate dimension: welcoming	.88	
Campus climate dimension: respect	.86	
Campus climate positive for LGBT people	.77	

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