

Motivations to Attend College among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer  
Students

By

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Honors Thesis

Appalachian State University

Submitted to the Department of Psychology  
and The Honors College  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Science

May 2016

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### Abstract

The literature on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) college students focuses primarily on their experiences after they get acquainted at their college or university. The purpose of this study was to assess motivations to attend college among LGBTQ college students, and to find any connections between their identity development and those motivations. Qualitative data from 9 participants was collected and coded. Results show that LGBTQ students who come from unaccepting environments or families are more likely to express motivations such as leaving their home, self-exploration, or branching out. This provides information for higher education professionals who seek to create more inclusive, welcoming environments in college.

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Motivations to Attend College Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer  
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**Introduction**

The decision to attend college is an important step in one's educational journey. While little research has been conducted on student motivations to attend college, even less has been done on how belonging to certain identity groups influences those motivations and decisions. Understanding the experience of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) students is becoming increasingly important as institutions of higher education strive for diversity and inclusivity. The question posed here is whether LGBTQ students' identity development plays a role in their motivations to attend college.

*Identity Development in Sexual and Gender Minorities*

Understanding the identity development of LGBTQ college students is a topic of interest for those in higher education and psychology. There are multiple models of identity development for this group, but there are limitations in addressing this complex issue. The Cass (1979) Model of Homosexual Identity was the first to propose stages of development and is still used as the basis for explaining the development of non-heterosexual identities. The Cass Model is composed of six stages. The first, identity confusion and awareness, is when an individual recognizes feelings of being different. Identity comparison is the second stage in which the individual begins to rationalize their feelings and compare them to ones they associate as heterosexual. In the third stage, identity tolerance, the individual begins to reach out to others who identify as homosexual, and the individual begins to tolerate their own identity. However, individuals may still feel alienation at this stage. The fourth stage, identity acceptance, occurs when the individual continues to find more people with similar

identifications, which generates a more positive self-image. People are likely to disclose to others during this stage. Identity pride is the fifth stage where the individual embraces the homosexual community and rejects some heterosexual values. Finally, in identity synthesis, the individual merges their homosexual identity into their sense of self and sees less of a dissonance between heterosexual and homosexual communities. The Cass Model was developed by research with gay, male participants and is intended to apply to lesbian women as well. Therefore, it cannot adequately explain the experience of other non-heterosexual identities.

Another important model that emerged was the Lesbian Identity Development Model (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). McCarn and Fassinger recognized that a new model needed to be crafted to address the specific experiences of lesbian women. They felt that the Cass Model, along with other previous gay/lesbian development models, addressed the group membership aspect of development too heavily. Thus, they created a phase model that depicts a balance between individual processes and group processes. While it is a phase model, McCarn & Fassinger understand that individuals develop in different progressions and can inhabit multiple phases at once. Their four phases include: awareness, exploration, deepening/commitment, and internalization/synthesis.

Most of the existing literature on LGBTQ identity development focuses on white gay men and lesbian women. There is not currently a development model that addresses bisexuality specifically. What we do know is that bisexuals experience their identity differently than gays and lesbians. Some bisexuals come to terms with their identity later in life after self-labeling as homosexual or heterosexual, while others are aware of their identity from childhood (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). In a study on disclosure of sexual identity,

Maguen, Floyd, Bakeman, and Armistead (2002) reported that bisexual youth often experience self-awareness at a later age compared to gay and lesbian youth. Other populations are understudied as well, such as queer people of color. Because of the cultural stigma surrounding sexual minorities in various ethnic and racial communities, queer youth of color are less likely to disclose their identity than their white counterparts (Maguen et al., 2002). These gaps in the literature should encourage more research on marginalized groups such as transgender people, bisexual people, and queer people of color.

One stage model that does address transgender identity development was proposed by Lev (2004). His Transgender Emergence Model is one of the first and few to address this specific community. Lev's book, *Transgender Emergence*, serves as a guide for social workers and counselors who will be working with transgender and gender-nonconforming clients. This model includes six stages: awareness, seeking information/reaching out, disclosure to significant others, exploration (self-labeling), exploration (transition issues), and integration.

In 1994, D'Augelli created a Homosexual Lifespan development model, which states that certain events can occur at different points in someone's life rather than following a stage-like progression, as previous models had implied. The events that make up this model include: exiting a heterosexual identity, developing a personal LGB identity status, developing a social LGB identity, claiming an identity as a LGB offspring, developing a LGB intimacy status, and entering a LGB community. Stage models do not apply to every individual's life experiences, so a lifespan model better reflects how LGBT individuals develop at their own pace and in different circumstances (D'Augelli, 1994).

All of these models express similar important events in LGBTQ identity development. Self-awareness of one's identity, exploration, disclosure or "coming out", and acceptance of one's identity are all elements incorporated into each model. D'Augelli's model will be used in this study because the fluidity and flexibility of the model could apply to most gender and sexual minorities, not just gay men, as is the focus of other models.

### *LGBTQ Students' Motivations for Attending College*

The available research on LGBTQ college students focuses on their development after starting college, particularly in leadership roles. Renn (2007) conducted a study on LGBT student leaders and found that increased involvement led to increased "outness," which in turn encouraged them to get more involved and obtain leadership roles. She also found that initial motivations for getting involved in student groups were wanting to explore identity, seeking social support, and seeking a voice on campus, to name a few. These motivations for involvement could be similar to LGBTQ students' reasons for attending college, particularly if they have not "come out" or disclosed their identity. In 2004, Stevens assessed gay identity development in the college environment. A large component of finding support networks in college is disclosure of one's sexual identity. In this sample, first disclosure was often to friends or other peers who identify as a sexual minority (Stevens, 2004). Finding empowerment was also a pivotal component of these men's identity development in college. After disclosures and accepting one's identity, they were more able to feel empowered about who they were (Stevens, 2004). One qualitative study investigated motivations to attend college for gay, black men in particular. Strayhorn, Blakewood, and DeVita (2008) found that gay, black men came to college to "come out" because they were not comfortable disclosing their identity in black communities, and this influenced their

choice of attending predominantly-white institutions. These men felt that predominantly white institutions were safe spaces for their gay identities (Strayhorn et al., 2008).

### *Motivations to Attend College*

In the past, sexual or gender identity has not been an area of focus for research on college motivation. We now wish to understand why LGBTQ students come to college in the first place. Some information does exist on why students choose to attend college as opposed to not attending college, although the effects of gender and/or sexual identity were not considered in this work. Cote and Levine (1997) developed a model for student motivations for attending university that has been used and modified in other research. They proposed five motivation categories. The first category is careerist-materialist motivation, which involves using college as a means to achieve a desired career, financial satisfaction, and status (economic or otherwise). The personal-intellectual development category references personal growth and learning. Another motivation category is humanitarian, which is the idea that one can help the less fortunate or change the world after attending college. The expectation-driven motivation involves pressure from family and peers to obtain a degree. The final category is default motivation, in which students elect to attend college because they do not know what else they could do.

Although the above categories address the biggest motivations for going to college, the model does not address every motivation, especially for underrepresented groups. Phinney, Dennis, and Osario (2006) expanded this model to accommodate for the college motivations of ethnically diverse students. They found three reasons for attending college that had not been reported before, including: to help one's family, to prove oneself academically, and because they were encouraged. These motivations were ranked high

among all non-white ethnic groups. Previously mentioned motivations were reported among all groups, but of lower importance. Other studies have investigated reasons to attend college among diverse samples, such as Terenzini et al. (1994). In their study, predominantly white, traditional students were expected to go to college; therefore, they had not really thought about their reasons for attending prior to the study. First-generation students, however, reported that going to college was a break in their family tradition. These students, who were mostly ethnic minorities, wanted to move past the expectations of their family and peers (Terenzini et al., 1994). For racial and ethnic minority students, the motivations to attend college are usually different than those of their dominant group peers. This is likely because minority groups have different experiences in a society that is shaped around the views and expectations of the mainstream, or privileged, groups. As another type of minority group, I expect LGBTQ students to have different experiences, such as developing a marginalized sexual or gender identity, that may influence their college motivations.

### *The Current Study*

My aim for this qualitative study is to see if a student's place in identity development has any influence on their motivation to attend college. In other words, I am looking for a relationship between their place in identity development (using D'Augelli's model) prior to attending college and their reasons for choosing to attend. I hypothesize that students who have reached a later stage in development or accepted their identity prior to college will place less importance on their identity as a reason to attend college, whereas students who are in a lower stage or are struggling with their identity will place more importance on their identity formation as a reason to attend college.

**Methodology**

This study used an epistemological framework, as it is a core part of qualitative research. As there is currently no research on LGBTQ students' motivations to attend college, we employed the Grounded Theory approach in order to generate knowledge about this topic. Grounded Theory develops a plausible theory that is grounded in the data itself (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Data was analyzed using constant comparative methods and the coding process used in Grounded Theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define open coding as a process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data. This was utilized by noting trends across the participants' qualitative responses and comparing them. Then, themes were created based on the commonalities in which responses could be categorized. This methodology was chosen due to the specificity of the population being studied and the sensitive nature of studying minority groups.

*Sample*

The sample consists of 9 undergraduate students and was obtained at a Southeastern public institution with approximately 18,000 undergraduates. The sample is made up of 7 white students, 2 students of color, 4 female-identified, 3 male-identified, and 2 transgender students. Participants also self-identified with various sexual identities including: gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual, and demisexual. Because of the specific population being studied, purposeful sampling was used. The LGBT Center, Sexuality and Gender Alliance, and the Office of Multicultural Student Development on campus were contacted to assist in identifying potential participants for the study. This sampling method was used because I believed it would recruit participants who could provide deep, meaningful insights into their experiences.

*Procedure*

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to assist in the coding process. After agreeing to participate and signing the consent form (See Appendix B), participants were asked open-ended questions (See Appendix C) about their identities, the coming out process, personal relationships, and motivations for attending college. Interviews were exploratory in nature and semi-structured, so that interviewers could ask follow-up questions in order to truly understand their experience. Establishing trust is an important element of qualitative research. As an active member in the LGBT groups on campus, I have relationships with several of the participants. This allowed for trustworthiness and credibility during interviews and data collection. Following the interview, participants completed the Student Motivations to Attend University-Revised SMAU scale. (See Appendix A). Participants rated the 46 items using a Likert scale (*1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree*) to assess the degree that the college motivations were true for them. The seven motivation subscales were career/personal, humanitarian, default, expectation, prove worth, encouragement, and help family. Examples of career/personal motivation items were “to help me earn more money” and “it gives me the opportunity to study and learn.” Cronbach’s alpha for this subscale was .87. Examples of humanitarian motivation items were “to help people who are less fortunate” and “to contribute to the welfare of others.” Cronbach’s alpha was .80 for the humanitarian subscale. Examples of default motivation items were “there are few other options” and “had no choice but to come to college.” Cronbach’s alpha was .71 for the default subscale. Examples of the expectation motivation items were “parents/family would be very disappointed” and “there were pressures on me from parents/family.” Cronbach’s alpha was .73 for this subscale. For

the prove worth motivation subscale, an example item was “to prove wrong those who expected me to fail,” and Cronbach’s alpha was .81. The encouragement motivation subscale had a Cronbach’s alpha of .70 and an example item was “someone I admired or respected encouraged me.” And finally, an example of the help family motivation items was “it would allow me to help parents/family financially.” Cronbach’s alpha was .88 for this subscale. (Phinney et al., 2006).

### *Data analysis*

Transcripts were read and re-read in order to identify themes in identity development and college motivations. The thesis writer and director agreed on the themes found. D’Augelli’s identity development model was used to assess participants’ place in their identity development based on the information obtained through interview questions. The subscale means from the Student Motivations to Attend University Scale (SMAU) were computed and compared to the qualitative results. Because of the small sample size, quantitative analyses were not completed using the SMAU data. Instead, each participant’s pattern of subscale means was examined to determine their primary motivations for choosing to attend college.

### **Findings**

To understand the identity development of the participants in this study, I utilized D’Augelli’s Homosexual Lifespan Model. I felt that transgender students’ identity development could be applied to the D’Augelli model as well, except for transition issues. Regarding the events in the model, all participants had exited a heterosexual/cisgender identity, developed their personal LGBT identity, and developed a social LGBT identity (disclosed their identity to their friends). Only five participants had claimed themselves as an

LGBT offspring, or disclosed to their parents. Seven participants had developed an LGB intimacy status, or had intimate relationships since coming out. Finally, eight of the participants had entered an LGBT community by getting involved on campus. Because this model is a lifespan model rather than a stage-progression model, I felt that it accounted for variations in identity development among all the sexual minorities in the sample. However, this model (along with most current models) was not always able to explain the developmental experiences of queer people of color. People with multiple marginalized identities have unique experiences and come to terms with those separate, but intersecting identities in different ways. An LGBTQ identity development model with an emphasis on intersectionality needs to be created to account for the experiences of queer people who also identify as a racial minority.

As expected with most college students today and consistent with Cote and Levine (1997), college motivations that were ranked highly on the SMAU survey were related to career aspirations, personal growth and learning, and expectations from others to attend. These reasons were often mentioned in the interviews as well. Humanitarian reasons, such as contributing to the human condition, were also ranked highly on the SMAU scale by at least half of the participants, but these reasons were only mentioned in one participant's interview. Also noteworthy were the reasons mentioned by the two participants of color. Consistent with Phinney, Dennis, and Osario (2006), these students reported helping family and to prove worth as motivations to attend college, whereas white students rarely reported this. Prior research from Fuligni and Tseng (1999) suggests that children from immigrant families place high importance on helping their family financially as an academic motivation, which may explain why non-European American students rank this motivation higher. Chuateco (2004)

also found that ethnic minority students are often told to not aspire to college, but rather to seek out other options after high school. These types of messages may make non-white students want to prove those people wrong. Students of color today may have similar experiences that relate to why those motivations are ranked higher than white students.

Interestingly, most participants reported other motivations during their interviews that were not covered in the SMAU scale. The most prominent theme found was students wanting to get out of their small, unaccepting hometowns or wanting to find a place with people they identify with. Other related motivations that were mentioned by participants include: branching out, self-exploration or self-discovery, and not being stuck in the same place. One participant, Nathan<sup>1</sup>, explained that getting out of his unaccepting hometown was the main reason he wanted to attend college. “I’m from a very small town in North Carolina...it’s very homophobic, very close minded...I didn’t think there would be any other opportunities for me to be in an inclusive and open environment other than college.” Another participant expressed similar sentiments. Taylor said, “[College] was a chance to get out of where I was living and kind of exist on my own. I lived in a really small town and I just wanted to go somewhere I could explore myself more.” Another factor influencing these students’ motivations to attend college was meeting new people that they could relate to. Isabella stated: “Second reason [for attending college] was definitely to meet more people, to get outside of my comfort zone and maybe find people that I identify more with rather than the people in my hometown.”

I had initially hypothesized that LGBTQ students would have more motivations for attending college such as leaving home and self-exploration if they were in a lower phase of identity development. This was not entirely correct, as participants reached different events

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms were created for every participant to maintain confidentiality

before and after attending college. However, I did find that the seven participants who mentioned reasons such as leaving their home, self-discovery, meeting new people, etc. were the individuals who had not come out to their families or did not experience acceptance and support from their home environments. The two participants who had received complete support from their families, friends, and hometowns did not mention any reasons of the sort for attending college. This implies that acceptance from one's family of an LGBTQ identity plays a significant role in those students' motivations to attend college. For most of the participants, religion was a mediating factor in the family's acceptance of their child's identity or the reason that the students have not disclosed to them. Selena, who is not out to her parents, said, "It was definitely a weird experience growing up in a very religious family and having that constant struggle between religion and LGBT identities." Another participant, Riley, talked about the struggle of their<sup>2</sup> mom's intolerance toward their transgender identity. They said, "My mom's not really supportive at all... and she's super religious Christian. She sees it as going against God...so that's really stressful...It's really hard to share anything about me with somebody who doesn't acknowledge me." Nathan has also come out to his parents, but they are not very supportive due to what their religious beliefs have taught them. "My entire family is conservative, Southern, Christian Baptist. [My mother] is not very receptive because she had been taught that being gay was wrong." For many LGBTQ individuals, religion is a factor that keeps people from coming out or serves as a source of conflict between their identities and the environment in which they grew up (Schuck & Liddle, 2001). This is represented in seven of the nine participants in the sample.

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<sup>2</sup> They is used as a singular pronoun to refer to this transgender participants' gender identity, as requested by participant.

Another finding reflected previous research regarding queer people of color. Consistent with Maguen, Floyd, Bakeman, and Armistead's (2002) findings, the students of color in the sample were not out to their families due to stigma or unacceptance from Black communities. Isabella shared her experience with her Jamaican father. "My dad's Jamaican...and that's not tolerated at all and people are getting killed in Jamaica right now [because they identify as LGBT]. So I'll probably never come out to him." It is not uncommon for queer people of color to feel stigmatized within their own race communities (Maguen et al., 2002; Strayhorn et al., 2008).

A theme that was found regarding identity development was participant's level of community involvement and activism. All but one of the participants in the sample had been involved in an LGBT community or organization on their college campus. In previous research, Renn (2007) explored LGBT student leaders and their motivations for getting involved in communities on campus. Some of the participants, such as Nathan, expressed similar importance for entering an LGBT community. He said,

I was extensively involved for 3.5 years because that was what I sought out first in college. I realized how much getting into LGBT communities and being involved with them did for me and my mental health and making me a stronger person and a better leader...getting involved with LGBT community-building really helped me figure out that was my passion and direct me to my major.

Nathan sought out a community for social support and became an active leader because of it. Another participant, Lauren, got involved because she could finally be out about her sexual orientation. "I can be more open about [my sexuality] without having a constant fear of someone in my family finding out. I wanted to check it out because I've avoided the

community for so long even though I do identify as part of it.” Riley also touched on the importance of community by saying, “Community acceptance can fill in that gap when there’s not family acceptance.” One participant even transferred schools in order to find a better LGBT community. Isabella said of her old institution, “It was just way too small and I had to transfer. Everyone there was the same; there was no LGBT community.” After transferring she said, “I don’t know anything about the community and I want to get into it because apparently I’m a part of this now.”

### *Limitations*

It is necessary to acknowledge that there were several limitations to the current study. First, the sample size is small, even though this would be expected for a minority population. Another possible limitation with the sample was homogeneity. Even with attempts to diversify the sample, most of the participants were volunteers in the university’s LGBT Center. Thus, these students’ experiences may be different than those who do not get involved with the community or may not be out to everyone on campus. It would be difficult to find participants who are not out and open on campus, though. It is hard to generalize these findings because of the sample that was obtained. Another limitation to the study was the way the qualitative data was analyzed. The study serves as a psychology student’s honors thesis, so the data collection and analysis had to be completed in a short amount of time. Furthermore, I did not have a team to help code the transcriptions and create themes from them. I could have overlooked some possible connections that could have been found with a larger research team. The lack of time also contributed to the interviews being shorter in nature than what would have been ideal. However, I do feel that I was able to draw out

enough information to create the major finding of the study: the connection between family acceptance and motivations to attend college among LGBTQ students.

### *Implications*

The findings of this study could be beneficial to professionals working in higher education institutions. This study suggests the importance of LGBTQ communities and acceptance in college, especially for individuals who come from unaccepting environments. If these students' motivations for attending college are based on leaving their hometowns, then colleges need to create inclusive campus climates and resource centers for LGBTQ students so that they can live as their true selves once they come to college. According to Tetreault, Fette, Meidlinger, and Hope (2013), LGBTQ students who feel the need to hide their identity on campus or have experienced negative bias are more likely to perceive the campus climate as negative and have thoughts about leaving college. Creating inclusive and supportive environments on campus could lead to better outcomes for these individuals. A question that arose from this study is how LGBT identity development is different for people of color than that of white individuals. The models of identity development that exist today were created with predominately white samples. Thus, future research should focus on identity development among queer people of color and how those experiences are unique from other populations. Another area that could be improved is the Student Motivations to Attend University scale. This should be updated to reflect the college motivations of various underrepresented groups, such as the reasons found for LGBTQ students in the current study.

### **Conclusion**

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer individuals are often a population that is ignored in psychological research. This study focused on the identity development of

LGBTQ students and how that influences their motivations to attend college. The results demonstrate the unique needs of this population, especially for students who come from unaccepting backgrounds. This research can guide future researchers and professionals in higher education who seek to improve the experiences of LGBTQ students entering college.

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doi:10.1080/00918369.2013.774874

Appendix A

Student Motivations for Attending University- Revision 2

Participants will indicate on a 1-5 scale the degree to which each of the following college motivations is true for them.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. To help me earn more money	1	2	3	4	5
2. To obtain the “finer things in life”	1	2	3	4	5
3. To achieve a position of higher status in society	1	2	3	4	5
4. To achieve personal success	1	2	3	4	5
5. To improve my intellectual capacity	1	2	3	4	5
6. To get into an interesting and satisfying career	1	2	3	4	5
7. To understand the complexities of life	1	2	3	4	5
8. It gives me the opportunity to study and learn	1	2	3	4	5
9. To understand complexities of the modern world	1	2	3	4	5
10. To develop myself personally	1	2	3	4	5
11. To contribute to the improvement of the human condition	1	2	3	4	5
12. To contribute to the welfare of others	1	2	3	4	5
13. To make meaningful changes to the “system”	1	2	3	4	5
14. To help people who are less fortunate	1	2	3	4	5
15. There are few other options	1	2	3	4	5

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16. It is better than the alternatives	1	2	3	4	5
17. Had no choice but to come to college	1	2	3	4	5
18. I don't get anything out of my courses	1	2	3	4	5
19. I often ask myself why I'm in university	1	2	3	4	5
20. There were pressures on me from my friends	1	2	3	4	5
21. Parents/family would be very disappointed	1	2	3	4	5
22. Would let parents/family down if I didn't succeed	1	2	3	4	5
23. There were pressures on me from parents/family	1	2	3	4	5
24. I owe it to parents/family to do well in college	1	2	3	4	5
25. I am expected to get a degree	1	2	3	4	5
26. To prove wrong those who expected me to fail	1	2	3	4	5
27. To prove wrong those who thought I was not "college material"	1	2	3	4	5
28. To prove to others that I can succeed in college	1	2	3	4	5
29. Someone I admired or respected encouraged me	1	2	3	4	5
30. I was encouraged by a mentor or role model	1	2	3	4	5
31. There was someone who believed I could succeed	1	2	3	4	5
32. To get an education in order to help my parents/family financially	1	2	3	4	5
33. It would allow me to help parents/family financially	1	2	3	4	5
34. To make new friends	1	2	3	4	5
35. To have new experiences	1	2	3	4	5
36. To have "the college experience"	1	2	3	4	5

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37. To find my passion	1	2	3	4	5
38. To network for my future career	1	2	3	4	5
39. As a necessary prerequisite to graduate or professional school	1	2	3	4	5
40. To be financially secure	1	2	3	4	5
41. To obtain a higher-paying career	1	2	3	4	5
42. To play on an athletic team	1	2	3	4	5
43. To play on an athletic team to afford college	1	2	3	4	5
44. To be in close proximity to a significant other	1	2	3	4	5
45. To experience diversity	1	2	3	4	5
46. To be independent	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix B

**Title: Motivations to attend college among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Students**

Principal Investigator: Kate Rawson

Department: Psychology

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Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lindsay Masland

Contact: [maslandlc@appstate.edu](mailto:maslandlc@appstate.edu)

**Consent to Participate in Research  
Information to Consider About this Research**

I agree to participate as an interviewee in this research project, which concerns *the reasons and motivations for LGBTQ students to attend college as it intersects with their identity development*. The interview will take place *in Smith Wright Hall and will consist of one interview that is around 60-90 minutes in length*. I understand the interview will be about *my identities and reasons for attending college*, and I will be asked to discuss my identity development, such as coming out, relationships, and involvement in the community, in depth.

I understand that *there are no foreseeable risks* associated with my participation. I also know that this study may *benefit society by contributing knowledge about LGBTQ students to the fields of higher education and psychology*.

I understand that the interview will be audio recorded. I understand that the audio recordings of my interview may be *transcribed to a word document and then deleted* if I sign the authorization below.

I give Kate Rawson and Lindsay Masland ownership of the tapes, transcripts, and/or recordings from the interview conducted with me and understand that tapes and transcripts will be kept in the *researchers' possession*. I understand that information or quotations from *transcripts will be published following my review and approval*. I understand I *will not* receive compensation for the interview.

I understand that the interview is voluntary and there are no consequences if I choose not to participate. I also understand that I do not have to answer any questions and can end the interview at any time with no consequences. I confirm I am at least 18 years of age.

If I have questions about this research project, I can call *Kate Rawson* at 828-291-3487, Dr. Lindsay Masland (Faculty Advisor) at 828-262-2272, or the Appalachian Institutional Review Board Administrator at 828-262-2692; through email at [irb@appstate.edu](mailto:irb@appstate.edu); or at Appalachian State University, Office of Research Protections, IRB Administrator, Boone, NC 28608.

This research project has been approved on February 15, 2016 by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Appalachian State University. This approval will expire on February 14, 2017 unless the IRB renews the approval of this research.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have read this form, had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and received satisfactory answers, and want to participate. I understand I can keep a copy for my records.

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Participant's Name (PRINT)

Signature

Date

## Appendix C

## Interview Questions

1. What are the appropriate pronouns for you? And what is your sexual orientation and gender identity?
2. What is your year and major?
3. What were your motivations and/or reasons to attend college as opposed to not going to college? Please think of all the reasons.
4. What would you say were the top three reasons you decided to come to college?
5. Were there any particular people or things that influenced your decision or reasons to attend college?
6. Did you attend any other college or university before Appalachian?
7. When did you first realize your sexual orientation or gender identity was unique or different? What was that experience like for you?
8. Tell me about the time of your first disclosure of your sexual or gender identity, i.e. your “coming out” story?
9. (If not previously mentioned) Were your family and/or friends receptive or supportive of your identity?
10. When was your first intimate relationship after coming out? Did you keep it secret or was it public?
11. Is your sexual orientation and/or gender identity your most salient identity; in other words, do you think about it often?
12. Are you currently or have you been involved in any of the LGBT organizations and clubs on campus? Explain the extent of your involvement.
13. Do you consider yourself to be an activist, or someone who is actively involved in promoting LGBT issues and making change?