Comparison of LGBT student involvement in identity-based organizations vs. other organizations on campus

Gabby Mora

Department of Educational Organization and Leadership, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, December 2009

What is “identity”? [image]

Cass’ Homosexual Identity Formation Model

Based on two assumptions,
- Identity development is a process
- Behavioral changes take place due to interactions between the individual and others

Six-stage Model,
1- Identity confusion
2- Identity comparison
3- Identity tolerance
4- Identity acceptance
5- Identity pride
6- Identity synthesis

Multiple Dimensions of Identity

Research Method

- Personal interviews with three students and three staff at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- Interviews focused on 15 questions and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes each
- Staff participants were chosen based on their roles on campus: all of them advised or worked with LGBT groups or at the LGBT Resource Center
- Students were chosen based on recommendations by staff participants.
- Each student participant was directly connected to one of the staff participants

How do students view identity-based groups?

- Identity-based groups are a positive part of their lives
- These groups allow for students to become more aware of certain issues affecting the community related to the particular identity
- Involvement with the LGBT Resource Center is much more prevalent than involvement in LGBT groups on campus
- Other groups on campus are important but do not provide the support they need to deal with their identity
- Students find themselves more interested in programs offered by identity-based student groups on campus than other groups, regardless of the identity such groups focus on.
- Identity-based groups are a big part of activism and raising awareness about LGBT issues
- Students are more likely to attend identity-based group meetings than other meetings on campus

How do multiple identities affect LGBT students?

LGBT students who present multiple salient identities (i.e. Latino and gay, lesbian student with a disability) often separate their sexual orientation from their other identities because sexual orientation tends to be the identity perceived most negatively by family and friends. (Abes, Jewes & McEwen, 2007)

Why are LGBT groups important for LGBT students?

Student 1 (Sophomore, 19)
“LGBT groups on campus allow me to be surrounded by people who share my interests, providing me with a sense of community.”

Student 2 (Freshmen, 18)
Belonging to an LGBT group “makes you more aware of the issues that are out there that may be disguised by every day life.”

Student 3 (Senior, 21)
“LGBT groups provide that feeling-at-home type thing. It is nice to be at a place where I can just be myself and don’t have to explain every little thing.”

Leadership Identity Development Model (LID)

Leadership Development in LGBT Students

- Commonly, LGBT students focus on involvement in organizations that are directly related to their identity. This applies to any of the identities that may be present in addition to their sexual orientation: race, ethnicity, gender, etc.
- Involvement in identity-based organizations “promotes positive development of leadership or activism and personal identity.” (Renn & Bilodeau, 2005, p. 344)
- Students in identity-based groups focus their leadership skills toward the betterment of the group and not the individual
- Sexual minorities experience more challenges than other students on campus, often affecting their academic performance (Rankin, 2005)

Contact information

Gabby Mora
M.Ed. In Higher Education Candidate
Department of Organization and Leadership
College of Education
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
gabby@illinois.edu