Identity Centers: Perceptions and Affiliations

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Identity Centers: Perceptions and Affiliations

Even though colleges and universities have greatly improved in the last few decades towards more progressive and safe college campuses, college students still face social isolation, harassment, and violence as a result of their sexual orientation or gender (Mallory, 1998; Owens, 1999; McCandless, 2009). Fortunately, many campuses provide lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students, as well as female students, with resources that greatly improve their experiences. LGBT and Women’s Centers work to fight against discrimination on campus, while student groups offer a place to meet and socialize with other like-minded students (Porter, 1998; Yoakham, 1999).

Campus Resources

Centers are typically funded by the universities and are often managed by a full-time professional staffer. Depending on the university, centers typically function both within and beyond the university campus. For the larger campus community, centers work to increase awareness and support for females and LGBT students. Some centers may even advocate for LGBT or women’s rights off of campus. For the inner campus community, centers primarily work to educate and support students, and to create a safe space where students can meet other similar individuals (Kasper, 2004). Campus centers provide many services, including information, referrals, management of incidents (i.e. hate crimes or rapes), crisis intervention, student organization advising, and mentoring (Bonebright, Cottledge, & Lonnquist, 2012; Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenberg, 2002). Furthermore, the mere presence of these centers on campuses sends a clear message to all students, faculty, and staff that LGBT students and female students are supported and accepted (Ward, 1998). Thus, these centers ultimately build “a climate that offers equal learning opportunities for all students” (Sanlo et al., 2002).
In addition to campus centers, student groups are a common resource that provide support, information, and fun for college students. These groups are typically run by and for students and their allies, and they may or may not be connected with the campus center. These groups can serve up to three purposes: support, socializing, and/or activist work (Westbrook, 2009; Kasper, 2004). Activist work mainly focuses on educating and influencing the larger campus community, whereas social and support works to build a prevalent LGBT community and female presence on campus. For LGBT students, social and support work are often separated by identity or orientation, such as groups for women, students of color, or bisexual students (Mallory, 1998).

**Common Problems**

Given the importance of identity centers and student groups, one could assume that LGBT and Women’s campus-based resources are vital for many college students’ wellbeing and academic success. While there are few studies that examine the effectiveness of these centers, several studies have identified common problems that inhibit individuals from affiliating with their organization. Based on a review of the extant literature, five critical problems that both LGBT and Women’s Centers face are administration and professor support, students’ attitudes towards identity centers, participation, differential leadership development, and visibility (Kasper, 2004; Westbrook, 2009).

**Administration and Professor Support**

While administration support differs greatly across institutions nation-wide, many LGBT organizations and Women’s Centers report having college administrations that have low levels of commitment or interest when it comes to supporting these centers (McCabe & Rubinson, 2008; Donohue-Mendoza, 2012). Many administrators today hold positive attitudes towards LGBT
individuals and report a willingness to address LGBT issues in schools, but many others still appear naive of the problems faced by LGBT individuals and lack experience in negotiating complex social justice issues in schools (McCabe & Rubinson, 2008). In a similar vein, some administrations still may not support those who report sexual assault (Payne, 2008). Sexual assault is common among college-aged women (18 to 25 years). In 2007, one in five women reported experiencing these crimes during their college years (Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2015). Although sexual assault is underreported in all settings, college students are particularly less likely to report; up to 80% of sexual assaults in college settings are unreported (Sinozich & Langton, 1995-2013).

Schools can play a significant role in preventing the negative effects of harassment and bias faced by students and administrators on college campuses. Administrations can establish strong anti-harassment policies, offer ongoing training to professors and students regarding bias towards marginalized groups, and provide increasing support to LGBT and female students (Peters, 2003). School administrators have a vital role in creating acceptance among all school members. Efforts to improve school climates for all types of students require administrative endorsement and support. Likewise, administrators and professors in institutions that fail to facilitate a safe and inclusive climate and fair access to education for all students should be held accountable. Ultimately, universities have a responsibility to nurture a respectful environment, encourage reporting, implement appropriate sanctions for unacceptable behavior, and reintegrate survivors of harassment back into the academic community (Reingold & Gostin, 2015).

**Student Attitudes Towards Identity Centers**

When it comes to managing an LGBT center or women’s center, one of the greatest obstacles is combating generalized stereotypes towards LGBT and feminist individuals. LGBT

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stereotypes typically associate gay men with the mannerisms of heterosexual women and lesbian women with the mannerisms of heterosexual men (Rhee, 2014). When it comes to females who associate with Women’s Centers, they have to overcome several beliefs. These beliefs include equating feminist to lesbian, a backlash against feminism, conservative political beliefs, and the feeling among many women that equality has already been achieved, so there is no need for a Women’s Center (Kasper, 2004).

It is important to recognize that negative stereotypes towards the collective identity of a center’s constituents inhibits many from affiliating with LGBT or Women’s Center. As such, colleges need to actively try to dismantle these widely held stereotypes through educational efforts inside and outside of the classroom. One method of combating these stereotypes is through diversifying the centers’ management and programming efforts. Identity centers need to provide regular activities that are not necessarily problem- or issue-focused. Through these institutionalized changes, centers will be able to break dated stereotypes related to feminist or LGBT “identity” (Kasper, 2004).

In addition, recent findings have also found that many identity centers struggle in regards to general apathy of students. Today, many college students believe that that feminism is no longer necessary or that LGBT students no longer face discrimination, which speaks to the failure of identity centers’ programming efforts. However, it is also possible that this apathy is being misunderstood. “What has been considered tried-and-true programming may no longer seem relevant to the new generation” (Kasper, 2004). Thus, more campuses need to devote their resources to examining what matters most to their current students and take efforts to help their student achieve those goals.
Participation

In Kasper’s (2004) nationwide study examining issues that Women’s Centers face, one obstacle found was low participation rates. Kasper’s findings were based on a questionnaire that was sent to 378 Women’s Centers at four-year colleges or universities in the summer of 2000. In total, 75 surveys were completed by the centers’ faculty and analyzed (return rate of 19.8%). From 36 private and 49 from public colleges and universities. Her survey consisted of 52 questions, the majority of which were open ended. Kasper constructed this survey based off input from the Women’s Center Advisory Board, and input from the directors of Women’s Centers in Minnesota, Iowa, and North Carolina. The survey focused on the following areas: center’s resources, administrative structure, use and programming, fostering of participation, internal and external relationships, communication, and perceived roadblocks and successes (Kasper, 2004).

The findings of this study showed that low attendance was a major obstacle for 12 (16%) of the centers. The involvement of faculty and traditional students was identified as particularly problematic (Kasper, 2004). Additionally, many Women Centers struggle with whether to engage in outreach efforts that are specifically aimed at men. Kasper (2004) found that campuses that do provide services for men often focus on men as perpetrators of relationship violence; this programming “niche” may consequently threaten many men and undermine the potential support they offer. More specifically, in Kasper’s (2004) study 44% of survey respondents stated that their Women’s Center did not offer specific programs or services to men, and 25% of respondents stated that the services their centers do offer men, revolve around the relationship between violence and sexual assault.” As a result, many Women’s Centers are left only engaging female students, as men are resistant to join. While programs to inform students and to prevent
violence are necessary, it may be better to expand the types of opportunities that are made available to men to become involved.

LGBT centers also face similar difficulties when it comes to engaging heterosexual allies and female students (Grzanka, Adler, & Blazer, 2015; Westbrook, 2009). On college campuses nation-wide, U.S. News & World Report (2011), estimates that less than a third of student government presidents are women, and the American Association of University Women (2013) speculates that the gender gap between male and female leaders is significant. In Westbrook’s (2009) study examining the gender gap between male and female participation in LGBT organizations on college campuses, her two primary research question were: (1) *Why do queer women and men utilize LGBT campus resources?* (2) *Through what processes do certain groups within LGBT communities unintentionally get excluded from access to resources?* In order to examine these questions, Westbrook conducted qualitative interviews (Weiss, 1995) and case-oriented comparative methodology (Ragin, 1987) on two campuses in California. Following this model, Westbrook selected two cases, that were similar in pertinent ways on each campus, that experienced different outcomes. As such, she treated each campus as a case, rather than each participant, as a unit of analysis.

Ultimately, her research found that not all LGBT students have the same level of access to resources on college campuses. All participants (*N* = 30) in her study noted that women did not participate at the same level as men in LGBT groups on campus. While previous research has explained this gender gap due to blatant sexism and women’s different needs from men (i.e. challenging their domestic, traditional roles in society), Westbrook’s findings showed that this gap can be explained due to the style of leadership support present in a particular organization or group. While her research methodology was advantageous, as it allowed for highly complex and
detailed analysis, her low number of cases make her findings harder to generalize to the larger population.

Often, LGBT and Women’s centers measure “success” by high level of participation. However, in order to increase their center’s number of participants, LGBT and women’s Centers alike have to understand the needs of their students. If centers were to increase the feedback loop between students, faculty, and their center, and annually survey students about the services they offer, one would assume these centers would be able to more effectively carry out their mission statements.

Additionally, research shows that centers which offer educational programming, support, and counseling bring in high numbers of participants (Grzanka et al, 2015). Another method to foster more participation is through outreach efforts to special populations. For the LGBT community, this could mean bringing in more straight allies, and for Women’s Centers, this could mean engaging male populations, women of color, and even the LGBT community. Identity centers could offer or host special services, support groups, or discussion groups for these populations. If simply offering these services are not enough, identity centers can provide deliberate invitations to groups that serve students’ other needs. For example, if identity centers were able to work together to support events and bring awareness to shared issues such as safety, discrimination, and victimization more students would be able to reap the benefits that these centers offer. Today, popular programming events that have high participation rates on college campuses include “The Vagina Monologues,” self-defense classes, and forums on eating disorders and sexual health (Kasper, 2004).

Differential Leadership Development
It is no surprise that groups that are run by students with leadership training and ongoing leadership support are more likely to succeed (Westbrook, 2009). It has been well established in the literature on identity centers that students need leadership development to succeed as leaders (Sanlo et al., 2002; Qibtiyah, 2012). Since college students have probably never run a group other than in high school, many students are still in the process of developing leadership skills. Once placed in a position of power, his or her actions could positively or negatively affect the rest of the organization.

As a result, some researchers have argued that how leadership support is distributed should be monitored (Westbrook, 2009). Currently, most institutions have a patrimonial system of leadership distribution, where resources are distributed by people in charge based on personal ties, feelings of closeness, and favors owed. Consequently, many student leaders do not receive the same level of advising and leadership training. Scholars argue that since student leaders are relatively young and have not yet formed adequate leadership skills, without leadership support from a mentor or campus office they often struggle when leading a group (Westbrook, 2009). Without this much-needed support, groups can struggle with high levels of burn-out, low membership in groups, and high rates of group failure. However, if these institutions adopted a bureaucratic system to distribute leadership support and acquired an office whose sole purpose was to make sure all students received the same high level of training, then more students would be able to thrive and leadership opportunities would be distributed off of a student’s needs, not on their personal relationship with a centers’ director or staff (Outcalt, 1998; Qibtiyah, 2012).

Visibility

Both the LGBT and Women’s Centers have to find the fine line between having a center that is physically visible and having a center that offers privacy to some of its members. In order
to increase internal or external visibility within these identity centers, research provides a number of solutions. For starters, offering information sessions for new and potential students has proven to be very effective (Kasper, 2004). By offering information about LGBT organizations and Women’s Centers early in a student’s college career, they will be able to take advantage of the resources and support the center provides during their entire collegiate career. In addition, research has shown that a center should frequently host receptions and open houses, providing college students from specialty populations with multiple opportunities to seek information about a center’s services and resources. In Kasper’s (2004) nationwide study, which surveyed participants of Women’s centers on college campuses, 48% of participants reported that their campus centers were successful in involving women of color, and 59% of participants reported that their centers were effective in engaging the LGBT community.

There are other actions a center can take to strengthen a center’s visibility from the greater college community. First, a center could offer specialty training to specific groups or organizations on campus, such as self-defense classes, sexual assault prevention workshops, or bystander intervention training (Koelsch, Brown, & Boisen, 2012). Some schools have also found it effective to highlight special events, such as “Women’s History Month” or “National Coming Out Day” to increase public awareness and participation from the greater campus community (Klak & Martin, 2003).

The Current Study

The current study will build on past research to further examine the factors that either promote or inhibit affiliations with identity centers on Duke University’s campus. While past research has tested these factors qualitatively, the present study will quantitatively measure students’ perceptions regarding these five critical issues. In addition, the present study will
measure whether students’ perceptions regarding these issues differ based on their campus affiliations with the Women’s Center and Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity (CSGD), Duke University’s LGBT Center.

Method

The data was gathered via an online 46 item survey consisting of questions and statements (a list of all survey items can be found in Appendix B) designed to elicit students’ perceptions regarding the five common problems (administration and professor support, student attitudes towards identity centers, participation, differential leadership development, and visibility) that previous research has suggested impacts students’ motivation to affiliate with campus based identity centers.

Participants

A total of 147 college students at Duke University participated in this study. Participants were recruited via three sources: The Duke Department of Psychology and Neuroscience subject pool ($N = 83$), the Duke Women’s Center ($N = 36$), and the Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity ($N = 28$). Students from the Psychology and Neuroscience subject pool were recruited through an online portal and received department credit as compensation. Students from the Women’s Center and the CSGD were recruited through their center’s directors and their center’s interns.

Measures

The measures in the study are described below in the order in which they were administered in the study (see Appendix 1 for full measures). All measures were constructed based on previous findings from the extant literature on the factors that promote or inhibit
affiliates with identity centers on college campuses. For each question, participants were given
the opportunity to select “prefer not to answer.”

**Demographics.** Six items assessed the demographics of participants. The demographic
questions assessed the following variables: year in school, sexual orientation, sex assigned at
birth, gender identity, ethnicity, and campus affiliations.

**Administration and professor support.** Seven items assessed participants’ perceptions
on administration support. Administration support was judged on a 5-point Linkert scale (1 =
*disagree* and 5 = *agree*). Two items assessed participants’ perceptions regarding the
administrations support towards the Women’s Center. Two items assessed participants’
perceptions regarding the administration’s support towards the CSGD. Two items measured
professors’ awareness of issues female and LGBT students face. One item assessed whether or
not the administration would support a student if he or she reported an incident of sexual assault.

**Students’ attitudes towards identity centers.** Eight items measured participants’
perceptions on campus held attitudes towards identity centers. All items were judged on either a
5-point Linkert scale (1 = *disagree* and 5 = *agree*) or 7-point Linkert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*
and 5 = *strongly agree*). Specifically, two items measured stigmas associated with identity
centers, two items measured the views affiliates of identity centers are perceived to have, two
items measured whether or not non-affiliates of identity centers are perceived as being
supportive, and two items assessed whether the overall attitudes students have towards issues
female and LGBT students face.

**Participation.** Eight items measured campus perceptions towards identity center
participation rates. Four items were measured on a 7-point Linkert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*
and 5 = *strongly agree*) and four items were answered with *yes* or *no* responses. Specifically,
four items measured opportunities for participation and four items measured whether or not participants ever provided feedback to identity centers on campus about their policies or programs.

**Differential leadership development.** Four items measured leadership opportunities and development within identity centers. All items were answered with yes or no responses. Specifically, two items assessed leadership development within the Women’s Center and two items assessed leadership development within the CSGD.

**Visibility.** Fourteen items measured identity centers’ visibility on campus. Items were measured either with a 5-point Linkert scale (1 = disagree and 5 = agree) or with yes or no responses. Specifically, four items measured participant’s awareness of identity centers’ location and programming efforts, two items assessed privacy issues, two items measured whether knowledge about programming affects participation, four items measured identity centers’ approachability, and two items measured the number of friends of participants that are associated with either the Women’s Center or LGBT center.

**Statistical Analysis**

The first goal of the study was to quantitatively measure students’ perceptions regarding the five critical issues. In order to execute this goal, descriptive statistics were reported on all measures. The second goal of this study was to measure whether students’ perceptions differed based on their campus affiliation. In order to execute this goal, participants were divided into three groups: affiliates of the Women’s Center, affiliates of the CSGD, and non-affiliates. Independent samples t-tests were then conducted on the Linkert scale measures of interest.
Results

Sample Description

The sample consisted of 147 participants, 84 were female (57.1%), 59 were male (40.1), and 4 preferred not to answer (2.7%). There were 85 freshmen (57.8%), 30 sophomores (20.4%), 13 juniors (8.8%), 11 seniors (7.5%), and 8 (5.5%) preferred not to answer. Of the 147 participants, 109 (74.1%) identified as heterosexual and 38 identified (26.9%) as LGBT. Specifically, 4 (2.7%) identified as lesbian, 4 (2.7%) identified as gay, 13 (8.8 %) identified as queer, 4 (2.7%) identified as asexual, 9 (6.1%) identified as bisexual, 2 (1.4%) identified as questioning, and 4 (2.7%) identified as pansexual. In my sample, 17 (11.6%) participants were African American, 80 (54.4%) were Caucasian, 27 (18.4%) were Asian, 6 (4.1%) were multiracial, 8 (5.4%) were Hispanic, 1(.7%) was Native American, 2 (2.0%) were South Asian, and 5 (3.4%) were other.

Statistics for Study Measures

For a list of all statistics for study measure, refer to Table 1 in Appendix A.

Administration and professor support measures. In general, students perceived the administration support towards the Women’s Center ($M = 2.82, SD = 0.83$) and CSGD ($M = 2.92, SD = 0.78$) to be fairly low, with the average response between slightly disagree and neither agree or disagree on the survey. Interestingly, an independent samples $t$-test showed that affiliates for both the Women’s Center ($t (119) = -2.402, p = .018$) and the CSGD ($t (65.59) = -4.78, p = .00$) viewed the administration as being more supportive towards their respective center when compared to non-affiliates.
Findings showed that students perceived professors as being slightly aware of the problems faced by female \((M= 3.57, \ SD = 1.03)\) and LGBT \((M = 3.70, \ SD = 1.05)\) students, with a response average between \textit{neither agree or disagree} and \textit{slightly agree}.

On the sexual assault item measuring whether the administration would support students claiming sexual assault, the average mean score once again lied between \textit{slightly disagree} and \textit{neither agree or disagree} \((M = 2.75, \ SD = 1.29)\).

**Students’ attitudes towards identity centers.** Overall, participants did not perceive the Women’s Center \((M = 2.69, \ SD = 1.14)\) or the CSGD \((M = 2.99, \ SD = 1.12)\) to have either positive nor negative stigma. While there was no significant difference between affiliates and non-affiliates of the Women’s Center \((t (129) = -1.03, \ p = .306)\), an independent sample \(t\)-test did show a significant difference between the perceptions of affiliates of the CSGD and non-affiliates of the CSGD \((t (120) = -3.34, \ p = .001)\), with affiliates perceiving a more negative stigma associated with the center.

In addition, students’ perceived non-affiliates of the Women Center \((M = 2.22, \ SD = .825)\) and CSGD \((M = 2.48, \ SD = .90)\) as being rather unsupportive, both with an average response between \textit{slightly disagree} and \textit{neither agree or disagree} on the survey. An independent samples \(t\)-test showed that there was no significant difference between the views affiliates and non-affiliates had for both the Women’s Center \((t (52.3) = -1.63, \ p = .11)\) and the CSGD \((t (118) = - .270, \ p = .181)\).

Lastly, participants perceived the majority of students on campus as being apathetic towards issues female \((M = 2.93, \ SD = 1.13)\) and LGBT \((M = 2.8, \ SD = 1.12)\) individuals face, both with an average response between \textit{slightly disagree} and \textit{neither agree or disagree} on the survey. While there was no significant difference between affiliates and non-affiliates of the
Women’s Center \((t(132) = .755, p = .452)\), an independent sample \(t\)-test did show a significant difference between the perceptions affiliates and non-affiliates of the CSGD \((t(131) = -2.23, p = .021)\), with affiliates perceiving the majority of students as more apathetic of issues faced by LGBT students.

**Participation.** In general, students thought there were a fair amount of opportunities to become involved with the Women’s Center \((M = 3.20, SD = 1.63)\) and the CSGD \((M = 3.3, SD = 1.70)\). When an independent sample \(t\)-test was performed, there was no significant difference in views from those who affiliate and do not affiliate with the Women’s Center \((t(145) = .835, p = .405)\), but there was a significant difference between the views of those who affiliate and do not affiliate with the CSGD \((t(52.02) = 2.95, p = .005)\), with affiliates perceiving a lower number of opportunities for students to become involved.

Participants also believed that the Women’s Center \((M = 2.70, SD = 1.78)\) and the CSGD \((M = 3.00, SD = 1.70)\) did not fully meet the needs of students, with an average response between *slightly disagree* and *neither agree or disagree* on the survey. Further, an independent samples \(t\)-test showed that affiliates for both the Women’s Center \((t(145) = 2.84, p = .005)\) and the CSGD \((t(86.10) = 6.33, p = .000)\) perceived their respective center as meeting the needs of students less when compared to non-affiliates.

With regards to providing feedback to the Women’s Center, 137 participants (93.2%) reported never providing feedback about the center’s policies and 135 participants (91.85%) reported never providing feedback about the center’s programs. Furthermore, when providing feedback to the CSGD, 128 participants (87.1%) reported never providing feedback about the center’s policies and 123 (83.7%) reported never providing feedback about the center’s programs.
Leadership. If interested, 79 participants (53.7%) believed that there were potential leadership opportunities for them at the Women’s Center, while 61 participants (41.5%) believed that there were potential leadership opportunities for them at the CSGD. Additionally, findings showed that 104 participants (70.7%) believed that the Women’s Center provided leadership development opportunities for students, while 84 (57.1%) participants believed that the CSGD provided leadership opportunities for students.

An independent samples t-test showed that affiliates of both the Women’s Center ($t(83.60) = -3.90, p = .000$) and CSGD ($t(51.34) = -5.25, p = .000$) perceived more leadership opportunities within their respective centers when compared to their non-affiliate counterparts.

Visibility. Items measuring students’ awareness of the Women’s Center ($M = 3.40, SD = 1.24$) and CSGD ($M = 3.54, SD = 1.46$) programming efforts were found to have an average response between *neither agree or disagree* and *slightly agree* on the survey. However, only 70 participants (47.6%) could correctly identify the location of the Women’s Center, while 93 participants (63.3%) could correctly locate the location of the CSGD.

Participants believed that the Women’s Center ($M = 2.24, SD = 1.11$) and the CSGD ($M = 3.10, SD = 1.12$) did not provide students with enough privacy. When an independent sample t-test was performed, there was no significant difference in views from those who affiliate and do not affiliate with the CSGD ($t(98) = -.353, p = .725$). However, there was a significant difference in views from those who affiliate and do not affiliate with the Women’s Center ($t(104) = 2.19, p = .031$), with affiliates perceiving the center as not offering students enough privacy compared to their non-affiliate counterparts.

Additionally, 95 participants (69.3%) said that they would be more likely to affiliate if they knew more about the programming efforts put on by the Women’s Center, while 68
participants (53.1%) said that they would be more likely to affiliate if they knew more about the programming efforts put on by the CSGD. Lastly, 102 participants (76.7%) believed that the services offered by the Women’s Center are accessible to all students and 87 participants (59.2%) believe that the services offered by the CSGD are accessible to all students.

**Discussion**

Although literature regarding campus resources have discussed the importance of resources for female and LGBT students, as well as have examined some reasons for non-participation, the existing literature has not evaluated why students *do* and *do not* participate. Without attention to what attracts students to campus resources, the literature cannot explain differential participation, nor can it fully explain the success or failures of particular programming efforts.

As such, my research aimed to further examine the common problems identity centers face, while paying particular attention to not only students’ perceptions but also the centers they *do or do not* affiliate with.

**Administration and professor support.** The first common problem identity centers face is administration support. Findings from this study showed that students perceived the administration and professors support for the Women’s Center and CSGD to be fairly low. While this finding may be surprising, it is fairly consistent with institutions nation-wide, which report low levels of commitment or interest when it comes to supporting identity centers (McCabe & Rubinson, 2008; Donohue-Mendoza, 2012).

However, findings also showed that affiliates of both respective centers perceived the administration as being more supportive when compared to their non-affiliate counterparts. This novel finding would suggest that affiliates either (a) work more closely with the administration,
and thus perceive them as being more supportive, or (b) are more knowledgeable of the actions the administration takes to support its students. If future research focused on how and why affiliates perceive the administration as more supportive, then future efforts could be geared towards changing the perceptions of non-affiliates as well.

While administration support of identity centers has been found to be vital for these centers’ success, past research has also found that it is vital for the administration to be responsive to students’ complaints of assault (Westbrook, 2009; Kasper, 2004). Unfortunately, students on Duke University’s campus viewed the administration as being rather unresponsive to students’ complaints of assault. Further research should investigate how the administration can better support its students’ complaints, especially their reports of sexual assault.

**Students’ attitudes towards identity centers.** The second common problem identity centers potentially face is students’ attitudes towards identity centers. At Duke University, findings from my study showed that students are slightly unaware, unsupportive, and apathetic towards issues female and LGBT students face. While perceptions of the Women’s Center’s did not differ between affiliates and non-affiliates, affiliates of the CSGD perceived their center to be associated with a stronger negative stigma and viewed students to be more apathetic towards LGBT issues when compared to CSGD non-affiliates. These findings suggest that while there may be an overall lack of support and awareness of issues female and LGBT students face on campus, there is also a difference between the perceptions non-affiliates and affiliates of the CSGD have over these issues. This may be explained by the fact that female rights issues have been prevalent in society for longer as compared to LGBT related issues. As such, future research should focus on how to better support the CSGD affiliated individuals, since they hold more negative perceptions towards the support they and their center are receiving.
Participation. The third common problem identity centers potentially face is participation. Findings from my study illustrate that students, both affiliates and non-affiliates, thought there were a fair amount of opportunities to become involved with the Women’s Center and the CSGD. However, once again affiliates of the CSGD perceived fewer opportunities to become involved. This finding again illustrates that the affiliates of the CSGD have perceptions that differ from the larger Duke community. In addition, findings from this study suggested that students believed that the Women’s Center and CSGD could do a better job at meeting the needs of students. Interestingly, affiliates from both identity centers thought that their respective centers could do a better job at providing support for students. As such, future research could investigate how identity centers can better support affiliates and non-affiliates. For the Women’s Center that could mean reaching out to the male population. This is consistent with findings by Kasper (2004), which showed that women’s center’s outreach efforts should target marginalized communities in addition to the male population in order to increase participation and support. Similarly, the CSGD should aim to increase its support for it’s heterosexual allies and female students (Grzanka, Adler, & Blazer, 2015; Westbrook, 2009).

One way centers can measure what marginalized groups on campus need to be supported is through feedback. If centers have a strong feedback loop between students, faculty, and their center, by annually surveying students about the services they offer, one would assume these centers would be able to more effectively carry out their mission statements. However, one of the most shocking finding from this study found that over 90% of students on campus have never given feedback to the Women’s Center or the CSGD with regards to their policies or programming efforts. Looking at these results overall, it would be fair to hypothesize that in
order to increase participation rates within identity centers, centers need to better understand the needs of their students.

**Differential leadership development.** The fourth common problem identity centers potentially face is differential leadership development. In contrast with previous findings (Westbrook, 2009), the majority of students on campus believed that both the Women’s Center and CSGD offered students enough leadership and leadership development opportunities. While previous findings have shown that leadership opportunities within identity centers were restricted by a patrimonial system of leadership distribution (Westbrook, 2009), findings from this study would suggest otherwise. That being said, the items in the study did not explicitly inquire about the division of leadership opportunities within the Women’s Center and the CSGD. A further study could be conducted to further examine these issues.

**Visibility.** The final common problem examined in this paper is visibility. As previously mentioned, identity centers struggle with finding a balance between offering a center that is visible on campus and one that provides privacy for its members. In this study, only 47.6% of participants could correctly identify the location of the Women’s Center, while 63.3% of participants could correctly identify the location of the CSGD. In addition, the majority of students lacked awareness of current programming efforts put on by both the Women’s Center and the CSGD.

While the Women’s Center and the CSGD lacked being physically visible on campus, findings also showed that they did not provide students with enough privacy. In addition, affiliates of the Women’s Centers views differed from non-affiliates, as affiliates perceived their center as not offering students enough privacy. By increasing students’ knowledge about these
centers’ location, programs, and policies, findings from this study would suggest that more students would be more likely to affiliate and benefit.

**Conclusion**

Findings from the extant literature and from the current study illustrate the need for systematic studies to measure the effectiveness of identity centers on college campuses. Since the needs of students are constantly changing, it is vital for Centers to not only provide services but to also continuously assess their efforts to improve effectiveness. Future research should test specific hypotheses about the factors and program components that affect participation and student satisfaction. As a point of entry, Centers can start with establishing systems for feedback in addition to the services they provide to better understand the needs of the current generation of college students.
### Table 1

*Results of Independent Means t-Test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Overall Mean</th>
<th>Affiliates Mean</th>
<th>Non-Affiliates Mean</th>
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Survey 1

Study Description:
The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that promote or inhibit affiliations with identity centers on college and university campuses.

Directions:
This study seeks to assess your knowledge, beliefs, and experiences about Duke’s Women’s Center and the CSGD (Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity). This survey will take you about 15 minutes to complete and you have the option to not answer for each question.

Demographics:
1. What year do you intend to graduate?
   a. 2016
   b. 2017
   c. 2018
   d. 2019
   e. 2020
   f. Prefer to not answer

2. What is your sexual orientation?
   a. Heterosexual/Straight
   b. Lesbian
   c. Gay
   d. Queer
   e. Bisexual
   f. Questioning
   g. Pansexual
   h. Asexual
   i. Self identify: ______________
   j. Prefer to not answer

3. What sex were you assigned at birth?
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Prefer not to answer

4. What is your gender identity?
   a. Female (Cisgender Woman: denoting or relating to a person whose self-identity conforms with the gender that corresponds to their biological sex).
   b. Male (Cisgender Man: denoting or relating to a person whose self-identity conforms with the gender that corresponds to their biological sex).
   c. Genderqueer (individuals whose gender identity and/or role does not conform to a binary understanding of gender as limited to the categories of man/women)
   d. Questioning
e. Transgender Woman
f. Transgender Man
g. Self Identify: ____________
h. Prefer to not answer

5. How would you best describe your race/ethnicity?
   a. Black/African American
   b. White/Caucasian
   c. Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander
   d. Multiracial
   e. Native American/American Indian.Native Alaskan/Hawaiian Native
   f. South Asian
   g. Hispanic/Latino
   h. Not Sure
   i. Prefer to not answer

6. What identity centers do you affiliate with on campus? (Select all that apply)
   a. The Women’s Center
   b. The CSGD (Center for Gender and Sexual Diversity)

7. What groups or organizations do you affiliate with on campus? (Select all that apply)
   a. Religious Organizations
   b. Sports/Intramural Sports Team
   c. Political Group/Organization
   d. Greek Letter Organization
   e. Selective Living Groups
   f. Service Organizations
   g. Academic Organization
   h. Performance Group
   i. Prefer to not answer

The following questions ask you about your knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions about the
Women’s Center and the CSGD.

8. Can you identify the location of the Women’s Center on Campus?
   a. First floor of the Bryan Center
   b. Bottom floor of the Bryan Center
   c. Above the Market Place
   d. Few Federation
   e. Unsure
   f. Prefer to not answer

9. Can you identify the location of the CSGD on campus?
   a. First floor of the Bryan Center
   b. Bottom floor of the Bryan Center
   c. Above the Market Place
   d. Few Federation
   e. Unsure
   f. Prefer to not answer

10. Have you ever given feedback to the Women’s Center about its policies?
11. Have you ever given feedback to the CSGD about its policies?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer to not answer

12. Have you ever given feedback to the Women’s Center about its programs?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer to not answer

13. Have you ever given feedback to the CSGD about its programs?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer to not answer

14. Do you feel that the services offered by the Women’s Center are accessible to all students?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer to not answer

15. Do you feel that the services offered by the CSGD are accessible to all students?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer to not answer

16. How many friend(s) do you have who are associated with the Women’s center?
   a. 0
   b. 1
   c. 2
   d. 3+
   e. Prefer to not answer

17. How many friend(s) do you have who are associated with the CSGD?
   a. 0
   b. 1
   c. 2
   d. 3+
   e. Prefer to not answer

18. If you knew more about the programming efforts put on by the Women’s Center, would you be more likely to affiliate?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer to not answer

19. If you knew more about the programming efforts put on by the CSGD, would you be more likely to affiliate?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer to not answer
20. Do you believe that the Women’s Center is sufficiently inclusive to attract new members?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer to not answer

21. Do you believe that the CSGD is sufficiently inclusive to attract new members?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer to not answer

22. Do you believe that the Women’s Center provides leadership development opportunities?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer to not answer

23. Do you believe that the CSGD provides leadership development opportunities?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer to not answer

24. If interested, do you believe that there are potential leadership opportunities for you at the Women’s Center?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer to not answer

25. If interested, do you believe that there are potential leadership opportunities for you at the CSGD?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer to not answer

26. Does the current location of the Women’s Center offer students enough privacy?
   a. Disagree
   b. Slightly disagree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Slightly agree
   e. Agree
   f. Not sure
   g. Prefer to not answer

27. Does the current location of the CSGD offer students enough privacy?
   a. Disagree
   b. Slightly disagree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Slightly agree
   e. Agree
   f. Not sure
   g. Prefer to not answer

28. I am aware of current programs and events sponsored by the Women’s Center.
   a. Disagree
b. Slightly disagree
c. Neither agree nor disagree
d. Slightly agree
e. Agree
f. Prefer to not answer

29. I am aware of current programs and events sponsored by the CSGD.
   a. Disagree
   b. Slightly disagree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
d. Slightly agree
e. Agree
f. Prefer to not answer

30. There are enough opportunities (i.e. open houses, receptions, information sessions) for students to become involved/gain more information about the Women’s Center.
   a. Strongly Disagree
   b. Disagree
c. Slightly disagree
d. Neither agree nor disagree
e. Slightly agree
f. Agree
g. Strongly Agree
h. Prefer to not answer

31. There are enough opportunities (i.e. open houses, receptions, information sessions) for students to become involved/gain more information about the CSGD.
   a. Strongly Disagree
   b. Disagree
c. Slightly disagree
d. Neither agree nor disagree
e. Slightly agree
f. Agree
g. Strongly Agree
h. Prefer to not answer

32. The administration supports the initiatives of the Women’s Center.
   a. Disagree
   b. Slightly disagree
c. Neither agree nor disagree
d. Slightly agree
e. Agree
f. Prefer to not answer

33. The administration supports the initiatives of the CSGD.
   a. Disagree
   b. Slightly disagree
c. Neither agree nor disagree
d. Slightly agree
e. Agree
f. Prefer to not answer
34. Some Professors seem to be unaware of the problems faced by female students.
   a. Disagree
   b. Slightly disagree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Slightly agree
   e. Agree
   f. Prefer to not answer

35. Some Professors seem to be unaware of the problems faced by LGBT students.
   a. Disagree
   b. Slightly disagree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Slightly agree
   e. Agree
   f. Prefer to not answer

36. Some campus administrators seem to be unaware of the problems faced by female students.
   g. Disagree
   h. Slightly disagree
   i. Neither agree nor disagree
   j. Slightly agree
   k. Agree
   l. Prefer to not answer

37. Some campus administrators seem to be unaware of the problems faced by LGBT students.
   g. Disagree
   h. Slightly disagree
   i. Neither agree nor disagree
   j. Slightly agree
   k. Agree
   l. Prefer to not answer

38. The administration would support a student if he or she reported an incident of sexual assault?
   a. Disagree
   b. Slightly disagree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Slightly agree
   e. Agree
   f. Prefer not to answer

39. There is a negative stigma associated with the Women’s Center.
   a. Disagree
   b. Slightly disagree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Slightly agree
   e. Agree
   f. Prefer to not answer

40. There is a negative stigma associated with the CSGD.
a. Disagree
b. Slightly disagree
c. Neither agree nor disagree
d. Slightly agree
e. Agree
f. Prefer to not answer

41. Students who affiliate with the Women’s Center have liberal views.
   a. Strongly Disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Slightly disagree
   d. Neither agree nor disagree
   e. Slightly agree
   f. Agree
g. Strongly Agree
h. Prefer to not answer

42. Students who affiliate with the CSGD have liberal views.
   a. Strongly Disagree
   b. Disagree
c. Slightly disagree
d. Neither agree nor disagree
e. Slightly agree
f. Agree
g. Strongly Agree
h. Prefer to not answer

43. The Majority of students on campus are apathetic towards issues female students face on campus.
   a. Disagree
   b. Slightly disagree
c. Neither agree nor disagree
d. Slightly agree
e. Agree
f. Prefer to not answer

44. The Majority of students on campus are apathetic towards issues LGBT students face on campus.
   a. Disagree
   b. Slightly disagree
c. Neither agree nor disagree
d. Slightly agree
e. Agree
f. Prefer to not answer
g. Prefer to not answer

45. The Women’s Center meets student needs not met by other programs on campus.
   a. Strongly Disagree
   b. Disagree
c. Slightly disagree
d. Neither agree nor disagree
46. The CSGD meets students needs not met by other programs on campus.
   a. Strongly Disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Slightly disagree
   d. Neither agree nor disagree
   e. Slightly agree
   f. Agree
   g. Strongly Agree
   h. Prefer to not answer

47. Students who do not affiliate with the Women’s Center still support the services, programming, and efforts put on by the center.
   a. Disagree
   b. Slightly disagree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Slightly agree
   e. Agree
   f. Prefer to not answer

48. Students who do not affiliate with the CSGD still support the services, programming, and efforts put on by the center.
   a. Disagree
   b. Slightly disagree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Slightly agree
   e. Agree
   f. Prefer to not answer
References


