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“We Exist!”: Sense of Belonging for Indian International LGBQ Students in U.S. Higher Education

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requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

"We Exist": Sense of Belonging for Indian International LGBQ Students in U.S. Higher Education

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education
University of California, Los Angeles, 2019
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This study explored perceptions of sense of belonging in academic and social contexts at West Coast University for Indian international LGBQ students in the United States with a focus on how institutional contexts and sociohistorical factors influence perceptions of sense of belonging on campus at the intersection of multiple identities. To address individual and institutional factors, a critical qualitative framework of Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) and a constructivist qualitative framework of Sense of Belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) grounded this phenomenological study. The current study used intersectionality to highlight the multiple and intersecting sociohistorical structures that influence Indian international LGBQ students' perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Sense of Belonging encapsulates how perceptions of personal and interpersonal experiences impact an individual's connectedness and overall success on campus. Strayhorn (2012) conceptualization of Sense of Belonging into seven elements is used in framing and analyzing the study. The seven elements are (a) sense of belonging is a basic human need; (b) is a fundamental motive; (c) takes on heightened

importance in certain contexts at certain times in certain populations; (d) is related to, and seemingly is a consequence of, mattering; (e) social identities intersect and affect college students' sense of belonging; (f) engenders other positive outcomes; and (g)m be satisfied on a continual basis and likely changes as circumstances, conditions and contexts change (Strayhorn, 2012).

All four participants partook in three semi-structured phenomenological interviews based on Seidman's (2013) three-part interview structure: (a) focused life history-understanding of individual and cultural values and journey to U.S. higher education; (b) details of the experience – exploring individual interactions in campus and academic contexts; and (c) reflection on the meaning of the phenomenon – how individuals perceive and make meaning of these experiences. The data analysis developed three major themes: (1) Defying Boundaries, Defining Self and Community, (2) Speaking Language to Power, and (3) Centering Self within Sociohistorical Contexts.

Overall, participants did not feel strong sense of belonging on campus. While interpersonal relationships fostered some belonging, there was a clear lack of overall perceptions of sense of belonging within academic and social contexts. The most salient facets of identity influencing sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students were sexuality, race, international student status, linguistic ability, and gender. While undergraduate and graduate students had similar perceptions of sense of belonging, graduate students expressed a need for relationships with other Indian international students while undergraduate students intentionally looked for domestic social circles.

At the institutional level, salient factors influencing belongingness for Indian international LGBQ students were: (a) lack of awareness among domestic peers and faculty; (b)

lack of visibility of Indian international LGBQ identities and communities on campus, (c) English language testing and requirements and (d) lack of institutional funding support. Intersecting sociohistorical factors influenced individual perceptions of sense of belonging by creating a culture where students did not feel it possible to express their intersectional identities on campus. Finally the study ends with recommendations for practice and research by higher education professionals and scholars.

The study concludes recommendations for practice and research to foster sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students by enhancing support and services specifically for this population while also challenging current definitions of sense of belonging and expanding monolithic representations of international students.

The dissertation of Raja Gopal Bhattar is approved.

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Breathing in, I am in this present moment,

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Asathoma Sat Gamaya, Tamasoma Jyotir Gamaya,

Mruthyorma Amrutham Gamaya, Om Shanti, Shanti, Shantihi

Kayenavacha Manasyendriyaivah, Buddhyathmanava Prakrutheswabhavat

Karome Yedyath Sakalam Paramsai, Sriman Narayana Yethi Samarpayami

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Honoring My Many Selves: Experiences of a South Asian Queer Man in Student Affairs
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Going Beyond Boundaries: Experiences of LGBTQ APIDA Men in Student Affairs
NASPA Inaugural Knowledge Community Conference Publication 3/12

The New Raja Yoga: What Hinduism has taught me about life, student affairs and myself
Graduate Thesis and article published in The Vermont Connection, 3/08

Rainbow Rice: A dialogue between Asian gay men in higher education
Co-written article published in The Vermont Connection, 3/07

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Service to NASPA Award
NASPA GLBT Knowledge Community

VIP Award
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Bridge Builder Award
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National Commission on Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Belonging shouldn't be considered a privilege available to only some students, it should be considered a basic human right."

- Linda Mullen, 2015

Sense of belonging is a critical component contributing to students' success in U.S. higher education, especially for students from marginalized and intersectional populations in U.S. higher education (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012). Yet, the extant research does not address how sociohistorical factors (e.g. heteronormativity, homophobia, xenophobia, racist nativism, sexism, and linguicism) impact students' perceptions of sense of belonging (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) and if or how the concept of sense of belonging can be applied to students with intersecting identities in all spaces (Read, Archer, & Leathwood, 2003). Sense of belonging is defined as a basic human need (Strayhorn, 2012), feeling a personal sense of membership (Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008), and having a level of trust of other members of the group (Furman, 1998; Strayhorn, 2012). Belonging has to do with individual perceptions of personal and interpersonal experiences and the impact of these perceptions on students' overall success and connectedness to campus (Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014; Strayhorn, 2012). Studies found a significant positive relationship between college students' sense of belonging within the classroom and across campus on academic motivation and performance (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007). Similarly, other studies have shown that a lack of sense of belonging has a negative relationship with undesirable outcomes such as depression, anxiety, attrition and self-harm (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Tinto, 1987). In other words, students who do not perceive a sense of belonging to campus, or aspects of campus, are

less likely to be engaged, and more likely to express dissatisfaction and withdraw from colleges and universities (Anderman & Freeman, 2004; Strayhorn, 2012).

Understanding basic factors like sense of belonging that contribute to student success is critical for campuses that state diversity and student success are core values and that strive to serve an ever-diversifying student body (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012). Further, federal and state funding structures are evolving and are becoming increasingly connected to student retention and graduation rates, rather than simple enrollment numbers (Souza, 2016). Simultaneously, scholarly research exploring the concepts of persistence and climate have been criticized for not centering experiences of marginalized students in their analysis (Tierney, 1992). Exploring how students with multiple marginalized identities perceive sense of belonging is necessary to enhance their experiences and address structural and sociohistorical barriers to belonging and success for all on campus (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Higher education institutions and leaders who shape university policies and practices based on dominant student perspectives continue to ignore students already at the margins of campus, and make them more invisible (Bhattar, 2016a; Bowleg, 2008; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012). Centering voices of students with multiple marginalized identities can transform campus for all students (Jones, 2009; Jones & Abes, 2013; Jones, Abes, & Kasch 2013; Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998). This study focuses on sense of belonging for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Queer (LGBQ) Indian international students in an attempt to address and enhance their sense of belonging on campus and foster educational equity. In acknowledgment of the difference between sexuality and gender identity, this study does not include transgender people in an effort to not conflate gender and sexuality.

Currently, U.S. campuses host over one-million international students, more than at any other point in the history of U.S. higher education, according to the Institute for International Education (IIE) (2016). International students at U.S. colleges have increased dramatically from 110,000 in 2001 to 1,043,839 in 2016, representing 5.2% of all students (IIE, 2016). Though the total number of students in U.S. higher education is on a downward trend (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017), international students are highly recruited and continue to have a larger presence on U.S. campuses (Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014; IIE, 2016). U.S. colleges and universities enroll more international students than any other country (Bain & Cummings, 2005), yet, international students feel higher levels of marginalization and experience more challenges than domestic students, especially when academic and social campus contexts are significantly different than their country of origin (Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014; Rosenthal, Russell, & Thomson, 2007; Strayhorn, 2012). Various student populations face marginalization and challenges on campus, including students of color (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012) and LGBQ students (Rankin et al., 2010; Renn, 2010, among others. But international students face a range of additional challenges including: unfamiliarity with academic systems (Baek, 2013; Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014; Osterman, 2000); language (Glass, Gómez, & Urzua, 2014; Yang, 2015; Yao, 2014); cultural norms (Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994; Kushner, 2010); lack of access to familiar food (Kushner, 2010); discrimination (Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014); lack of financial support (Khatiwada, 2012); and access to community spaces (Patrick, 2014; Wall, 2016). Combined, these factors contribute to international students' low levels of connection to campus and overall wellbeing (Hagerty, Lynch-Bauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992; Strayhorn, 2012). Asian international students represent more than 58% of all international students currently studying in

the United States (IIE, 2016). Of all Asian international students, China has the largest percentage of students at U.S. campuses with India coming in second (IIE, 2016). Students from India represent the highest percentage growth of any nationality from 2015 to 2016 (IIE, 2016). Indian international students constitute over 165,918 or 15.9 % of all international students in the United States in 2015-16 (Gardner & Witherell, 2009; Kushner, 2010; Project Atlas, 2016). Further, approximately one in four Asian international students (24%) studying in the United States is from India (IIE, 2016). Even with a notable presence in U.S. higher education, few scholars focus on the experiences of Indian international students on campuses (Atri, Sharma, & Cottrell, 2007; Khatiwada, 2012). This lack of research is reflective of a larger erasure of Asian and Indian people's experiences in U.S. history. Accapadi (2005) wrote, "The consequence of this inadequate representation [of Asian and Indian people in U.S. history] has resulted in the invisibility of the community in higher education research," (p. 12). Coming from a collective culture that places heavy emphasis on community and connectedness to others, understanding how Indian international students perceive sense of belonging is necessary to understand their experiences on U.S. campuses (Bhattar, 2016b; Kushner, 2010).

While the federal government counts and monitors international students, few campuses collect data on LGBQ populations (International Consultants for Education and Fairs (ICEF) Monitor, 2014). According to the American College Health Association (2018), 16.3% of college students identify as identities other than heterosexual, which is more than five times the estimated national average (3.5%) for LGBQ identified adults across the United States (Gates, 2011). Further, many higher education institutions are building programs to recognize, attract, and retain LGBQ identified students (Pratt, 2014). Though the first Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ) center was founded in 1971, 44% (118 out of 269) of LGBTQ

centers on U.S. campuses were established between 2008 and 2017 (Campus LGBTQ Centers Directory, 2017). Notable increases in research on sexual identity and campus climate (Rankin et al., 2010; Renn, 2010) and an increase in LGBTQ centers on campus (Sanlo, 2004) demonstrate a growing awareness and presence of sexual and gender diversity on campus. This research also exposes how domestic LGBQ students' experiences on campus influence academic achievement and overall satisfaction (Rankin et al., 2010; Renn, 2010; Sanlo, 2004; Stout & Wright, 2016; Tarasi, 2016). LGBTQ students who perceive chilly climates on campus feel disconnected from campus contexts and are more vulnerable to experience depression, attrition, and self-harm (Rankin et al., 2010; Renn, 2010; Strayhorn, 2012).

Beyond the campus climate, the current political climate of the United States has a significant impact on international students of various identities. Though September 11, 2001 and the years following saw a decrease in international student enrollments due to tightening of immigration policies and various acts of racism (Iyer, 2015) and Islamophobia (Lowell, Martin & Bump, 2007), the past decade had seen sustained growth in international student enrollment at U.S. colleges and universities (IIE, 2016). The 2016 presidential election and increasing nativist rhetoric from the Republican-controlled White House and Congress have changed this trend. For the first time since the early 2000s, the 2017 Open Doors Report demonstrated a decrease of more than 10,000 new international student enrollments in U.S. higher education (IIE, 2017). Though overall international student enrollments slightly increased, scholars attribute this decrease in new enrollments to the current administration's travel bans, public denouncements, and attacks on immigrants. In addition, scholars point to foreign policies such as the retreat from the Trans-Pacific Partnership which provided for trade agreements with Asia, as well as the Paris agreement regarding climate change (IIE, 2017; McCarthy, 2017). According to the Institute for

International Education, “This is the first time that these numbers have declined in the twelve years since Open Doors has reported new enrollments,” (2017, para. 3). Though this decline in enrollment is troubling, the full impact of current federal policies and practices on U.S. higher education is yet to be determined.

Higher education demographics are shifting with regard to international students and LGBQ student presence in relation to the current political climate, yet there remains a limited understanding of the collegiate experiences of students at the intersection of LGBQ and international identities. More specifically, it remains relatively unknown how sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) influence international LGBQ students’ perceptions of belonging on campus (Renn, 2010; Strayhorn, 2012).

While feeling a sense of belonging may be important for all students, this study focuses on understanding Indian international LGBQ students’ perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Given the lack of data on Indian international LGBQ students, qualitative inquiry is an effective tool for exploring their perceptions of belonging in U.S. higher education. Further, this research will contribute to addressing the current gap in understanding Indian international LGBQ students through lenses of sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) and intersectionality (Bhattar, 2016a; Bowleg, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Strayhorn, 2012).

Problem Statement

There is a growing body of research on international students currently studying in U.S. higher education (IIE, 2016), yet few academic researchers study international students’ sense of belonging (Le, LaCost, & Wismer, 2016; Strayhorn, 2012; Yao, 2014). Current literature compares campus acclimation and challenges between international and domestic students and differences in faculty-student interactions (Glass, Kociolek, Wongtrirat, Lynch, & Cong, 2015;

Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014). Yet, this research lacks focus on students' intersecting identities and the sociohistorical factors that influence their perceptions of sense of belonging on campus (Glass et al., 2015; Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014). For example, Glass and Westmont-Campbell (2014) conducted a study to compare international and domestic students' belongingness on academic success and cross-cultural interactions. Though Glass and Westmont-Campbell (2014), include gender, race, and class year in their analysis, they do not explore how these aspects of identity intersect in shaping a students' perceptions of belonging and do not include sexual identity, religion, or other aspects of identities as part of their analysis. Additionally, this research did not disaggregate Asian/Pacific Islander groups in the sample, which is typical for studies that emphasize race and ethnicity. Collapsing diverse groups of ethnicities into one group is a systemic problem and erases intragroup differences and histories (Museus & Truong, 2009; Ramakrishnan & Ahmad, 2014).

Scholars note that *academic* sense of belonging impacts both academic and social outcomes (Baek, 2013; Osterman, 2000), while others find that a *social* sense of belonging impacts both academic and social outcomes (Koehne, 2005; Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Wall, 2016). Consistently across various studies, English language confidence and competence impacts both academic and social aspects of students' sense of belonging (Subitrelu, 2013; Yang, 2015). Yet, these scholars do not address how English language ability impacts perceptions of sense of belonging for students at the intersection of LGBQ and international student identity (Bhattar, 2016a). Being in an English-based education system, campus environment, and broader society, English language ability is a major barrier in interacting with peers and faculty, building community, and accessing campus resources (Andrade, 2006a; Bhattar, 2016a; Campbell & Li, 2008; Yang, 2015).

Given the increased recruitment and presence of international students and LGBQ students in U.S. higher education, the lack of research on their experiences on campus is concerning. Though Indian international students are the fastest growing and second largest group of international students studying in the United States, only two studies were found focusing specifically on their experiences on campus (Atri, Sharma, & Cottrell, 2008; Khatiwada, 2012) and no studies were found that center the sense of belonging for Indian international students. Similarly, LGBQ students are a growing population on campus and in higher education literature (Rankin et al., 2010; Renn, 2010), yet their perceptions of sense of belonging are severely understudied (Strayhorn, 2012). Renn (2010) argues that higher education scholars have yet to fully address LGBTQ issues connected to internationalization and globalization in the current literature and urges country-specific and comparative studies to enhance our current literature on LGBQ international students.

In preparing for this research, no studies were found that explored the perceptions of sense of belonging for students who identify as both Indian international and LGBQ. Intersectionality and sense of belonging serve as effective concepts for the current study because intersectionality requires us to understand LGBQ international students from India as holistic individuals and reject additive notions of identity (Bowleg, 2008). Sense of Belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) provides a framework for understanding what is happening in the phenomenon and has guided every aspect of this project while Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) has informed methodology and interpretation of institutional and structural factors impacting Indian LGBQ international students' perceptions of belonging on campus (Henstrand, 2015). The use of two frameworks allows for more in-depth and extensive analysis of the phenomenon of sense of

belonging (Mills & Bettis, 2015), contextualized by naming various sociohistorical factors in the environment as identified through intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991).

Further, constructivist qualitative inquiry supports the perspective that everyone experiences sexuality, international identity, and campus in multiple ways, and many face multiple and intersecting forms of oppression, not necessarily in the same ways (Bowleg, 2008; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). Though experiences and perceptions differ, unique truths are constructed for each individual. Similarly, critical qualitative inquiry grounds this study's focus on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) by exploring institutional systems, contexts, and sociohistorical factors influencing individual's perceptions of sense of belonging on campus.

For Indian international students, disclosing international student identity may carry the fear of unwanted harassment and isolation from peers and faculty, and decreasing perceptions of sense of belonging in various aspects of campus (Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014; Wolff, 2014). While sense of belonging and community are important for Indian international students, Indian international students who also identify as LGBQ face difficulties due to intersecting cultural and sociohistorical factors such as heteronormativity, racist nativism, and xenophobia as a result of colonialism (Bhattar, 2016a; Rodricks, 2012; Ting & Morse, 2016). Indian students come from a political climate where non-heteronormative sexuality was criminalized until September 2018 (Borpujari, 2018) and non-heteronormative sexuality is still culturally taboo (Trikone, 2014). Though their co-national students share Indian cultural values, Indian international peers may also pose a risk of outing LGBQ people to family or networks in India. Further, LGBQ Indian international students may feel excluded from spaces for Indian international students (Bhattar, 2016a). Similarly, LGBQ students may feel isolated from other LGBQ people due to cultural and linguistic differences in identity construction (Bhattar, 2016a;

Bowleg, 2008; Kushner, 2010; Wall, 20162016). Further, the current political policies and practices in the United States regarding immigration, foreign policy, and education may also contribute to Indian LGBQ international students' perceptions of belonging on campus (Kavilanz, 2018; McCarthy, 2017). Given the scarcity of research on sense of belonging for Indian international students and LGBQ students, it is important to understand how LGBQ Indian international students uniquely perceive sense of belonging in academic and social contexts on campus and how sociohistorical factors influence their perceptions (Oba & Pope, 2013).

Researcher Positionality

As the primary data collector and interpreter, reflexivity and acknowledgement of my positionality is a critical aspect of this research process (Hopkins, Regehr, & Pratt, 2017; Merriam, 2009). Examining my "preunderstandings" (Finlay, 2008) is not an attempt to remove my role in and understanding of the research, but an opportunity to acknowledge how my values, history, and worldview are strengths that enrich the data collection and interpretation process (Hopkins, Regehr, & Pratt, 2017). Instead of eliminating the researcher's role, "researcher subjectivity should be managed with *reflexivity* – the noting, tracking, questioning, and sharing of the ways we shape and are shaped by the research process," (Hopkins, Regehr & Pratt, 2017, p. 23, emphasis in original). Reflexivity is critical for qualitative and quantitative research because it recognizes the perspectives through which I shape the study and how I am shaped by the planning, collection and interpretation of research data (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ruby, 1980). Therefore, I reflect below on my own experiences, "preunderstandings," and perspectives as it relates to this project.

Cultural Chameleon

I identify as a queer Desi Indian immigrant and have studied abroad in various countries during my academic career. During the time of data collection, I served as the Director of the LGBT Campus Resource Center at a prominent research university in the United States, working with many international LGBQ students on a regular basis. Currently, my professional role also involves working with international LGBQ students and students with various intersections of identity. My interest in this research stems from direct experience in supporting and advocating for international LGBQ students at several U.S. higher education institutions. My identity and professional and personal experiences influence how I understand and interpret perceptions of the participants in this study, what it means to be an Indian international LGBQ student studying in the United States, especially the cultural-political nuances of sexual identity and expression within Indian and Indian American contexts. For example, in India, same-gender contact in public (e.g. two men holding hands) is common and not indicative of queerness as it would be interpreted in the United States Similarly, having studied abroad myself in college, I know family pressures for getting married while using the time abroad to explore sexual and gender identity. I have an intimate understanding of the internalized shame in expressing queerness and the difficulty of navigating the coming out process, especially using my limited fluency in several Indian languages. Finally, I have also had both positive and negative responses from family and friends.

I was born in India and moved to the United States at the age of seven with extended family who adopted me. Though I emigrated at a young age and do not identify as an Indian international student, I grew up in a conservative traditional Indian family in the United States and still frequently visit and communicate with family in India. In *Bend it like Beckham* (Chadha, Nayar, Bindra et al., 2002), Jess, the main character, responds to her best friend coming

out with “You can’t be gay! You’re Indian!” Similar to Jess, I grew up with the understanding that my sexual and racial/ethnic/cultural identities were mutually exclusive, and that you “can’t be gay,” especially coming from the Brahmin caste, which adheres to strict heteronormative roles and structures, partially enforced by colonized interpretations of ancient Hindu scriptures (Bhattar, 2016b; Bhattar & Victoria, 2007). While in college, I came out as gay to my closest cousin who also grew up in the United States and similar to Jess, his first response was, “You can’t be gay, you’re Hindu!” (Bhattar & Victoria, 2007). Other Desi Indian and South Asian colleagues and students have complicated my “Indianness” because of my sexual and gender identity and expression. Usually, their statements begin with, “Really?! You’re Indian? But you’re… you know… I would have never guessed!” as if my identity is a game of *Guess Who.*

For over a decade, I have been involved in LGBTQ activism in the United States, particularly that which explores the intersection of Desi Indian and South Asian and spiritual identities. I have rallied against India’s colonial law Penal Code 377 (Gour, 1961) which criminalizes sodomy; I have written about the impact of homophobia and heteronormativity within Indian culture; I have advocated for diverse representations of LGBTQ people; and I have held various roles within in local and national social change organizations. I have also led LGBTQ and multicultural activism and support programs for various universities in a professional capacity with the mission of enhancing campus climate and institutional policies and structures for people of color, LGBTQ and Queer and Transgender students, staff, and faculty of color. Within educational environments, I have often been asked, “Why are you talking about race and religion? You’re the gay office.” Similarly, I have been made invisible with regard to my racial identity. “I can’t tell what you are,” said a colleague recently with regard to my racial and cultural identity. I am often questioned about my professionalism on

campus when wearing “exotic” Indian clothes or expressing non-binary gender through clothing and accessories. I intentionally wear *kurtas,* traditional South Asian tunics, on a regular basis. My *kurtas* are always pressed and professional, yet, I have been told my outfit is “so exotic and colorful” yet also been given feedback that my outfits are not appropriate for formal events on campus. I am called a “troublemaker” and have felt othered by White and other people of color communities, regardless of sexuality. On the other hand, I’m often told, “Your English is so good! I can’t even tell that you weren’t born here,” by colleagues who meant it as a compliment. Yet this statement makes me question if I am not Indian enough, if I am trying to “pass” as White, or if I should have done or worn something to make my identities less ambiguous to others.

I am told I do not belong when visiting family in India and on a daily basis by strangers in the United States. Not Indian enough. Not American enough. Not enough. September 11, 2001 marked a new era of stereotyping, violence, and harassment against Desi, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Sikh, and Muslim people in the United States and across the world (Iyer, 2015). As a first-year college student at the time, I had to learn how to protect myself from being seen as a terrorist, resisting collusion with xenophobia by challenging my own internalized Islamophobia, and exploring what it means to have multiple marginalized identities within the U.S. college campus context. I felt like I had to make sure everyone around me knew I was not “one of those” immigrants, brown people, or terrorists. I remember not wearing *kurtas* in public for at least a year after 9/11 because I was afraid of being assaulted, followed or being stopped by campus police. Yet, I also noticed I expressed my Hindu identity more overtly, proudly wearing traditional *kumkumam tilakams* (holy powder applied to the forehead, a sign of the

Hindu faith) and taking classes on Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity and never even considering taking a class on Islam.

Navigating my racial, cultural, religious, sexual, and immigrant identities, especially within in education, has framed who I am and my passion for my work. My interactions with Indian international LGBQ students and my own past experiences have guided me to the current research topic and study. I share these personal accounts as a representation of my perspective and positionality in this study. Though my experiences are not the same as that of Indian international students studying in the United States, being a 1.5 generation person (being born in a different country and moving to the U.S. at young child) growing up in the United States and navigating U.S. and Indian cultures and contexts influences my approach to this research (Kanagala, 2011).

As a queer Desi Indian professional, graduate student, and faculty member on campus, I am constantly trying to find where, when, and how I belong. Through a reflection process, it was helpful for me to outline my narrative within educational contexts as they relate to belonging, or lack thereof, and my investment in conducting research to enhance campus climate and systems for supporting Indian international LGBQ students.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore LGBQ Indian international students' perceptions of sense of belonging in academic and social contexts on U.S. campuses. This study also explores how institutional contexts and sociohistorical factors influence LGBQ Indian international students' perceptions of sense of belonging on campus at the intersection of multiple identities. In using a phenomenological approach, this study aims to bring visibility to a population that is not well-understood in higher education. The research also aims to serve as a

catalyst to fill a critical gap within extant literature and practice in U.S. higher education. To work toward this purpose, through this study, I explore four research questions:

Research Questions

The four primary research questions are:

1. How do Indian international LGBQ students perceive sense of belonging on campus?
2. What are the most salient facets of identity influencing sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students on campus?
    a. How does perception of sense of belonging compare among undergraduate and graduate students?
3. What are the most salient institutional factors influencing belongingness for Indian international LGBQ students on campus?
4. How do intersecting sociohistorical factors influence individual perceptions of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students?

Theoretical Frameworks

Intersectionality and sense of belonging are the conceptual foundations for this study. Using intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) and Strayhorn's (2012) elements of sense of belonging, this study will explore LGBQ Indian international students' perceptions of sense of belonging at West Coast University (WCU). Intersectionality provides a critical perspective on structural and sociohistorical factors that influence Indian international LGBQ students' sense of belonging on campus by contributing onus for student's perceptions and experiences on institutional structures and policies. Thus intersectionality will help me to interrogate and analyze my second, third, and fourth research questions. Intersectionality is grounded in legal studies and developed by Crenshaw (1989, 1991) to explore the influence of the intersections of

gender, class, and race on the experiences of Black women with regard to violence, employment, and access to community resources. Intersectionality has become a staple of current higher education research as an effective concept to understand intricate individual phenomena and institutional forces shaping these experiences (Azmitia, Syed, & Radmacher, 2008; Bowleg, 2008; Strayhorn, 2012).

While intersectionality allows for an exploration into the influence of systemic and institutional factors influencing students' perceptions, sense of belonging is helpful to explore students' individual perceptions of sense of belonging. Building on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, Strayhorn's (2012) conceptualization of belonging is helpful for the present study in understanding how academic and social aspects of U.S. higher education influence perceptions of sense of belonging for international LGBQ students from India.

Intersectionality and sense of belonging serve as effective concepts for the current study because intersectionality provides a frame for understanding LGBQ international students from India as holistic individuals; that not everyone perceives sexuality, international identity, and campus in the same ways, and many face multiple forms of oppression, not necessarily in the same ways (Bowleg, 2008; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). In this research, intersectionality is used to recognize and critique sociohistorical factors (e.g. heteronormativity, racist nativism/ethnocentrism, xenophobia, sexism, and linguicism) as they influence institutional policies and contexts. Sense of belonging is used to understand individual perceptions and experiences on campus. Together, these concepts and frameworks inform and build a foundation for a critical constructive analysis of higher education systems and structures, specifically through phenomenological interviews with four Indian international LGBQ students in U.S. higher education.

Using phenomenological inquiry, I interviewed four Indian international LGBQ students who attend WCU. Each participant partook in one semi-structured interview lasting between 90 and 120 minutes as well two 60-minute semi-structured interviews with the researcher. Using Seidman's (2013) three-part interview structure, I collected information on life history and the perceptions of sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students at the research site. Guided by the study's conceptual frameworks, I focused on the ways in which institutional factors and sociohistorical systems influence students' perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Strayhorn's (2012) elements of sense of belonging and Crenshaw's (1989; 1991) structural influences on intersectionality guided the interview questions and conversations. Data analysis was informed by phenomenological inquiry and codes were generated inductively and deductively as part of the thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2016; Sauro, 2015; Seidman, 2013).

Significance of the Study

This study has the potential to contribute significant findings that enhance current knowledge of LGBQ Indian international students' perceptions of sense of belonging in U.S. higher education. First, this study fills an important gap in extant literature by providing qualitative exploratory research on sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students in U.S. higher education. Current empirical research explores international LGBQ students (Renn, 2010; Tarasi, 2016; Wall, 2016), Indian students, (Khatiwada, 2012), and the intersection of ethnicity and LGBQ identity (Quach, Todd, Hepp & Doneker Mancini, 2013; Yang, 2015) as it relates to identity development, leadership, and cultural acclimation. Yet, no research, to my knowledge, explores Indian international LGBQ students' perceptions of belonging on campus, let alone from a critical, sociohistorical perspective. This study uses intersectionality to

understand how multiple aspects of identities and sociohistorical factors influence students' perceptions of sense of belonging. Given cultural and political differences between home and host countries, this study explores how this growing population experiences U.S. higher education which has the potential to provide new and necessary insight by centering an under-researched and under-supported population in U.S. higher education.

International students are sought after by higher education institutions across the country and the world as a source of institutional revenue and a critical component in increasing diversity on campus (Hegarty, 2014; IIE, 2016). As state support for public institutions declines, campuses are engaged in a multi-billion dollar race to attract international students who can pay significantly higher tuition than in-state students (Ruby, 2009). A recent study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found a correlation between a 10% decrease in state funding and a 12% to17% increase in international undergraduate student enrollment in the United States (Bound, Braga, Khanna, & Turner, 2016). Though campuses tout the diversity international students bring to campus, the declining enrollment of U.S. students (Hegarty, 2014) and institutional pressures to recruit international students and out-of-state students for higher pay tuition (Jaschik, 2017) make retaining international students critical for the future of U.S. higher education. Given the financial and educational benefits of having international students on campus and institutional responsibility to support their success, understanding how international students perceive belonging, a basic human need (Strayhorn, 2012), is necessary. Further, examining how institutional systems and sociohistorical factors contribute to international students' sense of belonging may assist institutions in employing proactive strategies to retain and graduate these students, especially at the intersection of their various identities (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991).

According to the World Economic Forum, India's population will soon surpass China to be the most populous nation in the world (Luxton, 2016). Students from India are the fastest growing international student group in the United States (IIE, 2016). Though Indian international students consist of a significant portion of all international students in the United States and continue to be heavily recruited (Gerritsen, 2017), higher education researchers have largely ignored their existence and experiences on campus (Bhattar, 2016a; Khatiwada, 2012). Similarly, though some scholars (Patrick, 2014; Wall, 2016) explore LGBQ international students' experiences on campus, research on belonging for LGBQ international students is scarce (Bhattar, 2016a; Strayhorn, 2012; Yang, 2015). Specifically, there is a gap with regard to Indian LGBQ students' multiple intersecting identities and perceptions of belonging on campus (Bhattar, 2016a; Strayhorn, 2012).

Further, critical qualitative inquiry urges researchers to acknowledge our own biases and to interpret the data in light of sociohistorical factors (Cannella, 2007). Similarly, critical constructivist scholars argue that one's sense of self is constantly evolving and is informed by one's environment (Agger, 1991; Baxter-Magolda, 2004; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Guido, Chávez, & Lincoln, 2010). Critical qualitative inquiry aligns with constructivist qualitative inquiry in centering multiple voices as "facts" and having the flexibility to hold various, and sometimes contrary, information (Creswell, 2009). Incorporating critical qualitative and constructive inquiries, this study goes beyond Maslow (1943; 1954), Tinto (1993; 1997) and others' acute individualistic framing of sense of belonging to incorporate the role sociohistorical factors play in students' meaning-making and perception of sense of belonging. Understanding how sociohistorical factors and campus policies impact sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students is necessary to truly change institutional systems and transform U.S. higher

education. As shown earlier, supporting international students is critical for the future of U.S. higher education, and more importantly, practicing values of diversity and inclusion espoused by many colleges and universities (Hegarty, 2014). It is important for U.S. higher education to take responsibility for shaping students' experiences and perceptions of belonging on campus through programming, policies, and fostering campus cultures to support diverse students. By expressing the importance of supporting Indian international LGBQ students, campuses can develop blueprints to foster inclusion and sense of belonging for other student populations with multiple marginalized identities. This is one of the first studies to use sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) to understand how Indian international LGBQ students perceive sense of belonging on campus. As such, conclusions and questions arising from this study will contribute to the understanding of Indian international LGBQ students' perceptions of belonging and lay the foundation for future research with non-dominant identities in the United States and international higher education.

Key Terms

Before reviewing the extant literature relevant for this study, I offer definitions for many of the key terms used throughout the study. This section defines the following terminology: South Asian, Desi Indian, international students, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer/Questioning, heteronormativity, racist nativism and ethnocentric monoculturalism, xenophobia, sexism, linguicism, and privilege.

South Asian

South Asian is a Western geopolitical term used to identify people with ethnic and cultural roots in India, Burma, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, inclusive of those from the diaspora (South Asian Americans Leading Together

(SAALT), 2012). "South Asia" is a remnant term for a region named "British India" under British colonization (Joshi, 2004). Further, these countries have similar ethnic and cultural roots in the Indus region, dating back to 3000 B.C. and still share similar cultural histories, mythologies, and religious identities (Bose & Jalal, 2018; Dehejia, 2007; Murphy, 2018). Though these countries have similar cultural, political, and colonization roots, they are a diverse group of peoples that Western scholars and institutions collapse into the category "South Asian," (Central Intelligence Association, 2017; Iyer, 2015; World Bank Group, 2017).

Desi Indian

The term "India" is a bastardized version coined by British colonizers of the Sanskrit name "Hindustan" (Place of Hindu people) and Indus – a term for the geographic region currently known as South Asia (SAALT, 2012). Under colonization, the entire region was named "British India" but current day India and Pakistan were established in 1947 as part of the independence movement, known as the Partition (Khan, 2017). The Partition Period was violent, destroyed families and laid the foundation for nationalism that continues to impact India-Pakistan and Hindu-Muslim relations in the region and the diaspora (Iyer, 2015; Pandey, 2001). Given colonial misidentification of indigenous people of the Americas as "Indians" and the impact of Partition in 1947 which divided the region into India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other nations, critical higher education scholars have challenged the term "Indian." For example, Accapadi (2005; 2012) argues against the term Indian due to its roots in English and urges the need for terminology that comes from languages native to this region. Further, the post-independence period in the Indo-Asian subcontinent, caste, class, religion, and region together provide ample markers of identity resulting in elaborate social hierarchies and differences in identification (Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997). In the United States, some scholars have

urged the use of the word “desi” (“from the motherland”) derived from the Hindi/Urdu word “desh” or country to define our community with our own language (Accapadi, 2012). There is no consensus within the community on the relationship between Desi and Indian. Bhattar (2016b) found some people consider these terms to be synonyms, while others find the Hindi/Urdu roots of the word Desi to be inaccessible given India’s 14 official national languages and over 400 dialects. For the purpose of this study, I will use Indian and Desi as synonyms and will ask participants to share how they self-identify and will reflect their choice in the analysis.

International Students

International students are individuals who arrive to the United States from other countries for the primary purpose of gaining post-secondary education (UNESCO, 2006). Unlike foreign students who are non-citizens who have immigrated to the United States and then choose enroll in United States higher education, international students originate from the country of origin and come to the United States specifically to pursue education (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2008). For example a student born in India who immigrates to the United States prior to college and chooses to attend a United States higher education institution is considered a foreign student, mostly due to citizenship, while a student who is born in India and travels to the United States specifically for the purpose of higher education is considered an international student. Wan, Chapman, and Biggs (1992) note the cultural distance between a student’s country of origin and host country is important to consider to fully understand differences among international students’ experiences on campus. In other words, a student from India comes from a culture and educational system that may be more dissimilar from the United States than a student who comes from a country like Canada, where the dominant culture and educational system may be more akin to the U.S. international students

from India are represented in both undergraduate and graduate populations and therefore both undergraduate and graduate students are included in this study (IIE, 2016).

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Queer/Questioning (LGBQ)

LGBQ represents non-heteronormative sexual identities and is often presented as LGBTQ to include transgender, agender and gender-nonconforming people (LGBTQIA Resource Center Glossary, 2017). While gender identity and expression are important aspects of the community, this study specifically focuses on sexuality. In acknowledgment of the difference between sexuality and gender identity, I do not include transgender people in this study to ensure these two are not conflated. Lesbian refers to women who are physically and emotionally attracted to other women. Gay is used both to identify men who are physically and emotionally attracted to other men and has historically been used to refer the community as a whole. Bisexual is a term used to identify people who have "the *potential* to be attracted – romantically and/or sexually – to people of more than one sex and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree," (Ochs & Rowley, 2009, p. 7). The term queer comes from Queer Theory and acknowledges the fluidity of sexuality. Though used as a slur in the United States in the early 1900s, queer has been reclaimed by many activists over the last few decades as a community umbrella term encompassing all non-heteronormative sexualities (Halperin, 2003). Similar to queer, questioning honors the fluidity of sexuality represents the process of exploring one's sexuality, especially as it deviates from cultural and societal norms (Bhattar, 2017). There is no agreement within the community on whether the Q represents queer or questioning, therefore LGBQ is used in this study to represent queer and questioning individuals (LGBTQIA Resource Center Glossary, 2017). The term

LGBTQ is used when referring to campus programs that focus on both sexuality and gender or when reflecting how other scholars have framed their population in their respective studies.

Heteronormativity

Coined in 1991 by Michael Warner, heteronormativity is the assumption and social norm of fixed heterosexuality, affirming exclusive desire for a different sex, built into institutional and cultural values (Weiss, 2008). Similarly, heterosexism is the act of asserting heteronormative values and expectations (Weiss, 2008). Heteronormativity as a structural concept is the foundation of heterosexism and homophobia, reaffirming assumptions of binary sex categories across different cultures (Warner, 1991). Through processes of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia – fear of people who deviate from heteronormative structures of heterosexuality and binary notions of gender, non-heteronormative people and groups are categorized as other (Signorile, 1993; Weiss, 2008).

Racist Nativism and Ethnocentric Monoculturalism

Concepts of nativism and ethnocentrism are used by the dominant white culture to maintain power and cultural superiority (Higham, 1955; Huber, Lopez, Malagon, Velez, & Solorzano, 2008). Nativism is the fear "that some influence originating abroad threaten[s] the very life of the nation from within," (Higham, 1955, p. 4). Racism is fear and hatred of non-dominant groups of people based on social constructions of racial identity and inferiority, often within one's national context (Mish, 1997). The term "racist nativism" recognizes the spatial and historical intersections racist and nativist perspectives and policies on immigrants of color and other populations (Nayar, 2015). Beyond the systemic foundation of racist nativism, ethnocentric monoculturalism conceptualizes the ways individual, institutional, and broader cultural influences degrade, weaken, and deny access and resources for people of color (Brown,

2007; Sue, 2016) and identify non-white cultures as deviant and morally inferior (Brown, 2007). These forces affirm the superiority of whiteness, inferiority of non-whites, and feelings of entitlement to assert the dominant culture on people considered other (Nayar, 2015; Sue, 2016). Racist nativism and ethnocentric monoculturalism are at the core of discrimination and harassment of people that do not hold dominant cultural identities (Brown, 2007).

Xenophobia

Xenophobia is the "fear or hatred of strangers or foreigners or of what is strange or foreign," (Mish, 1997). Though the literal interpretation connotes that xenophobic people would despise all foreigners, often only certain groups of foreigners are targeted by the dominant group, to varying degrees in different countries (Warner & Finchilescu, 2003). More than an attitude, xenophobia is both an interpersonal and structural experience, ranging from individual acts of violence to unequal institutional immigration policies (Harris, 2002). After September 11, 2001, there have been increased reports of xenophobic acts of racism and harassment against international students (Williams & Johnson, 2011) and the institution of racist policies such as the Patriot Act (United States, 2001). Violence against international students from the Middle East, South Asia, and the diaspora ranged from chants of "Go home!" to fatal violence based on real or perceived Muslim identity (Neider, 2011). While racist nativism and ethnocentric monoculturalism are about preserving one's dominant position and superiority, xenophobia is the hatred of differences.

Sexism

Sexism is discrimination based on sex, gender identity, and expression and occurs at individual and institutional levels (Lind, 2007). Specifically within an intersectional frame, sexism acknowledges that gender and sexist perspectives are shaped by structural inequities and

differential access to power through education, political voice, and other resources (Perez Huber, 2010: Robbins & McGowan, 2016). Often sexism denotes harassment or inequity among men and women, affecting the ways they are treated by individuals and the cultural values and contexts that enforce strict gender roles, such as race, ethnicity, geography, class, sexuality, ability, and religious identity (Bowleg, 2008; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Lind, 2007). Sexism is essentialist in that it assumes there are "essential differences between men and women" and that only two genders exist (Lind, 2007, p. 4212). Within a sexist culture, people who transgress cultural norms of gender are punished and categorized as other (Lind, 2007). Sexism and heterosexism are distinct but related concepts that marginalize LGBQ people and people whose gender expressions and mannerisms are incongruent with gender binary identities (Griffin, 2007; Lind, 2007).

Linguicism

Language, especially English, was and is a source of hegemonic power in the process of colonization (Nayar, 2015; Phillipson, 1992) and assessment of native identity within a racist nativist perspective (Huber et al., 2008). Language ability, accent, and confidence is often related to and associated with other aspects of identity such as race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and others (Subitrelu, 2013). It was common to be multilingual in the United States until World War I when nationalism and ethnocentrism promoted anglo-centric language preferences and xenophobia (Curiel, 1987). Unlike international students from other Asian countries, Indian international students come to the United States with a familiarity of the English language, but still different from English in the United States The differences in accents, sentence structure, and conversation style increases stress and may impact Indian international students' perceptions and experiences of campus (Khatiwada, 2012).

Privilege

Privilege as a concept is important to understanding how sociohistorical components influence access and perception of sense of belonging on U.S. college campuses. In the U.S. context, definitions of privilege have been defined within a set of specific identities, such as white privilege or male privilege (Crenshaw, 1997; McIntosh, 1990). Privilege within social environments is expressed, "…as any entitlement, sanction, power, immunity, and advantage or right granted or conferred by the dominant group to a person or group solely by birthright membership in prescribed identities," (Black & Stone, 2005, p. 245). Privilege is not earned but given by a dominant group or culture to other dominant groups or those in subordinated groups who fit into the dominant social structure without disrupting it (Black & Stone, 2005; Johnson, 2005).

Chapter Summary

Chapter one provided an overview of the need for understanding the experiences and perceptions of Indian international LGBQ students in U.S. higher education. Following an outline of the issues, the section on researcher positionality provided context for my personal and professional interest in this project. The major research questions and theoretical frameworks were outlined along with the importance of this study in addressing a gap in the extant literature. The chapter concluded by defining key terms and concepts to contextualize this study.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of the literature to demonstrate the need for intersectional research on sense of belonging for Indian international students who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and/or Queer/Questioning (LGBQ) in U.S. higher education. For the purpose of this study, Strayhorn's (2012) definition of sense of belonging is used to frame the research as it provides a wide-ranging and complex conceptualization of sense of belonging. The literature review is organized into four sections. First, I provide an overview of intersectionality and sense of belonging, two theories that guide this research and critically assess Indian international LGBQ students' sense of belonging in academic and social aspects of campus. Second, sense of belonging is unpacked for international students with a focus on Asian, Indian, and LGBQ students, respectively. Third, I use intersectionality to review current literature on sexuality and international student status. The chapter concludes by addressing three major themes in the literature (i.e. academic, social, and linguistic aspects) contributing to and resulting from sense of belonging at the intersection of Indian international LGBQ identity in U.S. higher education.

Conceptual Frameworks

Intersectionality and sense of belonging serve as effective concepts for the current study because intersectionality requires us to understand LGBQ international students from India as holistic individuals: that not everyone experiences sexuality, international identity, and campus in the same ways, and many face multiple and intersecting forms of oppression, not necessarily in the same ways (Bowleg, 2008; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). Further, given the important role of sense of belonging on acculturation of these individual identities, understanding how students make sense of the intersection between international identity and sexuality is critical;

especially with Indian students who come from a political climate where non-heteronormative sexuality is criminalized (Trikone, 2014).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is foundational to critically exploring how the intersection of social identities impacts Indian international LGBQ students' sense of belonging on campus. Critical theory in education challenges institutional and structural systems that contribute to various forms of power and oppression (Leonardo, 2004). Intersectionality acknowledges that identities do not exist in vacuums; rather individual experiences are shaped by the interplay of various aspects of identities (Anzaldúa, 1987; Crenshaw, 1991) and how social inequalities are based on and are interdependent of these various social identities (Bowleg, 2008; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Grounded in critical race theory (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000) and black feminist theory (Collins, 1999; Crenshaw, 1989), intersectionality was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) whose work focused on violence against women of color. Crenshaw's conceptualization of intersectionality critiqued the ways in which anti-racist and feminist theories and ideologies are not able to hold the complex stories of how women of color navigate the confounding effects of race and gender-based oppression on labor practices (Crenshaw, 1989) or domestic violence policies (Crenshaw, 1991). People with intersectional identities "are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas," (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1252). For example, equating women with whiteness, Black identity with men, and queerness with white men erases the narratives of Black LGBQ women (Bowleg, 2008; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Crenshaw (2017) states, "Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LBGTQ problem there. Many times

that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things," (para. 4). The competing agendas (Crenshaw, 1991) often make people with intersectional identities invisible even in conversations about these various populations (Bowleg, 2008; Rodricks, 2012; Wall, 2016).

Beyond understanding individual experiences simply as unique phenomena, intersectionality explores structural influences on shaping individual experiences, taking into account the sociohistorical influences within individual narratives (Azmitia, Syed, & Radmacher, 2008; Strayhorn, 2012). The variability in experiences, even for individuals who share similar identities, "…is due in part to the vast array of experiences that influence … the salience and centrality of their various identities, and the strategies and other psychological work that they use to make meaning of these experiences," (Azmitia, Syed, & Radmacher, 2008, p. 15). A critical element of intersectionality is understanding how context, perspectives, and events filter one's experience of the world. Such an understanding allows us to "connect individuals to systems and vice versa," demonstrating how such systems foster expression of specific or complex identities (Wall, 2016, p. 33), while also dissecting how systems and structures of power develop, maintain, and/or disrupt issues of inequity or access experienced at an individual level (Thornton-Dill & Zambrana, 2009). Such a methodology not only centers the experiences of multiple-marginalized communities, but also acknowledges the interconnectedness of individual and community.

Thornton-Dill and Zambrana (2009) propose several theoretical interventions of intersectionality:

- Centers inquiry on people of color and other marginalized people's experiences;

- Explores complexity of individual and group identity and acknowledges often variances within groups are not recognized;
- Explores how power and inequality are systematized;
- Encourages a holistic approach to addressing inequalities within higher education systems combining research and praxis for intentional social change (p. 3).

Tenets one and two reaffirm the need to understand the experiences of marginalized populations and how and when such identities collude or complicate one's connectedness to specific communities on campus. It is important to center students who are multiply marginalized, while also acknowledging the systemized experiences of inequality and marginalization within U.S. higher education (Wall, 2016). Finally, intersectionality inspires tangible and practical strategies to address structural and individual level inequities. Intersectionality incorporates the importance of context in understanding an individual's perception and experience. Intersectionality is an effective frame to understand "the ways in which multiple identities interact with social, historical, and institutional systems to produce differing, antiessentialized experiences," (Harris, 2015, p. 30) as well as the ways in which these identities interact with larger sociohistorical systems impact and create variance in people's perceptions of experiences.

Yet, as Brown (2012) noted, most of the work on intersectionality focuses on race and gender, rarely mentioning international student status or sexuality as a factor. Given the contextual differences and understandings of sexuality and international student status across the world, applying intersectionality with this group provides a unique opportunity to fill a gap in research. The current study uses intersectionality to focus on the multiple and intersecting structures that influence Indian international LGBQ students' sense of belonging on campus (Rodricks, 2012).

Indian international LGBQ students' sense of belonging on campus is not additive. Said another way, it is not as simple as understanding their experiences as international students from India or as LGBQ students. The student is both/and at the same time, navigating these and other aspects of identities (Bhattar, 2016a; Bowleg, 2008; Renn, 2010; Strayhorn, 2012).

For the sake of transparency, it is important to mention this study is framed to explore a targeted perspective on intersectionality, exploring only two intersecting social identities: LGBQ sexuality and international student identity for students from India studying in the United States Though these are only two of many aspects of students' identities, LGBQ and Indian international student identities have been studied mostly in one dimensional perspectives without acknowledging how LGBQ Indian international student identities intersect and impact a student's experience on campus (Bhattar, 2016a; Khatiwada, 2012; Kushner, 2010; Renn, 2010; Yang, 2015). Building on intersectionality, the concept of sense of belonging is an effective framework to better understand campus experiences for LGBQ Indian international students.

Sense of Belonging

Bowen (1977) posits a holistic perspective of education where colleges and universities are built as communities where students are comfortable, can engage with various perspectives, and embrace self-awareness. Bollen and Hoyle (1990) note sense of belonging as a measure of one's perceived social cohesion to various communities or environments and encompasses both cognitive and affective elements (p. 482). Further, Freeman, Anderman, and Jensen (2007) found a significant positive relationship between college students' sense of belonging within the classroom and across campus on academic motivation and performance. As college students are exploring complex identities, understanding how they perceive the learning environment is essential to promote holistic development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Other studies have

shown that a lack of sense of belonging has a positive relationship with undesirable outcomes such as depression, anxiety, attrition, and self-harm for LGBQ students, especially LGBQ students of color (Rankin et al., 2010) and students of color (Tinto, 1987). Still other scholars (Tierney, 1992) argue these studies do not fully articulate the experiences of how underrepresented students, particularly how they navigate the campus.

The below section provides a review of Maslow's (1943, 1954) Hierarchy of Needs as a foundational framework for sense of belonging, followed by a review of how sense of belonging is conceptualized to study multiply marginalized students' sense of belonging on campus. The latter section focuses on international students, Asian international students, Indian international students, and LGBQ international students.

Foundations of sense of belonging. Maslow's (1943, 1954) research on psychosocial needs is key to understanding sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs categorizes human motivators from basic foundations of physiological needs (e.g., food, shelter, water) moving up to self-actualization (e.g., holistic sense of self and recognition). Understanding the hierarchy of needs and the pivotal role of belonging in transforming human behavior from fulfilling basic needs (e.g. food, safety) to higher level motivators (e.g. esteem, identity, and self-actualization) is helpful to highlight why belonging is centered in the current study. The Hierarchy of Needs was used initially to provide a more comprehensive and linear understanding of how people's motivations move up as each bottom layer is fulfilled. Below, I provide a short summary of the five categories from Maslow's hierarchy to contextualize the concept of belonging within Maslow's framework.

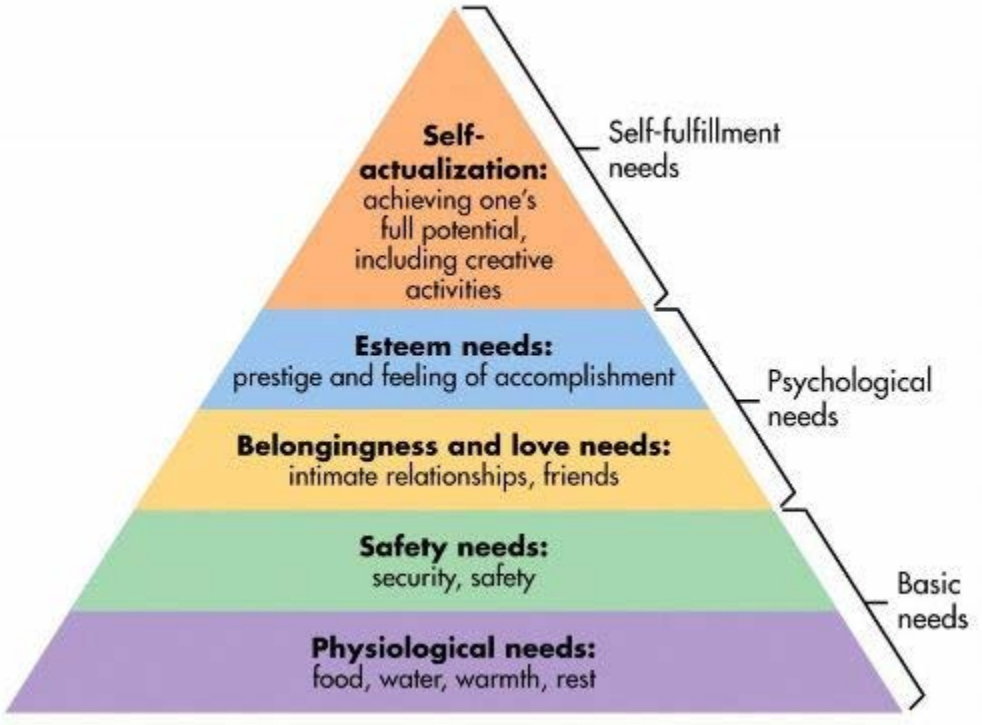

Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Reprinted from SimplyPsychology.com by S. McLeod, 2017, Retrieved July 20, 2017, from www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html. Copyright 2017 by Saul McLeod. Reprinted with permission.

Physiological needs. Physiological needs are the basic needs for living such as food, shelter, and water. In addition to being physiological needs, these behaviors may serve as a channel for other needs (e.g., hunger may be a sign of a desire for comfort or belonging beyond simply nourishment). If no other needs are fulfilled, one's main motivation will be to obtain these physiological needs (Maslow, 1943).

Safety needs. Safety needs are about one's sense of security and lack of physical and/or psychological threats (Maslow, 1943). He postulates that humans "…want a predictable, orderly world" and reject experiences that introduce instability into one's sense of being (Maslow, 1943,

p. 377). Physiological and safety needs are considered basic needs and form the foundation for higher-level motivators.

Belonging and love. Belonging and love are concerned with one's need to develop a sense of self in relation to others in one's environment. In intimate and non-intimate relationships, a person will strive to "belong" and a lack of relationships is cited as a source of psychosocial development (Maslow, 1943). Someone striving for such belonging may even forget when they felt hunger or safety needs and not feeling a sense of belonging may have adverse effects on one's sense of safety and physiological needs (Maslow, 1943).

Esteem needs. Esteem needs follow one's sense of belonging and represent one's need for feeling of accomplishment and stable sense of oneself. In other words, confidence in one's capacity for achievement and the desire for recognition and prestige (Maslow, 1943). "Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world," (Maslow, 1943, p. 382). Belonging and esteem constitute the psychological motivation.

Self-actualization. Self-actualization is the final aspect of the hierarchy and represents one's fulfillment of potential and finding joy and sense of authenticity. "A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately happy. What a man *can* be, he *must* be," (Maslow, 1943, p. 382, italics in original). In other words, beyond being good at a specific task, it is important that the task brings joy and sense of personal fulfillment. Pursuits of self-actualization are possible when the first four set of needs are satiated.

Figure 1 represents the first and most widely known version of Maslow's work. Later versions include cognitive, aesthetic, and transcendence needs (Maslow, 1970a, 1970b; McLeod, 2014), yet have not been used by higher education scholars. Strayhorn (2012) used the original

version of Maslow's framework to frame his sense of belonging framework. Though this model is helpful in grounding the current research, the linear model does not take into account how having multiple identities may challenge or even inhibit one's ability to meet these needs or how it contributes to motivation, within a collegiate experience. Maslow does not explore how belonging may not be possible (Said, 1978) or even desired by students with various identities in certain contexts (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Waterman, 2012). Further, Maslow's model does not address broader sociohistorical factors that shape one's ability to perceive a sense of belonging. For students from marginalized populations, being on campus may not only impact perceptions of belonging but even a basic sense of safety and security (Strayhorn, 2012). News stories across the country regularly chronicle harassment of and violence towards students of color (Green, 2016), LGBQ students (Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), 2018), queer students of color (Green, 2016; Horn, 2018; SPLC, 2018), international students (Rankin et al., 2010; Renn, 2017), and students at various intersections (Mac Donald, 2018; Renn, 2000; Renn, 2017). Understanding where and how LGBQ Indian international students perceive sense of belonging may provide important insight into how to enhance current campus support structures to foster safety and sense of belonging.

Strayhorn's (2012) definition of sense of belonging in higher education. Sense of belonging is a commonly cited component in understanding the success of students in higher education (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2010). Strayhorn's (2012) definition of sense of belonging is used in the current study as it provides the most comprehensive and multi-faceted understanding of sense of belonging. Tinto (1993, 1997) has touted students who lack affiliation and connectedness to an institution have higher attrition and dissatisfaction and lower academic and social integration. Building on Maslow (1943, 1970a) and other scholars, Tinto (1987, 1993)

explored student integration and factors influencing student departure from higher education institutions (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2011; Strayhorn, 2012). Tinto notes the importance of interactions with peers and faculty and how these moments contribute to social and academic integration leading to retention or attrition (1993, 1997). Hurtado and Carter (1997) find there is inconsistency across researchers in applying Tinto's model to various communities. Though seminal in the field of student retention and success, Tinto (1993, 1997) has been critiqued by scholars for promoting a cultural deficiency model where integration onto campus and academic persistence is correlated with loss of culture of origin, especially for students of color (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012; Tierney, 1992). Further, Tinto has been critiqued by scholars for using a framework that focuses on individual characteristics to address institutional and systemic issues and placing the onus on students who are already marginalized (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Yet, Tinto's major contribution to the field of higher education and marginalized student success has been to center the importance of the college environment and the impact of student engagement on student retention (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Building on Tinto's work, Strayhorn's (2012) conceptualization of sense of belonging provides an effective foundation for understanding diverse students' experiences in higher education. For the purpose of this study, Strayhorn's definition is used as it provides the most comprehensive, multi-faceted understanding of sense of belonging.

> Sense of belonging is framed as a basic human need and motivation, sufficient to influence behavior…Such a framework maintains that individuals have psychological needs, satisfaction of such needs affects behaviors and perceptions, and characteristics of the social context influence how well these needs are met. (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 3-4).

Strayhorn's broad definition and emphasis on human motivation are helpful in understanding diverse students' sense of belonging within a higher education context. Beyond a basic human need, higher education scholars define belonging as a level of connectedness to the campus (Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014), feeling a personal sense of membership (Locks et al., 2008), and level of trust of the other members of the group (Furman, 1998; Strayhorn, 2012). Belonging has to do with individual perceptions of personal and interpersonal experiences and impact on students' experiences and their overall success (Strayhorn, 2012). Building on the definition above, Strayhorn reviews major studies on sense of belonging in higher education and offers a seven element framework for understanding why sense of belonging is an important concept to consider in understanding student success in higher education, especially how the seven elements enhance knowledge of students from marginalized and intersectional populations in higher education (Strayhorn, 2012).

Strayhorn (2012) provides a framework for understanding sense of belonging in his book *College Students' Sense of Belonging: A Key to Educational Success for All Students*. By focusing on various populations (e.g., students of color in STEM, graduate students, and Latino students), Strayhorn offers various contexts for sense of belonging and broadens traditional frames used in higher education research (Johnson, 2012). Strayhorn categorizes sense of belonging into seven core elements: (a) sense of belonging is a basic human need; (b) is a fundamental motive, sufficient to drive human behavior; (c) takes on heightened importance in certain contexts at certain times in certain populations; (d) is related to, and seemingly is a consequence of, mattering; (e) social identities intersect and affect college students' sense of belonging; (f) engenders other positive outcomes; and (g) must be satisfied on a continual basis and likely changes as circumstances, conditions, and contexts change (Strayhorn, 2012). Using

these seven elements, Strayhorn provides a conceptual frame that is helpful for the present study in understanding how academic, social, and linguistic aspects of U.S. higher education influence experiences of sense of belonging for international LGBQ students from India.

Belonging is a basic human need. In line with Maslow (1943), sense of belonging is a basic human need and a primal universal desire for connectedness and community (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Unlike Freudian concepts where belonging to one person (e.g., mother, father) was essential, Baumeister and Leary (1995) argue that the individual with whom one feels belonging is less important than the fact that belonging is experienced. Regardless of identity or context, individuals want to belong to something or some group where they feel affirmed and valued (Maslow, 1943, 1954; Strayhorn, 2012).

Belonging as a fundamental motive, sufficient to drive human behavior. Sense of belonging can be strong enough to affect human actions, from getting up in the morning to academic performance (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Johnson, 2012). More specifically, Freeman, Anderman, and Jensen (2007) find students' sense of belonging in the classroom is positively related to academic motivation and perceptions of the value of class activities. More research is needed to understand if and how sense of belonging drives human behavior, especially in the context of significant change, such as entering U.S. higher education and centering intersection of identities.

Sense of belonging takes on heightened importance in certain contexts, at certain times, and among certain populations. Strayhorn (2012) states that individuals want environments that align with their personal views and values, defined as normative congruence. "Normative congruence suggests that individuals seek environments or settings that are congruent with their own expectations, values, attitudes, and positioning," (Strayhorn, 2012, p.

20). Deaux and Perkins (2001) have compared this process to a “kaleidoscope” where one’s sense of belonging in light of their unique set of personal and communal identities is dependent on the specific context in which this process occurs. Yet many marginalized students enter campus contexts that may differ from their personal values, and deciphering the process students navigate is important in better understanding their perceptions of sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Domestic or international students of color entering predominantly white institutions (PWI) and campuses without inclusive policies regarding sexual and gender identities seek community with similarly identified people on campus when possible (Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rosenthal et al., 2007) or may prioritize one aspect of identity over another depending on the context (Strayhorn, 2012). Given the constructivist frame, students at the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and other identities may experience the same context in significantly different ways based on their own sense of self and perception of the experience (Strayhorn, 2012). Particularly within academic settings, understanding the impact of academic and social contexts on marginalized students’ sense of belonging can provide important insight (Goodenow, 1993).

Sense of belonging is related to, and is seemingly a consequence of, mattering. Sense of belonging is the perception of being valued as a member (Hagerty et al., 1992) and feeling a sense of connectedness to a group (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) conceptualize mattering as "the feeling that others depend upon us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate, or experience us as an ego-extension," (p. 165). McMillan and Chavis (1986) condense this element into two statements: ‘It is my group’ and ‘I am part of the group,’ (p. 10). Mattering to others and being in social relationships is a key motivator and can facilitate sense of belonging through the act of affirmation. Particularly for international students

who are navigating unfamiliar environments, feeling a sense of mattering is important to their sense of belonging on campus (Oba & Pope, 2013). As stated earlier, mattering is a core human need and serves as both a source of belonging and contributes to belonging (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989, 1991) complicates this notion further by also considering how the context, community, and sociohistorical factors influence where and with whom mattering is sought. Simply mattering may not be enough; whom we matter to and how we perceive this sense of belonging may provide important insight to how students with marginalized identities navigate campuses (Bhattar, 2016a; Waterman, 2012).

Social identities intersect and affect college students' sense of belonging. Strayhorn (2012) highlights the need to explore how intersection of identities blends and shifts students' sense of belonging in various contexts. "Although the need for belongingness is universal and applies to all people, it does not necessarily apply to all people equally," (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 22). Strayhorn builds on Crenshaw (1991) who developed the term intersectionality "as a theoretical framework, [which] resists essentialist notions of identity categories and assumes that social conditions are structured by multiple forces interacting with intersecting social locations, thereby producing relatively unique circumstances for individuals and groups" (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 70). Indeed, intersectionality aligns with the constructivist frame to bring voice to the multiple layers of identities mixing to create a unique lived experience for each person (Cho et al., 2013; Strayhorn, 2012). Though the intersection of identities is highlighted as an important element, the structural critique of Crenshaw's framing of intersectionality is missing from Strayhorn's conceptualization of belonging.

Sense of belonging engenders other positive outcomes, in addition to psychosocial benefits such as motivation and mattering. Sense of belonging fosters positive outcomes such as

academic success, positive sense of self, and campus engagement (Goodenow, 1993; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Osterman, 2000; Strayhorn, 2012). Focusing on academic motivation and achievement, Solomon, Battistich, Watson, Schaps, & Lewis (1996) and Osterman (2000) note that there is a strong relationship between peer acceptance and sense of belonging on academic achievement. Andrade (2006a) found similar connections for international students that having community based on gender, country of origin, and being connected to various groups on campus promotes student adjustment and engagement. Yet, Andrade (2006a) and Baek (2012) note that outcomes such as academic performance, are not necessarily an effective measure of sense of belonging or adjustment for international students because they usually focus energies on academic work when they are not feeling connected to community on campus. These varied findings suggest the need for more research to better understand the connection between sense of belonging and positive outcomes for students, especially students with marginalized identities.

Sense of belonging must be satisfied on a continual basis and likely changes as circumstances, conditions, and contexts change. As students get more comfortable with the various aspects of identity, their definition and context for belonging may also be modified (Renn, 2010; Strayhorn, 2012). Belonging is a "continuous, dynamic process" (Inalhan & Finch, 2004) of "frequent, affectively pleasant interactions," (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Understanding how and where students perceive sense of belonging, especially because of their various aspects of identity, may provide insight into how to support students with multiple marginalized and intersectional identities on campus (Strayhorn, 2012).

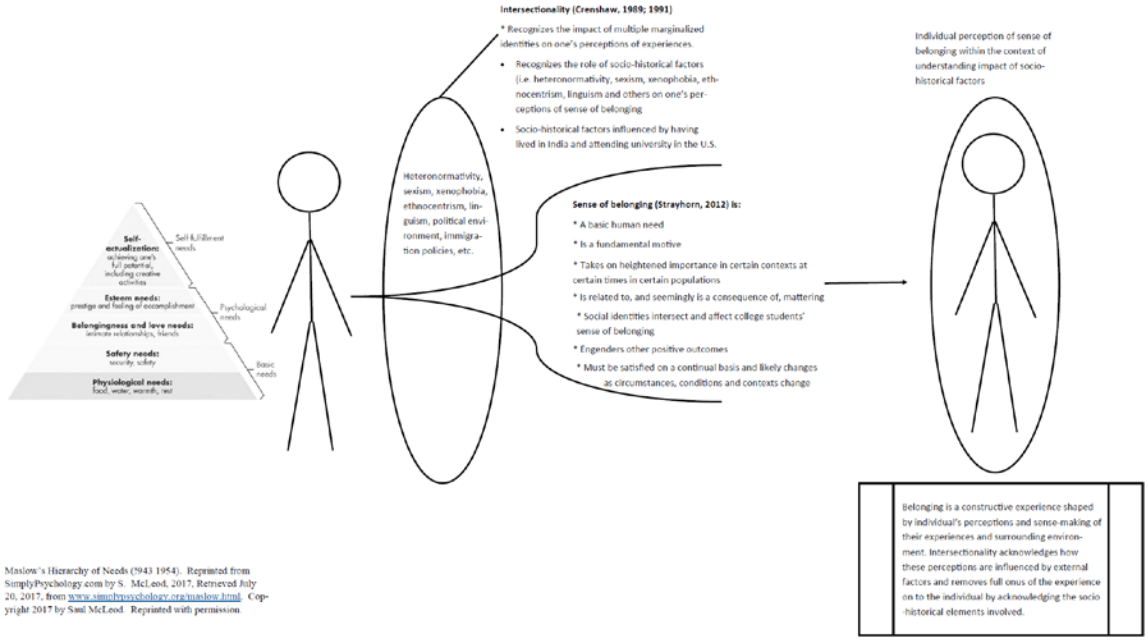

Figure 2. Theoretical Frameworks: Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) Intersectionality, Strayhorn's (2012) Sense of Belonging and Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs. Modified and reprinted from SimplyPsychology.com by S. McLeod, 2017, Retrieved July 20, 2017, from www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html. Copyright 2017 by Saul McLeod. Reprinted with permission.

In conclusion, Strayhorn (2012) defines seven elements as critical components to understanding sense of belonging and students' experiences on campus. Particularly for the current study, these seven elements provide a broad conceptual framework to organize and analyze data. There are several well-known theories that explore sexual identity development (Cass, 1979; D'Augelli, 1994) yet, there is limited research on belonging for this population (Strayhorn, 2012). Building on elements of belonging provided above, the following section provides an overview of research on sense of belonging for international students, Asian international students, Indian international, and LGBQ international students. The review of

literature concludes by reviewing literature on sense of belonging for LGBQ international students.

International Students' Sense of Belonging in U.S. Higher Education

Building on Strayhorn's definition of belonging and the seven elements presented above, in this section I review extant literature on sense of belonging for international students broadly. The major themes within literature on international students and sense of belonging are organized into three sections: a) academic, b) social, and c) linguistic. First, I explore academic aspects such as interactions with faculty and advisors and academic expectations on international students' sense of belonging. Next, I explore social aspects such as social isolation and lack of community and safety and identity disclosure. Finally, the impact of linguistic aspects of U.S. higher education on international students is outlined since academic and social sense of belonging may be influenced by English language confidence and competence (Andrade, 2006a; Curtin, Stewart, & Ostrove, 2013; Erichsen & Bolliger, 2010; Kato, 1998; Li & Lin, 2014; Wan et al., 1992; Zhai, 2002).

After exploring the three themes in the literature for international students broadly, I narrow the review of literature to focus on the experiences and perceptions of sense of belonging for international Asian students and international Indian students respectively. Though Indian international students and students from other countries like China, Japan, and Vietnam are all from the Asian continent, the ethnic, cultural, and sociohistorical contexts are important to differentiate for the current study (Atri et al., 2008; Frey & Roysircar, 2006).

The review of literature closes by exploring literature on sense of belonging for international LGBQ students. In acknowledgment of the difference between sexuality and gender identity, transgender identity is not included in this study criteria to ensure these two are not

conflated (Bhattar, 2016a; Stewart, Renn, & Brazelton, 2015). I center the intersections of LGBQ Indian international students within the sociohistorical contexts of U.S. higher education. International students reflect the diversity of cultural identities and nationalities, yet are often understood in literature with a monolithic concept of international students, "rather than as individuals with a range of personal histories and experiences, and a range of personal motivations and desires which have constructed the desire to become an international student," (Koehne, 2005, p. 104).

Sense of Belonging for International Students

Sense of belonging is an important concept to consider in understanding student success in higher education, especially how the seven elements of Strayhorn's theory enhance knowledge of students from marginalized and intersectional populations in higher education (Strayhorn, 2012). The current study explores Indian international LGBQ students' perceptions of sense of belonging in U.S. higher education. Hurtado and Carter (1997) write that "understanding [marginalized] students' sense of belonging may be key to understanding how particular forms of social and academic experiences affect these students," (p. 324). Many marginalized students enter campus contexts that may differ from their personal values. Deciphering the processes of belonging students navigate is important to better understanding their experiences (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Within academic settings, understanding the impact of academic and social contexts on marginalized students' sense of belonging can provide important insight (Goodenow, 1993).

Scholars consistently find that international students feel marginalized and experience more challenges than domestic students, especially when academic and social campus contexts are significantly different than their country of origin, regardless of racial identity of the students

in domestic and international categories (Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014; Rosenthal et al., 2007; Strayhorn, 2012). International students' perception of marginalization are greatly influenced by their "cultural distance" defined by Wan et al. (1992) as the "extent that a student's home culture differs from the predominant culture of the U.S.," (p. 609). For example, a student from India may come from a culture and educational system that is more dissimilar from the United States than a student who comes from a country like Australia, where the dominant culture and educational system are more akin to the United States. As Strayhorn (2012) argues, context is important, "especially for those who are marginalized or feel that way in said context," (p. 123). In both cases, the change in sociohistorical culture and context is important to consider in understanding international students' experiences on campus.

Although more than one million international students are currently studying in U.S. higher education (IIE, 2016), there is little research on international student's sense of belonging (Le et al., 2016; Strayhorn, 2012). The current research focuses on graduate and undergraduate student levels and interactions with faculty without noting any other criteria beyond being international students (Curtin et al., 2013; Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014). The studies that do exist focus on international students studying in the United States (Glass et al., 2015; Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014), Australia (Hellstén, 2002; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001; Rosenthal et al., 2007; Sawir et al., 2008; Smith & Khawaja, 2011), New Zealand (Campbell & Li, 2008) or Canada (Patrick, 2014; Wall, 2016). The United States, Canada, and Australia host a significant percentage of students studying abroad (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007) and are predominantly English speaking countries (Andrade, 2006a, 2006b). Given the high numbers of Asian international students studying at and included in research from

institutions in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, studies from all four countries are included in this review of literature.

Sense of belonging is especially important for international students' academic success; they must meet rigorous academic standards without similar support systems, background knowledge, or language competency as their domestic counterparts, regardless of racial identity or gender (Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014; Rosenthal et al., 2007; Strayhorn, 2012). Most studies on international students' sense of belonging mention academic, social, and linguistic aspects as important considerations impacting students (Baek, 2013; Hausmann et al., 2007; Osterman, 2000; Strayhorn, 2012). Studies have noted that academic sense of belonging impacts both academic and social outcomes (Baek, 2013; Osterman, 2000), while others show that a social sense of belonging impacts both academic and social outcomes (Koehne, 2005; Sawir et al., 2008; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Wall, 2016). Linguistically speaking, English language confidence and competence impacts both the academic and social aspects of students' sense of belonging (Baek, 2013; Hausmann et al., 2007; Osterman, 2000). Previous research exposes how students do not experience belonging and aspects of campus in isolation, but rather as a whole experience (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Strayhorn, 2012), and shaped by sociohistorical factors (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Rodricks, 2012).

Theme one: academic experiences. Belonging on campus is critical for international student academic success **(**Hausmann et al., 2007; Osterman, 2000) and belonging in academic aspects of higher education is important for overall international student success (Baek, 2013; Curtin et al., 2013; Thomas, 2012). Additionally, international students develop sense of belonging based on their interactions with faculty/advisors (Baek, 2013; Glass et al, 2015; Le et

al., 2015) and acclimating to U.S. academic expectations (Baek; 2013; Campbell & Li, 2008; Curtin et al., 2013; Wan et al., 1992: Zhai, 2002; Zhang & Goodson, 2011).

Interactions with faculty and advisors. Next to family and friends, international students are more likely to outreach to faculty for support than other staff on campus (Baloglu, 2000; Glass et al., 2015; IIE 2016; Le et al., 2016). Academic faculty/advisor is defined by Curtin et al. (2013) as a faculty member who serves as "a primary advisor/mentor," typically from one's academic department or one who provides "the majority of guidance and direction regarding your research," (p. 122). Relationships and interactions with advisors and faculty in the classroom are important because of the advisors' impact on academic and professional goals of the students, especially for graduate students (Baek, 2013; Curtin et al., 2013; Glass et al., 2015; O'Meara, Knudsen, & Jones, 2013). Yet, Glass et al. (2015) note that major reviews of literature (e.g., Smith & Khawaja, 2011) do not address the impact of faculty and advisors on sense of belonging for international students, demonstrating the need for more research. Positive relationships and interactions have a positive impact on sense of belonging for international students (Baek, 2013; Curtin et al., 2013; Strayhorn, 2012). Similarly, negative interactions have a negative impact on sense of belonging (Baek, 2013; Glass et al., 2015). The faculty-student relationship can make or break an international student's academic career (Glass et al., 2015; O'Meara et al., 2013). Though these studies mention the importance of students' various aspects of identity on sense of belonging, there is no mention in the literature on how international students' sexuality may impact sense of academic belonging, especially the relationship with faculty/advisors (Baek, 2013; Wall, 2016). Further, there is no consideration of how students perceive implicit or overt projections of institutional policies and sociohistorical factors through their interactions, or lack thereof, with faculty and advisors (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Curtin et al.,

2013; Rodricks, 2012; Strayhorn, 2012). Given the increase in numbers for Indian international, LGBQ, and Indian LGBQ international students with multiple marginalized identities (IIE, 2016; Rankin et al., 2010; Renn, 2010), understanding how they perceive faculty/advisor relationships is necessary to fill a current gap in literature at the individual and systemic levels (Bhattar, 2016a).

Academic expectations. Academic expectations create the highest level of stress for international students, impacting international students' sense of belonging and acculturation process (Baek, 2013; Campbell & Li, 2008; Curtin et al., 2013; Strayhorn, 2012; Zhai, 2002; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). In other words, understanding and navigating different academic systems, expectations, and demands in the United States is often framed as a barrier for international students. U.S. academic systems are structures of unfamiliar learning and teaching methods (Kingston & Forland, 2008), discussion-based classroom participation (Baek, 2013), and academic projects in an unfamiliar language which impact academic sense of belonging for many international students (Glass et al., 2014; Yang, 2015), especially international students from Asian countries (Rosenthal et al., 2007; Wan et al., 1992; Wolff, 2014). Though these studies are helpful, Zhai (2002), Wolff (2014) and Wan et al. (1992) do not include Indian international students or they aggregate all Asian students as one category, preventing insight into how academic expectations may impact sense of belonging for Indian international students differently than other populations. These studies also frame students through a deficit model where their academic barriers are seen as a result of lack of preparation rather than a result of institutional expectations, shaped by linguicism, xenophobia, and other factors which do not foster environments prepared to effectively support Indian international LGBQ students (Sawir et al., 2008; Yao, 2014). In summary, research grounded in intersectionality and exploring the

impact of relationships with faculty/advisors and academic expectations of U.S. higher education on Indian international LGBQ students' academic sense of belonging is missing in the current literature.

Theme two: social experiences. According to Strayhorn (2012) and Baumeister and Leary (1995), feeling a sense of "community" or social belonging on campus is a critical human motivation. Sense of belonging promotes positive outcomes such as academic success (Baek, 2013; Koehne, 2005; Strayhorn, 2012) and overall wellbeing (Hagerty et al., 1992; Strayhorn, 2012). Especially for international students, a positive or negative social sense of belonging may have a significant influence on student outcomes such as academic achievement, health and wellness, and community engagement (Campbell & Li, 2008; Li & Lin, 2014; Strayhorn, 2012). Two major subthemes in the literature are addressed as they relate to the current study: a) social isolation/lack of community and b) safety and identity disclosure on campus.

Social isolation and lack of community. International students experience significant levels of isolation and lack of community in the host country (Baek, 2013; Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011; Kato, 1998; Koehne, 2005; Oba & Pope, 2013; Sawir et al., 2008; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Valosik, 2015; Wall, 2016) and feel "other" or different from domestic students (Koehne, 2005; Oba & Pope, 2013). From having to cope with leaving family and familiar contexts of the home country to navigating daily challenges connecting with peers, international students need to negotiate community and belong in the host country (Sawir et al., 2008). In addition to personal and social loneliness, Sawir et al. (2008) note that international students experience a unique cultural loneliness in learning new languages, different financial processes and monetary systems, and novel customs and norms. Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) note a person in migration "ceases to belong to the world one left behind, and does not yet belong to the world in which one

has nearly arrived," (p. 23). Erichsen and Bolliger (2011) find international graduate students overall express high levels of isolation in person or in virtual spaces while Sawir et al., (2008) find over two-thirds of the sample of undergraduate international students expressed perceiving mild to high levels of loneliness in the host country. Within this literature, Asian students report more significant levels of loneliness and lack of belonging than students from Western countries (Glass et al., 2015; Khatiwada, 2012; Sawir et al., 2008; Um-Perez, 2011; Yao, 2014). International students feel a greater sense of community with other international students (Baek, 2013; Khatiwada, 2012; Koehne, 2005), especially with international peers from similar cultures (Yao, 2014), yet there is a dearth of knowledge on how social isolation may be a result of institutional structures rather than international students' English competence or academic ability (Yao, 2014). As will be discussed later, social isolation/lack of community may be more impactful for students from Asian cultures (Khatiwada, 2012; Wall, 2016).

An internalized notion of how one is connected to and feels belonging serves as an essential motivator (Maslow, 1943; McLeod, 2016), especially for adolescents (Pittman & Richmond, 2007) and is useful to understand experiences of students from non-U.S. cultural frames (Bertram, Poulakis, Elsasser, & Kumar, 2014). Though all individuals feel the need to belong, the work on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) argues that institutional structures and policies may be built to inherently exclude certain individuals or certain aspects of one's identity from feeling a sense of belonging. This process of exclusion or "othering" is sometimes an intentional systemic process of inhibiting belonging, access to power, voice or other resources from marginalized populations by dominant forces (Said, 1978, p. 33). For example, a woman of color may be welcome in a space for women of color with assumptions of heteronormativity; coming out as queer may exclude or marginalize that person from this space. Edward Said

(1978) argues that othering is a tool built into colonialism and other sociohistorical factors to privilege Western and European cultures and deem all other cultures as inferior. As people with marginalized identities, coming from a country with over three centuries of colonization by Britain, understanding how Indian people, and Asians in general, are deemed other and as perpetual foreigners, provides insight into how and if belonging can be perceived by this population on campus (Said, 1978; Takaki, 1989). Simply an innate need to belong does not mean students have opportunities to perceive sense of belonging on campus (Bhattar, 2016a; Strayhorn, 2012). Such a critical examination of sociohistorical factors can provide important insight into how social isolation is structurally built into the campus environment, impacting Indian LGBQ international students' experiences.

Safety and identity disclosure on campus. According to Maslow (1943), belonging is predicated on a sense of safety as exhibited by the placement of safety needs as foundational to belonging in the hierarchy. In other words, for a person to feel a sense of belonging, they must first feel safe in the given context, such as a college campus. Safety with regard to identity and sense of belonging on campus is important and may be experienced differently for international students who identify as Indian, LGBQ and students at the intersection of Indian international LGBQ identity (Bowleg, 2008; Crenshaw; 1991; Patrick, 2014; Valosik, 2015; Wall, 2016). The intersection of LGBQ and international student identities poses additional barriers for students' sense of belonging; especially for students from countries like India where sodomy is criminalized and non-heteronormative sexuality is taboo (Trikone, 2014). Similarly, disclosing international student identity may cause unwanted stereotypes, inhibiting sense of belonging in various aspects of campus (Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014; Wolff, 2014). More importantly, these studies lack a focus on whether it is even possible for some students to perceive sense of

belonging on campus (Rodricks, 2012). Though their co-national students share cultural values (i.e. collectivism), Indian international LGBQ students may perceive the impact of various sociohistorical factors (i.e. heteronormativity, homophobia and sexism) from peers who potentially "out" LGBQ Indian students to networks in India or exclude them from campus communities (Bhattar, 2016a; Yang, 2015). Understanding how LGBQ Indian international students perceive sense of belonging in social context with co-nationals and domestic students may provide insight not currently represented in the literature, especially in understanding how various sociohistorical factors (i.e. heteronormativity, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia) may intersect to shape students' perceptions of belonging on campus (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991).

Theme three: linguistic experiences. Language has the power to bring people together (Sherry, Thomas & Chui, 2010) or to make them feel a sense of isolation and disempowerment (Crenshaw, 1991; Patrick, 2014; Rodricks, 2012). Language competency has a significant impact on academic and social sense of belonging for international students (Andrade, 2006; Curtin et al., 2013; Erichsen & Bolliger, 2010; Kato, 1998; Li & Lin, 2014; Wan et al., 1992; Zhai, 2002). Language serves as a major barrier for international students (Andrade, 2006; Curtin et al., 2013) due to the daily stresses of communicating in a non-native language environment (Andrade, 2006a; Wan, 2001; Wolff, 2014) and impacts international students' ability to develop and sustain meaningful relationships in the host campus (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007; Zhai 2002), especially for international students from Asian countries (Campbell & Li, 2008; Um-Perez, 2011). Rosenthal et al. (2007) note international Asian students experience more stress with the English language than domestic students or other international students, contributing to a lack of social adjustment and sense of belonging. More than language ability, Campbell and Li (2008), Yao (2014), and Yang (2015) conclude that international students' lack of confidence and self-

perception of English language ability enhances stress and sense of isolation in academic and social aspects of campus.

Crenshaw (1991), in framing narratives of African American women, highlights the potential for language to be a structural barrier which limits non-English speaking people from accessing necessary resources. **"**Language barriers present [a] structural problem that often limits opportunities of non-English-speaking women to take advantage of support services," writes Crenshaw (1991, p. 1249). Here Crenshaw is speaking of women of color and non-English speaking women accessing resources such as housing and counseling after experiencing sexual violence. Similarly, language is a structural barrier for international students, especially Indian students (Khatiwada, 2012), LGBQ students (Patrick, 2014; Renn, 2010; Wall, 2016) and Indian international LGBQ students (Bhattar, 2016a) in communicating with and accessing necessary campus resources. An exploration of how institutional structural standards of English language competence combine with the multi-linguistic skills international students, especially from Asia, bring to the campus impact perceptions of sense of belonging in various campus contexts may provide insights not currently addressed in existing research.

Asian International Students and Sense of Belonging

International students from Asia constitute a majority of international students studying in the United States (Bertram et al., 2014; IIE, 2016). In the Open Doors report, the Institute for International Education states 555,472 students out of 1,043,839 international students in the United States in 2015-16 came from India, China, and South Korea (IIE, 2016). Though Asian international students are a diverse group, researchers often categorize these various populations into one monolithic category (Iwamoto & Liu, 2010; Wolff, 2014).

Sense of belonging is a key factor in the success and acculturation of Asian students on campus (Campbell & Li, 2008; Li & Lin, 2014). Many scholars note Asian students have greater difficulty in the acculturation process than European international students resulting in issues such as depression (Bista & Foster, 2016; Liao & Wei, 2014; Wei, Heppner, Mallen, Ku, Liao, & Wu, 2007), isolation (Campbell & Li, 2008), and language competency in academic and social settings (Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2015; Rosenthal et al., 2007). These difficulties may be due to greater cultural differences from Western cultures and countries where English is a primary language and sociohistorical systems that privilege English language and accent ability over other languages (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008; Li & Lin, 2014; Yue & Lê, 2012).

As demonstrated earlier, Asian international students come from cultures more distant from U.S. host campus culture than other international student populations (Wan et al., 1992; Wong, 2004). Using qualitative semi-structured interviews conducted in the English language, Campbell and Li (2008) explored the experiences of Asian international students at a university in New Zealand, but only one of the twenty-two students were from India. In fact, several studies exploring Asian international students do not have large representations of Indian students. Campbell and Li (2008) had one Indian student out of twenty-two participants and Ramburuth and McCormick (2001) had no representation at all. Rosenthal et al. (2007) conducted a study of belonging in which they defined connectedness to Melbourne, campus, and family in the home country for international students at a university in Australia. Given the proximity of Australia to Asia, especially East Asia, students reported strong ties to family at home (Rosenthal et al., 2007). Though this quantitative study is effective in considering campus, community, and country of origin aspects of how students understand sense of belonging, the lack of qualitative data misses an opportunity to fully understand how students' multiple social

identities contextualize their sense of belonging. As a fast-growing subset of the international student population, studying how Indian international students experience sense of belonging is important for U.S. higher education (Bhattar, 2016a; IIE, 2016; Kushner, 2010).

English language abilities and perception of academic progress influence their sense of belonging (Yao, 2014). Further, Asian students have distinct differences in the need for social communities when compared to other international students and Australian domestic students (Li & Yen, 2014; Yao, 2014). Given the collectivist nature of Asian cultures (Li & Lin, 2014), the loneliness and lack of community may have a more significant impact on Asian international students than international students from other cultures (Lin & Yi, 1997; Yao, 2014). Rather than framing these students' perceptions as a result of their individual deficits, a focus on institutional biases based on sociohistorical factors can support structural changes to foster a more inclusive environment (Bhattar, 2016a; Yao, 2014). Asian international students noted that involvement in off-campus cultural groups and religious organizations contributed to their increased sense of belonging, highlighting the importance of considering cultural and religious factors contributing to Asian and Indian international students' sense of belonging. Overall, although Asian international students compose a majority of international students on U.S. campuses, campuses have much work to do to address individual and structural barriers to fostering sense of belonging (IIE, 2016; Strayhorn, 2012).

Indian International Students and Sense of Belonging

From 2014-2016, Indian international students represented the highest percentage increase (24%) of international students studying in the United States (IIE, 2016). Though Indian international students have been a significant proportion of the international student body in U.S. higher education, little research has been conducted that centers Indian international students'

experiences and sense of belonging on campus (Atri et al., 2008; Khatiwada, 2012). To adequately support Indian international students attending U.S. higher education institutions, understanding how Indian cultural values and beliefs influence students' sense of belonging is important (Kushner, 2010).

Kushner (2010) reviewed cultural values impacting Indian international students' meaning-making of U.S. higher education and culture, finding that Indian international students in the United States are influenced by family and a care for collective decision-making process with deference to elders, community wellness, and prestige. Das and Kemp (1997) also find family to be a critical component of Indian international students' worldview. Family is an "interdependent group of people whose concerns are not for themselves as individuals, but for the family as a whole…" for South Asian students according to Das and Kemp (p. 25). Indian students studying in the United States, who grow up in a culture of collectivism, may have difficulty in navigating and developing a sense of belonging within U.S. cultural norms of individualism and independence (Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994; Kushner, 2010). Collectivism is the view that one person is a small piece of a larger family or network and that the family's or community's values and needs are placed higher than oneself (Kushner, 2010; Triandis, 1995). In contrast, individualism prioritizes personal goals and motivations over group values and is often seen as a Western cultural value (Triandis, 1995). Indian international students coming from collectivistic cultures and entering individualistic cultures may experience dissonance of personal and collective values in navigating academic, social, and other aspects of U.S. culture, causing barriers to sense of belonging within the U.S. campus and with family or co-nationals (Kushner, 2010). Kushner notes that gender, worries about financing higher

education, field of study, and Indian caste system also influence Indian international students' experience in U.S. higher education.

The caste system is a 3,000-thousand-year-old Indian tradition that organizes society into "mutually exclusive, exhaustive, hereditary, endogamous, and occupation-specific *Varnas* (translated into English as castes)" (Deshpande, 2000, p. 322). These castes create a social hierarchy based on birth that determines one's livelihood, socioeconomic access and "all aspects of [a person's] existence," (Kushner, 2010, p. 22). In the last few decades, there have been attempts by the Indian Parliament, community activists, and educational institutions to provide admissions quotas, affirmative action policies, and initiatives to undo social inequities built into Indian culture by the caste system (Deshpande, 2010). Studying in the U.S., away from Indian society provides students with opportunities to "achieve social mobility away from conventional societal roles…especially for Indian students from middle, rural, and urban poor socioeconomic statuses" (Kushner, 2010, p. 21). Bhattar (2016b) found while caste was identified as an important aspect of international students coming to the United States in the 1970s, contemporary Indian international students do not identify caste as a conscious or significant identity. One Indian international student could not identify what caste his family belonged to and had not thought much about it; while an Indian graduate student who immigrated to the United States in the 1970s felt it was a defining factor in her sense of self and worldview (Bhattar, 2016b). For Indian international students, the cultural significance of growing up with caste-based social structures in India may impact how they perceive and navigate sense of belonging on the U.S. campus, especially how they understand and express LGBQ identity (Bhattar, 2016a). Students who come from Brahmin communities and having social and cultural dominance in India, may find accessing and navigating campus resources easier than students

from Dalit (formerly the “untouchables” or the bottom of the caste system), who systemically have been oppressed through Indian social cultural systems (Bhattar, 2016a; Kushner, 2010).

Khatiwada (2012) explores five types of barriers faced by South Asian international students in the United States: social, cultural, financial, academic, and legal concerns. Khatiwada defines South Asian as students from Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and the Maldives. Though this demographic is larger than India, most of the students in the study were of Indian origin and relevant to the current study. Khatiwada’s framing of social, cultural, and academic areas are most closely aligned with sense of belonging literature, even though Khatiwada does not name sense of belonging or any other theory or concept in framing his study.

Khatiwada (2012) interviewed seven South Asian international students and found financial and legal barriers to be the most impactful for the students in the study. Students in Khatiwada’s study note the cost of attendance, lack of financial aid, fear of not finding a job after graduating, and the unfavorable conversion rate of South Asian currencies to U.S. dollars as major barriers. For legal barriers, students spoke about extra paperwork requirements, inability to work, and fear of losing legal status as major barriers. No other scholars were found to address these categories with South Asian international students. Khatiwada highlights the importance of understanding how legal barriers and post-graduation legal stress were identified by participants as obstacles in their engagement and increased fear which may contribute to students’ sense of belonging on campus. Consistent with research on international students from Asia (Campbell & Li, 2008; Rosenthal et al., 2007), but inconsistent with Kushner’s findings, students in Khatiwada’s study consistently mentioned language comprehension and communication skills as significant hurdles to feeling successful and connected to campus. Further, Khatiwada does not

provide demographics of participants' social identities, beyond mentioning religious identities, and how they impact students' campus experiences, limiting the impact of his study.

In summary, limited scholarship (Khatiwada, 2012; Kushner, 2010) provides a foundation and understanding of unique interpersonal and structural issues facing international students, including Indian international students. However, scholars do not often, if ever, highlight how international Indian students with multiple identities (e.g., LGBQ sexuality) experience sense of belonging on campus (Ting & Morse, 2016). Koehne (2005) posits a notion of hybrid subjectivity where international students feel different and changed from their home culture while concurrently not feeling like they "fit in" within their current environment. This "dual exposure" causes conflict and is complicated with the inclusion of LGBQ sexual identity within a U.S. context.

LGBQ International Students and Sense of Belonging

The domestic LGBQ student population is both becoming more visible and more engaged on campus (Marine, 2011), which is reflected in the increase in literature on LGBQ students in college (Rankin et. al, 2010; Renn, 2010; Strayhorn, 2012). Understanding LGBQ students is important because they are more likely to explore their sexuality in college in addition to understanding other intersectional identities (Dugan & Yurman, 2011; Rhoads, 1994; Strayhorn, 2012). LGBQ students living away from family in college "feel a freedom to explore, research, and discuss their sexualities in ways they never felt they could while at home" (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 12). This experience of finding safety on campus away from home for LGBQ students is different from studies that find students of color seek home-going and holding to cultural values and communities as a strategy for surviving and finding belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Waterman, 2012). Indian LGBQ international students speak of returning to India as an

important step but often do not feel at home or feel the need to hide or "cover" various aspects of identity (Bhattar, 2016b; Yoshino, 2007). Going abroad serves as a "coming home" experience for LGBQ students where they can find community that affirms intersectional identity development (Bhattar, 2016b).

Kumashiro uses "queer" as an umbrella term and notes the importance of exploring how college students understand their sexuality, given its importance developmentally (Renn, 2010). Many studies in higher education research have explored the experiences of LGBQ students and find academic and social belonging impacts LGBQ student motivation, achievement and success on campus (Rankin et al., 2010; Renn, 2010; Sanlo, 2004; Stout & Wright, 2016; Tarasi, 2016).

While several scholars have focused on LGBQ domestic students' sense of belonging, (Stout and Wright, 2016; Tarasi, 2016), minimal literature has explored LGBQ international students' sense of belonging on U.S. campuses. Renn (2010) argues that higher education scholars have yet to fully address LGBQ issues connected to internationalization and globalization in the current literature. Renn advocates for country-specific and comparative studies that may provide more insight into U.S. conceptualizations of sexuality and gender. Further Oba and Pope (2013) discuss mental health needs of international LGBQ students and note that currently there are no accurate estimates of how many LGBQ international students are studying in the United States Only a small number of colleges and universities collect data on sexuality of students (Rankin et al., 2010) and there is no consensus on how many LGBQ people are in U.S. higher education. Renn notes that the lack of "demographic questions that capture sexual orientation and provide a transgender option for gender identity" limits our current understanding of LGBQ people in higher education (p. 137). Given the difficulty in quantifying LGBQ populations on college campuses in the United States in general (Rankin et al., 2010), and

cultural barriers to expressing LGBQ identities, it may not be possible to fully understand how many international LGBQ students exist in the United States (Tarasi, 2016). Further, Tarasi finds most LGBQ international students are not out on campus, making it more difficult to understand this population. Using critical and queer theories, Tarasi conducts a mixed method study exploring how international students describe their experiences on campus. Tarasi finds many international students come from countries where LGBTQ people are marginalized and "where finding a safe space is nearly impossible" which affects their sense of belonging on campus (p. 35).

Tarasi's (2016) findings are consistent with Patrick's (2014) thesis on experiences of international students on a Canadian campus who finds participants consistently balancing "the Double Life;" where some participants' understanding and openness regarding sexuality and connectedness to various communities is influenced by the broader political acceptance of sexuality in Canada while also constantly being reminded of home countries where non-heteronormative sexuality is against the law. Students who came from countries where same-sex relations are legal also experience renegotiation with identity terminology but not necessarily the same level of catharsis and contrast to their country of origin (Patrick, 2014). As cited earlier (Baek, 2013; Khatiwada, 2012; Koehne, 2005; Yao, 2014), studies have consistently found international students tend to gather with others from their country of origin in creating community. Yet Indian international students' LGBQ identities may be in conflict with the sociohistorical context of India where non-heteronormative sexuality was criminalized until September 2018 (Borpujari, 2018). Though the Indian Supreme Court has recently ruled the ban on consensual sex between people of the same gender is unconstitutional, non-heteronormative behavior is still culturally taboo and discouraged by family and society (Bhattar, 2016a;

Rodricks, 2012; Ting & Morse, 2016). LGBQ international students may find themselves isolated and feeling as if they do not belong with their cultural groups on campus (Bhattar, 2016a; Yang, 2015).

Similarly, Corkum (2015) provides a qualitative study that explores ways in which "queer international students are subject to and disciplined by particular regimes of power…to nimbly and strategically find ways to navigate both literal (national) and imaginary (social) borders" (p. 61). Using Cantú, Anzaldúa and other critical and intersectional theorists, Corkum uses queer oral history methods to understand how nine international queer students navigate both complex social identities and physical and social borderlands (one student from this sample identifies as Indian). Further, Patrick's (2014) analysis within the context of a Canadian university highlights the "temporal and spatial nature of identity roles such as gender and sexual orientation, seeing culture as a strong force in shaping normative identities" (p. 7).

Tarasi (2016), Patrick (2014) and Corkum (2015) highlight the importance of acknowledging the potential impact of "different cultural constructions and understandings of sexualities" and cultural values on sense of self and belonging on campus for LGBQ international students (Patrick, 2014, p. ii). The authors reflect on the social constructive nature of identities and the complex, if at times conflictive, process that individuals experience. Tarasi (2016), Patrick (2014), and Corkum (2015) provide critical and complex constructions of identity for international LGBQ students studying in a Western context, yet no participants in Patrick's study identified as an Indian LGBQ international student. Corkum had one Indian LGBQ international student out of nine participants and Tarasi only had two participants out of 69 who identified as Indian and LGBQ. The specific cultural background of Indian international students and its impact on their perceptions of their LGBQ identity and belonging on campus is currently

missing from the literature. Given the limitations of these studies, I argue that there is still more research needed to fully understand LGBQ international students on campus, especially as it relates to how Indian international LGBQ students perceive sense of belonging on campus (Bhattar, 2016a; Rodricks, 2012).

LGBQ Indian International Students, Belonging, and Intersectionality

The intersections of international student status and LGBQ identity may require different levels of navigation for international LGBQ students from India compared to heterosexual Indian international students and domestic LGBQ students because of multiple levels of marginalization (Bhattar, 2016a; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Wall, 2016). In preparing for this research, no studies were found that used an intersectional analysis (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) to explore sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students. Because Indian international students are "situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas," understanding how sociohistorical factors influence how they experience academic and social sense of belonging is a necessary aspect of critical analysis (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1252).

Although the researcher did not identify any empirical studies that specifically address the intersection of *Indian* international LGBQ students, some research (Bhattar, 2016a; Rodricks, 2012; Yang, 2015) has focused on the intersecting aspects of identities that influence international LGBQ students' perceptions of sense of belonging on U.S. campuses. Yang (2015), Rodricks (2015) and Bhattar (2016a) addressed the intersection of Asian, international, and LGBQ identities. Yang found the intersection of being Chinese, international, and gay influences students' meaning-making process. Bhattar found LGBQ Asian international students' perceptions of sense of belonging is influenced by the interpersonal interactions with co-

nationals and classroom experiences. Rodrick shares his personal perspective as "a gay, Catholic, Portuguese-Indian, first-generation Third Culture Kid (TCK) from India" and reflects on how these intersections of social identities impacted his campus experiences (p. 96). All three authors find a significant relationship between students' international status and sexual identity and their meaning-making of the campus environment. Yet the authors do not offer an intersectional analysis of how sociohistorical systems influence students' sense of belonging. Below, I detail some of the sociohistorical systems that may help to guide an intersectional understanding and analysis of sense of belonging for LGBQ Indian international students. The sociohistorical factors include heteronormativity, racist nativism/ethnocentrism, xenophobia, sexism, and linguicism. Understanding the influence of intersecting systems of domination for Indian international LGBQ students in U.S. higher education can provide insight on their perceptions of sense of belonging on campus (Bhattar, 2016a; Bowleg, 2008; Patrick, 2014).

Sociohistorical factors act individually and overlap shaping one's environment based on their various aspects of marginalized identities (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Heteronormativity is the basis of heterosexism and homophobia, reaffirming assumptions of binary sex categories across different cultures (Warner, 1991). Heteronormativity imposes assumptions of heterosexual identity along the male-female binary onto international LGBQ students making it difficult for non-heteronormative students to explore and express their identities on campus (Jones et al., 2013; Stout & Wright, 2016). Sexism and heterosexism are related concepts that marginalize LGBQ people and transgender and gender non-conforming people who may challenge the binary by categorizing them as "other" and even entail laws that criminalize these identities (Griffin, 2007; Lind, 2007). Sexism, heteronormativity, racist nativism, and xenophobia are deeply connected to linguicism (Khatiwada, 2012; Kushner, 2010; Rodricks, 2012; Subitrelu, 2013).

English language ability, accent, and confidence are often associated with the process of colonization and assumptions of other aspects of identity such as race, gender, sexuality, nationality, citizenship, and others (Subitrelu, 2013). Unlike international students from other Asian countries, Indian international students come to the United States from a former British colony with a familiarity of the English language yet with significant differences in accents, sentence structure, and conversation style, which increases stress for Indian international students (Khatiwada, 2012).

For international students with language differences, the coming out process or even self-definition may be forced into an U.S./Western box of sexuality, denying their sense of self or perceptions within culturally-specific terminology or concepts (Bhattar, 2016a; Wall, 2016). The institutional criminalization and cultural stigmatization of non-heteronormative sexuality in India and current political climate in the United States may make it difficult for Indian LGBQ international students to express their identities even in a U.S. campus context (Bhattar, 2016a; Oba & Pope, 2013). Specifically, Indian international women may have difficulty expressing LGBQ identity in the United States and India due to sexism, heterosexism, racist nativism, and xenophobia, among other factors which may lead to invisibility and harassment (Iyer, 2015).

Heteronormativity and sexism may also be connected to racist nativism, ethnocentric monoculturalism, and xenophobia. The term “racist nativism” recognizes the spatial and historical intersections of racist and nativist perspectives and policies on immigrants of color and other populations (Nayar, 2015). While racist nativism and ethnocentric monoculturalism are about preserving one’s dominant position and superiority, xenophobia is the hatred of differences. Xenophobia reaffirms racist nativism in interpersonal and structural ways, varying from individual acts of violence to unequal institutional immigration policies (Harris, 2002).

This concept has been used to consistently "other" various populations, including South Asian, Asian, Middle Eastern, non-Christian, and other groups that do not fit the dominant narrative in the United States (Brown, 2007; Iyer, 2015). Indian international LGBQ students may face marginalization due to multiple identities that challenge U.S. dominant framing of identities and who is considered "American" and who is "other" (Iyer, 2015). Often Indian LGBQ international students may not be aware which aspect of identity is the source of harassment and hostile interactions making it difficult to find ways to navigate campus (Bhattar, 2016a; Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008).

Given the complexity of international LGBQ students and their social identities, more research using intersectionality to address sociohistorical factors is necessary (Bhattar, 2016a; Yang, 2015). In a post-9/11 world, Indian and other South Asian-Desi people, Muslims, Arabs, and other immigrant communities continue to be the target of hate speech, violence, and policing while also being used as political wedge populations (Iyer, 2015; Prashad, 2000). During President Obama's tenure, significant hate crime laws and policies were passed to support immigrants, refugees, LGBTQ people, international students, and people of color (Dimock, 2017). Under the current Trump presidency, there have already been significant attacks on immigrants, undocumented people (especially Dreamers – undocumented college students), women, LGBTQ people, people of color, and millions of people on the Affordable Care Act (Watkins & Tseng, 2017). For the 2016-2017 cycle, many university admissions offices report lower international student applications than the previous year and project more difficult experiences for international students who are allowed to enter (Strauss, 2017). Since 2015, white supremacy groups have become more visible and violent on campuses and in the community (SPLC, 2018). Upholding travel bans and developing resources to support various

communities affected by these federal policies are ways that these policies are impacting campuses across the United States. Given these incidents and current political context, understanding how Indian international LGBQ students perceive sense of belonging on campus is important to better support their success in academic and social spaces.

Focusing on the individual within a larger sociohistorical context for understanding international LGBQ students can challenge the homogenization of this diverse group of students. Students from the same country can have varied and even contradictory backgrounds and experiences and perceptions of campus (Kim, 2012; Wall, 2016). An intersectional framing provides an opportunity to understand how LGBQ international students from India experience campus environments and make sense of belonging, contextualizing the individual within a larger sociohistorical perspective through a critical constructivist framework. The current dissertation study will explore the impact of U.S. campus academic and social environments at individual and sociohistorical levels contributing to LGBQ Indian international students' perceptions of sense of belonging.

Chapter Summary

The academic and social perceptions of sense of belonging for LGBQ Indian international students in U.S. higher education are under-explored. Chapter two offered a review of how this study's conceptual frameworks, intersectionality and sense of belonging, complement and provide an effective foundation for the current study. Through the extant review of current literature, it was determined that no empirical research has focused explicitly on Indian LGBQ international students' experiences on campus and perceptions of academic and social sense of belonging on campus. Existing studies on international students, Asian international students, Indian international students, and LGBQ international students provide

little insight on how the unique intersection of LGBQ identity and Indian cultural and international identity may foster academic and social experiences that are different than their peers.

This study explores how LGBQ Indian international students' perceptions of sense of belonging impacts their academic and social connectedness on campus. Studying which aspects of campus feel welcoming and affirming and how international LGBQ students from India navigate these spaces, especially at institutions of higher education is important. It is especially worthy of study in a country with broad nationally stated policies that mostly support LGBQ people as compared to India where same-sex relations are criminalized. This study will fill a current gap in literature and provide voice to a community not centered in current scholarship (Bhattar, 2016a; Renn, 2010; Trikone, 2014). Understanding how LGBQ international students perceive and navigate campus communities can provide better insight into how campus administrators, faculty, domestic students, and co-nationals can support them. Rather than placing the onus of sense of belonging on LGBQ Indian international students, exploring the impact of structural factors such as culture and laws of the country of origin and U.S. campus policies on this population is necessary (Bhattar, 2016a; Campbell & Li, 2008; Tatar, 2005).

This study addresses current gaps in literature by focusing on (a) LGBQ Indian international students who exist outside of Indian heteronormative and homophobic culture and laws, challenging heteronormative assumptions of international students, and who exist beyond U.S. understandings of sexuality; (b) how these students perceive academic and social sense of belonging on campus; and (c) the impact of U.S. campus contexts on Indian international LGBQ students' sense of belonging. These gaps in the current literature directed me, the researcher, to ask the following questions to guide this study:

The four primary research questions are:

1. How do Indian international LGBQ students perceive sense of belonging on campus?
2. What are the most salient facets of identity influencing sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students on campus?
    a. How does perception of sense of belonging compare between undergraduate and graduate students?
3. What are the most salient institutional factors influencing belongingness for Indian international LGBQ students on campus?
4. How do intersecting sociohistorical factors influence individual perceptions of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students?

Given the exploratory nature of this study, qualitative perspective is most effective to explore and address these research questions. Further, qualitative research is able to honor the unique intersection of identities and experiences while also being able to extrapolate major themes from the data. Chapter three presents critical qualitative, critical constructive, and narrative inquiry along with methods and procedures used to collect and analyze data for the current study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore LGBQ Indian international students' perceptions of sense of belonging on U.S. campuses. This study focused on how participants experienced sense of belonging at the intersection of sexuality and national and ethnic identities. This research also explored how institutional contexts and sociohistorical factors influence students' perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. The current study used constructive-critical qualitative inquiry and a phenomenological approach to explore how LGBQ Indian international students perceived sense of belonging on U.S. campuses.

In this chapter, I define constructivist and critical qualitative inquiries followed by a definition and justification for the phenomenological methodology used in this research. Finally, the research design is presented, including sampling processes, data collection, and site selection. The data analysis procedures are also explained, followed by steps taken to enhance trustworthiness of the study.

Constructive Qualitative Inquiry

This study used a constructivist qualitative inquiry paradigm to explore LGBQ Indian international students' perceptions of sense of belonging in U.S. higher education. Challenging traditional and positivist theories, constructivist scholars argue that one's sense of self does not get formed in a linear fashion or in isolation of their environment or of other identities (Agger, 1991; Baxter-Magolda, 2004). For example, Applefield, Huber, and Moallem (2000) posited, "Knowledge is conceived as being embedded in and connected to the situation where the learning occurs. As a consequence, thinking and knowledge that is constructed are inextricably tied to the immediate social and physical context of the learning experience" (p. 9). Constructivist approaches provide a subjective understanding of learning where experiences

create multiple truths and are internalized by individuals. Furthermore, "truths" are developed and navigated through various identities and experiences, often in complex and adaptable ways (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Constructivist inquiry centers the importance of understanding how each individual builds a sense of reality through various experiences and interpretations while acknowledging the coexistence of multiple changing, and evolving truths (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Guido et al., 2010). Constructivist inquiry seeks to gain insight into the quintessence of shared experiences and give voice to differences within groups which may not be seen in positivist forms of research (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 1990).

Constructivism as an epistemology aligns with several elements of intersectionality and sense of belonging. Constructivist qualitative inquiry centers the individual's experiences of mattering within the specific context of U.S. higher education. Focusing on individual students' perceptions deconstructs and challenges dominant generalizations about student populations and acknowledges differences among participants' experiences and meaning-making processes (Guido et al., 2010). Constructivism also provides the opportunity to study how power and intersecting identities are related and must be explored as holistic identities, rather than as additive experiences (Bowleg, 2008; Strayhorn, 2012; Thornton-Dill & Zambrana, 2009). Finally, intersectionality, sense of belonging, and constructivism focus on identity salience, contexts, and meaning-making methods which are constantly evolving in a "continuous, dynamic process" (Inalhan & Finch, 2004).

In this study, constructivism was used to center the perspectives of student participants that may share intersecting ethnic and sexual identities as students studying in the United States yet have a broad range of experiences. Further, constructivism and phenomenology focus on how one perceives or makes meaning of an event rather than solely focusing on what the phenomenon

is (Rasmussen, 1998). Constructivism is used as a theoretical foundation to guide the interview protocols, which explored how participants perceived their sense of belonging and their intersecting identities (Seidman, 2013). Finally, constructivism was used to complement critical inquiry in exploring sociohistorical structures and systems and their influence on individuals' meaning-making process.

Critical Qualitative Inquiry

While constructivist qualitative inquiry centers the individual's experiences and meaning-making processes, critical inquiry is helpful in exploring the sociohistorical and structural aspects of higher education and how they shape experiences and perceptions of marginalized populations such as Indian international LGBQ students on campus (Creswell, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Critical qualitative researchers critique constructivist qualitative researchers for not doing enough to advocate for marginalized populations (Creswell, 2009). As a result, critical qualitative inquiry "assumes socially and historically embedded power relations, 'facts' as ideologically inscripted, language as both constructing and limiting consciousness, oppressions as multiple and interconnected, and research as producing and reconstituting (however unintended) systems of power" (Cannella, 2007, p. 867). Critical qualitative research aims to unearth unequal power structures, not often addressed in other forms of inquiry, such as constructivism. Critical qualitative inquiry challenges assumptions of "facts" and centers the importance of multiple and intersecting identities as they relate to structural and sociohistorical systems of power (Cannella, 2007; Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz, & Gildersleeve, 2012). To challenge the practice of research itself, critical qualitative inquiry urges researchers to acknowledge our own biases and interpret the data with sociohistorical influencers in mind (Cannella, 2007).

Critical qualitative inquiry allows for analysis of data at various levels to deconstruct inequitable power structures and dominant frameworks within higher education (Merriam, 2009; Pasque et al., 2012). Like constructivism, critical qualitative inquiry aligns with several elements of intersectionality and sense of belonging. For example, critical qualitative inquiry, like intersectionality, focuses on structural influences and sociohistorical factors on individual experiences (Bowleg, 2008; Merriam, 2009). Critical qualitative inquiry affords a focus on the ways which social, cultural, and political values shape the interpretation and internalization of students' sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Omi & Winant, 1994; Strayhorn, 2012). This form of inquiry accounts for current, historical, and social environments which inform services and resources for people with complex and multiple marginalized identities (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones, 2009). Critical forms of inquiry strive to center social justice and systemic change for marginalized student populations (Harris, 2015), particularly Indian international LGBQ students, within U.S. higher education (Bhattar, 2016a). Further, critical inquiries ask not only how participants live within a sociohistorical context but also how it feels to live in the context (Given, 2008). Finally, building on constructivist centering of individual voices and experiences, critical qualitative inquiry encourages researchers to center the voices, experiences, and perceptions of marginalized populations as an opportunity to challenge dominant and homogenized descriptions of communities (Cannella, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Given, 2008).

Phenomenological Methodology

Critical and constructivist inquiries informed my use of phenomenological methods in this current study. Phenomenology strives to understand how an individual person perceives an experience or situation, thus creating a subjective reality (Lester, 1999). Creating a subjective

understanding of reality challenges generalized assumptions of truth across and within groups (Lester, 1999). Given the lack of knowledge on Indian international LGBQ students and how various aspects of identity intersect in their perceptions of campus sense of belonging, phenomenological inquiry provides an effective medium for this research because it centers one's perception and experience on campus in the analysis of sense of belonging and various sociohistorical factors (Seidman, 2013).

Phenomenology encompasses a broad set of strategies for qualitative research such as interviewing, researcher observations, and participants' written self-reports (Waters, 2017). Interviewing as a phenomenological method centers individual experiences and their meaning-making processes (Kleiman, 2004; Sauro, 2015; Seidman, 2013). Sauro (2015) explained, "You rely on the participants' own perspectives to provide insight into their motivations" (para. 10). Seidman (2013) identifies four major themes of phenomenology: (a) the temporal and transitory nature of human experience; (b) subjective understanding of experience; (c) lived experience as the foundation of phenomena and (d) the emphasis on meaning and meaning-making in context. The first theme, the temporal and transitory nature of human experience, acknowledges the changing nature of human experiences while centering the "essence" of each interaction in shaping individual perceptions. The second theme, subjective understanding of experience, notes the importance of understanding how a person views the particular experience. Through observation, people can make meaning of what they see others doing. Phenomenological interviewing gives insight into how the individual experiences and makes meaning of a particular event (Seidman, 2013). The third theme, lived experience as the foundation of phenomena, centers an individual's everyday experience as a valid phenomenon worthy of recognition and study. The final theme, emphasis on meaning and meaning-making in context, acknowledges the

impact of a specific environment or situation in shaping how one understands a phenomenon. For example, a statement or an action may have significantly different symbolism in different contexts due to the environment in which they occur.

Phenomenology as a methodology challenges homogenous interpretations of data and incorporates the importance of contextualizing experiences within sociohistorical factors such as racist nativism, homophobia, heterosexism, and linguicism (Bowleg, 2008; Huber et. al., 2008; Weiss, 2008). Understanding and analyzing the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals creates patterns that can be defined as a phenomenon. Multiple experiences and "knowledges" of meaning can exist and may even contradict others given the various aspects of identity (e.g. race, sexuality, nationality) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 113). Intentionally reflecting and focusing on the meaning of a lived experience "brings experiences that would otherwise be simply lived through into our 'intentional gaze' and opens the pathway to meaningfulness" (Seidman, 2013, p. 18). Specifically, focusing on the context in which the phenomena are experienced provides a critical analysis of the environment, a focus of phenomenology that is in alignment with critical frameworks such as sense of belonging and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Maxwell, 2013; Seidman, 2013; Strayhorn, 2012). A phenomenological approach employs both inductive and deductive approaches to frame interviews and the meaning-making process of participants, especially within the sociohistorical context of the United States and U.S. higher education. The four aspects of phenomenology, including: the temporal and transitory nature of human experience; subjective understanding of experience; lived experience as the foundation of phenomena; and the emphasis on meaning and meaning-making in context, serve as a foundation for exploring sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students in U.S. higher education. Phenomenology provides a more complete picture of intersectionality (Parent,

DeBlaere, & Moradi, 2013) and sense of belonging (Yao, 2014) and is effective in exploring differences and similarities within and across the participants in this population.

Research Design

Setting

West Coast University (WCU) is a public Research I institution located in an urban city in the southwestern United States. WCU receives more undergraduate applications than most other higher education institution in the country (Watanabe, 2017). WCU is a diverse campus with a majority of students identifying as people of color, one-third transfer students, and significant representations on campus of undocumented students, low-income students, non-traditional students, and students representing various regions of the United States (Quick Facts, 2017). Overall, 80% of campus undergraduate and graduate students, staff, and faculty feel "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate at WCU (Rankin & Associates, 2014, p. iv). Over 1,200 student organizations support students' various ethnic, religious, cultural, sexual, gender, professional, and social well-being needs (Quick Facts, 2017).

Undergraduate students are 69% of the student body while graduate students constitute 31% of the student body. Of all undergraduate and graduate students, 12% identify as international students. Of all international students on campus, 867 international students, or 2% of all students, originate from India, including undergraduate, graduate, and non-degree students. Further, 13% of undergraduate and graduate students identify as LGBQ. Over half (56%) of the student population identify as women and no statistics are available on transgender and gender queer populations on campus. From these numbers, I estimate that approximately 13% (n = 112) of Indian international students who identify as LGBQ are currently enrolled as undergraduate or graduate students at WCU.

WCU was founded in the late 1800s as a teacher training school and transitioned into a branch of the state's university system in the early part of the twentieth century. The University transitioned into WCU in 1927, becoming a leading local and national higher education institution. Having been a "normal school" in its beginning, WCU has always admitted women and has admitted international students since the 1940s. International student presence on campus has increased dramatically in the last decade. Only 142 international undergraduate first-year students enrolled at WCU in 2008 compared to 739 undergraduate international first-year students in 2016 (Profile of Admitted Freshmen, 2017). Historically, services for international students consisted mainly of visa and immigration assistance; yet due to private and university funding, more comprehensive programs are now available. Currently, the International Students and Scholars Center hosts weekly events, language workshops, local outings and trips, film screenings, and speed-dating events to help international students to thrive and feel connected to campus. Though these programs and services are helpful, international students have difficulty with academic requirements, making friendships with domestic students, and overall adjustment to campus (Student Affairs Information & Research Office, 2014).

Similarly, LGBTQ communities have been acknowledged on campus since the 1950s (Our History, 2018). Activism and community empowerment is a critical aspect of student life and LGBTQ people hold positions in various levels of leadership on campus. From activism on campus, the LGBT Campus Resource Center was founded in the 1990s and is located prominently in the middle of campus (Our History, 2018). Sexuality, gender identity, and expression have been part of the university's non-discrimination policy for over a decade and students, staff, and faculty have access to domestic partner benefits, health care, and transitional support. WCU is regularly ranked as a top-10 LGBT friendly campus in the United States by

www.CollegeAccess.com. Though campus climate is generally welcoming for people of various marginalized sexual and gender identities, LGBQ people are more likely to report feeling "uncomfortable" or "very uncomfortable" with campus climate than their heterosexual peers (Rankin & Associates, 2014). Finally, WCU boasts large international and LGBTQ populations, yet currently, there are no specific programs to support international LGBQ students, especially Indian international LGBQ students on campus.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

Participants for the study were identified and selected using purposive sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select participants who could provide rich, descriptive data to address the phenomena being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The criterion for participant selection was:

1. Individuals who were currently enrolled as an undergraduate, graduate, or professional student at West Coast University and had spent at minimum one quarter at the institution;
2. Individuals must have identified as an international student identifying ethnically as Indian or multiethnic (Indian and other ethnicities) and having spent a majority of their life in India;
3. Individuals must have identified, at some point during their time at WCU, as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and/or questioning, or other non-heterosexual identity.

The first criterion was to ensure participants have personal knowledge of academic and social aspects of campus for one or more quarters so that they can reflect on their experiences as part of their meaning-making process. The second condition was necessary for an intentional focus on international students coming from India rather than other countries or other diasporic

experiences. Given the scope of this study, only students categorized as international students at the institutional level and holding student visas for higher education studies in the United States were considered. The third criterion ensured a focus on students with intersections of marginalized sexual and international student identities. Because of different cultural definitions of sexuality and linguistic differences, the term non-heterosexual was used in recruitment material and in the proposal as a catch-all after listing lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and questioning to cover a broad range of identities for students who may not use Western-American concepts or terms of non-heterosexual identity to identify themselves.

There is no perfect number of participants needed for phenomenological data collection and analysis. The sample sizes in phenomenological research must be sufficient to address the research question and be as representative of the population being explored as possible (Creswell, 2009; Seidman, 2013). The participants must sufficiently demonstrate saturation of perspectives and experiences within the community being understood (Boyd, 2001; Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell (1998) argues five to twenty-five datasets are sufficient for phenomenological studies. Though I recruited participants for five weeks and sent over 6,000 emails each week, identifying qualifying participants was difficult and may have been related to potential stigma due to the political and cultural environment of India and the United States (Bhattar, 2016b).

Qualitative research strives for meaning where "one occurrence of the data is potentially as useful as many in understanding the process behind a topic" which aligns with the phenomenological and constructivist foundations of this study (Mason, 2010, p. 1). Of the eight people that completed the online questionnaire, only four qualified or responded to communication to set up the initial interview. To gain an understanding of sense of belonging for

LGBQ Indian international students in U.S. higher education, two undergraduate and two graduate students in U.S. higher education were recruited and interviewed for this study.

Participant recruitment. Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I recruited potential participants who met the criterion through purposive sampling. In purposive sampling, "particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to questions or goals…" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 97). Utilizing campus-specific identity-based networks of LGBQ students and international students along with other identity-based networks was important to reach students that held identities relevant to the current study. To identify Indian international LGBQ undergraduate and graduate students, several listservs (e.g. international student services, LGBT campus resource center, graduate student resource center, graduate division, academic department lists, and student of color programs) were used to send digital recruitment material and study survey invitations. For example, the international student services office maintains an active list of all registered international students on campus. I worked with colleagues at WCU to send emails directly to reach international students through monthly newsletters and weekly updates on social media. Concurrently, snowball sampling (also known as network sampling) was conducted through individual invitation emails to campus faculty, administrators, and student leaders. In snowball sampling, participants refer other potential participants to the researcher through their network (Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching, 2017). Snowball sampling allowed for outreach to difficult–to-identify participants through participant connections and relationships, which was important given Indian cultural taboos of sexuality (Trikone, 2014). I asked colleagues to assist in nominating students who may be interested in or fit the participant criteria outlined above by sharing IRB-approved messaging and information regarding the study

(Appendices B and C). Due to difficulty in recruitment, I repeated the call for participants to over 3,000 emails, twice a week for five weeks. Study participants were also asked to forward study information to friends or contacts once they made initial contact, after completing the online questionnaire and at the end of each in-person interview, so that participants that met the criteria could be identified.

Through the recruitment emails, fliers and social media posts, potential participants were asked to complete an online recruitment questionnaire (Appendix A). The questionnaire assisted in (a) confirming that participants met the conditions outlined above; (b) gathering information about various intersecting identities of the participants; and (c) collecting contact information for further communication. Each participant had the opportunity to select a pseudonym to ensure anonymity and have agency in how they were named throughout the study. This survey facilitated communication in scheduling the interviews, framing questions during each interview, and building rapport between the participant and the researcher. Once the questionnaire was completed, and if the potential participant met the three criterion, I contacted them via email, informing them that they were eligible for the study and provided an online poll using Doodle, to set up the first interview date, time, and location. Each email also included a link to share with their network for the purpose of snowball sampling. I also contacted the participant one day preceding the interview to confirm location, date and time, and share any other relevant logistical information. At the end of interviews one and two, I worked with students to schedule interviews two and three, respectively.

Data Collection

Five data points were used in this study. The first three data points included one 90- to 120-minute interview and two 60-minute interviews with each participant incorporating

Seidman's (2006, 2013) three-part structure for phenomenological data collection. Fourth, my journal of interview notes and reflections helped in expanding and contextualizing the interview data. Finally, the screening questionnaire (Appendix A) served as a data point with demographic information and questions to help guide the in-person interviews.

The primary data for this qualitative study was collected through three interviews with each participant lasting 60 minutes to two hours and incorporating Seidman's (2006, 2013) three-part "in-depth phenomenologically, open-ended" interview structure (Seidman, 2006, p. 16). Seidman (2013) suggests three separate interviews to collect information on (a) focused life history – understanding of individual and cultural values and journey to U.S. higher education; (b) details of the experience – exploring individual interactions in campus and academic contexts and (c) reflection of the meaning of the phenomenon – how individuals perceive and make meaning of these experiences.

The interviews were directed by expansive open-ended questions, building on the participants' responses and facilitating their meaning-making of sense of belonging on campus as related to their Indian international LGBQ identity and perceptions of sociohistorical structural influences on their experiences (Seidman, 2006, 2013) (Appendix D). Interviewing allowed the researcher to understand the phenomenon situated within a specific context and meaning-making experience (Applefield et al., 2000). The interviews were conducted in English using semi-structured protocol in order to address sense of belonging in relation to and because of academic and psychosocial elements of the U.S. higher education environment. Seidman (2006) notes open-ended questions serve "to build upon and explore their participants' response to those questions" in an effort to recreate their experiences and perceptions of the experiences (p. 15). The semi-structured questions in interviews allowed for an intentional focus on the conversation

between participant and researcher while providing the flexibility to shape interview questions to meet participant's experiences. The first interview was in-person and began with "Tell me about yourself," engaging participants to share their life histories and their journeys to their university. Further questions explored participants' life histories: "Where did you grow up?" "What language did you speak at home?" "How and why did you choose to attend WCU?" and "What are some important aspects of your identity?" Given the importance of physical context in fostering or inhibiting one's sense of belonging, participants were given a printed map of campus and asked to identify spaces/offices/individuals on campus, if any, where they perceived a sense of belonging at the end of the first interview. *Sojourning* (J. McCarty, personal communication, January 9, 2018) and *walking interviews* (Harris, 2015) were considered as strategies to gain insight into participants' sense of belonging on campus through active walking alongside participants as both an observational and interview process. Given my professional role and visibility on campus and sensitivity of the topic, I chose to not pursue these strategies to protect participants from being inadvertently "outed" by being seen walking with me on campus. Once the mapping component was completed, students were asked, "Is there anything else you'd like to share?"

The second and third interviews were conducted and recorded using Zoom, a video conferencing platform and Rev.com transcription software. At the second interview, I asked if they had reflected on any specific thoughts from the first interview and checked in on how they were doing with school, family, and friends as a way to build trust. Once a foundation of information and participant-interviewer rapport was built, I defined sense of belonging as framed by Strayhorn (2012) and asked students to reflect on the campus environment. Open-ended questions helped to understand how Strayhorn's (2012) seven elements of sense of belonging

impact students' experiences, especially in academic and social contexts. Some examples of questions asked were: "Can you talk about your experience as an Indian international LGBQ student on campus?" "In what spaces are you most aware of these aspects of your identity?" "Can you share an experience where you felt fully connected or a sense of community on campus?" "To what extent does your identity or aspects of identity impact your connectedness to campus?" and "Where on campus do you feel you are most welcome with all your aspects of identities (i.e. ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, etc.)?" The third interview began with a check-in followed by questions exploring intersectionality through sociohistorical systems and structures. Examples of these questions were: "How often are you conscious of your Indian international LGBQ identity on campus?" "Do you feel your identities influence how you are seen on campus? If so where?" "How have faculty and staff influenced your experience on campus?" "Does anything frustrate you about being and navigating campus as an Indian international LGBQ student? If so what?" "What departments or people on campus have been most/least helpful in your experience on campus?" and "How have U.S. immigration policies influenced your connectedness to campus and overall level of comfort?"

Next, I posed questions to facilitate student reflection and meaning-making of these campus experiences as it relates to belonging and the various intersections of identities influencing these phenomena. Examples of such questions were: "If you could magically change some campus policy or department to make your life easier, what would you change?" and "Do you feel you have a community on campus? If so, what are some characteristics of this community and what makes you feel this sense of connectedness?" At the end of all three interviews, students were asked, "Is there anything else you'd like to share?"

Each interview was audio-recorded and sent out for transcription. The first interview for each participant was conducted in a private, centrally-located campus building in a general classroom or meeting space on campus. Interviews two and three were conducted virtually using Zoom video conferencing and recording services due to scheduling and physical distance between participants and researcher. Given the risks that may have arisen for students participating in the study (i.e. realizing lack of community, depression, frustration, and sense of shame after sharing about personal experiences on campus), information on counseling services were provided and students were reminded about the opportunity to disclose only information they feel comfortable sharing or stopping the interview at any point of the interview (Khatiwada, 2012; Wall, 2016; Bhattar, 2016b). Students were informed of voluntary participation and ability to end the interview process at any time, without any penalty. Each participant received one $20 gift card at the end of interview one and one $10 gift card at the end of interviews two and three. All participants also received informed consent forms at the end of each interview but were not required to sign them to provide anonymity and reduce the potential for identity revelation through the interview process.

Seidman (2013) acknowledges the impact of power differences and identities between participant and researcher on the data collection process. Differences between the researcher and participant with regard to class, position on campus, linguistic ability, and other intersections may influence interaction between the two parties (Bowleg 2008; Seidman, 2013). As noted earlier, English is often not the primary language for international students which may have served as a barrier in the interview process (Khatiwada, 2012). The interviews were conducted in English but any words used by participants in an Indian language were translated by follow up questions with participants. I, as the researcher, am proficient in speaking three South Indian

languages (Kannada, Tamil, and Telugu) and can understand conversational Hindi (one of India's national languages). English was my fourth language when I moved to the United States and I communicate often with family in India with little or no English speaking background. To minimize these influences I used a casual, conversational style for the interview. Additionally, as recommended by other researchers, prior to initiating interviews with participants, I reviewed the interview protocol with two Indian international students whose primary language is not English and peer-reviewed the questions for accessibility with three doctoral students (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005).

The study's conceptual frameworks (intersectionality and sense of belonging) and extant literature informed the questions guiding each interview. Given the gap in the literature on sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students in U.S. higher education, the interviews were structured to explore sense of belonging and structural sociohistorical factors contributing to participants' perceptions of sense of belonging. Further, intersectionality guided my critical approach to understanding sociohistorical factors that influence sense of belonging such as heteronormativity (Bhattar, 2016a; Bowleg, 2008; Yang, 2015), racist nativism/ethnocentrism (Higham, 1955; Huber et al., 2008; Nayar, 2015; Prashad, 2000; Sue, 2016), xenophobia (Yang, 2015), sexism (Griffin, 2007; Lind, 2007) and linguicism (Bhattar, 2016a; Bowleg, 2008; Patrick, 2014). These concepts inspired me to engage participants in intentional questions to uncover structural and interpersonal factors contributing to their sense of belonging in various aspects of campus such as faculty interactions, peer interactions, institutional policies, and immigration regulations. Some example questions asked were: "Where do you feel like you matter on campus?" "Who do you consider close or community on campus?" "Whom do you depend on in the United States?" "To what extent does your identity or aspects of identity

impact your connectedness to campus?" "Have U.S. immigration policies influenced your connectedness to campus and overall level of comfort?" "Have any U.S. or Indian news or events impacted how and where you are 'out'?" and "Has Indian or family cultural values contributed to how you express your international, ethnic, and sexual identity?" The seven elements of Strayhorn's (2012) sense of belonging and structural aspects of Crenshaw's (1989; 1991) intersectionality provided effective language and perspectives to shape follow-up questions to address more in-depth issues throughout and across interviews. The full research protocols are provided in Appendix D.

As a qualitative researcher, I kept a journal with field notes, reflections, and insights at various points of the research process which served as a fourth data point in understanding participants' experiences (Seidman, 2013). Qualitative inquiry acknowledges the role of the researcher as the instrument of research and as a source of strength for the study (Maxwell, 2013). The journal captured *descriptive* and *reflective* notes on my process of understanding the stories, connections, and contradictions between participants and was helpful in contextualizing transcription data and thematic interpretations following the interviews, connecting my insights to the words and themes of study participants (Creswell, 2009, p. 181-182). The journal entries grounded my experiences as well as the perceptions of the participants in the study. Referring to journal entries during data analysis proved beneficial in connecting my insights to the words and themes of study participants. Reflecting on my own study abroad experience as an Indian LGBQ international student and hearing the participant's stories brought up memories that were insightful in contextualizing experiences shared by participants and the influences of sociohistorical factors.

Lastly, participants completed one questionnaire as part of the recruitment process for data point five. Beyond identifying if potential participants met the research criteria, each student was asked demographic questions (e.g. gender, class year, academic major, religion) to understand the intersectional identities that shape their unique experiences. Additionally, students were asked questions such as: "Why are you interested in this study?" and "What does it mean to belong on campus?" These answers helped to build rapport with the participant during the interview and helped to tailor the open-ended questions (Maxwell, 2013).

Data Analysis

Analysis of qualitative data is often conducted concurrently with data collection processes, transcription, and reflection (Creswell, 2009). Interviews were analyzed inductively and deductively and informed by phenomenological inquiry (Creswell, 2009) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to capture students' perceptions of sense of belonging in their own words (Saldaña, 2016; Sauro, 2015; Seidman, 2013). Phenomenology centers an individual's experience while acknowledging the influences of sociohistorical contexts and individual perceptions of the phenomenon (Seidman, 2013). This study aligns with phenomenology in its exploration of how Indian international LGBQ students perceive sense of belonging within academic and social campus contexts, specifically accounting for sociohistorical factors that influence individual experiences and meaning-making.

Thematic analysis is effective for understanding phenomenological data because the objective is to not simply understand a descriptive review of a specific phenomenon but to scan across various datasets to identify repetitive patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can hold both "essentialist/realist" and "constructionist" paradigms where the former centers individual meaning-making while the latter addresses the "sociocultural contexts, and structural

conditions, that enable the individual accounts…" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 85). Given the current study's focus of individual perceptions of sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) and centering sociohistorical structures and systemic aspects of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), thematic analysis was a suitable analytical methodology.

The data were analyzed through a six-phase process that at times overlapped and was interwoven throughout the research. Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of thematic analysis were used to code and analyze the five data points for each participant. The six phases followed for analysis of data were: (a) familiarizing yourself with your data; (b) generating initial codes; (c) searching for themes; (d) reviewing themes; (e) defining and naming themes; and (f) producing the report.

Familiarizing yourself with your data. After having the interviews transcribed by an external transcription service, a deep reading and re-reading of data and making handwritten notes on observations, ideas, questions, and contextual cues was an important initial step in the analysis. Noting long pauses, body language, or other observations provided invaluable data in the analysis process.

Generating initial codes. Once I familiarized myself with the data, I used major thematic layers, discrepancies, questions, and overall meanings to develop emerging codes and analytic memos. Working systematically with the data, I used a first-level coding schema (i.e. in vivo) to develop codes from the earlier observations as they related to the research questions and contextual cues using handwritten notes and a spreadsheet. After reflecting on the first level analysis, the datasets were re-coded two additional times to provide multiple layers of interpretation (i.e. process and versus coding) (Saldaña, 2016). The data was further coded using emotional and versus coding based on the initial review of the data (Saldaña, 2016).

Following Saldaña's (2016) recommendation, I kept analytic memos, building on the observations and questions from phase one of data analysis. Analytic memos were helpful in connecting my interview observations and research journal with the interview transcript and participants' questionnaire answers to enhance the richness and depth of themes. Beyond serving to compare various data points for one individual, analytical memos were helpful in comparing participants' experiences and exploring any variations across the datum.

Searching for themes. Once organized, potential themes and subthemes were defined along with data supporting each emerging level of theme. The purpose of this phase was to develop as many themes and patterns as possible to make sure no important data was lost in the process (Braun & Clark, 2006). Codes that do not fit with any categories were held in a "miscellaneous" category for future review at the next phase. My field notes served to complement and expand these initial themes by comparing what participants said in individual interviews and my insights across the datasets (Saldaña, 2016). The survey questionnaire, field notes, and analytic memos were used to develop and cross-check themes that I observed from the participants' interviews (Saldaña, 2016).

Reviewing themes. In phase four, I reviewed the initial themes developed and identified themes that could be combined, themes without sufficient supportive data, and major themes with sufficient data. The first level involved reviewing collated data to identify any patterns. If there was a clear pattern among the coded data, the second level of analysis compared the data with the complete data set to assess its reliability and replicability within the data. Reliability relates to the "accurate representation" of subthemes within the theme and replicability assesses any overlap with other themes identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In contrast, if there was not a clear pattern in the coded data, I reviewed the data to determine how to organize the data into

other themes or subthemes. This process involved comparison of themes by mapping themes, subthemes, and any discrepancies to have an overall understanding of the themes in the data. Between and throughout the coding and analysis, the emerging themes from each participant w compared to group similar concepts and highlight any unique themes that did not reflect a general consensus across participants. Once themes were developed from the data, I shared the themes with participants for member-checking purposes (Creswell, 2009; Seidman, 2013). Member-checking increases trustworthiness and reliability by ensuring participants feel their voices are being represented accurately (Guba, 1981).

Defining and naming themes. Building on the previous phase, I "defined and refined" the themes to ensure the name of the theme was representative of the concept being captured. This process involved revisiting the theme, supporting quotes, and data, and honing in on the essence of the theme. As pointed out earlier, using interview data, analytical memos, field notes, and participant feedback served to complement the process and enhance trustworthiness of the themes. For each theme, I wrote a detailed analysis, exploring how the theme connected to the overall findings of the study and as it related to the research questions. The analysis addressed how participants agreed with or contradicted the major theme. Further, any subthemes were defined and connected to the overall analysis of the study. The individual detailed analyses established the foundation for the final dissertation findings chapter.

Producing the report. The final phase of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis is writing the final document. This document must tell the story of the participants, the themes extracted from the data and answers the research questions driving this study in "vivid, compelling" ways (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). To fully illustrate the thematic reliability, I used narratives throughout each theme (Seidman, 2013). Narratives allow researchers to

construct a profile of participants and the phenomena being explored, representing each theme identified through data analysis (Seidman, 2013). Following each description of the theme, I share insights from analyzing the data, making connections across cases and contextualizing the findings within the extant literature (Seidman, 2013). I also address discrepancies between participants and similarities across cases. The final document also includes recommendations for future research.

Perceptions of Sense of Belonging for Indian LGBQ International Students in U.S. Higher Education					
			Thematic Analysis		
Research Questions	**Sub question**	**Data collected**	**1st Coding**	**2nd/3rd Coding**	**Color used to code in connection to research question**
1. How do Indian international LGBQ students perceive sense of belonging on campus?		1. one 90-120 min in-person interview 2. Two 60 - 75 minute video interviews 3. Analytic Memos 4. Demographic Questionnaire	In Vivo -Provides an inductive approach to reviewing the data and allowing the data to speak for itself.	Emotion, Versus -Given the conceptual frameworks for this study, and after initial review of the data, I believe emotion and versus coding will provide important deductive insight to complement the 1st level coding schema	Blue
2. What are the most salient facets of identity influencing sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students on campus?	Sub question: How, if at all, is perception of sense of belonging different for undergraduate or graduate students?	1. one 90-120 min in-person interview 2. Two 60 - 75 minute video interviews 3. Analytic Memos 4. Demographic Questionnaire	In Vivo -Provides an inductive approach to reviewing the data and allowing the data to speak for itself.	Emotion, Versus -Given the conceptual frameworks for this study, and after initial review of the data, I believe emotion and versus coding will provide important deductive insight to complement the 1st level coding schema	Red (pink for sub question)
3. What are the most salient institutional factors influencing belongingness for Indian international LGBQ students on campus?		1. one 90-120 min in-person interview 2. Two 60 - 75 minute video interviews 3. Analytic Memos 4. Demographic Questionnaire	In Vivo -Provides an inductive approach to reviewing the data and allowing the data to speak for itself.	Emotion, Versus -Given the conceptual frameworks for this study, and after initial review of the data, I believe emotion and versus coding will provide important deductive insight to complement the 1st level coding schema	green
4. How do intersecting sociohistorical factors influence individual perceptions of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students?		1. one 90-120 min in-person interview 2. Two 60 - 75 minute video interviews 3. Analytic Memos 4. Demographic Questionnaire	In Vivo -Provides an inductive approach to reviewing the data and allowing the data to speak for itself.	Emotion, Versus -Given the conceptual frameworks for this study, and after initial review of the data, I believe emotion and versus coding will provide important deductive insight to complement the 1st level coding schema	yellow

Figure 3: Data Analysis Process based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six Phases of Thematic Analysis

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness captures the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research methods and participants' voices (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Unlike validity, which is often questioned by qualitative researchers (Seidman, 2013), trustworthiness serves to establish the reliability of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Multiple strategies were used to increase trustworthiness of the research. Creswell (2009) claimed, "…Examining evidence from [multiple] sources and using it to build a justification for themes" is a common qualitative tool for trustworthiness (p. 191). The researcher's interview notes and analytic memos were compared with audio transcripts of interviews and students' questionnaire responses to work toward trustworthiness (Creswell, 2009).

Another strategy for trustworthiness was member-checking. Guba (1981) defines member-checking as, "…testing the data with members of the relevant human data source groups" (p. 80). For the purpose of member-checking, the developing themes were shared with each participant and feedback solicited to ensure accuracy of themes and interpretations of the data (Guba, 1981). I sent a digital summary of initial themes to participants to provide any responses or reflections. Having the opportunity to confirm themes and get feedback from participants was a foundational method for centering their voices and addressing any inaccurate interpretations of the data (Creswell, 2009).

I provided rich, thick descriptions of the quotes and findings to enhance trustworthiness. Supplementing the findings with participants' quotes and descriptions of the phenomenon being discussed allowed for a more holistic and complex understanding of the participants' perceptions (Seidman, 2013). Seidman (2013) claimed, such rich descriptions "present the participant in context, to clarify [their] intentions, and to convey a sense of process and time, all central

components of qualitative analysis" (p. 122). These detailed descriptions helped to create a more "realistic" finding by contextualizing the data for the reader (Creswell, 2009). Further, I presented quotes and information from participants that may contradict the themes (Creswell, 2009). Rather than silence these "outliers," incorporating their voices was in alignment with the constructivist and critical frames grounding this research, honoring multiple truths shaped by unique perceptions of various intersectional identities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and challenging broad generalizations of marginalized communities (Bowleg, 2008). Providing multiple and contradictory perspectives is more representative of the diversity within human experience and also increases credibility of the findings (Creswell, 2009).

Further, peer review throughout the process served as an external voice to review findings and ask questions or provide insight that was helpful to further enhance trustworthiness (Creswell, 2009). This approach allowed peers who were aware of the research to regularly provide feedback and insights on research process and findings (Merriam, 2009). I reviewed my coding process with my dissertation co-chairs and committee members to compare notes and provide external validation for the themes I developed as part of the dissertation committee review process. Second, three graduate students familiar with the research topic were asked to give feedback and engage in informal and formal discussion of the findings and recommendations.

Finally, intentional reflection and reflexivity were built into all stages of the research process. I kept a research reflection journal throughout the process to capture interview notes, thematic observations, challenges, biases, and feelings about the research (Creswell, 2009). The journal also enhanced and influenced the data interpretation and coding processes.

Limitations

Though several strategies were put in place to enhance trustworthiness, there are several limitations to the current research. Most international students enter college in the United States as non-native speakers, where English is potentially a second, third, or one of many other native languages. Conducting the interview in English was a potential source of frustration in translation or miscommunication due to language barriers. I addressed language barriers by developing interview questions with basic level English terminology, asking participants if repetition of questions was needed and by providing the interview protocol to participants prior to the scheduled interview for review.

Second, students self-selected to be part of this study by responding to recruitment material. Given the diversity of languages in India, students may not have identified with Western concepts of "LGBQ" or "Indian" or prefer non-Anglo terms to identify themselves. Students who may not identify with these Western terms may have self-selected out of the study. Purposive and snowball sampling depended on networks of participants and may have skewed representation of students with various identities within the Indian international LGBQ communities.

Additionally, the small sample size may not represent many experiences of Indian international LGBQ students on U.S. campuses. In the sampling process, I attempted to identify students from various regions of India and seek diverse representation of LGBQ communities. In my data analysis, I recognize the limits of a smaller sample size on findings and recommendations and the differences (e.g. regional, familial, religious, and linguistic) that may have impacted their context and experiences.

Using intersectionality as a framework, this research sought to explore the impact of sociohistorical factors on Indian international LGBQ students' sense of belonging in various

campus contexts. To not take an additive approach to these facets of identity, no commas were used in between them (e.g. Indian international LGBQ) but students may have perceived the ordering of terms to signify implicit hierarchy (Harris, 2015). Such ordering or perception may have influenced a student's decision to participate in this study. To minimize this effect, fliers and recruitment emails were sent with identities in varying sequences (e.g. Indian international LGBQ, LGBQ Indian international, International Indian LGBQ). Further, I clarified the non-additive approach (Bowleg, 2008) as part of the in-person interview to help students feel comfortable talking about other aspects of identity beyond ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality.

Finally, participants may have had difficulty in providing honest feedback due to my professional identity and may have exhibited socially desirable characteristics, impacting the study findings. For example, during the recruitment process, I was employed as the director of the LGBT Center on campus and during the interview asked participants about aspects of campus where feel community and a sense of belonging. Students may have felt the pressure to mention the LGBT Center as such a place because of my professional role, even though I did not know any of the participants prior to the study. Throughout the process, I shared with students that my primary goal was to collect accurate, open, and honest data and enhance support for them in various aspects of campus (Creswell, 2009). After the first interviews conducted for each participant on campus, I moved to another region in the U.S. for another professional opportunity. My departure may have mitigated any conflict students may have felt during the interview with critiquing the LGBT Center. Finally, at the beginning of each interview, I reviewed the study purpose, answered any questions students had to help mitigate the impact of these limitations, and reiterated my role as researcher separate from my professional role on campus.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 outlines the research design used to understand sense of belonging for four Indian international LGBQ students studying in U.S. higher education. Constructivist and critical analysis and phenomenological inquiry were described in detail as they relate to the current study. Next, the research design was delineated, describing why WCU was an appropriate data collection site and the requirements for participant selection. The three aspects of data collection (e.g. three in-person interviews, recruitment questionnaire, and my research notes) were described in detail followed by the protocol for data coding and analysis. After data analysis, I describe strategies I took to ensure trustworthiness, such as member-checking, peer-review and my reflection journal to compare notes, observations, and insights. Finally, I list potential limitations of the study and various steps that were taken to minimize these limitations throughout the study. The timeline for this study is included in Appendix E.

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Overview

Before exploring findings from this study, it is necessary to understand the participants who took part in this research. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to identify participants who can provide rich, thick data to address the research questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Of the seven potential participants who completed the online questionnaire, four Indian international LGBQ students at WCU met the criteria and participated in this study. The three criteria for participation were:

1. Individuals had to be enrolled as an undergraduate or graduate student at WCU, a four-year public research university in the United States and have spent at minimum one quarter at the institution;
2. Individuals had to define themselves as an international student identifying ethnically as Indian or multiethnic (Indian and other ethnicities) and having spent a majority of their life in India;
3. Individuals had to identify, at some point during their time in college, as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and/or questioning or other non-heterosexual identity.

A table with participant demographics and pseudonym begins this chapter, followed by detailed profiles of each participant. Each profile below provides demographic characteristics such as age, where each participant grew up, why they traveled to the United States for college, and other background information.

Table 1.

Indian International LGBQ Students Study Participants

Name	Age	Gender Pronouns	Gender Identity	Country of Origin/Nationality	City or State of Origin in India	Race/Ethnicity	Class year	Sexual Orientation/ Identity	Academic Major	Student Status	Campus	Was coming to WCU your first time in the U.S.?
Sue	27	She/Her/Hers	Female	India	Mumbai	Bengali	First Year	Bisexual	Anthropology	Graduate	WCU	Yes
Om	31	He/Him/His	Male	India	Andhra Pradesh	Indian	First Year	Gay	Film	Graduate	WCU	Yes
Anna	20	She/Her/Hers	Cis-Female	India	Delhi	Indian	Third	Bisexual	English and Economics	Undergraduate	WCU	Yes
Maya	20	She/Her/Hers	Cis-Woman	India	Chennai (Tamil Nadu)	Indian	Fourth	Questioning/Not sure	English and Gender Studies	Undergraduate	WCU	Yes

Figure 4 provides a political map of India highlighting places of origin as defined by participants in the demographics table.

Figure 4. *Political Map of India.* (Maps of the World, 2016).

Participant Profiles

Sue (she/her/hers)

Sue was the first participant I interviewed. Sue is a twenty-seven-year-old, first-year graduate student pursuing a Ph.D. in Anthropology. Her research explores gender and media and was inspired by an interest in journalism, especially through an international and comparative lens. Sue grew up in Mumbai, a large urban city in West India, and has been in the United States for six months. Mumbai is a cosmopolitan city and the epicenter of Bollywood Indian cinema. Mumbai is often considered the New York equivalent of India (Inskeep, 2008). Though her extended family is mostly in Eastern India in Bengal, she did not grow up in close proximity to them but grew up with her mother and sibling. As a college student in Mumbai, she studied journalism and attended a university in the United Kingdom for her master's degree. Beyond identifying her citizenship as Indian, Sue was the only student that used Bengali as her racial identity on the questionnaire. Bengal is a state on the Northeastern part of India and has unique language and cultural traditions. Yet Sue spoke about not having a strong tie to her regional/racial identity before coming to the United States because she grew up in a large urban city on the Western coast of India. Sue did not have any specific connection to her pseudonym but selected it at random.

Sue identifies as female and bisexual. Though Sue has historically only been in heteronormative relationships, she is currently questioning her sexual identity and exploring a long-distance relationship with a female partner. Soon after coming to the United States for school, Sue broke off an engagement with a male-identified person from India. Sue talked about her mother having several gay friends and feeling comfortable talking about sexuality, politics and other progressive topics throughout her childhood. Their home was very open and a center of

social events. Sue also identified her sister as very supportive and "doing lots of allyship things." Sue's sister also resides in the United States and though she is heterosexual, openly talks about LGBTQ issues, advocates for equal rights, and has many queer friends. For Sue, allyship and support from her sister and mother through their actions was an important element in her process of sexual identity and awareness.

Sue comes from a family of educated women and was encouraged to pursue education and her passions from an early age. Coming to WCU was Sue's first time in the United States and her decision was based on the caliber of the graduate program and wanting to study in the United States After finishing a master's degree in London, Sue explored various doctoral programs in the United States She was attracted to campuses that provided funding for graduate students and specifically selected WCU for the opportunity to work with her faculty advisor. Sue spoke about the importance of having a faculty advisor who also identifies as Indian and has interest in her area of research. Through her advisor, Sue has gotten involved in the South Asian Studies Institute on campus, which has both become a community space and intellectual dialogue space. Sue has coordinated various events for the institute, including an annual conference, and serves as a teaching assistant in her academic department. Sue plans to become a faculty member in higher education and is looking to gain academic and publishing experience through her time on campus. Sue was very comfortable talking about U.S. politics and immigration policies as well as current political events in India. Sue shared that she feels close to her academic cohort but sometimes feels uncomfortable in academic spaces as the only international student from the global south in the program. Initially, Sue had planned to stay in the United States after her degree but is currently unsure and is contemplating returning to India where she feels greater connectedness and navigability.

Om (he, him, his)

Om is a thirty-one-year-old graduate student in a one-year, non-degree professional graduate program in film at WCU. The university offers "numerous graduate-level, non-degree" certificate programs modeled after the Master of Fine Arts curriculum as part of the graduate curriculum (Professional Programs, 2018). Since this program is offered at the graduate level on campus and Om identities as an Indian international LGBQ student, he qualified for the current study. Om chose his name because of its connection to Hindu religious concepts (Om is the sound of creation) with a desire to critique current Hindu conservative perspectives on sexuality in India. He comes from a small rural village community from the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh where his family has prominent social and political roles. Andhra Pradesh is on the southeastern coast of India and has a long history of vibrant kingdoms and cultural arts. Andhra Pradesh is known as the "rice bowl of India" due to its agricultural prominence in India's economy (New World Encyclopedia, 2018). Om's father is revered as a local political leader and involved in land ownership and agriculture. Their family traces roots to the region for many generations and holds conservative political perspectives, especially regarding sexuality.

Om's parents value education for their son because they themselves did not have the opportunity to participate in much formalized education. Om spent much of his childhood in English-based boarding schools and attended college at a prominent university in India. Though he speaks only in Telugu with his family, he feels most comfortable speaking English. Especially in college, Om mentioned that English was the only common language among his classmates. Given that students from across the nation attend the university and often did not speak any common Indian languages, English became the default medium for communication

and education. Om has also spent time working in Indian urban cities of Chennai and Bengaluru before pursuing graduate education.

Om first attended a two-year master's program in film in the U.K. and decided to attend the program at WCU due to its reputation and location in the Southwestern U.S. Beyond his Master's degree, Om was interested in building a professional network and find ways to be involved in the U.S. film industry. He considered programs in several coastal U.S. cities but ultimately decided on WCU's program for the caliber of the faculty, accessibility to film community, and warmer weather. He has been in the United States since the fall 2017 academic year and has chosen to live in the city's predominantly gay neighborhood.

Om is the only participant that identifies as male and gay. Om's program cohort and internships in film have and continue to be his main network on campus because of the course load and off-campus studying requirements. Though there are several international students in his program, they are all from European countries and none openly identify as LGBQ. Living in a "gayborhood" has been a positive experience and has led to building community outside of campus with other (mostly White) gay men through bars and social networking applications. He feels comfortable sharing about his various aspects of identity with friends in the United States but spoke about wanting to connect with Desi queer people. Om plans to stay in the United States after graduation because of the criminalization of homosexuality in India and his positive experience in the United States so far.

Anna (she, her, hers)

Anna is a twenty-year-old, third-year female student from New Delhi, a large urban city in the middle of North India and the country's capital. New Delhi is both a city and union territory (similar to Washington, D.C.) and located in between the Indian states of Haryana and

Uttar Pradesh (Varma, 2015). New Delhi is home to all three branches of the Republic (Executive, Legislative, and Judicial) and significant monuments from pre-colonial and colonial times. Anna and her family also have lived for periods of time in various countries in the Middle-East, Eastern Africa and the U.K., moving for her mother's career. Anna chose to attend college in the United States because she wanted to "get the best education" and did not want to attend college in India or in the Middle East. As a woman, Anna wanted to be in an environment where she could express herself without family or cultural barriers. She selected WCU for the English department's reputation and not wanting to be in cold places. Coming to WCU was Anna's first time in the United States. She chose her pseudonym because it reminds her of a childhood nickname and has been easier for people on campus. Anna expressed frustration at people on campus mispronouncing her given name and having to correct people often.

Anna self-identifies as bisexual and a cisgender woman. Though Anna's family is traditional and conservative, growing up and seeing their family move for her mother's professional growth was influential in Anna's vision for herself. She grew up having a strong relationship with her mother in which they discuss sexuality, politics, and other topics regularly. Several years ago, Anna came out to her mother as bisexual but does not feel supported by her parents in expressing this identity. Her family has tried to manage her gender expression and controlling her dress and activities, especially when with extended family in New Delhi. Anna is very proud of her familial heritage but has always felt like an outsider both with her large family in India and while living in the United States She feels invisible on campus as a bisexual person and has not found others who also identify as bisexual. On campus, Anna has felt eroticized and exotified, especially by White male peers, when speaking about her bisexuality which prevents her from wanting to share this identity with others. Currently, Anna is in a relationship with a

cisgender man which feels taboo to discuss with her parents, let alone family in India due to cultural expectations of women and premarital relationships. This summer Anna is planning to take her boyfriend to meet her parents but noted she would not feel comfortable if she had a female partner.

She speaks Hindi and can engage in conversations with extended family but feels most comfortable speaking in English with her immediate family and friends. Anna came to WCU as an Economics major but has always enjoyed English literature and classes and decided to pursue a double-major. English feels "more natural" and helps in understanding classroom material and interacting on campus. Her classes and advisors have been a critical space of connection. Anna grew up attending several English-based international schools with English speakers from across the world. She notes her English "doesn't have an accent" which both allows her to not be labeled as an international student but also makes her feel isolated. Anna plans to pursue a graduate program in the United States after finishing at WCU.

Maya (she, her, hers)

Maya is a twenty-year-old graduating fourth-year undergraduate student at WCU studying English and Gender Studies. Though her family is from New Delhi and Kolkata (in Bengal), Maya was born and grew up in the southeastern city of Chennai in Tamil Nadu. Chennai is a major city with strong Dravidian cultural roots who are the indigenous people of India and it was also a center of British colonial rule. Though she was born in Chennai, Maya mentioned feeling uncomfortable with identifying as Tamilian since she does not speak Tamil, the primary language of Tamil Nadu. Maya grew up speaking English and Hindi at home and attended an English-based Montessori school system. Early on, her middle and high school mentors encouraged her to read English poets and Western authors in developing her own

creative energy. Her first time in the United States was to attend WCU. She chose to attend WCU because she wanted to "get out of India" and feel freedom to explore and express herself in ways that she felt were not possible in India. Though Chennai is an urban city, she expressed that the city feels traditional and not safe for women to travel freely the way she can in Southern California.

Maya identifies as female and is questioning her sexuality. Maya selected her name because of its mysteriousness and wanting to embrace and challenge negative reputation of the word which represents "illusion" in Hindu mythology. She spoke about how being an English and Gender Studies major has been helpful in her embracing of gender and sexual fluidity and exploration. She is currently in a relationship with a cisgender man and feels strongly their relationship is based on queering traditional relationship roles which has been an important part of her self-exploration. Further, Maya has a close relationship with her mother, who has been a critical source of support and comfort in talking about progressive politics and sexual fluidity. Maya also reported that her extended family in New Delhi hold more conservative views than her.

Throughout her time on campus, Maya has been involved in progressive political spaces. She is an editor for a feminist news magazine on campus and credits this space as an important part of her community on campus. Maya spends the majority of her time on campus within the Gender Studies department and the student office for the progressive newspaper with her partner and close group of friends. Though there are no safety concerns on campus for her, Maya spoke about wishing there was a space to meet other Desi Queer people and feeling isolated in that experience. Upon finishing her program, Maya plans to stay but is not sure if India or the United States is where she would like to live long-term. Maya noted liking parts of both countries but

not feeling whole in either. While the United States offered the ability to be free and express her various identities, India provided a connection to family and sense of cultural connectedness that she does not feel on campus.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 introduced the four Indian international LGBQ students involved in this study. Each profile provided an overview of the participant's various aspects of identity and path to studying at WCU. While each participant identifies as Indian international LGBQ, they each have unique histories, motives, and perspectives on their U.S. educational experiences. Figure 3 provides a political map of India highlighting the cities and regions of each participant as demonstrated in Table 1. Building on the previous four chapters, Chapter 5 provides the detailed findings of themes identified from thematic analysis of participants' interviews.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

The purpose of chapter 5 is to present major findings and themes from the data. The first research question asked, "How Indian international LGBQ students perceive sense of belonging on campus?" The second research question was, "What are the most salient facets of identity influencing sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students on campus?" with a sub-question focusing on, "How does perception of sense of belonging compare among undergraduate and graduate students?" The third question asked, "What are the most salient institutional factors influencing belongingness for Indian international LGBQ students on campus?" and finally, "How do intersecting sociohistorical factors influence individual perceptions of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students?" Through phenomenological inquiry, thematic analysis of the data identified repetitive patterns within and across participants' responses. Themes were developed from a six-step analysis of the interview transcripts as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The six phases as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) are: (a) familiarizing yourself with your data; (b) generating initial codes; (c) searching for themes; (d) reviewing themes; (e) defining and naming themes; and (f) producing the report. Through this process, findings of the study are presented in three major themes: (1) *Defying Boundaries, Defining Self and Community*, (2) *Speaking Language to Power*, and (3) *Centering Self within Sociohistorical Contexts.*

Summary of Findings

This chapter presents major themes developed from data analysis to address the research questions guiding this study. The first theme, *Defying Boundaries, Defining Self and Community,* explores the perceptions of participants in crossing physical, educational, and cultural boundaries in pursuit of higher education. The subthemes highlight how participants understand community

and self through challenging stereotypes and navigating academic and social spaces at the intersection of Indian international LGBQ identity. The second theme, *Speaking Language to Power,* addresses the multiple ways participants understand the significant role of English language ability as a tool of access and privilege to U.S. cultural cues and contexts while also contributing to questioning of their authenticity as international students. Additionally, theme two highlights how participants' regional language ability (or lack thereof) contributes to self-directed and external perceptions of Indian international LGBQ identity. Finally, theme three, *Centering Self within Sociohistorical Contexts,* explores how individual experiences represent broader sociohistorical influences (i.e. race and racism, heteronormativity and linguicism) on perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Specifically, being Brown within Black-White racial structures and conversations, understanding U.S. constructions of heteronormativity and queerness and embracing sexually inclusive culture while resisting fetishization contributed to participants' perceptions of sense of belonging on campus.

Regardless of undergraduate or graduate student status, participants spoke about feeling a sense of belonging within their academic departments while often feeling like an "other" across campus. While graduate and undergraduate students had many similarities in their experiences on campus, graduate students specifically acknowledged the importance of finding community with other international students, especially Indian international students, in feeling a sense of belonging on campus. Undergraduate students named the importance of embracing their Indian identities through culture, art, and food on campus while not having a strong community of international students. Significant differences among undergraduate and graduate students are provided as it relates to each finding. Finally, participants reflected on a lack of spaces to be all of themselves at the intersections of identity and a desire for such depth on campus to enhance

their perceptions of sense of belonging. Given the importance of intersectionality, there were many overlaps in concepts across the themes in the data. These elements add to the power of understanding how participants perceived their aspects of self as related to sense of belonging and therefore are presented here in the current format.

Theme 1: Defying Boundaries, Defining Self and Community

One major theme centered on participants' perceptions of themselves as LGBQ Indian international students in the United States and how they perceive sense of belonging on campus. Participants reflected a keen awareness of how they both hold and challenge various boundaries and concepts of community and self. This theme is developed in four subthemes:

a.) Finding Community and Self: Being Indian International on Campus

b.) Queerness as Anomaly: Being LGBQ on Campus

c.) Being at the Intersections: Navigating Academic Spaces

d.) Being at the Intersections: Navigating Campus Spaces and Resources

These subthemes look into participants' motivations for attending a U.S. university for education, how their concept of home and belonging are shifting, and how participants develop strategies to navigate various spaces on campus as Indian international LGBQ people.

Participants spoke about both cultural and sexual identities in their interview responses. Though participants were asked about their perceptions of sense of belonging being Indian international LGBQ students, every student spoke about being an Indian international student separate from other aspects of identity. For the purpose of chapter structure, participants' discussion of identities as it relates to perceptions of sense of belonging are presented in sections while acknowledging that these are not mutually exclusive aspects of identity. Om, a graduate student from a rural town in Andhra Pradesh studying film at WCU, spoke about feeling "always

that sense of duality" regardless of whether he is in India or in the United States "There was that sense of I'm here but I'm also not here," Om stated, "Duality, I guess." As individuals who crossed international boundaries to attend undergraduate or graduate school, participants spoke about how they do not fully feel a sense of belonging anywhere. Maya, a fourth-year undergraduate student from Chennai, Tamil Nadu studying English and Gender Studies at WCU reflected, "I haven't found a space [on campus] that allows me to pursue all things or to express all of the things that I am at one time simultaneously." While Maya has found a strong community in the campus feminist magazine, she still feels that she can't fully express herself in any space on campus. Though participants don't fully perceive a sense of belonging on campus, Sue spoke about having difficulty in thinking about "uprooting" herself. Sue, a first-year graduate student from Mumbai, Maharashtra studying anthropology at WCU, spoke about feeling conflicted about an upcoming trip back to India,

> Yeah, I think I've been mixed about going home. I do miss it and I feel like it's time for me to go home and recharge the batteries and get some of the home comforts and the comfort of being in a place you know well and you can navigate really easily. I do also feel like I've established a life here now and so going back home is, in a way, sort of uprooting that again just when it was starting to feel normal (Interview 3, May 8, 2018).

Though it was easier to navigate spaces when she was in India, she finds her notion of home shifting as she gets more acclimated to her new space and context in the United States Sue speaks about "feeling normal" in the United States as a reflection of her ability navigate the local environment by knowing how to use public transportation, grocery shopping, and finding community on campus.

Further, the notion of "uprooting" speaks to changing notions of home and community. Maya spoke about sense of belonging as a constant state of compromise between two worlds,

> One of my advisors was talking to me about grad school and academia, and in some senses, I do feel a weird sense of belonging, like at the Gender Studies Department or at the English Department…but at the same time, I also don't because if you're going to be an academic, then you're committing to that, and it would mean moving here to the U.S. and settling down here…and necessarily remove myself from home (Interview 3, May 15, 2018).

The need to remove oneself from home whether in the United States or in India seemed to create stress for the participants. Further, context was an important factor in how and where participants perceive sense of belonging. For example, Om spoke about being in Manipal in the Indian state of Karnataka for his undergraduate program where he felt a sense of belonging on campus but not necessarily in the broader community,

> Manipal was a strange situation because it's like this space of immigrants. Essentially, there's a ton of students from across the country, across the world that go to Manipal. So, I did think I belonged there but not necessarily in the Karnataka space…Even now I think, for example, I go back home, the way I speak or the way I think, definitely is in contrast with what the locals are (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

While Om felt belonging in a college town, he did not connect to the broader state and culture where he attended college.

Finally, Anna, a third-year undergraduate student from Delhi, Uttar Pradesh studying English at WCU, reflected and wished that she did not have to choose particular aspects of identity. "It's frustrating mostly just not being able to be all of those things at the same time. I

wish it wasn't a choice." This statement demonstrates a deep understanding of how her various aspects of identity are not recognized and a need to carefully monitor where and with whom she shares various elements of herself. Having a roommate who is also Indian but a domestic student has helped Anna share more aspects of herself,

> I feel like with [my Indian roommate] I've had more of a sense of community or belonging and not feeling like there's only a part of me that I'm really showing to other people. I've been cooking more Indian food and listening to more songs, which isn't a lot, but it's more than I felt before (Interview 2, April 27, 2018).

Having someone that has familiarity with food and culture was an opportunity for Anna to express and explore parts of herself that may not have felt comfortable to identify earlier. Within the campus context, participants expressed various levels of feeling "other" and a lack of belonging as it relates to their identities. Regardless of undergraduate or graduate student status, participants perceived belonging in their academic departments. Yet on a campus level, they spoke about feeling like they did not fit into expectations of how others perceived people who hold one or several aspects of Desi international LGBQ identities. Om reflected on how people see him on and off campus. "I guess it's just that we're seen as the other, but I guess that's true of most people who look foreign, not necessarily Indian exclusive." Each participant spoke about feeling like an "other" in various campus spaces on the U.S. campus while also comparing these experiences to previous education spaces, especially in India. In response to these attempts to other them, participants reflected on ways in which they actively work to defy boundaries and stereotypes on campus while taking agency in defining themselves and their community.

Finding Community and Self: **Being Indian International on Campus**

As part of defying stereotypes and how they define their own sense of community and self, participants spoke about their identity as Indian international LGBQ students and their processes of finding social networks on campus. Specifically, Indian international identity was spoken about as a tangled and inseparable identity more than other aspects of self. Participants noted how their identity shapes their community on campus, academic interests, and experiences on campus. Finding a genuine sense of community was a very intentional and strategic process by participants. Anna spoke about a deliberate decision to find community with domestic students who are different than people she grew up with.

> I haven't had as many international friends. I think in part, that's been a conscious decision because a lot of people that I knew were very similar to the people that I knew back home. I was like, I don't want to associate with that (Interview 1, March 9, 2018).

While Anna did not want a community of students that reminded her of peers back in India, she also spoke about wanting a community of friends who accepted her queerness and were different from her peer group back home while also feeling unsure of how to identify friends who are also people of color in the United States Anna stated, “I don't think I'd ever had primarily Brown [friend group]…or I've ever had a friend group who had similar experiences as me, so I didn't know how to find that either.” Not feeling skilled to build community with other people of color, while still feeling like she had a primarily queer social group, seemed to cause some difficulty for Anna in feeling like she could be fully herself on campus.

While Anna desired more Indian and people of color in her social network, others focused on building community specifically with non-Indians. In particular, Sue specified an intentional desire in developing a social circle of non-Indian students.

> I think that my Indian friends don't have as many non-Indian friends as I do. Like my friend, who I was with yesterday, says “I don't have a single friend who is not a Desi”. And I said that's interesting because you're my only good friend who's a Desi (Interview 2, May 5, 2018).

Though Sue could have more Desi friends, she observed that unlike her friend, her social group is more diverse.

While Anna and Maya, the two undergraduate students, noted a desire for more domestic social circles, for Sue and Om, the two graduate students in the study, identifying openly as Indian international students and building community with other international students was a significant component of fostering perceptions of sense of belonging at WCU. While Sue remarked that most of her friends are not co-nationals, she acknowledged the importance of having Indian international friends in addition to others in her social circle. Sue stated, “There are times where you just need your Indian friends and we go for a walk or go eat something.” During all three interviews, Sue spoke about how having Indian friends, especially other Indian international friends, has positively impacted her connectedness to campus. Being around other Indian people talking about issues related to India and colonization provided a sense of belonging, relatability and shared experience which wasn’t available on other parts of campus,

> On campus I think, when I go for events [at the South Asian Institute], it's a very different atmosphere and a very different space in terms of the way people talk and the things they talk about. It's kind of more interesting to me because there's a lot more talk about colonialism and a better understanding of it (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

Sue’s comment speaks to the power of feeling seen and having “a very different atmosphere” for discussions. By centering politics and topics specific to India and Indian politics, this space

allowed Sue to defy the U.S.-centric conversations across the campus and defining her own sense of community through this space. “There aren't that many South Asian people here [on campus],” Sue said, “I actually didn't think that I would need this Desi group...but it's been really nice to have them.” Though she did not expect to need such a support space, it was important for her to have individuals who understand Indian politics and “just what's going on at home” because these topics were not discussed in classrooms or other spaces at WCU. Sue and Om are building their own networks of international students which challenges the U.S.-centric focus of the rest of campus.

In addition to talking about Indian politics and topics, Sue noted that finding other Indians to vent and express frustrations with was comforting. “There's only so many times you can tell your American friends, ‘Your laws are all stupid over here’… it's easier to bitch about those things with fellow Desis who see it the same way.” Feeling a sense of community through shared frustrations or experiences became an important component of Sue’s perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Finding community with other co-nationals navigating cultural border crossing created a sense of mattering and validation.

> Sometimes it's just nice because there's a deeper friendship, or the possibility maybe for a slightly deeper friendship. In terms of talking about family or the expectations people have of you. All of us, I think, are in some ways very different from our friends at home who did much more conventional, like engineering, that type of thing. So, there's lots of things to connect on (Interview 3, May 8, 2018).

In other words, for Sue, being different than her peers in India and being an international Indian student was an important source finding others who defy stereotypes of what Indian international students should study, such as engineering and other STEM fields. Finding other international

students or individuals who are also outside of their “comfort zone” was important to finding commonality and sense of community for these graduate students on campus. Om noted that his group of friends consisted of mainly international students from European countries within his program.

> [My friends] are super diverse. They come from Canada, UK, US, Europe, Italy, all of them… They're all international students, yes. Except for one or two, most of them have actually moved here for the program, like me. Which is also good because they're all out of their comfort zone. So, I think that helps because now everyone's out of their comfort zone. So, they're more accepting I think (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

Being out of one’s comfort zone and defying stereotypes of academic fields of study provided a shared experience that made it easier for these international students to connect on the WCU campus.

Unlike Om, Sue found it difficult to feel a sense of belonging with cohort members in her program who are international students. “So, I'm like the token global South person in the cohort.” Feeling tokenized as a South Asian person did not allow for other identities to be expressed. Often speaking with domestic non-Indian students also reaffirmed a sense of tokenization.

> I think my experience with Indian friends is very different from my experience with the American friends. I think [my American friends] have been very nice but almost in an overly nice way like “Oh, we want to make you feel at home,” and it's been very sweet. Like there's a lot more asking questions about India rather than more organic “How are you?” type things (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

Sue experienced a sense of authentic community and care with other Indian international students rather feeling like someone who was just being “very nice.” Sue did mention one exception in her interaction with a domestic White student who was helpful as a cultural bridge to understanding classroom expectations and U.S. cultural cues.

> In the beginning of the year, for the first month, I was trying to figure it out by myself and I realized that I can't learn everything everyone else knows just by observing quietly. All of the other South Asian students that I knew said, "Oh yeah it took me like a year and a half to figure out what was going on." I was sort of like, "Okay, I don't want to do that, I don't want to be lost for the next year." So then I sort of set up a coffee meeting with this one guy in my department who was a really nice person and he really knows the American academic system well. I sat down with him one day and I was like, "Josh, can you tell me what is expected of me?” I just felt like if I asked him, he would not think anything of it. He didn't, he was really kind when I spoke with him (Interview 2, May 3, 2018).

Hearing from her peers about their transitions, Sue decided she did not “want to be lost for the next year” and approached a domestic White student to ask questions. As a graduate student, Sue first approached a peer rather than going to the faculty or other campus resources, noting the importance of having a strong social community. Though Sue as a queer Desi international female student did not share many identities with Josh (who Sue stated was a White domestic heterosexual male), she saw him as non-judgmental and someone who would be able to give cues for navigating academic expectations in the United States. Further, learning from other Indian international peers about their acclimation process to U.S. academic expectations, Sue intentionally sought out a domestic White male student in the program as part of her own

process. Connecting with a person with several dominant cultural identities, many that are opposite from Sue's experience, provided social capital and tools for navigation.

Finally, beyond finding other Indian international students and the one domestic White student, Sue spoke about the power of finding another female student with a similar regional and linguistic background on campus. Expressing her Indian and linguistic identity within the U.S. campus was an empowering experience. In speaking about her friend, Sue states, "She's also Bengali like me which is a whole other level of identifying with someone." Beyond connecting as Indian international students, the focus on Bengali identity highlights the various levels of "Indianness" being explored and understood by participants. Such affinity fostered regular hangouts which even led to where "we had this conversation about wondering if we're bisexual…We talked about that a lot, what that means in terms of talking to our parents about [being bisexual] or in our department about it. That was a good conversation." Finding such a friend provided affirmation beyond expectation for Sue and a reflection of her own identities in another person. This experience defies stereotypical notions of how Sue is often seen on campus. Beyond specific identities of being Indian, international, bisexual, and female, naming the combination of these identities provided a unique experience for Sue where she could explore and express multiple aspects of identity and how they intersect without having to explain these elements.

Furthermore, this quote highlights the importance of having peers with similar identities to discuss the impact of family and academic spaces on expressing one's sexuality. "I was emotional at making this connection. We just had a lot in common and it was like, "Oh my god, where have you been all my life?" Sue's excitement at meeting someone who also shares multiple aspects of identity fostered an openness to discuss her experience and increased a

positive perception of sense belonging on campus. For Sue, finding another Bengali bisexual woman seemed to contribute breaking a sense of isolation that she's experienced all her life.

Anna shared Sue's desire for being seen at multiple levels by others on campus. Even regarding this study, Anna spoke about how it felt to see Indian international LGBQ identity together in one email subject line.

> I'd never heard the term [Indian international LGBQ] together. It's always one or the other. It always sort of felt like [this identity] can't be a thing. I think just seeing all of the words together. I was like, wait, is this seriously the email?! (Interview 1, March 9, 2018).

Simply seeing her identities together without having to select one or another aspect was exciting to Anna and inspired her to participate in this study. All four participants desired visibility and recognition by peers, faculty, and domestic, and international students. When asked what are things they wished others on campus knew about them, Maya immediately responded, "That we [Indian international LGBQ people] exist!" Anna spoke about a lack of recognition of her Indian identity on campus.

> …For the longest time, I didn't really talk about being Indian with my friends, or necessarily about parts of Indian culture that I do like, or movies, or food, or things that do matter to me. I think I don't really talk about being international, or about being Indian (Interview 2, April 27, 2018).

Though some friends knew Anna was an Indian international student, she did not feel comfortable exploring or expressing her interests in Indian culture and food. When probed further, Anna stated, "I just feel like there isn't a co-existence of those things [being Indian and international on campus]." While participants acknowledged their own perception of Indian and

international identities being entangled, they also felt like an impossible existence on campus. Feeling like one's identities cannot coexist is not unique to Indian international LGBQ students, yet these feelings may have a significant impact on their perception and navigation of campus spaces.

In addition to shaping intentional communities as Indian international students on campus, all four participants expressed pride at defying stereotypes of Indian international students by studying film, humanities, or social sciences, rather than being in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Anna noted, "I guess generally if you're Indian, then you probably want to work for Google or want to go into something very STEM and conventional…" Being a STEM student was seen as a "conventional" or stereotypical Indian international student experience. Participants observed how often peers were surprised when that assumption is broken. Maya reflected on how she is perceived by others on campus and her own feelings about the lack of South Asian international students in the humanities departments on campus.

> I think people are surprised when I tell them that I'm an international student because ... even just in my department English and Gender Studies, there's not a lot of international students in the departments. The international students I have met, especially South Asian ones, are usually in engineering, computer science, and those other departments…I feel like there's such a lack of international students in the humanities and it's so sad, it sucks. That's been really shitty (Interview 1, March 14, 2018).

Though Maya has met other international students from South Asia, not having many in humanities has often led to people being surprised when they meet her. While wanting to build

community with other Desis on campus, she expressed wanting more visibility of Desis who also are in non-STEM fields.

Even with their academic major choice, each participant noted how they were not in "typical fields" expected for Indian international students. Anna perceived stereotypes around being an Indian international student and the ways in which it complicated her ability to express multiple aspects of self.

> It's just negative [stereotypes]. Stuff about wanting to do STEM or being very conventional and very conservative and talking a certain way and liking spicy food. I guess very steeped into what people see, or smelling a certain way (Interview 2, April 27, 2018).

Being a STEM major was racialized in stereotypes of how Desi international students are supposed to look and smell. By naming this stereotype, Anna is challenging how others on campus often respond to finding out she is an Indian international student. Being anomalies in their respective spaces on campus often elicited awe and intrigue by domestic students. Participants reflected on how domestic students were shocked upon finding international students from India studying humanities and social sciences. Moreover, Anna's quote above notes physical dress, body smell, food, and political stereotypes ascribed to Indian international students at WCU.

All four participants were conscious about identifying and challenging stereotypes about Indian international identities or certain facets of their identity in various contexts of campus. In classroom spaces with faculty and on campus with peers, participants noted the desire to coexist. Feeling like one's identities cannot coexist on campus is not unique to Indian international

LGBQ students yet may have a significant impact on their perception and navigation of campus spaces.

Queerness as Anomaly: Being LGBQ on Campus

All four participants had a clear understanding of stereotypes of what Indian international students are supposed to be, especially devoid of any non-heteronormative desire and political/sexual consciousness. Anna spoke about how being Indian *and* queer was perceived as an anomaly, especially by heterosexual domestic men. In speaking about men in her friend circle, she reflected, "…the guys would be like, "Oh, she's Brown *and* queer?" Like I'm some kind of rarity." Being a "rarity" became an experience of both breaking stereotypes while also being fetishized. Sue spoke about being questioned by a white lesbian on campus. "'Wait, are you a lesbian too?' I wasn't sure how to answer her….This girl was especially surprised and so I think maybe my understanding was because she had possibly never met a girl who likes girls before and she had probably never met a Brown person who's not straight. 'Why are you so surprised?' And she was like, 'No, no, I guess I just didn't think of it.'"

In this interaction, Sue was attempting to be with other queer women on campus but had to engage in dialogue and justify her sexuality outside of a white heteronormative lens. Simply because Sue presents as a self-described female Indian international student, her peer had automatically assumed heterosexuality, leaving Sue unsure of how to respond. Sue even began questioning and comparing her own expression of LGBQ identity. "I don't know if there's anything in the way that I dress or talk that would necessarily give anything very clearly [about my sexuality]." Sue had quite a bit of compassion for this peer and stated, "…she will think back one day on how stupid she was."

Having to constantly feel like a “rarity” impacts Anna and Sue’s perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Often, these participants found themselves having to challenge these stereotypes in their living environments, classrooms, and other spaces. Not fitting into these stereotypes, participants spoke about not being Indian enough or being an anomaly. Om highlighted a feeling of being aware and uncomfortable with how he presented himself in various spaces on and off campus and how stereotypes impact his experience. Om stated, “I feel conscious about how I speak because there are also stereotypes. It's not like Americans aren't used to seeing Indians. They definitely have met many Indians, they just have set stereotypes and stuff.” Though his domestic peers may have met other Indian people, he spoke about the impact of stereotypes on their expectations and his relationship with these individuals.

> Am I aware that I'm Indian at this stage of my interactions with people around here? Yes I am, for sure. I feel conscious about how I speak because there are also stereotypes…My [white domestic] roommate, for example, he immediately boxed me in as one of those guys who is super reserved, which I'm not, which he clearly understands now. But his first impression was, he's an Indian guy who is polite, who is by himself all the time, who probably is into technology and all of that, so, you break these boxes (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

Without knowing anything about Om, his roommate had already boxed him into a stereotype of a “nerd” and someone who is socially awkward. Though Om is speaking about his own speaking ability and this interaction, the lack of mentioning his own sexuality reinforces assumptions of Indian identity with heteronormativity by his peers. Om noted how he debunked these stereotypes by being himself, a social person who enjoys drinking, going out, and making friends and is openly gay in the United States. He also spoke about being aware of his speech patterns

and making sure to challenge linguistic stereotypes. Having to constantly watch how one acts was both an opportunity to challenge stereotypes while also trying to express oneself. Similarly, Sue spoke about just being herself in her apartment and interacting with her roommate's mother.

> I could tell [my roommate's white mom] was just like, "I can't figure this person out yet." That's not what I thought would happen. In the same evening, I played David Bowie and I also made *dal makhani* [Indian lentil stew] and very Indian things and so I think maybe [it was] a slightly jarring experience [for her] (Interview 1, May 3, 2018).

Simply expressing her appreciation for David Bowie's music, rather than Bollywood movies and being able to prepare Indian food was jarring for her roommate's mother. Again, the lack of any mention of Sue's sexuality is meaningful. Though Sue grew up speaking English at home and attending English-medium schools throughout her formal education, she became an enigma that did not fit into a stereotype of who Indian international students are. Sue developed this concept further and spoke about how people in the United States "…expect me to be a certain kind of conservative, heteronormative person because maybe that's the framework they're working with." These stereotypes of equating being South Asian with conservative and heteronormative ideals further complicated how the participants navigated campus. By intentionally playing David Bowie's music and expressing her lesbian identity while also making traditional Indian food, Sue was challenging domestic White people's stereotypes of who Indian international students are supposed to be.

Not fitting stereotypes and being seen as an anomaly often also called participants' identities into question. Sue spoke about how others on campus perceive her. Sue reflected, "I guess some people would say that I'm not as Indian as other Indians." Similarly, Anna spoke about not being perceived as Indian or international.

> I guess also a lot of people don't often associate me or I don't often get the question of, "Where are you from? Are you an international student?" Just because I guess I pass off or I could pass off more like a local student. I don't know. I often don't get that question unless I'm meeting someone for the first time, then it's mostly a generic, "Where are you from?" I don't know, I just feel like there are a lot of things that are often invisible (Interview 2, April 27, 2018).

Being seen as a domestic student may feel like a positive experience but in fact erases students' actual experiences as an international student at WCU. Maya also commented on her sense of "not being Indian enough." "I think it's just unfortunate that growing up in India ... especially, in certain families, you don't get exposed to [culture and language] and things. You just have kind of a distaste for them; you're just colonized, like ... It sucks." Language, cultural identity, and being seen as an Indian international student was important for participants and authenticating one's Indian-ness.

Affirming or challenging various stereotypes, participants spoke about wanting to be truly acknowledged and having their unique experience understood. Maya spoke about the importance of being respected and recognized by peers.

> Everybody has their own way of like narrativizing and making sense of what they have experienced or even just the space that they're in. I think like, when I've been in spaces that I've really felt like welcome in, they've respected that and they've tried to engage with me and they have tried to like, see things the way I see them…When I've experienced truly intersectional spaces I have felt like the people in the space are receptive to not just the way I articulate the world but the way I experience the world based on all the different things that have made me who I am. Not just my racial, sexual,

> nationality identity but just like my own personal experience with the schooling background that I have. Like going to a Montessori school or just stuff like that. All of that comes together in unique ways with each person (Interview 3, May 15, 2018).

While acknowledging the collective experience of being a student at WCU, Maya spoke about how her individual experience and finding spaces that affirmed her unique journey were critical in perceiving sense of belonging on campus. Finding truly intersectional spaces meant feeling heard and seen in all aspects of identities that she brings, not just the stereotypes of who she should be or how she should act on campus. Finding such spaces where she does not have to explain her identity, rather a space where she can express her lived experiences and the ways that the social, educational, and political context of growing up in Chennai was empowering for Maya. Challenging stereotypes for Maya meant having the ability to express herself and finding communities where preconceived notions based on social identities only do not inhibit her ability to be in such spaces. Participants' ability to identify stereotypes and intentionally challenge the invisibility of their multiple aspects of identity served to reclaim their own sense of self on campus and seek spaces of belonging.

Being at the Intersections: Navigating Academic Spaces

Beyond broader notions of belonging, participants reflected on how they perceived sense of belonging in academic spaces. Specifically, Maya reported expectations she had as an English major and the reality of her interactions within the department.

> I knew that WCU is a big school but I definitely… I don't know, thought that I would say, "Oh, I'm going to get to know people in my department." Like, you know, I'll have fellow English majors that I'll be friends with because we're all English majors but that didn't happen because the English department is so huge and like, people don't talk to

> people in classes, you know. They don't form study groups all the time, I mean sometimes they do but not really (Interview 2, April 27, 2018).

Though Maya was expecting a more collegial environment and connectedness to others within the department, she found the large size of the department and lack of interaction with others as a hindrance to perceiving a sense of belonging. Even if Maya did not form meaningful connections, she did speak about connecting with faculty and getting involved on campus.

> I expected that I would form meaningful connections with professors, which I did. I expected to be able to like, work ... like, find a project that feels meaningful to me and be able to work on projects that I want to do, which I did. And, like also be meaningfully involved with an extracurricular activity, which I did (Interview 3, May 15, 2018).

In addition to making connections with peers, connecting with faculty and working on meaningful work brought higher level of perceptions of belonging. Anna noted having deeper conversations with faculty and building relationships due to smaller classes.

> I've only been taking upper division classes for English, and that was a lot more personalized. I felt like I could talk to the professors and I didn't just feel like a number in the classroom. It helped that we didn't have TAs for classes and it was a pretty small class size for all my classes…I think with friends, I'm more comfortable being queer, or like classes or talking about stuff, I'm more comfortable with some professors, but it's never been all of those things (Interview 2, April 27, 2018).

Though she felt more comfortable building relationships with faculty, Anna still revealed a hesitancy in talking, expressing, and being queer with some faculty. Anna's experience of not being "all of those things" demonstrates a need to select aspects of her Indian international LGBQ identity and perceptions of classroom climate. Anna also reflected on the impact of being

mistaken for another Indian female student by a faculty member in a class where there were only two of them.

> [The faculty member] actually mistook [another Indian student] for me... He stopped us after class and he apologized to us. The other student was like, "Obviously you had some racial biases, or some prejudice that you have to work on." It was great to hear someone say that, because I've never been able to voice that to professors or to be like, "Okay, this is how you're making me feel." It was kind of just great to hear someone do that and to take a very firm stance, because I was sort of like, "No, it's fine. I think in the future, just ask people what their names are, or confirm."

Being able to challenge such experiences seemed to help Anna feel a stronger connection with this peer and feel a sense of empowerment for future interactions. The fact that this experience was not the first time where she has been mistaken for another woman of color highlights how such an experience may impact her connectedness to her academic department. Yet Anna also noted feeling affirmed when an Indian faculty member pronounced and remembered names of people of color in the class while not remembering White students' names.

> It was really funny though because on the first day of class, [the Indian faculty member] forgot all of the white people's names, but he remembered the Brown people's names. I was like, that's so rare. I feel like I always have to tell people my name at least twice before they get it (Interview 2, April 27, 2018).

It seemed common for Anna to feel othered within a classroom environment as a person of color. Being seen and acknowledged as a unique person and not being confused for another person with a similar identity seemed to increase Anna's feeling of mattering. It was the first time she felt seen and heard on campus as an Indian woman. Beyond being identified properly and not feeling

tokenized, participants spoke about wanting faculty to acknowledge the unique experience and stressors of being an international student. Within classroom spaces, Sue spoke about wanting faculty to acknowledge the experience of being an international student in the United States

> In terms of really being able to look at what it might mean for a student to move here from another part of the world, I'm not sure that [faculty] really factor that into their interactions with you. I'm not sure if I want them to treat me differently and just be like, "Oh we know that this is a really hard experience" because I don't like when people think of me that way (Interview 3, May 8, 2018).

Sue expresses feeling torn between wanting faculty to note the unique stress of being an international student in the United States while also not wanting to be pitied. Yet, Sue notes the impact of having a faculty advisor who demonstrates care, “My advisor has been helpful... He's also a South Asian guy, so I mean he understands the experience well.” While South Asian faculty were helpful, other faculty in general were seen as not caring about international students, especially by the graduate students. Om recounted his experience with faculty in his program,

> [Faculty] are not interested in your personal life or your personal identity, unless you want to share it with them. But, I know a few of my Indian friends who are super reserved and I know [faculty] have taken an extra interest in them. They've invested some time, try to get them to meet other Indian people or other Americans who are comfortable with South Asians and build a sense of community (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

In Om’s reflection, faculty seem interested in investing energy to build community for students that are super reserved and finding co-national or domestic students “who are comfortable with South Asians.” This phrasing is important and points to the ways in which faculty both reify

Indian international students' challenges in finding community while also noting not everyone is welcoming or supportive of these students.

Being at the Intersections: Navigating Campus Spaces and Resources

As part of defying boundaries and defining self and community, participants spoke about their experience of navigating intersectional identities and spaces on campus. Beyond building community and finding a personal sense of identity on campus, participants inferred how various campus resources and departments impacted their perception of sense of belonging on campus. Speaking about the WCU campus in general, participants did not feel a broad sense of belonging, yet participants expressed specific spaces and resources as anchors for how, when, and where they perceive sense of belonging incorporating all of their intersectional identity. Participants spoke about particular student resource offices, campus buildings, and academic departments as spaces that, depending on context, support or deter perceptions of sense of belonging of their various aspects of identity.

With regard to student resource offices, participants were asked to review a list of campus resources between interviews two and three and share their awareness of and any experience with utilization of the campus offices listed. Om stated that he had spent time on this website prior to getting onto campus and was aware of many of the resources because "I did go to these pages before I came [to WCU]." Yet, Sue noted a sense that many campus resources seemed to cater to undergraduate students. "Some of [the campus services] feel very undergrad oriented and so maybe in that sense I don't always feel like it's for me." Though she could not point to a specific item that made her feel that way, Sue felt there weren't sufficient resources specifically developed and marketed for graduate students and their diverse identities. Participants acknowledged that they were aware of the resources on the website but in terms of

utilization, focused on the international student services office, the LGBT resource center and the student counseling center in their responses. All four participants were familiar with the international student services office on campus but saw it more as a transactional space than a community space. Anna reflected, “I think I go [to the international student services office] when I need to. It's mostly for functional things, or I have to get this done, or I have to get this signed. Apart from that, I'm rarely there.” Beyond getting paperwork processed or other “functional things,” participants did not see the international student services office as contributing to their sense of belonging or supporting their various aspects of identity on campus. Yet, Om stated that the ability to drop by without an appointment to process paperwork did make him feel welcome.

> I've been to the international student center a few times now. With questions regarding my visa, questions about employment, you know, anything - license, getting a California ID…They've been really helpful, resourceful. Literally, just walk in and get your things done, even if you don't have an appointment. So it's pretty welcoming (Interview 2, April 25, 2018).

Beyond the transactional nature, Sue stated, “I've been to the [international student services office] twice. Just for some sort of requirement but it's obnoxiously far away. I don't even know where it is, it's sort of down this way somewhere,” and pointed to the corner of campus. In addition to mandatory orientation sessions for all international undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctorate scholars, the international student services office plans a robust schedule of programming and hosts events to build community, yet participants seemed mostly unfamiliar with these events. Sue was the one student who was aware of programming through this office but felt that the events were more focused towards undergraduate students than graduate students. “I do like the [international student services] events…but half of the time I don't go

because I feel like there will be a lot of undergrads there, and that's not necessarily the kind of thing I'm looking for…"

Though the LGBT resource center was more centrally located on campus than the international student services offices, participants were less familiar with it and did not feel like it was a space for them. Anna reflected on a desire to be more involved with the LGBT center but not knowing what purpose it would serve for her.

> I really think I should be at the queer LGBT center more often because there are definitely more things that happen. I guess I only hear about the parties or other stuff. I wish I knew more people. Of all my friends, I would say like 90% of my friends are queer, but I didn't meet any of them through the center. We just sort of met and I don't think they use the center as much either… It would be sort of going out of my way to go there, just because normally I'm there to print and then I'm in a rush to get somewhere or I don't see a reason to hang out (Interview 2, April 27, 2018).

While Anna's social circle is predominantly queer, having a group of friends who do not connect with the LGBT space on campus made it feel like "going out of the way" to connect. Similar to the international student services office, the LGBT center seems more transactional with printing and other services rather than a community building space for these participants. Anna also noted a desire to feel a stronger sense of belonging within the LGBT center. "I wish I felt more comfortable in the LGBT center. I think I'm just shy about occupying the space. I know a lot of my queer friends…feel like, 'Oh I'm fine. I don't need to be there.'" Though Anna wanted to feel more comfortable in the LGBT space, there was a sense among her mostly domestic queer peers of what it means to utilize such a space. In other words, one only uses the LGBT space if

they “need it.” Om reflected that his academic department highlighted the LGBT center with a similar institutional message of stigma rather than a source of community.

> [The program] did mention that there's an LGBT resource center, but then they almost made it sound like, "If you need help and you're part of that community and if you have some sort of ... If you need help, almost like therapy or something, you need to go there," but not necessarily like it's a place where you could just go find like-minded people or you could just get involved with activities and stuff like that (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

Having the LGBT office on campus framed as a stigmatized space for people who need help served as a barrier to access services and resources available. Om expressed a desire for more LGBT-focused programming that fostered meeting other LGBT people on campus. “I wish there were [LGBT-specific] events because I do go to a lot of events on campus. I'm on [campus programming] mailing list and stuff, but I wish there was something similar for LGBT activities.” Though there are LGBT programming mailing lists on campus, Om was not aware of them or how to get involved. Beyond finding LGBQ people, Anna noted a specific interest in “…making more of an effort to find queer spaces that are occupied by people of color who are not necessarily American.” Similarly, she also reflected, “I don’t feel like I belong sometimes in very Brown student spaces, just because of being queer, I think that's not acknowledged as much…” Knowing where to find people with similar intersectional identities would enhance utilization and connectedness to campus resources. Finding spaces on campus to connect with other international queer people of color was a desire but the LGBT space was not identified as filling that need for these participants.

Finally, participants reflected on the accessibility and usefulness of the student counseling center on campus. Sue recounted how counseling services were easy to access, helpful soon after moving to the United States and needed after ending her engagement. “I thought [the counseling session] was really helpful and they were very nice. I think it's a really well-resourced campus,” Sue stated. Maya spoke about experiencing depression during her first year on campus and utilizing the counseling center.

> I got majorly depressed, just like, really bad. I was like, okay I need to go to [the counseling center]. I need to figure this out. [And] the whole seven session limit is a pain in the butt, because it's not that many sessions, and just getting in takes so long, so I think, definitely think mental health resources could be better (Interview 2, May 11, 2018).

Though mental health services were available, having a limit on the number of sessions accessible for students and the difficulty in scheduling was an issue for Maya. Anna and Om were not familiar with nor had used the counseling center which may be connected to stigmatization, similar to messages they had heard about the LGBT center.

Beyond specific offices, Om spoke about the importance of having social spaces dedicated to fostering community within the film and affiliated academic programs.

> I belong to the Film School, there's no lobby or a lounge area where film school people could hang out. I think that's been a huge difference. Like in Manipal, we had lounges. In the U.K., I went to business school and all the business students had a huge lounge area with free coffee and free candy, chocolate bars and stuff. That created a sense of community because you just go there, there'd be something happening all the time, there'd be people from all walks of life, at various stages in their education and life

> essentially, even alumni can be a part of it as well. It created a sense of community for sure. If you were celebrating a birthday party, you could do up the room and all of that. At WCU, I really miss that (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

Compared to other educational institutions he has attended, Om finds the lack of a lounge space within his school a hindrance to stronger perception of sense of belonging. Particularly as a graduate student who does not spend much time on campus, having such a space when he does would enhance his experience. Om's insight about the need for an intergenerational space where faculty, alumni, and students can interact and intentionally engage in conversations highlights an opportunity to physically foster sense of belonging by bringing people together within the department space. Beyond spaces for intergenerational academic connections, participants spoke about public spaces such as libraries and coffee shops serving as important spaces that fostered perceptions of sense of belonging on campus.

Undergraduate and graduate students highlighted the role of broader campus spaces that were central to their sense of belonging and accessibility of campus. It is notable that none of the four students spend much time on campus outside of attending classes. When they do spend time on campus, their time was mostly spent at the libraries and coffee shops. Sue reflected on her perspective of spending time on campus.

> Normally, I don't really spend that much time on campus, unless I have breaks between classes or something. I'll hang out by [a coffee shop in the middle of campus] or somewhere in the library or somewhere quiet to be able to read. A lot of times if I'm on campus, I'm either working or in class and then the minute I get out, I'm kind of like, I want to go home and eat, or have some space (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

Even while not spending significant time on campus, all four participants found a sense of community on campus. Yet, there was a desire for being in community with specifically other Desi international LGBQ people who have shared histories.

> Most of my queer friends are also people of color, but they're not Indian, so they have different experiences with queerness… I wish I had more… I have a personal history, but I don't necessarily have a deeply rooted national history, or something that's a part of my queerness (Interview 3, May 1, 2018).

Anna had several queer friends of color in her social network but still felt a lack of connectedness to their experience. She yearned for more spaces with other LGBQ Desi voices, queer women of color voices, and others that reflect her communities. Anna has intentionally tried to create spaces where she can express and explore intersections of self.

> I think I've tried to [talk about myself] more in creative writing or something, or writing more about people of color who are queer and not necessarily American. Apart from that, I don't really feel like there's a medium where I can talk about all of those things, or exist in all of those ways (Interview 1, March 9, 2018).

As an English major, her academic field of study has been essential to her ability to exist as a Desi international queer woman.

All four participants desired visibility and recognition by peers, faculty, and domestic, and international students. Though participants were asked broad questions on visibility and sense of belonging on campus, they focused on specific aspects of identity that they do not feel are adequately supported and seen. While participants had heard of other Indian international LGBQ people on campus, participants expressed that many people on campus would still assume that people with this identity could not be real. “I feel like the stereotype would be that they are

non-existent. A lot of people have varied perceptions of what Indian people are like." Similarly, Maya reflected on the need to affirm her existence.

> First of all, I would let [people at WCU] know that there really aren't any spaces explicitly for Indian LGBTQ students. I think there was, actually, a South Asian queer organization that was pretty active my first few years on campus, but I haven't heard any news about them since then. Yeah. I mean, it's just a really invisible community on this campus…I would just be, like, "We exist!" (Interview 3, May 15, 2018).

As a strategy for visibility, Maya desires spaces specifically to name and support Indian international LGBQ students. Anna added, "I wish I knew more [Indian LGBQ international people] on campus." Finally, Sue who met a Bengali international queer student on campus, reflected on how it had shifted her perception of sense of belonging on campus. "I was finally talking to someone who was speaking the same language as me and it was nice. It's been nice…" This experience of finally being seen and heard is powerful in challenging isolation and lack of connectedness to campus academic and social spaces.

Yet, Maya also reflected that simply finding other people with similar identity isn't enough.

> The reason I would be drawn to, for example, other Indian LGBTQ people would not be simply that we might have the same identity but that…they would be interested in thinking critically about our relationship to queerness, as it is different from say a white American's relationship to queerness, and how that difference plays out (Interview 3, May 15, 2018).

For Maya, simply sharing identity is insufficient. Having a critical perspective on how queerness and identity are framed and internalized is important. Maya expressed a strong desire for visibility as a means to deconstruct Western concepts of queerness. All the participants wanted more visibility on campus and a stronger sense of community, though Om highlights some fear around finding community of other Indian international LGBQ people.

> When I moved here, one of the things that I first resolved was, this is a new beginning and I shouldn't be in the closet here, as much as I can. But, I also am constantly worried that if I do come out way too much or [to] way too many people…They start bringing this up casually in social media, not vindictively but just because they would assume it's a normal thing, and they just bring it in social media and people back home get wind of it, it would complicate my life (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

While being on campus and in the United States affords some level of access to resources, desire for being open about one's sexuality, the intersection of these aspects of identity and connectedness to others on campus and thus to India brings some hesitation. Being at the intersection of these aspects of identity both hindered and fostered awareness and utility of spaces and sense of belonging in unique ways for each participant.

Theme 2: Speaking Language to Power

The second major theme in this study is *Speaking Language to Power*, noting how language influences perceptions of sense of belonging for Desi international LGBQ students at WCU. The theme is organized into three subthemes:

a) English: Language of Colonization and Freedom

b) Authenticity and Language: Regional Languages and Self-Identity

c) Having to Prove Myself: Linguicism on Campus

This theme explores how language ability, especially English and each participants' respective regional language, can provide privilege and access to some campus spaces while being alienating in other spaces.

English: Language of Colonization and Freedom

The participants of this study had complex relationships with the English language, a language of colonizers who imperialized India for over three hundred years, yet also a language that has been central to the participants' access to education and worldview. Participants spoke about a double standard in the United States of being celebrated for English proficiency while also having their international and racial identity questioned. Each participant in this study attended English-based schools from primary through college and beyond. It was notable that all four participants spoke about being more proficient in English than any other language. Yet, Om spoke about stereotypes about Indian international students' English language ability and accents on campus.

> I think sometimes [domestic people] assume somehow that your English is gonna be a little more difficult to understand. So they want you to repeat a word or so. Because clearly, a friend of mine can easily understand the same word [I tell them] but when … [I] express it, [other domestic people] cannot understand it (Interview 2, April 25, 2018).

Despite these experiences, participants expressed most proficiency in English. When I asked about what languages she feels most comfortable in, Sue responded, "Oh English. I always say that it's my first language. My Bengali cousins make fun of my Bengali. My friends who speak Hindi say, 'Your Hindi is terrible.'" Sue also noted that English is the primary language in her immediate family while her extended family criticize her ability to speak Bengali. Sue also studied English in college in India and worked as a journalist for several years in an English

publication as a copy editor. Unlike Sue, Om spoke about his family as the only people with whom he speaks in the regional language of Telugu. Given his time at boarding school, college in Manipal, and graduate school in London, “I'm super comfortable in English. I'm not as comfortable in many Indian languages anymore because I've been traveling for a while now, and also because I only speak in Telugu with my mom and dad, but I wish I could be more fluent, for sure.”

Similarly, Anna remarked that though she grew up speaking Gujarati, her most comfortable language is “…probably English. As a kid, I don't think I thought in English, but now that's what I think in.” Finally, Maya also noted a level of proficiency in English where she thinks in English. Maya stated, “English is pretty much the language in which I think I talk to myself…Things are very much articulated and processed in English, but I'm excited to change that in the future.” Beyond being fluent in English, all four participants expressed a high level of comfort not only speaking and comprehending English, but even thinking in English. For Om and Anna, this was different than how they would think in their respective regional language when they were younger while Sue and Maya have communicated predominantly in English at home, school, and other environments. Sue even spoke about differences in her ability to understand idioms, metaphors, and other U.S. English phrases more than her Indian co-nationals.

> I think I speak in a slightly different way; I get all of the references that some of my Desi friends don't. When people ask me what my first language is, I always say English. That makes it easy to communicate. I understand the nuanced ways of interacting, which I think has made it much easier to settle in [on campus]…Language is a very important part of how you're able to communicate with your new friends or your new environment.

> Maybe because I am equipped with that language by chance because of my profession and everything else it's been an easier thing to navigate (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

Though all four participants felt a high level of English language proficiency, Sue's statement speaks to the spectrum of English ability for Indian international students beyond the four participants in this study.

Further, English comprehension is seen by participants as an important tool making it "easier to settle in" or perceive a sense of belonging on the WCU campus. Having worked as a copy editor and journalist, Sue discussed how she was able to access campus resources, communicate in classes, and build community.

> I would rate my English speaking, reading, writing ability as about as good as it gets. I do it professionally as an editor, so at least I read the language when I am working. Also being able to speak and write in that way, it makes things very easy for me on campus I think (Interview 2, May 3, 2018).

Sue's English competency has made interactions with various campus offices and processes less frustrating than her peers. Given her background as a journalist and editor, Sue is keenly aware of how her English fluency aids her ability to navigate campus spaces. Though Sue notes that familiarity with the English language is not enough. Understanding U.S. accents and interpretations are also important to navigating an English language campus. Sue continued,

> Because it's not just English, but also being able to understand the American inflections or the things they don't mean when they say certain things and keeping up with that … I find it easy to understand the instructions when I'm getting my bus pass renewed at the transportation office, or things like that. I think that definitely at some level if I did not know the language well, I could see where that would be very hard. We had a workshop

> on how to file taxes as international students and I am pretty sure if I was struggling with the language, it would make the process so much harder (Interview 2, May 3, 2018).

Sue acknowledges how based on education and fluency, partaking in daily campus programs, even when tailored for international students is difficult. Similarly, for Anna, not being identified by her accent gave her some "passability." "My accent is ambiguous enough to not … indicate that I'm an international student. I think that gives me some pass-ability." In other words, not having a stereotypical Indian international student accent allows Anna to pass as a domestic student and code-switch to a specific context.

Code-switching is a sociolinguistic term that specifically speaks to mixing languages yet has also been used by social scientists to define broader concepts pertaining to identity and expression where, "many of us subtly, reflexively change the way we express ourselves all the time. We're hop-scotching between different cultural and linguistic spaces and different parts of our own identities — sometimes within a single interaction" (Demby, 2013). Yet, Maya reflected on how her English proficiency has often made people question her international student identity.

> I definitely feel weird about [speaking English] sometimes, because it's weird. At least on campus, when people realize that I'm most comfortable speaking [English], they're like, "Oh, her English is much better than any other language." It almost feels like they see me as less international, like they don't see me as racialized as they do some of the other international students. Yeah. I don't get treated differently based on that, which is kind of weird (Interview 2, May 11, 2018).

Maya's reflection highlights how there is a double standard with English proficiency. While speaking, understanding, and thinking in English enhances access to resources and making

friends on campus, Maya expressed feeling that her international student and racial identity was questioned because of her English proficiency. Anna expressed similar experiences on campus, “I definitely got offhanded comments like, ‘Oh, I didn't know you were international because you don't talk like that.’ It's definitely very entrenched in racist notions.” Though Anna spoke earlier about her ability to pass as a domestic student, she also spoke about challenging her domestic friends for their assumptions. “Even for friends [who say], ‘You don't have a heavy Indian accent,’ I'm like, ‘If I did, would you not be my friend?’ It feels like there's a huge disconnect between those two identities [of being international and language ability].” In addition to being questioned for authenticity of Indian international identity, Maya spoke about how English proficiency was perceived as more conformed to U.S. culture. “I'm seen as more assimilated, whereas, in reality, I think just really what happened was my parents chose [to send me to English-based schools].”

Though Sue’s ability to speak English made her feel like it was easier to navigate campus and feel a sense of belonging, Maya and Anna felt like their ability to speak and navigate campus caused domestic peers to question their authenticity of being an Indian international student based on stereotypes of how Indian international students should act and speak on campus. This experience may be due to Sue’s graduate student status as compared to Maya and Anna who are undergraduate students. These Indian international students expressed frustration around the double standard of wanting international students to have English proficiency yet also questioning their authenticity of being Indian international students due to stereotypes and perceptions. Finally, Sue spoke about the level of comfort she feels when speaking with other Indian international students. “We [a group of Indian students] meet on Thursdays. It's a very different kind of conversation because I think even my language changes. Maybe my accent

changes when I speak to these people. And it's nice. It feels nice." Not having to perform or be constantly conscious of accent and language ability was important for Sue. Finding a community of others who have shared experiences and being able to be vulnerable was an important element in her connectedness to this group of peers on campus.

Authenticity and Language: Regional Languages and Self-Identity

While participants were proud of being fluent in English, each of them spoke about a sense of loss regarding their Indian regional language. This subtheme highlights participants' desire to speak their familial/regional language and how English-based education has contributed to self-consciousness and sense of being an outsider.

Having grown up in India and moving to the United States, participants noted how English language ability shapes their perceptions of sense of belonging on campus and beyond. Indian regionalism and structure means each state has a specific regional language along with Hindi and English as broader languages. Yet, as seen by these four participants, English is the only language they use to communicate in, even with other Indian co-national and domestic people. Om spoke about how as someone who has attended English-based schools throughout his education, he feels comfortable communicating in English even more than his native Telugu.

> I definitely do think I have more in common with the native [English] speaker, which is both a good and a bad thing. I think good because it gives you opportunities. You can travel anywhere. You can connect with people more easily. But bad because for a huge part of my life, I was definitely a little ambiguous... I wasn't really sure where I belonged, because obviously if I went back home, I feel like, "Yes, I speak English, but I'm still as Indian as I can get." (Interview 2, April 25, 2018).

English is seen by Om as a language of possibility and optimism. Yet, his English-language ability made him question his Indian identity and cultural connection to his family and community. Similarly, Maya spoke about the impact of English fluency on how she is perceived on campus.

> I was drawn to reading and writing in English at a very young age, so my English just rapidly got a lot better, while Hindi just kind of fell to the wayside. I think it does affect the way people see me on campus (Interview 2, May 11, 2018).

While enhancing English has been an asset in her education and understanding of campus, not speaking Hindi reasserts notions of not being Indian enough.

Even within regional languages, there are various accents and dialects. Om spoke about not feeling connected to his family and its dialect.

> So the way I speak Telugu is a lot more different than how my parents speak Telugu. And my Telugu is also more polished, I think, more neutral … It doesn't really belong to a particular region. In terms of the bad part of me focusing heavily on English meant that I would lose that sense of identity. So when I go back home, I'm always the outsider (Interview 2, April 25, 2018).

Though focusing on English enhanced his academic experience, it has also contributed to a sense of not belonging within his family and community. Om even apologized at the end for getting slightly emotional after this reflection. Sue shared a recent experience of being surrounded by Hindi speakers in Little India which is an ethnic enclave close to campus with restaurants, grocery stores, and other South Asian shops.

> I went to [Little India] the other day and I was surprised by how moved I was by experiences. Just to see where the other Desis live, I guess, and I don't live anywhere near

> that. I'm still very much by this whole campus bounds. So it was nice to see Indian families walking around and I didn't think I would feel emotional to see them or just the restaurants or the shops and I walked into this shop and I spoke to this old uncle in Hindi, it felt really nice (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

Sue's experience of feeling emotive by being around other Indian people and speaking in Hindi had a powerful impact on her perceptions of sense of belonging that she had *not* experienced anywhere else in the United States. Even though Sue states she is not comfortable in speaking in Hindi, hearing this language still carries important meaning in creating her perception of sense of belonging.

Beyond access to English education and contributing to a sense of alienation from one's community, English also provided agency in defining participants' sense of self. Om observed the complexity in defining his own sexuality.

> I think this was actually the most complex thing for me, was growing up, there's no word for gay in most Indian languages. There's no word for homosexual in most Indian languages. You can be an effeminate guy and then you're pretty much a transgender specifically, and that's identified. But if you're a person who loves another person of the same sex, there's not necessarily a very colloquial term for it (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

Not having any words within his Indian languages to identify LGBQ identity made it even more important to share his gay identity with peers in the United States as a tool to build community. Maya also noted the desire for a term specifically in Hindi. "There really isn't a Hindi word for queer." In addition to defining herself in the U.S. context, having the ability to be in community and build a terminology using languages native to India was important for participants. English

language ability served as an access point to Western education and self-definition while also fostering a sense of disconnectedness from participants' cultural and linguistic communities.

Having to Prove Myself: Linguicism on campus

While English language ability allowed for a sense of belonging through easier access and navigation of campus, participants also spoke about individual and institutional linguistic experiences which negatively impacted their perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Om reflected on his time in London versus the United States.

> I always thought I was fluent in English and when you travel the world, in most parts of the world it's okay. You can get by. They understand you perfectly well even in the U.K., but you come to the U.S. and you have to repeat yourself almost all the time. I don't understand why? (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

Om's words highlight experiences of being in the United States and having to question one's own language ability because of responses by people in the United States. Anna spoke about having to challenge a friend who always criticized her speech by saying, "You're constantly intellectually demeaning me, because you kind of always pick at my language and pick at words that I speak." Challenging this friend was an empowering experience for Anna, especially because he is a gay Asian male. Anna acknowledged the importance of challenging someone who she thought would have more compassion for her given their shared identities.

Similarly, Sue spoke about wanting to challenge institutional linguicism during her process of becoming a teaching assistant. Though she has studied English in college, holds a Master's degree in journalism, and considers English to be her primary language, she is required to take several tests to prove fluency. At WCU, this is a requirement for all international graduate students wanting to be a teaching assistant.

> This is the thing I was offended by as an international student on campus. I have to take a test of all proficiencies so that I can TA. I mean I already met the English requirements when I got into the program. I have a masters from a British school. I did all of my schooling in English and I was an English language journalist. I was a copy editor which means I was one of those annoying nerds. It was annoying I had to do this test at all. But also the way the way the test is structured, every international student has to do it, even if they're Canadian. They don't only have to be from India, or presumably not English speaking countries. It's a funny test. So they put you in a fake classroom and they put 200 undergrads there and you have to teach them something for a while and then they raise their hands and ask questions like, "Oh, what if I don't submit my assignment on time?" And they're testing you on your pronunciation and your vocabulary. To me it seemed like what they're testing is just seeing if these American students can understand my accent (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

Even with all her qualifications, Sue had to go through this process simply to prove her proficiency. She also reflected on how the test is graded. A student can receive a “near-native proficiency” score but not a “native proficiency” which assumes no international student can be proficient, even if they are from a dominant English speaking country, such as Canada or Great Britain. Further, the test focuses on how domestic students perceive and understand the teaching assistant rather than helping them learn how to understand various accents, therefore making international students subject to U.S. ethnocentrism and raciolinguicism. Sue stated that “it certainly makes you feel like you've come from some other planet.” Such experiences early on in her time on campus were critical in defining a sense of otherness on campus as an international

student. While international students are tested for comprehension and communication skills in this way, these strategies influence their perceptions of sense of belonging on campus.

Theme 3: Centering Self within Sociohistorical Contexts

The final theme explores how perceptions of self on campus are shaped by broader sociohistorical influences. These sociohistorical factors can both support and inhibit sense of belonging in various contexts. A major element of Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) conceptualization of intersectionality centers the various structural influences on how one perceives one's self. These structural influences are often understood by uncovering how various sociohistorical factors may or may not influence individual experience and perception (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). While sociohistorical factors can have broader influences, understanding individual participants' perceptions of how sociohistorical factors contribute to perceptions of sense of belonging is critical to fully supporting Indian international LGBQ students in U.S. higher education. This section highlights three subthemes addressing sociohistorical factors present in the data focusing on:

a) Where Do I Fit In?: Being Brown within a Black-White racial construct

b) Where Are My People?: To be or not to be LGBQ

c) I Don't Think I'm Read As Queer: Normalization and Cultural Expectations of Heterosexuality

Where Do I Fit In?: Being Brown within a Black-White Racial Construct

Within the conversation on race, participants highlighted their perception of how they fit into a broader racial structure of the United States. Though many cultures have different sets of racial structures and histories of colonization, participants noted how people in the United States often assume their cultural frame is central to the entire world. Sue reflected, "Sometimes it's

annoying but mostly it also seems like this American exceptionalism situation where they don't even imagine there's a world outside." A lack of awareness of Indian culture, history, or context seemed to be missing in many spaces on campus. At the same time, Sue observed how such a placement of Indian and Asian people in the U.S. racial dynamic ignores the impact of colonization and takes away agency from these communities in expressing their perspectives on campus. "I mean we are still a marginal group, we're still immigrants and we're still all of that but we're also like this model minority." Exploring what it means to be both a marginalized group while also acknowledging privileges provided coming from India into the model minority framework caused some level of stress. In reflecting on a conversation within a class on 19th-century global literature during a section on Indian literature, Anna noted frustration with having to explain aspects about her Indian culture to others, including the faculty member.

> Nobody in the class, apart from this one girl, was Brown or knew anything about India, so I kind of felt like I would be the one answering a lot of things. Then I was frustrated that people didn't know very basic [aspects of Indian culture and literature]. I can't really expect people to know, but at the same time, it was like, "Why don't you know?" (Interview 1, March 9, 2018)

Having to navigate being one of only two Indian people in the class while also having to explain and teach her classmates seemed to cause stress for Anna. From a graduate perspective, Sue detailed how many of the conversations in class were centered on United States and Western cultural perspectives.

> I don't know if it's just not knowing that much outside of America for instance. There are moments [when] I'm very frustrated where especially in the department and things we're talking about are super American, even just the readings that are being assigned. I'm like,

> you need to bring some other writers, like global South writers and post-colonial writers [into the conversation within the classroom] (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

This lack of inclusion of content that reflects consciousness of Indian cultural identity and literature served as barriers to perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. As expressed earlier, Om often felt he was "seen as the other" regularly on and off campus. This experience is connected to domestic people on campus not being able to identify that participants identify as Indian rather than other racial identities.

Being in Southern California, WCU is situated within a city with a significant Latinx community comprising of 48% of the city (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Anna remarked that she is often assumed to be of Latin American/Hispanic heritage on campus.

> I don't think I look ambiguous but I've had people think that I look Hispanic or I've had people come up to me and start talking in Spanish and I'm like, "Oh I wish I could speak Spanish, but I don't." I think overall people do think that I'm Brown… (Interview 3, May 15, 2018).

While people do identify Anna as a person of color (Brown) being misidentified racially continues to make her Indian identity invisible. Anna also noted that U.S. domestic students often conflate Indian culture and identity with cultures from the Middle East or other parts of the world. "Sometimes there will just be an overlap of Middle Eastern and Indian culture[s] because not a lot of people know the difference between them so it's often collapsed." Though South Asian and Middle Easterners have similarities and centuries of intercultural exchanges, conflating these communities and the various cultures within them as one homogenous experience continues to demonstrate ways that U.S.-centered approaches inhibit perceptions of sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students on campus. While having cultural

identities mistaken by others was a common experience, being within a U.S. cultural context was helpful in shaping participants' racialization process. Maya reflected on her experience of being racialized within a U.S. context.

> My sophomore year a lot of it was about me grappling with my racialized identity…I thought, 'Now that I've lived in the U.S. for like a year, I do want to start reading about what does it mean to be a racialized body like, in this space, because I am inhabiting a body whether I like it or not. I'm realizing more and more, like, when people meet me, they're like, 'Oh South Asian' or 'Indian.' They're racializing me in that way and I don't know what that process is, what that means, for myself (Interview 1, March 14, 2018).

Maya was keenly aware of how her racial identity was often shaped or determined by others because of the way race is structured in the United States and how that determination by others took agency from her ability to define herself. At the same time, Maya acknowledged how exploring her racial identity within the United States construct contributes to her consciousness of other identities and the impact of colonialism. "It definitely helped me realize a lot of important things about colonization, and about the way I think of myself and my sexuality." Understanding race within the context of the United States provided space for participants to shape their senses of self, particularly within the racial system of the United States.

Participants spoke about how their Indian identity was often invisible within the U.S. campus environment and were both exotified and made invisible in various spaces on campus. Sue focused on instances when conversations of race were discussed in her classes, often her racial identity was challenged and framed as an extension of whiteness. Sue reflected on how even other people of color in her department consider her to be white.

> There's a lot of conversation about race in my cohort and the African American students have a certain position vis-a-vis the white American students and I sort of get lumped in with the white kids a lot. And that to me is very strange. Because I think the racial understanding here is very Black versus White but I don't think that necessarily leaves room for other kinds of marginality. And so I've been trying to push that conversation just a little bit (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

In addition to navigating academic differences, international Indian LGBQ students navigate an environment where their experiences are interpreted using a U.S.-centric lens. For example, participants spoke about being seen as White within academic and social spaces on campus. Sue noted an experience of being named as having a white lens by her peers while feeling invisible within a U.S. racial construct.

> Even in the class discussion somehow there have been moments where the African American students have been disagreeing a lot with other people or saying things like "you're reading this as a white person, through a white lens." But they will say that to me as well and I'm just like, I don't even come from here. I can't have a white lens, I don't even have an American lens. I have this other post-Colonial lens which is very different (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

The perception of sense of belonging within academic spaces is influenced by both White and non-white domestic students. While Sue perceives her perspective as post-Colonial, her peers box her into a notion of whiteness, further reaffirming a U.S. racial dichotomy and placing Indian and Asian Americans within a white category.

Further, for Sue, she resists the term as someone that did not grow up in the United States and challenges white-washing of Indian perspectives. Specifically, naming her post-colonial lens

centers her experience as some who studied and was raised in post-colonial India. While language, education and other remnants of British colonization still exist in India, Sue's critique recognizes her perspective not simply as a British, Western, or white framework, rather a post-colonial thought which is not simply leftover British thought but a truly unique Indian thought process which defies U.S. and Western-centric conversations altogether. As part of her conversation in class, Sue identified caste as an important factor to consider in the experience of Indian international LGBQ people on campus. "I think that [caste] actually strangely ties into this dichotomy I've been feeling about why I'm lumped in with the white students. Because in a way I identify more with the white culture is because I come from a similar situation of privilege in India." Naming the colonial history of India and the residual impact on Indian culture is a way for Sue to make sense of why she is not considered a person of color by domestic peers. Noting the difficulty of being othered by various groups on campus, Anna spoke about a desire to not be international so she could fit into the U.S. structure.

> When I moved, I was kind of like, "Oh, I wish I wasn't Indian, or I wish I wasn't born here," just because I thought that would be easier. It would make assimilating into a different culture, adapting to a different culture easier (Interview 1, March 9, 2018).

While Anna feels conflicted about not wanting to be part of Indian culture and racial structures, she also spoke earlier about wanting peers and faculty to be more aware and competent of Indian culture, providing conflicting experiences of wanting to be proud of her heritage and country of origin while feeling that being an Indian international student was a detriment to her perception of sense of belonging on campus.

Where Are My People? To Be or Not To Be LGBQ

In similar fashion to racial and national identity, participants spoke about being LGBQ on campus. This subtheme highlights how participants experience sexuality while resisting fetishization and colonial perspectives of sexuality. Further, participants spoke about various ways homophobia, biphobia, and heteronormativity are normalized on campus. Specifically, participants perceived the United States as a more open environment for exploring and expressing LGBQ identity, compared to India. In speaking about being out as a gay man, Om stated, “Here [in Southern California], there's nothing special about being gay. You're just gay, which is good, which basically I like.” Om also connected this level of sexual normalcy in comparison with his upbringing and understanding of Indian culture.

> I was so conditioned to believe it is not right to be gay or you're going to be different and all of that. So, you obviously aside from that, you just bottled it up and never really expressed anything about it. Growing up in a conservative society like India, you have to rely on your intuition to trust another person or not. How else are you going to safeguard yourself I guess? (Interview 1, March 1, 2018)

Growing up in India meant having to hide one’s sexuality or being cautious in trusting others and in the United States. Om felt the ease of being openly LGBQ in the United States comforting. While a progressive culture and acceptance of LGBQ identities are important in the community, participants spoke about the need for visibility of queerness and how their sexuality influenced their perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Sue recounted, “I don't know how many queer students there are in the department other than me. I only know the one.” Besides a European international student in her department, Sue was not aware of any other LGBQ identified people. While undergraduate students spoke about visibility on campus in general, Sue, as a graduate student, spoke specifically about the impact of not knowing many LGBQ

people in her department. At a structural level, Sue spoke about the lack of funding and institutional support for queer research agendas. “There isn't that much funding for [my research]. I almost feel like it's an invisible concept in some way, just talking about LGBT things.” Though she finds campus to be generally welcoming, Sue also perceives a lack of support for queer academic scholarship.

Anna spoke about the importance of classroom content and campus programming reflecting her experiences. “Going to certain talks by authors…or readings by authors who also have similar immigrant experience, or talk about diaspora, or race and just the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, all of that stuff [has] made me feel super connected.” Being reflected in various aspects of campus is critical for students to perceive sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012). Beyond academic content and support for research, Om reflected that more visible signs of LGBQ inclusion are needed across campus spaces that express support for LGBQ people across campus.

> I wish I could see more of LGBT flags for sure. That would really be like, this is a campus that is for gay people as well. When I went to Seattle, it really makes a difference, I mean Seattle's Capitol Hill, every restaurant has “no racism, no homophobes,” and they have this huge LGBT flag plastered on to the windows and stuff and that is so nice to just have that. You just feel okay, especially if you come from a community or society like India, where this is completely not accepted. You can never flaunt this identity…They're literally celebrated. I definitely wish you could see a little bit more of that on campus (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

This was a powerful quote about why visibility matters. Om argues that seeing flags and other symbols affirming one’s diverse identities on campus is important at individual and institutional

levels. Such symbols send messages of acceptance especially to students who come from India, where LGBQ people experience targeted violence or harassment due to cultural taboos and discriminatory laws (Trikone, 2014).

While Om uses examples of a community neighborhood and local businesses displaying signs, this example highlights his desire for a similar sense of community and collective support of diverse communities on campus. Anna noted how her Indian international and queerness feel mutually exclusive and not supported on campus.

> I don't use Indian or international as much, because sometimes I feel like that doesn't…there a dissonance with queerness and being Indian for me, almost. I think the most connected I felt was when I took my queer Latinx literature class, but that was mostly about the experiences of Latinx people. I was like, "That's not my history." American queer history is not necessarily my history. I'm not connected to that, but somehow it feels like more of a connection than I have to Indian queer history, which I don't know a lot of either (Interview 1, March 9, 2018).

Even the connection she feels to queer history was helpful in providing more intersectional perspectives of sexuality yet, made her yearn for an Indian queer history. Similarly, Anna also spoke about not finding a community of other Desi LGBQ people on campus.

> I associate being Indian with home and family and I don't associate them or that part of my life with queerness. Most of the Indian people I know [on campus]… I don't know a lot of Brown people who do identify as queer, so there's a disconnect there as well. (Interview 1, March 9, 2018).

Anna's sense of disconnect with her racial and sexual identities comes from not finding other Indian LGBQ people on campus and not being able to learn about her cultural history at the intersection of these identities.

I Don't Think I'm Read As Queer: Cultural Expectations of Heteronormativity

In addition to personal and cultural influences, broader heteronormative expectations on campus contributed to participants' perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. As international Indian LGBQ students, participants remarked on how often they are not seen to fit cultural definitions of LGBQ people within the U.S. campus context, leading to having one's identity questioned. Sue noted that when talking with peers on campus, both domestic and international students assume she is heterosexual.

> I think my ethnicity, because I present very femme also, I'm not read queer a lot of the time, or I'm definitely read more in a certain way…people are kind of surprised, I think they kind of assume that you're straight until you tell them otherwise. I'm trying to see how I answer that question (Interview 2, April 25, 2018).

Specifically, Sue is referring to being asked "Do you have a boyfriend?" and not knowing how to answer the question as someone who is in the process of exploring her sexuality. Sue also highlights the ways in which her Indian identity and presentation of feminine gender are used to place her into a heteronormative box. The assumption of heteronormativity was prevalent for Sue on campus within her department's physical space and with her peers. Similarly, Anna spoke about how peers react when she shares her bisexual identity. Unlike women who respond positively, Anna reflected on the reaction from cisgender heterosexual men in her peer group.

> I definitely don't think women are sexually demeaning towards me. I don't think I'm read as queer most of the time, so I'm sort of protected from getting those comments, but

> definitely men, if I'm outed or if that ever comes up in a conversation, then it gets very fetishizing very quickly. I think most people that I've been with in the past who have been men have asked about previous experiences with women, or been very interested. It's just felt very dehumanizing because it's like why do you care? That shouldn't affect you (Interview 1, March 9, 2018).

Anna's intentional covering of her sexuality is an attempt to protect herself from unwanted inquiries about her experiences with women. In this context, not being read as queer is a source of safety for Anna and provides a sense of agency sharing her sexual identity. At the same time, Anna also spoke about feeling the need to self-police her expression of attraction. "Friends have asked, 'Are you really bisexual?' if I was dating a boy, or if I liked a boy or something. I definitely have that internalized to a certain level. It felt very self-policing." As a bisexual person, Anna felt pressure to defend her attraction while at the same time causing self-doubt on her sexuality. Maya shared that her definition and expression of queerness was very much influenced by her current partner and their relationship.

> It's funny because this relationship has been a place in which I've like, realized, oh, I'm not just some girl who likes guys. I think my partner has also realized that he's not just some guy who likes girls, you know. That's what we both thought when we started dating but it's crazy how much we've changed and the ways in which we have, like, worked through our sexualities together and I'd let that inform how we interact with each other (Interview 1, March 14, 2018).

Maya's perception of sense of belonging regarding her sexuality and fluidity was very much defined by her relationship and the ways in which they queer their individual and collective identities. Om was intentional to mitigate any such confusion in personal and broader community

relationships and spoke about sharing his sexuality when entering a new social group on or off campus.

> So, now what I've done is, at least whoever I'm really close with, whoever I hang out with, I make it a point to just tell them [that I'm gay]. Also because people assume I'm straight and they start talking about girls and how they're hitting on somebody or their experiences, and I don't relate to that. So, it's just better to let them know (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

As the only male in this study, Om noted his strategy of being direct in naming his LGBQ identity so that there are no assumptions of heterosexuality. Om also pointed out that it was important for him to name his sexuality here in the United States as he was not able to do so as a college student in India. "In college, there was that sense of I'm here but I'm also not here, duality I guess… because I was a closeted gay man…" Om remarked that living in the predominantly gay neighborhood of the city was intentional and helpful in perceiving a sense of belonging and openness about sharing his sexuality on campus.

While participants spoke about specific contexts in which they can or cannot express their queerness, Maya spoke about a desire to have a space on campus where she could discuss the unique intersection of being an Indian international LGBQ person and how cross-cultural perspectives can help build a sense of belonging because of these aspects of identity, rather than in spite of them.

> I just feel like the concept of queerness is so much more complex than just, either, like, same sex desire or some sort of non-heteronormative desire. It's so much more than that, and I think that if I had a space to talk to other Indian LGBTQ students, that would be something that I would really want to talk about, because you can't pin it down so easily.

> I would love to talk to other people from different cultural backgrounds, different parts of the country, and talk about, historically, how queerness has been dealt with in our communities and how does that translate to identifying as queer in the U.S., you know, what is understood as even being queer, like, what does that mean, what does that look like, stuff like that (Interview 2, May 11, 2018).

In naming the need for such a space, Maya notes the importance of having diversity of representation even within the LGBQ Indian international community. Being able to build a culturally grounded definition of queerness was an important desire for Maya in building such a space. Further, Maya challenges the simplification of the concept of queerness. In resisting such definitions and desiring a community of other Indian LGBQ people to explore this concept in more depth, Maya identifies the importance of finding a community of people with multiple shared identities. Being in such community while also acknowledging the regional and cultural differences within India, Maya notes an interest in reclaiming a history of queerness within a uniquely Indian context. By doing so, Maya also acknowledges that queerness may have different meaning, expression, and desire than in the U.S. context. On the contrary, Sue reflected that she embraces the current process of exploring identity without the need for a specific label or definition,

> Because it's sort of like a new identity for me, I'm still not sure where I fall on this spectrum but whatever it is, I'm not fully sure, I'm still forming my opinion. And in some ways, I feel like I don't have to create a name for it so I don't (Interview 1, March 1, 2018).

Being beyond definition within English or any Indian language has a sense of liberation for Sue that allowed her to embrace the process of identity exploration. Participants had different desires

for labels and terminology; while Om made it a point to express queerness when meeting someone, Maya, Sue, and Anna felt it much harder to do so and also felt less pressure to define themselves within Western constructs of sexuality.

Overall, visibility of Indian, international, and LGBQ identity were highlighted as important tools for enhancing campus climate and perceptions of sense of belonging for communities holding these identities. Participants spoke about how individual interactions of sharing their Indian identity or institutional representation of LGBQ symbols enhanced their connectedness to campus and engagement on campus. This section highlighted ways in which participants perceive and navigate sense of belonging as it relates to various aspects of identity. While understanding these individual aspects of identity is important, participants noted the importance of finding community and visibility of their intersectional identities on campus.

Chapter Summary

The research findings of this study were presented in three major themes in chapter five. Theme one, *Defying Boundaries, Defining Self and Community* explores how participants understand their own identities and how the intersections influences one's perceptions and navigation of sense of belonging in various campus contexts as Indian international LGBQ people. Theme two, *Speaking Language to Power,* highlights the importance of English and vernacular language ability on ones' perceptions of sense of belonging and authenticity on campus. Theme three centers the individual within a broader sociohistorical context exploring how U.S. and institutional culture and policies influence perceptions of sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students. Table 2 offers a summary of themes and subthemes from the study.

Table 2

Indian International LGBQ Students' Sense of Belonging Outline of Findings by Theme

Theme
Defying Boundaries, Defining Self and Community
Finding Community and Self: Being Indian International on Campus
Queerness as Anomaly: Being LGBQ on Campus
Being at the Intersections: Navigating Academic Spaces
Being at the Intersections: Navigating Campus Spaces and Resources
Speaking Language to Power
English: Language of Colonization and Freedom
Authenticity and Language: Regional Languages and Self-Identity
Having to Prove Myself: Linguicism on Campus
Centering Self within Sociohistorical Contexts
Where do I fit in?: Being Brown within a Black-White racial construct
Where are my People?: To be or not to be LGBQ
I don't think I'm read as queer: Normalization and Cultural Expectations of Heterosexuality

Following these findings, chapter six provides an in-depth discussion of these themes related to the theoretical frameworks and literature presented earlier. Chapter 6 concludes with implications for research and practice to enhance perceptions of sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ international students in U.S. higher education.

CHAPTER 6: ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter provides several contributions to the current understanding of perceptions of sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students on U.S. campuses. Chapter six begins with an overview of the study followed by an analytical discussion of findings through Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) and Sense of Belonging (Strayhorn, 2012), the conceptual frameworks grounding this study and the extant literature. Next, implications are presented with recommendations for future research directions for higher education administrators, student affairs practitioners, faculty, and scholars. Finally, a conclusion for the dissertation is provided.

Overview of Study

This study explored LGBQ Indian international students' perceptions of sense of belonging in academic and social contexts on U.S. campuses. This study also explored how institutional contexts and sociohistorical factors influence LGBQ Indian international students' perceptions of sense of belonging on campus at the intersection of multiple identities. To address the dearth of information on Indian international LGBQ identified students in U.S. higher education in the extant literature, a critical qualitative framework of Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) and a constructivist qualitative framework of Sense of Belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) ground this study. Prior to analyzing the findings, it is helpful to briefly review elements of Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) Intersectionality and Strayhorn's (2012) Sense of Belonging. Specifically, Crenshaw's framing of institutional and structural influences on how one experiences multiple marginalized identities is important to exploring how study participants perceive their sense of belonging on campus.

Intersectionality

As a critical theory, Intersectionality recognizes that individual identities and perceptions are not understood in isolation, but rather are shaped by various sociohistorical factors (Anzaldúa, 1987; Azmitia et al., 2008; Crenshaw, 1991; Strayhorn, 2012). Crenshaw's conceptualization of intersectionality complicated ways that anti-racist and feminist theories and ideologies attempt and fail at holding the diverse experiences and perceptions of women of color as they navigate the confounding effects of race and gender-based oppression on labor practices (Crenshaw, 1989) and domestic violence policies (Crenshaw, 1991).

The current study used intersectionality to highlight the multiple and intersecting sociohistorical structures that influence Indian international LGBQ students' perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. These perceptions are not additive or simple as understanding their experience separately as an international student from India or as an LGBQ student. Indian LGBQ international students' exist as both-and at the same time, navigating various contexts and experiences as related to all aspects of their identity within contexts shaped by factors such as heteronormativity, sexism, xenophobia, racist nativism, and linguicism (Bhattar, 2016a; Bowleg, 2008; Renn, 2010; Strayhorn, 2012).

Sense of Belonging

In addition to Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) framing of Intersectionality, Strayhorn's (2012) Sense of Belonging provided an important framework to understand how participants perceive their experiences on campus related to sense of belonging. Building on work by Bollen and Hoyle (1990), Hurtado and Carter (1997), Maslow (1943, 1954) and Tinto (1993, 1994), Strayhorn's (2012) Sense of Belonging encapsulates how perceptions of personal and interpersonal experiences impact an individual's connectedness and overall success on campus. Strayhorn (2012) organized Sense of Belonging into seven core elements: (a) sense of belonging

is a basic human need; (b) is a fundamental motive; (c) takes on heightened importance in certain contexts at certain times in certain populations; (d) is related to, and seemingly is a consequence of, mattering; (e) social identities intersect and affect college students' sense of belonging; (f) engenders other positive outcomes; and (g)m be satisfied on a continual basis and likely changes as circumstances, conditions and contexts change (Strayhorn, 2012). Perceptions of sense of belonging center the individual's unique understanding of a particular experience, context or community as a truly constructive process which may be different from another individual within the same context. In light of these two frameworks, the research findings are analyzed below.

Research Questions

Using Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) and Strayhorn's (2012) elements of Sense of Belonging as conceptual foundations, this study specifically explored LGBQ Indian international students' perceptions of sense of belonging at West Coast University (WCU). Intersectionality names and critiques sociohistorical factors (e.g. heteronormativity, racist nativism/ethnocentrism, xenophobia, sexism, and linguicism) as they influence institutional policies and contexts. Sense of Belonging was used to explore participants' unique perceptions and experiences on campus, with a focus on academic, social, and linguistic elements of the campus environment. Together, these frameworks informed a critical constructive analysis of higher education systems and structures, through several phenomenological interviews with four Indian international LGBQ students in U.S. higher education. To understand perceptions of sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students at WCU, the following research questions guided the study:

1. How do Indian international LGBQ students perceive sense of belonging on campus?

2. What are the most salient facets of identity influencing sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students on campus?
    a. How does perception of sense of belonging compare among undergraduate and graduate students?
3. What are the most salient institutional factors influencing belongingness for Indian international LGBQ students on campus?
4. How do intersecting sociohistorical factors influence individual perceptions of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students?

To address these questions, each of the four participants partook in three semi-structured phenomenological interviews based on Seidman's (2013) three-part interview structure: (a) focused life history- understanding of individual and cultural values and journey to U.S. higher education; (b) details of the experience – exploring individual interactions in campus and academic contexts; and (c) reflection on the meaning of the phenomenon – how individuals perceive and make meaning of these experiences.

Phenomenological inquiry inductively and deductively informed interview structure and the meaning-making process of participants within the U.S. context, data analysis, and code categorization as part of the thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2016; Sauro, 2015; Seidman, 2013). Every interview was read thoroughly and underwent three sets of coding (i.e. in vivo, process, and versus coding) to identify significant themes within each participant's data set and across the data. Congruent patterns were identified across the data and analyzed with constructive and critical frames, Sense of Belonging and Intersectionality, respectively. Phenomenological inquiry centered individual experiences within a sociohistorical context while thematic analysis explored broader themes across the datasets (Braun & Clarke,

2006). The three major themes from the data presented in chapter five are: (1) *Defying Boundaries, Defining Self and Community,* (2) *Speaking Language to Power,* and (3) *Centering Self within Sociohistorical Contexts.*

Summary of Findings

Findings from this study were developed into three major themes to address the research questions driving the inquiry. The first theme, *Defying Boundaries, Defining Self and Community,* addressed participants' perceptions in crossing physical, educational, and cultural boundaries to pursue higher education. The first theme was organized into sub-themes to explore how participants understand community and self through challenging stereotypes while traversing academic and social spaces as individuals at the intersection of Indian international LGBQ identity. The second theme, *Speaking Language to Power,* centers the importance of English language ability in students' perceptions of campus and a tool of access and privilege to U.S. cultural cues and contexts. This theme also highlights how English language ability contributed to questioning one's validity as international students and influence on vernacular language ability and sense of belonging on campus. Lastly, theme three, *Centering Self within Sociohistorical Contexts,* delineated how individual experiences are influenced by broader sociohistorical influences (e.g. race and racism, heteronormativity, and linguicism) in shaping perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. This final theme discussed the role of being Brown within U.S. Black-White racial structures and U.S. constructions of heteronormativity and queerness on participants' definition of self and perceptions of sense of belonging on campus.

Undergraduate and graduate participants noted feeling a sense of belonging within their academic departments yet feeling like the *other* in the broader campus. While graduate and

undergraduate students shared similar experiences on campus, finding community with other international students, especially Indian international students, was important for graduate students in perceiving a sense of belonging on campus. In contrast, undergraduate students did not strive for a strong community with other international students though they found it important to embrace their Indian identities through culture, art, and food on campus. Finally, participants cited a lack of spaces to express "all" of themselves at the intersections of identity on campus. As a study grounded in Intersectionality, there were many overlaps in concepts across the themes in the data and were presented categorically for ease of comprehension and discussion.

In summary, participants do not feel strong sense of belonging on campus. While interpersonal relationships fostered some belonging, there was a clear lack of overall perceptions of sense of belonging within academic and social contexts. The most salient facets of identity influencing sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students were sexuality, race, international student status, linguistic ability, and gender. While undergraduate and graduate students had similar perceptions of sense of belonging, graduate students expressed a need for relationship with other Indian international students while undergraduate students intentionally looked for domestic social circles.

At the institutional level, salient factors influencing belongingness for Indian international LGBQ students were: (a) lack of awareness among domestic peers and faculty; (b) lack of visibility of Indian international LGBQ identities and communities on campus, (c) English language testing and requirements and (d) lack of institutional funding support. Intersecting sociohistorical factors influenced individual perceptions of sense of belonging by creating a culture where students did not feel it possible to express their intersectional identities

on campus. The institution did not have structures that sufficiently acknowledge that Indian international LGBQ people exist on campus and are valued as members of the community.

Analytical Discussion of Findings

The four Indian international LGBQ participants at WCU provided rich and powerful descriptions of how they perceive sense of belonging on campus and the various sociohistorical factors that contribute to their perceptions. Given the lack of focus on Indian international LGBQ students within the extant literature, the findings from the current study contribute significantly to understanding and affirming Indian international LGBQ students' perceptions of sense of belonging on campus and how these are influenced by the various sociohistorical structures. To better understand these perceptions, factors, and identities, this chapter discusses findings in light of the existing research and conceptual frameworks grounding this study.

Overall, participants did not perceive sense of belonging on campus, especially for their intersectional selves. Given the constructivist framing of the study, differences in how participants perceived sense of belonging on campus is a strength of this study and challenges monolithic representations of student populations (Renn, 2010). While academic, social, and linguistic elements did support a positive perception of sense of belonging in specific contexts, the overall feeling of being other or an anomaly in various contexts was expressed by each participant throughout the interviews. While this finding is in line with Hurtado and Carter (1997), Koehne (2005), Strayhorn (2012) and others who note how people with marginalized identities experience lower perceptions of sense of belonging at a campus level, it also raises the question posed by Waterman (2012): Are perceptions of sense of belonging even possible for individuals and communities with such identities and experiences? Holding intersections of

Indian LGBQ international identities has a significant impact on how participants perceived sense of belonging on campus.

Salient Facets of Identity and Context

Participants desired the ability to be all of themselves on campus. Although participants did not perceive sense of belonging at a broad level on campus, each person did speak about aspects of self that were supported or challenged which influenced their connectedness to various contexts. While Anna, a third-year undergraduate student in English and Economics, noted that she was often perceived to be Latina by peers and faculty, Sue, a first-year graduate student in Anthropology, and Anna were frustrated that they are often perceived to be heterosexual and people often struggle with their responses. Yet Om, a graduate student in film, expressed an intentional need to come out as gay in all his interactions to make sure that identity was affirmed. Each participant demonstrated how context was important to their assessment of safety and comfort in expressing these various aspects of identity with peers and faculty. Om specifically noted apprehension in connecting with another Indian international male student in his program and intentional filtering of his social media for fear of how it might impact his relationship with his family in India. While his major concern was about family in India, his fear influenced how he experienced the physical and digital community and connectedness in the U.S. While Om's experience resonates with Wall's (2016) finding of isolation and various cultural barriers to being out and utilizing campus resources as international LGBQ students on campus, Sue and Anna did not have the same concerns about sharing their identity on campus. The assumptions of heteronormativity by domestic students simply because Sue is a female Indian international student was more frustrating for Sue than experiencing any fear. For Anna, her hesitation in

sharing her sexuality was connected to avoiding fetishization by men on campus rather than a fear of home or family.

Before exploring findings in light of the conceptual frameworks, findings are discussed within the context of extant literature. Specifically, the following section explores how aspects of identity and context influence perceptions of sense of belonging in relation to undergraduate and graduate participants, faculty and advisors, religion and caste, cultural distance, and language.

Undergraduate and Graduate Participants

Given the lack of literature on Indian international LGBQ students in U.S. higher education, this study cast a wide net in the recruitment process on campus. Of the four participants, two students were pursuing graduate programs on campus and two students were pursuing bachelor's degrees. While Baek (2013) explored sense of belonging for graduate international students and Yang (2015) explored campus experiences of Chinese LGBQ undergraduate international students, no studies specifically explored how undergraduate and graduate students may differ in their perceptions of sense of belonging on campus in light of their intersections of identity.

Findings from the current study observed important differences and similarities between Indian international LGBQ graduate and undergraduate students. Many studies of international students note a preference for building community with other co-nationals (Kushner, 2010; Wall, 20162016, Yao, 2014). While graduate participants in the current study cultivated strong relationships with other international students, relationships with co-national students were limited to people who either also identified as LGBQ or were accepting of LGBQ identity. In this current study, unlike undergraduate students, both graduate students spoke of stronger affiliation with non-Indian international students, contrary to findings by Baek (2012) and

Khatiwada (2010) who argue graduate international students desire co-national community. Sue was elated upon finding community with another Bengali lesbian graduate student on campus while Om spoke about connecting with an Indian female heterosexual graduate student in his department who was accepting of his LGBQ identity.

In contrast, Maya and Anna, the two undergraduates, expressed a lack of community and connectedness to other Indian international students. Maya, a fourth-year student studying English, did not have any strong relationships with other international students, let alone Indian or LGBQ students. Anna found community with her Indian American roommate but did not have any international Indian or LGBQ people in her social network. Regardless of academic status, every participant in the current study noted the importance and desire for a stronger sense of community, especially with other Indian international LGBQ people on campus. Participants spoke about not finding any spaces on campus "to pursue or to express all the things that I am…simultaneously" as a significant barrier to perceptions of sense of belonging on campus.

Faculty and Advisors

Within academic spaces, interactions, and connectedness with faculty and advisors were critical to participants' perceptions of sense of belonging. While Baloglu (2000), Glass et al., (2015), and Le et al. (2016) note the importance of faculty for international students, the current study found more complex experiences. The current study participants highlighted the importance of having faculty who have similar identities and "get me" as Anna stated. Anna reflected on the importance of having faculty acknowledge her and her identities on campus, with a simple gesture as not mistaking her for another Indian female student in class. Sue spoke about how her advisor was not only critical for the selection of her doctoral program but also for involvement in academic institutes and programming. Maya also detailed a similar relationship

with her academic advisor, even though he was a white male faculty member. While Anna, Sue, and Maya all spoke about how their relationship with faculty, especially if the faculty member is Indian, is an important element of perceptions of sense of belonging, Om did not have similar feelings. Om noted that although he felt positive rapport with his faculty, he did not perceive their interactions as being essential to his experience.

While faculty were important for many of the participants, Indian international LGBQ students cited institutional discomfort in talking about sexuality or finding community around LGBQ identity within their departments. Even when participants perceive positive sense of belonging in their academic departments, every participant remarked sexuality as both largely ignored in their departments and were not aware of many out LGBQ faculty. Sue expressed frustrations at the heteronormative culture within her department where everyone's heterosexuality was assumed, including faculty. Similar to previous scholars, this study reaffirms the importance of understanding the role of faculty for international student success (Baek, 2012; Patrick, 2014; Strayhorn, 2012).

Religion and Caste

Sawir et al. (2008) noted the role of religion and spirituality as important aspects of identity and a source of community on and off campus for international students. In their study, international students demonstrated low perceptions of sense of belonging on campus and intentionally sought community with local religious spaces. Hsien-Chuan Hsu, Krägeloh, Shepherd, and Billington (2009) observed religion as an important factor in international students' acculturation on campus. While participants in the study acknowledged religion as a part of their family upbringing, religious or spiritual communities were not a critical part of their own perception of sense of belonging on campus. Such findings challenge broader narratives of

international students being equated with having strong religious or spiritual identities in the current literature. Given the lack of literature on Indian international LGBQ students, there is an opportunity to explore the nuances of interactions between one's religious identity, English language ability, and sexual identity through future research.

Similarly, while several studies (Bhattar, 2016a; Kushner, 2010; Rodricks, 2012) call attention to the need for understanding how the Indian caste system influences students' experiences in the U.S., the current study found participants did not strongly identify with caste identity. Though Kushner notes that "in the context of Indian international students' experiences, the caste system plays a significant role," most of the participants in the current study did not share a significant connection or awareness of their caste identity (2010, p. 22). Om was the one student who reflected on how he was often referred to in college by his last name which clearly marked his caste identity. Kushner (2010) does note that current population migration from rural to urban parts and federal policies in India have contributed to such a shift in blurring the impact of caste on people's experiences. While Om, the one student in the study from a rural town, cited the importance of caste, the other three participants did not as feel strongly as him given their urban upbringing. Such importance of caste may be a product of rural cultures that uphold traditional caste-based social structures (Rao, 2009). Om also expressed his relief in entering a campus culture in the U.S. where his last name is not immediately connected to caste. Such a context allowed him to feel that his caste identity would not define or influence his academic and social experiences on campus.

While the importance of religion and caste may be perceived as decreasing in India and on campus for three of four participants in the current study, their perception may be due to the privilege of growing up in Brahmin (upper caste) Hindu families in India. There is growing

literature on and by Dalit activists in the U.S. highlighting the differences in experiences of Dalit people compared to other castes both in India and abroad (Bhattar, 2016a; Paul, 2018). Dalit is a community term developed to self-identify communities historically labeled "untouchables" (Paul, 2018). A 2017 survey of Dalits in the U.S. noted high levels of discrimination in education. Historian Anupama Rao (2009) notes that for many years post-1965, immigration from South Asia was primarily of people from upper castes. Though no data exist on caste categories of Indian international students in the U.S., the lack of impact of caste may be a sign of how caste privilege impacts one's perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. While Brahmin participants did not perceive caste as an active factor in shaping perceptions of sense of belonging on campus, for Om, the ability to cover his caste identity increased perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Furthermore, the inability to identify other non-Hindu participants notes the impact of caste in Indian cultural and educational environments which may have an impact on accessibility of educational opportunities in the U.S. for people from other caste categories (Iyer, 2015; Prashad, 2000; Rao, 2009).

Cultural Distance

In line with Wan et al. (1992), the current study noted that cultural distance, the extent of difference between a student's home culture and the host culture, is an important factor in influencing how Indian international LGBQ students perceive sense of belonging on campus. Participants perceived themselves as experiencing more cultural distance than domestic students on campus while also feeling less cultural distance and difficulty compared to other Asian international students and even other Indian international students. This finding is in line with scholars such as Glass and Westmont-Campbell (2014), Rosenthal et al. (2007), and Strayhorn (2012) who note international students experience marginalization and more challenges than

domestic students, especially when academic and social campus contexts are significantly different than their country of origin. While previous studies compared domestic and international students, this current study highlights the importance of challenging homogenous categorization of international students and their perceptions of sense of belonging on campus.

Though Indian international students are categorized as Asian, there was a marked difference in how cultural distance differed for Indian international students compared to what has been examined in the literature. Wan et al.'s (1992) study consisted of primarily Asian international graduate students, yet lacked the ability to disaggregate how different communities within the Asian category differ in campus experiences. Participants in the current study remarked on feeling different levels of cultural distance on campus compared to other Asian international students. The colonial history of India and importance of English cultural familiarity in contemporary education and societal contexts in India may facilitate easier navigation of campus spaces and increase perception of sense of belonging (Khatiwada, 2012). Given the lack of Indian international student representation in previous research, this study's findings are essential to inform how policies and practices supporting international students are developed. Furthermore, participants' insightful understanding of their own experiences on campus and how they may differ from other international students demonstrates the need for more international student-centered programming and initiatives that acknowledge the agency and wisdom in students' perceptions of campus. Scholars and practitioners alike may benefit from broadening current framing of international LGBQ students in U.S. higher education by acknowledging the influence of various aspects of identity, such as sexuality, caste, and educational history on students' perceptions of cultural distance (Andrade, 2006a; Curtin et al., 2013; Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014; Rosenthal et al., 2007).

Language

Linguistically speaking, English language ability impacts both academic and social aspects of Indian international LGBQ students' perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Previous research exposes how students do not experience language, sense of belonging, and aspects of campus in isolation, but rather as a whole experience (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Strayhorn, 2012) shaped by sociohistorical factors (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Rodricks, 2012). Similar to previous scholars (Andrade, 2006a; Campbell & Li, 2008; Glass et al., 2015; Rosenthal et al., 2007; Um-Perez, 2011; Yao, 2014), this study found language to be an important aspect of one's perceptions of sense of belonging on campus, specifically English language ability and vernacular language ability (Ramanathan, 2005). Ramanathan describes vernacular languages as "regional languages in multilingual cultures," different from the colonial language of English (2004, p. 2). U.S. higher education institutions use TOEFL and campus-specific tests to measure English language ability and international student ability to succeed in U.S. higher education (Andrade, 2006a; Chen, 1999; Khatiwada, 2012). While campuses argue such assessments are necessary, participants in the study noted how, as fluent English speakers, such exams are not useful in determining academic success and impacted their sense of Indian identity.

Andrade (2006a) observed English language ability as a major barrier for international students to feel a part of the campus community and navigate campus resources. Specifically, many studies focusing on Asian international students studying in predominantly English speaking universities note Asian international students experience the use of English language as a greater barrier to academic and social connectedness than for international students from other parts of the world (Campbell & Li, 2008; Glass et al., 2015; Rosenthal et al., 2007; Um-Perez,

2011; Yao, 2014). Kushner (2010) even cited similar stress for Indian international students. In response to this literature, the current study took special precautions in methodology (e.g. providing participants with questions prior to interviews, repeating questions) to ensure the use of English language was not a barrier for participation in the study. Yet, participants had no difficulty in understanding the questions and providing thoughtful answers in English. Unlike previous findings, English language was not a barrier for the participants in the current study, challenging broad generalizations about international students' language ability, especially from Asian countries.

Participants in this study perceived little stress due to English language ability in navigating the campus. One influence may be the smaller cultural distance between Indian and U.S. cultures, given the history of colonization of India and prevalence of English language usage in Indian society. Participants demonstrated a strong proficiency with English language. All four participants had completed their entire education in English-based institutions and three of four participants were or had majored in English literature in college. This study's findings challenge scholars to take a more nuanced look at how international students' language ability is assessed, formally through tests and informally through assumptions of language ability by faculty and peers, within U.S. higher education and the impact of such perceptions on sense of belonging (Bhattar, 2016a; Khatiwada, 2012; Strayhorn, 2012; Yao, 2014).

Yoshino's (2006) work on covering speaks to how individuals from marginalized populations act to minimize others' perceptions of their identities. "To cover is to downplay a disfavored trait so as to blend into the mainstream. Because all of us possess stigmatized attributes, we all encounter pressure to cover in our daily lives." (Yoshino, 2006, p. ix). While Yoshino focused on race and sexuality, participants in the current study noted similar strategies

in navigating campus. While all four participants rated their English language skills as proficient, Anna and Maya stated how they made certain to speak in a manner so to not be perceived by other peers as international students. Sue and Om were less concerned about this yet still disclosed similar consciousness in effort. Sue's comment about how being with other Indian international students allowed her to not be self-conscious about speaking in her Indian accent or Om's pride in adapting to speaking in a more "American accent" demonstrates an intentional and prolonged attempt to not be perceived on campus as an Indian international student. The impact of such a process is an internalized consciousness and shame of what it means to fit into a U.S. stereotype of Indian international students, specifically with an absence of sexuality. It was not the grammatical or syntactical aspects of language that made it difficult for participants, but the racialized and stereotyped expectations of being a female Indian international student that had a greater impact on participants' perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Each participant noted how their English-based education resulted in losing vernacular roots and identity (Ramanathan, 2005), casting doubt on their personal Indian identity and connections to family. The differences in experiences of Indian international students from previous research on other Asian populations challenge monolithic representations of Asian international students in the U.S. from various countries. Given the rise in Indian international students in U.S. higher education, this study demonstrates the need for intentional inclusion of Indian international students in future research on Asian international students in U.S. higher education.

Analysis with Sense of Belonging and Intersectionality

Building on the discussion of how the current study's findings align with and challenge extant literature, this section discusses the findings within the context of the conceptual

frameworks grounding this study, Sense of Belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) and Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991).

Sense of Belonging

For the purpose of this study, Strayhorn's (2012) conceptualization of Sense of Belonging was a useful framework in which to explore Indian international LGBQ student's perception of sense of belonging on campus. The study's findings reflected the seven elements as described by Strayhorn. Participants' perception of sense of belonging was both a basic human need that transcends cultural and national boundaries and a fundamental motive driving their academic and social networks. All four participants consistently expressed their desire to belong at some level of the university. Maya spoke about a constant search for belonging with peers on campus and even peers in India. Anna noted how the need for belonging had resulted in some unhealthy relationships with peers and yet was an important process in her ability to find community on campus. Sue declared a desire to find people who had similar curiosity about the world and Om spoke about how building community among his group of peers was a primary desire during his first few months on campus. While Anna and Maya, the two undergraduate students, spoke about a desire for domestic peers as a source of sense of belonging, Sue and Om, the two graduate students, intentionally built community with others who were also newly acclimating to WCU as international students. Sue spoke about having to navigate how to speak up in class or manage expectations as a female Indian international student so that she wouldn't harm her ability to build community by making an unfavorable first impression. Similarly, Om spoke about coming out as a strategy to ensure the community he was building was accepting of his sexuality.

Scholars such as Astin (1984), D'Augelli (1994), Jones (2009), Renn (2010), and Strayhorn (2012) have written extensively on the impact of college as a unique environment for young people to find community and develop perceptions of belonging, especially students with marginalized identities (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rankin et al., 2010; Renn, 2010; Tinto, 1987, 1993; Torres & Hernandez, 2007). Findings from this study affirm the importance of considering context of how students perceive sense of belonging on campus. In the campus mapping exercise, participants noted their perceptions of sense of belonging on campus were limited to areas around their academic department and their awareness of campus resources was inconsistent.

Om primarily built community on campus by finding peers that affirmed his sexuality and with people who were also in a new academic environment as international students. Sue found community in an academic network of scholars that could converse on topics related to India, South Asia, and related sociopolitical topics. Similarly, Maya acknowledged the importance of attending a meeting for the campus feminist magazine in finding a community of politically active and conscious peers that became her close-knit social circle. Finally, Anna noted how, as a third-year undergraduate, she had just begun to explore what it means to be an Indian international LGBQ student and how her intentional choice to have a domestic Indian female roommate was helping her to reconnect with aspects of Indian culture.

Feeling mattering was different for each participant interviewed. While Om felt a strong sense of mattering by simply being in a campus coffee shop and having the barista know the exact way he likes his hot chocolate, Maya felt that being elected into a leadership role within the student magazine was affirming of her mattering. Similarly, Anna felt a sense of mattering in her academic department when she was able to develop relationships with faculty. For Sue, true

mattering was in meeting another female Bengali Indian international LGBQ peer and exclaiming, “Where have you been all my life?” As observed by Strayhorn, mattering was both a source of and a result of a perception of sense of belonging. Furthermore, perceptions of sense of belonging are influenced by intersecting social identities. While all three women in the study expressed feelings of fetishization when sharing their LGBQ identity with heterosexual men, Om reflected on an intentional avoidance of interacting with another Indian male in his program for fear of not knowing if it would illicit a homophobic response. Similarly, the two graduate students remarked that even though they identified as Indian international LGBQ students, many campus resources seemed geared for undergraduate students and therefore felt inaccessible. Similarly, while belonging is a universal need, every participant noted how they did not feel a strong sense of belonging across campus, especially in their intersections of identities (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Strayhorn, 2012).

When students perceived a strong sense of belonging, there was an increase in desired outcomes. For example, when Sue felt a sense of community within the South Asian Institute, she felt comfortable engaging in academic dialogues and even took responsibility for organizing a national conference. Her engagement was a positive result of a perception of sense of belonging. Similarly, Maya felt comfortable expressing a desire for pursuing graduate education because she felt affirmed by faculty in the classroom regarding her academic ability and communication skills. On the contrary, not feeling a sense of belonging by not having a social space close to his academic department, Om spent little time on campus outside of classes which may contribute to his lack of a broader sense of belonging on campus (Astin, 1984; Strayhorn, 2012). Anna noted an intentional disengagement from the campus LGBT Center because it was not seen as a space for international students and stigmatized as a space for students who have a

problem. Both positive and negative experiences and perceptions impacted participants' overall sense of belonging and changed over time. While Maya was very close to her floormates her first-year, this relationship soon unraveled as the year went on and finding community within the campus feminist magazine and her academic department was an important step in her own maturation and community building on campus. Similarly, Sue pointed out how she did not initially miss Indian food or languages and yet going to the Indian neighborhood and being surrounded by people speaking Hindi made her feel at home, even if she could not understand and communicate in the vernacular language.

Though all participants experienced the same campus environment, unique truths were constructed for each person through their individual perceptions of sense of belonging as seen through Strayhorn's (2012) seven elements. Building on these individual perceptions, the following section highlights how sociohistorical factors provide an Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991)-based analysis of the findings.

Intersectionality

As observed earlier, individual identities and experiences cannot be understood in isolation and are influenced by various sociohistorical factors (Anzaldúa, 1987; Azmitia et al., 2008; Crenshaw, 1991; Strayhorn, 2012). Beyond exploring the intersections of identities, Intersectionality, as framed by Crenshaw (1989, 1991) contextualizes one's perceptions and experiences within an examination of sociohistorical factors such as heteronormativity, sexism, racism, xenophobia, and linguicism. This section explores the ways in which these various sociohistorical forces contribute and inhibit participants' perceptions of sense of belonging on campus.

In a post-9/11 world, xenophobia, racist nativism, and ethnocentrism are complicated for Indian international LGBQ students on campus. While the current immigration conversations and federal policies continue to restrict entry for people from other nations, the rhetoric of white supremacy and the Indian history of colonialism continues to frame a double-life (Patrick, 2014) for participants. Participants noted feeling other on and off campus and a desire to understand how they fit into a U.S. raciocultural context. Yang (2015) found Chinese international LGBQ students struggled with discrimination because of their national and international identity and Khatiwada (2012) discussed discrimination and social isolation due to Indianness as a major barrier for Indian international students' connectedness to campus. Unlike these scholars, participants' perceptions of being other was not connected to any experiences of racial or xenophobic discrimination. While coming from a country colonized by the British gave access to language and coming from mostly urban educational environments provided cultural capital to navigate campus, participants were reminded that they are considered as having "white perspectives," even by domestic students of color. Yet being mistaken for being Latina or being told, "You don't sound international" were forms of operationalized xenophobia and ethnocentrism, noting that they were not White. Participants spoke about not feeling "enough," whether due to their English language ability, ability to make Indian food, or being questioned about their bisexuality and sexual fluidity.

While the U.S. was cited by every participant as a more inclusive culture for sexuality, participants remarked on the prevalence of heteronormativity, especially as it colludes with stereotypes of Indian international students. Participants remarked on a duality of experiences where they both found community in exploring their sexuality while also having to challenge assumptions of heterosexuality. Patrick (2014) noted how participants in her study experienced a

"double life" where they were able to be out and accepted for their sexuality on campus but not in their country of origin. Yet participants in the current study challenge the false binary by noting how the double life is their experience of being open and accepted about their sexuality in some contexts while being questioned in others. While Sue found community with other LGBQ Indian people, she recounted her experience with a group of White lesbian women on campus who were surprised by her queerness. Such a dissonance suggests how even within LGBQ communities on campus, heteronormativity and ethnocentrism are deeply ingrained and racialized.

Szymanzki and Sung (2013) inferred a correlation between Asian students' cultural values, internalized heterosexism, and sexual orientation disclosure. Of the 143 participants in the study, 9% identified as Indian. Given the assumption that most Asian cultural values are heteronormative, assessed through one's internalized heterosexism, these scholars find that adherence to more cultural values was correlated with sexual identity disclosure. The current study's findings align with that of Symanski and Sung. As cited earlier, each participant spoke of how their personal values were different than traditional Indian cultural values as seen through their choice of education (e.g. English, Film, and Anthropology rather than Medicine, Law, etc.), choice to travel abroad for education, and lack of strong religious affiliation. While identity disclosure in the U.S. was not difficult for participants, fear of disclosure to family in India and navigating gender expectations influenced how participants shared and explored their sexual identity. Additionally, the lack of strong connections with other co-nationals may be a signifier of participants self-selecting community of people with similar perspectives different from Indian cultural values. Om's fear of connecting with an Indian male is driven by his own assumptions of internalized heteronormativity and how this other co-national student may react.

Furthermore, all four participants remarked that campus spaces, such as the LGBT Center and the international student services office, did not offer specific programming or resources directed to build community or connect resources for Indian international LGBQ students. Invisibility of this community on campus and lack of resources was seen by participants as an institutional oversight. Patrick (2012) noted the experience of international LGBQ students on campus as they negotiated wanting community yet being afraid to build community without institutional leadership for fear of being outed or complicating their relationship with family. In the current study, the three female participants did not express such fear while the one male student expressed such a feeling as a barrier to finding others on campus. One solution suggested by Om was for institutional intersectionality in building more community spaces across campus, especially within academic departmental spaces to foster more informal interactions with students, faculty, and staff to enhance visibility of various intersectional identities and more complex notions of community within the department. Similarly, participants reflected a lack of visibility of various campus resources, especially the LGBT Center on campus as a community building and intersectional space. In fact, Anna and Om pointed to how their peers and academic departments presented the LGBT Center as a place for "people with problems".

In addition to xenophobia and heteronormativity, the female participants in the current study remarked on how sexism shaped their perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. While Anna and Maya expressed comfort in sharing their sexuality with other women on campus, sharing with men, especially heterosexual domestic men, resulted in feelings of fetishization and discomfort. Both women acknowledged an intentional distancing from such peer circles to ensure personal safety yet also noting a sense of loss in community. Maya chose to connect with the campus feminist magazine as a way to find community without being fetishized and also

have the opportunity to discuss and write about these experiences. In a study of international female graduate students, Le et al. (2016) noted that participants experienced campus as a "positive, life-changing, and transformative experience" (p. 128). While female participants in the current study named important contexts and individuals that made the experience positive, understanding how sociohistorical factors influence their perceptions of sense of belonging as women is important. Crenshaw (1989, 1991) discussed the importance of centering women of color's experiences in exploring systemic structures and barriers. For participants in the current study, having their identity questioned in some contexts (e.g. accent) while experiencing fetishization in other contexts inhibited perceptions of sense of belonging. Though not unique from female international students from other countries and domestic female students, recognizing the impact of gender on Indian international LGBQ students' perceptions of sense of belonging is critical to address gender-based discrimination and oppression (Strayhorn, 2012; Yao, 2014).

Finally, the current study affirms previous scholarship that notes the role of linguicism in how other sociohistorical factors (e.g. heteronormativity, racist nativism, and xenophobia) influence perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Participants observed a double standard regarding English language ability as well. English has become the *lingua franca*, a common language among speakers whose vernacular languages may be different (Ramanathan, 2005; Seidlhofer, 2011). English language ability and accent are often correlated with the process of colonization and assumptions with other aspects of identity such as race, gender, sexuality, nationality, citizenship, and others (Subitrelu, 2013). Participants noted English language ability as important to academic success as witnessed by U.S. institutional requirements to pass the TOEFL exam and communicate all transcripts and application material in English. In addition,

Sue detailed a test as part of her application process to become a teaching assistant on campus. While Sue's entire education was in English-based schools, she was required to speak in front of domestic students and ensure they were able to comprehend her accent and speech. While such a practice may seem harmless, using such subjective metrics reaffirms ethnocentric and xenophobic expectations of language and accent ability (Ramanathan, 2005, 2013; Schneider, 2007).

While previous scholars note lack of English language ability as a major barrier to perceptions of sense of belonging for international students (Khatiwada, 2012; Kushner, 2010; Yang, 2015; Yao, 2014), participants in the current study stated how their fluency in English was also a barrier. For example, participants' English language fluency and accent were used as a tool to question their authenticity as international students. Having an accent which is deemed as difficult to understand by domestic students reaffirmed stereotypes and questioned international students' academic ability. Such cultural and linguistic marginalization urges minoritized populations to assimilate to dominant culture for the sake of approval or survival and punishing those who may not have the ability or choose not to blend in (Castellanos Jr, 2016). For example, a student who is fluent in English may have their academic ability questioned because of an accent, which is deemed as difficult to understand by domestic people. Sue's experience of managing her accent until she can be in a closed space with other Indian international students to speak freely without worry of being judged is an example of hegemony, where she censoring herself given internalized notions of how to communicate on a U.S. campus. While the Model Minority Myth (Lee, 1994; Lee, Wong, & Alvarez, 2009; Yi & Museus, 2015) would stereotype Asian and Asian Americans as ideal immigrants worthy of praise for assimilation in language

and practice, Indian international LGBQ students both conform while simultaneously challenging these myths (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Prashad, 2000).

In line with Said's (1978) and Takaki's (1989) explorations of how Asian and Asian American people are framed as perpetual foreigners, participants observed how they were both seen as anomalies for their English language ability while also being questioned of their authenticity as international students for the same reason. Limon (2011) cited in his study of non-Spanish speaking Latinos a similar experience where students' Latino identity was questioned because of their English ability while also facing an internalized experience of not fitting external expectations and definitions of Latino identity.

The idea of being an anomaly was not restricted to language. The *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (2018) defines an anomaly as "a deviation from the common rule,…abnormal, [and] peculiar" (n.p.). Participants expressed various levels and contexts of feeling like anomalies on campus. Deloria (2004) speaks to the power of stereotyping and the implications of being deemed an anomaly for Native Americans in the U.S., particularly as it reaffirms and is influenced by sociohistorical factors. He argues "that broad cultural expectations are both the products and the tools of domination….It is critical, then, that we question expectations and explore their origins, for they created—and they continue to reproduce—social, political, legal, and economic relations that are asymmetrical, sometimes grossly so" (p. 4). While Tinto (1987, 1993) and others argue that acculturation and fitting stereotypes may be effective strategies for navigating campus, Deloria's (2004) work on Native Americans can be applied to critically examine these expectations and their impact on Indian international LGBQ students' perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. "We name an event [or person] an anomaly in relation to accepted norms and categories….the naming of an anomaly

simultaneously re-creates and empowers the very same categories that it escapes….Expectations and anomalies are mutually constitutive—they make each other" (Deloria, 2004, p. 5). While each participant noted being an anomaly in the classroom or with peers, their experiences of not meeting expectations and the various internalizations of not being enough of a particular identity impacted their perceptions of sense of belonging.

Moreover, every participant's sense of isolation on campus as Indian international LGBQ students and their desire for people on campus to acknowledge their existence demonstrates the impact of dominant cultural definitions of students with marginalized and intersectional identities in everyday lives of the latter. Experiences of "Oh, you're a lesbian?" and "You don't sound like an international student" continue to reaffirm that participants cannot exist and do not belong on campus. These expectations of heteronormativity, sexism, linguicism, xenophobia, and racist nativism intersect as expectations of various aspects of identity conflict. For example, participants in the current study suggested a double-edged sword of feeling a sense of cultural capital in navigating campus spaces, classes, and resources due to English language ability while being questioned by peers as to their authenticity as Indian international students because of language ability and lack of vernacular language ability (Limon, 2011; Ramanathan, 2005; Smitherman, 2017). Such a pattern is reflective of a history of raciolinguicism where vernacular and indigenous languages are devalued by European colonization (Smitherman, 2017). Moreover, racist nativism and raciolinguistic perspectives award participants for their English language ability through the Model Minority Myth while xenophobia and linguicism questions their authenticity in not sounding like an international student. Not fitting into U.S. centric expectations of how Indian, international, and LGBQ students are supposed to be, act, and speak, let alone exist at the intersection, further begs the question of if perceptions of sense of belonging

are even possible on campus for these students due to the various sociohistorical influences (Waterman, 2012).

While these four participants provided powerful insights into their perceptions of sense of belonging and the impact of expectation, one important discussion point is what was not visible in the findings. Originally, this study was structured to interview eight participants from WCU; yet, after five weeks of recruitment to over three thousand emails, only seven people completed the participant survey. Of these seven, only four met the criteria of (a) being currently enrolled as an undergraduate, graduate, or professional student at West Coast University and have spent at minimum one quarter at the institution; (b) self-identifying as an international student identifying ethnically as Indian or multiethnic (Indian and other ethnicities) and having spent a majority of their life in India; and (c)identifying, at some point during their time at WCU, as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and/or questioning, or other non-heterosexual identity. Though these criteria are not extensive, recruiting participants was extremely difficult. As observed in previous literature, this difficulty in recruitment maybe a signal of stigma and fear around disclosing their identities and being labeled as anomalies (Deloria, 2004; Patrick, 2014; Tarasi, 2016; Wall, 2016). While only four participants met the criteria, modifying the protocol to interview each participant thrice allowed for full implementation of Seidman's (2013) phenomenological interview process and provided the opportunity to build trust and rapport with the participants.

Implications for Practice and Research

The findings from this study have potential to increase current knowledge of and influence institutional policies and campus programs and initiatives to foster higher perceptions of sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students in U.S. higher education. Given that no studies were found in the extant literature that center how Indian international LGBQ

students perceive sense of belonging in U.S. higher education, this study's findings contribute critical data on the need to increase visibility and resources on campus and encourage further studies to better understand this population. Recognizing the fiscal and educational value that international students bring to campus, going beyond broad generalizations and honoring their multiple intersectional identities will be important to continue to attract and retain diverse students on campus (Bhattar, 2016b; Jaschik, 2017; Strayhorn, 2012). Additionally, given the recent growth in Indian international students in the United States, providing intentional opportunities for students with diverse identities to develop sense of belonging is important to successful continuation of recruitment and graduation rates (Bhattar, 2016b, Carter & Hurtado, 1997). The recommendations are presented in two sections: Implications for Practice and Implications for Research.

Implications for Practice

Participants in this study offered many recommendations to enhance their experiences and perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Two major implications for practice are enhancing pedagogical practices and reframing how campuses serve and support Indian international LGBQ students.

Enhancing pedagogical practices. Developing inclusive pedagogical practices requires institutions of higher education to be thoughtful in fostering an inclusive climate at a systemic level even before Indian international LGBQ students arrive on campus. Inclusive pedagogical practices to enhance sense of belonging would be to recruit Indian international LGBQ students as a cohort and providing focused trainings to enhance skills for domestic students, staff, and faculty. While having domestic and international peers was important for participants, having intentional cohorts of Indian international LGBQ-identified peers in their programs was named

as an important path to enhancing perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. For example, while Sue noted a high sense of belonging in her department, she also experienced being questioned as not "looking like a lesbian" by a domestic student. Sue and others expressed a strong desire for a community of people with similar identities in their programs and departments. Academic departments can support Indian international LGBQ students by recruiting cohorts of students with similar identities so as not to tokenize these students, decrease their sense of isolation, and enhance perspectives within the classroom and across campus.

Similarly, providing trainings for domestic students, staff, and faculty within academic departments and across the university on understanding their own cultural lenses along with more global perspectives on their field would enhance empathy and skills for working with Indian international LGBQ students. Challenging current practices focused on assimilating Indian international LGBQ students to U.S. cultural norms is a necessary pedagogical shift. These workshops must center inclusive pedagogy that incorporates more global ways of learning and frames international students' identities and experiences as important perspectives to be considered. These pedagogical recommendations would enhance connectedness and interactions for Indian international LGBQ students at individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels. If institutions are truly committed to supporting Indian international LGBQ students, domestic students, staff, and faculty must cross cultural borders on campus. A radical transformation of campus would require the implementation of the recommendations above with the intent to fully examine every aspect of our current higher education system and challenge our campus leaders to envision a new system of pedagogical perspectives.

Reframing support and services for Indian international LGBQ students. Beyond transforming current systems of education, institutional agents must create programs and policies

to foster increased campus-wide perceptions of sense of belonging for Indian international LGBQ students and others with intersectional marginalized identities. Specifically, students in this study noted the need for intentional and intersectional programs across campus and increased financial aid as imperative to better serving and supporting Indian international LGBQ students on campus.

Campuses committed to Indian international LGBQ student success must enhance and develop intentional and intersectional programs across campus, which may include regular social and community-building events, mentorship programs, and tailored outcomes that are developed in consultation with this population. Specifically, participants in the current study noted that understanding the academic system and cultural nuances of U.S. higher education was a significant barrier to their perceptions of sense of belonging. Reconsidering international student orientation programs and providing regular programming throughout the year focusing on fostering a deep understanding of the U.S. academic system and cultural practices may enhance Indian international LGBQ students' perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Further, intentional marketing of campus services by every office that interfaces with Indian international students is helpful. Given the differences in experiences of graduate and undergraduate student experiences on campus, providing specific spaces of Indian international LGBQ graduate students to be in community with clear marketing directed towards them would be beneficial. To challenge the assumption of many campus programs being more tailored to undergraduate students, naming that programming is for undergraduate and graduate students would enhance perceptions of sense of belong for these students and encourage the staff who are planning the programs to be more representative in campus programming of Indian international LGBQ students' experiences.

Beyond inclusive programming, institutions must develop sustainable and sufficient funding opportunities for Indian international LGBQ students. While many campuses seek to recruit international students as a growing source of income, every participant in this study noted financial stress as a significant barrier to perceptions of sense of belonging. Given the current political environment of the United States where the federal government is practicing anti-immigrant policies (Pierce & Selee, 2017) and eliminating protections for LGBQ people (Diamond, 2018), scholars predict a significant decrease in international student enrollments in the coming years (Jaschik, 2017). To ensure enrollment of Indian international LGBQ and other diverse student populations, faculty and academic departments must be thoughtful in sharing a commitment to diversity and inclusion through financial resources.

Implications for Research

Using Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) and Sense of Belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) proved significant in this study in unearthing how individual aspects of identity and institutional factors influence perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. The combination of these frameworks to explore individual perceptions and sociohistorical influences can be used to center other marginalized populations with intersectional identities and provide novel information to the extant literature. Specifically, three major implications for future research are to increase identity representation, foster language accessibility and challenge constructions of sense of belonging.

Identity representation. While the current study centered sexuality and international student identity, future studies can center additional vectors of identity that may increase the data for this population, such as gender, caste, and age. In the current study, these (and other aspects of identity) were not identities named in the research title or focus. Gender was a critical aspect

of identity and mitigating factor in how participants, especially female Indian international LGBQ students, understood their own identities and perceived sense of belonging in various campus contexts. Similarly, the current study intentionally focused on sexuality to not conflate transgender and gender nonconforming experiences with LGBQ identities. Future research that centers how female, transgender, and gender nonconforming Indian international students perceive campus sense of belonging is essential. Complicating current understandings of international students requires more complex representations of this population and challenging monolithic framing of their experiences.

Foster language accessibility. In addition to intentional increases in participant representation, future research must challenge English-centric language usage in the research process. Given the difficulty of recruiting participants as originally planned for the current study, future research should employ terminology and language in recruitment material that may elicit more responses (e.g. sexuality rather than LGBQ) to decenter Western and English-based labels for sexuality. Additionally, while English language ability was not a concern for participants in the current study, providing research material and conducting interviews in various vernacular languages of India my increase information on how English and vernacular language ability influence perceptions of sense of belonging on campus.

Challenge constructions of sense of belonging. Findings from this study demonstrate that exploring participants' perceptions of sense of belonging is important as perceptions are more qualitative yet can color one's sense of reality and context. Yet, the conceptualization of sense of belonging by previous scholars may still be deficient in assessing which elements of campus contribute to how Indian international LGBQ students perceive sense of belonging. Current definitions of institutional attempts to gather data on students sense of belonging on

campus is conducted in ways that may not fully encompass one's actual experience or reality. In other words, challenging how we measure sense of belonging, or other metrics of success for that matter, and centering the diverse and intersectional perspectives may enhance our ability to create a more inclusive and comprehensive narrative of sense of belonging. Waterman (2012) and other scholars' critique of current conceptualizations of sense of belonging challenges us to center students in redefining the elements that deemed important to student success and accepting that a sense of belonging on campus may not be possible for all students populations given the various sociohistorical systems at play.

Conclusion

Chapter six began with a summary of the study, conceptual frameworks, and findings. Furthermore, the chapter provided an in-depth analysis and discussion of the findings in light of the conceptual frameworks and extant literature to address research questions guiding this study. The chapter concluded with recommendations for practice and research for higher education practitioners and researchers to inspire individual and systemic transformation.

While this study was inspired by the students I met during my professional work on campus, I learned invaluable lessons in self-awareness and intentional navigation of unfamiliar contexts through my work with Sue, Om, Maya, and Anna. Having recently relocated to a new city, community, and academic institution, I find myself struggling to find my grounding, even with no significant differences in academic, cultural, and linguistic factors. Sitting at the intersections of Indian international LGBQ identity on campus, these four participants demonstrated tremendous courage in finding ways to authentically express themselves and foster connections on and off campus.

As researchers, Winn and Ubiles (2011) conceptualized the power of being a "worthy witness" to someone's story. Particularly in their work with high school students in inner city New York, Winn and Ubiles (2011) speak about being witness to these students' truths and vulnerabilities by fostering a sense of safety and trust. I feel blessed to have been witness to the stories of Sue, Maya, Om, and Anna and hope that I have done justice to their voices. I truly wish this study inspires further inquiry to better understand how Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) Intersectionality and Strayhorn's (2012) Sense of Belonging can be incorporated to address how other student populations with various intersections of identities perceive campus in specific sociohistorical contexts.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Indian International LGBQ Student Study Online Screening Questionnaire

[PAGE 1]

Welcome to the online screening for a study on Indian international LGBQ student perceptions of sense of belonging on campus. Filling out this form indicates that you are interested in meeting with researchers to talk about your experiences as an international student from India who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer/questioning (LGBQ) at UCLA.

Your answers to the following questions will be used to determine whether you may be eligible for the research. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or are uncomfortable answering, and you may stop at any time. Your participation in the screening is voluntary. Your answers will be confidential. No one will know your answers except for the research team. If you do not qualify for the research, your responses will be destroyed. If you are selected for the study, decide to participate and approval of the research informed consent form, the answers will be kept with the research records.

Upon completing this screening, the researcher will contact you to inform you about whether you have been selected to participate in the study. If you have been selected, you will be asked to schedule a 90-minute in-person interview with the researcher.

To be considered for this study, you must: be 18 years of age or older; be a current UCLA undergraduate or graduate student; and identify as international (be registered with the international student services office) originating from India and as a member of the LGBQ community.

The results of this study will be shared publicly with the campus community in an effort to understand and improve Indian international LGBQ student experiences at UCLA. The personal information you provide here will be used to schedule interviews, and researchers will make efforts to maintain your privacy and the confidentiality of your information. Your demographic information will be reported in the aggregate and will not be directly connected to any information you share during the interview.

To participate, you must be willing to provide your informed consent at the time of the interview. Signing the informed consent form will be optional to give you a sense of safety.

To proceed, please click the NEXT button. Clicking this button affirms your interest in continuing with the screening questions. [NEXT]

* Denotes required questions

* *First Name*: ___ [Write in]

**Email Address to Contact You During Study*: ____ [Write in]

* *Preferred Pseudonym for Research Publications*: ___ [Write in]

**Preferred Gender Pronouns*: ___ [Write in]

**Current Student Standing* [Check one]:

☐Undergraduate, ☐Graduate

Years at your campus: ___ [Write in]

**Current Age*: ___ [Write in]

**Gender Identity/Expression*: ___ [Write in]

**Country of Origin/Nationality:* ___ [Write in]

Race/Ethnicity: ___ [Write in]

Sexual Orientation: ___ [Write in]

Academic Major: ___ [Write in]

Do you live on campus? ☐ Yes, ☐ No

Was coming to UCLA your first time in the U.S.? , ☐ Yes, ☐ No

Please click the submit button if you are interested in participating in this study. [SUBMIT]

[PAGE 2]

Thank you for your interest in UCLA's study on Indian international LGBQ student's perceptions of sense of belonging. Please share this study with other Indian international LGBQ students!

https://goo.gl/forms/ELqT87gnFy2RlNE03

If you qualify for the research, researchers will contact you with the email you provided with more information about participating. If you would like to withdraw at any time after submitting this questionnaire, send an email to rgbhattar@gmail.com requesting to be removed from consideration.

For more information about this screening or research study, please rgbhattar@gmail.com or rbhattar@lgbt.ucla.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or if you wish to voice any problems or concerns you may have about the study to someone other than the researchers, please call the UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program at (310) 825-7122.

Thank you again for your willingness to answer our questions.

https://goo.gl/forms/ELqT87gnFy2RlNE03

Appendix B

Recruitment Letter

Version 1:

Are You An International Student from India? Do you identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Queer/Questioning? Share Your Student Experiences with Researchers.

A doctoral student researcher is conducting interviews during Winter and Spring Quarter 2018 with UCLA students who describe themselves as international students from India **AND** a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer/questioning community.

We would like to hear more about you and your experiences of navigating campus spaces, how you feel sense of belonging, and intersectional identities. Tell us what it's like to be yourself in various spaces and how and where you find support. Findings from this study may be helpful for creating support services for international LGBQ students on your campus! Participants who complete interviews will receive a $20 Amazon gift card!

Undergraduate and graduate students are encouraged to find out more and apply at:

https://goo.gl/forms/ELqT87gnFy2RlNE03

For more information, please contact Raja Bhattar at rgbhattar@gmail.com.

UCLA IRB # 18-000084

Sincerely,

Raja G. Bhattar

UCLA Higher Education & Organizational Change

Version 2:

Do you identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Queer/Questioning?

Are You An International Student from India?

Share Your Student Experiences with Researchers.

A doctoral student researcher is conducting interviews during Winter and Spring Quarter 2018 with UCLA students who describe themselves as international students from India **AND** a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer/questioning community.

We would like to hear more about you and your experiences of navigating campus spaces, how you feel sense of belonging, and intersectional identities. Tell us what it's like to be yourself in various spaces and how and where you find support. Findings from this study may be helpful for creating support services for international LGBQ students on your campus! Participants who complete interviews will receive a $20 Amazon gift card!

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For more information, please contact Raja Bhattar at rgbhattar@gmail.com.

UCLA IRB # 18-000084

Sincerely,

Raja G. Bhattar

UCLA Higher Education & Organizational Change

Version 3:

Are You An Indian International Student?

Do you identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Queer/Questioning?

Share Your Student Experiences with Researchers.

A doctoral student researcher is conducting interviews during Winter and Spring Quarter 2018 with UCLA students who describe themselves as international students from India **AND** a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer/questioning community.

We would like to hear more about you and your experiences of navigating campus spaces, how you feel sense of belonging, and intersectional identities. Tell us what it's like to be yourself in various spaces and how and where you find support. Findings from this study may be helpful for creating support services for international LGBQ students on your campus! Participants who complete interviews will receive a $20 Amazon gift card!

Undergraduate and graduate students are encouraged to find out more and apply at:

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For more information, please contact Raja Bhattar at rgbhattar@gmail.com.

UCLA IRB # 18-000084

Sincerely,

Raja G. Bhattar

UCLA Higher Education & Organizational Change

Appendix C

Recruitment Fliers

Protocol ID: **IRB#18-000084** UCLA IRB Approved Approval Date: 2/6/18

Are You an International Student from India?
Do You Identify as LGBQ?
Want the chance to receive a $20 Amazon giftcard?!

Researchers are conducting interviews during Spring Semester/Quarter 2018 with undergraduate students who describe themselves as international and a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer/questioning (LGBQ) community.

We would like to hear more about you and your experiences of navigating campus and intersectional identities. Tell us what it's like to be yourself in various spaces and how and where you find support. Findings from this study may be helpful for creating support services for international LGBQ students on campus!

Each participant will be offered a $20 giftcard at the end of the interview.

Undergraduate and graduate students are encouraged to find out more and apply at:

https://goo.gl/forms/ELqT87gnFy2RlNE03

Take a tab below or contact Raja Bhattar, PhD student at UCLA at rgbhattar@gmail.com for more information:

Study Link https://tinyurl.com/guufoea	Study Link https://tinyurl.com/guufoea	Study Link https://tinyurl.com/guufoea	Study Link https://tinyurl.com/guufoea	Study Link https://tinyurl.com/guufoea	Study Link https://tinyurl.com/guufoea	Study Link https://tinyurl.com/guufoea	Study Link https://tinyurl.com/guufoea	Study Link https://tinyurl.com/guufoea	Study Link https://tinyurl.com/guufoea	Study Link https://tinyurl.com/guufoea	Study Link https://tinyurl.com/guufoea	Study Link https://tinyurl.com/guufoea

Protocol ID: **IRB#18-000084** UCLA IRB Approved Approval Date: 2/6/18

Do You Identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and/or Queer/Questioning?
Are You an International Student from India?
Want the chance to receive a $20 Amazon giftcard?!

Researchers are conducting interviews during Spring Semester/Quarter 2018 with undergraduate students who describe themselves as international and a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer/questioning (LGBQ) community.

We would like to hear more about you and your experiences of navigating campus and intersectional identities. Tell us what it's like to be yourself in various spaces and how and where you find support. Findings from this study may be helpful for creating support services for international LGBQ students on campus!

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Protocol ID: **IRB#18-000084** UCLA IRB Approved Approval Date: 2/6/18

Are You An Indian International Student?
Do you identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Queer/Questioning?
Share Your Student Experiences with Researchers.

Researchers are conducting interviews during Spring Semester/Quarter 2018 with undergraduate students who describe themselves as international and a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer/questioning (LGBQ) community.

We would like to hear more about you and your experiences of navigating campus and intersectional identities. Tell us what it's like to be yourself in various spaces and how and where you find support. Findings from this study may be helpful for creating support services for international LGBQ students on campus!

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Appendix D

Interview Protocols

LGBQ international students' perceptions of Sense of Belonging in U.S. Higher Education

Interview Protocol – Interview #1

Interview Set-up (10 minutes)

Overview

Welcome and thank participant for coming

Review purpose of the interview and research project:

- To hear about individual participant's experiences and perceptions of sense of belonging for Indian international AND lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer undergraduate and graduate students on campus and how they navigate academic and social contexts
- To understand participant experiences as a whole to improve services and campus environment for Indian international LGBQ students

Describe interview process

- Interview Set-up (5 minutes)
- Informed consent process (5 minutes)
- Notes on Recording
- Interview (70 minutes)
- Wrap-up (5 minutes)
- Gift card given at finish of full interview

Introduce interviewer, roles, and responsibilities

- Asks questions from protocol
- Takes notes during the interview
- Asks follow-up questions to probe for more information
- Keeps conversation on track
- Monitors recording equipment
- Conducts informed consent process
- Collects information for issuing incentive

Terminology note:

The interviewer will use the terms LGBQ to refer to individuals who identify as part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning, or other sexual identity terminology. Interviewer will also acknowledge that labels are limiting, potentially given participants' upbringing in non-U.S. contexts and various language issues with Western-centric terminology. Participants may use any terms they wish to identify themselves and will be mirrored by the researcher in the interviews.

Informed Consent

Key points to cover with participant:

1. The purpose of the study is to learn about perceptions of sense of belonging and experiences of Indian international LGBQ students in navigating campus contexts so that campus support services can better meet the needs of this student population.

2. Participants' personal identity information will not be linked to their responses in ways that could potentially make them identifiable. This includes—but is not limited to—real names, personal characteristics, and demographic information.
3. The data collected will remain confidential. Only the researcher will have access to it.
4. Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants can choose to leave or not answer any questions if they feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview.
5. There is minimal risk involved in participating in this study; however it is possible to experience mild to moderate emotional distress in the process of discussing personal experiences and identities. Participants are free to stop discussing distressing content, and interviewers will not pressure participants to discuss anything that causes discomfort. Information for Counseling and Psychological Services at the respective campus will be made available at the conclusion of the interview.
6. Participating in the interview indicates that participant understands the purpose of the study, their role in participating, and how their information will be used. Researcher will make every attempt to ensure participant's privacy and maintain the confidentiality of data collected throughout the study.
7. Signing of informed consent form is not needed to minimize documents linking participants to study data. Participants are free to leave now with no penalties if they decide not to participate.
8. Ask if there are further questions about the informed consent process or document, before distributing, signing (optional), and collecting.
9. Ensure participants retain a copy of the informed consent form.

Notes on Recording

Confirm permission to record the session and remind participant of the following:

- Research team members will have access the audio recordings of the interviews throughout the course of the study.
- The audio files will be securely transcribed by the researcher and confidential external service.
- Transcripts are only available to research team members.
- At the conclusion of the study, the audio files will be destroyed.
- Researchers will use pseudonyms to code the transcripts and audio files.
- Any descriptors that could inadvertently reveal participants' identity will not be used in reports or publications.
- Researchers will never share information that would allow participants to be identified.

Remind the participant to speak loudly and clearly for the recording.

Ask the participant if they have any further questions.

Tell participant you are turning on recording device.

Turn the recorder on and check to see that it is functioning correctly.

Interview (100 minutes)

Campus Mapping of Belonging (20 minutes)

Participants will be given Strayhorn's (2012) definition of sense of belonging.

> "Sense of belonging is framed as a basic human need and motivation, sufficient to influence behavior…Such a framework maintains that individuals have psychological needs, satisfaction of such needs affects behaviors and perceptions, and characteristics of the social context influence how well these needs are met." (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 3-4).

Since context and space are critical for sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012), participants will be given a black and white copy of the campus map and asked to reflect on where on campus they feel a sense of mattering and connectedness, critical aspects of sense of belonging. Students will be given highlighters and pens to mark areas on the map that indicate levels of belonging (i.e. yellow highlighter for most belonging and pink highlighter for least belonging). Participants will be asked to describe their reflections and add any notes on the map. The researcher will collect the map at the end of the interview and incorporate it into the interview data analysis.

Participant Introduction (80 minutes)

Identity & History

1. Can you give me your name (pseudonym) and tell me more about yourself?

   Possible probes:

   - Where did you grow up?
   - What are your roots in South Asia?

- What language(s) do you speak? Most fluent/comfortable language?
- Why and how did you choose to study in the U.S. for college?
- Do you feel strongly about the terms you use to describe your Indian international LGBQ identity? Why or why not?
- Are there other cultural terms that you feel better describe these aspects of your identity?
- How long have you known about being __ (mirror participant's language)?
- What does it mean to be this identity?
- Are you out about your Indian international LGBQ identity on campus?
- If so, to whom? If not, how have you navigated campus?
- Does it affect your ability to participate in university programs or access campus resources?
- Does being an Indian international LGBQ person have any effect on your academics/scholarship/research?
- Are there other identities that are important to you?
- What are some important identities for you? i.e. Gender? Religion? Caste? Class?

Experience

2. Can you talk about your experience as an Indian international LGBQ student on campus?

   Possible probes:

   - What are some of the expectations you had for college? How have these expectations met, or not met, your experiences on campus? How has it been in academic spaces (i.e. classrooms, with faculty)?

- What has your experience been on the rest of campus (i.e. residence hall, student groups, international office, LGBTQ office, etc.)?
- How often are you conscious of your Indian international LGBQ identity on campus?
- In what contexts are you most aware?
- Do you feel your identities influence your experiences on campus?
- What's your experience with your faculty/advisors? How do they support you?
- What do you like and not like about your classes?
- What are your challenges academically?
- On a scale of 1-5 how do you rate your English communication skills?
- To what extent does your identity or aspects of identity impact your connectedness to campus?
- Do you feel strongly about the terms you use to describe your sexual identity? Why or why not?
- Does it affect your ability to participate in university programs or access to campus resources?
- How have faculty and staff influenced your experience on campus?
- Does anything frustrate you about being and navigating campus as an Indian international LGBQ student? If so what?
- What departments or people on campus have been most/least helpful in your experience on campus?
- How have U.S. immigration policies influenced your connectedness to campus and overall level of comfort?

Meaning-Making

3. What does it mean to experience sense of belonging for you? (incorporating 7 elements of belonging and intersectionality)

   Possible probes:

   - What does it mean to be an Indian international student who identifies as LGBQ?
   - Can you share an experience where you felt fully connected or a sense of community on campus?
   - If you could magically change some campus policy or department to make your life easier, what would you change?
   - Do you feel you have a community on campus? If so, what are some characteristics of this community and what makes you feel this sense of connectedness?
   - How do you understand these aspects of identity intersecting?
   - Are there times when you don't' feel they intersect?
   - To what extent does your identity impact your connectedness to campus?
   - Where do you feel like you belong the most on campus?
   - Why? Or why not?
   - Are there places on campus where you don't feel a sense of belonging? Why or why not?
   - Are there barriers at the institutional level that make campus life hard for you?
   - Has your understanding of Indian identity or sexuality changed since coming to the U.S. campus?
   - How do you feel when you feel a sense of belonging? Do you act any differently?

- Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give to a younger version of you?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share?
- How have campus staff/departments been helpful to you as an Indian international LGBQ student?
- Do you feel some parts of you are more easily connected to campus than others? Where? When? How?
- Is your sense of belonging on campus different than in India?
- What might help your belonging process on campus?

Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

Thank participant for coming to interview.

Stop audio recording.

Remind participant that what they shared will be used to improve programming and services for Indian, international, LGBQ and Indian international LGBQ students.

Remind them that their identity will remain private and that personally identifiable information in the interview contents will be kept confidential.

Provide participant a business card with researcher's contact information in case they have questions or concerns.

Share information about when and where to find results of the completed study.

Provide student with information about student counseling resources.

Confirm email address with student to send one $10 Amazon gift card within 24 hours of the interview.

Indian LGBQ international students' perceptions of Sense of Belonging

in U.S. Higher Education

Interview Protocol #2

Interview Set-up (10 minutes)

Overview

Welcome and thank participant for coming

Review purpose of the interview and research project:

- To hear about individual participant's experiences and perceptions of sense of belonging for Indian international AND lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer undergraduate and graduate students on campus and how they navigate academic and social contexts
- To understand participant experiences as a whole to improve services and campus environment for Indian international LGBQ students

Describe interview process

- Interview Set-up (5 minutes)
- Informed consent process (5 minutes)
- Notes on Recording
- Interview (45-60 minutes)
- Wrap-up (5 minutes)
- Gift card given at finish of full interview

Introduce interviewer, roles, and responsibilities

- Asks questions from protocol
- Takes notes during the interview
- Asks follow-up questions to probe for more information
- Keeps conversation on track
- Monitors recording equipment
- Conducts informed consent process
- Collects information for issuing incentive

Terminology note:

The interviewer will use the terms LGBQ to refer to individuals who identify as part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning, or other sexual identity terminology. Interviewer will also acknowledge that labels are limiting, potentially given participants' upbringing in non-U.S. contexts and various language issues with Western-centric

terminology. Participants may use any terms they wish to identify themselves and will be mirrored by the researcher in the interviews.

Informed Consent

Key points to cover with participant:

10. The purpose of the study is to learn about perceptions of sense of belonging and experiences of Indian international LGBQ students in navigating campus contexts so that campus support services can better meet the needs of this student population.
11. Participants' personal identity information will not be linked to their responses in ways that could potentially make them identifiable. This includes—but is not limited to—real names, personal characteristics, and demographic information.
12. The data collected will remain confidential. Only the researcher will have access to it.
13. Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants can choose to leave or not answer any questions if they feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview.
14. There is minimal risk involved in participating in this study; however it is possible to experience mild to moderate emotional distress in the process of discussing personal experiences and identities. Participants are free to stop discussing distressing content, and interviewers will not pressure participants to discuss anything that causes discomfort. Information for Counseling and Psychological Services at the respective campus will be made available at the conclusion of the interview.
15. Participating in the interview indicates that participant understands the purpose of the study, their role in participating, and how their information will be used. Researcher will

make every attempt to ensure participant's privacy and maintain the confidentiality of data collected throughout the study.

16. Signing of informed consent form is not needed to minimize documents linking participants to study data. Participants are free to leave now with no penalties if they decide not to participate.
17. Ask if there are further questions about the informed consent process or document, before distributing, signing (optional), and collecting.
18. Ensure participants retain a copy of the informed consent form.

Notes on Recording

Confirm permission to record the session and remind participant of the following:

- Research team members will have access the audio recordings of the interviews throughout the course of the study.
- The audio files will be securely transcribed by the researcher and confidential external service.
- Transcripts are only available to research team members.
- At the conclusion of the study, the audio files will be destroyed.
- Researchers will use pseudonyms to code the transcripts and audio files.
- Any descriptors that could inadvertently reveal participants' identity will not be used in reports or publications.
- Researchers will never share information that would allow participants to be identified.

Remind the participant to speak loudly and clearly for the recording.

Ask the participant if they have any further questions.

Tell participant you are turning on recording device.

Identity & History:

- Follow up questions from previous interviews
- Review elements of belonging from Strayhorn (2012)
- Language – where did you learn English?
- How would you rate you English speaking, reading and writing ability?
- Has your English impacted experience on campus positively or negatively?
- Has it impacted your experience in the classroom?
- Going to school in India, where did you connect with people? Where did you find community?

Experience:

- Since our last interview, have you reflected on where and who you feel a sense of community? Any insights you'd like to share?
- Can you share a story on campus of when you felt really connected to others? What about this experience made you feel that?
- What do you miss about India?
- Within the first month on campus, what were you looking for? What questions did you have? Where did you go to meet people?

- Now where do you go to meet people? What questions do you have? What do you look for on campus?
- Have you returned to India since you first came to the U.S. for college?
- If so, what have you missed about the U.S.?
- How connected do you feel to the political happenings in India? In the U.S.?
- We talked a little about stereotypes you have experienced, can you share some stereotypes of Indian international LGBQ people on or off campus?
- Here are a list of resources on campus. Can you tell me if you know any of them? Have you used any of them or wanted to use any of them?
  http://www.ucla.edu/students/current-students
- Have you had any difficulty navigating campus resources recently?
- Is there anything you will not miss about campus?
- Which faculty or advisors have made you feel welcome on campus? How have they supported you?
- Where do you like to hang out on campus?
- How can faculty or advisors better support you?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

Thank participant for coming to interview.

Stop audio recording.

Confirm details for third interview.

Remind participant that what they shared will be used to improve programming and services for Indian, international, LGBQ and Indian international LGBQ students.

Remind them that their identity will remain private and that personally identifiable information in the interview contents will be kept confidential.

Provide participant a business card with researcher's contact information in case they have questions or concerns.

Share information about when and where to find results of the completed study.

Provide student with information about student counseling resources.

Confirm email address with student to send one $10 Amazon gift card within 24 hours of the interview.

Interview Protocol #3

Interview Set-up (10 minutes)

Overview

Welcome and thank participant for coming

Review purpose of the interview and research project:

- To hear about individual participant's experiences and perceptions of sense of belonging for Indian international AND lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer undergraduate and graduate students on campus and how they navigate academic and social contexts
- To understand participant experiences as a whole to improve services and campus environment for Indian international LGBQ students

Describe interview process

- Interview Set-up (5 minutes)
- Informed consent process (5 minutes)
- Notes on Recording
- Interview (45-60 minutes)
- Wrap-up (5 minutes)
- Gift card given at finish of full interview

Introduce interviewer, roles, and responsibilities

- Asks questions from protocol
- Takes notes during the interview
- Asks follow-up questions to probe for more information
- Keeps conversation on track
- Monitors recording equipment
- Conducts informed consent process
- Collects information for issuing incentive

Terminology note:

The interviewer will use the terms LGBQ to refer to individuals who identify as part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning, or other sexual identity terminology. Interviewer will also acknowledge that labels are limiting, potentially given participants' upbringing in non-U.S. contexts and various language issues with Western-centric terminology. Participants may use any terms they wish to identify themselves and will be mirrored by the researcher in the interviews.

Informed Consent

Key points to cover with participant:

19. The purpose of the study is to learn about perceptions of sense of belonging and experiences of Indian international LGBQ students in navigating campus contexts so that campus support services can better meet the needs of this student population.
20. Participants' personal identity information will not be linked to their responses in ways that could potentially make them identifiable. This includes—but is not limited to—real names, personal characteristics, and demographic information.

21. The data collected will remain confidential. Only the researcher will have access to it.
22. Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants can choose to leave or not answer any questions if they feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview.
23. There is minimal risk involved in participating in this study; however it is possible to experience mild to moderate emotional distress in the process of discussing personal experiences and identities. Participants are free to stop discussing distressing content, and interviewers will not pressure participants to discuss anything that causes discomfort. Information for Counseling and Psychological Services at the respective campus will be made available at the conclusion of the interview.
24. Participating in the interview indicates that participant understands the purpose of the study, their role in participating, and how their information will be used. Researcher will make every attempt to ensure participant's privacy and maintain the confidentiality of data collected throughout the study.
25. Signing of informed consent form is not needed to minimize documents linking participants to study data. Participants are free to leave now with no penalties if they decide not to participate.
26. Ask if there are further questions about the informed consent process or document, before distributing, signing (optional), and collecting.
27. Ensure participants retain a copy of the informed consent form.

Notes on Recording

Confirm permission to record the session and remind participant of the following:

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- Any descriptors that could inadvertently reveal participants' identity will not be used in reports or publications.
- Researchers will never share information that would allow participants to be identified.

Remind the participant to speak loudly and clearly for the recording.

Ask the participant if they have any further questions.

Tell participant you are turning on recording device.

Meaning Making:

- How are you doing since our last interview?
- Anything exciting going on?
- Anything stressing you out?
- What's on your mind today?

- When you reflect on yourself – do you see yourself as one identity with multiple aspects or as multiple identities coming together?
- Where do you think you developed this concept?
- Having had ___ time on campus, would you change anything about your academic experience on campus? Would you change anything about your social experience on campus?
- Where do you feel a sense of home on campus? Has your sense of home changed since our first conversation?
- What are your feelings about going back to India? How often do you go back?
- Who would/will miss you on campus once if you were not here on campus?
- What will you miss if you are no longer on campus? (especially for students graduating)
- If you are planning to stay in the U.S. why or why not?
- We have talked about various resources on campus at the last interview, have you visited any of them?
- Have you had any difficulty navigating campus resources recently? Any successes?
- To what extent does your identity impact your connectedness to campus?
- Why? Or why not?
- Are there places on campus where you don't feel like you belong? Why or why not?
- Has your sense of self changed in your time on campus?
- Why did you choose your pseudonym?
- Where have you consistently felt comfortable to be yourself on campus?
- Has anything changed for you since our last conversation?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

Thank participant for coming to interview.

Stop audio recording.

Remind participant that what they shared will be used to improve programming and services for Indian, international, LGBQ and Indian international LGBQ students.

Remind them that their identity will remain private and that personally identifiable information in the interview contents will be kept confidential.

Provide participant a business card with researcher's contact information in case they have questions or concerns.

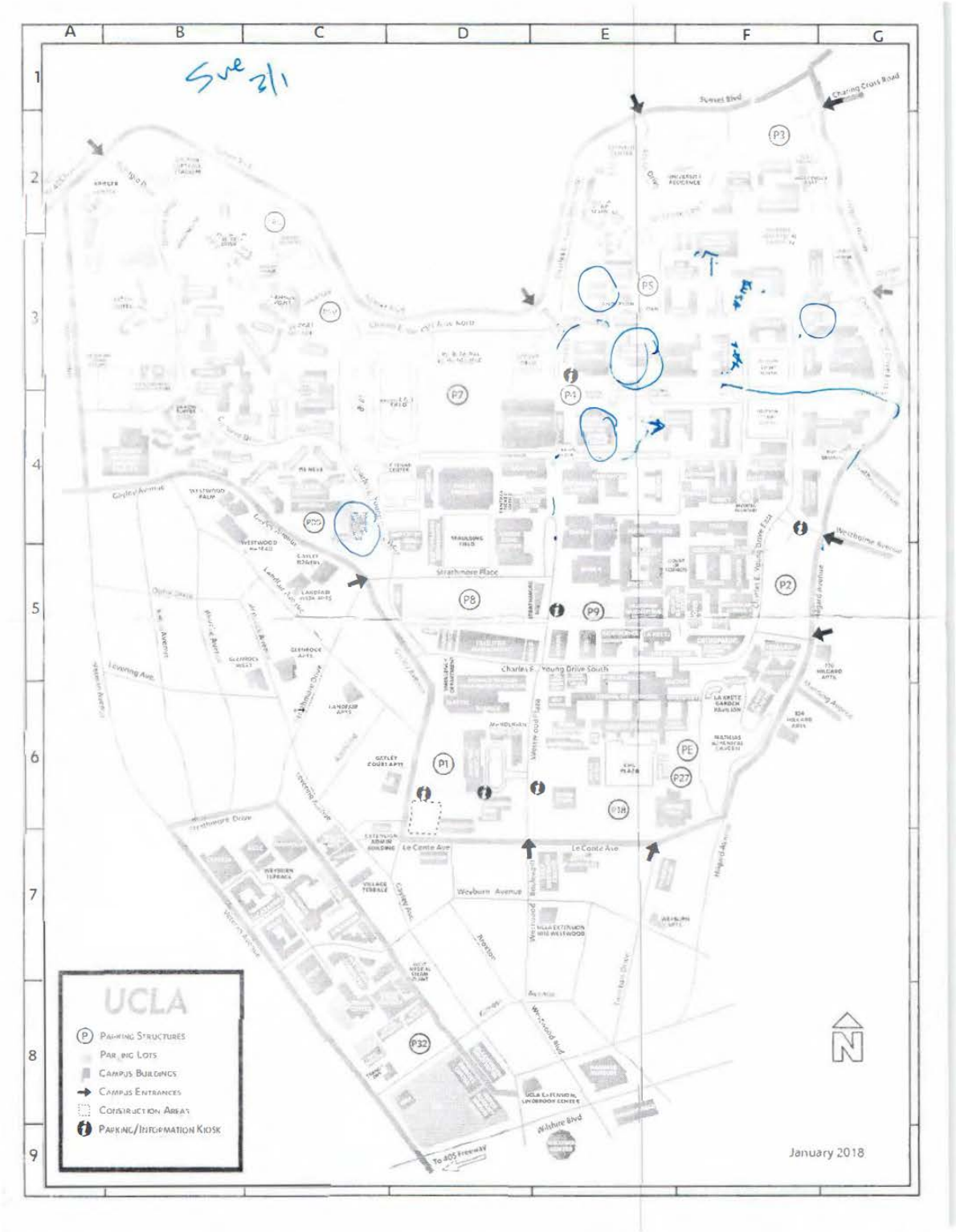
Share information about when and where to find results of the completed study.

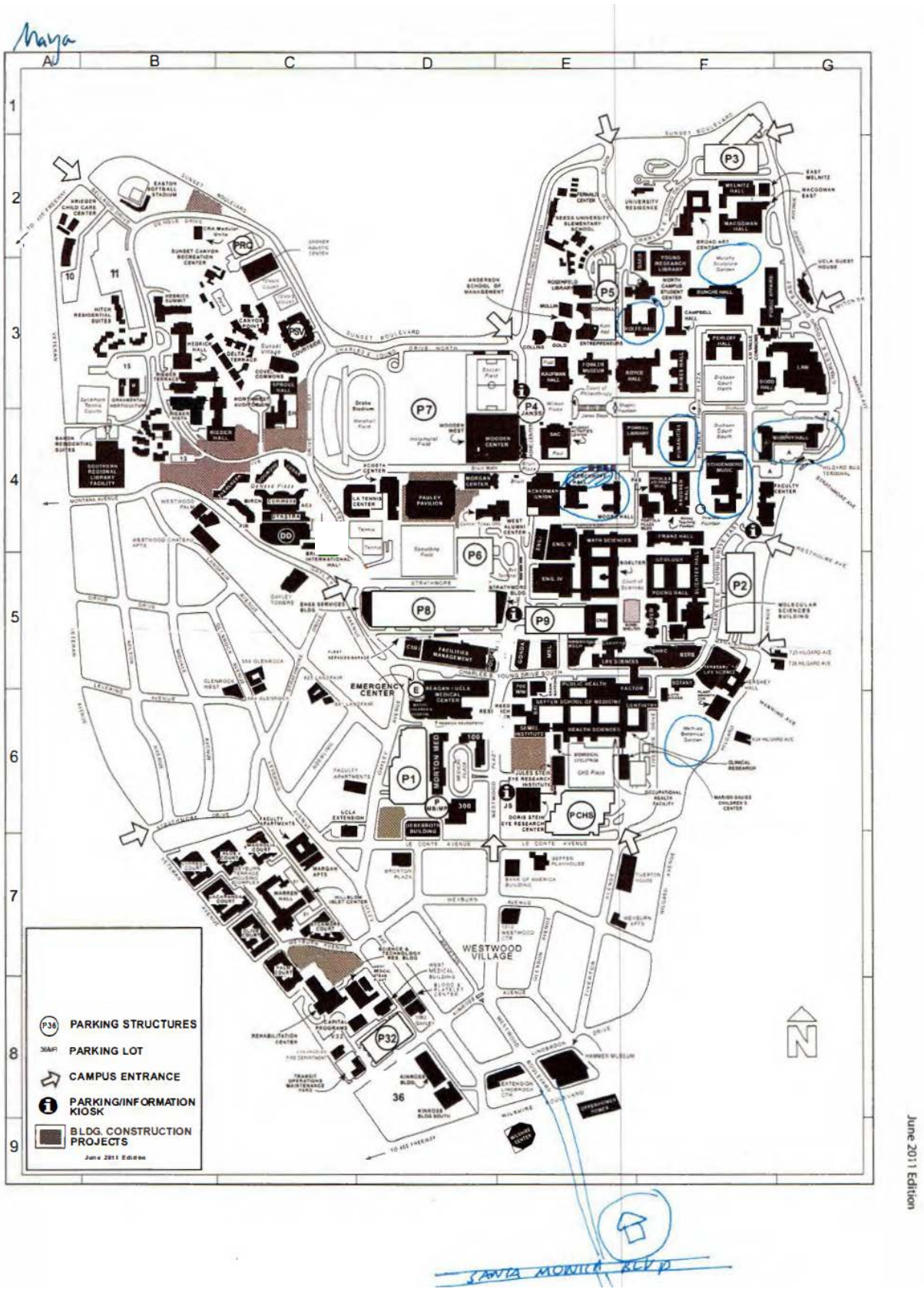
Provide student with information about student counseling resources.

Confirm email address with student to send one $10 Amazon gift card within 24 hours of the interview.

Appendix E

Participants' Mapping

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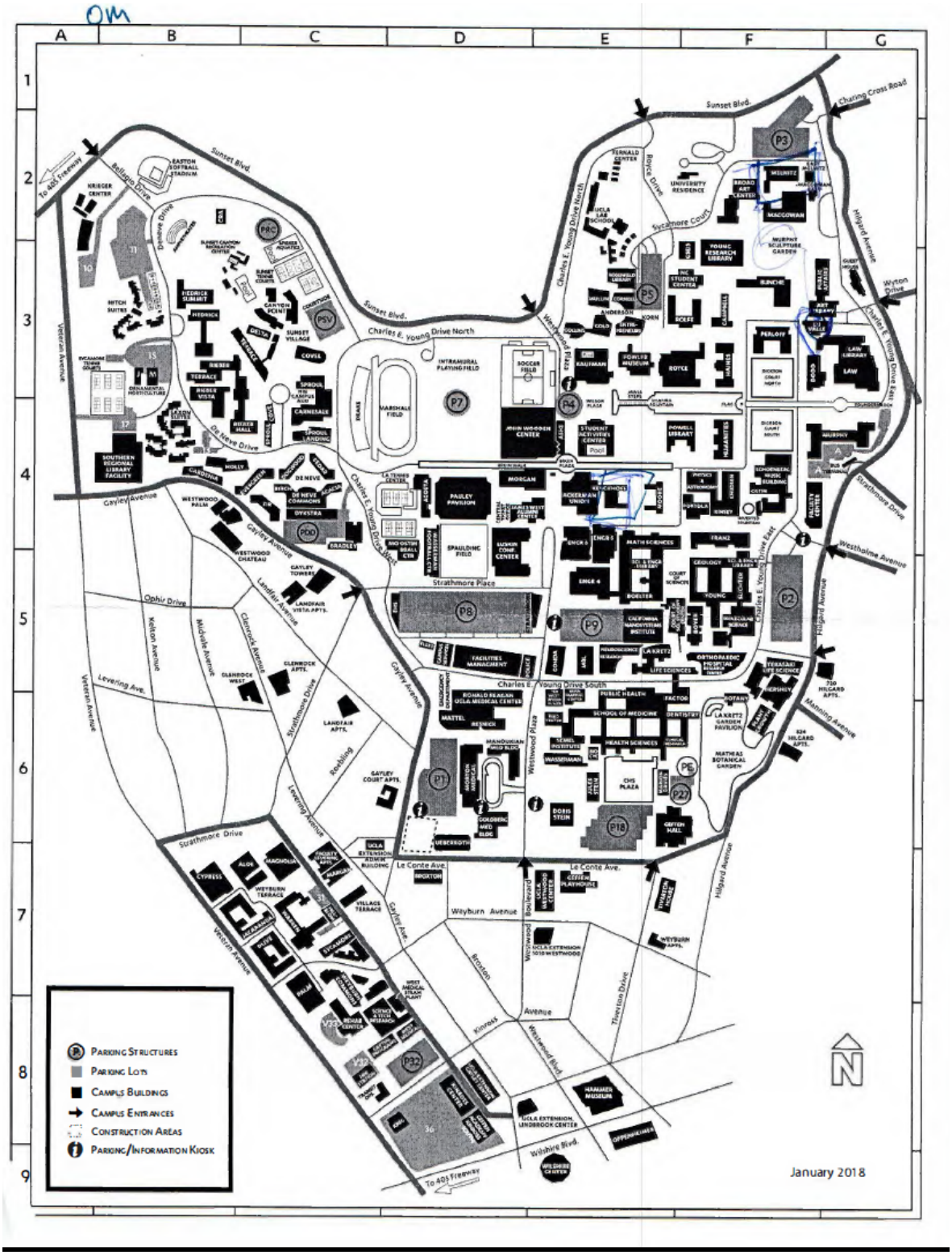
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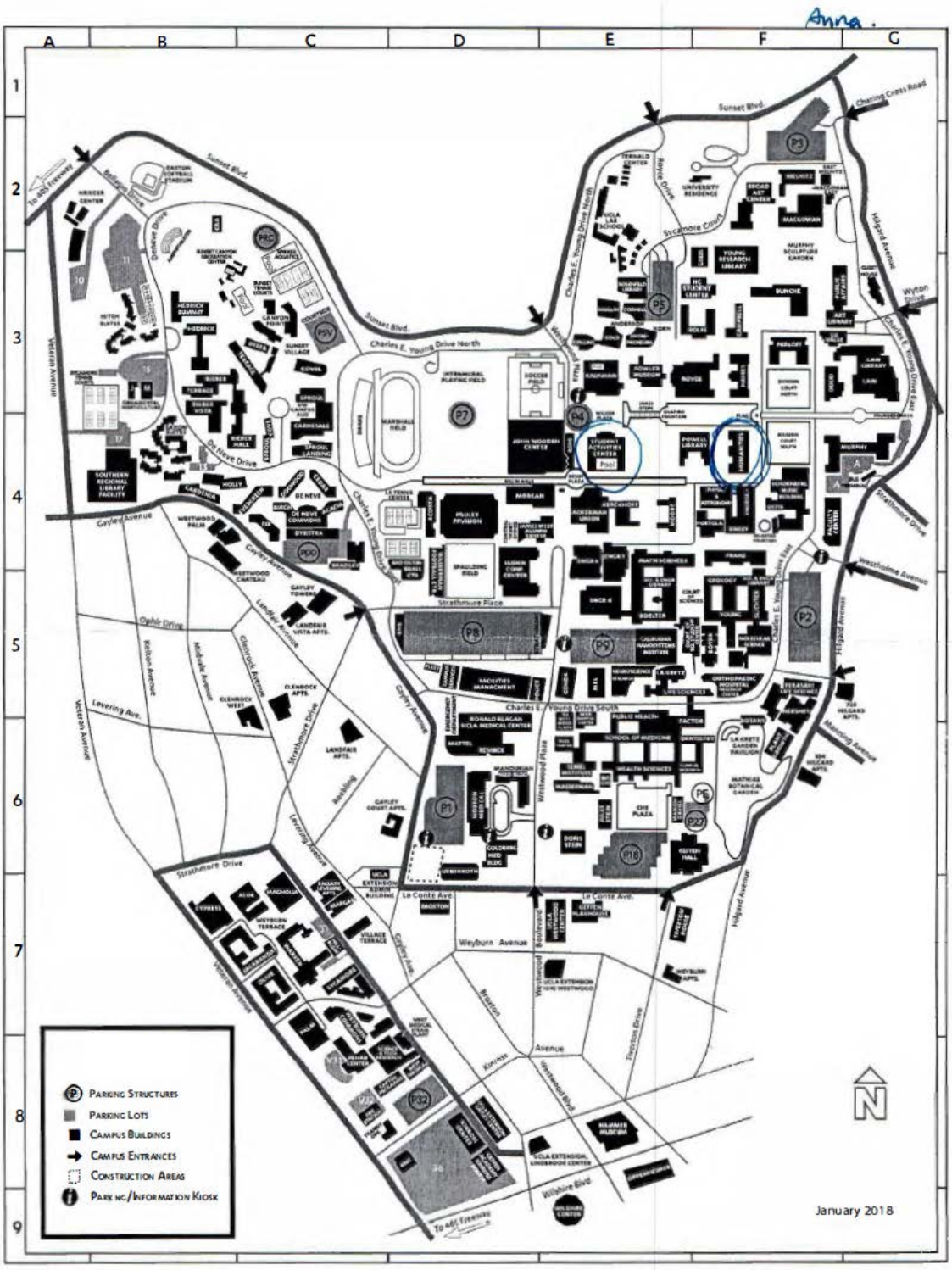
Construction Areas
Parking/Information Kiosk
January 2018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Hilgard Avenue
Levering Ave.
Veteran Avenue
Parking Structures
Parking Lots
Campus Buildings
Campus Entrances
Construction Areas
Parking/Information Kiosk
January 2018

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