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# A Seat at the Table: Evaluating Student Activism at Colgate University and Administration Response

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A Seat at the Table: Evaluating Student Activism at Colgate University and Administration

Response

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Colgate University

Women's Studies Honors Thesis

A Seat at the Table: Evaluating Student Activism at Colgate University and Administration  
Response

In this thesis, I will examine student activists and higher education policy in which my goal is to show that students need to be involved in the development of university policy that directly affects them. Students are often dismissed by institutions of higher education based solely on their age or relative lack of life experience when compared to administrators. The experiences of students are not counted as valid or as constituting “real knowledge.” Students have every right to be a part of the decision-making processes at their universities when it comes to policies and procedures that directly affect them. Faculty and administrators are also an important part of this process as they have the power to bring students into policy discussions. Cooperation between faculty, administration, staff, and students would create a truly collegial institution. Students are vital parts of these conversations because students are experts of their own experiences.

A large portion of my thesis will be an exploration of the ways that students are routinely dismissed and their experiences and knowledge are discounted. I am especially interested in those who are considered experts on students and their experiences. My thesis will explore what factors must be in play in order for social movements to form on college campuses, particularly campuses like Colgate University. There is a large body of research that describes how student activist movements arose in the 1960s and 1980s, but there is not yet a large body of scholarship on what factors allow for a culture of protest to persist on campuses today. A history of student activism is a major factor in determining whether or not a campus will have a culture of protest (Van Dyke, 1998). Van Dyke also points to factors such as isolation or a socioeconomic disparity between students as factors that can contribute to the formation of activist subcultures.

I find that the outcomes of student protest are defined in two ways. First, by the institution's framing of the protest, and second, success is defined by the student activists themselves. Much has been written about the successes and failures of student activism, but successes are typically defined as curricular or policy change. Little has been documented to suggest that students themselves are asked to determine whether they believe a social movement was a success or not. Almost all of the academic scholarship available on student protests is written by a third party, a neutral source with no association to the university or students involved. I am interested in how students who participate in social movements would define their movement's successes or failures.

My main, overarching question is why are student voices routinely dismissed and ignored by universities? Exploring an answer to this question will require me to discuss student development theory and the hierarchies inherent in higher education. Determining why student voices are not valued will allow me to investigate what factors and circumstances necessitate student protest and how faculty, staff, and administration treat students who participate in activism on their campuses.

I claim that the intentional inclusion of students in university decision making processes is vital. I will advocate for the intentional inclusion of students in university decision making processes as students are often organizationally illiterate about their institutions and are routinely left out of conversations around policies that directly affect them. Rather than involving students in decision making processes, administrators often act as interpreters of students' experiences which reflects an "educator knows best" mentality. In order to determine why student voices are not valued by their universities, I will have to explore why administrators are considered more reliable and objective than students within the context of student experience on college

campuses. Students are not seen as adults with the same complex thoughts, feelings, and opinions as administrators. I will discuss traditional student development theory that describes student growth as a linear process progressing steadily over time. After establishing this basis I will explore theories of development that explain development as something that is happening continuously over the course of a person's life. I will look to queer theory and feminist approaches to student development theory in order to critique the standard theory of linear student development. Abes and Kasch (2007) describe identity as fluid and something that is constantly forming and reforming over the course of one's life. Normative assumptions about student development and identity are a hindrance to productive conversations and interactions between administrators and students. These limiting ideas about student development undoubtedly lead to tensions between students and administrators that can influence student social movements.

If identity is circular and fluid, why are the opinions and beliefs of administrators prioritized over that of students? Answering this question using feminist theories of student development will lead me not only to an answer to my overarching question, but will also allow me to make specific recommendations for the inclusion of students in policy discussions. Specifically, I will advocate for the inclusion of student activists in policy discussions that directly affect them, particularly when the policy conversations include topics such as sexual violence. When students are excluded from conversations about policies that will directly impact them, both students and the institution suffer.

I will look to Colgate University as a case study of a university with a long and well-documented history of student activism around issues of race and sexual violence. Students have fought for recognition, respect, and safety from the institution for decades at Colgate, and while

activism around race and gender are separated in university history, I will explore the movements as related and stemming from one another. I will look at the importance of narrative and defining one's own experience within a social movement and how telling stories of personal experiences encourages cohesion within a social movement and relates movements to one another. Exploring Colgate's history of activism will provide me with valuable data about how student activists are perceived and how they have interacted with administrators before, during, and after their protests or social movements.

For the purposes of this project, I will explore in detail social movements at Colgate University by utilizing a narrative-case study format. I will explore the history of social protests around race and sexual violence at Colgate University in order to show how students have been routinely dismissed, as well as how students have fought for recognition, respect, and safety from Colgate. My presentation of Colgate University's rich history of student activism will show that despite the institution's attempts to separate the history of student protest around race and sexual violence, the two are inextricably linked and stem from one another.

To supplement my case study of Colgate University, I will provide context as to how student activism has been traditionally perceived and normalized and the ways in which violence on college campuses has become institutionalized and recognized as a social issue. Emphasizing the importance of student voices in policy discussions, I will look to Magolda's (2008) theory of self-authorship in which she emphasizes the importance of defining one's own beliefs, identities, and social relationships. Students are experts of their own experiences and they have the capacity to contribute to important conversations about their safety and experience at their university.

In my conclusion I will assert that the university can be a space of possibility and growth. It is possible for everyone to have a seat at the table in policy discussions and beyond. If

institutions of higher education operated under the assumption that everyone's identity, and not just that of students, is in constant flux then the university could live up to its true collegial intentions as Birnbaum (1988) describes. As I address my overarching question, why student voices are not valued, I will review relevant aspects of student development theory through a critical feminist lens. My critique of traditional notions of student development will lead me to theories of student development that are rooted in feminist thought and queer theory. I will conclude my thesis by discussing the impossibility of fully incorporating these progressive theories of student development into higher education as it currently stands. I will advocate for a complete restructuring of higher education in order to create a space that will truly listen to and value the safety and thoughts of its students.

### **Reflexivity**

I first became interested in exploring the history of student activism at Colgate University in the fall of 2014 during the 100-hour occupation of the Admissions building. As a participant in this student protest I saw first-hand how the administration, faculty, and fellow students dismissed student activists. I saw how hard the four "vessels" worked to legitimize themselves in the eyes of the administration, and I began to imagine an institution in which those with institutional power valued student voices. My interest in investigating activism at Colgate grew after the fall of 2015 when I, along with five incredible women, held a demonstration and speak-out aimed at calling attention to Colgate's failure to appropriately address sexual violence on campus. In the aftermath of the protest, I was discouraged to discover the long history of protest around sexual violence at Colgate.

Digging into Colgate's history of student activism revealed discouraging patterns of protest. Students have frequently stood up to voice their concerns with the institution, but were

often dismissed and forgotten, and shortly after new students would stand up against the same problems. The lack of institutional memory around student activism prevents real change from taking place. My hope in chronicling Colgate's history of student activism and its relation to student affairs and feminist theories is to ensure a historical record of these important movements and to create a record that future activists can reference.

I recognize that the nature of the study and my own identity and position as a white woman can be problematic in nature. A large portion of this thesis is a narrative-case study of student activism at Colgate in which I retell the stories of student activists and their contributions to campus. I acknowledge that I am not necessary to validate or give voice to these narratives. These stories are already valid, and in writing this thesis I am trying to take a critical look at Colgate as an institution, not attempting to lift up or give voice to forgotten narratives.

### **Theoretical framework**

#### **Student Development**

Strange (2004) discusses traditional theories of student development, particularly cognitive developmental structures. He describes the hierarchical sequence by which students progress through increasingly complex stages of development. Strange writes, "Early simplistic assumptions are gradually replaced by more advanced assumptions, as individuals seek new meanings for the events and experiences in their lives (p. 51)." This linear, step-wise model of student development is not only found within Strange's suggestions for educating millennials, but is also a core component of constructive-developmental theory. Strange's theories, particularly his focus on constructive-developmental theory, outline current best practices in student affairs.



**Constructive-developmental theory.** The work of Helsing, Drago-Severson, and Kegan (2004) defines constructive-developmental theory as “the ways in which our beliefs construct the reality in which we live and the ways in which these beliefs can change or develop over time (p. 164).” In other words, students’ beliefs create an interpretive lens through which they make meaning. Helsing, Drago-Severson, and Kegan suggest that individuals create increasingly complex systems of meaning gradually as they age and progress. Their gradual evolution is partially based on the challenges individuals face and the support they have access to. Helsing, Drago-Severson, and Kegan write, “As we interact with our environment, we make sense of our experience, and through this interaction and negotiation- sometimes fitting our experience to mental models, sometimes adjusting our mental models to fit our experience- our meaning systems may gradually evolve and grow more complex (p. 162).” According to Helsing, Drago-Severson, and Kegan, the rate at which a student will progress from a simpler way of knowing to a more complex way of knowing depends mainly on the challenges they face and the support and encouragement they have access to. Constructive-developmental theory necessarily implies a hierarchical relationship between students and student affairs professionals that assumes that faculty, staff, and most of all administrators are more developed than students. Throughout this section I will explore and challenge this hierarchical relationship between students and administrators and the assumption that administrators are inherently more developed than their students.

***Self-authorship.*** Baxter Magolda (2008) has written extensively on the constructive-developmental tradition of student development and has used those ideas to develop her theory of self-authorship. According to Baxter Magolda, the constructive-developmental tradition encompasses an epistemological dimension, an intrapersonal dimension, and an interpersonal

dimension. The epistemological dimension includes how students view the world, intrapersonal how students view themselves, and interpersonal how students view social relations. Her theory of self-authorship is derived directly from constructive-developmental tradition and is defined as “the internal capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity, and social relations (p. 269).” Students reach self-authorship when they are faced with a significant challenge and provided with sufficient support. The significant challenge provides the student with a catalyst for change while support allows a student to shift into internal meaning making, or self-authorship.

In discussing the evolution of self-authorship, Baxter Magolda (2008) problematizes the linear, step-wise model of student development. Rather than developing in linear, forward moving increments, Baxter Magolda describes the progression to self-authorship as cyclical and suggests, “self-authorship is more complex and nuanced than a simple linear trajectory (p. 281).” She comes to this conclusion through an in-depth study of how students come to achieve self-authorship. Through her long-term study, Baxter Magolda concluded that three elements are crucial to the creation of self-authorship. Students must learn to trust their internal voices, build and internal foundation, and secure internal commitments. All three elements, according to Baxter Magolda, come from the same underlying principle, “internally determining one’s beliefs, identity and social relations (p. 281).” It is through individuals’ ability make meaning of their own experiences that they come to achieve self-authorship. Baxter Magolda’s study shows that self-authorship can be achieved through numerous pathways based on an individual’s experiences and characteristics. Baxter Magolda’s study participants did not always progress through traditional stages of development in a linear fashion.

### **Queer theory**

Abes & Kasch (2007) challenge traditional theories of student development by applying queer theory to student development. Abes (2009) remarks on the unique approach of Abes & Kasch's (2007) study. By combining multiple theoretical perspectives along with qualitative research, Abes & Kasch pushed the boundaries of student development theory to create a more complete picture of how students experience development and identity formation. Abes & Kasch use queer theory, constructivism, and Magolda's theory of self-authorship to form a new theoretical approach to student development they call queer-authorship.

According to Abes & Kasch (2009), queer-authorship suggests that people may exhibit qualities from multiple stages of development simultaneously. They directly challenge the constructivist-developmental perspective. The constructivist-developmental perspective presents student development linearly and assumes that once a higher stage of development is reached a student will always remain on or return to that higher level. Abes & Kasch dismiss the constructivist-developmental theory of development, writing, "This assumption suggests that student development is finite and measurable and that changes in students' expression of their identity reflect development along a trajectory (p. 631)." Rather than viewing student development as something that happens along a linear trajectory, Abes & Kasch see student development as cyclical and ever evolving. For Abes & Kasch identity is always in flux and "development does not accommodate 'arriving' at a stage of development (p. 632)." Abes & Kasch's perspective on identity development fundamentally uproots the constructivist notion that an administrator exists on a higher plane of development than a student. Queer theory allows scholars such as Abes & Kasch to lay the necessary theoretical ground work to propose an alternative model of identity development. Sullivan (2003) discusses the roots of queer theory, writing:

Poststructural theorists such as Foucault argue that there are no objective and universal truths, but that particular forms of knowledge, and the ways of being that they engender, become ‘naturalised,’ in culturally and historically specific ways [...] [Identity is] constructed in and through its relations with others, and with systems of power/knowledge [...] We embody the discourses that exist in our culture, our very being is constituted by them. (p. 39, 41)

Queer theory, according to Abes (2009), challenges the power dynamics inherent in student development studies by addressing and confronting the pervasiveness of heteronormativity in the construction of student identity. Abes points out the importance of critiquing heteronormativity when evaluating student development theory. By defining what is perceived as normal (heterosexuality) and abnormal (nonheterosexuality), heteronormativity creates a binary of essentialized identities. Queer theory refuses essentializing identities and instead recognizes that “as time and place changes, so too does identity (p. 147).”

Abes (2009) asserts that student development theory is rooted in inequitable power structures that “result in oppressions such as racism, classism, and heterosexism [...] privilege and oppression associated with power inequities affect how college students learn and develop (p. 143).” The importance of using queer theory to evaluate student development theory, according to Abes, is queer theory’s ability to undermine these power structures. When applied to student development theory, queer theory, as a poststructural theory, seeks to challenge and deconstruct systems of power and knowledge, such as heteronormativity, that influence how college students develop. Sullivan (2003) writes, “heterosexuality, as it is currently understood and experienced, is a (historically and culturally specific) truth-effect of systems of power/knowledge. Given this, its dominant position and current configuration are contestable

and open to change (p. 39).” Queer theory can be used to challenge heteronormativity and heteronormative assumptions about how college students develop, particularly the assumption that administrators are more developed than their students. The hierarchy of development between students and administrators is certainly historically and culturally embedded in higher education, and applying queer theory to student development allows scholars to deconstruct that system.

**Performativity.** In order to deconstruct heteronormativity, many queer theorists turn to the work of Butler (1990) and her theory of performativity. Butler discusses performativity as a process by which individuals construct their social identities in relation to their behaviors in everyday life. Butler’s concept of performativity is crucial to a queer understanding of identity development. According to Butler, an individual’s actions do not represent or happen as a result of their identity; instead, their actions actively shape and create their identities. Butler’s theory of performativity is specifically attached to the production of gender identity. Her theory of performativity shows that gender is not inherent or static, but culturally formed and constantly reproduced. It is the reiterated performance of gender that becomes an individual’s gender. Because actions can never be repeated in precisely the same ways, Butler claims that identity is constantly shifting and changing.

By challenging the essentialist nature of gender, Butler’s (1990) theory of performativity allows queer theorists to challenge traditional modes of student identity construction. If identities are in constant motion, then a fundamental component of constructivist-developmental theory is called in to question. Identities that are constantly changing and fluctuating cannot be classified as more complex than other identities. Applying queer theory to student development theory calls into question certain inherent relationships within universities, which necessitates the

question, can an administrator truly be more developed than a student? Queer theorists and scholars such as Abes & Kasch (2007) would say no. If identity is in constant motion and flux, then no identity can be considered more fully developed or complex than any other identity. The application of queer theory to student development theory demands the creation of new perspectives for understanding student identity development.

**Becoming/ liminality.** To move from a theoretical understanding of heteronormativity and performativity to a practical understanding it is necessary for queer theorists to consider liminality, a transitional period of flux between two distinct stages of being. Abes & Kasch (2007) discuss liminality as a way that individuals incorporate elements of seemingly contradictory identities into one completely separate identity. Liminality is a state of flux between two contradictory identities, such as heterosexuality and nonheterosexuality. Liminality is a state of resistance that allows for contradictory identities such as heterosexuality and nonheterosexuality to coexist within one identity that rejects normalized definitions. Abes & Kasch wrote, “liminality, as resistance, is a state of becoming” that “facilitates flexible genders and sexualities and reflects how an individual may perform a seemingly contradictory performative in ever-changing ways (p. 621-622).”

### **Implications for practice**

Abes & Kasch (2007) recognize that their theories on student development are not as widely embraced as theories that describe student development as a linear trend. They discuss the implication for educators writing, “One of the implications for practice, then, is the need to reconsider how educators frame students. Do educators align students along a trajectory and measure their development through a process of stages, or do educators move outside of linear models to consider the influence that students are having on their environment to reshape their

contexts? (p. 633).” They point out that the ways student affairs educators view students’ development is a reflection of how they position themselves in relation to their students. When educators impose their own perspectives on how students should or are negotiating their multiple identities, they are unable to create meaningful or caring relationships with their students as they are too far removed. Instead, educators often acts as interpreters of students’ experiences. According to Abes & Kasch, “This reflects an “educator knows best” mentality in which students are passive receptors of knowledge or development (p. 634).” They call for educators to work with their students to deconstruct the social constructions of their identities instead of imposing their perceptions and power onto students. Abes & Kasch call upon student development scholars to expand their research, writing, “Student development theory literature must include more attention to the ways in which social power structures such as racism, classism, and heterosexism, mediate student development (p. 619).”

This robust theoretical framework can help scholar-activists assess the tensions, failures, success—and also, help us redefine failure and success—in student movements.

## **Literature Review**

### **What Is A Social Movement?**

Although there is not a universally acknowledged definition of what constitutes a social movement, Diani (1992) claims that all definitions of social movements share three criteria. He argues that social movements are “a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity (p. 1).” Tarrow (1994) adds to this broad understanding, defining social movements as “collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities (p. 3-4).” Blumer (1971) argues that

movements begin with the identification of a social problem. Blumer writes that social problems are created through collective definitions. According to Sloan (2010) these collective definitions are “projections of collective sentiments, rather than simple mirrors of objective conditions (p. 34).” Activists identify a problem and then seek to legitimize it through endorsement that there is in fact a problem that should be addressed by policy makers. Once legitimized, activists secure public interest and encourage the public to make demands on policy makers in order to create the change they seek.

Within universities, social movements arise in the same manner. Students identify a problem within their university’s structure, and seek the endorsement of that problem from peers. The burden of addressing the problem falls often on administrators who, according to Arthur (2011), “despite their ability to exercise leadership in other areas [...] are predominantly positioned as reactive agents (p. 163)” Administrators “respond to demands and pressures for changes from below with apathy or with outright hostility, and they seek ways to contain contention and avoid radical change (p. 163-4).” The resistance to change embedded within the university’s structure is seen by many scholars as a death sentence for student social movements. DeGroot (1998) writes that student activists “often espouse a naïve vision of the world and employ tactics which, due to their lack of experience, fail to take account of the cruel realities of institutional power (p. 5).” Furthermore, DeGroot claims that American universities are “remarkably adept at containing, manipulating and redirecting the tide of change, so much so that, when the shouting ceased and the sit-ins ended, status returned resolutely to quo (p. 8).”

### **Why Do Social Movements Happen?**

There exists an abundance of literature on the topic of why social movements arise, but few scholars focus on contemporary social protests movements on college campuses. Scholars



have written about student activism during the 1960s, but few scholars have looked at student activism post-Occupy Wall St. (2011). The scholars who study activism on college campuses often assess institutional forces that influence and allow students to organize protests at their universities. In a 2011 profile of student protest in the United Kingdom from 2010-2011, Ibrahim argues that student activists were able to effectively mobilize based on the network-like structure of universities.

Ibrahim (2011) also analyzes why students choose to become involved in activism even if the social problem at hand does not directly influence them. The students in Ibrahim's profile mobilized around increased tuition prices at universities across the United Kingdom. Ibrahim notes that the vast majority of students would not be unduly affected by these tuition increases, but an increase in tuition would likely make higher education less accessible to students of lower socioeconomic status. Ibrahim points to Thompson's (1971) theory of moral economy as a framework for understanding why students involve themselves in activism regardless of their personal stake in the issue. According to Thompson, a moral economy "is a negotiation between economic prices and cultural and political norms (as cited in Ibrahim 2011, p. 420)." Students in Ibrahim's profile cited the affordability of higher education for themselves and future generations as a motivating factor for their activism. Ibrahim draws parallels between Thompson's theory of moral economy and the actions of student activists by designating students as a political contingent mobilizing due to protest an increase in the price of goods, in this case higher education. Students are concerned with what they perceive to be right and just and utilize their moral convictions to impact an economic process.

Ibrahim (2011) touches on the importance of recognizing history as influencing social protest movements but does not spend any time discussing the importance of past social

movements in influencing current social movements on college campuses. Van Dyke (1998) writes about the locations of social protest movements on college campuses and claims that a history of student activism is a major factor in determining whether or not a campus will have a culture of protest. Van Dyke's findings are important when looking at activism at Colgate University, a campus with a long history of student protest. The history of social movements at Colgate helps to contextualize current activism on campus. Van Dyke also critiques the current scholarship around student activism. She points out that traditional models of investigating student activism in higher education are ahistorical and fail to incorporate the social, historical, and political factors that influence students and their social movements. Van Dyke claims that most of the research on student activism has failed to analyze the history of student protest movements. Few studies have examined the importance of historical continuity in the emergence of student activism. Van Dyke's study seeks to determine whether or not a history of activism influences the emergence of social protest at universities.

Van Dyke's (1998) research suggests that social movements influence one another and that ideas and tactics are shared between common members of different movements. Therefore, it is impossible to point to one instance or movement as the catalyst for all other protests. Instead, Van Dyke suggests a more reciprocal relationship between movements. Institutional histories of protest, as well as social, political, and historical factors, play a role the emergence of social movements. According to Van Dyke, institutions with activism around one issue are more likely to have activism around multiple issues. Van Dyke also points to factors such as isolation or a socioeconomic disparity between students as factors that can contribute to the formation of subcultures. It is these subcultures, according to Van Dyke, that mobilize around social issues

and lead social protest movements. She is quick to point out that these activist subcultures are not defined or confined by a single issue, cause, or injustice, however.

Aside from a history of activism and a high degree of isolation, Van Dyke (1998) points to economic wealth as a reason for the emergence of activism on a college campus. Van Dyke points out that students at more elite or selective institutions are more likely to engage in activism than students at less elite institutions. This could be due to any number of factors, but one possibility is the abundance of resources that students at more elite institutions have access to. The most elite institutions have access to the most economic resources, and therefore more resources to devote to protest and social movements. Soule (1997) supports this notion and notes that activism is often located at schools with high endowments. Soule's finding is consistent with McCarthy and Zald's (1973) resource mobilization theory, which states that activist groups do not mobilize unless they have enough resources to sustain their movement. Using this logic, student activists with more access to resources will be able to mobilize their movements more quickly and effectively. Once a movement is in motion, the outcomes and successes of the movement must be evaluated.

### **Outcomes/ Success**

In a 1998 article, Giugni poses important questions about social movement tactics and outcomes. He contrasts strongly organized movements and loosely organized movements in an attempt to determine which mode of movement organization is most effective. Giugni also attempts to determine if the use of violence and disruption is more likely to lead to policy changes than moderate tactics. Giugni finds that "the use by social movements of disruptive tactics and violence seems to increase their potential for change" and "the use of force by social movements increases the chances that they reach their goals (p. 376)." Giugni pulls heavily from

a 1990 study by Gamson that provides empirical evidence of the effectiveness of violence and force in social movement tactics. Gamson also discusses what constitutes success in social movements. He claims that there are two possible measures of success for social movements. First, the challengers are seen as legitimate claimants and second, that new advantages are obtained.

Both Giugni (1998) and Gamson acknowledge that movement outcomes and movement success are complicated ideas and often the two concepts do not overlap. Gamson defined the four possible outcomes of a social protest as: 1. full response, 2. preemption, 3. co-optation, and 4. collapse. While Giugni spends a great deal of time on Gamson's (1990) theories, he also notes that Gamson's view is limiting and has caused subsequent research into social movements to focus on specific organizations rather than broader cycles of protest. Giugni further complicates the idea of success by pointing out that many social movement scholars do not evaluate the subjectivity of success. He writes, "Movement participants and external observers may have different perceptions of what counts as success, and the same action may be judged as successful by some participants and as failed by others (p. 383)." The process of measuring movement outcomes for success is problematic according to Giugni because it does not speak to the intention of the participants, nor does it take into account the long-term effects of social movements. Giugni calls for a broader study of the outcomes of social movements that takes into account the emergence, development, and decline of a protest as well as the political, institutional, and cultural changes. Ideally, this broad study would examine both the long-term and short-term consequences of social movements.

Charles Tilly (1999) discusses the outcomes of social movements and like Giugni he recognizes the difficulties in determining movement outcomes. He writes, "This range of effects

far surpasses the explicit demands made by activists in the course of social movements, and sometimes negates them. By any standard, ‘success’ and ‘failure’ hardly describe most of the effects (p. 268).” Tilly presents three sets of variables that describe the outcomes of social movements. When determining the outcomes of social movements scholars should consider 1. movement claims, 2. effects of movement actions, and 3. effects of outside events and actions as well as the overlap between these three categories.

Social movement theorists identify four arenas for the effects of social movements: individual, institutional, cultural, and political. I will focus primarily on institutional change at Colgate University throughout this thesis, but I also acknowledge the importance of the other impacts of social movements, particularly individual and cultural changes. Individual activists are transformed through their participation in social movements and often create new communities and networks with fellow activists through their shared cause. These individual changes impact the cultures of certain communities and spaces.

The outcomes and successes are measured by a variety of factors, but the racial, gender, and sexual identities of participants in social movements may also play into the outcomes of social movements. Therefore, identity is crucial to social movements as it plays a role in the creation, operation, and success of social movements.

### **Identity in Movements**

According to Morris (1992), Bernstein (2005) and Taylor & Whittier (2002), a shared identity is crucial for the effectiveness of any social movement. Without a collective identity, social movements are unable to mobilize their members or unite them under a common, empowered identity. Social movements develop and preserve their collective identities by establishing boundaries between movement participants and non-participants, developing a

consciousness that views the group's structural position as socially constructed, and politicizing the participant's everyday life and existence. Collective identity is essential to the creation and operation of social movements.

The collective identity of a social movement is in constant interplay with personal identities and is not the compilation of all of the identities of the movement's participants (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). Collective identity is both an imagined as well as a concrete community that involves the creation of community as well as the discovery of preexisting interactions. It is never fixed or static, and is instead a dynamic category "by which individuals divide up and make sense of the social world" (p. 298). In the social movements at Colgate University that I study, collective identity is not as simple as student protestors uniting themselves based on their status as students or their race, class, gender, and sexual identities. Instead, collective identity in these movements is defined by the interactions of student activists identities and the communities and tensions that result from these identities.

Bernstein (2005) uses a framework of identity politics to understand the interaction between individual experience and political leanings as well as the problems activists face when the collective identity of their movement is the basis of oppression. Bernstein (2005) points to feminist standpoint theory and materialist feminism as theories that conceptualize identity politics as a method of creating knowledge from the experiences and social location of movement participants. Bernstein (2005) cites Naples (2003) to combat criticism of feminist standpoint theory as essentialist. Naples argues that "people do not translate personal experience into political action in an unreflective, essentialist way. Instead, political analyses are arrived at through collective interpretation and analysis (p. 60)." Feminist standpoint theory draws on the idea that the subjectivity resulting from experiencing oppression can inspire or influence a social

movement. Individual experience informs a movement's collective identity rather than forcing participants to adhere to false universal understandings of gender, class, or race.

According to Fine (2002), "narrative is central to group identity" and social movements are essentially "bundles of stories (p. 230)." Fine emphasizes the importance of narrative for creating a movement identity as well as a way to attract participants to the movement. Narratives that provoke reactions such as anger or disgust may lead participants or uninvolved listeners to increase their commitment to the movement and to bolster their desire for action. Fine points out, however, that narratives are not meant to be all-encompassing or inclusive of everyone. He writes, "Stories told within a social movement are limited and constrained by the previous experience of participants, and the stories in turn, as they become shared, serve to increase the likelihood that certain participants will decide to join and that others will exit or become inactive (p. 233-234)." Narratives then function not only as a way to bring in participants to a social movement; they are also useful as a mode of control. Most narratives will not universally appeal to everyone who hears that narrative and those who are not inspired or called to action will not participate. In this way, narrative is a useful tool for expressing movement ideology in a format that does not focus on minute details of belief, but rather bonds the audience to characters they identify with. Narratives are essential according to Fine, as they are able to make the theoretical concrete and cement group identity.

### **Rationale for Narrative-Case Study**

Colgate University was built by white, wealthy, Christian men for others like them. Byron Chandler expressed this idea in 1969 when he stood on the steps of Merrill House and declared, "You are going to say, "negotiate in good faith, little colored boys; we're morally committed, but we condemn your actions... so keep talking" (Speak, Brother 1969)."

Historically, Colgate has demanded that students keep talking, keep coming up with ideas, and keep solving problems that they did not create. Students have fought to have their voices heard and to have their concerns taken seriously by an institution that was not built with all students in mind. For decades, Colgate students have come together to fight back against the institution with a myriad of concerns. Colgate's administration has framed these incidents to try and separate student activists from one another, and this attempted separation continues today. The original intention of this institution created structures of power and privilege that persists to today. Students have historically fought against these structures and they will continue to do so as long as they remain in place. The question that remains is that of success. How are students measuring the successes of their movements? How do those definitions of success change as the student body changes?

Narrative-case study is useful for exploring Colgate's history of student activism as it provides not only into the facts of what happened during these protests, but also provides a window into the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the students who led these protests. In blending factual accounts with student voices, I hope to paint a picture of student activism at Colgate that has not yet been presented. Within this history of student activism, I will show that those who don't belong and are ostracized by the institution and campus climate have fought back and demanded a place within the institution. In order to present this narrative-case study, I spent considerable time in Colgate University's University Archives and Special Collections. My work in the archives provided me with access to news clippings, personal letters, University memos, and other documents that allowed me to blend student experiences and voices with Colgate's presentation of student activism. Narrative-case study is a unique contribution to Colgate's history of social protest.



### **A Brief on Note on Critical Archiving**

In critical archiving, it is just as important to consider what pieces of information are not available as it is to consider what is. One box in the archives is dedicated to protest at Colgate, but the only items in the folders were copies of President Barnett's romanticized retelling of the 1968 sit-in. As I read through the archives I had to be mindful that much of Colgate's history of activism is likely lost. In order to report responsibly on Colgate's history of activism, I need to step back and look at the gaps and missing pieces. This omitted information is a further symptom of the system that created the need for student activism at Colgate. What does it say about the institutional value of women at Colgate that their history and their social movements are not well documented? What does it say about Colgate that there is a protest, sit-in, speak out, or other demonstration almost every four years? Colgate's history of activism is not merely the product of student discontent. It's the product of something bigger. In the next section, I will evaluate the historical and social factors of wider society along with campus dynamics to paint a picture of why each movement arose, what students demanded, and how the administration responded and framed each challenge.

### **Narrative Case Study**

#### **1960s**

**Colgate's First Sit-in.** It is impossible to discuss the conditions that led to the sit-in of 1968 at Colgate University without discussing the historical and social forces at play across the United States. In 1968, the United States was still in the midst of the Vietnam War, and anti-war sentiment was high, particularly on college campuses, following the October 21, 1967, march on the Pentagon. 1967 saw the highest rate of American casualties in the Vietnam War, and the race riots of the long hot summer of 1967 reflected America's political tension. The political unrest of

1967 carried into 1968 as Lyndon Johnson announced he would not run for reelection in late March. The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1968 left the nation in mourning and brings us to Colgate's historic sit-in.

In the early morning of April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1968, Colgate students Naceo Giles '70 and Bob Boney were walking down Broad Street past the Sigma Nu Fraternity House when a Sigma Nu brother began shouting at them from the roof of the house. Giles left to get help, and during his absence shots were fired at Boney and another student walking down Broad Street. Giles remembers:

I went to get help and while I was gone shots were fired. Boney and another person walking down Broad Street ducked behind a tree. No bullets were ever found and the brothers were drinking but I felt that there could be no excuse. They say it was a starter's pistol but it didn't really matter (Cochran 1978, p. 1).

Later that day, nineteen Black students entered the Sigma Nu house and demanded that the brothers turn over their guns. In response, the Sigma Nu brothers called Hamilton Police and Campus Safety. According to Andy Young '70, "The significance of the shooting event was that it was the straw that broke the camel's back. It was the culmination of a series of racist events (p. 2)." Members of the Association of Black Collegians occupied Sigma Nu for seven hours until President Barnett suspended the fraternity's charter and set a full investigation of the shooting incident into motion.

Sigma Nu was not the only fraternity on campus known for their racist attitudes. Andy Young '70 remembers Phi Delta Theta as "the most blatantly discriminatory fraternity while I was on campus (1964-1968) (Cochran 1978, p. 3)." In April of 1968, a Jewish student was prevented from joining the organization based on anti-Semitic feeling within the organization. Phi Delta Theta's "discriminatory selection procedures" were one of many campus issues

discussed at a faculty meeting on April 8<sup>th</sup> that lasted for more than six hours (Feasley et. al 1969, p. 6). Also at this meeting, the faculty, along with President Barnett, approved a day of mourning for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the dissolution of Sigma Nu.

The next day, the executive board of the Association of Black Collegians presented President Barnett with a list of demands and an ultimatum. Among the demands were the revocation of Phi Delta Theta's charter and the immediate closing of the fraternity house. They concluded, "Failure to meet these demands within 24 hours from the time of 2:00p.m. Tuesday, April 9, will result in a direct confrontation with the administration by the Black people of this community (Feasley et. al 1969, p. 6)." Twenty-four hours later, 450 students and 40 faculty members occupied the Administration Building.

Al Pearman '70 remembers, "The ABC and other student organizations looked at the problem and decided something had to be done. The saying was, 'Don't be concerned, be involved.' The students' talk on campus, combined with the national scene, led to a demonstration (Cochran 1978, p. 4)." The demonstration on April 10<sup>th</sup> drew a crowd of 800 students and 40 professors to Whitnall Field where students including Bob Boney gave impassioned speeches lamenting the blatant discrimination and racism at Colgate University. After the demonstration, many of the students and professors gathered on the field marched to the Administration Building to sit-in, promising that they would not leave the building until Phi Delta Theta's charter was revoked. Professor Linden Summers, a participant in the sit-in, recalls that "every kind of positive leadership on campus was in the Administration Building" and that Wellington Powell (Chairman of the Board of Trustees) attempted to gather all the student leaders and found that almost all were participating in the sit-in (p. 5). Naceo Giles recalls that Powell "was adamant about having us arrested. He would have done anything to get us out of the

building. The Board in general held him up. I suppose that a group of blacks making demands was very offensive to them. They thought of us as ungrateful (p. 8).”

For the next 101 hours, members of the ABC met with President Barnett and other members of the administration as to the terms of the demands. The ABC demanded the immediate revocation of Phi Delta Theta’s charter as well as the closing of the house. After much debate and back and forth between the ABC and President Barnett, a resolution was reached at 6:30pm on Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup>. Phi Delta Theta’s charter was revoked for at least two years and the fraternity house was no longer eligible to be considered a fraternal living unit. While the student and faculty protestors left the Administration building with what they asked for, the revocation of Phi Delta Theta’s charter and the promise of a cultural center, success was not as simple as one administrative action.

**The second Sit-In.** On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1969, an unseasonably warm day for central New York, Byron Chandler stood on the steps of Merrill House to deliver an impassioned speech concerning the creation of a cultural center on Colgate University’s campus. “I’m so tired,” he declared, “Mr. Whiteboy told me he was morally committed and that we should continue to negotiate. We are. But our throats are sore, so sore- and I’m running out of words... and we still ain’t got no Soul House (Speak, Brother 1969).” Chandler’s speech expressing his frustration and exhaustion came only a few days after the conclusion of a 70-hour occupation of Merrill House.

Less than a year after the 1968 sit-in at the Administration building, a group of Black Colgate students were verbally abused and physically beaten by a group of students from Hamilton High School. The March 20<sup>th</sup> incident was a stark reminder of what the editor in chief of the MidYork weekly referred to as the “underlying strain of racism pervading the village of Hamilton” and the “great mesh of racism spreading over the town (Amberg 1969).” Both

Colgate and the Village of Hamilton Board issued statements condemning the incident, but the incident served as yet another reminder of Colgate and Hamilton's racial climate. This incident, coupled with a lack of administrative attention to what the Association of Black Collegians had been promised, became a rallying point for concerned students.

It was soon clear that the administration was not keeping its promises to the Association of Black Collegians, and the students knew they had to take action. Students occupied Merrill House for seventy hours in the hopes of forcing Colgate's administration to keep their promises to their students and commence construction of a cultural center. Though the students were forced from Merrill House when Colgate officials threatened to involve the police, students continued to meet with and push administrators towards the creation of a campus cultural center. The administration eventually agreed to allocate \$50,000 towards the construction of the cultural center so long as the Association of Black Collegians agreed to raise another \$50,000. A former maintenance building was refurbished, and the Colgate's first cultural center opened its doors in 1970.

### **1970s**

**Co-education.** Colgate University became co-educational when 132 freshmen women joined the 2,152 men in September of 1970. Before the arrival of women students on campus, the Women's Caucus was established in the summer of 1970. The Women's caucus consisted of faculty and students concerned with "issues specifically pertaining to women at a predominantly male institution (Barr 1982)." The Women's caucus advocated for the inclusion of more women in each incoming class, and the number of women students on Colgate's campus grew much more quickly than the administration had originally intended. The first class of women was originally capped at 50, but 132 women students joined campus in the fall of 1970.

**Delta Kappa Epsilon Suspended.** In 1973, three years after the first women students arrived on Colgate's campus, the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity was under investigation for sexual misconduct. The suspension came in February 1974, five months after a sophomore woman alleged that she had been raped inside of the fraternity house. DKE's suspension made it the third fraternity to be closed due to University action in the previous five years, the two others being Sigma Nu and Phi Delta Theta, though Phi Delta Theta was allowed to reopen with an entirely new membership. The University's investigation of the September incident at DKE came only after months of pressure from students and faculty as well as multiple phone calls from the young woman's mother to multiple members of the Board of Trustees.

**Union Minority Folk.** On March 8, 1974, about three weeks after DKE's suspension, a group of students formed a ring around the quadrangle in protest against persistent problems that affect all students, but particularly students of color. The Union of Minority Folk led the demonstration, and ten members of the UMF vowed to fast until their grievances were met. Their demands included "a more equitable number of minority professors and administrators (Ritholz 1974, p. 6)." In 1974, students of color made up only 5% of the student body, and only 1% of the faculty and administration.

Other demands included an apology from the *Colgate News* for a sensationalized report of an armed robbery where the suspects were described, above all, as Black. The UMF was also concerned with ensuring adequate and security protection for students of color. While the demonstration seemed to shock the administration, a commentator in *The Colgate Maroon* noted, "Some of the demands of the Union of Minority Folk have the alarming ring of the women's grievance made known recently. In both cases, the University made efforts favorably adjust the figures of its discrimination without making ample provisions to accommodate these minority

groups. The University may have changed superficially, but its underlying attitudes remain unaltered (Minorities 1974, p. 4).” To many students, the administration’s priorities were clear. They would make concessions to student protestors in order to maintain peace on campus, but they were not making any meaningful changes to the institution in order to ensure the safety and comfort of all of their students.

### **1980s**

**Women in crisis.** In 1981, students petitioned for the creation of a Women’s Center, and the first Women’s Resource Center opened in the Cutten core as a place for women to access resources and discuss their similar struggles. Eight students who worked at the center were trained as rape crisis counselors. Despite this success for Colgate’s women, the establishment of the Women’s Center did not seem to deter sexual violence against Colgate’s women.

The Colgate Board of Trustees and the Alumni Corporation received a formal complaint from Debbie Query, the parent of one of Colgate’s female students, Chris Sturges, in 1981. Query lamented Colgate’s poor response after her daughter was raped at a fraternity house. Though the student was suspended following the incident, Query was convinced that “unless basic policy changes are instituted from the top, you are going to see more and more tragedy at Colgate (Query 1981, p.1).” According to Query, Colgate’s ineffectual policies around sexual violence and the complete disregard for the safety of its female students pointed to a fundamental flaw with Colgate. Query pointed to the “underlying sexism which has its roots in the male fraternities which dominate the campus socially, [and] are undermining basic decency and intellectualism at Colgate (p. 2).” After spending time on campus speaking with students and administrators, Query felt as though students do not feel as though they must be held responsible for their actions and that “fraternities feel that they are separate entities (p. 2).” Query concluded

her letter to The Board of Trustees and the Alumni Corporation with recommendations for creating change at Colgate, the first of which was the abolishment of fraternities at Colgate. No response from The Board of Trustees or the Alumni Corporation could be located.

**The Writing is on the Wall.** On April 24, 1984, *The Maroon News* published “The Writing is on the Wall,” an article written by ten women that exposed rape culture at Colgate and linked it to the fraternity system. The five women who authored the article, Sandy Cioffi, Kathy Cooney, Rosie Dady, Amy Quinn, and Mern Horan, demanded the end of the Greek system at Colgate. The women questioned the state of Colgate’s social scene and exposed many abhorrent practices that happened with frequency on fraternity row. The women also questioned Colgate’s lack of response to incidences of sexual harassment and rape at fraternities. They authored a scathing critique of Colgate and the Greek system, writing:

Although Colgate admitted women in 1970, to date it is not coeducational and cannot be while the Greek system exists here. Any system based on a principle of social exclusion, in this case by gender, is divisive and impedes the process of coeducation [...] We are victims and victimizers both. The effects of the system are not confined to the edifices on the Row; they permeate every aspect of Colgate life. (Cioffi et. al 1984, p. 6)

The women did not call out any particular Greek organizations or group of students, but they linked the Greek system’s blatant objectification of women to the high rates of rape on campus.

Unsurprisingly, “The Writing is on the Wall,” caused an uproar on campus. For weeks, the commentary section of *The Maroon* was full of responses both slamming the five authors and offering them their support. Members of the campus Greek system attacked the article for being “thoughtless” and “an attack on the Greek system (Brown 1984, p. 8).” Backlash to the article referred to the incidents of sexual violence that Cioffi et. al exposed were referred to as “grossly



exaggerated or part of ancient Colgate's history" and "non-existent (quoted in "Rape At Colgate" 1984, p. 8)." Critics claimed that only "nymphos" or "loose girls" could be victims of sexual assault on campus (p. 8). The women faced intense criticism in the commentary section of *The Maroon* but received some positive feedback as well. Their supporters praised the authors of "The Writing on the Wall" for exposing "the oppressive acknowledgement of the oppressive climate fostered by the Greek system at Colgate (Kessler et. al 1984)."

Conflicting opinions clashed in the editorial and commentary pages of *The Maroon* and *The Colgate News*. While many students used their pieces to attack individuals or particular incidents, Janice DeToro's letter to the editor on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1984 problematized the campus' reluctance to address their problematic institutions. She wrote, "tradition for tradition's sake has no intrinsic value. Institutions that are not making the best possible contributions to the Colgate community as a co-educational whole should be questioned and re-evaluated," she continued, "Any system that does not have the strength and flexibility to question itself and, when necessary, the actions of its members operates counter to the ideals of this liberal arts institution. Such systems stagnate and eventually fall because of their own intolerant rigidity (p. 3)."

In response to what many members of Colgate's Greek system saw as a direct attack on the institution, angry fraternity members led a march from the Memorial Chapel to the Coop on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1984. While the march in support of fraternity life seems innocuous, the march came mere weeks after a similar march led by students advocating for gay rights who marched from the Coop to the Chapel. Many students saw the march in support of fraternity life to be in direct opposition to the gay rights march, one writing, "This seemed a blatant attack on gay rights. I was surprised not to see a banner leading the fraternities' procession reading 'Oppose Gay Rights – Join a Fraternity' ("To the Editor" 1984, p. 8)."

“The Writing is on the Wall” was published at the close of the Spring 1984 semester, but the piece had a major impact on the following academic year. In February 1985, a small group of students held a sit-in aimed at abolishing Colgate’s Greek system, which they viewed as one of the greatest contributors to sexual assault. A section of the group’s statement of purpose read by then senior Rosemary Dady, read, “We call for an end to the sexism, homophobia, racism, elitism, intolerance and dehumanization which divide this campus [...] The Administration has failed to take effective action against the problems it claims to recognize (Greek Abuses Protested 1985).” The small group of students held vigil in McGregory Hall throughout the day as prospective members of Colgate’s Greek system placed their bids for their preferred organizations. The group of activists hoped to spark a dialogue among their peers about the administration’s ineffective response to the issue of sexual abuse and hazing in the Greek system which had been exposed in “The Writing is on the Wall” the previous Spring. In a phone interview with *The Colgate News*, Dady explained, “It was important to get people together to feel empowered... We’re trying to break the silence and to create a constructive dialogue [...] It’s sad to say, but nothing has changed since last Spring (Greek Abuses Protested 1985).”

Less than a month after “The Writing is on the Wall” was published, *The Post-Standard* published an article on Colgate’s lack of response to eight reports of rape reported during the 1983-1984 school year. The eight reports of rape in question all occurred at fraternities, and four of them occurred during Spring Party Weekend. The article called into question the future of the Greek system at Colgate, as students, faculty, and administrators gave conflicting opinions on the role of fraternities in perpetuating sexual violence and sexist attitudes. Professor Don Berry noted that “there is absolutely no question that the fraternities dominate the social life (Laper 1984, p. A-11).” Senior Amy Quinn gave the most scathing critique of the Greek system and

Colgate overall, stating, “This is still a male school that women go to [...] If (women) avoid the physical edifices of the fraternities, they are not going to avoid the influences that those physical edifices have on campus, because they just permeate the life here (p. A-11).”

Bolstered by the campus conversation around “The Writing is on the Wall,” Colgate’s first “Take Back the Night” march and speak-out was held March 7, 1985. The march and speak-out allowed students to read statements related to rape and question what it meant for them to attend an institution built on male bonding. The inaugural “Take Back the Night” also served as a protest against fraternity involvement in campus social life.

**Colgate Women’s Crisis Center.** As awareness of sexual assault grew on campus, students advocated for the creation of a Crisis Center within Bolton House to ensure that survivors of sexual violence on Colgate’s campus had access to appropriate support in the aftermath of an assault. The student senate approved the creation of a Crisis Center for students to utilize in the aftermath of sexual assault or other traumatizing event. The Crisis Center was located in Bolton House.

Student members of Colgate’s Women’s Crisis Center participated in a number of direct actions aimed at agitating on behalf of Colgate women and educating the campus, particularly on issues of sexual violence. Students met with Colgate’s Madison County Rape Crisis Center Advocates to discuss strategies for rape prevention and victim support that could be reproduced on Colgate’s campus. Students also organized a sit-in at Fraternity bidding in an attempt to reopen campus dialogue around sexual violence, which originated with “The Writing is on the Wall.” Through the Women’s Crisis Center, students were able to organize a training program for student crisis advocates. Student advocates completed a ten-hour training in working with hospitals, police, and the court system along with survivors of sexual violence.

**Rape resurfaces.** Though “The Writing is on the Wall” was published only three years prior, on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1987, the *Colgate News* published a special commentary section titled “Speaking Out on Rape”. The description of the section read, “Women are being raped. One woman in ten will be raped in her lifetime. Women are being raped at Colgate. The women who are raped are afraid to speak out. We will not be silent anymore (Schauer et. al 1987).” The central piece in the commentary section called for the administration to take on a more proactive approach to handling rape on campus. They demanded that the administration create educational programming for rape awareness in order to combat the pervasive attitude of permissibility of sexual assault on campus. The piece placed a great deal of the burden for battling sexual assault at Colgate on the administration. They called for changes in the Justice Board, educational programming, and university policy.

**Coming together.** In May of 1988, 300 students rallied in front of the chapel while listening to speeches from peers, staff, and faculty on racism, sexism, and homophobia. A banner hung from the Chapel’s pillars read, “Oppressions are Interconnected Join Us!” Immediately following the speak-out on the steps of the chapel, students marched to Dean Moynihan’s office to present a letter appealing to the administration to confront intolerance and bigotry at Colgate. Upon receiving the letter Dean Moynihan said, “we would all have to work together to make Colgate a place where intolerance is not tolerated (Smith 1988, p. 4).” Student, faculty, and staff members of cultural groups, the Women’s Coalition, and the Jewish Union spoke to the issues that were most troubling to their communities and how those problems were interrelated. Students, staff, and faculty pointed the lack of faculty members of color, discrimination against LGB students, anti-Semitism, oppression of women, and the lack of academic courses in African and Caribbean Studies.

**Faculty resolve to abolish Greek life (again).** In their last regular meeting of the year, Colgate faculty passed a resolution to abolish the fraternity and sorority system by the beginning of the 1994-1995 academic year. The resolution passed 134-37, making the decision to disavow Greek life a hugely popular move among the faculty. Many members of the faculty spoke in support and in opposition of the resolution and the affect the decision may have on student life, but Professor Balmuth spoke particularly to the concern that the faculty's vote might seem to be in response to a string of incidents rather than "the historic point of a decision to engage in a new residential future (Patrick 1989, p. 1)." Professor Balmuth insisted that the faculty's vote should be viewed as "the sentiment that the fraternity and sorority system no longer has a place at the academic institution [...] [and] no longer fits in with the place of higher education in the larger sphere of society (p. 1)." Despite the faculty's historic and overwhelming support of abolishing fraternities and sororities, the Greek system did not cease operation.

### **1990s**

**Twenty years later.** On March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1990, Colgate Dean of Students Florence Mitchell received a letter from two student Residential Advisors, Karen Lipton, and Krista Pilot. The two RAs expressed their deep concerns about the continued presence of a student found guilty of two counts of rape by the Judicial Board. They called for Dean Mitchell to take immediate action to remove the student as his continued presence on campus "impairs the academic performance of the women directly involved and many other concerned men and women on campus (Lipton 1990, p. 1)." They concluded the letter by saying, "On the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of co-education at Colgate, Colgate women will NOT tolerate living with a convicted rapist (p. 2)."

**Speak-out, again.** A speak-out held on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1993 drew a crowd of more than 200 students and over the course of four hours many told their stories of sexual violence at

Colgate. *The Colgate Maroon-News* reported, “Many said they heard their own story in what was said by other survivors. They were so moved by hearing others speak that they felt compelled to break their silence as well (Schaer 1993, p. 3).” The article detailed, without including names, similar themes that emerged from the survivors recounting of their rapes. It read, “Many were raped in their own beds. The survivors commented that they see their attacker everywhere, on the quad, the coop, the dining hall and downtown. One woman yelled to the crowd, ‘It happens here and it can happen to any one of you’ (p. 3).”

### **2000s**

**Another sit-in.** Discomfort and tension on campus came to a head once again in the wake of multiple racially insensitive events including an offensive email sent by a political science professor. In his email, Professor Barry Shain claimed that many students of color take courses that are not academically rigorous and allow them to talk about their feelings and in which they receive “undeservedly high grades (Arenson 2001).” In response to this and other incidents, students once again occupied the admissions building, this time for seven hours, armed with nine demands.

One year after Professor Shain’s remarks, Phillip Richards, the only Black tenured professor at Colgate in 2002, wrote for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* as to what he saw as the biggest problems facing Black students at Colgate. In conversations with Black students, Professor Richards reported that “They observed that few, if any, Colgate faculty members had stood up to contest Shain’s assertion that black students were less well prepared and educated than their white counterparts (Richards 2002).” Professor Richards remarked that Black students at Colgate are expected to perform at the same level as their white peers who often come from more educationally rigorous backgrounds, but are also perceived by their professors to be less

capable than their white counterparts. Professor Richards wrote, “The double standard leaves its mark on black students long after graduation (Richards 2002).” Professor Richards concluded his article by calling into question foundational aspects of Colgate’s academic expectations for its students, writing:

The silence surrounding such a serious problem is, in and of itself, important. My college, like others of its type, prides itself for educating students in an environment that promotes excellent teaching, individual attention, and high student motivation and accomplishment. The visible disparity between the performance of black and white students calls many of those values into question. What does the sustained failure of black students in the sciences say about the quality of teaching and the individual attention that black students are receiving? What does it say about the institution’s commitment to intellectual excellence? It is far easier for the faculty and administration to brand black students with silent stigma (Richards 2002).

**“A pervasive problem since the beginning”**. On November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009, Angelica Chapman stood with survivors of sexual violence and their allies to voice concerns about their experiences. She told *The Maroon News*, “I’ve been doing research on the history of sexual abuse at Colgate, and it’s been a pervasive problem since the beginning. I’m sick and tired of having these conversations with women about what we can all do to be safer. In my own experiences with sexual abuse, it’s so clear that people don’t understand what’s going on. People close their eyes and shut their ears to it... So many people need to be educated (*The Maroon News* 2009).” Chapman’s speak-out was yet another action in a history of activism focused on ending sexual violence at Colgate, but unlike the speak-outs of 1993 and earlier, Chapman could not point to the extensive services offered to survivors on campus. As of 2009, the Women’s

Resource Center and the Crisis Center no longer existed. Though the Women's Studies Center was open and fully operational, it no longer housed resources for victims of sexual violence as it had in the 80s and early 90s. There is no record of the disbanding of the Crisis Center, and no evidence of a battle to keep it open.

## 2010s

**“Hands up, Don’t Shoot”.** On August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the first day of the Fall semester, a small group of Colgate students gathered on the academic quad to protest police brutality and the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Many students stood on the quad with their arms in the air for as long as they could hold them in place to demonstrate unarmed innocence while other protestors held signs with slogans such as, “Hands up, Don’t Shoot” or distributed information to passersby. According to Kristi Carey ('15), “the protest was a time and space for us to say that this is not okay [...] This was a time to reflect, mourn and connect with other people at Colgate who feel similarly. It was a space for community building—breaking silences of generalized apathy by creating a ‘silent space of solidarity’ (Soderberg 2014).”

**Colgate for who?** On a cold and rainy September morning, a group of students called the Association of Critical Collegians, named for the Association of Black Collegians, marched from the Hall of Presidents to the Admissions Building (formerly the Administration building) carrying signs and chanting “community not conformity” and “we want equity now.” Most student participants sported Colgate gear with question marks taped to their shirts to symbolize the uncertainty of Colgate as an institution that was built for them. The students entered the Admissions building shortly after 8:00am on Monday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 and began Colgate’s second 100-hour sit-in. Students involved in the sit-in cited a myriad of reasons for



their participation. Some pointed to the general campus climate while others cited racist posts on social media and racially insensitive coverage of a campus police brutality rally.

A few hours into the first day of the demonstration, students took turns standing on the Admission building's main staircase to share their experiences with racist stereotypes and microaggressions that together painted a picture of an exclusive and unwelcome climate at Colgate for students of color. Kori Strother ('15), one of the four main organizers of the demonstration, stated, "those testimonies allowed the administration to see us. We walk around campus, marginalized students, minority students, never being seen, feeling as if our identities are not important, are not validated. So it was important that they listen to us and they don't respond. That they sit there and they just listen (Maroon-News Staff 2014)."

The testimonies of students served to contextualize and actualize the list of demands presented to the administration by the Association of Critical Collegians. The ACC's action steps demanded tangible action from Colgate's administration such as the installation of cameras and audio recording devices on the cruiser as well as stronger disciplinary action for hate speech or hate crimes committed on campus. Demands also included a call for diversity training for all faculty, staff, and administrators as well as a call for Colgate to hire and retain more faculty, staff, and administrators of color.

Members of the ACC were clear; they would not vacate the Admissions building until their demands were met. More than 100 students slept in the Admissions building each night, and the daily sign-in sheet recorded more than 400 visitors to the Admissions building on certain days. Members of the ACC voted to reject the first response to their demands put forth by the administration. After hours of negotiation between the ACC's "vessels" Mellissa Melendez, Kori Strother, Natasha Torres, and Kristi Carey, and the administration, the ACC voted to accept a

response from the administration on Friday, September 26<sup>th</sup>. Students left the Admissions building after 101 hours of occupation. As students left the Admissions building they marched across upper and lower campus chanting and celebrating the potential of a Colgate that worked to actively protect and include all of its students.

The administration's response to the ACC's demands was published on Colgate's website and titled "Colgate For All." The plan is routinely updated with the administration's progress on particular initiatives related to the Fall 2014 protest. The website states that the 21-point action plan was "authored collaboratively by students and administrators, to help begin the work of making Colgate a more inclusive and welcoming campus for all students (Colgate For All)." In the Autumn 2014 *Colgate Scene*, President Herbst wrote an open letter to the Colgate community about the sit-in. President Herbst's letter focuses on the collaboration between the administration and concerned students but ignores much of the pain, exhaustion, and hours of work that students put in to make these changes possible. Nowhere in his letter does President Herbst acknowledge Colgate's failure to adequately serve all of its students, and he packages the demonstration and subsequent action plan as a list of boxes to be checked off in order to make Colgate "[a] community that welcomes all, where we learn from each other, and where all can reach their full academic and social potential (Herbst 2014)." President Herbst sings the praises of the collaborative plan while refusing to give credit to the students who formulated it. He concludes his letter by promising that Colgate will make the appropriate changes without crediting those who developed the strategies for remedying the problems they observed.

**Silence is violence.** On November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015, a group of more than 200 students formed a human chain around East Hall and the Center for Women's Studies chanting "silence is violence" and "we need transparency." The chain blocked entrance into the center, where

administrators had previously planned to hold a brown bag discussion of the results of the Sexual Assault Campus Climate Survey. The organizers of the demonstration, Dayna Campbell ('17), Madison Paulk ('16), Rachel Drucker ('17), Susan Miller ('16), Bailey Graves ('16), and Monica Murphy ('16) stood directly in front of the doors to the center, and the chain of support wrapped around the entirety of East Hall from approximately 10:45am until 1:00pm. In addition to preventing the administration from presenting the results of the survey, student protestors called for an increase in support services for survivors of sexual violence. Later that evening, the organizers held a speak-out in the Memorial Chapel at which a list of 11 demands was read to an audience of more than 800 students, faculty, and staff members. After the demands were read, students were invited to come to the stage to share their own experiences with sexual violence at Colgate. The speak-out lasted for more than two hours as students spoke to their experiences and lamented Colgate's reporting process and virtually non-existent support structures.

Six women comprising two separate campus groups completed the organization of the human chain and the speak-out. Campbell, Paulk, and Drucker represented the Association of Critical Collegians, while Miller, Graves, and Murphy represented Colgate Forward—a group comprising only the three which had been in conversation with the administration about improving the conditions for survivors on campus. Members of the ACC had become increasingly frustrated with the administrations less than adequate handling of issues of sexual violence and reached out to Colgate Forward to form a partnership and to plan a direct action.

The protest and speak-out caused a flurry of discussion and controversy on campus, but despite the rumblings of the student body, the organizers of the demonstration received radio silence from the administration. On Friday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, the day after the protest, Interim President Jill Harsin and Vice President and Dean of the College Suzy Nelson sent an email to

the Colgate community acknowledging the power of the speak-out, saying, “We were moved as many survivors found the courage to speak about their experiences and their pain. Their testimonies underscored the need for our community to join together to address sexual violence on this campus (personal communication November 6, 2015).” However, the email made no mention of the previous day’s protest and linked students to the very data that the demonstration had prevented the administration from presenting. Also on Friday, the Sexual Climate Advisory Committee was scheduled to meet, but Interim President Harsin postponed the meeting. While many members of the committee still chose to meet to discuss the events of the previous day, no members of the administration attended the meeting.

In the weeks and months following the demonstration and speak-out, members of Colgate Forward and the ACC met with administrators and worked towards the establishment of a sexual violence resource center, which is promised to be equipped with counselors, advocates, and generous resources. A few adjustments to Colgate policy such as the addition of a personal leave policy and the reorganization of some aspects of the Equity Grievance Policy also resulted from student talks with administration. A full report of the changes to Colgate policy and procedure is published on Colgate’s website.

In the months after the demonstration, Dean Suzy Nelson published a message in the *Colgate Scene* about the protest. She wrote:

Whether protesting race relations or sexual climate, our students have demonstrated their passion and their desire to create a better Colgate. Their idealism, organization, and courage have caused many to examine important aspects of our campus community [...] Campus activism is a sign that Colgate is a strong, intellectually engaged university where students are taking on difficult challenges [...] As a dean, I am committed to

sustained dialogue as a pathway to collaborative problem solving: engaging students with respect, seriously listening to their concerns, and facilitating reasonable and decisive action aimed at making Colgate better for all. (Nelson 2016)

The demonstration and speak-out, much like protests of Colgate's past, was presented in Colgate's alum and parent magazine as a time for the campus to come together to work on problems that affect the entire community, rather than a call for an institution to do better.

Continuously, student movements are co-opted and repackaged with this message of community and inclusivity when the movements themselves attempt to call attention to a lack of community and care at Colgate.

### **Wrapping up**

The response to student discontent throughout Colgate's history and continuing to today seems to be, if you're not happy here then you should fix it. The burden to create an institution that is safe and hospitable for all students continually falls on the shoulders of student activists. Students have been forced to fight institutional structures that were not made to accommodate them. Colgate's culture of entitlement creates a sense of anxiety around institutional change. When students seek to upset the status quo, they challenge the historical foundations of Colgate—a university built by white men for white men. Colgate was not created for students of color, women, LGBT people, non-Christians, or people of low socioeconomic status. In order to create a Colgate that is truly “for all,” students have fought continually to break down the structures that were created at Colgate's inception.

### **Discussion**

Based on my exploration and critique of student affairs theories along with my historical account of Colgate's history of activism, I seek now to critique the administration's framing of

success of student social movements. I will show that a new conception of student affairs theories will allow administrators to reconsider the value of student social movements and re-conceptualize how student activists should be considered. To begin this reevaluation, I turn first to Van Dyke (1998) and her theories about what causes social movements to arise on college campuses.

One factor that Van Dyke (1998) considers when examining how social movements arise on college campuses is student isolation. The Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Consortium Sexual Assault Campus Climate Survey was given to Colgate students in Spring 2015. The HEDS data shows that students on Colgate's campus feel isolated from their peers. According to the HEDS data, 56.1% of Colgate students believe that their fellow students are genuinely concerned about the welfare of other students, compared with 73.9% as the benchmark for similar schools (Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium 2015).

In her article, Van Dyke (1998) claims that a history of activism is the strongest factor in determining whether or not a school is likely to have student activism. She also claims that locations with protests around one issue are more likely to have protests around multiple issues. We see this clearly at Colgate where there is a long history of protest around the racial climate and sexual violence. Van Dyke shows that isolation is a key factor in the creation of activist subcultures and the continuation of student movements across years. As shown by the HEDS data, students at Colgate feel more isolated than students at their peer institutions. Van Dyke also discusses the emergence of student activism as related to the affluence of the University and its students. As a wealthy, predominately white institution, it is no surprise that Colgate has a rich history of student protest. According to Van Dyke, affluent, selective campuses such as Colgate are more likely to have student activism.

Colgate clearly has an important history of protest and activism that has shaped the campus. This history of social movement at Colgate is hidden from the collective memory of the institution. The historicization of social movements is important not only to preserve the work of student activists, but to reinforce their agency and to refute the idea that students are merely passive consumers of their education. Students are affected by what goes on outside of the ivory tower, and the institution is not removed from the rest of the world. The Colgate Bubble is a myth, and the factors that influence protest on campus are not limited to campus dynamics. Social movements arise from institutional and social memory as well as students' interaction with the political and social issues of their time.

Typically, students are not valued as independent thinkers, only as child-like consumers of their education. Long (2002) reports on the frustration that many student activists feel when advocating for changes at their universities. She writes that student voices are often dismissed and students are encouraged to be consumers of knowledge rather than active producers of knowledge. When student contributions are not considered valuable, students feel discouraged from participation in their university apart from the classroom. Long's report in *The Wingspread Statement on Student Civic Engagement* makes recommendations for institutions that want to incorporate student voices and concerns into policy discussions. She writes, "Student representation in administrative areas should not be limited to one token student sitting on a number of committees. In addition, it is not merely enough to talk with students; their input should have equal weight when compared to the input of other stakeholders in the decision-making process (p. 13)."

Students must be intentionally included in decision making processes because students are often organizationally illiterate about the institutions they attend (Long, 2002). It can take

student activists years to learn the nuances and bureaucracy well enough to enter into any meaningful conversations with university administrators, and by the time students make it to the level at which administrators are willing to engage with students, it is at the end of their time at the university. Student contributions to policy and procedure are rarely valued until they are adjusted and/or co-opted by administrators. Plans such as the 21 points presented by the Association of Critical Collegians and the 11 points presented by Colgate Forward and the ACC are nowhere near perfect documents, but they show that students are thinking about and engaging with issues that are important to them, and that they are serious about making changes at Colgate.

As the administration's response to student protest movements at Colgate has shown, administrators often act as interpreters of students' experiences which reflect an "educator knows best" mentality (Abes & Kasch 2007, p. 634). By determining whether or not a student movement was successful, Colgate has systematically overwritten their students and ignored their agency in determining what constitutes a successful student movement. The overarching belief that students, particularly millennials, are apathetic plays a role in the institutional dismissal of student voices. Morton asserts, the same rationale that allows people, institutions, and events to be left out of the history of higher education is the same rationale that continues to exclude people, institutions, and events from policy discussions (personal communication, January 24, 2016).

### **Conclusion**

After evaluating the theories, literature, and history of social protest at Colgate University, I now return to my main question, why aren't student voices valued? The narrative-case study has clearly shown that students have continually been forced to fight back against the



institution in order to advocate for their place as valued members of Colgate's community.

Despite Colgate's rich history of student activism, student voices remain an unvalued yet vital part of Colgate. Exploring Colgate's history of student activism through the lens of queer theory and student affairs theories has given me new insight into Colgate's refusal to value the voices and concerns of their students.

Student voices are not valued because students are not seen as having valuable opinions or ideas, and their concerns are routinely dismissed as petulance or misunderstanding. A reinterpretation of the value of student contribution to policy discussions would be largely beneficial to universities like Colgate. It is possible for everyone, from students to administrators, to have a seat at the table in policy discussions and beyond. If institutions of higher education operated under the assumption that everyone's identity, and not just that of students, is in constant flux then the university could live up to its true collegial intentions. The recognition that administrators are continuing to develop and change their identities would lend new credibility to students, particularly student activists who often formulate concrete plans for the improvement of the institution. If we assume that everyone within the university is in constant flux, then students necessarily become the experts of their own experiences rather than relying on administrators to interpret their experiences. As the experts of their own experiences within the university, students are an invaluable resource to creating and adjusting university policy to create institutions that are more inclusive and better serve their entire populations.

These ideas of incorporating students into policy discussions are highly idealistic and impossible based on the current structure of higher education. To create truly inclusive institutions that serve their entire communities, it is necessary to completely restructure higher education as a space that truly values the safety, thoughts, and contributions of its students. As

the legend goes, Colgate University was founded by thirteen men with thirteen dollars and thirteen prayers. If Colgate is to become an institution that lives up to its mission statement as an inclusive institution that develops thoughtful and critical leaders, the university's lore must change. Colgate was not created as an inclusive space, and to make it a space in which all students are valued we must realize that the Colgate that we hope for will be built by its students.

Bodies that have had racialized or sexualized violence enacted upon them contain vital knowledge. In our reimagining of the university, we must prioritize and center the voices of students who have been historically pushed aside and forgotten. We can clearly see that higher education has not been a place for all bodies. Universities like Yale, Mizzou, Columbia, and Colgate have all seen pushback from student activists who are demanding that their bodies be heard, valued, and considered in the development of university policy. The university, as it is reimagined, can be a place of great possibility and growth that values and centers the experiences of its most traditionally disserved students.

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