ABSTRACT

Title of Document:	MEMBERSHIP VS. BEING OF THE COMMUNITY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE GO-GO MUSIC-CULTURAL COMMUNITY.
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Community *membership* is an important element of McMillan and Chavis' (1986) classic sense of community framework, which has been a staple in community psychology research. The present study explored the extent to which the McMillan and Chavis five-attribute definition of community membership matched how membership is defined by members of the Go-Go music-cultural community that is highly localized to the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area. This qualitative case study also explored the possibility that other membership attributes exist for the Go-Go community besides the five McMillan and Chavis attributes of boundaries, emotional safety, sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and common symbol system. Results suggest that the membership construct may not be relevant for all types of communities, as boundaries, emotional safety, sense of belonging and identification, and personal investment do not operate in the Go-Go community the way that McMillan and Chavis defined them.

A different construct called *being of the community* is offered for the Go-Go community as a better fit than membership. Attributes for this alternative concept, being of the community, include *permeable levels*, *personal knowledge and experience*, and

recognition, as well as *common symbol system*. This construct takes into account the Go-Go community's contextual intersection of: geographical location, the Washington, D.C. area; the historical era in which Washington, D.C. was majority-Black, 1970s through early 2000s; the perceived older age of the community; the perceived Blackness of the community; and the community's connection to the entertainment industry. Being of the community is also offered as a better fit than membership because of the Go-Go community's *unbounded* structure, in contrast to the *bounded* structure of the communities that exemplify McMillan and Chavis' (1986) attributes of membership.

Noting scholarly critiques of the sense of community construct as an assumption of homogeneity and social equality (e.g., Wiesenfeld, 1996), and critiques of music scene studies as prioritizing the male voice (e.g., Hill, 2014), the present study imparts alternative findings regarding race, age, socioeconomic status, and gender. Implications of this study include the need for researchers to consider issues of power and cultural marginalization as they study communities and the role of Western dominant culture in how community theory is constructed and applied to all types of communities (i.e., without addressing contextual variation, including culturally and historically specific variation).

This work speaks to academic audiences interested in moving toward more contextualized approaches to community study. This study also has significance for the Go-Go community, as the community has been consistently stereotyped and marginalized in its local sociopolitical context; participants' experiences and perspectives illuminate the cultural significance of Go-Go to the people who are *of the community*.

MEMBERSHIP VS. BEING OF THE COMMUNITY:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE GO-GO MUSIC-CULTURAL COMMUNITY

By

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Scholars had put forth at least 94 definitions of "community" by 1955, according to Puddifoot (1995). A review of the academic debate over the meaning of community revealed that scholars do not agree on what constitutes a community, or what measurements of it are sufficient (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009). The study of community has generated scholarly assertions that *community* as a construct is abstract, ambiguous, and unable to fit within the alleged social fragmentation of modern society (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009; Wiesenfeld, 1996). Nevertheless, researchers continue to study "communities" of various types, viewing "community" as an important area of study, with increasing emphasis given to chosen relational communities since individuals relate more to these non-geographically defined communities than to their localities (Heller, 1989; Small & Supple, 1998).

Though relational communities are not necessarily bound by geographic location, many studies on relational communities are conducted through geographically-based settings and formalized units such as: schools; community centers; workplaces; churches; community-located organizations; and nonprofit organizations. These geographically-based settings and formalized units are important in communities, as they often serve as conduits for and/or protectors of resources. Based on the definition of community, however, neither formalized organizations nor traditional settings are needed for a community to form (Heller, 1989; Dunham, 1986) or for people to feel a sense of community (see McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

An important task facing researchers, then, is exploring a diversity of directions for collaborative efforts—especially because relational communities, whose boundaries are more social than geographical, can offer more diverse possibilities for community activities that can positively impact a great number of families, neighborhoods, and individuals. By including more unbounded relational communities in community psychology studies, researchers can explore a greater diversity among types of communities and diversity in the ways in which individuals relate to them.

At the center of the present study is the Go-Go community, a group of people referenced in relation to go-go music, a genre highly localized to the DC-Maryland-Virginia region. Though associated with music and culture, the term *go-go community* has simultaneously been linked to collective social issues, emotions, and political activity, as well as race, in a specific geographic location. The unique context of the Go-Go community, with its relational, unbounded-but-localized quality, makes it ideal for examination using a community psychology framework that is most often applied to relationally or geographically bounded communities.

***Who* is the Community?**

In community studies, researchers work with a sample of members from the larger community. Community samples are influenced by timing (the point in the community's history in which the study is conducted), community leaders or gatekeepers (who facilitate access to prospective participants), and formal community/institutional programs (mechanisms in place that provide a pool of participants or data), among other factors. These contextual factors are important whether the community under study is location-based, relational, bounded, or unbounded. How, then, do researchers facilitate a process of deeper contextualization in which scholars think beyond the community as an object, and carefully consider the human beings impacted by our work?

Community study helps us to better understand larger social issues of society, and in many cases, to collaboratively understand and address location-specific or group-specific issues. To properly address a community's issues, it is important to know who belongs to it, i.e., the specific people who must share power in the process and outcomes. The present study explores how members of an unbounded relational community identify their membership, i.e., who belongs and who does not belong to their community.

To Analyze a *We*

The proposed study seeks to determine how members of an unbounded relational community construct social boundaries that distinguish their community from those outside of it. Wiesenfeld (1996) questions the presumption that a community under study represents a *we*: a "homogeneous group of individuals, clearly distinguishable from others" (p. 337). Treating the concept of a community *we* as merely a myth, Wiesenfeld insisted that there is danger in mounting this *we* as an object itself to be analyzed by community scientists who inevitably focus on common characteristics, actions, and perspectives.

Emphasizing community psychology's focus on diversity, Wiesenfeld (1996) also cautioned that academics constrain the production of new insights when they conceptualize a community without any recognizable intra-individual or inter-individual differences. This "pursuit of homogeneity" alleged by Wiesenfeld may, in fact, be an academic way of coping with the reality of heterogeneity in community. Given the very obvious variation among people in a community, it should be expected that scholars as well as laypersons would seek to examine what common things distinguish the community as a group.

Though a solid critique of the assumption of homogeneity in community study, this contention of a *we* is misplaced. Weisenfeld's definition of the *we* as a "homogeneous group of individuals, clearly distinguishable from others" binds two ideas: 1) community uniformity, and 2) a community's ability to distinguish itself from others. However, these ideas need not be entwined, because this confounding ignores humans' varying ways of forming relational boundaries—dynamic though they may be—without members of a community needing to feel identical in their identities, characteristics, actions, and perspectives.

Wiesenfeld even stated that, "…people with divergent views may coexist in the same community with others with whom they share needs, feelings, actions, hopes, space, dispositions, commitments, and a history which makes them feel part of a single whole" (p. 341). Herein lies the *we*. That *we* is not based in homogeneity or diversity; it means that *we* are a community and *we* know who *we* are.

The aspect of the *we* truly up for debate, then, is not homogeneity, but distinguishability. The present study addresses the question of whether the community *we* can distinguish themselves from *others*, and, how. Wiesenfeld notes that even with the chaos and complexity of community, "there is a group of people willing to struggle to preserve that sense" (p. 345). The present study will address the distinguishability of that group.

The sense of community framework, with its explicit definition of the construct of *membership,* offers a guide for recognizing how communities form social boundaries to identify who belongs and who does not. This membership framework will be used to study the distinguishability of the Go-Go community.

Membership: Who Belongs and Who Does Not

Sense of community. Building on Sarason's (1974) initial work and Gusfield's (1975) dimensions of community, McMillan and Chavis' (1986) framework has been at the center of the psychological literature on sense of community. Psychologists suggest that an individual's sense of community is an important aspect of self-identification (Sarason, 1974). McMillan and Chavis (1986) propose four elements of *sense of community*:

> The first element is *membership*. Membership is the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness. The second element is *influence,* a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members. The third element is reinforcement: *integration and fulfillment of needs*. This is the feeling that members' needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group. The last element is *shared emotional connection,* the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences. (McMillan & Chavis, p. 9)

Scholars study sense of community and how it operates in relational communities tied to the workplace, religion, ethnic identity, school, and other socially-bounded conceptual and physical spaces. Sense of community has been analyzed to reveal an underlying needs-based theory: "an individual's sense that their community serves as a resource for meeting key physiological and psychological needs such as the need for affiliation, power, and affection" (Nowell & Boyd, 2010, p. 833).

Research has demonstrated that individuals hold multiple senses of community, as they belong to multiple diverse communities at once (e.g., Brodsky & Marx, 2001; Mannarini & Fedi, 2009). An individual's sense of community can also change over time (Loomis, Dockett, & Brodsky, 2004). Researchers have also conceptualized a construct called negative psychological sense of community, which is purported to be the qualitative opposite of sense of community, entailing four elements labeled *distinctiveness*, *alienage*, *abstention*, and *frustration* (Mannarini, Rochira, & Talo, 2014). However, the scale used to measure these assumes that the community for which individuals are responding is bound by location or by obvious social confines. A full critique of the negative psychological sense of community construct is unnecessary for the present study, but it is worth noting that the construct's assumption of common location and definite boundaries reflect problematic areas of community study that have been criticized by some scholars. The assumption that every community has definite boundaries of membership is under investigation in the present study.

It is presumed that McMillan and Chavis' sense of community framework holds true for all communities. However, scholars have criticized the sense of community framework—especially its measurement, the Sense of Community Index—for focusing too much on an individual's orientation and feeling toward a community while overlooking the notion of community itself (see Hill, 1996; Sonn, Bishop, & Drew, 1999). Sense of community theory has also been criticized for being a concept of group cohesion and utopian characteristics that eschews the aspects of individual freedom sought in a democratic culture (Dunham, 1986). In similar fashion, feminist literature criticizes the majority of scholarly work regarding community as an imposition of an idealized view of community that is free from structural inequalities (e.g., Friedman, 1989; Weiss, 1995; as cited in Hill, 2014). Critics note that such studies disregard the fact that many communities function via the exploitation of some groups to the advantage of others.

Despite the criticism, sense of community as a construct remains a popular area of study. For the present study, it provides guidance by which the concept of membership can be more systematically analyzed using qualitative data.

The membership framework. The first of the sense of community elements is *membership*, defined as "the feeling of belonging or sharing a sense of personal relatedness" and "a feeling that one has invested part of oneself to become a member and therefore has the right to belong" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). Membership was theorized to have five attributes: boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system. Membership, by this theory, is based on the notion that there are people who belong to a given community and people who do not belong to that community.

The authors suggest that membership has clear *boundaries* that divide group members from outsiders. In other words, both members and non-members of the community know who belongs and who does not. Social and symbolic boundaries have been studied in social psychological and sociological context, specifically the conceptualization of in-group and out-group identification. This *us versus them* categorization is studied in social identity theory, highlighting groups' need to evaluate their own group positively and groups' need to feel superior to other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Symbolic boundaries are believed to be created, maintained, and/or dismantled by groups competing for the symbolic resources that set the parameters of reality and uphold group and status-based categorization (Lamont & Molnar, 2008). These are conceptual tools that humans use to classify people, as well as objects, practices, time, and space (Lamont & Molnar, 2008). Symbolic boundaries also contribute to feelings of similarity with and membership in a group (Epstein, 1992). Boundaries are used to keep some people in and others out; they are barriers of trust and interpersonal protection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

The second attribute of membership is *emotional safety*. Underlying emotional safety is the concept of security, which can be experienced emotionally, as well as physically and economically (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). This security, provided by membership boundaries, is theorized to protect group intimacy (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). McMillan's (1996) extension of the sense of community framework also included emotional safety, but uses *truth* as the underlying concept. This truth is related to whether a community member feels safe upon expressing a personal truth to the community. Sharing and allowing community members' varying personal truths provide safety and group intimacy (McMillan, 1996).

Third, the authors assert that members of a community have a *sense of belonging and identification*. This means that an individual may identify as a part of a group and hold the thought "This is my group" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). This is a belief in and an expectation of a place in the group (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), which McMillan (1996) updated to having *faith* that one belongs. The second component here is community acceptance, in which an individual becomes attached to the community because the individual has been accepted by the community (McMillan, 1996).

The fourth attribute needed for membership is *personal investment*. Individuals can develop emotional attachments with communities or groups as a result of "working" for their membership (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). A personal investment means that a person feels as if his or her own group membership was earned, and as a result it is more valuable (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Lastly, McMillan and Chavis propose that *a common symbol system* is an attribute of membership. Symbols are the social conventions that groups use to create social distance and distinguish members from nonmembers (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). These are given meaning by those who use them, providing integration into community social life (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Examples include a logo, a flag, language, holiday, rites of passage, and dress.

In revisiting sense of community theory with a fresh look after its years of considerable influence in the field of community psychology, McMillan (1996) updated the concept of *membership* to that of *spirit*. In this extension of the sense of community construct, McMillan affirms that the original elements (*membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs*, and *shared emotional connection*) are preserved but rearranged and renamed as *spirit, trust*, *trade*, and *art*. The study presently proposed, however, is concerned with membership as defined in the original sense of community framework (1986). Most community psychology literature references the classic (1986) framework, and the proposed study will remain consistent with this tradition.

The *boundaries, sense of belonging and identification*, and *common symbol system* attributes of membership, specifically, denote that there are those who belong and those who do not belong to a given community. The idea that community psychologists and laypersons can discern a community's membership so easily has been challenged as an assumption of homogeneity (Wiesenfeld, 1996). McMillan and Chavis' membership framework, however, operates outside of assumptions of community homogeneity. For example, having a common symbol system represents a community's ability to distinguish itself; it does not mean that each member is identical to the other.

McMillan and Chavis' definition of membership is very *us versus them*, which adds to Weisenfeld's problem with the *we*, given the instability of community boundaries and the nuance of historical context. Community boundaries may be unstable, but instability does not equate to nonexistence.

The present study uses McMillan and Chavis' (1986) membership framework as the basis for a qualitative study on how membership, i.e., who belongs and who does not, is conceptualized in the Go-Go community.

The Go-Go Community

In the current study, the community of interest formed around go-go music. Geographical, historical, political and cultural contextual factors directly impacted the community's formation, growth, and challenges. Though the Go-Go community is primarily based on shared interest (a music form) and a geographical location (Washington, DC and its suburbs), representations of it in local media include associations to class and socio-economic status, local violence, and collective political positioning.

In the interest of conceptualizing this group as the community of people it is purported to be, the present study treats the Go-Go community as a proper noun, i.e., capitalizing "Go-Go" in that sense. Go-Go music, which originated in Washington, D.C.’s Black community in the 1970s, was born of the funk genre and incorporates African and Latin rhythms with call-and-response performance techniques. It developed as a form of expression for a cultural group that came of age under the mayoral reign of Marion Barry as Washington’s population grew into a Black majority. The style of entertainment quickly spread to neighboring Prince George’s County, Maryland and other suburban areas surrounding D.C. but never gained the same intensity of popularity outside of the metropolitan region, even though go-go bands have played all over the United States and internationally. The go-go scene has been carried forth by dozens of go-go bands, a limited number of venue owners, patrons of go-go shows, community media outlets, and other supportive forces such as local disc jockeys and historians.

Settings are important for the perpetuation of go-go culture and the spread of the art form. Go-Go was built upon and still exists in the tradition of the live music experience—that is, go-go is most impactful when it is experienced live instead of when it is recorded for listening. Go-Go music is based on interactive performance between the musicians and their audience, with call-and-response creating many shared songs that can be unique to a given performance moment (see Lornell & Stephenson, Jr., 2009). The moment is composed of the location of the performance (a specific venue or type of event) and the varying group identities within the audience (the groups and individuals who make their attendance known to the band). The fact that this form of entertainment is so interactive, having been created based on in-person experience, has been cited as why the genre has not spread as quickly as other forms of music that are more readily consumed by listening to a studio recording (Lornell & Stephenson, 2009).

Other reasons why the music has not gained popularity as fast as hip hop (which it preceded in origin) have been debated for the past 20 years in internet forums created for go-go fans and in panel discussions sponsored by universities and arts organizations. Still, go-go bands have been created in Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, and overseas among military personnel. In the 1980s and 90s, several go-go bands toured internationally (Hammond, 2015; Lornell & Stephenson, 2009). Though the go-go phenomenon is very much centered in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area, go-gos take place in many Virginia towns outside of the Capital Beltway, as well as in North Carolina, and in conjunction with HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) sports and social activities in the Southern Atlantic region. Also, go-go bands play at a variety of concerts and festivals nationwide, to national and international audiences.

A go-go music show is called a *go-go* when it is held in certain locations, mainly low-capacity venues and restaurants that cater to a largely Black population of go-go music fans. The *go-go* is the unit of collectivity, community member recognition, recreation, and artful expression. Going to a go-go is a noticeably different experience than watching a go-go band perform at an institutionally sponsored public festival or event at which go-go bands are invited to play. The audiences at go-gos have been described as "in your face" and "demonstrative," expressing themselves "vigorously and loudly" (Lornell & Stephenson, 2009). Go-Gos are publicly perceived as happenings that are unwelcoming toward non-Black populations, and they are primarily advertised directly to Black people (Lornell & Stephenson, 2009).

A variety of safe and appropriate community settings are what the community has always relied on to experience a sense of unity through interactive performance (Lornell

& Stephenson, Jr., 2009). Within the go-go, the call and response format welcomes audience feedback from the community *crews* in attendance. From the stage, a rapper may ask the crowd, “Who are you? Who is your crew?” or may distinctly call out groups of people who are attending the go-go together from a neighborhood, block, street, or town. Attending and participating in a go-go has been compared to a religious or spiritual experience (Ellis, 2009; Lornell & Stevenson, 2009).

There are three nonfiction books written with go-go music as the primary subject. First, *The Beat! Go-Go Music from Washington, D.C.* (Lornell & Stephenson, 2009) explored the phenomenon of go-go music and its social and cultural impact on the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area. Second, *Go-Go Live: The Musical Life and Death of a Chocolate City* (Hopkinson, 2012) documented the socio-political history of go-go music, centering on race and District of Columbia politics. Third, *Take Me Out to the Go-Go: The Autobiography of Kato Hammond* (Hammond, 2015) is a first-person narrative that explains how go-go came to be a distinct lifestyle for many young, Black people from the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Region. All three of these books refer to a “go-go community.”

Purpose of the Study

The presumption that the Go-Go community is a distinctive, identifiable group of individuals is simultaneously associated with presumptions of shared socioeconomic status, political power, and race—contextualized in the history and politics of Washington, D.C. The unique context of the Go-Go community makes it ideal for examination with community psychology theory to see if a framework such as *membership* provides a precise application.

The purpose of this study is to expand knowledge on the construct of community membership, which captures the notion that, in a community, there are members and nonmembers—those who belong and those who do not. Though Wiesenfeld (1996) confounded the uniqueness of a community "we" with an assumed homogeneity, the present study aims to explore social boundaries without assuming community uniformity.

The first aim of this study is to determine to what extent the Go-Go community's conceptualization of membership follows McMillan & Chavis' (1986) five-attribute definition of membership: boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system. In their detailed definition of membership, McMillan and Chavis named Puritans, gangs, college fraternities, and homeowners as example communities; however, the Go-Go community is notably different than any of these. It is unknown whether the membership construct applies equally to this type of music-cultural community.

The second aim of this study is to determine if there are other attributes of membership for the Go-Go community unaccounted for in the membership framework. Given its unique context, the community may offer further information on how a community's social boundaries are constructed, making distinguishability possible.

This study also takes into account the criticism from some community scholars that community studies focus too much on idealized notions of community, focusing on uniformity and sameness while overlooking issues of diversity and structural oppression. In this exploration of membership and social boundaries, the Go-Go community is not assumed to be homogenous nor free of within-group social inequality.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Go-Go Community in Media

The Go-Go community is not easily comparable to any other loosely referenced music community or other community of interest such as the fanfiction community. Mainstream and community-based media mentions of a go-go community suggest it is not merely a music community, but a socially marginalized and geographically localized one with associated political implications. In this sense, it is different than other music communities characteristically associated with Black people such as blues, hip hop, or reggae. The following emphasis on media representations of the Go-Go community is used to illustrate its unique contexts.

Mainstream local media. The phrase *go-go community* has been used in mainstream media, in reference to a group of people associated with go-go music (e.g., Lornell & Stephenson, 2009; Richards, 2015; Hammond, 2015b; Wartofsky, 2015). In referencing a go-go community, journalists and other professional writers articulate the existence of a culturally specific force and voice of a certain population based in the Washington, DC Metropolitan region. For example, this is how a *Washington Post* article acknowledges a go-go community:

> Local government officials have long paid lip service to go-go, especially during campaign season, but members of the go-go community have felt that official Washington has done too little to support, showcase and protect the music… The D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities collaborates with go-go musicians two to three times each year, hosting public concerts and organizing education programs. But by and large, the go-go community feels that this isn't enough.

> Many wonder why the city hasn’t taken steps toward a go-go museum, a hall of fame, or a permanent venue where tourists could hear Washington’s home-grown music. (Martinez, 2015)

This quote illustrates how local mainstream media identifies the go-go community as a group to which local politicians and a local government-backed arts institution have directed some activity. The phrase ‘go-go community’ can be found in other mainstream media publications serving the Washington, D.C. area (e.g., Austermuhle, 2012; Richards, 2013; Smith, 2010; Wartofsky, 2015). Writers making the reference typically describe the alleged disenfranchisement of go-go musicians and venue owners due to recent regulatory policies, link go-go to violence, or assert that the gentrification of Washington, D.C. has negatively impacted the go-go scene and the revenue upon which its business owners depend.

The political dimension of the loosely referenced go-go community is evident in local journalists’ reporting of how Washington, D.C. politicians either associate with or distance themselves from it. As in the above example from the *Washington Post*, the *Washington City Paper* also implies a powerlessness and pawn status of this presumed group of people and their art in relating them to the 2010 mayoral campaign of Adrian Fenty.

> But what Fenty’s campaign might not want to share with the go-go community is that some of the other parts of his political platform—the relentless focus on constituent service, the toughness on crime—has actually made things harder for the scene. Because even as the music has become a useful political prop, go-go venues remain a touchy subject for some of their neighbors, who see them as

> magnets for criminality. And Fenty has courted those neighbors just as assiduously as he courts the musicians. (Smith, 2010)

This politicization of the so-called "go-go community" is compounded by the fact that go-go music has always been associated with Washington's lower-income Black population (Lornell & Stephenson, 2009; Hopkinson, 2012a; 2012b). Along with gentrification in Washington came the closings of housing projects, schools, and entertainment venues that have historically served the city's lower-income Black residents, pushing many of them into neighboring Prince George's County, Maryland (DeRenzis & Rivlin, 2007; Lornell & Stephenson, Jr., 2009; Klein & Zapotosky, 2011). This mainstream media narrative has linked gentrification to the displacement of go-go music from Washington, D.C. (e.g., Hopkinson, 2012a).

Before the current media narrative of a displaced, powerless community, however, there was one of a violent go-go community (see Lornell & Stephenson, 2009; Wartofsky, 2015). The rise in violent incidents at go-go shows paralleled the crisis in drug-related violence all over the country during the late 1980s. By the 1990s, the music was targeted for legislation and policies designed to reduce violence at go-go shows. Both the crisis of violence and the crisis of displacement would affect the go-go community because the community relies on the go-go venues to provide cultural ties, social interaction, recreation, and income. Local violence—prior to the threat of gentrification—contributed to the closings of venues and to the policies that managed to restrict the go-go scene without restricting other forms of music that are performed in Washington, D.C. and Prince George's County. Most media stories about go-go in the

1980s and 1990s were specifically about violence at go-go shows, and to a lesser extent, about incidents in which women were videotaped dancing partially nude at shows.

Violence is not merely a media narrative, but a tragic reality for people whose family members have been injured or killed at a go-go music venue. Prince George's County officials reported that an increase in violent incidents at go-gos from 2005 to 2011 led to their enactment of an emergency bill named CB-18-2011 (Prince George's County Maryland, County Executive, 2011). This is important because following the enactment of Prince George's County's 2011 Dancehall Law CB-18, an authentic go-go [venue] was more likely to be shut down, and the likelihood of a community member creating an authentic go-go (venue or standalone event) was greatly reduced. One of the stipulations of the law is that persons must acquire a license to operate a "dancehall" and that no one previously convicted of a felony could obtain one. Another term of this law prevents some facilities from holding "public dances" and charging admission to the public (Robinson, 2014). According to the *Washington Post*, some former owners of go-go venues that were forced to close have called the law discriminatory and they collectively filed a lawsuit against the county, which was dismissed (Robinson, 2014). Go-Go fans have publicly (via internet) expressed resentment that the law unfairly targets go-go music as if it were the cause of violence, and those accounts also make mention of "the Go-Go community" (Greenleigh, 2014a; 2014b).

Some Washington, D.C. and Prince George's County restaurant owners have still been able to maintain venues and events where go-go music is performed; however, some bands obtain their performance gigs by refraining from labeling their music as go-go. Also, several of Washington's large-capacity venues that cater to many different forms of entertainment have recently begun to open their stages to go-go bands because of the income generated.

Community-based media. The mainstream media's focus on the negative aspects of the go-go scene in the mid-1990s occurred during the same time that a go-go musician trained himself in web design and decided to make a media platform specifically about go-go music. In his autobiography, Kevin "Kato" Hammond describes his introduction to the World Wide Web in 1996, as well as his continual searches for information on go-go music. Finding none, he started his own website about go-go music and culture, and his personal account of its growth in popularity is that "word started circulating in the Go-Go community about the website" (Hammond, 2015, p. 188). That website has now grown into a multi-media platform, including a digital magazine, a print magazine, a radio station, and a YouTube channel, collectively referred to as *Take Me Out to the Go-Go (TMOTTGoGo),* with its center at www.tmottgogo.com. Since 1996, at least two dozen individuals have made journalistic contributions to the platforms with articles, photography, videos, or web log posts. Hundreds have participated in the site's several iterations of online community message boards. The media outlet was created and exists to allow anyone to contribute articles, videos, music, photographs, etc. that represent go-go culture. It has provided a springboard for many of its contributors to launch their own ventures, companies, websites, and more. *TMOTTGoGo* has been regarded as the "best source of information about go-go" (Lornell & Stevenson, 2009, p. 241).

Typing the phrase "go-go community" into the site's search input box yields web log postings that date back to 2009, many of which name the Go-Go community as a group or entity that has been specifically affected by certain events. For example, one web posting that comes up in the search is “Top 15 Most Significant 2012 Moments That Affected The Go-Go Community” [sic] (TMOTTGoGo, 2012). Other postings are in memoriam of go-go musicians or popular individuals who have passed away, many of which contain the person’s full legal name and the qualifying phrase “known to the Go-Go community as…” to specify the person’s nickname (e.g., Hammond, 2015b; TMOTTGoGo, 2013; TMOTTGoGo, 2014). This is significant, because these eulogies suggest that there is a community to which these people belonged and to which they had an impact, even being identified largely by a Go-Go community nickname instead of their legal one.

Web log posts and articles on this community-based media outlet also reference a “Go-Go community” in relation to Washington, D.C. politicians, just as the mainstream publications do. For example, the following quote from a 2010 post reifies the Go-Go community, confirms its politicization, and solidifies a collective political stance taken by it:

> In a time where we all agree unemployment among African American males is unacceptably high, Vince Gray candidate for Mayor has quietly asked for Anwan “Big G” Glover to be fired. Anwan “Big G” Glover will be joined by Mayor Fenty and other leaders from the Go-Go community to inform the public of this and other unjust actions. In addition, the Go-Go community will also announce their endorsement of Mayor Fenty. (*TMOTTGoGo*, 2010)

As the premier and primary source for information about go-go music, culture, and scene happenings, it is significant that this media outlet contains references to a “Go-

Go community." The Go-Go community, then, has been linked to politics, race, socioeconomic status, a culture specific to the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area, and a specific time period in that region's history.

The Go-Go community has been reified in local mainstream and grassroots media, often with an attribution of collective political voice (e.g., preference of mayoral candidate), collective coping with a social issue (e.g., violence), and collective emotion (e.g., grief). Given the unique nature of this music-cultural community, an examination of how membership is perceived and defined by those associated with the community will expand our understanding of the meaning of membership in relational communities in general, and music-cultural ones in particular.

Approaches to Studying Music-Cultural Spaces and Collectives

Researchers have studied 'music communities' that are based on shared interest in a genre of music and have debated the applications of the term 'community' as opposed to ' music scene' or 'music subculture'(see Garder, 2010; Straw, 1991). Scholars have also suggested other ways of conceptualizing music-related communities for study, such as the *imaginary community*, presented to ensure representation of women in such studies, and *community of imagination*, presented to capture the nuance of online communities.

Groups of people linked to lesser known music genres have been referred to as *subcultures*, *scenes*, and *communities* in the literature (see Gardner, 2010; Straw, 1991). Gardner (2010) provided definitions of these three types using an interactionist sociology perspective. Subcultures, scenes, and communities are discussed as separate aspects of music-cultural space, all of which have been significantly impacted by the Internet (Gardner, 2010).

Subculture. The concept of a *subculture* is that its participants use symbols to express a very central, personal identity, linking to others through shared core values, rituals, and worldview (Gardner, 2010). The Internet, however, has introduced virtual spaces in which to communicate about music, as well as marketplaces in which subcultural symbols are accessible commodities. This broadening of access allows nearly anyone, at any time, to claim any subcultural identity through the use of symbols without participating in physical, social contact with others who claim that identity (Gardner, 2010).

The use of 'subculture' in labeling music-cultural spaces has been criticized from a research perspective, mainly because of its prioritizing of male voices and youth voices. Critics point to subculture studies' sensationalizing of youth's symbols of defiance (Hill, 2014). For example, punk rock has been studied as a music-based subculture, but not only has the focus primarily been on youth, the associated communities have been conceptualized as exceptionally contrary to a "mainstream" culture that alienates them (see Munsell, 2011). This fits Munsell's (2011) definition of subculture, citing Goldstein (2006), Hebridge (1979), and Steinberg (2006), which underscores how subcultures develop "outside the mainstream culture," have their "own modes of style and values system[s]," and "are thought to have come into existence in direct response to a crisis or event such as war or political tumult" (p. 4). The proposed study does not utilize a lens of cultural deviance to learn about the Go-Go community; therefore, we will not explore research questions using subcultural theory or approach.

Scene. A music *scene* is described as a social world in which meaning-making practices are important in interaction, while time, place, and territory are not—even though the music may be situated locally (Gardner, 2010; Kruse, 2010). Chicago blues and Seattle grunge are named as examples, with place having symbolic importance for "meaning-making practices that flourish within them" (Gardner, 2010, p. 74). The Internet provides access to concerts and other interested parties, allowing more than just locals to participate in a scene, which can lead to its international growth (Gardner, 2010). Straw (2001) supported the use of 'scene' to describe "cultural unities whose precise boundaries are invisible and elastic," and he championed the flexibility in the term's usage, emphasizing its "capacity to disengage phenomena from the more fixed and theoretically troubled unities of class or subculture" (p. 248).

Critics, however, find trouble with the fact that 'scene' has been used to indicate both bounded spaces and broader conceptualizations of place and space for music-related activity. Hesmondhalgh (2005) warns that these two different ideas of place are incompatible and confusing for this type of research, though the studies themselves may provide information on the importance of place to music consumption. Scene theory is also criticized by Hill (2014) for its focus on music venues and the people who work within them, including musicians. This emphasis, according to Hill, leaves the fans' voices ignored and, like subculture studies, they center the voices of men. Though place/space is important to go-go music, the present study seeks to go beyond this emphasis to learn about how membership and social boundaries are constructed by the community.

While some scholars use ‘subculture’ or ‘scene’ to study what Hesmondhalgh (2005) refers to as “musical collectivities,” others criticize these concepts as inadequate for such studies (e.g., Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Hill, 2014). Feminist critiques of both subculture and scene studies assert that such research often results in the centering of the male experience because the activities under study often happen in public places outside of the home (Hill, 2014). Activities outside the home may be implicitly associated with barriers to widespread female participation, given that men and boys traditionally have more freedom, financial resources, and time to attend music venues (Hill, 2014). The male domination of music scenes is also structured by obstacles to women, such as the need to arrange or provide childcare, the perception that nighttime activities are unsafe for women, and the reality of sexism and sexual harassment from male scene participants (Cohen, 1997, as cited in Hill, 2014). Women and girls are more likely to participate in music fandom by socializing inside their homes, by listening to music or reading magazines, or by fashion expression (McRobbie & Garber 1991, as cited in Hill, 2014).

Music community. A music *community*, according to Gardner, involves the “human relationships and distinct forms of sociability that grow out of scene interactions” (2010, p. 75). Music communities have been studied from a symbolic interactionist perspective that emphasizes how social practices in these communities serve to maintain local culture, shape individual identity, and maintain personal relationships (see Gardner, 2010; Nowatny et al., 2010; Schneider, 2009). While the present study’s focus on membership may uncover distinct forms of sociability, it does not assume that these grow exclusively out of scene interactions.

Imaginary community and community of imagination. *Imaginary community* theory, developed as a basis for studying fans of the hard rock and metal genre, was also considered as a framework for the current study of the Go-Go community. This theory was intended to address fans' feelings of togetherness and to account for a wider frame of fan activities while de-centering the voices of males (Hill, 2014). It is a rejection of and a response to several theoretical frameworks that have been used to study music communities, namely *subculture, scene*, *imagined community*, and *community of imagination*. Subculture and scene approaches are rejected in this agenda because they center the male voice and the public expression of music fandom, leaving out a variety of ways in which women participate as fans (Hill, 2014).

Imaginary community framework also responds to the fact that some scholars study music-cultural spaces by appropriating Anderson's (1991) *imagined community* theory regarding the spread of nationalism. According to Anderson, the community "…is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 6). This notion targets the actual feeling of imagined existence with others in a group, while it bypasses the assumptions of homogeneity critiqued by Wiesenfeld (1996). Despite this broadening of context, the use of *imagined community* theory for studying music-based communities is critiqued by *community of imagination* theory (Hills, 2001), to which *imaginary community* is also a response.

In response to scholarly critiques that the construct of community is utopian and ignores social inequality, the imaginary community framework acknowledges that people may feel a sense of community while imagining that the community is harmonious and fostering of equality. This emphasizes that individuals are merely thinking of the community in this way, which leaves room for analyzing their lived realities of the community. Finally, imaginary community allows attention to personal fan experiences that happen inside the home and in one's imagination. Altogether, imaginary community provides an agenda broad enough to account for a variety of fan behaviors.

The *community of imagination* framework arose from studies with internet-based fan communities. It views these communities as having come together by a coincidence of time, space and consumption of culture (Hills, 2001, as cited by Hill, 2014). Its response to imagined community theory is that the coincidence uniting music fans is the emotional response to an object (music) and not a 'temporality of information and consumption' that permits sense of community in the imagining of a nation (Hills, 2001, as cited by Hill, 2014). In turn, imaginary community theory critiques this community of imagination theory (developed for online communities) for overlooking the variety of other media through which fandom is communicated and shared; for centering the fans' relationship to the object of fandom instead of their relationship to each other; and for hindering the examination of power or cultural structures (Hill, 2014). Imaginary community framework was proposed to fill those gaps (Hill, 2014).

However, like the other theories of music-cultural spaces and collectivities, imaginary community framing is still inadequate for the current study on the Go-Go community. Both the outlines and critiques of the above research structures highlight fandom, settings, and the relation of people to their consumption of music-related objects. The present study must expand beyond these in order to explore "the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness" found in McMillan and Chavis' (1986) membership definition. Further, the Go-Go community is unique in that it is rooted in the Go-Go culture that is indigenous to Washington, D.C., and that it is distinctly and distinctively impacted by significant personal relationships within a small locality.

Studies of Membership in Music Collectives

As previously discussed, music-cultural collectives are usually studied within the context of scene or subculture, with some innovations made in the context of imaginary community and community of imagination. The following qualitative studies center the idea of participation in music-cultural collectives through the exploration of identity, behaviors, and symbols. They do not explore the construct of membership itself, and none have used McMillan & Chavis' membership framework as a tool of comparison in analysis.

A study of jamband *subculture* by Hunt (2008) emphasized that there is variation in quality of membership among people who identify with a particular music-cultural space. Jamband evolved from Grateful Dead subculture, maintaining the specific elements of fans following musicians around America for concerts and improvisational performances. The author referred to the entirety of these people as a subculture, and distinguished it from community in stating that "Jamband subculture members share a temporary community outside of the venues at which bands perform" (p. 5). Membership was explored using continuous measures to determine variation in individuals' participation in the subculture and in the meanings they attach to community roles.

Instead of using a dichotomous measure of participation versus non-participation in the subculture, the author used two continuous measures of group membership in respect of the fact that members “are known to vary quite extensively in their commitment to subcultural ideology and in the extent to which they are behaviorally-relationally involved” (p. 9). The two variables were Ideological Embeddedness and Behavioral-Relational Involvement. Hunt’s participant sample was N=418, 68% men, 32% women, Mean age 28 years, with 50% over age 27.

Ideological Embeddedness was measured by respondents’ rating their similarity to five gender-neutral character vignettes based on the identified subculture roles (e.g., jamband subculture roles have names such as *deadhead*, *drinker*, *drug user*, *environmentalist*, *rainbow person*, *vendor*, and termed authority roles such as *capitalist*, *nark*, *police officer*). Behavioral-Relational Involvement was measured by four open-ended questions, (e.g., *How many friends have you made purely as a result of being a jamband subculture member? How many friends would you miss if you stopped being a part of the jamband subculture? How many people would you no longer see if you stopped being a part of the jamband subculture?* and *How many jamband type concerts or performances do you typically attend per year?*), and a fifth question requiring a Likert-scale response ranging from 1 to 7 (*To what extent are you emotionally invested in your relationships with people in the jamband subculture?*).

Based on the variation in participants’ responses to these questions, results demonstrated the non-homogenous nature of groups related to music-cultural spaces, and how this variation affects how people give meaning to the various identified roles of the group. This study emphasizes the continuous nature of membership, specifically in a subgroup. Such distinction in roles is not common in the Go-Go community, though very standard roles may be recognized such as bandmember, fan, dancer, promoter, manager, owner, singer, etc. We can still expect that participants in the present study will, as in Hunt’s study, exhibit diversity of behavioral-relational involvement. This is also in line with Wiesenfeld’s (1996) assertion that, “Variations among people in the degree and form of involvement, activity, participation, and commitment to the community should be expected” (p. 341).

Hunt’s study did not address the intersection of race, class, and music-cultural community membership with oppression or social privilege because the sample was 99% non-Hispanic white and 65% had a bachelor’s degree or higher level of education. Qualitative studies on music-cultural communities that develop from [transnationally] Black or oppressed peoples’ cultures usually reveal themes of social oppression (e.g., Morgan & Warren, 2010). Unlike the Hunt study, such themes may arise in the proposed study on the Go-Go community.

Unlike participants in the jamband study, participants in a study of the Go-Go community should not be expected to be able to count the number of friends they made as a result of being a member. This question supposes that respondents would not count to a very high number, and it leaves out the people with whom one might have a relationship or frequent interaction without considering them to be “friends.” Asking about the number of concerts one attends per year is a good way to capture variation in involvement; however, it leaves out the ways in which people participate through the internet, through buying music, or through using other means to communicate with others to maintain a sense of community (e.g., Hill, 2014).

A study on “punk rock as a family and community” (Munsell, 2011) used qualitative methods to investigate the positive aspects of group membership, a departure from the ways in which social science studies investigate deviant behaviors associated with youth participation in subcultures. Punk is described by Munsell as a “youth subculture” in which members have been traditionally associated with a “specific form of dress, a shared set of ideals or values, and their identification with a particular genre of music” (p. 5). Psychological sense of community (PSOC) was briefly discussed, but only to state generally that the punk subculture “may provide” PSOC for the youth who participate.

For Munsell’s study on punk membership, twelve participants were recruited through snowball sampling in the punk rock scene of Charlotte, North Carolina; ten were male, 11 identified racially as “Caucasian”, and seven were college graduates. Participants were grouped by age range, 18-24 and those older. Results were grouped into seven categories: Path to Punk: Entry to Identity, Punk as Community, The Meaning of Punk: Punk Music, The Meaning of Punk: Punk Values, The Charlotte Punk Community: A Tale of Two Scenes, The Pitfalls of Punk, and Punk for Life: Advantages and Challenges of Adhering to a Punk Lifestyle. The author found that the positive aspects of membership were friendship and a sense of belonging, the adoption of a do-it-yourself mentality (from playing in bands and booking tours), and valuing freedom of expression. These findings are alongside other participant characteristics such as discord in family life during childhood and a feeling of alienation from childhood peers.

Again, the participants’ racial characteristics cannot be divorced from these findings, nor can they be taken separately from the recognition of punk as a subculture that is counter to the mainstream. This is evident even without the author’s finding that some participants reported “harm and tales of violence, reflecting skinhead activity” (p.

96). Still, the focus of Munsell's study was on the positive aspects of punk membership. A focus on the positive aspects of membership amidst negative stereotypes is not germane to the present study, which will explore participants' concepts of membership itself in the Go-Go community, and use specific theory, namely McMillan and Chavis' membership framework for context and analysis.

The grindcore-metal scene in Melbourne, Australia was used to qualitatively study the concept of belonging (Overell, 2010). The author's framing of the research drew from the definition that belonging is a feeling of comfort in relation to social groups and spaces. Having been a participant in the grindcore-metal scene, Overell utilized personal contacts and incorporated snowball sampling to recruit 25 participants for the study. The study's focus on the feeling of comfort in social spaces led to centralizing affect and affective encounters and a decentralizing of linguistic representations of how members show that they belong.

By allowing for more than what could be represented with words, Overell revealed that membership in this scene revolved around a specific disposition called "brutal." The "brutal" construct centers on the rough interaction between individuals' bodies at grindcore-metal shows as a demonstration of their belonging to the grindcore-metal scene. Study participants were able to demonstrate with their bodies the way in which they expressed and recognized belonging. This is important, as other researchers are made aware of how study participants may express belonging and membership in ways other than what can be explained by words (verbal answers to interview questions). The present study of the Go-Go community may also reveal aspects of membership that entail one's personal disposition or behavior in the context of the go-go music scene.

Mentoring relationships were explored in conjunction with *identity work* in a study of an Indigenous Australian hip hop music-cultural collective (Morgan & Warren, 2010). In this Aboriginal community, mentors and elders used modes of hip hop performance to pass along ideas of Aboriginal culture and politics.

The authors studied the cultural politics of identification among Indigenous Australian youth in urban settings, who use hip hop music to culturally construct their own identities. Study findings explained that identification with Aboriginal identity is not developmentally inevitable, but that mentors and elders lead the effort to form the youth's identities. The researchers used semi-structured interviews, participant observation, a research diary, and interview reflections to examine how hip hop performance (rapping, DJing, breakdancing, graffiti art, dress, and language) influences perspectives and identities of Aboriginal youth in two urban locations. Narrative analysis was used to maintain sensitivity to individuals' construction of their own stories, networks, and ideas of hip hop and identification.

Results demonstrated that hip hop is a creative expression used by community leaders and youth to reinforce cultural bonds and that Aboriginal hip hop expression involves informal mentoring processes that shape the identity of the hip hop enthusiasts, resulting in certain post-colonial political orientations centering Aboriginal identity. This requires ongoing work and is not merely an unavoidable circumstance of being an Indigenous person—an assumption that the authors say is common in other studies of Aboriginal youth. There was no consistent agreement among participants on the associated political disposition or which aspects of hip hop are valuable to Aboriginal culture.

Given the grassroots nature of the Go-Go community and the localized uniqueness of how the genre is experienced by fans and musicians, the theme of mentoring relationships may emerge from the data. Like the Go-Go community, Aboriginal hip hop enthusiasts are part of an oppressed group in Australia—many of whom identify with Blackness as a racial identity (based on skin tones, facial features, and hair textures)—whose communities face problems of systemic racism and the socio-economic pitfalls that are inherited therein. This intersection of Blackness with music community membership has been recognized in the study of go-go music culture (e.g., Hopkinson, 2012; Lornell & Stephenson, 2009).

The Go-Go community is already associated with a shared political orientation in the context of Washington, D.C. and mentoring processes are evident in go-go culture. This point is important to the present study because even though participants may be able to distinguish the membership of the Go-Go community, it should not be expected that the membership requires a singular, generalized worldview.

Challenges to the idea of a community *we* seem to not only have come from purposeful critiques (e.g., Wiesenfeld, 1996), but by the existence of a musical collective that "eschews" community (Venkatesh, Podoshen, Urbaniak, & Wallin, 2014). The black metal community was studied as a scene to examine how participants (producers and consumers of this type of music) "make sense of" and construct their participation in the scene. Black metal, the authors explain, is identified by performers' use of harsh, screeched vocals, with lyrics that endorse solitude, anti-Christian attitudes, and themes from Nordic myths such as cold, dark winters and desolation.

Authors referenced McMillan and Chavis (1986) sense of community outline to very briefly orient the reader, but did not draw clear connections to it with the literature review, results or discussion. The main themes of the research were identity and signification of individuality rather than of community.

The researchers interviewed 18 individuals from Europe, North America, Asia, and South America, finding participants from concerts in North America and Europe, in addition to Facebook pages created specifically for the study. They also collected data from observation at concerts, published magazine articles, and documentaries. Findings indicated that symbolism was important, especially anti-Christian or anti-religion, such as an inverted cross and various Nordic mythological elements, often displayed with tattoos and corpse imagery, often displayed through makeup. Though information was not provided on participants' racial identities, researchers noted that participants were asked about black metal's relationship with Nazism and hate crimes, including church burnings in Norway and incidents of murder. Though all participants reportedly condemned such acts, the authors did not clarify that racism itself was denounced—only that the participants denounced religion, and that Satan was an important symbol of individualism. Data also revealed that appreciation of black metal is viewed as a solitary act, given that the black metal community is a subculture of a subculture, i.e. black metal is a subculture of the metal genre. Fans at concerts often stay to themselves, and some do not attend shows because they do not enjoy the company of other people, thus rejecting the social support and commonality that is theorized to come from community. The study calls into question the need for community to form in order to transmit and communicate a musical genre.

This study demonstrates that membership in at least one music-related "collective" can be experienced in ways that do not involve experiencing a sense of community with other members. Further, it shows how individuals can have a common interest and participate in the same space to experience the interest (e.g., a black metal show), while rejecting the idea that having this shared interest makes them a community. An important question, then, is whether the construct of membership is even applicable to such a non-community.

Without a collective desire to be perceived as a *we*, could a researcher ever find evidence that there is such a thing as the black metal community that entails a membership? Are they simply not a community because they say they are not? Having individuals who are willing to represent a *we* of the community may be an underestimated element to defining community.

The Go-Go community as an abstract entity has been affirmed, but the membership (who belongs and who does not) has not been explored. Though none of the above studies dealt with the construct of membership as a standalone construct, as outlined by McMillan and Chavis, they contribute several important conclusions that inform the ways in which themes from collected data are selected for the present study: 1) there are different levels of participation in a music collective-space, with membership behaviors falling along a continuum of involvement, 2) individuals who identify as a members of the same music-cultural community do not necessarily share a worldview, 3) individuals demonstrate belonging and membership in ways other than what can be explained by words, 4) without a group of people willing to represent a *we*, there may not even be a community.

Relational Community

The Go-Go community as a relational community. With the intersections of location, race, historical time frame, and age that are essential to the contextualization of the Go-Go community, a study of it requires a broader approach than those developed specifically for genres of music. For the present study, the Go-Go community will be situated and analyzed as a relational community. This is a broad, general approach used for efficient application of the membership framework defined within McMillan and Chavis' sense of community theory.

Relational communities are defined by networks of social relationships that develop from people having shared interests rather than a shared locality (Heller, 1989). The conceptualization of community is often tied to physical place or geographic location, and the term "neighborhood" is often used synonymously with "community." However, academics have also defined *community* in psychological terms, emphasizing social relationships, shared identity and norms, sense of belonging and trust, and common goals and values (Heller, 1989; Small & Supple, 1998). Members of relational communities can find a sense of community without a common location, because individuals nevertheless share common experiences, history, identity, and perceived destiny (Heller, 1989; also see McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Small and Supple (1998) found relational community study to be much more relevant than neighborhood study, conceptually and methodologically. Even using official location (e.g., from the U.S. Census Bureau or U.S. Postal Service) to determine a neighborhood is not ideally effective, as the authors explained, since individuals' conceptions of their geographical communities can vary based on their age, economic status, employment, and the extent of their access to areas that surround or lie far beyond home. The concepts of *neighborhood* and *community* may overlap, considering that a community might exist in a neighborhood, but the physical location is not necessary for a community to occur.

Recognizing the psychosocial actuality of community as one's mental construction of relationships and their meanings, Small and Supple's framework operates on the principle that communities are of greater social and psychological influence on families than the families' residential, physical spaces. Present-day American society is less influenced by extended family networks than it once was, and citizens are more mobile, with greater access to technology that can establish and maintain social connections (Heller, 1989; Dunham, 1986); therefore, informal peer groupings are societal structures that provide individuals with meaningful associations (Heller, 1989).

This literature review continues with studies pertaining to membership and belonging in several types of relational communities.

Qualitative Studies of Membership in Other Types of Relational Communities

A search for qualitative studies of membership in other types of relational communities yielded only a handful of studies. These are reviewed below.

Researchers studied how the sense of community model functioned in a community of people living in Melbourne, Australia, who had been classified as "Coloured" in their birthplace South Africa (Sonn & Fisher, 1996). 'Coloured' was a subgroup of the racially oppressed majority in South Africa, meaning neither "black" nor "white," according to South Africa's Population Registration Act of 1950. This designation of "neither black nor white" applied to individuals' skin color and physical features, though an exact definition was not provided (Sonn & Fisher, 1996). However, the “coloured” label also applied to persons who were married to someone in this designated group, and an amendment to the law expanded the label to include within-group “ethnicities” called Cape Coloured, Cape Malay, Indian, and Asiatic.

In instances where ethnic groups have boundaries and separateness from a dominant majority culture imposed upon them, their social status also symbolizes psychological oppression that impacts the ways in which members of a group or ethnic community characterize their intra-group experiences (Sonn & Fisher, 1996). Responses to imposed membership may include negative in-group identification, but often include positive, group cohesion, or strengthened original culture (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990; Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1984, as cited in Sonn & Fisher, 1996).

The authors conducted semi-structured interviews with 23 people (15 men, 8 women) between the ages of 23-74 years old who had left South Africa later than age 16. Results were analyzed and reported using three of the four attributes of *sense of community* (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) as themes: Membership; Integration and fulfillment of needs; and Shared emotional connection. Under Membership, data were further sorted by four of the five membership attributes (McMillan & Chavis, 1986): Boundaries; Common symbol system; Sense of belonging and identification; and Emotional safety.

Data indicated that membership in this group was defined in two different ways. One way was by Apartheid laws, i.e., constructed by political forces outside of the subgroup, which determined: 1) their ethnicity status of being “between,” “neither,” or “a mix of” black and white races, 2) where they could live, and 3) other social, educational, and economic opportunities. This politically imposed, oppressive designation of membership and community *boundaries* was rejected by the participants, who considered it insulting; however, they still referred to themselves as ‘coloured.’

The second dimension of membership found in the data was of positive community experiences, mostly characterized by the membership attribute *sense of belonging and identification*. In line with the membership attribute *emotional safety*, participants also reported feeling more secure with other members of the ‘coloured’ group—a phenomenon the authors linked to the apartheid system that enforced people living only with their own racial group.

This study demonstrates how the McMillan and Chavis’ membership construct can be used for qualitative study. It also explains how membership in a community may be defined by those outside of it, thus influencing the perceptions of those inside of it. This is important in regard to the present study on the Go-Go community, because it is a community that has been identified, recognized, and reified by an outside and dominant force, i.e., Washington, D.C.’s mainstream media. The Go-Go community was not labeled and forced on individuals by oppressive law as was the “Coloured” community; but, we can expect that some individuals’ answers to some questions may be influenced by their previous understanding of how the community has been characterized by those outside of it who hold more social and political power.

Merely grouping individuals together will not automatically make them all feel like part of the same community. A study of community formation in distance learning courses provided evidence for this idea (Brown, 2001). The author interviewed 21 graduate students and three faculty members from three online graduate-level courses, also using follow-up questions via email after an initial round of data analyses. Like the proposed study of the Go-Go community, Brown's interview questions included participants' definitions of "community," and, specific to that study, their definitions of "learning community."

Using axial coding, the author discovered a three-stage phenomenon in the formation of an online course community among students. The first stage was students making friends with individuals they felt similar to because of location, personal circumstances, or background. The second stage, in which membership became a theme, was community conferment (acceptance), which students gained through interacting in "long, thoughtful, threaded discussions," that increased their self-efficacy in communicating their own ideas and having those ideas accepted for further discussion. The third stage of community was camaraderie, which involved further communication and engagement outside of the online course forum, or having taken multiple courses together.

Though the author identified these "Three levels of community" as a study finding, another finding was labeled "No community," indicating that some student participants did not feel like they were a part of the online course community. These participants' reasons included: not wanting to be a part of that community; personal circumstances, such as health and family issues, that prevented full engagement in the community; not wanting to engage in the in-person interactions suggested by classmates; and recognizing that there was a community but not having the time to devote to participating. Brown also found that these participants defined community differently than the other participants. They either reported that face-to-face interaction was necessary for community or that the individuals involved must interact voluntarily—neither of which was the case in their online courses.

This finding is relevant to the present study, because participants' definitions of community, i.e., their responses to the first interview question, may be closely related to how they define the Go-Go community and its membership. Further, it is possible that, as in the Brown study, some participants will be able to discuss the Go-Go community and its membership without reporting that they are members of that community. In these cases, a participant may perceive that personal circumstances are preventing desired membership status, or a participant may report a definition of Go-Go community membership that does not match how they view themselves in relation to the community.

Another qualitative study that may be relevant to the study of membership focused on individuals' definitions of community in a sample of four different groups of individuals from different parts of the United States (MacQueen et al., 2001). The authors noted that the topic was practically important, given the recent increased emphasis on community collaboration in public health research and programs (MacQueen et al., 2001). Researchers interviewed groups described as "25 African Americans in Durham, NC; 26 gay men in San Francisco, Calif; 25 injection drug users in Philadelphia, Pa; and 42 HIV vaccine researchers across the United States" from 1995 to 1998 (MacQueen et al., 2001, p. 1929). Individuals' answers to the question "What does the word community mean to you?" were analyzed using cluster analysis.

Results indicated that, even among members of diverse groups in diverse locations, there is a strong possibility of commonalities within definitions of community. The core cluster of definitions discovered by the authors provides insight into the notion of membership, specifically the themes of *locus* (a sense of place with people), *sharing* (common perspective and interests), *joint action* (cohesion through activities), and *social ties* (relationships as the foundation of community). These all indicate face-to-face interaction, which was also revealed to be a major theme of community membership in the Brown (2001) study of an online course community.

Community distinguishability and membership were examined in an article about "the international community" as Peltonen (2014) proposed steps toward a criteria to distinguish its membership. Peltonen noted that collective responsibility is assigned to this frequently referenced community, but that it is unclear who the actual members are.

Peltonen concluded that there is no one international community, but many "thick" international communities that are dynamic, without fixed membership, each shaped by different contexts and beliefs. "International community" was outlined in contrast to what could be called "international society." To determine the boundaries of an international community, Peltonen suggested two methods. The first is paying attention to a shared *we-feeling* or in-group identity. Individuals with the shared we-feeling may perceive the community in terms of agents who interact, while individuals who do not share the we-feeling may perceive the community as an abstract entity. The second is evaluating a shared ethos among agents: the international community shares an ethos, but the international society does not. Both of these accounts of membership, Peltonen asserts, come with inclusion of some and exclusion of others.

The studies reviewed here inform the present study in several ways. First, Sonn and Fisher's study on the South African "Coloured" community in Melbourne demonstrated that four out of McMillan and Chavis' five membership attributes matched and were applicable to their participant data regarding membership. The boundaries attribute, however, was classified in a separate dimension of membership. Participant data in the present study may align only partially with McMillan and Chavis' definition. The context of a community (e.g., intersecting issues of forced classification, race, social and political oppression, relocation from birthplace) may affect the application of the membership framework, and the Go-Go community's context (intersecting issues of class, race, location, historical era) may also affect how accurately the membership framework applies to participants' notions of membership.

Second, Sonn and Fisher's study shows that members of a community can perceive boundaries that are imposed from the outside of a community instead of seeing the boundaries as self-constructed. In the case of oppressive boundaries by social-cultural dominance, the oppressed community may reject the boundaries but still be drawn to each other in community because of their shared negative experience. The nature of social oppression is such that members of an oppressed community can have their perspectives of themselves influenced by the forced-dominant culture.

Third, Brown's (2001) identification of three stages to the formation of an online course community provides, as Hunt (2008) did, evidence of a continuum of community participation *and* a sharply defined in or out status. The sharply defined in-out line was indicated by individuals who stated that they were not members of the community, not professed community members. In this study, we see again that forming a community boundary was more relevant to those on the outside of a community, its nonmembers—and that their accounts of community membership were consistent with members'.

Fourth, participants in the present study may base their assessments of membership in the Go-Go community on face-to-face interaction, as demonstrated in MacQueen et al. (2001) and Brown (2001). Given the community's link to the go-go music scene and the live-performance element of the go-go music culture, participants may inherently link membership to in-person scene interactions. However, given that scholars have critiqued of scene studies for centering the male voice and only accounting for public fandom (see Hill, 2014), the present study does not assume that the Go-Go community is developed strictly through go-go scene interactions.

Lastly, Peltonen discussed the *we* in terms of a feeling that members of a community have, which distinguishes that community and its members from others. This is in line with the definition of membership, which is that there are those who belong to a community and those who do not. This naming of the 'we-feeling' by Peltonen possibly challenges Wiesenfeld's (1996) assertion that the *we* of a community is likely a myth.

The present study contributes to the literature on community membership by disentangling two ideas often confounded in community literature: community homogeneity and a community's ability to distinguish itself from others. The study also contributes by using a widely accepted framework from the field of community psychology, i.e., McMillan & Chavis' (1986) five-attribute definition, to organize and categorize data. The present study contributes to literature pertaining to the Go-Go community in particular, and to music-cultural communities and music collectives in general.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Questions

The present study aims to answer two research questions:

1. To what extent do participants' ideas of membership fit within the five-attribute definition of membership explicitly presented in McMillan and Chavis' (1986) sense of community framework?
2. Does participant data provide evidence that other membership attributes exist for the Go-Go community?

Qualitative Approach

This research applies a qualitative case study approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The case in a qualitative case study, according to Stake (2005), is a singular, specific, bounded system. In the present study, the case is the Go-Go community. This case "plays a supportive role and it facilitates our understanding of something else," namely the membership construct; therefore, the present research can be described as an *instrumental case study* (2005, p. 445). In seeking commonalities and particularities of the case, case researchers take into consideration the "nature" of the case, its history, setting, economic and political contexts, and informants (2005, p. 447). As noted throughout the present study, it is imperative that the Go-Go community be examined in consideration of its unique, intersecting contexts such as geographical location, the historical era/age cohort, race, and the entertainment industry.

Qualitative understanding of a case study entails experiential knowledge of actors who describe case activity (Stake, 2005). For the current case study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The researcher then analyzed and interpreted participants’ subjective descriptions of their experiences being part of and relating to the Go-Go community.

Positionality Statement

This research takes both emic and etic perspectives. The first research question is of an etic perspective because it uses preexisting theory to determine if it applies to a different culture (Olive, 2014). The second question is of an emic perspective because it allows for the data to reveal information that does not fit within an already established theory. The researcher’s relationship and previous experience with the community under study also contributes to an emic perspective.

The present study was conducted as *insider research*, a label that captures the researcher’s position in relation to the group, society, community or organization under study. Insider research is called such if the researcher has prior intimate knowledge of the group under study, or if the researcher is a member of the same group having the same characteristics (see Merton, 1972; Chavez, 2008; Greene, 2014; Taylor, 2011). The idea of insider research came from ethnography, as anthropologists and sociologists discussed concepts such as “going native” or becoming a member of a community in order to properly study it. The term “insider research” has also been used synonymously with “native research” and “indigenous research,” implying that a non-white scholar was studying a group of the same ethnicity (Kanuha, 2000).

I am assuming insider positionality with this research based on my previous knowledge of and affiliation with the go-go music scene and my history of contributing to its community-based media. I assume that this prior history of affiliation will help data interpretation in instances of community terms, slang terminology, and references to scene activities, locations, groups, and individuals. I have previous intimate knowledge of and affiliation with the Go-Go community in notable ways. First, I was a regular attendee at various go-gos in Prince George's County from 1990 to 2002. Second, I have been a [non-paid] contributor to *TMOTTGoGo* Media between 1998 and 2016 under a pseudonym. Third, I have maintained an arts and culture blog since 2012, on which I have reviewed go-go performances and written about go-go music.

On Facebook, there are currently at least ten 'Facebook groups' related to go-go music, in which people share, discuss, and debate information. Many members of these Facebook groups belong to more than one. Now that internet technology has become integral to the concept of what it means to participate in a subculture, scene, or community (Gardner, 2010), it has become especially important to go-go fans; however, I am not a participant in that substantial community component.

My lack of participation in the thriving Facebook groups for go-go enthusiasts and my absence from the physical go-go scene place me at a personal disadvantage for a sense of belonging to the Go-Go community. However, I am aware of my ever-shifting social position in relation to the Go-Go community, and I am aware that my sense of belonging can change in the future. I am also aware that my love of the go-go experience is a valued part of my identity.

Even when asserting insider positionality, a researcher must reject the idea that this position is fixed and certain, given the constantly changing social positions of community members (Hellawell, 2006; Naples, 1996, as cited in Chavez, 2008; Taylor, 2011). Thus, a community member's position and identity—and therefore, an insider-researcher's position and identity—should be expected to shift over time. Reflexivity in the research process is a tool to address and keep track of a researcher's shifting position with respect to the community under study (Chavez, 2008; Greene, 2014; Hellawell, 2006).

This continual shifting of insider versus outsider positionality and identity most closely describes this researcher's locus in relation to the Go-Go community. There is no academic standard to alert researchers as to exactly what aspects of their identities must match their participants to ascertain insider positionality. However, I acknowledge what may be perceived as "insider" status for the present study, based on pre-existing knowledge of this community and because my position affords me the benefits of insider status described by Chavez (2008) and Greene (2014).

The benefits of insider research are summarized here from the literature reviews of Chavez (2008) and Greene (2014). An insider researcher has previous knowledge of the research context, environment, and participants. This includes the ability to engage in social settings without standing out, disturbing it, or being shocked by it. This knowledge also permits the researcher to recognize non-verbal cues and meaningful elements. Insider researchers can be perceived by participants to have a better, truer understanding of the culture being researched than researchers who do not have previous familiarity with the community or culture. Insider researchers have the benefit of natural interaction with the participants, and their familiarity allows them the knowledge of how to approach individuals. The benefit of previous interaction also lessens an insider researcher's likelihood of stereotyping or judging participants. Insider researchers also have the benefit of more expedient access to and acceptance by the group or culture under study.

Participants

For participant recruitment, the *labeled community* approach was used to organize the snowball sampling approach. ‘Labeled community’ denotes that there are organizations that have intentionally, publicly labeled themselves in relation to a common interest—in this case, go-go music and culture. This approach is based on the uniqueness of the Go-Go community specifically, because at this moment, there are very few organizations currently named in relation to go-go, i.e., having the term “Go-Go” in their titles. The proposed approach is expected to be more efficient and more effective for participant recruiting in the Go-Go community than a scene approach, a basic snowball approach, or a public recruitment approach in which participants could be recruited through social media, flyers, or other forms of media.

The labeled community approach is more desirable for participant diversity than a basic *scene* approach, in which the researcher attempts to gain participation from randomly selected individuals observed at music scene activities such as concerts. The go-go scene has been described as “male-dominated” by Lornell & Stephenson (2009), and feminist critiques of music subculture and scene research have found those studies to center the male experience. Therefore, this approach will be effective in allowing for gender balance and women’s highlighted voices, as the invitation to participate will ask organization leaders to select one man and one woman from their organizations.

It is more coincidental than intentional, but worth stating, that all of the aforementioned go-go related organizations operate with women in positions of leadership. The organizations themselves represent diverse ways in which individuals participate in the go-go scene, such as by go-go performance, by creating go-go media, by establishing a go-go related nonprofit, and by Go-Go community advocacy. Facebook or social media groups dedicated to discussion and promotion of go-go music and culture were not classified as organizations in the present study. The organizations labeled 'Go-Go' that were asked to participate in this study, unlike the Facebook groups, exist independently from Facebook and operate within specialized community roles.

The highly localized nature of the community, as well as the fact that there are so few go-go labeled organizations, means that persons identified with them in any way are highly recognizable. In order to further safeguard confidentiality, the organizations will not be specifically named. However, the organizations include community media, community advocacy, community health, and music-based/band organizations. Go-Go related Facebook groups, though currently a staple in the community, are not included as organizations. In addition to participants linked to go-go labeled organizations, I recruited three participants who were not affiliated with a go-go organization, but who were identified as members of the community. This was done to broaden the sample and scope of the study, providing additional perspectives.

Participants were seven women and seven men who reside in Prince George's County, Maryland, Washington, D.C., or Northern Virginia. Thirteen participants' ages ranged from 36 to 53 years old, and one participant was 26 years old. Twelve out of the fourteen participants were Black. Five of the participants were go-go musicians.

Procedure

Before contacting organizations, I piloted the interview protocol with a person who was not affiliated with an organization, but who shares go-go related content publicly and often through social media accounts. I asked this participant to recommend two individuals to participate.

I contacted five people from five organizations by email or through Facebook Messenger, depending on the internet availability of their contact information. I sent a standardized, IRB-approved message (Appendix A) to a leader in each organization, identifying myself as a Ph.D. candidate who is completing a research study on the Go-Go community. The message invited the organization to select three of its members—preferably not of the same gender—to participate in the study. The message specified that compensation was $20.00 and that participant identities would be kept confidential.

Organizational representatives gave me the names and contact information for the individuals they recommended, and I contacted those people with a differently worded message (Appendix B). The invitation messages asked that the both the research topic and the request to participate be kept confidential, except within their respective organization.

Out of the five organizations, four organizations' representatives replied and agreed to participate. Several of the recommended individuals did not schedule a time to be interviewed, even though they agreed to participate upon receiving the initial invitation. In those cases, I contacted the respective organizations again and asked for other recommendations, and then followed the same procedure. For one organization, only two individuals agreed to participate.

At the start of each interview, the participant was asked to read and sign a statement of informed consent (Appendix C), in addition to checking a line to confirm their consent to the audio recording of the interview. When I started each recording, I asked the participant, “Do I have your permission to record your voice?” One participant was interviewed by phone and was read a statement of consent at the start of that interview (Appendix D). Participants were either paid $20.00, or they signed a receipt stating that they would receive the $20.00 incentive later. Half of the study’s participants, for various reasons, refused to accept the $20.00.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol is attached in Appendix D. The first and second questions are intended to focus participants on the concept of community, and to ease them into thinking and speaking about their own definitions of it. The ordering and wording of questions were intended to reduce defensiveness and decrease the possibility of participants feeling as if they are being challenged on their membership in the community. For example, a two-pronged question was worded, *Why do you consider yourself to be a member? What lets you know that you are a member?* instead of “How do you know that you are a member?”

Other questions were worded based on McMillan & Chavis’ membership attributes, referring to thoughts and perceptions such as recognition of other members and of shared symbols. A subset of questions asked participants to consider what race, gender, ability, age, socioeconomic status, and other aspects of identity have to do with Go-Go community membership. Participants were asked specifically about “criteria for membership” in order to gain maximum specificity concerning how each person perceives the notion of membership having specific criteria in the community. This is directly related to McMillan and Chavis’ assertion that criteria set by boundaries of membership protect members’ emotional safety.

Some interview questions were included to facilitate participants' thinking of the community in terms of those who belong and those who do not belong. For example, one question asked specifically about "people outside the community" and another asked how it is determined that someone is not a member of the community. The interview ended with the questions, *What should I have asked you about the Go-Go community that I did not ask?* and, *Is there any final theme or message you'd like to leave me with about the Go-Go community or membership in it?*

Data Analysis

Interview Transcription and Data Cleaning

Four of the fourteen interviews were transcribed directly by the interviewer/researcher. The other interviews were transcribed by the transcription company Speechpad. Interviews transcribed by Speechpad were edited to ensure accuracy of the data before analysis, and there were many things that were incorrect and inaccurate in each Speechpad transcription. I listened to each outsourced interview and edited for punctuation to provide accuracy of intent (e.g., humor, exclamation, emphasis). For example, one participant's statement was transcribed as, "Oh, wow, geez." I edited it to reflect his tone of voice, laughter, and a pause, changing it to "Oh, wow. [laugh] Geez!" In addition to punctuation, I added laughter, pauses, and vocal segregates like "um" and "you know" to interviews transcribed by the service.

One reason for inaccuracy in Speechpad transcriptions was some participants' regional accent. Many people who were born and raised in Washington, DC or in Prince George's County have an identifiable accent and an identifiable dialect, especially if they are of the Go-Go community. This is why, in some cases, I would leave in a phrase such as “you know what I’m sayin,” and I may not have put the ‘g’ at the end of the word ‘nothing’ if the participant actually said “nothin.”

Another reason for inaccuracy in transcriptions is because transcribers did not have knowledge of go-go terms or well-known names. For example, one transcript had the participant quoted as calling someone “a white boy,” but the participant was actually speaking of placing a phone call to Whiteboy, a member of the go-go band Rare Essence (who is not white).

Matrix Display Format

Data were first organized using three matrices, each on a separate sheet in a Microsoft Excel document. The matrix display format is described by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2013). This technique organizes qualitative data in a systematic way to “display” the data for the researcher. By using a matrix, with one row for each participant and columns to arrange questions or variables, data are displayed in order to facilitate accurate comparisons, location of differences, and theme and pattern recognition. Qualitative data are expected to “evolve” and researchers using the matrix method of data organization are encouraged to be receptive to the possibility of adding more rows or columns (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). Further, Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña advise that researchers using this method may find that they need more than one matrix for a research question, and that the need for this may emerge during data collection or analysis.

To organize data by McMillan and Chavis’ five attributes of membership, the first matrix (sheet) was designed with columns representing each attribute. These labels included phrases from the definitions of each attribute, in order to specify what evidence should be searched for in an interview transcript. For example, the column for ‘sense of belonging and identification’ was also labeled ‘holds the thought "This is my group"; belief in, expectation of a place in the group; individual has been accepted by the community.’

The second matrix was first designed according to reflection data, so new columns were added as interviews progressed. Columns were labeled by common statements that participants were making, such as ‘It’s a culture,’ ‘All are welcome,’ and ‘I am Go-Go.’ Other columns added over time included ‘Age,’ ‘Knowledge of go-go,’ ‘DMV/Location’ and ‘I am known for go-go.’ Eventually, columns added to the second matrix were based on specific interview questions, such as ‘Has there ever been a time when you did not feel like a member?’, ‘Who is the Go-Go community?/What comes to mind when you hear or see the term “the Go-Go community?”

The third matrix was first designed using categories of diversity such as ‘Gender,’ ‘Race,’ ‘Socioeconomic status,’ ‘Ability,’ and ‘Sexual Orientation. Columns in this matrix were also added as the study progressed to include other themes or interview questions that may or may not have impacted how results were interpreted. These columns included ‘Other communities to which you belong,’ ‘Do to maintain membership,’ ‘Subcommunities/Communities within,’ ‘Mainstream media,’ and ‘Unique issues/gentrification/laws passed/venues fading.’

Thematic Analysis

The data were analyzed using a *thematic analysis* approach in the tradition of Braun and Clarke (2006), who describe this approach as a primary analytical method of qualitative research, instead of as a tool within another method. The thematic analysis method identifies, analyzes, and reports themes (patterns) within data, providing organization and a detailed description of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). Thematic analysis is a foundational approach of qualitative methodology that is flexible across other methods of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 4). This method provides theoretical freedom, but holds its own clear guidelines that are theoretically and methodologically sound, as laid out by Braun and Clarke.

A *theme* in thematic analysis is a unit that represents a patterned response within the data that is important in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke do not advise a stringent predetermination on what size a theme needs to be or how many times it must be seen across data items to be considered an important theme. Instead, researchers are advised to use judgment in determining what qualifies as a theme, no matter how many times it is seen within one item or across items. The significance of themes lies in their relevance to the research question, not in a quantifiable measure of their value. The prevalence of themes is, indeed, an aspect of thematic analysis, in that the researcher must remain consistent in determining the themes and their prevalence.

Coding

Each transcript was analyzed and coded by itself. I read through each transcript once for each of the five attributes, to code for corresponding data, and at least once more to identify other themes that emerged. Coded data were highlighted by color, or using the comments feature, and then copied and pasted into relevant columns in any of the three matrices. As new themes emerged and were added to the matrices, previously analyzed transcripts were reviewed for corroborating data.

To isolate and examine specific themes, several Microsoft Word documents were created for another level of thematic analysis. For example, I copied and pasted the ‘Socioeconomic status’ column from the third matrix into a Word document, with each row representing each participant. Then, I added a second column in which I identified themes from each participant. This second level of thematic analysis made it possible to see similarities among participants’ accounts, but also how they differed.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers have had to defend their studies and prove them valid amidst the primary status afforded quantitative research, as some question the legitimacy of “people’s stories” (e.g. Loh, 2013). This argument over whether there should be a universal way to establish the “trustworthiness” of qualitative studies persists even though various methodologies and criteria have been used in different disciplines. Denzin (2009) writes about this as “the politics of evidence,” noting that,

> It is rather a question of who has the power to control the definition of evidence, who defines the kinds of materials that count as evidence, who determines what methods best produce the best forms of evidence, whose criteria and standards are used to evaluate quality evidence? (p. 142)

Scholars are said to maintain one of three standpoints about which type of evaluative criteria should be used for qualitative inquiry: foundational, quasi-foundational, and non-foundational (Denzin, 2009). Foundationalists believe that quantitative and qualitative studies should be held to the same criteria, and quasi-foundationalists believe that qualitative inquiry needs its own set of criteria (Denzin, 2009).

The non-foundational perspective, which is closest to the framework of the present study, emphasizes understanding instead of prediction, conceptualizing inquiry in terms of “morality, love, and kindness” (Denzin, 2009). Above morality, love, and kindness, the current study is framed in ethical responsibility, specifically Standard 8- Research and Publication of the General Principles of the American Psychological Association’s Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. Having affirmed a commitment to these ethical guidelines, this researcher provides an expansive Methods section, using “thick description” (Ponterotto & Grieger, 2007) to establish the academic and ethical framing for the research, to outline the exact techniques for ensuring its legitimacy and trustworthiness, to explain assumptions and limitations, and to state the researcher’s positionality. This thick description is intended for thick interpretation (Ponterotto & Grieger, 2007) for the purpose of maximizing transparency and fairness to both the academy and to the community with which this research was conducted.

The researcher assumed a non-foundational evaluative perspective because this research emphasizes understanding one particular community that exists in a very specific context. This research is not proposed in order to contribute to evidence-based policymaking. Instead, it is proposed as “discipline-based qualitative research focused on accumulating fundamental knowledge about social processes and institutions” (Denzin, 2009, p. 142).

To establish the trustworthiness of this research, several techniques were used. First, I established a labeled community approach to recruit participants. This technique was used to make participant selection a fair and transparent process, given the researcher’s prior history and association with the Go-Go community.

Second, I made a clear, expansive positionality statement at the outset of the research, before data collection, in the dissertation proposal. This included a discussion of insider research, its advantages, and its limitations. It also included a detailed description of my prior history of affiliation with go-go culture.

Third, I used reflection and reflexivity, defined as “an active engagement of the self in questioning perceptions and exposing their contextualized and power driven nature” (Greene, 2014, p. 9) during data collection and analysis. After each interview, I typed reflections on the interview experience, including things that stood out in the interview and what the participants said after recording stopped. I also reflected several times during the coding process, as I discovered things that were surprising or challenging.

Reflexivity: From Membership to Being of the Community

One question that proved to be very important to this research was, *Has there ever been a time when you did not feel like a member of the Go-Go community*? Answers to this question came in only two ways. Eleven participants shook their head and said “No,” or “Nah,” with little further explanation. But three said, “Yes,” and talked about how they came to be a part of the community and why there are times when they do not feel like a part of the community.

Though the present study is considered ‘insider research,’ I identified more with the “Yes” answers because I had the experience of moving from Baltimore, Maryland to Forest Heights, Maryland in the late 1980s and having go-go music be an entirely new thing to me—along with other aspects of Washington, D.C. area Blackness, including a noticeably different regional accent and unique slang terms. If I were asked the same question, i.e., if there had been a time when I did not feel like a member of the community, I would tell my Go-Go origin story, recalling hearing go-go music played on the school bus once I moved to the D.C. area, around the same time that popular hip hop acts such as Salt-N-Pepa and Kid 'N Play started celebrating the genre in their songs. I would also note that I don't always feel like a part of the Go-Go community because I haven't attended a go-go in several years.

I believe that being able to identify with not always feeling like a part of the Go-Go community led to me assuming that the participant interview data would fit the membership construct—specifically the notion that some people belong and some do not. Even though participant discussions did not suggest this notion at all, I went into the coding process still expecting that data would fall into the five membership attributes. During the coding process for the first few interviews, I was trying to detect evidence of a common story, since my reflection data indicated that my participants were "telling the same story." However, with the five attributes of membership as my framework, the data were disjointed and did not tell a common or consistent story.

At the same time, other codes outside of the five membership attributes did tell a common, consistent story. My notes on the participants' interviews were vital in allowing me to explore the possibility that a construct other than membership may be a better fit for the Go-Go community. In my reflections, I consistently wrote that participants were "saying the same things." By examining the data without using the five membership attributes as a guiding framework, I was able to pay closer attention to the commonalities in participants' interview data and allow a different, unexpected pattern to develop in consideration of the Go-Go community's unique, intersecting contexts.

Chapter 4: Results

Application of Membership Framework

Research Question 1: To what extent do participants' ideas of membership fit within the five-attribute definition of membership explicitly presented in McMillan and Chavis' (1986) sense of community framework? Participant data indicate that the five-attribute framework of membership has limited application to the Go-Go community. Results are organized by each attribute: boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system.

Boundaries. The first of McMillan and Chavis' (1986) *membership* attributes is *boundaries:*

> Membership has *boundaries*; this means that there are people who belong and people who do not…The boundaries provide members with the emotional safety necessary for needs and feelings to be exposed and for intimacy to develop (Bean, 1971; Ehrlich & Graeven, 1971; Wood, 1971)... Groups often use language, dress, and ritual to create boundaries. People need these barriers to protect against threat (Park, 1924; Perucci, 1963). (pp. 9-10)

McMillan and Chavis' definition suggests that community members construct boundaries to foster intimacy and safety within a group that needs protection against those who are not of the group.

Interview data from the present study, however, did not reveal such group-based boundaries, and instead indicated a culture of invitation and inclusion based on shared interest in go-go music. An important factor in this open perspective is the fact that the

Go-Go community, as an entity, is linked to the local entertainment industry. Following discussion of the go-go music industry, several additional boundary-related themes that emerged are described below, specifically: reactive community, location as a natural non-boundary, and boundaries constructed from the outside.

The go-go music industry. As Go-Go is a community with ties to the entertainment business and industry, invitation and inclusion have been instrumental to this community's membership—not exclusion of those who "do not belong." In fact, many participants described a very open community that would like to increase its membership, not limit it.

> *"I can't say that I know that even happens. If anyone, you know, is saying, 'Oh, you can't be a part of it.' You know, I think it's all inclusive. You know, if you express the love for the music...and not even love, just, you know, even just a respect for it. You know, I think you're welcome...in my opinion anyway. So yeah, I don't think there's any barometer as to whether you can be in or not. But I know if you don't wanna be in, [laugh] based off what you say." – A-A-ron*

> *"I don't think the membership discriminates. I think it's, you know... THE MUSIC DOESN'T CARE. The music just wants to be heard…I do know there are some bands that play some music that, maybe, you know, the lyrics or the content may be offensive to women, may be offensive to somebody that is lesbian, but...the same can be said for rap, same can be said for R&B, same can be said for country music as well. So that is probably a music issue. If there's an issue, it's a music issue, not a genre issue…I think the doors are wide open for anybody who*

> *wants to come in and, if you embrace it, it will return your embrace." –* Congo Dre

> *"Well, it's not an exclusive thing. It's open to whoever. It loves who loves it. Put it that way. It loves who loves it. So, it's not… you sayin, like, membership? Anybody can be a member. Anybody can be a member. You know… we're not the good ol' boys… we don't shun for religious beliefs, sexual preference, race, none of that… don't nobody even pay attention to that." –* Carlos

Reactive community. The interview data demonstrate that people of the Go-Go community do not actively construct boundaries to protect this community against threat. Two participants described the community as "reactive."

> *"I just wish they would be more proactive instead of reactive… I mean, whenever something happens, they're all like, 'Let's come together,' but they're never like, 'Let's come together and try to prevent this from happening.'" -* Angie

> *"Because every time… somebody in go-go is asked to do, like, a article talkin', documentary talkin' 'bout go-go, they will definitely talk about the violence aspect. They will never, ever do a jo'nt and not talk about that part of it, youknowhatI'msayin. Because of that, they give it a perception, a real negative perception. And in a sense, I might probably say part of that is the people within go-go's fault… We already know that they gonna jump on the negative, and, that's because that's what they see. They not payin' attention to us. We're not*

doin' any things that make them pay attention to the positive, youknowwhatI'msayin. Go-Go needed to be… and still does… more proactive, and not just reactive. Go-Go only reacts when they're being attacked. And what I mean by bein' attacked… 'We 'bout to shut down nine clubs,'… uh-oh! It's a state of an emergency. Other than that, if it's no club bein' shut down, if you're not messin' with money that they can be makin'… everything is all fine and clean with that. So, they'll scream the 'stop the violence' thing when there's a situation goin on." – Carlos

Location as a natural non-boundary. Participants consistently linked the Go-Go community specifically to "D.C.," referring to Washington, DC, or "the DMV," or "the D.C. area," to specify the metropolitan region that connects Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia. Interview data indicate that "the D.C. area" location is an important factor in Go-Go community participation, providing more opportunities to participate and even the basic awareness that the go-go music scene exists.

Though "the D.C. area" would seem to provide a natural boundary for the community, it does not—only partially because there are individual differences in perception of the area's geographical boundaries. Also, participants spoke about "people all over the world" who love go-go music, or discussed go-go performances in places such as North Carolina.

Interviewer: "If I were to ask you, 'Who is the Go-Go community?' what would you say?

Carlos: "People from DMV. And I when I say DMV, I'm… when I say the M *part, I'm talkin DC, when I say M, I'ma say PG County, some of Montgomery County. Um, maybe sprinkles of Calvert or whatever. But mainly PG County. Some of Montgomery, mainly PG County. When I say the V, I'm saying like Alexandria and Arlington, youknowwhatI'msayin Old Town, Virginia… not Fredericksburg, VA or further out in VA…They more into down south than anything, than in this direction. And of course, Maryland, I'm not talkin' Towson, Baltimore, and all that. You know. Eastern Shore and all that*."

"Not necessarily for membership because the music has stretched down to North Carolina. They started their own bands to get their feeling of it. We do travel further out to see the bands, now that we have money. We go to Fredericksburg or Rockville. For a local go-go head, that is far to go to see a go-go… People prefer to be in their own community or watering hole that you go to every week, from the bouncers to the bartenders… you form the friendship, you see them at the same time every day, every week… the spots are so hard to come by now. Location can be important. Go-Go is organic and it grows." – Free

"…The people I believe who are a member of the Go-Go community, probably geographically they're from the D.C. area. They have heard it on the radio. They heard it live…PG County. That's all I've heard. PG County…If you are from California or anywhere outside of D.C. or anything like that, you probably are not as likely to have heard that go-go even exists… So I would imagine that for the community, it would be considered that the real authentic Go-Go community

> *is the Washington D.C. community and PG County. And we all define the D.C. area differently…So I think location plays into that. It's considered to be D.C.'s music. And so, you know, you know about it because you're in D.C. and it's D.C.'s music." – Matt*

> *"I think a lot of people don't realize that there are people who like go-go all over the world." -Angie*

> *"I think, because we live in, you know, DMV, we have exposure to it. It is native to this area, and once you get a little outside of this...the District, Maryland and Virginia, the exposure to the music kind of wanes a bit. Internationally, it may have a greater following, I think, in Europe and Asia, just by word of mouth. Things that I have read, it seems like...that the music is well-received internationally. Because I probably heard just as many bands, or just as many tapes and CDs, from other countries than I have, say, Chuck Brown live from LA* [Los Angeles] *or, you know, that kind of thing." – Congo Dre*

Washington, D.C. is the known origin point of the Go-Go community, and members of the Go-Go community are likely to live in close proximity to Washington, D.C. Though this location is essential to the context of the community, it does not serve boundary construction purposes because of the diffuse nature of the "D.C. area" boundaries and because of go-go music's intentional international reach.

Boundaries constructed from the outside. The Go-Go community's culture of invitation and inclusion—especially in the context of the entertainment industry—holds those outside of the community as *potential members* rather than nonmembers. Boundaries are described as constructions of those who reject the open invitation to be a part of the community—not as constructed by the people of the community themselves.

The interview data indicate that boundaries are constructed by those who reject, disparage, marginalize, or exploit go-go (music and culture), whether those forces are public, political or interpersonal. Boundaries are formed by those who: 1) do not like go-go music; 2) speak negatively about go-go music and/or the people who attend go-go shows; 3) use political or authoritative power to close go-go venues or stop go-go performances, 4) pretend to support go-go music for political or social convenience; or 5) use go-go music and shows to make money without fully supporting the genre and community.

> *"Yeah, if you're having a conversation about go-go and they're like, 'I don't like go-go,' or even amongst musicians, if you mention go-go, and they say certain things and kinda, uh, indicate that they're very disconnected from what's going on."* – C#

> *"I know if you don't wanna be in, [laugh] based off what you say…If you turn it on and they say, 'Aw, man, we gotta listen to this again?' [laugh] 'Not that go-go stuff!'" – A-A-ron*

"Because the first thing they'll say is, 'I don't like go-go,' 'I don't like this...' What do they call it? Like, 'bang-bang noise' or whatever. They just say anything, just anything negative." – Antoinette

"Little Benny passed away, and you saw all 'em politicians come up there and you know, people like... who was, what was the last mayor's name? Vincent Gray. And you're saying, 'Man, you ain't really down with this! Why you actin like you down with this? When... you know, you actin like you down with this 'cause it's that time, you know, you runnin for office, somethin goin on, you need something. But when it's just a regular, normal day, you part of the crew that's trying to shut it down or whatever,' youknowwhatI'm sayin? People can sense that. People can sense… because you say dumb stuff that don't make sense, like you down with it." - Carlos

"When they try to put up fronts like, try to be fake managers… don't know what they doin'. So, I think as far as that community, you just have to do something. Like if you're a promoter, not just throw one show, and you know, be honest, be respected, be trustworthy. I know that's a big issue with promoters, club owners. Just welcome it in there. Lot of clubs didn't want it until business so slow, then they want the bands in there because they know it's a quick buck. Treat the patrons with respect. Like, 'I don't want you in here, but I want your money.'" - Angie

As perceived by those interviewed, community boundaries are formed from the outside, as an act of rejection by others, but they are not formed by community members to distinguish outsiders, increase intimacy, or protect against threat.

The notion of membership boundaries for the Go-Go community is incompatible with the community's ties to the entertainment industry, wherein such boundaries would be detrimental to the growth and earning potential of the go-go scene. Using geographical location to establish boundaries is also unsuccessful with the Go-Go community because of the diversity in perceptions of what comprises the Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia region, and because of go-go's worldwide reach. Taken together, these results suggest that the boundaries attribute of membership is not fully applicable to the Go-Go community.

Emotional safety. In describing the overlap between the first two membership attributes, identified as *boundarie*s and *emotional safety*, McMillan and Chavis (1986) bring up "the broader notion of security" and stipulate that, "Boundaries established by membership criteria provide the structure and security that protect group intimacy" (p. 10). As examples, the authors draw attention to the physical security provided by gangs and the economic security provided by collectives.

The interview data do not indicate that the Go-Go community collectively provides protection and security for itself, thereby reinforcing a feeling of emotional safety for those who consider themselves to be members. Data do not indicate that the Go-Go community collectively perceive themselves to be a group within which members expect intimacy and security.

To explore participants' possible feelings of emotional safety as an aspect of their membership in the community, they were asked if they perceived that community members trusted one another. Only one participant out of 14 responded positively to the question, comparing the community to a family.

> *"I think they do* [trust one another]*...just like any community, you may have your fall-outs… they have their fall-outs and then they make up and they good again. It's just like, you know, just like being a family, like siblings. But I think as a whole, as far as most of the bands that I've seen, I know they get along well 'cause they perform in shows together. Sometimes they sing in each other's bands, which I think is a good look, I really like that. So it's showing like that family, that, you know, close-knit community like that. I love how they support one another, even though they're in different bands, it's not competition, per se…"- Antoinette*

It is important to note that Antoinette is not a musician. Participant interview data suggest that, in the Go-Go community, there is a class of individuals who are musicians, members of bands, band managers, promoters, sound technicians, and others who "make" go-go music. Many of the participants' remarks reflected the interaction among these community roles and a perceived lack of emotional safety. Interview data indicate that this lack of emotional safety among Go-Go community members is usually a result of 1) competition for money and resources, or 2) suspicion that others are not conducting ethical business practices.

"Go-Go, keep in mind, is street. Everything is handled street. Even business is handled streetwise – the majority of the business, not all of it. Everything is handled with street principles… and street values. So therefore, in the streets, you can love the streets or whatever, but the streets don't love you. You know? It's a dog-eat-dog type thing. Everybody tryna get on… and get over. In many cases, yeah, so…. it's unfortunate that it's that way. But that's the way it is." – Carlos

Tony: "I haven't been in that crowd in a while. But, from what I'm gettin', nobody trust nobody. That's in my ear. I don't play for a band right now.
Interviewer: "Ok. And why don't they trust anybody?
Tony: "Money."

"Well, I know there have been, uh, little scuffles in the audience because of different neighborhoods, you know, not trusting or liking each other. I know that that's been a thing. I know go-go bands have been competitive with each other at the same time. And I see on like some of these Go-Go Facebook groups that are into some kind of like 'crab in the barrel' mentality and I only know about that because I read it on Facebook. I'm not aware of that, but I would imagine there's competitions." - Nora

"Crabs in the barrel' is something that I hear across the board with everything that I deal with, whether it's rap music or entertainment or artistry. But go-go,

> *I've always heard it's always been… regarding relationships, it's hard for people to trust each other. It's hard for people to trust each other, I wanna say, because it seems like everybody is fighting for the same money, or at least they feel that way. Or fighting for respect. It's hard for people to trust each other. It's a lot of competitions too…" – Ye Yo*

> *"It seems to be business. And at the end of the day, you gotta watch out for yourself. And while I would say that there's probably lot of allegiance towards family or other, you know, connections that people have, I would say at the end of the day really, it's an industry. I mean, you know, the music industry, it's really very... You know, everybody's kinda out for themselves. I wouldn't say it's like gonna be on ABC as the next* Empire *[TV show] or anything but, I mean… Would there be so much violence and so much of a perception of violence if there was trust? Probably not." – Matt*

Other participant interview data indicated that within the Go-Go community are smaller units in which individuals may feel trust toward others in that unit. Data also indicate that there are individuals whom community members are more likely to trust.

> *"…Any members of the go-go community that are part of a tight squad are tight because you trust the people that you're working with, you trust the people that are in your circle. And then you just have a certain level of distrust for folks that are outside of that circle." – C#*

> *"I think there are certain people that people definitely trust and see their name and think they're definitely on the up-and-up or...people like Kato, people like Moe Shorter." - Angie*

Participant data indicate that among go-go attendees, emotional safety is not only lacking, but some may consider it irrelevant to their membership in the Go-Go community.

> *A-A-ron: "So there's always the whole situation of people who don't like each other, the neighborhood thing, the neighborhood beef and all that. So from that stand point, you know, I'm sure there's probably not very much trust involved. But you know, in general, I can't really think of any reason there would be a untrustworthy situation.*
>
> *Interviewer: "How does this affect how you think about membership in the go-go community?*
>
> *A-A-ron: "...Hmm. I don't think that really matters either. Because again, membership, for me anyway, is open to anybody who, you know, expresses like or love for it. So, yeah. I don't… I don't really see how trust would be too much of a factor. Trust or lack of trust, you know."*

> *Interviewer: "How does this affect how you think about membership in the Go-Go community?*
>
> *Congo Dre: "It doesn't impact me. I hadn't necessarily thought about it but, when I go to see a show, the dude in the next seat or the lady in front of me, whether or*

> *not I have a...you know, that it even came into my spirit whether or not I trusted them or anything else. I just assume we're here for the same reason, to hear great music, have a good time, enjoy the music, enjoy the friends, and enjoy the family. So I've never really given that a whole lot of thought."*

The music business is part of the contextualization of this particular community—from both the fans' and musicians' perspectives. Participant interview data do not indicate that members of the Go-Go community feel *emotional safety* as a component of their feelings of membership. Held to the definition of emotional safety, the participant data do not indicate that the Go-Go community employs "boundaries established by membership criteria" that "provide the structure and security that protect group intimacy" (p. 10). Participant data also do not indicate within-group physical or economic security.

Sense of belonging and identification. The membership framework (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) defines the third attribute, sense of belonging and identification as:

> The *sense of belonging and identification* involves the feeling, belief, and expectation that one fits in the group and has a place there, a feeling of acceptance by the group, and a willingness to sacrifice for the group. The role of identification must be emphasized here. It may be represented in the reciprocal statements "It is my group" and "I am part of the group. (p. 10)

Specific interview questions provided the participants with opportunities to express sentiments similar to "It is my group" and to express their personal notions of fitting in and acceptance. For example, participants were asked: *Do you consider yourself to be a member of the Go-Go community? Why do you consider yourself to be a* *member? What lets you know that you are a member? Has there been a time when you did not feel like a member of the Go-Go community?*

The interview data do not indicate that fitting into, having a place in, or a willingness to sacrifice is a major aspect of how individuals perceive themselves in relation to the Go-Go community. Data, instead, indicate that instead of "It is my group," some individuals regard "Go-Go" as a cultural identification.

I am Go-Go. Two of the study's participants made the statement "I am Go-Go," and another said, "You are what you are." However, these sentiments were different than feelings of fitting in and acceptance. In these cases, participants conveyed self-knowledge of identity in relation to a culture, in a way that is deeper and more stable than membership.

> *"Membership? Well, it's almost like… it's almost like a person's race. You are what you are. So you don't even think about it, youknowwhatI'msayin? It ain't like, 'OK, tomorrow, I'm a step out and not do'… You can say, 'I'm not goin' anymore' or 'I'm not gon' play anymore,' and all that. But you're still part of it. You may not be active in activities, but you're still part of it. So yeah, that's why I said like, somebody can't just step out* [and say] *'Oh, I'm not going to be this race anymore. I'm not gon' be Jewish or whatever, Black or Hispanic anymore.' You don't even think about that. Well, some people, I guess, do [laugh]." – Carlos*
>
> *"I'm Go-Go 'til death." - Tony*

> *"I AM Go-Go. I grew up with it, I was raised with it. I played in bands, I managed bands. It's all around. It's a part of me." - Free*

The role of identification is emphasized here, per McMillan and Chavis' explanation of the membership attribute sense of belonging and identification. However, instead of, *It is my group*, the sentiment was *I am the community. This is my culture. This is who I am.*

Another participant employed the same notion in order to separate himself from others in the community. While he acknowledged that he is a member of the Go-Go community, he also acknowledged that he is different than the individuals who say, "I am Go-Go."

> *"I guess, when I think about identity, I identify myself as African-American, or if I'm in a group community I identify myself as a [college fraternity]. I don't know that I identify myself as Go-Go, you know, if I'm understanding your questioning correctly. But like I said, I do consider myself a member of the community, but I don't know that I identify personally as Go-Go. And maybe that might be something that's, maybe, used to, you know, describe one of the musicians, or somebody that's producing, or somebody that's really involved in the actual making of the music, more so than somebody who supports the music and listens to the music." – Congo Dre*

Participant interview data reveal a pattern of stratification in the Go-Go community, which does not fit the description of a closed group to which one says "It is my group," to the exclusion of others. The attribute *sense of belonging and identification* is about how an individual lays claim to a group of people based on how well the individual fits in and is willing to sacrifice.

There are some individuals who are unmistakably “Go-Go” folks, and some individuals, who, although they would consider themselves to be members of the Go-Go community, find themselves in a different intra-community orientation. As noted earlier, there is a reverence reserved for the people involved in the making of the music, but even among fans, there is stratification by how well an individual or crew is known within the go-go scene. This has to do with a separate attribute, categorized as *recognition,* a construct separate from membership. This construct will be explained to answer the second research question of whether other attributes of membership exist for this community.

Personal investment. The fourth attribute of *membership* is *personal investment*. McMillan and Chavis (1986) state that personal investment is:

> …an important contributor to a person's feeling of group membership and to his or her sense of community. McMillan (1976) contended (a) that working for membership will provide a feeling that one has earned a place in the group and (b) that, as a consequence of this personal investment, membership will be more meaningful and valuable. This notion of personal investment is paralleled by the work of cognitive dissonance theorists (Aronson & Mills, 1959; Festinger, 1953). For example, the hazing ritual of college fraternities strengthens group cohesiveness (Peterson & Martens, 1972). Personal investment places a large role in developing an emotional connection (such as in home ownership). (p. 10)

In the membership framework, the attribute of personal investment builds upon cognitive dissonance theory and is illustrated by the idea that individuals “work for” and “earn” their membership, resulting in the membership being more valuable. To discover how participants may feel and demonstrate that they have “worked for” or “earned” their membership in the Go-Go community, the interview included the questions “Do you feel that you do specific things to maintain your membership in the Go-Go community?”, “What is the criteria for membership in the Go-Go community?”, “How do people learn what to do to become a member?”, and “What lets you know that you are a member?” In exploring personal investment as a potential attribute of membership, three related themes are discussed below: outsiders and personal investment; community is as community does; and love, culture, blood.

Outsiders and personal investment. Participant interview data indicate that earning membership in the Go-Go community is only relevant for outsiders, and then, only in reference to musicianship and business affairs. Though participants did not describe an in-out dichotomy, their interview data indicate that there are levels to the Go-Go community. There is a top or core level of the Go-Go community that designates who is *of* the community—meaning there is no “investment” to be made or membership to be earned. These are the individuals who share the common history of the Go-Go community, specifically during its first generation as a genre, from the mid-1970s through the 1990s, in the context of their age cohort, residential location within the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area, and which band’s shows they either played or attended during that time.

Participant data indicate that time or historic era is an important factor in community stratification, but especially in the context of music or business affairs. An outsider in this sense is a person who is seeking an instrumental role in the core level of the community (as a musician, businessperson; may also apply to journalists and researchers) but does not share the same go-go history. In such cases, an individual may be from outside of the go-go scene, but is still considered to be a part of the community, if they love and support go-go music. Personal investment would be required for the person's role in the community to become meaningful and valuable.

> *"Just by studying, I guess, studying the music. If we're talking about membership for musicians, that's it, you have to study. You have to study, especially, like, your older go-go bands. Don't think you're going to walk in there and just play willy-nilly, you have to really, really study and I mean, going back. Especially one of these bands have been playing since the 70s, you have to study." – C#*
>
> *"But I think also a significant part of it is just knowing about it and having invested the time, the sweat equity into listening to the tracks, the PA tapes, all that stuff, if that makes sense… And that's kinda the feeling that I get is, 'Oh, you can play along and kinda think you're there but, really, if you wanna be like a MEMBER, then you've gotta go through there.' And to some extent I, once again, completely hearsay, maybe have to engage in the extra musical activities that can come along with different genres of music to really, you know, be at the gold, platinum, double-diamond membership level of the Go-Go community… Because you want your street cred and, you know, respect from your, you know, boys and*

> *everything…You can hear a little bit of this, hear a little bit of that, but my polite personal answer is in supporting the music and making sure that it doesn't die is the best way to...because if the music dies, the community, does it die too? Well, we don't know. So if you wanna keep the community, if you wanna be a part of it, you gotta keep it going."- Matt*

Matt's description of having to "invest" "sweat equity" into listening to go-go tapes and "all that stuff" illustrates a difference in his relation to go-go. He is not from the original go-go scene and did not grow up in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area. He also identifies as white. Matt description of "the gold, platinum, double-diamond membership *level* of the Go-Go community" corroborates data that indicate levels to being of the community. Matt and C# are two of three participants who expressed feeling that they had to earn their membership in the Go-Go community.

Race. Participant interview data also indicate that even as the Go-Go community is perceived to be inclusive of or welcoming to all races, race plays a role in community expectations of membership. The only instances in the data that speak to personal investment being tied to membership were in regard to race. Two participants indicate that non-Black people are expected to "prove" they were a part of the community.

> *"Even though it's largely African-American, um... I think if you're outside the African-American community of race, you do have to earn your stripes and prove yourself a lot more, but once you do, I think they're open to respect you. " – Angie*

> *"I can't remember a time when, 'Naw, no white people.' They just ain't goin' searchin for you. They can do without you, you know. But you come to party, and you prove that you part of them, hey, they'll accept you big time. Matter of fact, to the point where they even may even crown you king or queen…" – Carlos*

Analyzed with other data, these support the conceptualization that there is a core level of the community to which members can become a part of over time. Thus, again, personal investment appears to be for musicians and business people, but not for go-go attendees and fans.

Two musicians, however, did not equate race with personal investment.

> *"Race ain't got nothin' to do with it. As long as you are musically talented, race ain't got nothin' to do with nothin'. Race ain't got shit to do with it. Long as you musically inclined, and you get up there and perform. That's all that matters." – Tony*

> *"I don't think is so much an issue anymore just because the racial composition of our city has kinda changed, so as it's changed it's not such a shock to see, you know, white boys playing at the go-go, basically. You know what I mean? Versus, even 10 years ago, it was kind of like 'Who? What? Wow, and they're killing? Really?' You know? But like, nowadays, it doesn't even matter, because we're so used to seeing diversity in our city. At least to me, and at least, you know, I'm not hearing so much about people being described as, you know, 'white boy' this, 'oriental boy' that, like it was back in the day, you know what I mean?" – C#*

Community is as community does. Participant interview data indicate that for individuals who just want to join the community as a go-go music fan or enthusiast (not as a musician, businessperson, or other instrumental role) there is no expectation of personal investment to earn a place in the community. Instead, data indicate that to become one of the community, one does what the community is doing. Below are some of the responses to the question of how a person learns what to do to become a member of the Go-Go community.

> "*Learn what to do to become a member, just start doing what everybody doing [laugh]. It's definitely a follow-a-crowd type of thing." – Carlos*
>
> *"They go to a Go-Go show [laugh] and participate." – Nora*
>
> *"I have no idea [laugh]. I have no idea. I guess just being introduced to the music and just loving the music, and once you become a fan of it, you in the community." - Antoinette*
>
> *"You get introduced to the music…maybe you heard it on the radio, somebody introduces you to it and you wanna learn more. And so, your drive or your passion to know more about something that, you know, interests you... As you continue to reach out to people or talk to people about the music, there will be the ones that kind of coach you up, so to speak, on the protocol, if there is such a thing, or try to learn you about the business of what is go-go." – Congo Dre*

> *“Watching other people. Yeah, you just watch other people… If we're talking about media, you’re watching people and who they may talk to to get information or to get insight or to get a story, so you may do that. Or, if you're watching who people network with or who people talk to to get access or support certain privileges…” – Ye Yo*

Participant data also indicate that members of the Go-Go community can find themselves immersed based on their social or employment connections, still absent of any feelings of having to earn membership.

> *Interviewer: “Do you feel that you did specific things or that you do specific things to maintain your membership?*
>
> *Angie: “Umm… [pause] I think I did, but not intentionally for that purpose. It just happened that way…It's not like I said, ‘Well, let me stay involved in go-go,’ you know. When I got involved… It was about … being in touch with people, seeing what needed to be done…”*

> *Ye Yo: “Interaction, network. Most of the people that I know are a part of that community, whether it's just...it could be band members or people that like the music, or...it could be anything, but, yeah, my interactions with my network.”*
>
> *Interviewer: “Do you feel that you do specific things to maintain your membership in the community?*
>
> *Ye Yo: “I do. I go out sometimes. I kind of wanna know what's going on sometimes. I read or listen to things that are specific to it.”*

Love, Culture, Blood. McMillan and Chavis described an emotional connection that comes from personal investment and earning membership. Participants did describe emotional connections, but not from any perceived personal investment. Participants who attended go-gos during the early history of go-go music discussed their love for go-go music and culture. They described their introductions to go-go music and culture by family members. They did not describe earning membership, but simply coming to realize that go-go was a part of their life and culture. Below are some of the comments participants made when asked what lets them know that they are a member of the community and if they feel they do anything specific to maintain their membership.

> *GoGo: "I fell in love with go-go from the first time I accidentally attended a show when I was 11 years old. So I rocked to the records ever since, you know. My big brother and sister would come home with their new albums, the new Trouble Funk, the E.U. album…*
>
> *Interviewer: "Do you feel that you do specific things to maintain your membership in the go-go community?*
>
> *GoGo: "I'm not gonna say I do anything specific other than keep it in my heart."*

> *Michelle: "I grew up in a household of go-go music and three of my family members were a part of a band. And then I end up dating someone in a band. I moved in a neighborhood that was very popular with one of the bands so it was something that's just in my blood that I couldn't get away from.*
>
> *Interviewer: "Do you feel that you do specific things to maintain your membership in the go-go community?*

Michelle: "Yeah, I do, I support. I support. I will still go and visit the bands at different events."

"... I grew up in [a Prince George's County direct suburb of DC]. I played on got damn Tupperware. I played on cans. You don't need nothin to start a go-go band. That's how I started out, when I was a kid. I started out with nothin. Played til my hands… [stretched out his hands]*… I had splits an' shit all across my hands. My hands was bleedin…beatin on whatever I could beat on." - Tony*

"I AM go-go. I grew up with it, I was raised with it. I played in bands, I managed bands. It's all around, it's a part of me." – Free

"How do I know someone is a member? Just by the type of music they love. You know, most of us that are born and raised here, Go-Go is our musical choice, it's our you know we love all music but what makes us D.C. natives is our love for Go-Go music, our music, our love for going to the Go-Go and you know when it comes on at a party or the club, wherever you may be, the way we get up and dance together no matter what. No matter what age no matter what [DC] quadrant we're from." – Queen of Go-Go

Participants were asked, "What are the criteria for membership in the Go-Go community?" Participants indicated both that "there are no criteria" for membership and that the criteria are love, acceptance, and respect of go-go music.

"It's not really a criteria. You just gotta love the congas, the timbales, gotta have a love for a lot of music. Gotta be able to accept and deal with the energy that it brings." – Free

"Just loving the music." – Angie

"Exposure and appreciation. Exposure to and appreciation of go-go music." – Nora

"[laugh] Criteria for membership in the Go-Go community. Have fun. Enjoy yourself. Don't bash it. They [the Go-Go community] *are very defensive of anybody who bashes it. They proud people, they proud of their community. And, I would say don't bash it, don't perpetrate it… Don't say you down with it and you really ain't." – Carlos*

"It's no criteria. I mean, if you love the music, you love the music. Come, relax." - Tony

"I guess just being introduced to the music and just loving the music, and once you become a fan of it, you in the community." - Antoinette

Even when describing the criteria of "love," "appreciation," and "respect," many participants included an invitation to join the community. Carlos says, "Enjoy yourself," and Tony says, “Come, relax.” This matches the tendency observed among at least half of the participants who, during their interviews, spoke to an imaginary other: a perceived potential community member to whom they offered invitations to join the community, no investment needed.

Go-Go is described by some participants as being their culture, their way of life, or something that is in their blood. Though their participation may have involved paying for go-go music, paying for shows, or making a personal investment of their time and energy to listen to it and participate in it, this declaration of being a part of the Go-Go community is different than declaring that one has earned a place in a closed group to which it is important to establish who belongs and who does not.

Common symbol system. The fifth of McMillan and Chavis’ attributes of membership is *common symbol system:* “Groups use these social conventions (e.g., rites of passage, language, dress) as boundaries intentionally to create social distance between members and nonmembers” (p.11).

Though participant interview data indicated that members of the Go-Go community do not intentionally construct boundaries to exclude others, data did provide evidence of a common symbol system. The system, however, does not operate according to the McMillan and Chavis definition.

Instead of intentionally keeping others out, it naturally stratifies the community, separating the core level of the community from the rest of the community. It maintains a natural within-community boundary between those who experienced early go-go history and those who did not. The system operates according to time and knowledge, more intricate at the core level, and more basic outside of it.

Participant data indicate that the common symbol system tells how familiar a person is with go-go music and culture. Instead of intentionally creating social distance from others, participant interview data indicate that the intention is to share and amass knowledge of the Go-Go community's history.

Outside of the core level, the basic common symbol system includes the most accessible symbols, such as Chuck Brown and Black Washington, DC/ The DMV. Other themes that emerged were in relation to the core community, such as: demeanor and behavior in the context of go-go music; bands, musicians, and instrumental people; age cohort + historical period; specific go-go shows; and neighborhood or crew affiliation.

Chuck Brown. The name Chuck Brown was mentioned by all participants, even though no questions in the interview directly specified him.

> *"I mean, as soon as you hear those congos, or Chuck Brown's voice, or whatever. I mean, it's like, 'Oh you already know.'" – Antoinette*

> *"Go-go is always gonna be unique and I love saying this…where else can you find a genre where the person that created that genre, performed that genre in the city with musicians who also still perform the genre, or if you didn't play, you know, with Chuck on stage, you at least went to a Chuck show and saw this person who created a genre, you know what I mean? Or where else can you even name a genre that's had this big of an impact, where can you pinpoint the one person who created it? We're unique because of Chuck, basically. Um, so, it then becomes the burden of trying to carry on his legacy." – C#*

> *"I remember, I worked with this woman, she was telling me how Chuck Brown was playing at her granddaughter's prom and she was like, 'Chuck played at my prom.'" - Angie*

"D.C."/ "the D.C. Area"/ "the DMV"/ "Chocolate City". Participant interview data indicated that the localized nature of the Go-Go community makes its location an important symbol in social convention. As D.C. was a majority-Black city during the historical era that marks the origins of the Go-Go community, affiliation with Black D.C. (of that time) is a symbol of the Go-Go community. Participants referred to "D.C.", "the D.C. area", "the DMV," and "Chocolate City" synonymously.

> *"Chocolate City, as a whole, the one that we grew up in that was united around being you know, Black, mostly Blacks and brought together by go-go music. If you think about it, Chuck Brown's music made a family. I went to my first go-go with my father who was a big Chuck Brown fan and worked for Chuck Brown in his younger years. So when I think of the local community, I think of D.C. as Chocolate City." - Queen of Go-Go*

> *"…it's the way we walk, talk, the slang we use… even to the point of when we talk, you can almost tell that a person from that… DC—we say 'DC'—we call it 'Go-Go community,' or we'll say you from DC." – Carlos*

> *"Not everybody in the DMV supports and likes go-go but go-go is the DMV." – Free*

Demeanor and behavior in the context of go-go music. Participant interview data indicate that some in the Go-Go community believe that one's demeanor and behavior in the context of go-go music is a symbol that tells whether one is or is not a member of the Go-Go community.

> *"Outside of interacting with them, you know because, you'll be riding in the car, another car pull up, playing go-go… they give you the look and this nod, they automatically communicating that this is the hot stuff right now… or maybe the two step here or there when a good Chuck song come on. It can shut a whole store down… If you in the store and it comes on, people will stop and party right there… A few people have that air-congo thing going… a song come on and you playin' along. Once you feel the vibe, those things stick…I have perfected that mean mug… when you get the nasty socket going, whatever it is that touches your soul, the mean mug and nod."* *-Free*

> *"They use different hand signs and... the little flags up… the little scarves and stuff…In particular, I know one group who used to do that, used a scarf…They used to twirl their scarves up in the air like it's a helicopter... this is something that the whole crowd end up doing… It was too much energy for me. [laugh] …and they already knew what song was about to come on, they already knew who this group was, and then, everybody would just… the whole club was a part of that one little thing that this band would do or that group started." – Michelle*

The *core* community has a more intricate, detailed, experiential common symbol system, based largely in a specific intersection of geographical location (Washington, DC/ "The DMV"), historical time period (1970s through 2000s), age cohort, and Black social spaces.

Bands, musicians, and instrumental people. Participant interview data indicate that members of the Go-Go community use conversation to determine whether an individual is a member of the Go-Go community. Individuals signify their membership by their knowledge of key figures in go-go music and the go-go scene.

> *"I don't know if there's a legit criteria* [for membership] *but I would think that everyone can name, you know, key people of… the major bands anyway."*
> *– A-A-ron*

> *"You know that, okay, they know something about it and they say that they've been going for so many years, that they've been visiting this band, they can name at least two people out of three bands, they know a little something." - Michelle*

> *"Being a Washingtonian and growing up on go-go, it's like everybody knows a go-go song. You know, everybody identifies with, like, Chuck Brown, so if you know more than Chuck Brown, like if you know JYB, or BYB, and Rare Essence… that's how you can [laugh] really identify." –Antoinette*

Age Cohort + Historical Period. Go-Go's common symbol system is based largely upon things that were once available but no longer are, such as P.A. (public address system) tapes, specific go-go venues, certain brands of apparel, and live Chuck Brown or Little Benny performances. Internet technology has increased public access to go-go music, the Go-Go community, and its symbols. However, individuals who lived in the Washington, DC area and attended go-gos at go-go venues throughout the 1980s and 1990s have a bond of experiential knowledge and personal recognition that others in the community do not.

> *"I guess it comes with age… and knowin' what real music sounds like, what real go-go music sounds like…. With real go-go music. 'Cause if you go back and look at old EU records… check that out. That's go-go. And, like, old Chuck Brown records, stuff like that. That's real go-go music." – Tony*

> *"That's because D.C. had their own identity. You see what I'm sayin? I'm talkin pre-internet. You see what I'm sayin? We were more of a proud people back then... not saying we're not proud, but we were proud of our own identity, you know, our own sayings...If you notice, when a older band plays, they still sound the same as they did in the 80s. [laugh] You can tell a old-head band that used to be a band in the 80s and now they back out playin again. They rap the same, where they say everything four times. Are y'all ready to go? [pause, as if waiting for crowd response] Are y'all ready to go? [pause] Are y'all ready to go? [pause]*

> *Are y'all ready to go? [pause] Well say 'hell no!' [pause] Say 'hell no!' [pause] Say 'hell no!' [pause] Say 'hell no!' [laugh]" - Carlos*

PA tapes and specific go-go shows (band + date + venue). Recordings of go-gos from the early 1980s through the early 2000s are referred to as "P.A. tapes," even though the medium eventually switched to CD and digital recordings later. Two participants spoke of PA tapes as being integral to their socialization within the Go-Go community.

> *"The PA tapes—not as common anymore—but it was something about PA tapes from 2000s or before. You wanted to have a live tape from the night before." – Free*

> *"When I woke up in the morning when I was 10 years old, my brother played EU* [go-go band Experience Unlimited] *tapes. He played EU tapes before I went to bed. It was like 1979, 1978… '78, '79, 1980. And, when I wake up in the morning, that's all I heard was EU tapes. And, I used to get dressed to EU. That's all I heard." - Tony*

> *"One of my good, good friends a long time ago… everywhere we went, he carried a tape in his pocket. [laugh] That is definitely a symbol! And he would get in your car and take your tape out, put his tape in. That's a symbol." – Congo Dre*

Participant interview data indicate that a common symbol in the Go-Go community is knowledge about specific dates of shows and what made some shows noteworthy for go-go culture. This relates to PA tapes as symbols, because if an individual was not at a show, that person could hear it on a PA tape of the show. To one participant, dates of shows are a vital part of the symbol system he uses to communicate about go-go.

> *"I would just say, I guess, if they're just somebody who, you know, expresses their love for the music, you know, you hear them playin' it all the time or talkin' 'bout certain dates of shows. Y'all can have an exchange about just those dates, say, "Oh, man. Remember this part on dah-dah dah-dah." So, yeah, somebody who can shoot out some numbers and things of that nature." – A-A-ron*

Neighborhood and/or crew affiliation. Many people attend go-gos as part of a crew or with a group from their neighborhood. Being a part of a crew or neighborhood that is known in the go-go scene is symbolic.

> *They're* [Individuals in the Go-Go community are] *gonna say their neighborhoods… and don't let 'em be one of those people saying, "You're not from the neighborhood because I've never seen you with these people." And the names is the letters that they will use or just the individuals themselves. If they* [band members] *see one person of one group, oh they know who they are. So, for let's say, if I say these the Three-Twenty Honeys*. You see me with at least one of them? Oh, they know that's the Three-Twenty Honeys*. They come all the time. They show out and support our band. Sometimes I've seen people with t-shirts, I've seen scarves." – Michelle* [*Crew name changed.]

The *common symbol system* attribute of membership is applicable to the Go-Go community but does not serve the same function as the theory states. Instead of creating social distance from those who do not belong to the community, the common symbol system of the Go-Go community helps to sort the community into core and supportive levels.

Summary: Research Question 1

Results related to Research Question 1 provide evidence that the Go-Go community may not be the type of community that the membership framework was meant to describe. The examples provided by McMillan and Chavis to illustrate the membership construct were *bounded* communities, e.g., neighborhoods, gangs, and fraternities. Emphasized in the framework is the way that the five membership attributes "work together and contribute to a sense of who is part of the community and who is not" (p. 11).

The attributes, taken together, prioritize the notion of belonging versus not belonging, using these *bounded* communities as examples. McMillan and Chavis, at least in some of their examples (e.g., gangs, fraternity hazing), present membership attributes in a defensive, power-asserting way, wherein a community member is at once declaring his own investment into a group, sensing that s/he belongs to the group, and constructing boundaries to keep others out of the group.

Results indicate that the Go-Go community does not operate as a "group" to which individuals do or do not belong, but as an open community of people with a shared interest in and identification with go-go music. Results of the present study indicate that the Go-Go community is an *unbounded* community, meaning that it is not actively constructing boundaries from the inside. The Go-Go community's link to the go-go music industry and scene influences its perception of being open, inviting, and inclusive.

The results also demonstrate that the Go-Go community is rooted in an intersection of geographical location, historical era, age cohort, and race, and association with the local go-go scene/entertainment industry. These conditions of race, power, geographical location, historical era, and local entertainment industry stratify the community, and limit the extent to which McMillan and Chavis' membership framework applies. As such, notions such as belonging and membership may have limited application to the Go-Go community.

Being *of* the Community

Research Question 2: Do participant data provide evidence that other membership attributes exist for the Go-Go community? Though participant interview data did not fit the pattern of the membership construct's five attributes, it did fit a pattern that indicated a different construct than membership was at work.

Instead of membership, data offer a pattern that can be described as *being* of *the community,* a construct developed for this research and applicable to the Go-Go community. The interview data indicate that the Go-Go community is not a closed group when contextualized within its role in the local, national, and international entertainment industries. The community's extreme localization to the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan region forms the basis of its core community, and its desire to perform and share go-go music opens a supportive level to anyone who demonstrates love for go-go music and support of the go-go music scene. Instead of membership's "feeling that one has invested part of oneself to become a member and therefore has a right to belong," (p. 9), being *of the community* is having a personal, interactive knowledge and experience of the community such that one is recognizable as a community member.

At the core of this community, according to participants is culture. Go-Go is described as more than just a shared interest of the community; it is referred to as a culture that originated with Black people in Washington, DC in the 1970s.

> *"…It's still culture. So it's not just… the Howard Theatre, and the Fast Eddie's, and the Martini's, youknowwhatI'msayin… It's also Metro subway, it's also McDonald's; it's also Safeway and Giant. You see what I'm sayin? It's the culture. Go-Go is a community, but it's a culture." - Carlos*

> *"It's its own culture. It's its own community, especially in this area." – Free*

> *"I always have mixed feelings when I see a more diverse crowd at the go-gos 'cause, it's like, this is great, you know, that they feel comfortable enough and they're knowledgeable enough to come in and, like, party with Back* [Backyard Band, a go-go band] *or whatever. But at the same time, you don't want to see go-go go the way of the whole souvenir shop treatment, like, we don't want go-go to become, like, this typical DC thing that's kind of packaged for, like, tourists or packaged as like a selling point for living here. It really has to be respected as a culture." – C#*

Being *of* the community is a term that reinforces respect for the culture of the core community. Love, support, and knowledge emerged as important themes in how individuals find themselves and others in relation to the community, but belonging did not. Belonging (needing something from the community) is not the priority in terms of one's relationship to the Go-Go community, according to interview data; support (for the sake of the community) is the priority.

Similar to the construct of membership, the construct of being *of* the community has attributes with interdependent definitions. In addition to *common symbol system* (which is also an element of membership), there are three attributes proposed to define being *of* the Go-Go community: *permeable levels*, *personal knowledge and experience,* and *recognition*.

Permeable levels. The exploration of boundaries to Go-Go community membership revealed a community structure more closely resembling *permeable levels.* Instead of one closed group to which one belongs or does not, there is an open community with varying levels of participation and recognition. Given the inclusive, entertainment-based, and culturally-based nature of the community, these levels represent who is: 1) *of* the community (core); 2) part of the imagined community collective (supportive); and 3) unaware of the community, indifferent to the community, or explicitly in opposition to it (potential). Figure 1 illustrates these levels.

The interview data demonstrate that among those who love and support go-go music, i.e., the Go-Go community, people fall within *core* and *supportive* levels. Even with this inside-the-community stratification, a permeable boundary is constructed by those in the supportive level to separate them from the core. This is another example of boundaries constructed from the "outside". Those who are supportive community separate themselves from the core community out of respect for the core's lived experiences, knowledge of the community and culture, and their recognition as Go-Go community members. These attributes, *personal knowledge and experience* and *recognition* are explored later.

The core is made up mostly of those who have lived in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area between the late 1970s and early 2000s and thus have "been there" during the building of the go-go music scene. Those new to the community may gain experiences, knowledge, and recognition based on the present-day go-go scene, but they will not have the personal, experiential knowledge of the community's history that began in the late 1970s.

"There" at the Core. Still, the levels are permeable, and over time, one can gain personal knowledge and experience and recognition that lets the community know that the person is a member. One aspect of this is *being there*, as YeYo explains.

> *"Because they show it…doing something. Whether it's like writing or taking pictures, they show up in...I don't wanna say, like, Go-Go is this exclusive thing, but you're either there or you're not. They show up managing a band or carrying equipment or maybe they start playing for a band, but they show up. It's noticeable." – YeYo*
>
> *"Well, you see them in the circles, you know, at the shows, which is a part of the community. Or even if they're not at the shows, they speak the same language. They know about the music and culture, even from when we were children*

> *growin' up. And they have a respect for it…Their knowledge of it is generally the same as the next person from the same community. They do not dishonor it. Even though they may not attend, they respect and party to it. You know, they give it its props, and different ways of supporting by…people attending shows* or *purchasing the music...I wanna say there has never really been a set criteria other than because of the way things are with if not being recognized nationally, that the only criteria is for you to be here to experience it." – Go-Go*

The responses below indicate that a certain segment of the community is more knowledgeable about the community and more noticeable in the community, and that those people are perceived to be in a "deeper" or on a "top" level. This level is the *core*.

> *"I guess someone could self-identify themselves as being a fan of any type of genre of music… At any time you're engaging and experiencing the music, you're a part of that community of the music. But I think really more for the Go-Go community, I think it's almost like once you've amassed a certain amount of knowing people in the community, knowing the music, and… it almost at times can almost be what you can talk about to others. And what you can recite and what you can profess about it. So the deeper you are, as in the more you can say you know." – Matt*

> *"It's all in who you know, at the top level and it's all in what you can do at the bottom level, basically." – C#*

> *"…the people who are the musicians, the people who are, you know, concerned and dedicated to getting the music out to the masses, the people who support it in a number of ways, whether it's behind the scenes or actually in the pit, being involved in the call and response. There are, you know, people like me who are right on the cusp of it… I have listened to so much Go-Go, but I haven't been into some of these iconic places." – Congo Dre*

Participant data indicate that the core level of the community entails two main characteristics: 1) superior personal knowledge and experience of go-go, and 2) being recognizable for their involvement in go-go. *Being there* gains one the needed experience to enhance one's knowledge, and one is noticed when one is always 'there.' This is true for musicians and for fans, two subgroups of the community identified by participants.

Personal knowledge and experience. Participants reiterated the presence of a barometer of community knowledge that identifies that a person is a part of the Go-Go community. Personal knowledge and experience determine the extent of one's shared, common symbol system with the community and the permeable level at which one is identified. Below are examples of how participants described how they discern whether a person is a member of the community.

> *"When they have a little knowledge of the community. A lot of times…when people are from certain neighborhoods, and…they have close friends of certain neighborhoods... You know that, okay, they know something about it and they say*

that they've been going [to the go-go] *for so many years, that they've been visiting this band, they can name at least two people out of three bands… they know a little something." – Michelle*

"Experience. I will say experience and being active. Go out, go see it. Don't judge based on only what you hear on the radio. You need to experience a live go-go in its normal self. And I would say not even going to see a Constitution Hall or big shows only. Go see these bands at their every week spot where they normally play. And for some things, you just have to be there because it's changed so much from the late '70s, '80s up till now. Some things you just had to be there for…

So that's the sign of that they are from the area and from the community because they have knowledge… they're very knowledgeable of it and speak on it with a certain passion. There it is. The passion that they have for it will show up in their tone of voice and their knowledge of it." – GoGo

"They can remember the things [go-gos] *they went to and the year." – Free*

"… If they're just somebody who, you know, expresses their love for the music, you know, you hear them playin' it all the time or talkin' 'bout, you know, certain dates of shows. Y'all can have an exchange about just those dates, and say, 'Oh, man, remember this part on dah-dah dah-dah.' So, yeah, somebody who can shoot out some numbers and things of that nature." – A-A-ron

The three participants who could identify a time or times when they did not feel like members of the Go-Go community also compared their lack of personal knowledge and experience to others. These three participants currently consider themselves to be members of the Go-Go community, but they respectfully separate themselves from others they perceive to have more extensive personal knowledge and experience of go-go music.

> *Interviewer: "Has there been a time when you did not feel like a member of the Go-Go community?*
> *Nora: "Um… [pause] well, yeah. When I was really new to it, but even now because I'm still learning. I mean, as a musician, as a just like a fan, yeah. I'm part of it, but I can't call myself on the same level as [well-known go-go musician] or [musician] or wherever as a Go-Go musician. Only 'cause I respect their experience and their unique background. I just don't have that."*

> *"I always feel like half in, half out. It's kinda always been like that… I'm not really from here, so, I kinda knew about go-go but not really. I learned about go-go from hearing it being sampled in popular rap songs, so once I moved here, I realized 'okay, that beat from that song is go-go,' you know what I mean? So I really learned about it through the whole Kid n Play thing and the whole Salt n Pepa thing… which is like, you know, not ideal when you have folks here who grew up going to the Capital Center, you know what I mean? So it's a different experience. So, yeah, I'm part of the community because I contribute in that way. I can play the music, I can kinda teach others about the music but I'm not a part*

> *of the community in that, like, my history just doesn’t go back as far as it should have for someone my age.” – C#*

> *“I don't really consider myself to be a part of it, even though I am a part of it…This is completely unrelated to Go-Go, but the best parallel I can make. A friend of mine, who's a very strong activist up in New York, when a lot of the things were going on with the Black Lives Matter movement…I was asking her how things were going. Things were very hostile up in New York. And she said, ‘The best thing that I can do right now is stand in solidarity.’ She’s white like me. And she said, ‘That's the best thing I can do because I really can only do with so much because I am not that which I am advocating for.’ And so for her, it was a matter of she wasn't in the community that she was fighting for, but she was trying to support them. And so for me I kinda see it as -- because not even an ethnic thing -- but it's more of a, ‘Because I haven't been doing this so long.’ And I'm not as familiar, like I said, about people who know all the PA tapes and all the everything. Because I don't do that, there's only but so much I can do. So I can't really self-proclaim to be a member of this community… But I think it takes time to be able to come in from the outside and merge into that community.”- Matt*

The *personal knowledge and experience* attribute applies to all roles of the community, including the business side. Participants describe how individuals on the business side reveal themselves to be *not of* the community.

> *"Don't know anything about go-go music… just wanna be seen or just wanna be a manager, a so-called manager, but don't know what the hell they doin' as a manager… Don't know anything about the music, the crowd, and how to book places, you dig what I'm sayin?" – Tony*

> *"When they try to put up fronts, like try to be fake managers, don't know what they doin'. So, I think as far as that community, you just have to do something. Like if you're a promoter, not just throw one show, and you know, be honest, be respected, be trustworthy. That's a big issue with promoters, club owners." – Angie*

The way that personal knowledge and experience sets the core apart from the supportive and potential community can also be demonstrated through participants' comments about coverage of go-go in local mainstream media.

Sources of knowledge: media versus community. The supportive and potential community, who rely on local mainstream media for information about go-go, without adequate personal knowledge and experience of the Go-Go community, are at risk for believing negative stereotypes about the community. This idea is noted in participant interview data, which indicate that the tendency to associate violence with the Go-Go community is associated with being from outside the community. Two participants who separated themselves from the core based on their lack of personal knowledge and experience discussed having their perception of the community shaped by mainstream media.

> *"I think they'd* [mainstream media would] *more contribute to the downfall and the perception of violence. I think that's probably how the media portrays that and then that shapes little old Matt's perception of it. You wouldn't have any first-hand experience for some time but just hearing, 'Oh, there's a lot of violence.'" – Matt*

> *"Well, it* [local mainstream media] *helped me understand the larger picture. Like I knew there was violence in the audience here and there. I mean, when I played I was like ready to dive behind the drums, but I didn't realize that there was a police report about it and that they were shutting down clubs. The only way I knew about it is because I read it in the media and how it's sort of dwindled a little because of all of that, and um… Yeah, it keeps me abreast of all the larger picture of what's going on." – Nora*

Personal knowledge and experience of the community, especially when compared to media accounts of the community, brings out the *we* that feels marginalized and stereotyped.

> *"I think they* [local mainstream media] *influence how outsiders see it* [the Go-Go community]. *We already know they wrong. Well, they don't necessarily have to be wrong, we just know they kinda biased…they can only tell what they know. And they don't know much themselves. So, a lot of times, they will focus on the negatives of it…Because every time… somebody in go-go is asked to do, like, a article talkin'… documentary talkin' 'bout go-go, they will definitely talk about*

the violence aspect. They will never, ever do a jo'nt and not talk about that part of it, youknowwhatI'msayin...” - *Carlos*

“…What I know about it [go-go] *doesn't come from local mainstream media. You know, I heard about Chuck Brown, Little Benny passin' away before the news broke, you know…I'm, like, 35 years in already. My first experience with go-go didn't come from mainstream media.” – GoGo*

“Fuck the media. The media doesn't give a fuck about go-go. That's bullshit. They don't give a shit about the Go-Go community at all. That's my opinion.” – Tony

Interviewer: “How do you know someone is not a member of the Go-Go community?
Ye Yo: “They hate the music or they talk bad about the music or they quote what they read or what they see maybe in the news as opposed to real-life experiences.”

Recognition. Participant interview data indicate that *recognition* is an attribute of being of the Go-Go community. *Recognition* distinguishes those in the core community from those in the supportive and potential community. Instead of being largely self-directed as in, “It is my group,” this attribute of *recognition* is directed from others toward the individual, as in “You are one of us.” Instead of emphasizing acceptance, the sentiment is, “Others know me to be of this community,” or “I am known for being of this community.” As individuals move from potential or supportive to core, the sentiment is “I am told that I am of this community.” This attribute also speaks to the element of ‘being there’ that also underlies *permeable levels* and *personal knowledge and experience*. ‘Being there’ leads to one’s ability to be recognized by other community members.

There are several ways in which participants indicated this attribute:

I am Go-Go. These data were previously reported to demonstrate why the membership attribute sense of belonging and identification was not fully applicable to the Go-Go community. Two of the present study’s participants made the statement “I am Go-Go,” indicating cultural belonging that is different from the notion of membership in a group. Several other participants made a contrast between their own orientation to the community and those whom they perceived as *being* Go-Go, based on their recognition within Go-Go culture.

“I’m Go-Go ‘til death.” - Tony

“I AM Go-Go. I grew up with it, I was raised with it. I played in bands, I managed bands. It’s all around. It’s a part of me.” - Free

I am known for this. /Go-Go affiliation is a salient identity. Participant interview data indicate that perceiving oneself as a member of the community is not so much based on one’s personal feelings of acceptance or belonging in the Go-Go community, but based on the Go-Go community’s (and others’) identification and validation of that person as a member. Individuals of the [core] Go-Go community discussed it as a status that supersedes other identities—in the eyes of others—because affiliation with go-go is something that a person would be known for.

> *"You know how some people are known for something? And I don't mean to sound morbid with this; it's just ironic that it come up. But like when a person pass* [dies]*? It's* [Go-Go is] *something that somebody would… it would probably be on their headstone… it's something that somebody is always known for? 'He was the burger guy,' or something like, you see what I'm saying? That kind of thing…everybody has that one tag. That it's just gon' be. That's just what it is. You have no choice of it; it's what other people see."* - Carlos

> *"…back in the day where, you know, you were either in or you're out, you know, and you got looked at different for being in* [the Go-Go community]. *You know, you was put on a certain status for being in. You know, you had your in-crowd football players and football team. Go-go overrides that. (laugh) Unless that football player was at the go-go too, then he was up there* [having high social status among peers]. *You had popularity from you being at the go-go. You was cool."* - GoGo

> *"I consider myself a member because anybody who gets in my car, it's a pretty good chance they gonna hear go-go before they get out if they don't hear it when they already, you know, when they get in. And, you know, just...I mean, I'm known*

for that. You know, you gon' hear talk radio, sports radio, or go-go. Like, that's probably it." – A-A-ron

Interviewer: "Are there any specific symbols of membership that help members identify one another?

Nora: "Not really… other than membership in a band. You know, I mean, if you're kind of known, everybody knows that you're a part of the Go-Go community."

I was told that I belong. The notion of acceptance arose when some participants discussed the fact that high-ranking go-go musicians have told them that they belonged to the community. This recognition by high-status community members was exhibited in two ways: within personal conversation or by a "shout out" from the stage when a band is performing.

Interviewer: "Do you consider yourself to be a member of the Go-Go community?

Nora: "Um… [pause] (laugh) Yes, because other people do. I feel like I'm...yeah I guess so, marginally. (laugh)

Interviewer: "Okay. Well, the next question is, why do you consider yourself to be a member and what lets you know that you're a member?

Nora: Basically because people like [go-go musician] *and* [go-go musician] *and the other musicians tell me I'm a Go-Go musician, although I feel like an… I always feel like an outsider."*

Calling out members of the audience or naming local neighborhoods and crews is a basic element of go-go songs, especially at the live shows, where call-and-response traditions make the audience a crucial part of the go-go experience. Some participants said that having their name called by a go-go musician performing at a show was one of the things that let them know that they are a part of the Go-Go community. This was referred to as being "shouted out" or "put on display."

> *"They* [the Go-Go community] *bring people together through music, and you know, if you ever go see a band, and just like I said, when they put you on display, you feel that love like, 'Yeah, they know me.' And even if you know 'em personally, and you introduce a friend to them, it's like, they just bring the friend on, you know, 'Welcome!' So it's like you feel like they're your family, like you really close to 'em." - Antoinette*

> [Asked what let her know that she was a member] *"Um, being included in things, involved in the community, being asked my opinion, being invited to events, being asked to help organize things, being shouted out from the stage, [laughs] social media requests."- Angie*

> *"Everybody try to do their thing everybody try to you know, be a little different from everyone just stand out more than the next group. They have to become popular. You know, their name has to be on display." – Michelle*

For the Go-Go community, identification is directed from the community to the individual, and is contextualized in the extreme localization of the community to the Washington, DC area, as well as the phenomena of local celebrity. This *recognition* of individuals (and neighborhoods and crews) is an attribute for being *of* the community.

Summary: Research Question 2

Themes from participant interview data fit a pattern of a construct similar to membership, identified here as *being of the community*. The construct captures the Go-Go community's unique geographical, historical, racial, and social contexts, in addition to the context of the associated music scene.

Instead of *boundaries* constructed by the community to define who is in and who is out, the Go-Go community has constructed *permeable levels* that determine who is of the core community, who is supportive of that core community, and who may potentially support the core. Boundaries are imposed from the outside in, whereby individuals can reject go-go music and identify themselves as not being of the community. Boundaries are also imposed from the outside in, by individuals of the supportive community who cite their own lack of *personal knowledge and experience* of go-go and lack of *recognition* within the go-go scene to respectfully refrain from identifying themselves with the core.

A *common symbol system*, named by McMillan and Chavez as an attribute of membership, is also an attribute for being of the Go-Go community. The difference, however, is that instead of reinforcing membership boundaries, the use of the common symbols reveals one's *personal knowledge and experience*, and therefore one's *level* of belonging to the Go-Go community. An intricate common symbol system, displayed through conversations with others, affords the individual identification with the core community. A more general, publicly accessible common symbol system is used by the supportive community.

Data indicate that instead of the individual claiming the community, the community claims the individual. This attribute of being of the community is *recognition*. Also, rather than holding belief that they are *accepted* by the community or that they *belong* in a community, some core individuals, based on their personal knowledge and experience, recognition, common symbol system, and core level status, demonstrate that they *are* the community.

In sum, central attributes of being of the Go-Go community revealed by the research are: permeable levels, personal knowledge and experience, recognition, and common symbol system.

Other Relevant Findings

The present study explores community distinguishability in light of community psychology literature that criticizes sense of community theory and the assumption of a community *we* for being utopian concepts that do not acknowledge structural inequalities (e.g., Dunham, 1986; Friedman, 1989). Several questions were included in the interview protocol to directly address the most commonly known forms of structural inequality in the United States, which are race, age, socioeconomic status, and gender. Participants were asked, *What does gender have to do with membership in the Go-Go community? What does socioeconomic status have to do with membership in the Go-Go community?* and, *What does race have to do with membership?* Outside of these questions, issues of race, age, gender and socioeconomic status may have arisen as participants answered other questions. Below is a summary of findings regarding race, age, socioeconomic status, and gender in the Go-Go community.

Blackness. All of the participants stated that race has nothing to do with membership in the Go-Go community. Many did, however, label the community and go-go music as "Black" or "African-American." Blackness is a necessary contextualization of this distinct community whose origins are in Washington, DC, in the 1970s, during a time when the city was nicknamed "Chocolate City" because of its Black majority. The impact of this historical context was outlined by Hopkinson (2012a).

> *"Chocolate City, as a whole, the one that we grew up in that was united around being, you know, Black, mostly Blacks, and brought together by Go-Go music." – Queen of Go-Go*

> *Interviewer: "What comes to mind when you hear or read the term 'the Go-Go community?'*
> *Nora: "Well, I think of a party with a Go-Go band and call and response and the dancing audience, mostly African-American. But it's getting more mixed... um… But the first thing I think of is African-Americans. D.C. area, Prince George's County...uh, musicians."*

> [asked what race had to do with membership in the Go-Go community] *"First I'll say as a whole: nothing. As the bigger picture of things. But the funk generation is out of the Black community. But it was still primarily, predominately Black. It's*

a Black subgenre of music or subculture. Even though the musicians come in all colors… the music itself is an African-American form of music." - Free

"At face value, it does seem like the Go-Go community is comprised of a very certain single race or ethnicity…And so I think…maybe part of what the ethnic background had to do with this when Go-Go was coming up, it seems like it correlated with some particular ethnic oppression. And so…kinda almost circling back to the politics thing …the music was kinda created for D.C. but it also probably seems to have very close ties to the politics and the ethnic issues ranging back several years ago. Being in this particular geographic area that is kinda the power center of this nation, that is perceived to be run by old white men, it kinda seemed as a way to rise up… and transcend it… I think that sense of oppression looming overhead maybe would be something that would contribute to that."

- Matt

"Go-Go is VERY accepting of other races. People in the go-go community are VERY OPEN to other races. Um, it's just that other races don't come into the community. You got some bold ones… Sometimes people, rest of the people in the community wonder if they really police undercover. And that's TRUE. You know. And they could, they be a little too bold. They more bold than the regular [laughs] go-go head…but go-go has always welcomed white people if they came. I can't remember a time when, 'Naw, no white people.' They just ain't goin' searchin for you. They can do without you, you know." - Carlos

> *"I don't think race matters either. I mean, it is because of the area, you have predominantly African-American, Black, you know, people of color, but...All are welcome." – A-A-ron*

Age. Even though most participants said that age did not have anything to do with membership, almost all made remarks about the age they perceived most Go-Go community members to be. While they spoke of the "everyone is welcome" policy, many also remarked that they perceived "young people" to be unlikely members of the Go-Go community because of a preference for modern rap music. In discussing age, participants were likely to invoke the name of Chuck Brown, the musician credited with popularizing the go-go sound, who performed regularly from the 1970s until he fell ill a few months before his death at age 75 in 2012.

> *"…the younger people aren't coming in like they used to. I think there's still some, you know, the bounce beat* [a newer style of go-go music]*, but they're kind of half-and-half, and then some are just straight hip-hop, don't even like go-go…But they're definitely not like we used to be, you know, where everybody under you or your parents listened to go-go. I remember, I worked with this woman, she was telling me how Chuck Brown was playing at her granddaughter's prom and she was like, 'Chuck played at my prom.' I don't know that we'll be seeing that type of thing anymore." - Angie*

“We started this thing from beating on desks, gettin’ your rhythm going. You have these bands that are like...the members are, like, in their 50s now. They started these bands in elementary school.” - GoGo

“It's okay to be an older musician in go-go unlike say pop music or mainstream music…This is still a strong community, although it has some fear that it's disappearing or something like that, or in the shadows right now, and that the younger generation doesn't appreciate it anymore. They're like more into hip hop.” - Nora

“‘Cause I mean the Go-Go community started, you know, back in the day with Chuck, and, you know, there's still people who, you know, in their 50s, 60s, 70s that still listen to it. So all the way to [sigh] this new age music [laugh] with the youngsters.” – A-A-ron

“Oh, well, usually that term [Go-Go community] *is used more talking about the old-school community, and there’s kind of been, like, this change in go-go over the years where, um, [pause] there seems to be kind of a rift between, like, the old-school go-goers and, like, the newer guys? Kind of? Where, like, the new guys kind of look at the old guys as being really close-minded, and the old guys look at the new guys as, like, not sticking to the foundations of what go-go really is… So that’s the first thing when I hear, like, ‘Go-Go community,’ it’s like, it kind of has*

> *like a formal sound to it, like, 'okay, you have to know your Rare Essence* [go-go band] *trivia, you have to know your E.U.* [go-go band] *trivia…'"- C#*

The Go-Go community is perceived to be mostly an older generation that is often contrasted with young people in the Washington, DC area who prefer rap music.

Perceptions of socioeconomic status. The Go-Go community is not only frequently associated with Washington, DC's Black population, but with the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area's low-income Black population (Lornell & Stephenson, 2009; Hopkinson, 2012a; 2012b). However, in the present study, data indicate that within the Go-Go community, people perceive a diversity of socioeconomic status.

Participants were asked, "What does socioeconomic status have to do with membership?" and only two participants answered this question by comparing the Go-Go community as a group to people outside of it. One discussed socioeconomic status in relation to how certain musicians end up as go-go musicians as opposed to going "to school" and making a career in a different genre.

> *"Well, I think -- I don't know this. But I believe, probably my, once again, general impression… You have the musicians who went out and played on the street corners, had the bucket drums playing in the subway station, playing on the roads or gigging every night, playing in these communities, playing in a different place every night, playing with different people all the time. I think the socio-economic status, it influenced where people went with their music. They either went to their surroundings, to the streets and the clubs, or they went to school and then went up and up and up* [in socioeconomic status] *or maybe a mixture of both."- Matt*

The other discussed socioeconomic status in terms of the lack of awareness of go-go music and a perception of “working-class” versus “uppity,” “upper-class” and “educated.”

> *“There’s a big divide in awareness… In the arts, you know, it seems like the working class appreciates go-go more than the uppity ‘fine arts’ people—let’s put that in quotes—do. They're starting to understand now the value of go-go and hip hop and pop, but you know, the arts establishment tends to be more upper-class, educated, you know. They have more prejudices towards go-go or popular music of any kind.” - Nora*

The two participants who expressed this between-group (go-go music/arts vs. other genres/art forms) perception had two other things in common. Previously reported results confirm that the same participants also discussed how their perceptions of the Go-Go community were influenced by mainstream local media. Also, they reported that there had been a time when they did not feel like a member of the Go-Go community.

Other participants answered this question using a within-group frame, and discussed perceived variation in socioeconomic status within the Go-Go community. In the within-group framing/perception, some consider “low” economic status as not being able to afford to go to a go-go.

> *“Well, the shows can be a little pricey but, other than that, I don't think it's discriminating based on how much you make an hour.” – Congo Dre*

> *“I'm going to say that only has something to do with you being able to pay your money to get in shows. [laugh] Other than that, it's all love. Everybody's welcome.” - GoGo*

Most participants said that socioeconomic status had “nothing” to do with membership in the Go-Go community, but some of those participants described their perception of how different bands came to be associated with different socioeconomic statuses.

> *“As I grew up, it dictated a lot in my younger years what bands I went to see. I had to catch the five-dollar specials… I had to see Northeast and Junkyard. I couldn’t afford to see Rare Essence and Chuck. As I grew up and got a job, I could afford them. Some bands were location based. Socio-economics may have to do with different fans and fan bases. The people you encounter at a Junk show would be different than the people you see at a Chuck show. People there,* [at a Chuck Brown Show] *whether positive or negative, they had more money.”- Free*

> *“It [socioeconomic status] kind of drives who you fall in with, I guess.” – C#*

> *“…The middle class, lower class, upper class, they all enjoy it…regardless of race. So you know it's the choice of their band that they do like or the choice of the go-go that they listen to…say like your middle and your upper class. They may like Chuck Brown more than they would like Backyard Band. Because it's two*

> *different styles…Chuck Brown is more like the rhythm and blues or whatever." – A-A-ron*

A quote from Angie shows that no matter how members of the Go-Go community see the variation among themselves, the "low-income" group stereotype persists.

> *"Backyard* [Band] *used to go 'til 2:30* [a.m.], *and I remember one night when I was trying to leave, a police officer was blocking my car just because of the way he parked, and I said, 'Hey, can you move your car? I'm going home. I gotta get up to go to work in the morning.'*
>
> *He was like, 'Oh, I didn't think people that came to go-gos had jobs.'*
>
> *I mean, I've had people, a lot of people, just state that when you come to go-gos, you don't have to get up in the morning… we're ghetto or, you know, we're 'hood' or low-income or whatever, and* [the people stereotyping] *don't think bougie folks, I guess, go to go-gos." - Angie*

Gender. The Go-Go community has been called "male-dominated" (Lornell & Stephenson (2009). Participant interview data reflect that gender inequality in the Go-Go community mirrors gender inequality in American society, and in the music business. These data are included to amplify voices of women in Go-Go, addressing scholarly criticism that studies of music collectives often center the male voice (see Hill, 2014).

Participants were asked what gender had to do with membership in the Go-Go community. Following are quotes from women only.

“*sigh* I gotta think about this one. Because it does have somethin to do with it. Women are the minority. And most often, maybe [women are] _the fans as opposed to an actual person that does the music.” – Ye Yo_

“I mean, my first thought is that your entry point to anything having to do with go-go is going to be through a man, and that’s the unfortunate reality. ‘Cause I can’t name any—I mean there’s been female managers and I’ve had some, and they were great, but they were also always partnered with a man, who either had more experience or more resources, you know… I guess it follows the music industry as a whole where everything is kind of male dominated and, it sucks…” – C#

“Theoretically nothing really, but on a practical level, I know that there aren't as many women go-go musicians as there are male.” - Nora

“I know tons of guys in their 50s that are still playing go-go, so I guess in that aspect for go-go, there’s not this pressure to make it by 20, make it by 30, that you have in a lot of the rest of the music industry. Um, granted, that standard is a little different for women, though… because no one wants to see grandma on stage at the go-go, you know what I mean? Versus, Grandpa on stage at the go-go is cool, you know, because everybody knows him.   So, I guess that’s why, like, a lot of the females that are really successful in go-go put a lot of emphasis on their looks *and looking a certain way and fitting a certain accepted standard for beauty, I guess… I guess that’s just industry-wise.” – C#*

“I think women in management have a little harder time, but I think women are gaining, have gained a lot more respect.
Interviewer: “Why do you think they have a harder time?
Angie: “Just from knowing some of 'em. One in particular managed a band and people would ask her stuff instead of, like, her co-manager, like they didn't take her word for it, like they had to go double-check with him. I know she used to be frustrated by that…I mean it's definitely gotten better. Before, it used to be every now and then a band might have a woman, but we see more women actually playing instruments as well as singers. So I think it's just because there's more of them there, and I think they're a lot less sexualized than they used to be.
Interviewer: And do you mean as musicians or as fans?
Angie: As musicians.”

“A female has to have a strong – her name has to be very popular for her to have a strong, um, have a good turnout for her party, as opposed to an all-male band…I’ve seen that they [promoters] *don’t give them* [all-woman bands] *the same respect that an all-male band would have.” - Michelle*

“I don't think it has anything to do with being in the Go-Go community because you have all-female bands, you have mixed bands with females and males, you

> *have all-male bands, so I don't think that has anything to do with it at all…'Cause I know back in the day, it was mostly men in the bands. So, since they started having female singers and all-female bands, it's like they kinda started coming, you know, more together." - Antoinette*

These women still considered themselves part of the same Go-Go community, even though gender-based inequalities are evident to them.

Summary: Other Relevant Findings

Participant interview data suggest that the Go-Go community exhibits gender-based structural inequality that exists in the larger society and in the entertainment industry in particular. Though most participants perceived a diversity of income within the Go-Go community, they did not discuss low income as it relates to the larger system of income-based structural inequality in American society. The two participants who did relate income inequality to the larger society were making a between-groups comparison, identifying the Go-Go community with low income while identifying other types of music pursuits with higher income. Participants identified the Go-Go community as a Black community, and did not compare racial inequality in the community to that of the larger American society.

These findings do not support Wiesenfeld's assertion that a researcher-identified community *we* ignores diversity or structural inequality within a community. In the present study, individuals of the *core* Go-Go community (the *we*) were able to discuss socioeconomic diversity in a way that others could not, rejecting a stereotype that the entire community is low-income. Participants acknowledged disparities of gender in go-go musicianship, as well as contexts of race and age. The *we*, then, is not necessarily co-constructed by a researcher to disregard diversity and inequality. Participants' perspectives may imply a *we* without assuming their own community to be homogenous and free from disparities.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The present study provides evidence that the McMillan and Chavis' *membership* framework may not be applicable for all types of communities. The McMillan and Chavis construct of membership connotes a closed group where belonging is a priority. Data collected for the present study, however, can be organized into a different, related construct called *being* of *the* [Go-Go] *community*. The construct connotes a community with unique cultural origins that are tied to geography, race, and historical era. It also reflects the community's unbounded nature that can be largely attributed to its association with the go-go music scene and the entertainment industry at large.

For this construct, four attributes work together: permeable levels, personal knowledge and experience, recognition, and common symbol system. Permeable levels represent how the community is stratified by individuals' recognizability, their personal knowledge and experience of the Go-Go community and its history, and by their participation in a common symbol system. Levels are permeable, as it is possible that the more personal knowledge and experience one has of the Go-Go community, the more recognizable one is within the go-go scene. With a more intricate shared common symbol system, an individual is equipped to go from a potential member of the community, to a supportive member of the community, to a core member of the community.

At the same time, there are people who have always represented the core level of the community and did not move from the outside in. For them, the community is based in local [Black] culture and has always been a substantial part of their lives.

None of the studies of music collectives reviewed studied membership explicitly, but some of those studies nonetheless support different aspects of the current findings. For example, the present study's findings mirror others in that the data indicate various ways in which people participate in a music collective (e.g., Hill, 2014; Hunt, 2008). Several noted ways to participate in the Go-Go community include attending go-gos, purchasing go-go music, listening to go-go music in one's car, dancing to go-go music heard in public, and by "loving" and "supporting" go-go music.

Similar to the results of Overell's (2010) study of the grindcore-metal scene in Melbourne, participants in the present study identified behaviors of individuals in the context of the type of music. Overell described a "brutal" disposition that comes with participating at a grindcore show. Participants in the present study talked about identifying members of the Go-Go community by the ways in which they dance or participate at a show, and also what they do when they listen to go-go in their cars or hear it playing over the intercom of a local store.

Though participants named various ways to participate in the Go-Go community, i.e., to demonstrate that one is a member, two of the four attributes of being of the community are related to face-to-face interaction. The present study's findings may add to evidence found in the literature that many people's perceptions of what makes a group of people community are based on the idea of face-to-face interaction (e.g., Brown, 2001; MacQueen et al., 2001). In the Go-Go community, personal knowledge and experience, recognition, and access to the more intricate common symbol system are achieved by attending go-gos or doing instrumental things within the go-go scene, especially as a go-go musician. As noted, a theme in the data was “being there,” which increases one’s knowledge of the culture and the community, one’s recognizability as a member, and one’s knowledge of the common symbol system. On the other hand, being of the community also has permeable levels, which allow people to be supportive members of the community—a status that does not require face-to-face interaction.

A previous study supports the present study’s findings that boundaries can be more imperative for those outside of a community than to those inside of it. For example, in Sonn and Fisher’s (1996) study of sense of community within the South African “Coloured” community in Melbourne, Australia, the “Coloured” designation itself was created and enforced by outside forces, namely an oppressive government, in order to separate “Coloured” individuals from others. Participants in the Sonn and Fisher study rejected the notion of boundaries for that reason. In the present study of the Go-Go community, most participants rejected the notion of boundaries because it did not match their belief that all people are welcome to join the community. They did, however, discuss the boundaries created by people and forces outside the community who dislike, disparage, or exploit go-go music and culture.

The present study also supports findings from Brown’s (2001) study of community formation in online courses, which demonstrated how individuals who do not feel like members of a community can still discuss what it means to be a member of that community—with their perceptions matching those of community members. In the present study of the Go-Go community, interview data from professed community members about what makes one a member was the same as data from those who said they do not always feel or have not always felt like members of the community.

Only one of the previously reviewed studies (Morgan & Warren, 2010) discussed what race—specifically Blackness—meant to a given music-related collective. In their study of an Indigenous Australian hip hop music-cultural collective, Morgan and Warren wrote of the perceived “symbolic” bridge between Black people in America and Indigenous people in Australia who adopted hip hop, recognizing common skin color, experiences with racism and police brutality, as well as life in an urban ghetto setting. The study focused on identity work, and mentoring was an important theme.

The importance of mentoring was not completely obvious among participant interview data in the present study, but I would infer it based on my experience of the Go-Go community, including my own status as a mentee regarding early community history. Participants talked about older siblings, parents, and neighborhood people introducing them to go-go music through playing go-go records and taking them to go-go concerts. Hammond (2015) described the typical process of mentoring for go-go musicians who learned to play go-go music through older relatives and neighborhood folk who were in go-go bands. That phenomenon can be compared to mentoring processes in the Aboriginal hip hop collective in Morgan and Warren’s (2010) study.

Bringing to bear Hill’s (2014) scholarly advocacy for women’s voices in studies of music communities, the present study benefited from stratified sampling within the labeled community approach, which was found to be effective in recruiting an equal number of men and women for the study. Though this study did confirm a gender disparity in go-go musicianship, findings did not suggest that women are less likely to participate in the go-go scene or that women who are go-go fans are more likely to participate through home-based activities (e.g., Hill, 2014).

Earlier, I argued that Wiesenfeld's (1996) rejection of the *we* [of community, in community studies], unnecessarily links community distinguishability with community homogeneity. I intended to explore the idea of community distinguishability by studying the construct of membership within a highly contextualized community, the Go-Go community; in other words, I set out to explore how a researcher could identify the *we* of a community. It is important to revisit Weisenfeld's (1996) warning about the danger that, in looking for a *we*, researchers can too easily ignore social inequality in their attention to similarities among people in a community. The present study demonstrates that a community is capable of representing a *we* and addressing its own social stratification at the same time.

Wiesenfeld's critique seemed to focus on an individual's primary, bounded geographic community in challenging the *we*. Though the article warns against the reification of community, it reiterated the concept of "the community" as one single community to which an individual belongs. There was no examination of the *we* in regard to unbounded relational communities that are rooted in culture, such as the Go-Go community.

I believe that the *we* of the Go-Go community is what the data indicated to be the core community, one of three permeable levels to the Go-Go community, the others being the supportive community, and the potential community. The intersecting contexts of race, geographical location, historical era, and age cohort contribute to the core community's distinguishability. While Wiesenfeld implores us to contextualize a community as “an ever-changing network marked by continuous inclusions and exclusions” (p. 341), the present study demonstrates that, in the Go-Go community, there is *both* a *we* and a network beyond them—the core community and the supportive outer community of people. Further, the supportive level is not marked by continuous inclusions and exclusions; it is marked by a continuum of participation. The core does not need the exclusionary boundaries *or* the generous continuum of participation. They know who they are.

It is noteworthy that, in this study of the Go-Go community, the *we*, i.e., the core community, was underscored when participants spoke of forces that threaten or marginalize the community, specifically stereotypes attributed to the community such as violent behavior and low income. Study results show that (two of three) participants who did not consistently feel like members of the Go-Go community also said that their perceptions of the community had been influenced by local mainstream media. Those participants’ comments implied the low income stereotype and confirmed that they joined the community believing the stereotype about rampant violence. The *we* disputed the stereotypes while those who are not of the *we* sustained them in their perspectives. This is important, even in terms of research, as people from outside a community (including researchers) may perceive it in terms of prevailing stereotypes.

The fact that the Go-Go community is obviously regarded as a Black community (even with non-Black members) is germane to this finding—especially in light of the finding that the McMillan and Chavis membership construct was found to not be fully applicable to how members may perceive their own orientation to the community. The intersecting contexts of race, location, and age/historic cohort illuminate the fact that issues of social, cultural, and financial power may affect the application of the construct of membership to the Go-Go community. For example, the community does not have a membership to “protect against threat,” made up of people who have “the right to belong,” as described in the McMillan and Chavis (1986) framework. Instead, the community invites “everyone” and “all” to share in “love,” “support,” and “respect.” It is important to note that even with the criteria of love, respect, and support for Go-Go culture, the membership attribute *emotional safety* was not detectable among the data.

This leaves the question of whether the orientation of individuals to the Go-Go community can still be called membership, given the present study’s finding that the accepted membership framework does not fit the data. It is worth noting that from the researcher’s observation and reflection, there was variation in the ways in which those interviewed accepted and processed the word ‘membership.’ Some made it clear that their idea of membership and their idea of being a member of the Go-Go community were two different ways of thinking, contrasting the concept of membership as exclusionary with their belief that the Go-Go community is inclusive and welcoming.

In what types of communities, then, might members be more likely to feel emotional safety (security), more likely to make a personal investment to earn a place in the group, and more likely to join with others in creating boundaries to protect against threat? In their membership framework, McMillan and Chavis (1986) specified Puritans, gangs, college fraternities, and homeowners. Gangs and college fraternities are (and Puritans were) formed in order to provide emotional safety, boundaries, and a sense of belonging and identification for those willing to make a personal investment. However, these types of communities do not represent the full gamut of types of communities, including unbounded relational communities based on shared interests such as the Go-Go community.

Furthermore, college fraternities and homeowners represent privileged access to resources that is not afforded to or afforded by many people in the United States. Beyond the financial disparity, there is disproportion in access to college and homeownership that is racially based, in that Black, Latinx, and First Nation people are significantly less likely than white and Asian populations to attend college (and thus be eligible to join a fraternity) or own a home. It is possible then that McMillan and Chavis' membership construct assumes that the people of a community have social, economic, political, or physical power. For example, *emotional safety* is all about security, whether financial or physical. Over 50 years of research and journalism suggest that this is not the case for "the Black community" in general, and in many Black communities globally, due to hundreds of years of anti-Black racist institutional and government policies, as well as racial stratification in many countries all over the world. Again, emotional safety was not evident among participants from the Go-Go community.

The definition of membership as "a feeling that one has invested part of oneself to become a member and therefore has the right to belong" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 10) is exclusionary in its insinuation that some people do not have the right to belong. History, however, teaches us that when it comes to racism, even if a person has invested in a neighborhood community as a homeowner, or invested in their college education with personal sacrifice and financial contribution, a person may be denied membership into a community because of race.

The intersection of race and power are pertinent to the understanding of membership in a community. Consider neighborhoods known to be majority Black and/or majority low-income that have experienced disinvestment by local government, and eventually, gentrification. Even if people of these geographic communities feel that they had the right to belong, those feelings are overridden by people who can make a financial investment into the neighborhood, letting their investment justify their right to belong (see Young, 2017). Once the people who have the power to invest secure their right to belong, social and financial boundaries are created that then invalidate the original community members' right to belong. Scholars should consider other attributes of membership that cannot be so easily adapted or exploited by powerful individuals in order to assert their right to belong in a community and subsequently contribute to the marginalization of the less powerful.

Sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and common symbol system can be exploited by individuals with power and privilege who insist on membership in marginalized communities. For example, a woman named Rachel Dolezal became well-known for insisting that she has membership in 'the Black community.' She has publicly detailed her feelings of acceptance by and ways in which she has sacrificed for the Black community (sense of belonging and identification). She has also detailed the ways in which she earned the right to call herself Black because she was a professor of African American studies and headed a local branch of the NAACP (personal investment). She wears traditionally Black hairstyles, and through social media, has offered her services as a Black hairstylist, claimed superior recipes for traditional Black American dishes, and demonstrated her use of a Black common symbol system—going so far as to change her name to a Swahili one. Excerpts from her memoir published in mainstream news publications describe her experience of emotional safety within the Black community (Keating, 2017; Wootson, Jr., 2017). According to the membership framework (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), she may feel as if she invested herself in the community and therefore has the right to belong. However, many Black people reject her insistence that she is of the Black community. It is important, then, for researchers to consider what membership means to members of a community, instead of assuming that McMillan and Chavis' (1986) definition holds true for all types of communities equally.

The above examples suggest that power [which is experienced differently by racial groups globally] may be an important underlying factor in why the construct of membership was found to be largely inapplicable to the Go-Go community, and why a different relational pattern, being of the community, was observed in the present study. The membership construct may reflect principles of the United States power structure, normalizing the values of the most powerful (e.g., Park, Keller, Williams, 2016) and may itself be a cultural expression of Western science (Marsella, 1998) or whiteness (see Baltimore Racial Justice Action, n.d.). Previous scholarly critiques of the sense of community framework called it idealistic and asserted that it did not take structural inequality into account (e.g., Dunham, 1986; Hill, 2014). Furthermore, Wiesenfeld's (1996) critique of the assumed *we* of a community highlights the tendency of community research to target "communities which historically have not been able to express themselves in society's political-economic-power spheres" (p. 342).

In light of these insights from community psychology literature (Marsella, 1998 and Wiesenfeld, 1996), suppose the cultural orientation of the membership construct (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) reflects ideologies of a group that holds the most power and privilege in United States society. That could mean that when researchers of 1986 studied community with this cultural lens, their construction of sense of community framework may have inadvertently been providing information on power structure within the United States.

Specifically, the membership framework may, at least in part and in some contexts, serve to reveal who are the most powerful people in a community. For example, who are the people who create boundaries to designate who belongs and who does not? Who are the people experiencing emotional safety because of those boundaries? Who are the people with an actual sense of belonging and identification to the community, expecting and believing that they fit in? Who are the people requiring a personal investment for individuals to earn their membership in a community? Who are the people who use a common symbol system to exclude others?

At the same time, who are the most unlikely to experience those attributes within a community, especially if the research study itself targets a population categorized as 'underprivileged,' 'at-risk,' and 'low-income'? Membership, according to the 1986 framework is about who belongs and who does not. The question of who "has the right to belong" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9) is a major one in the United States in general, and has been a matter of legislation and of social conflict even before the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1868. The everyday implications of the disagreement on who belongs surely impacts different American communities and community types in various ways.

In the present study of the Go-Go community, participants rejected ideas that some belong and some do not. Instead, they emphasized that everyone is welcome and that they can identify who is of the community based on an individual's obvious knowledge of and/or their support of the community. Participants indicate that this is not about belonging and boundaries, as everyone is invited to share in knowledge and support of the community. It is unclear whether the open, inviting nature of the Go-Go community is a result of its marginalized status in the Washington, DC area. It is also unclear whether the marginalized status of this community (including its Blackness) is what makes its members' perceptions of community relatedness different from the 1986 membership framework.

Another interesting question is to what extent the current study's findings will and will not apply to other unbounded communities. Take for example 'the Baltimore Ravens football team community.' The common symbol system is apparent through team logos, memorabilia, athlete stats, etc. However, as with the Go-Go community, members of the Baltimore Ravens community may not feel as if being a member provides them with emotional safety. Sense of belonging and identification is based on "sacrifice" and "acceptance by the group" (1986, p. 10), but what sacrifice is there to make and what acceptance is needed? A fan of the team may have to consider these in terms of membership with a specific grouping of sports fans, for example, their feeling of acceptance at a local sports bar, but not with the Ravens community in general. As Go-Go community members stated, all are welcome; and, just like in the Go-Go community, the sports/entertainment industry helps to open the boundaries. Lastly, what personal investment is to be made? For some, a personal investment may be buying tickets to games or related merchandise, but that leaves out people who cannot afford to do anything but love and support the Ravens by cheering for them and by merely identifying themselves as members of the Ravens community. The membership framework may be inapplicable because the Baltimore Ravens community is an unbounded relational community.

On the other hand, the being of the community construct may not fully apply to all unbounded relational communities. Using the Baltimore Ravens community as an example, it seems that everyone is a potential member and invited to join, just as participants reported for the Go-Go community. It also seems though one's personal knowledge and experience of the Ravens community signals that one is a member of that community. However, the recognition attribute may not work the same way it does in the Go-Go community because the Go-Go community is relatively small, and is not promoted to the extent that the Ravens sports team is, with a brand management budget of $173 million dollars (Badenhausen, Ozanian, Settimi, 2017). The number of members assumed to be in a community may affect how well the being of the community construct applies. Lastly, being of the community assumes an ethnocultural component to the core level. A community such as the Ravens community is based within a national organization, the NFL, and is based around the Ravens organization, which has an owner, a system of management, and a net worth of $2.5 billion dollars (Badenhausen, Ozanian, Settimi, 2017).

Nor will the current findings necessarily apply to all types of bounded communities. Take for example, a religious institution, such as a church. A church represents a bounded community, and unlike the Go-Go community, there is such a thing as church membership. Indeed, the membership framework has face validity in this situation. A church establishes boundaries of religious beliefs and rules, as well as physical location. Members' experience of emotional security, sense of belonging and identification, and personal investment are likely tied to their religious beliefs and needs, as well as their need for affiliation. Furthermore, a church community may, like the Go-Go community, have a potential level of membership, but the church community boundaries have several layers constructed by religious beliefs and culture that are constructed from the inside. Even if there is a supportive community level to a religious institutional community, involving people, business, and other religious institutions, the boundaries to membership remain and are likely contextualized uniquely to the specific institution. A religious institution's "all are welcome" policy likely has different implications than the Go-Go community's "all are welcome" policy.

Alternative Explanations

There are several alternative explanations for the present study's findings. For example, the fact that the community is perceived to be comprised of mostly older individuals—in contrast to younger Washington, DC area residents who prefer hip hop—may be influencing assessments of the community's mortality, and subsequently creating a need for the "all are welcome" attitudes. Further, the marginalized status of the community may influence attitudes regarding community boundaries, and the "all are welcome" policy may be a protective measure to develop community power.

The present study is a current snapshot of the Go-Go community, and this time-boundedness may affect how well the membership framework applies. The same results may not have been seen 30 years ago, and they may be different ten years from now. The present study was conducted after frequently documented consequences of gentrification for the Go-Go community, including residential displacement, loss of income from performances, and new laws that seemed to target the go-go scene specifically. As of 2015, Washington, DC is not majority-Black, and this fact may affect perceptions of who attends go-gos.

Furthermore, it is possible that the participant interviews could not elicit the information necessary to fully ascertain whether the membership framework applies to the Go-Go community. Using different interview questions may have been more effective for discussion of the five attributes of membership. Also, my experience of joining the Go-Go community may have unconsciously influenced how I perceived patterns within the data.

Limitations

Though it captures an important, self-identified portion of Go-Go community members (those involved in go-go organizations), the *labeled community* approach also leaves out many members of the Go-Go community. A *scene* approach to the present study would entail the study of attendees of go-go shows and others who contribute to making go-go music, such as promoters and band members themselves. These individuals would definitely provide useful perspectives on how people belong to the Go-Go community. However, as previously discussed, a scene approach is more likely to leave out the various other ways in which people may participate in the community, such as buying music or discussing music and community issues via the internet (e.g., Hill, 2014, Hills, 2001). It is unclear whether a scene approach would have generated a different pattern among the data, in regard to how well the construct of membership applied to the Go-Go community.

The present study used qualitative data and issues of subjectivity are important. As noted in the Methods section, to enhance trustworthiness of the research I used a labeled community approach to recruit participants, made a clear, expansive positionality statement at the outset of the research, and used reflection to maintain awareness of my own subjectivity and bias during data collection and interpretation. Concerning the latter, one aspect of the data organization process was especially challenging, and that was how to accurately transcribe speech patterns for participants speaking with regional dialect and Go-Go slang. I did not want to 'fix' their speech while adding their quotes, but I also did not want the dialect to overshadow what was being said. Several months spent with the data analysis eventually helped me to determine a way to report quotes while maintaining the participants' voices. My reflections also suggest that there were contradictions within most interviews during the series of questions that asked, "What does [age, race, location, gender, etc.] have to do with membership?" Most participants would answer, "Nothing," but then go on to explain how it did have something to do with membership. Time spent with analysis eventually helped me to determine the best way to report these results, especially after I detected the *being of the community* patterns.

Furthermore, the initial coding processes for each interview, in which the five attributes were used as themes by which to sort the data, were difficult. With the first seven or so interviews, I had to go through them many times to be sure that I was coding the same type of information consistently for application to the five membership attributes. Over time, however—and with more interview experiences—I began to feel as if I were trying to force the data into the already-established membership framework and was not paying close enough attention to the other obvious, common themes of the participant interviews. Noting that several participants were rejecting or challenging the term 'membership' itself was an important observation that led me to think about the possibility that participants may have still been describing a related construct, even if it was not membership, per se.

Another researcher, interpreting these same data may have observed a different pattern among the data, or they may have more successfully fit the data within the membership framework. Replication of this study may not yield the same results, especially since there were no validated scales used to extract quantitative data. Relatedly, interviews were the only means of collecting data in the present study. Including other methods such as focus groups and surveys may have yielded different results.

The following limitations of insider research are based on the critiques that have been reviewed and outlined by Chavez (2008) and Greene (2014). These areas of concern are reviewed here; however, these are not asserted as absolute limitations of the present study. Some criticize insider research as too subjective, meaning that cultural structures and patterns would be too familiar to the insider researcher. This subjectivity, critics warn, comes with the risk that the researcher would make assumptions based on prior experience. In the case of the present study, however, one could argue that a researcher who is an "outsider" to go-go would be too unfamiliar with cultural structures and that they would make assumptions based on stereotypes found in mainstream media (as demonstrated by participant interview data).

Critics' assertion that insider research is limited by subjectivity is tied to the idea that such research may be biased. Critics warn that insider researchers would be too biased to ask provocative questions, letting their personal beliefs and experiences influence the study's design and results. However, feminist theorists, critical race theorists, and qualitative research experts assert that every researcher carries preconceived notions into their study designs and methodologies (e.g., Collins, 2013; Morrow, 2005).

Future Research

Future research on membership in the Go-Go community (or in any community) should consider a broader sample of participants to reveal whether the current findings would be observed within a broader sample or need to be modified. Also, additional aspects of the Sense of Community construct would be important to examine, as well as other conceptualizations in the literature on sense of community, and in other related literature.

Scholars studying notions of belonging to a community (i.e., membership) or the idea of being of a community should separately consider *bounded* and *unbounded* communities. As the current research demonstrates the inapplicability of the membership construct to the Go-Go community, an important question is whether membership is applicable to any other unbounded communities. The importance of boundaries to individuals' perceptions of their numerous, varied communities is worthy of interdisciplinary study including the disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and public health.

Future research with the Go-Go community should include participatory-action research, wherein researchers and community members work together to understand the community's issues and work toward making changes to improve the lives of its members. Participatory action research, importantly, values the local context of community and takes structural oppression into consideration.

For communities created intentionally to serve an instrumental purpose, such as a community of underrepresented math scholars within a university setting, or a community of artists in a city, the membership framework may be best used to create a system that intentionally fosters a sense of community—and sense of empowerment—among members. Other aspects of sense of community that seem to reflect the experience of power could also be used to create communities that feel empowered. In this context, researchers should use qualitative methods to study the *influence* and *integration and fulfillment of needs* elements of sense of community.

Implications

Though, when asked, individuals' definitions of community seem to resemble what has been stated in social science literature (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009), membership can be conceptualized in different ways, based on the community under study. For example, depending on the context, key aspects of membership may include face-to-face interaction (Brown, 2001; MacQueen et al., 2001), civic involvement (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009; MacQueen et al., 2001), legally imposed low social status and oppression by a dominant majority (Sonn & Fisher, 1996), social interaction and shared activities

(MacQueen et al., 2001; Sonn & Fisher, 1996) and shared sense of place (Brown, 2001; MacQueen et al., 2001; Mannarini & Fedi, 2009); Sonn & Fisher, 1996).

The applicability of the membership element of the sense of community construct to all types of communities, based on the current study findings, is debatable. Future studies must take into account how a community fits within its society's power stratification. For example, studying sense of community or membership in a struggling neighborhood in Flint, Michigan is not the same as studying sense of community or membership in a Harvard University alumni organization.

Consider that researchers studying 'at-risk,' 'low-income,' underprivileged neighborhoods automatically label the neighborhood a "community" and then apply the expectations of the sense of community construct. Even in such a bounded community, the real unit of analysis may be neighborhood, not community. The present study's results reiterate Wiesenfeld's point that a community's people should not be impersonalized and grouped as one object. This is tied to the danger of using the terms 'neighborhood' and 'community' synonymously, especially when race, economic power, social power, and cultural marginalization are part of the context of the grouping of people. For example, studying a low-income neighborhood as a "community" is irresponsible without an idea of a *we* who consider themselves a community, since community literature confirms that people who are grouped together do not automatically identify as part of the same community (e.g., Brown, 2001; Overell, 2010). Researchers can study a community while respecting an assumed uniqueness of the structure of its *we*, which would be influenced by the issues of power [economic, social, cultural] that operate within the community and outside of it.

There are many different types of communities that are not created equally. In consideration of some types of communities, such as the current one, the membership framework appears to lack full applicability. By continually treating communities as a *what* instead of a *who*, we may assume the habit of loosely labeling groupings of people “communities” without accounting for important contextual differences that would affect the applicability of community theories. Future research on the application of the membership construct should involve various bounded and unbounded relational communities.

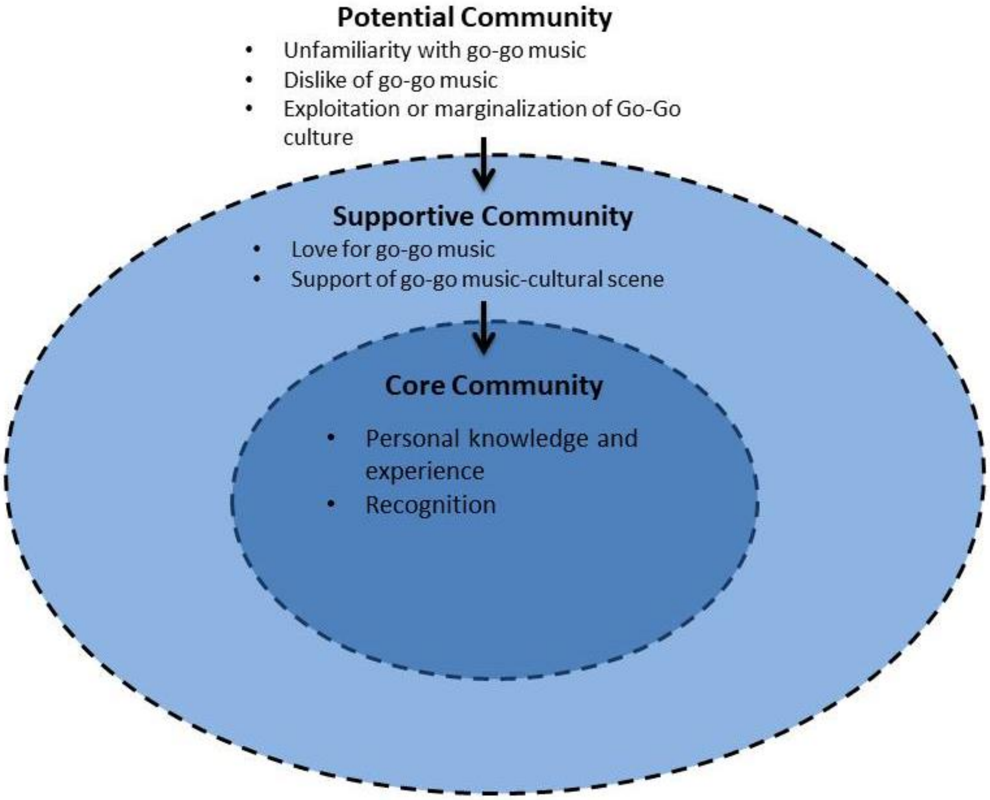
Table 1

Membership versus Being of the Go-Go Community

		Membership	Being of the Go-Go Community
Attribute		Boundaries	Permeable Levels
	Definition	There are people who belong and people who do not.	Everyone is welcome to have a supportive role and can eventually have a core role in the community.
	Purpose	Protect against threat; determine who can be trusted	Promote unity and build community power
Attribute		Personal Investment	Personal Knowledge and Experience
	Definition	One earns a place in the group, thereby making membership in it more valuable.	One demonstrates knowledge of community history and culture that could only have been gained by "being there" (attending shows in the go-go scene on a regular basis) – especially during the 1980s through early 2000s.
	Purpose	Develop emotional connection with the group	Amass, preserve, and share Go-Go culture and history; demonstrate emotional connection
Attribute		Sense of Belonging and Identification	Recognition
	Definition	One expects a place in the group and will sacrifice for it; one feels "It is my group."	One is identified by the community and others as being of the Go-Go community; community says, "You are one of us"; individual feels "I am

		known to be of this community.”
Purpose	Feeling of fitting in, gaining group acceptance	Identify the community and its supporters
Attribute	Common Symbol System	Common Symbol System
Definition	Representations of community’s social interactions	Representations of community’s social interactions, particularly go-go culture and the go-go music scene; more intricate at the core level than at the supportive level
Purpose	To intentionally create boundaries restricting those who do not belong	Amass and share community history and culture; identify the core community
Attribute	Emotional Safety	--
Definition	Membership criteria ensure group security	
Purpose	Intimacy within the group	

Figure 1. Permeable Levels to Being of the Go-Go Community


Potential Community
• Unfamiliarity with go-go music
• Dislike of go-go music
• Exploitation or marginalization of Go-Go culture
Supportive Community
• Love for go-go music
• Support of go-go music-cultural scene
Core Community
• Personal knowledge and experience
• Recognition

Appendix A

Email to Organization Leaders

Dear [Name of Organization Leader],

I am Ph.D. candidate at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), conducting a study for my dissertation. My field of study is community psychology, and I am interested in speaking with members of community organizations. Your organization, [name of organization], would be an ideal partner in this research.

If your organization is interested in participating, please recommend 3 people from your organization—preferably not all of the same gender, yourself included. Each participant will be paid $20.00 to be interviewed by me for approximately one hour. Interviews will be audio-taped only, and treated as confidential, with no names associated, as this study is only concerned with group results.

Please contact me at tahira1@umbc.edu or on my cell phone at 240-416-6622 for more information. At this time, I ask that you keep this participation request confidential to the people within your organization only, as you determine which of your members would be willing participants. I will schedule in-person interviews at each participant's convenience, and as soon as possible.

Though no persons' names will be associated with this research, I will ask your permission to name your organization, [name of organization], as a partner in this research once it is completed. Until then, I will ask each participant to keep the subject matter confidential, in order to preserve the integrity of the study and to prevent it from being made less effective by social media discussion.

Thank you, and I hope to speak with you soon.

Appendix B

Invitation to Research Participants

Dear [Name of Participant],

You were recommended by [Name of Organization Leader] as a potential participant in my doctoral dissertation research focused on the experience and perspectives of those involved in the Go-Go Community. The purpose is to learn more about community groups such as the Go-Go Community. You may be aware of my work with *Take Me Out to the Go-Go* Media (*TMOTTGoGo*), but I am also a Ph.D. candidate, studying community psychology at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC. Members of [Name of Organization] would be ideal for me to interview for my research project.

You will be paid $20.00 to be interviewed by me for approximately one hour. Interviews will be audio-taped only, and treated as confidential, with no names associated, as this study is only concerned with group results. Please contact me at tahira1@umbc.edu or on my cell phone at 240-416-6622 if you would like to participate. If you would like to participate, I will schedule an in-person interview at your convenience, and as soon as possible. At this time, I ask that you keep this participation request confidential to the people within [Name of Organization] only.

Though no persons' name will be associated with this research, I will ask each participant to keep the subject matter confidential, in order to preserve the integrity of the study and to prevent it from being made less effective by social media discussion.

Thank you, and I hope to speak with you soon.

Tahira Mahdi, M.A.

Appendix C

Informed Consent

Whom to Contact about this study:
Principal Investigator: Tahira C. Mahdi
Department: Psychology
Telephone number: 410-455-3110

Music-Cultural Community Membership Study

I. INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE:

I am being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine the meaning of membership among members of a music-cultural community. I am being asked to volunteer because I belong to an organization related to go-go music. My involvement in this study will begin when I agree to participate and will continue until May 31, 2017. About 18 persons will be invited to participate.

II. PROCEDURES:

As a participant in this study, I will be asked to answer questions during an audiotaped interview. I will be asked to come to a mutually agreed upon location for the interview. My participation in this study will last for approximately seven months, including one audio-taped interview lasting no more than two hours, and the possibility of follow-up questions via email, telephone, or in-person meeting. Detailed note taking will occur. No personal identifying information will be written with responses to the questions.

III. RISKS AND BENEFITS:

My participation in this study does not involve any significant risks and I have been informed that my participation in this research will not benefit me personally, but results of this study are expected to contribute to the public's and the psychology field's general understanding of community membership in music-cultural communities.

IV. CONFIDENTIALITY:

Any information learned and collected from this study in which I might be identified will remain confidential. Information collected is for the reporting of group results. The investigator (s) will attempt to keep my personal information confidential. To help protect my confidentiality, only identification codes will be used on data forms and for audio file identification. Audio files will be electronically password-protected.

Only the investigator and members of the research team will have access to these records. If information learned from this study is published, I will not be identified by name. By signing this form, however, I allow the research study investigator to make my records available to the University of Maryland

Baltimore County (UMBC) Institutional Review Board (IRB) and regulatory agencies as required to do so by law.

Consenting to participate in this research also indicates my agreement that all information collected from me individually may be used by current and future researchers in such a fashion that my personal identity will be protected. Such use will include sharing anonymous information with other researchers for checking the accuracy of study findings and for future approved research that has the potential for improving human knowledge. My name will not be included on the surveys and other collected data. A code (created name) will be placed on the survey and other collected data. Through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link my survey to my identity, and only the researcher will have access to the identification key.

I give permission to record my voice for this study. If I am quoted for the purposes of illustrating a specific finding, my name will not be attributed to anything I say during the scheduled interview or possible follow-up questions.

___ I give permission to record my voice or image.

___ I do not give permission to record use my voice or image.

V. SPONSOR OF THE RESEARCH:

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County Graduate Student Association is providing funding for this research study.

VI. COMPENSATION/COSTS:

My participation in this study will involve no cost to me. I will be paid $20.00 for my participation in this study.

VII. CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS:

The principal investigator, Tahira C. Mahdi has offered to and has answered any and all questions regarding my participation in this research study. If I have any further questions, I can contact Tahira Mahdi at 240-416-6622 or at **tahira1@umbc.edu.** I can also contact Dr. Ken Maton at 410-455-3110 or at maton@umbc.edu.

If I have any questions about my rights as a participant in this research study, contact the Office of Research Protections and Compliance at (410) 455-2737 or
compliance@umbc.edu.

VIII. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

I have been informed that my participation in this research study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw or discontinue participation at any time. I have been informed that data collected for this study will be retained by the investigator and analyzed even if I choose to withdraw from the research. If I do choose to withdraw, the investigator and I have discussed my withdrawal and the investigator may use my information up to the time I decide to withdraw.

I will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

IX. SIGNATURE FOR CONSENT

The above-named investigator has answered my questions and I agree to be a research participant in this study.

Participant’s Name: ________________________________ Date: ______________

Participant’s Signature: _____________________________Date: _______________

Investigator's Signature: _____________________________Date: ______________

Approved by the
UMBC Institutional Review Board
IRB Protocol Y17KM20071

Permitted for use
From 11/16/2017
To 11/15/2017

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

1. What does the word "community" mean to you? What makes a group of people a "community?"

2. Next, I want to ask you about different communities to which you belong. Can you name as many as you can think of?

3. Now, let's talk about the Go-Go community. What comes to mind when you hear or read the term "the Go-Go community?"

4. How do you know someone is a member of the Go-Go community?

5. Are there any specific symbols of membership that help members identify one another?

6. Do you consider yourself to be a member of the Go-Go community?

7. Why do you consider yourself to be a member? What lets you know that you are a member?

8. Do you feel that you do specific things to maintain your membership in the Go-Go community?

9. Is being a member of the Go-Go community a part of your personal identity? Please explain.

10a. What does gender have to do with membership in the Go-Go community?

10b. What does age have to do with membership?

10c. What does sexual orientation have to do with membership?

10d. What does physical or mental ability have to do with membership?

10e. What does political affiliation have to do with membership?

    - 10f. What does socio-economic status have to do with membership?
    - 10g. What does race have to do with membership in the Go-Go community?
    - 10h. What does location, or where a person lives, have to do with membership in the Go-Go community?

11. What are the criteria for membership in the Go-Go community?
12. Has criteria for membership in the Go-Go community changed over time?
13. How do you know that someone is not a member of the Go-Go community?
14. How do members of this community decide who has the right to belong?
15. Do you perceive that members of the Go-Go community trust one another?
    (Probe if necessary: Why or why not?)
    - 15a. How does this affect how you think about membership in the Go-Go community?
16. How do individuals learn what to do to become a member of the Go-Go community?
17. Has there been a time when you did NOT feel like a member of the Go-Go community?
18. If I were to ask you “Who is the Go-Go community?” what would you say?
19. Has the community changed over time?
20. Are there issues that you feel are especially unique to this community?
21. What role do you think local, mainstream media plays in your perception of the Go-Go community?
22. What role do you think community-based or grassroots media plays in your perception of the Go-Go community?

23. Are there issues in this community that could benefit from the assistance and support of people outside the community?
24. Is there anything I should have asked you about membership in the Go-Go community that I neglected to ask?
25. Is there any final theme or message you'd like to leave me with about the Go-Go community and membership in it?

Appendix E

Oral Script to be read for a Telephone or Skype Interviewee

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study on perspectives from the Go-Go community. I am conducting this research as a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. You have been asked to participate because of your organizational affiliation with [Name of Organization]. If you agree, I would like to ask you questions about your personal perspectives regarding the Go-Go community. This should take one to two hours. Your responses and your identity will be kept confidential, so please speak freely in answering the questions. You will be asked to create a name for yourself that can be used with any quotes, but your responses will be grouped with others who participate. I also ask that you keep this interview and its subject matter confidential until the end of the study, in order to preserve the unique nature of our work together. Do you have any questions? Please confirm that you have already signed the written consent form to participate in this interview. May I proceed with the first question?

Appendix F

Supplemental Information on Go-Go Music

Included are links to informative videos regarding go-go music and culture.

- ***The go-go beat***. Explained by Buggy and Sauce from the legendary Backyard Band.

http://www.tmottgogo.com/buggy-hot-sauce-of-backyard-band-a-lesson-on-playing-the-go-go-beat/

- ***Queen of the Go-Go stage.*** The incomparable Sweet Cherie shares her "True Go-Go Story."

http://www.tmottgogo.com/true-go-go-stories-sweet-cherie-hiphuggers-chuck-brown-bela-dona/

- ***Take Me Out to the Go-Go Magazine.*** Digital archive of go-go's community media platform, from 1998 to 2004.

http://www.tmottgogo.com/archives/

- ***Go-Go included in a virtual D.C. tour.*** TMOTTGoGo's Kato Hammond provides narration and information for the Detour app's guided virtual walking tour of the go-go scene on U Street.

http://www.tmottgogo.com/a-go-go-detour-uptown-through-washington-dcs-u-street-corridor/

- ***A fresh look at Go-Go culture and the roots of go-go music.*** A 2016 mini-documentary from Dr. Jared Ball (iMiXWHATiLiKE! and Real News Network) featuring commentary by go-go historian Kato Hammond, go-go musicians Go-Go Mickey and Donnell Floyd, and the author of this dissertation, Tahira Mahdi.

http://www.tmottgogo.com/a-fresh-look-at-the-history-and-politics-of-the-worlds-nastiest-groove/

- ***Go-Go Mickey.*** Famed percussionist Go-Go Mickey has a collection of video blogs on YouTube, including an old clip of his sons playing go-go as children.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAb1pqddDqc

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