RELINQUISHING AND RECLAIMING: A GAY AND QUESTIONING ADOLESCENT GROUP GUIDEBOOK

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By

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ABSTRACT

RELINQUISHING AND RECLAIMING

A GAY AND QUESTIONING ADOLESCENT GROUP GUIDEBOOK

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Gay and questioning adolescents are highly vulnerable people’s opinions regarding their sexual orientation. Gay and questioning adolescents run the risk of being rejected from family and friends based on homophobic and heteronormative beliefs. Recent reports of increased rates of suicide, harassment, drug usage, unsafe sex practices, depression, and homelessness put gay teens at a level of risk that cannot be ignored. This purpose of this project is to propose a support and process group that aids adolescents in developing a healthy identity and self-concept in the face of society’s inescapable heteronormative messages. The provided guidebook is written in a step-by-step fashion in order to allow for easy implementation of the group in practice. In each of the outlined twelve sessions there are main themes, goals, activities, interventions, process questions, and worksheets. Every group session is geared toward getting group members to participate in the collaborative group process and find a sense of community and belonging in their sexual minority status.
CHAPTER I

Introduction

Harvey Milk, an influential gay activist and role model, once said, “All young people, regardless of sexual orientation or identity, deserve a safe and supportive environment in which to achieve their full potential” (Milk, 1977). Milk was speaking to the gay adolescents all over the world during the 1960s and 1970s that could not be openly gay at home or in society out of fear of harassment and rejection. Unfortunately, almost forty years later, this fear still holds true for many gay adolescent in the United States. Even today, heterosexuality, attractions and feelings toward members of the opposite sex, is presumed to be the only acceptable way of life (Campos, 2005). In 2012, gay adolescents continue to be bullied, harassed, and, consequently, a disproportionate number of them attempt and commit suicide. Most recently, in October of 2011, gay adolescent Jamie Hubbley hung himself on his family’s swing set when he could no longer bear the incessant and ruthless bullying he was experiencing at school (Zerbisias, 2011; ("Jamie Hubley, 15," 2011). Zach Huston, another gay adolescent was viciously beaten at his Ohio high school in 2011 (Garcia, 2011).

According to prominent researcher and psychotherapist Erik Erickson, the primary task during adolescence should be the pursuit of identity and purpose in life (Sokol, 2009). For those adolescents who either identify as gay or are questioning their sexuality, this task becomes significantly more difficult. Campos (2005) considers the gay youth population to be “at risk” because of the multitude of stressors and burdens they must face when navigating the adolescent stage. In addition to navigating through
the adolescent phase, those adolescents who do not define themselves as heterosexual must also come to terms with their sexuality (Goldman, 2008).

Gay and questioning adolescents suffer because of the homophobic sentiments that dominate the society in which they live. Society’s view and actions towards the gay population can negatively affect gay adolescents’ self-esteem and worth, and can increase rates of depression, drug usage, and suicidality (Hershberger & D’Augelli, 2000; Marshall et al., 2011; Jordan, 2000). Furthermore, these adolescents run the risk of feeling isolated and hopeless without adequate resources and coping strategies from society (DeBord, & Perez, 2000; Mallon, 2010).

**Statement of Problem**

The school environment has the potential to provide queer and questioning adolescents the space and ability to discover themselves safely and securely. Unfortunately, this potential is not always realized and school often becomes another place in which queer and questioning adolescents feel unsafe and fearful (Mufioz-Plaza, Quinn, & Rounds, 2002; Pearson, Muller, & Wilkinson, 2007). Gay or questioning adolescents report higher rates of victimization and suicidal ideation than their heterosexual counterparts (Goodneow, Szalacha, & Westmeimer, 2006; Kitts, 2005; D'Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 2001). In a recent survey of 6,209 kinder through twelfth grade lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, “60.8% reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation” (Kosciw et al., 2008,p. #25). Furthermore, over 80% reported being the victim of verbal harassment and 40% report experiencing physical harassment at school. Suicide claims the lives of 4,000 adolescents yearly (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007) and various reports and studies
have shown that gay teens are 20 to 40% more likely to commit suicide than straight teens (D’Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 2001; Kitts, 2005).

Negative messages about homosexuality are heard anywhere from the school playground, to the home environment, to the media. Lemoire and Chen (2005) and Doty, Willoughby, Lindahl and Malik (2010) determined that the extent to which gay adolescents are exposed to understanding and supportive individuals and environments significantly increases their ability to develop helpful coping skills in order to combat these negative messages. This goal of this project is to provide this optimal environment for gay and questioning adolescents.

**Purpose of Project**

The purpose of the group guidebook is to increase gay and questioning adolescent self-esteem. The group will target adolescents who may experience shame regarding their sexuality and/or contemplate ending their lives. The endeavor of the group process is to assist these adolescents in developing a positive self-concept despite an often homophobic society. This guidebook outlines a hands-on approach for group leaders who are interested in facilitating the group in a safe and welcoming space for adolescents. The guidebook is broken up into twelve step-by-step detailed sessions in which adolescents explore the negative personal ramifications of homophobia. The goal is to increase self-awareness and self-esteem and integrate a positive self-concept in spite of these. Each session includes a theme, an outline of a session, worksheets, supplemental materials, examples of suggested activities, and step-by-step instructions regarding what to do and say during each session. Topics range from “Playing with Language and Meaning,” which focuses on gaining insight into our preconceived and automatic assumptions about what being gay means to “Multiple Layers of Identity,” which
specifically addresses minority group members and how to incorporate rather than
disregard the value of their multiple identities. The guidebook is extremely user-friendly
and accessible to a wide range of facilitators. For each session, the group facilitator is
provided with multiple process questions and activities geared toward ensuring that the
group is actively involved in the process. The main purpose of creating this guidebook is
to provide a resource for adolescents who need the space and ability to dispute society’s
negative views of homosexuality and increase their own self-esteem

**Terminology**

For the purpose of this project and group guidebook the following terms will be
used, described by the definitions below:

**Bisexual:** “Refers to sexual attraction toward people of both genders” (Mallon, 2010
p.16).

**Coming Out of the Closet:** “A popular phrase that describes the ongoing process of
unveiling one’s sexual identity. The closet is a metaphor for hiding or keeping a secret,
such as one’s sexual orientation” (Campos, 2005 p.105).

**Gay:** “Can be used to refer only to males who are other than heterosexually oriented, but
is often used to inclusively refer to men and women who identify as such” (Mallon, 2010
p.17). In terms of this paper this term will be used to encompass both men and women
that have attracts and feelings for the same sex.

**GLBT:** “Is shorthand for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender” (Campos, 2005 p.107).

**Lesbian:** “Is the common term for homosexual women” (Campos, 2006 p.109)

**Heteronormative Culture:** “The fact that society is structured to reflect the unquestioned
and largely unconscious assumption that everyone in the culture is heterosexual—or
should be heterosexual” (Pharr, 1998; Rothblum & Bond, 1998 as cited in Firestein, 2007 p.98). “Any person who is not perceived as heterosexual is perceived as abnormal, unnaturual, and in some cases, sinful and morally corrupt” (Herek, 2003; Pharr, 1998 as cited in Firestein, 2007 p. 98).

“Society’s laws and structures, such as the institution of marriage and the definition of family, reflect these assumptions” (Herk, 2003; Rothblum & Bond, 1996 as cited in Firestein, 2007 p.98).

Homophobia: “Most frequently used to describe any sort of opposition to homosexual behavior or the political causes associated with homosexuality” (Mallon, 2010 p.20).

“Homophobia is based on false notions, stereotypes, and the fear of being homosexual, which propels a prejudice that often leads to avoidance of, discomfort around, harassment toward, discrimination against, and violence toward people with diverse sexualities” (Campos, 2005 p.108).

Homosexuality: “Relates to sexual attraction, both physical and emotional, which is primarily directed toward people of the same gender” (Mallon, 2010 p.16). “Describes the sexual orientation, behavior, and/or identity of persons inclined to be physically, sexually/erotically, and emotionally attracted, committed to, or interested in persons of the same gender” (Campos, 2005 p.108).

Heterosexuality: “Relates to sexual attraction, both physical and emotional, which is primarily directed toward people of the opposite gender” (Mallon, 2010 p.15). “Such persons are referred to as heterosexual” (Campos, 2005 p.108)

Heterosexism(ist): “System by which heterosexuality is assumed to be the only acceptable and viable life option” (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1998 p.226 as cited in
The belief that homosexuality is somehow lesser—less valid, less fulfilling, less celebratory than heterosexuality. The inherent superiority of one form of loving (male with female) over all others and thereby the right to cultural dominance. Despite the dramatics of homophobic actions and statements, the heterosexist privileging of heterosexual love is usually a much larger problem for most families, clients, and therapists than is homophobia. (Sanders & Kroll, 2000 p.3). Denial, denigrations, and stigmatization of non-heterosexual identity, behavior, relationships or community (Ryan & Futterman, 1998 p.12).

**Questioning:** “Applies to persons who are exploring their sexual and gender identity and who have not identified, accepted, or committed to any of the labels associated with non-heterosexual status” (Campos, 2005 p.109).

**Transgender:** “Describes persons whose gender identity and/or gender expression is opposite to their biological gender and who consequently do not follow traditional gender roles and societal expectations” (Campos, 2005 p.111). Also, “it is now generally considered an umbrella term encompassing many different identities. It is commonly used to describe an individual who is seen as “gender different.” Used to describe behavior or feelings that cannot be categorized into other defined categories; for example, people living in a gender role that is different from the one they were assigned at birth, but do not wish to undergo any or all of the available medical options” (Mallon 2010 p.18-19).

**Summary**

The ability to create and integrate a positive identity and self-concept becomes extremely difficult for the gay or questioning adolescent who has been taught, both subtly and blatantly, that homosexuality is wrong (Ryan & Futterman, 1998). Developing a
healthy identity, a central task according to Erickson’s theory regarding adolescents, can potentially be delayed as a consequence of a mainstream homophobic society (Ryan & Futterman, 1998; Rosario, Schrimsha, & Hunter, 2011). This purpose of this project is to create a support group that will assist adolescents in developing a healthy identity and self-concept in the face of society’s pervasive heteronormative messages.

This paper is organized into four main sections. First, a literature review which discusses such topics as adolescent development, the effects of a heteronormative society, why the gay adolescent population is considered to be at risk, the negative implications of a lack of positive gay role models, the experience of belonging to more than one minority group, and the suggestions regarding the facilitator’s use of both cognitive behavioral and narrative therapy in the group. Second, a section dedicated to discussing the implementation and delivery of the project. Third, a complete gay and questioning adolescent self-esteem group guidebook. Lastly, a summary of the group’s potential impact and possible limitations. It is the goal of this author that this group guidebook can and will be used by anyone, gay or straight, who is interested in creating a safe space that provides gay and questioning adolescents the potential to increase their self-esteem.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Those adolescents that experience same-sex attractions and feelings are likely to encounter significant and possibly detrimental challenges compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Although society has progressed significantly, many gay adolescents still feel the need to hide their identity out of fear of being rejected by peers or family or being verbally and physically bullied (Mallon, 2010). Society continues to perpetuate heterosexuality as the only normal lifestyle through the media, as well as through interaction with family, society, and school. School, a place where adolescents spend a significant amount of time, often becomes another place for the gay adolescent to feel unsafe and live in fear. The literature review below will explore and review the negative implications and effects of a mainstream homophobic society on gay and questioning adolescents. First it will discuss such topics as adolescent development, the stages of sexual identity development, and the repercussions of a homophobic and heteronormative society. Second, it will discuss the reasons as to why the gay adolescent population is considered to be at risk. Thirdly, it will explore the impacts of both rejection and acceptance of sexual orientation, the lack of role models in today’s society, and the impacts of identifying with more than one minority group by parents and friends. Finally, it concludes by suggesting the best approach to working with the gay adolescent population is through a support group which incorporates both cognitive behavioral and narrative therapy. The main goal of such a support group would be to increase gay and questioning adolescent self-esteem and self-concept.
Brief Background on Adolescent Development

Adolescence refers to the time in one’s life between childhood and adulthood. Although studies debate the actual age range of adolescence, Johnson and Johnson (2000) define adolescence in three parts. The first stage, puberty, ranges from ages 10 to 14; the teen years range from ages 13 to 19, and the concluding period of time of leaving the home ranges from ages 18 to 21. Having not yet reached adulthood, but leaving the childhood years behind, adolescence is a crucial stage as this age group experiences changes in a multitude of spheres including physical, cognitive, emotional, and social (Graber & Archibald, 2001; Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2009). In addition to navigating through these spheres, adolescents are constantly searching for an identity, as well as their place and role in the world (Steinberg & Morris, 2001; Sokol, 2009). Furthermore, friendships and peer influences become pivotal and crucial in the development of a healthy adolescent identity (Berndt, 2002; Graber & Archibald, 2001; Steinberg & Morris, 2001)

Erick Erickson and James E. Cross are two of the most prominent researchers on the subject of adolescent development. Erikson saw development from birth to death as occurring through eight psychosocial stages. He referred to this as The Theory of Psychosocial Development (Sokol, 2009). During each stage, a conflict or problem occurs that the individual must resolve in order to move forward to the next stage of development. If the conflict is not resolved, the individual becomes stuck in the stage, preventing further development (Sokol, 2009). This theory is relevant to the discussion of adolescent development because the fifth state, identity versus role confusion, pertains to adolescents (Alsaker & Kroger, 2006; Kroger, 2003; Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2009;
Sokol, 2009). The primary task during this stage is for individuals to develop a sense of identity and purpose in life. If this stage is completed successfully, adolescents will feel as if they have a role and place in the world. Furthermore, these adolescents will be comfortable and confident within their own bodies (Sokol, 2009). Erikson stresses the importance of trying on a variety of roles and finding a matching fit (Alsaker & Kroger, 2006); some of these crucial roles include finding an occupation, a set of values to live by and a satisfying sexual identity (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2009). If this is done correctly, the navigation of identity versus role confusion, as well as decision making, will have a stronger sense of value and meaning to the individual (Alsaker & Kroger, 2006). These adolescents are deciding how they will chose to define themselves meaningfully. According to Erikson, individuals receive a virtue for each stage that is successfully completed. For the adolescent stage, that virtue is fidelity. These adolescents have a strong sense of belonging and connectedness to society, friends, and family (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2009; Brems, 2008). Part of the process of this stage, in which the adolescent confronts identity search and role confusion is essential for greater understanding of oneself; however, the inability to move past this confusion can create inner turmoil. If the stage of identity versus role confusion is not completed successfully, Erikson suggests that individuals will lack purpose for living and question what they can contribute to the world and themselves (Sokol, 2009).

James Marcia is another prominent adolescent researcher who developed the identity status model (Kroger, 2003). Building upon Erikson’s theory, Marcia developed four categories to recognize various identity statuses: achievement, moratorium, diffusion, and foreclosure. Marcia posits that as individuals go through a crisis stage,
during which individuals explore and commit to an identity (Kroger, 2003). During crisis, individuals are making decisions related to commitment to a personal investment, an occupation, and a belief system (Papilia, Olds, & Feldman, 2008). Marcia sees an adolescent crisis as a way to navigate and search for a fitting identity, which is a positive virtue for adolescents. For example, he believes that one must continually explore and commit to an identity in work, politics, school, friends, and society. Identity achievement is the most successful status, and it refers to individuals whom have explored a variety of opinions or alternatives and have made a commitment to an identity (Papilia, Olds, & Feldman, 2008). These individuals are more likely to have close friendships and relationships and they experience higher degrees of internal drive and self-esteem (Kroger, 2003). During moratorium, the adolescent is actively searching for a meaning regarding their identity, but has not yet decided on one. High levels of anxiety have been associated with this status in the adolescent community (Kroger, 2003). Individuals that have experienced foreclosure have made a commitment, but have done no exploration or investigation of other identities. They are unable and unwilling to see other alternatives; additionally, many of these individuals have committed to an identity or value based on someone else’s choices for them. It is therefore not surprising that adolescents in foreclosure have high levels of conformity and low levels of anxiety (Kroger, 2003; Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2009). Lastly, individuals in diffusion have not yet explored or committed to an identity or occupation. Individuals experiencing diffusion are likely to be unhappy and have low levels of self-esteem (Kroger, 2003; Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2009). The search for an identity becomes an integral part the adolescent phase.
Both Erikson and Marcia theories of adolescent development provide an effective lens to understanding adolescent development.

During the adolescent phase, individuals spend more time with their peers than with their family. During an individual’s childhood years, parental relationships were the central focus; however during adolescents, the parental relationships typically lessen in focus and peer relationships become central (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Usually, relationships with parents still play an important role in adolescents’ self-esteem and efficacy, whereas peer relationships serve as role models and the development of compassion and intimacy (Papilia, Olds, & Feldman, 2008). Having a secure and safe space to call home is important to healthy development. Healthy and open communication with parents is important in the choices adolescents make, both as friends and future partners (Padilla, Walker & Bean, 2009).

The impact of the peer group on adolescents’ identity development can have both positive and negative effects. The amount of time individuals spend with their peer group can impact levels of self-esteem and social behaviors (Pledge, 2004). Peers and cliques provide a place for adolescents to learn about themselves and discover various problem-solving techniques. Peer groups have the ability to influence the way adolescents feel about themselves, the way they dress, their behaviors, and possible engagement in risky behaviors (Padilla, Walker & Bean, 2009; Steinber & Morris 2001). Healthy friendships provide a space for adolescents to be themselves, social support, and the ability to express their thoughts and feelings to peers with similar life experiences (Tome, Matos, & Camachos, 2012). Those who have safe and supportive friends are typically more likely to be well-adjusted and are more academically successful (Padilla,
Walker & Bean, 2009). Unfortunately, peers also have the ability to negatively influence one another. Peers’ opinions and disapproval are continually echoed and reinforced. They can perpetuate stereotypes that foster higher levels of prejudice, discrimination, and homophobia. These negative behaviors and attitudes often can set the standard for fellow peers of what is and what is not considered acceptable. Lack of approval of behavior or identity from peers contributes to degrees of internalized shame (Grossman, 2001).

In addition to social development, biological changes, particularly puberty, take place during adolescence. Puberty entails outward physical changes in appearance, signaling the end of childhood. The process of puberty includes changes in height and weight, changes in body fat distribution, an increase in production of sex-related hormones, breasts, and pubic hair growth (Papilia, Olds, & Feldman, 2008; Graber & Archibald, 2001). For the majority, these physical changes accompany an increase in adolescent sexual feelings and attractions (Papilia, Olds, & Feldman, 2008; Graber & Archibald, 2001), thus beginning the process of sexual discovery, both in identity and attraction.

In the adolescent population, the heterosexual lifestyle or opposite sex attraction is viewed as the only socially appropriate and socially acceptable way of life (Campos, 2005). Adolescents who do not define themselves as heterosexuals face two tasks: navigating through the adolescent phase and coming to terms with their sexuality (Goldman, 2008). These youth, also referred to as gay, are attracted to members of the same sex. Based on these additional tasks and difficulties gay adolescent are more likely to develop a negative self-image and self-concept (Hershberger & D’Augelli, 2000). Additionally, these adolescents report higher levels of victimization and suicidal ideation.
or attempts than their heterosexual counterparts (Goodneow, Szalacha, & Westmeimer, 2006; Kitts, 2005; D'Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 2001). Such blatant adversity in the world and at school can interrupt the potential for the adolescent to develop a healthy identity (Rosario, Schrimsha, & Hunter, 2011). This adversity can potentially delay the formation of a positive identity and self-concept, a central task according to Erickson’s theory. Creating and integrating a positive identity and self-concept becomes even more difficult and crucial for the gay adolescent who has been taught from very early on that homosexuality is wrong (Ryan & Futterman, 1998). In order to better understand the experiences and developmental stages that gay adolescents experience, Vivienne Cass’ model will be discussed below.

**Stages of Sexual Identity**

In 1979, Vivienne C. Cass developed The Homosexuality Identity Formulation Model that classified the stages individuals navigate in the coming out process (Cass, 1979 as cited in Kulkin, Chauvin, & Percle, 2000, p.18). During the first three stages individuals are most vulnerable and are highly sensitive to the people’s opinions and judgments (Kort, 2008). Identity Confusion, the first stage in Cass’ model, occurs when individuals begin to acknowledge that they may have some form of attraction to people of the same sex. With this beginning awareness there is also a heightened understanding that it deviates from the society’s dominant heterosexual orientation (Halpin & Allen, 2004). Awareness may cause internal conflict, which further facilitates the lack of disclosure of same sex attraction. Additionally, most individuals having these feelings do not identify or label their same sex attractions, and in many instances are hoping that these feelings will pass (Halpin & Allen, 2004; Kort, 2008).
Identity Comparison, individuals begin to develop a heightened understanding that they may be gay, but often do not identify with the label or the community (Kort, 2008). Often people at this stage are living with internalized gay shame while outwardly identifying as heterosexual, and “passing,” out of fear and possible harassment (Mallon, 2010). Individuals with this heightened awareness also experience isolation and alienation, and are more likely to be at a greater risk of suicidal ideation (Halpin & Allen; Kulk, Chauvin, & Percle, 2000).

Identity Tolerance, stage three of Cass’ model, occurs when individuals begin to expose themselves to other gay people and feel more comfortable in committing to a gay identity (Kulk, Chauvin, & Percle, 2000). It is also during this stage that friendships and role models play an influential role in creating a positive self-concept and increasing self-esteem (Mallon, 2010). Most commonly, at the end of this stage individuals are able to come out as gay to themselves. During stage four, Identity Acceptance, individuals begin to experience higher levels of acceptance in their own sexuality and increased contact with the gay community. Continual exposure to the gay community creates a sense of normalization and the ability to view ones sexuality in a more positive light (Halpin & Allen, 2004; Kulk, Chauvin, & Percle, 2000). The amount of shame experienced related to sexual identity begins to decrease and a sense of acceptance of one’s identity prevails (Kort, 2008). “Passing” or acting as heterosexual becomes more difficult as gay identity is perceived more positively (Kulk, Chauvin, & Percle, 2000). Disclosure to close friends may also occur at this stage, which may unfortunately result in the risk of rejection or the loss of friendships (Cass, 1979 as cited in Kulk, Chauvin, & Percle, 2000; Kort, 2008). In stage five, Identity Pride, individuals immerse themselves
into the gay community. Passion and dedication to activism is often seen at this stage, as well as viewing the world as an adversarial binary consisting only of gay and straight players. Inability for others to recognize their gay identity and assume they are straight often comes with frustration and anger. Furthermore, often in this stage individuals see their gay identity as their whole identity in contrast to the following stage (Kort, 2008).

The last stage of Cass’ model, stage six, is called Identity Synthesis. In this stage gay individuals are able to continue to take pride in their sexuality, and understand that not all straight individuals are homophobic. Although their sexuality is still an important part of who they are, they are able to integrate it with other aspects of their identity. Friendships are also had both with heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals (Halpin & Allen, 2004; Kulkın, Chauvin, & Percle, 2000; Kort, 2008). Unfortunately, adolescents often do not go through these stages without some form hurdles in their way. These problems are endemic of a predominant heterosexual society.

**A Heteronormative Culture**

This section of the literature review will examine the ways in which heterosexuality is presumed and assumed within society, and the impact this has on those who define themselves as homosexual. Even before language or words are communicated, attitudes and beliefs about homosexuality are expressed. Gestures, words, motions, and signals are used in society to reinforce the belief that homosexuality is wrong (Ryan & Futterman, 1998). Without fully comprehending the meaning of the words gay and homosexual, these terms are viewed with a negative connotation. These groups are continually described with negative and disparaging language (Campos, 2005). Religious leaders, teachers, family members, and friends can have a strong
influence on adolescent thinking and have the ability to impact the ways in which adolescents come to understand homosexuality.

Even without our conscious realization, heterosexuality is implicitly presented and experienced in society (Rotheram-Borus & Langabeer, 2001). When individuals of the opposite sex display affection in the form of a kiss or holding hands, witnesses appear un-phased. However, when individuals of the same sex mirror these displays of affection, observers often look away in disgust. In May of 2012, in Florida, a principal wanted to suspend a lesbian couple for holding hands while at school (Jones, 2012). Without fear of consequence or repercussion, heterosexuals are able to proudly put their relationship on display (McGeorge & Carlson, 2011). On the other hand, Sanders and Kroll (2000), define heterosexist belief as, “the belief that homosexuality is somehow lesser—less valid, less fulfilling, less celebratory than heterosexuality” (p. 435). Heterosexism makes it permissible for heterosexuals to have this dominance and privilege over homosexuals. Thus, homosexuals are treated as second class citizens, appearing inferior to their heterosexual counterparts. Typically, new people we encounter in our daily interactions are presumed heterosexual until proven otherwise (Rotheram-Borus & Langabeer, 2001). Assumptions of heterosexuality are not only presumed in society but they are reinforced in the media and academia as well. Heteronormative beliefs and culture are based on the “fact that society is structured to reflect the unquestioned and largely unconscious assumption that everyone living in the culture is heterosexual or should be heterosexual” (Pharr, 1988; Rothblum & Bond, 1996 as cited in Firestein, 2007, p. 98). Herek (2003), Phar (1998), and Campos (2005) suggest that individuals that deviate from the norm are deemed sinful and immoral (Herek, 2003; Phar, 1998 as cited in Firestein, 2007).
Furthermore, McGeorge and Carlson (2011) echo similar sentiments by stating that individuals that deviate from heterosexuality are viewed as unnatural and ultimately wrong (McGeorge & Carlson, 2011). The continual exposure of heterosexuality throughout society perpetuates these negative views of homosexuality, allowing heterosexuality to be treated as the standard (Ingraham, 2005). Those that openly identify as homosexual or gay are forced to live their life without the same privileges as heterosexuals. Daily living becomes a constant fight for acceptance, the same acceptance that heterosexuals receive without effort or struggle.

Identifying oneself as heterosexual requires no explanation. Heterosexual labels become extraneous pieces of information because these are implicit in the societal norm. The marginalization of homosexuality can be displayed by both subtle and blatant means. Marriage, health benefits, social security, laws, religions, advertisements, role models, teachers, peers, family, language, and gestures continually exclude homosexuality through a lack of representation. Furthermore, marriage, dating, job roles, and health benefits are constructed through a heterosexual lens (Campos, 2005; Grossman, 2001; Firestein, 2007; Rotheram-Borus, & Langabeer, 2001). Without question, heterosexuality is viewed as something that is naturally occurring in society at large (Campos, 2005). Viewing the world through a heteronormative lens reinforces the belief that anything deviating from these strict confines appears unnatural. As a result homosexuals become the stigmatized group and are treated as a minority.

Schools serve as a facility that promotes and instills societal norms and beliefs in children and adolescents (Pearson, Muller, & Wilkinson, 2007). It is in school where adolescents gain a sense of purpose and identity and ultimately embark on the coming of
age process (Uribe & Harbeck, 1992). When gay youth decide to become open with their sexuality their previously held heterosexual privileges are challenged. Their privilege and acceptance in society, at school, at work, and at home is questioned (Grossman, 2001).

While school can provide a means for adolescents to discover themselves it can also become a place where gay adolescents feel unsafe and fearful (Mufioz-Plaza, Quinn, & Rounds, 2002; Pearson, Muller, & Wilkinson, 2007). As Campos (2005), explains, “Schools, in particular, are breeding grounds for heterosexism” (p. 3). School structures are based on heterosexual presumptions. This atmosphere, reinforced by teachers and administrators, anticipates that their students are heterosexual (Mufioz-Plaza, Quinn, & Rounds, 2002). In doing so, they deny the presence of gay students; ultimately creating a space that is not welcoming and not safe for homosexual students (Vega, Crawford, & Pelt, 2012; Walters & May, 2008). Hallway and locker room gossip is typically spoken in a heterosexual context which facilitates the marginalization of homosexuality (Campos, 2005). Even with age old traditions such as dances, students are obligated to bring a date of the opposite sex. The idea of having a same sex couple appears unacceptable or even absurd in the school system.

As a result of this heterosexual school atmosphere, derogatory terms such as “faggot” or “dyke” are often unnoticed or not reprimanded by school personnel (Campos, 2005; Rotheram-Borus & Langabeer, 2001). In 2009, the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network conducted a study with 7,261 middle and high school students on their experiences as openly gay adolescents. They found that 90% of gay adolescents experienced some form of harassment and less than one fifth of these students reported an intervention by school personnel after becoming subjected to homophobic remarks.
(Kosciw et al., 2008). When asked about anti-gay bullying, Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, and Lichty (2009) reported that a high number of school personnel and teachers placed the homosexual student at fault for “putting themselves in those situations” (p. 539). These staff members felt as if effeminate students were calling too much attention to themselves. Another study conducted by Mufioz-Plaza, Quinn, and Rounds (2002) interviewed twelve gay 18 to 21-year-olds in North Carolina about their perception of social support during their high school years. One participant described that she was treated differently if teachers found out about her sexuality. Based on these findings it seems more than coincidental that gay or questioning adolescents have heightened levels of depression and suicidal ideation (Hershberger & D’Augelli, 2000; Marshall et al., 2011; Jordan, 2000).

**Gay Adolescents At Risk**

The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (Kosciw, Gretak, Diaz, & Bartkiewics, 2009) found that, “Approximately 61% of LGBTQ youth reported feeling unsafe in their school environments and 44% reported being physically harassed due to their perceived sexual orientation” (p. 18). Recently, in national headlines, the American public is hearing and reading about gay adolescents that have committed suicide because of constant bullying faced in and out of school. These gay adolescents see no other way to cope with multiple stressors than to end their lives. During 2010, Billy Lucas, Cody J. Barker, Seth Walsh, Tyler Clementi, Asher Brown, Harrison Browns, Raymond Chase, Felix Sacco, Caleb Nolt, and Bill Lucas all were reported to have committed suicide because of the constant bullying and harassment experienced at school for being gay (Badash, 2010). During 2011, gay adolescents continued to be bullied and harassed and
committing suicide. Jamie Hubbley killed himself in early October, and Zach Huston was viciously punched and beaten in Ohio (Zerbisias, 2011; Garcia, 2011).

### Suicide

Attempted suicide and suicidal ideation within the adolescent gay community is of great concern in the United States. For individuals between the ages of 15 and 24, suicide is the third leading cause of death (Mallon, 2010). Suicide claims the lives of 4,000 adolescents yearly (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007). Various reports and studies have shown that gay teens are 20 to 40% more likely to commit suicide than straight teens (D'Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 2001; Kitts, 2005). Similarly, in a 2011 meta-analytic review, researchers found that suicidality and depression rates were higher in homosexual youth, on average between 12% and 14% greater (Marshall et al., 2011). A total of nineteen studies between 1998 and 2007 were analyzed that arrived at this conclusion. The Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2009) found that high school students who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual were over four times more likely than heterosexual students to have attempted suicide in the past year (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2009). In this study over 2,700 high school students were surveyed in over fifty randomly selected schools throughout Massachusetts.

### Harassment

In 2009, the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network conducted a study on 7,261 middle and high school students on their experiences as an out gay adolescent. They found that 90% experienced some form of harassment at school (GLSEN, 2009). Most recently, The Human Rights Campaign (HRC, 2012) conducted a survey of over 10,000
participants who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual about their experiences. The campaign found that these youth are two times more likely than their straight peers to experience physical and verbal harassment and being ostracized by their peers while at school. Based on all of these findings it is no surprise that gay adolescents may experience academic interruptions. The fear of experiencing verbal or physical harassment forces the gay adolescent to skip or drop out of school. The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network found that, “29.1% of LGBT students missed a class at least once and 30.0% missed at least one day of school in the past month because of safety concerns” (GLSEN, 2009). Rather than serves as a safe heaven and a place to learn appropriate socialization skills, school becomes another place for the gay or questioning adolescent to feel unsafe and live in fear-instead of.

Homelessness and Substance Use

Of the homeless youth in Los Angeles and New York an estimated 20 to 40% are gay and have been thrown out by their parents because of their sexual identity (Mallon, 2010). The National Coalition for the Homeless estimates that 20% of homeless youth identify as gay lesbian or bisexual, while only an estimated 10% of the total population identifies as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). Gay teens can turn to drugs as a means to cope and escape from the shame they feel for their identity (Goldman, 2008). Jordan (2000) speculates that the lack of acceptance adolescents experience upon disclosing their sexual orientation is linked to higher degrees of substance usage. The use of substances can help these adolescents cope with the stress and stigmatization that they experience for being gay (Rosario & Rotherman-Borus, 1992 as cited in Grossman, 2001). These adolescents are better able to deny or
escape from their internalized shame through the use of drugs and alcohol (Ryan, 1997). Consequently, these adolescents are at increased risk of engaging in risky sexual practice; enhancing the likelihood of contracting a sexually transmitted disease such as HIV or AIDS (Rosario & Rotherman-Borus, 1992 as cited in Grossman, 2001; Lindley & Reinger, 2001).

In a recent meta-analytic review (Marshal et al, 2008) researchers compared a total of 18 studies regarding the likelihood of drug usage for homosexual youth as compared to heterosexual youth. They concluded on average the likelihood of substance usage was 190% higher for homosexual youth. Echoing similar results, in 2004, California used both the California Healthy Kids Survey and Preventing School Harassment Survey to gather information about the experiences of out or perceived gay youth. It was concluded that these students were more likely to drink and use marijuana, methamphetamines, and inhalants (O’Shaugnessy, Russell, heck, Calhoun, & Laub, 2004). Drugs also allow for an increase in unprotected sex and possible transmission of STDs. Drugs create a form of escape for gay adolescents who are aware that their family or friends have the potential to reject them. These perceived possible rejections and lack of support are seen in the high suicide rates, drug usage, depression rates, and unsafe sex practices.

**Support, Role Models, and the Media**

Gay and lesbian adolescents are often forced to navigate and develop a positive self-concept on their own. They are told very early on that this integral piece of their identity, being gay, is wrong and they commonly face rejection or victimization (Ryan & Futterman, 1998; Lemoire & Chen, 2005). Adolescents who are questioning their
sexuality may go out of their way to create a “false self” in order to pass as a straight person. In doing so, they are hoping to experience less victimization and bullying by appearing to be straight (Rotheram-Borus & Langabeer, 2001). Environments in which heterosexual adolescents find safety and comfort often become too dangerous for perceived, questioning, or out adolescents. Those that begin to disclose their orientation to others put themselves in a very vulnerable position (Lemoire & Chen, 2005). These adolescents may also have increased levels of stress related to the perceived negative reactions or rejections of both family and friends that result from the coming out process. A negative reaction or experience may intensify levels of distress and increase the probability of engaging in risky behaviors (Tharinger & Wells, 2000; Lemoire & Chen, 2005).

Negative messages about homosexuality can be heard or seen anywhere from the school and home environment to the media and religious institutions. Lemoire and Chen (2005) and Doty, Willoughby, Lindahl and Malik (2010) conclude that the extent to which gay adolescents encounter understanding and supportive individuals and environments positively impacts their ability to develop helpful coping skills in order to combat against these negative messages. In order to decrease the degree of stress related to their sexual orientation, these adolescents will need supportive friends and family members who are understanding and supportive of their sexual orientation. Espelage et al. (2008) mirrored similar results when conducting a study of 13,291 high school students’ experiences of, “bullying, parental support, mood, and drug-alcohol abuse,” in a Midwestern public school district. The researchers determined that having both an affirming school climate and positive parental reaction to adolescents’ sexual orientation
Disclosure can serve as defense against a multitude of mental health issues that gay adolescents may face such as drug usage and depression. Furthermore, Tharinger and Wells (2000) add to this by concluding that those adolescents without adequate support experience academic problems and have an increased likelihood to drop out of the school system. These adolescents who do not experience supportive environments or reactions have nowhere to turn to talk about the struggles they experience as a minority individual. Leaving the school system is often done out of necessity rather than choice.

In a study by Rosario, Schrinshaw, and Hunter (2009), it was found that adolescents’ perceived parental rejections of sexual orientation correlated with increased likelihood of substance usage. Furthermore, Padilla et al. (2010) examined to see if parental acceptance and support provided a safeguard against illegal drug usage in lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. Here 1,906 lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth ages 12-17 years of age completed an online national survey. They found that 20% of the sample disclosed having used an illegal drug or substance in the past 30 days. This was almost twice the average national rate of youth drug usage of 10.1% in 2010 (SAMSA, 2010).

The study found that even before adolescents decided to disclose, their perceived parental acceptance played a pivotal role in preventing drug usage. More than half worried about the extra hurdles they may face in life related to sexual orientation and two thirds had experienced suicidal thoughts at some point. Most significantly, parental acceptance and support of sexual orientation played a significant role in preventing against drug usage.

The Family Acceptance Project, founded by Caitlin Ryan, studies the impact of acceptance and rejection of families on gay adolescents. The project additionally creates interventions for both families and schools to aid in the education and acceptance
process. One recent study by Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, and Sanchez (2009) addressed the potential negative impact and consequence of family rejection in 245 White and Latino young adults. Participants who reported higher degrees of family rejection during adolescence were, “8.4 times more likely to report having attempted suicide, 5.9 times more likely to report higher levels of depression, 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs, and 3.4 times more likely to have engaged in unprotected sexual intercourse” (p.346). These adolescent family rejections have adversely affected both their adolescent and young adult years. In a related study by The Family Acceptance Project and, Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, and Sanchez (2010) examined the effects of family acceptance on adolescents on 245 White and Latino participants. A multitude of positive implications were discovered based on family acceptance. The researchers found that family acceptance protects against, “depression, substance abuse and suicidal ideation and behaviors” (p.205). It enabled gay adolescents to live successful lives in a predominately heterosexual society. Family acceptance plays a fundamental role both in the adolescent and adult years; meaning their adolescent years were not dominated by suicidal thoughts or substance usage like those adolescents that experienced family rejection.

The potential rejection or absence of support from family and friends only increases the need and importance of positive role models and media depictions (Brown, Steele, & Walsh-Childers, 2002). Gay adolescents rarely have the opportunity to interact with other gay individuals and role models and the media can play a critical role in gay adolescent development (Gross, 2001; Hunteman & Morgan, 2001; Raley & Lucas, 2006). Seeing examples of gay individuals living happy and successful lives are
necessary in the development of a positive self-concept and high self-esteem. Even in the school environment, teachers and staff may want to be openly out or supportive, but fear the ramifications of doing so (Rotheram & Langabeer, 2001). The lack of positive role models only enhances the fear that gay adolescents have in revealing or accepting their sexual orientation (Johnson & Johnson, 2001). Having nowhere to turn can reinforce the shame and fear that gay adolescents experience.

Minority Status

Throughout this paper it has been documented that gay adolescents encounter a multitude of stressors that they must somehow cope with in a predominately heterosexual society. These adolescents experience homophobia, bullying, possible rejection from family and friends, increased depression, and even suicide. However, what happens when an adolescent identifies as both gay and as an ethnic or racial minority? What is the experience of these individuals whose identity includes two different minority statuses? Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people of color may have the potential to experience multiple layers of discrimination based on their race, gender, and sexual orientation (Harper, Jernewall, & Zea, 2004; Fukuyan & Ferguson, 2000). Coming out as a gay person of color can be an extremely difficult decision because of the possibilities of multiple layers of repercussions.

Gay people of color face numerous difficulties in integrating and coming to terms with their two or more minority statuses. They may be visible and open in their ethnic community and invisible in the community of their sexual orientation (Fukuyan & Ferguson, 2000). Each community may have different issues with or discriminate against the other part of their identity. Within each racial or ethnic group, sexuality holds
different values and meanings (Ryan & Futterman, 1998). Thus, adolescents who belong to two minority groups have the potential to experience extreme hardships because of racism and homophobia in society. Recently, solidifying these findings, The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003) illustrated that gay youth of color encounter three constant struggles and oppressions in society. They conclude that gay youth of color, “Face homophobia from their respective racial or ethnic group, racism from within a predominantly white LGBT community, and a combination of the two from society at large” (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003, p.17) No matter which space gay adolescents of color choose to occupy, they may often face the inability to feel comfortable or safe in one space.

Due to the multiple layers of oppression they experience, gay youth may feel the need to choose only one of their minority statuses. The perceived need to choose between ethnicity and sexual orientation becomes a concern for gay adolescents of color (Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999; Chung & Katayama, 1998). The process can become particularly taxing on the gay adolescents of color who are made aware that they may need to deny or hide one of their identities. Many of these youths are less likely than their white counterparts to be involved in gay-related activities (Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999; Rosario, Schrimsha, & Hunter, 2004). Less exposure or experience with gay related activities can create a delay in the formation of a healthy self-concept as a gay person of color.

In one study of 2,335 participants, Grov, Bimbi, Nanin, and Parsons, (2006) found that gay youth of color were considerably less likely to be out to their family members than their white counterparts. This finding is understandable considering the high
statistics of the homelessness of gay youth of color. In a recent finding (http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2012/04/pdf/lgbt_color.pdf) it was shown that gay adolescents make up 40% of the homeless population, and of this population 44% were black and 26% were Hispanic. Gay youth of color maybe very aware of the potential rejection and harassment they may face from their family upon disclosure, forcing them to deny or hide their sexual orientation.

Recent reviews and research have shown that the gay individuals and people of color experience discrimination based both on their race and their sexual orientation (Battle, Cohen, Waren, Fergerson, & Audam, 2002; Diaz, Ayala, Bein, Henne, & Marin, 2001; Dang & Hu, 2005). In the spring and summer of 2000, at nine different Black Gay Pride Festivals in the United States, 2,700 black gay men were surveyed about their experiences regarding being black and gay. Half of the men reported dealing with problems of racism from the white gay community. In this exact same survey, the same individuals revealed having negative experiences at GLBT organizations or events (Battle, Cohen, Waren, Fergerson, & Audam, 2002, p 44). Furthermore, 22% of these individuals reported having negative experiences within predominantly black heterosexual organizations (Battle, Cohen, Waren, Fergerson, & Audam, 2002, p 55). Similar results (Diaz, Ayala, Bein, Henne, & Marin 2001) have been found within the gay and Latino communities. In a study of 912 gay and bisexual Latino men in New York, Miami and Los Angeles, participants revealed pervasive experiences of both homophobia and racism. Within the Latino community 91% reported hearing negative views or opinions about homosexuality, including blatant and subtle messages about the shamefulness and sinfulness of homosexuality. Furthermore, 70% of the Latino
individuals perceived that their sexual orientation would hurt their family of origin. Those that were a part of the gay community reported experiencing racism from the gay community and 62% revealed undergoing objectification in their relationship with white men (Diaz, Ayala, Bein, Henne, & Marin, 2001). Dang and Hu (2005) conducted a survey in New York on the implications of identifying both as an Asian or Pacific Islander and as a gay. Seventy-eight percent reported experiencing racism within the gay and lesbian community and nine out of ten individuals believed that homophobia was an issue in the Asian community. Lastly, men of color who have sex with other men are at a higher potential risk of receiving HIV than their white counterparts (Harawa, et al, 2004). Marin (2003) speculate that the increase in HIV risk in Latino populations is related to increased occurrences of poverty, racism, and marginalization. Furthermore, Black and Hispanic men that sleep with men are less likely to find out if there are positive, creating a stronger potential for late and possible detrimental results (Hall, Byers, Ling, & Espinoza & 2007). Additionally, these findings suggest that the Black and Latino populations lack knowledge about treatment regarding HIV.

As shown in previous sections of this literature review, safety and victimization of gay youth remains an enormous concern in the United States. In the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network’s 2007 National School Climate Survey, the experiences of youth at school who identify both as a gay and as an ethnic minority often experience various levels of harassment regarding their multiple identities (Diaz & Kosciw, 2009). The total sample size consisted of 6,209 gay students with a total of 2,130 of this identifying both as a gay and a person of color. The statistics revealed that, “48% of LGBT students of color reported being verbally harassed in school because of both their
sexual orientation and race/ethnicity, and 15% had been physically harassed based on both of these characteristics” (p.21). These students were also three times more likely to have missed school because they feared for their safety. Experiencing homophobia and racism both at school and in society at large can have harmful effects on gay youth self-esteem and self-concept.

When integration of both sexual and ethnic identity is achieved, it has been shown that healthier levels of functioning exist. In a recent study Crawford, Allison, Zamboni, and Soto (2002) demonstrated Black and gay individuals that were able to incorporate their two identities in their life showed higher levels of self-esteem, greater HIV protection, and higher degrees of satisfaction with life.

**Working with the Gay Adolescent Population**

The research has demonstrated that the gay adolescent population is in dire need of support and assistance in order to combat high risks of depression, suicide, social rejection, and HIV transmission. The research also suggests that the best way to assist gay adolescents is through the use of Vivienne C. Cass’ Homosexuality Formulation Model in conjunction with both Narrative and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and the use of an adolescent support group. Many gay or questioning adolescents may experience low levels of self-esteem or negative views of homosexuality (Hershberger & D’Augelli, 2000). The core goal of the group is to improve self-esteem and self-concept for gay or questioning adolescents.

**Therapy**

The increased risk of suicide, depression, drug usage, homelessness and unsafe sex practices makes the use of therapy a viable option and tool for the gay population.
Researches at University California, Los Angeles collected data in Quality of Life Survey regarding use of therapy, finding that the gay population is almost more likely to seek therapy than their straight counterparts. The study interviewed over 2000 participants with ages ranging from ages 18 to 64. Specifically, finding that 48.5% gay individuals had received mental health services as compared to 22.5% of heterosexuals (Grella, Greenwell, Mays & Cochran, 2009). Furthermore, Cochran, Mays, and Sullivan (2001) found similar results noting that gay, lesbian, and bisexual men and women were likely to use some form of mental health service. The following section will discuss the benefits and implications of using both cognitive behavioral (CBT) and narrative therapy with the gay and questioning adolescent population. Both of these approaches will assist individuals in disputing negative societal messages regarding homosexuality and developing a positive self-concept in spite of these messages.

The founders of cognitive behavioral therapy are Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck. The overarching theme of this theory is to assist clients in identifying and challenging negative and irrational thoughts (Kendall & Braswell, 1993 as cited in Ryan, Blau, & Grozeva, 2011). It focuses on how, “people’s thoughts influence their feelings and behaviors (Balter, 2011). In the mid 1950’s, Albert Ellis’ contribution to cognitive behavioral therapy was Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, which still continues to be one of the major cognitive behavioral approaches. The foundation of this therapy focuses on, “challenging and disputing irrational beliefs” (Ellis, 1962, at cited in Ryan, Blau, & Grozeva, 2011, p 24). It suggests that these irrational beliefs create emotional disturbances and egregious behaviors. These individuals become stuck in this an often detrimental cycle (Wolfe, 2007 as cited in Balter, 2011). It becomes the therapist’s job to
assist clients in recognizing these irrational beliefs, disputing them, and creating ones that are more logically based (Corey, 2009). This theory uses such techniques as “disputing irrational beliefs, doing cognitive homework, role playing, and changing one’s language “(Corey, 2009). Aaron Beck’s development of cognitive therapy model was another major contribution to the field. Similar to Ellis’ theory, Beck’s theory focuses on recognizing and changing both negative thought patterns and the behaviors they create (Corey, 2009). Beck referred to these negative thoughts as schemas, which are core beliefs, that affect how individuals interpret events, feel, act, and conduct themselves. Cognitive therapy theorizes that, “the ways people feel and behave is determined by how they perceive and structure their experience” (Corey, 2009, p287-288). Clients are taught how to recognize these negative thoughts, and weigh the evidence for or against them. Most of Beck’s work focused on working with the depressed client population.

The literature on Cognitive Behavioral therapy is too expansive to cover in its entirety. Below, however, the main interventions, techniques, and applications to the gay community will be discussed. The CBT model proposes that each individual’s thought process is multi-faceted such that it includes automatic thoughts, conditional beliefs, and core beliefs (Hardin, 1999 & White, 2000). Automatic thoughts are those emotional reactions we first have in response to an event or situation. Those that cause problems for individuals in their life are known as negative thoughts. These negative thoughts can be harmful and damaging. The layer right below our automatic thoughts is known as conditional beliefs (J.S. Beck, 1995 as cited in White, 2000 & Hardin, 1999). These conditional beliefs are the values that have been instilled both verbally and non-verbally throughout one’s life. These beliefs frame the ways in which one lives and make sense of
the world. Most often these values come in “if-then statements” (White, 2000) A conditional belief relevant to a gay or questioning adolescent maybe, “If I tell my parents about my sexual orientation they will reject me.” These rules are made clear throughout an individual’s life. The last and final layer is core beliefs, which inform how one perceives oneself. Using the previous example, “being homosexual makes a person inferior to heterosexual people.” While automatic thoughts, conditional beliefs, and core beliefs can all work together in both positive and negative ways, they hold the potential to create significant inner turmoil for gay adolescents.

Some of the most used and well-known cognitive behavioral techniques will be further explained here. Automatic thought records are often used, in which therapists encourage clients to keep track of their daily automatic thoughts (White, 2000; Hardin, 1999). The record prompts the client to note the situation or event, the automatic thought, and the feeling experienced. This assists clients in becoming more consciously aware of their daily thoughts and their impact. Challenging these thoughts, also known as cognitive restructuring, is another commonly used technique, where therapists ask clients to provide evidence for or against this automatic thought (White, 2000; Corey, 2009). Cognitive restructuring also assists individuals in developing more realistic and positive core and conditional beliefs. Role playing exercises are also commonly found in the cognitive behavioral approach (White, 2000; Corey, 2009). Another technique, called exposure therapy, prompts individuals to put themselves in situations that frighten them. Therapists also encourage clients to change their language if it appears it may be causing them psychological harm (Corey, 2009). The purpose of cognitive behavioral therapy is to use these techniques not only within therapy, but also in daily life.
The practice and use of cognitive behavioral therapy is integral for gay adolescents to recognize and dispute core negative irrational beliefs about themselves and their sexual orientation (Safren & Rogers, 2001). Cognitive behavioral therapy helps clients bring these thoughts or cognitions out in the open and develop ways of testing these negative beliefs. Clients are encouraged to look for evidence that support or refutes these cognitions. From a cognitive behavioral perspective, “exposure to negative attitudes about same sex attractions can lead to the development of negative core beliefs about the self” (Safren, Hollander, Hart, & Heimberg, 2001, p. 218). Societal messages play a large part in influencing gay adolescents’ beliefs about themselves and their roles, which can lead to high levels of emotional distress (Gray, 2000). Without conscious realization, many adolescents begin to internalize negative views and it becomes likely that they will develop internalized homophobia (Safren, Hollander, Hart, & Heimberg, 2001; Safren & Rogers, 2001). Additionally, as mentioned in previous sections, the lacking of available positive role models or school or family support makes it extremely difficult for the individual to dispute negative beliefs about their sexuality (Safren, Hollander, Hart, & Heimberg, 2001).

Cognitive behavioral therapy focuses on assisting individuals to develop coping skills, increase positive social support, and increase exposure to healthy and positive events (Safren, Hollander, Hart, & Heimberg, 2001). Two of the most effective CBT techniques are cognitive restructuring and behavioral experiments. With these techniques, counselors or group leaders assist individuals in the development of insight into their automatic thoughts. Behavioral experiments facilitate the client’s ability to either support or refute a given cognition. CBT creates an atmosphere in which clients
become an active participant in their discovery. The intention is that individuals will begin to develop new ways of thinking and take pride in their identity.

Michael White and David Epston described their theoretical orientation, narrative therapy, in their book *Narrative Means to a Therapeutic Ends* (White & Epston, 1990). They derived a significant portion of their theory from philosopher Michel Foucault. Much of Foucault’s writing focused on the power of language and the ways in which certain type of stories become “truths” in society (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). According to Foucault’s writing, those individuals that have power or dominance in society determine what is acceptable and what is not. Foucault terms this, dominant discourse that is those stories that are culturally prescribed values and ideologies about the correct ways to live and behave (Gehart, 2009). These dominant discourses are taken as fact and instilled by the dominant groups without reference to or acknowledgment of minority groups. These taken for granted assumptions create binaries of what is good or correct and what is not. When deviation from the discourse occurs, individuals can experience complications and hardship. In his book, *History of Sexuality*, Foucault writes extensively regarding the dominant discourse’s powerful negative views and its impact on nontraditional sexuality (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). Narrative therapy posits that our experiences and understandings are shaped and maintained through the stories we experience as well as those we tell.

These stories and experiences affect the way we see ourselves and the world around us (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). Narrative therapy theorizes that the language used within these stories is, “used to create and maintain particular versions of reality” (Avdi & Georgaca, 2007, p.409). The ways in which we come to understand our
own experiences is through language (White & Epston, 1990). These stories in essence become our realities and our “truths” (Corey, 2009, p. 387). One’s narratives are further influenced by the more dominant cultures, which have greater power and are able to control the ways in which people construct and understand their own realities (Corey, 2009).

Narrative therapy, a postmodern approach, arose in opposition to the traditional therapies at the time. Narrative therapy focuses on and encourages therapists to listen carefully to their client’s stories and discourages listen only for the presenting problem. The client’s relationship with the therapist is “collaborative,” allowing for greater closeness and not focused on clinical distance. Narrative therapists are discouraged from pathologizing clients and see the client as the “expert” in his or her own life (Goldenberg & Goldenber, 2008).

The main purpose of narrative therapeutic stance is to assist clients in the development of “personal agency,” and separation from the detrimental effects of society’s dominant stories (Corey, 2009). Therapists assist clients in “re-authoring their new stories and changing the ways in which they see themselves, their relationships, and the world (White & Epston, 1990, p82). As explained in earlier sections, heterosexism, that is the belief that gay individuals are lesser than straight individuals, allows for heterosexual dominance and privilege over homosexuality. In working with gay adolescents, the main goal will be to create a space for individuals to separate themselves from the dominant heterosexual discourse and develop their own alternative stories.

The degree to which narrative therapy is effective depends more on the therapist’s attitudes than on linear pathways or formulas. Goals and techniques are used, but
narrative therapy believes if they are used in a linear and distant fashion, they will be ineffective. Narrative therapy begins with asking the client questions about their life, the history of the problem that brought them into therapy, and the ways in which it is currently affecting them. In narrative therapy, a fundamental objective is to externalize the problem by having the individual separate themselves from “problem saturated stories” and create new alternative stories (Corey, 2009; White & Epston, 1990, Freedman & Combs 1996 as cited in Gehart, 2002).

White and Epston suggest that relative influence questions are the key to helping individuals externalize the problem. Relative influence questions are a two-step intervention process. The first step maps the influence of the problem and the second maps the influence of the person. The first step focuses on the therapist and client having a heightened understanding of the impact and effect of the problem on the client and significant others (Gehart, 2009; Corey, 2009). The second portion focuses on how the person has affected the problem. This school of thought suggests that focus on the person enables or keeps the problem alive. Gehart (2009) provides the example of allowing the client to see the ways in which they have allowed the problem to prohibit their enjoyment in life socially and romantically. The next portion of this step involves searching for “unique outcomes,” instances where the problem did not occur or was easier to handle. Unique outcomes were originally based on narrative theorist Jerome Bruner, who looked at not just separating oneself from the dominant narrative, but changing its impact and re-writing a preferred narrative (Gehart, 2009). The therapist helps the client in understanding the steps or reasons that the problem either did not occur in the past or was easier to handle. The therapist will also help the client to understand the steps that he or
she will need to take in the future so that the problem can be dealt with more easily and
with less anxiety. It also asks the client to evaluate the impact of the dominant culture’s
discourse on their problem or outcomes assists the client to continue to separate
themselves from binary cultural views.

Externalization creates a relationship with the problem where the clients do not
see themselves as being the “problem” (Corey, 2009). Gehart writes (2009) that
adjectives such as “depressed” are altered into nouns such as a “depression.” This
change from the adjective being internal to a noun that is external makes the problem
easier to deal with. By separating oneself from the problem, the individual is able to see
the heavy influence of dominant culture on their problem. Individuals are better able to
understand and analyze the problem— and search for times the problem did not occur,
while also constructing and rewriting a new story through their own eyes. This new story
is not told through the lens of the dominant culture. The power and sense of control is
given back to the individual. Here, individuals, “are able to experience a sense of
personal agency, as they break free from their performance of their stories, they
experience a capacity to intervene in their own lives and relationships” (White & Epston,
1990, p.16). The present problem and future problems become easier to manage after
narrative therapy has occurred.

An example of this implication of dominant culture and externalization can be
shown in a recent article from the Huffington Post. Justin Huang, a gay Asian American,
writes about how his life changed for the better when he was able to begin to separate
himself from the dominant culture’s narrative (Huang, 2012). He writes, “Giving him a
name made it easy to separate from him. I gave him a voice on my blog I AM YELLOW
PERIL, and I began to write my stories, my life, my pain.” Justin had experienced years of victimization and self-hate based on his two minority identities. He had begun to see himself as ugly through the direct and indirect messages he had received from society. His sense of agency and power was created when he separated himself from the dominant culture’s detrimental narratives.

For specific use with the gay population, Yarhouse (2008) has created his own form of narrative therapy referred to as Narrative Sexual Identity Therapy. Its main purpose is to help individuals who are experiencing difficulty related to their sexuality. Narrative Sexual Identity Therapy is a six step process that begins with the client, presenting a sexual identity concern. Here, Yardhouse (2008) explains, “recognize the role that socially constricted “scripts” from which clients read” (p.204). This concern or scripts can be related to religious, cultural, or family beliefs that somehow make the individual feel that their sexual feelings and attractions are wrong. An individual’s perception of society’s views of homosexuality has a powerful impact on that person’s self-image. The next step, mapping the dominant narrative, involves exploring the impacts, origins, and implications of dominant discourse on individuals’ perception of sexuality. A question that may be asked to assist in this process is, What were some of the messages you received growing up about identifying as gay? The next stage, recognizing preferred metaphors, focuses upon two different metaphors, discovery and integration. The first, discovery, is when individuals are able to uncover and recognize their sexual attractions, and “affirm a positive GLB identity.” Contrary to this, integration is where individuals are facing difficulty with acceptance of their gay identity. Some here may be unable to incorporate their gay identity into their already established
identity. Yardhouse (2008) suggests that clients may come to recognize how this difficulty is influenced by their culture’s powerful and dominant narrative. The next stage, recognize exceptions to dominant narratives, parallels some of the implications and effectiveness of White and Epston’s unique outcomes. Furthermore, the understanding of dominant narratives’ impact facilitates the individual’s development of a more productive counter narrative. The next stage, highlight sexual identity-congruent attributions, involves the therapists continued encouragement and support of the counter-narrative. The therapist might ask the client a question like “In what ways would you like to challenge some of the messages you’ve received about your sexual identity?” (Yarhouse, 2008, p. 207). These negative automatic thoughts about sexuality will be challenged and the client will continue to be supported in the preferred narrative. The therapist also continues to highlight the many steps the client has taken and their impact. It is also recommended that clients attend support groups that further support their gay identity. In the final stage, resolution/congruence, clients are asked about how they will continue to incorporate and solidify their preferred narrative.

Cognitive behavioral and narrative therapy work together smoothly in the adolescent self-esteem group guidebook. Both therapeutic stances help individuals question and understand the origins of their underlying assumptions. Looking at the complexities and implications of language, while also looking for the evidence of such beliefs and truths. Many preconceived notions about others and ourselves are unconscious and continually reinforced by society. Both theories strive to assist individuals in discovering, challenging, and changing their negative thoughts. Both, are proponents of separating individuals from the problem, allowing for a reduction of self-
defeating thoughts, focusing on the use of language, and developing a positive self-concept. Techniques and interventions from both therapies will be applied to the group described below.

Support Group for Adolescents

As gay or questioning adolescents become more aware of their non-heterosexual orientation they may self-isolate out of shame and fear (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). The group model can be extremely valuable for gay adolescents in facilitating peer emotional support (Lemoire & Chen, 2005). Furthermore, Lemoire and Chen (2005) conclude that this type of group provides the most effective means of developing self-acceptance for gay adolescents. Group therapy using both a cognitive therapy and narrative therapy lens can be extremely beneficial in working with gay adolescents. Adolescents often lack adult and peer role models while going through this developmental transition. Through group therapy, minority populations such as the gay community tend to experience a marked increase in their ability to identify and express feelings about their minority status when surrounded by similar individuals. It becomes a space for gay individuals to discuss issues unique to their identity such as coming out and homophobia (DeBord, & Perez, 2000). The feeling of commonality among group members is a powerful tool. It becomes a space to discuss commonalities of familial and societal rejection based on same sex orientation.

In addition to both narrative and cognitive behavioral therapy this adolescent self-esteem group, aspects of both group therapy and Yalom’s therapeutic factors will be applied. Yalom’s therapeutic factor, “Instillation of Hope,” is an influential tool in a gay adolescent support group (Yalom, 2005). It is here that adolescents can begin to have
some form of hope and increased degrees of acceptance by seeing banners about such a group that exists in their school. This helps to foster a feeling of belonging before the group even begins. This has the possibility of alleviating stress for gay adolescents that have become stuck in Vivienne Cass’ stage one or two of identity development (DeBord, K., & Perez, R., 2000). Additionally, different members may be at different stages of Cass’ model. Observing more experienced members can give younger members hope that there are possibilities for coping and navigating through minority status and homophobic society. Yalom’s concept of therapeutic “universality” is seen when members begin to feel that they are not alone in their struggle for identity acceptance (Yalom, 2005). Universality helps to combat feelings of isolation and fears of hopelessness. Although universality is an important therapeutic factor, it is imperative that group members and leaders acknowledge individual differences with regards to “race, culture, gender, and age” (DeBord, & Perez, 2000). Non-Caucasian adolescents may have different experiences and hurdles with both self-esteem and coming out due to double minority status. Lack of information about gay culture, events, and positive role models leads gay adolescents to increased feelings of isolation and aloneness. Through Yalom’s therapeutic factor, “Imparting Information,” adolescents are able to learn about gay history, events, and ways that older individuals have successfully navigated through the coming out process (Yalom, 2005). These older individuals serve as role models for younger individuals. Yalom’s, “Development of Socializing Techniques,” and “Imitative Behavior,” both use cognitive behavioral techniques to help members develop new ways of solving present problems and trying new behaviors in and outside of group (DeBord, & Perez, 2000; Yalom, 2005). In group, members are able to practice coming
out to friends and family with other members before doing it outside of group. The
communication skills required for this process can be learned from members that have
already come out to friends and family.

Through the use of an adolescent support group with the combination of both
cognitive behavioral therapy and narrative therapy adolescents will be aided in the
development of a positive self-concept.

Summary and Relation to the Proposed Project

This chapter reviewed the literature regarding the experiences of gay and
questioning adolescents, as well as a proposed support group for these adolescents using
specific counseling theories. The literature review concludes that gay and questioning
adolescents experience a multitude of stressors related to belonging to a sexual minority
group. The review provides a plethora of examples and quantifiable research regarding
the hardships and barriers that many of these adolescents experience in and out of school.
The literature review concludes by providing the reader with counseling theories and
interventions geared toward working with the gay and adolescent population. The
purpose of this project is to create a group using these theories and interventions in the
hopes of raising adolescent self-esteem and self-concept. Group activities are interactive
and are meant to be both a learning experience and a fun experience. It is the goal of the
author that adolescents look forward to group, both for the events and the potential of
making new friends.
CHAPTER III

PROJECT AUDIENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION FACTORS

Introduction

Adolescents who identify as gay or are questioning their sexuality are at greater risk of suicide, depression, substance abuse, HIV, and low levels of self-esteem. Additionally, for gay and questioning adolescents school becomes another place in which they live in fear, as they experience increased rates of bullying, victimization, and harassment. It is almost impossible for the American public to not be aware of the suicide epidemic facing gay and questioning adolescents. During 2010 alone, Billy Lucas, Cody J. Barker, Seth Walsh, Tyler Clementi, Asher Brown, Harrison Browns, Raymond Chase, Felix Sacco, Caleb Nolt, and Bill Lucas all were reported to have committed suicide because of the constant bullying and harassment experienced at school for being gay (Badash, 2010). This purpose of this project is to create a guidebook for a group geared at increasing self-esteem for questioning and gay adolescents in order to combat against high rates of suicide. The following sections will explain in detail the development of the project, the intended audience, the personal qualifications of the author, and the environment and equipment necessary to facilitate the group process. The last section will provide a brief outline of the final guidebook.

Development of Project

In many ways, I feel as if the idea of this project arose many years ago when I was in high school and personally witnessed and experienced the negative repercussions for being gay. Although I was not openly out until the final months of high school, shame and embarrassment regarding my sexuality weighed me down for many years.
Like many of the gay and questioning adolescents that this project is geared towards helping, I too contemplated taking my own life. I feel as if the need for this project became apparent when I saw the recent stories about the countless gay and questioning adolescents that have decided end their lives because of their experiences of incessant bullying and harassment. During this past year as I was developing this project, two particular YouTube videos stood out to me and continued to make me aware of why groups such this are both necessary and vital. The first was entitled Anti-Gay Bullying (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUOBNoPjJZU) which depicted pictures of some of the recent adolescent gay suicides and the disturbing means by which they decided to end their lives, including shooting oneself, jumping off a bridge, and hanging oneself. The second video was a personal account of Jonah Mowry, (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdkNn3Ei-Lg) a young adolescent who shows, through the use of note cards and his tears, the feelings of hopelessness and the daily struggles of being a victim of bullying. Jonah explains that he contemplates suicide and cuts himself as a means of relieving the pain he experiences. These gay adolescents felt so depressed, trapped, and alone that they contemplated ending their lives or did take their own lives.

I spoke with many of my out gay friends about their experiences in high school, and almost every single individual recalled some form of bullying or harassment. At the time, some of these individuals were too ashamed of their same-sex attractions to report their experiences to school faculty members or their family. Adolescence should be a period of growing, learning, changing, understanding, and slowly becoming oneself. Adolescence should not be a time where teenagers contemplate ending their life or using
drugs in order to cope with the insurmountable pain as a result of bullying and harassment.

The purpose of this project is to create a guidebook geared toward adolescents who either identify as gay or are questioning their sexuality with the goal of increasing self-esteem and a positive self-concept. This project also aims to reach both those adolescents who have thought about ending their lives as well as those that have not. The guidebook created for this project is to provide a space in which these adolescents feel safe and are able to be open and vulnerable without fear of harassment. The twelve group sessions outlined in the guidebook have a structured format with extensive time devoted to group process. The proposed group continually strives for a high level of group members’ involvement and participation in the process.

**Intended Audience**

The proposed project is intended for use with the adolescent gay or questioning population to be used in a group setting in either a school or at a resource center. Implementation of the group requires a safe and confidential environment both for group members and the group leader. It is the intention of the author that the group leader acquires the guidebook online or in the mail, print a copy, and read it thoroughly before using it with group members. Group members will be allowed to join the group during the first or second sessions, but after that the group will function as a closed group until the end of the twelfth session.

**Personal Qualifications**

The individual that will lead the group does not need to be a licensed therapist or psychologist. The group leader can be any adult, a teacher, a school counselor, or a
resource center volunteer. The group guidebook can be used by anyone that is interested in implementing this intervention in a school. The only requirement is that this individual either identifies as an ally or a gay individual themselves. The leader implementing this group needs to be fully invested in the purpose of the group and have group members’ best interests at heart.

**Environment and Equipment**

The distribution of this resource requires a computer, internet, and a printer. This resource can either be delivered in the mail or sent through the internet to anyone that is interested. The environment can range from a school to a resource center, but must be safe and confidential. A public outdoor setting or a room where people can enter at any time is not appropriate. There should be a locked closet in order for members to feel comfortable leaving their journals and other personal information in the room.

**Formative Evaluation**

This group guidebook would not have been produced without the help and assistance of many reliable and influential individuals. Feedback and guidance was provided by my committee chair, Dana Stone, my committee member, Eric Lyden, my committee member and intern supervisor, Melissa Burroughs, my peers, and my friends.

**Project Outline**

Based on the undeniable amount of evidence regarding the effects of bullying and harassment on gay and questioning adolescents’ experience, a guidebook for creating a group to build self-esteem has been created. The guidebook consists of outlines for twelve closed and confidential group process sessions with gay and questioning adolescents. The group will assist gay and questioning adolescents in understanding the
detrimental effects of a homophobic and heteronormative society. The group process is intended to help gay and questioning adolescents recognize the personal impact of these societal dynamics and to create a self-concept not based on society’s views of homosexuality. All materials necessary for the curriculum are provided in the guidebook. Multiple examples and suggestions are provided for each session. The goals of each session are as follows:

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<td>Session 11</td>
<td>Arts, Crafts, and My Future</td>
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<td>Session 12</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
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</tbody>
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CHAPTER IV
Summary of Project

The purpose of this project is to provide a guidebook for a support group geared towards increasing the self-esteem, self-worth, and positive self-concept of adolescents who either identify as gay or are questioning their sexuality. Recently, adolescent bullying and victimization based on perceived sexual or gender orientation has become a crucial issue that cannot be ignored. Mainstream society’s homophobic beliefs have been connected to increased rates of suicide or suicidal ideation, increased homelessness, increased drug usage, depression, and low self-esteem. A group such as this is a vital resource for addressing the multitude of stressors and barriers that gay and questioning adolescents experience.

This project is divided into five main sections, which include four chapters and concludes with the product, a group and process guidebook. Chapter one gives the reader a quick and detailed snapshot of the experiences of gay and questioning adolescents. It provides statistics and examples as to why gay and questioning adolescents are considered an “at risk” group and why a supportive group environment geared towards these adolescents is necessary. Chapter two provides the reader with a detailed literature review that explores the negative ramifications of a homophobic mainstream society on gay and questioning adolescents. First the literature review focuses on adolescent development, the stages of sexual identity development, and the implications of a heteronormative society. Second, the review provides quantifiable evidence as to why the gay and questioning population is considered an at risk group. Third, it explores the effect of both rejection and acceptance of sexual orientation, the lack of positive role
models, and the experiences of belonging to more than one minority group. Finally, review of the literature concludes with the suggestion of a support group for gay and questioning adolescents using both cognitive behavioral and narrative therapy. The main goal of the support group would be to increase gay and questioning adolescent self-esteem and self-concept in spite of societal barriers.

Chapter three reintroduces the reader to the need for the project, as well as development and distribution procedures. It discusses such elements as intended audience, qualifications of the program facilitator, ideal environmental conditions, equipment that maybe needed, and an outline of the group. Chapter four gives a brief summary of from the previous chapters and discusses the positive impacts of the group plus possible limitations and recommendations. The project concludes with a completed group guidebook consisting of the outlines for twelve consecutive closed and confidential group process sessions. The overarching goal of the group is to create a space that provides gay and questioning adolescents with the opportunity to increase self-esteem and self-concept.

**Recommendations for Implementation**

It is recommended that anyone facilitating the group identify as either gay or an ally. No certification is required of the group leader, making it easily accessible to anyone interested in running it. The guidebook is intended for use by group facilitators in a community setting such as a school or a resource center in which the group can be confidential and the participants can feel safe. The group leader need not use all of the suggested material and it is up to their discretion to determine which activities will be most useful for their particular group. For schools that also have Gay Straight Alliances,
the group can function as a supplement to it. This group focuses more on interpersonal process, whereas GSA’s focus more on activism and student involvement. Both groups should work together and coordinate, but people that are involved in one group should not be required to be in the other. Involvement in both groups will be beneficial for students. It is recommended that the group is advertised on school walls and newspapers as well as in classes. It is also recommended that the group leader discuss the group with teachers, counselors, and principals so they can refer students whom they deem to be “at risk”.

Recommendations for Future Research

While doing research for this project, I was often dismayed by the lack of relevant research and quantifiable statistics on the gay and questioning adolescent population. The gay and questioning adolescent population is often a group that goes ignored, has not been well-researched in the last ten years, and is often misunderstood or dismissed. Most of the research that I was able to find related to gay and questioning youth was conducted during the 1990’s, making it difficult to apply it to current issues. It was also very difficult to find research specifically based on adolescent experiences. Furthermore, there is also a lack of recent research based on the experiences and impact of belonging to more than one minority group.

This project is almost exclusively focused on gay and lesbian identity and experiences. It never mentions transgender adolescents or the queer identity, and rarely focuses on bisexual experiences. This project might benefit from incorporating these often ignored populations. While this group does not target transgender, queer, or bisexual identifying youth populations, it may still be able to provide them with an
increase in self-esteem and concept. However, the group would benefit from activities that are specifically geared toward transgender, queer, or bisexual identity experiences.

I would love to eventually investigate the impact and effectiveness of this group as compared to a similar group that does not use the guidebook. In order to do this, I would administer written and verbal surveys in order to assess the group’s impact on adolescent experiences and changes in self-esteem levels. I have plans to test the group out in a few Gay Straight Alliances in Los Angeles County that have shown interest. If the group were found to be effective, I would make the guidebook for group facilitation available for free to anyone that was interested in running it. Ideally, it would be used along with a Gay Straight Alliance or in a resource-center-like atmosphere. Should I further my education, my hope is to continue to research this topic and to collect quantifiable and substantial data.

**Conclusion**

The idea of a gay and questioning adolescent group came about in light of the media’s coverage of teen suicides over the past few years. There have been countless news articles about gay and questioning adolescents all over the United States who have killed themselves after countless experiences with bullying and harassment. I was reminded of my own experiences growing up and the consequent thoughts of suicide that I also had. These stories brought to light numerous memories that I thought I had suppressed. Through an assignment in my group counseling class, I realized that the population that I wanted to focus my clinical work towards and felt most passionate about was gay and questioning adolescents. This past year, I feel as though I have lived and breathed this topic, through months of research, multiple drafts, and countless trial and error group ideas.
With this paper I strived to encompass a wide range of topics and themes that relate to the high rates of suicide for gay and questioning adolescents in this country. However, e this research is certainly not exhaustive. This goal for this group guidebook is to enable adolescents to safely question their views on sexuality, separate themselves from society’s homophobic stance, and develop their own views of their sexuality. The group process attempts to provide adolescents with a confidential and safe atmosphere where they are able to improve their self-esteem and self-concept. All of these ideal outcomes and conditions were sorely lacking when my peers/friend and I were going through adolescence. I hope that one day this guidebook is will be used in the school setting. I hope one day that gay or questioning adolescents will begin to embrace their sexuality rather than internalizing messages of shame because of the activities and involvement from group and not experience internalized shame. If one person opts to live, rather than succumbing to suicidal thoughts, and begins to love themselves through participation in the group process, this project will have been more than worth the effort. A group like this can be vital for any gay or questioning adolescent. I feel a great sense of pride and hope as I complete this project, and I look forward to seeing it provide support and inspiration to gay and questioning youth for years to come.
References


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RELINQUISHING & RECLAIMING: A GAY AND QUESTIONING ADOLESCENT GROUP GUIDEBOOK

By: Julia Schwab
GOALS

• Create a safe and welcoming environment.
• Build rapport and get to know one another better.
• Discuss confidentiality, administer the self-report questionnaire, go over rules, purpose, and goals of the group.

SET UP

• Before group members arrive, the group leader will set the room up with the attached "Famous Gay Activists" templates. A few examples are provided, but it is up to the group leader to decide which are relevant or would like to add to it. The goal is for members to begin to identify with people around them and not feel as alone.

HAND OUT TO MEMBERS

• As members walk in the door the group leader will hand out the self-report questionnaire, group rules, group purpose, terminology, and a journal.

SOMETHING FOR THE GROUP LEADER TO REMEMBER

• During this session it is important to be aware that new members may be nervous and fearful about a variety of things that could potentially come up. Such things as, “Who in this group will tell others that I was here,” “Does this mean that I am gay.” During the first session it is imperative that the leader create a welcoming and safe environment for all the members.
Welcome to the Gay and Questioning self-esteem group! Today, we will go over all of the forms and hand out journals. First, I would like everyone to take out their name card and write their “preferred name,” and gender pronoun on this. For example, I would write (Name) and under that I would write “She/Her.” Your preferred name and gender pronoun does not have to be the name that you are called at school or home.

The group leader will inform the members that once they have completed their name cards, the next step will be to answer all the questions on the Self-Report questionnaire truthfully. The group leader will stress that the questionnaire will not be shown to anyone outside of the room. The idea behind the questionnaire is to get an idea of how members are doing in school and outside of school. Collect all questionnaires once completed.

The group leader will go around the room and have members introduce themselves, their preferred gender pronoun, and a superhero power that they would like to have.
The group leader will pass out one journal to every member. Before group members write anything down in their journal it is important the leader stress that all journals will be locked away in the classroom. Group members will not need to worry about other people at school or home reading their journals. Have each group member write down the group affirmation that is on the board on the first page in their journal. Under the group affirmation they should write their own personal positive affirmation and under that they should write one goal they have for themselves.

The leader will ask the group if anyone is interested in sharing what they wrote down. It is advised that no one should be pressured into sharing.
Example:
Who would like to collect the journals and put them back in the locked closet? Thank you. Remember everyone that our next meeting will be on (date) and please be on time so that we can make the most of it. Lastly, I want to thank all of you for coming to the first meeting. I know it can be frightening, but I am really looking forward to getting to know you and you getting to know one another. If there are no questions, I'll see you next week.
GOALS

• Gain insight into our preconceived assumptions about what being gay means and looks like.
• Build rapport and get to know one another better.
• Create a safe and welcoming environment.

SET UP

• Before group members arrive, the group leader will set the room up with the attached “Famous Gay Activists” templates and write the group’s positive affirmation on the board.
• The group leader will write the following categories on the board with plenty of room in between: Homosexual, Gay, Lesbian, Transgender, and Bisexual

HAND OUT TO MEMBERS

• As members walk in the door hand them their name cards from the previous session.

MATERIALS

• Markers or chalk

HOW TO END SESSION #2

• “Have a wonderful rest of your day and thank you for being so open. I hope each of you is able to see that you are not alone. I look forward to seeing you next week.”
SESSION #2: LANGUAGE & MEANING

2 TRUTHS, 1 LIE EXAMPLE
We are going to play 2 truths and 1 lie. For this we go around the room and each group member says three things about themselves. Two true and one lie. It is up to the rest of the group to figure out which one is the lie. For example, if I say I have two cats, my favorite color is orange, and I love to cook. Once members guessed that the lie is that I have two cats we go on to the next members. Let’s start with...

EXAMPLE:
Everyone I have written a few different words on the board. I want each of you to go up and write down a word or thought that comes to mind under each of the categories. I do not want you to feel that you need to censor yourself. These thoughts that come to mind can be both positive and negative and that is okay.
Once all members have sat down, the group leader will encourage all members to take a few moments to look at the board. Next, the group leader will write down the words “Negative” and “Positive” on opposite sides of the board. The leader will assist members in categorizing the words on the board into negative and positive categories. This portion of the activity is meant to be interactive.

What to Say:
Now that every member has had a chance to participate and we have categorized our words, how do you feel? I will go around the room, and in a word or short phrase can you tell me how you now feel? If someone has a similar experience to what you experienced please share. It can be really helpful to know that others are experiencing the same feelings and maybe we will feel less alone.

A) What being gay means to the group leader:
I feel that although I know there can be many obstacles in identifying as gay, being gay is beautiful, different, unique, and similar in so many ways. Being gay should never be seen as shameful or morally wrong.

B) Ask members a final question
As we pack up to leave to the next period, I want everyone to think about where some of these feelings or opinions that were written all over the board came from?
**SESSION #3: WHAT I SEE AND WHAT YOU SEE**

**GOALS**
- Gain insight into the affects of a homophobic society
- Build rapport and get to know one another better.
- Create a safe and welcoming environment.

**SET UP**
- Before group members arrive, the group leader will set the room up with the attached "Famous Gay Activists" templates and write the group's positive affirmation on the board.

**HAND OUT TO MEMBERS**
- As members walk in the door hand them their name cards from the previous session.

**MATERIALS**
- Markers or chalk
- All video links for this session will be written in the supplemental section at the end of the guidebook.
As members are participating in the icebreaker, the group leader will write the following categories on the board:

Family  Media  Friends  School  Society

The group leader will have members stand up and sit next to someone that they do not know. Have them introduce themselves and tell this new person one interesting fact about themselves. This activity should take no more than five minutes.

The goal is to help adolescents gain some insight into where their views of homosexuality have come from? Who and what has expressed both negative and positive views. What does each of these categories say about being gay? I want each of you to grab a marker and write a word or phrase under each category. When you’re done, you can go back to your seat.
This next step is extremely important. Here, members will interact with one another and gather an understanding that these categories’ view of homosexuality affects their self-esteem and concept. The exercise will take place in two parts.

A) The group leader will assist members in understanding where their preconceived views of homosexuality and themselves have stemmed from.

B) The group leader will assist members providing a contradictory instance in which homosexuality was not seen or experienced in a negative light.

What to Say:

How do you think society’s (media, school, family, etc) views of homosexuality affect you?

And/or

What types of affects do their views or opinions have on how you see yourself?

It is important here to help members realize that many of their realizations and views are common throughout the group. It is the group leader’s job to facilitate this discovery. For example

Example 1) If an individual says something like I didn’t realize how many times I hear the word “faggot” at school. The group leader might say something like, “Is there anyone else here that agrees and or has a similar experience?

Example 2) If the leader starts to hear a few members discuss similar experiences or opinions, the leader can say something like, I’m wondering if members are noticing similarities in each of your experiences. Does anything come up for you as I say that?
What to Say:

Now let’s look on the board at some of the negative or not so great things these categories have to say about homosexuality. Are there ever instances that you could prove these wrong? For example:
Have you ever seen a gay man that was not effeminate?
Have you ever seen a lesbian that did not have short hair?
Are there any media stars that identify as gay or lesbian that you would say lead a happy and successful life?

The group leader may use additional questions.

The group leader can choose to either show a few video clips or have the group read an article. A few examples of video clips will be provided in the supplemental section at the end of the guidebook. It is advised that it focus on gay youth’s experiences, struggles, and their ability to overcome these.

The ending of session #3 will take place in three parts.
A) The group leader will ask members what stood out to them as noteworthy or significant from the activity.
B) The group leader will focus on members’ new ability to open up and share personal information with one another.
C) The group leader will highlight the positive impact of having a group that provides safety and comfort.

An example of these steps will be shown below.
A) WHAT STOOD OUT?

Example:
I am aware that this activity involved a lot of thought and could be emotionally draining for some. The purpose was never to bash any of these categories on the board, but to help you to separate yourself from these views and begin to form your own opinion. I am wondering one last food for thought. Was there anything during these couple of activities that really stuck out to you and you would like to share with the group? Or any types of insight that you gathered from today’s session?

B) Focus on openness

What to Say:
How many of you guys shared something that you had no intention of talking about before you walked in here? (Just a simple raising of the hand) How many of you guys felt safe in sharing those things? (Just a simple raising of the hand)

Now take a moment to think about today, what made you feel comfortable in sharing today? (Give students about 30 seconds)

Now please turn to the person next to you and share your thoughts. (Give about 30 seconds for sharing)

(Once conversation has died down) Would anyone like to volunteer what they talked about with their partner? (Allow for students to raise their hands and volunteer their responses. Make sure to steer the discussion to recognizing the feeling of safety created within the group)
Closing Example:

C) I’d like everyone to keep in mind that we all have something in common. That is the idea that we want to create a safe environment in which we can express ourselves. Keep that in mind when you come in here next week. See you next week.
SESSION #4: MULTIPLE LAYERS OF IDENTITY

GOALS

• Assist group members to increase their ability to incorporate multiple identities
• Build rapport and get to know one another better.

SET UP

• Before group members arrive, the group leader will set the room up with the attached "Famous Gay Activists" templates and write the group's positive affirmation on the board.
• A jewelry box with various accessories (ex: earrings, toys, bracelets, hats, etc) will be placed in the center of the room.

HAND OUT TO MEMBERS

• As members walk in the door hand them "My Identity" worksheet which is located at the end of this guidebook

HOW TO END SESSION #4

• If there are not any questions or comments, I’d like to wrap up today’s session. Thanks everyone for being such active participants. I hope each of you is enjoying group and that we continue to get even closer. Have a wonderful rest of your day.
The group leader will go over to the accessory box and pick out five different pieces. The items do not need to correlate to the identity. For instance, if one of the leader’s identities is a teacher, she does not have to have an apple or a notebook as an item. The group leader will put on each of the items that he/she was assigned. He/She will describe each of the pieces and which part of his/her identity each represents. When this is done he/she will put all of the items back in the box.

SESSION #4: IDENTITY LAYERS

The group leader will ask group members to identify the group leader’s multiple identities. For example:

Today we are going to try something different. First all of you are going to help me demonstrate today’s activity.

First I want you to tell me five different identities of what you see when you look at me? For instance, someone could say woman as one of my identities. I’ll write them on the board.
The group leader will have members answer the questions on the "My Identity" worksheet. After this is done the group leader will have members walk over to the accessory box and pick five items to represent their different identities.

The next three steps are extremely important. The focus is on each member’s process and their ability to carry multiple identities.

A) The group leader will ask for volunteers to talk about what they are wearing and how it represents each of their identities.

B) The group leader will ask the entire group about their ability to carry multiple identities.

C) The group leader assists members to recognize their ability to carry multiple forms of identity. Additionally helps members recognizes that they are able to wear multiple pieces. The Goal: Our different identities are able to co-exist and help make us who we are.
Example:

Everyone looks great! Who would like to talk about what they are wearing and how it represents their identities. An example of questions the leader would ask someone that has volunteered to talk about their five pieces:

What part of your identity does each piece represent? Are there any particular reasons why some identities have bigger or flashier pieces? What’s your experience in wearing all five pieces of your identity?

To the group example:

Does anyone have anything that triggered them about wearing all five identities at once?
Did anything stand out to you in the ways in which you incorporated those different identities?
As we end today’s session I think it’s important to look at how we were able to incorporate multiple identities into who we are. Although some identities may have more significance in our lives, it is important that we realize we do not need to choose one over another. For instance, let’s think about someone who is a woman, an African American, and gay. Although it may be difficult at times, she is able to wear and allow her identities to co-exist together. Just like the way all of you allowed your top five identities to co-exist together.
SESSION #5: GAY HISTORY LESSON

GOALS
- Learn about famous gay individuals and events in history.
- Learn about the history of gay culture

SET UP
- Before group members arrive, the group leader will set the room up with the attached “Famous Gay Activists” templates and write the group’s positive affirmation on the board.
- Before the meeting the group leader will set up the “Gay History” stations. Three examples will be provided in the supplemental section at the end of this guidebook. Have the information faced down at each station and only a short blurb visible.

HOW TO END SESSION #5
- If there are not any questions or comments I’d like to wrap up today’s session. Thanks everyone for being such active participants. I hope today’s activity gave you some knowledge and history of the gay community. I hope each of you is enjoying group and that we continue to get even closer. Have a wonderful rest of your day.
The group leader will instruct members to make their way around the room visiting different stations.

An example of how to get this process started is listed below:

I thought the best way to talk about the gay movement and famous gay activists is to get each and every one of you involved in an activity. As you can see I have a variety of stations set up around the classroom. Each station represents either a gay activist or an important event in gay history. The only part that you will be able to see will be a short blurb about the individual or event. No picture will be provided. I want each of you to go around to each station and read the short blurb. Once you have gone to each station decide which one you would like to stand at and learn more about. No more than 4 people per a station.
Once every member is at a station, the group leader will instruct each station to turn over the faced down papers and begin to read about the activist or event. For example:

_I’d like each of you to turn over the packets that are faced down at each station. Here you will find information about the person or event that you have chosen. I want each group to read over the information provided, pick out what piece really stuck out for you and synthesize it. I will give you (minutes) to do this and I want each station to talk about the person or event to the entire group for 5 to 10 minutes. This way even if we are not at that particular station we are able to still learn something about._

After all groups have presented the group leader will assist members in discussing the positive impacts of these gay activists and events. An example of how to do this is shown below:

**What to Say:**
- It is important to point out similarities in group members experiences.
- Why is it important for us to know about them?
- How does knowing their struggles impact us today?
- If you could describe your experience in either your own station or hearing about others, how would you describe it?
  - What makes them different than you?
  - What makes them similar to each of you?
  - Did you learn something new today?
- Is there any piece of today that you feel you will carry with you after the group?
- Could you accomplish similar ideas?
SESSION #6: CONSEQUENCES OF A HOMOPHOBIC SOCIETY

GOALS

- Assist group members to look at the affects of a heteronormative society
- Have members argue against some of the detrimental effects of a homophobic society

MATERIALS

- Index cards

SET UP

- Before group members arrive, the group leader will set the room up with the attached “Famous Gay Activists” templates and write the group’s positive affirmation on the board.
- Before the meeting the group leader will set up the empty chair category exercise. Anywhere from 3 to 6 chairs will be used each representing a different category. The group leader will write the following categories, one on each chair: Society, Family, Friends, Media, Religion, Culture, and School.

HOW TO END SESSION #6

- If there are not any questions or comments I’d like to wrap up today’s session. Thanks everyone for being such active participants. I hope each of you is enjoying group and that we continue to get even closer. Have a wonderful rest of your day.
Once the drawing is done, the group leader will take a few moments to discuss it with the group. Most likely the drawing will not be something that is attractive.

The group leader will engage members in a quick discussion about the “ugly” image that was drawn that depicts homophobia.

The group leader will ask members to say out loud some of the positive aspects about being gay. As members say these out loud, the group leader will write them on the board. The hope is that by this time in the group process, members are able to see their possible sexual minority status in a more positive light.
The next three steps are extremely important. Members will be able to understand that many of their negative preconceived notions about being gay are received unconsciously from such things as society, culture, school, friends, etc. Members will also be able to “argue against” many of these notions, which will help to increase their feelings about their sexuality. In the example below the category society will be shown.

A) The group leader will have members write down what each category (ex: society) says about being gay.

B) The group leader will have members write down each word or phrase on the board on an index cards that were provided. Members will place the index cards on the designated category chair. For example, all the words that were said to describe society will be placed on the “society” chair.

C) The group leader will assist members in “arguing against” these negative views by providing a counter example. After each member argues against these, the member will be instructed to rip the card up and throw it out.
The group leader will ask members to write down the words or phrases that were used in step A to describe society’s view of homosexuality on an index card. After this is done all index cards describing this will be placed and tapped on the chair designated “society.”

The group leader will do a demonstration and then encourage all members to participate.

Who would like to say a rebuttal against one of the index cards on the chair? Here is an example of what it could look like. Take this card that says, “AIDS/HIV is a gay disease.” I would pull this card and say, “I know as much as society wants me to think like this, it is not true. Anyone can get HIV/AIDS. Race, gender, and sexual orientation are not a factor. I know for a fact that HIV is not a gay disease and I refuse to let society tell me that! Now if you want, you can rip the card and throw it in the trash. I want each of you to begin to form your own opinions about homosexuality and not allow these multiple categories to control you.
After the group leader has demonstrated the activity, he/she will ask for volunteers to participate. It is recommended that every member participate at least once. It is suggested that at least three empty chair category activities are done during the session. When this is completed, the group leader assists members to recognize their internal ability and strength to combat against homophobia. An example of this will be shown below.

**What to Say:**

*As we end today’s session I think it’s important to look at how we were able to engage in an activity that was difficult, but yet rewarding. I really watched how each of you were affected when we looked at how negatively at times these categories can see homosexuality. We looked at how these reactions unfortunately also affect how we see ourselves. Most importantly we argued and opposed these views. We let them know that we’re not going to take it. We made a stand against it and we threw out their views. We need to begin to love ourselves for who we are.*

End session #6
GOALS

- Facilitate discussion of stages of sexual identity development.
- Have members participate in an interactive activity about the stages of sexual identity development.

SET UP

- Before group members arrive, the group leader will set the room up with the attached “Famous Gay Activists“ templates and write the group’s positive affirmation on the board.
- Before the meeting the group leader will set up six separate stations each designating a stage of sexual identity development. What to put down at each station will be provided in the supplemental section at the end of this guidebook.

AS MEMBERS WALK IN

- As members walk in the door, the group leader will assign them a number one through six and then have each student join their respective number station.

HOW TO END SESSION #7

- If there are not any questions or comments I’d like to wrap up today’s session. Thanks everyone for being such active participants. I hope each of you is enjoying group and that we continue to get even closer. Have a wonderful rest of your day.
SESSION #7: UNDERSTANDING THE STAGES OF SEXUAL IDENTITY

After all the groups have read the information at their station the group leader will explain the exercise: Now that every group has read their card, I want each group to brainstorm and decide how your group will act out their card. Each card depicts a certain experience and it is entirely up to the group how they will show the experience. However, every member needs to be involved. I will give you ten total minutes to practice and then we will begin to act out each card. Skit should be 5 minutes.

ALL GROUPS MUST PARTICIPATE! I know that not all of us are famous actors or actresses, but just give it a try. No need for perfection, have fun with it and try to act out the card you were given. I do not want you to tell any other group what your cards says. I simply want you to act it out in your skit. Okay which group wants to go first?
After all six groups have completed their skits, the group leader will write the Six Stages of Sexual Identity Development by Vivienne Cass on the board (examples are located in the supplemental section). After all stages are written on the board, the group leader will ask each group which stage they feel they acted out. An example of this is listed below:

*Each of you just acted out one of the six stages of sexual identity development. This is also very similar to the stages of coming out. Very often done so in coming out to oneself and coming out to others. After each of you has read all the stages I want your group to decide which stage you think you acted out. Once you have done so walk over to that stage.*

**What to Say:**
- Ask each station/stage about their experience during the activity and have them write down some of their answers on the board under their stage.
- *Okay stage (2) what was it like when you were acting out that experience?*
- *Did anyone relate to that experience or know someone that relates to it?*
- *What do you think about the life someone that leads that is in that stage?*
- *In three to five words could you describe some of the feelings or thoughts you felt when participating in the skit?*
After members have participated, the group leader will ask members to sit back down at their desks. The focus is to talk about possible resources or tools that members think would be helpful for individuals in each stage. It is recommended that the group leader write some of these ideas on the board. For example:

*If someone you knew or you yourself were in stage 1, Identity Confusion, what would you want to tell that person or yourself? What particular resources or people would be helpful? What could you tell them that would help them to begin to feel better or less fearful? Are there any types of information that could be helpful for them to move into the next stage smoothly?*

**The group leader will ask similar questions for each stage**

The group leader will hand out the attached “6 Stages of Sexual Identity Development according to Vivienne Cass.” The group leader will explain to members that this is one theory on the development of sexual identity. He/She will give members five minutes to read over the theory and ask if there are any questions. Members are allowed to keep all of these papers.

Before ending session #7, the group leader will ask members,

*Is there anything that any member would like to share about today’s activity?*
GOALS

- Assist group members in finding similarities with other out gay or questioning adolescents from a film that they will watch.
- Have members discuss reactions both positive and negative to the films that were watched.

NEEDS TO BE DONE IN ADVANCE

- The group leader needs to watch some of the films that are suggested supplemental activities section and decide which one would be the best fit for the group.

MATERIALS

- One video from the suggested list that relates to gay or questioning adolescents.

HOW TO BEGIN SESSION #8

- “Before I push play I want all of you to take out your journals and a pen. We will be watching (the film) and I want you to write down anything in your notebook that stood out to you. It can be a reaction you had to a particular scene or some part in the film that triggered you. After it’s over everyone is encouraged to share what they wrote.”
The following are a list of suggested questions for the group leader to ask after the video. The group leader should follow members lead and make sure to try to bring it back to member’s personal experiences. The goal is for group members to feel less alone in their sexuality.

- Did this film change your views about the topic?
- Did the film change your opinion in any way?
- Did the film make good arguments based on emotion or logic?
- Did you think that the actions that were depicted in it were realistic? Why or why not?
- Did you relate to any of the characters in the movie?
- What would you of done if you found yourself in (a character from a movie) situation?
- Has anyone here ever gone through similar struggles whether it be at home or at school?
- Does this film still hold the same weight it did when it was made? Are similar issues going on? Are other issues going on? Have things moved forward or have they stopped?
- What character can you most imagine yourself as in the film? Which character the least? Describe yourself in each of those roles? Where are you? What are you thinking? What are you feeling?
- What were some of the ranges of emotional expression in the film?
- Why did some express anger and others express joy? How were the emotions they experienced affected by the circumstance they were in?
- Were the people in the film changed by their experiences?
The conclusion of the meeting will take place in two parts. Below is an example:

1) The group leader will go around the room and ask each member one word they feel describes their reaction to the film.

   *I want you to think about the film that you just saw and pick one word to describe your reaction?*

2. Ask the group if there is anything that anyone would like to share about today’s activity.

   *Is there anything that any member would like to share about today’s activity? What did you learn from this experience?*
GOALS

- Assist group members in understanding the importance and implications of a healthy relationship both with oneself and others.

SET UP

- Before group members arrive, the group leader will set the room up with the attached “Famous Gay Activists” templates and write the group's positive affirmation on the board.

HOW TO END SESSION #9

- If there are not any questions or comments, I’d like to wrap up today’s session. Thanks everyone for being such active participants. I hope each of you is enjoying group and that we continue to get even closer. Have a wonderful rest of your day.
SESSION #9: HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH MYSELF AND OTHERS

EXPLAIN THE ACTIVITY

For each question that is asked members will decide which answer they identify with most, “Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, or Disagree.”

For each question that is asked, you will decide which of the four corners of the room your answer is and walk over there.

AGREE/ DISAGREE ROUND 1

Listed below are a few examples of statements to say for the agree/disagree body image portion.

For each of the following statements you will pick a corner in which you most identify with.

1. Beauty is more important than intelligence
2. Fat people are ugly.
3. I believe I am overweight.
4. I believe I’d look better if I lost 5 to 10 pounds.
5. I believe beauty is being thin.
6. I want to look like a magazine model.
After the agree/disagree body image portion of the activity is over, the group leader will have group members sit back down in their seats. The group leader will facilitate a dialogue about some of the reasons behind group member’s answers and about their experience. Listed below are questions that can help guide this process.

**What to Say:**

- Define what beauty means to you
- Do you feel that people in society think that beauty is more important than intelligence?
- Do you feel that you yourself or some of your peers are fixated on body image that it takes away from school activities?
- Which of the following are more important and have a stronger effect on your life, how you view yourself or how others view you? Why?
- Where do you feel our ideas about beauty and attractiveness come from?
- Have other people’s opinions about your body ever affected you?
- What is a healthy relationship with your body like? What would it look like?

The following is a recommended video for the group leader to play after all questions from above have been answered. It is a short video that discusses the impact body image plays in adolescents lives.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpFBKeuKf7M

After the video has finished the group leader can ask group members if they have any comments, questions, thoughts, or feeling that stirred up from the video.
Examples of statements to say for the agree/disagree healthy relationship portion.

For each of the following statements remember you will pick a corner of the room as your answer
1. It is okay for my friends or romantic partner to restrict my activities.
2. If I ignore abuse physical or emotional it always goes away.
3. It is okay for my friends or romantic partner to “hit” or “shove” me.
4. Women cannot abuse men, only men abuse women.
5. Same-sex couples should not report acts of physical violence towards one another.
6. If someone is possessive and extremely jealous of you it means they really like you.

After the agree/disagree healthy relationship portion of the activity is over the group leader will have group members sit back down in their seats. The group leader will facilitate a dialogue about some of the reasons behind group member’s answers and about their experience. Listed below are questions that can help guide this process.
What to Say:

- What is a healthy friendship?
- What is healthy romantic relationship?
  - How should you’re friends/girlfriends/boyfriends treat you?
- What are some warning signs that would tell you that you were in an unhealthy relationship?
- What types of warning signs could there be that would tell you you’re unhealthy relationship may lead towards violence?
- What type of relationship do you want with yourself? With someone else?

The following is a few recommended videos for the group leader to play after the above questions have been answered. The first discusses same-sex domestic violence and the second is about adolescent domestic violence.

A. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hO2RRnkcLO
B. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqiYNEhvNyc&feature=related

After the videos have been show, the group leader can ask group members if they have any comments, questions, thoughts, or feeling that were stirred up from the video.

Conclusion

1) The group leader will talk about the importance of loving ourselves and ways to increase self-esteem.

   Learning to love ourselves can makes it possible to learn to love others and be in healthy relationships What are some ways you can begin to love yourself?

2. The group leader will ask members:

   Is there anything that any member would like to share about today’s activity?
GOALS

• Have a member of the community come to the room and talk about their experiences.

SET UP

• Before group members arrive, the group leader set the room up with the attached "Famous Gay Activists" templates. A few examples are provided, but it is up to the group leader to decide which are relevant or would like to add to it. The goal is for members to begin to identify with people around them and not feel as alone.

SOMETHING FOR THE GROUP LEADER TO REMEMBER

This session will require preparation and should be done in the beginning weeks of the group in order to make sure that a speaker is available to come to the group. The following are a list of websites and organizations which have speakers that come to groups to talk about their experiences.

4. Project 10: http://www.project10.org/
5. The Trevor Project: http://www.thetrevorproject.org/
SESSION #11:
ARTS, CRAFTS, & MY FUTURE

GOALS

• Members will participate in a collage activity regarding how they see themselves and what they would like their future to look like.

MATERIALS

• Collage materials such as paper (8.5 X 11), markers, scissors, crayons, glue, magazines, etc
• Self-Report Questionnaire and “Four Corners” worksheet

SET UP

• Before group members arrive, the group leader will set the room up with the attached “Famous Gay Activists” templates and write the group’s positive affirmation on the board.
• The group leader will have all collage materials ready to go and placed in the center of the classroom before the session starts.

AS MEMBERS WALK IN

• As members walk in the door, the group leader will hand them the self-report questionnaire and the four corners worksheet. Both need to be filled out in the first 10 minutes

A NOTE TO THE GROUP LEADER

This session will require preparation and should be done in the beginning weeks of the group in order to collect sufficient collage materials. The group leader will need to collect magazines that they feel reflect the group’s atmosphere and future goals for each member. Images of same sex couples are both necessary and vital in the magazine collection content.
The goal of this session is to engage and excite members about being creative. An example of how to introduce the activity is shown below:

I want you to take a couple minutes to look at your answers or drawings on your Four Corners worksheet. In a few minutes you will come up here and get a piece of poster board from me. As you can see there are magazines, markers, scissors, and glue in the center of the room. On the poster board I am about to hand you I want each of you to create your own collage. The collage should reflect some of the things that were either drawn or written in your Four Corners worksheet. It should reflect who you are and who you would like to be? Where you see your life going, your near future and your future after high school? It can show future romantic partners, future jobs, future colleges, whatever you feel is fitting. We will use the remainder of today to just work on this. Next week during our final session each of you will have the opportunity to share his or her collage.

As the session is coming to an end the group leader will remind group members that next session is the last one.

As a reminder next week is our final group session. I’d like each of you over the next week to think about anything you would like to share next week about your experience in group.

Is there anything that any member would like to share about today’s activity?
GOALS

- Assist members in processing some of the gains and benefits of being part of the group.
- Assist members in processing thoughts and feelings relative to the ending of the group.
- Encourage members to use what they have learned in group to the outside world.

SET UP

- Before group members arrive, the group leader will set the room up with the attached "Famous Gay Activists" templates and write the group's positive affirmation on the board.

A NOTE TO THE GROUP LEADER

This session may be difficult for some members that are anxious or upset about the group coming to a close. It is imperative that the group leader allow for thoughts and feelings relative to the group ending to be processed. It is important here that the group leader be aware that some of the pictures or words that were put on the collage are very personal so allowing members to only talk about what they feel comfortable with is necessary.
After every member has presented their collage, the group leader will move into the closing stage of the final session.

Each group member will be encouraged to share their collage. The group leader will make sure that each person is treated with respected and applauded after their presentation.

I know last week our session was mainly dedicated to being creative and making our own collages. Now, I’d like to give each of you the opportunity to share each of your collages. Some ideas that could be reflected in your collage were where you see your life going, your future such as jobs, friends, college, and some goals you have for yourself. Also, anything you felt fit. Who would like to go first? Each person has 5 minutes.
What to Say:

The group leader will go around the entire room asking each member the same questions.

- On a scale of 1 to 10, how pleased are you with your own personal progress in the group?
- Also, I’d like you to use one or two words to capture how you feel about your group experience?

Since this is our final session, I’d like to spend the rest of this session talking about what group has been like for all of you? Your experience in here and possibly how it has affected you. Let’s start with one thing that stood out to you. It could be anywhere from an activity, a discussion we had, or a comment that was made. I’d like each of you to share, who would like to start?
What to Say:

The group leader will have members provide feedback to other group members about the changes they have noticed in one another. It is important that everyone is provided with positive comment.

- Now I know each of you has made some form change or been affected in the last 12 weeks by group. However, now I’d like to focus on the changes each of you have seen in other group members. I’d like each of you to pick three people who you feel have made positive changes. You are required that one of them is the person on your right and you are allowed to pick the other two. Who would like to start?

The conclusion of the meeting will take place in two parts. Below is an example:

1) The group leader will have member think about their progress in the group.
   I’d like for each of you could take a few minutes to yourself and think about some of the changes in your life in and outside of the group that have happened. None of you will need to share, but just take a few minutes to reflect quietly on your own about these changes.

2. Final group leader thoughts.
   With that we are going to end our final session. I know some of you might feel upset with group ending, but I hope each of you have gotten something out of the group process and will take some of these things outside of the group. I hope each of you continues to grow and change. You are welcome to stay until the period is over and talk to one another. It has been a pleasure to facilitate this group and I wish each and every member the best.
RELINQUISHING & RECLAIMING: A GAY AND QUESTIONING ADOLESCENT GROUP GUIDEBOOK SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES & EXERCISES
SESSION #1
Group Guidelines

1. Come to every group meeting. If you are aware that you are unable to make a meeting please let the group leader know. You are only allowed to miss 2 sessions.

2. Come to each meeting on time. There is so much to talk about during group and we want to make sure that everyone is able to be heard and participate in activities.

3. Confidentiality: It is important that you do not share what you hear in group with people outside of group. Additionally, the group leader will repeat or tell others about what goes on in group. The only time this may be broken is if the group leader hears about abuse that is going on or a group member is at risk of hurting themselves or someone else.

4. Be Respectful! You and other group members will benefit most if everyone is given time to share their thoughts and feelings about particular topics. If you are having an issue with a group member let the leader know.

5. Have Fun! This group was created to have a safe space to talk about our struggles, our various experiences, and have fun!
**Group Goals**

- **We will** create a safe and welcoming environment for all members!

- **We will** build rapport and get to know one another better.

- **We will** look at the ways homophobia (negative feelings/attitudes towards homosexuals) has affected your self-esteem and concept. **We will** challenge those views and aim to incorporate a new positive identity.
**Terminology List**

**Biphobia** Fear of bisexuals, often based on stereotypes, including inaccurate associations with infidelity, promiscuity and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases.

**Bisexual, Bi** An individual who is physically, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to men and women. Bisexuals need not have had sexual experience with both men and women; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all to identify as bisexual.

**Civil Union** State-based relationship recognition for gay and lesbian couples that offers some or all of the state (though none of the federal) rights, protections and responsibilities of marriage (see IN FOCUS: Civil Unions & Domestic Partnerships, and Appendix A: Federal & State Laws & Protections).

**Closeted** Describes a person who is not open about his or her sexual orientation.

**Coming Out** A lifelong process of self-acceptance. People forge a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender identity first to themselves and then may reveal it to others. Publicly identifying one’s orientation may or may not be part of coming out.

**Domestic** Civil/legal recognition of a committed relationship between two people that partnerships sometimes extends limited protections to them (see IN FOCUS: Civil Unions & Domestic Partnerships, and Appendix A: Federal & State Laws & Protections).

**Gay** The adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex (e.g., gay man, gay people). In contemporary contexts, lesbian (n. or adj.) is often a preferred term for women. Avoid identifying gay people as “homosexuals” an outdated term considered derogatory and offensive to many lesbian and gay people.

**Heterosexual** An adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to people of the opposite sex. Also *straight*.

**Homosexual** (see Offensive Terms to Avoid) Outdated clinical term considered derogatory and offensive by many gay and lesbian people. The Associated Press, *New York Times* and *Washington Post* restrict usage of the term. Gay and/or lesbian accurately describe those who are attracted to people of the same sex.

**Homophobia** Fear of lesbians and gay men. *Prejudice* is usually a more accurate description of hatred or antipathy toward LGBT people.

**Lesbian** A woman whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to other women. Some lesbians may prefer to identify as gay (adj.) or as gay women. Avoid identifying lesbians as “homosexuals,” a derogatory term (see Offensive Terms to Avoid).
LGBT / GLBT Acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender." LGBT and/or GLBT are often used because they are more inclusive of the diversity of the community. Care should be taken to ensure that audiences are not confused by their use.

**Lifestyle** (see *Offensive Terms to Avoid*) Inaccurate term used by anti-gay extremists to denigrate lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender lives. As there is no one straight lifestyle, there is no one lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender lifestyle.

**Openly Gay** Describes people who self-identify as lesbian or gay in their personal, public and/or professional lives. Also *openly lesbian, openly bisexual, openly transgender*.

**Outing** The act of publicly declaring (sometimes based on rumor and/or speculation) or revealing another person’s sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's consent. Considered inappropriate by a large portion of the LGBT community.

**Queer** Traditionally a pejorative term, *queer* has been appropriated by some LGBT people to describe themselves. However, it is not universally accepted even within the LGBT community and should be avoided unless quoting or describing someone who self-identifies that way.

**Sexual Orientation** The scientifically accurate term for an individual’s enduring physical, (also Orientation) romantic and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual (straight) orientations. Avoid the offensive term “sexual preference,” which is used to suggest that being gay or lesbian is voluntary and therefore "curable."

**Sodomy Laws** Historically used to selectively persecute gay people, the state laws often referred to as “sodomy laws” were ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003). “Sodomy” should never be used to describe gay, lesbian or bisexual relationships or sexuality.

Source: GLAAD Media Reference Guide- Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Glossary of Terms

http://www.glaad.org/reference/lgb
GENERAL TERMINOLOGY

Sex The classification of people as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex based on a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, and genitals.

Gender Identity One's internal, personal sense of being a man or a woman (or a boy or a girl). For transgender people, their birth-assigned sex and their own internal sense of gender identity do not match.

Gender Expression External manifestation of one's gender identity, usually expressed through "masculine," "feminine" or gender-variant behavior, clothing, haircut, voice or body characteristics. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression match their gender identity, rather than their birth-assigned sex.

Sexual Orientation Describes an individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay or bisexual. For example, a man who transitions from male to female and is attracted to other women would be identified as a lesbian or a gay woman.

TRANSGENDER-SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY

Transgender An umbrella term (adj.) for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term may include but is not limited to: transsexuals, cross-dressers and other gender-variant people. Transgender people may identify as female-to-male (FTM) or male-to-female (MTF). Use the descriptive term (transgender, transsexual, cross-dresser, FTM or MTF) preferred by the individual. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically.

Transsexual (also Transexual) An older term which originated in the medical and psychological communities. While some transsexual people still prefer to use the term to describe themselves, many transgender people prefer the term transgender to transsexual. Unlike transgender, transsexual is not an umbrella term, as many transgender people do not identify as transsexual. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers.

Transvestite Derogatory see Cross-Dressing

Transition Altering one's birth sex is not a one-step process; it is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition includes some or all of the following personal, legal and medical adjustments: telling one's family, friends and/or co-workers; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more forms of surgery.
Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) Refers to surgical alteration, and is only one small part of transition (see Transition above). Preferred term to "sex change operation." Not all transgender people choose to or can afford to have SRS. Journalists should avoid overemphasizing the role of SRS in the transition process.

Cross-Dressing To occasionally wear clothes traditionally associated with people of the other sex. Cross-dressers are usually comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth and do not wish to change it. "Cross-dresser" should NOT be used to describe someone who has transitioned to live full-time as the other sex or who intends to do so in the future. Cross-dressing is a form of gender expression and is not necessarily tied to erotic activity. Cross-dressing is not indicative of sexual orientation.

Gender Identity Disorder (GID) A controversial DSM-IV diagnosis given to transgender and other gender-variant people. Because it labels people as "disordered," Gender Identity Disorder is often considered offensive. The diagnosis is frequently given to children who don't conform to expected gender norms in terms of dress, play or behavior. Such children are often subjected to intense psychotherapy, behavior modification and/or institutionalization. Replaces the outdated term "gender dysphoria."

Intersex Describing a person whose biological sex is ambiguous. There are many genetic, hormonal or anatomical variations that make a person's sex ambiguous (e.g., Klinefelter Syndrome). Parents and medical professionals usually assign intersex infants a sex and perform surgical operations to conform the infant's body to that assignment. This practice has become increasingly controversial as intersex adults speak out against the practice. The term intersex is not interchangeable with or a synonym for transgender.

Source: GLAAD Media Reference Guide: Transgender Glossary of Terms
http://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender
Name: __________________________
Date __________________________

Self-Report Questionnaire

Please Use the following to answer the questions below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Circle a corresponding number for each statement

1. School is a place in which I feel safe and comfortable in.  1  2  3  4  5
2. If I have a problem I feel that I can talk to my friends.  1  2  3  4  5
3. If I have a problem I feel that I can talk to my family.  1  2  3  4  5
4. I have not had issues with being teased, taunted, or pushed by other students.  1  2  3  4  5
5. I sometimes think that it would be easier if I were just not around.  1  2  3  4  5
6. I have had thoughts about taking my own life.  1  2  3  4  5
7. I feel supported by the school staff/faculty and feel comfortable asking questions.  1  2  3  4  5
8. I have thought about not coming to school because of unwelcoming teachers, staff, or students  1  2  3  4  5
9. In a couple of sentences describe your high school experience.

10. In a couple of sentences what are you most looking forward to and most nervous about when it comes to this group?
http://www.itgetsbetter.org/video/entry/4563/

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_B-hVWQnjjM

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhhTir-UQTQ

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOiVTfH-REU
SESSION #4
My Identities

Instructions: In the circle below write down every word that comes to mind when you think about your own identity.

Instructions: Now write your top five identities in the spaces below. Have them listed from most significant to not as significant.

My first most important identity is ____________________________________________

My second most important identity is __________________________________________

My third most important identity is ____________________________________________

My fourth most important identity is __________________________________________

My fifth most important identity is ____________________________________________
SESSION #5

Station #1: An out Hollywood Actor
Station #2: An out retired NBA basketball player.
Station #3: A famous lesbian writer.
"I won't be specific," Wilson Cruz says, "but there's a show on television right now, a fairly new show, that wanted me to come in for a role, and I found it incredibly offensive."

His manager, Cruz tells *Metro Weekly*, had said no to auditioning for the role. But, Cruz – who made his first mark playing out high school student Rickie Vasquez on the '90s TV show, *My So-Called Life*, and then took on the role of Angel in Broadway's *Rent* – wanted her to go a step further.

**Wilson Cruz**

"I said, 'I want you to call them back and tell them why I'm saying no. They need to know that this is really offensive, and they're going to get shit about it,'" he says. "And she did, and they told her that I was being overly sensitive."

Asked if the show's name rhymes with "smirk bit," Cruz laughs and says, "It might."

ABC's *Work It* was canceled this past week, after significant criticism and insignificant ratings, and Cruz keeps pushing forward, fighting perceptions of queer people of color on stage and screen – and fighting for LGBT equality across the country.

After having served as a field organizer for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in 2002, Cruz will be "returning" to the Task Force for one weekend, performing a cabaret show about love at this year's Creating Change conference.

Rea Carey, the Task Force's executive director, first met Cruz while serving as the head of the National Youth Advocacy Coalition.

"Wilson – because it is his life – has the ability to give voice to queer people of color. He used to be, at that point, queer youth of color. And that was very rare in the '90s," she says. "And, unfortunately, still, there aren't enough of those voices and enough of those stories that get told. Or probably more specifically, get listened to."

Cruz works to tell others' stories on stage and screen for a living, but he also takes the time to, as he says, get his hands dirty and tell his own story to people across the country. Working with the Task Force in
2002, Cruz spent time in Miami-Dade working to protect the nondiscrimination ordinance there.
Sarah Reece, who works at the Task Force as the director of the Academy for Leadership and Action, was in Miami with Cruz. Of his work, she says, "Folks understand that when they're with Wilson, he is someone who cares as much about his commitment to excellence as a performer as he does building a community that values all of us."

Sometimes, that dedication comes with a price. On Election Day in Miami in 2002, there was a torrential downpour and Cruz decided to help a woman on her way to the polling place.
"I had an umbrella, and I went over to her car, helped her out of the car, and before I got to the 100-yard mark, I started to talk to her about how to vote on the issue," he says. "She stopped and asked me if I was asking her to support gay rights, and I said yes – and she spit on me."

Cruz kept on, though, walking her into the polling place, helping her back to her car when she was done voting, and – as always – keeping an optimistic outlook.
"Those are the chances you take," he says. "She may have voted the wrong way that day, but I hope, in some way, she went home and thought about that experience and maybe she did vote differently later on."

METRO WEEKLY: What will you be sharing with folks at Creating Change?
WILSON CRUZ: I'm actually doing a bit of a cabaret for them. It's called *Love Child* because, growing up, I had an affinity for the song "Love Child." Just because I think I was a bit of a love child growing up. My idea of love was a bit skewed. It was always about, if there was no pain involved, then it wasn't really love – really messed up.
I'm going to take people on a journey about love, what I've learned about love in the past 10 years. I think it's a great thing to talk to the Creating Change folks about because I've done a lot of this work. I've been a field organizer for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, I've worked on the Obama campaign, I'm a pretty political person. What I've realized is that, in doing my work as an activist and an organizer and such, we lose sight of what it is that we're actually fighting for.
I'm in the process of picking music that is going to help me tell that story. It's the story of falling in love, and what we do to sabotage that, and how we find ourselves ready to be open to loving again.

MW: You say you grew up with a very different definition of love. Why is that?
CRUZ: Growing up with the parents that I've been allowed to have – that's how we define our loving experiences, by our parents and how our parents model that for us. My parents were very young when they had me – they were 19 – and they were unmarried when my mother became pregnant with me. I think the reality of their socioeconomic circumstances helped define what their relationship was. And, so, I viewed love through that prism.
They struggled in their relationship. It was about breaking up and getting back together and breaking up again. This back and forth was what I thought love was about – only to find out, later on, that it didn't have to be that way. At least, I decided that it doesn't have to be that way.

MW: We hear, I think, a lot more today, more stories of difficulties faced by people of color coming out, and how those stories are less reflected in the media, in the public understanding of what coming out is. I
just had the opportunity to see Pariah last weekend —

CRUZ: Amazing.

MW: What is your experience of coming out, and how have you seen that reflected in public discussion of coming out?

CRUZ: I dealt with that issue a lot early on in my career – the coming-out process. And then I did a lot of speaking about it, at universities, to GLBT groups. In many ways, I've used my art and my life and my experience to convey what it was like for me to come out.

In many ways, all you need to do is watch 19 episodes of My So-Called Life and you'll see exactly what it was like. I wasn't forced out; I was prodded out by the fact that I was on this series that was dealing with this issue. And so I decided to come out publicly and with my family. I needed to do that because of the subject matter that we were dealing with on the show, and I knew that questions were going to be asked and I needed to be able to answer them from an authentic place.

Wilson Cruz from 1994's "My So-Called Life"

MW: So, you were cast for the show. Had you already had all of these conversations?

CRUZ: I wasn't out to my parents yet. I actually didn't come out to my parents until after the pilot of the show. I was out to everyone else in the world – except my parents. And, after having conversations with my parents, they clearly knew. They just didn't want to know.

There was a year between the pilot and the actual first episode that was shot because the show was passed over for the fall season the first time it was submitted. So, in that year, I came out to my parents. I came out to my dad at Christmas, just like the show did, and I was kicked out of my house and I lived in my car for a few months in between Christmas and the time that we actually started filming the series. I lived on people's couches if I had to, and that kind of thing. And we didn't reconcile, my father and I, until that episode actually aired, which was almost a full year later.

So, in a lot of ways, I owe that show my reality because I came out to my parents because of it. I reconciled with my father because of it. It was a very odd experience. It was very surreal.

MW: And, in a broader context?

CRUZ: I feel like most of the coming-out stories we see in media are white and male, and that's why when I saw the short of Pariah at Outfest Fusion like three or four years ago, I was blown away. I got to meet the director and writer, Dee Rees, at that screening, and she was saying she wanted to make it into a full-length feature. I remember saying to her not only does she want to do it but that she needs to do it, and that I would support it in any way I could. Which is why, when it came here to New York and they asked me to be on the host committee of the premiere, I said, "Absolutely." I have become friends with [Pariah star] Adepero [Oduye] because we sat on the jury of NewFest last year.

I think that the movie itself is, first of all, really beautifully done and the performances are ridiculous. But, above and beyond everything else, I feel like it really allows you into a world that we've never been allowed in before. It's so authentic that you don't feel like you're in a foreign country; you feel very much at
home when you're watching it, even though it's a new place for all of us. This is a very specific story about a young woman of color and her experience, and yet I felt very in tune with everything that she went through.

I hunger for those stories to be told. In this day and age, that we don't see more of them is a travesty. And, more of a travesty is that – what is it, 20 years since My So-Called Life? – we have yet to have a major GLBT character of color like that on TV. We've had adults, but I'm talking about a youth.

I mean, thank God for Chris Colfer and for Glee and for all of the work that they're doing. I wish that Ugly Betty had stayed on for a few more years so they could have dealt with it more, because I thought that was very promising. But, I mean, hello? People want to see themselves. They want to turn the television on and feel like they're being seen and heard. I think there's an opportunity that's being missed there.

MW: I think you were somewhat ahead of the curve in terms of this concept of actors and performers who are legitimately and actively involved in LGBT activism. During the New York marriage fight, it was clear that a corner had been turned and that many celebrities were involved. How do you see that process?

CRUZ: The more, the merrier. I welcome that. I welcome anyone who feels compelled to join this battle. When Gavin Creel started Broadway Impact and became as vocal as he did, I'm proud of him. I'm grateful for it.

I hope that, in some small way, I've modeled for people that it's okay to do that, but I hope that what I'm really modeling is that it's just not about putting your name on something. For me anyway, it's not about, "Hey, Wilson Cruz is for gay marriage." Well, duh. But what is Wilson Cruz doing on the ground to make sure that that happens, beyond just putting his name on a host committee?

I like to get my hands dirty. I like to do the heavy lifting. That's why I work with the Task Force, because I feel out of all of the organizations – the national organizations that are around – that they're doing the heavy lifting. They're doing the hard, grassroots work that really needs to be done – which is why I worked for them for a year and worked in Miami on the human rights ordinance and in Portland [Maine] and in Ann Arbor, Mich. I took a year off of my career because I felt that strongly about it.

MW: You have this odd experience of basically using national TV to come out. How did that change the process for you of moving forward in your career?

CRUZ: I'm not going to sugarcoat it in any way. It's been a tricky road. And what I mean by that is that I had one of the most amazing experiences that anyone probably would have just out of the gate.

It was inevitable that whatever came after that was going to be somewhat disappointing. Especially in light of the fact that I was a young man of color who was out, and there were very few opportunities. And so I had at the time, and still do, have to walk into a room and convince people that I'm the right person for the job – despite what it is that they have in their head about some preconceived notion about who that person is. I have to state my case and convince people that, "Hey, he doesn't have to be white," or whatever the case may be.

I got lucky in a lot of ways. I did a couple of small movies I felt strongly about – All Over Me and Johns – early on, and then I got to do Rent. Rent was life altering for me. I felt like all of my gifts were being used.
at the same time. I felt very much at home in that world. And it was extremely challenging at the time. I
don't know what made me think I could do it. It's the naiveté of youth. I don't know how I manifested that,
but, "Holla!"

MW: And playing a role that already had become a –

CRUZ: Oh, yeah, the balls. To call my agent at the time, and be like, "I know he just won the Tony … but
listen, I think I could do something really different with this and have my own spin on it." And that's
literally what I said when I went in and met with Michael Greif. I said, "I have no desire to copy with
Wilson [Jermaine] Heredia did because Wilson Heredia is the best person to do what Wilson Heredia did. I
am going to do this, and I hope you like that idea." And he looked at me like I had three heads. I was 22
years old! And he said, "I can work with that."

All that's to say, I got really lucky.

I still am in search of opportunities like that. In small ways, in big ways, I'm finding them. I think Noah's
Arc, even though it was a small audience, I feel like that was a huge opportunity to do and say something
and convey something about being an HIV-positive person today and what that means in relationships. I
felt like we did that really well.

MW: Even with Angel, though, that was a role that was another out person of color. Is there any role that
you've gotten that you felt was changed to fit you more specifically?

CRUZ: I did a couple of episodes of The West Wing. It was a character who was C.J. Cregg's assistant
press secretary of domestic affairs. That's how proud of it I am, I remember it.

I don't think they really pictured who they got. The great thing about the first episode that I did, most of the
episode was improvised because it was an episode that was shot as a documentary. Alex Graves, who was
directing the episode, said, "I want to do this thing where I'm interviewing a bunch of you guys, and I'm just
going to speak to you as a documentary filmmaker. I'm going to ask you questions, and you make up the
answers."

I was like, "Fuck, yeah!" I had already made up this back-story for myself, and he asked the magic
question. He was like, "How did you end up in this job?" And I just let him have it: "I went to Howard
University. I was writing letters to the administration about how they were dealing with GLBT issues."
And when we cut, he was just like, "Are you fucking kidding me? Just so you know, that is so in the show."
For years, I was like, "I have to get on there." I was too young. What was I gonna do on there? Finally, I
was old enough and the right thing came along and they brought me in, and I was like, "Yes! Bring it!"
Now I feel that way about The Good Wife. I'm obsessed with that show.

MW: On the other hand, what is the worst experience you've had when being out or being a person of
color has really made it more difficult or impossible to get a part?

CRUZ: That's a harder question. I haven't really had a horrible experience. And, here's the thing: Nobody's
gonna come out and tell me, "Hey, the reason why you didn't get this job is because you're gay or you're
Puerto Rican." But I know it's happened. Just like I know at times I didn't get the job because I wasn't the
best person or the right person. It's just reality.
I can't really answer that question in a specific way because I'm not privy to that information, so it would be me guessing – and we don't want to do that.

**MW:** If you were to give yourself, on leaving My So-Called Life, some advice on moving forward with your career, what would it be?

**CRUZ:** I probably would have said yes more often than I did. I think what I've learned in my old, old age is that that old improv rule is good for life, too. The rule in improvisation is, "Always say yes." I've said no to things that I feel strongly about, but I think early on I probably could have said yes to more stuff. I think, early on, you think it's going to affect the trajectory of your career. And not everything does. Sometimes it's just about –

**MW:** Some things are just a role.

**CRUZ:** Yeah. And sometimes it's just fun. I should have had more fun early on. I'm having more fun now, I'll tell you that. I'm having so much more fun in my work than I did then.

**MW:** What's the most fun thing you're doing?

**CRUZ:** The Finder. It's like playing. When you're a kid, and you're like, "Let's play act." That's what it's like. They let me do the most ridiculous – sometimes I do something just to see if I can get away with it, and they love it and they're like, "Do more of that!"

Some people are going to think it's over the top, but I just think it's funny. And I never get to be funny – not that funny. It's my chance to be Lucille Ball and Rosie Perez and John Leguizamo all wrapped up in one.

**MW:** I don't know if it is possible to really separate it, but do you think it's harder for young out gay actors or young actors of color to "break out" in Hollywood today?

**CRUZ:** It depends on the day. I'm telling you, if you had asked me this last week, I would have said something different. My very first thought when you asked the question was the George Lucas story about the movie he has out now, Red Tails. The fact that people did come right out and tell him, "No, we're not going to back this movie because there are no white people in it." I mean, where else could someone get away with saying that? I think that's the truth of it, and I applaud Mr. Lucas for going public with it.

I think, in the end, we're all looked at as dollar signs. Every actor is a dollar sign, and we're attached to a certain amount of money based on who we are. What color your skin is, and who you have sex with, and if you fit in a certain gender role. The only way that my career could possibly be any harder is if I was a transgender woman. Whoever that is and is doing it – oh, Candis Cayne, she's got it harder. RuPaul. It's not an easy industry to be a part of, but when you get the opportunity to work, it's magic. And I'm grateful for it, every time. That's why, whenever I do get work, I just enjoy it – because I don't know when it's going to happen again.

**MW:** One of the things some people have criticized about the push for marriage is whether other issues affecting people with a lower socioeconomic status, and disproportionately affecting LGBT people of color, like the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, are falling of the charts.

**CRUZ:** I don't know who it was, but a group of people decided that marriage was our ticket to everything else. And, where I didn't completely agree with it – my thing about marriage is that it's not so much that I
need or want to get married. I just don't want anybody to tell me that I can't based on the fact that I'm gay. Do I believe that there are other things that are more important? Of course. I wish that we had put more energy into ENDA than we have. I wish we had put more energy into not getting [the Defense of Marriage Act] to go through in the first place.

I know the thinking behind it. I know the political sense behind it, which is that it helps the larger society see our community and our relationships on equal footing and that that would lead to other things. But I feel like in a lot of ways our community and our movement has said, "This is the one and only goal at the moment and there isn't anything else."

Which is why I work so hard with [Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network], because they're dealing with youth issues in a way that nobody else is. I think that's as important, if not more, than marriage equality.

But that's my personal thing. I don't even have a boyfriend.

MW: Alas.

CRUZ: So, it's hard for me to wrap my brain around marriage right now. So, maybe that's my own myopic point of view. I'm like, "Can I get a date?" That would be great. I would love to pass a law where I would get a date every week.

MW: Who would that person be?

CRUZ: You know what? If I had the answer to that I would be busy finding him. Good lord.

MW: Well, Claire Danes got Hugh Dancy, so he's gone.

CRUZ: So cute, that one. You know, if Ryan Gosling wanted to come over to the other side, I'm open to that. Everybody knows that I have a soft – and a hard – place for Joe Manganiello. But who doesn't? The word "man" is in his name. I'm just sayin'. But, you know, a girl can dream.

MW: He says, mopping his brow.

CRUZ: I just did, actually. So, if you know anybody, let me know.

MW: We will look for some combination of Ryan Gosling and Joe Manganiello, then you'll fall over.

CRUZ: Right. I'm – anyway, I'll let this go. We don't want this to be my Grindr profile or something.
In a groundbreaking revelation that began to reverberate around the NBA on Wednesday, former player John Amaechi has become the first professional basketball player to openly identify himself as gay.

**ESPN Books**

Amaechi's book will be available in stores Friday.

Amaechi, who played at Penn State and spent five seasons in the NBA with Orlando, Utah and Cleveland, comes out in an upcoming book entitled "Man in the Middle" to be released later this month by ESPN Books (owned by the Walt Disney Company, parent company of ESPN).

Martina Navratilova, perhaps the most famous openly gay athlete in the world, praised Amaechi's decision and said it's imperative for athletes to come out because of what she called an epidemic of suicides among young lesbians and gays.

"It's hugely important for the kids so they don't feel alone in the world. We're role models. We're adults, and we know we're not alone but kids don't know that," she said. "He will definitely help a lot of kids growing up to feel better about themselves."

Three years after his playing career ended, Amaechi become the sixth professional male athlete from one of the four major American sports (NBA,
MLB, NFL, NHL) to publicly discuss his homosexuality. Former NFL running back David Kopay came out in 1977; offensive lineman Roy Simmons and defensive lineman Esera Tuaolo came out more recently. Glenn Burke, an outfielder for the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Oakland Athletics in the 1970s, and Billy Bean, a utility player in the 1980s and 1990s, have also come out. Former major-league umpire Dave Pallone has also said he is gay.

Burke died of complications due to AIDS in 1995.
"What John did is amazing," said Tuaolo, who came out in 2002. "He does not know how many lives he's saved by speaking the truth."
Tuaolo said coming out would be a relief to Amaechi.
"Living with all that stress and that depression, all you deal with as a closeted person, when you come out you really truly free yourself," Tuaolo said. "When I came out, it felt like I was getting out of prison."

Amaechi, a 6-foot-10 center, averaged 6.2 points and 2.6 rebounds before retiring from the league in 2003 after his contract was traded from Houston to New York. He never played for the Rockets or Knicks. He is currently known in Britain as a television personality and for helping fund the Amaechi Basketball Center in Manchester.
In the book and in an in-depth interview with ESPN's "Outside The Lines" to be shown Sunday, Amaechi speaks and writes candidly about his pro career, his relationships with teammates and coaches and how he began to live more openly gay while he was playing for the Jazz -- frequenting gay clubs, both in Salt Lake City and in other NBA cities.
In the book and in his interview, Amaechi called Jazz owner Larry Miller a "bigot," said former teammate Karl Malone was a xenophobe and said coach Jerry Sloan "hated" him.

Sloan, who was asked after practice Wednesday about Amaechi's allegations that the coach had made homophobic comments and treated the player crudely, said he did not know about Amaechi's sexuality when Amaechi was playing for the Jazz.
"We didn't see eye to eye on a few things," Sloan said.
Sloan later released a statement through the Jazz's public relations office.
"I have coached more than 100 players during the past 19 seasons, and it has always been my philosophy that my job is to make sure Jazz players perform to their maximum ability on the floor. As far as his personal life is concerned, I wish John the best and have nothing further to add," he said.
But Amaechi also spoke fondly of former teammate Greg Ostertag, who he said was the only player ever to ask him if he was gay (Amaechi answered: "You have nothing to worry about, Greg"), as well as another former teammate he calls "Malinka" (Russian for "little one") who Amaechi felt was aware and accepting of the fact he was gay. Amaechi's publicist, Howard Bragman, confirmed to ESPN.com that the player was Andrei Kirilenko.

Some time after Christmas of my last Utah season, as the team was sliding out of contention, Malinka instant-messaged an invitation to his New Year's Eve party, explaining he was only inviting his 'favorite' friends. Then he wrote something that brought tears to my eyes: 'Please come, John. You are welcome to bring your partner, if you have one, someone special to you. Who it is makes no difference to me,'" Amaechi wrote. "I was hosting my own party that night, so I had to decline his sweet invitation. But I was moved. I had Ryan deliver Malinka a $500 bottle of Jean Paul Gaultier-dressed champagne.

"The whole exchange was a revelation. Malinka's generous overture made the season more bearable. It also showed that in my own paranoia and overwhelming desire for privacy, I'd failed to give some of my teammates the benefit of the doubt. The sense of welcome and belonging, so often denied gay people even by their own families, meant the world to me, especially in the middle of a dreadful season in a strange desert state that in the end provided some of the best days of my life," he wrote.

NBA commissioner David Stern said a player's sexuality is not important. "We have a very diverse league. The question at the NBA is always, 'Have you got game?' That's it, end of inquiry," Stern told The Associated Press. Orlando's Grant Hill, who said he didn't know Amaechi when he was with the Magic, applauded the decision to go public.

"The fact that John has done this, maybe it will give others the comfort or confidence to come out as well, whether they are playing or retiring," Hill said.

LeBron James, however, said he didn't think an openly gay person could survive in the league. "With teammates you have to be trustworthy, and if you're gay and you're not admitting that you are, then you are not trustworthy," James said. "So that's like the No. 1 thing as teammates -- we all trust each other. You've heard of the in-room, locker room code. What happens in the locker room stays in there. It's a trust factor, honestly. A big trust factor."

Injured Philadelphia Sixers forward Shavlik Randolph acknowledged it's a new situation.
"As long as you don't bring your gayness on me I'm fine," Randolph said. "As far as business-wise, I'm sure I could play with him. But I think it would create a little awkwardness in the locker room."

News that Amaechi had come out surprised some players.
"For real? He's gay for real?" said Philadelphia center Steven Hunter. "Nowadays it's proven that people can live double lives. I watch a lot of TV, so I see a lot of sick perverted stuff about married men running around with gay guys and all types of foolishness."

Even so, Hunter said he would be fine with an openly gay teammate.
"As long as he don't make any advances toward me I'm fine with it," he said. "As long as he came to play basketball like a man and conducted himself like a good person, I'd be fine with it."

Orlando's Pat Garrity acknowledged reaction was bound to vary throughout the league.
"They would have teammates that would accept them for being a good person and a good teammate, and there would be people who would give him a hard time about it," he said. "I think that's true if you're playing basketball or in an office job. That's just how the world is right now."

In his "Outside The Lines" interview, Amaechi discussed how he realized his sexuality as a young teen and kept it hidden through his collegiate career at Penn State and in his early NBA days with the Cavaliers and Magic.

Amaechi also said he believes there are other gay players in the NBA.
"I don't know if there are a lot, but there are some," Amaechi said. "But you know ... I don't really want to talk about it because I think that the coming out process for these individuals that for some I have been privy to and some I have not, um, it is theirs and theirs alone. And I don't think that they should be pressured or pushed for the good of the gay community or otherwise. They should not be pressured or pushed."

Has Amaechi conversed with them?
"Some," he said.

What are their reservations about coming out?
"It's a frightening prospect. It's terrifying," Amaechi said. "There are people for whom their entire world is based around this idea that people will look at them and when they look at them, they are NBA superstars, NBA players. And any change to that would be physiologically devastating. Emotionally devastating, financially devastating."

"Man in the Middle" will be excerpted next week in ESPN The Magazine and on ESPN.com.
Audre Lorde
1934–1992

A self-styled "black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet," writer Audre Lorde dedicated both her life and her creative talent to confronting and addressing the injustices of racism, sexism, and homophobia. Her poetry, and "indeed all of her writing," according to contributor Joan Martin in Black Women Writers (1950-1980): A Critical Evaluation, "rings with passion, sincerity, perception, and depth of feeling." Concerned with modern society's tendency to categorize groups of people, Lorde fought the marginalization of such categories as "lesbian" and "black woman," thereby empowering her readers to react to the prejudice in their own lives. While the widespread critical acclaim bestowed upon Lorde for dealing with lesbian topics made her a target of those opposed to her radical agenda, she continued, undaunted, to express her individuality, refusing to be silenced. As she told interviewer Charles H. Rowell in Callaloo: "My sexuality is part and parcel of who I am, and my poetry comes from the intersection of me and my worlds. . . . [White, arch-conservative senator] Jesse Helms's objection to my work is not about obscenity . . . or even about sex. It is
about revolution and change. . . . Helms represents. . . . white patriarchal power. . . .[and he] knows that my writing is aimed at his destruction, and the destruction of every single thing he stands for." Fighting a battle with cancer that she documented in her highly acclaimed *Cancer Journals*, Lorde died of the illness in 1992. Born in New York City of West Indian parents, Lorde came to poetry in her early teens, through a need to express herself. Her first poem to be published was accepted by *Seventeen* magazine when she was still in high school. The poem had been rejected by her school paper, Lorde explains in *Black Women Writers*, because her "English teachers . . . said [it] was much too romantic." Her mature poetry, published in volumes including *New York Head Shop and Museum*, *Coal*, and *The Black Unicorn*, is sometimes romantic also. Often dealing with her lesbian relationships, her love poems have nevertheless been judged accessible to all by many critics. In Martin's words, "one doesn't have to profess heterosexuality, homosexuality, or asexuality to react to her poems. . . . Anyone who has ever been in love can respond to the straightforward passion and pain sometimes one and the same, in Lorde's poems."

While Lorde's love poems composed much of her earliest work, her experiences of civil unrest during the 1960s, along with Lorde's own confusion over her sexuality—a bisexual, she married in 1962 and had two children before divorcing and making a renewed commitment to her female lovers—created a rapid shift to more political statements. As Jerome Brooks reported in *Black Women Writers (1950-1980): A Critical Evaluation*, "Lorde's poetry of anger is perhaps her best-known work." In her poem "The American Cancer Society, or There Is More than One Way to Skin a Coon," she protested against white America thrusting its unnatural culture on blacks; in "The Brown Menace or Poem to the Survival of Roaches," she likened blacks to cockroaches, hated, feared, and poisoned by whites. *Poetry* critic Sandra M. Gilbert remarked that "it's not surprising that Lorde occasionally seems to be choking on her own anger . . . [and] when her fury vibrates through taut cables from head to heart to page, Lorde is capable of rare and, paradoxically, loving jeremiads." Lorde's anger did not confine itself to racial injustice but extended to feminist issues as well, and occasionally she criticized African American men for their role in the perpetuating of sex discrimination: "As Black people, we cannot begin our dialogue by denying the oppressive nature of
male privilege," Lorde stated in Black Women Writers. "And if Black males choose to assume that privilege, for whatever reason, raping, brutalizing, and killing women, then we cannot ignore Black male oppression. One oppression does not justify another."

Of her poetic beginnings Lorde once commented in Black Women Writers: "I used to speak in poetry. I would read poems, and I would memorize them. People would say, well what do you think, Audre. What happened to you yesterday? And I would recite a poem and somewhere in that poem would be a line or a feeling I would be sharing. In other words, I literally communicated through poetry. And when I couldn't find the poems to express the things I was feeling, that's what started me writing poetry, and that was when I was twelve or thirteen." As an adult, her primary poetic goal remained communication. "I have a duty," she stated later in the same publication, "to speak the truth as I see it and to share not just my triumphs, not just the things that felt good, but the pain, the intense, often unmitigating pain." As a mature poet, however, rather than relying solely on poetry as a means of self-expression Lorde often extracted poems from her personal journals. Explaining the genesis of "Power," a poem about the police shooting of a ten-year-old black child, Lorde discussed her feelings when she learned that the officer involved had been acquitted: "A kind of fury rose up in me; the sky turned red. I felt so sick. I felt as if I would drive this car into a wall, into the next person I saw. So I pulled over. I took out my journal just to air some of my fury, to get it out of my fingertips. Those expressed feelings are that poem."

In addition to race problems and love affairs, another important theme that runs through many of Lorde's poems is the parent-child relationship. Brooks saw a deep concern with the images of her deceased father in Lorde's "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" which carries over to poems dealing with Africa in The Black Unicorn. According to Brooks, "the contact with Africa is the contact with the father who is revealed in a wealth of mythological symbols. ... The fundamental image of the unicorn indicates that the poet is aware that Africa is for her a fatherland, a phallic terrain." Martin, however, took a different view: "Audre Lorde is a rare creature. ... She is the Black Unicorn: magical and mysterious bearer of fantasy draped in truth and beauty." Further, Martin found the poet's feelings about her mother to be more vital to an understanding of her works. In many of Lorde's poems, the figure of her
mother is one of a woman who resents her daughter, tries to repress her child's unique personality so that she conforms with the rest of the world, and withholds the emotional nourishment of parental love. For example, Lorde tells us in Coal's "Story Books on a Kitchen Table": "Out of her womb of pain my mother spat me / into her ill-fitting harness of despair / into her deceits / where anger reconceived me." In The Black Unicorn's "From the House of Yemanja," the mother's efforts to shape the speaker into something she is not do not quench the speaker's desire for the mother's love: "Mother I need / mother I need / . . . I am / the sun and moon and forever hungry." "Balled from Childhood" in The New York Head Shop and Museum is Lorde's depiction of the ways in which a child's hopes and dreams are crushed by a restrictive mother. After the mother has made withering replies to her child's queries about planting a tree to give some beauty to their wasteland surroundings, the child gives up in defeat, saying: "Please mommy do not beat me so! / yes I will learn to love the snow! / yes I want neither seed nor tree! / yes ice is quite enough for me! / who knows what trouble-leaves might grow!" As Martin noted, however, Lorde's ambivalent feelings about her mother "did not make [her] bitter against her own children when circumstances changed her role from that of child to mother." Coal includes the poem "Now That I Am Forever with Child," which discusses the birth of Lorde's daughter. "I bore you one morning just before spring," she recounts, "my legs were towers between which / A new world was passing. / Since then / I can only distinguish / one thread within runnings hours / You, flowing through selves / toward You." In addition to her poetry, Lorde was noted for eloquent prose, one example of which was her courageous account of her agonizing struggle to overcome breast cancer and mastectomy, The Cancer Journals. Her first major prose work, the Journals discuss Lorde's feelings about facing the possibility of death. Beyond death, Martin asserted, Lorde feared "she should die without having said the things she as a woman and an artist needed to say in order that her pain and subsequent loss might not have occurred in vain." Recounting this personal transformation was, for Lorde, of primary importance; as AnaLouise Keating noted in Journal of Homosexuality, "For Lorde, self-expression and self-discovery are never ends in themselves. Because she sees her desire to comprehend her battle with cancer as 'part of a continuum of women's work, of reclaiming this
"earth and or power,' she is confident that her self-explorations will empower her readers." Her *Journals* also reveal Lorde's decision not to wear a prosthesis after her breast was removed. As Brooks pointed out, "she does not suggest [her decision] for others, but . . . she uses [it] to expose some of the hypocrisies of the medical profession." Lorde summarized her attitude on the issue thus in the *Journals*: "Prosthesis offers the empty comfort of 'Nobody will know the difference.' But it is that very difference which I wish to affirm, because I have lived it, and survived it, and wish to share that strength with other women. If we are to translate the silence surrounding breast cancer into language and action against this scourge, then the first step is that women with mastectomies must become visible to each other." Martin concluded: " *The Cancer Journals* affords all women who wish to read it the opportunity to look at the life experience of one very brave woman who bared her wounds without shame, in order that we might gain some strength from sharing in her pain." Lorde's 1982 novel, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, was described by its publishers as a "biomythography, combining elements of history, biography and myth," and Rosemary Daniell, in the *New York Times Book Review*, considered the work "excellent and evocative. . . . Among the elements that make the book so good are its personal honesty and lack of pretentiousness, characteristics that shine through the writing, bespeaking the evolution of a strong and remarkable character." Daniell said that, throughout the book, Lorde's "experiences are painted with exquisite imagery. Indeed, her West Indian heritage shows through most clearly in her use of word pictures that are sensual, steamy, at times near-tropical, evoking the colors, smells—repeatedly, the smells—shapes, textures that are her life." In the late 1980s Lorde and fellow writer Barbara Smith founded Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, which was dedicated to furthering the writings of black feminists. Lorde would also become increasingly concerned over the plight of black women in South Africa under apartheid, creating Sisterhood in Support of Sisters in South Africa and remaining an active voice on behalf of these women throughout the remainder of her life. Indeed, Lorde addressed her concerns to not only the United States but the world, encouraging a celebration of the differences that society instead used as tools of isolation. As Allison Kimmich noted in *Feminist Writers*, "Throughout all of Audre Lorde's writing, both
nonfiction and fiction, a single theme surfaces repeatedly. The black lesbian feminist poet activist reminds her readers that they ignore differences among people at their peril. . . . Instead, Lorde suggests, differences in race or class must serve as a 'reason for celebration and growth.'

Source:

Poetry Foundation

http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/audre-lorde
SESSION #7

The correct groups with stages are listed below:

Stage 1: Group 4
Stage 2: Group 5
Stage 3: Group 1
Stage 4: Group 3
Stage 5: Group 2
Stage 6: Group 6
GROUP #4

Jack comes home after a long night partying with some friends. As he gets into bed he tells himself that what went on was just an accident and if his friends happen to ask about it he will claim to not remember. He thinks, “I must have had too much to drink and was forced to kiss Jason. I would never want to kiss another boy. That is just plain disgusting. I know I am straight and I only want to be with women.”

GROUP #5

Ruby is a 16 year old female high school student. She is an honor roll student and president of her junior class. Ruby notices that she may have non-friend feelings for her best friend, Julia. Every time she sees Julia she gets butterflies in her stomach and just wants to hold her close. She of course would never tell Julia about these feelings. Ruby believes that they will hopefully go away and it’s only a phase. She’s only felt this way about one girl so there is no possibility of her being gay. She feels alone in her feelings and would never dare to tell another.

GROUP #1

Jamez is in the beginning to internally accept that he is gay. Although he has not come out he continues to seek out resources in order to feel less alone. He watches TV shows and movies, and reads books about famous gay individuals. He hopes that seeing others like him will hopefully allow him to see a future that is filled with happiness and not sadness. Jamez is very vulnerable to his friends and society’s opinions about homosexuality.
GROUP #6
Toby is a teacher, an African American, a lesbian, an avid gym goer, and enjoys long walks on the beach at night. Toby does not see her sexuality as her only identity. She sees it as one part of her multiple identities. She does not believe that anyone is more important than the other. She is confident and comfortable with who she is. She has both gay and straight friends.

GROUP #2
Dwyne becomes a well-known gay activist. He is often seen at gay youth centers and volunteering his time on the weekend helping at HIV resource centers. Dwyne has begun to spend less time with his heterosexual friends and more time with his gay friends. He sees his heterosexual friends as “bad” and his gay friends as “good.” On some level he believes that all heterosexual people are bad and sees the world as “us” (gay) vs. them (straight). In any opportunity that he finds he makes sure to tell individuals about his sexuality.

GROUP #3
Cybil has moved from internally accepting possibilities of being a lesbian to outwardly being frustrated and angry at homophobia. All of the frustration that Cybil had inside of her before is now directed outward. All of the self-loathing that she felt when she was insecure about who she is now directed outward. She sees her sexuality in a positive light and feels as if everything will be okay. Cybil has come out to a few selective individuals and goes out of her way to make contact with gay individuals and community.
Identity Confusion: "Could I be gay?" This stage begins with the person's first awareness of gay or lesbian thoughts, feelings, and attractions. The person typically feels confused and experiences turmoil.

Task: Who am I? – Accept, Deny, Reject.

Possible Responses: Will avoid information about lesbians and gays; inhibit behavior; deny homosexuality ("experimenting," "an accident," "just drunk"). Males: May keep emotional involvement separate from sexual contact; Females: May have deep relationships that are non-sexual, though strongly emotional.

Possible Needs: May explore internal positive and negative judgments. Will be permitted to be uncertain regarding sexual identity. May find support in knowing that sexual behavior occurs along a spectrum. May receive permission and encouragement to explore sexual identity as a normal experience (like career identity, and social identity).

2. Identity Comparison: "Maybe this does apply to me." In this stage, the person accepts the possibility of being gay or lesbian and examines the wider implications of that tentative commitment. Self-alienation becomes isolation.

Task: Deal with social alienation.

Possible Responses: May begin to grieve for losses and the things she or he will give up by embracing their sexual orientation. May compartmentalize their own sexuality. Accepts lesbian, gay definition of behavior but maintains "heterosexual" identity of self. Tells oneself, "It's only temporary"; I'm just in love with this particular woman/man," etc.

Possible Needs: Will be very important that the person develops own definitions. Will need information about sexual identity, lesbian, gay community
resources, encouragement to talk about loss of heterosexual life expectations. May be permitted to keep some "heterosexual" identity (it is not an all or none issue).

3. **Identity Tolerance**: "I'm not the only one." The person acknowledges that he or she is likely gay or lesbian and seeks out other gay and lesbian people to combat feelings of isolation. Increased commitment to being lesbian or gay.

**Task**: Decrease social alienation by seeking out lesbians and gays.

**Possible Responses**: Beginning to have language to talk and think about the issue. Recognition that being lesbian or gay does not preclude other options. Accentuates difference between self and heterosexuals. Seeks out lesbian and gay culture (positive contact leads to more positive sense of self, negative contact leads to devaluation of the culture, stops growth). May try out variety of stereotypical roles.

**Possible Needs**: Be supported in exploring own shame feelings derived from heterosexism, as well as external heterosexism. Receive support in finding positive lesbian, gay community connections. It is particularly important for the person to know community resources.

4. **Identity Acceptance**: "I will be okay." The person attaches a positive connotation to his or her gay or lesbian identity and accepts rather than tolerates it. There is continuing and increased contact with the gay and lesbian culture.

**Task**: Deal with inner tension of no longer subscribing to society's norm, attempt to bring congruence between private and public view of self.

**Possible Responses**: Accepts gay or lesbian self-identification. May compartmentalize "gay life." Maintains less and less contact with heterosexual community. Attempts to "fit in" and "not make waves" within the gay and lesbian community. Begins some selective disclosures of sexual identity. More social coming out; more comfortable being seen with groups of men or women that are identified as "gay." More realistic evaluation of situation.
Possible Needs: Continue exploring grief and loss of heterosexual life expectation. Continue exploring internalized "homophobia" (learned shame for heterosexist society.) Find support in making decisions about where, when, and to whom he or she self discloses.

5. Identity Pride: "I've got to let people know who I am!" The person divides the world into heterosexuals and homosexuals, and is immersed in gay and lesbian culture while minimizing contact with heterosexuals. Us-them quality to political/social viewpoint.

Task: Deal with incongruent views of heterosexuals.

Possible Responses: Splits world into "gay" (good) and "straight" (bad). Experiences disclosure crises with heterosexuals as he or she is less willing to "blend in." Identifies gay culture as sole source of support; all gay friends, business connections, social connections.

Possible Needs: Receive support for exploring anger issues. Find support for exploring issues of heterosexism. Develop skills for coping with reactions and responses to disclosure to sexual identity. Resist being defensive!

6. Identity Synthesis: The person integrates his or her sexual identity with all other aspects of self, and sexual orientation becomes only one aspect of self rather than the entire identity.

Task: Integrate gay and lesbian identity so that instead of being the identity, it is an aspect of self.

Possible Responses: Continues to be angry at heterosexism, but with decreased intensity. Allows trust of others to increase and build. Gay and lesbian identity is integrated with all aspects of "self." Feels all right to move out into the community and not simply define space according to sexual orientation.


 Adopted by UNC Safe Zone, Spring 2001
### TABLE 1

**Brief Summary and Adaptation of the Stages of the Sexual Identity Formation (SIF) Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage and Name</th>
<th>Worldview</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1—Identity Confusion</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>beginning internal awareness of g/l/b thoughts, feelings, or behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2—Identity Comparison</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>increase contact with g/l/b persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3—Identity Tolerance</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>increase in g/l/b contact, selective openness about sexual orientation, extremely limited disclosure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4—Identity Acceptance</td>
<td>Transitional</td>
<td>more positive view of g/l/b self, increased networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5—Identity Pride</td>
<td>G/L/B</td>
<td>strong g/l/b identity, confrontation with heterosexuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6—Identity Synthesis</td>
<td>Integrative</td>
<td>sexual orientation as part of total identity, allows both positive and negative perceptions of g/l/b and heterosexual persons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adopted from The Facilitation of a Gay/Lesbian/ Bisexual Support-Therapy Group by Heterosexual Counselors

By: Joseph T. Chojnacki and Susan Gelberg
SESSION #8

2. Growing up Gay: Parts 1-8 can all be found on youtube. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4rRi64_znE&noredirect=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4rRi64_znE&noredirect=1)

3. Trevor by Peggy Rajski: Parts 1 and 2 can be found on youtube. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H29vdSolCz4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H29vdSolCz4)


Advocates for Youth suggestions:

- **Ballot Measure 9.** (72 min.) Wolfe Video, P.O. Box 64, New Almaden, CA 95402; 800.438.9653. This video looks at the battle in Oregon over an anti-gay initiative on the 1992 ballot.

- **Both of My Moms’ Names Are Judy.** Lesbian and Gay Parents Association, 6705 California Street, #1, San Francisco, CA 94121. A powerful and moving series of interviews with children ages 6 to 11 who have gay or lesbian parents. Training materials—*Overcoming Homophobia in the Elementary Classroom*—are also available from the Lesbian and Gay Parents Association.


- **The Celluloid Closet.** (102 min.) Wolfe Video, P.O. Box 64, New Almaden, CA 95402; 800.438.9653. This documentary chronicles gay and lesbian images in Hollywood over the last 40 years. Narrated by Lily Tomlin, it features interviews with a number of Hollywood’s elite and includes numerous film clips.

- **Coming Out Under Fire.** (71 min.) Wolfe Video, P.O. Box 64, New Almaden, CA 95402; 800.438.9653. This documentary profiles the experiences of nine gay and lesbian veterans.

- **Gay & Lesbian Youth: Making History in Massachusetts.** (29 min.) Governor’s Commission on Gay & Lesbian Youth, Massachusetts Dept. of Education, State House, Room 111, Boston, MA 02133. This documentary profiles the work of the Governor’s Commission as Massachusetts became the first state to pass laws to protect gay, lesbian, and bisexual students in schools.
• **Gay Youth.** (40 min.) Wolfe Video, P.O. Box 64, New Almaden, CA 95401; 800.438.9653. One of the best videos about lesbian and gay teens, it profiles two adolescents—one who committed suicide, the other openly gay in high school—and includes a curriculum guide for teachers.

• **It's Elementary.** (78 min.) Women's Educational Media, 2180 Bryant Street, Suite 203, San Francisco, CA 94110; 415.641.4646. Teachers discuss lesbian & gay issues with their classes and make a compelling case for schools addressing these issues.

• **Live to Tell: The First Gay & Lesbian Prom in America.** (24 min.) Wolfe Video, P.O. Box 64, Almaden, CA 95401; 800.438.9653. A documentary covering the first lesbian and gay prom, held in Los Angeles in 1994.

• **Out for a Change: Addressing Homophobia in Women’s Sports.** (27 mins.) Woman Vision Productions, 3145 Geary Blvd., Box 421, San Francisco, CA 94118; 415.346.2336. This documentary portrays women’s sports at the college level. Includes a curriculum written by Pat Griffin. Both the video and curriculum are appropriate for high school students.

• **A Question of Equality.** (220 min./4 parts) Wolfe Video, P.O. Box 64, New Almaden, CA 95402; 800.438.9653. A series, first shown on PBS that, looks at various aspects of the gay civil rights movement.

• **Setting the Record Straight.** (12 min.) GLSEN, 122 W. 26th Street, Suite 1100, New York, NY 10001; 212.727.0135. The first video of the Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) features interviews with members, teachers, and students who talk about GLSEN’s and about the need to combat homophobia in schools.

• **Silverlake Life.** (99 min.) Wolfe Video, P.O. Box 64, New Almaden, CA 95402; 800.438.9653. This moving diary covers the last days of two men with AIDS and documents the love and dedication of their longtime companions.

• **Stonewall 25.** (90 min.) Wolfe Video, P.O. Box 64, New Almaden, CA 95402; 800.438.9653. This segment of the PBS series, In the Life, covers a 25th anniversary celebration in New York City.

• **Straight From the Heart.** (24 min.) Woman Vision Productions, 3145 Geary Blvd, Box 421, San Francisco, CA 94118.
A moving account of parents' struggle with homophobia when they learn that a child is lesbian or gay. Nominated for an Academy Award and excellent for parent workshops.

- **Teaching Respect for All.** (52 min.) GLSEN, 122 W. 26th Street, Suite 1100, New York, NY 10001; 212.727.0135.
  A project of GLSEN, this "homophobia 101" workshop can help teachers, administrators, and parents understand why they need to care about issues of sexual orientation.

- **The Times of Harvey Milk.** (87 min.) Wolfe Video, P.O. Box 64, New Almaden, CA 95402; 800.438.9653.
  This powerful and moving documentary recounts the political success and assassination of the first openly gay supervisor of San Francisco.

- **Tongues Untied.** (55 min.) Wolfe Video, P.O. Box 64, New Almaden, CA 95402; 800.438.9653.
  This unprecedented exploration of black gay life, by Emmy-award winning director Marlon Rigg, became the center of a national controversy after Patrick Buchanan attacked its broadcast on PBS.

- **Trevor.** Intermedia; 1.800.553,8336. Free previews available.
  A humorous, touching short film that won an Academy Award in 1994, Trevor is about a 13-year old boy who is beginning to come to terms with his emerging gay sexual orientation. The video powerfully addresses topics such as teasing, crushes, feeling outcast, and suicide and is especially appropriate for middle-school children.

Source: [http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/component/content/article/727-resources-for-gay-lesbian-bisexual-and-transgender-youth-select-organizations-web-sites-videos](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/component/content/article/727-resources-for-gay-lesbian-bisexual-and-transgender-youth-select-organizations-web-sites-videos)
SESSION #11
# Four Corners

Name ________________________________

Date ________________________________

**Instructions:** Draw or write two sentences answering each statement in each box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How I see Myself</th>
<th>How Others See Me</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I Want to See</th>
<th>How I want others to see me.</th>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gay Activists
Templates
"I am not just a lesbian. I am not just a poet. I am not just a mother. Honor the complexity of your vision and yourselves."

--Audre Lorde
"I'm proud to be a woman. I'm proud to be a black woman, and I'm proud to be gay."

-Wanda Sykes
A writer will write with or without a movement; but at the same time, for Chicano, lesbian, gay and feminist writers—anybody writing against the grain of Anglo misogynist culture—political movements are what have allowed our writing to surface from the secret places in our notebooks into the public sphere.”

-Cherrie Moraga
"To keep living as I did up until today would be to indirectly diminish the glow that my kids were born with," Martin writes. "These years in silence and reflection made me stronger and reminded me that acceptance has to come from within and that this kind of truth gives me the power to conquer emotions I didn't even know existed."

-Ricky Martin
“I’ve already released six albums. I always work hard to give hope to people like me [who are transgendered]. Next year, I’ll be turning 40. I’m hoping hoobaes who are prettier than I am will debut.”

-Harisu
There are certain things that I can't control and have no desire to control. I am multi-racial, I am gay, and there's not much I can do about those things, nor would I want to if I could. So to sit there and worry, it's not a constructive thing. There are so many subjective things in this industry and there's no one linear path to success, so I could freak out about any number of those things, but for my own sanity I try hard not to go there.

-Jessica Clark
We need to dispel the invalid ideas such as the idea that being gay is a “western thing” or “a white man’s disease”.

To challenge anti-gay attitudes, one must be very confident of his/her own sexuality. Imaan and Safra Project are two support groups in the UK, who are doing commendable work in providing that support to LGBT Muslims, their friends, and allies

-Adnan Ali
When an individual is protesting society’s refusal to acknowledge his dignity as a human being, his very act of protest confers dignity on him

-Bayard Rustin