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# Adolescent sexual orientation and parent-child relationship quality

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ADOLESCENT SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND  
PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

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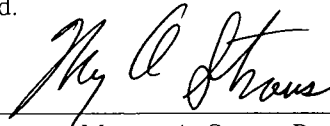
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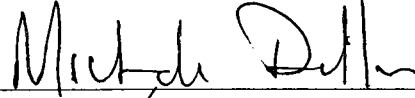
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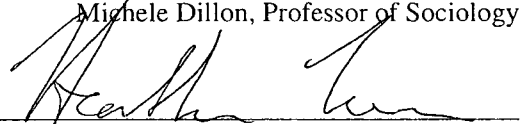
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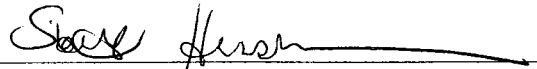
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10 July 2010

Date

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## DEDICATION

For the people who have become my family.

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## ABSTRACT

### ADOLESCENT SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

by

Rose Anne Medeiros

University of New Hampshire, September, 2010

The literature on gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) young people commonly assumes that GLB adolescents have difficult relationships with their parents, due to their parents' difficulty accepting their sexual orientation. However, research tends to show that the family experiences of GLB individuals are diverse. The current research compared the family experiences of GLB and non-GLB college students, specifically, levels of conflict with parents during the respondent's last year of high school, parent-child relationship quality, and physical and psychological assaults by parents during the same time frame, as well as perceived social support from parents at the time of the survey. Levels of depressive symptoms in GLB and non-GLB respondents were also compared. The possibility that parent-adolescent conflict mediated the relationship between sexual orientation, and relationship quality, perceived social support, or depression was also examined. No relationship was found between respondent's sexual orientation and any of the dependent variables, nor did any of the results suggest significant mediation. The lack of significant differences between GLB respondents and non-GLB respondents in this study suggests that the family experiences of GLB young people are not necessarily a great deal worse than those of their non-GLB counterparts.

These findings are consistent with recent scholarship on adolescents with same sex attractions (including those who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual), which tend to emphasize the diversity of identities and experiences of young people with same-sex attractions. Implications for future research, particularly the need for more realistic models of sexual orientation are discussed.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND THEORY

In recent decades gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) individuals have become an increasingly visible and accepted part of American society. Media portrayals of GLB individuals (fictional and otherwise) have increased, as has public support of GLB individuals by prominent individuals (e.g. politicians, social leaders, celebrities; Savin-Williams 2005; Seidman 2002). This increased visibility is partially the result of greater acceptance of GLB individuals. For example, the percentage of individuals polled who thought that gays and lesbians should have equal rights in terms of employment increased from 56% in 1978, to 89% in 2009 (see Gallup 2010 for a review of trends in public opinion on a number of gay related issues). Similarly, the percent of poll respondents who believe that marriages between individuals of the same sex should be legally recognized increased from 27% in 1996, to 44% in 2010. The increased visibility of GLB individuals in the media is also partially a result of the often bitter public debates about the role of GLB people in society. These include discussions about whether same-sex couples should be entitled to the same legal recognition as opposite-sex couples (in the form of civil marriage), but also whether GLB people should be allowed to serve openly in the military, retain custody of their children, adopt children, be protected from discrimination, or even attend their high school proms. At the same time that society debates these legal and social issues, families are also facing the sometimes difficult task of negotiating how GLB family members should be incorporated into family life. This



research examines one aspect of the integration of GLB people into family life, specifically, the quality of relationships between GLB adolescents and their parents.

### **Changes in Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Identities, and**

### **“Coming Out” in the Twentieth Century and Beyond**

Although many individuals report an awareness of their attraction to individuals of their own sex from an early age (Remafedi 1987; Troiden 1989; D'Augelli 2005), prior to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the social climate limited their ability to express this attraction. For individuals who came of age in the 1950s and before, the heterosexual norm of marriage and family formation was so strong that it left relatively little room for an individual to perceive other options (Siedman 2002). Based on in depth interviews, as well as other information, Seidman (2002) argues that individuals may have been aware that they were attracted to members of their own sex, and may have even had sexual experiences with individuals of the same sex, but in their social worlds, there was no role for such an individual. Some individuals managed or contain their attraction to members of the same sex as a personal characteristic (an idiosyncrasy at best, a shameful secret at worst), but the idea that attraction to members of one's own gender represented a distinct identity was largely absent, at least from the lives of individuals Seidman interviewed. There were of course medical models of homosexuality during this era, but individuals may not have been exposed to them.

The 1960s brought about considerable social change in the United States, including changes in norms about sexual behavior (Seidman 1996) and considerable questioning of a number of other social norms in the form of social movements, for example, the Civil Rights and feminist movements. These movements served as

examples and inspiration for a gay liberation movement—if other groups could challenge their oppression, why not gays and lesbians (Seidman 2002 p 173-174)? In 1969 a police raid on the Stonewall Inn, a bar frequented by gay clientele, resulted in a rioting, as well as protests over the following days. The Stonewall riots are often seen as the birth of the American gay rights movement. Part of the change that accompanied the early gay rights movement was that attraction to individuals of the same sex was increasingly seen as a core part of one’s identity, rather than a small (if highly stigmatized) part of who one was (Siedman 1996, 2002). Seidman (1996, 2002) argues that this transition from same-sex attraction as personal attribute to primary identity had profound consequences for individuals. Prior to conceptualizing sexual orientation as a primary identity, medical/psychiatric models viewed “the homosexual” as a distinct type of individual, but the identity fashioned as part of the gay rights movement was distinct in that gay and lesbian individuals were viewed as an oppressed minority. If one views one’s attraction to members of the same sex as an impulse, or as tangential to one’s overall identity, hiding that attraction may have personal costs, but if that attraction is seen as a core identity, then hiding that identity has a different meaning, now one is hiding one’s authentic self (one common description is that one is “living a lie”). Once the idea of being gay as an essential part of a person’s self became more common, individuals faced an important decision, whether to reveal themselves to others (e.g. family, friends, coworkers). Deciding not to reveal one’s sexual orientation to important others (i.e. staying in the closet), could mean considerable hardship for the individual in terms of personal fulfillment and expression, and a potential loss of their sense of personal integrity (e.g. feeling that one is being untrue to oneself). However, revealing oneself was not without

potential costs, including, but not limited to, rejection by family and friends, the loss of employment, and violence and harassment. Even when they did chose to take those risks and live more or less openly gay lives, in the second half of the twentieth century, individuals often did so at the cost of largely leaving behind their families and communities of origin. They moved to urban areas, congregating in “gay ghettos,” and lived lives that were often organized around being GLB. These individuals sometimes led “double lives,” either by hiding their sexual orientation entirely, or revealing their sexual orientation, but sharing little information about their lives with their families. In some cases, ties were cut entirely, either by the individuals themselves, or by families and friends. These strategies all had (and have) significant costs for the individual.

As mentioned above, the past few decades have seen increasing social and legal tolerance of GLB individuals (Gallup 2010). Seidman (2002) argues that in recent years, gay and lesbian individuals increasingly feel a sense of entitlement to full legal and moral status. It can be argued that these social changes have had a particularly profound influence on young people, who have, from a relatively early age, been exposed to positive images of GLB people, as well as to the idea that GLB individuals are moral equals to their heterosexual counterparts. Attraction to individuals of one’s own sex is increasingly viewed as normal by young people (Savin-Williams 2005). Research has found that at least some young people who are attracted to individuals of the same sex do not believe that their sexual orientation represents an important part of who they are, that is, it is not a primary source of identity (Cohler and Hammack 2007, Savin-Williams 2005, Seidman 2002). Bolstered by greater social acceptance, as well as a sense of themselves as normal (i.e. similar in most ways to individuals who are primarily attracted

to individuals of the opposite sex), Seidman (2002) argues that GLB individuals are increasingly unwilling to leave behind (geographically and/or emotionally) their families and communities of origin. Instead, GLB individuals want, and even feel entitled to, the respect and support of their families of origin (see Seidman, 2002, p 96-97 for a particularly succinct discussion of this trend). In previous generations, the decision to come out to important others was an important one. However, for many young people today, openness about their sexual attraction to members of the same sex, at least with the important people in their lives, is a matter of course. That is to say, the question has become more *when* an individual will come out, rather than *if* they individual will come out. While many individuals undoubtedly still face the coming out process with trepidation, they are more likely than individuals in previous generations, to do so with a sense of entitlement, that is, the sense that they should be accepted, and should have the same rights and responsibilities as their heterosexual counterparts.

### **Expectations About Familial Reactions**

As mentioned above, after the beginning of the gay rights movement, many individuals who were able to fashion lives as openly gay did so at the cost of physical and emotional estrangement from their families of origin. This estrangement was due to real or expected rejection by families based on sexual orientation. While coming out to one's family was now possible, and perhaps even desirable, the dangers of doing so were also well known. Consistent with a fear of rejection, studies have found that some gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals avoided revealing their sexual orientation to their families because they feared the negative consequences (Ben-Ari 1995; Martin and Hetrick 1988; Weston 1991 p 62-63). In some ways, negative reactions by family

members were accepted as normal. For example, the author of one study on GLB individuals and their families noted: “individuals who regarded their straight families as accepting often wondered why I wanted to talk with them, since they believed they had ‘boring’ stories, or even ‘no story’ at all” (Weston 1991 p 62). Weston observed that in the coming out stories her respondents and others labeled “good” or most worth telling, the process of coming out to family was often traumatic (Weston 1991 p 61). This suggests that a legitimate fear (i.e. rejection by family) was such a strong expectation that experiences that were inconsistent with this expectation were regarded by some as unimportant.

While adults were able, and often did, move away from their families in order to fashion openly gay lives, young people who still relied on their parents for material, as well as social, support were particularly fearful of familial rejection (Martin and Hetrick 1988; Weston 1991 p 62-63). An almost archetypal “bad coming out story,” served, or serves, as a cautionary tale about the dangers of coming out to one’s parents, especially at a young age. The following case of a 17 year old named Jim, taken from a book of writings by gay and lesbian youth, illustrates this type of story (Heron 1983).

‘Mom, I always hide something when I’m trying to protect you and Dad.

What I mean is, all the times I leave I’ve been going on dates with guys

because *I’m gay*’ ‘You cannot be gay....you don’t even know what it

means. Do you actually have sex with these people?’ She did not even

wait for my answer. She ran to the phone and called up our parish priest.

She got no support he said that gays do exist, and in fact constitute part of

life. This my mom could not accept. So she called Catholic Charities and

made an appointment for a counseling session—for *me*, not her. I came out on a Monday and the appointment was for Wednesday. On Tuesday, I was tormented at the dinner table by my parents. My Dad called me every name in the book while my Mom prayed over me, quoting from the bible...(Heron 1983 pg 41-42)

Later his parents would lie to have him placed in a psychiatric hospital, have him arrested, stalked by private investigators, and his father would severely assault him (Heron 1983).

Certainly, this fear of rejection, and even violence by family members is not unfounded, research reveals significant family problems among GLB young people (see Savin-Williams 1994 for a review, as well as, Busseri, Willoughby, Chalmers, and Bogaert 2008). However, the above story, and the empirical support for the notion that gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth have difficult family relationships may not accurately reflect the lives of all, or even most, GLB adolescents. A survey of youth who participated in activities held by an organization serving gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents found that the support network of participants typically included family members as well as peers (Grossman and Kerner 1998). However, these youth and their families may be substantially different from youth who have not disclosed their sexual orientation or who have done so on a limited basis, nor is it necessarily representative of GLB youth who reside outside of urban areas. Additionally, two qualitative studies of adults who identify as gay or lesbian found that although some parents' initial reactions were negative, most respondents reported that their parents did not reject them or take violent action against them (Savin-Williams 2001; Weston 1991 p 62). Another study,

which included both young gay people and unrelated parents of gay individuals (i.e. they were not the parents of the gay respondents), found that even when parents' initial reactions were negative, both young gay people and parents of gay or lesbian children reported that parents' negative reactions, including anger and rejection tended to decrease and that parents' acceptance and acknowledgement of their child's sexual orientation tended to increase over time (Ben-Ari 1995).

It is important to note that coming out, or having one's sexual orientation discovered, is not the only danger gay, lesbian, and bisexual young people face. Young people's attempts to hide their sexual orientation from their families may have considerable consequences; both because of the stress involved in constantly monitoring one's behavior (Weston 1991, p 50), and because the very behaviors related to self-surveillance (lying, withdrawal, limited disclosure of activities and feelings, etc.) may invoke negative reactions from parents. Ben-Ari (1995) found that both among parents of gay children and a sample of unrelated gay young people, the most common reason cited for coming out was to avoid hiding or "living a lie." This is important because it suggests that even among GLB youth, sexual orientation per say may not always be the cause of parent-child conflict.

While there is little doubt that the consequences of being gay, lesbian, or bisexual are severe for some young people (D'Augelli, Hershberger, and Pilkington 1998; Savin-Williams 1994; Savin-Williams and Cohen 1996; Winter 1995), there is also little doubt that some heterosexual young people have difficult, and even abusive relationships with their parents. In contrast, some gay, lesbian, and bisexual young people have close relationships with their parents and other family members (Grossman, D'Augelli, and

Hershberger 2000). Whether being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is associated with significantly more conflict and difficulties with one's parents is still largely unknown, because few comparisons have been made. One study (Busseri, et al. 2008) found that high school students who reported significant attraction to members of both genders and those who reported only being attracted to individuals of their own gender had significantly lower scores on a broad measure of parent-child relationship quality, when compared to students who reported being exclusively or primarily attracted to individuals of the opposite sex.

The current research seeks to contribute to this literature by comparing the parent-child relationships of GLB college students to their heterosexual counterparts. In addition to examining the relationship between adolescent's sexual orientation and the quality of the adolescent's relationship with their parents, the role of various parental factors will also be examined. Research on sexual minority samples has shown that some factors may predict parental acceptance of their GLB identified offspring. For example, one common finding is that mothers tend to react more positively to coming out than fathers (D'Augelli 2005; Remafedi 1987). The relationship of other parental attributes, such as age, level of education, religiosity, and authoritarianism, to parent-adolescent relationship quality will be examined. Of particular interest is the interaction of sexual orientation with other factors that may impact the relationship that young people (both homosexual and heterosexual) have with their parents. For example, more authoritarian parents may have difficult relationships with their adolescent children, regardless of the young person's sexual orientation. An argument can be made that one could expect even worse



relationships between authoritarian parents and sexual minority youth because these young people are failing to conform to the norms of society (i.e. heterosexuality).

### **On the Ethics of and Motivation for Cross-Group Comparisons**

This study explicitly compares differences between two groups, heterosexual and non-heterosexual young people. Given that sexual-minorities are the target of considerable social stigma, this type of comparison has the potential to raise ethical issues. In the view of some authors, research that compares GLB youth to heterosexual youth necessarily stigmatizes GLB youth. Savin-Williams, a psychologist who has authored four books and numerous articles on gay youth, writes: “studies that build into their research design a gay-versus-straight paradigm assume by their very nature that these two are separate populations of adolescents. One is ‘normal’ and the other is not. Guess which is not” (2001 p 10). I would like to respectfully disagree for several reasons. First, when one compares men and women, or variation between social classes, one does not assume these groups are from different “populations,” rather, such studies acknowledge that individual experiences and structural conditions may vary across social groups, while emphasizing that the groups live within the same culture. Second, research of this type, while it does identify differences between groups, often identifies many more similarities. In the case of homosexuality, such studies have been important because the *similarities* found between gays, lesbians, and bisexuals and their heterosexual counterparts were important in the removal of homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual in 1973 (Bohan, Russell, Cass, Haldeman, Iasenza, Klein, Omoto, and Tiefer 1999 pg 140). That is, rather than necessarily pathologizing homosexuality, comparisons have served to depathologize homosexuality. Research with this type of

design does perpetuate the heterosexual/homosexual binary, which is arguably problematic. I agree that a less constrained, and more realistic, approach to studying the role of sexual orientation in the lives of individuals is needed, but such approaches are far more easily called for than implemented (see Chapters II and IV for more thorough discussions of the difficulties in defining and measuring sexual orientation). Finally, I would like to explicitly state that the underlying purpose of this research is not to apply evaluative judgments to any group being studied. Rather I believe that the more that is known about the lives of individuals and social groups, the greater the possibility for general understanding and more humane treatment of these groups.

With regard to this research specifically, the main goals of comparing heterosexual and sexual minority youth is to ascertain if differences exist in parent-child relationships, and the degree of those differences. Additionally, this research investigates which adolescent and parent characteristics are associated with more or less parent-adolescent conflict, both for heterosexual and sexual minority youth. Finally, the current research will investigate the degree to which conflict, including conflict related to sexual orientation, is related to depression in early adulthood. While these questions are in part a matter of intellectual curiosity (i.e. that is a desire to attempt to systematically answer questions), they also have important applications. The results of this study, along with the results of other studies with different methodologies (e.g. Savin-Williams 2001; Weston 1991), may help those who provide mental health and other services to GLB youth with a more accurate picture of the range of family environments experienced by GLB young people. Further, information on which parent and adolescent characteristics are associated with problems in families of gay and lesbian youth, and young people in general, may be

of great utility. Such information has the potential to be used in outreach, targeting services, and in helping individual social service workers identify potential problems and areas of difficulty with their clients. For example, based on research that has shown that gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth make up nearly half of the adolescents and young adults living on the streets of New York City (Clatts, Hillman, Atillasoy, and Davis 1999), efforts have been made to provide services specifically geared towards the needs of young GLB individuals living on the streets (e.g. The Ali Forney Center 2004).

### **Background**

#### **Prevalence of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth**

Estimates of the number of gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals vary widely based on a number of methodological issues. The primary issue is whether sexual orientation is measured based on the individual's self-identification as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, or based on the individual's reported attractions and/or behavior. Regardless of how sexual orientation is measured, GLB youth still make up a sizeable minority of all youth. For example, in a random sample of Massachusetts high school students, a total of 6.4% reported same-sex sexual contact (Faulkner and Cranston 1998). Of the 6.4% of students who reported same-sex sexual contact, slightly less than half (3%) reported having had contact with individuals of both sexes while the remaining students (3.4%) reported engaging in sexual contact only with members of the same sex (Faulkner and Cranston 1998). A cohort study from New Zealand found that by age 28, 1.6% of men and 2.1% of women reported either primary or significant attraction to individuals of the same sex (Dickson, Paul, and Herbison 2003). In another sample, when high school students were asked to identify their sexual orientation (rather than report their behavior

or attractions) 6% identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and an additional 13% reported that they were uncertain of their sexual orientation (Lock and Steiner 1999).

### **Age of Awareness of Sexual Orientation**

Individuals typically report an awareness of same-sex attraction by mid-adolescence, with a minority of individuals reporting same-sex attractions beginning in childhood or in adulthood (Remafedi 1987; Troiden 1989; D'Augelli 2005). Rosario et al (1996) report that in a sample of GLB identified youth, the mean age for considering the possibility of a GLB identity was 13.9 years for females and 12.5 years for males. Respondents reported that a sense of certainty about their identity came a few years later, at a mean age of 15.9 years for girls and 14.6 years for boys (Rosario et al. 1996). These findings are consistent with other research on the identity formation of GLB adolescents (e.g. Troiden 1989). An awareness of sexual attraction to members of the same-sex, and often identification as gay, lesbian or bisexual (at least to ones' self), typically predates sexual contact with members of the same sex (Drasin, Beals, Elliott, Lever, Klein, and Schuster 2008; D'Augelli 2005; Remafedi 1987; Rosario et al. 1996). Given that some youth begin to identify themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual starting in early adolescence, the impact of their sexual orientation on their relationships with their family is important because adolescence is a critical time in development. Adolescence is a time during which physical and emotional maturation takes place, but is also the time during which individuals typically make decisions about their education, career, etc. that impact their life course.

Consistent with trends of greater visibility and acceptance of GLB individuals discussed above, research has found that younger cohorts of gay men tend to report

experiencing a number of developmental milestones earlier than older cohorts (Drasin, Beals, Elliott, Lever, Klein, and Schuster 2008). On average, men who were younger at the time of the survey reported realizing they were attracted to males, identifying themselves as gay, and telling someone they were gay at younger ages. The greatest drop was in the age at first coming out to a family member. Men born before 1935 were on average 40 when they first came out to a family member, in contrast, men born between 1970 and 1976 (the youngest cohort in the study) had an average age at first coming out to a family member of around 21. These differences remain even after statistically adjusting for differences in exposure (i.e. the fact that men who come to identify as gay later in life have had time to do so in older cohorts, but not in younger cohorts). Earlier ages at coming out, both to themselves and to family members, make studies of GLB young people both possible and more relevant than they were in earlier cohorts.

### **Mental Health in Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth**

Gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth are consistently found to be more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to suffer from depression, anxiety, suicide attempts, substance abuse, persistent loneliness, and self-mutilation (Busseri et. al 2008; Faulkner and Cranston 1998; Feldman, Bird, Hoven, Moore, and Bin 2000; Fergusson, Horwood, and Beautrais 1999; Remafedi 1987; Remafedi, French, Story, Resnick, and Blum 1998; Savin-Williams 1994). The magnitude of differences found between gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth and their heterosexual counterparts are often dramatic. For example, one study found GLB youth were found to be 6.2 times more likely to have attempted suicide and 5.4 times more likely to be or have been suicidal than their heterosexual peers (Fergusson, Horwood, and Beautrais 1999). The same study showed that gay, lesbian,

and bisexual youth were 5 times more likely to be smokers and 1.9 times more likely to use other substances (Fergusson, Horwood, and Beautrais 1999). Another study found GLB high school students were 30% more likely to have used crack cocaine than their heterosexual counterparts (Garofalo, Wolf, Kessel, Palfrey, and DuRant 1998). In addition to engaging in more health risk behaviors (e.g. substance abuse), GLB youth tend to begin engaging in risk behaviors at an earlier age (Garofalo et al. 1998).

Higher rates of distress and disorder in GLB youth are typically attributed to higher levels of stress among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth (Rotheram-Borus and Fernandez 1995). One possible source of stress is difficult family relationships. Research on the relationship between familial reactions to an individual's sexual orientation and various symptoms of distress is mixed. One study of gay men, most of whom were between the ages of 20 and 39, found that greater perceived social support from one's family and acceptance of one's sexual orientation by family members were positively associated with both mental health and self-esteem (Elizur and Ziv 2001). Similarly a study of GLB identified young adults (age 21 to 25) found that individuals who reported more rejection by family members were more likely to report high levels of depression, anxiety, suicide attempts, substance use, and unprotected sex (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, Sanchez 2007). One study of high school students found some evidence that parent-child relationship quality mediated the relationship between same-sex attraction and risk behaviors (Busseri et al. 2008). However, a longitudinal study of gay and lesbian youth from Belgium found that parental acceptance was not generally associated with self-esteem, depression, and hopelessness either at the beginning of the study, or at follow-up six months later (Vincke and Van Heeringen 2002). The young people for this study were

recruited from a summer camp for gay and lesbian youth (under age 25) and most reported that their parents were aware of their sexual orientation and were relatively accepting. Thus, it is possible that a lack of variance in levels of parental awareness and acceptance was partially responsible for the lack of an effect in that sample.

At least one study suggests that stressors not related to sexual orientation may be more important predictors of mental health problems in GLB young people (Elze 2002), a finding that runs counter to the assumption that relatively high levels of psychological distress seen in GLB youth are the result of their attraction to individuals of the same sex (either directly or indirectly through the reaction of important others). Elze surveyed a sample of gay youth, and found that the majority of variance in internalizing and externalizing behaviors was explained by stressors that were not related to being gay (e.g. economic stress, or mental illness in the family), rather than gay related stress (e.g. perceived stigmatization, and victimization because of sexual orientation, Elze 2002). Similarly, Darby-Mullins and Murdock (2007) found that general family functioning predicted emotional adjustment in GLB young people, after controlling for parental homophobia and degree of self-acceptance of sexual orientation. These findings suggest that factors related to sexual orientation are not the only, or necessarily even the primary, source of stress for GLB young people.

A related explanation for higher rates of mental health problems in GLB young people is that the combination of the additional stress experienced by gay, lesbian, and bisexual young people, and poor relationships with family and others, may result in a lack of social support, which would otherwise be important in mitigating the impact of stress (Turner 1999). The findings of Vinkcke and van Heeringen (2002 discussed above)

suggest the perceived availability of social support was consistently associated with better mental health.

Clearly these explanations are not mutually exclusive, it is possible that GLB youth both experience greater stress *and* have less social support available to them. The potential for mental health problems among individuals who experience this combination of stress and lack of social support is likely to be high. Conversely, it seems likely that that GLB (and other) young people with relatively good relationships with their parents would both have lower levels of stress and more social support when they do encounter stressful events or situations.

### **Parent-Adolescent Conflict**

The “storm and stress” perspective on adolescence, popularized by Sigmund and later Anna Freud has been largely discredited (Collins and Laursen 2004). Most research on parent-adolescent conflict suggests that conflict between adolescents and their parents tends to be over relatively mundane topics such as housework and spending money (Ellis-Schwabe and Thornburg 1986). Interaction between early adolescents and their parents does tend to be more negative than those of pre-adolescent children and their parents (Collins and Laursen 2004 pg 337). However, one longitudinal study found that while young adolescents reported that their interactions with family tended to be somewhat negative, four years later, their perceptions of interactions with family had improved (Larson, Richards, Monteta, Holmbeck, and Duckett 1996). Further, adolescents and parents both tend to report positive relationships (Collins and Laursen 2004 pg 337). Research does tend to suggest that poor relationship quality, including high



levels of conflict, between adolescents and their parents may negatively impact adolescents development (Collins and Laursen 2004 p 336).

### **Implications for GLB Youth**

As discussed above, GLB individuals are often aware of their attraction to individuals of the same sex during adolescence (Remafedi 1987; Troiden 1989; D'Augelli 2005). In younger cohorts, there is also a tendency to come out to others, including family members, during adolescence (Drasin, Beals, Elliott, Lever, Klein, and Schuster 2008). While evidence is somewhat mixed, research does tend to suggest that familial acceptance of their sexual orientation is a predictor of mental health and other outcomes for GLB young people. These findings are consistent with research that has found negative parent-adolescent interaction is associated with negative consequences for young people in general (Collins and Laursen 2004 p 336). To the extent that GLB young people experience greater conflict, and receive less social support than their heterosexual counterparts, one would expect to see greater rates of distress and disorder in GLB young people. The current research addresses both whether GLB young people report greater conflict with, and lower social support and/or relationship quality with their parents, and whether these variables mediate any relationship between sexual orientation and depression.

## **Theory**

### **The Phenomenological Approach**

Berger and Luckmann (1966 p 61) posit that both the self and society are the products of a dialectic in which one acts to create, maintain, and modify the other through the interaction of individual humans. Reality is divided into two spheres: objective and

subjective. Objective reality is the social environment in which the individual exists, while subjective reality is the portion of objective reality that is absorbed by the individual in childhood, through a process Berger and Luckmann term primary socialization (1966 p 133). In the case of sexual orientation, heteronormativity<sup>1</sup>, is absorbed by most, if not all, members of American society at an early age. The social construction of heterosexuality as the normal and morally correct way of being is an objective reality, and as such, a failure to follow the rules prescribed by this reality is likely to result in negative consequences for the individual.

It is important to note that while social constructions are an objective reality in the individual's social environment, they are not necessarily correct, and are subject to change over time. For example, it was once believed that women were incapable of, or unsuitable for, serious intellectual work. While women have now shown they are capable of such work, suggesting that this belief was untrue, that this belief was widely held by their contemporaries interfered with the careers of early women scientists and intellectuals. As this example also shows, the objective nature of the socially constructed reality does not render society static. Through a dialectical process, individuals can and do question institutionalized patterns using their everyday knowledge, further, through interaction with others such individuals may even change objective reality.

Objective reality is dependent on legitimating to “explain and justify” it (Berger and Luckmann 1966 p 61 and 93). Legitimizing provides individuals with codes of behavior, and with the knowledge needed to understand those codes. For example,

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<sup>1</sup> Heteronormativity is used to describe a set of social norms that construct as natural both a gender binary (i.e. male/female) and a “resulting” sexual orientation binary (i.e. heterosexual/homosexual). Resulting from these two binaries is the construction of heterosexuality as the normal or correct sexual orientation (Warner 1993 p xv-xvi). The terms heterosexist and heterosexism are defined similarly, describing again, the core assumption that individuals are heterosexual.

children learn to identify individuals as either male or female (the necessary knowledge of socially constructed reality), and later learn that when they become adults, they will be expected to form a socially recognized union with someone of the *opposite-sex* and bear children (code of behavior). Legitimizing also provides a justification for its rules and an explanation of its knowledge. To continue the previous example, the explanation of why an individual is male or female is explain in terms of the form of the individual's genitalia, but is often inferred based on both biological (e.g. presence or absence of facial hair, pitch of voice) as well as socially constructed (e.g. manner of dress) cues. The justification of this rule (that one marries someone of the opposite sex) may be provided by any number of arguments including, but not limited to: biblical imperatives, psychoanalytic theory<sup>2</sup>, and the inability of a same-sex couple to produce children through the traditional process. In addition to these functions, legitimating also provides an overarching system of beliefs that tie together seemingly unrelated areas of life and allows objective reality to be viewed as a relatively cohesive whole (Berger and Luckmann 1966 p 95).

Contained within the cohesive system with which societies define reality are theories about identity. These theories define types of individuals who can be identified within society as well as how they behave, and why they behave that way (Berger and Luckmann 1966 p 174). As with all other aspects of reality, identity types are a product of the dialectic between humans and the social system (Berger and Luckmann 1966 p

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<sup>2</sup> Psychoanalytic theory posited that homosexuality was the result of traumatic events in childhood that resulted in a failure of the individual to become a fully mature (read heterosexual) adult (Mondimore 1996). Despite substantial evidence that GLB individuals are not inherently different from heterosexuals with respect to psychological functioning and the subsequent removal of homosexuality from the DSM (Bohan et al 1999), some individuals, including some mental health professionals continue to espouse theories of homosexuality similar to Freud's.

174). What sets identity types apart from other some other aspects of reality is that they are within the realm of everyday life, and as such can be verified by the observations of individuals in the course of their lives (Berger and Luckmann 1966 p 176-177). This means that individuals can question theories of identity themselves, rather than relying on experts to do so. As a result, experiences in everyday life can be used to problematize theories of identity. Once theories are problematized, or challenged, they are then apt to be subject to revision or change (Berger and Luckmann 1966 p 179). In the case of beliefs about “the homosexual” interaction with GLB individuals, particularly before they are identified as such, may falsify some of the stereotypes about GLB individuals, for example stereotypes: of effeminate gay men and masculine lesbians, that all GLB people are promiscuous, that they do not value families (either their own or those of others), or that they are vastly different from “normal” people. The failure of theory to predict the behavior of GLB individuals allows individuals to question the theory itself.

Structural conditions impact the ability of the individual to question subjective reality, to change their own subjective reality, and to create a change in objective reality in either society as a whole, or a sub-section of society. Contact with other individuals who similarly question reality may provide support for the individual’s redefinition of reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966 pg 166). Contact with other GLB individuals helps some individuals who are attracted to individuals of the same-sex form a positive gay identity and lead fulfilling lives, and can help parents in accepting their GLB identified children (Salzberg 2004, Seidman 2002 p 107). One strategy for both forming a positive GLB identity, and maintaining it in the face of a relatively hostile society, is to form an identity and lifestyle that largely revolved around one’s status as GLB. This is consistent

with the pattern in which GLB individuals moved away from their families of origin to urban areas with relatively high concentrations of GLB individuals. If a group's redefinition of reality becomes known to the rest of society they may gain more members, that is, individuals who have revised their subjective reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966 pg 167). More importantly, as mentioned above, the existing theories of identity become problematic, which may lead to the revision of those theories. Changes in social norms around sexuality in recent decades have exhibited this phenomenon. Challenges to the prevailing homophobic and heterosexist society started with early so called homophile organizations which grew into the gay rights movement, which further expanded to include heterosexual supporters, and more recently the questioning of heterosexist social norms by a variety of individuals in society. Although not without considerable resistance, society has questioned existing beliefs and norms around sexual orientation, and change in the social world has followed.

### **The Life Course Perspective**

The life course is generally defined as “age-graded life patterns embedded in social institutions and subject to historical change” (Elder 1991 p 1121). While some of the stages and transitions in the life course are dictated by biology (e.g. infants are unable to care for themselves) many of the roles and the timing of role transitions are the product of social expectations, rather than biological constraints. For example, most women can become pregnant by their mid-teens, however, in American society, this has been socially constructed as undesirable, and the majority of individuals within this society do not bear children during this time (Grunbaum, Kann, Kinchen, Ross, Hawkins, Lowry, Harris, McManus, Chyen, and Collins 2004). The life course is generally conceptualized as a set

of social constructions that nonetheless have real consequences in the lives of individuals. This is consistent with the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), specifically the argument that reality (in this case the “proper” progression of roles) as experienced in everyday life is socially constructed, but that it is objective both in the sense that it is outside the individual and that it has real consequences for the individual. It is also worth noting the emphasis on cohort differences, that is, historical change in the “appropriate” timing, sequence, and existence of transitions in the life course. This is both consistent with the Phenomenological perspective, and potentially useful in understanding the changing manner in which GLB individuals navigate the life course (Cohler and Hammack 2007).

Despite some recent changes, the general structure of the expected lives of individuals is well defined. During childhood and adolescence the individual is taken care of by others and the individual’s time is largely consumed by socialization and education. This period is followed by adulthood, during which one begins a career, selects a mate and bears children; then midlife during which offspring are launched. Finally, there is late life, a return to relative leisure during which one’s career often ends, one’s children bear children, and one’s body may return to needing the care of others. The failure or refusal of individuals to follow these socially (and to some extent biologically) constructed stages is often met with resistance from others.

The primary developmental tasks for adolescents include education and/or career training, as well as the acquisition of social skills that will enable them to engage in adult roles. Parents, whose role it is to socialize, educate, and monitor their children will attempt to guide their children through adolescence in a manner that maximizes the

child's ability to engage in the anticipated adult roles. That is, parents will attempt to prepare a child for the adult roles they expect the child to hold. Variation in parenting behavior, can to some extent be explained by variation in parent's expectations about their children's future roles: for example, female children may be channeled into certain activities in anticipatory socialization of their future roles as mothers and wives, and parents of the middle- and upper-classes tend to encourage creativity, reasoning, and development of talents, while working-class parents tend to stress punctuality, and respect for authority (Bronfenbrenner 1958; Laureau 2003). Similarly, behaviors that parents believe will reduce the likelihood of their child successfully transitioning into adult roles will be discouraged. Behaviors such as substance use, rule breaking, and poor academic performance are of concern to many parents and other groups within society (e.g. political leaders, educators). The language often used by researchers to describe these behaviors, that is "risk behaviors" or "high risk behaviors," is suggestive; one could easily ask what exactly is being risked, arguably it is the adolescent's appropriate movement into adult roles is being risked.

### **Application of Theory**

Parental Response to Discovery of Youth's Sexual Orientation. In order to fully accept their child's status as a sexual minority, many parents will need to question the validity of their expectations, and/or their perception of sexual minorities and their life course. In other words, parents must question social norms, beliefs, etc. about homosexuality (i.e. objective reality) and hence modify their subjective reality. It is worth noting that while research suggests young people increasingly view attraction to individuals of the same sex as routine (Cohler and Hammack 2007; Savin-Williams

2005) and GLB individuals as “normal” (Savin-Williams 2005; Seidman 2002), their parents are from a different generation, and hence may have internalized different norms regarding sexuality. If parents believe that homosexuality is morally repugnant or unnatural, a belief still held by about half of Americans (Brewer 2003; Saad 2004), reevaluating these beliefs is a necessary step in accepting their GLB child.

While parents cannot individually change the objective reality of a heterosexist social environment, parents can modify their perceptions based on experiences in the daily lives. For example, parents who believe that sexual minorities are different from themselves in undesirable ways (e.g. promiscuous, flamboyant) may see that their child, their child’s GLB friends, or other members of the GLB community, are not necessary any of these things. Additionally, parents’ tendency to reject or condemn sexual minorities in general may conflict both with their love of their children and other deeply held values (e.g. “blood is thicker than water” or “god loves all people”). Qualitative research with parents of GLB young people suggests that parents tend to experience dissonance when their love for their children is challenged by their homophobic beliefs, an experience parents report finding emotionally difficult (Saltzberg 2004). For these parents, placing an emphasis on one set of values over another will allow them to partially resolve this inconsistency. Prior to discovering their child is GLB, beliefs, moral imperatives, etc. pertaining to homosexuality are likely to be more peripheral to most people’s experiences and lives than other values (e.g. the importance of family), hence, it may be easier for parents to modify or dismiss homosexuality-related beliefs, than it is for them to modify other beliefs and values. Thus, having their child come out to them may provide both evidence against parent’s homophobic beliefs, and the motivation to



further examine those beliefs. Results of one qualitative study of individuals with GLB relatives suggests that these processes do take place (Lease and Shulman 2003). For example, the most frequently cited factor in helping family members accept their GLB relative was the respondent's belief that in a god who loved and accepted all humans. The same study found that while the belief that homosexual activity was sinful made it more difficult to accept a loved one's identity as GLB, some individuals ultimately rejected organized religion, although not necessarily faith, because they believed it had moved away from the original message from gods and/or prophet. Other family members may continue to identify with organized religion, while believing that religious leaders are incorrect on the issue of homosexuality, not unlike individuals who identify themselves as Catholic, but opt to ignore teachings against the use of birth control (Lease and Shulman 2003; Stein 2001).

In addition to reevaluating any negative beliefs about GLB individuals that they may harbor, parents who discover that their child is GLB may also need to reevaluate their beliefs about the lives of GLB individuals and/or their expectations about their child's life course. It is an almost universal expectation in American culture that once they reach a certain age (adulthood), individuals will marry someone of the opposite sex with whom they will bear and raise children. Parents may have other aspirations for their children (e.g. educational, and/or career goals), but there is almost always the additional assumption that children will eventually get married and have children. In recent years there have been some changes patterns of childbearing, for example, people are marrying and having children somewhat later than was common a generation or two ago, and divorce has become more common (DeFrain and Olson 1999). These trends involve some

modification to the life course of today's adolescents compared to those of their parents and particularly their grandparents, but the basic pattern has remained the same. The revelation that a child is attracted to individuals of the same sex represents a serious challenge to this vision. One parent interviewed as part of a small qualitative study remarked:

It's like the death of a child that you thought was going to grow up and be the way you always thought about. All your dreams for this kid—you know, marriage, the whole bit—none of it is going to happen... (Saltzberg 2004)

Another commonly cited concern of parents involves their child's ability to fulfill two primary adult roles: spouse and parent. Savin-Williams (2001) interviewed the parents of gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents and young adults and found that parents were often upset by the "loss" of grandchildren they had anticipated.

The expectation that a gay, lesbian, or bisexual child will deviate from the expected life course is based on a number of beliefs about homosexuality and the lives of sexual minorities. The degree to which parents must modify their expectations about their child's future based on their offspring's sexual orientation will depend both on the expectations the parent had for their child and the parent's perceptions of the lives of GLB individuals. As the lives of at least some GLB individuals have shifted to mirror those of heterosexuals, this process may become less a matter of parents changing their aspirations for their child's future, and more a matter of changing their own beliefs about the lives of GLB individuals. For example, some of the parents interviewed by Saltzberg (2004) expressed a fear of losing their children to a lifestyle and community to which they, as heterosexuals, could not be a part. While earlier cohorts of GLB individuals

tended to move away from their families of origins, and fashion lives that largely revolved around their identity as sexual minorities, GLB young people increasingly want to remain integrated in the families and communities in which they grew up (Seidman 2002). For parents who fear losing their child to geographic and social distance, understanding that GLB individuals in general, and more importantly their child specifically, wish to remain an integral part of their family of origin may be comforting. Further, for at least some GLB individuals, the life course now includes commitment ceremonies (and in some places, legally binding partnerships), and childrearing. As the lives GLB individuals become more similar to those of the heterosexual counterparts, the degree to which parents must modify their visions of their children's futures based on sexual orientation decreases.

Questioning the validity of their expectations and beliefs allows the parents to modify their norms to fit a more realistic vision of their child's future. In families where parents are unable or unwilling to modify their expectations or beliefs there is likely to be significant strain on the parent-adolescent relationship. In contrast, families in which parents are able to make the changes necessary to accept their adolescent's status as a sexual minority may experience some disruption as the parent adapts, but are not expected to have more significant ongoing conflict than families of heterosexual children. The ability of parents to make the necessary changes may be based on multiple factors including: homophobia, their own variation from norms, religiosity, degree of authoritarianism, and level of education, factors which are examined in the current research.

The Alternatives to Coming Out. As discussed above, among the reasons cited for failing to come out to parents fear of rejection is a common theme in coming out stories told by gays and lesbians (Hartin and Hetrick 1988 in Savin-Williams 1994; Weston 1991 p 62-64). These fears include a general fear of rejection of the individual's sexual orientation, the withholding of financial support, or even violence (Weston 1991 p63). Based on these fears, some sexual minorities wait until they are adults to come out to their parents (Weston 1991 p 63).

Hiding one's sexual orientation from one's family is both possible and problematic because of the nature of sexual orientation and the nature of family relationships. Half a century ago, Goffman (1963 p 80) noted that many homosexuals could "pass" as heterosexual, in a way that is seldom possible for other stigmatized minority groups, and this continues to be true today. Plummer (1975 p 178) argues that four aspects of social life help individuals who are sexual minorities conceal their status as such from those around them. These factors include: the "normal" appearance of sexual minorities; the fact that in most social contexts (e.g. the workplace, supermarkets) homosexuality is irrelevant; the private nature of sexuality and sexual behavior; and the segregation of different aspects of daily life (e.g. work vs. home life). However, as Plummer (1975 p181) acknowledges, because of the structure of the family, these factors are less likely to work within families. Most notably, it may not be possible to keep various aspects of one's life separate from or unknown to members of one's own family because of norms that proscribe that the whole of the person be presented to family, rather than a single aspect of that person as is typical of relationships at work, school, or in voluntary organizations. This is particularly so in the context of relationships between

parents and under-age children. One aspect of the parental role is to monitor and control the behavior of children, thus, parents are allowed, if not expected, to know about their children's activities and associations. Parents are also responsible for the socialization and development of their children, meaning that they must monitor not only the outward behavior of their children, but more internal aspects of their children's lives.

In practical terms, this means that adolescents who attempt to hide their sexual orientation may meet with considerable difficulties doing so. In general, hiding one's sexual orientation is difficult because of the self-monitoring that is necessary to avoid disclosing information that will lead to the discovery of one's sexual orientation. The difficulty in maintaining the secrecy necessary to hide one's sexual orientation is shown by the observation of one author that many families learn of an individual's sexual orientation via interactional cues, rather than a formal statement by their relative (Weston 1991 pg 66). More importantly for the current research, because families, and particularly parents of adolescents, expect to have some knowledge of the behavior of the individual, an individual who attempts to avoid certain topics, refuses to give information, or generally appears to be hiding something may find that non-disclosure itself results in conflict.

### **Research Questions**

The questions addressed by the current research are listed below. The research questions are divided into three categories. First, are questions related to conflict with parents, quality of the young person's relationship with their parents, and aggression by parents. All three of these outcomes are measured during the respondent's last year of high school (or the last year the respondent lived with their parents). The second set of

questions involve perceived social support from parents and the respondent's level of depressive symptoms at the time of the survey. Finally, the third set of questions involves the role of various parental characteristics in explaining levels of parent-adolescent conflict.

### **Questions Related to Conflict, Relationship Quality, and Aggression By Parents**

1. Do gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) adolescents report more conflict with their parents than heterosexual adolescents, after controlling for potential areas of conflict (i.e. undesirable behavior by the young person)?
  - 2a. Do GLB adolescents report lower parent-child relationship quality?
  - 2b. Is the relationship between sexual orientation and parent-child relationship quality mediated by parent-child conflict?
  - 3a. Do GLB adolescents perceive less current social support from parents?
  - 3b. Is the relationship between sexual orientation and current social support from parents mediated by parent-child conflict?
4. Are GLB adolescents more likely to experience physical or psychological aggression from parents?

### **Questions Related to Social Support and Mental Health Outcomes**

- 5a. Is past parent-adolescent conflict associated with depression and perceived social support at the time of the survey?
- 5b. Does sexual orientation moderate the relationship between past parent-adolescent conflict and depression?
- 5c. Does level of parent-adolescent conflict mediate the relationship between sexual orientation and depression?

5d. Does sexual orientation moderate the relationship between past parent-adolescent conflict and perceived social support at the time of the survey?

5e. Does level of parent-adolescent conflict mediate the relationship between sexual orientation and perceived social support at the time of the survey?

### **Questions Related to Parental Characteristics**

6a. Are parent's gender, age, level of education, authoritarian or rigid personality traits, or religiosity associated with the level of conflict between parents and adolescents?

6b. Does the adolescent's sexual orientation moderate the relationship between parent's gender age, level of education, authoritarian or rigid personality traits, or religiosity, and level of parent-adolescent conflict?

Some of the above questions, and the hypotheses they will inspire, flow from the theoretical frameworks discussed above (i.e. the questions related to parental characteristics). Others are based on relationships posited in the literature on GLB youth and their parents that have remained largely untested (i.e. questions 1-5). The decision to include questions not grounded in the theoretical frameworks above, and to collect the data necessary to answer them, was largely based on two factors. First, that although they are not grounded in the theoretical framework used in the current research, answering these questions will contribute to the literature on GLB youth and their parents. For example, questions 5a, through 5e have been addressed by other studies, but largely for adult populations. Second, because some of the data needed to answer these questions, was also necessary to answer the theoretically grounded research questions, and because the data could reasonably be collected in the context of the current survey, there was no particularly strong reason not to address these research questions.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **METHODS**

#### **Sample**

The sample includes 343 students from two universities. Of these 310 were drawn from classrooms, all but 13 (4.19%) of whom identified themselves as “heterosexual.” In addition to data collection in classrooms, a supplemental sample designed to increase the number of GLB respondents was collected (n=33). While the supplemental sample was designed to include primarily GLB respondents, the only requirements for inclusion in the sample were that the individual was over the age of 18 and a student at one of the two universities where the classroom samples were collected, thus the supplemental sample includes 6 respondents who identified themselves as “heterosexual” in the survey. Data from the supplement sample was collected using several methods. First, paper copies of the questionnaire were distributed by the researcher at GLB related functions on campus and returned via mail (n=7). Additional responses for the supplemental sample were collected via an online survey form (n=26). Students were invited to participate in the online version of the survey via email list serves maintained by campus GLB groups. In each case the owner of the list was contacted and asked to post an email message (drafted by the researcher) inviting members of the list serv to participate in the research.

#### **Data Collection**

The data was collected via self-report questionnaires completed by respondents. Subjects were recruited in three ways. Students from the classroom sample were given a



single class period (either 50 or 120 minutes) to complete the survey. It typically took the students only about half an hour to complete the questionnaire. Since their completion of the questionnaire was not monitored by the researcher, the length of time it took students who completed the paper questionnaire on their own (i.e. those who returned questionnaires by mail) and online is unknown, however, it should not have been substantially different than the time it took students in the classroom sample to complete the questionnaire.

An informed consent letter, explaining the purpose of the survey as well as the inclusion criteria (i.e. that the individual was student at the university and over the age of 18) was attached to the survey and was received by all respondents. In the classroom sample, after completing the questionnaire respondents were given a debriefing letter. For the mail back portion of the survey, respondents were given a packet that contained the survey form, along with informed consent and debriefing materials, in a sealed, unmarked envelope. Each packet also contain a stamped pre-addressed envelope in which to return the completed form to the researcher. The top of the survey was marked with a note in bold stating that the survey should have come to them in a sealed envelope and should include a cover letter (i.e. the informed consent letter), a debriefing letter, and a stamped envelope in which the survey can be returned. This note asked that the respondent contact the researcher if they received the survey unsealed or with any missing components. In the online survey, the first page the respondent viewed contained the informed consent letter, and the respondent was asked to click on a button to continue on to the survey. The last page of the survey contained the debriefing letter received by other respondents.

In the classroom sample, students who did not wish to participate were asked to return blank questionnaires. No blank questionnaires were returned, and no students were observed leaving without returning a questionnaire, so the participation rate appears to be 100% for the classroom sample. It is much more difficult to calculate the participation rate for the supplemental sample. An unknown number of survey packets were handed out but never returned. Most of the response packets were given directly to potential respondents, but a small number were given to the campus gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) coordinator, who may or may not have distributed them to potential respondents. For the online portion of the sample, where respondents were recruited via an email sent to a campus GLBT related list-servs, I was never able to determine the number of individuals on the list-servs (not all of whom were necessarily students), and so it is not possible to estimate a participation rate.

When data was collected in classrooms, students were asked to spread out (i.e. sit away from other students) as much as possible to allow students some privacy in completing the survey. Respondents were instructed not to write their names anywhere on the survey. The completed survey forms were stored in a location accessible only to the researcher. As mentioned above, the return by mail packets were handed out sealed, and respondents were instructed not to write their name anywhere on the form or envelope (the researcher's address was used as the return as well as the recipient address). Once received by the researcher, the completed forms were accessible only to the researcher. For the internet portion of the survey, a professional survey collection site (i.e. surveymonkey.com) was used so that appropriate safeguards would be in place to protect respondent privacy. Respondents had the option to fill out the form under

conditions that would allow them to return to the survey form if they were interrupted (low privacy) or in a form in which their steps would not be traceable by other people using the computer (higher privacy).

University students were selected because they are an easily assessable group of young people. A relatively young sample was preferred so that the reference period (i.e. the respondent's last year of high school or last year living at home if they did not live at home their last year of high school) was more recent. Respondents similar in age are preferred for this study because of changes in trends in parenting practices over time. An additional advantage of using university students was that many university campuses have organizations for GLB students and their supporters, making it easier to locate potential GLB respondents. Further, since both the GLB and non-GLB respondents are students at the same university, they are likely to be similar in other respects, providing a better basis for comparison. One problem with this sample is that it is unlikely to contain youth who have had the worst parent-child relationships, because financial support from parents is often necessary for college attendance.

### **Issues in Survey Construction**

#### **Balancing Inclusiveness and Practicality**

The survey was designed to be applicable to as many students, and their families, as possible. One issue considered was whether the survey should ask about a "mother or mother-figure" and a "father or father-figure" as opposed to using some more general term, such as "parent or parent-figure." Gender neutral terminology would have been inclusive of students with same-sex parents, as well as students who were raised by other combinations, such as a mother and a grandmother. The use of gender neutral

terminology also would have had the advantage of allowing students to report on the two people they feel closest to, (e.g. a respondent might chose to report on their mother and grandmother). Of course this is a two edged sword, as students may feel closest to the relatives they get along with best, or in the case of gay students may feel closest to the two relatives who have been most accepting. The greatest difficulty with the gender neutral terminology is that it either requires the collection of information about only one parent, or creates a potentially confusing classification of “parent one” and “parent two.” The parent one/two option is potentially problematic in later portions of the questionnaire when respondents are asked about relationship quality etc.. The problem is that some respondents may have difficulty remembering which parent is “parent one” and which parent is “parent two.” For example, the question, “I sometimes wondered if my mother really loved me” versus “I sometimes wondered if parent two really loved me.” Because of these issues, respondents were asked about their “mother” and “father,” although the beginning of the questionnaire instructed respondents that they could report on any female or male caretaker. Respondents were asked to identify the specific caretaker (see measures section below for more details). All questions involving parent characteristics or the respondent’s relationship with their parents were measured separately for the respondent’s mother (or mother-figure) and father (or father-figure).

### **Recall Period**

Respondents were asked to recall information on two time-periods. Some questions, such as those on social support parents, and respondent’s mental health asked about the present. However, the majority of questions asked about the respondent’s last year of high school; students who did not live at home their last year of high school, were

asked to report on the last year they lived at home. This time period was selected because for most college students it is relatively recent, but also likely to be a time when they had a high level of interaction with one or both of their parents. Further, the respondent's last year of high school is likely to be a time during which parents may have been more likely, compared to later time points, to attempt to exercise control over their children in a number of areas (e.g. school performance). This is also a time when most young people are still financially dependent on their parents, which may not be true for all college students. An additional advantage of this method is that there is less variation in age, as well as less variation in legal status (adult vs. minor), than if the reference year was more recent (e.g. the last year). Selecting the last year of high school (or the last year students lived at home) as the referent year for many of the questions does have some drawbacks. First, are difficulties in recall, however, as mentioned above, since the sample is of undergraduates, for most respondents the reference year should be relatively recent. Another drawback is that many questions had to be phrased to clearly refer to the time period on which respondent's should report, which in some cases resulted in awkward wording.

### **Data Preparation**

Following data entry the dataset was checked for values that were likely to represent data entry errors, for example, out of range values for likert type items, and exceptionally young parents. Additional checks for highly unlikely combinations of values were made. Questionable values were checked against the paper forms and corrected as necessary.

After basic checking and cleaning of the dataset was complete, the proportion of missing values, as well as missing data patterns were examined. As is common in self-administered surveys, the dataset contains a fair number of missing values. While the proportion of missing values on any given item is relatively small, analyzing only the complete cases is associated with various problems, most notably, biased parameter estimates and reduction in sample size. The degree to which parameter estimates are biased by analysis of complete cases is in part a function of why the values are missing.

Missing values are generally divided into three types based on how the missingness (i.e. whether a variable is missing) is related to the values of other variables or the variable itself, this is generally referred to as the missing data mechanism (Little & Rubin 2002 pg 11, or for a less technical discussion Allison 2001 pg 3). Data may be missing completely at random (MCAR), missing at random (MAR) or missing not at random (MNAR, also sometimes termed not missing at random, or NMAR). Values are said to be missing completely at random (MCAR) when missingness is unrelated to either the value of the variable itself or other observed variables. A common "cause" of MCAR data is when a subset of subjects is randomly selected by the researcher for more extensive examination, for example, researchers investigating health outcomes might select a random subset of subjects to undergo a full physical, while other subjects only undergo a limited set of tests. Data is said to be MAR when the values of other variables predict whether a value is missing. For example (hypothetically), females may be less likely to answer questions about conflict with parents. Finally, data is said to be MNAR when the value of the variable itself effects the probability of missingness. A classic

example of this type of missing data is income; individuals with very high and very low incomes are generally less likely to report income.

The procedure for detecting the presence of values MAR (and contracting MCAR) involves creating dummy variables that indicate whether a value is missing, and examining the relationship between those dummy variables and observed variables in the dataset. Examination of the data in this manner suggested that the data were not missing completely at random, that is, for at least some variables, missingness could be predicted using other variables in the dataset (suggesting MAR). It is not possible to verify, based on observed data, whether data is missing not at random. Instead, the presence of values missing not at random is generally inferred based on substantive knowledge. In general there is no particular reason to suspect that the primary variables of interest are missing not at random. In addition to the absence of strong reason to suspect MNAR data, there is a practical reason to treat the data as though it is MAR. Specifically, there are few standard models and little software that appropriately handles MNAR data, making such procedures difficult to implement in practice. Hence the missing values were assumed to be MAR.

When values are MAR, complete case analysis (also known as listwise deletion) can lead to biased parameter estimates. Multiple imputation (MI), which is an appropriate method for handling data that is MAR, was selected for the current research. The goal of imputation generally is to create a dataset with complete data that recreates the covariance structure implied by the observed data. An alternative, although not entirely technically correct, way to think about this is that imputation “fills in” missing

values with plausible values based on the information in the observed data. The resulting dataset can be used with models that require complete data (e.g. regression).

Multiple imputation was selected over single imputations, because single imputation methods treat imputed values as known rather than estimated, resulting in standard errors that are too small (Little & Rubin 2002 pg 75, Allison 2001 pg 28). Multiple imputation creates a set of datasets, in each of the datasets missing values have been imputed using estimates that contain some random error, so that each imputed dataset is slightly different (note that non-missing values are unchanged). Each of the imputed datasets is then analyzed separately, and the results from these individual analyses are combined to form MI estimates. The MI estimate for parameters (e.g. regression coefficients) is the mean of the estimated parameter across the imputed datasets. The MI estimate of the standard errors incorporates both the standard errors from the individual analyses (within imputation error) and the degree of variation in the parameter estimate across imputations (termed the between imputation error, see Little & Rubin 2002 pg 61, Allison 2001 pg 29-32). Including the between imputation error adjusts for the degree of uncertainty introduced by estimating, rather than observing the missing values.

The imputed datasets were created using an approach known as multivariate imputation by chained equations (MICE, van Buuren, Boshuizen & Knook 1999). This approach to imputation is implemented in a user-written program in Stata known as “ice” (Royston 2009, 2004). This method uses repeated regression analyses to estimate missing values. Although the process is more complex, and involves the introduction of random error (which is necessary for multiple imputation), the process can generally be described



as follows. First, missing values are estimated for each variable in the dataset, using regression models. Once all variables with missing values have estimates, the process is repeated, and estimates of the missing values are reestimated. After a number of iterations (i.e. cycles through the dataset), the resulting dataset is used as the first imputed dataset. After a number of additional cycles, a second dataset is used as the second imputed dataset, and so on until the desired number of datasets has been created. The current research used 40 imputed datasets. Although only 3 imputed datasets are necessary for MI estimates of parameters and their standard errors (Little & Rubin 2002), and the use of 5 imputed datasets is common, the use of additional datasets may increase the reliability of the estimates of standard errors, especially in non-linear models. The imputations were drawn using bootstrapped standard errors rather than normal theory standard errors to relax the assumption of normality of the sampling distribution.

All variables used in the analyses were imputed, with two exceptions, gender, contact with parents, both of which were never missing. The variables year in school, and relationship to parent were not imputed, because they were used only to describe the sample, not as part of a model.

### **Data Analysis**

The ability to model measurement error using latent variables, for example confirmatory factor analysis, may be desirable given the sensitive nature of the measures in the current research. However, the models in the current research were too large (i.e. involve too many observed and latent variables) relative to the sample size for such procedures to be appropriate. Additionally, many of the scales used in this research are well established, including a procedure for scoring them (typically adding items

together). Because there is no estimation involved in forming scales in this manner, there are, for practical purposes no sample size requirements for such scoring methods. Where such established scoring systems existed and seemed appropriate they were used. Using existing scoring systems has the advantage of being more likely to be replicated, because the measurement portion of the model is not sample dependent, as it would be if latent variable techniques were used. It is also worth noting that measuring unobservable variables via a series of items, and summing them does, under certain conditions help control for measurement error. The scoring of all scales, including those without established scoring systems, is discussed below.

The central analyses used multiple regression techniques to address the research questions. The complexity of regression models is limited by sample size, but to a lesser degree than with structural equation models because far fewer parameters are being estimated. In general the analyses were performed using relatively standard techniques, such as ordinary least squares (OLS) and logistic regression models. The one exception is the use of more complex analysis techniques to address the research questions involving mediation.

The mediation models were estimated as systems of equations, using maximum likelihood estimation. This allowed for calculation of all of the coefficients at the same time. Total and indirect effects and their standard errors were calculated separately in each imputed dataset, and then combined using the standard procedure for calculating MI estimates described above and in Little and Rubin (2002).

Models were fit simultaneously for mothers and fathers to allow for tests of differences in outcomes (e.g. relationship quality) by parent gender. This was

accomplished by moving data into what is sometimes known as “long form” in which each respondent has two lines in the dataset (one for each parent). Table 2.1 shows a small dataset in the more common format (sometimes described as “wide format,” shown in Panel A), and followed by the long format (shown in Panel B) used for these analyses. In both formats there are variables for the respondent’s id number (denoted id) and age (resp\_age). In wide format there are also variables for social support from father (SSfather) and social support from mother (SSmother). In long format, each respondent has two rows in the dataset, and there is a binary variable indicating whether the data is for the respondent’s mother or father (mother) and a single variable containing the values of social support (SS) for both mothers and fathers. When respondents reported no contact with one of their parents, that parent-respondent dyad was omitted from the analyses, but data for the parent with whom the respondent reported contact was used. The data was transferred to long form after imputation, so that information on one parent was included in the imputation model for the other parent.

Table 2.1: Example Data in “Wide” and “Long” Format

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<u>A: Wide Format</u>			
id	resp_age	SSfather	SSmother
1	18	4	5
2	21	3	2
3	19	3	4

<u>B: Long Format</u>			
id	resp_age	mother	SS
1	18	0	4
1	18	1	5
2	21	0	3
2	21	1	2
3	19	0	3
3	19	1	4

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The regression techniques used in this analysis (e.g. OLS and logistic regression) assume that the observations are independent of each other. In long format, the observations are not independent, since each respondent has two lines in the dataset (one for each parent). Cluster robust standard errors (also known as Huber-White standard errors) were used to correct for the non-independence introduced by analyzing the data in this manner. An alternative strategy for analyzing clustered data is the use of random effects models. Preliminary analyses of the data showed that observations within a single respondent (i.e. scores for two parents) were relatively highly correlated, with intraclass correlations as high as .6. High intraclass correlations suggest that random intercept models may be more appropriate than standard regression models. Comparison of the results from the two types of models showed nearly identical results. With one exception, the significance of all coefficients was the same. The sign and magnitude were the same for all statistically significant coefficients, as well as for the majority of non-significant coefficients. In a few cases very small (and non-significant) coefficients reversed sign.

The one exception was the effect of not living with a parent on levels of psychological assault. In the random intercept model the coefficient was -0.318 (s.e. = 0.143,  $p \leq 0.309$ ), while the estimate from the OLS regression was -0.155 (s.e. = 0.152,  $p \leq 0.309$ ). Because the results are nearly identical, the simpler (i.e. models with only fixed effects) are presented.

Consistent with the data analysis strategy of analyzing the data in long form to model relationships with mothers and fathers at the same time, when the reliability of scales was assessed using Chronbach's alpha, calculations were based on the imputed data, in long form so that a single value reflects the reliability of the scale for mothers and fathers.

An exception to the analysis strategy described above is the analysis of respondent's level of depression. This exception was necessary because this dependent variable is specific to the respondent rather than the respondent-parent dyad. While adjustments can be reasonably made when the dependent variable varies within cluster (i.e. within respondent), this is not necessarily true when the dependent variable is fixed and only the independent variables vary. In this case, the data was analyzed in wide form, where each respondent has only one row in the dataset. In the analyses for all other dependent variables, the coefficients for mothers and fathers were constrained to equality because information on mothers and fathers was contained in a single variable. In the analysis of depression, the mother and father variables were entered into the regression equation separately. In order to be consistent with the rest of the analyses, the coefficients for mothers and fathers were constrained to equality, for example, if depression were

regressed on social support from parents (denoted SSmother and SSfather below), the equation could be written:

$$\text{depression} = b_0 + b_1 * \text{SSmother} + b_1 * \text{SSfather} + e$$

Note that for  $b_1$  is the coefficient for both SSmother and SSfather.

Similarly, in the mediation models with depression as a dependent variable, the paths from all independent variables to the two mediator variables (e.g. frequency of conflict with mother and frequency of conflict with father) were constrained to equality, as were the errors for the two mediator variables. The intercepts for the two mediator variables were allowed to be different, this is equivalent to including a dummy variable for parent gender in the models in long form. In equation form the model is:

$$m_m = a_{0m} + a_1 * \text{glb} + a_2 * \text{cov} + e$$

$$m_f = a_{0f} + a_1 * \text{glb} + a_2 * \text{cov} + e$$

$$\text{depression} = b_0 + b_1 * m_m + b_1 * m_f + b_2 * \text{glb} + b_3 * \text{cov} + r$$

Where  $m_m$  and  $m_f$  are the mediator variables for mothers and fathers respectively,  $\text{glb}$  is the respondents sexual orientation, and  $\text{cov}$  represents any additional covariates. The indirect effect of  $\text{glb}$  was calculated as  $a_1 * b_1$  and the total effect of  $\text{glb}$  was calculated as  $b_2 + a_1 * b_1$ . Calculating the total and indirect effects this way is consistent with the calculation of the total and indirect effects in long form. In both cases, the mediator is conceptually a single variable, that is, conflict with parents, measured by two variables, and predicting a single outcome.

### **Measures**

As mentioned previously, respondents answered questions about their parent's characteristics, and their relationships with their parents, as well as about themselves. All

questions involving parent characteristics or the respondent's relationship with their parents were measured separately for the respondent's mother (or mother-figure) and father (or father-figure).

### **Sexual Orientation**

Previous studies examining the relationship between gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents and their parents have often used sampling procedures that result in samples that are entirely made up of sexual minorities, for example Herdt and Boxer (1993) drew their sample from members of a support group for sexual minority young people. When studies utilize a more general group of young people, one common method for assessing sexual orientation involves asking respondents to identify themselves as either gay, lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual—occasionally undecided or questioning is also included as a category (e.g. D'Augelli, Hershberger, and Pilkington 1998; Fergusson, Horwood, and Beautrais 1999; Savin-Williams 1994; Waldner-Haugrud and Magruder 1996). An alternative method of measuring sexual orientation is to classify respondents based on behavior, that is, based on the respondent's report of the gender of their sexual partner(s). The disadvantage of these methods is that they tend to result in the treatment of sexual orientation as a binary (or sometimes categorical) trait, when, in reality, sexual orientation and identity are far more nuanced. Ideally, a measure of sexual orientation would incorporate aspects of who the respondent is attracted to (in a broad sense), who the respondent has been sexually or romantically involved with, how the individual thinks about themselves, how the individual presents their sexual orientation to others, particularly close others, and finally, the degree to which the individual identifies with and participates in the community of sexual minority and allied (heterosexual)

individuals. While information on these various aspects of sexual orientation were collected as part of the current research project, the final sample size was too small to allow for the estimation of a measurement model. That is, while some relevant information is present in the dataset, there are not enough respondents, particularly respondents who identified their sexual orientation as something other than heterosexual, to develop and evaluate a measurement model for sexual orientation. An arbitrary (in the sense that it is non-empirically based) method of combining the various pieces of information (e.g. items on attraction, sexual behavior, etc.) could conceivably have been devised, however, it would be difficult to assess the degree to which such a measure reflected any underlying “reality.” This is particularly problematic because it is questionable whether these items measure a single underlying continuum (i.e. sexual orientation may be multi-dimensional).

In light of these issues, the respondent’s own identification of their sexual orientation (i.e. how they think about their sexual orientation, rather than how they identify to others) was used as the measure of sexual orientation. An alternative strategy would be to classify respondents based on some other criteria, for example, reported gender of their sexual partners, or their reports on sexual attraction more generally. Respondent’s own identification of their sexual orientation was judged to be a more appropriate method of classifying respondents than these alternatives for several reasons. First, behavior and identity are not necessarily consistent, respondents who identify themselves as GLB may not have engaged in same sex relationships or sexual activity for a number of reasons, including but not limited to, lack of opportunity, and fear of discovery. Similarly, GLB respondents may have engaged in opposite sex relationships



or sexual behavior for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to, the desire to hide their sexual orientation and earlier denial of their GLB identity. Conversely, heterosexual respondents may have engaged in same sex relationships or sexual behavior for a variety of reasons. Second, there is reason to believe that how an individual identifies their sexual orientation may be more important than their behavior in terms of their interactions with their parents. For a young person who has engaged in sexual behavior with a member of the same sex, but still comfortably<sup>1</sup> identifies as heterosexual the fear of and/or probability of rejection by parents may be very different than for a similar individual who identifies as GLB, even if the young person who identifies as GLB has never engaged in sexual behavior with a member of the same-sex. For these reasons, the respondent's report of their sexual identity was used to measure sexual orientation in the current research. The question used to measure the respondent's self identification, that is, "how do you identify your sexual orientation to yourself? That is, how do you think about your sexual orientation." was intended to emphasize the importance of the respondent's own feelings about their sexual orientation, rather than what they tell others.

### **Sexual Attraction and Behavior**

Information was also collected on respondent's sexual attractions and behavior. The attraction items included the gender of individuals the respondent: found sexually attractive, had sexual fantasies about, had "crushes" on, bonded with romantically, and with whom the respondent imagined spending their life. Responses for all but the item ranged from "only males" to "only females" on a 5-point scale. The sexual behavior

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<sup>1</sup> Comfortable is used to denote individuals who identify themselves as heterosexual, and do so without question or internal conflict.

items included the number of individuals of either sex the respondent had dated, kissed or “made out with,” and had had sex with. See Appendix A for the exact wording each item. Due to constraints discussed above, these variables were used for descriptive purposes only.

### **Disclosure to Parents**

Respondents who identified their sexual orientation as anything other than heterosexual were asked whether they had come out to your parents, specifically “how old were you when you “came-out” to your mother?” (respondents could write in an age or check a box indicating they were not yet out to the parent). Respondents were also asked, “if you have not come out to your mother, which best describes her knowledge of your sexual orientation?” responses included “I think she knows,” “I know she knows, but we have never talked about it,” and “she asked if I was gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc., but I denied it or did not answer her.”

### **Parent Characteristics**

Parental Units Respondents were asked their relationship to the individuals they identify as their parents and about whom they would be answering questions. The question was close-ended and answers included parent, step-parent, adult relative, adult non-relative, and foster parents by sex (e.g. mother, father). This question was placed at the beginning of the survey, largely to establish for the respondent who they were to answer the questions about.

Parent’s Authoritarian Personality The degree to which parents evidence authoritarian personality characteristics is of interest for two reasons. First, because the inflexibility associated with authoritarian personalities, and with authoritarian parenting,

may increase the degree of conflict between adolescents and their parents (Smetana 1995). Secondly, parents with authoritarian personalities may be less able to make the adjustments in thoughts and beliefs necessary to accept a gay or lesbian child. The measure of authoritarian personality to be used is based on the Authoritarian Behavior Inventory (Rigby 1987). This measure was selected because it involves behaviors that indicate how the individual relates to authority, rather than the individual's opinion about various authority figures. This was important in the current study because the respondents reported on levels of authoritarianism in their parents, and it is reasonable to expect that respondents could more accurately report their parents' behavior than their parents' opinions. The original scale contains 22 items, to reduce this to a length more reasonable for use in the current research a subset of those nine items that respondents would likely be able to answer about their parents. For example, the item "does your mother express approval for the work of school teachers" was retained, while the item "does your mother follow doctor's orders" was dropped. While the scale was designed as a self-report, items were reworded to ask about the respondent's parents rather than the respondent. Responses were given on a five-point likert scale from "never" to "very frequently." The mean of the 9 items was taken to form a single scale score, reverse scoring items as necessary so that higher scores indicate more authoritarianism. Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.682. For a complete listing of the items, see Appendix A.

Parental Education was assessed by asking respondents to select the highest level of education complete by both of their parents. The primary reason for including this item is that research suggests that level of education may be related to anti-homosexual bias, with less educated individuals tending to have higher levels of bias (Dejowski 1992). The

response categories presented to the respondents were “did not finish high school,” “finished high school,” “went to college but did not finish,” “finished college (bachelors or associates degree),” and “graduate, law or other professional education.” Because relatively few parents did not complete high school (8 fathers and 10 mothers), the less than high school and finished high school categories were combined into a single category.

Parental Religiosity Religiosity in and of itself does not result in homophobia, but certain belief systems and denominations condemn gay, lesbian, bisexual and other sexual minority individuals. Subscribing to a religious tradition that condemns homosexuality does tend to be associated with homophobia. One study found that belonging to a conservative or moderate Protestant denomination or the Catholic church, was associated with holding more homophobic beliefs than non-religious individuals (Finlay and Walther 2003). Conservative Protestants, tended to show the highest levels of homophobia, followed by moderate Protestants, and then Catholics. Being a member of a liberal protestant denomination was associated with levels of homophobic beliefs similar to non-affiliated individuals. The same study found that adherents to non-Christian religions endorsed the fewest homophobic beliefs. The non-Christian groups included in Finlay and Walther’s (2003) study included the following identifications: Muslim (n=6), Jewish (n = 3), Buddhist ( n = 3), Pagan (n = 4); Hindu ( n = 1) and other Non-Christian (n = 5).

The questions used for this section are loosely based on the General Social Survey’s religiosity items (The National Opinion Research Center, 2009). Specifically “does your mother or mother-figure take part in any of the activities or organizations of

your church (synagogue) other than attending service?” (which is dichotomous) and “about how often does your mother or mother-figure attend religious services?” (presented on a 9 point likert scale from “never” to “several times a week”). Due to relatively low numbers of respondents in some of the categories, the original nine categories were later collapsed into four categories: never, less than once a year to several times a year, about once a month to nearly every week, and every week to several times a week.

Parental Homophobia Parents’ level of homophobia will be assessed because the degree of parental homophobia is related to the degree to which parents would be required to question their existing beliefs in order to accept their child. An item that assess parents’ prior experience with GLB people was included because parents who have prior experience with GLB individuals may have already undergone some of the reality testing necessary to accept their GLB children. There is limited empirical support for the idea that parents who have prior experience with GLB individuals will have less difficulty accepting their GLB children. A study that used small samples of both parents of gay children, and unrelated gay young people and found that the strongest predictor of parental reaction was parent’s lack of experience with homosexuality (Ben-Ari 1995).

Parent’s prior experience with GLB individuals is assessed with the question, “how many gay, lesbian, or bisexual friends does your mother/father have?” with closed ended responses of “none,” “one,” “two,” and “3 or more.” Parental homophobia was assessed using four items (e.g. “my mother said that homosexuality is morally wrong, a sin, an illness, or something similar”), responses were on a Likert scale from “never” to very frequently.” A single scale score was computed by taking the mean of the items.

Higher scores indicate higher levels of homophobia. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was estimated to be 0.667. For a complete listing of items see Appendix A.

### **Undesirable Behavior by Respondents**

It is important to control for factors other than sexual orientation that may lead to parent-adolescent conflict, particularly if, as some studies have found, some of the adolescent behaviors that lead to parent-adolescent conflict are confounded with sexual orientation, for example, substance use (Faulkner and Cranston 1998). The behaviors included in this measure were selected based on several criteria. First, some of the areas of conflict (e.g. personal appearance, household responsibilities) were selected because they were identified in the literature as major areas over which parents and young people come into conflict (Ellis-Schwabe and Thornburg 1986). Others were selected because certain behaviors may be more common in GLB youth based either on empirical research (e.g. substance use, fights at school, Faulkner and Cranston 1998) or because they are common themes in the non-empirical writings on GLB youth, such as conflict with parents over choice of friends, and personal appearance (e.g. Heron 1983). Finally, some items (e.g. delinquency and academic performance) were used because they may represent a failure of young people to fulfill their parents' expectations, which may lead to conflict. Using the theoretical framework employed for this study, it can be argued that parents may see all of these behaviors as a threat to the future they envision for their children. A parent's response to this perceived threat may lead to parent-adolescent conflict, in a manner similar to that with which the adolescent's sexual orientation may lead to conflict.

The areas of undesirable behaviors examined can be broadly grouped into three categories, substance use (3 items), academic performance and problems at school (3 items), and behavior at home (a range of relatively normal behaviors, such as not picking up after oneself, or dressing in a manner parents did not approve of; 4 items). A final item, breaking the law (other than substance use) did not readily fit into these categories.

Devising a reasonable scoring scheme for the undesirable behavior items presented a challenge. Originally the items were to be rescaled to their approximate frequency (e.g. once during the reference year yields a score of 1, and monthly yields a score of 12). However, because the items themselves all had at least moderate positive skew, this scoring system resulted in a highly skewed distribution which creates a number of analytic challenges. Transformations were considered, but many common transformations (e.g. log and inverse power) were not possible since the scores of zero are possible. Moreover, the degree of skew in the frequency weighted sums was so strong that it is unlikely that transformations would prove useful. More importantly, this type of weighted scoring system probably overweights frequent behavior. For example, at the extreme end, endorsing “5+ days a week” translates to a score of 260, while endorsing “2+ times a day” results in a score of 500. It seems unlikely that engaging in a behavior such as drinking alcohol every day results in twice as much parent-adolescent conflict as engaging in the behavior nearly every day. Further, with such a skewed scoring system, frequently engaging in one behavior would make the impact of other behaviors negligible, unless the respondent engaged in these behaviors very often. Since the measure is ordinal, one option, while not ideal, is to treat the original values (i.e. 0-9) as though they were interval or ratio and sum them. Such a scoring scheme is arbitrary, but

it does result in a measure in which higher scores indicate more conflict. More appropriate weights for the categories that also allowed for a reasonable distribution of values might be devised empirically, but this was beyond the scope of the current research, particularly since the sample is not large enough to split into two samples, so that one could be used for validation. Hence, due to a lack of viable alternatives, the items were averaged using ordinal categories from never (0) to two or more times daily (9).

Rather than creating a single scale by adding all of the items together, the items were grouped according to the four domains discussed above. While it might have been possible to combine the items into a single scale, keeping the scales separate allows for the possibility that the relationship between adolescent behavior and parent-adolescent conflict is different depending on the type of behavior. For example, substance use or law breaking may have a tendency to produce more conflict than the items in the “misbehavior at home” category. The delinquency (i.e. “breaking the law”) item was kept on its own. For a complete listing of questions see Appendix A. Cronbach’s alpha was not computed for this scale because this scale measures specific actions by respondent’s which are not assumed to be manifestations of a single underlying variable.

#### **Age and Age During Reference year**

Respondents were asked about their age at the time of the survey, as well as their age during the reference year (the last year they were in high school, or if they did not live at home that year, the last year they did live at home). Not surprisingly, age during the referent year had very little variance (mean=17.57, sd=.56), values ranged from 15 to 19, with the bulk of the sample either 17 or 18 that year (42% and 55% respectively).



Given the lack of variance, this variable is unlikely to predict any other variables and was dropped from the analysis. Age at the time of the survey administration had somewhat more variance (mean=19.93, sd=2.47), although the distribution shows severe positive skew, with 95% of the sample between the ages of 18 and 23. Age was retained for the final analyses, although, as with age during reference year, it is unlikely to be a significant predictor.

### **Parent-Adolescent Conflict Frequency**

A number of existing measures of parent-adolescent conflict were located. Most of these measures asked respondents about conflict over specific issues (e.g. curfew) over a relatively short time period (e.g. past day, or past week, Dekovic 1999; Ellis-Schwabe and Thornburg 1986; Robin and Foster 1989 p 296). While the focus of this research is the overall level of parent-adolescent conflict, rather than conflict over specific issues, the strategy of asking about the frequency of conflict about specific issues may result in better recall than asking broad questions about how often young people were in conflict with their parents. One well established measure of parent-adolescent conflict is the Issues Checklist (Robin and Foster 1989 p 296), which asks respondents (either parents or adolescents) whether there was conflict over 44 different issues in the past week, and if so, how many episodes of conflict took place over the specific issue. The 44 items of the Issues Checklist do not specify which parent the conflict was with. Modifying the measure to include separate items for conflict with mother and conflict with father would double that to 88 items, which would have resulted in a much longer measure than could be included in the survey instrument. The items on the Issues Checklist are often very specific, for example, “helping out around the house” and “messing up house” are

separate items, as are “drugs,” “drinking beer or other liquor” and “smoking.” To reduce the total number of items, some items were combined (e.g. the above series of items became “doing chores and picking up after yourself” and “drinking alcohol, smoking, or using drugs not prescribed to you by a doctor”). The loss of specificity was not problematic because asking about specific areas of conflict was primarily a means of aiding respondent recall, rather than trying to identify specific areas of conflict. An additional item, “disagreed over anything else” was added to cover any areas missing from the Issues Checklist.

Originally the items were to be rescaled to their approximate frequency (e.g. once during the reference year yields a score of one, and monthly yields a score of 12). However, positively skewed items led to the same scaling and analysis challenges as scaling the measure of undesirable behavior (discussed above). Following the same logic as in the case of undesirable behavior, the mean the of items was computed using ordinal categories from never (0) to two or more times daily (9). For a complete listing of questions see Appendix A. Cronbach’s alpha was not computed for this scale because this scale measures the approximate frequency of specific types of interaction between the respondent and their parents, which is not assumed to be the manifestation of a single underlying variable.

### **Perceived Parent-Adolescent Conflict**

The measure of perceived conflict included 9 items taken from the Conflict Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ, Robin & Foster 1989 pg. 304). These items were selected because they ask about the respondent’s perceptions of conflict with their parents, rather than asking about the parent-child relationship more generally. For example, “we almost

never seem to agree,” “my mom and I have big arguments about little things” and “my mom and I sometimes end our disagreements calmly” (the last item was reverse coded). Note that additional items from the CBQ were used as part of the measure of parent-adolescent relationship quality. As with other measures in the current research, the items had likert type responses on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The mean of items were used to form a single scale, reverse scoring items so that higher scores indicate higher levels of conflict. Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was estimated to be 0.896. For a complete listing of questions see Appendix A.

### **Parent-Adolescent Conflict Resolution Tactics**

The parent-child version of the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS-PC, Straus 2001) was used to measure physical and psychological aggression by parents towards the respondent during the reference year. The CTS-PC and its predecessor the CTS, have been used in a large number of studies looking at parent child interaction, parent’s use of corporal punishment, and child abuse (see Straus 2001 for a discussion of studies using the CTS, CTS2 and CTS-PC; also see Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, and Sugarman 1996). Some changes were made to the CTS-PC because the CTS-PC includes some items that are not necessarily applicable to adolescents. Specifically, the item “hit you on the bottom with something like a belt, hairbrush, a stick, or some other hard object,” was omitted. Additionally, the items “spanked on your bottom with his/her bare hand” and “slapped you on the hand, arm, or leg” were replaced with a single item , “spanked or slapped you someplace other than your head or face with her bare hand.” These changes reduced the focus on “spanking” (i.e. hitting on the bottom), which seemed less applicable to adolescents than younger children, while not excluding such acts.

The physical aggression portion of the CTS-PC is typically scored by creating an indicator of whether one or more assaults took place in the reference year (vs. none), because the occurrence of any given act tends to be relatively rare. This convention was adhered to in the current research. For a complete listing of questions see Appendix A. Cronbach's alpha was not computed for this scale because this scale measures the approximate frequency of specific types of interaction between the respondent and their parents, which is not assumed to be the manifestation of a single underlying variable.

The recommended scoring method for the psychological aggression portion of the CTS-PC involves summing the number of times each act occurred during the reference year. As with the measures of undesirable behavior and parent-adolescent conflict, due to skewed items, such a scoring system would result in a strongly skewed distribution of scale scores. Following the procedure used with the other two such measures, the ordinal items were summed using the response category values (i.e. 0-9). For a complete listing of questions see Appendix A. Cronbach's alpha was not computed for this scale because this scale measures the approximate frequency of specific types of interaction between the respondent and their parents, which is not assumed to be the manifestation of a single underlying variable.

### **Parent-Adolescent Relationship Quality**

Parent-adolescent relationship quality was measured using nine items from the Conflict Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ, Robin & Foster 1989 pg. 304). While the CBQ is generally used to measure conflict, the subset of items used here all address aspects of relationship quality. For example, "my mom is a good friend to me," "we joke around often," and "my mom doesn't understand me" (the last item is reverse coded). An

additional 10 items of unknown origin were included in the parent-adolescent relationship scale. These items addressed a variety of aspects of relationship quality not addressed in the CBQ, including affection (e.g. “sometimes I wondered if my mother really loved me”), and a sense of trust (e.g. “my mother didn’t seem to trust me” and “my mother treated me unfairly”). Respondents were instructed to answer these questions recalling the reference year, and all questions were phrased in the past tense. All items were answered on a 5 point liker-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, the average of the 19 items was taken, reverse scoring as necessary so that higher scores indicate higher parent-adolescent relationship quality. Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was estimated to be 0.949. For a complete listing of items see Appendix A.

### **Current Social Support From Parents**

The Perceived Social Support—Family (Pocidano and Heller 1983) was used to measure perceived social support from parents. The Perceived Social Support—Family (PSS-Fa) is a 20 item measure that examines the respondent’s perception of the adequacy of social support they receive from their family. Generally, the items of the PSS-Fa are all phrased in terms of “family” (e.g. “my family gives me the moral support I need”), rather than for specific members of the family. In order to make the PSS-Fa more appropriate for the current research, the items were modified to ask specifically about the respondent’s mother and father. Items were presented on a five point likert scale, from never, to very frequently. The mean of the items was taken to form a scale score, reverse scoring as necessary so that higher scores indicate higher levels of perceived social support. Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was estimated to be 0.947. For a complete listing of items see Appendix A.

## **Depression**

A short form of the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D Radloff and Locke 2000; Radloff 1977) was used to measure depression. The major advantage of the CES-D is that while short, it still provides a generally accepted measure of a common mental health problem. The 10 items ask how often the respondent had experienced symptoms of depression in the last week, with two positively worded items (e.g. “I felt as good as other people”) which are reverse scored. Items were presented on a four point likert scale, with responses ranging from “rarely or none of the time. (Less than 1 day)” to “Most or all of the time. (5-7 days).” Items were averaged to form a scale score, reverse scoring items as necessary so that higher scores indicate higher levels of depression. Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was estimated to be 0.789. For a complete listing of items see Appendix A.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

The sample size for all analyses with respondents as the unit of analysis is 343. When parent-respondent dyads are the unit of analysis or parent level variables are described (e.g. parent's age), the sample size is 675. The 675 cases includes only those respondent-parent dyads where the respondent reported some contact with the parent. Unless otherwise noted, all analyses were performed using the 40 multiply imputed (MI) datasets, and the estimates shown are the MI estimates of the parameter.

#### Descriptive Statistics

##### Respondents' Demographics

On average respondents were 19.93 years old at the time of the survey (see Table 3.1). The distribution of age included few high outliers, specifically two respondents over thirty (38 and 47). The median age was 20, and the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of age was 23. The relatively compact distribution of age ( $sd=2.466$ ), with a few high outliers is not unexpected given that the sample is of university students.

The average age of respondents during the reference year (either their last year of high school or the last year they lived with their parents if they did not live with their parents their last year of high school) was 17.57. There was relatively little variation in age during the reference year, the standard deviation is 0.56 years, the range in the observed data was 15 to 19 years. The median age during the reference year was 18, the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile was also 18. This lack of variation is not entirely surprising given the

relatively narrow window of time allowed for the reference year, that is, the respondent's last year of high school or the last year they resided with their parent(s) if they did not live with their parents their last year of high school.

Table 3.1 Descriptive Statistics for Age and Age During the Reference Year

	mean	sd	min	max
Age (at survey)	19.931	2.466	16.86 <sup>a</sup>	47
Age (reference year)	17.568	0.561	15	19

<sup>a</sup> This is an imputed value, the youngest reported age in the observed data was 18. Note that imputed values outside the range of the observed data are not generally indicative of a problem.

Table 3.2 shows the frequencies for respondents' gender, year in school, and contact with parents during the reference year. All of the statistics in Table 3.2 were calculated on the observed data. Respondent's gender, and contact with mother and father were never missing, so M.I. estimates are not necessary. Year in school, and relationship to parent are presented for descriptive purposes only, and were not imputed.

The sample is 72% female, which is to be expected given that the classroom sample was drawn from undergraduate sociology classes. The majority of respondents were freshmen or sophomores. The majority of respondents lived with both a mother (or mother-figure) and father (or father-figure) during the reference year. Eleven of the respondents reported no contact with their father during the reference year. The majority of respondents reported on biological mothers and fathers. Respondents reported on step-fathers more often than step-mothers (5.25% versus 0.87%). Six of the 10 cases with missing values for relationship to father reported no contact with their father.



Table 3.2 Frequencies for Gender, Year in School, and Parental Contact During Reference Year, and Relationship to Parent <sup>a</sup>

	Freq.	Percent
Female	246	71.72
Male	97	28.28
Freshmen	128	37.32
Sophomore	83	24.20
Junior	53	15.45
Senior	60	17.49
Other	5	1.49
Missing	14	4.08
Contact with mother		
Lived with	330	96.2
Other contact	13	3.8
No contact	0	0
Contact with father		
Lived with	283	82.51
Other contact	49	14.28
No contact	11	3.21
Relationship to mother		
Biological	333	97.08
Step-parent	3	0.87
Adoptive	5	1.46
Missing	2	0.58
Relationship to father		
Biological	306	89.21
Step-parent	18	5.25
Adoptive	8	2.33
Other relative	1	0.29
Missing	10	2.92

<sup>a</sup> Note that gender and contact were never missing, while year in school and relationship to parent were not imputed.

### **Respondents' Sexual Orientation**

Table 3.3 shows respondents' self-identification of sexual orientation. The majority of students, 88%, identified themselves as heterosexual. About twelve percent of

students identified themselves as other than heterosexual. Descriptively, a higher percentage of male respondents in this sample identified themselves as heterosexual, compared to female respondents. Of the 6 respondents who selected “other,” 4 provided more specific identifications. The three females wrote “bicurious,” “I really don’t like labels,” and “queer,” the male who provided additional information wrote “sexual.” These responses, particularly “I really don’t like labels” and “sexual,” may reflect the trend discussed in the introduction of younger individuals eschewing labels all together (Cohler and Hammack 2005; Savin-Williams 2005; Seidman 2002).

Due to the relatively small numbers of respondents in each of the categories of sexual orientation (other than “heterosexual”), sexual orientation was analyzed as a dichotomous variable. The categories were collapsed into a binary variable, heterosexual (0) and all other categories (1), which will for brevity be referred to as GLB (i.e. gay, lesbian, and bisexual). As discussed in Chapter II, this measure of sexual orientation is not ideal, but was the best method of defining sexual orientation given the constraints of the current research.

Table 3.3: Sexual Identification to Self by Sex<sup>a</sup>

	Total		Females		Males	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Heterosexual	303	88.34	212	86.18	91	93.81
Gay	8	2.33	6	2.44	2	2.06
Lesbian	5	1.46	5	2.03	0	0
Bisexual	9	2.62	7	2.85	2	2.06
Questioning	3	0.87	3	1.22	0	0
Other	5	1.46	3	1.22	2	2.06
Missing	10	2.92	10	4.07	0	0

<sup>a</sup> Values shown are for the observed (i.e. pre-imputation) data. Sexual orientation was dichotomized before imputation.

Sexual Attraction and Behavior The Tables 3.4 and 3.5 compare GLB and heterosexual respondents on various aspects of sexual orientation, including sexual attraction, romantic attraction, and sexual behavior. As discussed above, respondents who identified themselves as heterosexual were placed in one group, and all other respondents were in the GLB category (for a more detailed view see Appendix B, which contains similar information using a three category variable for sexual orientation). Because these variables were not included in any of the statistical models presented later in this chapter, they were not included in the imputation model. As a result, the cross tabulations shown below are for the observed data. All of the sexual orientation and behavior questions were asked in terms of male and female (e.g. “only males,” “mostly males”), then transformed to same- and opposite-sex for the tables shown below.

Table 3.4 shows students’ responses to questions related to physical/sexual attraction, romantic attachment (i.e. who the respondent likes or loves in a romantic way), “crushes,” sexual fantasies, and the imagined gender of a future life partners. What is most notable about the results shown in this table is the degree to which respondent’s reports of attraction appear to be inconsistent with their sexual orientation. For example, looking at the first portion of Table 3.4, 91% of respondents who identified themselves as heterosexual reported exclusive physical attraction to individuals of the opposite sex. Of respondents who identified as other than heterosexual, 20% of reported exclusive physical attraction to individuals of the opposite sex and another 17% reported primarily being attracted to individuals of the opposite sex. At the other end of the spectrum, 1.5% of individuals who identified as heterosexual reported exclusive attraction to individuals of the same sex, and about 13% of GLB respondents reported exclusive attraction to

individuals of the same sex. The results for romantic attachment, “crushes,” sexual fantasies, and who they individual expects to spend their life with show similar patterns.

Table 3.4 Attraction Variables by Sexual Orientation

	Total		Heterosexual		GLB	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Sexual attraction (n = 332)						
Always opposite sex	281	84.38	275	90.76	6	20
Usually opposite sex	30	9.01	25	8.25	5	16.67
Either sex equally likely	7	2.10	0	0	7	23.33
Usually same sex	9	2.70	1	0.33	8	26.67
Always same sex	5	1.50	1	0.33	4	13.33
Romantic attachment (n = 332)						
Always opposite sex	303	90.99	292	96.37	11	36.67
Usually opposite sex	9	2.70	6	1.98	3	10
Either sex equally likely	7	2.10	3	0.99	4	13.33
Usually same sex	7	2.10	0	0	7	23.33
Always same sex	6	1.80	1	0.33	5	16.67
“Crushes” (n = 332)						
Always opposite sex	294	88.29	285	94.06	9	30
Usually opposite sex	19	5.71	15	4.95	4	13.33
Either sex equally likely	6	1.80	1	0.33	5	16.67
Usually same sex	7	2.10	0	0	7	23.33
Always same sex	6	1.80	1	0.33	5	16.67
Sexual fantasies (n = 331)						
Always opposite sex	264	79.28	257	84.82	7	23.33
Usually opposite sex	44	13.21	39	12.87	5	16.67
Either sex equally likely	7	2.10	4	1.32	3	10
Usually same sex	10	3	0	0	10	33.33
Always same sex	6	1.80	1	0.33	5	16.67
Future partner (n = 329)						
Opposite sex	310	94.22	298	99	12	42.86
Same sex	13	3.95	2	0.66	11	39.29
Either or both	5	1.52	1	0.33	4	14.29
Don't know	1	0.30	0	0	1	3.57

Table 3.5 shows the distribution of the gender of the respondent's sexual and romantic partners by sexual orientation. The majority of heterosexually identified respondents (86%) had dated individuals of the opposite sex exclusively, but almost 10% reported having dated individuals of both sexes. Notably, two of the heterosexually identified respondents reported only having dated individuals of the same sex. Only one of the GLB identified respondents had dated only individuals of the same sex, while a little over half (55%) had dated individuals of either sex, and 31% had dated individuals of the opposite sex exclusively. Looking at the item that included kissing, "making out," and sexual touching, 41% of heterosexually identified respondents and 77% of GLB respondents had engaged in sexual contact with members of both sexes. Seventy-five percent of heterosexually identified respondents had engaged in intercourse, oral sex, or anal sex exclusively with members of the opposite sex. The majority (15%) of the remaining heterosexually identified respondents reported not having had sex with anyone, but some respondents (8%) reported sexual contact with individuals of both sexes, and a few (1%) with individuals of the same sex exclusively. Almost equal numbers of GLB identified respondents reported having sex with individuals of both sexes or exclusively with individuals of the opposite sex (12 and 11, or 40% and 37% respectively).

Table 3.5 Sexual and Romantic Behavior by Sexual Orientation

	Total		Heterosexual		GLB	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
<b>Dated (n=324)</b>						
Opposite only	262	80.86	253	85.76	9	31.03
Same only	3	0.93	2	0.68	1	3.45
Both	44	13.58	28	9.49	16	55.17
Neither	15	4.63	12	4.07	3	10.34
<b>Kissed (n= 315)</b>						
Opposite only	164	52.06	159	54.27	5	22.73
Same only	4	1.27	4	1.37	0	0
Both	137	43.49	120	40.96	17	77.27
Neither	10	3.17	10	3.41	0	0
<b>Had sex with (n=325)</b>						
Opposite only	231	71.08	220	74.58	11	36.67
Same only	7	2.15	3	1.02	4	13.33
Both	38	11.69	26	8.81	12	40
Neither	49	15.08	46	15.59	3	10

The lack of correspondence between sexual attraction, sexual behavior, and self-identification seems somewhat counter-intuitive. However, other research has found that sexual behavior in adolescence is not always consistent with sexual orientation. For example, D’Augelli (2005) found that that gay and lesbian identified young people have commonly had sexual experiences with individuals of the opposite sex. Research has also shown that same-sex sexual contact is not uncommon regardless of how young people identify their sexual orientation (Savin-Williams 2005; Garofalo, Wolf, Wissow, Woods, and Goodman 1999; Remafedi, Resnick, Blum, Harris 1992).

Disclosure to Parents Looking specifically at the GLB group, 86% (19/22) of respondents were out to their mothers at the time of the survey. The average age of coming out to a mother was 18.58 (range 14 to 38), when the high outlier is excluded (i.e.

age 38), the average age is 17.5, with a range of 14 to 23. Fifty-nine percent (13/22) of GLB respondents were out to their mother during the reference year. Two of the three respondents who were not out to their mothers at the time of the survey, believed their mother had some knowledge of their sexual orientation, one reported that they thought their mother knew, the other reported that they knew their mother knew, but that they had not discussed it with their mother.

Turning to fathers, 65% (6/19) of respondents were out to their fathers at the time of the survey. The average age at which respondents reported coming out to their fathers was 18.08 (range 14 to 23). Forty-two percent (8/19) of those who were out to their father were out during the reference year. Three of the 7 respondents who were not out to their fathers at the time of the survey believed that their father had some knowledge of their sexual orientation, two reported that they thought their father knew about their sexual orientation, and two reported that they knew their father knew, but that they had never discussed it.

### **Respondents' Undesirable Behavior and Depression**

Table 3.6 shows the descriptive statistics for the undesirable behavior by respondent (i.e. areas of potential conflict) and depression scales.

Table 3.6 Descriptive Statistics for Undesirable Behavior and Depression Scales

	mean	sd	min	max
Substance <sup>a</sup>	1.960	1.962	0.000	9.000
School <sup>a</sup>	0.753	0.710	0.000	4.667
Home <sup>a</sup>	1.828	1.584	0.000	8.250
Law <sup>a</sup>	0.571	1.210	0.000	5.000
Depression	1.696	0.468	1.000	3.600

<sup>a</sup> Undesirable behavior by respondent, specifically, substance use (substance), misbehavior at home (home), problems at school (school), and breaking the law (law).

### **Respondent-Parent Relationship Characteristics**

Table 3.7 shows descriptive statistics for the continuous (or quasi-continuous) variables specific to a respondent-parent dyad, that is, conflict frequency, perceived conflict, current social support, relationship quality during the reference year, and psychological assaults. Conflict frequency and psychological assaults both have a possible range from 0 to 9. The maximum value of conflict frequency is 6.22, indicating that no respondents reported what would be exceptionally high levels of parent-adolescent conflict (i.e. two or more conflicts per day on all issues). Similarly the maximum value of psychological assaults was below the possible maximum, indicating that no respondent reported experiencing each of the psychological assault items two or more times per day. Perceived conflict, current social support, and relationship quality all have a possible range from 1 to 5. Relationship quality does not cover its entire range, indicating that no respondents selected either the highest or lowest values on every item.



Table 3.7 Descriptive Statistics for Variables Specific to Respondent-Parent Dyads

	mean	sd	min	max
Conflict frequency	1.094	0.958	0.000	6.222
Perceived conflict	2.134	0.824	1.000	5.000
Current social support	3.700	0.871	1.000	5.000
Relationship quality	3.849	0.669	1.407	4.947
Psychological assaults	0.881	1.145	0.000	7.045

Table 3.8 Assaults on Respondent by Parent

	Frequency	Percent
Any minor	96	14.18
Any severe	47	6.86
Any very severe	29	4.28

Table 3.8 gives the estimates of the prevalence of minor, severe, and very severe assaults on respondents by parents. The physical assault scale used here (i.e. the CTS-PC) is often divided into four categories, individuals who did not experience any assaults by parents, those who experienced only minor assaults, those who experienced any severe assaults (possibly in addition to minor assaults), and those who experienced very severe assaults (possibly in addition to minor and/or severe assaults). Table 3.9 shows the frequencies and percentages of the assault types.

Table 3.9 Prevalence of Assaults Severity Levels on Respondent by Parent

	Frequency	Percent
None	573	84.92
Minor only	47	7.019
Severe (no very severe)	26	3.88
Very severe	28	4.18

When the assaults are divided by types, as in Table 3.9, relatively few respondents fall into either the severe or very severe categories. Given that only around 9% of respondents reported (or were imputed) an identity classified as GLB, the potential for small cell sizes made it unclear whether the typology could be used as a dependent variable in a multinomial logistic regression model with sexual orientation as the primary independent variable. Table 3.10 Shows a cross-tabulation of assault types with sexual orientation. For GLB respondents, the minor only, severe, and very severe assault types all have very low cell sizes (4, 3, and 4 respectively). These cells are small enough to make estimation of a multinomial logistic regression model difficult. (Note, in this specific case, the model will run, however, the overall model is not significant.) An alternative approach is to dichotomize the assault variable into those respondents who experienced no assaults by parents, versus those who experienced any assaults, and fit a binary logistic regression model. This results in larger cell sizes and may avoid some of the estimation difficulties associated with small cell sizes. Note that for the dichotomized variable, the smallest cell was for GLB respondents who had experienced any assault with a cell size of 11.

Table 3.10 Cross-tabulation of Assault Types with Sexual Orientation<sup>a</sup>

Assault Type	Sexual Orientation	
	non-GLB	GLB
None	526	52
Minor only	44	4
Severe	26	3
Very severe	27	4

Specific Types of Conflict Table 3.11 gives the mean and standard deviation of each of the 18 conflict items for GLB respondents at their heterosexual counterparts. The

two groups appear very similar across all of the types of conflict. For both GLB young people and their heterosexual counterparts, the most frequent sources of conflict were doing chores and picking up after oneself and “anything else.” Given the relatively high frequency of endorsement, future research may want to probe further by asking respondents who endorse this item or similar items to describe the types of conflicts. The least frequent sources of conflict were dating and getting into trouble at school.

Table 3.11 Means and Standard Deviations for Individual Conflict Items by Sexual Orientation

	Total		Heterosexual		GLB	
	Mean	(S.D.)	Mean	(S.D.)	Mean	(S.D.)
Doing chores	2.881	(2.465)	2.912	(2.448)	2.566	(2.626)
Clothes, hair, etc.	0.769	(1.615)	0.719	(1.507)	1.265	(2.408)
Piercing or tattoos	0.629	(1.366)	0.639	(1.375)	0.524	(1.271)
TV, video games, etc.	1.102	(1.894)	1.088	(1.877)	1.241	(2.058)
Fighting with siblings	1.788	(2.270)	1.824	(2.253)	1.422	(2.415)
Driving and use of car	1.480	(2.046)	1.509	(2.038)	1.193	(2.116)
Allowance	0.773	(1.669)	0.775	(1.659)	0.751	(1.778)
Substance use	0.902	(1.561)	0.942	(1.581)	0.502	(1.271)
Choice of friends	0.629	(1.466)	0.602	(1.408)	0.896	(1.943)
Grades	0.830	(1.467)	0.835	(1.448)	0.781	(1.650)
Trouble at school	0.252	(0.799)	0.259	(0.814)	0.178	(0.600)
Phone use	0.909	(1.598)	0.899	(1.572)	1.012	(1.849)
Curfew/calling home	1.792	(2.035)	1.828	(2.023)	1.423	(2.127)
Employment	0.971	(1.666)	0.990	(1.678)	0.773	(1.527)
Time use	1.170	(1.874)	1.170	(1.846)	1.174	(2.148)
Dating	0.222	(0.967)	0.216	(0.924)	0.283	(1.323)
Sex	0.315	(0.953)	0.315	(0.945)	0.308	(1.029)
Anything else	2.284	(2.228)	2.291	(2.221)	2.213	(2.309)

### Parents' Characteristics

Tables 3.12 and 3.13 give descriptive statistics for the parent variables. The average age of parents was around 50 years old at the time of the survey. The range of 35 to just over 77 is large. On average parents scored relatively high (3.7) on the

authoritarian personality scale, which has a possible range of 1 to 5. Given that many of the items used in the scale are relatively common behaviors (e.g. standing when the national anthem is played in public) this is not necessarily noteworthy. On average, parents scored relatively low on the Parent’s homophobia scale (1.3) which also has a possible range of 1 to 5.

Table 3.12 Descriptive Statistics for Parent Variables

	mean	sd	min	max
Parent age	50.188	5.163	35	77
Authoritarian personality	3.704	0.520	1.747	5
Parent’s homophobia	1.313	0.533	1	4.412

Table 3.13 gives the frequencies of the parental education, frequency of religious attendance, participation in religious activities, and number of gay, lesbian, or bisexual friends . Most parents had either a college degree (44%) or a graduate or professional degree (22%). The majority of parents attended religious services (other than weddings or funerals) either never (31%) or once a year to several times a year (39%). Only about 21% of parents were reportedly involved in religious activities other than attending services. Just over half of parents were reported to have no gay, lesbian, or bisexual friends (53%), among those parents with any gay, lesbian, or bisexual friends, the number of friends was approximately equally divided among the remaining three categories, one (14%), two (15), and three or more (18%).

Table 3.13 Frequencies for Parental Education, Frequency of Attending Religious Services, Involvement in Religious Organizations, and Number of Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Friends

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Education</b>		
High school	149	21.95
Some col.	84	12.38
Finished col.	298	44
Grad/prof.	147	21.67
<b>Frequency of attending religious services</b>		
Relig. freq. 0 <sup>a</sup>	206	30.48
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>a</sup>	261	38.49
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>a</sup>	90	13.23
Relig. freq. 3 <sup>a</sup>	121	17.8
<b>Involvement in religious organizations</b>		
No involvement	529	78.09
Involved	148	21.91
<b>Number of gay, lesbian, or bisexual friends</b>		
None	353	52.27
One	95	14.09
Two	102	15.1
Three or more	125	18.55

<sup>a</sup> Parent's frequency of attendance of religious services. The categories are (0) never, (1) less than once a year to several times a year, (2) once a month to every week, (3) more than once a week.

### **Bivariate Statistics**

Table 3.14 shows the means of the six continuous dependent variables, along with tests for group differences in these variables. There are significant differences in the means for social support and relationship quality, with non-GLB respondents reporting higher levels of both. Further analyses showed that controlling for respondent age caused the association between sexual orientation and both social support at the time of the survey and relationship quality during the respondent's last year of high school to

become non-significant. Table 3.15 uses a bivariate logistic regression to compare the probability of assaults on respondents by parents for GLB and non-GLB respondents.

The association is not significant.

Table 3.14 Differences in Means of Dependent Variables by Sexual Orientation

	Sexual Orientation		t	P(t)
	non-GLB	GLB		
Conflict, Frequency	1.101	1.028	-0.34	0.732
Conflict, Perceived	2.121	2.261	1.16	0.245
Social Support	3.734	3.358	-2.37	0.018
Relationship Quality	3.87	3.641	-2.00	0.047
Psychological Assault	0.878	0.909	0.15	0.882
Depression	1.692	1.732	0.46	0.644

Table 3.15 Logistic Regression of Any Physical Assault on Sexual Orientation

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
GLB	0.121	0.488	0.25	0.805	-0.837	1.078
Intercept	-1.741	0.138	-12.63	0.000	-2.011	-1.471

Table 3.16 gives the correlations among the respondent characteristics. There is a significant correlation between sexual orientation (GLB) and respondent's age. Respondents who identified themselves as heterosexual were on average younger than respondents who did not. The association between depression and gender is not statistically significant, which is somewhat unusual, given that studies often find that women report more depressive symptoms than men (Hankin, Mermelstein & Roesch 2007). Respondents with higher levels of depression were more likely to report misbehavior at home and school during their last year of high school (or the last year they lived with their parents, if they did not live at home their last year of high school). Male

respondents were more likely to report misbehavior at home and school, and to report having broken the law. Older respondents were more likely to report substance use and misbehavior at home. Not surprisingly, substance use, misbehavior at home and school, and breaking the law were significantly positively correlated.

Table 3.16 Correlations Among the Respondent Characteristics

	GLB	Depression	Male	Age	Substance <sup>a</sup>	Home <sup>a</sup>	School <sup>a</sup>	Law <sup>a</sup>
GLB	1							
Depression	.03	1						
Male	-.07	-.04	1					
Age	.37**	-.01	-.05	1				
Substance <sup>a</sup>	-.07	.05	.06	.15*	1			
Home <sup>a</sup>	.05	.11*	.12*	.16*	.24**	1		
School <sup>a</sup>	-.08	.11*	.24**	.08	.50**	.29**	1	
Law <sup>a</sup>	.10	-.02	.20**	.04	.23**	.19**	.17**	1

\*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$

<sup>a</sup> Undesirable behavior by respondent, specifically, substance use (substance), misbehavior at home (home), problems at school (school), and breaking the law (law).

The bivariate associations among parental and respondent-parent dyad characteristics are shown in Table 3.17. Not surprisingly, conflict frequency (con. f.) is positively correlated with perceived conflict (con. p.), physical assaults (phys.), and psychological assaults (psych.). It is somewhat surprising that conflict frequency is also positively associated with social support at the time of the survey (soc. s.) and relationship quality during the respondent's last year of high school (r. qual.). In contrast to the finding for conflict frequency, perceived conflict is associated with lower levels of both social support and relationship quality. Suggesting that while the two types of conflict are related, they operate somewhat differently. These relationships are discussed further in the context of the multiple regression models presented below. The correlations between parent's homophobia and both measures of conflict (frequency and perceived),

social support, relationship quality, and assaults (physical and psychological) are all statistically significant, a somewhat unexpected finding. Consistent with previous research on the relationship between homophobia and gender (e.g. Kite and Whitley 2003), mothers were found to be less homophobic than fathers. Not surprisingly, the number of GLB friends the parent has was negatively associated with homophobia. Interestingly, homophobia was not correlated with either religious involvement or frequency of religious attendance.



Table 3.17 Correlations Among Parent and Respondent-Parent Dyad Characteristics

	Con.f.	Con.p.	Soc.s.	R.qual.	Phys.	Psych.	Mother	P.age	Auth.	Rel.inv.	Gay f.	Homop.	No live	Ed.	Rel.freq.
Con. f.	1														
Con. p.	.42**	1													
Soc. s.	-.11*	-.55**	1												
R.qual.	.27**	-.78**	.79**	1											
Phys.	.25**	.26**	-.10	-.16**	1										
Psych.	.51**	.54**	-.22**	-.36**	.50**	1									
Mother	.13**	.06	.33**	.10**	.08*	.15**	1								
P. age	.08	.02	-.09*	-.07	.05	.01	-.20**	1							
Auth.	.09	-.09	.11*	.11*	-.04	-.05	.02	.11*	1						
Rel. inv.	.02	.02	-.04	-.05	.08	.02	.06	-.03	.08	1					
Gay f.	-.07	-.05	.11*	.12*	-.04	-.05	.12**	-.02	.03	-.03	1				
Homop.	.20**	.17**	-.20**	-.17**	.21**	.26**	-.18**	.02	-.15*	.05	-.28**	1			
No live	-.14**	.13**	-.23**	-.22**	-.04	-.07	-.19**	-.03	-.15**	.03	.04	.06	1		
Ed.	.07	-.04	.09*	.09*	.03	-.05	-.03	.17**	.15**	.08*	.13**	-.05	-.01	1	
Rel. freq.	.08	.03	.02	-.03	.06	.02	.07**	-.03	.17**	.52**	-.11*	.05	-.04	.16**	1

\* p ≤ 0.05; \*\*p ≤ 0.01

Table 3.18 shows the correlations between respondent characteristics (listed in the rows) and parent and respondent-parent dyad characteristics (listed in the columns). Note that unlike standard correlation matrixes, including those shown above, this matrix is not symmetric. This is a byproduct of the method used to generate the correct p-values in the presence of clustering. Despite the difference in layout, the information displayed (i.e. the correlation coefficients and p-values) can be interpreted as usual. As noted above, respondent's sexual orientation is associated with social support and relationship quality.

Table 3.18 Correlations Between Respondent Characteristics (Rows) and Parent and Parent-Respondent Dyad Characteristics (Columns)

	Con.f.	Con. p.	Soc. s.	R.qual.	Phys.	Psych.	P. age	Auth.	Rel. inv.	Rel.freq.	Ed.	Gay f.	Homop.	No live
GLB	-.03	.05	-.12*	-.10*	.02	.02	.10	-.06	.01	-.04	-.02	-.02	.12	.08
Dep.	.21**	.22**	-.15**	-.18**	.09	.19**	-.01	.05	.01	-.01	-.08	.05	.06	.02
Male	.06	-.01	-.05	.01	.02	-.01	-.09	-.14**	.03	.05	-.01	-.04	.12*	-.03
Age	.18*	.07	-.12*	-.11*	.16**	.09	.30**	-.03	-.03	-.03	-.02	-.08	.27**	-.01
Substance	.28**	.18**	-.07	-.17**	.10	.12*	.06	-.05	-.07	-.06	.02	.03	.08	.01
Home	.56**	.29**	-.19**	-.28**	.19**	.33**	.14*	-.07	.05	.01	.03	-.08	.31**	-.05
School	.28**	.15**	-.05	-.13**	.13*	.16**	.05	-.05	-.02	.04	.04	-.04	.15*	.02
Law	.09	.08	-.10**	-.10*	.14*	.09	.02	-.08	.01	-.07	.04	-.03	.17*	-.07**

\* p ≤ 0.05; \*\* p ≤ 0.01

## **Statistical Models**

The research questions discussed at the end of Chapter I were addressed in a series of regression models. The models are presented below, grouped by dependent variable. As discussed in the methods chapter and noted above, models with respondent-parent dyads as the unit of analysis (i.e. all dependent variables except depression) were analyzed with the data in long form, and have an n of 675, nested in 343 clusters (i.e. respondents). Cluster robust standard errors were used to help correct for non-independence of observations from the same respondent. Note that in the 11 cases where the respondent reported no contact with a parent (fathers in all cases), that respondent-parent dyad was excluded from these analyses. The models with depression as a dependent variable have an n of 343, because the unit of analysis is respondents.

Due to concerns about the number of parameters in the models, additional models with fewer parameters were estimated. Specifically, non-significant covariates were dropped from each model. Core demographic characteristics, that is, respondent and parent age, respondent gender, and parent gender were included in all models regardless of their statistical significance. The coefficient estimates in the reduced-form models were generally similar to those in the full models. In all cases the effect of sexual orientation, was similar, and the statistical inference (i.e. significance) was the same. The full models are shown because they are more consistent with the overall theoretical model than the reduced form models.

### **Conflict Frequency**

A series of research questions addressed the relationship between sexual orientation, parent characteristics, and parent-adolescent conflict. These research

questions asked whether respondent's sexual orientation, and/or their parent's gender, age, education level, authoritarian personality characteristics, or religiosity predicted parent-adolescent conflict. Further, it was hypothesized that sexual orientation might moderate any relationship between parental characteristics and parent-adolescent conflict. As discussed in the Methods chapter, parent-adolescent conflict was operationalized in two ways, first as frequency of conflict, and second, as the respondent's perception of conflict with their parent. The analyses in this section address the research questions using conflict frequency as a dependent variable, the following section addresses the research questions using perceived conflict as the dependent variable.

The analyses testing direct effects of respondent's sexual orientation and parental characteristics on conflict frequency, as well as the interaction of sexual orientation and parental characteristics were performed using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Potential confounding variables, specifically areas of conflict (i.e. undesirable behavior by the respondent); respondent's age and gender; and whether the respondent lived with the parent were included in the analysis. Table 3.19 shows the results of a regression of conflict frequency on respondent's sexual orientation (GLB), parent's age, parent's gender (mother), parent's education (some college, finished college, and grad/prof degree), parent's frequency of attendance of religious services (relig. freq. 1 to 3), parent's involvement in other religious activities (relig. involvement), parent's authoritarian personality (auth. personality), parent's level of homophobia (parent's homophobia), whether parent had any gay or lesbian friends (parent's gay fr.), respondent's gender (male), respondent's age, respondent's undesirable behavior (substance, home, school, and law), and a binary variable indicating that the respondent

did not live with the parent during the reference year (did not live with). The overall model was statistically significant ( $F(20, 337.9) = 11.69, p \leq 0.01$ ).

The results shown in Table 3.19 indicate that respondent's sexual orientation was not significantly associated with frequency of parent-adolescent conflict. Of the independent variables of interest only parent's gender and parent's authoritarian personality were significantly associated with frequency of parent-adolescent conflict. Specifically, the coefficient for mother indicates that predicted value of conflict frequency is 0.234 points higher for mothers than fathers (on a scale with scores from 0 to roughly six). Higher authoritarian personality scores (for parents) were also associated with higher predicted conflict frequency. The coefficient for this variable indicates that for each one unit increase (on a roughly 1 to 5 scale) in parent's authoritarian personality, the predicted value of conflict frequency increases by 0.18.

For the ordinal independent variables, specified as a series of indicator variables (i.e. parent's level of education and frequency of attendance at religious services), in addition to the tests of the individual coefficients for the indicator variables, Wald tests were used to perform a multiple degree of freedom tests for an overall effect of the variable. In this instance, the Wald test was used to test whether all the indicators for a single categorical independent variable were simultaneously equal to zero. The results of the Wald test indicate that the dummy variables for parent's education were not, as a group, statistically significant ( $F(3, 333.4) = 0.86, p = 0.46$ ). Additional Wald tests were also used to test for pairwise differences between the coefficients for the indicator variables (note that this is equivalent to rerunning the model with different reference

groups). None of the pairwise comparisons between groups (i.e. levels of education), were statistically significant.

Looking at parent's attendance of religious services, the overall test of the coefficients was non-significant ( $F(3, 333.7) = 2.15, p = 0.09$ ). One of the pairwise comparison, specifically the comparison between never attending church (the reference category) and the once a month to once a week category was statistically significant (shown in Table 3.19). This significant difference indicates that respondents with parents who attended church once a month to once a week had significantly higher predicted values of parent-adolescent conflict than those whose parents never attended church. None of the other pairwise comparisons were statistically significant. Given the lack of a significant overall test for parent's attendance of religious services, the lack of any additional significant differences, and the number of hypothesis tests performed in the course of the analysis, it is difficult to make any inference from this finding, which may be type I error.

Of the control variables included in the model, not living with a parent was associated with significantly lower predicted values on the conflict frequency scale. This finding is not surprising given that individuals who live together typically spend more time together, providing greater opportunity for conflict. Substance use and breaking household rules were associated with higher predicted values on the parent-adolescent conflict frequency scale. As discussed in Chapter I, undesirable behavior by young people, particularly relatively risky behaviors (e.g. substance use) may increase parent-adolescent conflict as parents attempt to eliminate such behaviors.

Table 3.19 Regression of Conflict Frequency on Main Effects

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
GLB	-0.155	0.134	-1.163	0.246	-0.418	0.107
Mother	0.234	0.045	5.195	0.000	0.145	0.322
Parent's age	-0.003	0.008	-0.424	0.672	-0.020	0.013
Auth. Personality	0.180	0.077	2.332	0.020	0.028	0.332
Some college <sup>a</sup>	0.048	0.103	0.468	0.640	-0.155	0.251
Finished college <sup>a</sup>	0.143	0.094	1.518	0.130	-0.042	0.327
Grad/prof degree <sup>a</sup>	0.075	0.103	0.724	0.470	-0.128	0.277
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>b</sup>	0.134	0.081	1.655	0.099	-0.025	0.294
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>b</sup>	0.305	0.124	2.467	0.014	0.062	0.549
Relig. freq. 3 <sup>b</sup>	0.141	0.120	1.175	0.241	-0.095	0.377
Relig. involvement <sup>c</sup>	-0.135	0.100	-1.356	0.176	-0.332	0.061
Parent's Gay fr.	-0.016	0.031	-0.510	0.610	-0.077	0.045
Parent's homophobia	0.111	0.087	1.276	0.203	-0.060	0.283
Male	-0.031	0.096	-0.324	0.746	-0.220	0.158
Respondent's age	0.037	0.023	1.621	0.106	-0.008	0.082
Did not live with <sup>d</sup>	-0.249	0.102	-2.442	0.015	-0.449	-0.048
Substance <sup>e</sup>	0.054	0.023	2.366	0.019	0.009	0.098
Home <sup>e</sup>	0.296	0.036	8.127	0.000	0.224	0.368
School <sup>e</sup>	0.099	0.072	1.383	0.168	-0.042	0.240
Law <sup>e</sup>	-0.033	0.035	-0.967	0.334	-0.101	0.035
Intercept	-0.701	0.465	-1.508	0.132	-1.615	0.213

<sup>a</sup> Parent's level of education. The reference group is high school or less.

<sup>b</sup> Parent's frequency of attendance of religious services. Reference category is never, compared to (1) less than once a year to several times a year, (2) once a month to every week, (3) more than once a week.

<sup>c</sup> Indicates whether the parent was involved in religious organizations, other than attending services.

<sup>d</sup> Indicates the respondent did not live with the parent during the reference year.

<sup>e</sup> Undesirable behavior by respondent, specifically, substance use (substance), misbehavior at home (home), problems at school (school), and breaking the law (law).

In order to examine whether the relationships between parental characteristics and conflict frequency differed based on respondent sexual orientation, models including interactions between respondent's sexual orientation and parent characteristics were also estimated (i.e. tests for moderation). The interactions were tested individually, that is, the



interaction between sexual orientation and each parental characteristic was tested in its own model. For variables represented by a series of indicators, a series of indicator by sexual orientation interactions were included in a single model, and Wald tests were used to test for the overall significance of the interaction. Interactions between respondent's sexual orientation and the following parental characteristics were tested: parent gender ( $b = 0.054$ ,  $s.e.=0.113$ ,  $p \leq 0.632$ ), age ( $b = 0.018$ ,  $s.e.=0.018$ ,  $p \leq 0.303$ ), education ( $F(3, 328.8) = 0.47$ ,  $p \leq 0.701$ ), authoritarian personality ( $b = 0.087$ ,  $s.e.=0.238$ ,  $p \leq 0.715$ ), religious involvement ( $b = -0.123$ ,  $s.e.=0.242$ ,  $p \leq 0.611$ ), and attendance of religious services ( $F(3, 312.4) = 0.98$ ,  $p \leq 0.404$ ). None of these interactions were statistically significant. For parental education and attendance of religious services, all pairwise comparisons were also tested, none of which were statistically significant.

### **Perceived Conflict**

Analyses parallel to those with conflict frequency as the dependent variable were run using perceived conflict as the dependent variable. The independent variables in these models were the same as those models with conflict frequency as a dependent variable, except that conflict frequency was added to the models for perceived conflict as a control variable. Conflict frequency was included in the models for perceived conflict because the frequency of conflict is associated with the level of perceived conflict both logically and empirically (see Table 3.17 above and Table 3.20 below). That is to say, respondents who report more frequent conflict with their parents are expected to perceive that their relationships with their parents include more conflict. Of interest was whether other variables predicted perceived conflict after controlling for the role of conflict frequency in the relationship. For example, the previous analysis showed that parents' authoritarian

personality characteristics are positively associated with conflict frequency. It is also possible that, controlling for conflict frequency, respondents with parents with more authoritarian personality characteristics also perceive more conflict, because their parents are less flexible and demand greater adherence to authority than less authoritarian parents.

The results of the model with perceived conflict as the dependent variable are shown in Table 3.20. The overall model was statistically significant ( $F(21, 337.4) = 7.54, p \leq 0.001$ ). The results shown in Table 3.20 indicate that respondent's sexual orientation was not a significant predictor of perceived parent-adolescent conflict. Nor were any of the independent variables of interest were statistically significant predictors of perceived parent-adolescent conflict. As in the analysis for conflict frequency, in addition to the tests of coefficients shown in the table, Wald test were used to perform a multiple degree of freedom test for an overall effect of categorical variables, as well as additional pairwise comparisons. The results of the Wald tests indicate that the indicator variables for parent education were not, as a group, statistically significant ( $F(3, 336.8) = 1.08, p \leq 0.359$ ), nor were any of the pairwise comparisons statistically significant. Parent's attendance of religious services was similarly non-significant ( $F(3, 335.1) = 0.88, p \leq 0.451$ ), as were all of the pairwise comparisons.

Looking at the control variables, not living with a parent was associated with significantly higher predicted values on the perceived conflict scale, after controlling for conflict frequency. It is somewhat interesting to note that in the previous analysis (i.e. the analysis with conflict frequency as a dependent variable), not living with a parent was associated with less frequent conflict, while not living with a parent is positively related

to perceived conflict in the current analysis. This is not entirely surprising because while living together provides greater opportunity for conflict in terms of frequency, young people may be less likely to live with a parent they get along with less well (perceived conflict). Finally, higher conflict frequency was also associated with higher predicted values of perceived conflict. Finding an association between frequency of conflict and levels of perceived conflict suggests that the measures are at least to some extent, behaving as expected.

Table 3.20 Regression of Perceived Conflict on Main Effects

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
GLB	0.147	0.103	1.419	0.157	-0.057	0.350
Mother	0.096	0.057	1.681	0.094	-0.016	0.209
Parent's age	0.005	0.007	0.807	0.420	-0.008	0.018
Auth. Personality	-0.128	0.067	-1.911	0.057	-0.260	0.004
Some college	-0.028	0.108	-0.260	0.795	-0.241	0.185
Finished college	-0.052	0.087	-0.598	0.551	-0.224	0.119
Grad/prof degree	-0.161	0.099	-1.630	0.104	-0.356	0.033
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>a</sup>	-0.065	0.073	-0.893	0.373	-0.209	0.078
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>a</sup>	-0.074	0.113	-0.656	0.512	-0.296	0.148
Relig. freq. 3 <sup>a</sup>	0.085	0.128	0.662	0.509	-0.167	0.337
Relig. involvement	-0.027	0.095	-0.282	0.778	-0.214	0.160
Parent's Gay fr.	-0.003	0.030	-0.088	0.930	-0.061	0.056
Parent's homophobia	0.114	0.078	1.471	0.142	-0.039	0.267
Male	-0.091	0.073	-1.253	0.211	-0.235	0.052
Age	-0.027	0.016	-1.716	0.087	-0.058	0.004
Did not live with	0.507	0.111	4.551	0.000	0.288	0.726
Substance	0.028	0.019	1.449	0.148	-0.010	0.065
Home	0.021	0.028	0.764	0.445	-0.033	0.075
School	-0.001	0.054	-0.016	0.987	-0.108	0.106
Law	0.013	0.025	0.535	0.593	-0.036	0.063
Conflict, frequency	0.357	0.046	7.785	0.000	0.267	0.447
Intercept	2.046	0.322	6.345	0.000	1.411	2.680

<sup>a</sup> Parent's frequency of attendance of religious services (Relig. freq.). Reference category is never, compared to (1) less than once a year to several times a year, (2) once a month to every week, (3) more than once a week.

Interactions between respondent's sexual orientation and the following parental characteristics were tested individually in a series of models: gender ( $b = 0.276$ ,  $s.e. = 0.218$ ,  $p \leq 0.206$ ), age ( $b = 0.01$ ,  $s.e. = 0.02$ ,  $p \leq 0.613$ ), education ( $F(3, 331.3) = 0.25$ ,  $p \leq 0.865$ ), authoritarian personality ( $b = -0.307$ ,  $s.e. = 0.21$ ,  $p \leq 0.145$ ), religious involvement ( $b = -0.065$ ,  $s.e. = 0.262$ ,  $p \leq 0.805$ ), and attendance of religious services ( $F(3, 297.4) = 1.72$ ,  $p \leq 0.162$ ). None of these interactions were significant. There were some pairwise differences in the sexual orientation by parental attendance of religious services interaction terms. Specifically, among GLB respondents, respondents whose parents attended religious services more than once a week had significantly higher predicted values of perceived conflict than those whose parents attended religious services either once a year to several times a year (difference  $0.698$ ,  $s.e. = 0.305$ ,  $p \leq 0.023$ ), or once a month to once a week (difference  $= 0.808$ ,  $s.e. = 0.356$ ,  $p \leq 0.024$ ), holding all other variables in the model constant. As with the significant pairwise comparisons in previous models, given the lack of an overall effect of the interaction and the number of hypothesis tests performed, it is difficult to make inferences based on these differences in coefficients given the possibility of type 1 error.

### **Perceived Social Support**

A series of research questions addressed the relationship between sexual orientation and perceived social support from parents at the time of the survey, including possible mediation and/or interaction of any relationship between sexual orientation and social support by conflict frequency, and/or perceived conflict. Table 3.21 shows the results of social support at the time of the survey regressed on conflict frequency (conflict, frequency), perceived conflict (conflict, perceived), and sexual orientation

(GLB), controlling for respondent's gender (male), respondent's age (age), whether the respondent lived with the parent (did not live with), parent's gender (mother), parent's age, and parent's level of education (some college, finished college, grad/prof degree). The overall model, estimated using OLS regression, was statistically significant ( $F(8, 338.3) = 70.31, p \leq 0.001$ ).

Looking at Table 3.21, conflict frequency was positively associated with perceived social support at the time of the survey, that is, higher levels of conflict frequency during the reference year were associated with higher predicted values of social support at the time of the survey, even after controlling for whether the respondent lived with the parent during the reference year. Specifically, the coefficient in Table 3.21 indicates that a one unit increase in the roughly seven-point conflict frequency scale was associated with a 0.092 point increase in the predicted value of the four-point social support scale. The finding that higher levels of conflict during the reference year are associated with higher predicted values of perceived social support at the time of the survey may seem somewhat counter-intuitive. This may be a result of exposure, that is, respondents who felt closer to and/or spent more time with a parent also had greater opportunity for conflict with that parent, resulting in higher conflict frequency. It is worth noting that despite being statistically significant, the estimated coefficient is relatively modest.

Perceived conflict was negatively associated with predicted values of perceived social support, that is, respondents who reported less perceived conflict with their parent during the reference year had lower predicted values of perceived social support from the parent at the time of the survey. The coefficient indicates that a one unit increase in the

four-point perceived conflict scale was associated with a 0.629 point decrease in the predicted value of the four-point social support scale, holding all other variables in the model constant. Being male, and not having lived with the parent during the reference year were associated with significantly lower predicted values of perceived social support at the time of the survey. On average, mothers had higher predicted values of social support than fathers. The indicator variables for parent's education were not, as a group, statistically significant ( $F(3, 337.7) = 1.95, p \leq 0.1208$ ). The pairwise comparisons between high school or less (the reference group) and finished college was statistically significant, as was the pairwise comparison between high school or less and graduate or professional school (shown in Table 3.21). These coefficients indicate that respondents whose parent had finished college or went to graduate or professional school had higher predicted values of perceived social support at the time of the survey than respondents whose parents had a high school education or less. None of the other pairwise comparisons for parent's education were statistically significant. As with other significant pairwise comparisons discussed above, given the lack of an overall effect of the variable and the number of hypothesis tests performed, it is difficult to draw an inference from these differences given the possibility of type 1 error.

Table 3.21 Regression of Perceived Social Support on Main Effects

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
Conflict, frequency	0.084	0.038	2.217	0.027	0.010	0.159
Conflict, perceived	-0.623	0.041	-15.286	0.000	-0.703	-0.543
GLB	-0.189	0.131	-1.445	0.149	-0.447	0.068
Male	-0.131	0.060	-2.187	0.029	-0.248	-0.013
Age	-0.026	0.016	-1.581	0.115	-0.057	0.006
Did not live with	-0.237	0.111	-2.138	0.033	-0.455	-0.019
Mother	0.580	0.048	12.118	0.000	0.486	0.674
Parent's age	-0.003	0.006	-0.422	0.673	-0.014	0.009
Some college	0.058	0.095	0.610	0.542	-0.129	0.245
Finished college	0.144	0.069	2.080	0.038	0.008	0.281
Grad/prof degree	0.162	0.078	2.065	0.040	0.008	0.316
Intercept	5.122	0.327	15.652	0.000	4.478	5.766

Two additional models (not shown), were estimated in order to test for a sexual orientation by conflict frequency interaction, and a sexual orientation by perceived conflict interaction. Neither the sexual orientation by conflict frequency interaction ( $b = -0.113$ ,  $s.e. = 0.112$ ,  $p \leq 0.315$ ), nor the sexual orientation by perceived conflict interaction ( $b = -0.085$ ,  $s.e. = 0.099$ ,  $p \leq 0.39$ ) were significant.

The research questions also posited that parent-adolescent conflict might mediate the relationship between sexual orientation and perceived social support at the time of the survey. Two additional models were used to test this hypothesized relationship, one with conflict frequency as a mediator, and one with perceived conflict as a mediator.<sup>1</sup> Both of the models were estimated using maximum likelihood (ML) techniques rather than ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Note that for these models, the two methods are expected to provide nearly identical results, the difference in estimation methods was a

<sup>1</sup> Given the lack of a significant relationship between sexual orientation and either the mediator variables (conflict frequency and perceived conflict) or the dependent variables the mediation models were highly unlikely to find a significant mediation effect, but were run, and are included for the sake of completeness, not because they were necessarily expected to provide novel findings.

matter of convenience because the software used to estimate the mediation models would calculate the indirect and total effects, along with the correct standard errors, using maximum likelihood estimation. The mediation models for social support contain variables not included in the above models of social support because the covariates from the model with the mediator variable, that is, conflict, as a dependent variable were added to the model. The addition of these covariates to the model produces some small changes in the coefficients versus those in the model immediately above (i.e. Table 3.21), but does not result in substantively meaningful changes. Also note that the software used to estimate the mediation models (Mplus 5.2) does not provide overall significance tests for saturated models, so no overall chi-squared tests or F-tests are reported.

Table 3.22 shows the model with conflict frequency mediating the relationship between sexual orientation (GLB) and perceived social support. The first section of the table, labeled “Mediator: Conflict frequency,” shows the portion of the model with paths from the independent variable (sexual orientation) and covariates, to the mediator (conflict frequency). Consistent with previous results the coefficient for sexual orientation (GLB) is not statistically significant. The second section of the table, labeled “Dependent: Social support,” shows the paths from the mediator, as well as the direct effects of the independent variable and covariates to the dependent variable (social support). Again, consistent with previous models, the direct effect of sexual orientation on perceived social support is not statistically significant. Consistent with the model shown in Table 3.21, the coefficient for the path from the mediator variable, conflict frequency, to social support is statistically significant. Higher conflict frequency is associated with significantly higher predicted values of social support. The final section



of Table 3.22, labeled “Indirect and total: Sexual orientation” shows the indirect and total effects of sexual orientation on perceived social support, neither of which is statistically significant.

Table 3.22 Model with Conflict Frequency Mediating the Relationship Between Sexual Orientation and Social Support

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
Mediator: Conflict frequency						
GLB	-0.186	0.124	-1.496	0.135	-0.430	0.058
Mother	0.174	0.041	4.274	0.000	0.094	0.253
Parent’s age	-0.005	0.008	-0.630	0.529	-0.020	0.010
Auth. Personality	0.202	0.071	2.827	0.005	0.062	0.341
Some college	0.052	0.098	0.532	0.595	-0.140	0.244
Finished college	0.143	0.090	1.593	0.111	-0.033	0.319
Grad/prof degree	0.120	0.100	1.192	0.233	-0.077	0.316
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>a</sup>	0.140	0.074	1.897	0.058	-0.005	0.285
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>a</sup>	0.293	0.120	2.455	0.014	0.059	0.528
Relig. freq. 3 <sup>a</sup>	0.096	0.112	0.855	0.392	-0.124	0.315
Relig. involvement	-0.110	0.093	-1.180	0.238	-0.293	0.073
Parent’s Gay fr.	-0.013	0.029	-0.455	0.649	-0.069	0.043
Parent’s homophobia	0.060	0.082	0.726	0.468	-0.102	0.221
Male	0.003	0.088	0.035	0.972	-0.169	0.176
Respondent’s age	0.042	0.022	1.869	0.062	-0.002	0.085
Did not live with	-0.389	0.095	-4.110	0.000	-0.574	-0.203
Substance use	0.038	0.021	1.796	0.072	-0.003	0.080
Home	0.254	0.035	7.247	0.000	0.185	0.322
School	0.088	0.066	1.333	0.183	-0.041	0.216
Law	-0.034	0.033	-1.025	0.306	-0.099	0.031
Intercept	-1.302	0.458	-2.841	0.005	-2.201	-0.403

Dependent: Social support						
Conflict, frequency	0.106	0.040	2.629	0.009	0.027	0.185
GLB	-0.127	0.133	-0.958	0.338	-0.387	0.133
Mother	0.576	0.049	11.649	0.000	0.479	0.673
Parent's age	-0.001	0.006	-0.201	0.841	-0.013	0.011
Auth. Personality	-0.001	0.060	-0.018	0.985	-0.118	0.116
Some col.	0.028	0.095	0.295	0.768	-0.158	0.214
Finished col.	0.133	0.070	1.902	0.057	-0.004	0.270
Grad/prof	0.143	0.082	1.735	0.083	-0.019	0.304
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>a</sup>	0.100	0.069	1.452	0.147	-0.035	0.235
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>a</sup>	0.003	0.097	0.028	0.978	-0.188	0.193
Relig. freq. 3 <sup>a</sup>	0.057	0.098	0.588	0.557	-0.134	0.249
Relig. involvement	-0.105	0.077	-1.372	0.170	-0.256	0.045
Parent's Gay fr.	0.026	0.028	0.912	0.362	-0.030	0.081
Parent's homophobia	0.032	0.061	0.526	0.599	-0.088	0.152
Male	-0.115	0.060	-1.924	0.054	-0.232	0.002
Respondent's age	-0.031	0.017	-1.832	0.067	-0.063	0.002
Did not live with	-0.251	0.110	-2.293	0.022	-0.466	-0.036
Substance	0.017	0.017	1.003	0.316	-0.016	0.049
Home	-0.041	0.023	-1.794	0.073	-0.085	0.004
School	0.030	0.044	0.691	0.489	-0.056	0.117
Law	-0.043	0.024	-1.776	0.076	-0.091	0.005
Intercept	5.113	0.333	15.356	0.000	4.460	5.766
Indirect and total: Sexual orientation						
Indirect	-0.020	0.015	-1.323	0.186	-0.049	0.010
Total	-0.147	0.134	-1.097	0.273	-0.410	0.116

<sup>a</sup> Parent's frequency of attendance of religious services (Relig. freq.). Reference category is never, compared to (1) less than once a year to several times a year, (2) once a month to every week, (3) more than once a week.

Table 3.23 shows the results from the model testing whether perceived conflict mediates the relationship between sexual orientation and social support. The total, indirect, and direct effects of sexual orientation on social support are all non-significant. Consistent with previous results, the relationship between perceived conflict (the mediator variable) and social support is statistically significant, with higher levels of perceived conflict during the reference year associated with lower predicted values of social support at the time of the survey. As a sensitivity check, the model was estimated

without the conflict frequency, all of the coefficients were the same in terms of sign, significance, and magnitude.

Table 3.23 Model with Perceived Conflict Mediating the Relationship Between Sexual Orientation and Social Support

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
Mediator: Perceived conflict						
GLB	0.147	0.102	1.439	0.150	-0.053	0.347
Mother	0.096	0.057	1.704	0.088	-0.015	0.207
Parent's age	0.005	0.006	0.818	0.413	-0.007	0.018
Auth. Personality	-0.128	0.066	-1.934	0.053	-0.258	0.002
Some college	-0.028	0.107	-0.264	0.792	-0.237	0.181
Finished college	-0.052	0.086	-0.606	0.544	-0.221	0.116
Grad/prof degree	-0.161	0.097	-1.654	0.098	-0.352	0.030
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>a</sup>	-0.065	0.072	-0.906	0.365	-0.206	0.076
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>a</sup>	-0.074	0.111	-0.665	0.506	-0.292	0.144
Relig. freq. 3 <sup>a</sup>	0.085	0.126	0.671	0.502	-0.163	0.332
Relig. involvement	-0.027	0.094	-0.286	0.775	-0.211	0.157
Parent's Gay fr.	-0.003	0.030	-0.089	0.929	-0.061	0.055
Parent's homophobia	0.114	0.077	1.490	0.136	-0.036	0.265
Conflict, frequency	0.357	0.045	7.879	0.000	0.268	0.446
Male	-0.091	0.072	-1.271	0.204	-0.232	0.050
Respondent's age	-0.027	0.016	-1.737	0.083	-0.058	0.004
Did not live with	0.507	0.110	4.610	0.000	0.291	0.722
Substance use	0.028	0.019	1.468	0.142	-0.009	0.064
Home	0.021	0.027	0.774	0.439	-0.032	0.075
School	-0.001	0.054	-0.017	0.987	-0.106	0.104
Law	0.013	0.025	0.541	0.589	-0.035	0.062
Intercept	2.046	0.318	6.424	0.000	1.421	2.670

Dependent: Social support						
Conflict, perceived	-0.617	0.041	-14.953	0.000	-0.698	-0.536
GLB	-0.127	0.133	-0.958	0.338	-0.387	0.133
Mother	0.576	0.049	11.649	0.000	0.479	0.673
Parent's age	-0.001	0.006	-0.201	0.841	-0.013	0.011
Auth. Personality	-0.001	0.060	-0.018	0.985	-0.118	0.116
Some college	0.028	0.095	0.295	0.768	-0.158	0.214
Finished college	0.133	0.070	1.902	0.057	-0.004	0.270
Grad/prof degree	0.143	0.082	1.735	0.083	-0.019	0.304
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>a</sup>	0.100	0.069	1.452	0.147	-0.035	0.235
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>a</sup>	0.003	0.097	0.028	0.978	-0.188	0.193
Relig. freq. 3 <sup>a</sup>	0.057	0.098	0.588	0.557	-0.134	0.249
Relig. involvement	-0.105	0.077	-1.372	0.170	-0.256	0.045
Parent's Gay fr.	0.026	0.028	0.912	0.362	-0.030	0.081
Parent's homophobia	0.032	0.061	0.526	0.599	-0.088	0.152
Conflict, frequency	0.106	0.040	2.629	0.009	0.027	0.185
Male	-0.115	0.060	-1.924	0.054	-0.232	0.002
Respondent's age	-0.031	0.017	-1.832	0.067	-0.063	0.002
Did not live with	-0.251	0.110	-2.292	0.022	-0.466	-0.036
Substance	0.017	0.017	1.003	0.316	-0.016	0.049
Home	-0.041	0.023	-1.794	0.073	-0.085	0.004
School	0.030	0.044	0.691	0.489	-0.056	0.117
Law	-0.043	0.024	-1.776	0.076	-0.091	0.005
Intercept	5.113	0.333	15.356	0.000	4.460	5.766
Indirect and total: Sexual orientation						
Indirect	-0.091	0.063	-1.435	0.151	-0.215	0.033
Total	-0.218	0.157	-1.390	0.165	-0.525	0.089

<sup>a</sup> Parent's frequency of attendance of religious services (Relig. freq.). Reference category is never, compared to (1) less than once a year to several times a year, (2) once a month to every week, (3) more than once a week.

### **Relationship Quality**

One research question addressed a possible relationship between sexual orientation and parent-adolescent relationship quality during the reference year. A second research question posited that conflict during the reference year might mediate the relationship between sexual orientation and relationship quality. Because there were no research questions involving moderation with relationship quality as the dependent variable, these questions were most directly addressed by a two mediation models, one

for each measures of conflict (i.e. conflict frequency and perceived conflict). As with the mediation models for social support, these models included all of the covariates included in the models for the conflict variables.

Table 3.24 shows the results for a model where the relationship between sexual orientation and relationship quality is mediated by conflict frequency. The total, direct, and indirect effects of sexual orientation are all non-significant. While there is no evidence for mediation, conflict frequency was significantly associated with predicted values of relationship quality. Specifically, for each one unit increase in conflict frequency (on a seven point scale), there was a 0.168 decrease in the predicted value of relationship quality (on a four point scale), controlling for all other variables in the model. Predicted values of relationship quality were significantly higher for mothers, and when parents had a graduate or professional degree (versus high school or less), controlling for all other variables in the model. Predicted values of relationship quality were significantly lower when the respondent did not live with the parent, controlling for all other variables in the model. Undesirable behavior at home was associated with lower predicted values of parent-adolescent relationship quality during the reference year.

Table 3.24 Model with Conflict Frequency Mediating the Relationship Between Sexual Orientation and Relationship Quality

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
Mediator: Conflict frequency						
GLB	-0.155	0.132	-1.180	0.238	-0.413	0.103
Mother	0.234	0.044	5.270	0.000	0.147	0.321
Parent's age	-0.003	0.008	-0.430	0.667	-0.019	0.012
Auth. personality	0.180	0.076	2.362	0.018	0.031	0.330
Some college	0.048	0.102	0.474	0.635	-0.151	0.248
Finished college	0.143	0.093	1.539	0.124	-0.039	0.324
Grad/prof degree	0.075	0.102	0.733	0.463	-0.125	0.274
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>a</sup>	0.134	0.080	1.677	0.094	-0.023	0.291
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>a</sup>	0.305	0.122	2.502	0.012	0.066	0.544
Relig. freq. 3 <sup>a</sup>	0.141	0.119	1.190	0.234	-0.091	0.373
Relig. involvement	-0.135	0.099	-1.371	0.170	-0.329	0.058
Parent's Gay fr.	-0.016	0.031	-0.516	0.606	-0.076	0.044
Parent's homophobia	0.111	0.086	1.294	0.196	-0.057	0.280
Male	-0.031	0.095	-0.329	0.742	-0.217	0.154
Respondent's age	0.037	0.022	1.645	0.100	-0.007	0.081
Did not live with	-0.249	0.100	-2.478	0.013	-0.446	-0.052
Substance	0.054	0.022	2.399	0.016	0.010	0.098
Home	0.296	0.036	8.241	0.000	0.226	0.367
School	0.099	0.071	1.403	0.161	-0.039	0.237
Law	-0.033	0.034	-0.978	0.329	-0.100	0.034
Intercept	-0.701	0.457	-1.533	0.125	-1.597	0.196

Dependent: Relationship quality						
Conflict, frequency	-0.168	0.040	-4.233	0.000	-0.246	-0.090
GLB	-0.153	0.109	-1.399	0.162	-0.367	0.061
Mother	0.099	0.044	2.258	0.024	0.013	0.185
Parent's age	-0.005	0.006	-0.905	0.365	-0.017	0.006
Auth. personality	0.097	0.058	1.676	0.094	-0.017	0.211
Some college	0.058	0.095	0.617	0.537	-0.127	0.244
Finished college	0.129	0.070	1.850	0.064	-0.008	0.267
Grad/prof degree	0.192	0.082	2.347	0.019	0.032	0.353
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>a</sup>	0.074	0.064	1.162	0.245	-0.051	0.199
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>a</sup>	0.035	0.092	0.380	0.704	-0.145	0.215
Relig. freq. 3 <sup>a</sup>	-0.097	0.107	-0.912	0.362	-0.307	0.112
Relig. involvement	-0.039	0.079	-0.492	0.623	-0.194	0.116
Parent's Gay fr.	0.036	0.026	1.361	0.174	-0.016	0.088
Parent's homophobia	-0.012	0.066	-0.186	0.853	-0.141	0.117
Male	0.081	0.060	1.352	0.176	-0.037	0.199
Respondent's age	0.005	0.014	0.346	0.729	-0.022	0.032
Did not live with	-0.538	0.093	-5.804	0.000	-0.720	-0.356
Substance	-0.024	0.017	-1.426	0.154	-0.056	0.009
Home	-0.051	0.024	-2.130	0.033	-0.099	-0.004
School	-0.000	0.046	-0.010	0.992	-0.091	0.091
Law	-0.029	0.024	-1.198	0.231	-0.076	0.018
Intercept	3.915	0.258	15.145	0.000	3.407	4.422
Indirect and total: Sexual orientation						
Indirect	0.026	0.023	1.121	0.262	-0.020	0.072
Total	-0.127	0.111	-1.141	0.254	-0.345	0.091

<sup>a</sup> Parent's frequency of attendance of religious services (Relig. freq.). Reference category is never, compared to (1) less than once a year to several times a year, (2) once a month to every week, (3) more than once a week.

Table 3.25 shows the results of a model similar to the previous model, testing whether perceived conflict moderates any possible relationship between sexual orientation and relationship quality. The indirect effect of sexual orientation, shown at the bottom of Table 3.25 is statistically significant, and the total effect is also nearly significant. However, the direct effects of sexual orientation on both perceived conflict (the mediator) and relationship quality (the dependent variable) are non-significant. Perceived conflict was associated with significantly lower predicted values of

relationship quality. For each one unit increase in perceived conflict (one a four point scale), the predicted value of relationship quality decreased by 0.604 points (on a four point scale), holding all other variables in the model constant. The non-significant coefficients for the direct effects of sexual orientation, along with the relatively large coefficient for perceived conflict, strongly suggests that the significant indirect effect (and the nearly significant total effect) are a result of the relatively strong relationship between perceived conflict and relationship quality, rather than an actual indirect effect of sexual orientation. In other words, in the absence of a statistically significant coefficient for the path from sexual orientation to perceived conflict, it is difficult to argue that any effect of sexual orientation could be mediated by perceived conflict.

As in the model with conflict frequency as the mediator, predicted values of relationship quality were higher for mothers than for fathers, and lower if the respondent did not live with the parent during the reference year versus respondents who resided with the parent. Unlike the previous model, the relationship between undesirable behavior at home and relationship quality was non-significant. Also a change from the previous model, the relationship between the number of gay, lesbian, or bisexual friends a parent has was associated with higher predicted values of relationship quality. In both cases, the coefficients are in the same direction across the two models, the differences in significance are due to relatively small changes in the coefficients and their standard errors, and hence are unlikely to represent substantively important differences in the models. Two additional things should be noted with regard to the relationship between parent's number of gay, lesbian, and bisexual friends and relationship quality. The first is that this finding does not involve an interaction with sexual orientation, that is, this



coefficient applies to both GLB and non-GLB respondents. Second, the coefficient is very small, that is, a one unit change in parent's number of GLB friends (i.e. from none to 1, 1 to 2, or 3 or more) was associated with a 0.034 point increase (95% CI 0.002 to 0.067) in relationship quality (on a four point scale). Thus, while the estimated coefficient is significantly different from 0, the size of the effect is very modest. This finding may also represent type 1 error.

One additional point to note is that once perceived conflict is included in the model, the relationship between conflict frequency and relationship quality changes from significant and negative, to significant, positive, and of substantially smaller magnitude (i.e. from -0.168 to 0.054). This is consistent with the often noted tendency of individuals who spend more time together, to have more frequent conflict, merely as a result of exposure, rather than as a result of actual relationship problems. Thus, once degree of overall difficulty in the parent-adolescent relationship is controlled for (i.e. perceived conflict), the positive relationship between relationship quality and conflict frequency may reflect greater exposure to the possibility of conflict, through greater contact. As a sensitivity check, the model shown in Table 3.25 was also estimated without conflict frequency, all coefficients in this model were similar to those shown in terms of sign, significance, and magnitude.

Table 3.25 Model with Perceived Conflict Mediating the Relationship Between Sexual Orientation and Relationship Quality

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
Mediator: Perceived conflict						
GLB	0.147	0.102	1.439	0.150	-0.053	0.347
Mother	0.096	0.057	1.704	0.088	-0.015	0.207
Parent's age	0.005	0.006	0.818	0.413	-0.007	0.018
Auth. personality	-0.128	0.066	-1.934	0.053	-0.258	0.002
Some college	-0.028	0.107	-0.264	0.792	-0.237	0.181
Finished college	-0.052	0.086	-0.606	0.544	-0.221	0.116
Grad/prof degree	-0.161	0.097	-1.654	0.098	-0.352	0.030
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>a</sup>	-0.065	0.072	-0.906	0.365	-0.206	0.076
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>a</sup>	-0.074	0.111	-0.665	0.506	-0.292	0.144
Relig. freq. 3 <sup>a</sup>	0.085	0.126	0.671	0.502	-0.163	0.332
Relig. involvement	-0.027	0.094	-0.286	0.775	-0.211	0.157
Parent's Gay fr.	-0.003	0.030	-0.089	0.929	-0.061	0.055
Parent's homophobia	0.114	0.077	1.490	0.136	-0.036	0.265
Conflict, frequency	0.357	0.045	7.879	0.000	0.268	0.446
Male	-0.091	0.072	-1.271	0.204	-0.232	0.050
Respondent's age	-0.027	0.016	-1.737	0.083	-0.058	0.004
Did not live with	0.507	0.110	4.610	0.000	0.291	0.722
Substance use	0.028	0.019	1.468	0.142	-0.009	0.064
Home	0.021	0.027	0.774	0.439	-0.032	0.075
School	-0.001	0.054	-0.017	0.987	-0.106	0.104
Law	0.013	0.025	0.541	0.589	-0.035	0.062
Intercept	2.046	0.318	6.424	0.000	1.421	2.670

Dependent: Relationship quality						
Conflict, perceived	-0.622	0.027	-23.131	0.000	-0.674	-0.569
GLB	-0.062	0.082	-0.755	0.450	-0.222	0.098
Mother	0.159	0.030	5.269	0.000	0.100	0.218
Parent's age	-0.002	0.004	-0.545	0.585	-0.010	0.005
Auth. personality	0.018	0.038	0.469	0.639	-0.056	0.092
Some college	0.041	0.064	0.645	0.519	-0.084	0.165
Finished college	0.097	0.045	2.136	0.033	0.008	0.186
Grad/prof degree	0.092	0.052	1.771	0.077	-0.010	0.194
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>a</sup>	0.033	0.043	0.785	0.432	-0.050	0.117
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>a</sup>	-0.011	0.054	-0.206	0.837	-0.117	0.095
Relig. freq. 3 <sup>a</sup>	-0.045	0.061	-0.731	0.465	-0.165	0.075
Relig. involvement	-0.056	0.047	-1.176	0.240	-0.148	0.037
Parent's Gay fr.	0.034	0.017	2.079	0.038	0.002	0.067
Parent's homophobia	0.059	0.039	1.491	0.137	-0.019	0.136
Conflict, frequency	0.054	0.025	2.133	0.033	0.004	0.103
Male	0.024	0.039	0.619	0.536	-0.053	0.102
Respondent's age	-0.012	0.010	-1.201	0.230	-0.032	0.008
Did not live with	-0.223	0.069	-3.217	0.001	-0.359	-0.087
Substance	-0.007	0.011	-0.618	0.537	-0.028	0.014
Home	-0.038	0.015	-2.604	0.009	-0.067	-0.009
School	-0.001	0.028	-0.036	0.971	-0.056	0.054
Law	-0.020	0.015	-1.314	0.189	-0.051	0.010
Intercept	5.186	0.201	25.745	0.000	4.791	5.582
Indirect and total: Sexual orientation						
Indirect	-0.091	0.064	-1.428	0.153	-0.217	0.034
Total	-0.153	0.109	-1.399	0.162	-0.367	0.061

<sup>a</sup> Parent's frequency of attendance of religious services (Relig. freq.). Reference category is never, compared to (1) less than once a year to several times a year, (2) once a month to every week, (3) more than once a week.

### **Physical and Psychological Assaults by Parents**

The relationship between sexual orientation and both physical and psychological assaults is of particular interest, given the perception that GLB adolescents are particularly likely to fall victim to such assaults discussed in Chapter I. As discussed above, the physical assault scale used here (i.e. the CTS-PC) is often analyzed as a series of categories; no assaults, minor physical assaults, severe physical assaults, and very severe physical assaults. However, in this case, the variable is analyzed as a dichotomy

(no assaults versus any assaults) to avoid estimation difficulties associated with sparse data (i.e. small cells). Psychological assaults were analyzed as a continuous variable because distributions of psychological assaults tend to be far less skewed than the distribution of physical assaults. Parent's gender, age, and education, as well as respondent's gender and age, and whether the respondent lived with the parent were included in the models as control variables.

Table 3.26 shows the results of the logistic regression analysis modeling whether the respondent experienced one or more assaults by a parent during the reference year. The overall model was statistically significant ( $F(6, 7549.9) = 2.78, p \leq 0.01$ ). Respondent's sexual orientation (GLB) was not significantly related to experiencing physical assaults. Of the control variables, parent's gender and respondent's age at the time of the survey were both significantly positively associated with the probability of minor physical assaults by parents. That is, mothers had higher predicted probabilities of assaulting their adolescent (i.e. the respondent, odds ratio = 1.63) and older respondents had a higher predicted probability of being assaulted (odds ratio = 1.17). The overall test for parent's education was not significant ( $F(3,13117.4) = 0.53, p \leq 0.66$ ), nor were any of the pairwise comparisons.

Table 3.26 Logistic Regression of Any Physical Assaults on Predictors

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
GLB	-0.573	0.605	-0.946	0.344	-1.759	0.613
Mother	0.486	0.202	2.400	0.016	0.089	0.882
Parent's age	0.008	0.031	0.276	0.782	-0.051	0.068
Male	0.183	0.306	0.598	0.550	-0.417	0.782
Respondent's age	0.161	0.062	2.617	0.009	0.041	0.282
Did not live with	0.565	0.449	1.259	0.208	-0.315	1.445
Some college	0.288	0.341	0.842	0.400	-0.382	0.957
Finished college	0.291	0.407	0.714	0.475	-0.508	1.089
Grad/prof degree	-0.130	0.474	-0.274	0.784	-1.060	0.800
Intercept	-5.510	1.303	-4.228	0.000	-8.065	-2.956

The bivariate regressions shown earlier in this chapter showed a relationship between physical assaults and both conflict frequency and perceived conflict. These relationships are not surprising, given that physical assaults are more likely to occur during conflict than in other situations. Additionally, in the case of perceived conflict, it is possible that individuals may perceive greater conflict when physical assaults have taken place, than when such assaults have not taken place (i.e. the relationship between perceived conflict and physical assault may be bi-directional). Although it was not part of the planned analyses, an additional model was estimated with conflict frequency and perceived conflict as predictors of physical assaults by parents. While both of these variables were statistically significant, including the variables in the model did not change the overall results.

Turning to the relationship between respondent's sexual orientation and psychological assaults by parents, Table 3.27 shows the results of a regression analysis examining the relationship between sexual orientation and psychological assaults on respondents during the reference year, controlling for parent's gender, age, and

education, as well as, respondent's gender, and age at the time of survey. The overall model was statistically significant ( $F(5, 320.9) = 6.36, p \leq 0.001$ ). The respondent's sexual orientation was not significantly associated with levels of psychological assault. Of the control variables, only parent's gender was significantly associated with psychological assaults. The predicted value of the psychological assault scale was higher for mothers than fathers, suggesting that mothers may use psychological assaults more frequently.

Table 3.27 Regression of Psychological Assault on Predictors

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
GLB	-0.097	0.214	-0.453	0.651	-0.517	0.324
Mother	0.325	0.066	4.912	0.000	0.195	0.455
Parent's age	0.003	0.012	0.262	0.793	-0.020	0.026
Male	-0.019	0.116	-0.163	0.870	-0.247	0.209
Respondent's age	0.039	0.027	1.448	0.149	-0.014	0.092
Some college	-0.181	0.176	-1.029	0.304	-0.528	0.165
Finished college	-0.188	0.139	-1.355	0.176	-0.460	0.085
Grad/prof degree	-0.151	0.163	-0.923	0.356	-0.472	0.170
Did not live with	-0.162	0.154	-1.052	0.294	-0.464	0.140
Intercept	0.106	0.540	0.197	0.844	-0.956	1.168

### Depression

The research questions also addressed a possible direct relationship between sexual orientation and depression at the time of the survey, as well as possible mediation or moderation of this relationship by parent-adolescent conflict. As discussed in Chapter II, the analyses with depression as a dependent variable were somewhat different from the previous analyses because depression varied by respondent rather than respondent-parent dyad. Constrained regression models were used to estimate single regression coefficients for variables that vary by parent-adolescent dyad, rather than estimating

separate effects for mothers and fathers (see Chapter II for more details). Depression was operationalized as continuous variable using the CES-D scale (Radloff and Locke 2000; Radloff 1977) and models were estimated using OLS regression.

Table 3.28 shows the model for depression regressed on sexual orientation, and conflict frequency, controlling for respondent's gender and age. Sexual orientation was not significantly associated with depression at the time of the survey. Both conflict frequency and perceived conflict were significantly associated with the predicted value of depression. Specifically, a one unit increase in conflict frequency (on a seven point scale) was associated with a 0.036 increase in the predicted value of depression (on a four point scale), controlling for other variables in the model. For perceived conflict, a one unit increase (on a five point scale) was associated with a 0.079 point increase in the predicted value of depression (on a four point scale), holding all other variables in the model constant. None of the control variables had statistically significant coefficients, this finding is somewhat unusual as gender is often found to be associated with depression (e.g. Hankin, Mermelstein & Roesch 2007).

Table 3.28 Regression of Depression on Predictors

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
Conflict, frequency	0.036	0.016	2.195	0.028	0.004	0.068
Conflict, perceived	0.079	0.022	3.618	0.000	0.036	0.122
GLB	0.054	0.093	0.576	0.565	-0.129	0.237
Male	-0.056	0.054	-1.029	0.303	-0.162	0.050
Respondent's age	-0.012	0.012	-1.011	0.312	-0.034	0.011
Intercept	1.523	0.239	6.368	0.000	1.054	1.992

<sup>a</sup> Coefficient for conflict frequency with mothers and fathers constrained to equality.

Two additional models were estimated to test for interactions between the conflict variables and sexual orientation. The coefficient for the interaction between conflict frequency and sexual orientation was not statistically significant ( $b = 0.0319$ ,  $s.e. = 0.0496$ ,  $p \leq 0.521$ ), nor was the interaction between perceived conflict and sexual orientation ( $b = 0.043$ ,  $s.e. = 0.0751$ ,  $p \leq 0.569$ ).

Finally, additional models were estimated to address the research questions involving the possible mediation of any relationship between sexual orientation and depression by the conflict variables. As with previous mediation models, all of the covariates used in the models for conflict were included in the mediation model. The discussions in footnote 1 (on the estimation of the mediation models given non-significant total effects for sexual orientation) applies to these models.

Table 3.29 shows the model where conflict frequency mediates the relationship between sexual orientation and depression. The total, direct, and indirect effects for sexual orientation on depression are all non-significant. Consistent with the previous model, the coefficient for conflict frequency (with depression as the dependent variable) is statistically significant.



Table 3.29 Model with Conflict Frequency Mediating the Relationship Between Sexual Orientation and Depression

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
Mediator: Conflict frequency						
GLB	-0.211	0.127	-1.665	0.096	-0.459	0.037
Respondent's age	0.043	0.024	1.773	0.076	-0.005	0.091
Substance	0.037	0.021	1.716	0.086	-0.005	0.079
Home	0.256	0.035	7.331	0.000	0.187	0.324
School	0.096	0.067	1.439	0.150	-0.035	0.227
Law	-0.037	0.033	-1.119	0.263	-0.103	0.028
Male	-0.035	0.090	-0.391	0.696	-0.212	0.141
Conflict, perceived	0.325	0.044	7.338	0.000	0.238	0.411
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>a</sup>	0.163	0.075	2.190	0.029	0.017	0.310
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>a</sup>	0.327	0.120	2.722	0.006	0.092	0.563
Prelig. freq. 3 <sup>a</sup>	0.132	0.110	1.198	0.231	-0.084	0.347
Did not live with	-0.438	0.096	-4.585	0.000	-0.625	-0.251
Parent's age	-0.004	0.008	-0.480	0.631	-0.019	0.011
Some college	0.076	0.098	0.778	0.437	-0.116	0.268
Finished college	0.166	0.089	1.856	0.063	-0.009	0.341
Grad/prof degree	0.145	0.101	1.436	0.151	-0.053	0.344
Relig. involvement	-0.094	0.093	-1.014	0.311	-0.277	0.088
Parent's Gay fr.	-0.011	0.030	-0.380	0.704	-0.069	0.047
Parent's homophobia	0.032	0.083	0.380	0.704	-0.132	0.195
Intercept, mothers	-1.133	0.508	-2.230	0.026	-2.130	-0.137
Intercept, fathers	-1.299	0.500	-2.596	0.009	-2.280	-0.318

Dependent: Depression						
Conflict, frequency	0.049	0.022	2.216	0.027	0.006	0.093
GLB	0.081	0.117	0.693	0.488	-0.148	0.310
Respondent's age	-0.014	0.017	-0.869	0.385	-0.047	0.018
Substance	-0.018	0.014	-1.215	0.225	-0.046	0.011
Home	-0.021	0.026	-0.827	0.408	-0.071	0.029
School	0.073	0.040	1.813	0.070	-0.006	0.151
Law	-0.014	0.023	-0.603	0.547	-0.058	0.031
Male	-0.078	0.052	-1.480	0.139	-0.181	0.025
Conflict, perceived	0.079	0.024	3.298	0.001	0.032	0.126
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>a</sup>	0.009	0.032	0.269	0.788	-0.055	0.072
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>a</sup>	-0.031	0.051	-0.603	0.546	-0.130	0.069
Relig. freq. 3 <sup>a</sup>	-0.003	0.056	-0.055	0.956	-0.114	0.107
Did not live with	-0.017	0.061	-0.283	0.777	-0.137	0.102
Parent's age	0.001	0.003	0.321	0.748	-0.005	0.007
Some college	-0.081	0.061	-1.331	0.183	-0.199	0.038
Finished college	-0.054	0.042	-1.299	0.194	-0.136	0.028
Grad/prof degree	-0.116	0.050	-2.343	0.019	-0.214	-0.019
Relig. involvement	0.025	0.046	0.539	0.590	-0.066	0.116
Parent's Gay fr.	0.020	0.013	1.502	0.134	-0.006	0.045
Parent's homophobia	0.010	0.038	0.264	0.792	-0.064	0.084
Intercept	1.587	0.340	4.670	0.000	0.921	2.254
Indirect and total: Sexual orientation						
Indirect	-0.010	0.008	-1.343	0.179	-0.026	0.005
Total	0.071	0.116	0.607	0.544	-0.157	0.298

<sup>a</sup> Parent's frequency of attendance of religious services (Relig. freq.). Reference category is never, compared to (1) less than once a year to several times a year, (2) once a month to every week, (3) more than once a week.

Table 3.30 shows the mediation model with perceived conflict mediating the relationship between sexual orientation and depression. The total, direct, and indirect effects for sexual orientation are all non-significant. Consistent with the previous model, the coefficient for perceived conflict (with depression as the dependent variable) is statistically significant.

Table 3.30 Model with Perceived Conflict Mediating the Relationship Between Sexual Orientation and Depression

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
Mediator: Perceived conflict						
GLB	0.160	0.107	1.492	0.136	-0.050	0.369
Respondent's age	-0.028	0.016	-1.757	0.079	-0.060	0.003
Substance use	0.030	0.019	1.632	0.103	-0.006	0.067
Home	0.022	0.028	0.775	0.438	-0.033	0.076
School	-0.004	0.053	-0.077	0.939	-0.109	0.100
Law	0.017	0.026	0.655	0.513	-0.033	0.067
Male	-0.064	0.074	-0.870	0.384	-0.208	0.080
Conflict f	0.344	0.045	7.598	0.000	0.255	0.433
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>a</sup>	-0.077	0.073	-1.066	0.286	-0.220	0.065
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>a</sup>	-0.097	0.111	-0.875	0.382	-0.314	0.120
Relig. freq. 3 <sup>a</sup>	0.060	0.125	0.480	0.631	-0.185	0.304
Did not live with	0.542	0.111	4.900	0.000	0.325	0.759
Parent's age	0.005	0.007	0.697	0.486	-0.008	0.018
Some college	-0.046	0.107	-0.431	0.666	-0.255	0.163
Finished college	-0.063	0.085	-0.747	0.455	-0.229	0.103
Grad/prof degree	-0.177	0.097	-1.822	0.068	-0.368	0.013
Relig. involvement	-0.036	0.093	-0.382	0.702	-0.219	0.147
Parent's Gay fr.	-0.003	0.030	-0.112	0.911	-0.063	0.056
Parent's homophobia	0.127	0.079	1.618	0.106	-0.027	0.282
Intercept, mothers	2.170	0.341	6.372	0.000	1.502	2.839
Intercept, fathers	2.060	0.330	6.236	0.000	1.412	2.708

Dependent: Depression						
Conflict, perceived	0.079	0.024	3.298	0.001	0.032	0.126
GLB	0.081	0.117	0.693	0.488	-0.148	0.310
Respondent's age	-0.014	0.017	-0.869	0.385	-0.047	0.018
Substance	-0.018	0.014	-1.215	0.225	-0.046	0.011
Home	-0.021	0.026	-0.827	0.408	-0.071	0.029
School	0.073	0.040	1.813	0.070	-0.006	0.151
Law	-0.014	0.023	-0.603	0.547	-0.058	0.031
Male	-0.078	0.052	-1.480	0.139	-0.181	0.025
Conflict, frequency	0.049	0.022	2.216	0.027	0.006	0.093
Relig. freq. 1 <sup>a</sup>	0.009	0.032	0.269	0.788	-0.055	0.072
Relig. freq. 2 <sup>a</sup>	-0.031	0.051	-0.603	0.546	-0.130	0.069
Relig. freq. 3 <sup>a</sup>	-0.003	0.056	-0.055	0.956	-0.114	0.107
Did not live with	-0.017	0.061	-0.283	0.777	-0.137	0.102
Parent's age	0.001	0.003	0.321	0.748	-0.005	0.007
Some college	-0.081	0.061	-1.331	0.183	-0.199	0.038
Finished college	-0.054	0.042	-1.299	0.194	-0.136	0.028
Grad/prof degree	-0.116	0.050	-2.343	0.019	-0.214	-0.019
Relig. involvement	0.025	0.046	0.539	0.590	-0.066	0.116
Parent's Gay fr.	0.020	0.013	1.502	0.134	-0.006	0.045
Parent's homophobia	0.010	0.038	0.264	0.792	-0.064	0.084
Intercept	1.587	0.340	4.670	0.000	0.921	2.254
Indirect and total: Sexual orientation						
Indirect	0.013	0.009	1.387	0.165	-0.005	0.030
Total	0.094	0.118	0.796	0.426	-0.137	0.324

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<sup>a</sup> Parent's frequency of attendance of religious services (Relig. freq.). Reference category is never, compared to (1) less than once a year to several times a year, (2) once a month to every week, (3) more than once a week.

### Summary

None of the above analyses found a statistically significant relationship between sexual orientation and any of the dependent variables. Moreover, only one significant interaction was found, specifically there was some evidence for an interaction between sexual orientation and the frequency with which parents attended religious services, when used to predict perceived conflict. In this case, there was no significant overall effect of the interaction (represented by a series of dummy variable by sexual orientation interaction terms), but two significant pairwise comparisons. As discussed in the text

above, given the non-significant overall effect of the interaction, as well as the number of hypotheses tests performed in the course of these analyses, this finding may represent type 1 error. The lack of significant differences between sexual minority respondents and their heterosexual counterparts suggests that at least in this sample, sexual minority respondents did not have more difficult or problematic relationships with their parents, were not more likely to have been the victims of physical or psychological assaults by parents, and were not more depressed than their heterosexual counterparts.

While the analyses did not find significant relationships between sexual orientation and any of the dependent variables, a few statistically significant relationships between other independent variables of interest and the dependent variables were identified. Parent's authoritarian personality, substance use by the respondent during the reference year, and breaking rules at home during the reference year were associated with higher frequency of parent-adolescent conflict during the reference year. Regression results also suggest that respondents had more frequent conflict with mothers than fathers, as well as more frequent conflict with parents with whom they lived compared to parents with whom they did not live. As mentioned before, the association between living with a parent and conflict frequency is not surprising given that greater contact between individuals who live together provides opportunity for more frequent conflict. Higher levels of conflict frequency, and not living with a parent were both associated with higher levels of perceived conflict.

More frequent conflict during the reference year was associated with higher levels of social support at the time of the survey. At the same time, greater perceived conflict was associated with lower levels of social support at the time of the survey. On the

surface, these two findings may seem to conflict. However, as mentioned above, more frequent conflict may be a result of more frequent contact between the respondent and their parent, rather than an indicator of poor relationship quality. If this is the case, then a positive relationship between conflict frequency and social support at the time of the survey is not entirely surprising. At the same time, higher levels of perceived conflict may be the result of more strained parent-adolescent relationships, which is consistent with its negative association with perceived social support. Additionally, male respondents reported lower levels of perceived social support than females. Mothers were perceived as providing more social support, as were parents the respondent lived with during the reference year.

When included in a model without perceived conflict, more frequent conflict during the reference year was associated with lower parent-adolescent relationship quality during the same time period. However, once perceived conflict is included in the model, conflict frequency was associated with higher levels of parent-adolescent relationship quality. Regardless of whether conflict frequency was included in the model, perceived conflict was associated with lower levels of parent-adolescent relationship quality. As discussed in the previous paragraph, this may be the result of a difference between more frequent conflict due to exposure (i.e. time spent together) versus greater perceived conflict, which may reflect more difficult parent-adolescent relationships. Respondents report higher relationship quality with mothers compared to fathers, and lower relationship quality when they do not live with the parent compared to parents with whom they live.

The results suggest that mothers may be more likely than fathers to perpetrate both physical and psychological assaults, a finding that is consistent with results from other studies (e.g. Straus & Stewart 1999), as well as the finding in this study that respondent's reported more frequent conflict with mothers than fathers.

Finally, both conflict frequency and perceived conflict during the reference year were associated with increased depression at the time of the survey, suggesting that respondents who had higher levels of conflict with their parents experienced more symptoms of depression at the time of the survey.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The current research compared the parent-child relationships a sample of GLB and non-GLB college students. The parent-child relationships were compared on both conflict frequency and perceived conflict, as well as relationship quality, social support, and physical and psychological assaults by parents. In addition to comparing the family relationships of the respondents, differences in levels of depression between the two groups were also examined. Overall, the results failed to find support for the idea that GLB young people have more difficult relationships with their parents than other young people. The analyses also failed to find a significant difference in levels of depression between GLB respondents and their heterosexual counterparts. Additionally, none of the interaction effects between sexual orientation and other independent variables (e.g. parent gender, parent age) were found to be significantly related to any of the outcomes of interest. These findings may reflect an actual lack of differences in these groups, however, it is also possible that the lack of significant differences between the two groups may be a result of the limitations of the study, which are discussed below.

The models did yield some statistically significant relationships between predictor variables and the outcomes of interest. The results suggest that respondents had more frequent conflict with mothers than fathers during their last year of high school (or the last year they lived at home if they did not live at home their last year of high school), and that mothers were more likely than fathers to physically or psychologically assault



respondents during the same period. At the same time, respondents tended to reported having higher relationship quality with mothers (compared to fathers) during their last year of high school, as well as, greater social support from mothers at the time of the survey. While these findings seem to conflict, it may be a result of the tendency of mothers to be primary caretakers of children. If mothers spend more time with their children than fathers this provides greater opportunity for positive interactions (resulting in higher relationship quality) but also greater opportunity for conflict and even aggression. This more intense bond with mothers may carry over into young adulthood, resulting in higher levels of perceived social support from mothers than fathers at the time of the survey.

An interesting set of relationships between conflict frequency, perceived conflict, and whether the young person lived with the parent their last year of high school emerged. The finding that individuals have greater frequency of conflict when they live together is not surprising, more time spent together gives greater opportunity for conflict. Nor is the finding that higher conflict frequency is associated with higher levels of perceived conflict surprising. At the same time, living with a parent was associated with lower levels of perceived conflict (controlling for conflict frequency). One possible explanation for this constellation of findings is that while exposure leads to greater conflict frequency, adolescents have more tenuous relationships (and hence higher perceived conflict) with parents they do not live with. Or alternately, that when parents do not live together, adolescents tend to live with the parent they feel closer to. Consistent with these explanations, living with a parent during their last year of high

school was associated with higher levels of relationship quality (during their last year of high school) and greater perceived social support at the time of survey.

In light of the two sets of findings above, it is not entirely surprising that greater conflict frequency was associated with higher levels of perceived social support at the time of the survey. As mentioned above, one possible explanation is that more frequent interaction during the respondent's last year of high school led to more opportunities for conflict, and hence more frequent conflict between parents and adolescents, but that the higher levels of interaction also led to higher perceived social support in young adulthood. Given all of the above, it is also not surprising that perceived conflict is associated with lower social support (controlling for conflict frequency).

The relationship between conflict frequency and relationship quality during the respondent's last year of high school is somewhat nuanced. Without controlling for perceived conflict, conflict frequency is associated with lower levels of relationship quality. However, once perceived conflict is included in the model, higher conflict frequency is associated with higher relationship quality. The latter finding is consistent with the idea, discussed above, that closer parent-adolescent relationships result in higher conflict frequency. As noted in the results, the relationship between perceived conflict and relationship quality is similar regardless of whether conflict frequency is included in the model.

A few other significant relationships are worth mentioning. First, while the relationship between sexual orientation and depression was not significant, both conflict frequency and perceived conflict with parents during the respondent's last year of high school were associated with higher levels of depression symptoms at the time of the

survey. Second, respondents reported higher conflict frequency when parents exhibited more authoritarian personality characteristics, suggesting that regardless of the young person's sexual orientation, more rigid parents tend to have more conflict with their children.

Few of the variables included as controls were significant in any given model. Substance use and misbehavior at home (during the respondents last year of high school) were associated with greater conflict frequency. Misbehavior at home was associated with lower relationship quality during the respondent's last year of high school. Male respondents tended to report lower levels of perceived social support at the time of survey than their female counterparts. Finally, age was significantly associated with the probability of having been assaulted by a parent, with older respondents having a higher probability of having been assaulted.

Although no formal models were tested, the results of the descriptive analysis of sexual attraction and behavior items by sexual orientation is worth noting. What is probably most noteworthy about respondents' reports of sexual attraction and behavior is the degree to which these reports are seemingly incongruous with respondent's self-identification. For example, twenty percent (6/30) of respondents who did not identify as heterosexual reported that individuals they found sexually attractive were always members of the opposite sex, and an additional 17% (5/30) reported that the individuals they found sexually attractive were usually of the opposite sex. Similarly, 10% of respondents who identified themselves as heterosexual reported having dated individuals of both sexes, and a small percentage (0.7%) reported having only dated individuals of the same sex. While these results may seem surprising, they are consistent with the recent

qualitative literature that suggests that the ways in which individuals, particularly young people, define their sexual orientation have changed over the past few decades (Savin-Williams 2005; Seidman 2003). As discussed in the introduction, a major theme in this area is that young people increasingly view attraction to members of the same sex as normal (Savin-Williams 2005). Additionally, other researchers have noted that current cohorts of young people who are attracted to individuals of the same sex view sexual orientation as a less important part of their identity than previous generations (Cohler and Hammack 2007, Savin-Williams 2005, Seidman 2002). In light of these findings, the incongruence between self-identified sexual orientation, sexual attraction, and sexual behavior might be seen as an increase in the fluidity of sexuality in young people over previous generations. At the same time, the finding that individuals who identify as heterosexual have experience same-sex attractions and engage in sexual acts with individuals of the same-sex is not confined to recent research or the current generation, perhaps the most famous examples being Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin (1949 p 258-261), and Kinsey, Pomeroy, Margin, and Gebhard (1953 p 455-466). Rather than a change in the experiences of individuals (both in terms of attraction and behavior), what may have changed in recent generations is the way that such experiences are defined by the individual, that is, recent generations may view these experiences as more normal than individuals in previous generations. As discussed in the introduction, during the time of the Kinsey studies the norm of heterosexual marriage and family formation was so strong that many individuals, even if they had primarily same-sex attractions, perceived no other options (Siedman 2002). Thus a more relevant comparison is probably to more recent cohorts. As mentioned above, and in the introduction, research on young people with

same-sex attractions suggests that they view their sexual orientation as less central to their identity than similar individuals in earlier cohorts. However, how individuals who identify as heterosexual, and report largely opposite-sex attractions construct their sexuality, including any same-sex attractions or experiences is less well understood.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

As with all research, this study has limitations. One of the biggest limitations of this study was the small number of respondents who identified as anything other than heterosexual (n=35). The small sample size limited the type of analyses which could be performed, as well as the statistical power of those analyses that were performed. The issue of statistical power is relatively straightforward, with only 35 subjects, the effect size (i.e. differences between groups) would have to be quite large in order to be statistically significant. The effect of any interactions (i.e. moderating effects) would need to be even larger, because interaction terms necessarily introduce collinearity into the model, increasing the size of standard errors. The obvious method of avoiding this problem is to increase sample size, especially the number of GLB respondents. One method of doing this is discussed below along with other sampling issues.

The measurement of sexual orientation is a less straightforward issue. As discussed in the Methods chapter, the relatively small number of respondents overall, and the even smaller number who identified as other than heterosexual, severely limited the ability to estimate a measurement model for sexual orientation, resulting in the use of a binary measure of sexual orientation. How to best define and measure sexual orientation has long been debated. Much past research, as well as the current project, has made the unlikely assumption that sexual orientation is a binary trait (i.e. heterosexual vs. non-

heterosexual). This practice has been widely criticized for failing to take into account the true variability in sexual orientation and for perpetuating a heterosexist view of human sexuality (Savin-Williams 2001, 2005; Seidman 2002). Measurement may be improved by treating sexual orientation as either nominal or ordinal. However, while somewhat more nuanced, these categorical measures are still lacking.

Researchers continue to attempt to find methods of measuring this complex attribute of humans that more accurately reflect the understanding and experiences of individuals. A better measure of sexual orientation would probably be continuous and include multiple dimensions, to more accurately describe the different domains of sexuality. One might expect that such a measure would include domains such as sexual attraction, sexual behavior, romantic interest, self-identification, and community involvement. However, in the current study, respondent's self-identification was often inconsistent with their reported attractions, behaviors, etc. (e.g. respondents who identified as heterosexual but reported being attracted exclusively to members of the same sex). These findings are not unique to the current study, Savin-Williams (2005 Chapter 2) discusses at length the lack of concurrence between what have traditionally been thought of as markers of sexual orientation (e.g. the gender of individuals one is attracted to or forms romantic relationships with) and how young people define their sexual orientation. Given the relatively rapid pace of social change around sexual orientation, particularly evidence that young people today may relate to same-sex attraction differently than earlier cohorts, a better understanding of how individuals and groups construct sexual orientation is necessary in order to construct more sensitive measures of sexual orientation. Such an understanding is most likely to come, at least

initially, from qualitative research, because of these techniques tend to provide a more in-depth view of nuanced internal processes.

Additionally, regardless of how sexual orientation is measured, it is also important to bear in mind that it is probably not static, that is, how an individual experiences and identifies their sexuality, as well as how central that is to the individual's identity may vary considerably across time (Diamond 2008). Another important issue for future research, is the importance an individual places on their sexual orientation as part of their identity. As discussed previously, through most of the past few decades, sexual orientation was typically constructed as a major source of identity, however, many younger individuals feel that their attraction to members of the same sex is a small part of who they are as people (Savin-Williams 2005; Seidman 2002). If there is considerable variation in the degree to which individuals view sexual orientation as part of their identity (which is itself a question for future research), then future research will probably need to account for this when examining the effect of sexual orientation on the lives of individuals. That is to say, the degree to which attraction to members of the same sex influences one's life may be dependent in part, on how central that attraction (and any resulting identity) is to the individual's sense of self.

The nature of the sampling procedure for this research also presents some limitations. The sample for this study was a convenience sample of students from two state universities in New England. The degree to which this sample is representative of all college students, or even students at these universities is unknown. Further, it is doubtful that this sample is representative of all young people. Because attending college is aided substantially by social support (material and otherwise) from parents, the sample

may be unlikely to include young people who had the poorest relationships with their parents. One strength of the sample is that the GLB and heterosexual respondents all attended the same two universities, and hence are likely to have somewhat similar backgrounds.

The issue of generalizability, that is, uncertainty about whether the current sample is representative of any known population, as well as issues related to sample size are both amenable to change. One efficient method of solving both of these problems is the inclusion of more extensive measures of sexual orientation in large nationally representative surveys of young people. Such large scale surveys already exist, and more will probably take place in the future. In the past, a lack of social acceptance of homosexuality, as well as heteronormativity prevented such questions from being asked, particularly on surveys to be administered to young people. Additionally, young people who were attracted to members of the own sex may have been regarded as too small or too hidden a population to be found in such studies. However, recent improvements in public acceptance of sexual diversity (Gallup 2010), as well as the realization that such attractions are relatively common (and are increasingly regarded as common place, especially among young people; Cohen and Hammack 2007; Savin-Williams 2005; Seidman 2002) should make it possible for such information to be collected in the future.

### **Implications for Theory**

The lack of a statistically significant relationship between sexual orientation and the quality of young people's relationships with their parents does not necessarily challenge the theoretical perspectives used in this research (i.e. phenomenology and the life course perspective), either generally or when specifically applied to issues related to



sexual orientation. To the extent that these findings reflect the experiences of individuals in the population, rather than challenging existing theory, these findings challenge the basic assumption that parents of the study's respondents (respondents who for the most part were adolescents in the late 1990s and early 2000s) would have difficulty accepting that their child is gay, lesbian or bisexual, and that this difficulty would be sufficient to negatively impact parent-adolescent relationships. Cohler and Hammack (2007) argue that the seeming inconsistency between earlier accounts of the difficulties faced by GLB youth and the relatively smooth process described in more recent years can be explained by rapid social change. There was a time in American culture when due to highly constrained sexual norms the revelation that an individual was sexually attracted to members of the same sex would have resulted in either rejection or attempts at "treatment" by many if not most families. However, there is evidence of substantially more diversity in experiences both today (Cohler and Hammack 2007; Savin-Williams 2005; Seidman 2002) and even several decades ago (Weston 1991). These differences in experiences over time are well accommodated by both phenomenological and the life course perspectives. Because both perspectives emphasize reality as socially constructed, and importantly, reconstructed, both perspectives accommodate the role of social change in influencing the lives and experiences of individuals. In the introduction, the individual parent's process of changing their subjective reality was emphasized, but it was also noted that as individuals, and particularly subgroups within society, challenge the objective reality of the social environment, the norms in question are subject to questioning by society as a whole, and objective reality can consequently change (Berger and Luckmann 1966 p 179). There is substantial evidence for changes in public opinion

about homosexuality from public opinion research (Gallup 2010), as well as in the frequency and manner in which GLB individuals are portrayed in the media (Savin-Williams 2005; Seidman 2003), and in the public debate over the roles and rights of homosexuals in society (e.g. debates same-sex marriage, adoption by same-sex couples, and military service by openly gay individuals). These debates themselves show the process of change in the social environment. For most of the twentieth century, no such debates took place, because they were unthinkable, these issues only became the subject of debate once there was substantial support for equal rights for GLB individuals. That is, once a sufficient number of individuals had questioned the social norms involved, and many of them had formed communities of like-minded individuals, then broader society took notice of these issues and they became problematized for society as a whole. This pattern of social change is highly consistent with patterns of social change described by Berger and Luckmann ( 1966 p 176-179).

### **Implications for Future Research**

While the decreased homophobia, and increased visibility of GLB issues and individuals in society is encouraging, it is important to remember that the families of same-sex attracted youth are as diverse as the families of other young people. As a result of this diversity, as long as heteronormativity exists, whether generally or within specific subcultures, we would expect significant variation in the responses of parents to their child's same-sex attractions. The implication for future research is that a focus on the diversity of experiences of same-sex attracted young people (and young people in general) is probably more appropriate than previous studies that have treated "gay" adolescents as a homogenous group. The need for an increased focus on the diversity of

the lives and experiences of same-sex attracted young people (and same-sex attracted individuals more generally) has been noted in the literature (Cohler and Hammack 2007; Savin-Williams 2005 p 187-193, 2008). The most obvious sources of diversity are differences in gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, geographic location, and religion, but others almost certainly exist. It is worth noting that these same factors influence the lives of young people without attractions to individuals of the same sex.

An additional source of diversity that is both a subject for research in-and-of itself and a factor that should be considered in future research is how young people identify their sexual orientation, and the level of importance they place on it as part of their identities and lives. Recent research suggests that young people today feel that their sexual orientation is less important in defining who they are than those of previous generations (Savin-Williams 2005, 2008; Seidman 2002 p 88-90). While some young people eschew labels altogether, others have adopted a number of relatively new labels, many of which challenge both the heterosexual/homosexual and male/female binary, for example, some of Savin-Williams interviewees identified themselves using terms like “boidyke,” “multisexual,” and “polygendered” (2005 p 7). Additionally, unlike the past few generations of individuals with same-sex attraction, whose sexual orientation was often a primary identity, many young people today view their sexual orientation as unrelated to who they are as a person. Savin-Williams (2005, Chapter 10) goes so far as to argue that the “gay teen” is a disappearing phenomenon. The argument is not that young people with same-sex attractions are disappearing, they certainly are not, but that the lives of same-sex attracted young people are increasingly similar to those of their

heterosexual peers. In other words, as same-sex attractions and behavior have become more socially accepted, the gay teen is being replaced with the ordinary teen.

As with how individuals identify themselves, the degree to which individuals construct sexual orientation as an important (or unimportant) part of their identity is both a subject for research, and a variable which will need to be considered in constructing research. While recent research suggests that young people are less concerned with labeling their same-sex attractions, and tend not to view such attractions as an important part of their personal identity, some young people continue to label their sexual orientation and to see their sexual orientation as an important part of their identity (Savin-Williams 2005, Chapter 10). How and why some young people claim their sexual orientation as an important source of personal identity while others do not is unknown. With regard to family relationships, the degree to which an individual sees their sexual orientation as an important part of who they are may influence any relationship between family acceptance and various outcomes. That is, if young people see their attraction to members of the same sex as a relatively unimportant part of their identity, a parent's difficulty accepting the young person's sexual orientation may be less difficult for the young person because a rejection of the young person's sexual orientation is not seen as a rejection of an essential part of the self.

### **Final Remarks**

Ideally, one would like to conclude that GLB young people have relationships with their parents that are similar to those of their heterosexual identified counterparts. However, while the findings of this study do not contradict this conclusion, due to the limitations discussed above, these findings provide only modest evidence on this issue.

When considered in the context of other recent research on young people with same-sex attractions the current study can be viewed as providing additional evidence that the family relationships of GLB young people are not universally poor. This is consistent with recent writing on GLB young people (e.g. Cohler and Hammack 2007) which has tended to emphasize their diversity across a wide variety of traits including sociodemographic traits, but also in terms of self-identification (or lack there of), family relationships, and a host of other attributes. Evidence that the parent-child relationships of same-sex attracted young people are not universally poor should not be taken as evidence that no differences exist. The current social environment is far more accepting than it was a generation or two ago, but even so, young people who experience “significant” same-sex attraction may still have different experiences, both within the family and outside it, than their opposite-sex attracted peers. Moreover, the degree and type of differences is likely to be influenced by other factors, again pointing to the importance of considering diversity when studying same-sex attracted young people.

## APPENDIX A

### MEASURES

Unless otherwise specified, the following response categories were used: “Strongly agree,” “agree,” “neutral,” “disagree,” “strongly disagree,” and “don’t know.” See the Chapter II: Methods, for a description of the direction of scoring. Note that while the listed items are all phrased in terms of the respondent’s mother, all parental questions were asked for both mothers and fathers.

#### Depression

##### **Instructions to Respondents**

Below is a list of ways you might have felt or behaved. Please tell me how often you have felt this way during the past week.

##### **Response Categories**

- 1 - Rarely or none of the time. (Less than 1 day)
- 2 - Some or a little of the time (1-2 days)
- 3 - Occasionally or a moderate amount of the time (3-4 days)
- 4 - Most or all of the time (5-7 days)

##### **Items**

I was bothered by things that usually don’t bother me.  
I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with help from my family or friends.  
I felt that I was just as good as other people.  
I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.  
I felt that everything was an effort.  
I felt hopeful about the future.  
I thought my life had been a failure.  
I felt fearful.  
I felt lonely.  
People were unfriendly.

#### Sexual Attraction

##### **Instructions to Respondents**

Now we are going to ask some questions about your sexuality. There are no right or wrong answers, and you may leave blank any questions you do not wish to answer. Remember your answers are anonymous.

### **Response Categories**

The response categories are given below along with the items. For descriptive purposes the items were recoded to refer to individuals of the same or opposite sex based on the respondent's gender (e.g. for a female respondent, selecting "always male" was recoded to "always opposite sex").

### **Items**

When I see someone I am sexually attracted to (that is a person who has a nice body/face, or someone you would like to kiss, touch, or have sex with), that person is:

The people I like, or love, in a romantic way are:

- Always male
- Usually male
- Equally likely to be male or female
- Usually female
- Always female

My crushes are on:

My sexual fantasies are about:

- Only males
- Mostly males
- About equally males and females
- Mostly females
- Only females

When you think about your future, and the type of person you would like to spend your life with, is this person:

- Male
- Female
- Either or both
- Don't know or haven't thought about it

## **Sexual Behavior**

### **Instructions to Respondents**

The following questions about your romantic and sexual behavior. For these questions answer yes only when you wanted to participate in the behavior at the time, if someone forced you that is a different issue. Include any individual you did this with, even if you already counted them on another line. For example, count someone you dated, made out with, and had sex with on all three lines. If you have not engaged in one of the following behaviors, write zero on the line.

### **Response Categories**

These items were open ended.

### **Items**

How many males have you dated or had romantic relationships with?  
How many males have you kissed, “made out,” or engaged in sexual touching with?  
How many males have you had sex (intercourse, oral or anal sex) with?  
How many females have you dated or had romantic relationships with?  
How many females have you kissed, “made out,” or engaged in sexual touching with?  
How many females have you had sex (intercourse, oral or anal sex) with?

### **Parent-Adolescent Conflict Frequency**

#### **Instructions to Respondents**

Teens and parents often have disagreements. We would like to know how often you disagreed with your mother or your father about the following issues, **during your last year of high school** (or the last year you lived at home).

#### **Response Categories**

The response categories and associated scores were:

- 0 - Never during the time I was in high school
- 0 - Not in that year, but at some time before my last year of high school
- 1 - 1-2 times that year
- 2 - 3-5 times that year
- 3 - 6-9 times that year
- 4 - Monthly (10 to 14 times that year)
- 5 - A few times a month (2-3 times a month)
- 6 - Weekly (1-2 times a week)
- 7 - Several times a week (3-4 times)
- 8 - Daily (5 or more times a week)
- 9 - Two or more times a day

### **Items**

Disagreed with my mother about doing chores or picking up after myself.  
Disagreed with my mother about how I dressed, wore my hair, or make-up.  
Disagreed with my mother about whether I should have body piercings or tattoos.  
Disagreed with my mother about use of television, video games, or computers.  
Disagreed with my mother about fighting with brothers and sisters.  
Disagreed with my mother about driving or use of a car.  
Disagreed with my mother about my allowance or spending money.  
Disagreed with my mother about my drinking alcohol, smoking, or using drugs (other than those prescribed for you by a doctor).  
Disagreed with my mother about my choice of friends.  
Disagreed with my mother about my performance (grades) at school.  
Disagreed with my mother about my getting in trouble at school.  
Disagreed with my mother about use of the phone or cell phone.  
Disagreed with my mother about curfew or calling home.  
Disagreed with my mother about whether I should work, or what type of job I should have.



Disagreed with my mother about what I should do in my spare time.  
Disagreed with my mother about whether I should be allowed to date.  
Disagreed with my mother about whether I should have sex, or whether I might be having sex.  
Disagreed with my mother about anything else.

### **Perceived Parent-Adolescent Conflict**

#### **Instructions to Respondents**

Now we're going to ask you some questions about your relationship with your parents **during your last year of high school** (or the last year you lived at home). How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your relationship with your mother.

#### **Items**

My mom and I sometimes ended our disagreements calmly.  
We almost never seemed to agree.  
At least three times a week, we would get angry at each other.  
The talks we had were frustrating.  
In general, I don't think we got along very well.  
My mom and I would speak to each other only when we had to.  
My mom and I had big arguments about little things.  
My mom would get angry with me whenever we have a discussion.

### **Parent-Adolescent Conflict Resolution Tactics**

#### **Instructions to Respondents**

We would like to know what your parents, or caretakers, did when you made them upset or angry during **your last year of high school**, or the last year you lived at home, if you did not live at home your last year of high school. The following is a list of things they might have done. Please indicate how often your parents did the following things that year, **if they did those things some other time, but not that year, we would like to know that as well.**

#### **Response Categories**

0 - Never during the time I was in high school  
0 - Not in that year, but at some time before my last year of high school  
1 - 1-2 times that year  
2 - 3-5 times that year  
3 - 6-9 times that year  
4 - Monthly (10 to 14 times that year)  
5 - A few times a month (2-3 times a month)  
6 - Weekly (1-2 times a week)  
7 - Several times a week (3-4 times)  
8 - Daily (5 or more times a week)  
9 - Two or more times a day

**Psychological Assault Items**

Your mother threatened to spank or hit you, but did not actually do it.

Your mother shouted, yelled, or screamed at you.

Your mother swore or cursed at you.

Your mother called you dumb or lazy or some other name like that.

Your mother said she would send you away or kick you out of the house.

Your mother tried to make you feel ashamed or guilty?

**Minor Assault Items**

Your mother spanked or slapped you someplace other than your head or face, with her bare hand.

Your mother pinched you.

Your mother shook you.

Your mother slapped you on the face, head, or ears.

**Severe Assault Items**

Your mother hit you on some other part of your body besides your bottom with something like a belt, hairbrush, a stick, or some other hard object.

Your mother threw or knocked you down.

Your mother hit you with a fist or kicked you hard.

**Very Severe Assault Items**

Your mother beat you up, that is hit you over and over as hard as they could.

Your mother grabbed you around the neck and choked you.

Your mother burned or scalded you on purpose.

Your mother threatened you with a knife or gun.

**Parent-Adolescent Relationship Quality****Instructions to Respondents**

Now we're going to ask you some questions about your relationship with your parents **during your last year of high school** (or the last year you lived at home).

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your relationship with your mother.

**Items**

Sometimes I wondered if my mother really loved me.

My mother sometimes told me I had done a good job, that she was proud of me, or something like that.

My mother says good things about me to other people.

My mom was a good friend to me.

My last year of high school, did a lot of things together.

I enjoyed spending time with my mother.

We joked around often.

My mother helped me learn new things.

My mother didn't seem to trust me.  
My mother encouraged me to make some of my own decisions.  
My mother treated me unfairly.  
I often felt like my mother didn't listen to me.  
My would mother listen when I needed someone to talk to.  
If I run into problems, my mom would help me out.  
My mom could tell when I had something on my mind.  
It seemed like whenever I tried to talk to my mother, she had something else to do.  
If my mom made a promise to me, she always did her best to keep it.  
I often felt like my mother didn't understand me.  
I felt like my mom picked on me.

### **Parent's Authoritarian Personality**

#### **Instructions to Respondents**

The following is a list of things people sometimes do. How often does your mother do these things? Would you say she does them, never, rarely, occasionally, frequently, or very frequently.

#### **Items**

Does your mother listen attentively to what authority figures say about how she should behave?  
When a person in authority whom she trusts tells your mother to do something, does she do it, even if she can't see the reason for it?  
Does your mother criticize people who are disrespectful to their superiors?  
Does your mother treat experts with respect, even when she doesn't think much of them personally?  
Does your mother express approval for the work of school teachers?  
Does your mother make fun of the police?  
Does your mother stand when they play the national anthem in public?  
Does your mother show special respect for people in high positions?  
Does your mother get annoyed when people express contempt toward those in authority

### **Social Support From Parents**

#### **Instructions to Respondents**

Thinking about your relationship with your mother or mother-figure in **the past six months**, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

#### **Items**

My mother gives me the moral support I need.  
Most other people are closer to their mother than I am.  
When I confide in mother, I get the idea that it makes her uncomfortable.  
My mother enjoys hearing about what I think.  
I rely on my mother for emotional support.  
I could go to my mother if I were just feeling down, without feeling funny about it later.

My mother and I are very open about what we think about things.  
My mother is sensitive to my personal needs.  
My mother comes to me for emotional support.  
My mother is good at helping me solve problems.  
I have a deep sharing relationship my mother.  
When I confide in my mother, it makes me uncomfortable.  
My mother seeks me out for companionship.  
I think that my mother feels that I'm good at helping her solve problems.  
I wish my relationship with my mother was much different.

### **Parental Homophobia**

#### **Instructions to Respondents**

The following is a list of things people sometimes do. How often does your mother do these things? Would you say she does them, never, rarely, occasionally, frequently, or very frequently.

#### **Items**

Does your mother tell jokes that make fun of gays, or lesbians?  
Does your mother say that homosexuality is morally wrong, a sin, an illness, or something similar?  
How often does your mother say that gays and lesbians should not be allowed to teach in public schools?  
Does your mother say that gays and lesbians are responsible for AIDS?

### **Undesirable Behavior**

#### **Instructions to Respondents**

During your last year of high school (or the last year you lived at home) about how often did you do the following.

#### **Response Categories**

The response categories and associated scores for substance use and misbehavior at home items were:

- 0 - Never during the time I was in high school
- 0 - Not in that year, but at some time before my last year of high school
- 1 - 1-2 times that year
- 2 - 3-5 times that year
- 3 - 6-9 times that year
- 4 - Monthly (10 to 14 times that year)
- 5 - A few times a month (2-3 times a month)
- 6 - Weekly (1-2 times a week)
- 7 - Several times a week (3-4 times)
- 8 - Daily (5 or more times a week)
- 9 - Two or more times a day

**Substance Use Items**

How often did you drink alcohol without your parents' permission?

How often did you take illegal drugs?

How often did you smoke cigarettes?

**Misbehavior at Home Items**

How often did you break rules, such as coming home later than you were supposed to or taking the car without asking?

How often did you dress or wear your hair or make-up in ways your parents did not approve of?

How often did you spend time with friends that your parents did not like or approve of?

How often did you not do your chores or things you were asked to do around the house, such as keeping your room clean, doing dishes, or taking the garbage out? (Include times when you forgot to do them, as well as times when you just didn't do them.)

**Problems at School Items**

How often did you miss a class without your parents' permission?

How often did you get in trouble at school for something that resulted in your parents being contacted, other than missing class?

0 - Never

1 - Once or twice that year

2 - Three to 10 times that year

3 - About once or twice a month

4 - About once or twice a week

5 - Every day or almost every day

How often did you receive grades that were below what your parents expected?

0 - Never

1 - Once in a while

2 - Often

3 - Very often

0 - I wasn't in school the last year I lived at home

0 - My parents weren't aware of my grades

**"Breaking the Law" Item**

How often did you break the law? (other than skipping school, using drugs, or alcohol)

0 - Never

1 - Once

2 - Two to three times

3 - Four to six times

4 - Seven to twelve times

5 - More than twelve times

## APPENDIX B

### IRB APPROVAL LETTER



UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE

December 1, 2005

Rose Anne Medeiros  
Sociology, Horton SSC  
1000 South Street  
Portsmouth, NH 03801

**IRB #:** 3560  
**Study:** Relationships of Young Adults with their Parents  
**Approval Date:** 11/30/2005

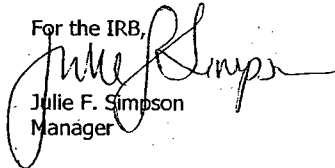
The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Expedited as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 110.

**Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol for one year from the approval date above.** At the end of the approval date you will be asked to submit a report with regard to the involvement of human subjects in this study. If your study is still active, you may request an extension of IRB approval.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the attached document, *Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects*. (This document is also available at <http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/irb.html>.) Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or [Julie.simpson@unh.edu](mailto:Julie.simpson@unh.edu). Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,



Julie F. Simpson  
Manager

cc: File  
Murray Straus

Research Conduct and Compliance Services, Office of Sponsored Research, Service Building,  
51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585 \* Fax: 603-862-3564

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