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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

James Russell Couch

The Graduate School
University of Kentucky

2009

EXPLORING LESBIAN AND GAY EXPERIENCES WITH INDIVIDUALS,
SYSTEMS, AND ENVIRONMENTS: PATTERNS OF RESPONSE TO
HETEROSEXIST PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Education
at University of Kentucky

By
James Russell Couch

Lexington, KY

Co-Directors: Dr. Rory Remer, Professor of Counseling Psychology
Dr. Pam Remer, Associate Professor of Counseling Psychology

Lexington, KY

2009

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

EXPLORING LESBIAN AND GAY EXPERIENCES WITH INDIVIDUALS, SYSTEMS, AND ENVIRONMENTS: PATTERNS OF RESPONSE TO HETEROSEXIST PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

While the general social climate in the U.S. has become more accepting and tolerant of sexual minority individuals, heterosexist discrimination, prejudice and violence continues to affect LGBT individuals, families and communities. While much research literature exists on the experience of minority stress and the psychological consequences of minority stress on sexual minorities, little research has been produced that examines sexual minority coping. Within the last decade, heteronegativity has been suggested as a possible coping response to heterosexism. The goal of the present study was to understand sexual minority responses to heterosexism (including heteronegativity) in a variety of contexts and circumstances.

The present study involved individual interviews with twelve adult, self-identified sexual minority participants. Utilizing Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR), an inductive qualitative methodology of data analysis, eight domains were discerned from examining the experiences of lesbian and gay men's coping with heterosexist individuals, systems and environments. These domains were: (a) assessing sexual orientation in context; (b) observation of change; (c) messages/social influences; (d) social systems; (e) categorizing; (f) empowerment; (g) resignation; and (h) equality. Eight subcategories existed under the domain of assessing sexual orientation in context: *family, childhood, coming out, heterosexuals, work, harassment, acquaintances, and general*. The domain observation of change yielded six subcategories: *general, personal, advocates of change, heterosexuals, family, and gay and lesbian community*. Under the domain of messages/social influences, six subcategories existed: *general messages, peers, heterosexuals, gender roles, media, and family*. Five subcategories contributed to the domain of social systems and include: *religious institutions, educational systems and institutions, political parties, systems and institutions, media and general*. In terms of how individuals categorized others, the fifth domain, six subcategories constituted this phenomenon: *general categorizing, social institutions, challenged assumptions, gender roles, beliefs about heterosexuals, and gay and lesbian*. Empowerment is a domain comprised of five subcategories: *disengagement, coming out, advocate, engagement, and values/beliefs*. Four subcategories contributed to understanding the domain of resignation: *avoiding confrontation, rationalizing, pressure, and suppression*. And under the domain of equality, two subcategories were explicated: *parity and social institutions*.

Results of the study were consistent with aspects of minority stress including stigma consciousness and stigma and self-esteem. One important contribution of the findings from the present study reveals three overarching components to coping with heterosexism. These components were discernment, disclosure and concealment, and self-empowerment. Implications for trainees, educators, and practitioners were outlined.

KEYWORDS: Gay & Lesbian Psychology

Heterosexism

Coping

Discernment

Disclosure

JAMES RUSSELL COUCH

Student Signature

June 21, 2009

Date

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2009

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Dedicated to my spouse, Barry E. Gray

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts..."*
(Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act II, Scene VII).

I never planned on being in this role. Had someone told me ten years ago that I'd be in the latter stages of becoming a psychologist in 2009, I'd have thought they were referring to my keen ability to capture the psychological undertones for the many different characters in my scripts. I surely would not have guessed that my interest in the dramas of life would lead me toward helping real people to rewrite their own roles and circumstances. I have many players to thank for shaping my current circumstances in this transition from dramatist to psychologist—though I suppose one can never fully leave the art of stage and screen.

Guided by the words of Aristotle, I thought my career transition was doomed to be a tragedy, for a tragedy begins with happiness and joy, and ends with death and weeping. My first two years were just that—all happiness, excitement, and triumph. I had many colleagues—co-stars—to thank for my success. Julie Duhigg taught me everything that I know about how to conduct Consensual Qualitative Research, and Sherry Rostosky gave me the opportunities to use my skills with understanding words to better understand psychological research. The doctors Remer gave me the chance to hone my craft of acting into sharper intuition and greater clinical acumen. And doctors Lynley and Eric Anderman and Kenneth Tyler—master architects of plot and structure—illuminated the path of research and statistics with a brilliance that I am only now able to vision.

Alas, I awaited the death and weeping—but this is not a classical storyline. Thank God for Shakespeare and the birth of tragicomedy, for I might have a happy ending after all! This journey was not without its hurdles and tensions. No graduate student survives the doctorate unscathed, and I have many major and minor characters in EDP to thank for providing important life-saving moments when I was left feeling crushed and bruised by the conflict and tension of the plot. My program mentor, and friend, Jaime Guerrero often lifted me up, or put me back together again and I love him for that—and for being a good role-model for directing psychodramas. Pei Yi Lin and I suffered through statistics and

shared the joys of psychodrama together. And my office mates—Lynda Fereday, Angie Tombari, and Gilbert Singletary—each of whom made teaching an absolute joyous, if not occasionally silly, endeavor while at University of Kentucky.

To my directors of this play, my doctoral committee, I must give hardy and generous thanks. I thank Rory Remer for being so much more than a mentor to me—he is at once my mentor, father-figure, friend, and now colleague. No one does theory like Rory—not even close. He will, no doubt, continue to be a presence in my professional and personal life in the years to come. I thank Pam Remer for co-creating this role of therapist for me. She took a good script and made it even better. She taught me to trust my intuition, to really listen to my clients, and to always speak my own truth. Her psychodramas were truly inspirational, and I aspire to one day have that same ability. Thank you to Karen Tice for adding a sense of challenge and leaving no stone unturned. I cherish your wisdom and your ability to get me outside of my head when I needed it the most. Many thanks are due Kenneth Tyler. I often wonder if he ever really understood the meaning and importance of our office chats—he inspires without even trying, and his classes really awakened the theorist and researcher in me. I hope we will collaborate in the future. And thank you to Joy Jacobs-Lawson, my outside reader, not only for her eagle-eye edits but for her in-the-moment challenge for me to stand on my own two feet, giving me voice to critique my own methods and a chance to validate my findings.

There is a core of individuals, the producers so-to-speak, whose love, and friendship made all of my dreams come true. To my husband, Barry, and to our families, I owe much more than I could ever hope to repay. Barry, your love and devotion, on and off the stage, is why this project is dedicated to you. To my dearest friends, I also offer deepest thanks and gratitude: Nathan & Shannon Rome, Valerie & Bryan Leake, Ron Johnson, Brian Gustman, Alex & Charmaine Nounopoulos, Leslie Gerrard & Matt Hassman, Raven & Donnie Piercey, Nick Denton, Carrie Brown & Karl Alexander, Bill & Tamara Harris, Erin Rooks and Aaron Ingell, Missy & Randy Taylor, and Ruth & Martin Riding-Malon.

I offer sincere thanks and gratitude to the members of my research team: Nick Denton, Leslie Gerrard, Raven Piercey, and Julie Duhigg. They were amazing workers, and they did it all with passion and keen interest. I especially appreciate Julie for her

stepping-into the role of auditor at the very last minute. I also want to thank the participants in this study—for trusting me with their stories and sharing their experiences with the world.

While the story of my career transition *does* end on a happy note, there was death and weeping along the way. The sudden and tragic loss of my very good friend, Dr. Bethe Ann Korfhage in 2006, still leaves an empty place in my heart, though I know she is cheering me on from some distant place. Her fierce dedication to LGBT issues as a straight ally was truly inspirational, and her friendship and advice are sorely missed.

I've not been on the stage in over ten years, nor have I penned any new plays in six. But I have not stopped learning new parts to play. I've played many roles in my life, on and off the stage. I must now learn a new role, and leave this act behind. I only pray that in my new role, I can give to others what was given me; and maybe something new...
(Exeunt flourish).

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a background to the present study that includes current and former research findings on the sources and experiences of psychological distress for sexual minority individuals. While this dissertation will use both of the terms LGBT and sexual minorities, they should be understood as interchangeable. The term sexual minority (or minorities) has only recently been introduced in the literature as a way to more efficiently discuss lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues in research, as opposed to the sometimes cumbersome, and growing, acronym LGBT. In Chapter One I also introduce the scope and contribution of the present study for sexual minority research.

Background to the Dissertation Study

Much attention and focus on sexual minorities from the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century has stressed that same-sex attraction and sexual behavior are deviant and harmful to both the individual and to society. Before the 1970's, few scientists and researchers would have ever thought to dissent from this position. However, a few researchers did just that (Hooker, 2001). One philosopher and researcher, Dr. Harry Benjamin, went so far as to posit that the sexual minority individual is not to blame, but rather society's insistence on demonizing such individuals was the root of any disfunction. "If adjustment is necessary, it should be made primarily with regard to the position the homosexual occupies in present-day society, and society should more often be treated than the homosexual" (as cited in Rutledge, 1988). This quote, by the founder of our modern understanding of transgender and transexual issues, was made thirty years before same-sex attraction and sexual behavior were removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Dr. Benjamin's words may well have been spoken today, given that sexual minorities still face much discrimination and prejudice from the more dominant heterosexual individuals, systems and environments.

While the general social climate in the U.S. has become more accepting and tolerant of sexual minority individuals, a significant amount of discrimination, prejudice and violence continues to affect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals, families and communities. Whether through local, state, and federal governments,

schools or the workplace, discrimination and prejudice continue to cause distress to lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons everywhere (DiPlacido, 1998; Meyer, 2007).

Since 1990, the U.S. Attorney General has been required to track crimes that target specific groups of people in the U. S. (Congress, 1990). Known as hate crimes, these offenses range from murder to vandalism and are so-called because the crimes are directed toward individuals based upon real or suspected identity in a specific racial category, religious affiliation, ethnicity or national origin, disability status, or sexual orientation. And while hate crimes are currently tracked and prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney General's office, no federal hate crimes bill sets punitive or judiciary consequences for hate crimes directed at sexual minorities. Since 2000, hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation have ranged from 14.2% of total hate crimes reported to a high of 16.7% (FBI, 2008; HRC, 2008a). And while crimes are being tracked across the country, individual states still have the authority to ignore or to further protect individual lesbian, gay, or bisexual citizens. At the time of this dissertation, current national legislative efforts to protect sexual minorities under hate crimes statues have failed to garner enough support in either the Senate or the House of Representatives.

Public schools in the U.S. are also places where sexual minority youth face many types of verbal and physical harassment and assault based solely upon sexual identity. In the 2008 school climate survey conducted and published by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), 6,000 self-identified sexual minority youth aged 13-21 years revealed a staggering amount of hostility toward sexual minorities existing in all 50 U.S. states' schools, including the District of Columbia (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008). Nearly three-fourths of all students reported hearing homophobic remarks on a frequent basis, and while 86% of students reported verbal assaults 45% of students reported physical harassment, and 22% reported physical assault—all on the basis of sexual orientation. Sadly, according to the GLSEN report, about 60% of these students that reported some form of verbal or physical harassment and or assault never reported these incidents to school personnel out of fear that nothing would be done to help the situation.

Even the practice of celebrating, affirming, and protecting relationships has become an area of political and social stricture in the U.S. Since the 2004 legalization of

same-sex marriage in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 29 U.S. states have passed constitutional amendments to prevent same-sex couples from having such rights. Moreover, 15 other states have laws that currently define marriage to be between one man and one woman (HRC, 2008c). Currently, there are four states where actual marriage is legal (Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, and Iowa as of May 26, 2009), one state that recognizes marriages performed in other states (New York), while five states allow civil unions or domestic partnership registries. Similarly, protections against workplace discrimination are left to individual states to accept or deny. At present, only twenty states and the District of Columbia list sexual orientation as a protected status in employment (and only twelve of those states also include gender identity) (HRC, 2008b). This leaves thirty U.S. states and four U.S. territories that do not explicitly protect sexual minorities from losing their jobs from sexuality-based discrimination. These are but a few examples of the macro and meso levels of prejudice and discrimination that sexual minorities face in the U.S. today.

“Homonegating processes” is a relatively new phrase that better captures the systemic, multilevel heterosexist repudiation of all things related to same-sex attraction, same-sex affiliation and other “queering” elements of our collective experience (Russell & Bohan, 2006). Therefore, any law, social scripts, role socialization processes, or non-gay or lesbian affirming incidents that serve to denigrate sexual minorities, keeping sexual minorities separate from the larger society, or punishing the existence of sexual minorities in the public sphere either implicitly or explicitly, may be understood to be acting as a homonegating process. Heterosexism is an, “ideological system that operates on individual, institutional, and cultural levels to stigmatize, deny, and denigrate all non-heterosexual way of being” (Szymanski, Kashubeck-West, & Meyer, 2008, p. 512). One of the principle motivations behind changing the phraseology from heterosexism to homonegating processes is to make the phrase more active, and imply that something is indeed being done by society to sexual minorities—action rather than ideology.

While not necessarily using the phrase “homonegating processes”, the heterosexist prejudice and discrimination experienced by sexual minorities have been shown to cause psychological distress. Known as the minority stress model (V. R. Brooks, 1981; DiPlacido, 1998; Meyer, 1995, 2003, 2007), the additive effects of

everyday common stressors experienced by most individuals becomes compounded and further exacerbated by the stress experienced as a result of heterosexist prejudice and discrimination. Minority stress researchers have demonstrated how minority stress can lead to higher rates of depression and psychosomatic complaints in sexual minorities (Meyer, 1995, 2007). These stressors have also been linked to higher rates of what some consider to be unhealthy behaviors, such as higher rates of drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco, and drug use (DiPlacido, 1998). How do sexual minorities cope with and mitigate these points of stress? This area of research is particularly sparse with one notable exception: research of internalized heterosexism.

Internalized heterosexism, formerly referred to as internalized homophobia, has been a fecund area of sexual minority study since the mid 1980's (Shidlo, 1994; Szymanski et al., 2008; Williamson, 2000). While most researchers conclude that social oppression, sexual prejudice, and discrimination are at the root of this internalized and self-deprecating form of psychological distress, the focus of practitioners has been on the individual and intrapsychic factors for treating internalized heterosexism and not on the external environment. An entire edition of *The Counseling Psychologist* in 2008 was devoted to the history and current issues related to internalized heterosexism. The special edition also included a thorough review of the research literature on internalized heterosexism. Until recently, no other sexual minority coping strategies had been reported in the literature, even though minority stress researchers had been asking this same question for the past 15 years: other than internalizing this prejudice and discrimination, what other coping strategies are being used by sexual minority individuals to diffuse the stressors associated with sexual minority status?

Among the first researchers to explore new avenues of coping were White and Franzini (1999). The researchers explored sexual minority individuals' attitudes towards heterosexuals. Calling this construct "heteronegative attitudes," the researchers attempted to explain that some sexual minorities do indeed develop negative attitudes and beliefs about heterosexuals. Another researcher who reached a similar conclusion was Douglas Haldeman. In his writings on gay male heterophobia, Haldeman (2002; 2006) posited that gay men experience a lifetime of prejudice and discrimination at the hands of important people in their lives, and may adopt a phobic or distant approach to heterosexuals in a

variety of situations and environments. And, while attitudes are an important aspect of coping, without assessing behaviors and or affective responses, heteronegativity or heterophobia cannot be fully explained as a coping mechanism. Areas of research that are primed for further exploration include sexual minority coping skills and strategies.

Statement of the Problem

Much research exists on the experience of stress for sexual minorities, and too little on coping strategies for living in a heterosexist society. Coping and resiliency factors are relatively new areas of research within the literature on sexual minorities. As little research has examined heterophobia or heteronegativity as a facet of sexual minority coping experience, one important contribution to the literature would be to explore this phenomenon from a paradigm that allows for a more intricate explication of what heteronegativity is, and how it impacts the lives of lesbian and gay individuals. Heteronegativity is only one of a range of coping strategies and skills that sexual minority individuals may apply when interacting with heterosexist individuals, systems, and environments. I hope that by utilizing the concept of homonegating processes to guide the exploration of heteronegativity, scholars, researchers, practitioners, and training programs can better understand the responses of sexual minority individuals to the interactive, and socially constructed experience of heterosexist individuals, systems, and environments.

In what ways does heteronegativity impact the lives of gay and lesbian individuals? How do gay and lesbian individuals express heteronegativity? As a first step, more fully exploring how lesbian and gay individuals cope throughout heterosexist interactions with heterosexuals will be necessary. Understanding the effects of such interactions, especially the interactions that are heteronegative, may give future researchers important insights into some of the social or contextual factors that continue to contribute to harmful interactions between lesbian and gay individuals and heterosexuals.

Scope of the Present Study

The study presented in this dissertation includes an exploratory approach to the experiences of lesbian and gay individuals with heterosexuals in a range of settings, circumstances, and contexts. Some initial questions included, “what is the nature of this distancing from heterosexuals, from the sexual minority perspective,” and, “is it

protective for the sexual minority individual or harmful?” The research questions for the project were, “What are the central features of heteronegativity that are manifest in the lived experience of lesbian and gay individuals, and how does heteronegativity impact the lives of lesbian and gay individuals?” In Chapter Two I review selected literature related to the research questions, and provide an important background to exploring the nascent construct of heteronegativity.

Grounded theory design is one way to explore and develop theory for understanding phenomena that has not been explored previously in the literature. One commonly used system of qualitative analysis is Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) (Hill et al., 2005; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). The present study used CQR to examine the construct of heteronegativity. Twelve adult gay and lesbian participants were recruited and individually interviewed for the present study. Transcripts of these interviews were then analyzed by a team of doctoral trainees for common themes. The themes were derived consensually, over the course of six months, and independently verified by an external auditor not affiliated with the initial coding process. In Chapter Three I outline the methods, materials and analysis employed in the present study.

In Chapter Four I explain the results of the present study with connections to the selected literature from Chapter Two. In Chapter Five, the final chapter, I present a discussion of the findings and propose three components of sexual minority coping in response to heterosexism, of which heteronegativity is only one aspect. The present study contributes to the new body of research literature on sexual minority coping and resiliency factors. The study also provides important background to the nature of responses that sexual minorities exhibit as a response to heterosexism and homonegating processes in general. Chapter five also includes a section on the implications of the current study for students, trainees, educators, and practitioners of services for sexual minorities.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Two comprises a review of selected literature, a summary discussion of the selected literature, and the purpose of the present study. In consultation with the dissertation committee, only sexual minority research literature that directly influenced the research questions or provided sufficient background to the present study was selected for review in this chapter. The following literature contributes to understanding the emergence of heteronegativity as a construct, and how it was operationalized in the present study.

A Review of Selected Literature

A paucity of research exists in the area of heterophobia and heteronegativity. At the outset, one might be tempted to assume that the two terms are synonymous; however after carefully considering the extant literature on each, a clearer distinction between the two terms emerges. As a result of this important distinction, I assert that the larger more encompassing construct of heteronegativity offers a promise of a deeper and richer set of data for the dissertation project. Therefore, in this chapter I discuss existing literature for both heterophobia and heteronegativity. This chapter also includes a review of selected literature from research areas that are corollary and antecedent to heteronegativity, and constructionist theories that help to form a foundation for heteronegativity as a construct. Corollary and antecedent areas of intersection with heteronegativity are sexual identity formation, minority stress and its related constructs, as well as constructs introduced within the past several decades that help describe the interactions of oppressed group members with the majority culture in a variety of contexts.

The Experience of Stress Among Sexual Minorities

Since homosexuality was removed from the list of psychological and psychiatric disorders in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in the 1970's, research has focused upon the psychological stressors that lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals experience across the lifespan. Smaller studies of lesbian, gay, and bisexuals have uncovered several types of stress related to being openly lesbian, gay, or bisexual, mostly centered around workplace discrimination, family rejection, and other types of discrimination (Gillow & Davis, 1987; Mays & Cochran, 2001). The more recent of these two studies compared 73 lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons with nearly 3,000

heterosexuals from the federally funded Mid-life in the U.S. study (MIDUS) (Mays & Cochran) and found that sexual minorities experienced more lifetime stressors—stress events that all individuals experience—as well as more daily stressors as a result of sexual minority status.

Currently, the largest study of gay-related stress was published in 2001 from research conducted from the mid 1990's in the Midwestern portion of the U.S. (Lewis, Derlega, Berndt, Morris, & Rose, 2001). The Measure of Gay Stress (MOGS) was developed and concurrently validated with the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) from a sample of 979 lesbian and gay individuals in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Principle Components analysis revealed a ten-factor structure for the measure with confirmatory factor analysis supporting the ten-factor model as the best fit. The ten distress factors extracted from the data of this study are: (a) family reaction; (b) family reactions to my partner; (c) visibility with family and friends; (d) visibility with work and public; (e) violence and harassment; (f) misunderstanding; (g) discrimination at work; (h) general discrimination; (i) HIV/AIDS; (j) sexual-orientation conflict (Lewis et al., 2001). Other important factors revealed from the data in this study suggest that: (a) individuals with more support from within the lesbian, gay and bisexual community reported lower over-all scores of distress; (b) lower levels of distress associated with sexual-orientation conflict indicated lower over-all distress; and (c) those individuals with larger over-all distress levels experience higher levels of dysphoria measured by the CES-D. Most importantly, this study actually confirmed that other types of distress or stressors that are additive for sexual minorities exists. This study is not, however, the first foray into research on the stressors experienced by sexual minorities.

Canadian researchers Lindquist and Hirabayashi (1979) stated very eloquently, in a publication on gay men coping with a marginal status (being gay),

“[gays] constitute an aggregate which has and which continues to experience significant social disabilities...rang[ing] from the existence of negative attitudes towards homosexuality and homosexuals on the part of the general public to a variety of real and potential sanctions based upon such attitudes” (pp. 88-89).

The article also stated that gays should not be seen as individuals with intrapsychic issues, but as oppressed minorities who suffer at the hands of a heterosexist culture. The

Lindquist and Hirabayashi study involved 142 gay-identified men in Alberta Canada and their experiences with being gay in a heterosexist society. In addition to measuring gay identity commitment, involvement in the gay community, and personality functioning, the study examined the perceived and experienced barriers of these gay men to participation in the larger non-gay social sphere. One of the findings of the study revealed that social support from others helped to lessen the effects of heterosexism on key aspects of personality functioning in gay men, but that this support only came from within the gay community (Lindquist & Hirabayashi, 1979). The authors also stated that fuller inclusion into the dominant culture *or* more gay institutions beyond the bar culture is needed for the healthy development of personality functioning in gay men. While the results sound very intrapsychic in nature, the researchers also offer some potentially confounding ideas in their study. The problem was from “two related factors: one, the nature of the minority situation facing gay people and two, the format of gay people’s early socialization experiences” (p. 102). Clearly, even as homosexuality was being reevaluated by the psychological and psychiatric communities as non-pathological in nature, stigma and psychologically damaging effects from the interactions of being gay in a heterosexual society still existed. Given that the damaging effects come from an internal/external interaction, intrapsychic factors can only describe one half of this phenomenon.

Minority Stress and its Related Constructs

Such thoughts about the interaction of sexual minorities with larger social heterosexist pressures gave rise to an new and important conceptualization of such experiences—minority stress theory (V. R. Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 1995, 2003, 2007; Meyer, Schwartz, & Frost, 2008). First posited by V. R. Brooks, the minority stress model properly situates the lesbian, gay, or bisexual person as experiencing a wide range of stressors from the context of living within a world where heterosexuality is assumed and privileged. Meyer (1995, 2003, 2007) has most recently written extensively in the psychological literature on the theory, and has articulated that sexual minorities experience two specific types of stressors: proximal and distal stressors. Distal stressors are those that are objective and less likely to involve a perceived event—direct

discrimination for example, while proximal stressors are those that are more subjective and/or internalized.

In Meyer's (2007) conceptualization of the minority stress model, distal and proximal stressors still exist only within the realm of micro and meso levels of enactment. Meyer listed another box in his diagram (p. 248) labeled "general stressors," but did not directly address larger social processes that overtly and covertly serve to isolate homosexuality from the heterosexual and normative. Instead, the minority stress model only speaks of how sexual minorities internalize these stigmas until they develop harmful psychological sequelae. Only recently have other researchers begun to explore how macro-level events can be conceptualized within the minority stress model, specifically with the advent of anti-marriage amendment initiatives in many states in the U.S. (Rostosky, Riggle, Horne, & Miller, 2009).

Stigma consciousness. The role of stigma, and the perceptions of stigma by sexual minorities, is an important factor in the minority stress model. While the term stigma consciousness was first used by Pinel (1999), it is perhaps the best term to describe the experience of stigma as it relates to sexual minority experience of minority stress. Stigma consciousness refers to the extent a person expects to be stigmatized or stereotyped as a function of identity. Using heteronegativity in the context of stigma consciousness, an example might be that if sexual minority individuals do not have an expectation of being stereotyped or stigmatized in a particular situation, those individuals may not be as negative toward the heterosexuals surrounding them. Other research with lesbian women and stigma consciousness has shown that social constraints (not having a strong in-group social network) interacts with stigma consciousness to predict higher levels of intrusive thoughts and physical symptoms (Lewis, Derlega, Clarke, & Kuang, 2006). Would gay men without a strong personal social support network be more likely to feel conscious of sexual minority stigma in certain environments?

Similarly, when a sexual minority individual experiences a stigmatizing or gay-related stressor and attributes the event as an aspect of prejudice against sexual minorities, does this attribution constitute a rejection of heterosexism or is this a potential resilience or coping strategy related to being gay or lesbian in a heterosexist world? Or, can the attribution of rejection be a coping strategy? The process of stigma consciousness

in the study of heteronegativity may be an important corollary construct for future research on resiliency of all sexual minorities to heterosexist events. Stigma consciousness may also explain situations that are associated with somatic symptoms experienced by sexual minorities as a result of the minority stress found in heterosexist environments.

Stigma and self-esteem. The effect of stigma on self-esteem is another component that is addressed in the minority stress model, but has been researched separately by other researchers. The work of Crocker and Major (2003) may have something to contribute to heteronegativity. Sexual minorities may so quickly ascribe their apprehension of heterosexual men to the simple fact that heterosexual men are more likely to act prejudicially. Crocker and Major stated that the self-esteem of an individual in a stigmatized group can remain unaffected if that person believes that prejudice is directed at the group as a whole, and not because of the individual's specific merits or traits. Meaning that an individual's level of self-esteem remains stable in pre-post tests where the individual believes that the prejudice is directed toward the sexual minority group and not to the individual specifically.

Working mostly with women and with ethnic minorities, Crocker and Major (2003) identified several aspects of stigma that had not previously been explored. Crocker and Major found that many women's and ethnic minorities' sense of self-worth or self-esteem will remain constant under specific circumstances. In this manner, stigmatized individuals have escaped the internalization of the negative attributes ascribed to them by their minority status. Crocker and Major talked about the protective factors of stigma, and are keenly aware that such statements initially appear counter-productive to the study of stigma and stress. The authors clearly stated that the stigma associated with belonging to certain groups is damaging in many ways to the individual (i.e., somatic complaints, decreased productivity, impaired levels of concentration and attention); however, the same research has shown that one area to remain unaffected by such stigma is self-esteem. Therefore, if Crocker and Major's work were to generalize to Gay and lesbian individuals, self-esteem and heteronegativity should be negatively correlated. What remains to be seen, is the persistence of high self-esteem while also experiencing a high level of heteronegativity—can a lesbian or gay individual have these

negative feelings, thoughts, and behaviors about heterosexuals, and still have high levels of self-esteem.

Stigma consciousness and stigma and self-esteem, were key elements in Meyer's (1995, 2003, 2007) minority stress model. Meyer recognized the limitations of focusing only on the experiences of stressors, and argued for research that examines how sexual minorities cope with the stressors of minority status. This area is open for further research.

Homonegating Processes and Ventriloquation

In any given culture, an interaction exists between the self and the environment or cultural milieu. Making use of constructionist and postmodern ideologies, Russell and Bohan (2006) articulated that no innate "self" or individual identity exists, but rather a shared self in the presence of others, and in the daily interaction with society and culture. Russell and Bohan referred to this process as a dialogic or discursive model of identity. For example, you might be a slightly different person in the context of social interactions with your parents than you would be in social interactions within the workforce. Constructionists would argue that a person is also different within a couple-context than from a parent-child context—both are personal spheres, yet the interaction effects change the personal communication style and the nature of personal expression. Therefore, if no individual self exists, but only one that is in a state of constant co-creation, there can be no internal existence such as internalized homophobia—instead, homophobia is everywhere.

There is no separation, no boundary between the homonegativity residing in social exchange at large and the homonegativity (usually understood as) internal to individuals...If we erase the boundary between the inner and the outer, homonegativity is simply everywhere, like oxygen—in the air and in each/all of us... (Russell & Bohan, p. 349).

When individuals, regardless of sexual orientation, reify heterosexist or homonegative thoughts, actions or behaviors, they are simply regurgitating this pervasive, *de facto*, social script of stigma and sexual prejudice. The reification of socially constructed ideas has been referred to as ventriloquation. Ventriloquation is also the term used by Russell and Bohan to describe this reification of heterosexism without examination. One can

think of ventriloquation in a literal sense, with the individual as the puppet and society or culture as the ventriloquist. The term originates from the Russian literary philosopher Bakhtin (1981) whose works from the early Soviet-Stalinist era were not translated into English until much later. The concept that language, and by extension voice, was rarely original to the individual exists as one of Bakhtin's great contributions to philosophy. "Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others" (Bakhtin, p. 294).

Bakhtin (1981) believed that our environment or social context, both significant influences and the mundane minutia of daily life, serve as the genesis of all individual human communication. In his ideas about the average individual, Bakhtin presumed that when confronted with a novel situation, an average person might appropriate (ventriloquate) the socially pervasive ideologies. His philosophies were tied directly to the literature of the day, but other scholars and social scientists of the late 20th and early 21st centuries began to appropriate his ideas and apply them to social constructs (Brown, 1999; Russell & Bohan, 2006).

The image of individuals as puppets for the larger social script is a useful one to get a sense of how society and culture can create myths, images, and stereotypes about minority groups, and because of the pervasive and covert nature of the modes of transmission, most individuals will readily accept and ventriloquate these myths, images, and stereotypes themselves. Worell and Remer's (2003) examination of intersecting personal and social identities and the implications for work with women in the therapeutic relationship provides evidence for how ventriloquation affects clients on an individual level. While individuals may balk at being compared to puppets in a larger social scheme, the relationship is a justified one, and one that is meant to shock the individual into action against social injustices such as the ones described in this dissertation. Many authors describe in identity development models a stage often labeled as pre-awareness, wherein an individual actually believes or agrees with prejudicial, stereotypical, and discriminatory statements and beliefs made by the dominant culture. I believe that, as an extension of examining biases through personal growth, the term ventriloquation can be useful to moving individuals toward more sensitive and accurate

interactions with the “other.” The use of the term ventriloquation may serve as a motivator for individuals to pursue more active interventions in homonegating processes—who likes the idea of being a puppet to larger social forces?

While the work of Russell and Bohan (2006) revealed a few of the dialogic processes that have shaped homonegating processes in the writings on gender, sexuality, and social systems for the past several centuries (Bakhtin, 1981; Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1978; Russell & Bohan), one still requires a new conceptualization to explain this pervasive heterosexism or homonegativity. Russell is credited for suggesting homonegating processes as a new conceptual term (Russell & Bohan). She chose the term specifically because it implies a dynamic relationship rather than a trait—a process of enactment in which all individuals within a society play a part. Homonegating processes are a series of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that each individual in our society absorbs, and replicates (or ventriloquates) to cycle the phenomenon perpetually (Russell & Bohan). Homonegating processes are multiple in forms, and should be viewed as multifaceted—operating on different levels of enactment and within differing modalities.

Russell and Bohan (2006) suggested that as a process of enactment, meso-level or relational points of intervention might be the best way to examine and explore homonegating processes. Given the constructionist viewpoints espoused by Russell and Bohan, relational modes of research may also afford the best exploration of heteronegativity. Specifically, research centered on detailed exploration from a phenomenological perspective, such as this dissertation study, can provide a richer description of the process, genesis, and effects of heteronegativity.

Social Contexts of Gender and Race

Other theoretical constructs exist that may inform the investigation of heteronegativity. These theoretical constructs may offer important questions to contemplate in a study of heteronegativity. Attitudes about heterosexuals would indeed be a part of what contributes to heteronegativity, as would social context. Specifically, what are other social locations where multiple identities have some bearing on the experiences of gay and lesbian persons (e.g., race/ethnicity, urbanicity, SES) (Worell & Remer, 2003). Researchers might consider aspects of gender and race, among other social locations, that may have important bearing on the experience of particular gay and

lesbian individuals. In the area of gender, these issues are gender-role socialization and the childhood experiences of living up-to the code of masculinity (Levant et al., 1992; Levant et al., 2007), as well as what it means to be a woman in our modern culture (Basow & Rubin, 1999; Pipher, 1994; Tolman, 1999).

Because boys and men are mostly socialized to express only aggressive emotional tendencies, and men tend to police or enforce these ideals more than women and girls, those individuals who stray from these norms will be dealt with harshly (G. R. Brooks, 2002; Levant, 2005). If a researcher were to investigate heteronegativity in gay men, including items that touch upon the experiences of masculinity would be essential. Since the advent of gender-role strain paradigms and scales and measures of gender-role norms, it has become evident that men experience a wide range of conflict about “how” to be a man (Fischer, 2007; Flowers & Buston, 2001; Levant, 1992, 1997; Levant et al., 1992; Levant et al., 2007; Richmond & Levant, 2003; Tejirian, 2001). This socialization process is analogous, with some differences, to investigating how women are supposed to be as mothers and daughters (Huston, 1988; Powlishta, Sen, Serbin, Poulin-Dubois, & Eichstedt, 2001). Information about early childhood and family life might be useful in determining an early sense of hostility that might later manifest as fear or negative beliefs or attitudes about heterosexuals in general or even specific contexts. More research on the overlap of sexual identity with gender socialization may help to better understand some of the mechanisms behind heteronegativity.

Variables like race and ethnicity contribute significantly to the generalizability of research results to the larger sexual minority population. Sexual orientation, like gender, cannot be described in absolute homogeneity because the racial and ethnic composition of sexual minorities as a group closely resembles the composition of society as a whole. Ergo, one cannot speak collectively about sexual minorities as they are a very heterogeneous group of individuals, not only in terms of sexual orientation (gay, bisexual, lesbian), but in terms of most other social identities. The body of research literature on sexual minorities (and psychology in general) has historically done a poor job of addressing the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic factors in research design and analysis (Greene, 1997; Sneed, Schwartz, & Cross, 2006). More often than not, published research has erred in one of the following ways: excluded information about the racial

composition of the study, never clearly outlined what racial groups comprised the study's participants, or reported very low rates of ethnic and racial minority participation (Cote, 2006; Greene, ; Loiacano, 2001; Sneed et al.).

The intersection of gender with race and ethnicity have been examined recently in the literature (Burman, 2003; Steinbugler, Press, & Dias, 2006; Yuval Davis, 2006). Drawing from many different identity theorists, Steinbugler and colleagues defined intersectionality in four parts. First, intersectionality, "...is the theory that race, gender, class, and sexuality are socially defined categories whose meanings are historically contingent" (p. 808). Second, where an individual is uniquely situated within this hierarchical milieu determines a lived experience that cannot be fully comprehended by the sum of its parts, but as a multiplicative(Steinbugler et al.). Third, the hierarchical nature of these socially determined identity statuses create privilege and oppression (white, upper-class, heterosexual males are not free of oppression, but are afforded direct and tangible benefits from their social identities). And finally, many individuals will occupy locations of privilege and oppression simultaneously (Steinbugler et al.).

Each of these related ideas are potential aspects of how heteronegativity may manifest within lesbian and gay populations. Stigma and stereotype from multiple points of privilege and oppression could simultaneously contribute to and complicate the exploration of heteronegativity. However no research currently exists to even demonstrate the heteronegativity's viability or validity. A detailed phenomenological research design would begin to address this gap in the literature. Such research often examines a specific phenomenon by utilizing a small theoretically determined sample (Creswell, 2007). These methodological complexities are addressed later in Chapter Three.

Heteronegativity Versus Heterophobia

Today, in the field of sexual minority research, precision of terminology is paramount for communication with and about lesbian and gay individuals. A discussion of terminology used in the literature is not only prudent, but necessary for clarity of purpose. A key-word search for "heterophobia" on a major commercial web-based book seller yielded 220 published books that have some mention of the word heterophobia within the text. Of these, 44 are directly related to sexual orientation and "heterophobia"

as an impact to LGBT individuals. In the result of a key-word search for the terms heterophobia *or* heteronegativity within peer-reviewed research articles using a major social sciences aggregate database (Psych Info), less than 10 such articles appeared. Unlike the constructs of *homophobia* and *homonegativity*, which have been used in the literature on sexual minorities for a much longer time, *heteronegativity* and *heterophobia* are less clearly defined and less researched.

With a paucity of actual research on the construct of heterophobia or heteronegativity, and a very wide body of theoretical and critical discourse from a multitude of other disciplines, operationalizing either heterophobia or heteronegativity for psychological research is problematic at best. Within the realm of psychological research, two available resources exist that provide a conceptual and operational framework for the constructs of heterophobia and heteronegativity. In his work with gay men from California, Douglas Haldeman wrote about *heterophobia* using case studies from his private practice. He was among the first to use heterophobia in the psychological literature, and the first to offer a definition. In his work he has also expressed his interests in stimulating further research into this area of clinical application (Haldeman, 2002, 2005, 2006). *Heteronegativity* has also only recently been operationalized within the literature (White & Franzini, 1999). In this initial study, the authors have taken a critical first step in the process of understanding one component of heteronegativity. Literature on both heterophobia and heteronegativity are discussed in the following sections, with my working definition of heteronegativity at the end of this section.

Heterophobia

The term heterophobia has been in the literature since the early 1980's. In the simplest reductionist usage, heterophobia can be construed to mean an intense or irrational fear of heterosexuals. Etymologically, in nearly all instances within the body of literature that uses the term, heterophobia is derived from homophobia and how it has been used since its first appearance in 1965 by George Weinberg, a New York City therapist (Ayyar, 2002). While the term has been used in many ways, it was first used in 1982 by second-wave Feminist scholar Robin Morgan in her book on feminist liberation titled, *The Anatomy of Freedom* (Noonan, 2003). Psychiatrists, psychologists, and

sexologists used the term as early as 1986 in discussions on ego-dystonic homosexuality while concurrently dealing with a fear of opposite-sex attraction (Lief & Kaplan, 1986).

Haldeman (2006) defined heterophobia in gay or bisexual men as, "... the common fear that many gay and bisexual men harbor of heterosexual men as a result of traumatic experiences..." (p. 303). Haldeman (2002) stated that, "Heterophobia may manifest as an avoidance of situations in which heterosexual men are present, as stress responses when obliged to interact with heterosexual men, especially in groups, and as self-devaluation and shame" (p. 6). Haldeman also subtly described several possible factors that influence the development of heterophobia: loss of emotional connection to paternal or masculine figures in early childhood; antagonistic relationships with same-sex peers in school, the "playground ghosts" or bullying experiences from childhood; family issues; and other traumatic experiences at the hands of other men (Haldeman). Assuming that phobias are defined in part as irrational fears, I would argue that gay men having negative thoughts about heterosexuals who have harmed them is not "irrational." Therefore the term heterophobia may not be the best label for what is occurring to sexual minorities.

Haldeman's (2006) definition of heterophobia posed many more questions that are open to future research. Haldeman has described heterophobia as a mechanism that may impact gay men's abilities to create and maintain positive relationships, the ability to fully function in the office environment and the ability to experience trust and intimacy with other men—irrespective of one's sexual orientation. Clearly, Haldeman's ideas about heterophobia go well beyond simple fear or reprobation of heterosexuals. What Haldeman explored as a broader range of experiences—well beyond the realm of irrational fear—denies a much more complex construct than the term heterophobia implies.

Heteronegativity

White and Franzini (1999) actually formulated their definition of heteronegativity in response to ongoing criticism that heterophobia is a simplistic term implying a more complex set of ideas. The authors stated that heterophobia is only one end on a spectrum of negative attitudes, behaviors, and feelings toward heterosexuals. *Heteronegativism* would better capture this range. White and Franzini made the decision to adopt the

conceptual term *homonegativism*, an acknowledgement that homophobia is only one end of the spectrum of attitudes and beliefs toward homosexual persons, and applied this concept to heterophobia in the pursuit of examining the full range of negative attitudes and beliefs that lesbian, gay and bisexual persons have about heterosexual persons (White & Franzini). The authors chose the term *heteronegativism*, which would indicate a doctrine or belief system. The root, heteronegative, implies an adjective. For the remainder of this chapter, I have chosen to use an alternate suffix to indicate a state of quality or being—heteronegativity. This choice is for clarity of understanding a lesbian and gay individual's quality of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

The theoretical background utilized by White and Franzini (1999) came from Lewin (1980) and his ideas on the marginalization of certain groups and the tendency for marginal groups to have a more rational approach to group differences than the majority groups. This rational approach was partially confirmed in White and Franzini's study of heteronegativity through the six hypotheses in their study. The researchers selected a sample of 120 university students, 30 gay men, 30 lesbian women, 30 heterosexual men, and 30 heterosexual women from a larger sample for analysis. Participants were given the Kinsey Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948), the Hudson and Ricketts (1980) Index of Homophobia (IHP) with the questions reworded for use by gay and lesbian participants. The results of the study indicated that the gay men and lesbian women had lower mean heterophobia scores than their heterosexual counterparts' scores on homophobia; that heterosexual men had higher mean scores of homophobia than heterosexual women; lesbians had higher levels of heterophobia than gay men; gay men and lesbian women experience more abuse and harassment as a result of their sexual orientation than heterosexuals; and that gay and lesbian persons who were not very "out" (open about sexual orientation status) had lower mean heterophobia scores than those that were very out.

One hypothesis from their study that was not supported stated that a positive correlation should exist between individuals' phobia scores who are not out, or closeted (hiding sexual orientation status from others), with reported negative experiences—meaning that closeted individuals should have reported higher levels of negative experiences. While several factors were explored as to why this particular hypothesis was

not supported, possibly some individuals who are not out have not had to experience the direct negative effects that other out members have had to endure. Or more clearly stated—if one is not out, one can protect oneself from certain negative experiences. This idea of concealing identity exposes an aspect of context the study did not anticipate.

The overall picture of gay and lesbian attitudes toward heterosexuals, as reported in this study, are as follows: (a) sexual minorities who are not very open about their sexuality often have more positive attitudes about heterosexuals than those sexual minorities who are more open about their sexuality; (b) lesbians have more negative reactions to heterosexuals than gay men; and (c) all sexual minorities have fewer fears of heterosexuals than heterosexuals have of sexual minorities. The study successfully captured negative attitudes about heterosexuals.

That the measure developed by Hudson and Ricketts (1980) and modified for use in this study may not accurately capture modern attitudes toward homosexuality, and therefore may not paint a full picture of current attitudes toward homosexual or heterosexual individuals, bears explanation. The development of the Modern Homonegativity Scale (MHS, Morrison & Morrison, 2002) took the measurement of heterosexist attitudes into the Twenty-First century. This modernization by the authors was made possible by creating a scale that measured *covert* attitudes toward LGBT persons rather than *overt* or explicit heterosexist language. The authors believed that most individuals become defensive and reactive to traditional measures of homophobia. With modern attitudes shifting, concealing or presenting oneself as being non-prejudiced toward homosexuals while still maintaining a high level of covert heterosexist ideas is easier (Morrison & Morrison). Future researchers might use this final 12 item scale and adapt it for gay men to rate their own beliefs and attitudes toward heterosexual men and women or have select items reworded for use in a larger examination of lesbian, gay and bisexual attitudes toward heterosexual individuals.

And as a final note, while White and Franzini (1999) claimed that heteronegativity is not a simplistic idea or construct, they failed to utilize measures beyond attitudes, leaving this examination of heteronegativity one-dimensional. As a specific example of this condition, their unconfirmed hypothesis related to outness or

disclosure and heteronegative ideation may have larger implications for the role of sexual prejudice and heterosexist events directed at out versus closeted individuals.

Intrapsychic Pitfalls

The potential uses of heteronegativity warrants a careful discussion. Avoiding the research trajectory of other related constructs such as internalized homophobia or homonegativity merits some careful attention to how heterophobia will be used in psychological research. Linking research on internalized homophobia (or internalized homonegativity) to minority stress models, researchers began to question the psychological implications for the continued use of these constructs as a sole factor in future research studies (Herek, 2004; Kitzinger, 1996; Meyer, 2003). What risks do researchers take when continuing to examine internalized homophobia from a purely intrapsychic individualized frame of reference (Williamson, 2000)? “Instead of going to a heterosexual therapist to be cured of homosexuality, we now go to lesbian and gay therapists to be cured of internalized homophobia” (Kitzinger, p. 10).

When working with oppressed groups such as lesbians and gay men, researchers should remember that intrapsychic conceptualizations can sometimes lead to label the individual as pathological without any critical examination of social structures that reify oppression. Or even worse, these intrapsychic conceptualizations can lead to victim blaming (Bohan & Russell, 2003; Russell & Bohan, 2006).

Internalized social prescriptions have direct implications for the self-perception of people with problems. Although coercion has not disappeared from the treatment of the mentally ill, we have, today, treatment methods characterized by kindness and compassion. However humanitarian, this trend is not without side effects, for it turns responsibility for problems and solutions inward. In the absence of apparent coercion, and in the presence of overt caring, there is nobody but oneself to blame for difficulties (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002, p. 8)

Nearly all of the authors contributing to the extant literature on internalized homonegativity and those authors cited within this chapter have stressed that the constructs of internalized homonegativity and heteronegativity derive etiologically from social contexts or from the results of living in a heterosexist society. These authors' works have advanced the understanding of psychological functioning for lesbian and gay

individuals. However, none of the authors clearly stated that more should be done to eradicate the source of homonegativity or heteronegativity, namely heterosexism (Kitzinger, 1996; Russell & Bohan).

A continual propensity exists in the literature to view internalized homonegativity as individual pathology without any exploration of reducing societal heterosexism that perpetuates sexual prejudice and sexual stigma. Williamson (2000) asserted that researchers should examine more closely the larger socio-political implications of their work and strive to reduce the potential for the research to simply reinforce heterosexist and oppressive systems. The construct of internalized homonegativity was developed upon clearly introspective and intrapsychic formulations that tend to render the individual as the point of pathology. Without critically examining external factors as to the why, how, and where of the construct's true psychosocial etiology, researchers do not provide a full picture. Moving forward, the tendency to look into the individual, rather than the interaction between the individual and social contexts is important to remember. What might be the best way for researchers to avoid a complete intrapsychic perspective on the construct of heteronegativity? This research project attempts to minimize these intrapsychic pitfalls by clearly accessing sexual minority experiences with past and present evidence of prejudice and discrimination.

Summary

The element that ties the research of both Haldeman (2006) and White and Franzini (1999) together is their usage or discussion of the term heterophobia. While both Haldeman's (2002, 2006) theoretical work and White and Franzini's article based their definition of heterophobia on Greg Herek's definitions of stigma related to lesbian and gay persons (Herek, 1996, 2000, 2004), the two constructs are indeed two different, but related ideas. Both terms are discussed further below, along with an explanation of why heteronegativity represents a more suitable word to describe these complicated issues.

Might individuals, institutions, and larger social systems better benefit from a more broadly-defined construct of heteronegativity? What about a construct that encompasses individual, internalized beliefs as well as the external experiences of heterosexism—or even the interaction of both? Haldeman's (2006) definition gives an important clue in directing the researcher to external factors. Haldeman asserted that the

fear and reprobation experienced by gay and bisexual men toward heterosexual men exists as a result of traumatic experiences at the hands of straight men. G. R. Brooks (2002) echoes this sentiment on the antagonism toward gay men in his statement on gay-straight dialogues and the code of masculinity,

[I]t seems that we buy into this [gendered] belief system assuming that everyone else (at least every other *real* man) has already bought into [the masculinity code] and that we had better do the same (or face the shameful consequences)...

Obviously this has tragic consequences for gay men. Less obviously, however, this process creates major problems for heterosexual men as well (G. R. Brooks, p. 9).

While the term may not originate with Haldeman, the term heteronegativity better captures the complex multi-faceted ideas that Haldeman espouses. Simple fear, rational or otherwise, cannot fully reflect the wide range of experiences described by Haldeman. Heteronegativity better captures the range of negative reactions to heterosexuals, based upon a life-time of experiences with the heterosexual “other.” And while White and Franzini (1999) used the term heteronegativism, they failed to measure anything other than attitudes toward heterosexuals. A complete definition of heteronegativity would encompass behaviors and affective reactions in addition to attitudes or cognitions. I offer the following definition of heteronegativity as one does not currently exist in the research literature. *Heteronegativity* is a construct that describes a sexual minority individual’s negative thoughts, feelings and behaviors that are responses to heterosexual individuals, systems, and environments.

As a part of developing negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors towards heterosexual individuals, systems, and environments—assuming that a person would first develop some identification as a sexual minority is logical. If a central process of defining “...ourselves [by] terms and categories that we share with other people” (Deaux, 2001, p. 1059), involves contrasting experiences, then research should also inform our understanding of how heteronegativity operates in tandem with sexual identity development.

Sexual Identity Development

To what extent does behavior constitute identity? What about emotional commitment, group commitment, political engagement, or even the disclosure of sexual identity in every situation? These questions are central to understanding how identity development models have evolved over time. Certainly, the concept of individual responses to sexuality has been of great importance to the social sciences for over a century. Sexual expression and its regulation in society is hardly a new idea, as most civilizations have had very explicit codes of conduct regarding human sexual expression (Halperin, 1993). What makes sexual orientation so unique is the development of its scientific study in the late Nineteenth Century (Foucault). Before the late Nineteenth Century, homosexuality, as a classification of behaviors or affective responses, did not exist. Essentialist historians, cultural scholars, and philosophers have argued and toiled to clearly explicate the ascendancy of homosexuality as a distinct persona throughout history (Fone, 1998; Norton, 1997; Rupp, 1999; Saslow, 1999). While the study of such behavior and its genesis is a relatively new undertaking, many scholars cite the works of Kraft-Ebing and Ulrichs (as cited in Katz, 1995; Kennedy, 1988, respectively), in the 1860's as the beginnings of discourse on human sexuality in a clearly dualist fashion—the birth of heterosexuality and homosexuality. This modern birth of the heterosexual and homosexual was more or less about normalizing heterosexuality and marginalizing homosexuality (Foucault, 1978), as homosexuality would be categorized as abnormal within the nascent science and philosophy of psychology. This “abnormal” status would remain the primary position on homosexuality in the social sciences for the next 100 years, until the pioneering work of psychiatrists and psychologists in the 1960's began to evaluate the potential that homosexuality was not “abnormal,” but perhaps a variation of the human experience (Hooker, 2001; Weinberg & Williams, 1975). While the desire to empirically validate the spectrum of human sexual behavior had its beginnings in Alfred Kinsey's work (Kinsey et al., 1948), the real work of formulating a look into the development of sexual identification as a homosexual person did not begin to appear until approaches to other social identities, like racial/ethnic identities, began to develop. The arena of “identity” and its development would spur a whole new field of inquiry in

the social sciences that is still formulating a common set of goals and language with which to frame a discourse on personal and social identities (Cote, 2006).

Four Perspectives on Sexual Identity Development

Essentially four perspectives have emerged in the literature on gay, lesbian, and bisexual identity development since the 1970's. The four sexual identity development model perspectives are: stage models (Cass, 1984a, 1984b, 1996; Fassinger & Miller, 1996; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Troiden, 1989); lifespan developmental models (D'Augelli, 1994; Fox, 1995); post-modern and constructionist models (Bohan & Russell, 2003; Kitzinger, 1995); and multicultural perspectives that intersect sexual identity with racial/ethnic identities (Boykin, 1996; Wilson, 1996). While a majority of the literature and subsequent research has focused upon stage models, no empirical data have emerged with sufficient psychometric properties and flexibility to account for within group differences. While I will provide a general overview of the four philosophical views of sexual identity formation, I will give particular attention to the popular stage models, namely the Cass model, the model developed McCarn, Fassinger, and Miller (1996; 1996), and to D'Augelli's lifespan developmental model of identity development. The lack of research into lifespan development models is disappointing, particularly since D'Augelli's model shows promise for handling within group differences, while also serving an important tool in understanding the arenas in which any particular sexual minority may be experiencing distress as a result of sexual minority status.

Stage models. Cass (1979, 1984a, 1996) created the first comprehensive model of homosexual identity development. While older and other concurrent models existed, they were not as complex or utilitarian as Cass's. The model was originally a one-way linear progression model with identity synthesis as the optimal goal. In later years, Cass (1996) stated that the model might be cyclical, and that individuals may belong to more than one identity stage simultaneously. Cass (1996) also acknowledged the growing constructionist movement and wrote that her model should be viewed as a "western phenomenon" rather than to be taken as universal. Cass realized that her model could not be ascribed to eastern or other non-western cultures, as there existed such different approaches to sexuality in general. In her model, pre-awareness of one's sexual

“difference” precedes the stage model. The stages she identified were as follows: (a) Identity confusion, in which the individuals become aware that they may have desires not exclusively heterosexual; (b) Identity comparison, where individuals realize that they might be homosexual and compare their internal sense of self against heterosexuals; (c) Identity tolerance, wherein individuals experiment with identity and reach out to the gay community or other homosexual individuals for emotional, social, and sexual needs; (d) Identity acceptance, individuals build a social support network, begin disclosure to select others; (e) Identity pride, at this stage individuals have formed a commitment to a homosexual identity and immerse themselves into a gay culture; and (f) Identity synthesis, in which individuals have developed a sense of self as homosexuals, but also realize the importance of heterosexual others.

Other models were developing at the same time Cass (1979) and others were conducting validation studies based upon her model. Minton and McDonald’s model (1984) was one of the first alternatives to the Cass model. This new model was developed from Symbolic-Interactionist and Psychodynamic theoretical origins. The model is a progression from non-specific identity through identity differentiation toward an identity that is differentiated but with a strong ego structure to support the minority position in which the individual now finds him or herself. These development stages are: (a) Symbiotic; (b) Egocentric; (c) Socio-centric; and (d) Universalistic. One of the more widely known early alternatives to the Cass (1979) model is Troiden’s (1984) sociological perspective on homosexual identity formation. Troiden introduced for the first time the idea that the process of identity formation is overlapping, simultaneous, interactive with the environment and non-linear for many individuals. The stages Troiden developed in his model are: (a) Sensitization, which could be experiences of how sexual “others” are treated or the feelings of marginalization even before puberty; (b) Confusion, in which the individual experiences a disconnect between his or her internal sense of self and what expectations and stereotypes exist about heterosexuality and homosexuality; (c) Identity Assumptions, where the person adopts an internal and presented sense of a homosexual self; and (d) Commitment, in which the individual makes the decision to follow a social script of the homosexual identity. His model however has been widely regarded as linear in fashion (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Eliason, 1996), and closely tied to

age in lifespan development, therefore less cyclical in nature than he had originally intended.

A more recent stage model has been proposed by McCarn and Fassinger (1996) and Fassinger and Miller (1996). This stage model has the potential to overcome some of the criticisms leveled at other similar models. The model of sexual minority identity formation was a collaborative effort by McCarn, Fassinger, and Miller. This two-branch system of development is the first to recognize that awareness of one's own sexual minority status is a different idea than one's level of acceptance as being a member of a sexual minority group. Therefore, there are different levels of development to a personal LGBT identity and a group LGBT identity. Both branches of identity have the same four levels to describe each identity status: (a) awareness; (b) exploration; (c) deepening/commitment; and (d) internalizing/synthesis. For example, awareness of the individual status may mean, "I wonder if there is something strange about me," and for group status may mean, "I had no idea how many gay people there were out there" (McCarn & Fassinger). This research was the first to articulate that individual development and group development are processes that develop separately. While still a model that builds to committing to an identity that centralizes sexual minority status, the model does not imply a one-way linear process for development of identity status for either individual or group affinity—meaning that a person may be situated in the synthesis phase of individual identity while committing to the exploration phase of group identity. Similarly, an individual may recycle through other phases given different life experiences or developmental tasks (making a geographic move, change in partnership status, etc). Simultaneously, Fassinger and Miller adapted the model and measure to fit for gay men (Fassinger & Miller). The Fassinger and Miller model adds a significant contribution to models of sexual minority identity development in that it is not linear, it allows for a greater flexibility of fluid movement within each branch, and it more closely mirrors the complexity of racial/ethnic models of identity development. Therefore it has the potential to draw more accurate inferences between multiple identities in psychological research.

Lifespan development models. Stage models are not, however, the only perspectives on identity development. D'Augelli (1994) and Fox (1995) developed

different ways of assessing an individual's process of identification as a sexual minority. While Fox developed a similar lifespan conceptualization of bisexual identity formation that D'Augelli developed for gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals; the Fox model attempted to focus more on bisexuality as all of the research on sexual identity had centered primarily on the gay/lesbian dichotomy rather than a fuller explication of the full spectrum of sexual identities.

Building upon the literature on sexual identity formation, D'Augelli (1994) set out to define a model that fits with a lifespan developmental model, but is not in stages nor implies that an individual must complete every domain of sexual identity to have a positive and healthy life. D'Augelli outlined a relational matrix and six specific domains wherein an individual might grow or develop a sense of sexual identity at various points in life. The central and arguably most functionally important aspect of the model exists in the reciprocally deterministic three-level matrix that is used to explain development in any of the six domains.

D'Augelli (1994) described this matrix as being comprised of an individual's: personal subjectivities and actions, sociohistorical connections, and interactive intimacies. D'Augelli described the matrix as:

- “1. How individuals feel about their sexual identities over their lives, how they engage in diverse sexual activities with different meanings, and how they construct their sexual lives and feel about them (subjectivities and actions). This element is influenced by and influences the second set of factors.
2. How sexuality is developed by parental and familial factors, how age-peer interactions shape and modify the impact of early parental and filial socialization, and how this learning affects and is affected by intimate partnerships of different kinds (interactive intimacies). All of this results from and affects the third set of factors.
3. Social norms and expectations of various geographic and subcultural communities; local and national social customs, policies, and laws; and major cultural and historical continuities and discontinuities (sociohistorical connections).” (p. 318)

Unlike many other models of sexual identity development, the factors listed *must* be taken into account or the domains of sexual identity development are as one dimensional as other stage models. Therefore individuals' processes for arriving at a particular level of development is not taken for granted or assumed. The six domains articulated by D'Augelli are: (a) exiting heterosexual identity, or adopting a sexual minority status for oneself; (b) developing a personal lesbian/gay/bisexual identity status, wherein an individual begins to explore what it means to be a sexual minority in society; (c) developing a lesbian/gay/bisexual social identity, the time when a sexual minority may begin to disclose her or his sexual identity status to other individuals; (d) becoming a lesbian/gay/bisexual offspring, disclosing one's sexual identity to parents and or important family members; (e) developing a lesbian/gay/bisexual intimacy status, entering a same-sex sexual and/or romantic relationship; and (f) entering a lesbian/gay/bisexual community, through activism or open participation in LGBT civic and social groups (D'Augelli). In the lifespan developmental conceptualization outlined by D'Augelli, an individual may be more developed in the domain of creating a gay identity status and entering a lesbian, gay, or bisexual community, but may not have developed an intimacy status, or come-out to one's family. This discrepancy between areas of development is not necessarily seen as a barrier to healthy sexual identity development, but allows for a different concept of what is meant to truly develop a sexual identity in a broader context. With the exception of exiting a heterosexual identity, clients are not assumed to necessarily need to explore the many other domains to be considered "healthy" or well adjusted.

Multicultural and constructionist models. Other writers have spoken on the notion of intersectionality in the lives of many LGBT persons of color in this country (Boykin, 1996; Wilson, 1996). The task of decentralizing the individualistic nature of sexual identity development in a predominantly White European American perspective figures heavily in the writings of Boykin and Wilson. Many minority groups' and cultures' more collectivistic values and world-views challenge the very idea that an individual sexual identity, which appears to centralize different-ness, can be a useful social identity. Since such a premium is placed upon group-identity, can sexual minorities be seen as useful to

the social group or collective? Can an identity built upon difference have a place in the cultural “we?”

Both Boykin and Wilson express their on-going struggles to fight racism in the predominantly White LGBT culture, and fighting heterosexism and sexual prejudice in their respective minority cultures. In this intersectionality, postmodern and constructionist points of view on sexual identity development become easier to understand. The negotiation between the internal world of the individual’s desires and beliefs with the social scripts written by culture becomes the source of examination. Most of the stage models and even developmental models presuppose that sexual identity is an inert, fixed, and an essentialized aspect of the individual. While many postmodern scholars will readily admit factors about sexual identity may be inert or fixed, they will also argue that the expression of that identity and its definitions are co-created by the individual and the larger culture in which the individual lives (Bohan & Russell, 2003; Haldeman, 1999; Kitzinger, 1995, 1996). Because each individual is the co-author for his or her own life, the notion of empirically validating a belief about these social scripts and the lived expression of them by the individual is hopelessly out-of-touch for examining these psychological/sociological phenomena (Kitzinger, 1995). Or more succinctly, if each situation is context-bound, can there be a large enough pool of individuals with the same contexts for which any researcher can quantitatively measure its existence? Or are there other methods a researcher might employ to examine such phenomena?

Summary

The selected literature reviewed in this chapter represents a background from which to explore a relatively new area of research. In Chapter Two I have explored the meaning and theory of heteronegativity as they apply to the larger theoretical frameworks of minority stress and sexual minority experiences with homonegating processes. Considerable overlap is found in the terms heterosexism and homonegating processes. In the remaining chapters of the dissertation, I will refer to heterosexism (or heterosexist) when discussing ideological issues, but will use homonegating processes when discussing more active forms of discrimination and prejudice. Also included with Chapter Two were, the process of sexual identity development and gender-role socialization as corollary constructs that may offer further insights into how heteronegativity develops.

The final section of this chapter outlines the dissertation study as a transition to the methodology utilized in the study described in Chapter Three.

Purpose of the Study

Qualitative methods are often ways to gain insight into a phenomenon while also attempting to explain or further develop theory. Therefore, a qualitative research approach is appropriate for the study of heteronegativity as one potential response to heterosexism and homonegating processes. This present study utilized Consensual Qualitative Research or CQR (Hill et al., 2005; Hill et al., 1997) as a means to further explain the phenomenon of heteronegativity and how this construct manifests in the lives of sexual minorities. The probes developed for the one-on-one interviews with participants were created by examining the many different elements from the reviewed literature contained in this chapter. Some questions include, “What did you learn about how men (or women) should or should not behave?”, and, “Many gay and lesbian individuals say they knew that they were different from other people much sooner than when they actually ‘came-out’ themselves...tell me about how you knew you were different.” Likewise, the demographics questionnaire contains questions related to sexual identity development.

Better understanding heteronegativity brings researchers, clinicians, and trainees closer to providing better affirmative practices to working with sexual minority participants, clients, and students. Chapter Three outlines the specific methods, participant recruitment procedures, materials and analysis procedures used in the current study. Chapter Four includes the qualitative structure and results of the present study, while Chapter Five discusses the results of the present study as it relates to the literature presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The following sections outline the methods utilized in the dissertation project to explore how sexual minorities cope with heterosexism and homonegating processes, especially using heteronegativity. The central question guiding the project was, “What are the central features of heteronegativity that are manifest in the lived experience of lesbian and gay individuals, and how does heteronegativity impact the lives of lesbian and gay individuals?” Qualitative research designs, specifically those that explore research questions from a phenomenological perspective, afford the researcher a more eloquent and intimate description of important constructs like heteronegativity. Counseling Psychologists have increasingly found that using qualitative methods—whether as a part of mixed-method study, as a method of data triangulation, or as an alternative to quantitative methods—afford the researcher a way to investigate ideas that are not clearly outlined in the literature (Morrow, 2007).

A discussion of research participants, followed by a detailed description of researcher roles, procedures, and materials utilizing Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) methods comprises the remainder of this chapter.

Participants

The idiographic nature of qualitative research paradigms necessitates a purposeful and selective process for identifying and recruiting participants. Within CQR, and most constructivist-interpretivist oriented research, selecting a highly homogeneous group of interviewees ensures that one’s domains most accurately describe the phenomenon in question within a given population (Creswell, 2007; Hill et al., 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this study I recruited 12 individuals for the study (ten gay men and two lesbian women) over the age of 18 who are “open” about their sexual orientation identity to themselves and to other members of their community (defined in Appendix C). Appendix A lists the research study selection script with the following inclusion criteria to determine if participants would be eligible for participation in the current study: (a) participants only over the age of 18; (b) participants who are “out” in at least two areas (e.g., family, friends, co-workers); and (c) participant experienced some form of discrimination or prejudice.

Participants were recruited via listservs and regional publications that cater specifically to the gay and lesbian community, and through snowballing techniques. In terms of geographic distribution, participants were recruited from the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic regions from the Central Bluegrass and eastern portions of Kentucky through the Highland regions of the Allegheny mountains of West Virginia and Southwest Virginia.

Procedures and Materials

After potential participants were selected via the screening process, outlined in the previous section, participants scheduled the interview at a time convenient to both the interviewer (the researcher) and interviewee. Interviews were conducted privately between the researcher and each individual participant. The location of the interview was negotiated at the time of screening. The participants had the option of having the interview at the University in one of the quiet interview rooms or conducting the interview at a location of the participant's choosing; thus allowing for the maximum of participant confidentiality. Before the interview began on the scheduled day, the participant read and signed an "informed consent to participate in research" form (Appendix B) that outlined the parameters of the current study. After completing the informed consent procedures, the participant completed a brief demographics questionnaire that is discussed further in the following section. The audio-taped interview then commenced. The duration of the interview lasted between 20 to 75 minutes. The entire research process took less than two hours for each participant to complete. Individual questions from the interview protocol are listed in Appendix D.

Demographic Questionnaire

For the sole purpose of clearly describing the participants in the study, each participant completed a brief demographic questionnaire. Items such as racial background, sexual identity development, level of education, socio-economic status, and information about participants' gay, lesbian, and heterosexual friends can be found in the questionnaire. The complete demographic questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

Interview Protocol & Transcription

The questions created for the interview protocol are derived from the literature discussed in Chapter Two of the dissertation. In the manner suggested by Hill et al. (2005), the questions were written in an open-ended format that allowed the participants

to describe the “how” and “what” of the phenomenon explored in the study. The purpose of the literature review is not necessarily to drive the questions in the protocol, but should help formulate the boundaries within which to explore the phenomenon in question. CQR prepares the interviewer for a semi-structured interview—a central set of essential questions designed to provoke deep discussion, coupled with a series of planned probes to maintain continuity of questioning across the body of interviews/transcripts (Hill et al.). Unlike other models of qualitative research, CQR does not utilize saturation—modifying questions on the interview protocol across participants until enough phenomenological information is collected—in the data collection phase of the study. All questions and potential probes are created before data collection to ensure uniformity across participant responses. This difference does not, however, preclude the researcher piloting the questions to members of the community and to other researchers (2005). To ascertain the effectiveness of the questions for capturing the developmental and psychosocial essence of the phenomenon from participants, I solicited feedback from two colleagues. Both colleagues are self-identified gay men, one of whom has familiarity with sexual minority research. I asked each colleague all of the questions, while they had a copy of the questions in front of them. Their feedback helped me to create more probes for each question to maximize the richness of participant responses. Appendix D contains the central research question, along with 14 questions and possible probes.

After the research interviews had been conducted, I transcribed each transcript verbatim. Included in the transcript were notes or comments that described a participant’s emotional reactions during the interview. No other non-verbal information was written into the transcript. The coding team only had access to the transcripts during analysis, as CQR emphasizes a reliance upon what was actually said in the interview, and not an interpretation by the coders (Hill et al., 2005).

Data Analysis

This study employed CQR, a method of qualitative research developed at the University of Maryland under the guidance of Hill (Hill et al., 2005; Hill et al., 1997). I have had extensive experience with CQR methods and procedures, having completed the method from every possible position: as coder, supervisor, external auditor, interviewer, and primary investigator. I have also co-authored two published studies that had

employed CQR in the research (Dudley et al., 2005; Riggle et al., 2006). While other qualitative methods may have provided similar results, I chose CQR based upon my familiarity with the methodology. In Chapter Four I explore the costs and benefits of adhering to such a structured qualitative methodology.

Definition of Roles in CQR

One of the many advantages of CQR is that an entire team is involved in the research process. This arrangement not only reduces the chances for investigator bias, but also ensures that more input is given to explain the phenomenon being explored. One strength of research utilizing CQR is that the roles for each researcher have to be clearly defined and followed exactly. This section defines the roles and responsibilities of each part of the analysis team.

Primary coders. The primary coders are the main workforce for the research study, each having the most time immersed in the original data. The coders use de-identified transcripts of the recorded interviews and examine them for common themes or domains, core ideas, and subcategories found within the domains. Each domain, core idea, and subcategory defined by the coding team must be made consensually. This consensus process means that the final analysis is agreed-upon by this primary coding team. According to Hill et al. (2005), this aspect of CQR is in keeping with Feminist principles. The research team employed three primary coders.

External Auditor. The external auditor prevents the coding team from becoming too esoteric in their data analysis. According to Hill et al. (1997, 2005), the external auditor should be able to understand how the coding team derived the domains, core ideas, and subcategories by simply examining one or two transcripts, and the original research questions. This affords the coding team some critical feedback in order to achieve the most comprehensible final analysis.

Supervisor/data manager. The primary function of the supervisor role is to oversee the entire process of CQR throughout the current study. Secondary functions in this role are twofold: (a) to serve as mediator between members of the coding team when consensus cannot be reached on a particular domain, core idea, or subcategory; or (b) serve as mediator between the coding team and the external auditor.

Coding and Auditing Process

CQR involves two levels of analysis—the generation of domains and the generation of subcategories. These two levels of analysis are performed by two different parties—the coding team (which includes the supervisor) and the external auditor. The analysis begins with the supervisor distributing one transcript from the data set to the coding team. Using this same transcript, the team reads the transcript for its overarching themes. The team then meets together, sharing these themes to reach agreement on which themes to look for in the generation of domains. Once the team reaches consensus on the domains, the team creates a definition for each domain to use when coding the transcript. Each coding team member then independently codes the transcript, specifically identifying each word, sentence, or selection of text that falls into each of the pre-determined themes or domains. The coding team used different colored highlighters for the domains, and highlighted text according to domain color. The team then meets again to compare coding, discussing points of difference and if the domains “fit” with the transcript.

At this point, the supervisor evenly distributes a majority of the remaining transcripts among the coding team. Each coding team member has a different set of transcripts to code. Once coding team members finish coding their transcripts, they trade transcripts with another team member. With newly coded transcripts in hand, the team members verify one another’s coding. This trade and verification process continues until every team member has read and verified the coding of domains for all transcripts distributed by the supervisor. The primary purpose of this stage of the coding is to ensure that all members of the team become familiar with the entire data set, and audits or double-checks that the other members have correctly identified the domains. The domains and their definitions are sent to the external auditor, with clean copies of the distributed transcripts, to be independently verified. The external auditor checks the structure of these domains against the transcripts to verify what the coding team has generated. The external auditor then provides the supervisor with her or his feedback. This feedback is shared with the coding team. The coding team has the authority to accept or reject these suggestions, but only through consensus.

The coded material from the transcripts is then abstracted. These abstracted statements are the core ideas of each domain (Hill et al., 2005; Hill et al., 1997). Organized by domain, these core ideas are analyzed by the coding team for common themes once again. These common themes within domains are called subcategories. Similar to the generation and definition of domains, each subcategory is given a definition and the team members arrange core ideas into subcategories. At this point, the subcategories, their definitions, and core ideas are sent to the external auditor for feedback. The auditor checks the subcategory structure against the core ideas. Feedback is shared with the supervisor, who then shares the feedback with the team. The team accepts or rejects the feedback after careful consideration.

Now, the core ideas are sorted into domains and subcategories and placed into a document called the cross-analysis (Hill et al., 1997). The cross-analysis is a document that allows a researcher to view the representativeness of the domains and subcategories across the data set. An example of the cross-analysis for one participant can be found in Appendix F. In the final stage of analysis, the supervisor gives each coding team member a single, previously un-coded transcript. These transcripts were not included in the initial analysis. These transcripts were used to perform a verification check (Hill et al., 2005; Hill et al., 1997). The verification check exists to confirm that the domain and subcategory structure can be applied to new, previously unseen transcripts.

Each team member, working independently, codes the transcript, abstracts these data into core ideas, organizes these core ideas into domains and subcategories and placing them into a new document sends this to the supervisor. The supervisor makes sure no data were skipped or over-looked, and then creates a table that lists the domain and subcategory definitions, the number of occurrences within these data, and the classification of each domain or subcategory. In the final product of a CQR study, results are communicated using the table format, with a few illustrative quotes for each domain or subcategory in the text version of the results. An example of CQR results is given in Table 3.1. After completing the table, and writing a narrative of the results, I sent these data to the participants for their comments and input.

Classification types are rhetorical labels that identify the representativeness of each domain or subcategory with these data. Classification types are: general, typical, and

variant. General domains and subcategories are found in all or all-but-one of the transcripts. Typical domains and subcategories are found in at least one-half of the transcripts, but less than in those labeled general. Domains or subcategories that are found in at least two, but less than half of the transcripts are labeled as variant.

A careful and detailed account of the study results using the domains, subcategories, core ideas and quotations from individual participants to illuminate the phenomenon's structure and function forms the corpus of Chapter Four. In Chapter Five of the dissertation I discuss the findings of the study and make inferences about the relationship of heteronegativity, gay-straight interactions and sexual minority responses to heterosexism and homonegating processes. This discussion includes suggestions for clinicians, educational personnel, and directions for future research.

Summary

This chapter outlined the qualitative background and methodology of the dissertation project. Research participant selection, procedures and materials, and methods of data analysis have been defined.

Table 3.1

Sample Table Representing the Simplified Results of a CQR Study

Domains & Subcategories	Number of Occurrences	Classification	Definitions & Coding Criteria
Thoughts	12	General	Participant talks about thought processes
I can't do this	12	General	Defeatist self-talk
Why does this happen to me?	7	Typical	Catastrophic thoughts
Feelings	12	General	Participant speaks of emotional reactions
Anxious	10	Typical	Descriptions of anxiety symptoms
Depressed	9	Typical	Descriptions of depression symptoms
Behaviors	7	Typical	Participant demonstrates actions related to thoughts and feelings
Binge eating	4	Variant	Client reports over-eating related to stress
Drinking	3	Variant	Client reports excessive drinking related to stress

Note. General domains/subcategories are found in all or all-but-one transcript, Typical domains/subcategories are found in at least half, but less than in the general category, and Variant domains/subcategories occur in at least two of the transcripts but less than in the typical category.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

In this chapter I explain the results of the current study by listing first the demographic and descriptive data of the research participants, followed by the domain and subcategory structure discovered through analysis of the qualitative data. Definitions and illustrative quotes from the participants' interviews are given for each domain and subcategory.

Participants

Twelve individuals participated in the current study. These participants represent four U.S. states and one foreign country. All interviews were conducted in-person in the U.S. All participants were over the age of 18, were openly lesbian or gay, and had experienced some form of prejudice or discrimination based upon sexual orientation. Each participant is described below, giving their demographic data, social support, and level of identity development. Using D'Augelli's (1994) ideas from his work on a lifespan developmental approach to sexual identity development, I asked participants questions on the demographics form that assessed each of the six domains suggested. Ten of the participants had initiated some development in all six domains outlined by D'Augelli. One participant had not initiated any development or connection to becoming actively involved in the LGBT community, while another participant had not yet told any family members that he was gay. Items used to assess sexual identity development can be found in Appendix C. Table 4.2 contains a tabular representation of the study participants.

Participant 1

Participant 1 currently lives in Kentucky but was born and raised in Central Europe. She lives in an urban environment and is a part-time student enrolled in an undergraduate course of study. She is a thirty-year-old lesbian earning less than ten-thousand dollars per year. She has known that she is not "straight" for over ten years, and has had some contact with other LGBT individuals for the same period of time. She has been "out" to others for the past five years, and reports to have come-out when she was twenty-five. She is open about her sexual orientation in all areas of her life, and has disclosed her sexual orientation to one parent, a few cousins, and to select aunts/uncles. She has had at least one same-sex intimate relationship for two-to-five years in length,

and is very involved with the LGBT community where she lives (she endorsed six out of nine possible options for involvement on her demographics questionnaire). She reported that she has not been married to an opposite-sex partner. Participant 1 listed an equal number of gay and heterosexual male-friends, and equal numbers of lesbian and heterosexual female-friends. She reported seven bisexual female friends, and no bisexual male friends.

Participant 2

Participant 2 lives in an urban area of Kentucky, and identifies as a Caucasian lesbian woman earning between forty and fifty-thousand dollars per year, in a full-time professional career. She has obtained a graduate/professional degree and is thirty-one years-old. She reported that she came-out eight years ago, at the age of twenty-three, but has know she was not straight for over ten years. She reports to have had contact with LGBT individuals for the past ten-years, and is open about her sexual orientation in all areas of her life, but does not feel supported by family members. She is out to her sister, both parents, and select cousins. She reports to have had at least one same-sex intimate relationship of at least two-to-five years in length, but never married to an opposite-sex person. She endorsed five of nine ways she is involved with the LGBT community. She listed five heterosexual male friends, six heterosexual female friends, one gay male friend and three lesbian friends. She reported two bisexual female friends, and no bisexual male friends.

Participant 3

Living in an urban area of Kentucky, Participant 3 works full-time earning between sixty and seventy-thousand dollars per year. He has a college degree. He identifies as a forty-nine year-old gay male of Native American and European ancestry. He reportedly came-out about twenty-seven years ago at the age of twenty-three, and has had contact with other LGBT individuals for over ten years. He reported to be open and out to most individuals in his life, including one sibling, both parents, select cousins, uncles and aunts. He reported that he has never been married to an opposite-sex partner, but has had at least one same-sex partner for six-to-ten years in length. He endorsed eight out of nine areas of involvement with the LGBT community. He reported two heterosexual male friends, six gay male friends and no bisexual male friends. He did not

list any heterosexual female friends, but listed four lesbian friends, and no bisexual female friends.

Participant 4

At the age of forty-three, Participant 4 only recently came-out to others. He did so two years ago, at the age of forty-one. He identifies as a Caucasian gay male who works full-time earning more than one hundred-thousand dollars per year in a small town in Kentucky. He has a college degree. He reported that he knew he was not straight for over ten years, but has only recently had contact with other LGBT individuals. He reported that he is out and open in most areas of his life, and is out to both parents and a sibling. While never married to an opposite-sex partner, he has had at least one same-sex relationship of two-to-five years in length. Participant 4 did not endorse any of the nine ways of involvement in the LGBT community. He reported eleven heterosexual male friends, and four gay male friends. He also reported five heterosexual female friends, and two lesbian friends. He did not identify any bisexual friends of either sex.

Participant 5

Participant 5 lives in a small town in Kentucky, working full-time and earning between twenty to thirty-thousand dollars per year, and has a graduate/professional degree. He identifies as a forty-five year-old Caucasian gay male that has been out for the past ten years. He is out in most areas of his life, but has only disclosed his sexual orientation to his cousins. He has never been married to an opposite-sex partner, but has had at least one same-sex partner for two-to-five years in length. He endorsed five out of nine ways to be involved with the LGBT community. He identified twelve heterosexual male friends, twelve gay male friends, and one male bisexual friend. He also identified twelve heterosexual female friends, four lesbian friends, and no bisexual female friends.

Participant 6

Participant 6 has a college degree and identifies as a twenty-five year-old Caucasian gay male living in an urban area of Kentucky. He works full-time earning between ten and twenty-thousand dollars per year. He has come-out and made contact with the LGBT community within the last ten years, and is open about his sexual orientation in nearly all areas of his life. He is out to both parents, a sibling, cousins and select aunts/uncles. He has had a same-sex partner for between two and five years, but

has never been married to an opposite-sex partner. He endorsed four out of nine ways to be involved with the LGBT community. He identified five heterosexual male friends, fifteen gay male friends, and two bisexual male friends. He also identified six heterosexual female friends, two lesbian, and five bisexual female friends.

Participant 7

Participant 7 is a Caucasian gay male living in a small town in Ohio. He is a full-time student who prefers not to disclose his yearly income. He is twenty-six years-old and already has a college degree. He came-out at the age of nineteen, within the last year years, and is out to several areas of his life, but not open about his sexual orientation to his family. While he has never been married to an opposite-sex partner, he has dated same-sex partners in the past. He endorsed one out of nine ways to be involved in the LGBT community. He listed one heterosexual male, no bisexual men, and six gay men as friends. He also listed two heterosexual, no lesbian, and one bisexual female friend.

Participant 8

Living in an urban part of Kentucky, Participant 8 has a graduate/professional degree and earns twenty to thirty-thousand dollars per year working full-time. He identifies as a gay Caucasian male, who came-out at the age of fifteen (over ten years ago). He has maintained contact with LGBT individuals since that time, and endorsed eight out of nine ways of being involved with the community. He has never married an opposite-sex partner, but has had a same-sex relationship for at least two-to-five years. He reported being out and open in most areas of his life, and is out to both parents, cousins, aunts/uncles, and to one sibling. He listed four heterosexual male friends, but no gay or bisexual male friends. He listed ten heterosexual female friends, seven lesbian friends, but no female bisexual friends.

Participant 9

Participant 9 only came-out three years ago, at the age of eighteen. He is now twenty-one years-old, and lives in rural West Virginia. He is a full-time student enrolled as an undergraduate student, and earning less than ten-thousand dollars per year. He identifies as a Caucasian gay male. He reported that he has some contact with LGBT individuals, but is not out in very many areas of his life. He is openly gay to one parent, his grandparents, cousins, and select aunts/uncles. He did not endorse any of the nine

ways to be involved in the LGBT community. He has not married an opposite-sex partner, but has had same-sex relationships from three-to-six months in duration. He listed four heterosexual and two gay male friends, but no bisexual male friends. He listed two heterosexual and one bisexual female friends, but no lesbian friends.

Participant 10

Participant 10 has some college experience, and works full-time earning over one hundred-thousand dollars per year in a small Virginia town. He identifies as a Caucasian gay male, and came-out eight years ago at the age of 38. He was previously married to a heterosexual woman for sixteen years, and did not come-out until after the divorce. He has had contact with LGBT individuals for more than ten years, and has also known he was gay for more than ten years. He is out and open in most areas of his life, and is out to both parents, his children, and siblings. He has had at least one same-sex relationship for more than ten years. He endorsed three out of nine ways to be involved with the LGBT community. He listed four heterosexual male, and three gay male friends, while listing eight heterosexual female, and four lesbian friends. He did not list and bisexual male or female friends.

Participant 11

At twenty-one years of age, Participant 11 has been out the shortest period of time in the present sample. Although he knew he was gay at the age of ten, he did not come-out to others until only a couple of months before the interview. He is from a small town in Virginia, and is a part-time undergraduate student. He identifies as a Caucasian gay male, earning less than ten-thousand dollars per year. He has only initiated contact with other LGBT individuals within the past year, and only endorsed one out of nine ways to be involved with the LGBT community. He has never been married in an opposite-sex relationship, but has had at least one same-sex relationship for three-to-sixth months in duration. His is not out in very many areas of his life, but is out to his brother. He listed five heterosexual males and five gay males as friends, while listing seven heterosexual females and three lesbians as friends. He did not list any male or female bisexuals.

Participant 12

The final participant in the sample lives in an urban city in Virginia. He is currently unemployed, has some college experience, but prefers not to give his yearly

income. He identifies as a twenty-three year-old Caucasian gay male who has been out for the past five years. He has had continuous contact with LGBT individuals during this time, and is out and open about his sexual orientation in most areas of his life. He is out to both parents, siblings, grandparents, cousins, and select aunts/uncles. He has had same-sex relationships of at least two-to-five years in duration, but has never been married to an opposite-sex partner. He endorsed five out of nine ways to be involved in the LGBT community. He listed one heterosexual male and eight gay male friends, and five heterosexual friends. He did not list any lesbian friends, or any bisexual male or female friends.

Process Comments, Observations, and Critique of the CQR Method

The research team followed the CQR process of analysis as outlined in Chapter Three. In this section I address relevant issues to the CQR process not discussed in Chapter Three. Most importantly, I address the following: the characteristics of the research team, pre-analysis training, important feedback provided by the auditor over the course of the study, and a critique of the CQR method as it relates to the present study.

By sexual orientation, the entire team was comprised of two self-identified sexual minorities and three heterosexually-identified individuals. The coding team included three doctoral student researchers in the Counseling Psychology program at University of Kentucky. One member was self-identified as a gay male, while the other two team members identified as heterosexual females. The external auditor for the study was a graduate of the Counseling Psychology program who has had extensive experience with CQR and has also co-authored research that utilized CQR methods (Duhigg, 2007; Rostosky et al., 2004). The auditor identified herself as heterosexual. I was the final team member, the supervisor, and I identify as a gay male. By educational status, the external auditor completed her Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology, each of the coding team members were doctoral students in Counseling Psychology, and I was a Counseling Psychology doctoral candidate. Each team member was currently living in an urban setting, and all making less than \$40,000 dollars per year. Ethnically, the research team comprised three members who identify as Caucasian, and one member that identifies as multiethnic.

The primary coders were provided with two initial training sessions prior to receiving transcripts of the taped interviews and commencing data analysis. One of the training sessions focused upon the coding team's expectations for the study as well as any hypothesis or biases that each member may have about the project. The coding team's primary bias was that two out of three of the coders were heterosexual, and being heterosexual, neither of them had a "true" understanding of what the research participants' experiences might be. We processed these thoughts and feelings, and discussed how to put these issues "on-the-table," so to speak, when discussing differences of opinion during the first coding phase of the project. For example, one member of the coding team, who identified as gay, had several frank discussions with the coding team about his own journey in coming-out, and his own experiences with heterosexuals. These early discussions were useful because they provided background that allowed the coding team space to challenge one another's perceptions when coding material from the transcripts. For example, the gay male coder's impulse to code a portion of the transcript one way was very different from how the other two would have coded the material—by discussing the coding decisions, the team was able to reach a consensus about what the data actually meant. Discussions about the true intent of the participant versus one person's biases were able to take place in a more open and concerned tone during the first stage of the coding process.

Critical feedback from the external auditor came at the end of the audit for subcategories. In an examination of the domains and subcategories, significant overlap was identified by the external auditor across four different domains. After careful discussion between the auditor and me, we suggested to the coding team that a new domain might better capture some of the identified overlap. The team agreed with the auditor's suggestion. Overlapping subcategories were merged, and the domain of social institutions was formed. No other major structural or editorial changes were identified or implemented during the analysis phase. At the end of the study, when the domain and subcategory structure had been confirmed, participants in the study were contacted and given the results of the study. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback. Only one participant responded, saying that as a student of law, he loved the term discernment. No other participants had responded to the study's results.

CQR, in my opinion, tries to serve two masters: quantitative and qualitative “gods” if you will. On the one hand, CQR offers the researcher a very clear, step-by-step process for building theory using inductive analysis of qualitative data. Conversely, this same formula for building domains and subcategories from these data limits the organic flow of many other qualitative techniques. Hill et al. (2005) stated that CQR uses positivist and constructivist elements in the analysis and reporting of the results. While the constructivist parts of the data analysis are very much in-tact—as evidenced by the consensual coding process as opposed to axial coding—the positivist reporting of results limits the more detailed narrative of participants and the reporting of overall findings in the study. Similarly, the authors of CQR appear to be very aware of bias, as all qualitative researchers explicitly realize, but discussed bias as if it were somehow bad. Many aspects of CQR are designed to reduce bias—but all research, *including* quantitative research, has some sort of bias. I believe that the CQR developers, feeling the blunt criticisms of quantitative researchers in the 1990’s, developed a methodology that quantitative researchers might somehow “accept as legitimate.”

Another difference between more traditional qualitative designs and CQR is in the development of the interview questionnaire. In more traditional qualitative methods, the interviewer has the flexibility to change the interview protocol during data collection until the researcher feels that the entire phenomenon being studied has been captured—this process is often described as working for saturation. In CQR, the interview protocol can be piloted, but once data collection begins, the protocol should remain constant throughout. While these data gathered in CQR have a high inter and intra-participant consistency, the phenomenon being explored may not be fully captured. Not being able to modify the interview protocol during data collection proved to be very frustrating for me as the researcher. I found myself wanting to change some of the questions—namely question three. By the third interview, I wanted desperately to ask, “tell me about the straight people in your life (good and the bad).” I believe this wording would have better captured that for which I was looking, and would have better transitioned to question four. I also wished that I could have asked the participants about gender rules they felt they broke, and if they felt other people broke them too (straight or otherwise). I also wanted to drop questions nine and fourteen, as they were yielding very little useful data.

While CQR does have some limitations, as compared to other qualitative methodologies, it is very straight-forward in a step-by-step fashion that is easily learned. CQR is also quite popular in top Counseling Psychology journals. Despite the limitations of saturation, and the terser representation of the results, I have used CQR in research for five other projects, and felt I knew this method better than many others—and therefore my choice of method for the current study.

Domain and Subcategory Structure

Table 4.1, beginning on page 73, shows the domain and subcategory structure, including frequencies, classifications, and the coding criteria used to define each subcategory. Eight domains are discerned from examining the experiences of lesbian and gay men's coping with heterosexist individuals, systems and environments. These domains are: (a) assessing sexual orientation in context; (b) observation of change; (c) messages/social influences; (d) social systems; (e) categorizing; (f) empowerment; (g) resignation; and (h) equality. Eight subcategories exist under the domain of assessing sexual orientation in context: *family, childhood, coming out, heterosexuals, work, harassment, acquaintances, and general*. The domain observation of change yields six subcategories: *general, personal, advocates of change, heterosexuals, family, and gay and lesbian community*. Under the domain of messages/social influences, six subcategories exist: *general messages, peers, heterosexuals, gender roles, media, and family*. Five subcategories contribute to the domain of social systems and include: *religious institutions, educational systems and institutions, political parties, systems and institutions, media and general*. In terms of how individuals categorize others, the fifth domain, six subcategories constitute this phenomenon: *general categorizing, social institutions, challenged assumptions, gender roles, beliefs about heterosexuals, and gay and lesbian*. Empowerment is a domain comprised of five subcategories: *disengagement, coming out, advocate, engagement, and values/beliefs*. Four subcategories contribute to understanding the domain of resignation: *avoiding confrontation, rationalizing, pressure, and suppression*. And under the domain of equality, two subcategories are explicated: *parity and social institutions*.

In the following sections, each domain and subcategory is explored in detail, including the frequency of occurrence in the data, as well as definitions and direct quotes

from the data to illustrate each. In reporting the results of the study, brackets [] are used in two ways when quoting from participant transcripts. Brackets are used to either de-identify personal information, or to clarify the intent of the participant for ease of reading in this chapter. In clarifying the intent of the participant, a quote from the transcript used in this chapter may contain pronouns with not internal referents. For example, a quote from a participant's transcript may say, "I told him that several times." "That," in the quote, may refer to a type of disclosure spoken about in a preceding or subsequent section of the transcript. For understanding the quote in the context of the domain or subcategory being discussed, I inserted the referent in place of the pronoun or other vague wording. The quote as used in the text of this chapter would then read, "I told him [that I was gay] several times."

Assessment of Sexual Orientation in Context

All participants shared experiences that gave them insights into how individuals and systems viewed sexual minorities in general and the sexual orientation of the participant in particular. Each subcategory is reported below with illustrative quotes from the data.

Family

Family is one context in which a participant observed reactions toward sexual minorities, including statements about the status of disclosure. Eleven of the participants recounted such experiences. Participant 2's experience was particularly chilling, "Well, anyway, Rosie O'Donnell was on TV, and [my dad] was like, "I don't want to see that fat dyke." And I thought, well what about this fat dyke over here. And you remember that stuff forever." Another participant described his feelings about his extended family,

And when I think about some things like extended family reunions, I don't think that's a good environment at this point to be out in. I don't know that it'd be a bad one; it just would be an added complication that I'm not interested in. And I do find myself then avoiding stuff like that, because I can't be fully honest about all the stuff that's going on in my life and it's just tedious to have to censor yourself a lot (Participant 4).

Another participant describes how issues related to being gay get distorted through family networks:

Uh, um, but I wanted to come to the wedding, you know for the first time in a long time I'd get to see my larger family in general. And I wanted to know if I could bring my boyfriend at the time cause we'd been together for two and a half years, you know several of the other members of the family knew I was gay... and so I called and asked if I could invite my boyfriend, and I didn't quite state it as my boyfriend, but as a guest. And of course my cousin goes, "guest, is this the famous girlfriend I've been hearing about?" and I was like, "who's been telling you it was a girlfriend?" so apparently somebody had told them that I was seeing somebody, but didn't disclose, and she assumed I was dating a girl (Participant 6).

Childhood

Four participants described incidents of heterosexism as a child. In the subcategory of childhood these incidences included one participant's experience with being singled-out for her differences, "...I only ever mentioned women, so kids started teasing me about it, I remember one little girl started spreading rumors about me that way" (Participant 1). Participant 2 speaks of a time in seventh grade, "when some kids said you know, 'oh you're a lesbian,' and I was like—I didn't know what it meant." Participant 10 described an experience that still has an effect on him, stating, "Well, once, in seventh grade walking home one day- I had had the best day. I bought something with my allowance money, this car drove-by and [a guy I knew in town] stuck his head out of the car and yelled, 'faggot!' Boy, my mood went from really good to rock-bottom. That was over 25 years ago, and I'd still spit-in his eye if I had the chance."

Coming Out

Eleven of the participants described experiences of disclosing sexual orientation status and the consequences of doing so, or the responses of others. Coming out experiences included statements like,

...living in a small town and coming from the country has made things tough to be a practicing homosexual to say the very least. Yes, because when you are from a small town, and you're from the kind of background I have come from, coming out means that you are risking everything you've ever [known] (Participant 5).

Another participant described his general outlook on coming out when he says,

... I try not to come-out to conservative people just 'cause a fear of discrimination or prejudice and stuff... I generally have a pre-conceived notion that it's not gonna go well (Participant 7).

And another participant described more of a process for deciding upon disclosing or not. It's more selecting the environment in which you decide whether you have to be in or out, and if you want or need to be out you do it in the right way. And if you don't, then you know, that's a part of your life you're gonna have to gloss-over, and ultimately wind-up avoiding some of [dealing honestly with others] (Participant 4).

Participant 11 also described the process for disclosing, stating that,

I've spent most of my life hiding who I am. And I'm trying to read people better. And I think that I can pick-up on people pretty well. I get, I can usually tell about their—what kind of personality they are, what might upset them or get them going. And I always play it straight, so if I was ever around someone I didn't know, but could pick up some negative vibes, I'd listen to what they say first, and if I heard them say the least thing like sexist or racist, then I won't hang around them. I just tell about a person by the way they carry themselves in public if I can be myself or tell them more about me.

One participant discussed the sometimes harsh consequences of disclosing sexual orientation,

It meant basically burning a lot of bridges as far as my college, I had to leave my college and give up a full scholarship; um I had to leave my church, I just had to cut myself off from the only friends that I knew at the time (Participant 1).

Heterosexuals

When specifically examining the reactions of heterosexuals to sexual minorities, in general, all participants expressed some sense of how they have been perceived by straight individuals, or to what extent they trust straight individuals. One participant described his understanding of how difficult it is to relate to heterosexual men,

Straight men are going to be a little more guarded around a gay guy, well it depends on how well they know you. (pause) In some instances things might be more distant, uh, and I would say that's probably more common than the opposite.

And it's more of a guarded thing. Some of them are physically more guarded with their body, you know if they're being checked-out, and all that stuff. And um, some of them feel, you know, possibly there's a little bit of closeness that you've shared something that's more intimate about yourself, you know. Like if you knew the circumstances of someone's... the death of a child, or something, something very personal about them, probably the more guarded things will become (Participant 5).

Another participant echoed this sentiment,

I actually I had somebody accuse me of [hitting on them] behind my back which was extremely... I was very hurt by that. I [heard it one day]...this was by somebody who professed to be very accepting of my being gay...—I had a good [relationship with her] at the workplace, you know we would hug hello and goodbye, and the person that I am talking about... she said to my friend, “how do you know, do you ever wonder if [participant] is trying to hit on you?” And I my friend said “no,” and she said, “well, how would you know?” So I actually never heard it from a person that I was interacting with, but I heard it from a person who professed to be accepting—accused me of that behind my back (Participant 1)!

Other participants described more general interactions with and reactions from heterosexuals. For example, one participant described his perceptions of how some straight people can give physical cues to show their discomfort with sexual minorities, “There is a moment that looks like a slap in the face, and I fear that rejection” (Participant 9). And participant 8 described his frustration that, “there are just all these expectations [about life], and I think a lot of straight people don't think through them, and I think gay people have to” (Participant 8). Participant 12 made a comparison of racism to heterosexism in his comment, “Kind of you know, like Black people say that White people—you have all of this privilege, well I see them like that. Privileged.... Yeah as a group.”

Work

Sorting-out one's decisions to disclose in the workplace, and the reactions that come from such disclosure, constitutes another subcategory in this domain. All the participants in the study described some facet of this dynamic. From blatant

discrimination to the more subtle, several participants recounted some negative experiences in the workplace. One particular participant stated, "...then other employees, I'd be talking with the [other workers] about whatever, and it'd come-up that I'm gay, and they'd be like, 'you're gay, no way that's gross.' They were just, 'oh, I don't want to deal with you'" (Participant 6). Another participant revealed more negativity from his coworkers,

And I was very upset that [my boyfriend] and I were meeting-up with another couple, and we were going to go around and look at antiques or whatever, and I wanted to talk about what we were going to do and what fun it was going to be, and feel like a normal part of life. And instead the stuff comes, 'oh, what are you all gonna do, when's the orgy start, where you all gonna throw your keys into?' It's that joking kind of thing, but it's not what I wanted to joke about, I wanted to talk about—you know, and I guarantee that if it had been a straight person in there talking about it, the topic would have turned to, 'oh, well what are you all gonna do?' and you would have gotten to talk about all the fun things you were gonna do, instead it has to turn into a joke. ... I wasn't taking it personally like they really thought that, it's just that you know it was a joke, a topic for joking and ribbing about, when that wasn't what I wanted it to be. I guess that all leads to maybe a lack of seriousness of how seriously your being a couple is being taken (Participant 4).

Another participant described his workplace incidents and the effects they had on him, saying, "I don't know...if it's something work related, and I can tell they're not down-with a gay person, I've played straight for so long, it really didn't phase me—it feels terrible inside—but I'd just let them say what they're gonna say" (Participant 11).

Other participants, however, have experienced some positive reactions in the workplace. One participant, who works as a waiter, remarked, "My boss has said that she'd throw people out for being obnoxious [about my sexual orientation]," (Participant 9). Other employers saw their gay employees as assets to the workplace. Working in a government position, participant 8 described his task on the job, "[My boss] is really like, I need you to turn-on your gaydar when these kids come-in [to our agency]. I need you to

flag them if you think there's a special problem so that I can divert them to a [more gay-affirmative resource]" (Participant 8).

Harassment

Five participants recounted experiences of harassment outside of other subcategories. "It would be easy to say that could just brush it off, but I really couldn't because even though he was just an acquaintance...it still bothers me that somebody from [my past] will harass me like that [after all these years]" (Participant 1). This statement, from one woman who was stunned to have such a reaction from someone she had not been in contact with, illustrates one type of harassment experienced by participants. Another participant talked about the effects of such experiences with harassment, "well I guess after experiencing so [much harassment]... it always depressed me, it chips away at my self-esteem, my self value, makes me feel bad about myself, and makes me question whether they're right or not" (Participant 9).

Acquaintances

Ten participants' experiences with friends and other close acquaintances' reactions to sexual orientation fall under this subcategory. One participant remarked that he is much more interactive with straight people than with gay people, "So what's more likely is being with me being the only gay person in a set of straight people" (Participant 4). And another participant remarked, "When I told my friends from like high school, the few I have, they were like, my one friend was like, 'you're just now realizing this, I've been waiting for you tell me for a while now...' so the friends from high school that know, have been supportive" (Participant 7), again highlighting that not all of the experiences with heterosexuals has been negative. Participant 10 made a statement that, "that's great thing about friends—if they're your friend they don't care [about your sexuality]."

General

All but two participants listed other experiences that afforded them the opportunity to understand how their sexual orientation is situated within specific contexts of everyday life. Some of these other statements include, "[as a child] I was attracted to guys, but you don't get married with them and have kids. I mean it was just not an

option” (Participant 4). Other participants highlighted the inner struggle it is to understand how to react to different incidents in life,

I tend to try to not overanalyze every single situation, but I try to wonder and judge in what kind of mentality was this said? Was it said in a belittling mentality was it said it said in purely a joking—I can made fun of myself I can also make fun of other people, let’s laugh and relax—um, when I sense it is done in a belittling condescending way, I call them down on it. And that’s a very touchy thing, ‘cause you can be labeled, ‘oh ease up, I didn’t really mean it that way, blah blah...so that’s a difficult call to make some times in a social setting where gays and lesbians are the butt of a joke (Participant 3).

Another participant poignantly stated that, “I spent all of my life being someone that I wasn’t—I tried to change myself, I didn’t accept myself, so why would these guys” (Participant 11). But some participants have experienced more heated reactions to their own experiences. One such participant remarked that,

...heterosexuals—sorry this is kind of throwing me. I viewed them for a while with animosity and hatred, just as though I felt I had been viewed [by them]. I feel that this was unfair—this level of scrutiny that I was put under; they do not have the same attractions that I do; they have rationalizations to pick on people who are different—there was a point where I hated heterosexuals for a while (Participant 9).

Another heatedly discussed the hypocrisy of the modern Christian Church for lay people’s reactions to same-sex sexual behaviors,

Why do they give damn about what he does in his personal life? I mean honestly. You learn about straight pastors who do just the same bad things that they say like gay priests who get outed have to leave the church... you think that there aren’t straight priests who want to fuck around with women? I mean, it happens on all sides, I don’t understand why everyone’s got to bring all this mystery to it. And like further stigmatize the gay guy, when the straight guy’s doing the same thing (Participant 6).

Observation of Change

In the domain of observation of change, participants reveal recognition of some type of development either within a person or a particular situation. This development can be about changes in beliefs or behaviors of the participants themselves or changes in beliefs or behaviors of other individuals, systems, or environments. All of the participants described such instances in the present study. The six subcategories under this domain are discussed in the following.

General

This group of comments expresses generalized or non-specific changes with interpersonal, intrapersonal, or broader social levels. Six participants relayed such commentaries. From the larger picture, one participant expressed his observation of a widening of perspective regarding gender and sexual orientation. “It’s just kind of the way things are, it’s broadened out a whole lot. But you know, at one time everything was seen very hyper-feminine [about the gay community]” (Participant 5). Another participant spoke of changes to his friendship from the perspective of his straight friend,

Over time, I realized that it was just that this person’s views have changed. And ... [he] realized that you don’t have to be cut from the exact same stream of cloth—you can be different in some respects and still have a great friendship (Participant 9).

Participant 10, speaking about the changes in gender-role socialization noticed that, “The lines are blurrier now, but it is easier to get along [with other men] now.”

Personal

In the subcategory of personal changes, which all participants spoke about, the changes identified are those interpersonal and intrapersonal changes that the individual participant has made him or herself.

I mean I used to have these really intense friendships with girls who would be like a girlfriend, and also like why I never had a boyfriend ever, you know... it just kind of made sense later when I came out (Participant 2).

Participant 2’s comment highlighted the types of intrapersonal awareness of change that were shared by other participants. Perspective change on a different order is seen in the following quote,

...I mean it's the majority culture. It is the majority, and I had assumed, in-fact, [that] I was a part of – that nothing ever worked out, and when things finally clicked, and I put it all together that you actually could have a [same-sex] relationship, a loving relationship—everything turned-on (Participant 4).

Another participant echoed this sentiment stating that, “Well I was more, you know I was more comfortable around [straight people] before I came out” (Participant 12). Other transitions made by participants have to do with understanding that sexual orientation was different for different people:

I was... probably in 5th ... [and] I had this little neighbor kid and we would um sexually experiment together. And at some point I sort of realized that he was always attracted to the women in these sort-of porno flicks that we found... I mean it was always women for him, and I sort of realized ... and I remember thinking that these boobs were just doing nothing for me, and he was going insane, and I was like hmmm.... Yeah I guess this is meaningful or something, because before then it was sort-of harder to tell I think, to sort-of distinguish between the two of us, and I think at that point it became very clear to me—that we were sort-of two different people sexually (Participant 8).

Alternatively, some participants observed changes in friendships. Recalling a negative experience with a long-time friend, one participant stated, “Fortunately, as time progressed, things have gotten better. One day, he came up to and started speaking to me again” (Participant 9). While another participant learned that, “I have learned that people are less overtly judgmental than you might guess” (Participant 2).

Advocate of Change

Two participants describe experiences where they felt that their experiences called them to advocate for change in a particular situation. Participant 1 claimed that her experiences with discrimination had so changed her perspectives that, “It has made me an advocate,” for other issues related to being a lesbian. Similarly, participant 9 stated that, “Since I've started fighting [those that harass me] tooth and nail, and they haven't chased-me-off like they hoped to do, their attitude has toned-down immensely, and now it's just like I'm not even there to them.”

Heterosexuals

In the experiences of seven participants, there were noticeable changes in their attitudes, beliefs, and responses to heterosexual individuals. As one participant remarked, “as a general population base, I think heterosexuals are increasingly becoming more open and realize that all the gay couples want are serenity, contentment, and security and financial success, career success—the same things that they want in life” (Participant 3). Other participants still worried about how heterosexuals would or would not react to their sexual orientation status, as in participant 7’s experience, “for a while I was afraid of heterosexuals—that they would automatically condemn me, ... I used to be so afraid to talk to any straight guy especially if they were the least bit attractive, I was very scared to talk to them, and I don’t have that problem [now]” (Participant 7). While another participant did not have the same positive experience, “guys stopped being friends with me. And you know I never hit on them or anything, or stare at the them—just you know, I’ve gone out of my way to make friends with them, [friendships with them] just never happened” (Participant 12).

Family

In this final subcategory of observation of change, four participants described changes to the dynamics in their families of origin as a result of ongoing exposure to the sexual minority issues of each participant. One participant, in particular, has had great success with extended family members’ acceptance of his sexual orientation.

[M]y cousin has been so cool about it, he’s always been making comments like, “that’s so gay,” in a negative way, but now he’s so cool about it. I think it’s so amazing to watch their attitudes change; their attitudes became pro-homosexual because, well their cousin wasn’t a bad person (participant 9).

Gay and Lesbian Community

Two participants described the social evolution of the gay and lesbian individual experience. Participant 10’s comment on social change and the gay and lesbian community best summarizes this subcategory,

I see gays and lesbians—I’m gonna coin a phrase—gays are the new black. I do see gays being on the upswing as far as being equal and having more rights. I think it’s still a struggle, but I see it coming. I think it’s gonna happen easier and

quicker than it has been for the civil rights movement—and for that I’m very pleased, very pleased (Participant 10).

Messages/Social Influences

Rules or expectations that have been dictated by external forces comprise the over-arching definition for all six subcategories delineated within this domain. All participants reported having such messages and or social influences that affected their interactions with heterosexual individuals, systems and environments.

General Messages

This subcategory encapsulates messages received from ambiguous and or overlapping sources. Ten participants described such situations. Participant 4 described his experience with staying closeted because, “I guess I had bought into this ‘the rules for being a fit within the majority culture’, [and] that’s what you do for as long as you can bear it, [but] once I had met [my boyfriend] it’s like ok, well I’ve discovered an area where I can’t bear [being closeted], now I’m gonna start exposing myself more to the general world.” Participant 3 talked about messages received from multiple sources about how to be a man, all the while knowing that he was different.

...well because from very early on, kids are, uh given that... that notion from the media, and parents and brothers and sisters that you know boys like girls and girls like boys. And the ones you pay attention to, and want to be around, are the opposite sex... and it wasn’t that I was repelled by girls but it was just that you know, I seemed to have this special fascination with men and the media (Participant 3).

Peers

Six participants described the experience of having majority heterosexual behaviors enforced through casual actions or indirect behaviors toward others.

It’s more of the watching reactions of other people on “open” gays or people who are not so tactful in hiding their homosexuality. And that is what frightened me—but they didn’t have to pick on me, because watching them pick on others did the job, they didn’t even have to pick on me because I felt the pain of what the others were feeling (Participant 9).

Participant 4 also described learning socially from the other boys,

it's that I felt [that] I had areas of difference that ... you wouldn't talk about. And that probably other people had their different areas of difference where they didn't either, and [sometimes] things would creep out and you'd get either beat-up or made fun of or whatever for it. And so you just learned which of the things you [could] be out with and which you don't (Participant 4).

And finally, sometimes the message is conveyed by what is not said, "none of my friends or the boys I knew casually in class ever talked about... 'oh, look at him.' They were all you know more interested in whatever the activity was, or [in] the girls... I never heard them say, 'oh, look at that guy, I like his mustache'" (Participant 7).

Heterosexuals

Four participants described situations where general heterosexual individuals sent specific signals of acceptance or rejection of sexual minority behaviors. One instance, from participant 1, sums-up this experience with heterosexuals and their duplicity, "[my professors] warned me that I could get into trouble for [being out], they can't say this publicly, because they [would be reprimanded], but privately they were 100% supportive of me being gay, and that being open about it was a good thing" (Participant 1).

Gender Roles

Eight participants reported information about gender role socialization in childhood as it relates to her or his understanding of sexual orientation.

Basically I have grew-up with an ethic that this is the way a man behaves, and um, I behave that way, or try to. I try to have the respect for things in the world that I'm supposed to have respect for. And I feel a duty to live-up to certain things. I'm supposed to, as an able bodied man, supposed to look out for physically, and do for people who are less able. I'm supposed to have that respect, and I have duties that I'm not supposed to just walk by and let some person be assaulted or some person in need or some person that needs my help, to sit there. Especially if it is a physical thing (Participant 5).

Another participant described his childhood play, and while he does not remember any gender messages, he makes a point to state that he still participated in typical male play.

I did play Barbie with my cousins, and I did enjoy it... I never really had any thorough black/white messages about being a guy or a girl. And I was still into

my guy stuff too—transformers, I liked x-men, killing soldiers in my front yard and stuff (participant 9)!

Media

This subcategory of messages/social influences comprises seven participants' experiences with the media and the messages they send regarding either heterosexuals or the sexual minority community. Two quotes best illustrate the nature of this subcategory. One participant talked about media and religion saying, "Here's a good alternative, why don't you form stable relationships and you know, and push that as a positive... and instead it's like that would be the worst possible thing to do because that might actually mean that gayness that isn't something that can be stamped out" (Participant 4). Another participant talked about implications for the way the media represents gay characters, saying, "Like, I refuse to watch *Queer as Folk* because I feel that it doesn't represent me at all, it just represents what the media wants gay people to be. Even though I love Andrew Vandekamp on *Desperate Housewives*, for the first two seasons he was shown as completely evil" (Participant 7).

Family

The remaining subcategory, one that ten participants conveyed in the data, describes the values and appropriate behaviors espoused by the participants' families. These comments range from the very specific to the ambiguous, "you're probably most influenced by your parents, and I think that it's amazing that with most offspring either they tend to go right in the path of their parents or directly in the opposite direction" (participant 3). Another participant described his experience with his father's reactions to his speaking openly about his life, "... in a few cases like especially with my dad, I've gotten a reaction of getting stony-faced, he doesn't want to hear about couple-y type things" (Participant 4).

Social Systems

The domain of social systems captures all of the macro-level experiences participants have encountered with systems, institutions, and environments. Five different subcategories define the parameters of the domain, with all participants experiencing at least one form of institutionalized or systemic heterosexist event or situation.

Religious Institutions

Ten of the participants described either positive or negative experiences with both religion and spirituality, or with organized religious environments. One particularly painful experience was related by one participant,

Back when I was a poster child for Christianity because I'd been so active in mission work, they loved me a lot and thought I was a role model and all that—and now, just because I've come-out as a lesbian I'm the same person... now they think I'm the opposite. My entire social support system that I had built-up for several years, all that just crumbled-out—all gone (Participant 1).

Sometimes, participants tried to be objective about the discrimination experienced with religious conservatives because they, “wind-up so far on the wrong side of the equation, because in fact they have a hell a lot to offer that I think a lot of gay people can use, and I think on the reverse side with gay people, you wind-up getting beat-up on so much [by religion], you wind-up rejecting more than perhaps should be rejected” (Participant 4).

Other participants described the perceived hypocrisy of the larger religious systems in general, “they say, ‘oh love your neighbor,’ and do this and this and this, but oh but you're gay, and you do this so we can exclude you. They really seem to have this, they say one thing and do another. I don't really care for that” (Participant 6). Or alternately, participants had direct experiences that support the idea espoused by the participant above, “and so I caught-up with this girl that I had gone to summer camp with as a kid, and um, she says, ‘so what are you doing,’ and I said going to school and doing a little gay community organizing here, and doing vacation bible school here, and she just got like livid that I was doing both of those things—livid” (Participant 8).

And while three participants expressed some positive experiences with religion, a majority of the current sample has not had those same experiences. One man stated that his experiences with his own spiritual journey made him, “want to get away from ...church and religious people in general” (Participant 9). Another young man surmised that,

I've noticed that religion—well religion is great—but religion is the worst thing for gay people in my opinion, it causes so much trauma, and so many more people hate gay people because of the Bible. And it's not really the Bible, it is people

who take a literal translation rather than reading what it actually says! (Participant 11).

Educational Systems and Institutions

This subcategory captures the positive and negative educational experiences of eight participants from the current sample. Some participants described the difference in attitude towards sexual minority issues between public education and post-secondary education. “I know there have been efforts to teach kids about homosexuality being okay, but I also know that that has been met with huge instances of backlashes. I think that’s a big problem. However, in higher education—it’s kind of the opposite almost, especially in public and secular universities” (Participant 1). Another person described his positive experiences in graduate school, stating that, “Education, you know at the [graduate] school, it’s great... I was actually given [an honor] at graduation this weekend, so like the dean said the words gay and lesbian a couple of times, and giving this little speech, and I got to go on stage and it was a lot of fun. So I think like a lot of positive portrayals [in education]” (Participant 8).

Political Parties, Systems, and Institutions

Nine individuals in the study gave examples of their observations of the political system or political parties here in the U.S. One participant believed that while local governments are making progress on sexual minority issues, it may never be enough. On the subject of same-sex marriage, she stated that “there’s not going to be anything on the federal level, which is where it would have to be, for that situation to change” (Participant 2). On the same subject, another participant subverted a common political strategy used to keep same-sex couples from obtaining the legal right to marry, saying, “the conservative side says, ‘no special rights for gays,’ when the laws that they are passing give special rights to straights, so they are FOR special rights, just not for us” (Participant 6). Another participant remarked in an angry tone, “Government? Our government—what they’ve promised, they haven’t fulfilled for us” (Participant 12).

On a final note, one participant described the emotional consequences of such a macro-level discussion of an issue that has far-reaching micro-level implications.

It bothers me a lot, like emotionally, "cause it just causes me to feel like less of a person because guys like, “oh he shouldn’t have the same rights as other people,”

and I just the same as everyone else, why shouldn't I have the same rights? And it's just kind like makes me feel like less of a person and it really angers me, and I get kind of riled up about it, and I just, it just kind of angers me and hurts me all at the same time (Participant 7).

Media

The subcategory of media, under this domain as opposed to other domains, specifically covers the reactions of participants to media portrayals of sexual minorities in general. Seven participants recounted such experiences. "In mainstream media, I feel gays and lesbians are portrayed as sort sources of humor like in *Will & Grace*, as sort of exotic and other-worldly in a way" (Participant 1). One person was openly displeased, stating that, "It's clear, take media, the safe gays to portray are the ones who are funny or the ones who are the (makes a sound) comic relief type people—which just winds up being irritating and repellent" (Participant 4). And one other participant recalled that the media was the only place that he had even heard the term gay, stating that, "Growing up you didn't hear about anything gay ...I don't remember hearing anything about it until *South Park* in 1997, when one kid called another kid gay, and I thought, 'gay, oh, what is that'" (Participant 11).

General

In the general subcategory, seven participants described their experiences with overlapping social systems. One participant's words sum-up the subcategory with his statement on the overlap of church and state. "I'd say that it's pretty evenly [distributed], society is religion—religion is society, government is society—society is government" (Participant 3). Another participant gave a concrete example, he states "And Senator [x] had said about [the domestic partnership bill], something about how he thought it was full of sin and inappropriate something or other, ... that this sort of presumption and arrogance, and this sort of using the Bible as a way to hurt people" (Participant 8).

Categorizing

The domain labeled categorizing contains assumptions made about others, including stereotypes, in six different subcategories. Each subcategory with illustrative quotes is given below. All twelve participants made some type of assumption about others.

General

The general subcategory covers assumptions not listed in the remaining five subcategories. Six participants' assumptions fall into this arena. "[Heterosexuals] assume that because somebody's gay you would know them, and I'm like, 'I don't know every gay person in the world.' Or like, 'are they gay,' well I'm like I don't know anymore [than] you do just by lookin' at them" (Participant 2). Another comment falling under this subcategory came from a participant that spoke more generally about assumptions, reporting that, "I try to get... beyond the look ... we all come-across with preconceived notions right away, regretfully, and that's a shame that we all...but I guess 99% of the whole world does it as well. We all do" (Participant 3).

Social Institutions

Going well beyond actual experiences with social systems, found in another domain, statements falling into this subcategory are purely assumptions made about institutions, regardless of how much or how little interaction an individual has had in the past with the institution. Eight participants held such assumptions, as in the following, "[W]ell I tend to be wary of Christians, like Evangelical Christians, I tend to think, mmmm we're not likely to get along so well" (Participant 2). Or another participant made an assumption about therapists, stating,

I would be much more comfortable with a bi or queer therapist just because they've lived a similar experience, and they know all of the nuances of the discrimination I've faced, the way you're treated by society. They're a little more clued-in to the experiences and not having learned about it in a classroom (Participant 6).

And finally, the combination of personal and blanket-statements about certain groups, "I still do largely have the same mentality about the big NRA morons and the George Bush morons and, you know, those idiots out there that I feel are never reachable" (Participant 3).

Challenged Assumptions

Three participants described assumptions that they had made in the past, that were later dispelled. Participant 1 stated that, "I really misread her, because she appeared very deeply Christian and Conservative, and I regret it now because I just recently had a

conversation with her and she was, and she could not have been more accepting and more welcoming” (Participant 1). And another participant explained joyously, that, “... I was expecting to be eating out of a garbage can so I was thoroughly shocked at the lack of resistance [to my coming out]” (Participant 9).

Gender Roles

Six participants described assumptions made about gender role socialization and its connection to sexual orientation. “The stereotype thing means that all gay men’s friends are either all gay men or straight women” (Participant 6), and Participant 9’s comment, “[rednecks] groups of people who feel that they have to prove who has the biggest dick, and who are the biggest alpha male; who are also inclined to make fun of and belittle other people,” best illustrate this type of assumption within the gender roles subcategory.

Beliefs about Heterosexuals

Eleven participants gave assumptions about specific heterosexual individuals. “I think that everybody’s pretty much the same...I don’t see ... you being able to put a label on straight people and say they are this or they are that” (Participant 5). While the participant statement above shows that the majority group does not always get stereotyped, other participants gave examples of assuming what heterosexuals assume about sexual minorities—a double assumption: “from the straight [perspective], lesbians are very butch and gays are very effeminate” (Participant 6).

Many participants, however, do make some assumptions about heterosexuals, and the cues that sexual minorities use to determine if someone is “safe” to be around or not. One participant claimed that, “And how I [determine if someone is safe or not] is pretty much how they talk and how they dress. I mean like if they’re in a flannel shirt, or not well put together then I’m not—that’s kind of stereotypical, but it is what it is” (Participant 12).

Another participant offered a more detailed account of who might not be safe,

[Y]ou know, [I] have that first visual impression of people. Whether or not they are quote safe or quote not safe... um....—and not all of these apply in every situation obviously, you know—they tend to have the Neanderthal walk or caveman walk...their diction, their use of words.. uh, their just general ambiance, or mentality.. um what kind of clothes they wear, how their hair is styled or not

styled. Um, the look from their eyes can say a lot about somebody. Yeah it can either give a welcoming inflection or it kind of give this stand-offish “who are you?” The whole picture, the way they look, the way they walk, the way they act, the way they talk, just the whole composite (Participant 3).

And if looks aren't enough, then what a heterosexual person says may be used to assume safety, “it's kind of hard to say... I kind of pre-judge them [because they are] judging me for being gay, so I haven't come-out to them” (Participant 7). But, according to the same participant, sometimes there are verbal cues that indicate an assumption that someone is actually safe, “like if I hear them say something positive, or if I come across their facebook [page and it looks okay], then I feel more safe around them.”

Gay and Lesbian

For nine participants, there exists some serious stereotyping of the sexual minority community as well. “[Y]ou have the real life examples of living-out the gay stereotype, you know they screw everything under the sun, the ultra sexually liberal and you know, everything is just sex, sex, sex, sex!” (participant 4). Another participant stated his frustrated assumption about gay men when he stated, “a lot of gay men my age really sort of fetish-ize straight men, ...they say, ‘oh wow, he's so straight,’ or, ‘he's really straight acting,’ and it's all sort of caught-up in something that I have no comprehension, that I don't try to get my head around” (Participant 8).

Empowerment

In the domain of empowerment, participants describe situations in which they refused to accept subordinate positions in personal or political circumstances. Five subcategories' definitions and illustrative comments for each are given below. All twelve participants related some type of empowerment in these data.

Disengagement

Some participants describes the desire to remove themselves from a particular situation rather than to engage the heterosexist individual(s). “I ended up... [quitting] that job because I was dealing with so much at that time and I felt that it would be better not to have to deal with going into a [heterosexist] situation like that every day” (Participant 7). Another participant distanced himself by stating, “I mean usually most people you see them for one class, I mean why waste my time trying to change their minds or make an

impact” (Participant 9)? Another participant stated that, “... if anyone has an opinion about [being gay], it’s been my experience, to argue is a futile thing. You’re not gonna change someone’s mind by arguing with them” (Participant 10), proving that avoidance of engaging some heterosexuals is preferred.

Coming Out

In this subcategory, participants described their coming-out experiences when it meant being truthful or honest with themselves or with important others. “But I was persistent once I started coming out, I wanted to make sure that all the people in my life that I deemed important to know about it” (Participant 9). Another man described his experience of being out over time,

you know being gay has so many layers of complications in life, ...you feel that you have to fight-off so many elements all the time, ... at times you think, “man wouldn’t it have been just so much less complicated being born a straight man?” And not have to deal with this issue or that ... but you know things are as they are, so you try to go on and make the best of it. Be fulfilled with who and what you are (Participant 3).

Sometimes, coming out is important even if it means facing discrimination, “now if I’m going to have an ongoing relationship of some sort whether it’s working together or whatever, then I would think I would feel that I needed to be out regardless of what their reaction was, because I don’t feel right about just pretending to be something that I’m not” (Participant 2).

Advocate

Used this time as a verb, the subcategory advocate comprises six participants’ experiences of using their circumstances to act on behalf of other sexual minorities. One participant decided to go to her college reunion, knowing that she might face discrimination, saying that she wanted “to show that five years later I am healthy and well adjusted and *happy*, and that I don’t have to be a straight to be well adjusted or healthy *or* happy” (Participant 1). Another person spoke of correcting others’ misperceptions, “Generally when somebody has touched on an issue that they’re not quite sure of, or if they’ve got their facts totally wrong [about sexual minorities], I’ll

correct them” (Participant 6). And finally, some participants spoke of imparting knowledge and advice to other sexual minorities,

I always advise people—the few that have approached me about coming out, and sought confidence in me—that you know life is like a game chess—it’s not about the move you make, it’s when you make that move. You don’t bring your queen out [laughs] on the first move, you keep that queen in until it’s appropriate (Participant 9).

Engagement

Circumstances were shared, in the case of nine participants, where speaking-up against heterosexist individuals or groups was a priority. Participant 3 stated, that in his experience, “if I’ve encountered [prejudice] in a store or a restaurant or wherever, I would pretty much run it right back in their face.” Another participant reported an event in the workplace with which he was very upset. He directly confronted his coworkers, “It was the sort of... I left it where it was clear I was annoyed a bit and let him know why I was annoyed” (Participant 4). Participant 8 has taken the approach of “don’t leave a bad taste in their mouths” when describing his tactics, “I tend to sort of kill them with sweetness. ... my mother was always telling me, ...that awful things will happen to you, and people may or may not ever remember that this totally shit thing happened to you, but if you become a jackass about it, everyone will remember that.”

Other participants have used their voice to deconstruct heterosexist assumptions and statements. “Well if people use the word gay as an insult or something or make insulting comments, I would try to speak-up pretty much every time, I would even confront professors about it privately” (Participant 1). Participant 9 even expressed his enthusiasm for open debate in the following comment, “it’s given me much better debating skills, and show the world how screwed-up their way of thinking is—like watching a gold fish flop around outside of a fishbowl, when they realize all of the religious loopholes in the doctrines that are holding all of these prejudices together.” And another participant stated that in the end, “It makes me want to get it all out in the open, instead of playing a game—in my own way, [dealing with others] in my own way” (Participant 12).

Values/Beliefs

Eight participants' comments comprise this final subcategory of empowerment. The following statements are observations of the participant's own values system or fundamental beliefs. Participant 4, speaking with very soft and reflective tones, stated, "...it's only recently that I could feel discriminated against, because I have a gay part of my life that I actually *want* to be valued outside of [myself]." Another participant, enraged by recent legislative measures, stated, "I mean that I think that they can vote and they can sort of support really bigoted legislators and legislation and that sort of thing, but I don't think that they can sort of change fundamentally who I am and how I think about myself at this point in time" (participant 8). One participant, speaking about his fundamental belief that he will be who he will be, stated quite emphatically, "I'm pretty much myself—I'd like to think I'm always myself" (Participant 10). Finally, in one last act of empowerment through a fundamental belief, participant 6 stated, "[so] the last thing she said was, 'we don't want to deal with your problem.' To which I replied, 'I'm not the one with a problem, you're obviously the one with a problem.'"

Resignation

Four subcategories constitute the domain of resignation. Defined in the data, resignation is the acceptance of discrimination and doing nothing about it either politically or personally. Eleven of the participants reported such resignation thoughts or behaviors. Illustrative quotes from participants are given below to define each subcategory within the domain.

Avoiding confrontation

This subcategory is characterized as a type of resignation that is promoted by the need to avoid unpleasant situations with others. Ten participants reported circumstances wherein they avoided confrontation. One participant described his experience in a psychology class where the professor had been talking about sexual minorities.

I thoroughly bit my tongue in this class ...and I heard someone mumble, "that's nasty," or "that's disgusting," under their breath behind me. ... I was disappointed for one thing, because I thought I had escaped that kind of talk, but I realized that this was only one class—that these dumb asses are only in this one class (Participant 9).

Participant 2 gave another type of resignation when she stated, “If it’s just somebody like in a short interaction with them in a store—I’d just like change the subject and leave.”

Rationalizing

In this type of resignation, the participant overanalyzes or excuses the actions of self or others. Five participants conveyed rationalizing in their interview. “I had over-estimated how far people had come on this issue, but it’s still not as bad as it could have been” (Participant 9). Another person decides to underplay her situation as well, “I mean I sort of brushed it off because of her history of stirring-up conflict between coworkers” (Participant 1).

Pressure

Only three participants exhibited feelings of resignation induced by the demands of external forces. Two participants expressed nearly identical phrasing, “like try to get my self-confidence up, if you know certain questions will come-up be prepared for it, but I get cowed sometimes too” (Participant 2), and, “... I wind-up just being cowed into keeping my mouth shut” (Participant 4).

Suppression

Two participants employed a strategy that allows an individual to ignore particular knowledge of the self as a means of resignation. Participant 9’s example of suppression is very to the point,

[T]here are people you desire physically, but you realize there’s a distance that has to be there, as far away as the sun set, it’s never gonna happen. You have to in your mind, come up with some way to view these people so that you do not make them feel uncomfortable. Because that’s the worst thing you can do is to make someone feel uncomfortable.

Equality

Ten participants’ experiences in the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness without inconvenience to anyone else comprise the domain of equality. Two subcategories further define the domain. Illustrative quotes are given for both in the following.

Parity

This subcategory includes nine participants’ experiences and feelings of equality in their own treatment, and of their expectations of others. “I want to go off and do my

thing—and don't harass me, don't bother me, don't mess with me, just let me do my thing with the people I want to do it with, and you go do your thing with the people you want to do it with" (Participant 3). Participant 2 showed her expectations of parity in her statement, "we hold hands in public, we just figure that's—we don't feel any need to act otherwise."

Social Institutions

Three participants described feelings regarding the desire for equal rights in social institutions or personal experiences of having equality within a social institution. Participant 3 claims that, "you know, I don't want special rights; or special privileges, I just want the same ones that you have." While participant 1 describes already feeling like she is on equal footing in her religious community, "I've never felt anything but acceptance and welcoming from straight people [at our church]."

Summary

This chapter provided a detailed account of sexual minorities' experiences with heterosexist individuals, systems, and environments. The consensual data analysis of the 12 individual interviews yielded eight domains, with two to eight subcategories for each domain. Quotes, taken directly from the transcribed interviews with each participant, illustrated each subcategory discussed in the chapter. Table 4.1, beginning on page 67, presents the domains and subcategories along with the frequency of occurrence for each, the classification label for each, and the definition or coding criteria. In Chapter Five I discuss the results given in this chapter in the context of current research with sexual minorities and with suggestions for the use of this study to provide empirically-supported services for sexual minorities in a range of settings.

Table 4.1

Domains, Subcategories, Frequencies, Classifications, and Definitions or Coding Criteria for Responses to Heterosexism

Domains and Subcategories	Number of Occurrences	Classification	Definition or Coding Criteria
Assessment of Sexual Orientation in Context	12	General	
Family	11	General	Participant's observations of family reactions toward sexual minorities, including statements about disclosure status.
Coming-out	11	General	Participants' experiences and attitudes about disclosure and the effects of one's status as a sexual minority.
Heterosexuals	12	General	Participants' discernment of individual heterosexuals' imagined or actual reactions to disclosure of sexual minority status.
Work	12	General	Participants' positive and negative experiences with individuals in the workplace.
Acquaintances	10	Typical	Peers' reactions to sexual minority status.
Harassment	5	Variante	Participants' experiences with harassment based upon sexual minority status.
Childhood	4	Variante	Experiences of heterosexist behaviors in childhood.

Table 4.1 Continued

General	10	Typical	Other experiences of participants' observations of one's status as a sexual minority individual.
Observation of Change	12	General	
Personal	12	General	Commentary on change in intrapersonal beliefs, feelings, and behaviors regarding sexuality.
Heterosexuals	7	Typical	Commentary on changes in heterosexuals in regards to sexual minorities, and personal change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors regarding heterosexuals.
Advocates for Change	2	Variant	The experience of sexual minority status prompted the respondent to effect positive changes around him or her.
Family	4	Variant	Commentary on changes in the individual's family dynamics in regard to one's minority sexual orientation.
General	6	Typical	Other non-specific comments on changes in intrapersonal, interpersonal, and broader social levels vis-à-vis minority sexual orientation.
Gay and Lesbian Community	2	Variant	Commentary on the evolution of the experiences of gay and lesbian individuals.
Messages/Social Influences	12	General	
Family	10	Typical	Information from family about values and appropriate behaviors

Table 4.1 Continued

Media	7	Typical	Information from various media sources about heterosexual and LGBT culture and experiences
Gender Roles	8	Typical	Information about socialized gender roles
Peers	6	Typical	Information from peers about behaviors accepted by the majority culture.
Heterosexuals	4	Variant	Information from heterosexual individuals regarding acceptance of stereotypically non-heterosexual behavior
Social Systems	12	General	
Religious Institutions	10	Typical	Participant positive and negative observations and experiences with religion and or spirituality in general as well as with organized religious systems or environments.
Educational Systems & Institutions	8	Typical	Participant positive and negative observations and experiences with the educational system throughout the lifespan.
Political Parties, Systems & Institutions	9	Typical	Participant observations and experiences with politics, political groups, and governments.
Media	6	Typical	Participant perceptions and reactions to media representations of sexual minorities.
General	7	Typical	Other participant experiences with overlapping social systems.

Table 4.1 Continued

Categorizing	12	General	
Beliefs about Heterosexuals	11	General	Perceptions, heuristics, and assumptions regarding heterosexual individuals.
Social Institutions	8	Typical	Generalizations or beliefs about individuals who identify with specific social groups or institutions.
Gay & Lesbian	9	Typical	Stereotypes of gays and lesbians.
Gender Roles	6	Typical	Beliefs or reflections regarding gender role socialization or orientation.
Challenged Assumptions	3	Variant	The respondents commented on experiences where s/he held beliefs or stereotypes regarding individuals who identify with specific social groups. These beliefs were eventually disproved through experience individuals in the specific social group.
General	6	Typical	General, non-specific statements regarding categorization of individuals.
Resignation	11	General	Resignation
Avoiding Confrontation	10	Typical	A type of resignation that is promoted by the need to avoid unpleasant situations with others.
Rationalizing	5	Variant	A type of resignation that occurs through over analyzing and excusing the actions of the self or others
Pressure	3	Variant	Feelings of resignation induced by the demands of external forces

Table 4.1 Continued

Suppression	2	Variant	A strategy that allows an individual to ignore particular knowledge about the self.
Empowerment	12	General	
Engagement	9	Typical	Participant observations about making conscious choices to enter into environments and/or relationships and to speak up for what they believe in
Values/Beliefs	8	Typical	Participant observations regarding their fundamental values.
Coming Out	10	Typical	Participant experiences of being honest with oneself and others regarding sexual orientation.
Disengagement	8	Typical	Participant decisions to remove themselves from a particular situation.
Advocate	6	Typical	Participant experiences providing education to others regarding gay and lesbian rights and/or personal steps taken to protect rights.
Equality	10	Typical	
Parity	9	Typical	Participant feelings and experiences of equality in their own treatment and their expectations of others.
Social Institutions	3	Variant	Participant feelings regarding the desire for equal rights in social institutions; personal experiences of equality within social institutions.

Table 4.2

Demographic results

Variable/Descriptor	Freq.	Percent	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Mode
State or Region						Kentucky
Kentucky	6	50.00	-	-	-	-
Virginia	3	25.00	-	-	-	-
Ohio	1	8.33	-	-	-	-
West Virginia	1	8.33	-	-	-	-
Central Europe	1	8.33	-	-	-	-
Gender						Male
Male	10	83.33	-	-	-	-
Female	2	16.66	-	-	-	-
City Size						Urban
Small Town	5	42.00	-	-	-	-
City	1	8.00	-	-	-	-
Urban (more than 100k)	6	50.00	-	-	-	-
Income						0-9999
0-9999	3	25.00	-	-	-	-
10k-19999	1	8.00	-	-	-	-
20k-29999	2	17.00	-	-	-	-
40k-49999	1	8.00	-	-	-	-
60k-69999	1	8.00	-	-	-	-
100k or more	2	17.00	-	-	-	-
Prefer not to answer	2	17.00	-	-	-	-
Level of Education						Some College
Some College	5	42.00	-	-	-	-
College Degree	3	25.00	-	-	-	-
Professional/Graduate Degree	4	33.00	-	-	-	-
Ethnicity						White/European
White/European	11	92.00	-	-	-	-
Other	1	8.00	-	-	-	-
Current Age	-	-	32	10.6	28	Bimodal: 21; 25
Age at Coming Out	-	-	24	8.4	22	19
Time since coming out	-	-	7.5	6.8	6	Trimodal: 2; 5; 8

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the following chapter, I provide a summary and discussion of the results from the present qualitative-based study. First, the results of the study are summarized. Second, the strengths and the limitations of the present study are discussed. Following these introductory discussions, the chapter addresses a divergence of the findings from the research question, in the section labeled *expect the unexpected*. Three unifying themes that emerge from the present study are: *discernment, disclosure and concealment, and self-empowerment*. These three themes are discussed as the results points to aspects of coping and resilience amidst pervasive heterosexism and minority stress, previously discussed in Chapter Two. In the penultimate section of the chapter, implications for training and practice are explored. And finally, the chapter ends with suggestions for future research.

Summary of Results

After careful and thorough analysis, eight domains were discerned from examining the experiences of lesbian and gay men's coping with heterosexist individuals, systems, and environments. These domains are: (a) assessing sexual orientation in context; (b) observation of change; (c) messages/social influences; (d) social systems; (e) categorizing; (f) empowerment; (g) resignation; and (h) equality.

Eight subcategories exist under the domain of assessing sexual orientation in context: *family, childhood, coming out, heterosexuals, work, harassment, acquaintances, and general*. The bulk of participant experiences in this domain fall into the relational or meso-level of experience. Observed in the data are moments where participants gage the behaviors and comments of important others against participants' internal sense of being different. Sometimes this came from individuals keeping a catalogue of comments, as in one father's statement about Rosie O'Donnell being a fat dyke, to being called a name (e.g., lesbian, faggot). Other participants described situations where forays into engaging heterosexuals as an out-gay or lesbian individual became moments of frustration or events to be ignored all-together. Participants also stated fears of same-sex interactions with heterosexuals being interpreted by the heterosexual counterpart as sexual in nature. But the overriding theme in this domain is that individuals used these interactions as the basis for determining "where they stand" in the eyes of important others.

The domain observation of change yields six subcategories: *general, personal, advocates of change, heterosexuals, family* and *gay and lesbian community*. The overwhelming majority of comments belonging to this domain are positive in nature. This domain contains personal, relational, and collective observations of positive change—from participants' awareness of a change in attitude about the nature of their own sexuality, to statements that observe changes in family or social attitudes.

Under the domain of messages/social influences, six subcategories exist: *general messages, peers, heterosexuals, gender roles, media, and family*. The coding team identified this domain as capturing the messages or social influences that are dictated by outside forces. An overwhelming majority of these statements are either about gender or gender-role socialization, or about the acceptance or rejection of same-sex attraction and behavior. Participants' experiences speak to the sense that there are specific ways to act, or to play, or to interact with the world, and these messages come from these subcategories of experience.

Five subcategories contribute to the domain of social systems and include: *religious institutions, educational systems and institutions, political parties, systems and institutions, media* and *general*. Comprised entirely of collective or macro-level experiences, the domain of social institutions contains some of the more caustic and hurtful stories shared by participants. Specifically, religion and politics present as particularly problematic for the affective and behavioral responses of the participants. Anger and resentment are best illustrated in comments about the hypocrisy of politicians and religious leaders where sexual minority issues are of concern. Alternatively, most of the comments about educational systems and environments were presented as positive experiences for these participants.

In terms of how individuals categorize others, the fifth domain, six subcategories constitute this phenomenon: *general categorizing, social institutions, challenged assumptions, gender roles, beliefs about heterosexuals, and gay and lesbian*. Most of the assumptions that participants described in the present study either related to assumptions and stereotypes that heterosexuals have applied to sexual minorities, or assumptions that the participants use to provide quick appraisal of different situations. An example of the

latter would be participants two and six, both expressing generalizations about either religious individuals or therapists.

Empowerment is a domain comprised of five subcategories: *disengagement*, *coming out*, *advocate*, *engagement*, and *values/beliefs*. Knowing the coding definition for the domain of empowerment is important to understanding the seemingly paradoxical subcategories it comprises. The domain of empowerment captures participant experiences of not accepting subordinate positions, either personally or politically. I was particularly thrilled with the novelty of disengagement as an empowerment strategy. Creating physical or psychological distance from situations that are humiliating, hurtful, or personally damaging is seen as an act of empowerment. Other subcategories appear to be more in-line with conventional beliefs about being or acting empowered under oppressive conditions or circumstances.

Four subcategories contribute to understanding the domain of resignation: *avoiding confrontation*, *rationalizing*, *pressure*, and *suppression*. Where disengagement specifically captures the experience of not accepting a subordinate experience under the domain of empowerment, avoiding confrontation under the domain of resignation is less about standing-up for yourself and more about safety and concealment of sexual identity status. Sometimes giving-up or just “getting through the day,” is the take-home message about the resignation experiences of these participants.

And under the domain of equality, two subcategories are explicated: *parity* and *social institutions*. These experiences capture the wishes and hopes for equal footing of sexual minorities with heterosexuals and heterosexual institutions (e.g., marriage).

Much of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two has connections to the domains and subcategories that emerged from these data in the present study. The domains of assessment of sexual orientation in context, and the domain of social institutions connect very strongly with aspects of stigma consciousness and stigma and self-esteem. The experiences catalogued by participants in these domains and subcategories demonstrated key events, circumstances, and relationships where the stigma of being a sexual minority had an effect on interpersonal communication, and intrapersonal affective responses to sexual minority status. While some participants related experiences of ventriloquating stereotypes about sexual minorities, many participants also had strong beliefs or

stereotyped schemas about heterosexuals, gender-roles, and social institutions. This is clearly seen in the domains of categorizing and messages/social influences. Absent from these data in the present study were very many statements or experiences that fall under the definition of heteronegativity. Conversely, what did emerge from these data was evidence of coping skills and resiliency of sexual minorities to minority stressors.

Expect the Unexpected

One aspect of research I have always enjoyed is finding the unexpected. In quantitative research, one of the most celebrated examples, germane to my own research interests, was in the ground-breaking research of the late 1950's that shattered the formerly held beliefs about the pathology of homosexual behavior. In qualitative research, the process itself is inductive, so that the bias of the investigator—usually the impetus for the study—may initiate the direction of the research, but that direction often drifts because of the open-ended structure of the questions designed to illicit participants' responses. This drift is exactly what happened during the course of the present study. Discussed in the following sections are three surprises that I encountered from the present study.

One of Many

In my own personal experiences as a sexual minority, which include roles as student, teacher, friend, husband, therapist, and minister—I have often heard other sexual minorities' remarks that they could trust few straight individuals. From a purely emic perspective, this distrust appeared as a *sine qua non* in a heterosexist culture. I was surprised that more research had not already captured this phenomenon. So what is the nature of this distrust that takes place from the perspective of the sexual minority? Why does it happen? Is it protective for the sexual minority individual or harmful? In these humble beginnings, the idea for the project took shape. Over the course of the entire project—from the epiphany at two o'clock in the morning one winter evening six years ago, through the end of the data analysis—there was one pervasive thought or certainty in my mind: heteronegativity is going to be a very complex process.

That thought is very much confirmed by the present study. Not only does the response to heterosexism present as a complex process, but heteronegativity is likely only one end of a spectrum of possible responses to heterosexism. Because the research team

focused on meso and macro-level systems and environments, and not only on micro-level heterosexual exchanges, the participants were able to give a wider range of responses to the heterosexism and homonegating processes that they have experienced.

What these data suggest is a much more complex series of cognitive, affective, and behavioral coping skills in response to different heterosexual or homonegating processes. Assessment of sexual orientation in context, and observation of change domains are largely cognitive appraisals of past and current experiences applied to the process of deciding “Whom can I trust,” or, “is the current system or environment likely to change in my favor?” Domains of messages/social influences and categorizing evoke much emotion in participants, and almost act as social schemas for quick reactions in new situations. However, many data speak to other potential coping skills, with domains like empowerment, equality, and even resignation. Indeed, heteronegativity is only one point on the spectrum of responses to heterosexism and homonegating processes. But this process is only one of three surprises in the present study.

Where is the Negative in Negativity?

The second surprise in the present study is that there exist very few statements from these participants that constitute any evidence to prove that the distancing of sexual minorities from individuals, systems, and environments constitutes “negativity.” In fact, even the most harshly worded phrase about heterosexuals was directed specifically to only those heterosexuals who caused physical and or emotional pain to the participant. While the comment may be negative in content, I believe almost any therapist would agree that the statement could also be quite rational. This lack of negativity supports my belief that using the suffix of phobia, as in heterophobia, is an inadequate term for describing the phenomenon.

Given the very rich data set in the present study, very little appears to meet my definition of heteronegativity: sexual minority individual’s negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are responses to heterosexual individuals, systems, and environments. While negative thoughts, by way of assessment of sexual orientation in context, and negative feelings are found in the domain of categorizing—subcategory of beliefs about heterosexuals—very few negative behaviors are found.

What does emerge from the data is a rational approach to heterosexuals. This rational approach is directly applicable to what White and Franzini (1999) proposed in their study of heteronegativism. Lewin (1980) states that, individuals finding themselves marginalized, will either polarize their behaviors to directly contrast the dominant culture or force, or those marginalized will take a rational approach to the situation and attempt to find a comfortable place within the space in-between the dominant culture and the marginalized culture. Lewin posits his argument by drawing an analogy to adolescents. During adolescence, the body—once very familiar, constant, and understood by the individual—becomes unfamiliar, changing, and at times confusing. These changes in physiology are matched by changes in social interests and relationships. Because sexual minorities are socialized from birth in a largely heterosexual environment, with the assumption that everyone will be heterosexual, an overt identification with heterosexuals is fostered long before discovery and disclosure of sexual orientation status. This observation is confirmed by many of the participants in the study, but summarized quite nicely by participant 11, “That’s all the contact I’ve had most of my life—I identify with straight people, I get along with straight people...”

If more direct negativity or even hostility exists, it most often is directed at larger systems or environments—namely those listed in the domain of social institutions. Many participants simultaneously spoke of positive changes in social systems or environments and castigating these same institutions for their contributions to heterosexism and homonegating processes. Can it be that even when sexual minorities take a rational approach to important individuals in their lives, that they can find a less personal outlet for their negativity when directed at larger and less personalized systems and environments? I suspect that individuals who struggle the most directly with heterosexist prejudice and discrimination, in addition to homonegating processes—who are also having very strong GLBT affinity—will have more heteronegative responses. This question needs further research.

Forging New Paths

The final surprise of the study is something I had not thought we would discover. A process of disambiguation exists, or, as I will argue for later, discernment or cognitive appraisal, built from a life-time of experiences with homonegating processes, that has

provided fodder for the development of skills that afford sexual minorities the ability to navigate heterosexist interactions and environments with the least amount of conflict and/or frustration. Discernment, or cognitive appraisal, has not been introduced to the literature when applied to sexual minorities and will, I feel, offer new avenues for future research on coping and resiliency factors for sexual minority individuals. Two other themes that emerge from the data, which also hold promise for a better understanding of coping and resiliency in sexual minorities, are disclosure and concealment, and self-empowerment. These three themes are described in greater detail in the following section.

Minority Stress, Coping, and Resiliency

For nearly thirty years now, sexual minority researchers have amassed a sizeable body of literature to prove the level of stress derived from heterosexist environments (V. R. Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 1995, 2003, 2007; Meyer et al., 2008; Szymanski et al., 2008). In that same time, less than a dozen articles explore the coping or resiliency factors for sexual minorities. Much of the research on resiliency factors that intersect with sexual minorities has been with men who test positive for the HIV virus. The two most recent forays into coping and resilience were only recently published in 2009 (Sheets & Mohr, ; Szymanski).

While both of these recent studies included social support as variables of interest, Szymanski (2009) also used avoidant coping as a variable in her study. She found that social support from other sexual minorities continues to be important, however, avoidant coping was not shown to mediate the effects of heterosexism. One potential problem presented in Szymanski's study is the avoidant coping scale used. She used the COPE scales (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989), which operationalizes avoidant coping in general terms and not specifically to sexual minorities. For example, the COPE scales includes such items as, "I give-up trying to reach my goal," and, "I daydream about things other than this." The subscale names used in this instrument include, "behavioral disengagement," and, "mental disengagement." Given the results of the present study, the subscale names used in the COPE scales are very appropriate, and mesh well with the subcategories under the domains of resignation and empowerment—namely avoiding conflict and disengagement, respectively. Conversely, wishing to avoid a potential

heterosexist event is not the same thing as giving-up trying to reach a goal, and removing oneself from a potentially tense circumstance is hardly the same as daydreaming.

More context-specific items for disengagement might better describe how avoidance *can* mediate between heterosexist situations and minority stress. I propose three separate components for responding to heterosexist individuals, systems, and environments. These components are similar to core properties found in the model of human agency (Bandura, 2002, 2006). Each component includes cognitive, behavioral, and affective aspects that, taken as a whole, can explain the constructivist nature of context-specific response patterns to heterosexism and homonegating processes. These components are *discernment*, *disclosure and concealment*, and *self-empowerment*. Each component is discussed below, connecting the results of the study to the selected literature discussed from Chapter Two, and to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2002).

Discernment

Over one hundred years before cognitive psychology, an Episcopal priest and Provost at the University of Pennsylvania, penned the book, *A Search of Truth in the Science of the Human Mind* (Beasley, 1822). In his chapter on discernment, he wrote,

After the power of perception, and thinking in general, the next faculty of the mind which claims our notice, is that of discernment, by which is meant that power by which we are able to discriminate our perceptions and thoughts from each other, or rather those objects or qualities in the external or internal world, which present themselves to the contemplation of the mind (p. 499).

I will admit, I found Beasley's work while searching for the perfect word to describe what the participants in the present study were doing to determine their courses of action in any given context. I also remembered that Bandura's (2002) model of human agency for social cognitive theory also mentions another potential synonym—forethought. Disambiguation was also a candidate, but after careful examination of the participants' experiences, there were very few moments of ambiguity—most participants had plenty of clues from which to determine their responses. Forethought and discernment remained.

Forethought was the initial likely winner, as Bandura (2006) described that in, "...this anticipatory self-guidance, behavior is governed by visualized goals and anticipated outcomes" (p. 164). After careful examination of the domains—assessment of

sexual orientation in context, observation of change, categorizing, and messages/social influences—participants have had a history of experiences that guide behaviors, as equally as their affective and cognitive reactions. Yes, the participants are clearly making assumptions about various outcomes, but where did the social learning go in this new model of human agency? In Beasley’s eloquent, albeit archaic, definition, there is an explicit interplay between what the individual experiences and what the individual thinks or feels; deciding what to do with these sometimes disparate, sometimes concordant inputs, is the power of discernment. Through this study, I posit that discernment is the ability of the sexual minority to assess a history of behaviors and environmental factors and weigh these against personal motivations, needs, or expected gains to determine: (a) if disclosure or concealment is the desired choice; and (b) what are the known or imagined outcomes of that choice.

Discernment is evident in participant 2’s experience in the video rental store. A clerk asks her a simple question about her boyfriend. The participant has to weigh what she has experienced in the past with casual situations and disclosure—as well as the stories from the media and friends in similar situations—against her own perceived needs to disclose or conceal her sexual orientation. In this situation, the participant chooses concealment. She pays for her video rental and leaves without incident.

Discernment is also evident in the case of participant 9, who has made the conscious decision to disclose his sexual orientation to important people in his life. In his case, he has experienced a lifetime of religiously-based heterosexism, and experienced discrimination and prejudice from several interpersonal sources as well. These experiences however do not exceed the anticipated gains of living a life free from hiding this aspect from his family. The participant’s choice to disclose his sexual orientation to important others superseded his anticipated outcome of being kicked-out of his home.

Both of these examples highlight the power of discernment to either protect the individual from more heterosexist prejudice that is not necessary, or to exercise agency in fostering more openness and communication in interpersonal contexts. Both of these examples also highlight aspects of stigma consciousness (Pinel, 1999) and stigma and self-esteem (Crocker & Major, 2003). The status of the stigmatized individual is obvious in both circumstances only to the individual participant. How much that individual is

aware of the potential reactions of others is also present. But to what extent will the self-esteem of the individual suffer as a result of disclosure or concealment. The present study cannot answer this question. Would the self esteem of the lesbian in the video store crumble if she were harassed by the store clerk, probably not? But the self-esteem may have been lessened had the young gay man's family reacted according to his fears, assuming he had sufficient self-esteem to begin with. The ability of the individual to actively contemplate this outcome, and decide to forge ahead is clearly not an impulse, but the ability to discern a course of action. Discernment is only one part of this process. Disclosure and Concealment, discussed below, is another.

Disclosure and Concealment

The disclosure of sexual orientation status is an important action that has multiple consequences. The body of research literature on disclosure is most often discussed within the same literature on sexual identity development (Hunter, 2007). While many linear models exist, more researchers are looking toward more flexible models of identity development. In one area of the overlap between identity development and disclosure, I am emphatically in agreement—the first disclosure occurs within the individual. The initial point engagement as a sexual minority is making the firm internal agreement that, “I am not a heterosexual,” or, “I am not totally straight.” This initial disclosure does not preclude discernment. The stories of the participants in the present study confirm that there have long been lingering questions and circumstances that informed their conclusion that, “yes, I am gay,” or, “lesbian.” The multitude of types of disclosures—the circumstances involved, and the motivations behind each disclosure—are beyond the scope of this project. Hunter (2007) has published a book on this topic, and has thoroughly explored the many different facets of disclosure.

Concealment comprises the other half of this component. Little research has been conducted on concealment. The necessity for concealment in the context of sexual minorities is connected to a number of social groups and institutions, such as the U.S. military policy, “don't ask, don't tell,” where disclosure of sexual orientation status is grounds for dismissal from the Armed Forces (Kavanagh, 1995). The concealment discussed in Kavanagh's article is a type of forced concealment—wherein disclosure of sexual minority status of any kind has the ultimate job-loss consequence for U.S. military

personnel. Other convergence of concealment and sexual minorities appears to have also emerged within the research literature on workplace disclosure. According to Croteau (1996), the research literature on self-concealment in vocational psychology has merely suggested that sexual minority individuals who are more open, are experiencing more discrimination on the job site. Another study that utilized self-concealment (Potoczniak, Aldea, & DeBlaere, 2007) found that self-concealment had a negative mediating role between ego identity commitment and social anxiety. The frustrating part of this second study is the use of measures that are vague, and not explicitly referencing specific sexual minority cues. For instance, Potoczniak et. al. (2007) used the self-concealment scale (Larson & Chastain, 1990) which includes Likert type items like, “some of my secrets have really tormented me,” and, “if I shared all of my secrets with my friends, they’d like me less.” Because the items are not worded specifically about concealing sexual orientation status, a research participant is free to choose any number of secret habits to relate these items. Similarly, Pontoczniak et. al (2007) use a measure called the ego identity process questionnaire (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995) that also does not specifically tap sexual minority ego identity. Some of the items from the subscale called commitment are, “I have definitely decided on the occupation I want to pursue,” and, “the extent to which I value my family is likely to change in the future” (1995). The last item, reversed-scored, is particularly problematic if the reference is not specific to sexual minorities. Again, in the instance of participant 9, he might have valued his family differently if they had thrown him out for disclosing his sexual orientation. Does this mean that his ego identity commitment is somehow lessened?

My point in this discussion is that disclosure and concealment, as research variables, need to be evaluated on context-specific criteria—and also by examining the discernment applied in the decision to disclose or to conceal. In and of themselves, disclosure and concealment are neither negative nor positive; they should be construed as neutral until applied to a specific circumstance or environment. In the example of the participant in the video store, her concealment certainly has no bearing on whether or not she is fully committed to being a lesbian, but that she simply chooses not to potentiate a possible prejudicial exchange—just getting through the day without one more hassle. However, I fully recognize that sometimes, through the process of discernment, not only

does an individual decide to disclose, but will then engage the other individual. These situations constitute the third component, empowerment.

Self-Empowerment

Feminist researchers and clinicians have contributed greatly to the literature of working with oppressed groups. Two of the guiding principles of Empowerment Feminist Therapy or EFT are: personal and social identities are interdependent; and the personal is political (Worell & Remer, 2003). These two Feminist principles connect the component of self-empowerment with two other human agency factors: self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness (Bandura, 2006). Bandura states that self-reactiveness, “involves not only the deliberative ability to make choices and action plans, but also the ability to construct appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution” (p. 165). Regulating the interaction of personal identity as a sexual minority with a larger social system is analogous to the principle of the personal is political. What definitely did not surprise me in the present study is that all the participants experienced some form of discrimination or prejudice from major social systems. These macro-level homonegating processes are rife with politics—all contain one or more layers of bureaucracy where power and privilege is exerted against oppressed minorities. Whether or not a person has disclosed sexual orientation status remains irrelevant. As participants have described, they did not have to be out in certain circumstances to feel disempowered or otherwise affected.

The Feminist principle of personal and social identities are interdependent is nearly mirrored in the human agency factor of self-reflectiveness. Bandura defines self-reflectiveness as, “[t]he metacognitive capability to reflect upon oneself and the adequacy of one’s thoughts and actions [as] the most distinctly human core property of agency.” He goes on to say, “[p]eople do not operate as autonomous agents. Nor is their behavior wholly determined by situational influences. Rather, human functioning is a product of a reciprocal interplay of intrapersonal, behavioral, and environmental determinates” (p. 165) In the present study, the domain of empowerment provides important clues to how this final component I call self-empowerment operates. As seen in the domain of empowerment, there are several facets to this idea that a person exercises their right to not accept a subordinate position politically or personally in a

variety of situations and contexts. These facets are: disengagement, coming-out, advocate, engagement, and values/beliefs. The subcategory of values/beliefs is particularly important to this component of self-empowerment. As demonstrated by the participants, having a core set of ideas or guiding principles, that situate sexual minorities as worthwhile and on-par with heterosexuality or in some ways superior to heterosexuality, play an important role in strengthening the sexual minority individual's sense of resolve in difficult times. The subcategory of coming-out at first seems like it belongs in the component of disclosure or concealment. I believe that the coming-out subcategory of empowerment is fundamentally different than the coming-out subcategory of assessment of sexual orientation in context because the empowerment brand of coming-out exists as a moment of defiance. The circumstances of coming-out under empowerment involve a teachable moment of sorts wherein the participants are making a point by disclosing their sexual orientation. For example, Participant 1 stated, "If the class... has to do with [gay issues]—I will talk about it, because often nobody else will, that's what I think. I also feel what if there is a closeted gay person in there who needs that affirmation, and if I have the power of delivering that affirmation, then who am I not to do it." The subcategory of coming-out in assessment of sexual orientation in context is more descriptive or reveals more of the recounting of the experience or revelation of consequences, as in the experience of Participant 11 when he stated, "so I told him and the first thing he said was, "what else is new." He didn't think that I was gay, but at the same time he had inklings, and it wasn't anything to him, he knows I'm still the same person."

Among these self-empowerment strategies, disengagement at first may seem anomalous. Participants' experiences, on the other hand, demonstrate that creating distance can actually serve to limit the effects of the current stressor. If the primary definition of the empowerment domain is to not-accept someone's oppressive behaviors, then disengagement—walking away—must be an option for empowering the self to recognize that some situations are not going to change in the moment. At other points in time and in other environments, through the process of discernment and choosing disclosure, for the sexual minority individual to engage the oppressor or oppressive environment becomes necessary. Participants have used this self-empowerment strategy

to either introduce a détente in relations with family and coworkers, or to correct well-intentioned friends', acquaintances' or family members' discriminatory and prejudicial language or behaviors. And finally, advocating for other sexual minorities has been described by participants in the present study as an activity that provides the individual a sense of pride, self-worth, or connection to the larger sexual minority community.

These facets of self-empowerment highlight important concepts found in other research, namely Feminist (Worell & Remer, 2003) and human agency factors (Bandura, 2002, 2006). Most importantly, these self-empowerment facets exist as valuable skills that can actually be taught or demonstrated to sexual minorities who may be lacking in this area.

Implications for Training and Practice

Understanding how gay and lesbian individuals learn to cope with the effects of societal heterosexism and homonegating processes is fundamentally a question of social justice. The field of Counseling Psychology has increasingly put more emphasis on the activist role of the psychologist. Psychologists, by right of their socio-educational status, have a unique opportunity to give voice to oppressed groups—a voice that is often silenced or ignored by important policymakers, politicians, and other community leaders. As a counseling psychologist, now more than ever, to approach client issues from a social justice perspective is imperative (Fouad et al., 2004; Goodman et al., 2004; McCrea, McNally, O'Byrne, & Wade, 2004; Prilleltensky, 2003; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). A range of psychological activities from empowerment to social action would be considered social justice work (Toporek & Williams, 2006). I posit that to be effective in interrupting homonegating processes, psychologists must involve themselves in both empowering clients and communities, while also being involved in changing said communities. These strategies do not exclude psychologists who identify as heterosexual, as there are many such “allies” to sexual minorities (Duhigg, 2007).

When working with clients whose environmental conditions are the source of distress, to only focus on the individual's perceptions, cognitions, and behavioral sequelae is short-sighted. We, as professionals should instead split our energies into affecting both social and personal change. Only in this manner can we truly aid oppressed groups of clients (Kiselica, 2004) . While the specialization in Counseling Psychology

has historically included an approach to clients from a healthy mental functioning perspective (Fouad et al., 2004; Hage, 2003), only within the past few decades have the professions of Clinical and Counseling Psychology begun to address the full context of clients' lives from both within and outside of the therapists' office. In addition to actively identifying client strengths and resilience, empowering clients to be active agents for positive change in their personal and social spheres of life is important, while we as practitioners engage ourselves in enacting the same kinds of change (Goodman et al., 2004; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Worell & Remer, 2003). Many times clients simply no longer have the psychic energy to work toward change by themselves (Kiselica, 2004). Increasing our understanding of the ways in which gay and lesbian individuals experience negative situations as a result of heterosexist events, circumstances, and environments afford researchers, clinicians, clients, and policy-makers important clues in changing the structures that reify heterosexism. In the following sections, I offer suggestions for trainees, educators, and practitioners that access both empowerment and social action.

Trainees

One of the most important aspects of training counseling psychologists is also one of counseling psychology's greatest assets—multicultural praxis. The “guidelines” for LGB clients is an important tool for trainees to receive continuing guidance on sexual minority issues. The American Psychological Association adopted a series of guidelines for working with sexual minorities in therapeutic settings in 2000 (“Guidelines for psychotherapy with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients,”). There are sixteen guidelines broken into four sections: (a) attitudes toward homosexuality and bisexuality, (b) relationships and families, (c) issues of diversity, and (d) education. While the guidelines are not “standards,” which carry administrative and boards of ethics oversight, they are considered “best practice” or “aspirational” in nature. A list of these guidelines is given in Appendix G. Educating students about these guidelines will hopefully empower students and trainees to take more ownership of her or his learning and growing competence in working with sexual minorities. I would argue that trainees should develop a sense of awareness about sexual minority issues that include learning about discernment, disclosure and concealment, and self-empowerment as positive coping skills

and resiliency factors for working with sexual minority groups and individuals. These findings from the present research study fall into areas (a), (c), and (d) of the “guidelines.”

A more action-based suggestion would be for trainees to assess their local communities for what resources already exist for sexual minorities. This exploration of the community should, ideally, involve in-vivo experiences at sexual minority community centers, civic organizations, and special community events—including special seminars, lectures, or film series. If a university community has a student organization for sexual minorities, often numerous such community events are offered throughout the year. I would also suggest that trainees seek-out researchers and professors who work with sexual minorities, to gain important insights into the local community and the best way to move-forward in interacting with sexual minorities. Developing a sense of discernment in their own approach to working with LGBT groups and individuals is key to applying these skills to working with sexual minority clients who may not have a well-developed ability to use discernment, disclosure and concealment, or self-empowerment effectively.

The experience related by participant 6 about his preference for a sexual minority therapist is very telling. He states that a heterosexual therapist could not understand the nuances of the sexual minority experience—that it cannot be taught. By engaging themselves in activities designed to provide a more hands-on approach to sexual minority counseling competence, trainees have the maximum opportunity to reflect upon their own attitudes and beliefs, and gain valuable interactions with sexual minorities that can aid in providing more competent and affirmative research and practice with sexual minority clients. Trainees, regardless of sexual orientation, still experience the effects of heterosexism. Without understanding the etiology of heterosexism, trainees run the risk of ventriloquating heterosexist ideas and behaviors onto colleagues and clients. As seen from the participants in the present study, sexual minorities will be keenly aware of behaviors, statements, and appearance of important people—especially their therapists.

Educators

I encourage educators to continue consultation with other professionals that interact regularly with sexual minorities. Educators who already have some competencies

in working with sexual minorities are encouraged to build alliances with professionals outside of Counseling Psychology (some examples would be lawyers and policy analysts, public health officials, school boards, local and national sexual minority advocacy groups, and religious leaders). Building research groups and or regular consultation teams with other psychology specialties like I/O, school psychology, and community psychology are important steps to take in forming strategies to enact positive change for sexual minorities in both meso and macro levels. Educators should also encourage student and trainee participation in the activities stated previously, as appropriate to the level of development and competence.

Including research findings like those of the present study into coursework that deals with multicultural practice is very important to developing counselors, educators, student life personnel and psychologists who will practice affirmative and empirically supported practices with sexual minorities. We should be teaching future practitioners that *how* an LGBT person is responding to his or her environment is the preferred question over the approach of “what is wrong with the client.”

As some of the more affectively-charged responses to heterosexist systems and environments have centered on religious institutions and political parties, systems, and institutions, educators must be sensitive to issues related to religion and politics where sexual minority issues are concerned. Educators should be aware of periods of resistance in counselor development in these domains. Some common points of resistance occur in religiously-conflicted trainees. For professors in programs or departments that do not already have sexual minority policies and curricular programs, two sources exist to guide departments through the process of offering more ethical and competent training in this area (Biaggio, Orchard, Larson, Petrino, & Mihara, 2003; Fischer & DeBord, 2007).

Supervisors are also encouraged to review new research with supervisees on ethical, competent, and affirmative treatments for the wide range of counseling issues that sexual minorities may bring to the therapeutic setting. The present study is another example of new research findings to share with trainees. Teaching trainees to understand that sometimes identity may not be an issue for sexual minorities, but *how* the LGBT client makes use of discernment, disclosure and concealment, and self-empowerment to navigate circumstances and environments that are heterosexist in nature.

Practitioners

Clinicians that have sexual minority clients in psychotherapy whose presenting issues include social and interpersonal difficulties from heterosexist individuals, systems, and environments can use discernment, disclosure and concealment, and self-empowerment in case conceptualization, treatment planning, and psychotherapeutic interventions. Counselors and psychologists can assess the client's abilities to accurately discern personal safety in a variety of settings (e.g., educational environments, social and political events, family or class reunions, faith communities, etc.). Some of the questions used in the interview protocol might be used as standard intake assessment questions for sexual minority clients. Specifically, questions about the history of sexual identity acceptance, reactions from other important individuals that lead LGBT clients to perceive their difference from others, and the changes in individuals or environments pre and post coming-out, would illicit some ways the client may use discernment. Working in various college or university counseling centers I have noticed that some centers do not even ask students questions about sexual orientation status. Other centers ask questions about sexual orientation status but fail to integrate the salience or relevance of that client's sexual orientation into clinical work. These questions should be standard in any clinical setting, but at university imperative.

Because of the overwhelming use of stage models of identity development, therapists should fight the urge to push clients toward disclosure for all situations in clients' lived experiences. Concealing sexual identity from some individuals, systems, and in certain environments can actually be protective for the client. But in order for the client to maximize the benefits of disclosure and concealment, appropriate usage of discernment is essential. Therefore, discernment can be viewed as a necessary skill set to acquire before individuals can maximize the benefits of disclosure or concealment.

Similarly, the benefits of self-empowerment are maximized only if the individual can accurately discern safety, and then make thoughtful decisions about disclosing or concealing sexual identity. These types of self-empowerment are best illustrated in the examples used from Chapter Four when discussing disengagement (concealment) and engagement (disclosure) as facets of empowerment. Assessing for individual abilities in self empowerment can also use questions from the present study.

Clinical supervisors are encouraged to address sexual orientation issues regularly with supervisees and trainees—affording them ample opportunities to reflect, “What am I doing as a therapist to reify heterosexism?” or, “What am I doing to demonstrate my openness to this client?” Physical appearance and dress, as noted from some participants’ comments in the present study, is one example. Practitioners do not need to make an overhaul of their physical appearance, but it is important to note that some sexual minority clients may express hesitation, or exercise a level of concealment that they might not have otherwise, simply from the therapist having made a political or religious comment, the décor of the office, or the style of clothing and accessories.

In keeping with the Empowerment Feminist Therapy principle of a woman’s perspective is valued (Worell & Remer, 2003), therapists working with sexual minority clients should adopt a thoughtful and non-judgmental stance toward the experiences shared by the lesbian, gay, or bisexual client. The unique experience of the sexual minority client is that individual’s story, and sharing it with you, the clinician, should be regarded as a sign of good faith. It is a trust, sometimes almost sacred, for clients struggling to manage an emergent minority sexual identity status to share their experiences with their therapists.

Beyond Sexual Minorities

How do discernment, disclosure and concealment, and self-empowerment fit into a larger conceptualization of coping and resilience for all minority or oppressed groups? Of the three components, discernment may have the broadest utility for other minority and oppressed groups. Potential connections lay in key works by other scholars. For example, Franklin (2000) created a conceptualization of the effects of minority stress (specifically racism and micro-aggressions) called the “invisibility syndrome,” wherein African American men are essentially invisible to Caucasians and other groups due to the prevalence of stereotype, prejudice, and even unwillingness of the Caucasian to recognize the presence of the African American male. African American men exercise discernment in determining where and when they conduct daily business. Invisibility, and its psychological sequelae, may limit or constrict the range of geographic mobility in different environments. Similarly, disengagement and engagement (self-empowerment strategies) serves to empower the African American man when he decides to avoid

certain parts of downtown to avoid racist situations, or to confront the Caucasian coworker who always looks away when he comes walking down the hall.

I also suspect that individuals from religious minorities may also experience similar situations in which discernment, disclosure or concealment, and self-empowerment are utilized. How do devout Jewish individuals make decisions about disclosure in work settings that are largely populated by Christian or another religious background? To whom can they relate? Who on staff is “safe” with whom to share important personal moments? When is confronting the boss when a religious line has been crossed important?

How might the three components of coping and resilience relate to the experience of sexual assault survivors? By what means do the victims of such assaults determine who is a safe or unsafe partner, friend, or even coworker? Might these same elements of discernment afford a greater mobility and degree of personal safety for the sexual assault survivor? Knowing when and where disclosing their status is important, and under what circumstances is also crucial to the psychological healing from such traumatic events. Disclosure and concealment in these situations can also be useful. Regardless of the group or circumstance, discernment may offer a useful conceptualization for the coping and resilience of minority individuals in navigating the specific “ism” or “isms” that present harmful or hurtful systems and environments.

Limitations of the Present Study

Consistent with other qualitative research, different or additional themes might have emerged in these data had subjects with different demographics. Other limitations, however, are limitations dictated by recruitment, screening, and interest from the community. These limitations are: limited participation of ethnic minorities, limited participation of lesbian women, and the contribution of gender-roles. Each of these latter limitations is discussed below.

Recruitment and participation of ethnic minorities in psychological research are ongoing problems within the field of Counseling Psychology. This problem also extends to the recruitment and participation of ethnic and racially diverse sexual minorities (Greene, 1997). While efforts were made to recruit ethnic and racially diverse participants (e.g., solicitation of recruitments through LGBT students of color

organizations), the only participant that self-identified as non-Caucasian was biracial—Caucasian and Native American. This lack of ethnic and racial diversity in the present study limits its results to a predominately Caucasian demographic, and these results may not successfully speak to sexual minorities of color.

The present study also includes a substantial gender imbalance. Homogeneity of the data sample is a hallmark characteristic of creating a well-constructed qualitative study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The intention of the research team was to have an even number of lesbian and gay participants, so that should any substantial differences be discovered, these differences might be controlled by analyzing each group separately. In the current sample, there are two lesbian participants to ten gay male participants. I had considered analyzing the data using only gay men. However after the first round of data analysis was complete, the contribution of the lesbian participants was not substantially different in content than the contributions of the gay men. Since there would be no net effect loss of any domain or subcategory status by removing the lesbian participants, the team and I made the decision to leave the lesbian participants in the data analysis. And, while these two lesbian participants have been included in the present study, more research will be needed before the contribution of gender and gender roles can be understood. Additionally, the research team did not include anyone who identified as lesbian. Therefore, some subtleties present in the lesbian participants' responses may have been lost in analysis.

Gender-role socialization is one key area that needs further analysis. Much of these data suggest that the experience of gender constitutes a major influence on the participants in the current study. A limited number of women participating in the current study limits the ability of these data to speak more broadly to the experience of lesbian woman. For example, one of the pillars of the male code is, “no sissy stuff” or the devaluation of all things feminine. This devaluation was spoken about in these data, however, relational aggression—a prominent feature of female gender-role socialization—was not clearly articulated. Increased lesbian participation in the current study may have presented such evidence.

The rigidity of the CQR method was also another limitation. As discussed earlier, without the ability to reach saturation, via the evolution of the interview protocol, the

phenomenon being explored may not be as fully developed as it would have been by other more traditional qualitative methodologies. Therefore, while the present study's results contribute to the research literature in the areas of coping and resilience with minority stress experiences these data have not uncovered more direct aspects of heteronegativity as defined in Chapter Two.

Suggestions for Future Research

Much research can build upon the foundations derived in the present study. One potential line of research to follow would be to develop quantitative measures to explore discernment, disclosure and concealment, and self-empowerment as coping skills in the larger population of sexual minorities. Once analyzed and validated, what statistical relationships exist between measures of coping skills and levels of distress in sexual minority populations? Do these coping skills apply to sexual minorities of color? If the answer to either of these questions is yes, then more research should follow, to develop interventions for use by clinicians, student services personnel, public health professions among others.

A second direction of research should build from the first research suggestion. What about the domains of resignation and equality? Participants reported experiences of both. Does lower self-empowerment correlate to higher levels of resignation? What about higher levels of discernment correlating to higher levels of equality? These questions remain, for the moment, unanswered.

A third direction for future research would be to conduct a quantitative exploration of heteronegativity that targets participants who prefer to be around other sexual minorities, and not with heterosexuals. The present study was limited in that no such parameters were enforced during participant recruitment. Some statements made by participants in the present study may be reworded to form Likert-type response items. Items could also be generated from ideas expressed in the literature from both Haldeman (2006) and White and Franzini (1999). Since Haldeman puts much weight on gender interactions in his conceptualization of heterophobia, would Gender Role Norms (Levant et al., 1992; Levant et al., 2007) help to understand the mechanisms for coping with heteronegativity? Are gay men, who present as more masculine, more or less likely to

experience direct and overt prejudice and discrimination? What about lesbian women who are also feminine?

A fourth direction for future research would be to examine discernment, disclosure and concealment, and self-empowerment within each level of identity development. Are different strategies and skills used across all levels of identity development, and are there different skills and strategies that are bound to certain developmental contexts? And finally, a fifth direction for future research would be to extend the three components of coping and resilience to other marginalized or oppressed groups--such as ethnic and racial minorities, sexual assault and trauma survivors, and religious or spiritual minorities.

Strengths of the Present Study

One of the greatest strengths of the present study is the contribution it makes to psychology's understanding the complex processes of sexual minority reactions to heterosexist individuals, systems, and environments. Extant research has certainly captured the many elements of prejudice and discrimination that sexual minorities experience on a daily basis, as well as the physical and psychological consequences of such experiences (Meyer, 1995, 2003, 2007). What have not been so fully explored are coping and resiliency factors. In January of 2009, the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* devoted the entire issue to research on sexual minorities. Only two articles directly addressed coping or resilience (Sheets & Mohr, 2009; Szymanski, 2009). I see this as a good sign that the body of literature is ready to explore these issues further. More discussion of coping and resilience is addressed in the following sections.

The second strength of the present study lay in the methodology employed. Consensual Qualitative Research or CQR (Hill et al., 2005; Hill et al., 1997) has a proven record of solid publications in Counseling Psychology journals, even before the popularity of qualitative methods had begun to increase. Add to CQR's utility, the constructivist ontological foundation meshes well with the overall nature of the extant research with sexual minorities—namely that the experience of sexual minorities is a constructed one that relies on as many external as internal factors. Similarly, CQR employs a constructivist approach in the analysis of data. Reaching consensus on the structure of the data is made exponentially more difficult as the present study used four

people for the data analysis and one external auditor. The team approach to CQR certainly follows in the Feminist tradition of valuing the many voices involved in making meaning, but also acts a check against possible investigator biases. The richness and thoroughness of the data could only have been possible through the involvement of the entire team.

The third strength of the present study was in not limiting the participants to one level of identity development. One stipulation that could have been made on the participant screener would have been to ask if the potential participant agreed that she or he preferred to spend more time with other sexual minorities than straight individuals. By selecting only those participants who prefer the company of other sexual minorities, more direct aspects of heteronegativity might have been captured, but may have limited the range or participants to those in the same stage of identity development. This lack of specificity did not impede the richness of these data, but increased the range of experiences captured in the study.

Conclusions

Positive changes can come at the macro, meso and micro levels of enactment, or as Prilleltensky and Nelson (2002) would phrase them: collective, relational, and personal, respectively. I hope to affect some change in the macro or collective arenas through the present study by contributing to the scholarship on lesbian and gay individuals and new directions in terms of exploring a new three-component model for how sexual minorities respond to heterosexist individuals, systems, and environments. I hope that this research will extend into the personal and relational levels of enactment through more affirmative practices with sexual minorities within a wide range of settings and communities. Ultimately, I hope that by better understanding discernment, disclosure and concealment, and self-empowerment, more sexual minorities will be able to share the following statement with participant 8:

I'm not afraid of straight people in the same way that I probably was before... I'm sort of always afraid of large numbers of people who I don't know, but ...I think that probably for a long time I thought that a lot of straight people were going to have some kind of power over me, and I can't articulate what exactly that might have been, but I just felt like they could make me feel miserable, and I don't think

that anymore. I mean I think that they can vote and they can sort-of support really bigoted legislators and legislation and that sort of thing, but I don't think that they can sort of change fundamentally who I am and how I think about myself at this point in time.

Table 5.1

Distribution of Domains and Subcategories Into the Three Components of Coping

Component	Domain	Subcategory	
Discernment	Assessment of Sexual Orientation in Context	Family	
		Heterosexuals Harassment Childhood General	
	Observation of Change	Personal	
		Heterosexuals Advocates for Change Family Gay & Lesbian General	
		Messages/Social Influences	
		Family	
	Social Systems	Media Gender Roles Peers Heterosexuals	
		Religious Institutions Educational Systems & Institutions Political Parties, Systems, & Institutions Media Genera	
		Categorizing	Beliefs about Heterosexuals Social Intuitions Gay & Lesbian General
			Disclosure vs Concealment
Avoiding Confrontation			
Assessment of Sexual Orientation in Context	Pressure Coming Out		
	Work Acquaintances		

Table 5 cont.

**Self-
Empowerment**

Empowerment

Coming Out

Disengagement

Engagement

Values/Beliefs

Advocate

Equality

Parity

Social Systems

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Protocol for Screening Potential Research Participants

Thank you for your interest in this study. Just to remind you, in this study we are examining the many different ways that gay men and lesbian women react to heterosexuals in everyday contexts as well as in moments where discrimination or prejudice may have been involved.

The study will involve about one hour of your time. You will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire that should take no more than 10 minutes to complete, followed by an interview that lasts about 45 to 50 minutes in length. If you are still interested in participating, I have just a few simple questions to make sure that you match the specific requirements of the study.

Are you over the age of 18?	Yes	No
Are you out in at least two areas of your life? (Such as with some family, friends, co-workers)	Yes	No
Have you personally experienced discrimination or prejudice based upon your sexual orientation?	Yes	No

Appendix B: Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Exploring How Gays and Lesbians Cope With Heterosexism

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This is a study of the interactions that lesbian women and gay men have with heterosexuals. To participate in this study you ***MUST BE AT LEAST 18 YEARS OF AGE***. This study is being conducted by J. Russell Couch, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational & Counseling Psychology, under the direction of his graduate advisors, Rory and Pam Remer, PhDs at University of Kentucky. We really appreciate your participation in this study. The purpose of this study is to understand the difficulties that lesbian and gay individuals may have when interacting with heterosexuals in a variety of settings and situations. We are specifically examining situations and past experiences that may lead some lesbians and gays to avoid heterosexuals in specific settings, or in some cases avoiding heterosexuals whenever possible.

This interview will take approximately two hours of your time today.

ALL OF THE INFORMATION YOU SHARE WILL BE TREATED

CONFIDENTIALLY. We are not collecting information that identifies you. Because this interview is being recorded, there is the possibility that your responses today could be intercepted by a third party. In order to minimize these security risks, information from this session today will be transcribed, with any personally identifying information removed. The recordings will then be destroyed.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

Your participation in this study involves sharing your experiences with heterosexuals in a variety of situations and different times in your life, your attitudes about heterosexuals, and behaviors that you may use to interact with heterosexuals in situations that you feel are threatening. By signing this consent form, you are agreeing to participate in the study.

We also have a very brief demographic questionnaire for you to complete before the interview begins.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be discussing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. Although we have made every effort to minimize this, you may find some questions we ask you to be upsetting or stressful. You may choose to not answer a specific question or you may decide to end your participation in this study at any time without penalty.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY PAYMENT OR REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?

For participating in this study, you will be given a gas card valued at \$10.00 U.S. Even if you decide to end participation in the study before we are finished tonight, you may still keep the gas card.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. However, we may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from the Office of Research Integrity at University of Kentucky. The results of this study however will be analyzed and reported as a whole, with no individually identifiable information. Your responses today will aid in the understanding of the effects of heterosexism on individual lesbians and gays.

CAN MY TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

You may elect to stop your participation at any time with no consequences to you.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study, please contact J. Russell Couch at jrussell.couch@uky.edu or (859) 257-1022. If you have any questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at (859) 257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Signature of authorized person obtaining informed consent

Date

J. Russell Couch, M.S., Ed. S.

Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

1. State in which you currently live: _____

2. My city/town is:

- Rural (less than 5,000)
- Small Town
- City
- Urban (more than 100,000)
- Metro Area (Big cities like New York; L.A.; Chicago; Boston; and Atlanta)

3. My current current employment status is: (Check all that apply)

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Student
- Retired
- Unemployed

4. My personal yearly income is:

- 0-9,999
- 10,000-19,999
- 20,000-29,999
- 30,000-39,999
- 40,000-49,999
- 50,000-59,999
- 60,000-69,999
- 70,000-79,999
- 80,000-89,999
- 90,000-99,999
- 100,000 or more
- prefer not to answer

5. My highest level of education is:

- Some High School
- High School Diploma
- Some College
- College Degree
- Professional/Graduate Degree

6. Age in years: _____

7. My Racial or Ethnic Identity Group is:

- European-American//White
- African-American//Black
- Asian/Pacific American
- Latino/Hispanic/Chicana American
- Native American/American Indian
- Biracial
- Other (Please specify: _____)

8. Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Identity Development:

A: I have decided that I am most definitely *not* heterosexual:

- Within the past year
- Within the past five years
- Within the past ten years
- Over ten years ago (specify how long if you remember:_____)

B: After coming out to myself, I have had social contact with other gay and lesbian persons:

- Within the past year
- Within the past five years
- Within the past ten years
- Over ten years ago (specify how long if you remember:_____)

C: I have a core group of individuals who are supportive and affirmative about me as a gay man or lesbian woman that includes: (Select all that apply)

- Family members
- Co-workers or Fellow Students
- Employers or "Management"
- Religious/Spiritual Members
- Clergy
- Casual Friends
- "Best" Friends
- Teachers/Professors/Mentors
- Significant other

D: I am "out" to my family: (Select all that apply)

- Not at all out to family
- To a sibling (brother or sister)
- To one parent
- To both parents
- To grandparent(s)
- To cousin(s)
- To aunt(s) or uncle(s)

E: I have had *at least one* same-sex intimate relationship of:

- I have never had a same-sex relationship
- I have dated occasionally
- For about a month
- For three to six months
- For a year
- For two to five years
- For six to ten years
- For more than ten years (Specify how long:_____)

F: I am involved within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans community:

(Select all that apply)

- Subscribing to a LGBT magazine or newspaper
- Talking with individuals in your community about LGBT issues
- Talking with family members about LGBT issues
- Attending LGBT community social events (bars, clubs, Pride events)
- Membership in political action groups like Bluegrass Fairness or the HRC
- Writing your elected officials about LGBT matters
- Attending LGBT rallies or political events
- Being an open advocate for LGBT rights in the workplace
- Being an open advocate for religious or spiritual affiliated LGBT individuals

9. How long have you been out? _____

10. How old were you when you first “came-out”? _____

For the following questions:

LIST ONLY FIRST NAMES OF YOUR FRIENDS TO PROTECT ANONYMITY.

11. Who are your close personal friends that are straight men? **FIRST NAMES ONLY**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

12. Who are your close personal friends that are gay men? **FIRST NAMES ONLY**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

13. Who are your close personal friends that are bisexual men? **FIRST NAMES ONLY**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

14. Who are your close personal friends that are straight women? **FIRST NAMES ONLY**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

15. Who are your close personal friends that are lesbian women? **FIRST NAMES ONLY**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

16. Who are your close personal friends that are bisexual women? **FIRST NAMES ONLY**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

17. Have you ever been married to a member of the opposite sex? Yes No

18. If yes how long were you (or currently have been) married? _____

19. Were you “out” to your spouse before you were married? Yes No

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Research question: What are the central features of heteronegativity that are manifest in the lived experience of lesbian and gay individuals, and how does heteronegativity impact the lives of lesbian and gay individuals?

1. Many gay and lesbian individuals say they knew that they were different from other people much sooner than when they actually “came-out” themselves. Think back to a time when you knew you were different than other people because of who you were attracted to. Tell me more about that experience. Tell me about how you knew you were different.
2. What were other people’s reactions to your being different? Before you came-out? After you came-out?
3. What are your general attitudes about heterosexual people? As a group? Specific kinds of straight people? Your straight family members? Your straight co-workers? Your straight friends?
4. How do you determine if a straight person is safe or not safe (not ok to be around)? The feelings involved. The thoughts. How do you put that into practice behaviorally (what actual actions do you take to make sure you are safe)?
5. Many lesbians and gays do not disclose their sexual orientation in every setting or situation. If this is true for you, how do you decide to disclose your orientation?
6. Tell me about the first time you felt discriminated against as a lesbian/gay man. The worst experience. The most recent experience. What did you do about it? How has it affected your life?
7. When you are in a situation where you *have* to interact with straight individuals—even if you know they might be prejudiced against lesbians or gays—how do you deal with those incidences? Give me an example of a situation where you had to interact with someone who you knew might give you problems because of your sexual orientation.
8. Some individuals have described situations where they were in a mixed-group of individuals and someone in the crowd had said something very stereotypical

about being gay or lesbian. Can you think of a time where this happened in your presence? What did you think? How did you feel? Did you do anything about it? How do these incidents affect you now?

9. Is there anything else you would like to share about the way your sexual orientation affects the way you interact with straight individuals of the same sex? What about the opposite sex?
10. Each of us is more than just a gay man or lesbian woman. Are there other parts of who you are (race, ethnicity, or gender) that have made the situations we have talked about today more complicated? (e.g., Person of Color and gay, woman and lesbian). If so, can you describe these identities, and how they influence your decisions about disclosure?
11. How do you see gays and lesbians portrayed in our society in general? Media, religion, education, government. How do these images impact the way you relate to heterosexuals?
12. What did you learn about how men (or women) should or should not behave? How have these rules about men (or women) affected you as a gay man (or lesbian woman)? As a child, as an adolescent, now?
13. How have the national debates about same-sex marriage or the role of gays and lesbians in religion affected you as a gay man (or lesbian woman)? Has this impacted the way you interact with heterosexuals?
14. In general, how have your reactions to heterosexuals changed after you “came-out”? Describe some of these changes.

Appendix E: Example of Domain Abstracts for a Transcript

Participant 3

Assessment of Sexual Orientation in Context

- My mother's reaction to my coming out was one of disbelief, my father's that of anger and inappropriate jokes.
- My parents had a typical Baptist response to my coming-out.
- My parents were closer to kicking me out of their lives for being gay than being accepting of it.
- My parents wanted me to go to a reparative therapy program.
- It has been a long time since I experience direct discrimination because I work in a liberal job environment, I go to a very accepting church and I have been out to my family for a long time.
- Sometimes I feel that I overanalyze things. I try to separate lighthearted jokes from the belittling ones. I don't want to get called-out for taking things too seriously.
- When I was very young I knew I was different—not gay or heterosexual—just that I loved watching those masculine men on TV.
- Most situations in every day life do not necessitate my being out, but if the stakes are high, or it is relevant, I certainly don't hide my sexuality.
- If I sense that someone is not safe, I will physically remove myself from the situation, if they are safe I will interact with them a bit, but not on a personal level. If I sense that they are beyond safe into accepting, I will be more involved with them.
- I once felt discriminated against at work on a project, but I had no proof—I just sensed that was the underlying issue.
- My immediate supervisor wanted to replace me with a cute young woman—that made me wonder if he was discriminating against me for being gay.
- About twenty years ago, someone vandalized my home, and I really got the sense that it was someone who was not very happy with me, and also knew I was gay.
- My sexuality becomes relevant if I feel somehow threatened either physically or psychologically.

Observation of Change

- The older a person gets, the more tolerant they become.
- I dated girls, and it wasn't that bad, but I still had lingering images of the men from TV in my mind.
- Things have really changed for younger gay men, boys in middle school and high school can come out, and older men who were trapped in marriages can now come out—I just happened to come out in my late 20's.
- As a general group, straight people are becoming more accepting of gays and see them as more similar than different from themselves.
- My relationship with my parents has come full circle—largely because of my religious faith. It takes years and years to rebuild a relationship that was so drastically altered like mine was—all because of who I am.

Messages/Social Influences

- Media, my parents, and my brothers all reinforced the idea that boys like girls and vice-versa. I wasn't repulsed by girls, but I was still very attracted to the guys on TV.
- I knew I was different as a child because of who I was attracted to on television shows- *the wild, wild west*.
- I dated women and went to prom, just like I was supposed to.
- Gay men are supposed to do feminine things.
- I have ignored the gender messages from my youth in my adult life.
- Today, people are increasingly influenced by things like youtube and the media.
- The men in my family have not treated women well.
- People are most influenced by their parents. Either you are just like them, or you are completely opposite.
- I was influenced by my grandparents' attitude of "go out and get it," you just have to take what you need in life rather than sit idly by.
- I have heard both positive and negative stories about coming-out to parents—from total acceptance to complete rejection.

Social Systems

- Education in this country is at least a little more progressive in their attitudes toward sexual minorities.
- If you are gay, and even mildly politically active, you think to yourself sometimes, 'man it would just be so much less complicated if I were a straight man.'
- Even though we have not had to endure the many atrocities that African Americans suffered throughout slavery, I would say that we are still second-class citizens in this country.
- I am sad that American culture has not progressed any further on same-sex marriage. I really wanted to thank John Edwards's wife for being so outspoken in her support on the issue.
- I can be intense in my opinions, but I simply want equal rights that come with marriage, not special rights.
- I think that in terms of religion and government, they are both interchangeable where attitudes about sexual minorities are concerned. There are small pockets of acceptance, but largely we are slightly second-class citizens.

Categorizing

- We all have our preconceived ideas about different groups. I just try to look beyond that most of the time.
- My parents had a typical Baptist response to my coming-out.
- George Bush and the NRA are idiotic morons, truly unenlightened.
- The straight people I regularly deal with are welcoming and accepting of who I am.
- There are good straight people, and then there are bad straight people.
- I get an impression of a safe or not safe straight person from my first visual impression of them.

- Unsafe straight guys give visual cues: smokers, are ultra masculine in look and behavior, and have stand-offish personalities.
- Straight bosses are harder on gay employees.
- I think the guy who vandalized my house was just a closeted gay man who didn't like my open lifestyle.
- Men who are hardest on gay men, are usually gay themselves.
- All gays and lesbians are subject to homonegative talk.
- Gay men are supposed to do feminine things.

Empowerment

- While I tire of always being in the spotlight, you have to make do with the situation you are in. You just deal with it.
- In less intense instances of discrimination, I will just take the stance of, "well screw you too."
- I will not back down from a confrontation with someone just because they have a different belief than I do.
- I confronted the man who vandalized my house and told him I got a lawyer, and filed a police report.
- If I encounter discrimination in a store or restaurant, I will put it right back in their face.
- I usually directly question people if they are having issues with my sexuality, especially if I sense tension that I feel is there because of my being gay.
- I make a conscious effort not to let the larger society impede my daily interactions with straight folks—unless it is my local congressman who openly denies gay rights, then I will make my voice heard.
- I was influenced by my grandparents' attitude of "go out and get it," you just have to take what you need in life rather than sit idly by.
- Be fulfilled with who and what you are.
- I am what I am—no person or group can change that. No thanks.

Resignation

- Even though I've been out to my parents for years, it is a topic that we just cannot discuss now.

Equality

- Most people are inherently alike, we all want happiness and success.
- There are good straight people, and then there are bad straight people.
- Gays and straights want basically the same things in life.
- I will give you the benefit of the doubt, and treat you as well as I want to be treated, until you prove that you cannot be trusted.
- You do your thing, just let me do my thing—that's how it should be.
- I can be intense in my opinions, but I simply want equal rights that come with marriage, not special rights.

Appendix F: Example of Consensual Cross-Analysis for One Participant

Participant 9

Assessment of Sexual Orientation in Context

Family

- My mother cried when I told her I was gay.
- It's a don't ask don't tell situation in my family.
- My dad is very against homosexuality.

Childhood

- None

General

- I wanted to make heterosexuals feel the way they have made me feel.
- I have to take steps to protect myself at all times because any situation can degenerate into violence because I am gay.

Coming Out

- My experiences of coming out were less extreme than what others have experienced.

Heterosexuals

- I hated heterosexuals for placing gay men under such social scrutiny.
- Some people look slapped in the face when you come out to them.

Work

- The straight servers where I work express positive opinions of me.
- Customers still make comments about my being gay at work.
- My boss stands up for me at work when it comes to customers.
- I can be more of myself around my women coworkers, because they enjoy my comments.

Harassment

- Even though I'm ashamed to admit it, I was so closeted that I participated in taunting other kids who were thought to be gay.
- My best friend started harassing me about my earring.
- Harassment still makes me feel depressed, and chips away at my self-esteem.

Acquaintances

- My best friend stopped talking to me completely the day I came out to him.
- I was surprised to hear the level of hatred towards gays from a random classmate.

Observation of Change

General

- Things are different now in the 21st century.
- I thought I'd have to fight the whole world when I came out, but I haven't.
- I came out to someone, and the distance I experienced after coming out to him has decreased a little each day.
- Over time, my friend began talking to me again.
- Friends don't have to be cut from the same cloth, they can be different and still have a close friendship.

Personal

- I have been as changed in my view of heterosexuals as heterosexual people in my life have changed about gays.
- My worst experience with a straight man turned out to also be my best experience with a straight man.
- I had overestimated how much change has taken place.
- Because I see so few gay men, I'm always thinking, is this the man of my dreams?

Advocate of Change

- Once I stood up for myself at work, things have really changed, and people are not harassing me anymore.

Heterosexuals

- People are cool with you before they know you're gay, and then they become distant after you come out to them.
- I am more cautious now around straight people.
- I respond to heterosexuals now based upon how they treat me.

Family

- Some family members who were homonegative before I came out are now important allies for gays.

Messages/Social Influences

General Messages

- Gay jokes are okay if they make us look good.

Peers

- Watching others' reactions to openly gay men let me know that it was not okay to be out.
- I felt the pain that other gay men were experiencing even though I wasn't out.

Heterosexuals

- Gay men have to be very careful about how they treat straight men.

Gender Roles

- Men don't wear feminine things.
- Even though I enjoyed playing Barbie, I still did all of the boy things.

Media

- None

Family

- My mother wanted me to have a "normal" life.

Social Systems

Religious Institutions

- I tried to be the best Christian as possible so that I could not be gay anymore.
- I stood on a mountain in a thunderstorm to prove my devotion to God.
- I followed the bible literally so that I could try to be straight.
- Preachers talk about gay people as though they were the plague or a disease.
- My church made me want to get away from religion all together.
- Religion is the root of all social ills.

Educational Systems & Institutions

- None

Political Parties, Systems & Institutions

- None

Media

- The media paints us as flamers, flouncing around and totally not serious.

General

- The world sees gays as trouble makers, anomalies, and in the way of business as usual. We should be kept quiet.

Categorizing

General

- None

Social Institutions

- None

Challenged Assumptions

- I expected people to throw me out on the street for being gay.

Gender Roles

- Redneck men are just trying to be the alpha male at any cost and will use anything to their advantage against you.

Beliefs about Heterosexuals

- Heterosexuals aren't as good as gays when being sympathetic to others.
- Rednecks are uneducated, primitive and hyper-masculine.
- Straight women flock to gay men like moths to flames.
- The kitchen workers where I work are rednecks who will lash-out at anyone.
- Bigots are not safe people.
- Straight men are deathly afraid of being attractive to another guy.

Gay and Lesbian

- Gay men are more in touch with emotions and not afraid to cry.
- Gays are fundamentally different than straight men.
- Many gay men are very effeminate.
- As long as you aren't flamboyant, you are safe.

Empowerment

Disengagement

- If you don't put yourself into dangerous situations, you have nothing to fear.
- I don't always wear "pride" items to clubs to protect myself.
- Why waste time and energy on someone who you will barely interact with?

Coming Out

- I was persistently out once I finally came out.
- I wanted everyone important in my life to know about my being gay.
- People with whom I interact on a regular basis need to know that I am gay, so that I can be a positive influence for change.
- If you come-out in an angry way, it serves no one.
- I come-out to people in a very casual way.

Advocate

- I feel that I have to be an example or role model as a gay man.
- I feel it's my duty to make others comfortable around me so that I can educate them about gays.
- My being out might make the world a better place for future generations of gay men.
- I tell other gay people about to come out that it's like playing a game of chess.
- I hope to make changes in my field in terms of being a role model.

Engagement

- Some people at work thought I'd back down, but I filed harassment lawsuits against them, now they leave me alone.
- I enjoy deconstructing others' faulty arguments about gays.
- I have a chance to articulate clearly to other religious folks and educate them on what the bible really says.

Values/Beliefs

- I always keep an open mind, even to those that others would say are insane.

Resignation

Avoiding Confrontation

- I kept my mouth shut in psychology class.

Rationalizing

- I reminded myself that this was only one situation, and to keep my mouth shut.
- I was disappointed that I never said anything.

Pressure

- None

Suppression

- You have to suppress your own thoughts and desires to make sure you don't upset straight people.
- There are some things you just don't say around straight people.

Equality

Parity

- My family lets me love who I want, and doesn't make them feel uncomfortable, that's as comfortable as I can expect to be.

Social Institutions

- None

Appendix G: List of Guidelines for Psychotherapy with LGB Clients

Attitudes toward Homosexuality and Bisexuality

- **Guideline 1.** Psychologists understand that homosexuality and bisexuality are not indicative of mental illness.
- **Guideline 2.** Psychologists are encouraged to recognize how their attitudes and knowledge about lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues may be relevant to assessment and treatment and seek consultation or make appropriate referrals when indicated.
- **Guideline 3.** Psychologists strive to understand the ways in which social stigmatization (i.e., prejudice, discrimination, and violence) poses risks to the mental health and well-being of lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients.
- **Guideline 4.** Psychologists strive to understand how inaccurate or prejudicial views of homosexuality or bisexuality may affect the client's presentation in treatment and the therapeutic process.

Relationships and Families

- **Guideline 5.** Psychologists strive to be knowledgeable about and respect the importance of lesbian, gay, and bisexual relationships.
- **Guideline 6.** Psychologists strive to understand the particular circumstances and challenges facing lesbian, gay, and bisexual parents.
- **Guideline 7.** Psychologists recognize that the families of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people may include people who are not legally or biologically related.
- **Guideline 8.** Psychologists strive to understand how a person's homosexual or bisexual orientation may have an impact on his or her family of origin and the relationship to that family of origin.

Issues of Diversity

- **Guideline 9.** Psychologists are encouraged to recognize the particular life issues or challenges experienced by lesbian, gay, and bisexual members of racial and ethnic minorities that are related to multiple and often conflicting cultural norms, values, and beliefs.
- **Guideline 10.** Psychologists are encouraged to recognize the particular challenges experienced by bisexual individuals.
- **Guideline 11.** Psychologists strive to understand the special problems and risks that exist for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth.
- **Guideline 12.** Psychologists consider generational differences within lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations, and the particular challenges that may be experienced by lesbian, gay, and bisexual older adults.
- **Guideline 13.** Psychologists are encouraged to recognize the particular challenges experienced by lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals with physical, sensory, and/or cognitive/emotional disabilities.

Education

- **Guideline 14.** Psychologists support the provision of professional education and training on lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues.
- **Guideline 15.** Psychologists are encouraged to increase their knowledge and understanding of homosexuality and bisexuality through continuing education, training, supervision, and consultation.
- **Guideline 16.** Psychologists make reasonable efforts to familiarize themselves with relevant mental health, educational, and community resources for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people.

("Guidelines for psychotherapy with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients," 2000)

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VITA
James Russell Couch

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Born January 16, 1973
Georgetown, Ohio

II. EMPLOYMENT

2008-present	Pre-doctoral Psychology Intern Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
2007	Adjunct Faculty, Department of Psychology Morehead State University
2004-2008	Instructor of record, Educational & Counseling Psychology University of Kentucky
2004	Projects Coordinator, Psychosocial Research Initiative for Sexual Minorities University of Kentucky

III. EDUCATION

2006-2009	Ph.D. candidate in Counseling Psychology from University of Kentucky Lexington, KY
2005	Ed. S. in Counseling Psychology from University of Kentucky Lexington, KY
2004	M.S. in Counseling Psychology from University of Kentucky Lexington, KY
2003	M.A. in Theatre Arts from University of Kentucky Lexington, KY
1998	B.A. in Liberal Arts from Berea College Berea, KY

IV. AWARDS

2007	Student of the Year, Division 51: Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinity American Psychological Association
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V. GRANT FUNDING

- 2007 *Graduate Student Support* (\$1,500 funded) To support travel to receive outstanding student honors at the American Psychological Association national convention in San Francisco, CA.
- 2005-2007 *Graduate Student Support* (\$1,200 funded) To support travel to present research at American Psychological Association national conventions in Washington, DC, and New Orleans; as well as travel to present at the American Educational Research Association national convention in Chicago.

VI. JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

- Riggle, E., Rostosky, S., Couch, R., Campbell, J., Brodnicki, C. and Savage, T. (2006) To have or not to have: Advanced planning by same-sex couples. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy: Journal of NSRC*, 3 (1), 22-32.
- Dudley, M. G., Rostosky, S. S., Riggle, E. D. B., Duhigg, J. M., Brodnicki, C., & Couch, R. (2005). Same-sex couples' experiences with homonegativity. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 1(4), 68-93.

VII. PRESENTATIONS

- Couch, R., Anderman, L. H. & Riding-Malon, R.. (2007) *The Interaction of Press and Support in Mastery Structured High School Classrooms*. Poster session at the 2007 American Educational Research Association National Convention, Chicago, IL.
- Couch, R., Guerrero, J., Gray, B. E. and Olson, A. (2006) *The reel experiences of LGBT individuals*. Poster session at the 2006 American Psychological Association National Convention, New Orleans, LA.
- Rostosky, S., Couch, R., Singletary, G. and Roberts, S. (2005) *Interracial same-sex couples and minority stress*. Poster session at the 2005 American Psychological Association National Convention, Washington, DC.
- Riggle, E., Couch, R., Brodnicki, C. and Savage, T. (2005) *Advance Planning Documents and Same-Sex Couples*. Poster session at the 2005 American Psychological Association National Convention, Washington, DC.