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The Impact of Work on Gay Male Identity Among Male Flight Attendants

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THE IMPACT OF WORK ON GAY MALE IDENTITY

AMONG MALE FLIGHT ATTENDANTS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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Hats off to the male flight attendants who participated in this study, therefore making it possible. In addition to giving their time, these men willingly shared their personal experience of being gay in the working world.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In June, 1969 police made an arbitrary raid on a gay
bar in New York. The raid itself was not significant as
these raids were quite common at the time. The significance
of this event lies in the spontaneous reaction of the gay
men and women who left the bar and went into the streets to
fight against police harassment and social oppression. In
gay culture this event is referred to as the Stonewall riot
and represents a shift in gay lifestyle from the secretive
bar to the establishment of gay and lesbian communities in
major cities around the world. In essence, Stonewall
symbolized the end of closet homosexuality and the beginning
of the "coming out" process for gay men and women in
America.

Coming out, on a global level, indexes the act whereby
someone declares their identity to be "homosexual" or "gay"
to family, friends, or co-workers who assumed the person to
be "straight" or "heterosexual" (Herdt, 1992). The process
of consolidation and integration of sexual identity is
conceptualized as part of the "coming out process" by
Vivienne Cass (1979) in her theoretical model of homosexual
identity formation. Consolidation may be equated with
coming out to oneself, and integration, with coming out to

others. Isay (1989) does not conceptualize coming out as a goal in itself, but views it as being part of the developmental task of establishing self esteem.

Four years after the Stonewall riot the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a disease. Stonewall and the American Psychiatric Association's mandate dramatically changed the course of psychological inquiry into homosexuality. Research on homosexuality would no longer be based on a medical model and studied to determine its cause and treatment. A new line of research, in place of studying the origins and causes, began to focus on exploration of developmental pathways leading to gay identity formation and issues surrounding identity, gay lifestyle and culture.

Gay represents more than a sexual act. Gay today is perceived, more in urban centers and more frequently among younger cohorts, as a distinct cultural category. Although the term "homosexual" is often used synonymously with those of "gay/lesbian", there are different cultural meanings surrounding each construct. The "homosexual" cultural system indexes the historically older pathology discourse; whereas the "gay" cultural system incorporates emergent meanings that are still disparaged in the mainstream homosexual society, but not in the lesbian and gay community (Herdt & Boxer, 1992). Gay culture is formed by social movements and events and characterized by such positive

images as the fiction of Edmund White and David Leavitt and the film, Long Time Companion. The Gay and Lesbian Pride Day Parade is held on the last Sunday in June across the United States to commemorate the Stonewall Rebellion. Gay signifies not only identity and role but also a distinctive system of rules, norms, attitudes and beliefs from which the culture of gay men is made (Herdt, 1992).

The historical circumstances growing out of Stonewall made it possible for men and women to declare their sexual identities at an earlier age. Evidence suggests that the age of self-identification as gay or lesbian has been lowering over the last 50 years (Coleman, 1982; Herdt, 1989; Troiden, 1989). Interviews in a recent Chicago study of gay and lesbian youth revealed that the average age of disclosure was 16.75 for males (Boxer, 1990). Due to these trends, research in the 25 years since the Stonewall riot has focused primarily on early developmental issues rather than outcomes. According to Herrell (1992), these studies have found that,

> gay men's identities derive from self interests and not from parents and peers in childhood, as in the case with straights. The discovery and confirmation of gay selfhood proceeds through social relationships. For men, first in sex, then in love, selfhood initiates gay culture (p. 12).

Although research on early developmental issues is both necessary and useful, Boxer and Herdt (1992) stated,

> With concern fixed on childhood, too little attention
> has been devoted to studying either adolescents or
> adulthood as other than an outcome of childhood.
> Experiences across the life course and their impact on
> identity has been given little attention (p. 16).

The workplace is a major focus of personal evaluation
and makes a contribution to self-esteem through the
awareness of one's efficacy and competence and through the
production of things valued by other people. Yet within the
workplace, discrimination against gay people, the
stigmatization of homosexuality and the interface of gay
male identity and vocation has not been widely researched.
Escoffier (1975) noted that there is inadequate information
about the consistency between occupational and job
characteristics and the special requirements of gay workers.
He suggests that the occupational choices of gay people are
made in light of the usual considerations of expected income
and preferences for occupations for which one's innate
abilities and personal characteristics appear to be suited.
He further suggests a pattern of gay distribution within
jobs that would be dependent on the stress put on "passing"
(concealment of homosexuality) and individual success at
passing. Ultimately, what each job choice indicates is an
attempt by an individual to blend personal identity needs
with the needs met by one's career. Individuals who place a
high value on passing may enter a conservative occupation
that has norms that do not allow for deviations from
heterosexuality. The military, civil service, and teaching

might be classified in this category. Another class of occupations dependent more on reliable credentialing processes, where job effectiveness can be easily measured, may be classified as more liberal and tolerant of the disclosure of gay interests. Actors, artists, carpenters and small business owners are examples of these occupations.

A third class of occupations are those publicly labeled as predominantly open to gay people or, even if not publicly known to be, that do actually employ many gay people. These tend to be forms of service occupations such as hairdressers, interior decorators and waiters. In these occupations there are usually many gay people who are not willing or able to conceal their homosexuality. Occupations in this category have traditionally been filled with the opposite sex. Escoffier suggests that one explanation for gay people being willing to enter opposite-sex-typed occupations is that the stigma of being the opposite sex in such work may not be that onerous for a gay man.

In an effort to extend the study of identity formation in gay men, this study will examine gay male sexual identity development among a sociodemographically diverse sample of flight attendants. This occupation could presumably be classified as a job that has traditionally been filled by the opposite sex and would fall into the third category of occupations under Escoffier's suggested stratification of

jobs. The influences of the profession on gay male identity development will be examined in addition to social class, education, ethnicity and age.

<div align="center"><u>Purpose of the Study</u></div>

The suggestion that gay men and women have a need to work in an open environment free from discrimination in order to achieve psychological well being and promote positive gay identity is an openly debated topic in our society. In 1994, United States President William Clinton proposed a change in military policy to enable the inclusion of homosexuals openly serving in the military. This proposal stirred considerable controversy and the resulting compromise was a "don't ask don't tell" policy.

Awareness within the gay community itself of the impact of a working environment on gay identity development has changed drastically in the last two decades. In 1975, Bell and Weinberg found that two-thirds of their sample of gays and lesbians believed their work lives had been unaffected by their homosexuality and vice versa. By 1991, a shift in attitude had clearly taken place. The New York Times published an article that year entitled, "Gay Rights, Issue of the 90's", concerning discrimination by companies toward gay people and the measures being taken to halt it. George Kronenburger echoed this theme in an article entitled "Out of the Closet" and proclaimed that gays and lesbians were feeling more comfortable being open and out on the job

(Kronenburger, 1991). This marks a definite shift in attitude from the gay men and women of the 1975 Bell and Weinberg study who failed to see any connection between their work life and their gay identity.

The concept of prevailing roles and attitudes within a workplace toward gay identity either facilitating or hindering identity formation has been addressed in the literature but there are few empirical studies of this subject. As noted by Herdt (1992), studies of gay identity development have primarily focused on events occurring in adolescence. Research examining the effects of events occurring in adulthood (such as work) and their influence is practically nonexistent. In this study, I propose to examine how the personal and social roles in which gay men evolved interact within the workplace. I have chosen the occupation of flight attendant for study due to the large number of gay men employed in this position.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

1. Was the profession of flight attendant chosen as a context for the coming out process? (Coming out indexes the act whereby someone declares their identity to be "homosexual" or "gay" to family, friends, or co-workers who assumed the person to be "heterosexual".)

2. Has the profession of flight attendant facilitated the coming out process? What is the association between length of employment as a flight attendant and acculturation

into the gay community?

3. Has working as a flight attendant enabled the men to fulfill their social needs as gay men through relationships with others within the profession?

The following research questions are directed at assessing whether the career of flight attendant has promoted a positive identity for a gay man:

4. What is the relationship between length of employment as a flight attendant and personal self-esteem, mental health, and career satisfaction?

5. What is the relationship between perceived freedom to be open and oneself on the job and personal self-esteem, mental, health and career satisfaction?

6. What is the relationship between perceived support of gay identity and personal self-esteem, mental health, and career satisfaction?

7. What is the relationship between perceived discrimination within the job and personal self-esteem, mental health, and career satisfaction?

<u>Theoretical Basis</u>

Sexual conduct is primarily social in origin (Gagnon, 1977). Sexual conduct and its meaning vary among cultures because sexual learning occurs within specific sociocultural settings and specific historical eras. People learn to identify and label their sexual feelings through experiences gained with gender roles and their related scripts.

Committed homosexuals recall having arrived at perceptions
of self as homosexual in relation to romantic and sexual
settings (Troiden, 1989).

The homosexual identity is one of several identities
incorporated into a person's self-concept. A perception of
self as homosexual is an attitude, a potential line of
action toward self and others, that is mobilized in settings
(imagined or real) defined as sexual or romantic. Depending
upon the context, the homosexual identity may function as a
self-identity, a perceived identity, a presented identity,
or all three (Cass, 1983/84).

The homosexual identity, according to Cass, is a self-
identity when people see themselves as homosexual in
relation to sexual settings. It is a perceived identity in
situations where people think or know that others view them
as homosexual. It is a presented identity when people
announce themselves as homosexual in concrete social
settings. Homosexual identities are most fully realized in
situations where self-identity, perceived identity, and
presented identity coincide -- where an agreement exists
between who people think they are, who they claim they are,
and how others view them (Cass, 1983/1984).

Richard Isay's view of a positive gay identity is
similar to that of Cass. In his book, Being Homosexual,
Isay (1989) defines the personality of a well integrated gay
man as one in which there is reasonable intrapsychic harmony

so that he may feel positive about his personal identity as a homosexual and work and live without significant hindrance from intrapsychic conflict.

Significance of the Study

Gay identity development extends into adulthood and is affected by events occurring over the life course. Within relationships the gay man must repeatedly choose whether or not to reveal his sexual identity. These decisions may influence his self-esteem and mental health. Within a work setting, his job satisfaction may either be enhanced or reduced.

The significance of this study is that to date there have been few empirical investigations examining these issues. Research in this area would extend knowledge of how gay identity development is impacted by the adult life event of work. This knowledge would broaden theory on gay identity development and provide useful information to clinicians working with this population.

Summary

This chapter has introduced the research study on how the personal and social roles in which gay men evolved interact within the workplace and affect gay identity development. This chapter presented the research questions, theoretical rationale and significance of the study. The next chapter reviews clinical literature and empirical research. It is divided into sections covering theoretical

models of homosexual identity, positive identity in gay men and gay identity and occupation. Chapter three will review the methods utilized in this work. Chapter four presents the results obtained from the research, and chapter five provides a summary of the study, including discussion of the data, limitations of the study, and implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical Models of Homosexual Identity

Several theoretical models that attempt to explain the formation of homosexual identity have been proposed during the last 15 years (Cass, 1979, 1984; Troiden, 1977, 1979; Weinberg, 1977, 1978). Although varying in the number of stages identified, these models describe similar patterns of growth and change as major hallmarks of homosexual identity development (Troiden, 1989).

According to Troiden, nearly all models view homosexual identity formation as taking place against a background of stigma. The stigma surrounding homosexuality affects the formation and expression of homosexual identities. Secondly, homosexual identities are described as developing over a protracted period and involving a number of growth points that may be ordered into a series of stages. Third, homosexual identity formation involves increasing acceptance of the label "homosexual" as applied to the self. Fourth, although "coming out" begins when individuals define themselves as homosexual, lesbians and gay males typically report an increased desire over time to disclose their homosexual identity to at least some members of an expanding

series of audiences. Thus, coming out, or identity disclosure, takes place at a number of levels: to self, to other homosexuals, to heterosexual friends, to family, to coworkers, and to the public at large. Fifth, lesbians and gays develop "increasingly personalized and frequent" social contacts with other homosexuals over time (Troiden, 1989).

The model proposed by Troiden in 1988 represents a synthesis and an elaboration on previous research and theorizing on homosexual development. Troiden's four-stage model is not conceptualized as a linear, step by step process in which one stage precedes another and one necessarily builds on another, with fluctuations written off as developmental regressions. Instead he likens the process of homosexual identity formation to a horizontal spiral. Progress through the stages occurs in back-and-forth, up-and-down ways; the characteristics of stages overlap and recur in somewhat different ways for different people.

The first stage of Troiden's model is labeled sensitization and is characterized by generalized feelings of marginality, and perceptions of being different from same sex peers. The sensitization stage typically occurs before puberty. Social experiences are acquired that later serve as a basis for emerging perceptions of viewing oneself as possibly homosexual. Examples of themes of childhood marginality of gay males are: "I had a keener interest in the arts"; "I just didn't feel I was like other boys. I was

very fond of things like ribbons and flowers and music"; "I
never learned to fight". Although a sense of being
different and set apart from same-sex age mates is a
persistent theme in the childhood experiences of gay males,
research indicates that only a minority of gay males (20%)
begin to see themselves as sexually different before age 12.
Only 4% of the males label this difference as "homosexual"
while they are children (Bell et.al., 1981b). Physical acts
become meaningful only when they are embedded in sexual
scripts, which are acquired during adolescence (Gagnon &
Simon, 1973). Troiden states that prehomosexuals rarely
wonder, "Am I homosexual?" or believe that homosexuality has
anything to do with them personally while they are children.
Childhood experiences gained in social, emotional and
genital realms come to be invested with homosexual
significance during adolescence.

Stage two of Troiden's model is entitled identity
confusion. By middle to late adolescence, a perception of
self as "probably" homosexual begins to emerge. Gay males
begin to suspect that they "might" be homosexual at an
average age of 17 (Troiden, 1977, 1979; Troiden & Goode,
1980). Whereas only 20% of the lesbians and gay males in
the Bell et.al. (1981a) study saw themselves as sexually
different before age 12, 74% of the lesbians and 84% of the
gay males felt sexually different by age 19, as compared to
only 11% of the heterosexual male controls. Erotic and

emotional experiences, more than social experiences seem to precipitate perceptions of self as sexually different during the stage of identity confusion.

The sexual experience itself can add to identity confusion. Recent investigations of homosexuality have revealed consistently that homosexuals exhibit greater variability in their childhood and adolescent sexual feelings and behaviors than heterosexuals (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Bell et al., 1981a; Saghir & Robins, 1973; Schafer, 1976; Weinberg & Williams, 1974). By early to middle adolescence, most lesbians and gay males have experienced both heterosexual and homosexual arousal and behavior. Only a minority of the Bell et al. (1981b) sample, for example, 28% of the gay males and 21% of the lesbians, were never sexually aroused by the opposite sex, and only 21% of the males and 12% of the females reported never having an opposite-sex encounter they or others considered sexual. Thus, significant majorities of lesbians and gay males experience heterosexual and homosexual arousal and behavior before age 19.

The stigma surrounding homosexuality also contributes to identity confusion. Plummer (1975) noted that the societal condemnation of homosexuality created problems of guilt, secrecy, and difficulty in gaining access to other homosexuals. Moreover, the emphasis placed on gender roles and the general privatization of sexuality compounds the

experience of identity confusion and aloneness.

Lesbian and gay males typically respond to identity confusion by adopting one or more of the following strategies: (a) denial: deny the homosexual component of feelings, fantasies or activities (Goode, 1984; Troiden, 1977); (b) repair: attempts to eradicate homosexual feelings and behaviors (Humphreys, 1972); (c) avoidance: nonrecognition of behavior, thoughts, or fantasies as homosexual (Cass, 1979); (d) redefinition: behavior, context, or feelings are viewed along more conventional lines (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1977); and (e) acceptance: acknowledgement of behavior, feelings, or fantasies as homosexual (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1977).

The third stage, identity assumption, occurs during or after late adolescence. In this stage, the homosexual identity becomes both a self-identity and a presented identity, at least to other homosexuals (Troiden, 1989). Retrospective studies of adult homosexuals suggests that gay males arrive at homosexual self-definitions between the ages of 19 and 21, on the average (Dank, 1971; Harry & DeVall, 1978; Kooden et al., 1979; McDonald, 1982; Troiden, 1979). More recent studies looking at adolescent teens indicate a younger age at the time of self-identification as homosexual: age 14, on the average (Remafedi, 1987). In older generations, gay males arrived at homosexual self-definitions in sociosexual contexts where homosexual men

gathered for sexual purposes: gay bars, parties, parks, YMCA's and men's rooms (Dank, 1971; Troiden, 1979; Warren, 1974). More recently, self-definition as homosexual has been found to occur at the same time as, or shortly after, first social contact with other gay identified individuals (Cronin, 1974; Dank, 1971; Ponse, 1978; Troiden, 1977, 1979; Weinberg, 1977, 1978).

Personally meaningful contacts with gay individuals enable those not yet out to see that homosexuality is socially organized, and that a diverse cultural group exists to which they may belong, which diminishes feelings of solitude and alienation. Acculturated homosexuals provide neophytes with role models from whom they learn: (a) strategies for stigma management; (b) rationalizations that legitimize homosexuality and neutralize guilt feelings; (c) the range of identities and roles available to homosexuals; and (d) the norms governing homosexual conduct (Troiden, 1989).

Once homosexual identities are adopted, lesbians and gay males are confronted with the issue of stigma and its management. They may adopt one of several stigma-evasion strategies during identity assumption: (a) capitulation: avoidance of homosexual activity; (b) minstrelization: the expression of homosexuality along lines etched out by the popular culture; (c) passing: concealment of sexual preference and behavior from heterosexual family, friends

and colleagues; and (d) group alignment: active involvement in the homosexual community and avoidance of heterosexual settings (Humphreys, 1972).

The last stage in Troiden's model is commitment. In the homosexual context, commitment involves adopting homosexuality as a way of life. For the committed homosexual, "it becomes easier, more attractive, less costly to remain a homosexual" than to try and function as a heterosexual (Plummer, 1975). Entering a same-sex love relationship marks the onset of commitment (Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1979).

The main characteristics of the commitment stage are self-acceptance and comfort with the homosexual identity and role. Commitment has both internal and external dimensions. It is indicated internally by: (a) the fusion of sexuality and emotionality into a significant whole; (b) a shift in the meanings attached to homosexual identities; (c) a perception of the homosexual identity as a valid self-identity; (d) expressed satisfaction with the homosexual identity; and (e) increased happiness after self-defining as a homosexual. It is indicated externally by: (a) same-sex love relationships; (b) disclosure of the homosexual identity to nonhomosexual audiences; and (c) a shift in the type of stigma-management strategies (Troiden, 1989).

Plummer (1975) defines homosexual identity as emergent; never fully determined in a fixed or absolute sense, but

always subject to modification and further change.

Homosexual identity formation is therefore continuous, a

process of "becoming" that spans a lifetime, a process of

"striving but never arriving" (Plummer, 1975).

<div align="center">Positive Identity in Gay Men</div>

Roy Cain (1991), in his article, Disclosure and Secrecy

among Gay Men in the United States and Canada: A Shift in

Views, states:

> When homosexuality was considered pathological,
> secretiveness about one's homosexuality was viewed as
> normal and desirable; openness, conversely, was seen as
> an expression of personal and social pathology and as a
> political liability to gays in general. In contrast,
> when homosexuality was normalized, openness about one's
> homosexual preferences came to be viewed as desirable,
> while secretiveness came to be seen as problematic (p.
> 27).

Disclosure of one's gay orientation became a central

strategy of the gay movement while secrecy was viewed as one

of the major reasons for the ongoing oppression of gays.

Healthy acceptance of one's gayness began to be viewed as

requiring self-revelation. These political ideas became

integrated into the new theoretical models of homosexuality.

While the various models differ on what events are included

and their timing, they all view the revelation of one's

sexuality to others as a milestone event (Cain, 1991).

By the 1970's clinicians began to explicitly address

the issue of disclosure. Psychologists such as Evelyn

Hooker (1965) and Alan Bell (1976) argued that the social

and psychological problems that confronted many gay men

stemmed from their covert existences, rather than from their
sexual preferences. Alan Bell, a psychologist from the
Kinsey Institute, stated that covertness led some gays to
"compartmentalize their sexual lives in ways that do them
little good. They frequently experience a great deal of
tension in pretending to be what they are not, a profound
disparity between their inner and outer selves" (Bell,
1976). This corresponds to what Sidney Jourard (1964, 1971)
has written on the phenomenon of self-disclosure. Jourard
holds that the greater the discrepancy between an aspect of
the real behavioral self that is seen salient to one's
character (as sexual behavior often is) and the
representation of that aspect to others, the greater
likelihood of stress and anxiety.

There is agreement in the current mental health
literature that self-revelation should be encouraged to
promote the development of a healthy gay identity. Parry
and Lightbown (1981) suggest in their book, The Theory and
Practice of Homosexuality, that counselors discuss with
covert gay clients the risks of overtness and the advantages
of developing an integrated self-concept. In doing so they
offer this caution:

> The gay person who says,'I accept my homosexuality, but
> I don't see why I should tell anyone else about it,
> it's my own business,' is likely, in our experience, to
> be whistling in the dark. Such a statement may reflect
> considerable uncertainty, about whether one is deep
> down lovable, basically okay (p. 18).

This position illustrates the degree to which disclosure has

now been associated with mental health and shows how secrecy is viewed as a priori of evidence of problems in psychological adjustment.

The following empirical studies of a positive gay identity have all looked at self-disclosure. In 1975, Weinberg and Williams studied several thousand gay men and found that non disclosure of gay identity was related to feelings of depression and awkwardness in interpersonal relations, together with shame and anxiety. These results were replicated in 1982 when McDonald conducted an empirical study on individual differences in the coming out process. One of the events studied within this process was the acquisition of a positive gay identity (i.e., glad to be gay). Results indicated that positively and nonpositively gay-identified subjects differed significantly on a number of measures. Those not viewing themselves as possessing a positive gay identity had more negative attitudes toward male homosexuality, participated less in the gay subculture, disclosed less about their affectional/sexual preferences to others, disclosed less to non gay others, and felt guilty, anxious, and ashamed about being homosexual. Respondents who reported acquiring a positive gay identity averaged an eleven year period between the time they became aware of same-sex feelings (average age 13) and the time they viewed themselves as positively gay-identified. This study indicates that achieving a positive gay identity is a

developmental process that may extend into adulthood.

In a study on interpersonal functioning in gay males, Schmitt and Kurdek (1987) defined positive gay identity as disclosing one's sexual preference to others and being comfortable being gay. Findings from this study were congruent with McDonald's. Both studies found that positive gay identity is related to disclosing one's sexual preference to others, particularly non-gay persons. Schmitt and Kurdek's findings further indicate that self disclosure is also associated with low trait anxiety, low worry and rumination, and low depression. Comfort with being gay was related to low social anxiety, low sensitization, low depression, and high self concept. Buss (1980) suggests that high public self-consciousness, high social anxiety, and low self-esteem may result from social stigmatization. To the extent that supportive relationships, self-disclosure, and comfort with one's self moderate stigmatization, then self-consciousness and social anxiety should diminish. Schmitt & Kurdek contend that their findings support this reasoning.

Gay Identity and Occupation

In 1974, Escoffier published an article reviewing problems encountered by gay men and women in the workplace. He observed that although gay Americans had begun to organize for their civil rights and community development, little had been done to examine the unique and additional

burdens they bore as workers. Although discrimination in the labor market against the hiring of gays was a main target of political action, so far no analyses of its effects on gay people's occupational choices, employability and self-realization had been performed. Escoffier suggested that a belief existed in society based on the following premise: As long as gay men and women remained in the closet and continued to pass as heterosexuals they would not suffer in the workplace. He disagreed with this belief and proposed that gay people organize groups within professional associations and unions to deal with this dilemma. He observed that it was too early to know how successful these efforts would prove.

Twenty years have passed since Escoffier proposed that the extension of analysis of homosexual identity include occupational choice and working environment needs. Articles published since then may be categorized as addressing: (a) career; (b) discrimination within the workplace; (c) corporate policy regarding gay rights and gay employee organizations; and (d) empirical studies of gay male identity and vocation. Articles within these categories will be reviewed.

Career

Few empirical studies of the interplay between career and gay identity are found in the psychological literature. The majority of articles published in this area provide an

overview of gay career needs and the resources presently available to the career counselor. For instance, Schmitz (1988) described gay networks and associations dedicated to offering legal support and information concerning career opportunities. In addition, he listed corporations, states, cities and municipalities that have implemented anti-discrimination policies.

Noting the near absence of research on gay identity and career, Hetherington, Hillerbrand and Etringer (1989) proposed the following areas of study: (a) social stereotypes about homosexual occupations; (b) employment discrimination; (c) the limited number of visible gay role models; and (d) unique life-style issues affecting relationships and the transition from school to work. The authors contend that the absence of research in these areas perpetuates stereotypic attitudes towards gay men and fails to distinguish gay career needs from heterosexual ones.

A stage theory of career development was proposed by Strader and Bowman (1993) at the Annual Convention of the American College Personnel Association. Each stage in their career development model is based on a corresponding level of development within a proposed gay identity model since the authors view career and identity development as inseparable. Issues of concern are delineated within each stage. Suggestions for helping clients articulate and work through their individual needs are elaborated. Although a

linear progression through the stage model is implied, the authors warn that stagnation may occur at any level and recycling through the stages may be necessary. A framework is thus created to help career counselors target their clients' dilemmas and follow their progression along a career continuum.

Career choice and satisfaction was addressed by Etringer et al. (1990). Heterosexuals and gays were surveyed on several career making variables. They found that gay men had the highest uncertainty about their career choice and were also significantly more dissatisfied with their career choices than were lesbian women and heterosexual men. Factors underlying their dissatisfaction were not addressed.

The interplay between an individuals personal definition of their sexual orientation and their career decision making was explored by Orzek (1992) in four case studies. In each case the client gave a different meaning to his or her sexual orientation. Certain values, philosophies, political statements and sexual practices were associated with the term. She suggests that in blending sexual orientation and career choice, an occupation needs to allow for an expression of these factors at some level.

Research on the stereotypes typically associated with gay men has received little empirical support. Bell and Weinberg (1978) found that the homosexuals they

interviewed were indistinguishable from heterosexuals in terms of the kind of work they did. Myrick (1974) also found no differences in the occupations held by his homosexual and heterosexual male respondents. One study, however, does provide empirical support for the notion that disproportionate numbers of homosexuals exist in particular occupations. Murray (1991), in a study of homosexual men in Guatemala, found that 41% of his nonrandom sample of men were in "feminine occupations", while only 10% were in "masculine occupations". This compared to 60% of Guatemalan men overall involved in "masculine occupations". Murray's sample is nonrandom, and he does not define "feminine occupations" although we can assume, in Latin American countries, gender roles may be more traditionally defined and homosexuality is implicitly defined by feminine gender role behavior. Brown (1975), in an earlier review of the literature, believed that the "myth" that homosexuals were concentrated in the arts, hairdressing, or other "aesthetically-oriented vocations," has been perpetuated in part because "overt homosexuals were accepted in these vocational areas and would not face the censure and discharge which would result in business, education, the military, and other less liberal vocations." Murray (1991) explains the supposed concentration of homosexuals to certain occupations he found by stating, "In any field, there is routine insider trading of information about job

vacancies and even secrecy about them so that any

concentration is likely to be replicated or reinforced over

time." Thus, any concentration that may occur to certain

occupations is attributed to social forces (i.e., increased

acceptance, insider information) rather than anything

"inherent" to being gay.

Discrimination Within the Workplace

A review of employment discrimination law and the

rights of gay men and lesbian women was published by

Hedgpeth in 1980. She noted that until recently, no

protection was given to those discriminated against because

of their sexual orientation. Legal protection had been

extended in a few recent cases, although Hedgpeth stated

that this was a less than perfect state of affairs. In many

cases, for example, if the gay person maintained a public

gay life-style and was active in gay politics, he was in

danger of being fired because of vague "unfitness" criteria.

Hedgpeth concluded that in the struggle for constitutional

guarantees, administrative and judicial protection for the

employment opportunities of homosexual persons remained

sporadic and unreliable.

In an effort to document the existence of

discrimination against lesbians and gay men, the National

Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NCLTF) reviewed 20 surveys

conducted across the United States between 1980 and 1991.

More than one out of three persons surveyed had experienced

employment discrimination. The discrimination was manifested in hiring, firing, harassment, promotions or evaluations. In one survey, one out of four employers said they would "not promote" someone they thought was homosexual.

The Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force conducted an exploration of discrimination and violence against lesbian women and gay men in 1992. Of the 860 gay men surveyed in the city of Philadelphia, 25% reported experiencing employment, housing or public accommodations discrimination in the preceding 12 months, despite the local enactment in 1982 of legislation outlawing such discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Sixty-five percent of the men had experienced verbal abuse in the previous 12 months and 24% were the victims of criminal violence on the basis of their sexual orientation. Results of this study showed that 76% of the men concealed their sexual orientation at least some of the time to avoid discrimination. The group of Philadelphians surveyed was a predominantly white, highly educated group of individuals with a mean age of 33. Federal statistics indicate that such individuals are among those in society least likely to be victimized (U.S. Department of Justice, 1991).

Corporate Policy Regarding Gay Rights

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force conducted a corporate survey to assess corporate policies concerning

employer sexual orientation. Results of this six year study were published in 1981. Company personnel policies were rated on a scale from 1 to 6. A score of 1 denotes a specific statement regarding a nondiscriminatory stand on sexual orientation and a score of 6 identifies company policies that do not address the issue at all.

Of the 238 companies responding (850 surveys were sent), 61% have policies stating that they do not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. This group represents company policies scoring 1 or 2. America's largest firms are likely to have such policies, as this survey noted. The top 10 Fortune 500 companies all reported nondiscrimination policies, as did 51% of the top 100 firms.

In April 1991, an article appeared in the business section of the New York Times entitled, "Gay Rights, Issue of the 90's." The subtitle reads "discrimination is the charge, and more companies are making an effort to end it." The article illustrates an attitudinal shift within management toward gay workers that is taking place within many corporations across the United States. AT&T, Xerox and U.S. West Communications are cited as examples of companies who have not only established policies prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation but have included within their training workshops on homophobia. In contrast, several companies that "grudgingly acknowledge their gay groups existence" are noted. For example, a

company spokesperson from Hewlett-Packard made the following statement, "We don't see a business need to sponsor organizations based on sexual preferences."

Two books have recently been published that offer guidance in understanding and responding to gay issues in the workplace. The 100 Best Companies for Gay Men and Lesbians presents strategies for employers who wish to create positive work environments for gay men and lesbians. Through networking, referrals and published reports, author Ed Mickens (1994) has selected one hundred companies to illustrate what can be done to change discrimination at work. Employers were evaluated on four basic criteria: a written policy of non-discrimination; inclusion of gay issues within diversity training; recognition of a gay employee group; and the availability of benefits for same-sex domestic partners. All 100 companies have a written policy of non-discrimination but vary on meeting the remaining criteria. Brian McNaught's (1993) book, Gay Issues in the Workplace, serves as a managerial guide for implementing workshops within corporations on gay issues. McNaught bases his book on the workshop, "Homophobia in the Workplace", which he has designed and offered since 1988 as either a whole or half day training session.

Studies of Gay Male Identity and Vocation

A study of the professional lives of gay men and the various strategies they have developed for managing their

sexual identity at work was conducted by James Wood (1993).

Woods then converted his dissertation into a book entitled,

The Corporate Closet. The 70 men interviewed for Wood's

study were located through social networking and lived in

five metropolitan cities across the United States. They

ranged in age from 22 to 64 and were all college educated.

Sixty-seven were white, two were Black and one was Latino.

Criteria for the workplace included: (a) a management

hierarchy; (b) a central office environment in which work

was done; (c) work tasks that necessitated interaction with

co-workers.

The study focused primarily on the different strategies

these men employed to manage information about their sexual

lives, which strategy was most effective and what the costs

and consequences were of using any particular one. The

strategies employed fell into three categories:

(a) counterfeit: fabrication of a heterosexual life;

(b) avoid: establishment of boundaries and avoidance of

social activities; (c) integrate: authentic expression on

one's sexuality. Of the 70 men interviewed, 15 chose to

counterfeit their identity at work, 31 avoided identity

issues altogether, and 32 had integrated their sexuality

within the workplace. (Many men use more than one strategy

and are therefore counted more than once). What is most

enlightening about this study, however, is not the numerical

number of men that fall into each category but the

individual case studies which illuminate the significance of each alternative and the process by which these choices were made. As James Woods states, "It is time for us to look more closely at the boundaries between the sexual and the professional, and the many ways in which these worlds overlap."

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This research project was designed to examine gay male sexual identity development among a sociodemographically diverse sample of flight attendants. The interaction between gay male identity development and the perceived environment was investigated within a place of work.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. The profession of flight attendant was not chosen as a context for the coming out process.

2. The profession of flight attendant has not facilitated the coming out process.

3. Working as a flight attendant has not enabled the men to fulfill their social needs as gay men through relationships with others within the profession.

4. There is no significant relationship between length of employment as a flight attendant and personal self-esteem, mental health, and career satisfaction.

5. There is no significant relationship between perceived freedom to be open and oneself on the job and personal self-esteem, mental health, and career satisfaction.

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6. There is no significant relationship between perceived support of gay identity and personal self-esteem, mental health, and career satisfaction.

7. There is no significant relationship between perceived discrimination within the job and personal self-esteem, mental health, and career satisfaction.

Cultural Context of the Sample

The subjects in this study were 90 flight attendants employed by one of the three largest airline carriers in the United States. The job of flight attendant was chosen for study due to the large number of gay men reported to be working in this profession. It should be noted that men were initially hired as flight attendants in the United States in 1972. Before that time, the job was restricted to women.

The sample for this study was drawn from an airline currently employing 20,273 flight attendants. Within this group 3,211 are men and their average age is 32. The male flight attendants interviewed in this study were based in Chicago. The total number of flight attendants based in Chicago is 3,993. Five hundred and sixteen of these flight attendants are male. This information was obtained from the flight attendants union.

The Sample

The subjects were interviewed over a two-year period, between 1992-1994. The subjects' ages ranged from 25 to 49. Eighty-seven percent of the sample were Caucasian, three percent were African-American, two percent were Asian-American, two percent were Puerto Rican, one percent was Native American, and three percent were of mixed ethnic backgrounds. The religious backgrounds of the flight attendants were thirty-one percent Protestant, twenty-nine percent Catholic, one percent Jewish, three percent Atheist/Agnostic, and twenty-six percent reported that they had no religious affiliation. The mean for the educational level of the subjects was 15.4 and the standard deviation was 2.0. Forty-one percent of the men had a college degree. Only fifteen percent of the subjects were secondarily employed. The average income of all flight attendants ranges between $30,000 to $35,000. Four of the men were divorced and 12 have had a relationship with an opposite-sex partner. Twenty-four of the men were currently living with a same sex partner while 40 were single and dating the same sex. Table 1 presents an overview of the subjects past and current relationships.

Table 1

Personal Relationship History* (N=90)

	n	%
Opposite Sex Relationship/Partner History:		
Separated	2	.02
Divorced	4	.04
Involved one year +	12	.13
Involved (second relationship) one year +	2	.02
Living with opposite sex	11	.12
Same Sex Relationship/Partner History:		
Involved one year +	49	.54
Involved (second relationship) one year +	23	.25
Live with partner	40	.44
Live with partner (second relationship)	13	.14
Present Relationships/Partners:		
Same sex (Involved one year +)	9	.10
Living with partner	24	.27

*Categories are non-exclusive. Respondents may be represented in one or more categories.

Procedures

The 90 flight attendants who participated in this study were enlisted through the following methods: snowballing, recruiters within the flight attendant corp who talked to fellow employees and enlisted their consent to be interviewed and; random calls from a computerized list of all male flight attendants based with a major airline in Chicago. Potential recruits were informed that the purpose of the project was to study gay men's experience in the

profession, including incidents of discrimination and the influence of work on their current life circumstances. Identification of sexual orientation was not requested during the recruitment process. Potential subjects were provided with a description of the study and then asked whether or not they were interested in participating. Recruits were also told that their responses would be held in strictest confidence and not shared with anyone outside of the project investigators. Participation was voluntary and each recruit signed an informed consent form (see Appendix A). Each participant was told that the face-to-face interview would take approximately two hours to complete. It should be noted that none of the subjects refused to sign a consent form or refused to complete an interview. Subjects were given the choice of being interviewed at the Evelyn Hooker Center for Gay and Lesbian Youth, the subject's home, or one of the interviewer's homes. No participant appeared to experience any negative response to the procedure. Typically the subjects voiced considerable interest in being part of a self-reflective interview. The refusal rate among the men asked to participate in this study was only .05%.

Data for this dissertation research project was drawn from a larger study and collected through an individual face-to-face interview, as well as a battery of paper and pencil assessments. The interview contained five sections:

(1) sociodemographics and family background; (2) sexual
identity life history (including current relationships and
gay acculturation); (3) work history (including pathways
into the profession, and incidents of discrimination);
(4) future aspirations and life goals; and (5) mental
health. Interviews were conducted by the following people
who also contributed research questions for this study: Kay
Adams and John Carlson (doctoral students), Dr. Terry Stein
(Michigan State University), and Andrew Boxer, Ph.D.
(University of Chicago). The interview protocol can be
found in Appendix B.

<center>Instrumentation</center>

Demographic Information

Demographic information was collected through interview
items and included: age at time of interview (in years);
social class; ethnic background; educational level;
employment status (number of jobs); residential and
relationship status (e.g., living alone, living with
roommates; cohabiting with partner, etc.); parental/family
background (education and occupation); and religious
affiliation.

Gay Acculturation Index

A series of paper and pencil items were used to assess
frequency of associations and degree of involvement in gay
cultural community activities. These items were weighted in
terms of relevance to gay acculturation based on studies by

Weinberg and Williams (1974) and Bell and Weinberg (1978) (the largest urban samples of homosexuals studied to date). The items were weighted in the following order: level of involvement in gay political activities, contribution to gay/lesbian organizations, reading gay literature, attending gay/lesbian entertainment, socializing with gay/lesbian people, and frequenting gay/lesbian bars. This measure demonstrates the desired psychometric properties (alpha coefficients above .75) including reliability and validity studies conducted by Weinberg and Williams (1974) and Bell and Weinberg (1975).

Level and Type of Discrimination/Victimization

Items shown to comprehensively cover the range of victimization reported by gay men in previous research (D'Auggeli, 1992; Herek & Berrill, 1992) were put to the respondents during the course of the interview. The types of victimization are verbal insults, threats of physical violence, personal property damage, objects thrown, being chased or followed, being assaulted (hit, kicked, or beaten), being assaulted with a weapon, and sexual assault or rape. Participants were asked if each type of attack ever happened to them. If it had, they were asked how many times it occurred, within the workplace, outside the workplace, and within the last year. For purposes of data reduction and analysis, three levels of violence were used (Dean et al., 1992):

Type I: Verbal abuse and threats

Type II: Objects hurled, being spit upon, etc., (physical
           abuse)

Type III: Physical assault

Job and Sexual Orientation

A series of self-report items were adapted for the
study of flight attendants based on an extensive study of
homosexuals conducted by researchers at the Kinsey Institute
for Sexual Research (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Weinberg &
Williams, 1974). These items, which can be found in the
interview protocol, were constructed to assess the
interaction between gay male identity development and the
perceived working environment of flight attendants. The
items examined the following questions: Was the job choice
of flight attendant influenced by sexual orientation?; What
was the effect of working as a flight attendant on gay
identity development and gay acculturation?; Were the social
needs of gay flight attendants fulfilled through
relationships with other gay men within the profession?;
Does the job atmosphere of a flight attendant support a gay
mans ability to be open and himself at work?; Do gay flight
attendants co-workers support gay identity at work?

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a 10 item instrument
answered on a four-point Likert scale. It measures global
self-esteem, that is, the individual's positive or negative

attitude toward the self as a totality (Rosenberg et al. 1995). Internal consistency of the measure is high (.93), and the scale has been shown to be unidimensional, unless it is used with samples varying considerably in age (Goldsmith, 1986; O'Brien, 1985; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Test re-test reliability ranges from .78 to .92 (Ciarlo, 1986).

Brief Symptom Inventory

The Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) consists of 53 items presented in a five-point Likert format. The BSI contains nine dimensions of psychopathology: somatization, obsession-compulsion, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychoticism. The BSI has been found to be very useful in research on the impact of trauma on mental health (see Landsman, Baum, Arnkoff, Craig, Lynch, Sopes, & Champion, 1989). The flight attendants in this study may have experienced trauma due to discrimination and or violence within their workplace against gay men. The occurrence of discrimination and violence against gay men within the workplace was reported in surveys by the National Gay Task Force (1981) and the Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force (1992). The psychometric properties of the BSI have been well researched (Boulet & Boss, 1991; Broday & Masinm, 1991; Derogatic & Spencer, 1982) with the reliabilities of the nine scales ranging from .74 to .89 (internal consistency). Test-retest reliability ranges from .68 to .91.

Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire

    According to O'Connor, Peters, and Gordon (1978), the
Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) is the second
most popular instrument for research into job satisfaction.
The MSQ was developed as part of the Work Adjustment Project
of the Industrial Relations Center at the University of
Minnesota. The MSQ is available in both a long-and a short-
form. The MSQ long-form has 20 subscales each having five
items. The short-form includes the technically best item
from each of the 20 scales. Three sub-scales: Intrinsic,
Extrinsic, and General Satisfaction are yielded by the
short-form. The internal consistency reliability
coefficient for the short-form was determined by the Hoyt
analysis of variance method. Median internal consistency
for the short-form ranged from .80 to .90 for seven norm
groups with a total of 1,723 subjects. Test-retest
stability coefficients are reported for each of the 21 long-
form scales for one year intervals. The one-year test-
retest yielded coefficients ranging from .35 to .71, with a
.70 coefficient for the general satisfaction scale. Only
preliminary test-retest data are available for the MSQ
short-form, however, the authors indicate that these
coefficients would likely be as favorable as those for the
long-form, since the short-form was assessed through a study
of group differences (O'Connor, Peters & Gordon, 1978). All
of the norm groups were combined to make up a total of 1,723

subjects. A one-way analysis of variance procedure was used to test the hypothesis of no differences across the intrinsic, extrinsic, and general satisfaction scales. The results of the analysis yielded statistical significance at the .001 level for the mean difference hypothesis. However, it should be noted that the null hypothesis was not rejected regarding differences in variability among different occupational groups.

Data Analysis

The overall purpose of the study design and data analysis was to investigate the associations between aspects of gay male identity, career choice, and career satisfaction. The demographic variables in this study included age, minority status, current relationship status, educational level, and secondary employment. The three dependent measures were job satisfaction (assessed by the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire), mental health (assessed by the Brief Symptom Inventory) and self-esteem (assessed by the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale). The independent variables (length of employment, perceived freedom to be open, perceived support of gay identity, degree to which the job affects sexual identity either positively or negatively and discrimination) were systematically assessed by using a standard set of questions during the interview protocol and paper and pencil measures. Finally, frequency distributions and descriptive statistics

were examined for the dependent, independent and control variables. Correlations were then computed to permit the systematic examination of interrelationships among all variables. To examine the multiple effects of independent variables on the dependent variables, a series of multiple logistic regressions were conducted. Analyses conducted specific to each hypothesis are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2

Statistical Analysis of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Independent Variables and Measures	Dependent Variables and Measures	Statistical Analyses
1)	Choice of profession for coming out process. Interview questions*: 33, 34a, 34b		Frequencies Percentages
2)	Facilitation of coming out process. Interview questions*: 37, 38, 38a		Frequencies Percentages
	Length of employment. Interview questions*: 32 Covariates:-current age 　　　-age when first 　　　 considered gay 　　　-educational level	Gay Acculturation Index Questions*: 2, 4, 13, 14, 17, 40	Frequencies Percentages Stepwise Reg
3)	Social needs. Interview questions*: 39		Frequencies Percentages
4)	Length of employment. Interview questions*: 32 Covariates:-current age 　　　-other current 　　　 employment 　　　-educational level	MSQ Rosenberg BSI	Forward Reg Forward Reg Forward Reg

Table 2 (continued)

Hypotheses	Independent Variables and Measures	Dependent Variables and Measures	Statistical Analyses
5)	Freedom to be open and oneself. Gay Acculturation Index question*: 30 Covariates:-current age -educational level	MSQ Rosenberg BSI	Forward Reg Forward Reg Forward Reg
6)	Perceived support for gay identity. Gay Acculturation Index question*: 35 Covariates:-current age -educational level	MSQ Rosenberg BSI	Forward Reg Backward Reg Regression models
7)	Discrimination. Discrimination questions*: 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60 Covariates:-current age -educational level	MSQ Rosenberg BSI	Forward Reg Forward Reg Regression models

*Interview questions, Gay Acculturation Index questions, and Discrimination questions are located in Appendix A.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter provides the results of the data analysis.
The chapter is divided into seven main sections which
corresponds to each hypothesis.

Findings Relating to Testing Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1: The profession of flight attendant was
chosen as a context for the coming out process.

To determine whether or not the subjects sexual
orientation influenced their decision to become a flight
attendant, three questions were put to the participants
during the course of the interview protocol. The first
question was open-ended and asked each subject to describe
their reasons for seeking employment as a flight attendant.
The second question specifically asked whether the subjects'
sexual orientation was related to their job choice. If this
question was answered affirmatively, the subject was then
asked "how" their sexual orientation influenced their job
choice. Responses to the last two questions were
categorized into three groups: men who felt their sexuality
was an influence on their job choice; men who felt that it
was not; and those who were uncertain. Within each of these
categories, the responses were classified and coded.

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Interestingly, in response to the first question (reason for seeking employment as a flight attendant) only six subjects (7%) reported their sexual orientation as an influence. In response to the second question, 39% responded affirmatively while 9% were uncertain. It should be noted that the uncertain responses of the 9% indicate that their uncertainty probably lies more in "how" their sexual orientation affected their decision than whether or not it had any influence. Fifty-two percent of the subjects indicated that their sexual orientation did not play a part in their decision to seek work as a flight attendant. The following selected quotes are from subjects who felt that their sexual orientation influenced their decision to work as a flight attendant:

I chose it because I wanted to be in a gay oriented field that would be more tolerant. I knew about it through friends.

I would be able to be myself . . . be gay and not hide it.

Men who were uncertain as to the influence of their sexual orientation on job choice said:

It was complicated. I was dating a woman but drawn to
men. I was not sure where I was.

I have a feeling it (sexual orientation) did but I
can't say specifically.

I'm not sure. Maybe it's a fear of other places where
gay isn't as accepted.

Some of the men who did not feel that their sexual
orientation played a role in their decision to become a
flight attendant commented:

The travel, the glamour, the money, the lifestyle . . .
it's not a job or a career, its a lifestyle to be able
to have so many days off each month and to go and visit
friends in one city and have dinner in another. The
flexibility of not working Monday through Friday.

It was a fluke. I was bored being a waiter, had just
finished college, and I had no ties. I needed a change
and I took it.

The travel benefits. Moved to Atlanta after college
and read a newspaper ad for flight attendants. At the
time, I thought it was glamorous. I was looking for

excitement. I needed direction at the time I applied.
I was dating a guy in L.A. and it wasn't working. I
thought I could use this to get away from it. I hate
nine to five. I wanted something different . . . out
of the ordinary.

One third of the men had personal knowledge of the job
and its lifestyle through either a friend or an acquaintance
who was employed by the airlines. As might be expected,
given the nature of the job, over one-half of the men gave
travel and flexibility of their work schedule among their
reasons for seeking this type of work. Although the men
were almost equally divided as to whether or not their
sexual orientation had affected this choice of work, a clear
majority in each group cited escape from a present situation
in their lives as the primary reason for seeking this
employment. Examples of this theme occur in the following
statements:

I wanted out of Utah. I wanted to escape.

I needed to get out of Minneapolis. I had to get away
from family and pressure and also really having to face
my sexuality. It was an escapist thing to do. In
Minneapolis, it would have been harder to own up to my
sexuality. I have a business degree and I didn't want

to spend my life in a bank in Minneapolis. Perhaps, also me not wanting to take on a lot of responsibility . . . a job you can hide in.

I worked in a very conservative environment and I couldn't be myself so I wanted out.

Most male flight attendants are gay, and I felt I wouldn't have to hide anything. Before, when I worked as a programmer, I always felt like I had to hide something.

I figured it would be easier to have a career where being gay was an accepted norm. I wouldn't have to fight prejudice every day at the job. Plus, coming from a small community in Wisconsin, there aren't a lot of gay men around, so it would be easier to find a partner if I worked for an airline.

The work environment of a flight attendant was perceived as "safe" by twenty (57%) of the thirty-five men who stated that their sexual orientation was a factor in choosing this job. Here are some examples of their comments:

I felt more comfortable being with a company and in a profession that more men were known and welcomed being gay.

Because I felt I wouldn't be as discriminated against. Free to be yourself personally and professionally.

I knew that a lot of male flight attendants were gay and I felt I needed to find my orientation. I didn't know of gays in other professions . . . even if there were any.

I felt I would be able to be out. The public automatically assumes that you're gay and that's that. I had a job in government and they wanted me to sign a paper that I was not gay . . . which I didn't.

In summary, the men were fairly divided as to whether the profession of flight attendant was chosen as a context for the coming out process. Thirty-nine percent of the men felt that their sexual orientation was a contributing factor while nine percent were uncertain. Responses given by the men who were uncertain indicate that they experienced difficulty stating how their sexuality was an influence rather than whether or not it played a part. The remaining 52% stated that their sexuality was not an influential

factor on their job choice. What is interesting about this groups' responses is what they did not say. Failure to mention their sexual orientation or identity as a contributing factor is conspicuously absent. If the male component of the profession of flight attendant were not so heavily populated by gay men, their answers would not be unusual. This, however, is not the case. Examining the responses by the order in which the questions were asked revealed that only six men openly volunteered that their sexual orientation played a significant role in their job choice. It was not until the question of sexuality was specifically asked that an additional 29 men agreed that their gay orientation had been an influential factor. Why did 47 of the men not acknowledge their gay sexual orientation as a contributing factor when they chose to enter a field that is clearly dominated by gay men? One reason may be the discrimination the men have experienced and their socialization into avoiding discussing the topic with others outside of their own social support network. Another possibility supported by some of the men's narrative responses may be that some may have used the job as a way to avoid disclosure both to others and themselves that they were gay. Are there issues surrounding their sexuality and job choice that they have not acknowledged? Unfortunately, this question cannot be addressed in this research project. This could be an interesting area of focus for future study.

Findings Relating to Testing Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2: (Part I) The profession of flight attendant has facilitated the coming out process.

Defining the self as homosexual and presenting the self as homosexual to other homosexuals are the first stages in a larger process of identity disclosure called "coming out" (Coleman, 1982). The earmarks of this stage are self-definition as homosexual, identity tolerance and acceptance, regular association with other homosexuals, sexual experimentation, and exploration of the homosexual subculture.

The flight attendants were asked several questions to assess the effect of their job on the development of their sexual identity. The first question asked whether the job has been supportive of a positive gay identity for them. Eighty-two percent of the men reported that they felt the job was supportive and 18% reported that they felt it was not supportive. When asked how the job has been supportive of their identity, the men responded with the following statements:

It definitely has supported it. I realized that there were other people with the same type of feelings I had. A world opened up ... there are other people like me. It was a relief.

It's (support of gay identity) been very positive. I
feel more comfortable with who I am. I have a lot more
fun with it. I'm exposed to more gay people. Female
flight attendants accept it. When you find a huge
group of people who accept it, you feel comfortable
with it yourself.

Absolutely. I believe that perception of the airline
industry as a whole ... that a good many of the men are
gay males. I don't act any different on the job than I
do with you. In other jobs I always felt like the lone
person although I know that wasn't always true.

From my co-workers there is a basic support system ...
basically accepted ... no shock that I am gay. That
helped me accept being gay ... I wasn't alone in this.
I learned about the lifestyle in general conversation.
I was young and this environment helped. I came from a
small town and I was kind of green.

The previous statements express the men's experience of
no longer feeling alone and of finding a support system
where they can be comfortable and accepted. The following
statements were given by men who feel this has enabled them
to get involved with gay issues:

It definitely propelled me forward ... on with my gay lifestyle, basically helping me to come out. I've become more outspoken about gay issues because I feel comfortable around gay men and people I work with are more comfortable and accepting. This is what brought me out of the closet.

It has made me so much more comfortable with it because everyone assumes you are gay. It is so rare that you're exposed to this whole community of gay people and accepting people. It's wonderful. It's made me more political. The unity among flight attendants, this has carried over into gay politics as well.

Men who felt the job has had no effect or an adverse effect on their gay identity made the following statements:

I've always been relatively secure. I don't think the job has influenced me one way or another.

Yes and no. Yes, I spend a lot of my time working with gay men and there's a bonding process. No, in that I have always known who I am.

It's hindered it. Because its not totally accepted, I've spent more time educating other people and not

working on my own personal growth. I've educated co-
workers, neighbors, some passengers (only a few times).
I've had two people arrested for calling me a faggot on
the airplane.

I don't know that its had an impact but I feel its made
it easy to be gay in the workplace.

It hasn't affected my sexual identity because I don't
associate with people at work. However, I did meet a
gay colleague who took me to my first gay bar which led
to my coming out.

Probably has supported it. Once you become a flight
attendant, you become part of this network. You meet
gay colleagues and gay travelers on the plane. You
know people from all over the country. The way it has
detracted . . . it makes certain travelers look at you
and you know they think you are gay, which you don't
want. Also, you become limited in your relationships
. . . everyone you meet is gay.

When asked if the degree to which they can be open
about their sexual identity has changed since they began
work as a flight attendant, 75 (83%) of the men said yes
while 15 (17%) said no. Forty-nine of the men said they

were much more open, 26 said somewhat more open, and fifteen stated that their level of openness had not changed. In summary, most men agree that the job has been supportive and their level of openness has increased since they began work as flight attendants.

Hypothesis 2: (Part II) There is an association between length of employment as a flight attendant and acculturation into the gay community.

The men's length of employment as a flight attendant ranged from one to 20 years (see Table 3). The mean was 6.6 years. Almost half of the men (48%, n=43) have been employed for less than five years as a flight attendant while 24% (n=21) have worked from 10 to 20 years.

Table 3

Length of Employment as Flight Attendant

Years	Frequency (n=89)	Percent
1 - 5	43	48%
6 - 10*	36	40%
11 - 15	6	.07%
16 - 20	4	.04%

*Eleven of the 36 men in this category have been flight attendants for 10 years.

To construct a dependent variable that would assess the flight attendants level of acculturation into the gay

community, five items from the Gay Acculturation Index were weighted by the investigator to create a summed score. These items were subjectively weighted in terms of relevance to gay acculturation in the following order: involved in gay political activities, contributing to gay/lesbian organizations, reading gay literature, attending gay/lesbian entertainment, socializing with gay/lesbian people, going to gay and lesbian bars. A stepwise regression was run between length of employment as a flight attendant and the summed score from the acculturation index. This regression analysis was found to be significant (see Table 4). Current age, education level, and the age of the respondent was when he first considered himself gay or homosexual were used as covariates.

Table 4

Stepwise Regression of Acculturation on Length of Employment as a Flight Attendant and Ratio of Current Age to Age the Men First Considered Themselves Gay

	b	Beta	Significance
Length of Employment as a Flight Attendant	.33	.26	.02
Current Age/Age First Considered Gay	-1.81	-.20	.08
Constant	22.25		

R = .087, df = 74, F = .034

Acculturation into the gay community was found to be positively associated with length of career as a flight attendant. The longer the men were employed, the more likely they were acculturated into the gay community. Results from the acculturation scale (see Table 5) characterize the gay flight attendants as a very socially interactive group of men. Most of the participants friends were reported to be gay (68%) and a majority of their time was spent socializing within the gay community (79%). Approximately half of the men socialize with one another in their homes or in a bar on a weekly basis. Two-thirds or nearly 60% of the men indicated that they would feel most comfortable in a gay/lesbian culture while 40% would choose a combined culture that was equally gay/lesbian and heterosexual.

Table 5

Gay Acculturation Index

I. In which culture does respondent feel most comfortable?	n=90	%
A. Probably the heterosexual	2	2
B. Most definitely gay/lesbian	25	28
C. Probably gay/lesbian	25	28
D. Gay/lesbian & heterosexual equally	36	40

Table 5 (continued)

II.	Ratio of Friends Who are Gay/Lesbian/ Homosexual		Proportion of Leisure Time Socializing with Gay/Lesbian/ Homosexual	
	n=90	%	n=90	%
A. All	1	1.1	2	2
B. Most	35	39	48	53
C. More than half	25	28	22	24
D. About half	19	21	8	24
E. Fewer than half	5	6	7	8
F. Only a few	3	3	1	1
G. Missing	2	1	2	1

III. How open are you (out of closet) compared to your gay/ lesbian/homosexual friends?

	n=90	%
A. Totally hidden	0	0
B. More hidden than most	7	8
C. As open as friends	38	42
D. More open than most	17	19
E. Totally open	26	29
F. Missing	2	1

Table 5 (continued)

IV. Current level of involvement with gay/lesbian/bisexual
    political or social organizations.

	n=90	%
A. None	27	30
B. Just a little	26	29
C. Some	24	27
D. Moderate level	9	10
E. Significant level	2	2
F. Missing	2	1

V. Participation in gay/lesbian activities (n-90)
(Percentages)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*
A. Every day	2	4	0	0	0	2	4
B. Every other day	6	9	3	0	1	1	2
C. Twice a week	7	17	22	1	2	8	0
D. Once a week	18	46	22	2	10	47	4
E. Once a month	58	17	43	29	49	30	33
F. Never	8	4	7	60	24	9	45
G. Missing	2	2	2	8	13	4	11

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*1 = Gay/Lesbian Entertainment
 2 = Socializing in Gay/Lesbian Homes
 3 = Frequenting Gay Bars
 4 = Participating in Gay/Lesbian Political Activities
 5 = Contributing to Gay/Lesbian Organizations
 6 = Reading Gay Periodicals
 7 = Reading Gay Books

About half (42%) of the men viewed themselves as being as open about their sexuality as their friends. Another 49% see themselves as going beyond their friends in terms of openness. No one indicated that they kept their gay sexuality hidden from others.

The participants were only somewhat politically involved. Two percent indicated that they had a significant involvement with political and/or social organizations. Sixty-six percent had little to moderate involvement, and thirty percent had none. Half the men contribute monthly to political activities. Approximately a third of the men read gay literature (periodicals or books) on a monthly basis.

With acculturation as the dependent variable, a stepwise regression was run that included the ratio of current age to age the respondent first considered himself gay, and number or years working as a flight attendant. The mean age of the men when they first considered themselves gay was found to be 18.208 with a standard deviation of 3.416. It should be noted that the age a man first considered himself gay is not to be confused with the age when a man first becomes aware of his same-sex attractions, which typically occur at a younger age. A significant inverse interaction was found between current age and the age when the respondent first considered himself gay (refer to Table 4). The regression coefficient for this model accounted for 9% of the variance in acculturation. As the

ratio of current age over age at time of gay awareness increased, the acculturation level decreased. Therefore, those participants who had their first gay awareness later in life were found to be more acculturated. Participants who had their first gay awareness earlier in life were found to be less acculturated.

In summary, the profession of flight attendant appears to have facilitated the coming out process. Eighty-two percent of the flight attendants perceived their job as supportive of their gay identity, and 75 of the 90 men (83%) interviewed reported being more open about their sexual identity since working as a flight attendant.

A majority of the respondents described their fellow flight attendants, both gay and straight, as accepting of the male co-workers gay identity. This acceptance appears to have created an opportunity for these male flight attendants to share their gay identity with others. Comments made by the men in the interviews portray an open and accepting atmosphere within their workplace where they feel comfortable and are not alone. In a way, the workplace has become a gay community where the men share and learn from one another.

The data shows that the longer a gay man works as a flight attendant, the higher his level of involvement in gay cultural activities. This further suggests that a gay network or community exists within the male flight attendant

corp. This community is described by the men as a place where common issues are discovered and discussed, resulting in a feeling of unity. To reiterate one mans statement, "It's (whole community of gay and accepting people) made me more political. The unity among flight attendants, this has carried over into gay politics as well".

Findings Relating to Testing Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3: Working as a flight attendant has enabled the men to fulfill their social needs as gay men through relationships with others in the profession.

In her theory of homosexual identity formation, Vivienne Cass (1984) stated that during the coming out process a gay man develops increasing personalized and frequent contacts with other homosexuals. Contact with other gay men provides the opportunity to see that homosexuality is socially organized and that a group exists to which they may belong, which diminishes feelings of solitude and alienation. Social relations are therefore critical for developing one's identity as a gay man and are a significant part of the gay culture.

A flight attendants work schedule provides ample opportunity to meet and interact with hundreds of co-workers. Work schedules change on a monthly basis and are individually awarded to flight attendants on the basis of seniority. Flight attendants may choose to work together but most choose their monthly schedule on an individual

basis. Flight attendants may then trade the trips awarded to them among themselves. It is not unusual for a flight attendant to work with many different people within a one month period.

Schedules consist of trips lasting from one to three days. Two or three day trips have layovers (an overnight rest period between daily trips) in cities across the United States or, if the flight attendant works internationally, foreign countries. On layovers individuals can choose to interact socially with each other or other crews who happen to have a layover in the same city. A flight attendant's work schedule is constantly changing and this increases the occurrence of many social interactions among co-workers.

To assess the type and extent of social interactions among gay male flight attendants, the subjects were asked to estimate the number of gay flight attendants they had met through their job in each of the following four categories: close friend (not a sexual partner); close friend (a sexual partner); sexual partner (not a close friend); and romance/ lover (a person with whom they have had or continue to have a sexual and intimate relationship). Frequencies and means were computed with this data set (see Table 6). To eliminate ambiguity about the types of relationships in which the men had engaged, more fine-grained categories were employed which included in some cases, specific dimensions of sexual relationships. The men were asked about those

categories in a self-report paper and pencil measure.

On average, the number of relationships reported among the gay flight attendant corp is high (see Table 6), indicating that as a group they are quite socially interactive. Many have formed close friendships as well as intimate relationships with one another. Fifty-two percent of the men have formed between one and five close friendships with their gay workmates. The mean number of friendships within the group is 6.8 (standard deviation 9.1). Only 11% of the men reported not having a close friend at work. The remaining 37% have six or more gay flight attendant friends.

Table 6

Social Relations Among Flight Attendants: Percentage of Men Who Report Relationships with Work Colleagues

	%	n=90	$\overline{X}$	S.D.
Close friends	89	80	7.0	9.1
Close friends/sex partners	48	43	.89	1.6
Sex partners only	60	54	3.0	4.7
Intimacy/romance	46	40	.7	1.8

When asked whether they had formed close friendships with flight attendants who were also sexual partners, 52% of the men said they had not while 48% said they had. Of the men who responded affirmatively, 27% recalled having

relationships with one flight attendant and the remaining 21% with two or more flight attendants. Sixty percent of the men reported having one or more sexual partners who were not close friends while 40% had not.

Intimate sexual relationships (including those defined as romantic and lover-relationships) have been established between flight attendants by 45% of the men. An additional 8% of these men have formed more than one intimate relationship at work. This would seem to indicate not only a desire by the men to seek a partner, but their willingness to seek a partner within their own field of work.

These results indicate that a large enough group of gay men work as flight attendants to constitute a "gay community" where the men feel free to make social contact with one another at many different levels of intimacy. Given the number of relationships that were reported between flight attendants, it would appear that both the men's friendships and sexual partners are likely to be work colleagues.

Findings Relating to Testing Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between length of employment as a flight attendant and career satisfaction, personal self-esteem, and mental health.

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Brief Symptom Inventory were used

as the dependent measures in research questions four through seven. The Guttman statistical transformation process was performed on the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire responses and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale responses. The Guttman transformation created a scale that maximized the correlation between the items on these instruments. Items on the Brief Symptom Inventory were weighted by using the inverse of the mean and summed to create an overall score.

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) consists of 20 items that reportedly assess job satisfaction. Each item is scored on a five point likert scale with the total number of points equal to 100. The mean for the sample of flight attendants participating in this study was 65.34 and the standard deviation was 10.78. The findings indicated that in this sample, a majority of the mens' scores fell between the categories of "neutral" and "satisfied" with their job.

The MSQ was developed as a broad based instrument that could apply to many jobs. Examples of areas assessed are pay, opportunity for advancement, working conditions, and the opportunity to use ones' abilities. Not included in the MSQ are opportunities unique to the job of flight attendant such as travel benefits and flexibility of work schedule, both areas that the men indicated were important to them when seeking their jobs. The MSQ, therefore, offers a

general but somewhat limited view of the flight attendants' satisfaction with their job.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale consists of 10 items. Each item is scored on a five point likert scale with the total number of points equal to 50. The mean for the flight attendants was 44.16 and the standard deviation was 5.67. The median score of 44 indicated a generally high level of self-esteem within this sample of flight attendants.

The Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) consists of 53 items (symptoms) that assess mental health. Items are scored on a five point likert scale ranging from "not at all" to "extreme" for levels of symptom distress. Frequencies were compiled and percentages determined for each item. Levels indicating a high degree of symptomatology were selected infrequently. Only 10 men (11%) indicated that they were feeling "easily annoyed or irritated" to an extreme degree. Items labeled, "nervousness or shakiness inside" and "feeling tense or keyed up", were also scored as being extreme in experience but only by 6 of the men (7%). Less than 6% of the men indicated that the remaining 50 items were a source of distress for them.

Symptoms experienced at a moderate level by 50% or more of the men were: trouble remembering things; feeling easily annoyed or irritated; feeling lonely; feeling blue; feeling lonely when you are with people; easily hurt feelings; others not giving proper credit for achievements; and

feeling that people will take advantage of you if you let them. Two additional symptoms, "trouble concentrating" and "feeling blocked in getting things done", were also scored by the men at a moderate high level (49%). The content of these items suggests that some of the men may be depressed.

Items selected by 90% or more of the men as not causing any distress were: faintness; fear of open spaces; suicidal ideation; fear of traveling on buses, subways, or trains; trouble breathing; idea of being punished for ones' sins; the urge to beat, injure, or harm someone; and feeling nervous when left alone.

A forward regression was run to test whether or not a significant relationship exists between length of employment as a flight attendant and career satisfaction (assessed by the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire). Length of employment was the only variable that reached statistical significance (see Table 7). These results indicate that as length of employment increased, job satisfaction decreased. Age, education level and other current employment were used as covariates. The model was also tested for interactions between/among variables. The covariates were not found to be significant and no significant interactions were documented. Since 13 (15%) of the 90 men interviewed work a second job, secondary employment was utilized as an additional covariate in this research question. The men's average length of employment in a second job was eight

years. The length of employment by the airline, by those men with a second job, ranged from three to 18 years. There were a range of types of secondary employment, such as substitute teaching, owning and managing a small business, professional pianist, landlord, and retail sales.

Table 7

Forward Regression of Length of Employment as a Flight
Attendant and Career Satisfaction (n=90)

	b	Beta	Significance
Length of Employment as a Flight Attendant	30.67	.33	.002
Constant	34.54		

R = .107, df = 85

To systematically assess the impact of outliers, a stepwise regression was computed deleting all the values of years worked equal to one (five cases). The results (see Table 8) were not significant and indicate that the positive results reported in Table 7 are probably influenced by those participants who have been working for only one year as flight attendants who are much more satisfied in their jobs than are those who have been working for a longer period of time. Thus, there appears to be a honeymoon period during the first year of employment during which job satisfaction levels are high. After the first year or so, this job

satisfaction declines. Finally, it should be noted that when the two participants with the longest length of employment (18 and 20 years) were left out of the regression equation, the results were not affected (see Table 9).

Table 8

<u>Stepwise Regression of Length of Employment as a Flight Attendant and Career Satisfaction with Values of Years Worked Equaling One Deleted</u> (5 cases deleted)

	b	Beta	Significance
Current Age	.24	.06	.65
Length of Employment as a Flight Attendant	-.84	-.18	.21
Constant	38.498		

R = .021, df = 79, F = .422

Table 9

Stepwise Regression of Length of Employment as a Flight
Attendant and Career Satisfaction with Values of Years
Worked Equaling 18 or More Deleted (2 cases deleted)

	b	Beta	Significance
Length of Employment as a Flight Attendant	31.27	.33	.002
Constant	34.26		

R = .109, df = 82

A forward regression was run between length of
employment and personal self-esteem (assessed by the
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale). There was no significant
relationship found between length of employment and personal
self-esteem. Age, education level, and other current
employment served as covariates here. There was an
interesting trend, but not statistically significant
relationship, noted between education level and self-esteem.
There seems to be a tendency for self-esteem to decrease as
educational level increases (see Table 10). Age and other
current employment were not found to be statistically
significant.

Table 10

Forward Regression of Length of Employment as a Flight
Attendant and Self-Esteem

	b	Beta	Significance
Educational level	-1075.27	-.161	.133
Constant	36852.95		

R = .026, df = 86

A forward regression was run between length of
employment and mental health (assessed by the Brief Symptom
Inventory). The regression equation using the inverse of
years worked was not found to be significant (see Table 11).
The results from this regression model did suggest that as
length of employment as a flight attendant increased mental
health decreased. Age, education level, and other current
employment served as covariates. Interactions between these
variables were tested, but no significant interactions were
found.

Table 11

Forward Regression of Length of Employment as a Flight
Attendant and Mental Health

	b	Beta	Significance
Length of Employment as a Flight Attendant	-8.157		.154
Constant	15.323		

$R = .023$, $df = 87$

Findings Relating to Testing Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant relationship
between perceived freedom to be open and oneself on the job
and career satisfaction, personal self-esteem, and mental
health.

A Likert Scale was used to assess the subjects' level
of openness concerning their sexual identity on the job.
The scale ranged from one to five with "not open to anyone"
as level one and "very open to everyone" as level five.
Twenty-six percent of the men reported being "very open to
everyone" and 44% reported being "somewhat open to people".
Twenty-four percent reported that they were "not open to
some/open to others" and 6% said they were "not open to many
people".

A forward regression was run to test whether or not a
significant relationship exists between the participants'

view of their freedom to be open and themselves on the job

and career satisfaction (assessed by the Minnesota

Satisfaction Questionnaire). This regression model which

used the inverse of level of openness on the job was found

to be significant (see Table 12). The results indicate that

job satisfaction goes down as the men's level of openness

goes up. Age and education level served as covariates and

did not reach statistical significance.

Table 12

Forward Regression of Flight Attendants' Perception of

Freedom to be Open with Gay Identity on the Job and Career

Satisfaction

	b	Beta	Significance
Openness on the Job	.21	.20	.059
Constant	40.89		

R = .041, df = 85

A forward regression was conducted between the

participants view of their freedom to be open and themselves

on the job and personal self-esteem (assessed by the

Rosenberg self-Esteem Scale). The ridit statistical

transformation procedure was used on the data set. With

education level serving as a covariate, the results were

found to be significant. This finding indicates that as

openness on the job increases, so does self-esteem

regardless of age or education level (see Table 13). It should be noted that the Ridit transformational procedure can be interpreted as the probability that a random individual chosen from the same population would have a value less than or equal to someone in the group. If a multiple regression were run using only the ridit transformation (i.e., leaving educational level out of the regression equation), the results would also be significant. Age was used as a covariate in these regressions and did not appear to affect the results.

Table 13

Forward Regression of Flight Attendants' Perception of Freedom to be Open on the Job and Self-Esteem with Educational Level as a Covariate

	b	Beta	Significance
Educational level	-996.547	-.1449	.172
Openness (Ridit)	8308.013	.2206	.039

R = .07, df = 84, F = .0473

A forward regression was conducted between the participants view of their freedom to be open and themselves on the job and mental health (assessed by the Brief Symptom Inventory). The ridit of openness was squared and included in the model. The relationship was found to be not linear but quadratic. The results were significant (see Table 14)

and indicate that both a low and high degree of openness is correlated with high mental health. Interestingly, degrees of openness falling in the middle range are correlated with a relatively low degree of mental health.

Table 14

Forward Regression of Flight Attendants' Perception of Open on the Job and Mental Health

	b	Beta	Significance
Openness (Ridit)	26.412	.618	.1429
Openness (Ridit Squared)	-32.524	-.773	.0680
Constant	10.617		

$R = .054$, $df = 86$, $F = .0899$

Findings Relating to Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6: There is a significant relationship between perceived support of gay identity and career satisfaction, personal self-esteem, and mental health.

To assess "support for gay identity at work" the participants were asked to rate on a scale from high (very positively) to low (very negatively and does not apply) how people they come in contact with at work react to the fact that they are gay. The categories of workmates, cockpit crews, supervisor, airline passengers, and ground agents were individually rated. This question was in the self-report portion of the protocol. Unfortunately, there were

not enough ratings reported in the last three categories to
include them in the analysis. Support for gay identity from
workmates and cockpit crews differed significantly (see
Table 15). Eighty-one percent of the male flight attendants
reported experiencing positive support for their gay
identity from workmates whereas 62% rated cockpit crews as
nonsupportive. It is significant to note that none of the
flight attendants interviewed rated their workmates as
negative in their support.

Table 15

Support for Gay Identity

	Cockpit Crew n=82	%	Workmate n=88	%
Very positive	2	2.2	52	58
Somewhat positive	4	4.4	21	23
Neutral	20	22	15	17
Somewhat negative	39	43	0	0
Very negative	17	19	0	0

On a scale of 1-5, 1 = very positive and 5 = very negative

$\overline{X}$ for Cockpit Crew = 3.79, S.D. = .913

$\overline{X}$ for Workmate = 1.58, S.D. = .769

A regression was then run between the scores for
"support at work" and career satisfaction (assessed by the
Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire). When both workmate

and the inverse of pilot variables were used together in a forward regression, the results were found to be significant at .00 and accounted for 22% of the variance perceived support at work (see Table 16). The results suggest that the perceived support from both workmates and pilots has a strong positive effect on job satisfaction. Age and education level were entered as covariates and were not found to be significant.

Table 16

Forward Regression of Flight Attendants' Perception of Support for Gay Identity and Career Satisfaction

	b	Beta	Significance
Pilots	50.995	.3436	.001
Workmate	-7.640	-.2925	.004
Constant	38.3006		

R = .2287, df = 77, F = .000

A backward regression was run between the scores for "perceived support by pilots and workmates of gay identity" and self-esteem (assessed by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale). The results were found to be significant (see Table 17) and indicate that higher self-esteem is associated with perceived support of gay identity by pilots and workmates on the job. Age and educational level were entered as covariates and were not found to be significant.

Table 17

Backward Regression of Flight Attendants' Perception of

Support for Gay Identity and Self-Esteem

	b	Beta	Significance
Pilot (Ridit)	-42227.8693	-1.1345	.0036
Pilot (Ridit Squared)	40980.8036	1.1341	.0036
Workmate	-4139.9460	-.3113	.0029
Constant	44574.5425		

$R = .2275$, $df = 78$, $F = .0001$

To assess the effect on mental health (assessed by the
Brief Symptom Inventory) of "perceived support by pilot and
workmate of gay identity", regression models were run. None
were found to be significant. Age and education level
served as covariates and did not reach statistical
significance. There does not appear to be a relationship
between "perceived support by pilots and workmates of gay
identity" and mental health.

Findings Relating to Testing Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7: There is a significant relationship
between perceived discrimination within the job and personal
self-esteem, mental health, and career satisfaction.

The respondents were asked to estimate the number of
times they were discriminated against due to their sexual
orientation on the job, off the job, and within the last

twelve months. Discrimination was divided into nine categories ranging from verbal insults to sexual assaults. The highest number of incidents both on and off the job occurred within the categories of "verbal insults" and "sexually harassed" (see Table 18). The remaining seven categories which ranged from physical threats to sexual assaults dropped by at least two-thirds while on the job. It should be noted that it is a felony to interfere with an airline crewmembers' duties, and this policy may influence the rate of discrimination the men have experienced at work.

It is interesting to note that in the Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force survey on discrimination, 65% of the respondents reported being verbally insulted within the last 12 months, compared to 44% of the flight attendants. The rate of verbal discrimination in the Philadelphia Task Force survey may be higher due to the fact that it sought responses specifically from gays who had experienced some form of discrimination. Thus, the sample was self-selected and focus was given to the topic of discrimination.

A discrimination index was calculated by weighing each item on the Discrimination/Victimization Inventory by the inverse of the mean and summing up across those items. This index was summed and used as an aggregate to create a total discrimination score. The mean was 7.045 and the standard deviation was 16.097.

Table 18

Discrimination Due to Sexual Orientation

	On the Job			Off the Job			In the Last Year		
	n	%	$\overline{X}$	n	%	$\overline{X}$	n	%	$\overline{X}$
Verbal insults	44	49	1.6	59	61	5.7	40	44	1.1
Physical threats	10	11	.2	25	26	.8	7	9	.09
Property damaged	1	1	.0	11	11	.2	0	0	.00
Objects thrown at self	4	4	.1	13	14	.6	2	2	.02
Chased or followed	3	3	.0	20	22	.4	5	6	.06
Punched or kicked	4	4	.0	15	17	.3	0	0	0
Hit with a weapon	0	0	.0	5	6	.1	0	0	0
Sexually harassed	22	24	1.6	22	23	1.8	19	21	.06
Sexually assaulted	2	2	.02	14	14	.2	2	2	.02

A forward regression was run between the summed scores from the discrimination index and the career satisfaction scores (assessed by the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire). Results indicated that as instances of discrimination increased, job satisfaction decreased (see Table 19). The results were found to be significant at .04. Age and education level were used as covariates and were not

found to be significant.

Table 19

Forward Regression of Flight Attendants' Experience of

Discrimination on the Job and Career Satisfaction

	b	Beta	Significance
Discrimination	-.2874	-.21606	.0444
Constant	44.0682		

R = .0466, df = 85

A forward regression was run between the summed discrimination score (on the job) and personal self-esteem (assessed by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale). The results did not reach statistical significance (p=.13) but educational level appeared to have a weak effect (see Table 20). High educational level was associated with low self-esteem. Age was not found to be significant.

Table 20

Forward Regression of Flight Attendants' Experience of

Discrimination on the Job and Self-Esteem

	b	Beta	Significance
Educational level	-1076.7146	-.16148	.1306
Constant	36881.2881		

R = .0260, df = 87

Regression models were run between the summed discrimination scores (on the job) and mental health (assessed by the Brief Symptom Inventory). None were found to be significant. Age and educational level served as covariates and did not reach statistical significance. Given these results, there does not appear to be a relationship between discrimination experienced on the job and mental health.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

The overall purpose of the study was to examine gay
male sexual identity development among a
sociodemographically diverse sample of flight attendants
with same-sex desires. The interaction between gay male
identity development and the perceived environment was
investigated within the context of work. Gay sexual
identity development theory provides a framework for
understanding how gay identity is affected within the
workplace. The following hypotheses were addressed:

1. The profession of flight attendant was chosen as a
context for the coming out process.

2. The profession of flight attendant facilitated the
coming out process.

3. Working as a flight attendant enabled the men to
fulfill their social needs as gay men through relationships
with others within the profession.

4. There is a significant relationship among length of
employment as a flight attendant and career satisfaction,
personal self-esteem, and mental health.

5. There is a significant relationship among perceived

freedom to be open and oneself on the job, career satisfaction, personal self-esteem, and mental health.

6. There is a significant relationship among perceived support of gay identity, career satisfaction, personal self-esteem, and mental health.

7. There is a significant relationship among perceived discrimination within the job, career satisfaction, personal self-esteem, and mental health.

Ninety flight attendants employed by one of the three major airlines in the United States served as participants in the study. The job of flight attendant was chosen for study due to the large number of gay men working in this profession. Data was collected through a series of individual fact-to-face interviews, as well as a battery of paper and pencil assessments. The interview consisted of five sections: (1) sociodemographics and family background; (2) sexual identity life history (including current relationships and gay acculturation; (3) work history (including pathways into the profession, and incidents of discrimination); (4) future aspirations and life goals; and (5) mental health.

The demographic information collected included age, minority status, past and current relationship status, educational level and secondary employment. Other measures used in this study included a Gay Acculturation Index, a Discrimination/Victimization Index, Interview Questions

related to Job and Sexual Orientation, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Brief Symptom Inventory, and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire for work.

The data set consisted of frequency counts and continuous measures. A series of multiple regression analyses were conducted on the continuous measures. The independent variables were length of employment, perceived freedom to be open about sexual orientation, perceived support of gay identity, and discrimination. The dependent measures were job satisfaction, mental health, and self-esteem.

Null Hypothesis 1 was not rejected. That is to say that the profession was not chosen as a context for the coming out process. Only 39% of the flight attendants stated that their sexual orientation was an influence on their decision to become a flight attendant, 52% said it was not an influence and 9% were uncertain. A more fine grained examination of the responses from men who reported that they were uncertain revealed that they were confused as to how their sexuality influenced their decision, rather than uncertain with respect to it being a contributing factor.

To date there has been no empirical research related to the specific issue of how sexual orientation in general influences career choice nor specifically same sex sexual orientation. Research question one was designed to address this issue. When the men were asked in an open ended

question why they had chosen the job of flight attendant, only 7% (n=6) of the 90 subjects mentioned their sexuality as a contributing factor. Rather, they stated other reasons mentioned below. This open ended question was followed by a question that specifically asked whether the subjects' sexual orientation influenced their job choice. An additional 41% of the subjects stated that it had. A possible explanation for 41% of the men failing to initially mention their sexuality comes from the research conducted by James Woods (1993). Woods, when interviewing 70 gay men as to the role their sexuality played within the workplace, found that the men often drew the conclusion that it is proper the two be kept apart. They cited informal rules and normative beliefs within society that define sexuality as marginal inappropriate organizational behavior. Woods suggested that the men's attitudes represent the values of a larger culture that defends conventional notions about privacy and professionalism, specifically that sexuality has no place at work. Thus, many of the men in this study may have also been influenced by these cultural norms which separate, in particular, nonconventional sexuality in the workplace.

Of the 35 (41%) men who reported that their sexuality had some influence related to their job choice, 20 perceived the job as a safe working environment. Media mogul David Geffen was quoted as saying in the Advocate,

> When I realized as a teenager that it was possible that
> I might be gay -- I wasn't sure until my 20's -- I
> thought, 'What kind of a career can I have where being
> gay won't make a difference?' I thought about it a
> lot, and I decided that the entertainment business was
> a profession in which being gay was not going to be
> unusual or stand in my way (Friskopp & Silverstein,
> 1995).

To Geffen, selecting a working environment where he could fit in and be free from discrimination was of utmost importance in choosing a career. The importance of safety was also raised by the flight attendants in their descriptions of what they hoped for and expected to find within a flight attendant's job. One-third of the 90 men interviewed reported that they had some prior knowledge of the job through friends and reported their awareness of its reputation for welcoming gay men. The job was known as one where a gay man could be free to be himself and comfortable with his sexual orientation. Several men said that the job, "looked like something gay males did -- that a majority of the men in the field were gay." This may be based on the stereotype of effeminacy in gay men. The profession of flight attendant had traditionally been defined as "women's" work. In addition, the nature of the work itself inhibits significant personal interaction, since flight crew and passengers change with each trip. This may serve a defensive function in protecting gay men from disclosure and discrimination. As pointed out in Hochschild's (1983) study of female flight attendants, the work itself also requires containment and "management" of affects and emotions.

When asked how their gay sexuality influenced their job choice many men expressed the opinion that the job of flight attendant would permit a man to be gay and not be discriminated against. Men who had experienced previous job discrimination or experienced the need to hide their sexual orientation cited this as a reason for seeking this work as well as men who were entering the work force for the first time. Their statements included: "I wouldn't have to fight prejudice every day at my job"; "I knew I wouldn't be fired for being gay"; "I worked as a programmer and felt hidden. I knew I wouldn't have to hide as a flight attendant."

In Straight Jobs/Gay Lives, Friskopp and Silverstein (1995) interviewed 100 gay alumni from Harvard Business School about being gay in the American workplace. They found that nearly one out of three gay professionals surveyed had experienced on-the-job discrimination because they were known or suspected of being gay. The authors stated that,

> Because gay people have only recently begun to feel safe enough to make themselves visible in business, those who dream of business careers or seek job advancement have had few positive successful models to emulate. In the absence of proof to the contrary, the homophobia and discrimination they experienced growing up gave young gay people every reason to believe that the road to business success will be difficult if not impossible, especially for those who are openly gay (Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995).

The lack of gay role models in the workplace was noted by the flight attendants. Examples included: "There are no gay figures in work to look to"; "I knew flight attendants were

gay, I didn't know gays in other professions". Forty-one percent of the flight attendants have college degrees and 19% completed graduate work and yet they have chosen the job of flight attendant. Whether anticipated or directly experienced, the pressures of blending a gay sexual orientation and work to a satisfying degree appears to have exerted an influence on the type of work they selected.

Other reasons for seeking work as a flight attendant can be categorized under the need to escape from a current situation and the need to fulfill a current desire. Escape translated into movement out of a family, community, or job that stifled being gay and finding a large group of gays, for the purpose of confirming a gay sexual identity, seeking sex, companionship, and in some instances a partner. By definition an airline job offers not only the opportunity to move to a large city and work among a group of gay males, but entree to cities with visible gay communities thus potentially fulfilling all of these needs. Friskopp and Silverstein (1995) found that the most frequent and recent encounters with homophobia and discrimination were described by those from less cosmopolitan cities and that gays who choose to come out gravitated to large cities. Additionally, they found that people they interviewed sought to establish relationships with other gay people where they were employed.

What remains unexplained is why 52% (n=47) of the men

stated that their gay sexual orientation did not influence their decision to work as a flight attendant. In a field of work where a clear majority of the men are gay, it is interesting to note that being gay did not appear to be a major factor with respect to selecting the field. Perhaps the answer lies in the phenomenon of denial. It may be that for these men the need for escape lay not only in seeking an escape from a society where gay identity is stigmatized but an escape from having to acknowledge that a need for escape is needed at all. A gay man working as a flight attendant may feel he can avoid the stigmatization a gay man working in other professions encounters.

What led men into the field of flight attendant in the first place? Until 1972 only women were allowed to work as flight attendants. Escoffier reported in 1974 that jobs classified as "service occupations" tend to employ many gay people. Perhaps it was only natural that when the job of flight attendant (a service oriented field with many opportunities for travel and possibilities of meeting other gay men in large urban settings) opened up to men, gay men applied. Additionally, Escoffier suggested that one explanation for gay men being willing to enter opposite sex typed occupations is that the stigma of being the opposite sex in such work may not be that onerous. From what the flight attendants reported, Escoffier's explanation seems to hold true for them.

Based on a strict technical reading of the statistical data, Null Hypothesis 1 was not rejected. However, based on the contents of the information reported by the flight attendants, this strict quantitative interpretation appears to be somewhat questionable. The responses of the 47 men who indicated that their sexual orientation did not contribute to their job choice of flight attendant conveyed that the job may have been used as an avoidance of disclosure both to others and to themselves. In addition, the men's responses may reflect entrenched ideas within our society concerning the separation of work and sexuality (Woods, 1993).

On the other hand, null Hypothesis 2 was rejected. The profession of flight attendant facilitated the coming out process. Eighty-two percent of the men felt the job was supportive of their gay identity while 18% stated it was not supportive. Eighty-three percent of the men reported that the level of openness about their gay identity had increased since taking the job while 17% reported no change. Of the 75 men who reported they were more open, 49 said they were much more open and 26 said they were somewhat more open.

The coming out process begins for a gay man when he defines himself as homosexual and when he begins to disclose his gay identity to others. Before a man comes out, however, he typically goes through a stage of sexual identity confusion (Troiden 1977; 1979). During this stage

an individual may experience guilt and become secretive about his gay identity due to the stigmatization surrounding homosexuality and the general privatization of sexuality in society. He may also experience difficulty in finding other gay men with whom to form relationships.

Some of the men in this study reported consciously seeking the job of flight attendant (knowing it was populated with gay men) to clear up their own confusion as to whether or not they were gay. Statements exemplifying this are: "I was dating a woman but was drawn to men. I was not sure where I was" and "I knew that a lot of male flight attendants were gay. I felt I needed to find my orientation."

Upon becoming flight attendants, the men entered a workplace they described as safe, comfortable, and populated with others like themselves. The men reported that this atmosphere encouraged them to come out of the closet and share their identity with others. For example, "It (the job) definitely propelled me forward -- on with my gay lifestyle, basically helping me to come out. This is what brought me out of the closet."

In being exposed to many gay people, the men were exposed to a variety of social networks where gay lifestyle information was shared. In a sense, the flight attendant corp became a microcosm of the gay culture. As one man said, "There is a basic support system that helped me accept

being gay -- I wasn't alone in this. I learned about the lifestyle in general conversation. I was young and this environment helped."

A statistically significant association was found between length of employment as a flight attendant and acculturation into the gay community. The longer a man has been employed as a flight attendant, the more acculturated he is into the gay community. Thus, exposure to a large number of gay men who seek and share information among themselves appears to have helped increase the men's awareness of the gay literature, gay entertainment, gay social activities, and political organizations available to them. Knowledge from others broadens the gay resources available to them which can lead to an immersion in gay culture. The flight attendants' responses to the acculturation scale (see Table 4) further supports this by characterizing the men as a very socially interactive group.

Additionally, the data revealed an interaction between current age, age when a subject first considered himself gay, and acculturation into the gay community. Men who had their first gay awareness later in life tended to be more acculturated than men who had their first gay awareness earlier. This is a rather unexpected finding and has not to date been studied. Men who become aware of their gay sexuality later in life are more likely to be exposed to a visible gay cultural community. In the context of working

as a flight attendant, this results in greater acculturation. Given that the oldest flight attendants grew up in a less open society with a less visible gay culture, a cohort effect may be operating (Herdt & Boxer, 1992).

Null Hypothesis 3 (i.e., Working as a flight attendant has not enabled the men to fulfill their social needs as gay men through relationships with other gay men in the profession) was also rejected. Through their jobs as flight attendants, a significant number of the men have formed friendships and found sexual partners within the flight attendant corp. Almost half (45%) of the men have established intimate sexual relationships at some time during their airline employment with other flight attendants during the course of their flight attendant career.

Cass (1984) stated that during the coming out process, a gay man develops increasingly personalized and frequent contacts with other gay men. According to Troiden (1979), "Before a man can see himself as gay, he must realize that gay men exist, learn what they are like as people, and perceive similarities between their own desires and behaviors and those of people labeled socially as gay." Historically, when it was more the norm for gays to be closeted, there were fewer opportunities for the open community socializing and socialization that are available to gay men today. Men coming out today have more of an opportunity to integrate their homoerotic desires with other

components of their developing identities including social roles and transitions into gay communities. Herdt (1992) has suggested that greater social acceptance within gay communities enables gay men to find the passion and intense male bonding denied them elsewhere. In the life of a gay man, this experience can facilitate a new level of identification with the gay social community. In the interviews many of the men reported seeking the job of flight attendant to find new gay friends. One man said, "I had a sense of isolation in my job at a big company. It was a neutral environment. I knew I would meet people through this job." In this study, 89% of the men reported having formed close friendships (as distinct from sexual relationships) with other gay flight attendants through their work.

Troiden (1979) characterized a same sex love relationship as an external sign of a commitment to homosexuality as a way of life. In keeping with their gender-role training, Troiden stated that males are much more likely than lesbians to gain sexual experiences with a variety of partners before focusing their attentions on one special person. Many of the flight attendants reported having sexual relations with other gay flight attendants some of whom were friends and some of whom were not. Almost half the men have sought and established intimate love relationships with other gay flight attendants and of this

group of men, 8% have had more than one love relationship.

Many of the men expressed in the interviews a wish to meet a

partner: "I was single at the time. This was a way to meet

a partner; "I wanted to get away from a small town and find

a partner"; "I am shy and had just broken up with a lover.

I felt there was more of an opportunity to meet other gay

men in this job." Thus, these flight attendants had several

types of social relationships with one another, and not

simply one type.

Null hypothesis 4 was not rejected. A significant

relationship was not found between length of employment as a

flight attendant and career satisfaction, personal self-

esteem, and mental health. Job satisfaction was not found

to significantly increase or decrease over length of

employment. Participants working for one year or less,

however, indicated a higher level of satisfaction with their

jobs. A majority of the subjects interviewed stated that

they sought the job of flight attendant for benefits

inherent within the job itself along with the opportunities

it provides for a gay man. The realization of these goals

within the first year may account for an initial "honeymoon"

period of satisfaction with the job. Interestingly, the

relationship found between education level and self-esteem

may play a part in why the initial satisfaction with the job

levels off. Although not statistically significant, there

was a tendency for self-esteem to decrease as the variable

educational level increases over length of employment (i.e.,
The more education a man has, the more likely his self-
esteem will decrease over length of employment.). Forty-one
percent of the men have a college degree while 19% have
completed graduate work. Their work as flight attendants
does not necessarily allow them the opportunity to utilize
their educational training to advance their careers. This
may, over the course of their career as a flight attendant,
affect the level of satisfaction they experience in this
job. Mental health was not affected by length of employment
or by any of the independent variables; this may be due to
the nature of the measures in part, employed in this study
which was focused on symptomatology and not on any positive
markers or traits of mental health (e.g., resilience). The
mental health data indicate these men have, on average, a
relatively low level of symptomatology.

Null hypothesis 5 was rejected. There is a significant
relationship between perceived freedom to be open and
oneself on the job and career satisfaction, self-esteem, and
mental health. The flight attendants ratings of their level
of openness at work closely paralleled the results found in
a study by Friskopp and Silverstein in 1995. In Friskopp
and Silverstein's study of 100 gay alumni from the Harvard
business school, the authors found that almost none of the
alumni were completely open at work and few were completely
closeted. Most were somewhere in the middle.

Interestingly, a majority of the flight attendants (68%) also rated their level of openness at work as somewhere in the middle range. These men indicated that they were either somewhat open to others at work or selectively open to some but not to others. None of the flight attendants reported being completely closeted at work while 26% indicated they were open to everyone. Only 6% were not open to many people. Here are some examples of how a few of the men responded when asked about being open at work:

I decide if I feel a need to share that part of me with anybody on the flight. If it comes up, I decide what to do. If its positive, I may be open. In the right situation, I have nothing to hide.

I'm just me. I don't announce it but I don't hide it. If someone asks me I'll tell them. Many conversations take place.

I don't hide my identity but I don't think its any of their business. If asked by someone I don't know, I don't say. If I get to know someone and wish to tell them I will.

The responses above reveal the men's selectivity concerning with whom they share their sexual orientation.

The decision as to whether or not to be open often appears to be based on the anticipated reaction of others. Since the flight attendants who comprise a work trip vary from trip to trip, there is a good chance that the men are carefully monitoring their level of openness. The following responses support this:

I don't go out of my way to tell them. If they ask then I'll tell them. I don't think my personal life is any of their business. I only work with them a short time anyway. One shift and it's on to someone else.

I don't tell everyone. You kind of feel the person out. After flying for three days together I may share.

To whom are the men closed?

I'm very open. It's on my flight attendant bag and lapel and in my gay flag. It sparks questions so I talk about it but there are people -- cockpit crew, straight male flight attendants, and bible belt females -- we just don't get into it. I'd quit my job if I had to hide it. You do qualify people as to how they're going to react to you.

I'm very open with people I work with, with the

exception of cockpit members. I don't work with them enough for it to be addressed. If it comes up with them, I would tell them who I am.

I keep my identity separate from some people who are in headquarters who I'm on the phone with.

Some supervisors. I know they know, but I sense they're homophobic. I don't know if "hide it" is the right word but I don't advertise it.

Results from a series of forward regression procedures performed on the data set indicated that job satisfaction decreases as the men's level of openness increases. Seventy-five percent of the verbal responses concerning openness at work were in reference to being open with flight attendant co-workers although the question itself was not targeted at a certain group but instead left open. Since the flight attendants were rated by these respondents as extremely supportive of their gay identity (see hypothesis 6), these results were somewhat surprising. Flight attendants, however, spend their working hours with many other people such as passengers, other airline employees, and members of management. Here are some of their comments regarding these groups:

The general public assumes all male flight attendants are gay and I don't like assumptions made about who I am.

Male passengers are less at ease with a gay male flight attendant than a female flight attendant.

Other gay men outside of the profession of flight attendant assume we (flight attendants) are promiscuous and we're not taken seriously.

There are some instances when I'm not open. For example to passengers when they assume I have a wife and I just let it go.

In summary, job satisfaction in relation to openness concerning gay identity at work may be negatively influenced by the time and emotional energy the men expend in continually assessing whether or not to reveal their sexual orientation to others. Secondly, a flight attendants' workplace consists not only of interactions with other flight attendants, but of the public as well as people holding other positions within the airline. The level of openness expressed by the men with each group may vary greatly. The interview protocol did not sufficiently differentiate the responses of the men among these groups.

These differences in openness emerged when the men's verbal responses were reviewed. It is recognized that they may have influenced the results.

Results from the forward regression analysis of the data set indicated that as openness on the job increases so does self-esteem. The mental health literature is in agreement that self-disclosure can promote the development of a healthy gay identity (Cass, 1996; Kertzner & Sved, 1996). In theories of gay identity development, disclosure of a gay identity to nonhomosexual audiences is an external marker of commitment to the homosexual identity (Troiden, 1979). Weinberg and Williams (1975) and McDonald (1982) reported that positively gay identified subjects with a high self-concept held positive attitudes toward male homosexuality, participated more in the gay subculture, and disclosed more about their affectional/sexual preferences to others. Results from this research project conducted with flight attendants support these findings.

A forward regression procedure was also computed between openness and mental health and a curvilinear relationship emerged. Both low and high degrees of openness on the job were associated with lack of symptoms. Degrees of openness in the middle range were indicative of a relatively low degree of mental health (or more symptomatology). Flight attendants who were open about their gay identity within the workplace were also found to

have low symptomology on the BSI. This finding is supported by research conducted by Smith and Kurkek (1987) who found that low worry and low anxiety were associated with a high degree of self-disclosure.

Flight attendants whose level of openness was low on the job were also found to have an absence of symptoms.[1] This finding may indicate that these men have developed a coping strategy for dealing with their gay identity within their workplace. By suppressing their gay identity at work, they may be able to avoid encounters with others that evoke feelings that result in symptomology. It should be noted that this study was directed only at openness within the workplace. Many of these men may be open in contexts outside of work thus providing other outlets for expression of their gay identity.

Participants whose level of openness at work fell in the middle range were found to have a relatively low degree of mental health. These men may be experiencing what Alan Bell (1976) described as "A great deal of tension in pretending to be what they are not, a profound disparity between their inner and outer selves". This finding corresponds to what Sidney Jourard (1971) wrote about the phenomenon of self-disclosure. Jourard claimed that the greater the

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[1]Mental health was defined, based on the measure, as an absence of symptoms. This leaves open the question of what is defined as "positive" mental health, outside of being symptom free.

discrepancy between an aspect of the real behavioral self that is seen as salient to one's character and the representation of that aspect to others, the greater likelihood of stress.

Null hypothesis 6 was only partially rejected. A significant relationship was found among perceived support of gay identity, career satisfaction, and personal self-esteem. However, a significant relationship was not found between support of gay identity and mental health.

Support for gay identity from workmates was found to be high (81%). Support of gay identity from workmates was found to contribute to the profession of flight attendants' evolvement as a safe context for the coming out process as well as a place where gay identity development is promoted. One gay flight attendant stated,

> This job has supported my identity. Once you become a flight attendant you become part of a network of male and female flight attendants who are very tolerant of gay men and women. I can identify with the gay men, and the women you meet are usually very liberal and accepting. This made me more accepting.

For the most part, female flight attendants, who make up the majority of the flight attendant corp, were described as being supportive of the mens' gay identity:

> Working as a flight attendant has been a positive experience in that I've been able to come out more. You don't have to put on a front. Female flight attendants are open minded. I can be myself.

Most of the people I interact with (male and female flight attendants) are very tolerant and accepting of gay men.

On a rather negative note, support for gay identity from cockpit crews appears mixed and was rated by 62% of the men as nonsupportive. Here are some of their comments:

Sometimes working with the cockpit crews is awkward. They treat you with either indifference or disdain and they demand service from you.

Some crew members won't allow gay flight attendants to serve them a meal. There's a lot of homophobia among the pilots although this seems to be lessening with time.

The entire environment has been very supportive -- quite liberal. Other gay role models are well adjusted. It's a gay affirming atmosphere. Homophobia is not condoned or accepted except among the pilots.

A positive workplace for gay flight attendants has been supported by the airline through the initiation of VAIS (Volunteer AIDS Information Services) and the initiation of written airline policies recognizing gay rights. In 1988, a

male flight attendant based in Los Angeles with this airline started an education and training program that would provide all flight attendants and employees working for the airline with information and facts regarding AIDS. VAIS is currently a systemwide referral source that provides confidential information to employees concerning the subject of AIDS and the disease process, AIDS in the workplace, and medical and disability benefits to those affected.

In 1993, two of the airlines written policies were extended to recognize gay rights. The airlines written policy against discrimination was amended to include the words "sexual orientation" and a regulation was added that states, "An employee will not be discriminated against for having any long-term illness including AIDS". In 1994, the airline began to develop a gay and lesbian task force (GLEAM) for its employees. The purpose of this task force is to teach employees to be aware and sensitive to gay issues.

Null hypothesis 7 was only partially rejected. A significant relationship was found between perceived discrimination within the job and career satisfaction. However, a significant relationship was not found between discrimination within the job and personal self-esteem and mental health.

Although incidents of discrimination against gay people within the workplace have been documented [Philadelphia

Lesbian and Gay Task Force (1992), and the National Gay and
Lesbian Task Force (1981) (Comstock, 1991, Herek & Berrill,
1992)], there have been no empirical studies of the specific
effects of discrimination on job satisfaction, personal
self-esteem, and mental health within a place of work.
Results from this study of gay flight attendants found that,
not surprisingly, as instances of discrimination on the job
increased, job satisfaction decreased. Reports of
discrimination were highest within the categories of "verbal
insults" (49%) and "sexual harassment" (24%). The number of
reported incidents concerning discrimination dropped by two-
thirds in the remaining seven categories. These categories
referred to physical rather than verbal incidents. Fewer
incidents reported in these categories may be related to a
federal law stating that it is a felony to interfere with an
airline crewmembers duties.

It is interesting to note that the airline as well as
the employees have set into motion a growing number of
organizations and policies to assist gay and lesbian
employees. In addition to VAIS (Volunteer Aids Information
Services) which was established in 1988 and the airlines
written policy change occurring in 1993 prohibiting
discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, an
organization entitled GLEAM (Gay and Lesbian Employees
Association) was established in 1994. Additionally, in 1994
the Human Resource Department of the airline established

policies extending the sick leave of employees who suffer from AIDS.

The flight attendants in this study were interviewed from 1992-1994, a time period when policies and employee groups addressing gay rights were expanded by the airline. It is recognized that the discrimination levels found in this study may have shifted somewhat during the course of the implementation of the new policies.

It is interesting to note that significant relationships were not found among discrimination within the job, personal self-esteem, and mental health. Statements made by the flight attendants during the interview process may offer some insight into this finding. Many of the men made the statement that a male flight attendant is automatically labeled by the public as well as his co-workers as gay. As one man put it, "The general public assumes all male flight attendants are gay." Therefore, the verbal insults and sexual harassment experienced within the workplace while wearing a flight attendant uniform may be more associated to the perception of what a male flight attendant is perceived to represent (i.e., a "gay man" rather than personalized by the individual as an attack on his sense of self). While job satisfaction was negatively affected by occurrences of discrimination, self-esteem and mental health were found not to be affected.

Limitations of the Study

A cross-sectional retrospective design can only lead to descriptive information about pre-existing situations. According to Kerlinger (1986), several weaknesses are inherent in a retrospective design: (1) the risk of improper interpretation; (2) the inability to have control over independent (predictor) variables; and (3) the lack of power to randomize. However, in many social science research projects, Kerlinger stated that retrospective designs are valuable because many social science research problems do not lend themselves to experimental manipulations.

A nonprobability sampling procedure was utilized. Inability to provide firm conclusions and to make generalizations from the research data are two major limitations of a nonprobability sample. Conclusions made in this study pertain to the 90 subjects who participated. There is no reason to expect that this sample reflects the characteristics of the entire population of gay men who work.

Another limitation has been imposed due to the voluntary nature of the sample selection. Because the sample was voluntary, it cannot be determined whether the attitudes and experiences of the respondents differed significantly from nonrespondents. It should be noted that ethnic minorities were underrepresented within the sample of subjects interviewed which is an additional limitation of

the study. Females were excluded from the study design primarily because of the difficulty in accessing lesbian flight attendants. Pilot fieldwork interviews conducted in preparation for the research design, indicated that gay male flight attendants were more open and more easily accessible than lesbian flight attendants, although it is clear that there are lesbians in the flight attendant workforce. Thus, the findings from this study apply only to the male flight attendants. It is likely that lesbian flight attendants would provide a different set of findings from those obtained in this study.

Self-report, retrospective, and individual data were collected in this study. No external, corroborative data sources were utilized. The extent to which distortion due to selective or inaccurate reporting is reflected in this study is unknown. However, the overall purpose of this study was to focus on the subjects' perceptions of their workplace environment and the interface of the workplace with their gay identity development.

The measures were chosen for this study for several reasons: (1) they focused on clinical issues (e.g., discrimination/victimization of gay people, gay acculturation, the experience of being gay within a working environment); (2) they were reported to be reliable and valid; and (3) they supported the theoretical focus of the study. The <u>Brief Symptom Inventory</u> (BSI) was chosen to

assess mental health because it has been found to be very useful in research on the impact of trauma on mental health (Landsman, Baum, Arnkoff, Craig, Lynch, Sopes, & Champion, 1989). Resilience has been studied in gay adults and has been characterized as the ability to deal with the adversity of various types of discrimination, homophobia, and social stigmata (Berger, 1982; Weinberg & Williams, 1974). However, it should be noted that in this study mental health was viewed as the absence of symptoms rather than the capacity to remain resilient when confronted by difficult life circumstances. The <u>Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire</u> (MSQ) offered a general but somewhat limited view of the flight attendants job satisfaction. Not included in the MSQ are opportunities unique to the job of flight attendant such as travel benefits and flexibility of work schedule, both areas that the men indicated were important to them when seeking their job.

<u>Implications for Educators and Clinicians</u>

Few gay-related articles have been published in counseling journals. From 1978 to 1990, only 42 of 6,661 articles published in six major counseling journals addressed lesbian and gay issues (Buhrke, Ben-Ezra, & Hurley, 1990). Additionally, research suggests that counselors (Graham, Rawlings, Halpern, & Hermes, 1984), and counselor trainees (Thompson & Fishburn, 1977) have received little if any exposure to or training related to counseling

lesbian and gay clients. It is recommended that counseling psychology training programs need to incorporate cases, examples, and issues (including career issues) specific to lesbian and gay men into courses in theory, research, and practice.

The findings of this study have several implications for educators and counselors:

1. There is an absence of empirical research on gay male identity and vocation. Educators should encourage further research into this area. Findings from this research should be published in counseling journals as well as professional journals for employers. It is recommended that personnel increase their awareness of gay issues within the workplace.

2. Career counselors need to be aware of the special career needs of their gay clients. Focus should be given to: stereotypes associated with particular careers; discrimination and homophobia within workplace settings; minority group status of gays; the limited role models available at work for gay men.

3. Counselors need to be aware that although gay men may encounter similar issues within their workplace environments, their methods for resolving these issues may differ. The important role of individual differences needs to be taken into account.

4. Counselors need to be sensitive to the issues of

oppression and appreciate the strength and struggle it takes to establish a positive gay identity.

5. Both counselors and educators need to create a focus for appreciation of differences and examine their values, beliefs, and biases including homophobia.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Both males and females (from diverse ethnic and social class backgrounds) need to be studied with regard to the interplay between sexual orientation and work. Interviewing these gay people may prove to be difficult because historically they have remained invisible due to the discrimination they often encounter at work.

2. There is a need for longitudinal studies of gay men's careers. How does sexual orientation influence a gay man's (or woman's) decision to either continue in or switch his/her career?

3. The career-making decision of gay and lesbian high school and college students needs to be systematically studied. When choosing a career, how much of an influence does sexual orientation play? Are students aware of the issues they may encounter as a gay or lesbian person within the workplace?

4. Traditionally, research findings related to gay identity development has supported the notion that gay men and lesbians who have been more open and accepting with respect to their sexual orientation have better mental

health. This notion was not supported in this study. Research needs to be conducted to study the personality characteristics of individuals who are open and accepting of their sexual orientation as contrasted to those who are not.

5. In this study, there is evidence to support the view that many gay men choose a career based on its ability to meet their gay needs (i.e., a safe working environment free from discrimination, the opportunity to come in contact with other gay men, and the opportunity to be open at work as a gay person). What has not been studied is whether in the process of making a career choice based upon sexual orientation/identity, whether other abilities, talents, and interests are being put aside.

6. Studies of the specific life course of gay and lesbian ethnic minorities and their career work paths need to be systematically studied.

7. Research needs to be conducted on discrimination within a place of work after sexual diversity and anti-discrimination policies and/or gay employee groups are established.

Conclusion

Until recently, researchers interested in gay identity development have focused on early childhood and adolescent development. To extend research into adulthood, the interface between gay identity development and a workplace environment was chosen for study.

Most studies of gays stem from a sample of convenience because the universe of the homosexual population is unknown. The flight attendants were chosen for study due to the large population of gay adult men within the profession. Men in the profession of male flight attendants are considered to be members of an underrepresented social-political group and are reported to be stigmatized. Until 1972 when men first entered the profession, flight attendant jobs were traditionally staffed by women.

The findings reported in this dissertation research project indicate that the men's job selection of flight attendant reflected a choice to integrate their needs as gay men with work. The job of flight attendant was reported by many of the men as a vehicle for movement into a large group of gay men with some hope of finding companionship, sexual relationships, and in some cases, a long-term partner. The job of flight attendant was also sought as a means of escape from either family, a community, or a job that stifled being gay. Many of the participants reported that both before and after taking the job, the working atmosphere of a flight attendant was perceived as being safe for a gay man.

Overall, the results from this study suggest that there is a relationship between adult gay identity development and the environment within a place of work. Working as a flight attendant provided many of the participants with a nuturant context for the coming out process that facilitated their

identity development as a gay men. A positive relationship was found between working as a flight attendant and acculturation into the gay community, as well as an increase in openness with others and heightened self-esteem.

The challenge for future researchers is to conduct finely detailed longitudinal studies focused on the relationship between gay identity development and career choice and social supports within the workplace. Knowledge in this area would not only extend theories of gay identity development into early, middle, and later adulthood, but would also provide needed information for practitioners working in the field.

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I, _____ , wish to participate in the Study of
Male Flight Attendants, conducted by Andrew M. Boxer, Ph.D.,
Director of the Evelyn Hooker Center for Gay and Lesbian
Mental Health of the Department of Psychiatry of The
University of Chicago. The purpose of the research is to
understand the impact of work in the role of a flight
attendant on men's sexual identity development and future
career plans.

I understand that I will be interviewed to obtain my
opinions, thoughts, and feelings regarding my life history,
my work, my sexual identity, and my relationships with
family, friends, and significant others. I understand that
my responses will be kept completely confidential and that
the interview record contains only a numerical code which is
known only to the investigators. I understand that if the
results of this study are published in the social science
literature, I will not be identified by name.

I understand that my participation in this study is
voluntary and that my refusal to participate will involve no
penalty. If I decide to participate, I may quit at any time
also without penalty. For further questions, I may call
312-702-9725.

_____   _____
Signature of Respondent   Date

_____
Signature of Investigator

_____
Signature of Witness

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

33. Thinking back, when did you first become interested in being a flight attendant? Why then? (Probes: What was appealing about it at that time? What were you looking for in this job? Were there people (e.g., flight attendants and others) you knew who influenced your decision to enter this profession?

34a. Looking back on the decision, was your sexual orientation a factor in your desire to work as a flight attendant?

Yes, it was a factor_____
No, it was not a factor_____
Uncertain about whether or not it was a factor_____

34b. How was it a factor?

37. Looking back over the time you have spent in the job as a flight attendant, how would you say, this job has affected the development of your sexual identity? Has the job supported your having a positive identity as a gay (bisexual, homosexual, etc.) man? If so, how?

38. Has the degree to which you can be open about your sexual identity changed since you begin the job?_____
1 = yes   2 = no

38a. If changed, in what direction:
        1 = much more open?
        2 = somewhat more open?
        3 = not open/not hidden/no change?
        4 = somewhat more hidden?
        5 = much more hidden?

38b. How has it changed - to what extent, and when did it change? Also, what factors led to the change?

32. How long have you been working as a flight attendant:

        _____
        code in years

2. In which culture do you feel most comfortable?
    a.   Most definitely gay/lesbian culture..........._____
    b.   Probably gay/lesbian culture................._____
    c.   Probably the heterosexual culture..........._____
    d.   Most definitely the heterosexual culture....._____
    e.   Gay/lesbian and hetero cultures about equally_____

4. How often do you participate in the following:
    1 = Every day
    2 = Every other day
    3 = Twice a week
    4 = Once a week
    5 = Once a month
    6 = Never
    Gay/Lesbian entertainment (movies, plays, music).._____
    Socializing in Gay/Lesbian people's homes (parties,
        etc.)...................................._____
    Gay/Lesbian bars...................................._____
    Gay/Lesbian political activities...................._____
    Contributing to Gay/Lesbian organizations/causes.._____
    Reading Gay/Lesbian periodicals...................._____
    Reading Gay/Lesbian books.........................._____

13. How many of your friends are gay/lesbian/homosexuals?
    All.._____
    Most..._____
    More than half....................................._____
    About half..._____
    Fewer than half...................................._____
    Only a few..._____
    None..._____

14. What proportion of your leisure-time socializing occurs
    with gay/lesbian/homosexual people?
    All.._____
    Most..._____
    More than half....................................._____
    About half..._____
    Less than half....................................._____
    Only a small amount................................_____
    None..._____

17. In terms of being open and out of the closet, how would
    you compare yourself to your gay/lesbian/homosexual
    friends?
    1 = totally hidden
    2 = more hidden than most
    3 = as open as friends
    4 = more open than most
    5 = totally open

40. What level of involvement do you currently have with
    lesbian/gay/bisexual political or social organizations
    in your life?
    a.   None--I'm not a "group" person
    b.   Just a little--It depends upon the group
    c.   Some
    d.   A moderate level of involvement
    e.   A significant level of involvement

39. Have you ever met other gay men (friends, dates, sexual partners) through your job?

   If you have met other gay men through your job, how many of these men were flight attendants:

   Please estimate the number of: (1-4) you have ever had through this work:

   1. close friend (not sexual partner)_____
   2. close friend/sexual partner_____
   3. sexual partners (not close friends)_____
   4. romance/lovers (sexual and intimate relationship)_____

30. How open in general are you now about your sexuality? On a scale from 1 to 7, with 7 representing complete openness and honesty, circle the number that describes your openness:

   Homosexual/Gay/Bisexual   Complete openness and
   identity hidden with   honesty about Homosexual/
   few exceptions   Gay/Bisexual identity

           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

35. How have the following people reacted to the fact that you are gay? (Circle appropriate number on each line)

		(Very Positively)				(Very Negatively)	
a.	Workmates	1	2	3	4	5	6
b.	Supervisor	1	2	3	4	5	6
c.	Airline passengers	1	2	3	4	5	6
d.	Ground agents	1	2	3	4	5	6
e.	Cockpit crews	1	2	3	4	5	6

I would like to ask you a series of questions about whether you have been insulted, threatened, or hurt, while on the job, because someone knew or thought you were gay/homosexual/bisexual.

52. Have you ever been verbally insulted?   _____
                 0 = no   1 = yes

   How many times while you were working on the job   _____

   How many times in the last year?   _____

53. Have you ever been threatened with a physical attack?

          0 = no   1 = yes   _____

How many times since you have been working on the job?

                                        _____

How many times in the last year?   _____

54. Have you ever had your personal property damaged
or destroyed?   _____
          0 = no   1 = yes

How many times since you have been working on the job?

                                        _____

How many times in the last year?   _____

55. Have you ever had something thrown at you
intentionally?   _____
          0 = no   1 = yes

How many times since you have been working on the job?

                                        _____

How many times in the last year?   _____

56. Have you ever been chased or followed by someone who
you assumed planned to hurt you?   _____
          0 = no   1 = yes

How many times since you have been working on the job?

                                        _____

How many times in the last year?   _____

57. Have you ever been punched, kicked or beat? _____
          0 = no   1 = yes

How many times since you have been working on the job?

                                        _____

How many times in the last year?   _____

58. Have you ever been hit with a weapon or wounded? _____
          0 = no   1 = yes

How many times since you have been working on the job?

                                        _____

How many times in the last year?   _____

59. Have you ever been sexually harassed by someone? _____
              0 = no   1 = yes

    How many times since you have been working on the job?

                                                           _____

    How many times in the last year?   _____

60. Have you ever been sexually assaulted/raped by
    someone?   _____
              0 = no   1 = yes

    How many times since you have been working on the job?

                                                           _____

    How many times in the last year?   _____

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VITA

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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Kay V. Adams has been read and approved by the following committee:

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

11-12-96
Date

Dr. Gloria J. Lewis
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