The Semiotics of Sexual Identity:
Myth vs. History

The Honors Program
Senior Capstone Project
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ABSTRACT

In this project, I argue that gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) students majoring in liberal arts have a higher likelihood of being out and of feeling confident in their identity and manner of self-expression. On the other hand, GLB students majoring in business-related fields are more likely to either be closeted or to fit a very defined, stereotyped gay identity. I test my hypothesis by conducting a semiotic analysis of sexual identity and by looking to the history of sexual identity categories. I also survey and interview various students, both liberal arts and business majors, to determine their perceptions about sexuality. Semiotics is the study of signs. Signs are the building blocks of communication and include words, body movements, and clothing. We have constructed "a web of significance" in order to communicate with one and other and to understand the world (Salzman). Semiotics teaches us that the meaning of signs is arbitrary, historical, and contextual. The business world tends to be conservative and by and large run by heterosexual males. I argue that this social group ultimately benefits from the signs that have come to characterize a person as GLB. These signs constrain homosexuals within very limited categories of self-identity and expression and stem from a history of suppression and inferiority. In the context of the business world, and perhaps American society at large, these signs are perceived to be indicative of both a person's essence and of his/her capabilities. As a result, students at a school with a strong business focus adopt these signs. By doing so, they express themselves in ways that are acceptable to the business world, but not necessarily beneficial to themselves. On the other hand, the more open-minded environment of a liberal arts program nurtures not only a more confident, but also a more varied and diverse group of GLB students.

INTRODUCTION

In Fall 2010, gay suicides received a lot of media attention. The death of Raymond Chase, a student at Johnson and Wales, made the fifth in one month and several more followed. Many of these incidents are the direct result of anti-gay bullying. For example, Tyler Clementi, an 18-year-old Rutgers freshman, jumped off the George Washington Bridge as a result of two students posting a video online of him having sex with another man (Kim). In addition, due to repeatedly being called a "fag" at school, a 15-year-old from Indiana, Billy Lucas, killed himself (Kim). On the other hand, some suicides may not be directly related to homophobia; for instance, the circumstances around Raymond Chase's death are unclear (Huffington). Regardless, there is clearly a pattern (all victims are male and homosexual) and a problem.

These events prove that despite improvements over the past few decades, homophobia still runs rampant in our society and affects many lives. Furthermore, if events like these suicides and others are so prevalent, then there must be some larger issue in our society beyond the character flaws and wrongdoings of a few anti-gay bullies. There is a fundamental problem concerning our society's expectations and our society's support system surrounding masculinity and homosexuality. For example, in their campaign It Gets Better, Dan Savage's partner Terry describes his experience with anti-gay bullying and the administration's lack of response to it; he was told "if you look that way, act that way, walk that way…then there's nothing we can do" (It Gets Better Project). This is an insight into the failure to act on the part of many school systems. A stigma associated with homosexuality persists, and sexuality limits and, in some cases, hurts homosexuals. There would be no reasonable explanation for these suicides if proper support and information were available to these young people. In the end, our society's conceptions of gender and sexuality, as well as the power mechanisms that lie beneath them, are responsible for these tragedies. The social environment of these incidents is the root of the problem.

In this project, I argue that gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) students majoring in liberal arts have a higher likelihood of being out and of feeling confident in their identity and manner of self-expression. On the other hand, GLB students majoring in business-related fields are more likely to either be closeted or surprisingly to fit a very defined, stereotyped gay identity.

I test my hypothesis by conducting a semiotic analysis of sexual identity and by looking to the history of sexual identity categories. Semiotics is the study of signs. Signs are the building blocks of communication and include words, body movements, and clothing. We have constructed "a web of significance" in order to communicate with one and other and to understand the world (Salzman). Semiotics teaches us that the meaning of signs is arbitrary, historical, and contextual. The business world tends to be conservative and by and large run by heterosexual males. I argue that this social group ultimately benefit from the signs which have come to characterize a person as GLB. These signs constrain homosexuals within very limited categories of self-identity and expression and stem from a history of suppression and inferiority. In the context of the business world, and perhaps American society at large, these signs are perceived to be indicative of a person's core and of his/her capabilities. As a result, students at a school with a strong business focus adopt these signs. By doing so, they express themselves in ways that are acceptable to the business world, but not necessarily to themselves. On the other hand, the more open-minded environment of a liberal arts program nurtures not only a more confident, but also a more varied and diverse group of GLB students.

Power relations have been essential to the idea of sexuality since its inception. Homosexuals have been intentionally marginalized since the invention of sexual identity categories and limited by the cultural meaning of "homosexual." Students who attend a university which emphasizes the importance of success in the business world are well aware of this unwritten rule. Therefore, young GLB people at these types of institutions feel compelled to hide their sexuality if they want to succeed. In addition, some students adopt the opposite approach; they know they are GLB, so in order to be accepted, they feel the need to conform to the characteristics and attributes prescribed by the dominant culture to those people who are attracted to and have sexual relations with the same sex.

These associations for same-gender sexual activity, as well as sexuality itself, have a history which is shorter than we might expect. For instance, Michel Foucault explains how the concept of sexuality itself developed as a result of power struggles and how sexual acts, including sex with a person of the same gender, came to define the entirety of an individual. He examines the many roots of sexuality, including one Marxist position: that sexuality

emerged out of economic need and was used as a means for the bourgeoisie to establish itself as a superior class.

I begin my discussion of the history of sexuality by analyzing an essay by David Halperin, a student of Michel Foucault. He examines the absence of our modern conception of sexuality in Ancient Greek society. He discusses instead how sex was a socially-integrated and accepted part of daily life for the Greeks. The assertion that sexuality did not exist in this historical period undermines our contemporary understanding of it as natural and given. It forces to re-evaluate our assumptions about sexuality.

I. THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY

<u>Before Sexuality as We Know it Today</u>
David Halperin elaborates on the history of sexuality by comparing ancient Greece's conceptions of sex acts to contemporary ones. Halperin begins by quoting Foucault, describing that sexuality is a "'set of effects produced in bodies, behaviors, and social relations by a certain deployment' of 'a complex political technology'" (416). He re-establishes Foucault's affirmation that sexuality is an invention manipulated to benefit certain ruling groups. He undermines the contemporary world's assumption that sexuality is a natural given. He insists it is a device utilized by powerful groups of people throughout history to maintain their power. He details the Athenians' view of sex to substantiate this theory.

In Ancient Greece, the conception of sexuality was radically different from the one we understand it today. Halperin demonstrates the temporality of two aspects of sexuality which are taken for granted in the modern world: that sexuality forms a separate sphere of existence, a field to be studied, and that sexuality and sexual acts are principle determining factors of a person's identity. The former assumption held no weight in the Athenian world.   Sex had everything to do with power relations, whether social, economic, or political, and could not be separated from them. Historical documents show that sex was construed as an action of a "social superior upon a social inferior" (Halperin 418). In other words, a Greek citizen determined his partners based on social relations.   It was only considered appropriate for a

citizen to have sex in a way that reflected the society's political and economic hierarchy; someone of inferior status. This could be a female; a free male who was not yet a citizen, but past puberty; or a slave or foreigner of any gender (Halperin 418). In this way, sex was completely entwined with every other aspect of daily life; it was not something which could be cleanly dissected and examined. The qualifications and the ramifications and associations about the nature of the sex act itself, which would be considered today, did not apply.

Our contemporary understanding of sexuality relies on the idea that sex acts themselves are significant and important. The appropriateness of these acts is determined by the nature of the acts themselves and how they compare to a heteronormative standard, rather than how they fit into a larger, social context. Compared to the Greeks, who focused on who was doing the act, we focus on what is being done. Today, sex is judged based on its own merit. Also, sex acts, particularly transgressions relating to sexual deviance, are determinant of a person's identity. According to this conceptualization of sexuality, it did not exist in Ancient Greece.

Additionally, a person's sexual preferences, had no bearing on his personality or character. To place our modern fascination with gender-object preference in the focus of a larger scope, Halperin notes "that human beings differ, often markedly, from one another in their sexual tastes in a great variety of ways (including sexual object-choice) is an unexceptional and, indeed, an ancient observation" (423). Men were not judged by their preference, or lack thereof, for a specific gender. Gender was not a consideration, and male-to-male sexual acts were not uncommon or looked down upon. Halperin humorously compares current society's fixation on sexual object-choice to an absurd fixation about food-taste preference if that were to determine person's core being. He says that despite the widely varied tastes people have in food:

 It would never occur to us to refer to someone's dietary preference as some innate, characterological disposition, to see in his or her strongly expressed and even unvarying preference for the white meat of chicken the symptom of a profound psychophysical condition, leading us to identify him or her in contexts quite removed from that of the eating food as, say, a "pectoriphage" or a "stethovore;" nor would we be likely to inquire further, making nicer discriminations according to whether a person's predilection for chicken breasts

expressed itself to eat them quickly or slowly, seldom or often, alone or in company, under normal circumstances or only in periods of great stress, with a clear or guilty conscience, beginning in earliest childhood or originating with a gastronomic trauma suffered in adolescence.

(Halperin 423)

He gives this absurd example to show how absurd our judgments about sexual preference would seem out of context. Ancient Greeks accepted sexual-object choices in the same way we accept a variety of food tastes now.

The only concern was that social relationships remain intact during sexual activity. A problem arose when a citizen adopted the position of the penetrated, the dominated, as Halperin defines it: "sex-role reversal, or gender-deviance" (422). Athenian society insisted that sex should reflect and perpetuate the social hierarchy.   The powerful citizen should dominate and penetrate the subordinate social inferior. If a citizen were to reverse this order, he would be labeled as "'soft' or unmasculine." However, Halperin emphasizes that this frowned-upon behavior was not ascribed as a fundamental flaw in the character of the transgressor.   It was instead a signal that he was at a different stage in life than most men. In other words, this merely indicated that he would express the appropriate desire in the future, if he were a young boy, or that he had already passed the point in his life when he expressed desire suited for a man, if he were elderly (423). Ancient Greek society passed no judgment on the people transgressing the prescribed sexual code, but rather on the acts themselves. This vastly different perspective on sex demonstrates that the sexual norm has fluctuated throughout history. There was sexual activity which was not acceptable by Ancient Greece's standards, which coincides with the contemporary world's characterization of homosexuals, but this did not imply a pathological or moral problem with the perpetrator. The sex act said nothing about the person's identity. The idea of a "homosexual," especially as a sick, immoral social deviant, was not relevant to their society.

The Invention of Sexuality

It was not until the 19th century, after the Industrial Revolution, that our modern conception of sexuality was deployed. The most obvious cause for the deployment of sexuality is the Marx's theory about the economic necessity to control the population and social body in order for it to function properly in a capitalist system. Foucault is critical of this position for its simplicity, but recognizes its importance. These particular foundations of sexuality still apply today and are especially relevant when considering students attending a university with a strong business focus since capitalism is so clearly central to the function of business. This capital-driven strategy for the deployment of sexuality focuses on "the body as a machine" (Foucault 139). In other words, the body's only function should be to further the economy, to benefit the wealthy and powerful. The body operates like a machine repressing all unproductive sensations and desires while at work. In order to succeed and be productive in the business world, must suppress sexual desires and feelings and focus only on labor. This manipulation of the masses must be achieved through subtle maneuvers such as the invention and spread of a restrictive sexuality. Students at a business-driven school follow this same pattern of behavior.

Policies and laws lacked the subtly needed to control society sufficiently and to infiltrate an ideology into the masses. Various hegemonic groups in the 20th century turned instead to engendering unwritten taboos and installing them into daily life so carefully and deeply that they seemed organic. For example, sex acts of children, especially masturbation, were problematized to the point where they were seen as both inevitably occurring, as well as dangerous and unnatural. "Psychologists would have to take charge," making this into a pathological issue which could be analyzed and "solved" (Foucault 104). Social powers and rules had an excuse to enter even the most intimate and everyday parts of people's lives. Psychologists created a problem which needed to be solved and then offered a solution. They directed people's attentions and discourse and their sources for answers. People were constantly policing themselves and looking to others for solutions. They made authority figures such as doctors, teachers, and psychologists an essential, automatic, and infallible resolution to a problem which had not existed before the intervention of those same authority figures.

The control of a person's body and its functions are key because "the body produces and consumes" (Foucault 106). Producing and consuming are fundamental tenants of a capitalist society. These activities are essential for its function. A level of control of wealth and of the economy can be gained through control of human beings' bodies and thoughts. Power relations created a way to think about oneself and categorize oneself. In the case of children's sex, there were licit and illicit behaviors for children to engage in and logical fixes found in authority figures when a child eventually engaged in the illicit. Specifically, it was considered unhealthy for children to masturbate. Children were constantly surveyed so that when they eventually were caught in the act, authority figures like parents and teachers could provide the proper sanctions and solutions (Foucault 42). In this way, children's actions and thoughts were effectively controlled, and authority figures maintained their power because they created the problem and they provided the solution.

Binary categories were later assigned to people's gender preference in sexual partners, causing the creation of the "homosexual" and the "heterosexual." Like children's sexuality, this created a problem which could only be cured by authority figures, such as doctors and psychiatrists.   These authority figures were intertwined in the power bloc which invented the issue in the first place. Before psychology became a widespread phenomenon, the Church was the authority on people's behavior. Most actions were considered in relation to sin and virtue. Before the intervention of psychology, the sin of sodomy was categorized as a "sin of the flesh." It was a transgression resulting from the impurity of man, much like gambling or drinking. With the spread of psychology, the sin of sodomy was transformed into a specific problem of identity and mental health. Homosexuality was defined as a pathology which inverted the feminine and the masculine into each other. These men were male and exhibited certain masculine features, but were also feminine because of their attraction to other men, so they were characterized in other ways as feminine. Psychology was the solution; it presented a method to detect and reveal these pervasive and destructive impulses and a resolution through medicine and therapy (Foucault 43-49). The ruling body asserted one category to be right (abstinent children, heterosexuals) and the other wrong (sexually-active children, homosexuals). These definitions and judgments still persist today.   People who are attracted

to the same sex still cannot escape the associations of their gender-preference categories and their well-hidden history.

Not only has the hetero-homo binary explained by Foucault maintained its weight and stigma, but the entire concept of sexuality has limited society. Sex acts formerly were viewed independently and merely as another sin committed by imperfect man until the concept of sexuality assigned moral and personal implications to sex acts and sexual preferences. Previously, all sex not intended for procreation and outside marriage was considered a sin and punished more or less equally. Everyone was afflicted by sin, and this said nothing about his/her character. However, during the nineteenth century, peripheral sexualities were brought into the forefront of society's eye so that "typical" sexuality could avoid further scrutiny. As this change progressed, sexuality was invented. A sex act deviating from heterosexual marriage approved by the Christian faith began to be seen as "less a habitual sin than as a singular nature" (Foucault 39). If a man was a homosexual or any other form of deviant, nothing about his being, his soul "was unaffected by his sexuality" (Foucault 43). The sexual decisions made by a person said everything about the core of that person. A person's sexual choices along with every one of his personality traits and flaws originated from inside of him. A person who enjoyed peripheral sexual activities had to fit into a specific description. Deviant sex acts went from being viewed as a "sin of the flesh" to an indicator of the essence of a person. For the homosexual, this was typified as one who found a way of "inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself" (Foucault 43). This was the dominant culture's solution to simplify the difference between heterosexual and homosexual needs and desires. This simplification controlled and limited homosexuals by confining them to a binding definition in order to benefit heterosexual men.

As a result of these societal associations, exerting a heterosexual male identity is essential to power and success. Historically, a solid solution has been to employ homophobia; "calling someone a 'fag' or ridiculing individuals believed to be homosexual has been a way to publicly declare a straight identity" (Dean 137). First, by using anti-gay slurs, a male asserts he is not gay. Additionally, this behavior keeps his symbolic power intact. He is in a position of superiority for being able to ridicule another sexual identity, and he, therefore,

places them in a subordinate position. His sexuality is right, while theirs is wrong; he is strong, while they are weak. Clearly, it is easier to achieve success when these power relations are already set up in one's favor. This mentality leads to the homophobic actions taken by people like Tyler Clementi's roommate; humiliating Tyler for being homosexual establishes his straight identity and highlights its dominance and privilege. Students, particularly those who attend universities which place high value on success in the business world, internalize these rules about gender and sexuality. Therefore, many gay students feel pressured to fit traditional gender roles.

Another important element of the economically-based control of bodies was the deployment of sexuality paired with the deployment of alliance. The deployment of alliance was related to marriage, kinship, and property, which also related to the economy.   When the rules of alliance were no longer enough to contain and guide society, they became tangled up with sexuality. The "family cell," was incredibly important with regards to alliance because it defined the relationships between husband and wife and between parents and children in a specific way. It was also invaluable to the deployment of sexuality (Foucault 106-108). This structure and these relationships created a sexual norm to be followed and inevitably broken. The power structures in place knew, for example, that it would be impossible to completely eliminate children's sexuality; they, in fact, relied upon this truth.

To remain relevant and authoritative, the dominant bloc required an "ever present" threat to the decency they were establishing. It relied upon the ability of sexual transgression and the discourses constructed around it to "proliferate to the limits of the visible and the invisible" (Foucault 28, 42). In other words, because sexual "problems" like children's sexuality constantly presented themselves to the public eye only to be discouraged again by the discourse of various power structures, those power structures retained their authority. Hegemonic groups retained their power not through a fully repressive regime, but rather through discourse. These groups controlled the conversations about the problems they created, but most importantly, ensured that the conversations took place. To be relevant, the ruling powers needed to offer a solution to a social issue. They could not simply repress

deviance because they required this deviance in order to quell it. They needed to establish the deviance before weakening it.

A self-policing system was established. They held the solution to a pervasive problem. This system had everything to do with social expectations and rules.   It relied upon the superiority and benefits which accompany participating in a socially-sanctioned institution. The masses benefitted from conforming to these rules, and they felt humiliation when they failed. For this reason, sexual acts, which define certain lifestyles, such as homosexuality, are still viewed as somewhat taboo and inferior. They disallow the "natural," or what has been ingrained in us as "natural," path to economic and social success.

Not only did the deployment of sexuality serve to control the population and continue the effective function of the economy, it also ensured an economic disparity and class differentiation.   In the late nineteenth century, after the spread of industrialization, the class rift between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat had been threatening to disappear, so it needed to be reinforced. The bourgeoisie used the restrictions associated with the deployment to differentiate themselves from the lower classes.   They were better because they were faced with a more stringent "suppression" of their sexuality. This urge to emphasize their self-restrictions first resulted from a "perversion-heredity-degenerescence" theory based on the idea that deviance was hereditary. The theory furthered the system of control because people had a "biological responsibility" to reproduce in a socially acceptable way in order to ensure descendents were normal; perverts allegedly resulted from bad breeding (Foucault 118-119). This belief directed society by creating anxiety around reproduction.   It continuously differentiated the bourgeoisie, or those who reproduced properly without producing perverts, from the proletariat, or the deviants.

The degenerescence explanation for perversion eventually fell to psychiatric reasoning, but the motivations for these explanations remained the same. The bourgeoisie created a restrictive sexuality and submitted themselves to harsher regulations than the lower classes, making themselves appear to be victims, and thus, superior. In reality, the authoritative institutions which they had economic access to and which insisted on these unwritten regulations reinforced social and economic power relations already in place. The intensity of

their "suppression" made them superior (Foucault 128-129). The wealthy faced stricter regulations, but this separated them from the deviant working class who did not abide by the commandments which the ruling class installed and perpetuated as natural and essential. Similar to the heredity theory, the bourgeoisie constructed for themselves "a body to be cared for, protected, cultivated, and preserved from the many dangers and contacts" of the less sophisticated working class (Foucault 123). The heredity theory insisted that the superior ruling classes naturally produced good, non-deviant progeny, and so orthodox reproductive practices where required to separate the wealthy from the proletariat. Similarly, using psychiatry, the ruling class brought sex into the body. Its privilege allowed it to create and then have access to systems, like psychiatry, which both solved and perpetuated the existence of the deviance they authored (Foucault 121-131). The rich retained their social standing because they helped create sexuality, both the licit and the illicit, as well as an image of perfection which they could attain, but the poor could not. As a result, black-and-white categories, such as homosexual and heterosexual, were invented as a measure of caste. These categories were designated as either right and natural (heterosexual) or wrong and unnatural (homosexual). Homosexuality was associated with working class deviance because it did not conform to the standard set up by the ruling classes.

On the other hand, it is important to remember that Foucault is cautious to emphasize that this system of control is not solely repressive. While Foucault is not denying the reality of Marx's capital-based explanation or of any other instance of repression, he argues that this repressive theory is too simplistic. First of all, the ruling powers obviously knew that their restrictions were bound to fail; children were going to be sexual, and some people were going to be homosexual. Therefore, their plan could not merely rely on eliminating these activities, but rather on a cycle of repression and rebellion. In this way, there would constantly be a battle to be fought and a danger from which the ruling class could protect the people. Additionally, it did not wish to eradicate these deviant sexual acts, but "rather to give it an analytical, visible, and permanent reality" (Foucault 44). In other words, it brought these peripheral and forbidden sexualities to the forefront of the public eye, rather than trying to hide them, in order to establish a system of classification and a hierarchy of sexual acts. Foucault's point is that sexuality itself is repressive. No matter what institutions dictate its behavior, whether

they are religious or scientific, sexuality is an oppressive concept designed to control the people. Creating definitions to explain and categorize people's behavior limits them. People are too various and different to be explained by two categories. We cannot be truly liberated until we are free of sexuality itself.

Thus, Foucault proves that "sexuality" has not always been consistent or even existent. It changes based on historical context. Certain sexual actions, like a man having sex with a man, have been understood differently throughout history. Homosexuality is a modern category. It is also an instable category. Authorities, such as the Church and psychologists, have provided various explanations for the existence of homosexuality, have established a multitude of associations for that category, and have offered various "solutions" to this form of social deviance. Sexuality itself has been developed, deployed, and changed in various ways over time to benefit certain hegemonic groups.

The Stigma of Being "Homosexual
Moreover, the "homosexual" has been a member of the subordinated group since society created that category. Simone De Beauvoir insists, similar to Foucault's argument, that this oppression is a purposeful invention of the powerful to retain its dominance by having something lesser to compare itself to. De Beauvoir says the dominant body uses the "Other" to affirm the "Self," similar to how Marx explains that the bourgeoisie created for themselves a body which needed protecting from the lower classes (13). The self is the body requiring protection, and it needs to be shielded from the "Other." De Beauvoir argues that despite the fear and imminent danger, the "Other" is necessary to define the "Self." She uses these terms in reference to men and women, but the duality also applies to heterosexual and homosexual. The heterosexual male is more masculine because he is not homosexual. The heterosexual needs the "Other" to define himself; the "Self" cannot exist without the "Other" (De Beauvoir 16). The dominant group, in this case, heterosexuals, can identify itself as superior because it bears no resemblance to the inferior, the homosexual. Thus, homosexuality exists for the betterment of the dominant bloc: heterosexuality.

This theory falls in line with Foucault's arguments. Sexuality labels people based on their preferences and places them in a hierarchy. Sexuality is deployed by hegemonic groups to

retain their power. As demonstrated by Foucault, the institutions which govern society change, and the rules and norms change with them. Both homosexuality and heterosexuality have not always existed nor have they been viewed consistently during their lifetime. The conceptualization of being sexually attracted to a person of the same sex changes based on historical and social context. The construction of this concept is always designed to benefit certain powerful groups.

De Beauvoir's theory can be applied to contemporary issues, explaining our culture's fixation on masculinity and what it means to be a real man and the negative results this fixation engenders. It seems ironic and regressive that homophobia and anti-gay bullying should persist when the GLBT community has gained more rights and visibility than ever. In fact, this problem is a direct result of such movements. Due to the rising power of homosexuals and females, straight men feel the need to project their straight identity so as not to be confused for gay or feminine. Straight identity is so important because when sexuality and its binary categories were invented, "individuals who violated rigid binary gender norms were stigmatized as homosexual" (Dean 136). In other words, changes in society's power hierarchy created a need to re-emphasize the dominance of heterosexual men; therefore, the normal category of heterosexual and the unnatural, negative category of homosexual were implemented (Dean 135-136). Being a real man means not being a homosexual or a woman. The hegemonic bloc continues to maintain its power by establishing itself through comparison.   Heterosexual men make up the "Self," and females and homosexual men make up the "Other." Men rely on their straight sexuality then, not only to avoid being cast in with the other, but also to cultivate control.

Even in our seemingly progressive society, men still further their power by belittling women and homosexuals. For example, although gays have gained many rights throughout the past few decades, many gays, especially students, are still subjected to harsh ridicule because of their sexuality. In one instance, 15-year-old Billy Lucas was constantly harassed and called a "fag" at school to the point where he committed suicide. Because of his sexuality and because he exerted some stereotypically feminine traits, he was marked as a target for teasing. By ostracizing him with the label and insult "fag," his schoolmates made themselves feel part

of the "in" group. They made him the "Other," so they could be established as the "Self."

However, they probably did not realize the destructive results this name-calling would have.

Regardless of their intentions, the form of alienation and harassment which they take part in

ensures that power is successfully associated with heterosexual men and weakness with

homosexual men and with women.

 Monique Wittig builds off of De Beauvoir's argument, asserting that in order to gain

equality, oppressed groups must completely renounce the categories assigned to them by the

hegemonic ruling powers. She insists that the label of "woman" and all its connotations is a

"mark imposed by the oppressor;" this analysis can also be applied to the label of

"homosexual" (Wittig 266). She describes how the category of women has been established

as a natural given inherently encompassing certain characteristics; one of the most important

of those is to be attracted and subservient to men. As De Beauvoir's argues, this category of

women is established as not only naturally existent, but naturally inferior to men, to the

"Self." This is achieved because the concept of femininity is believed to be the natural result

of being a female, and femininity is naturally weaker than masculinity. The definition of

women is accepted without a second thought. She agrees with Foucault in that the categories

themselves are restrictive and repressive. Definitions and labels are always limiting.

Furthermore, she asserts that lesbians are neither women nor men. They are not classically

feminine, and they do not accept the inferior status allotted to women. At the same time, they

are not men because that would imply they fit into a binary hegemonic system which

oppresses one group. Lesbians reject this system entirely (Wittig). Here, Wittig is more

radical than her peers. In order to escape this system of oppression, she believes it is

necessary to be a separatist. Being a lesbian is the solution because this category lies outside

the boundaries and rules of patriarchal hegemony.

The rejection of the category of "woman" can be expanded to a rejection of the category of

"homosexual."   This category implies a hegemonic binary. A person can be either male or

female, homosexual or heterosexual, and one category is superior to the other. Whittig

undermines the assumption that these categories are natural. Homosexuals should denounce

these labels to free themselves from the oppressive heteronormative system in place.

On the other hand, unlike Foucault, she emphasizes the importance of this group consciousness with the contingency that it is recognized as a socially-constructed class, not as an essential, biological truth. She emphasizes the importance of "class consciousness" in the fight for the rights of females (Wittig 269). Those who have been labeled "women" form a class which has been oppressed.   In order to gain rights and to destroy the mechanisms which oppress them, "women" must come together as a class. This is a necessary evil because identifying as a "women" who is part of an oppressed class system is dangerously similar to buying into the categories of women as natural, innate entities (Wittig). This struggle is similar to the plight of homosexuals who also must join together as a class, an oppressed minority, while at the same time, they must reject the category of homosexual itself.

II. THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN HOMOSEXUAL IDENTITY

The Emergence of Gay Visibility in NYC (late 1800s to early 1900s)

Although the gay rights movement and the concept of a class consciousness did not begin until the 1940s, homosexual visibility and homosexual communities surprisingly emerged a significant time before that. This contrasts many other historians' assumptions that gay life was completely repressed until the 1940s. However, visibility at this time still did not imply equality or respect. As the working class boroughs of New York were home to many homosexuals during the late 1800s and early 1900s, they became the center of visible gay life with Paresis Hall, the most popular and scandalous locale, as Mecca. The saloons and halls were home to various degenerates, homosexual and heterosexual alike. A homosexual subculture was firmly established and well-defined. At the same time, the heterosexuals with whom homosexuals shared the bars were very tolerant; same-sex and multi-sex couples "intermingled casually" (Chauncey 42). The bars became a place where poor, working class people could escape the harsh reality of their daily lives with cheap fun and public sex. The working class as a whole was considered to exert a degenerate sexuality so the heterosexual working class people did not find any particular fault with the homosexual population (Chauncey 41-42).

Saloons and halls were also a place where the bourgeoisie went slumming; in other words, engaged in inappropriate sexual behavior under aliases with no social repercussion in their

world. The concept of slumming indicates that while homosexuals were tolerated, they were not often respected, especially by the higher classes. In fact, often times they were abused. Due to its lack of resources, the working class did not have the opportunity to separate sex and other elements of a "'private life'" from public ones.   The middle class, who could afford such luxuries, looked down on the poorer groups and saw this difference as a class boundary (Chauncey 35). Therefore, homosexual working class groups were on the same level as heterosexual ones. The disapproval of the upper classes united the lower classes, causing heterosexuals to tolerate homosexuals in working class environments.

Furthermore, visible gay life turned into a spectacle. The homosexual lifestyle of the time was looked down upon and not taken seriously. It was nonetheless a popular form of entertainment. Slumming was a popular treat for the middle class who could enjoy a night of uninhibited fun, then return to their normal life while retaining a sense of superiority in relation to the lower classes. The media, particularly newspapers furthered this phenomenon by featuring these stories set up as a moral cautionary tales. They would adopt a "tone of reproach" while the intense and sensationalist detail of the stories actually titillated audiences (Chauncey 39). Alternative sexualities were clearly marked as the "Other," as immoral but interesting specimen to be studied and from which to gain amusement.

This phenomenon supports Foucault's theories about cycles of discourse and repression. Our contemporary understanding of this historic period tells us that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sexuality, especially homosexuality, was repressed. However, Chauncey clearly proves that gay life was active and well-known at this time. In fact, it was a favorite subject of the media. Again, the hegemonic groups in place scolded and scorned this low class behavior. At the same time, they were fascinated by it and encouraged discussion of it.

Beyond being degraded as mere spectacle, homosexuals at the time were subject to harassment. Because the gay subculture was so visible, homosexuals were at risk for verbal and physical assaults. They were often exploited and attacked by gangs because they were marked as easy targets; they were considered "'outlaws,'" so they would not risk reporting the assault for fear of receiving further harassment from the police (Chauncey 59). So while

homosexuals were allowed to exist and to create a subculture for themselves, it came at a price.

Gays at the time were labeled effeminate "fairies." This concept established several stereotypes which are still prevalent today. While some of these indicating factors were useful to other homosexuals for the purpose of identification, mainly they were and still continue to be used for discrimination and persecution. Homosexuals had such an obvious presence because of the distinct features associated with being a gay man at the time. Chauncey then disagrees with Foucault, saying that in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the hetero-homo binary did not exist. Sexual-object choices and gender identity were not black-and-white issues. Gay men lived in the grey area. Homosexuals struggled with the idea of gender because they did not conform to the social expectation that men should be attracted to women. The confusion arose they possessed other qualities and physical features which would classify them as men, and some that would classify them as women. To resolve this dilemma, many men adopted the persona of a fairy, of an effeminate man. As a result, the "third sex" was born. Many exhibited and exaggerated feminine characteristics and therefore, were referred to as "'female impersonators'" (Chauncey 47). They were considered "inverts" because they distorted their gender; they demonstrated both female and male characteristics and so were considered to be a sex of their own (Chauncey 47-49).

However, the most distinctive traits for which a homosexual could be recognized were the traditionally feminine ones. Fairies wore bright colors, most notably red ties, wore their hair in certain ways, wore makeup and perfume, penciled their eyebrows, and walked talked, and acted with feminine mannerisms (Chauncey 51-55). Not all homosexuals adopted this style, simply the most visible ones. As a result of their visibility, the public began to associate those feminine attributes with all homosexuals, and a stereotype developed. The prominence of these images is taken for a sign of their naturalness. In reality, these characteristics result from the social environment. Homosexuals at the time adopted this style and behavior in order to be accepted and understood by society. They did their best to conform to the norm so as not to be sanctioned. The stereotypes which developed as a result of this pressure continue to affect how homosexuals are perceived and judged today.

A Class Consciousness Begins to Form (1940s-1960s)

In his book, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, John D'Emilio details how beginning in the 1940s, with the help of WWII, homosexuals came together again, this time to form a group consciousness. Chauncey describes how in the 1930s, the environment of the Great Depression led to repression of homosexuals. Their visibility was no longer permitted. As a result of this repressive period, a popular belief is that gay visibility did not exist until the mid-twentieth century. Even many historians, like D'Emilio, ignore the visible gay life of the early twentieth century.

Later on in the twentieth century, as D'Emilio discusses, the most famous gay rights movements occurred in the 1960s. However, he emphasizes the importance of the lesser-known and more subtle movements towards equal rights and homosexual identity which began in the 1940s. This homosexual group consciousness was informed by mainstream culture's categorization of this deviant sexual category. They could not ignore the prevalent public opinion that homosexuality was a mental illness.   However, in some ways, the gay rights movement rejected and resisted this belief. The clash between two schools of thought within the early gay rights movement epitomizes the difficulty balancing society's dominant view that homosexuality was immoral and a sickness with personal viewpoints, needs, and desires.

The accommodating side contended that homosexuals should be subtle. They tried to adapt to society's expectations and to use the opinions of professionals to gain rights.   The radical side vowed that the only way to attain results was through militant action, and only homosexuals could be the true authority for defining homosexuality and for proving themselves worthy for equal treatment. The former group of homophiles (a term for gay rights activists at the time) was heavily influenced by the belief that homosexuality was a pathology to be cured. Though they wanted to gain rights and be treated better, they could not escape the beliefs of the culture in which they lived. They began working during the 1950's, a period of serious backlash and conservatism, so it was difficult to escape this prevailing way of thought. It was impossible for them not to compare themselves to the dominant culture's standards. This group of activists saw some truth and importance in their society's doctrine. On the other

hand, the new guard grew weary of being told that they needed to be fixed and refused to accept the self-hatred pushed upon them (D'Emilio 149-175). Homosexuals were torn between their views of themselves and the conflicting ones of mainstream society. Through this conflict, gays themselves evolved in ways reflecting the way they viewed their sexual preferences, which were largely based on historical context. As a stronger group consciousness formed, they moved from accepting society's diagnosis of them to resisting it and rebelling against it.

The older manner of thinking about homosexuality was endorsed by the elder leaders of the homophile movement because they suffered through the backlash of the 1950's. During WWII, gay men and lesbian women enjoyed sexual freedom due to the economic and social conditions of the war. Young people moved into cities where gay and lesbian life and other divergent forms of sexuality were more widespread and accessible. In addition, gender roles were reconfigured out of economic need; women had to take on traditionally male jobs to keep the country functioning while many men were at war. Finally, the sex-segregated nature of the military allowed homosexuality to flourish, and the necessity of wartime kept sanctions against this lax (D'Emilio 23-39). This period of change in the expectations of gender roles resulted in a backlash. During the Cold War and the Red Scare of the 1950's, American society struggled to put everyone back into their "proper" place.

After the freedom of WWII, the agents of the McCarthy era fired back against homosexuals. They were rooted out and hunted in the military, in government jobs, and in many other institutes who followed suit. Opponents of homosexuality spewed propaganda about its dangers to the point where "national security seemed to depend" on the exposure and cure of homosexuals (D'Emilio 46). It was difficult for a homosexual to obtain a job, and one was stripped of the respect of the community if his/her alternative sexuality was revealed.

As a result of McCarthy's moral crusade, life was made miserable for gay men and lesbian women. Police raids and brutalities cracked down on the urban gay subculture which had developed during the 40's. One could be arrested for the most innocent acts relating to homosexuality. In addition, being openly homosexual was dangerous to career and well-being. People accused of homosexuality, especially those actually found "guilty" faced what

experts labeled a "'life stigma'" (D'Emilio 45).   Their reputations were destroyed, their lives were weighed down by guilt and confusion, and many were essentially black-listed, causing economic and social strife.

In addition, the psychological ideology that homosexuality was pathology reigned. From the 1950s well into the 1960s, homosexuality was still considered perversion, and the psychological community maintained the ideology that it was a sickness, a fundamental flaw in need of a cure (D'Emilio 132-142). Along with stigmatizing homosexuality as a disease, professionals in the 1950s typified "symptoms" which engendered limiting stereotypes. A "pervasive hostility expressed through religion, law, and science" pushed GLB people into a box, forcing them to either be closeted or submit themselves to a cure (D'Emilio 22). For example, medical authorities described homosexuality as a "condition," an individual affliction (D'Emilio). In this way, through the eyes of mainstream society, GLB people saw themselves as sick and as inherently fitting into a certain mold. Most importantly, they saw themselves as struggling with an individual problem.

At this time, the leaders of the homophile movement, specifically the Mattachine society (a group of homosexuals paving the way for gay rights at the time), tried to adjust their movements to fit society's perspective in the hopes of gaining the most ground by appearing respectable and respectful. In this way, while homosexuals were coming together and supporting each other, they viewed their plight as an individual one resulting from an innate part of their soul. They believed the assertions society made about them and accepted the category given to them as natural. They felt alienated, and many embraced self hatred.

On the other hand, beginning in the 1960s, a new way of thinking about homosexuality started to emerge. Particularly along the East Coast, homosexual activists became fed up with both the treatment they were receiving and with the negative definitions their own people were embracing. They witnessed black Americans come together as an oppressed minority and reject the role of victim in order to gain equal rights and fair treatment. This inspired many gay and lesbian leaders to take similar actions and to view homosexuals as part of a minority group rather than as suffering from an individual problem (D'Emilio 150- 153). One new radical, Franklin Kameny, asserted that one needed to attack the "roots" of the social issue;

simply giving out aid when needed would never solve the problems at hand (D'Emilio 153). He, along with other activists like Jack Nichols, further insisted that homosexuals were healthy, normal, moral, and right to be exactly the way they are. This new way of thinking was a huge step forward for gay and lesbian rights and significantly helped carve the path to the Stonewall Uprising of 1969 (D'Emilio).

Despite the disagreements between the two groups of homosexuals, the activist movement persisted, and homosexual identity managed to perpetuate itself. Gay visibility increased through academic pursuits such as the Kinsey Reports and through gay subculture, particularly urban, bar life. Homosexuals began to feel like they were not alone. Gay and lesbian issues transformed from "a personal problem" to "a cause for political action," as a group consciousness developed (D'Emilio 57). This change was important because gay men and lesbian women realized that they were not the only ones struggling with their sexual identity. They began to see that they could come together to support each other. The problem of homosexuality had previously been framed only as an individual pathology, but the increase of gay visibility led to the awareness that many others shared similar experiences. Perhaps they were not so sick and perverted after all? Moreover, the potential to band together to gain rights and equality formed alongside the formation of this growing group consciousness, especially due to the work of the new radicals of the 1960s.

On the other hand, the damage from mainstream society's perception of homosexuality had already left its mark and is still apparent today. The anxiety around revealing oneself as homosexual is still prevalent. Although it is no longer considered a disease by psychologists, and although the gay rights movement has made strides to earn rights and equality, the stigma remains. People still lose family and friends for being open about their sexuality.

The stereotypes, developed with the invention of the category of homosexuality as well as a general disapproval on the part of dominant culture, are still evident in the modern world and continue to affect gays and lesbians. The limitations and stigma associated with a homosexual identity were developed through social institutions, specifically legal systems and psychiatry. Psychiatrists identified homosexuality as a disease to be cured, and laws prohibited sodomy (D'Emilio). This prevailing discrimination against GLB people not only

established them as the "Other," as a group to be feared and mistreated by the dominant bloc, but it also inserted these detrimental beliefs into the minds of GLB people themselves. The mistreatment and oppression of homosexuals throughout the twentieth century is well-known and well-documented. While today, this mistreatment is framed in a negative light, the stigma still lingers.

This self hatred continues to be a reality today. It is reinforced by religious and scientific stigma associated with homosexuality which has allotted them a second-class citizen status. As Foucault discuses in The History of Sexuality, religious stigma results from the Church's condemnation of sexual acts outside of heterosexual marriage. This belief began with the start of the Church. Next came the scientific stigma, originating in the nineteenth century with the emergence of psychology. Authoritative institutions throughout history have condemned and stigmatized sexual acts with people of the same gender. As a result, many people in contemporary American society think it is acceptable to hold onto homophobic beliefs and to use homophobic language. This is evident in the frequent bullying which takes place in schools and which rarely receives sanctions. Terry Savage describes how the administrators at his high school were ambivalent toward the harassment he received simply because he exhibited certain stereotypically homosexual traits; to the administrators, bullying Terry was acceptable because he engaged in behavior which deviated from the prescribed norm of heterosexuality and masculinity (It Gets Better Project). As a result of this mentality, many people are closeted and fear being outed. When students witness these events, learn about this history, and hear these statistics, the danger and the pain of being openly homosexual is made real and the acceptability of being homophobic is reinforced. School systems are particularly crucial environments where students develop their opinions and learn about who they are as a person.

Students who major in business may be more apt to recognize the weight of the stigma associated with homosexuality because the business world tends to be so conservative and still generally reflects traditional gender roles. For example, today in the US, it is legal in 38 states to fire someone based on their sexual orientation (PFLAG). Getting fired for your sexual-object choice, especially in hard economic times, is a daunting possibility. Hearing

about this type of blatant discrimination makes students wishing to enter the business world
wary. When the corporations can still be so judgmental and ignorant, some GLB students are
led to believe that in order to succeed, they need to hide their sexuality. They may either
choose to be closeted or to fit a stereotyped gay identity. They feel like they must fit an
accepted mold. The inferior status of homosexuality has been an innate part of its definition
since the category was invented. It is difficult to ignore the stigma homosexuality continues
to bear.

Homosexuals themselves and society in general have defined and re-defined what it means to
be homosexual. The concept has changed over time due to social conditions and cultural
context. Homosexuality has been established, persecuted and repressed, and has re-emerged
in multiple instances throughout the late nineteenth and the entire twentieth century. The
environment plays an essential role in determining how homosexuality is perceived both by
the heterosexual mainstream and by GLB people themselves.

III. THE SEMIOTICS OF SEXUAL IDENTITY

<u>Introduction</u>
An environment and the expectations of that environment dictate its inhabitants' behavior.
Sexual acts with a member of the same sex have come to identity every aspect of a person's
identity. Certain behaviors, in turn, are expected from a person who adopts this identity. The
definitions prescribed to homosexuals stigmatize them. The category of "homosexual" is
limiting. It insists that a homosexual act in a certain way in order to be understood or
accepted. They are forced to exhibit certain signs. The hetero-homo binary also establishes
homosexuals as inherently inferior to heterosexuals. Achieving success is, therefore, easier
for a heterosexual than for a homosexual. Therefore, many homosexuals decide to keep their
sexual preferences secret, to remain closeted.

Furthermore, the stigmatization of homosexuality has led to the development of stereotypes.
As a result, many homosexuals who choose to be open about their sexual-object choices feel
pressured to fit a certain set of characteristics in order to be accepted. The more an
environment purports the inherent inferiority of homosexuals and the "truth" of stereotypes

relating to them, the more homosexuals living in that environment will be uncomfortable with their sexual identity. This is particularly true with schools because young people are so impressionable and unstable in who they are. Here, students learn the accepted signs for being heterosexual and for being homosexual. They also learn the significance of these sexual-identity categories. If a school or university is supportive of homosexuals, gives them appropriate resources, does not tolerate bullying, and openly and honestly teaches all students about sexuality and its history, then gay and lesbian students will become comfortable with their identity and feel free to express themselves genuinely. However, if a school or university values more conservative ideals, for instance, if it caters to corporate America, then gay and lesbian students may not receive the support they need and may feel uncomfortable with their sexual-object choice and the identity assigned to it.

The mold which homosexuals are forced to express to be accepted, originally developed in the 20th century, relates to the inversion of traditional gender norms which began to be visible in New York City gay subculture in the late 1800s. These stereotypes pressure homosexuals to behave in a certain way and result from the signs which have come to be associated with homosexuals and also with heterosexuals. Homosexual men are expected to exhibit certain characteristics and to act in a specific way, a feminine way. While the specific sign itself has changed through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the idea that a specific form of dress or other sign is indicative of sexual-object choice has persisted. Today, being interested in fashion and clothing in general infers that a person is homosexual. Homosexual men are expected to exert these characteristics, and heterosexual men are expected to avoid them.

The Dangers of Contemporary Hypermasculinity
While within the hetero-homo binary system, heterosexual men are not as limited as homosexual men, heterosexual men are expected to demonstrate certain signs as well, masculine ones. In order to perpetuate patriarchy, the dominant culture has created images which portray heterosexual males as strong and powerful and everyone else (women and homosexuals) as weak and sensitive. This system persists because, as Jackson Katz points out in his documentary Tough Guise, people analyze the minority, rather than the majority because the majority is seen as normal; this can also be seen with race, as white people are

usually not scrutinized. He discusses that in the media and in our education systems, certain categories are not examined. No one talks about what it means to be a white person or a heterosexual because white, heterosexual people are not generally limited by a restrictive definition. They are the ones in power; they are the ones who impose definitions on minority groups (Katz). When a group holds hegemony, their habits are seen as natural and given; everyone already understands them, so there is no need to discuss them. Those who do not conform to the hegemonic bloc are seen as outsiders.   Their habits are scrutinized and criticized rather than those of the majority. Consequentially, the norms of violence, harassment, and homophobia as signifiers for masculinity are not examined. Anti-gay bullying is allowed to continue, and gay students are left feeling like this is an acceptable part of life with which nobody can help them.

Images of strong men, particularly in the media and in popular culture, have increased in recent years as a reaction to the increasing rights of women and homosexuals. Jackson Katz explains this phenomenon in Tough Guise. Heterosexual men are forced to exert masculine traits, particularly through violence, in order to separate themselves from the supposedly weaker categories of female and homosexual. The strengthening of the male heterosexual image weakens that of the other groups. The images of men in the last fifty years have become bulkier and more aggressive. For instance, Katz explains how wrestling stars have changed from somewhat flabby men who try to best their opponent in a fight to outrageously muscular, intimidating assailants who constantly threaten and undermine their enemies' masculinity, strength, and reputation (Katz). This representation shows men as symbolically more powerful than women and stereotypically effeminate homosexuals as well as physically larger and stronger than them. Consequentially, men have to be seen as big and tough to be considered real men and to be counted among the powerful. Violence is often used as a sign of masculinity, as seen with the over-dramatization of the wrestling world. Men are forced to hide their emotions and anything else that would make them seem feminine.

 For this reason, when gay students are bullied for their sexuality, they already feel like they are in the wrong. They feel as if the sexual identity category with which they identify is the wrong one, the weaker one. To make matters worse, they cannot handle these emotional

problems on their own; they need support and information about their sexuality in order to feel confident and to overcome homophobia. Overall, according to the regulations of our society, they do not exhibit masculine traits. They feel ostracized and have nowhere to turn. The violence and aggression connected with masculinity and the general limits of this system negatively affect every participant in society.

Byron Hurt elaborates on the negative effects of stereotypes and the perceived need to assert male power as it appears in Hip-Hop in his film Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes. Hurt applies the arguments of Katz to the specific culture of Hip-Hop. He explains that one of the most prominent features of masculinity in our culture, which Hip-Hop expresses, is violence. Violent masculinity is dominant in American society from films to the valuation of thug life and of violence in general which appears in Hip-Hop. Hurt argues that this notion first evolved out of the lifestyle associated with the expansion of the frontier. Violence and toughness, especially in men, was valued because it was necessary for survival in the harsh world of the West and because it emphasized the patriotism connoted by expansionism. In this context, the gun first became of symbol of masculinity (Hurt).

This violence is extended to ghetto life, which Hip-Hop tries to represent. In order to survive in the inner city, men need to be tough, violent, and constantly carry a gun. Hip-Hop music reinforces this ideal through lyrics and through media associated with it, like album covers and music videos. Artists employ signs which evoke images of violence and strength. They sing about violence, portray it in their videos, and express it through their choice of clothing and gear, such as bulletproof vests. Hurt also insists that this focus is an expression of the rage engendered from the frustrations of life as a minority growing up in the ghetto (Hurt).

In order to prove oneself and to foster one's ego and gain respect, Hip-Hop artists rely on "violent assertion" (Hurt). A man living in the inner city must be "hard," which means denying all sensitivity and any other characteristics typically associated with femininity and weakness. This establishes strength and also prevents criticism and ridicule from other men. Men feel as if they are constantly under surveillance and need to assert their masculinity. As a result, they are forced into a limited definition of masculinity from which they cannot stray without threatening their reputation. Violence is a central strategy employed to this end.

Men learn about the importance and value of violent behavior from Hip-Hop culture.   It is also frequently portrayed throughout American culture in general. The media, such as action films, is filled with images of violent masculinity. For example, Hip-Hop fans see representations of gun fights in music videos, such as 50 Cent's video, "Many Men," where he re-enacts getting attacked in a drive-by shooting. This makes violence appear cool and almost glamorous. This behavior has become an accepted form of self-expression wherein a man can establish his strength and his ideal masculinity (Hurt).

Violence and leading a truly thug lifestyle are methods used to earn street cred. However, these assertions ring false especially given that many white suburbanites love Hip-Hop music. In addition, these "hard" rappers are at the mercy of the music industry, which is controlled by white heterosexual males. Hurt interviewed several aspiring artists and asked them their opinions about this limited representation of masculinity. They responded that the extremes portrayed in songs, videos, and other media do not reflect real life. However, they feel pressured to express themselves, especially in their music, in a particular way which white hegemony has deemed acceptable. They say that an artist will not get signed unless he conforms to certain conventions about black males which the dominant culture holds true. Additionally, since the hegemonic bloc dictates that the proper behavior for males is to be "hard" and to degrade females and homosexuals, these young artists felt forced to exhibit these characters in order for themselves to be accepted and their music to be popular. They may acknowledge the wrongfulness of these choices and stereotypes, but they still perpetuate them and participate in the system because this is the accepted norm. Like most elements of American culture, "Hip-Hop is trapped in a box" (Hurt). In other words, it is forced into a mold which the ruling body has deemed acceptable, and all alternatives are rejected and marginalized (Hurt).

This fact has seriously detrimental effects on society. Hurt emphasizes Katz's point that not only are heterosexual men put into a box and forced to be victims and accessories of violence, but also homosexual men and women are harmed and demeaned. Because, according to gender roles and stereotypes, females and homosexual males cannot possibly embody the traditionally masculine traits, of the powerful gender, they are forced to be subservient and

lesser. Homosexuals, in particular, are marginalized by branches of popular culture like Hip-Hop. Due to stereotypes, gay men represent the opposite of what a real man should be. For instance, they do not express a virulent sexuality towards women in a degrading manner, and according to social expectations, they do not display traditionally-valued aspects of masculinity such as toughness and violence (Hurt).

Contradictorily, Hip-Hop culture demonstrates at once an extreme homophobia and a hidden element of homoeroticism. While being interviewed, Hurt asked rapper Mos Def his feelings about homosexuality, and the artist became visibly uncomfortable and refused to talk on the issue at all. He said that lifestyle was not accepted in his culture. Many men are scared of homosexuals because their sexual-object choices apparently threaten heterosexual men's masculinity. As a result, men, particularly through the medium of Hip-Hop, attempt to feminize other men in order to feel better about themselves. This strategy allows them to avoid suspicion about their sexuality and the ridicule which accompanies that. Men do this in an attempt to establish themselves as a part of the accepted group and as obeying the prescribed rules. Ironically, however, in their struggles to appear masculine, Hip-Hop artists often embody blatant homoeroticism. For example, male unions, which supposedly portray masculine power, can connote homosexual relationships. Also, images of sexualized male artists showing off their muscular bodies appeal to homosexual men as easily as the supposedly intended heterosexual female audience (Hurt). Homosexuality is a threat because it lives so close to home. It is used as an insult because that is an easy way to gain acceptance into the in crowd.

As a result of these prevailing messages from popular culture, homosexuality is marginalized. It is portrayed as a weaker form of heterosexuality. Men who are gay or bisexual are not real men, and women who identify as lesbian or bisexual are not real women. These alternative sexualities do not live up to the standards prescribed by our heteronormative culture. The aggression so common throughout our society, as displayed by Hip-Hop, along with the need to assert one's sexual identity as the accepted one cause many acts of homophobia, most prevalently in schools. The subliminally homophobic messages students receive from outlets such as Hip-Hop lead students, such as Billy Lucas' peers, to engage in homophobic behavior,

in his case leading to suicide. These messages emphasize traditional masculinity, proving oneself as a true man, and in the process, feminizing other men. The prevalence of these messages establishes homophobia as socially normal and acceptable.

The Closet of Sexual Expression
As Judith Butler argues, homosexuality is persecuted as a "bad copy" of the original heterosexuality. Homosexuality is antagonized by the dominant culture because it is different, but also because it is uncannily familiar. This is evident is Hip-Hop's odd mix of homophobia and homoeroticism. The fear of being associated with homosexuals leads Hip-Hop artists, and many other contemporary men, to exert a hypermasculine image. Homosexuals embody many traditional aspects of gender roles. However, they often adopt these in subversive ways. As a result, homosexuality is seen as merely a false imitation of the dominant sexual identity. Butler argues that the hegemonic bloc perpetuates this structure to preserve its power, saying, "The origin requires its derivations in order to affirm itself as an origin" (Butler 307). In other words, if homosexuality did not exist, heterosexuality would lose its power. It makes no sense to establish a certain sexuality as the correct and original one if it is the only one. In order to define itself, both sexual orientations need another one to compare itself. This coincides with De Beauvoir's argument about the "Self" and the "Other." The two categories are interdependent. In this way, definitions of sexuality are unstable. Therefore, the dominant patriarchal culture feels the need to affirm heterosexuality as correct through prolonging its own life and through demeaning heterosexuality. The dominant bloc fears homosexuality because it wishes to reproduce itself as often as possible. In order to spread this fear and assert itself as the superior sexuality, heterosexuals are taught through media and through historical examples that it is acceptable to make fun of and in other ways belittle those who do not conform to orthodox gender roles and sexual-object choices (Butler).

This homophobia creates a need to reproduce an ideal of what heterosexuality should be. As a result, heterosexuality is also a copy. There is no authentic gender pertaining to a certain sex. Butler describes heterosexuality as an "incessant and panicked imitation of its own naturalized idealization" (308). Through frequent repetition and ubiquity in the dominant

culture, heterosexuality has set itself up as the ideal and natural sexuality. In order to maintain that power and define itself, it must compare itself to another, improper sexuality. It is constantly at risk, and thus, must constantly reproduce and protect itself. However, this risk, in the end, strengthens it. Therefore, it is a "panicked imitation" because it is constantly re-asserting itself in opposition to homosexuality. Also, since it is constantly being reproduced, it is itself a copy of the ideal of heterosexuality which people are supposed to emulate. Heterosexual people are merely copying the characteristics which they have learned to signify heterosexuality, rather than expressing an innate part of their psyche (Butler). The hypermasculinity displayed in Hip-Hop videos is no more "real" or "natural" than a homosexual man loving fashion and clothing. It is all an act, merely conformity to social pressures about how males and females are supposed to behave.

Butler connects sexuality with gender roles because those are so key in determining the nature of sexualities. Dominant culture teaches us that masculinity rightly pertains to males, and femininity rightly pertains to females. This is expressed in heterosexuality, but homosexuals supposedly always adopt the opposite approach. She points out the falsehood in this claim by detailing the groups of homosexuals and drag queens who adopt gender traits which supposedly should solely belong to that of the opposite sex. The fact that they can exert these attributes which supposedly do not belong to them shows that all gender is a performance. Whether a man tries to be feminine or a woman tries to be feminine, the gender s/he expresses is still merely an imitation of an ideal (Butler).

Butler proves that sexual orientation and its expression depend upon signs. These signs depend on context. Both heterosexual and homosexual people are expected to display certain codes in order to express their sexual orientation. Heterosexuals supposedly should behave in the way their society considers true to their sex. Homosexuals should adopt the opposite approach. The signs which indicate these gender identities have changed throughout the years. For example, as Katz argues, images of men have changed in the media in the past few decades. Where wrestling stars of the '50s were considered manly despite their flabby physiques, modern wrestling stars need to be widely muscular and exaggerated to demonstrate

the social codes which express masculinity. These signs are purely arbitrary and contextual and thus, can be deconstructed and undermined.

By understanding the nature of these social expectations and their falsehoods, we can escape the hegemonic system which limits us with restrictive, black-or-white categories. Here, Butler agrees with Wittig; categories, such as man and woman, and heterosexual and homosexual, are social constructs designed by the hegemonic bloc to retain their social power. These categories, however false they truly are, are placed into a hierarchy. The group that benefits is the one placed on top of that order.

However, many people do not realize this truth about gender and sexuality. The dominant theory prevails, which leads to many homosexuals either remaining closeted or conforming to a typified mold. This mold, Butler argues, results from the category of homosexual itself. Even the act of coming out can be dangerous, not just for physical safety, but for the safety of identity. She describes her own uneasiness with describing herself as a lesbian, not because she fears homophobic harassment, but because the act of coming out produces a "new and different 'closet'" which demands "radical concealment" of whichever aspects of her personality do not fit the established definition of a lesbian (Butler 302). In other words, by identifying as a lesbian, she loses part of herself, whichever part does not fit the set of rules to which she is now compared. By identifying as a lesbian, not only is she pressured to imitate the definition of a lesbian perpetuated by dominant culture, but people's understanding of her is limited by that definition (Butler). Here, she disagrees with Wittig. Wittig views identifying as a lesbian as a form of escape from this system of patriarchal oppression. However, Butler argues that the category of "lesbian" has come to have as limiting a definition as the term "woman." The definition of "lesbian" fits into the hetero-homo binary which represses and limits all homosexuals.

Gayness is marginally accepted only if it fits into the mold prescribed by the dominant culture. Therefore, being openly gay requires a certain "performance," or a repetition of what has been established as behavior appropriate for homosexuals (Butler 304). As a result, it is difficult for homosexuals to create their own individual identity because they feel they have to live up to the identity given to them by the dominant culture. For this reason, many

homosexuals who are not closeted change themselves to fit a defined, stereotyped gay identity in order to feel accepted. This is especially true when they environment a person inhabits, such as the business world, values tradition and conservative principles. The business world is highly influenced by dominant culture and the hegemonic blocs which control it. The business world is largely run by white male heterosexuals, so traditional gender roles and traditional ideas about homosexuality are preserved in many business cultures. This ensures that the dominant group (white male heterosexuals) keeps its power. The limited images of homosexuality are so dominant in mainstream society, such as the business world, that any homosexual who deviates from the constructed norm is sanctioned.

These stereotypes are still relevant. Most people, whether closeted homosexuals or heterosexuals seeking to exert their accepted sexuality, strive to avoid association with them. In James Dean's essay "Straight Men," he examines the ways in which modern heterosexual men exert their masculine, heterosexual identities without resorting to blatant homophobia and sexism. The first participant in his research, William establishes his sexuality through "hypersexual virility" and "competitive aggressiveness" (Dean 137). His identity is particularly threatened for him because he is still unmarried at thirty-eight. As a result he has a phobia of being hit on by a man, and he is anxious to prove his straightness. He accomplishes this by besting other men in competitions, especially sexually. He boasts of his many conquests including many sexual encounters with multiple partners. To him, this proves his sexuality (Dean 137-138). The next participant relies similarly on hypermasculine qualities and hyper virulent sexuality. His straightness is threatened by his "metrosexuality," like manicured fingernails; since he enjoys and is comfortable exhibiting some stereotypically feminine qualities, he asserts his masculinity in other ways (Dean 139). He explains that his race, African-American, removes him from suspicion of homosexuality because of the stereotyped images of black men as hypyermasculine and heterosexual. For example, he has many women who are friends and not lovers. This could be cause for suspicion of homosexuality, but because of the exaggeratedly masculine images of black men, people just assume these women are all his sexual partners. In this way, he asserts his straightness (Dean139-140). Because men can no longer, for the most part, use homophobia and sexism

as an expression of their straightness, traditional gender roles and conceptions of gender are enforced to avoid suspicion of the lesser sexualities.

On the other hand, GLB people who chose to be open about their sexual-object choice sometimes feel the need to conform to the stereotype in order to be better understood or accepted. This is the result of a lack of proper representation of and education about alternative sexualities. This phenomenon began with the first visible groups of homosexuals in New York in the late 1800s. The most visible and obviously-identified homosexuals in the gay subculture of New York were the traditionally-feminine fairies. Because they were the most noticeable and received the most attention from the public and from the media, the dominant culture assumed they represented the true and only definition of a homosexual (Chauncey). The association of homosexuals with femininity or a reversal of gender roles has prevailed throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Often times, representation of homosexuals is limited to that definition. The general heterosexual public is led to believe the stereotype represents the entire population. Homosexuals themselves are also left with limited examples of how they should behave.

<u>Sexuality in School Systems</u>
These problems with identity stem from the social environment. Generally, in the US, we have limited exposure to alternatives forms of sexuality, and our education concerning sexuality in any form is lacking. Educational institutions "appear neutral transmitters of the best and most valuable knowledge" (Miceli 357). This gives schools dangerous amounts of power; by neglecting to educate students about peripheral sexualities, schools make homosexuality invisible and make GLB students feel alienated, confused, and alone. Furthermore, schools focus on the value of heterosexual monogamous relationships and ignore and devalue all other options. For example, in many establishments, sex education is limited to what is deemed necessary for the "good of public health" (Miceli 362). Generally, this means avoiding all discussion of sexuality except avoiding STIs and teen pregnancy through abstinence until heterosexual marriage. Teachers are required to emphasize to children the importance of abstinence because engaging in sexual activity outside of the boundary "'is likely to have harmful psychological effects'" (Miceli 364). Authorities believe

this will lower STIs and teen pregnancies , but in reality it makes homosexual and bisexual students feel isolated and unsure of how to safely and healthfully explore their sexual inclinations.

Furthermore, the intense visibility of heterosexuality continually alienates GLB students. For instance, the prom is a tradition set up by history and media to reinforce heterosexuality. It is social humiliation to not have a date of the opposite sex for senior prom. Therefore, GLB students who may wish to pursue alternatives paths feel ostracized for not fitting in. Additionally, heterosexual culture prevails in high schools and many other educational institutions through dates for football games and school dances, open heterosexual flirtation and displays of public affection, and discussion of heterosexual relationships in and out of the classroom. This makes GLB students feel "invisible" or "abnormal" because they do not conform to the expected heteronormative standard (Miceli 360). To exacerbate this feeling, GLB bullying is a current occurrence which rarely goes checked by administrators. Out of the 84 percent of GLB students who reported by harassed verbally, 82.9 percent said that teachers "rarely, if ever, intervened" (Miceli 360). This normalizes homophobia and GLB harassment, leading many students to feel that homophobic behavior such as using anti-gay slurs is acceptable and "no big deal." The more a school or university environment tolerates this anti-GLB behavior and lacks resources for GLB students, the more GLB students feel alienated. Therefore, most GLB students remain closeted or are forced to conform to a constrained identity.

The environment, particularly that of a school system, has a real impact on the way people in that environment think about and express their sexuality. Homosexual men in New York in the 1900's wore bright colors and rouge to fit in. Young men today, especially in the inner city, call each other "bitches" and "fags" to prove their masculinity and their place in the acceptable mainstream. Homosexuals in the twenty-first century can feel more open and comfortable with their sexuality due to seeing a wider variety of representations of themselves in the media. Regardless of the specific signs and conditions, the environment and the examples portrayed through popular culture and mass media affect people's ideas about their sexual identity.

Therefore, it is crucial, especially in schools, to foster an atmosphere of acceptance, tolerance, and understanding. Many of the recent suicides and instances of depression and anxiety in GLB people partly result from a lack of information to the public and a lack of resources for GLB people. The mass media, such as Hip-Hop music, tell society that it is acceptable to ridicule a person when their masculinity or sexuality is called into question. This belief leads young people, like Billy Lucas' peers to bully young homosexual students. Furthermore, the education system, in many cases, does not address issues of sexual orientation-based harassment, and many incidents pass by administration leaving students feeling hopeless and often with no other solution except suicide.

Here at Bryant as well, students frequently engage in homophobic behavior, specifically the use of homophobic language. The environment on campus is not always supportive and understanding of GLB students. In a survey conducted by Bryant Pride in 2010, seventy percent of students said they use homophobic language. These events still occur at Bryant because there is a lack of proper education about diversity, specifically sexual diversity. GLB students themselves lack resources. We do not have a GLBT center, and our library is lacking in materials about sexuality. In addition, the administration does very little about the instances of homophobic language used on campus. The only time it is even addressed is when a highly-visible event occurs which the administration cannot possibly ignore. For example, in the Fall 0f 2008, the word "fag" was burned into the door of an openly gay Resident Assistant. Students came together to hold a rally for equality at which several members of the administration spoke. However, there speeches focused more on accepting diversity in general terms. They offered no tangible suggestions to improve the situation, and they did not even speak out against the use of homophobic terms. The supposed normality of this form of harassment persists even at an institute of higher learning.

I believe the emphasis on success in the business world plays a large role in that statistic. In the conservative, male-dominated world of business, gender roles and traditional notions of masculinity are still valuable. The business world is run predominantly by white heterosexual males. At the very least, students seeking to gain entry to that world conform to the expected and mainstream sexual and gender identities to fit in and to emulate those in power. As a

result, business majors at Bryant, which is a school with limited resources for and limited visibility of GLB students, feel pressured to express their sexual identity in a certain way, whereas liberal arts majors are more likely to feel comfortable with their sexual orientation.

IV. INTERVIEWS WITH SIX BRYANT STUDENTS

Introduction
Much of what I've been discussing in terms of theory was confirmed in my interviews with six students Bryant students. I also passed out surveys, but the responses were limited, and I did not notice any significant patterns. The way they feel about and express their sexuality is highly influenced by the specific environment of Bryant. I wanted to find out about how comfortable students at Bryant were in general about their sexuality. More specifically, I wanted to examine the difference between liberal arts majors and business majors. Would the environment provided by the College of Liberal Arts versus that of the College of Business nurture a more confident GLB student? What is the experience of a GLB student at Bryant University?

Bryant University, historically, has been a business school. It became a university in 2004 by including a liberal arts program. The liberal arts program is small, but increasing year by year. Bryant is a close-knit community with only 3,370 students, 87% of whom live on campus.

As for GLB students, out of the 3,370 students, I can name about 15 off the top of my head who identify as openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Considering that, on average, one in ten people are gay, this number is low. The resources available to GLB students are Bryant Pride, the Women's Center, the faculty-run GLBT Caucus, and any faculty member who expresses her/himself as accepting. Bryant Pride is a student-run organization which meets once a week. It organizes educational, campus-wide events to inform the student and faculty body of GLBT issues. The group's goal is to reduce ignorance and bias incidents on campus and to increase acceptance. It is also there to support GLB or questioning students, and its electoral board members meet with any students who contact them with questions or concerns. Active members only amount to about 12 people. The Women's Center is not specifically staffed or

designed for GLB students. However, GLB students know they will receive comfort and acceptance there as well as information and education. This educational information would specifically have to do with reporting bias incidents or seeking counseling. Bryant faculty, in general, are very accepting. Students are aware of which professors they can go to for help and advice. Moreover, in Fall 2010, the GLBT Caucus was established to organize those teachers who would be resources to students. Their goals are similar to those of Bryant Pride, but they operate on an administrative and faculty level. Their initiatives include Safe Zone training and ensuring that only facts about the GLBT population are taught, rather than myths and outdated information. There is no GLBT center on campus.

In this project, I examine how the heavily business-focused environment of Bryant affects GLB students. I also examine the effects of the number of resources for GLB students and ask the students' opinions of them. I look to determine whether there is a difference in attitudes between students majoring in liberal arts and those majoring in business. I explore how Bryant's environment as well as each student's major, whether liberal arts or business, affects how comfortable they are with their sexuality and how open they are with it.

I interview each student on campus, where all of them live. The first five participants were interviewed at my town house, a location with which they were all comfortable; none of my housemates were in listening distance. The sixth participant was interviewed in his own townhouse, which I had visited before on social occasions. The interview took place in the privacy of his room. Pseudonyms are used throughout. Participants 1 (Bob), 2 (Liz), and 3 (Tim) are liberal arts majors, Sociology and Service Learning, Literary and Cultural Studies, and Statistics, respectively. Participants 4 (Joe), 5 (Craig), and 6 (Logan) are business majors, Finance, Finance, and Marketing, respectively. I asked them a series of pre-determined questions (see Appendix) and modified them based on their responses. If they were more interested in or had more to say about a particular topic, then I would pursue it in more detail. It was a casual, informal setting; all of the participants knew me and had previously been open with me about their sexuality. I chose them based on people I knew to identify as GLB or questioning.

I proposed a working hypothesis that GLB students who major in liberal arts would have a better experience and feel more comfortable with their sexuality. On the other hand, business majors would struggle more with their sexual-object choice, either expressing a stereotyped gay identity or remaining closeted. This hypothesis was not significantly substantiated by the data. The only patterns I noticed surrounding liberal arts and business majors had to do with levels of openness and perceptions of stereotypes. Business students interviewed are closeted to their families. Also, while all felt comfortable being themselves, business majors discussed a pressure to conform to a straight identity.

I also proposed that GLB students at Bryant in general would struggle with their identity. While I expected that liberal arts students be more comfortable, I expected to find an overall pattern indicating that a homosexual or bisexual identity at Bryant was stigmatized. This hypothesis was substantiated by the data. All participants except one feel that serious improvements needed to be made in regards to the support available to GLB students and to the university's approach to diversity in general. They felt that there are many ways in which Bryant can become a more welcoming and accepting community. According to the respondents, Bryant needs to address more specifically the issue of sexual identity.

Patterns in levels of openness
The three liberal arts majors classify themselves as open and are open with their immediate family. The three business majors are mostly open, but not to most members of their family. Every person interviewed feels completely comfortable discussing her/his sexuality with me and felt s/he had a supportive group of friends at Bryant who accepted her/his sexual orientation.

Bob is open with everyone at school and at home. He doesn't feel that he comes off as gay if you meet him, but he would talk about his sexual-object preference and be truthful if the subject came up or if he were asked. He sometimes fears homophobic reactions when people find out that he is gay, but he is secure in himself. Even his parents sometimes display homophobia and frequently question his sexuality. This bothers him, but does not change the way he feels about his sexuality. All his immediate family knows that he is gay. Liz is completely open with her sexuality. Her immediate family knows and is supportive, and she

feels comfortable discussing her sexual object preference with anyone. She didn't view her process of "coming out" as a "coming out thing"; she only discussed it with members of her immediate family because the subject came up. For example, she described filling out a survey with her mom, and one of the questions concerned her sexuality, so she mentioned it to her mother. Both Bob and Liz have become more open since coming to Bryant; they both attended conservative high schools and encountered more issues of homophobia there. Both of them hang out with mostly liberal arts majors, and they believe this impacts their friends' level of acceptance of them. They have noticed that the liberal arts teach people to be more open-minded and to see a situation from multiple perspectives. As Bob describes, Sociology encourages people to have a "better understanding of people, to judge people based on their experience"; he says Sociology majors try not to "blame people" for their behaviors, but rather to try to understand them.

On the other hand, the three business majors felt less comfortable with their family. All three, however, were open on campus. Joe and Craig were also open with select members of their family, but they felt significantly less comfortable with the subject of telling them. Joe said he felt totally comfortable participating as long as, "none of this gets back to my mother." He doesn't feel like his mother's side would be comfortable discussing his sexuality, and he described his father's side as "oblivious." Craig hasn't told most members of his family, specifically his dad, but his mom and sister know. He hasn't found the "right time" to mention it to his dad, and his mom doesn't "know how well it will go over" if he were to tell the rest of his family. In addition, Logan said that none of his family knows. He is an international student, and he explained that there are different expectations in his native community. He grew up in a culture of hypermasculinity where traditional masculinity is highly valued. For this reason, he feels highly uncomfortable discussing his sexuality with his parents. He fears that if he is open with his family he will be met with rejection and homophobia.

Overall, there were no significant differences between students attending the College of Liberal Arts and those attending the College of Business. All students who identified as gay

feared homophobia upon coming out to people. Every participant interviewed felt comfortable discussing their sexuality and was open at school.

Patterns in perceptions of stereotypes
None of them identify with stereotypes. They preferred to be true to themselves. However, most of the respondents said that stereotypes were prevalent, and students at Bryant had certain expectations about what it means to be a straight man, a gay man, a bisexual girl, or any other sexual orientation. These stereotypes do not affect their own perception of their sexuality, but some found it frustrating. Tim was the only respondent who did not feel stereotypes were prevalent or a problem.

Liz described her frustration with the stereotypes associated with being bisexual. She does not identity with these images at all. She said people view bisexuals, especially bisexual females, as "indecisive." She explained that a lot of people don't believe bisexuality exists, that it is simply a step in the coming out process. Most people think that bisexuals "have a preference" one way or the other, so a person is never really "bisexual." She feels this type of thinking undermines her sexuality. Furthermore, many bisexual girls are perceived as "party girls." There is recently a "fad" for girls to say they identify as bisexual. Liz believes this occurs because many girls at Bryant kiss other girls in front of boys in order to receive attention and sexual gratification. Liz feels this is degrading and only benefits men. She other believes that that behavior does not connote her view of true bisexuality. Nevertheless, this image impacts how people view here. She ended by saying that despite these negative stereotypes, bisexuals generally have an easier time than gays or lesbians. She explained that bisexual people "blend in more" and can relate to both homosexuals and heterosexuals. Therefore, they are generally well-accepted, and many people they interact with do not realize that they are bisexual.

Bob describes his take on stereotypes, saying "Everyone relates to stereotypes in some ways, even straight men." He believes at least one aspect of a stereotype can apply to most people. For example, he considers himself a good dancer; this is part of the stereotype for a gay man. However, he views this as a "positive stereotype," and does not view his similarity to it as conforming. In addition, he explains that most people upon finding out that he is gay expect

him to behave in a way which matches the stereotype. He said most males at Bryant "look at him differently," and most females expect a "shopping buddy." He said some males even physically demonstrate discomfort upon finding out; he believes this stems from their discomfort with the associations which being a gay man has. Stereotypes impact they way he is viewed. Logan also found that people upon meeting him expected him to exhibit more stereotypically "gay" behavior. However, as he got to know his friends and became closer with him, they accepted him for who he was rather than judging him based on an image of what a gay man should be.

This sentiment was echoed by Joe. He stated that people judge him as a person, not in relation to his sexuality. Craig felt the same way. They both simply act the way they want to act and try not to care about people's reactions to it. Craig went on to say that he feels less pressure to conform to the stereotype and encounters fewer problems in general because the issue is "not widely talked about." In other words, if people have an issue with his sexuality they do not bring it up because of their discomfort with the subject overall.

Finally, both Joe and Craig said they related to the stereotype in the form of fashion and hygiene. They both present themselves well, and this is a major part of the dominant image of homosexuals. Joe and Craig emphasized that although they were fashionable, they were not flamboyant. Joe called himself "conservative." He explained that he grew up in Connecticut, and his style of dress is very common there regardless of sexual orientation. Logan also related to the fashionable stereotype. He and Joe said their style could be viewed as "metro" rather than gay. In other words, while they fit the stereotype that gay men dress well, the particular way in which they dress could also be associated with a certain kind of straight male. This possibility was increased for Logan because he grew up in a European country which is associated with fashion regardless of sexual-object choice. Neither Joe, Craig, or Logan were particularly bothered by other students' imposition of a stereotype.

All of the students I interviewed believed that they were perceived as straight. This pattern persisted across the board regardless of major. None of them thought that their sexuality, or their questioning of their sexuality, was evident to an outside observer.

Liz doesn't purposefully present her sexuality in a certain way. She feels comfortable with who she is. She doesn't think the way she dresses makes people suspect her sexuality. She would not describe herself as "butch;" as a result, she believes people automatically categorize her as straight. She does not consider herself "visibly" bisexual; she feels in general, women who identify as bisexual share this experience. She doesn't fit into the definition of the category of lesbian. We discussed how bisexual identity is more difficult to define and less understood. The general population prefers to put GLB people into one category or the other. In Liz's case, they assign her to a straight identity. She describes how many people are surprised to find out she is not straight. When she attended the LEARN weekend, it came up in conversation, and one of her peers said, "Wow I didn't know that. That's really cool." This reaction offended Liz because she does not wish to be judged based on her sexual orientation. That desire stems from her will to be herself; she does not purposefully put forth an prescribed identity in order to be accepted. Further, Liz felt her peer's reaction was limiting to bisexuals. She thinks his positive reaction has to do with the restrictive and ignorant conception of bisexual girls as "sluts" who like to "make out with girls at parties." In her opinion, his approval of her sexual orientation stems from a misogynistic fantasy in which bisexual women are only bisexual to please men and fulfill their sexual desires.

Every business student I interviewed presented themselves as straight. Joe and Craig both dress conservatively, and again, Joe even used that word to describe himself. Neither of them is flamboyant, and they purposefully avoid that association for its negative connotations and attention. In addition, Logan explained that business majors who are gay try to "act straight." They feel pressured to behave this way because the business world is largely dominated by heterosexuals. He says if you are a man who works in business, then "you're straight, you do straight things." This is the expectation which pressures them to express themselves the way they do. He said that it is a lot more difficult at Bryant to behave in an effeminate way.

Summary and Implications
My first hypothesis was refuted, and my second was confirmed. There were few significant differences between Liberal Arts majors and Business majors. Instead, they overall struggle

with the Bryant community's reaction to and expectations of their sexuality. However, they were all secure in their sexual orientation and comfortable speaking about it.

I believe it is important to note that being openly and comfortably GLB at Bryant is a rarity. I believe this stems from the environment in place at Bryant. For example, Craig said that had he been more comfortable with his sexual-object preference upon selecting colleges, he would have picked a different school. Upon picking Bryant, he realized that it was not particularly welcoming to GLB students and that there was not a large, visible population on campus. I believe this environment affects the experience of every gay student at Bryant. For this reason, there is a trend, as my research substantiated, to remain closeted or to act straight. In comparison with other universities, Bryant is very different in its approach to inclusivity. Bryant emphasizes diversity, but mostly in regards to international students and multicultural students. On the other hand, some colleges, like Connecticut College, are very open and vocal about their support of GLB students. For instance, on the school tour there, they mention multiple times the resources available to GLB students. This is not mentioned once at Bryant. Also, while the online sources for GLB students is startling limited on Bryant's website, there is an entire section of Connecticut College's website devoted to their GLBT center and other resources for GLB or questioning students.

For further research, I would suggest comparing Bryant to Connecticut College or another school with similar resources for GLB students. This would substantiate my conclusion that the lack of resources for GLB students at Bryant has a detrimental effect on their experience with their sexual identity expression. I would also suggest further research on the difference between the experience of male and female GLB students.

Finally, I offer some suggestions for improving the situation at Bryant. These come from my own opinions and from those of the six students I interviewed. The biggest improvement necessary is a GLBT center on campus. This would make GLB students feel like they were more welcomed on campus. It would also provide valuable resources to students when they encounter problems with their sexual identity or expression. These needs are comparable to those fulfilled by the Women's Center and by the Intercultural Center, but the needs of GLB students differ widely from the groups attended to by the establishments already in place.

Next, there needs to be more faculty- and administrative-involvement in GLB issues. For example, Bryant could host a GLB conference or rally which the administration supports and aids. Also, in classes and activities where appropriate, sexual (rather than simply racial) diversity should be emphasized. For example, discussions and skits could be designed around sexuality at Freshman Orientation, and freshman could be required to attend a Pride meeting for FFL. This would educate students about sexuality, provide a more diverse image of GLB students to heterosexuals, and demonstrate to GLB students that they are welcomed and accepted at Bryant. Moreover, administration could speak out more against instances of homophobia. There should be school-wide emails sent out when bias incidents occur. Students need to know that these things happen and that they are wrong. If more negative attention is given by administration, this will make students examine their own behavior. It will raise awareness and hopefully, decrease instances of homophobia. Finally, administration must not suffer the presence of homophobic faculty. If a professor taught racist ideals, s/he would be immediately fired. However, homophobia is a more sensitive issue. For instance, there is a professor on campus who teaches human sexuality; some of the ideas he teaches are homophobic and inaccurate. He claims that homosexual men are only gay because they lack a positive male influence in their lives and that they have sex with 1,000 partners a year. These outrageous statements, which are put forth as truth from a supposedly reputable source, perpetuate stereotypes and ignorance and normalize homophobia. Administration needs to take a stand against this type of behavior so GLB students can feel more accepted and welcomed on campus.

Bryant is a tolerant campus, but there is a lot of room for improvement. Hopefully, GLB students at Bryant can grow to feel more comfortable at their chosen school, and GLB students will grow to be attracted to Bryant for its support and acceptance of sexual diversity.

<u>METHODOLOGY</u>

Survey Measures

Feelings towards university or workplace. Students or adults will be asked questions about how conservative or liberal they perceive their school or work environment to be. Some questions will also focus on the availability of resources for GLB people.

Feelings about pers. Students or adults will be asked about how open-minded, accepting, sexually open, etc. they perceive their peers to be. A sample question would be "My peers often demonstrate diversity of thought."

Openness in different circumstances. Students or adults will be asked questions about how open they are in different social groups, such as at school, with friends, with family, at work, etc. A sample question would be "When I am in class, I am always open about my sexuality." A related sample question, focusing on satisfaction or confidence, would be "I feel pressured into expressing my level of openness."

Overall openness. Students or adults will be asked questions about their openness on a general level.

These items will all employ a Likert scale of 1 to 5 with 1 representing "strongly disagree," and 5 representing "strongly agree."

All survey data are quantitative. A MANOVA, with the conservative or liberal attitude of the university or workplace being the one independent variable and the above-mentioned openness factors as the dependent variables, will be computed to test my hypothesis.

I also collected qualitative data through interviews with 6 Bryant students. 3 are Liberal Arts majors, 3 are Business majors.

I interview each for a period of between 30-60 minutes. I interviewed 5 in my townhouse, and one in his townhouse. They were all comfortable in the location. I tape-recorded each interview, keeping the tapes in a locked cabinet afterwards.

The questions in the survey are similar to the ones I asked in the interviews.

Finally, I prove my hypothesis using qualitative data in the form of my literary research. I prove that sexuality is a social construct and therefore, changes based on context using Foucault, De Beauvoir, Wittig, and Halperin. I prove that homosexuality identity varies based on social and historical context using D'Emilio, Chauncey, and Hebdige. I prove that environment plays a huge role and homosexual identity and comfort levels using Hurt, Katz, Rich, Butler, Dean, and specifically in the context of schools using Miceli.

APPENDICES

Appendix A- a copy of the survey handed out to respondents. This also provides a general

overview of the types of questions I asked each participant in my interviews.

<u>Appendix A – (Survey Sample)</u>
What is your major?

Do you identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or straight?

Please select a response from 1 to 5, with 1 representing "strongly disagree," and 5

representing "strongly agree."

1.)   I am unsure of my sexuality.

1   2   3   4   5

2.)   When I am with my friends, I am open about my sexuality.

1   2   3   4   5

3.)   When I am with my friends, I feel pressured to express my sexuality in a certain way.

1   2   3   4   5

4.)   When I am with my family, I am open about my sexuality.

1   2   3   4   5

5.)   When I am with my family, I feel pressured to express my sexuality in a certain way.

1   2   3   4   5

6.)   When I am in class, I am open about my sexuality.

1   2   3   4   5

7.)   When I am in class, I feel pressured to express my sexuality in a certain way.

1   2   3   4   5

8.)   I feel comfortable with my sexuality overall.

1   2   3   4   5

9.)   I relate to the stereotypes which represent my sexuality.

1   2   3   4   5

10.)   I intentionally express my sexuality clearly so as not to be mistaken for a different sexuality.

1   2   3   4   5

11.)   My sexuality is well-accepted.

1   2   3   4   5

12.)   I believe the way in which sexuality is expressed are socially constructed. I believe they result from social forces imposed on someone from the outside world, rather than his/her biology or core.

1   2   3   4   5

13.)   My peers accept their own sexualities.

1   2   3   4   5

14.)   My peers do not understand my sexuality.

1   2   3   4   5

15.)   My peers have a limited view of my sexuality.

1   2   3   4   5

16.)   My peers have a modern, progressive point of view.

1   2   3   4   5

17.)   The university I attend embraces diversity.

1   2   3   4   5

18.)   The university I attend has a strong business focus.

1   2   3   4   5

19.)   The university I attend is progressive.

1   2   3   4   5

20.)   I value intellectual challenges and true enjoyment of what I do over financial success.

1   2   3   4   5

21.)   I have a modern, progressive point of view.

1   2   3   4   5

Appendix B – (name of appendix item)

REFERENCES

Butler, Judith. "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." Class handout from course reserves.

This essay theorizes that gender is a performance based on repetition of what is portrayed in
society. It proves that gender is a social construct.

Chauncey, George. Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male
World, 1890-1940. New York: Basic, 1994. Print.

This book discusses the change in mainstream perception of homosexuality, in homosexuality
visibility, and in the very nature of homosexuality as well as what social and economic
forces caused these changes. I will use it to prove sexuality is not static; people's
perception of it, their level of comfort with it, and the codes which signify it change
based on social context.

Dean, James J. "Straight Men." Introducing the New Sexuality Studies. Ed. Steven Seidman.
New York, NY: Routledge, 2008. 135-42. Print.

This essay describes the way in which several different men interpret what it means to be a
heterosexual male. I will use it to prove modern men use and interpret certain
signifiers, such as dominance in sexual activity and manicured nails, to indicate
sexual-orientation preference.

De Beauvoir, Simone. "Introduction to the Second Sex." Class handout from course reserves.

This essay discusses how the idea of femininity and the category of female is a social
construct designed to oppress women and benefit men. I use this analysis and apply it
to homosexuals.

D'Emilio, John. Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of
Chicago, 1998. Print.

This work describes the subtle politics used by GLBT community members to slowly change
the way gays were viewed and treated. I will use this to demonstrate how conceptions
of homosexuality have changed and to demonstrate that they can in fact change in the
first place.

Foucault, Michel. The History of Sexuality: An Introduction. Vol. 1. New York: Random
House, 1978. Print.

This book critiques the theory that sexuality was oppressed in the 1800's and early 1900's only
to be freed in the late 1900's. He explains that idea is simply a power mechanism used
as a social control and in order to benefit a certain group. He insists rather than being
suppressed in the 1800's, sexuality was implemented into society along with an

intensive discourse of it. I will use this text to prove sexuality and the codes which signify it are social inventions and therefore, change based on social contexts.

Halperin, David M. "Is There a History of Sexuality?" The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader. Ed. Henry Abelove. New York, NY: Routledge, 1993. 416-26. Print.

It establishes that the very concept of sexual and its foundations can and have changed throughout history; these conceptions all depend on social context.

Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes. Dir. Byron Hurt. Media Education Foundation, 2006. DVD.

This documentary provided me with an insight into the violent hypermasculinity presented in Hip-Hop music and culture. It discussed the images men felt they needed to maintain in order to be accepted. It was useful in my discussion of the semiotics of sexual expression.

"It Gets Better: Dan And Terry." It Gets Better Project. Web. 11 Oct. 2010. <http://www.itgetsbetterproject.com/>.

This website provided me with information on the It Gets Better Project and the personal experiences of homophobia encountered by the founders.

Tough Guise. Dir. Jackson Katz. Media Education Foundation, 1999. Videocassette.

This documentary discusses the prevalence of violent masculinity in American culture, particularly in film and other forms of popular culture. It discussed the images men felt they needed to maintain in order to be accepted. It was useful in my discussion of the semiotics of sexual expression.

Kim, Richard. "Against 'Bullying' or On Loving Queer Kids." The Nation. 6 Oct. 2010. Web. 11 Oct. 2010. <http://www.thenation.com/blog/155219/against-bullying-or-loving-queer-kids>.

This article provided me with insightful opinions of the real problems surrounding GLBT suicides- the institutional tolerance, rather than the bullies themselves.

Nigel, Sarah. "Billy Lucas, 15, Hangs Himself After Classmates Called Him a 'Fag' One Too Many Times / Queerty." Queerty - Free of an Agenda. Except That Gay One - The Gay Blog. Queerty Home, 14 Sept. 2010. Web. 17 Oct. 2010. <http://www.queerty.com/billy-lucas-15-hangs-himself-after-classmates-called-him-a-fag-one-too-many-times-20100914/>.

This article provided me with the facts surrounding Billy Lucas' suicide.

Miceli, Melinda. "Schools and the Social Control of Sexuality." Introducing the New
Sexuality Studies. Ed. Steven Siedman. New York, NY: Routledge, 2007. 357-64.
Print.

This essay discusses the aspects of contemporary American school systems which make it
difficult for GLBT to feel comfortable with their sexualities and to fit in. It was useful
in my semiotics section and pertains directly to my hypotheses.

"Raymond Chase Commits Suicide, Fifth Gay Youth To Take Life In Three Weeks." The
Huffington Post. 1 Oct. 2010. Web. 11 Oct. 2010.
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/10/01/raymond-chase-
suicide_n_746989.html>.

This article provided me with facts surrounding the suicide of Raymond Chase.

Salzman, Philip C. Understanding Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theory.
Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland, 2003. Print.

This work gives a detailed overview of studying culture. It is useful in interpreting my other
sources and in defining semiotics.

"STATISTICS." PFLAG. 2008. Web. 18 Oct. 2010.
<http://www.pflagupstatesc.org/statistics.htm>.

This website provided me with statistics about GLBT discrimination.

Wittig, Monique. "One is Not Born a Woman." Class handout from course reserves.

This essay discusses the category of woman as a tool to oppress them by putting them into a
limited category to be subservient to men. Wittig insists that gender is a social
construct. I apply this analysis of the label of "woman" to the label of "homosexual."