

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Karen Nimitz Smith for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in Speech Communication, Philosophy and Psychology presented on June 5, 1997. Title: The Disclosure of Gay and Lesbian Sexual Identities and Relational Outcome Uncertainties.

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Scott Chadwick

The purpose of this study was to analyze the change in gay/lesbian friendships after the disclosure of their sexual identity. Six specific areas were examined: (1) what are the circumstances under which persons find out their close friends are gay/lesbian (hereafter referred to as the event), (2) do relationships change when close friends find out about the participants' sexual identity, (3) if the relationship changes, how does it change (hereafter referred to as the relational outcome), (4) which events are associated with which relational outcomes, (5) how satisfied are the gays/lesbians with their relational outcomes, and (6) what are the gays'/lesbians' perceived causes of the relational outcomes.

The results of this study indicated that the majority of the participants disclosed their sexual identity to their close friends. And they did so in an attempt to be honest, to avoid hiding who they are, and to be able to talk about their sexual identity freely. Most of the participants reported being quite satisfied with the relationships which became more close or stayed the same. Most of the participants reported being somewhat unsatisfied with the relationships which became more distant or terminated. The way in which the friends found out about the participants' sexual identity was not related to whether or not the relationship became more close or more distant. The participants believed their relationships became more close because they were honest. However, the participants believed their relationships became more distant because their friends were homophobic.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS (Continued)

This research is significant because it may help counselors, therapists, and practitioners coach gay men and lesbians when their relationships deteriorate or are strained. This research may also enable gay men and lesbians to be aware of potential factors which might affect their relationships with their friends after disclosure occurs. In addition, this research may equip gay men and lesbians with information to enable them to make educated decisions on discussing their sexual identity with their friends. Furthermore, the results from this research might provide suggestions to individuals who have gay friends to help them make the coming-out process easier for their gay friends.

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**The Disclosure of Gay and Lesbian Sexual Identities
and
Relational Outcome Uncertainties**

by

Karen Nimitz Smith

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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DEDICATION

To Harry:

To the man who taught me how to eat an elephant one bite at a time,
and then held my hand while I did it.

I love you.

THE DISCLOSURE OF GAY AND LESBIAN SEXUAL IDENTITIES AND RELATIONAL OUTCOME UNCERTAINTIES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Research Problem and its Significance

Gay men and lesbians face a crucial dilemma when deciding whether or not to disclose their sexual identity to others since there is uncertainty in the outcome of their relationships after this disclosure is made (Berger, R. 1992; Cain, 1991; Cramer & Roach, 1988). If they choose not to disclose their sexual identity to their close friends, they need to consider how this decision affects themselves. They must also consider how this decision might affect their relationships with their close friends. When gay men and lesbians decide to disclose their sexual identity to their friends, or when their sexual identity is disclosed to their friends by other people, their relationships with their friends may change (Cain, 1991).

Planalp, Rutherford, and Honeycutt (1988) surveyed people in relationships who experienced one of eight different types of events. Planalp, et al. labeled these types of events as competing relationship, unexplained loss of contact or closeness, sexual behavior, deception, change of personality/values, betraying confidence, more serious, or an event which could not be classified into any of the categories above. The researchers discovered that these people experienced uncertainty in their relational outcome or uncertainty regarding their relational partners as a result of this event.

This study extends Planalp et al.'s (1988) research by questioning the other person in the relationship. Instead of posing questions to individuals who experience an uncertainty producing event (such as finding out their close friend is gay or lesbian), this study questions those individuals who have an event which might create uncertainty (the disclosure of their sexual identity). By questioning the other person, this study attempts to determine whether or not the other person in the relationship also experiences uncertainty regarding their relational outcome or their relational partners.

Definition of Terms

In order to fully understand a few terms which are specific to individuals who are gay or lesbian, and to verify a common understanding of terms utilized throughout this thesis, four terms need to be defined. These terms are passing, coming out, event, and relational outcome.

R. Berger describes *passing* as "the social process whereby the homosexual presents himself or herself to the world as heterosexual" (1990, p. 328). Passing also involves the postulate that many people automatically assume most individuals around them are heterosexual (Berger, R., 1992).

Coming out is the process by which individuals who are gay or lesbian disclose their sexual identity to another person. "At the most simplistic level, it involves acknowledging that one is homosexual and disclosing that sexual orientation to others" (Martin, 1991, p. 158). This process involves two stages: (1) coming out to self,

and (2) subsequently coming out to significant others (Martin, 1991; McDonald, 1982; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993; Schneider, 1991; Troiden, 1988).

Events are the circumstances under which persons discover that their close friends are gay or lesbian. Some people may directly disclose their sexual identity to their close friends. Some people may ask a third party to disclose their sexual identity to their close friends for them. Some close friends may find out from a third party without the knowledge or permission of the individual who is gay or lesbian. Some close friends may ask the person who is gay or lesbian if they are gay or lesbian.

Relational outcomes are the participants' relationships with their close friends after their sexual identities have been disclosed. The four possible relational outcomes are: (1) the relationship might become closer than it was prior to the disclosure, (2) the relationship might stay the same, (3) the relationship might become more distant, or (4) the relationship might terminate (Cain, 1991; Planalp et al., 1988).

Rationale

This research is significant to researchers of gay and lesbian relationships, counselors to individuals who are gay and lesbian, to individuals who are gay or lesbian, and to people who have close friends who are gay or lesbian. For researchers who study gay and lesbian relationships, this study is significant because it extends C.

Berger's Uncertainty Reduction Theory into an area of interpersonal communication not previously addressed by the theory.

This research is also significant for counselors of gays and lesbians. The results of this study may help counselors, therapists, and practitioners aid gay men and lesbians when their relationships with their close friends become more distant or terminate. The information drawn from this study will suggest some of the circumstances under which individuals' sexual identities are disclosed to their close friends, and will describe some of the relational outcomes as a result of the disclosure.

This information may also help individuals who are gay or lesbian and their professional advisors make decisions as to how and when to make these disclosures. Furthermore, the results from this research might provide suggestions to individuals who have gay or lesbian friends to help them make the coming-out process easier.

Overview of the Study

The circumstances under which persons find out their close friends are gay or lesbian vary from person to person. Just as the circumstances vary across people, so too does the response to this information. Not only do individuals who are gay or lesbian face uncertainty regarding whether or not their relationships with their close friends will change, these individuals also face uncertainty as to how the relationship will change.

In an attempt to address some of these issues, this study (1) examines the circumstances under which persons discover that their close friends are gay or lesbian,

(2) questions whether or not the relationship with their close friends changed after the disclosure of their sexual identity occurred, and (3) asks how the relationship changed (if it did).

Coming out to close friends may not be a once in a lifetime event. Some people who are gay or lesbian may have more than one individual to whom they would like to disclose their sexual identity. Individuals who are making the decision whether or not to disclose their sexual identity to others may utilize their knowledge of past experiences to aid them in their decision. They may also examine how satisfied they were with the relational outcome, and what they perceived to be the causes of the relational outcome, in order to make their decisions regarding coming out to others in the future.

To understand these issues, this study attempts to determine if there is a relationship between the circumstances under which the sexual identity was disclosed and the relational outcome. This study also questions how satisfied gay men and lesbians are with their relational outcomes. And finally, this study attempts to uncover gay men and lesbians' perceived causes of those relational outcomes.

Outline of the Thesis

Chapter two begins with a review of theories and previous literature which guide the development of this research study. Chapter two reports the development of individuals into social beings, discusses how there is uncertainty in a social being, describes ways to reduce that uncertainty, elaborates upon uncertainty contexts in

which individuals who are gay or lesbian face the decision to disclose their sexual identity, and discusses the uncertainty in relational outcomes. Chapter two concludes with a discussion of the justification for each of the six research questions.

Chapter three explains the methodology employed in this thesis. This chapter details the sample design, data collection, data preparation, and analysis plan.

Chapter four focuses on the analyses of the results obtained from the responses to the survey questionnaires. Finally, Chapter five presents a discussion of the results, including (1) a specific discussion and explanation of the results presented in Chapter four, (2) the subsidiary analyses, (3) a discussion and explanation of the results of the subsidiary analyses, (4) recommendations for this study, (5) recommendations for future studies, and (6) concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Conceptual and Theoretical Background A Review of the Literature

This chapter focuses on a review of theories and literature to examine the relationship between individuals, their relationships with others, and their challenges when facing uncertainty. This chapter contains seven main sections: (1) the development of the individual into a social being, (2) uncertainty in a social being, (3) why uncertainty is reduced, (4) strategies used to reduce uncertainty, (5) when to reduce uncertainty, (6) the uncertainty contexts gays and lesbians face, and (7) the uncertainty in relational outcomes. This chapter concludes with the research questions.

Development of the Individual into a Social Being

Symbolic Interactionism posits that the self is made up of two components: the "I" and the "me" (Mead, 1934). The "I", acts (performs a behavior), whereas the "me" regards the behaviors of others, as well as the behavior of the self. By acting, observing the actions of others, and by observing others' attitudes toward the "me's" own actions, the self is participating in the socialization process. "The self, then, is developed through the process of socialization" (Stacks, Hill, Jr., & Hickson, III, 1991).

According to Mead (1934), the individual observes two groups' attitudes toward the self to form abstract and concrete thoughts. One group, the "generalized other," is the whole social group or organized community to which the individual belongs. The second group, the "specific other," refers to "those other individuals with whom he [or she] is involved in the given social situation or act" (Fisher, 1978, p. 156). Abstract thoughts come from the generalized other's attitudes toward the self, whereas concrete thoughts come from the specific other's attitudes toward the self.

The individual takes these abstract and concrete thoughts to perform a process known as self-indication. While self-indicating, the self "acts upon the experience and organizes past, present and future actions on the basis of interpretation of experiences" (Fisher, 1978, p. 168). Through self-observation and the observation of the behavior of others, individuals develop a "repertoire of responses and interpretations" (Fisher, p. 168) from which to guide their behavior.

Once an individual develops a repertoire of responses, the individual is able to participate in the role-playing process. Through the role-playing process, an individual takes on the role of another person and acts as that person might act (Mead, 1982). To play, the individual "must have the attitude of all the others involved in that game" (Mead, 1934, p. 154). By participating in the role-playing process, individuals are learning how to interact with others, thus becoming social beings. The more roles they play, the more individuals they can role-play with and the more social they become.

The Rise of Uncertainty in a Social Being

As these people role-play with others, they may begin to see how they are similar to, or different from, others. According to Kelley, Osborne, and Hendrick, (1974), the role-playing process allows individuals to perceive another person's perspective. This process also allows individuals to see their own perspective more clearly; to see how their own role differs from, or is similar to, the role they have taken. As these individuals begin to have relationships with others, they may begin to question their own behavior or the behavior of others in the relationship. These questions give rise to uncertainty regarding their own behavior, or the behavior of others.

Mead's idea of role playing and observations of others is used to predict and explain how others will act and what others' attitudes toward the self will be. C. Berger's uncertainty reduction theory also enables people not only to predict, but also to explain one's own actions as well as the actions of others (Berger, C., 1986, 1987, 1988; Berger, C. & Douglas, 1981; Berger, C. & Kellerman, 1983; Stamp, Vangelisti, & Knapp, 1994). C. Berger's uncertainty reduction theory examines why uncertainty is reduced and examines the strategies used to reduce uncertainty.

Why Uncertainty is Reduced

Uncertainty reduction theory asserts that individuals who are communicating for the first time seek information to reduce the uncertainty of their own behavior and

the behavior of others. According to C. Berger (1987) and Stamp, et al. (1994), communicative interactions with others enhance the possibility of reducing these uncertainties. Reducing the uncertainty about one's own behavior and the behavior of others allows individuals to make (1) decisions regarding their own future behavior, (2) predictions regarding how others may act in the future, and/or (3) predictions regarding the potential outcome of a relationship (Berger, C. & Calabrese, 1975; Stamp, et al., 1994).

C. Berger and Calabrese (1975) report people utilize the proactive approach to make predictions about behavior. The proactive approach involves three steps. First, individuals predict the numbers of ways a person might behave. Then, these individuals select response alternatives appropriate for each behavior. And finally, these individuals narrow the range of possible alternatives about others' future behaviors. The more narrow the range of possible behaviors, the more accurate the prediction of future behavior. And, the more accurate the prediction, the less uncertainty there is regarding others' behaviors.

Reducing the uncertainty about one's own behavior and the behavior of others also allows individuals to provide explanations for past behavior. C. Berger and Calabrese's (1975) retroactive approach involves observing others' behaviors and retroactively attempting to explain why the others behaved the way they did. Making accurate explanations for past behavior can enable individuals to reduce their uncertainty about the person's behavior in the past, and may enable the individuals to make more accurate predictions about others' future behaviors.

Strategies used to reduce uncertainty

C. Berger (1987, 1988) and C. Berger and Bradac (1982) assert that there are three uncertainty reduction strategies: passive, active and interactive. Passive strategies involve gathering information by unobtrusively observing others. Active strategies involve acquiring information indirectly, by either manipulating the context such that the individual can observe the desired behavior, or by asking other people how the target person has behaved in past situations. Interactive strategies are direct interactions with the individual, usually by asking the person how he or she behaves in certain situations.

Passive Strategies

One of the most simple uncertainty reducing strategies involves observing others. The more observations one makes, the more cues (such as appearance and behavior) a person has for the other person. Thibaut and Kelley (1959) found that predictions and forecasts regarding another person's behavior were much more successful (more accurate, more preferential) after the person has had the opportunity to observe many cues.

Predicting and forecasting another person's behavior are enhanced by two factors: (1) when the cues were obtained and (2) the salience of those cues. Observing when the cues were obtained and determining the salience of those cues are

the essence behind Thibaut and Kelly's (1959) three effects of observation. These three effects are the primacy effect, the recency effect, and the halo effect.

The primacy effect, labelled the "top of the head" phenomenon by C. Berger and Roloff (1980), is the phenomenon in which first impressions and impressions regarded as "powerful" or "salient" will overwhelmingly dominate the overall impression. People change their opinions and/or attributions on the basis of the most salient information.

The recency effect involves the consideration of a person's most recent behavior as the most accurate representation of his or her disposition. For example, person A volunteers at the local library, plays cards at the local Senior Citizen's Center once a week, and acts as a Candy Stripper on the children's ward at the hospital. One day, that person yells at a co-worker for using all the staples. In general, this individual could be considered a kind, generous individual who performs a lot of community service. Utilizing the recency effect, someone might claim that the individual above was no longer a kind and generous person, but rather had changed into a short-tempered, unreasonable person.

Thibaut and Kelley (1959) describe the halo effect, as an effect in which "one's general attitude toward a person" will "influence more specific evaluations of him [or her]" (p. 76). According to the halo effect, the person's reaction to the trivial problem described above might be construed as a one-time occurrence, rather than as a change in his or her personality.

By observing first impressions, most recent behaviors, and behavior during salient issues, the individuals are utilizing C. Berger's (1987, 1988) and C. Berger and Bradac's (1982) passive strategies to decrease uncertainty and enhance predictability of other's behaviors.

Active Strategies

To reduce uncertainty utilizing C. Berger's active strategy involves more than simply observing the target person in situations (Berger, C., 1987, 1988; Berger, C. & Bradac, 1982). One way to utilize C. Berger's active strategy is to acquire information about the target person indirectly. For example, by asking someone else questions about the target person (Berger, C., 1988). Acquiring information regarding the target person via another individual helps to reduce the uncertainty regarding the target person.

Another way to reduce uncertainty regarding another person's behavior is by manipulating the environment and observing the target's response to that manipulation (Berger, C., 1987). Observing the target person's behavior in various situations allows individuals to reduce their uncertainty regarding the target person.

Interactive Strategies

To reduce uncertainty utilizing C. Berger's interactive strategy requires direct communication with the target person (Berger, C., 1987, 1988; Berger, C. & Bradac,

1982). One way to learn more about the target person, thus reducing uncertainty, is to self-disclose. Rosenfeld and Kendrick (1984) state that "A communication act is considered self-disclosing if it has the self as content, is intentionally directed at another person, and contains information generally unavailable from other sources" (p. 324). This definition of self-disclosure is similar to that used by several other researchers (Adler, Rosenfeld, & Towne, 1992; Siebold, Cantrill, & Meyers, 1985). Relationships move from a casual level to an intimate level based upon this self-disclosure process.

According to the Social Exchange Theory, individuals within a communication relationship continue to reduce their uncertainty about one another by participating in a norm of reciprocity which "asserts that we feel obligated or indebted to return disclosures received" (Taylor & Altman, 1987, p. 268). When a communication relationship reaches an intimate level, mutual self-disclosures are expected (McCornack & Levine, 1990a) and the reciprocity of self-disclosures is more appropriate (Roloff, 1987). Ben-Ari (1995) claims that self-disclosure plays a major role in the development and maintenance of intimacy.

According to C. Berger and Kellerman (1983)

the ways in which people gather, encode and retrieve social information during the course of interactions exert considerable impact upon the decisions that interactants make regarding the ways in which they will or will not communicate with each other (p. 342).

Thus, individuals self-disclose to learn more about other people, thus reducing their uncertainty.

These three strategies, the passive, active, or interactive, can be used alone or in combination. By utilizing one or more of these three strategies, individuals are able to reduce their uncertainty about the behavior of others.

When to reduce uncertainty

Once an individual knows why uncertainty is reduced and what strategies are employed to reduce their uncertainties, then the individual can focus on when to reduce uncertainty. Individuals utilize uncertainty reduction strategies when facing uncertainty contexts. Uncertainty contexts are situations in which individuals face uncertainty regarding other people's behaviors. When facing uncertainty contexts, individuals (1) consider their ability to make an accurate prediction regarding others' future behaviors, (2) consider several relational factors, and (3) utilize associated cost/reward ratios before they reduce their uncertainty.

Accuracy in predicting others' future behaviors

Individuals who are facing uncertainty contexts may use either or both of the proactive and retroactive approaches (Berger, C. & Calabrese, 1975) as well as one or more of the passive, active, and interactive uncertainty reduction strategies (Berger, C., 1987, 1988; Berger, C. & Bradac, 1982). By utilizing these approaches and strategies, those individuals facing uncertainty contexts can attempt to make accurate predictions regarding another person's future behavior.

Making accurate predictions regarding another person's behavior helps to reduce the uncertainty regarding how another person might act in the future. These predictions play a large role in determining when individuals will reduce their uncertainties when facing specific uncertainty contexts.

Relational factors

According to Altman (1973), people take into consideration several relational factors before reducing their uncertainties. Altman asserts that there are five relational factors involved in whether or not individuals will self-disclose, thus attempting to reduce uncertainty. These factors are: (1) the stage of the relationship, (2) the level of exchange, (3) the situational context, (4) personal issues, and (5) group composition.

The first factor is the stage of the relationship. Whether the relationship is just beginning or has already been established helps some individuals decide whether or not to disclose. Some individuals are more comfortable self-disclosing in a relationship which is just beginning, in order to reduce their uncertainty regarding the other person's behavior. Others prefer to wait until the relationship is more established prior to self-disclosure.

The second relational factor is the level of exchange. Altman (1973) explains that there is a greater exchange for "superficial, non-intimate materials" (p. 255) versus a lesser exchange for "personal, intimate matters" (p. 255).

The third relational factor is the situational context. The specific context of a given situation helps to determine whether or not a person will self-disclose. Some individuals only self-disclose when there is a possibility that the relationship might continue in the future. Others may choose to self-disclose because they believe they will never see the other person again (the "strangers-on-the-train" phenomenon).

The fourth relational factor involves personal issues. These issues may include the person's mood, thoughts, feelings and/or attitudes at the time and place of the potential disclosure. These personal issues help to determine whether or not a person will self-disclose. For example, a person may feel like talking. Or, the person may have a headache, and may wish to ignore everyone else. Depending on the various personal issues that a person faces at the time of the potential disclosure, that person may or may not self-disclose.

Altman's (1973) fifth relational factor involves group composition. The group composition consists of those people around the individual at the time of the potential disclosure. The group composition may also consist of specific people who are absent from this group at the time of the potential disclosure. For example, the presence of certain group members may hinder or stimulate self-disclosure. In addition, the absence of certain group members may encourage or discourage a person from self-disclosing.

Rawlins (1983) adds two additional factors to this list. According to Rawlins, the topic being discussed may affect whether or not an individual may self-disclose. Some individuals feel more comfortable discussing certain topics over others. In

addition, Rawlins adds that individuals in a communication relationship may have tacit agreements regarding discretion. These tacit agreements may limit, or encourage, the self-disclosures.

Both Altman's (1973) and Rawlins' (1983) relational factors help to determine whether or not individuals will disclose information. And, whether individuals self-disclose plays a part in determining when their uncertainty regarding others will be reduced.

Rewards and Costs

Individuals debating whether or not they should reduce their uncertainties about others' behaviors by disclosing information also weigh the rewards and the costs of the disclosure before making their decision. Thibaut and Kelley (1959) state that "every individual voluntarily enters and stays in any relationship only as long as it is adequately satisfactory in terms of his rewards and costs" (p. 37). Individuals who believe that the rewards outweigh the costs may choose to disclose information about themselves. Those individuals who believe that the costs outweigh the rewards may choose not to disclose the information.

According to Hosman and Tardy (1980), individuals who disclose intimate information about themselves are increasing their vulnerability. The costs may be too high to disclose. Those individuals who do not participate in the reciprocal process of self-disclosure may end up minimizing the potential costs of disclosing. They may also end up minimizing the rewards that the disclosure might reap.

For example, individuals who are gay or lesbian must choose between (1) remaining safe from discrimination by not disclosing (reward), yet suffering the emotional strains from not disclosing their sexual identity (cost), or (2) coming out with the hope of achieving much needed emotional support (reward), yet facing possible exile from friends and family and being vulnerable to discrimination (cost). Examining the reward/cost ratios enables individuals to make better decisions about when to reduce their uncertainty.

Individuals who face uncertainty contexts must balance their ability to accurately predict others' behaviors, consider the relational factors, and balance the reward/cost ratios. Considering each of these three variables enables individuals to make better decisions regarding when to reduce their uncertainties when facing specific uncertainty contexts.

Uncertainty Contexts

There are a number of uncertainty contexts which individuals who are gay or lesbian face. The specific contexts which each person faces varies from person to person. However, because of their sexual identities, individuals who are gay or lesbian face many similar uncertainty contexts. Individuals who are gay or lesbian face uncertainty contexts when they face one or more of the following situations: (1) not yet avowing a gay/lesbian identity, (2) anticipating boundary changes, (3) facing discrimination, (4) desiring a stronger relationship with their friends, (5) wanting to be the person who discloses the sexual identity, (6) desiring the alleviation

of cognitive, social, and emotional isolation, (7) wanting to "be themselves", and (8) verifying a true friendship. When facing each of these uncertainty contexts, individuals who are gay or lesbian must decide whether or not to disclose their sexual identity.

Not Having Avowed a Gay/Lesbian Identity

One uncertainty context in which people may not disclose their sexual identity is the situation in which the individuals have not avowed a gay or lesbian identity. Individuals who have not yet fully accepted their gay or lesbian identity are strongly motivated to pass as heterosexuals while making their decisions (Mercier & Berger, R., 1989; Uribe & Harbeck, 1991). According to Uribe and Harbeck,

Most adolescents have not finalized their sexual orientation identification, and they are not willing to risk the ridicule and harassment that accompanies being open about their sexuality. Thus, they opt for concealment and hiding. The rewards for being normal are so great that those who can pass will (p. 14-15).

These individuals have observed the behavior of others, and have observed other people's negative attitudes toward this behavior. If the individuals do not desire to have other people express these negative attitudes toward themselves, they may choose to avoid these costs by not avowing a gay or lesbian identity.

Mercier and R. Berger (1989) also support the idea that individuals take the rewards of passing while they are deciding whether or not they wish to avow a gay or lesbian identity. Individuals "are most likely to conceal their identity in response to peer pressure" (p. 84). Individuals with gay or lesbian identities who associate with

people actively voicing opposition to gays, lesbians and to homosexuality may feel pressured to conceal their sexual identities (thus minimizing their costs). These individuals may conceal their sexual identities in order to maintain their friendships with their peers (attempting to reap the rewards). In Mead's terms, individuals may feel pressure from (1) the "generalized other," the society as a whole, or from (2) the "specific other," those individuals involved in the situation, to behave in a fashion considered "acceptable" by the specific other or the generalized other. The more the individuals are urged to act in a manner deemed acceptable by the specific other or the generalized other, the less they may wish to avow a gay identity.

These individuals are using their knowledge of their relationships with others to help them reduce their uncertainties regarding how the others' might respond to their gay or lesbian identities. While facing the uncertainty of whether or not to avow a gay or lesbian identity, those individuals who have not avowed a gay or lesbian identity can reap the rewards of passing by avoiding the costs of discrimination and peer pressure.

Anticipating Boundary Changes

Potential boundary changes create another uncertainty context in which gay/lesbian individuals may make decisions regarding whether or not to disclose their sexual identity. Individuals who are gay or lesbian may have uncertainty regarding whether the boundaries of the relationship will change after they disclose their sexual identity. According to Cain (1991), coming out might "change the boundaries of

friendships" (p. 348). In some cases, disclosing one's sexual identity may desexualize a relationship. "The disclosure communicated to the friend that the respondent was not interested in initiating a sexual relationship; it clarified the boundaries of their relationship and 'desexualized' their friendship" (Cain, p. 349).

On the other hand, disclosure to others might sexualize the relationship, "leading the friend to fear the respondent was sexually interested in him [or her]" (Cain, 1991, p. 349). These individuals may be uncertain whether the desexualization or the sexualization of the relationship will change the relationship. Individuals who do not disclose their sexual identity to their friends may be minimizing the costs of boundary changes, yet they may not be reaping the rewards that the boundary changes might bring with them.

Facing Discrimination

A third uncertainty context in which individuals may decide whether or not to disclose their sexual identity arises when the individuals are facing potential discrimination. For some individuals who are gay or lesbian, avowing a gay identity is frightening (Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993). Some may be frightened of being gay or lesbian after having viewed discrimination against other people who are gay or lesbian. The "fear that the same thing might happen to them intensifies their fear of discovery" (Martin & Hetrick, 1988, p. 170). These individuals are uncertain regarding what might happen to themselves after they disclose their sexual identity to their friends.

Passing allows individuals who are gay or lesbian to interact with their peers without worrying about "anticipated or actual discrimination" (Berger, R., 1990, p. 332). As such, passing is a form of self-preservation. Passing enables individuals who are gay or lesbian to avoid negative stereotyping and anti-gay violence which often results after being "discovered" by those people who are not supportive of individuals who are gay or lesbian.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) defined anti-gay violence as "any violence directed against persons because they are gay or lesbian or perceived to be so" (1986, p.2). The NGLTF has conducted several studies regarding anti-gay violence. The NGLTF's 1986 study of the magnitude of anti-gay violence included "nearly 2,100 respondents in eight US cities" (p.2) in an attempt to determine first, whether anti-gay violence exists, and second, whether anti-gay violence is prevalent in particular areas. The following summarizes the results of the study.

The results were staggering: more than one in five gay men and nearly one in ten lesbians had been punched, hit, kicked or beaten because of their sexual orientation, and approximately the same ratios suffered some form of police abuse. More than 40% had been threatened with violence. Overall, more than 90% had experienced some type of victimization. All this -- simply for being gay or lesbian (1986, p. 2).

According to Berrill (1986) eleven additional studies conducted throughout the United States on anti-gay violence "...have shown rates of victimization similar or identical to those documented in the NGLTF report" (p. 5). These rates of violence have not diminished since 1986. According to the 1995 NGLTF report on anti gay/lesbian violence, 2,031 incidents of anti-gay/lesbian violence were reported to National Tracking programs in 1993. These numbers rose to 2,064 in 1994.

The discrimination against gay men and lesbians does not stop with physical and emotional discrimination. A study conducted by Badgett (1995) determined that gay men and lesbians also face economic discrimination.

The findings of this study provide evidence that economic differences exist between people with differing sexual orientations (as defined by their behavior). Behaviorally gay/bisexual men earn from 11% to 27% less than behaviorally heterosexual men. (p. 737).

The types of discrimination that gay men and lesbians report are extensive. But many of the gay men and lesbians who experience anti-gay violence do not report the discrimination. The NGLTF noted that many gay men and lesbians, "possibly more than 80%," (1986, p.4) do not report crimes against them. This lack of reporting thus reduces the number of individuals who are available to participate in the surveys regarding anti-gay crimes. In addition, this lack of reporting may make the statistics of such crimes appear to be less significant than they actually may be.

But despite this effect, the results of the NGLTF's 1986 study showed that "the high rates of victimization in all survey locations, along with the considerable geographic diversity of the sample, allow us to conclude that anti-gay violence is pervasive" (p. 3).

Not only is the discrimination pervasive, but the results of Comstock's study (1991) determined that the violence against gay men and lesbians is higher than violence committed against the general population. "When the rate of anti-gay/lesbian violence in the lives of lesbians and gay men is compared to the rate of criminal violence experienced by the general population, the former is disproportionately higher" (Comstock, p. 55). The results of these studies indicate that individuals who

are gay or lesbian suffer physical and emotional discrimination simply because they are gay or lesbian.

The discrimination that these men and women face is extensive. And the settings for the discrimination are equally as extensive. Comstock's (1991) survey found that gay men and lesbians experienced discrimination in many different settings. And some of the participants reported experiencing discrimination in more than one setting. Of persons reporting to be victims of anti-gay/lesbian violence in Comstock's study, 59% were victimized in a public lesbian/gay area, 31% were victimized in a public non-lesbian/gay areas, 26% were victimized in homes, and 25% were victimized in schools (1991).

The stigmatization and ostracization of individuals who are gay is prevalent within our society (Bishop, et al., 1991; Cassens, 1985; Holland & Tross, 1985). This stigmatization "influences perceptions of responsibility and personality" (Bishop et al., p. 1885), thus increasing the motivation for individuals who are gay not to disclose their sexual identity to others. According to Cassens, "Guilt further magnifies the sense of isolation and estrangement many gay men have experienced throughout much of their lives. Society overtly and subtly ostracizes gay people" (p. 768). This ostracization and stigmatization increased with the emergence of HIV/AIDS (Bishop, et al., 1991; Conrad, 1986; Pryor, Reeder, Vinacco, & Kott, 1989).

When HIV/AIDS first became widespread in the United States in the early 1980s, individuals who were gay or lesbians, particularly gay men, not only had to

face potential discrimination because they are gay, but they also had to face discrimination because being gay is associated with having HIV/AIDS.

And along came AIDS. With its image as a 'gay disease' related to a fast track gay male lifestyle, the fear of AIDS tapped into a reservoir of existing moral fear of homosexuals. It was a catalyst to the reemergence of a latent 'homophobia' that had never really disappeared. Now there was a new reason to discriminate against gays. Thus, AIDS has led to a restigmatization of homosexuality. Every avowed male homosexual is a suspected carrier of AIDS and deemed potentially dangerous. This, of course, has pushed many gay men back into the closet, living their lives with new fears and anxieties (Conrad, 1986, p. 54).

Individuals who are gay or lesbian may have a strong motivation not to disclose their sexual identity to their friends because for many people there is a strong association between contracting HIV/AIDS and being gay.

[T]he facts that AIDS was first diagnosed among homosexual men, that homosexuals make up the largest single group of PWAs [persons with AIDS], and that AIDS is sexually transmitted have led to a strong association between AIDS and homosexuality (Bishop, et al., 1991, p. 1878).

Because of this association between being gay and having HIV/AIDS, many individuals who are gay experience discrimination. "...AIDS has come to symbolize homosexual promiscuity and moral decadence... Thus, negative reactions to persons with AIDS could also represent responses to the negative things that AIDS has come to symbolize" (Pryor et al., 1989, p. 379). Having a fear of discrimination due to others' associations of contracting HIV/AIDS and being gay, dramatically increased the motivation for individuals who were gay or lesbian not to disclose their sexual identity to their friends.

The more things for which individuals could be discriminated against, the more uncertainty contexts these individuals face. The greater the number of uncertainty

contexts they face, the greater the number of situations in which these individuals may choose not to disclose their sexual identities, even to their closest friends. These individuals might avoid disclosure in order to decrease the chances that they would face the costs of discrimination in their relationships with their friends.

When individuals decide whether or not to disclose their sexual identities to others, they face uncertainty regarding how the person may respond to their disclosure. Discrimination is one response which might occur. Thus, those individuals who wish to avoid this enormous cost, may choose not to disclose their sexual identities to others. As a result, they may also be minimizing the rewards that the disclosure might reap.

Desiring stronger relationships with their friends

Some individuals choose to disclose their sexual identity to their close friends when facing the uncertainty context of wanting to have a closer relationship with their friends. Cain (1991) wrote, when questioned, "respondents cite 'closeness' as a major reason to tell their friends that they are gay" (p. 349). However, even when individuals disclose their sexual identity to their close friends with the intent of having closer relationship, their relational outcome is uncertain. The outcome of the relationship is uncertain until the disclosure is made and the response has occurred. Because the relational outcome is uncertain, even when the intent is to have the relationship become more close, those individuals who consider disclosing their sexual identities are facing an uncertainty context.

Wanting to be the person who discloses the sexual identity

Individuals who are gay or lesbian also face uncertainty contexts when they want to be the person who discloses their sexual identity. Cain (1991) showed that in some relationships, the person who discloses the information may be just as important as the information which is disclosed. There are four different ways in which an individual's sexual identity may be disclosed. First, the individuals who are gay or lesbian may disclose their sexual identity to their close friends. Second, the individuals who are gay or lesbian may ask someone to disclose their sexual identities to their close friends. Third, someone may tell the close friend without the knowledge or permission of the individuals who are gay or lesbian. Or fourth, a close friend may bring it up/ask. The manner in which the close friends learn about the sexual identity will necessarily have an affect on the relationship between the individuals who are gay or lesbian and their friends (Cain, 1991).

Cain argued that "In addition, failure to disclose homosexuality to a friend may mean that the friend will find out from another source, which would compound the friend's sense of betrayal" (p. 348). Their friends' responses to their sexual identities may depend on who discloses the information.

The fact that a person has a gay or lesbian sexual identity may have an affect on the relational outcome. Just as the manner in which the sexual identity is disclosed may have an affect on the relational outcome. Thus, individuals who are gay or lesbian face uncertainty regarding the relational outcome depending upon who discloses the information. Gay men and lesbians face the costs of having a

relationship which might become more distant or terminate because they were not the source of the disclosure. However, these individuals may be able to reap the rewards of a closer friendship by having the information disclosed. These individuals must weigh the rewards and costs when deciding whether or not to disclose their sexual identity when facing this uncertainty context.

Wanting to alleviate cognitive, social, and emotional isolation

Individuals who are gay or lesbian who want to alleviate cognitive, social and emotional isolation are also facing the uncertainty context in which they must decide whether or not to disclose their sexual identity. Several researchers argue that individuals who do not disclose their gay identities may experience cognitive, social, and emotional isolation (Berger, R. 1990, 1992; Martin & Hetrick, 1988; Mercier & Berger, R., 1989; Uribe & Harbeck, 1991). According to Uribe and Harbeck,

Those who conceal their homosexual feelings experience loneliness and alienation, a splitting for their gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity from the rest of their personality. Most conceal their sexual feelings because of internal confusion, pain, and the fear of rejection and hostility. By developing elaborate concealment strategies these young people are often able to 'pass as straight,' but at some significant, unmeasurable cost to their developmental process, self-esteem, and sense of connection (p. 11).

The lack of a sense of connection and the feelings of isolation and alienation are also attributed to the lack of support these individuals receive from people who know their struggle.

R. Berger (1992) showed that individuals who are gay or lesbian experience isolation from groups of people who might be able to help them. "Passing isolates the

individual from other gay persons, gay social cliques, and the larger gay community. Thus, potential sources of social support are never realized" (Berger, R., p. 92). Individuals who pass are not utilizing the available resources to aid them in coping with costs of discrimination and negative stereotyping. Because these individuals are uncertain as to how others might respond to their sexual identities, they may not disclose their sexual identities, thus facing the costs of isolation and alienation.

This cognitive, social, and emotional isolation that gay and lesbians face relates to Mead's concept of role-playing. These individuals may believe that their roles are limited due to the generalized others' opinions of their behavior (the behavior of the self). These individuals may feel forced to take a role accepted by the generalized other; and this role does not include their sexual identity. When taking this role, they may experience the costs of cognitive, social and emotional isolation since the sexual identity portion of their role has been hidden.

Wanting to "be themselves"

Another uncertainty context individuals who are gay or lesbian face involves wanting to "be themselves." Several researchers indicate that individuals who do not disclose their sexual identity to their friends cannot "be themselves" around people who are not aware of their gay or lesbian identities. They cannot freely disclose information about their partners or their friends with individuals they do not know due to the uncertainty regarding potential discrimination or harm (Berger, R., 1990, 1992; Martin & Hetrick, 1988; Mercier & Berger, R., 1989). According to R. Berger,

"The covert gay man is thwarted in developing his social support relationships because he is unable to reciprocate in the sharing of intimate details of his emotional life, without threatening his status" (1992, p. 89).

These individuals who are uncertain of others' responses to their sexual identities monitor to whom they disclose their sexual identities (Berger, R., 1990, 1992; Martin & Hetrick, 1988; Mercier & Berger, R., 1989; Uribe & Harbeck, 1991). This monitoring behavior requires immense concentration and memory, for the individuals must remember who they have and have not told. "A major aspect of hiding is the ever-present need to self-monitor. Unconscious and automatic behaviors, especially those relating to gender are brought to the forefront of conscious attention" (Uribe & Harbeck, p. 15). These individuals monitor their behavior because they are uncertain as to how other people will respond to the disclosure of their sexual identities.

Individuals who are gay or lesbian who monitor their behavior are taking on roles which are deemed acceptable by the specific other. When gays and lesbians are uncertain regarding the way another person may respond to their sexual identities, gays and lesbians may take the role which is deemed socially acceptable to the generalized other, thus not disclosing their sexual identities.

Verifying a "true" friendship

Another uncertainty context arises when people who are gay or lesbian want to verify "true" friendships. These individuals are uncertain about how the disclosure of

their sexual identities might affect the outcome of their relationship with their friends.

Cain (1991) noted,

In a sense, disclosure tests a friendship. By revealing themselves to their friends, respondents demonstrate their trust and closeness. At the same time, they verify that their friends are 'real' friends on whom they can count. This sense of mutuality and reciprocity was clearly articulated by respondents in their discussions concerning friends. Disclosure may also relate to their ability to select friends who are supportive or drop those unlikely to accept the revelation, something they cannot do in their parental or sibling relationships (p. 349).

Verifying "real" friends by coming out might lead to a relationship which stays the same or becomes closer than it was prior to the disclosure. However, the disclosure of one's sexual identity might make the relationship more distant, or the relationship might terminate. Because of the uncertainty of the relational outcome, gays and lesbians face an uncertainty context when deciding whether or not they wish to verify their "real" friendships.

Facing Uncertainty in the Relational Outcome

In each of the eight uncertainty contexts previously discussed, individuals must decide whether or not to disclose their sexual identity to their relational partners. And yet no matter what decisions these individuals make in each of their uncertainty contexts, these individuals are not able to fully determine what the relational outcome will be. These individuals face uncertainty in their relational outcomes because all eight uncertainty contexts have to flow through the reaction of the relational partner

before a relational outcome occurs. In other words, their relational outcomes are determined in part by the interaction of the two relational partners.

Some relational partners face uncertainty in their relationships. Increased interactions with others may actually increase the uncertainty of other's behavior (Berger, C., 1987, Berger, C. & Bradac, 1982; Planalp et al., 1988; Stamp, et al., 1994). Planalp and Honeycutt (1985) and Planalp et al. (1988) found that some events (such as sexual behavior or unexplained loss of contact or closeness) increase uncertainty in existing relationships.

Even after the uncertainty is eventually reduced, having had uncertainty in the relationship could lead to uncertainty in areas of the relationship in which there was prior certainty (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985; Planalp et al., 1988). "For example, if a friend betrays a confidence, beliefs about his or her trustworthiness would be directly affected, but other beliefs about the relationship (such as beliefs about closeness, fairness, or supportiveness) might be affected as well" (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985).

C. Berger (1987) claimed that persistently high levels of uncertainty can induce stress on the relationship. The increase in uncertainty also encourages individuals to "take steps to reduce uncertainties about their relational partners (p. 52) and "force persons to seek further information about their partners to reduce their new uncertainties" (p. 52).

In Planalp et al.'s 1988 study, they found eight categories of events which might increase uncertainty about the relational partner and/or the relational outcome. Sexual behavior was one of these eight categories that increases uncertainty. Planalp

et al. defined the sexual behavior event as, "the respondent discovers information concerning the other's sexual acts, desires, or preferences that was unexpected" (p. 527). Finding out that their friend was gay or lesbian was one event which increased the relational partner's uncertainty regarding the relational outcomes.

Both partners in the relationship face uncertainty in the relational outcome. And each of the partners must face their own uncertainty contexts and make a decision regarding how to respond to that uncertainty. After gays and lesbians face their uncertainty contexts and make decisions regarding whether or not to disclose their sexual identity given the situation that they face, they must wait to find out how their relational partners will respond to this decision.

In this study, the individuals who are gay or lesbian were asked questions regarding the disclosure of their sexual identity to their close friends. They were asked questions regarding their decision-making process. These individuals were then asked questions regarding the outcome of their relationships. And finally, these individuals were asked questions regarding their responses to their relational outcomes.

Research Questions

Uncertainty reduction requires a situation. The situation on which this thesis is focused is essential to and concerns gays and lesbians the most. That situation is whether to reduce uncertainty of the specific other in a relationship -- specifically, the decision to disclose one's sexual identity to one's close friend. While the specific focus is the same (disclosing to reduce uncertainty) the variable specifics may vary

from person to person. In an attempt to determine what the specific circumstances are under which persons find out their close friends are gay or lesbian, the following research questions was asked.

RQ1: What are the circumstances under which persons find out that their close friends are gay/lesbian? (Hereafter referred to as the event.)

Individuals who are gay or lesbian face uncertainty regarding the outcome of their relationships with their close friends when their sexual identities are disclosed. They are uncertain whether the relationship will remain the same or if it will change in some way. In order to determine whether or not their relationships change after their sexual identities are disclosed, the following research question was posed.

RQ2: When gay men's and lesbians' sexual identities are disclosed to their close friends, do their relationships with these close friends change?

Not only do individuals who are gay or lesbian face uncertainty with whether or not their relationships with their close friends will change after their sexual identities are disclosed, they also face uncertainty regarding the ways in which the relationship will change, if it does change. The following research question attempts to determine in what ways the relationship changes, if it changes.

RQ3: If the relationship between the gays/lesbians and their close friends changes, in what ways does the relationship change? (Hereafter referred to as the relational outcome.)

When individuals who are gay or lesbian make decisions regarding whether or not to disclose their sexual identity, they consider all the uncertainty contexts they face and make a decision regarding whether or not, and in which manner, to disclose their sexual identities. In an attempt to make better educated decisions, these individuals

may wish to understand the relationship between the circumstances under which the sexual identity was disclosed (the event) and how the relationship changed after the disclosure (the relational outcome). The next research question attempts to determine if a relationship exists between these events and the resulting relational outcomes.

RQ4: Which events are associated with which relational outcomes?

When individuals are making their informed decisions regarding the disclosure of their sexual identities, their satisfaction with previous relational outcomes may help the individuals make their decisions. In order to understand how satisfied gays and lesbians are with their relational outcomes, the following research question was posed.

RQ5: How satisfied are gay men and lesbians with their relational outcomes?

Individuals who have experienced a particular event may be able to report on why that event worked well (i.e., what may have led to a desired relational outcome), or why that event did not work well (i.e., what may have led to a less desired relational outcome). To attempt to understand why some relational outcomes occurred, the following research question was posed.

RQ6: What are gay men's and lesbians' perceived causes of their relational outcomes?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology in the following order: (1) the sample design, (2) the methods employed in the data collection, (3) the strategies used in the preparation of the data, and (4) a discussion regarding the analysis plan for the data. The statistical methods used will be reviewed in Chapter four, and the results of this study will be reviewed in Chapter five.

Sample Design

The sample design is broken down into several components: (1) selection of the participants, (2) questionnaire development, (3) pilot study, (4) review of the pilot study responses and modification of the questionnaire, and (5) expected biases.

Selection of the participants

Participants of this study were individuals who either participated in gay/lesbian/bisexual support groups, acted as a facilitator for gay/lesbian and/or bisexual support groups, or frequented the main office of a participating gay/lesbian and/or bisexual organization. All of the participants were from the Seattle or San Francisco Bay areas. Furthermore, some of these groups were "rap" groups, groups

which met to discuss issues which pertain to gays, lesbians and/or bisexuals. Some of the groups were support groups, such as coming-out groups.

The individuals who participated in this study were selected based upon their membership in gay and lesbian organizations located in the San Francisco area and in the Seattle area. Thirty-seven gay and lesbian organizations were listed in the San Francisco telephone white pages and fifteen gay and lesbian organizations were listed in the Seattle telephone white pages.

The organizations chosen from these listings were selected based upon their listings as generic gay/lesbian support groups or therapy centers. Those groups which appeared to be special needs groups (such as groups for lesbians who have been abused) were not selected. In addition, those groups which were specialized social clubs or specialized services for gays and lesbians, (such as gay men's singing organizations, travel agencies, or legal referrals) were also not selected.

The list of organizations was refined further by focusing on the generalized gay/lesbian support groups. Some of the groups' listings in the phone book did not provide enough information to determine whether the group might be appropriate for participation. After speaking with a spokesperson from the group, or a spokesperson from another organization who was familiar with a specific group, several of the groups were eliminated based upon the group's purpose.

In addition, many organizations eliminated themselves from the list after learning about the study. These groups eliminated themselves based upon one of the following reasons:

1. The group was unwilling to participate.
2. The group's participation would violate their client's sensitivities. For example, according to some organizations, some of their clients might feel that they were being "examined" due to their status as an individual who is gay or lesbian.
3. The group was not a general support group for individuals who are gay or lesbian (e.g. support groups for lesbians who have been abused)
4. The group mainly supported clients under the age of 18.

After contacting the remaining organizations on the list, seven of the organizations gave referrals to other organizations (or individuals). Of these seven referrals, three of these groups gave multiple referrals and four of the groups gave one referral, for a total of twenty-two referrals altogether. After contacting each of these referrals, seven of the groups or individuals agreed to participate. The remaining organizations were either (1) unable to participate (in general the facilitator of these groups argued that participating in a research capacity would be detrimental to the individuals in the group), (2) unwilling to participate, or (3) could not be contacted after a minimum of three attempts per group. For more detailed information regarding the selection process of the selected organizations, see Appendix A.

Questionnaire Development

The initial questionnaire was a modification of Planalp et al.'s (1988) questionnaire (Appendix B). Modifying a survey which has already been utilized "(1) enhances the possibility for substantive comparisons with these and other studies and (2) adds to the cumulative body of methodological experience with survey items"

(Aday, 1989, p. 130). The responses were forced choice, Likert-type graduated scale, with an "other" -- fill in the blank -- option. By providing forced choice responses and Likert-scale responses, the researcher attempted to minimize measurement error. Participants whose responses were not provided in the forced choice possibilities were able to fill out the "other" category.

Certain questions from Planalp et al.'s (1988) questionnaire were adapted or modified to acclimate to this research population. Additional questions were composed to glean information that was more specific to the research questions of this study. The following general adaptations were made to Planalp et al.'s questionnaire.

Planalp et al.'s (1988) questions regarding confidence in the ability to predict, and accuracy in predicting how another person would behave, were refocused. In the questionnaire used in this study, several questions were asked regarding what happened to the relationship after the close friend found out about the participant's sexual identity. In addition, the questions for this study asked about the participants' satisfaction with their relational outcomes.

Open-ended questions regarding "what happened" in Planalp, et al.'s 1988 survey were changed to forced choices (with an "other" option) regarding how the close friend learned about the participant's sexual identity. Planalp et al.'s questions regarding emotional reactions to the event were refocused. In the questionnaire used for this study, several questions regarded the participants' satisfaction regarding relational outcomes and satisfaction in the way in which the close friends learned about the participants' sexual identity.

Planalp et. al's (1988) questions regarding beliefs about companionship, emotional involvement, honesty, and so forth were refocused. In this study, one of the questions referred to the importance of the friendships. In addition, several of the questions in this questionnaire asked the participants if they could change the events, what would they change them to, and if the participants could change the relational outcomes, what would they change them to.

A draft of this adapted questionnaire was then modified. The questionnaire was shortened to focus more specifically on this study's research questions. Several questions were modified for clarification. In addition, the instructions were modified for clarification and for better directions.

Pilot Study

Prior to distribution to the sample population, the questionnaire was submitted to a pilot sample. Pretesting the questionnaire enabled the researcher to find out "whether the words and phrases used in a question mean the same thing to respondents as they do the survey designers" (Aday, 1989, p. 197). Pretesting also "permit[ed] the identification of such problem items as loaded, double-barreled, or ambiguous questions or ones in which the entire range of response alternatives is not provided to respondents" (Aday, p. 198).

Furthermore, the pilot study was conducted to clarify directions within the questionnaire, to clarify the questions, and to increase the possible response options. The pilot sample was composed of twenty-two individuals who were participants in

the University of Oregon Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Alliance or the Oregon State University Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Alliance. A liaison from each of the groups was contacted by telephone. The pilot study questionnaires (see Appendix C), a script, and a self-addressed stamped envelope were then given to or mailed to each group. A liaison from the Portland State University Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Alliance was also contacted, but no pilot study questionnaires were received from this group.

Review of Pilot Study Responses and Modification of Questionnaire

Upon receipt of the pilot study questionnaires, the researcher reviewed the responses. The researcher noted that all of the participants responded that their friendships had become closer after their friends found out about their sexual identity. Upon a more in-depth review of the responses and upon a review of the wording of the original instructions, the researcher realized that the wording of the instructions on the pilot study questionnaire (see Appendix C) may have created a bias in the participants' selection of the friendships they chose to describe while answering the questionnaire.

The wording in the instructions used for the pilot study questionnaire asked participants to choose a close friend who knew about the participants' sexual identity. Then the participants were asked to complete the questionnaire keeping this one close friend in mind. The instructions did not specify for the participants to think about

individuals who were close friends prior to their knowledge of the participants' sexual identity.

Without specifying when the friendship was close, the questionnaire might have eliminated some close friends. Specifically, the questionnaire might have eliminated those people who were close friends of the participants before they learned about the participants' sexual identity, but whose relationships with the participants became more distant after they learned about the participants' sexual identity.

The researcher therefore revised the instructions for the questionnaire, and revised the questionnaire itself. This revision was performed in order to minimize the tendency for the participants to choose only one type of friendships, and to maximize the tendency for the participants to provide an equal distribution of both types of friendships.

In the revised instructions, the participants were asked to think back to the time when people were learning about their sexual identity. Then, the participants were instructed to choose two friends. Friend #1 was a person with whom the relationship became much more close, somewhat closer, or stayed about the same. Friend #2 was a person with whom the relationship became somewhat more distant, much more distant, or terminated after the friend learned about the participants' sexual identity.

These instructions gave the participants the opportunity to provide information for both categories of friends, thus increasing the amount of information which could be gleaned from the questionnaire. Furthermore, each of the participants were given the option to select the response "I did not have a close friend at that time whose

relationship with me became much more close, somewhat closer, or stayed about the same" (or the corresponding response regarding a lack of a close friend whose relationship with the participant became more distant or terminated). These two options allowed the participants NOT to select a close friend in either category if they felt they had no such friend. That way, the participants were not being required to force a friendship into a particular category in order to complete the questionnaire.

To avoid question order bias, the researcher created two versions of the questionnaire such that the first set of questions in Questionnaire #1 were regarding friendships that became closer or stayed the same, and the second set of questions were regarding friendships that became more distant or terminated. In Questionnaire #2, the types of friendships were in the reverse order. The final drafts of the questionnaires are located in Appendices D and E.

The final questionnaire contained two categories of questions: questions regarding the relationship with friend #1 and questions regarding the relationship with friend #2. The questions asked the participant for (1) background information about the friend and the participant's relationship with that friend, (2) the circumstances under which the friend found out about the participant's sexual identity, (3) why the participant thought the relationship turned out the way it did, (4) how satisfied the participant was with the way the relationship turned out, (5) whether or not the participant would want their friend to find out about their sexual identity if they could do it all over again, and (6) how the participant would want the friend to find out about their sexual identity if they did want their friend to find out.

Biases

Several potential biases are apparent for this questionnaire. Several researchers (Berger, R., 1990; Harry, 1982, 1984; Harry & DeVall, 1978; McDonald, 1982; Weinberg, 1974) have identified a significant bias related to this type of study:

One of the most problematic aspects of the study of gay men and lesbians by social workers and others has been the difficulty of obtaining representative samples....Because respondents in this study were members of a support organization, they may have been less closeted than the many same-sex couples who never join such organizations (Berger, R., 1990, p. 331).

Given the expected level of intimacy and commitment, subjects volunteering for such a study would tend to be highly motivated, open about their sexual orientation, and positively gay-identified. (McDonald, p. 54)

Some of this bias may have been eliminated by utilizing a questionnaire rather than an interview methodology, thus increasing confidentiality and decreasing discomfort with discussing gay/lesbian issues with an interviewer (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1991; Harry, 1982, 1984). Harry (1982) states:

We believe that procedures which provide complete anonymity to gay respondents, rather than those which provide only assurances of confidentiality, permit a broader sampling of gay respondents. In particular, they make it possible for gay men who feel uneasy about providing identifying information about themselves to respond. Interview and two-stage procedures may not (p. 40).

In addition, this bias may have been minimized by soliciting participants from several different organizations. The diversity of the different organizations may have helped to increase the differences in the characteristics of the population, thus increasing the population to whom the results may be generalized.

Furthermore, because one of the goals of this study was to help counselors and therapists coach gay men and lesbians with their decisions regarding the disclosure of their sexual identities, having a group of participants who were more open about their sexual identity may have actually been a beneficial bias. Individuals who were highly motivated to reveal information regarding their sexual identities may have provided very helpful information for those individuals who were less comfortable discussing their sexual identity with others.

Data Collection

The data collection section of the methodology includes a description of the data collection methods, the calculation of response rates, the benefits of the methods utilized to collect the data, and the drawbacks of the methods utilized.

Data Collection Methods

A person from each of the organizations listed above was contacted by telephone. This person is hereafter described as the facilitator. A copy of the phone script which was used as a guideline during these conversations is located in Appendix F. If the facilitator agreed that his or her group would be interested in participating in this research project, the researcher then asked the facilitator how the group would distribute the questionnaires. The researcher developed four options for the

distribution of the questionnaires, and the questionnaires were distributed in three of these four options.

Questionnaire Distribution -- Option 1

In Option 1, the facilitator agreed to participate in an extensive manner in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. The facilitator agreed to read a script to his or her own group, distribute the questionnaires to the group, monitor how many people received the questionnaire and how many people were under the age of 18 (and thus were ineligible to participate), collect the questionnaires, and return all the questionnaires (including the blank ones) to the researcher in a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

If the facilitator agreed to participate using Option 1, the researcher and the facilitator made a verbal agreement as to when the questionnaires would be distributed to the group, how many questionnaires were desired, and when the questionnaires would be returned to the researcher. The researcher then mailed a packet of information to this facilitator. This packet included a letter of instruction and thanks, a script, the requested number of questionnaires with attached consent forms, and a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Letter

The letter of instruction and thanks described the content of the packet, and confirmed in writing the agreed upon dates of distribution and return. In addition, the

letter described the instructions for completing the blanks on the script (see below).

Finally, the letter included the researcher's name, address, and telephone number. An example of the letter utilized for Option 1 is located in Appendix G.

Script

The script consisted of a paragraph which described the following information: the reason the facilitator was distributing the questionnaires as opposed to the researcher, the purpose of the research, the type of information that the questionnaires tried to glean, and the request for individuals under the age of 18 to raise their hands (those individuals under 18 were asked not to complete the questionnaires due to lack of parental consent). In addition to this paragraph, the script also included a table of four blanks for the facilitator to complete. The first blank was for the number of individuals who received a copy of the questionnaire. The second blank was for the number of individuals who were under the age of 18. The third and fourth blanks (which were filled out by the researcher prior to mailing to the facilitator) were for the name of the group and for the number of questionnaires that were mailed to the facilitator. The information gleaned from these blanks was utilized to determine response rates (see Chapter 4, Table 4.3). A copy of the script utilized for option 1 is located in Appendix H.

Questionnaires and Consent Form

In addition to the letter and the script, the researcher also included questionnaires in the packet. The questionnaires were ordered such that the even questionnaires were version 1 of the questionnaire, and the odd questionnaires were version 2 of the questionnaire. Each questionnaire had a consent form stapled to the front (See Appendix I).

The number of questionnaires sent to each group varied, based upon the number of active participants in the group. The facilitator made an estimate as to the number of active participants in the group. One questionnaire per active participant was sent to the group, with an additional five copies to assure that the facilitator would not run out of questionnaires.

The questionnaire itself included instructions regarding how to complete the questionnaire and what to do if a question was unclear. The instructions indicated that the respondents should discontinue participating if they felt emotional discomfort while responding to the questionnaire. Furthermore, the questionnaire provided instructions regarding what to do with the questionnaire when it was completed (return it to the facilitator who distributed the questionnaires to the group).

The researcher followed-up, by telephone, with each the groups after the questionnaires were mailed in order to determine if the questionnaires were received, to determine if any additional questionnaires were needed, and to inquire if any questions had arisen before or during the completion process. One group called the researcher to inquire if the participants were allowed to keep the copy of the consent

form that was attached to their questionnaires. The researcher granted this permission. No other groups reported any questions.

If the facilitator could not be contacted by phone, the researcher wrote a letter to the facilitator regarding the progress of the questionnaires. A sample of this letter is located in Appendix J. None of the groups reported the need for additional questionnaires. Four of the groups in this study utilized Option 1.

Biases for distribution utilizing Option 1

One of the biases for the distribution of the questionnaires using Option 1 was subtle. The facilitator of these groups asked the groups if they would like to participate, handed out the questionnaires, and utilized "group time" to allow the participants to complete the questionnaires. The individuals in these groups may have felt more compelled to complete the questionnaires than individuals who received the questionnaires in a different distribution method.

In order to alleviate some of the "discomfort" in feeling "obligated" to complete the questionnaire, the facilitators were asked to read the script to the group prior to the distribution of the questionnaire. The script clearly states that participation is voluntary, and the individuals will not be punished for not completing the questionnaire.

In an attempt to alleviate this bias even further, many of the facilitators who utilized Option 1 asked their group if they would be willing to participate in the study, prior to having the researcher mail the questionnaires to the group. If the group as a

whole decided to participate, the facilitator let the group know when the questionnaires were going to be distributed so that the individuals could choose whether or not to show up for that particular time or that group session.

Another bias for Option 1, and for all the other distribution methods, involved the decision regarding the number of questionnaires to be sent to each organization. During a telephone conversation, each facilitator told the researcher approximately how many individuals actively participated in the group on a regular basis. The researcher then sent one questionnaire for each active participant and five additional questionnaires.

Unfortunately, in two of the groups which utilized Option 1, the number of desired questionnaires greatly exceeded the number of returned, completed questionnaires (see Chapter 4, Table 4.3 for Response Rates). For example, the Lambda Center requested 30 questionnaires (35 were sent). Ten questionnaires were completed and returned to the researcher. Fourteen of the questionnaires were blank, and eleven of the questionnaires were not returned. In another group, the Pacific Center Men's Group, the facilitator requested 45 to 50 questionnaires. In this case, eight completed questionnaires and 45 blank questionnaires were returned.

Even after three attempts to contact each of the facilitators by telephone, and after sending each of the facilitators a letter requesting information, the researcher was unable to contact the facilitators to determine why the response rate was so low for each of the groups. If the researcher had known that so few of the participants were going to complete the questionnaires, additional organizations would have been

contacted to increase the number of completed questionnaires and to improve the response rates.

Another bias for all of the distribution methods was the lack of control regarding the return of the questionnaires. Four of the seven groups had non-returned questionnaires. The number of non-returned questionnaires varied for each group, with 1, 2, 11, and 15 non-returned questionnaires.

In an attempt to alleviate this bias, by attempting to recover the non-returned questionnaires, each of the two groups with the larger non-return rate were sent a letter (located in Appendix K). When no additional questionnaires were returned to the researcher, the researcher sent a second follow-up letter (located in Appendix L). Despite the two follow-up letters, no additional questionnaires were returned to the researcher.

Questionnaire Distribution -- Option 2

In Option 2, the facilitator agreed to post a script in the main office of his or her organization, as well as distribute copies of the script to each of the facilitators of gay/lesbian and/or bisexual groups. The facilitator then agreed to place the questionnaires in a box in the main office. Then, those individuals who wished to complete the questionnaires could pick up a questionnaire on their own time and then return the questionnaire in another box also located in the main office. Each of these boxes had construction paper signs (provided by the researcher) to indicate pick up or drop off sites. Furthermore, the facilitator agreed to return all the questionnaires

(including the blank ones) to the researcher in a self-addressed, stamped envelope (or in a box which included the proper amount of return postage).

If the facilitator agreed to participate with Option 2, the researcher and the facilitator made a verbal agreement as to when the scripts would be distributed to the group facilitator, where the questionnaires would be located, how many questionnaires were desired, and when the questionnaires would be returned to the researcher. These agreements were then noted in the letter which was mailed to the facilitator with the packet of information.

The packet of information for the facilitator included a letter of instruction and thanks, the requested number of scripts, the requested number of questionnaires with attached consent forms, signs to be posted with the pick-up and drop-off sites, and a self-addressed stamped envelope or box with the appropriate amount of return postage. A copy of the letter used for Option 2 is located in Appendix M, and the script utilized for the group facilitator is located in Appendix N. The questionnaires utilized for Option 2 were identical to those used for Option 1. Two of the groups in this study utilized Option 2.

Biases for the distribution of Option 2

In Option 2, several biases existed. There existed only minimum control regarding the notification, distribution, identification, and the collection of the questionnaires.

The notification that surveys were available may not have been well-publicized. The signs indicating the location of the questionnaires may not have been clearly displayed. In addition, the location of the questionnaires may not have been well-placed. The date that the questionnaires should be returned may not have been clearly marked.

Some of this bias was controlled by providing the signs for the display of the questionnaires. These signs were sent along with the questionnaires, and were approximately 8" x 8" in size on colored construction paper. One of the signs indicated the place to pick up the questionnaires, and one of the signs indicated the place to return the completed questionnaires. This latter sign also indicated the final date to return the questionnaires, and had the researcher's telephone number on the sign if assistance was needed.

Furthermore, the researcher spoke with the facilitator utilizing Option 2 to discuss the placement of the questionnaires. Each of the facilitators argued that the placement of the questionnaires would be appropriate for the distribution and collection of the questionnaires.

Another bias is that the individuals who completed these questionnaires may not have had a readily available individual, or a clearly identified individual, to assist them if they had questions regarding the completion of the questionnaire. To control for this bias, each of the posted scripts next to the questionnaires instructed the participants to direct questions to the person who was in charge of distributing the questionnaires. Furthermore, the instructions on the top of the questionnaires directed

participants to these same individuals. In addition, each of the posted signs had the researcher's telephone number, in case assistance was needed, and the consent forms attached to each of the questionnaires included the researcher's name and address.

The final bias, and that which posed the most complicated and detrimental to this study, was the collection of the questionnaires distributed by Option 2. Two of the groups that were sent questionnaires utilized Option 2. One group, the Edge, followed the procedure described above. This group received 25 surveys. Out of these 25, 15 of the questionnaires were completed. Three of the questionnaires were incomplete, six blank questionnaires were returned to the researcher, and only one questionnaire was not returned. This overall response rate, then, was 79%. (For the complete calculation, please refer to Chapter 4, Table 4.3). This response rate was higher than the overall response rate.

The other group which was sent questionnaires utilizing Option 2 was the Billy DeFrank Center in San Jose, California. As per the request of the Executive Director of the Billy DeFrank Center, 250 questionnaires were mailed to and received by the Billy DeFrank Center. Those individuals who wished to participate in the study followed the instructions by completing the questionnaires and returning them to the indicated box. Ten completed questionnaires and sixteen blank questionnaires were returned and utilized in the analyses of the response rates. Four of the ten questionnaires were invalid and were not analyzed as survey data based upon the similarity of their writing samples and their responses. The response rate for this particular group was calculated to be 60%.

The remaining 224 questionnaires were believed to be discarded by an office staff member at the Billy DeFrank Center. A detailed description of the distribution, collection, and dissipation of the Billy DeFrank Center questionnaires is located in an endnote at the end of this chapter¹. Due to the belief that the majority of the questionnaires were thrown away without having been available for potential participants, these 224 questionnaires were not included in any of the analyses of the data nor in the response rates.

This problem regarding the distribution, collection, and dissipation of 224 of the questionnaires could have been avoided if the researcher had been able to personally oversee the distribution and collection. However, due to lack of funding, personal supervision was not feasible. Furthermore, by mailing the questionnaires rather than distributing them in person, the researcher was able to achieve complete anonymity and confidentiality of all potential participants. Achieving complete anonymity and confidentiality may be an acceptable tradeoff for the potential benefits of higher response rates in this study. A discussion regarding low response rates can be found in Chapter four.

Questionnaire Distribution -- Option 3

A third option was created as per the request of one of the contact persons. This individual indicated that due to the nature of the gay/lesbian/bisexual support groups that her organization serviced, none of the members of the support groups could participate in completing the questionnaires. (This policy was created to

maintain absolute anonymity and to create a safe environment for the organization's clients such that the clients would not be studied or harassed or bothered by other individuals.) Despite this policy for the clients, the contact person noted that there was no such policy for the facilitators of the groups. Furthermore, the contact person indicated a strong desire to participate in the questionnaire herself.

After a long discussion, this contact person indicated that several of the group facilitators in her organization might also be willing to participate in the study. The researcher and the contact person made a verbal agreement as to when the questionnaires would be distributed to the group, how many questionnaires were desired, and when the questionnaires would be returned to the researcher.

The researcher then mailed a packet of information to this facilitator. This packet included a letter of instruction and thanks, a script, the requested number of questionnaires with attached consent forms, and a self-addressed stamped envelope. The letter describing Option 3 is similar to the letter used for Option 1 (located in Appendix G). The script and the questionnaires utilized in Option 3 were identical to those used in Option 1. One of the groups in this study utilized Option 3.

Biases for the distribution using Option 3

Those individuals who received their questionnaires via Option 3 may have been different from those individuals who received questionnaires via different options. The people who received questionnaires via Option 3 were facilitators for gay or lesbian groups; whereas, many of the other participants were people who

participated in gay or lesbian groups. However, with the following argument, the researcher allowed these facilitators to participate.

The questionnaires were directed toward individuals who are gay or lesbian who participate in social support groups for gays and lesbians. Since facilitators participate, in some manner, in the social support groups, the facilitators who received the questionnaires via Option 3 were allowed to complete the questionnaires.

Furthermore, those facilitators in the groups which received the questionnaires via Option 1 were not instructed not to participate. And since the questionnaires were completely anonymous, the identity of the individuals who completed the questionnaires were not distinguished as participants or as facilitators of the group. So, since both facilitators and participants may have completed the questionnaires received via Option 1, those facilitators who received the questionnaires via Option 3 were allowed to complete the questionnaires.

Questionnaire Distribution -- Option 4

A fourth and final option was created for the distribution of questionnaires to different gay/lesbian and/or bisexual groups. One of the group facilitators told the researcher that there were several other group facilitators in her organization who might be interested in having their groups participate in this research. After discussing with this facilitator the various types of groups which might be willing to participate, the researcher agreed to send a packet of information to each of these facilitators.

The packet of information included a letter of introduction, a copy of the script, and a copy of the questionnaire. The letter of introduction indicated the purpose of the study, and the nature of the facilitator's personal role in participating. A copy of this letter is included in Appendix O.

However, none of the group facilitators that were contacted via this packet of information contacted the researcher. Nor was the researcher able to contact any of these facilitators after several phone messages. As a result, none of the groups in this study utilized Option 4.

Response Rates

In order to determine response rates, all copies of the questionnaire were returned along with the table on the script indicating the number of people who were given a questionnaire. Individuals under the age of 18 were asked not to participate so that parental permission would not be required, thus those individuals who were under the age of 18 could maintain the confidentiality of their participation in the gay/lesbian organization.

The researcher then counted the number of questionnaires that were completed and the number of questionnaires that were blank. The response rate was calculated for each different organization, as well as for the whole study. This rate was calculated as the percent of surveys returned by potential respondents. ($\#$ of completed surveys)/($\#$ sent - $\#$ blank returned). These response rates are located in Chapter 4 in Table 4.3.

Benefits

Questionnaires were utilized for this research for three specific reasons.

Utilizing surveys allowed many individuals to participate in the study since questionnaires were able to be distributed widely, and in great quantities, in a relatively short period of time (Frey, et al., 1991).

In addition, the participants were able to answer the research questions without having to verbally respond to an interviewer. Although survey responses may have eliminated nonverbal communication patterns which can be noted by an interviewer, the presence of an interviewer to obtain the responses might have hindered some potential participants from answering the questions with as much honesty and integrity that they may have answered in a questionnaire. In addition, the presence of the interviewer would lead to a decrease in the amount of anonymity of the participant.

The decrease in anonymity leads to the third, and one of the most important, reasons why a questionnaire was utilized. The questionnaire allowed for greater and more enhanced confidentiality (Frey, et al., 1991). The respondents did not have to reveal their names or any information which might allow the researcher to identify them, thus ideally making more respondents willing to participate in the research study.

Drawbacks

There were three drawbacks to conducting this study: social desirability, practical constraints, and the threat to generalizability. Each of these drawbacks are described below, along with a description of the methods utilized to minimize or eliminate these drawbacks.

Social desirability

Social desirability refers to the tendency of participants to respond to the questions in what they believe to be the most socially acceptable manner. Cortazzi (1993) states,

A fundamental methodological point made by conversational analysts is that the analyst can never have access to all the knowledge for interpretation which participants themselves have (p. 26).

The researcher attempted to control for this limitation in several ways. First, the researcher attempted to encourage responses which were accurate representations of "what really happened" by soliciting participants from social support groups in which the topic of disclosure of one's sexual identity was a socially acceptable topic. If the disclosure of one's sexual identity was a socially acceptable topic in the environment in which the questionnaire was filled out, then hopefully the answers to questions regarding the disclosure were accurate representations of what really happened.

The researcher also attempted to control for this limitation by being straightforward regarding the purpose of this study. By disclosing the purpose of the study

on the consent form, the researcher attempted to elicit a positive attitude toward gay/lesbian issues. This positive attitude, in turn, was utilized in an attempt to gain the confidence of the potential participants so that the participants would feel more comfortable responding to the questions in an accurate manner, even if their answers may be deemed "socially unacceptable" by others.

Practical constraints

The second drawback of this study involved the practical constraints. The practical constraints of this study refer to the fact that it is not possible to randomly assign participants into groups of people who have disclosed their sexual identity. In order to alleviate this constraint, those individuals who participated in this study were gathered from a cluster sample. Utilizing a cluster sample increased the researcher's ability to obtain a larger amount of participants who have disclosed their sexual identity to a close friend. The greater the number of participants, the more generalizable the study will be to other individuals who are participants in gay/lesbian support groups or who "drop in" to gay/lesbian/bisexual organizations.

Generalizability of the results

The third drawback to this study involved the generalizability of the results. The results of this thesis are generalizable to individuals who are representative of the sample used in this study. Thus, since the sample population is from seven different

gay, lesbian and/or bisexual support organizations in Washington and California, the participants may not be representative of the gay/lesbian population as a whole.

However, one of the goals of this study was to help counselors and therapists coach individuals who are gay or lesbian make decisions regarding the disclosure of their sexual identity to their close friends. And those individuals who seek out support regarding their sexual identity are representatives of the sample used in this study. Therefore, one of the goals was achieved even though the results of this study may not be generalizable to individuals who are not participants in gay/lesbian support groups.

Data Preparation

Two key issues make up the data preparation section of this methodology chapter: procedures for translating the data into numerical codes and entering the data into SPSS/PC+. These issues are addressed in this section.

Procedures for translating the data into numerical codes

Each of the returned questionnaires were assigned a code number. Every different group or organization was assigned a separate code number. Then, each questionnaire was assigned two numbers, separated by a dash. The first number was the number affiliated with the appropriate group number. The number following the dash was a number which reflected the rank order in which the questionnaire was

received. For example, the twelfth questionnaire received by the researcher was from group #2. Therefore, this questionnaire was designated the number 02-012.

The data from the instruments did not need to be converted into numeric data, because the responses on the questionnaires were provided with corresponding numbers. These data were entered directly into SPSS/PC+, version 7.0 as their own corresponding, designated number. A code book was created in order to maintain consistency and accuracy in coding the identification numbers of the questionnaires.

The responses to the "other" category of the close-ended questions were reviewed to determine if different participants disclosed similar topics within their answers and to determine the frequency of the responses. By searching for similar topics in the answers, the researcher was attempting to determine if any commonalities existed between the participants' responses.

Responses which were similar in nature were grouped together into categories. Another individual also grouped the responses together in order to verify the similarities of the categories. If any responses appeared in different categories, the other individual and the researcher discussed these discrepancies until an agreement could be made as to which category the response belonged.

Entering the Data into SPSS/PC+

The data were entered into the statistical computer program (SPSS/PC+, version 7.0 for Windows 95). Each questionnaire was entered as a separate data unit, and each response from the questionnaire was entered as its own corresponding

number. The raw data was then verified with the data which had been entered into SPSS/PC+.

Analysis Plan

The responses to the questions were analyzed for frequency counts and were analyzed to determine the measures of central tendency. The Chi-Square test was performed on several of the questions to determine if the response rates to these questions were statistically significant. Cross-tabulations were performed as a manipulation check to determine if the responses to the questions were similar if the participants had Questionnaire #1 or Questionnaire #2. And a Cramer's V test was used to determine if the different circumstances under which close friends learned about the participants' sexual identity were related to the relational outcomes. The results of the analyses and a discussion of the results are located in Chapters 4 and 5, respectively.

Endnote

'The executive director of the Billy DeFrank Center indicated a desire to participate in the study, and asked the researcher to send 250 questionnaires. According to the executive director, the Billy DeFrank Center has an average of 800 to 1200 individuals who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual who frequent the Center on a weekly basis. The executive director also suggested that more questionnaires might be necessary. The executive director believed that Option 2 would be the best method of distribution for such a large number of questionnaires.

The researcher sent the packet of questionnaires with attached consent forms, signs for posting, postage for the completed questionnaires to be returned, and a script to be posted with the signs.

After two weeks, the researcher contacted the executive director to make sure the questionnaires arrived safely and to make sure there were no questions, and no additional questionnaires were needed. At this time, the executive director indicated that the questionnaires had arrived, but they had not yet been put out for distribution.

One week later, the researcher called the executive director and was given the name of an office manager who would be assisting the researcher with the distribution and collection of the questionnaires.

Two weeks after the agreed upon return date for the questionnaires, the researcher still had not received any completed questionnaires from this group. The researcher contacted the office manager at the Billy DeFrank Center. The office manager and the researcher discussed the approximate number of questionnaires which

had been completed at this time. Both the office manager and the researcher agreed that the Billy DeFrank Center should keep the questionnaires for an additional month to encourage more individuals to complete the questionnaires.

At the end of the month, the researcher did not receive any completed questionnaires. The office manager indicated that she thought she had mailed approximately 10 to 12 completed questionnaires to the researcher at the address located on the bottom of the consent form. The office manager then sent the remaining questionnaires that were located in the box. The researcher received sixteen blank questionnaires. At a much later date, the researcher received, by mail, ten completed questionnaires. Four of these questionnaires were considered invalid and were not utilized in the questionnaire (See Chapter 4, Response Rates).

Upon questioning the office manager, the researcher discovered that 224 of the 250 questionnaires were not located in the Billy DeFrank Center, nor were they in the possession of the researcher. The researcher questioned the office manager regarding the placement of the questionnaires, the display of the return date, and other possible causes regarding the presence of only 16 blank questionnaires and ten completed questionnaires. The office manager indicated that the questionnaires had been displayed in an area where individuals who frequent the Center pick up information regarding gay, lesbian, or bisexual issues. The office manager did not know if someone had recycled the questionnaires, thrown the questionnaires away, or if 224 individuals had picked up questionnaires and decided not to return the questionnaires to the Billy DeFrank Center.

Because the questionnaires at the Billy DeFrank Center were placed at an information-distribution location, some individuals may have picked up the questionnaires simply for information purposes. Or, these individuals may have picked up the questionnaires out of curiosity. Had these individuals desired to participate, they would have completed the questionnaires and returned them to the box. Ten participants did return completed questionnaires to the box. Furthermore, if, in fact, the majority of the questionnaires were discarded, these questionnaires were not then available to potential participants.

Two months later, the new executive director of the Billy DeFrank Center telephoned the researcher to discuss the response rate problems. She apologized for the lack of participants. She stated that the office manager with whom the researcher had been contacting was merely a "clean up" person at the Center. She believed that this individual may not have kept a "watchful eye" on the questionnaires. Furthermore, she asserted she believed that the questionnaires had most likely been recycled after a "period of time." According to the new executive director, the Billy DeFrank Center had a practice of periodically recycling or throwing away those materials which appeared to have an expiration date or seemed to have been "hanging around" for "a while."

Since the majority of the questionnaires were believed to have been destroyed prior to the distribution to potential participants, these questionnaires were not included in the calculation of the response rates.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter covers the demographics of the participants, the response rates, the results from various tests for each of the six research questions, and a summary of the findings. Tables are located throughout this chapter to help describe the results.

Demographics of the Participants

The sample of this study consisted of 64 individuals who were gay, lesbian, or bisexual. The demographics of the participants are as follows:

Table 4.1
Demographics of the Participants

Variable		Number	Percent
Age	Mean: 33.91		
Sexual Identity			
	Gay	35	54.7%
	Lesbian	22	34.4%
	Bisexual	4	6.3%
	None of the above	1	1.6%
	Did not respond	2	3.1%
Sex			
	Male	35	54.7%
	Female	23	35.9%
	None of the above	1	4.6%
	Did not respond	5	7.8%

The individual who responded “none of the above” to the sexual identity question was self-identified as a “Woman identified” female. This individual, and the two individuals who did not respond to the sexual identity demographic question, all responded “Yes” to the question which asked if they have a close friend who knows that they are gay or lesbian. Due to their affirmative response to this question, these three individuals were kept in the population.

The individual who did not have a close friend who knew that he/she was gay/lesbian did not answer the demographic questions at the end of the questionnaire, as per the instructions on the questionnaire. The only other individual who did not respond to the demographic questions signed the questionnaire “Donald” and received the questionnaire from a gay men’s rap group.

Two of the four bisexuals identified themselves as male and two bisexuals identified themselves as female. One of the participants who was self-identified as gay did not respond to the gender question, one of the participants who was self-identified as gay was self-identified as a transgender, and two of the participants who identified themselves as lesbian did not respond to the gender question. One of these two lesbians responded “Duh!” All of the remaining participants who identified themselves as gay also identified themselves as male, and all of the remaining participants who were self-identified lesbians also identified themselves as female.

The mean age of the sample was 36.17 years, $SD = 11.78$, and the participants’ ages ranged from 20 to 70 years of age. Thirty-three of the participants completed questionnaire #1, and thirty-one participants completed questionnaire #2.

Sixty-three valid questionnaires were received from seven different organizations, and one valid questionnaire was received from an unidentified organization. This questionnaire was sent directly from the participant, with a San Jose postmark. Four invalid questionnaires were discarded based upon the similarity of their writing samples and their responses. These questionnaires were not counted as part of the final sixty-four valid questionnaires. Table 4.2 displays the names and numbers of completed, valid questionnaires utilized in this study.

Table 4.2
Participating Organizations

Name of Organization	# of Surveys
SCS- Coming Out Group	10
Adult/Child Guidance Ctr	5
Pacific Ctr - Women's Grp	9
The Edge	15
Pacific Ctr - Men's Grp	8
The Lambda Center	10
Unidentified	1
Billy DeFrank Center	6
Total:	64

Response Rates

The response rate for each of the different organizations was calculated in the following manner. The number of completed surveys were divided by the number of surveys sent to a particular organization, minus the number of blank surveys that were returned. $(\# \text{ completed surveys} + \text{Under 18}) / (\# \text{ sent} - \# \text{ blank returned})$ The response

rates varied from 100% to 40%. An overall response rate for this study was calculated in the same manner, using the total number of surveys completed, sent, and returned. The overall response rate was calculated to be 65%. Table 4.3 displays the number of surveys completed and the response rate for each particular organization.

Table 4.3
Response Rates

Name of Organization	Complete	No Close Friend	Invalid	Not Complete	Under 18	Blank	Not Ret'd	# Sent	R RATE
SCS- Coming Out Group	10	1	0	0	0	5	0	15	100%
Adult/Child Guidance Ctr	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	6	100%
Pacific Ctr - Women's Grp	9	0	0	0	1	0	15	25	40%
The Edge	15	0	0	3	0	6	1	25	79%
Pacific Ctr - Men's Grp	8	0	0	0	0	45	2	55	80%
The Lambda Center	10	0	0	0	0	14	11	35	48%
Unidentified	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100%
Billy DeFrank Center	6	0	4	0	0	16	0	26	60%
Total:	64	1	4	3	1	87	29	188	65%

This response rate, although only average for research on heterosexual populations, is actually quite decent for research on populations involving gays and lesbians. According to Harry and DeVall (1978), response rates for research on gays and lesbians is sometimes low when compared to research on heterosexual populations.

The total number of returned and usable questionnaires was 243, constituting a 53 percent response rate. While this response rate is a little low when compared with the response rate of the heterosexual population (in those instances when the respondent mails back the questionnaire), it is quite respectable for research done on male homosexuals. By way of comparison, Weinberg (1970, p.529) had a 30 percent response rate; Siegelman (1972, pp. 11-12), a 49 percent response rate; and Myrick (1974, pp. 81-82), a 61.6 percent response rate (Harry & DeVall, p.25).

Harry (1984) had a particularly low response rate of ten percent. Harry stated that in his study, traditional response rates may not have been possible to calculate given the distribution method of the questionnaires. The distribution method in Harry's 1984 study was similar to that utilized in Option 2 of this study. Harry stated,

While 10 percent of the distributed Chicago questionnaires were returned, it is not possible to calculate a traditional response rate because of the mode of distribution. It is unknown how many questionnaires even got into the hands of potential respondents. Many may have been thrown away by owners or managers of the recipient establishments who may not have wanted them present. Some stacks of questionnaires may have sat for a few days and been thrown away. A number may have been destroyed by gays opposed to surveys (1984, p. 30).

Several other researchers (Berger, R., 1992; Cramer & Roach, 1988; McDonald, 1982; Mercier & Berger, R., 1989; Weinberg, 1970), also had distribution methods similar to that utilized in Option 2 of this study. R. Berger reported a 28.8 percent response rate (p.90), Cramer and Roach reported a 29 percent response rate (p. 82), McDonald reported a 38 percent response rate (p.49), Mercier and R. Berger reported a 61 percent response rate, and Weinberg reported a 30 percent response rate. With regards to Weinberg's low response rate, Weinberg stated, "Although this return is low, considering the nature of questionnaire distribution and of the sample, as well as the length of the questionnaire, the response rate could be considered reasonably high" (p. 529).

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the circumstances under which persons find out their close friends are gay/lesbian?

The participants responded that there were four different circumstances under which their close friends found out about their sexual identities. These four different circumstances are listed in Table 4.4. When referring to friend #1 (a friend with whom the relationship between the participant and the friend became closer or stayed the same), the majority of the participants responded that they disclosed their own sexual identity to these particular friends. Table 4.4 displays the percentages of the various responses.

Table 4.4
Circumstances under which Friend #1 Found Out (Event)

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Did not respond	2	3.1
	I disclosed that I am gay/lesbian	54	84.4
	Someone told Friend #1 w/o my knowledge	2	3.1
	Friend #1 brought it up/asked	3	4.7
	Other	3	4.7
	Total	64	100.0
Total		64	100.0

Two of the individuals who responded to the “other” category had similar disclosure experiences. One individual came out in a radio interview, the other came out in a newspaper article. In both cases, a close friend had heard the radio interview or read the article and later brought up the subject of the participants’ sexual identities to the

participants. The results of a chi-square test were significant, $X^2 = (4, N = 62) = 174.9$, $p < .0001$, indicating that a significant number of participants chose the response “I disclosed” over other choices.

When referring to friend #2 (a friend with whom the relationship between the participant and the friend became more distant or terminated), again, the majority of the participants responded that they disclosed their own sexual identity to these particular friends. Table 4.5 displays the percentages of the various responses.

Table 4.5
Circumstances under which Friend #2 found out (Event)

	Frequency	Percent
Valid I disclosed that I am gay/lesbian	31	72.1
Someone told Friend #2 w/o my knowledge	7	16.3
Friend #2 brought it up/asked	1	2.3
Other	4	9.3
Total	43	100.0
Total	43	100.0

The results of the chi-square test, $X^2 (4, N = 43) = 76.419$, $p < .001$, indicated that again, a significant number of participants responded that they chose the response “I disclosed” over other responses.

Fifteen of the 64 participants responded that they do not have a close friend whose relationship with them became more distant or terminated after the disclosure of their sexual identity. Five additional participants did not respond to this same question. Out of these 20 participants, eleven of them completed questionnaire #1 and nine of them

completed questionnaire #2. It appears that the order of the questions, whether the participants were first asked questions regarding friend #1 or friend #2, did not play a role in determining whether or not the participants responded that they had a friend #2. Table 4.6 displays a cross-tabulation of these results.

Table 4.6
Relationship w/F2 now * Survey Number Crosstabulation

Count		Survey Number		Total
		Survey #1	Survey #2	
Relationship w/F2 now	Did not respond	3	2	5
	Somewhat more distant	8	10	18
	Much more distant	6	5	11
	Terminated	7	6	13
	I didn't have a friendship wh/ became distant	8	7	15
	Other	1	1	2
Total		33	31	64

A chi-square test was performed to determine if the distribution of responses on Questionnaire form #1 varied with the distribution of responses on Questionnaire form #2 with regards to the relational outcome with friend #2. The results of the chi-square test, $X^2(5, N = 64) = .5999, p < .999$, indicated that there was no significant difference in the distribution of responses between the participants using Questionnaire form #1 and those using Questionnaire form #2.

RQ2: Do relationships change when close friends find out?

The participants responded that some relationships do change when close friends find out about the participants' sexual identity. When referring to friend #1 (a friend with whom the relationship between the participant and the friend became closer or stayed the same), 55% of the participants responded that their friendships with friend #1 became much more close or somewhat more close after the disclosure of their sexual identity. Whereas 45% of the participants responded that their friendships with friend #1 stayed about the same. In these types of relationships, then, half of the participants reported a change in the relationship after the disclosure of their sexual identity.

When referring to friend #2 (a friend with whom the relationship between the participant and the friend became more distant or terminated), 67.9% of the participants responded that their friendships became more distant or terminated after the disclosure of their sexual identity. In regards to this type of friendship, over half of the participants reported a change in the relationship after the disclosure of their sexual identity.

RQ3: If the relationship changes, how does it change?

The participants in this study reported five different ways in which their relationships with their friends changed after the disclosure of their sexual identity. The relationships either became much more close, somewhat more close, somewhat more distant, much more distant, or terminated after the disclosure of their sexual identity.

When referring to friend #1, 55% of the participants responded that their relationships with friend #1 became either much more close or somewhat closer after friend #1 learned about their sexual identity. And 45% of the respondents had relationships which stayed the same. Table 4.7 displays the percentages of the various responses.

Table 4.7
Relationship w/ Friend #1 now

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Much more close	16	26.7
	Somewhat closer	17	28.3
	Stayed @ same	27	45.0
	Total	60	100.0
Total		60	100.0

An analysis of a chi-square test indicated that the responses were distributed evenly across the participants: $X^2 (2, N = 60) = 3.700, p < .157$.

When referring to friend #2 (a friend with whom the relationship between the participant and the friend became more distant or terminated), 45.3% of the participants responded that their relationships became somewhat more distant or much more distant. And 20.3% of the participants responded their relationships terminated after friend #2 learned about the participant's sexual identity. 23.4% of the respondents did not have a relationship which became less close or terminated after the disclosure of their sexual identity. Table 4.8 displays the percentages of the various responses.

Table 4.8
Relationship w/Friend #2 now

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Did not respond	5	7.8
Somewhat more distant	18	28.1
Much more distant	11	17.2
Terminated	13	20.3
I didn't have a friendship wh/ became distant	15	23.4
Other	2	3.1
Total	64	100.0
Total	64	100.0

After screening out the fifteen participants who did not have a friendship which became less close or terminated after the disclosure of their sexual identity, and after screening out those participants who did not respond to this question, the percentages changed. Table 4.9 shows a more accurate representation of the percentages of relationships which became much more distant, somewhat more distant, or terminated after the disclosure of the sexual identity.

Table 4.9
Relationship w/Friend #2 now: Filtered

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Somewhat more distant	18	42.9
Much more distant	11	26.2
Terminated	13	31.0
Total	42	100.0
Total	42	100.0

An analysis of a chi-square test indicated that the responses to this question were distributed evenly across the participants: $X^2(2, N = 42) = 1.857, p < .395$.

RQ4: Which events are associated with which relational outcomes?

Events: circumstances under which the close friend learned about the participant's sexual identity.

Relational outcomes: the participant's description of the relationship as much more close, somewhat more close, stayed about the same, somewhat more distant, much more distant or terminated after the disclosure of the participant's sexual identity.

The results of this study indicated that specific events were not associated with specific relational outcomes for friend #1. An analysis of a chi-square test determined that participants did not systematically choose a particular response over other responses: $X^2(6, N = 60) = 7.732, p < .258$. Table 4.10 displays the cross-tabulation frequencies.

Table 4.10

Relationship w/Friend #1 now * How Friend #1 found out Crosstabulation

Count		How Friend #1 found out				Total
		You disclosed	Someone told Friend #1	Friend #1 brought it up/asked	Other	
Rshp w/ friend #1 now	Much more close	14		2		16
	Somewhat closer	15	1	1		17
	Stayed @ same	23	1		3	27
Total		52	2	3	3	60

A Cramer's V was also calculated to determine if the events were correlated to the relational outcomes for friend #1. The results were not statistically significant: $\chi^2(N = 60) = .254, p < .258$.

A chi-square test was also performed to determine if some participants systematically chose a particular response over other responses for friend #2. An analysis of the chi-square test were not statistically significant: $X^2(8, N = 42) = 4.483, p < .811$, indicating that a significant number of participants did not choose a particular response over other choices. Table 4.11 displays the results of the cross-tabulation.

Table 4.11
Relationship w/Friend #2 now * How Friend #2 found out Crosstabulation

Count		How Friend #2 found out				Total
		I disclosed	Someone told F2 w/o my knowledge	F2 brought it up/asked	Other	
Relationship w/F2 now	Somewhat more distant	13	2		2	18
	Much more distant	8	2		1	11
	Terminated	8	3	1	1	13
Total		29	7	1	4	42

A Cramer's V was also calculated to determine if the events were correlated to the relational outcomes for friend #2. The results were not statistically significant: $\chi^2(N = 42) = .177, p < .909$.

RQ5: How satisfied are they with their relational outcomes?

The participants in this study responded that they were moderately satisfied with their relational outcomes with friend #1. When referring to friend #1, the mean response rate was 1.94 on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being very satisfied and 7 being very unsatisfied. Both the median and the mode were 1, $SD = 1.44$. The results from a chi-square test were significant, $X^2(6, N = 62) = 103.29, p < .001$, indicating that the distribution of choices were weighted toward “very satisfied.”

The participants in this study were more satisfied than not with their relational outcomes with friend #2. The mean response rate was 3.36, the median was 4.0, and the mode was 0. The mean, median, and mode changed when participants were filtered out if they did not have this type of friendship, or if they did not respond to this question. The filtered mean was 5.0, the median was 6.0 and the mode was 6, $SD = 1.90$, indicating that the participants were somewhat unsatisfied with the relational outcome with friend #2. The results from a chi-square test were significant, $X^2(6, N = 43) = 18.698, p < .005$, indicating that the distribution of choices was weighted toward “very unsatisfied.”

A Pearson product-moment correlation was performed to determine if there was a relationship between satisfaction with the relational outcome with friend #1 and satisfaction with the relational outcome with friend #2. The results of the correlation indicated a negligible inverse relationship between the two variables:

$r(41, N = 43) = -.197, p < .205$.

RQ6: What are their perceived causes of the relational outcomes?

In response to this question, “why do you believe your relationship with friend #1 turned out or continued the way it did”, participants gave several answers. The three most frequent answers given were: (1) “Because I was honest,” (2) “Because friend #1 has an existing positive attitude toward gays/lesbians,” and (3) “Because I told them.”

The participants were given the option of responding to all items which apply. Many of the participants circled more than one response. Table 4.12 displays the responses, the number of times that particular response was circled, and the overall percentage rate of each particular response.

Table 4.12
Why did the relationship with Friend #1 turn out the way it did?

Why rshp outcome turned out w/ Friend #1	Number	Percentage
I was honest	46	32.4%
F#1 is homophobic	3	2.1%
F#1 is gay/lesbian	10	7.0%
F#1 has a fear of HIV/AIDS	1	0.7%
F#1 found out from me	22	15.5%
F#1 is upset I won't want to date him/her	0	0.0%
I lied	0	0.0%
F#1 has a POSITIVE attitude toward gays/lesbians	34	23.9%
F#1 has a NEGATIVE attitude toward gays/lesbians	5	3.5%
F#1 fears I will want to date him/her	2	1.4%
I waited so long to tell him/her	7	4.9%
F#1 found out from someone else	1	0.7%
Other	11	7.7%
Total Number of Responses	142	

The results of a chi-square test were significant: $X^2(12, N = 142) = 230.239, p < .001$, indicating that the participants' responses were not distributed evenly across the choices.

Three of the participants who responded to the "other" category indicated that they believed their relationship with friend #1 turned out the way it did because their close friend "cared about me and who I am" or "loved me for me." The rest of the participants who responded to the "other" category each had different reasons regarding why they believed their relationships with friend #1 turned out the way they did.

In response to this question, "why do you believe your relationship with friend #2 turned out or continued the way it did", participants gave several answers. The most five frequent answers given were: (1) "Friend #2 is homophobic," (2) "Other," (3) "Because I was honest," (4) "Because friend #1 has an existing negative attitude toward gays/lesbians," and (5) "Because friend #2 fears I will want to date him/her."

Again, the participants were given the option of responding to all items which apply. Many of the participants circled more than one response. Table 4.13 displays the participants' responses when asked why they believe their relationship with friend #2 turned out or continued the way it did.

Table 4.13
Why did the relationship with Friend #2 turn out the way it did?

Why rshp outcome turned out w/ Friend #2	Number	Percentage
I was honest	16	14.2%
F#2 is homophobic	24	21.2%
F#2 is gay/lesbian	3	2.7%
F#2 has a fear of HIV/AIDS	5	4.4%
F#2 found out from me	7	6.2%
F#2 is upset I won't want to date him/her	2	1.8%
I lied	2	1.8%
F#2 has a POSITIVE attitude toward gays/lesbians	4	3.5%
F#2 has a NEGATIVE attitude toward gays/lesbians	15	13.3%
F#2 fears I will want to date him/her	11	9.7%
I waited so long to tell them	3	2.7%
F#2 found out from someone else	4	3.5%
Other	17	15.0%
Total Number of Responses	113	

The results of a chi-square test were significant: $X^2(12, N = 113) = 70.956, p < .001$, indicating that the participants' responses were not distributed evenly across the choices.

Four of the participants who responded to the "other" category indicated that they believed their relationships with friend #2 turned out the way they did because of their close friend's religious beliefs. Two of the participants indicated that their close friends had insecurities about their own sexuality. The rest of the participants who responded "other" each had a different reason for why they believed their relationships turned out the way they did.

When the participants were asked to identify the most important reason they believed their relationships turned out the way they did, the participants identified "Because I was honest" when referring to friend #1. When the participants identified the

number one reason they believed their relationships with friend #2 turned out the way they did, the participants identified the response “Other.” Table 4.14 displays a frequency count of the number of times a particular response was marked as the most important reason the participant believed their relationship with friend #1 or friend #2 turned out or continued the way it did.

Table 4.14
What is the most important reason for the relational outcome?
Friend #1 vs. Friend #2

Most important reason for rshp outcome	Friend #1	Friend #2
I was honest	25	3
Friend has a POSITIVE attitude toward gays	11	0
Friend is gay/lesbian	6	2
Other	7	13
Friend found out from me	2	0
Friend is homophobic	1	12
Friend has a NEGATIVE attitude toward gays	1	4
I lied	0	2
Friend is upset I won't want to date them	0	1
Friend fears I will want to date them	0	1

The responses to the “other” category are described after Table 4.11 and 4.12. Analyses of chi-square tests indicated that for ten of the possible thirteen responses, the participants’ responses did not vary significantly between friend #1 and friend #2.

However, three of these responses differed significantly for friend #1 and friend #2.

(A) The response “Because I was honest” was selected more times for friend #1 than for friend #2 as the most important reason the participants believed their relationships turned out the way they did: $X^2(1, N = 28) = 17.286, p < .001$. (B) The response “Friend has a

positive attitude toward gays/lesbians” was selected eleven times for friend #1 and was not selected for friend #2 as the most important reason the participants believed their relationships turned out the way they did: $X^2(1, N = 11) = 11.000, p < .001$. (C) The response “Friend is homophobic” was selected more times for friend #2 than for friend #1 as the most important reason the participants believed their relationships with their close friends turned out the way they did: $X^2(1, N = 13) = 9.308, p < .002$.

Summary of the Findings

For this sample of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, a statistically significant percentage of individuals disclosed their sexual identity to their friends. This statistical significance was maintained for both the friendships which became more close after the disclosure, as well as for the friendships which became more distant.

The majority of the participants did report a change in their relationships with their close friends, after the disclosure of their sexual identity. This change ranged from becoming much more close to terminating.

No particular events were associated with particular relational outcomes. In other words, the way the close friend found out about the participants’ sexual identity was not statistically significantly related to whether the relationship became closer, more distant, or stayed the same.

The participants reported that they were quite satisfied with the way the relationships turned out with friend #1 (1.94 on a scale of 1 to 7). However, the

participants reported that they were somewhat unsatisfied (5.00 on a scale of 1 to 7) when referring to the way the relationship turned out with friend #2.

Several perceived causes were identified by the participants regarding why the participants believed their relationships turned out the way they did. When referring to friend #1, a large number of participants reported that they believed their relationships turned out the way they did because they were honest regarding their sexual identity. When referring to friend #2, many of the participants responded that they believed their relationships turned out the way they did because their friends were homophobic.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, SUBSIDIARY ANALYSES, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to analyze the change in gay/lesbian friendships after the disclosure of their sexual identity. Six specific areas were examined: (1) what are the circumstances under which persons find out their close friends are gay/lesbian (hereafter referred to as the event), (2) do relationships change when close friends find out about the participants' sexual identity, (3) if the relationship changes, how does it change (hereafter referred to as the relational outcome), (4) which events are associated with which relational outcomes, (5) how satisfied are the gays/lesbians with their relational outcomes, and (6), what are the gays'/lesbians' perceived causes of their relational outcomes.

A sample of 64 individuals who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual completed questionnaires. The questionnaires included questions regarding the participants' relationships with two different close friends: (1) Friend #1 was a close friend whose relationship with the participant stayed the same or became more close after the disclosure of the participants' sexual identity, and (2) Friend #2 was a close friend whose relationship with the participant became more distant or terminated after the disclosure of the participants' sexual identity.

Discussion of Results

RQ1: What are the circumstances under which persons find out their close friends are gay/lesbian?

The results of this study indicated that the vast majority of the participants disclosed their sexual identity to their close friends. They did not ask someone else to tell friend #1 or friend #2 about their sexual identity. Nor did the participants wait until friend #1 or friend #2 brought it up or asked. Nor did they ask someone else to disclose their sexual identity for them.

Being the “discloser” may have enabled the participants to reduce their uncertainty regarding the situation. If the participants themselves disclosed their sexual identity, these individuals may have been able to (1) prepare what to say to their friends, (2) decide where the disclosure may take place, and (3) choose when to disclose. Being able to choose what to say as well as where and when to say it, allows the individuals to use their past knowledge of their friend in making predictions regarding how their friend might behave in certain situations (Berger, C. & Calabrese, 1975). They may also look at the relational factors to decide if or when a disclosure might be appropriate (Altman, 1973). These individuals are using their knowledge of their relationships with others to help them reduce their uncertainties regarding how the others' might respond to their gay or lesbian identities.

If the participants ask someone else to disclose their sexual identity to their close friend, the participants' uncertainty might increase. The participants do not know (1) what the discloser will say, (2) how this person will present the information, (3) whether

or not the discloser's personal biases will come out during the disclosure, (4) where the disclosure will take place, (5) when the disclosure will take place, or (6) whether or not the discloser will even disclose the information. All of these situational factors are chosen by the discloser, rather than by the individuals who want the information disclosed. The more situational factors for which there is no control, the greater the uncertainty in the relational outcome. In this study, none of the participants reported that they asked someone else to tell their close friends that they were gay/lesbian.

The participants face further uncertainty regarding their relational outcomes by not being the discloser of their sexual identity. Close friends may feel a sense of betrayal if they find out from someone other than the individual who is gay or lesbian (Cain, 1991). These friends may feel that the fact that the individuals did not disclose their sexual identity was more upsetting than the fact that the individuals were gay/lesbian.

The participants' uncertainty is also increased if the participants wait until their close friends bring it up/ask. The participants may be uncertain as to where or when their sexual identity will be brought up. Furthermore, the participants may not be prepared when their close friends bring it up/ask. They may not be prepared for the emotional confrontation that may result from the disclosure. Nor may the participants' have decided what to tell their close friends when they bring it up/ask. By being the discloser, the participants can examine the relational factors and choose an appropriate place or time for the disclosure (Altman, 1973). These individuals may also have more opportunity to prepare what they are going to say.

Why did you disclose that you were gay/lesbian?

When the participants were asked “why did you disclose your sexual identity to your friends,” the three most frequent answers given were identical for friend #1 and friend #2: (1) “So I don’t need to hide who I am,” (2) “Because I wanted to trust my close friend with the knowledge that I am gay/lesbian,” and (3) “So we can talk about my sexual identity freely.” These responses support the research that individuals disclose their sexual identities so they can “be themselves” around those people who are aware of their sexual identities (Berger, R., 1990, 1992; Martin & Hetrick, 1988; Mercier & Berger, R., 1989). These results may also support Cain’s (1991) idea that “disclosure may also relate to their ability to select friends who are supportive and drop those unlikely to accept the revelation...”(p. 349).

The response “Because I wanted to trust my close friend with the knowledge that I am gay/lesbian” also supports the Social Exchange Theory. The Social Exchange Theory posits individuals disclose to reach more intimate levels in the relationship (Taylor & Altman, 1984). This response also supports Ben-Ari’s (1995) claim that self-disclosure plays a role in the development and maintenance of intimacy. Furthermore, this response also supports Cain’s (1991) research that persons report “closeness” as a main reason to tell their friends that they are gay or lesbian.

Why did you ask someone else to tell your friend you are gay/lesbian?

Not one participant asked someone else to tell their friend that he/she is gay/lesbian. This result may indicate that the increase in uncertainty by adding another uncertainty context is too high for the participants. As discussed above, having someone else disclose one's sexual identity increases the uncertainty contexts for the participants. Because none of the participants asked someone to tell their friends that they are gay/lesbian, it would appear that the participants seemed to desire having fewer uncertainty contexts by avoiding having someone else be the discloser.

RQ2: Do relationships change when close friends find out?

More than half of the participants reported that their relationships with friend #1 changed after the disclosure of their sexual identity. One third of the participants reported that they did not have a friend #2. Out of the remaining participants who did have a friend #2, a little more than two thirds of the participants reported that their relationships with friend #2 changed after the disclosure of their sexual identity, and one third of the participants reported that their relationships with friend #2 terminated after the disclosure.

It is not surprising that these relationships changed. The instructions set the participants up for a change in their relationships with friend #1 and friend #2 by asking them to pick a friend that became closer or more distant after the friend learned about the participants' sexual identity. As described in Chapter 3, the instructions guided the participants' choices in order to assure that the participants would discuss both types of

friendships. The participants had the option of choosing “the relationship stayed the same” or “I did not have a relationship which became more close [or more distant] after the disclosure of my sexual identity.”

RQ 3: If the relationship changes, how does it change?

More than half of the participants reported that their relationships with friend #1 became much more close or somewhat closer after the disclosure of their sexual identity. And less than half of the participants reported that their relationships with friend #1 stayed the same after the disclosure of their sexual identity. These results support McCornack and Levine’s (1990a) theory that those relationships which become closer or stay the same may have been at an intimate level where these types of self-disclosures were expected.

It is surprising that any of the participants reported that their relationships remained the same. It would seem that the disclosure of one’s sexual identity would necessarily change the relationship. Now that the friend knows about the sexual identity, the two friends may now discuss issues relating to the one friend’s sexual identity. Furthermore, new people may now enter the social sphere of that friendship. For example, the individual who is gay or lesbian may introduce his or her partner into the friendship.

When referring to friend #2, about two-thirds of the participants reported their friendships with friend #2 became somewhat more distant or much more distant after the disclosure of their sexual identity. One third of the participants reported their friendships terminated. These results might be explained by McCornack and Levine’s (1990a) theory

that these relationships were not at an intimate level where this type of disclosure was expected. These results might also be explained by Altman's (1973) research that the relational factors involved might have made the acceptance of the disclosure difficult.

When referring to friend #2, 28.3% of the participants responded that they did not have a friendship which became less close or terminated. These results may mean that the participants had only friendships which became closer or stayed the same. But they may also mean that the participants could not think of a relationship in which the relationship became more distant or terminated. Or, perhaps these participants did not wish to discuss their relationships which became more distant or terminated. These results do not necessarily mean that the friendships that these participants had all resulted in relationships which were much more close or stayed the same.

RQ4: Which events are associated with which relational outcomes?

The results of the study indicated that specific events were not related to particular relational outcomes. These results may be explained by the significantly high percentage of participants who reported that they were the persons who disclosed their sexual identity to both friend #1 and friend #2. The event was statistically significant, but the relational outcome was not. In other words, whether the relationship became closer, stayed the same, or became more distant varied. But the way the friends found out the participants were gay or lesbian remained almost constant.

The discussion of RQ1 above explains some reasons behind the participants' desires to be the discloser of the sexual identity. And the discussion regarding why

relational outcomes may be varied is discussed in RQ2 and RQ3. But the fact that the events and the relational outcomes are not related is quite interesting.

Despite the manner in which the friends learned about the participants' sexual identity, the relational outcomes still varied. In other words, it didn't seem to matter whether (1) the participants told their close friends that they were gay, lesbian or bisexual (2) their friends brought it up/asked, or (3) someone told their friends without their knowledge or permission. In all three cases, the relational outcomes varied.

This result may prove to be helpful for those individuals who are contemplating disclosing their sexual identity with their friends. According to the results of this study, these individuals can choose whichever manner they feel most comfortable for the disclosure of their sexual identity; for the relational outcome may be determined by (1) the close friend, (2) the gay/lesbian individual, (3) the stage of the relationship, or (4) some other factor not addressed in this study, rather than by the method in which that close friend finds out.

This result also may be deemed frustrating for some individuals. For those individuals who were searching for an easy way to "guarantee" a closer relationship, or a relationship which remained the same, these results do not support a simple method of disclosure which guarantees a certain response. Individuals are individualistic, and their responses to every situation vary upon different circumstances for different situations.

RQ5: How satisfied are the participants with the relational outcomes?

The results of this study indicated that the participants were quite satisfied with their relational outcomes with friend #1. The participants reported they were somewhat unsatisfied with their relational outcomes with friend #2.

It is not surprising that those participants whose relationships became closer or stayed the same were satisfied with their relational outcomes. These individuals faced uncertainty regarding their relational outcomes prior to the disclosure of their sexual identity. Yet after the disclosure, their relationships stayed the same or became more close. These individuals can now continue their relationships with their friends without the need to “hide who they are.” Furthermore, now these individuals can “talk about their sexual identity freely.” In fact, when the participants were asked why they disclosed their sexual identity to their friends, they reported these two reasons, and the reason that they wanted to “trust their friend with the knowledge that they are gay/lesbian.” By disclosing their sexual identity, these participants moved their relationships to a more intimate level (Taylor & Altman, 1984). And they reported a high level of satisfaction with their relational outcomes.

Several of the participants who had relationships which became more distant or terminated reported being somewhat unsatisfied with their relational outcomes. Their dissatisfaction may be explained by their desire for a relationship which stayed the same or became more close after the disclosure of their sexual identity. As described above, even those participants who disclosed their sexual identity to friend #2 disclosed so that they (1) “don’t need to hide who they are,” (2) “trust their friend with the knowledge that they are

gay/lesbian,” and (3) “talk about their sexual identity freely.” Those participants in relationships which became more distant or terminated after the disclosure of their sexual identity, may not have been able to achieve these goals after the disclosure. Therefore, they may be unsatisfied with their relational outcomes.

These results might also be explained by C. Berger and Calabrese (1975). The individuals may not have made accurate predictions about their partner’s future behaviors. So, when their relationships with their friends became more distant or terminated, these individuals were not satisfied with their relational outcomes.

Some of the participants reported being satisfied with their relational outcomes despite the fact that their relationships became more distant or terminated after their disclosure. Their satisfaction might stem from the fact that these individuals may not wish to remain friends with people who are “homophobic” or who have religious, or other, beliefs which do not tolerate associations with individuals who are gay or lesbian. For these individuals, a termination or a distancing of the friendship may be satisfying.

RQ 6: What are the perceived causes of the relational outcomes?

When the participants were asked “why do you believe your relationship with friend #1 turned out or continued this way,” the participants responded that they believed their relationships with friend #1 turned out this way (1) because they were honest, (2) because their close friends had an existing positive attitude toward gays/lesbians, and (3) because they told their friends. These responses support Cain’s (1991) research, which

posits that the manner in which close friends learn about their friends' sexual identity will necessarily have an affect on the relational outcome.

In two of the three responses, the participants attributed their successful relational outcomes to internal attributes: "Because I was honest," and "Because I told friend #1." When referring to friend #1, their relationships became more close or they stayed the same. So, these individuals are attributing their closer relationships to their own internal dispositional factors. This self-attribution supports the self-serving bias of the Attribution Theory (Baumgardner, Heppner, & Arkin, 1986; Heider, 1958).

In response to this question, "why do you believe your relationship with friend #2 turned out or continued the way it did", participants gave several answers. The most five frequent answers given were: (1) "Friend #2 is homophobic," (2) "Other," (3) "Because I was honest," (4) "Because friend #1 has an existing negative attitude toward gays/lesbians," and (5) "Because friend #2 fears I will want to date him/her." These responses do not support Cain's research (1991) which posits that the manner in which persons find out about their friends sexual identity necessarily has an affect on the relationship. In this case even though friend #2 found out about the participant's sexual identity from the participant (rather than from another source), the relationship still became more distant or terminated.

In this case, the relationship with friend #2 became more distant or terminated. And, in three of these five responses, the participants attributed the more distant relational outcomes to their friends' characteristics (external factors). By attributing their more

distant relationships to others' external characteristics, these individuals are supporting the Attribution Theory (Baumgardner, Heppner, & Arkin, 1986; Heider, 1958).

Subsidiary Analyses

Sexual Identity

Sexual Identity and the Event

When referring to friend #1, the majority of the participants responded that they disclosed their own sexual identity to these particular friends. Participants reported this response significantly more often than other responses in both types of friendships.

When the frequency count was filtered, the results indicated that the events did not vary between the gay participants and the lesbian participants. The responses from the bisexuals were not compared to the gay and lesbian groups due to the small sample size for bisexual participants ($N = 4$). The majority of the gay participants and the majority of the lesbian participants responded that they disclosed their own sexual identity to friend #1. An analysis of the chi-square test performed on this data was not significant: $X^2(4, N = 57) = 3.553, p < .470$, indicating that the responses did not vary significantly between the gay participants and the lesbian participants.

With friend #2, the results were similar. The events did not vary between the gay participants and the lesbian participants. In both the gay and the lesbian groups, the majority of the participants responded that they disclosed their own sexual identity to

friend #2. An analysis of chi-square test indicated that again, the gay participants and the lesbian participants did not respond significantly differently: $X^2(3, N = 41) = 2.267$, $p < .519$.

Sexual identity and the Relational Outcomes

The relational outcomes with friend #1 did not vary significantly with the participants' sexual identity. The results of the analysis indicated that 60% of the gay participants had relationships which became somewhat closer or much more close, whereas 50% of the lesbian participants answered the same way. None of the bisexual participants had relationships which became somewhat closer or much more close. 40% of the gay participants, 50% of the lesbian participants, and 75% of the bisexual participants had relationships with friend #1 which remained the same. Table 5.1 displays the results of the cross-tabulation.

Table 5.1
Relationship w/Friend #1 now * Sexual Identity
Crosstabulation

Count		Sexual Identity		Total
		Gay	Lesbian	
Rshp w/ friend #1 now	Much more close	9	6	15
	Somewhat closer	12	4	16
	Stayed @ same	14	10	24
Total		35	20	55

A chi-square test was performed to determine if these results were statistically significant. Again, the bisexual participants were not included in this analysis due to the small group size for the bisexual participants ($N = 4$). An analysis of the results found that the distribution of choices did not vary significantly between the gay and lesbian participants: $X^2(2, N = 55) = 1.270, p < .530$.

The relational outcome with friend #2 did not vary significantly with the participants' sexual identity. An analysis of the results indicated that 28.3% of the participants responded that they did not have a friendship which became less close or terminated. Of those participants who reported having a friend #2, 69% of the gay participants had relationships which became somewhat more distant or much more distant, whereas 73% of the lesbian participants answered the same way. None of the bisexual participants had relationships which became somewhat more distant or much more distant. 31% of the gay participants and 27% of the lesbian participants had relationships which terminated. Only one bisexual participant reported having a friend #2, and this friendship terminated after the disclosure of the sexual identity. Table 5.2 displays the results for the cross-tabulation.

Table 5.2
Relationship w/Friend #2 now * Sexual Identity
Crosstabulation

Count		Sexual Identity		Total
		Gay	Lesbian	
Relationship w/F2 now	Somewhat more distant	13	5	18
	Much more distant	5	6	11
	Terminated	8	4	12
Total		26	15	41

An analysis of the results indicated that the responses were distributed evenly:

$$X^2(2, N = 41) = 2.186, p < .335.$$

Sexual Identity and Satisfaction

The results from a chi-square test indicated that the participants' satisfaction with their relational outcomes with friend #1 did not vary significantly between the gay participants and the lesbian participants: $X^2(5, N = 57) = 6.569, p < .255$. In addition, the participants' satisfaction with their relational outcomes with friend #2 did not vary significantly between the gay participants and the lesbian participants:

$$X^2(7, N = 57) = 6.165, p < .521.$$

Discussion regarding Sexual Identity

Several chi-square tests were performed to determine if the results for specific variables varied for the participants who were gay and the participants who were lesbian. An analysis of these results indicated that: (1) the circumstances under which persons find

out that their friends are gay or lesbian did not vary between gays and lesbians with regard to friend #1 or for friend #2, (2) the relational outcomes for friend #1 or for friend #2 did not vary significantly between gays and lesbians, and (3) the gay and lesbian participants did not report significantly different levels of satisfaction with their relational outcomes with friend #1 or with friend #2.

The similarity of responses between the gay participants and the lesbian participants might indicate that both the gay and lesbian participants have similar reasons to disclose their sexual identity to their friends. Furthermore, the participants, whether they are gay, lesbian or bisexual, face similar uncertainty contexts. Each of the participants faced the same rewards of closer relationships and the same costs of relationships which become more distant or terminate after the disclosure of their sexual identity. So, it is not surprising then that gay participants and lesbian participants responded similarly to questions regarding their events, relational outcomes, and relationship satisfaction.

Questionnaire Form

Questionnaire Form and the Event

The results of a demographic check indicated participants with different questionnaire forms (whether the participants received Questionnaire form #1 or Questionnaire form #2) did not respond differently regarding how friend #1 found out about the participants' sexual identity. A cross-tabulation of the frequencies was

performed. An analysis of a chi-square test performed on the cross-tabulation indicated that the distribution of responses on Questionnaire form #1 and Questionnaire form #2 was not statistically significant: $X^2(4, N = 64) = 2.681, p < .613$.

The results of a second demographic check indicated the participants who had different questionnaire forms (whether the participants received Questionnaire form #1 or Questionnaire form #2) did not have respond differently with regard to how friend #2 found out about their sexual identity. An analysis of a chi-square test performed from a cross-tabulation indicated that the distribution of responses on Questionnaire form #1 and Questionnaire form #2 were not statistically significant: $X^2(4, N = 64) = 5.238, p < .264$.

Questionnaire Form and Relational Outcomes

The results of a demographic check, determined that the participants who had different questionnaire forms (whether the participants received Questionnaire form #1 or Questionnaire form #2) did not have different answers with regard to the relational outcome with friend #1 or with friend #2. The results from a chi-square test indicated that the responses did not vary significantly on Questionnaire form #1 and Questionnaire form #2. Friend #1: $X^2(4, N = 64) = 4.065, p < .397$. Friend #2: $X^2(5, N = 64) = 0.595, p < .988$.

Questionnaire Form and Importance of Relationship

A t-test was performed to determine if participants' rank of relationship importance varied with the questionnaire form. The results of the t-test were not significant for both friend #1 and friend #2. Friend #1: $t(62, N = 64) = .711, p < .480$, and Friend #2: $t(62, N = 64) = 1.125, p < .265$. These results indicated that the participants' rank of relationship importance did not vary with the questionnaire form.

Questionnaire Form and Satisfaction

A t-test was performed to determine if participants' rating of satisfaction with the relational outcome varied with the questionnaire form. The results of the t-test were not significant for friend #1 or for friend #2. Friend #1: $t(62, N = 64) = -.492, p < .625$, and Friend #2: $t(62, N = 64) = -.692, p < .492$. These results indicated the participants' rating of relational outcome satisfaction did not vary with the questionnaire form.

Discussion regarding Questionnaire Form

Chi-square tests and t-tests were performed on the participants' questionnaire form and several different variables. The results of these tests indicated that the participants' responses did not vary if they utilized questionnaire form #1 or questionnaire form #2: (1) the relational outcomes for friend #1 or for friend #2 did not vary significantly for participants using different questionnaire forms, (2) the circumstances under which persons find out that their friends are gay or lesbian did not vary with the participants'

questionnaire form, (3) the participants' rank of relationship importance did not vary with the participants' questionnaire form, and (4) the participants' reported levels of satisfaction with their relational outcomes did not vary with the participants' questionnaire form. Because the participants' responses did not vary significantly between questionnaire #1 and questionnaire #2, question order bias was avoided.

Age

Age and the Event

The way in which friend #1 found out about the participants' sexual identity did not vary with the participants' age group. The participants were grouped by decade, for a total of six age groups. The results of a chi-square test were not statistically significant: $X^2(18, N = 62) = 10.362, p < .919$.

Nor did the way in which friend #2 found out about the participants' sexual identity vary with the participants' age group. An analysis of the results indicated no statistical significance: $X^2(12, N = 43) = 14.066, p < .296$.

Age of the participants and Relational Outcomes

The participants who had different ages did not respond differently with regard to their relational outcomes with friend #1. An analysis of the results indicated that the relational outcomes for friend #1 or friend #2 did not vary with the participants' age

group. Friend #1: $X^2(12, N = 60) = 11.176, p < .514$. Friend #2: $X^2(8, N = 42) = 8.112, p < .423$.

Age and Satisfaction

The participants' satisfaction with their relational outcomes with friend #1 did not vary significantly with the age of the participant: $X^2(25, N = 59) = 24.202, p < .502$. In addition, the results from a chi-square test indicated that the participants' satisfaction with their relational outcome with friend #2 did not vary significantly with the participants' age: $X^2(24, N = 43) = 21.946, p < .583$.

Discussion regarding Age

Chi-square tests were performed on the age of the participants and several different variables. The results of these tests indicated that the participants' responses did not vary despite the participants' age: (1) the relational outcomes for friend #1 or for friend #2 did not vary significantly for participants of different ages, (2) the circumstances under which persons find out that their friends are gay or lesbian did not vary with the age of the participants, and (3) the participants' reported levels of satisfaction with their relational outcomes did not vary with the participants' age.

The results of this study suggest that participants with different ages face similar reasons to disclose their sexual identity to their friends. Furthermore, the results of this study suggest that participants of different ages face similar uncertainty contexts. Each of

the participants faced the same rewards of closer relationships and the same costs of relationships which become more distant or terminate after the disclosure of their sexual identity. So, it is not surprising then that participants of different ages responded similarly to questions regarding their events, relational outcomes, and relationship satisfaction.

Sex of Friend #1 and Friend #2

The participants were asked “Is friend #1 the same sex or the opposite sex as you?” The majority of the participants responded that their friend #1 was the same sex as that of the participant. The results of a chi-square test were statistically significant: $X^2(1, N = 62) = 10.903, p < .001$. Table 5.3 displays the frequencies.

Table 5.3
Friend #1 sex

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Same sex	44	71.0
	Opposite sex	18	29.0
	Total	62	100.0
Total		62	100.0

The participants were also asked “Is friend #2 the same sex or the opposite sex as you?” Again, the majority of the participants responded that their friend #2 was the same sex as that of the participant. Again, the results of a chi-square test were statistically significant: $X^2(1, N = 44) = 13.091, p < .0001$. Table 5.4 displays the frequencies.

Table 5.4
Friend #2 sex

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Same sex	34	77.3
	Opposite sex	10	22.7
	Total	44	100.0
Total		44	100.0

Discussion of Sex of Friend #1 and Friend #2

The sex of the friend refers to whether friend #1 or friend #2 was the same sex or the opposite sex of that of the participant. When the participants picked a close friend for friend #1, the majority of the participants picked a close friend who was the same sex as they were. A majority of the participants also picked a close friend for friend #2 who was the same sex as they were.

This result may mean that the participants were more comfortable disclosing their sexual identity with someone of the same sex. Or, perhaps the participants were disclosing to someone of the same sex with whom they were romantically interested, in an attempt to pursue a relationship with this individual. Or, this result may mean that the participants did not disclose their sexual identity to the individuals of the opposite sex as frequently. These issues should be addressed in future research.

The sex of the friend and the event

The distribution of responses to the event did not vary significantly with the sex of the friend #1 (same sex or opposite sex of the participant). Some of the participants

reported that their same sex friends brought up the issue of their sexual identity, whereas none of their opposite sex friends brought it up/asked. And some participants reported that another person disclosed their sexual identity to their opposite sex friends. However, none of the participants reported that another person disclosed their sexual identity to their same sex friends. The results from a chi-square test approached statistical significance: $X^2(3, N = 62) = 7.353, p < .061$. Table 5.5 displays the results of this cross-tabulation.

Table 5.5
How Friend #1 found out * Friend #1 sex Crosstabulation

Count		Friend #1 sex		Total
		Same sex	Opposite sex	
how F1 found out	You disclosed	38	16	54
	Someone told Friend #1		2	2
	Friend #1 brought it up/asked	3		3
	Other	3		3
Total		44	18	62

However, the distribution of responses to the event did vary significantly with the sex of the friend #2 (same sex or opposite sex of the participant). The results indicated that significantly more people responded that they disclosed their sexual identity to same sex friends than to opposite sex friends: $X^2(3, N = 43) = 8.272, p < .041$. The cross-tabulation is displayed in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6
How Friend #2 found out * Friend #2 sex Crosstabulation

Count		Friend #2 sex		Total
		Same sex	Opposite sex	
How F2 found out	I disclosed that I am gay/lesbian	27	4	31
	Someone told Friend #2 w/o my knowledge	3	4	7
	Friend #2 brought it up/asked	1		1
	Other	2	2	4
Total		33	10	43

Discussion of Sex of Friend #1 and Friend #2 and the Event

An analysis of a chi-square test indicated that how the close friend found out about the participants' sexual identity was related significantly to the sex of friend #1 and friend #2. In other words, whether the friend was the same sex or the opposite sex of the participant was related to how the friend found out that the participant was gay/lesbian. For example, three of the participants reported that friend #1 brought up their sexual identity. These three friends were all the same sex of the participant. None of the participants reported that their opposite sex friends brought up their sexual identity.

As discussed in the previous section, these results may indicate that participants feel more comfortable disclosing their sexual identity to friends of the same sex. Or, these results may indicate that friends who are the same sex of the participant may feel more comfortable than friends of the opposite sex bringing up the issue of the participants' sexual identity.

However, this correlation may be attributed to the small sample size of opposite sex friends (N = 10). Because there was a significantly large group of participants who

disclosed their sexual identity to same sex friendships (71%) rather than opposite sex friendships (29%), the statistical significance may be attributed to the small sample size, rather than a variance in the sex of the friends. For the future, researchers may wish to attempt to obtain similar group sizes of same sex friendships and opposite sex friendships.

The sex of the friend and Relational Outcomes

The distribution of responses regarding the relational outcome varied significantly with the sex of the friend #1 (same sex or opposite sex of the participant): $X^2(4, N = 62) = 9.221, p < .056$. In this study, participants reported closer friendships with opposite sex friends. The participants also reported that most of their relationships with friends of the same sex stayed the same. Table 5.7 displays this cross-tabulation.

Table 5.7

Relationship w/ Friend #1 now * Friend #1 sex Crosstabulation

Count		Friend #1 sex		Total
		Same sex	Opposite sex	
Rshp w/ friend #1 now	Did not respond	1		1
	Much more close	7	9	16
	Somewhat closer	12	5	17
	Stayed @ same	23	4	27
	No close friend who is closer now	1		1
Total		44	18	62

However, the distribution of responses regarding the relational outcome did not vary significantly with the sex of the friend #2 (same sex or opposite sex of the participant):

$X^2(2, N = 42) = 4.536, p < .104.$

Discussion of Sex of Friend #1 and Friend #2 and the Relational Outcomes

The sex of the friend #1 was related significantly to the relational outcome. In other words, same sex friendships stayed the same, whereas opposite sex friendships became more close. These results may be explained by the participants' reporting of why they believed their relationships turned out the way they did. Some participants reported that their close friends had a fear that the participants would want to date them. Perhaps the relationships with friends of the same sex did not become as close as relationships of the opposite sex because of this fear.

On the other hand, relationships with friends of the opposite sex may have become more close because this fear does not exist. If a person discloses that s/he is gay, then someone of the opposite sex no longer would have a justified fear that the gay/lesbian individual would want to date this person. However, this correlation also may be attributed to the small sample size of opposite sex friendships that were reported, as described above.

The sex of the friend #2 was not related significantly to the relational outcome. In these results, the participants reported a more even distribution of the various relational outcomes. For example, for those participants who had same sex friendships, about one third of the participants reported that their friendships with friend #2 became somewhat

more distant. One third of the participants reported that their relationships with friend #2 became much more distant. And, about one third of the participants reported that their friendships with friend #2 terminated. For the opposite sex friendships, two thirds of the friendships with friend #2 became somewhat more distant, and one third of the relationships with friend #2 terminated. The more even distribution of relational outcomes might have explained the lack of statistical significance.

Sex of the friend and Satisfaction

The results from a chi-square analysis indicated that the participants' satisfaction with the relational outcomes did not vary significantly with the sex of friend #1: $X^2(5, N = 62) = 5.811, p < .325$. In addition, the results from a chi-square test indicated that the participants' satisfaction did not vary significantly with the sex of friend #2: $X^2(7, N = 44) = 8.977, p < .254$.

The Event and Satisfaction

The results from a chi-square test indicated that a significant percentage of the participants who were very satisfied with their relational outcomes also disclosed their sexual identity to friend #1: $X^2(15, N = 62) = 48.519, p < .0001$. Table 5.8 displays the cross-tabulation.

Table 5.8

**How satisfied are you w/F1 friendship * How Friend #1 found out
Crosstabulation**

Count		Are you satisfied w/friendship F1?					Total	
		1	2	3	4	5		7
how F1 found out	You disclosed	33	10	4	6		1	54
	Someone told Friend #1				1	1		2
	Friend #1 brought it up/asked	1	2					3
	Other	1	1				1	3
Total		35	13	4	7	1	2	62

However, an analysis of the results indicated that when referring to friend #2, the participants' reported levels of satisfaction with their relational outcomes were distributed evenly across the choices, even when the majority of the participants reported similar events: $X^2(18, N = 43) = 10.980, p < .895$. Table 5.9 displays the results of the cross-tabulation.

Table 5.9

How satisfied are you w/ F2 friendship * How Friend #2 found out Crosstabulation

Count		How satisfied are you w/ F2 friendship						Total	
		1	2	3	4	5	6		7
How F2 found out	I disclosed that I am gay/lesbian	3	2	2	3	6	9	6	31
	Someone told Friend #2 w/o my knowledge	1	1			1	1	3	7
	Friend #2 brought it up/asked						1		1
	Other					1	3		4
Total		4	3	2	3	8	14	9	43

Discussion regarding Satisfaction

Participants reported similar levels of satisfaction with their relational outcomes with same sex friends and with opposite sex close friends. These results suggest that individuals' satisfaction with their relational outcomes vary with variables other than the sex of the friend. Some of these variables are described above under research question five.

The results regarding satisfaction and the event were quite interesting. With friend #1, a significant percentage of participants who disclosed their sexual identity to their friends responded that they were very satisfied with their relational outcomes. However, with friend #2, even though a significant number of people responded that they disclosed their sexual identity to their friends, their reported levels of satisfaction were equally distributed across the choices. These results indicated that participants do not necessarily report similar levels of satisfaction with their relational outcomes when they report similar events. So, their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their relational outcomes might vary with different variables described in research question five, above.

Importance of the relationship

The importance of the relationship (as reported by the participant) was not significantly correlated to how satisfied the participants were with the outcome of their relationships with friend #1 or friend #2. Friend #1: $r(60, N = 62) = .152, p < 0.238$. Friend #2: $r(41, N = 43) = .014, p < 0.929$.

Discussion of Importance of the relationship

The participants were asked “how important in your life is your relationship with Friend #1?” The participants responded that their friendships with Friend #1 were somewhat important. When the participants were asked “how important in your life is your relationship with friend #2?” the participants responded that their friendships with friend #2 were somewhat unimportant.

The response to this question might not be consistent across the participants. For example, some participants may have responded “the relationship is unimportant.” These participants may have meant that their relationships with friend #1 were unimportant prior to the disclosure of their sexual identity. However, after their sexual identity was disclosed, their relationships grew in importance.

On the other hand, some participants may have responded “the relationship is important.” These participants may have meant that their relationships with friend #1 were important prior to the disclosure of their sexual identity, but after the disclosure, the relationships lost importance.

This inconsistency was discovered when several of the participants wrote unsolicited comments in the margins regarding the question, “How important in your life is your relationship with friend #1?” These participants circled one response, such as a 7 for very unimportant. In the margins, however, the participants wrote “But it was very important before” or a similar response. This time component of importance had not been brought up in Planalp and Honeycutt’s (1985) questionnaire, Planalp et al.’s (1988) questionnaire, or in the pilot sample questionnaire utilized for this study.

In order to attempt to incorporate this time component in future studies, an adaptation to the questionnaire could be made. For example, the participants could be asked “how important in your life was your relationship with friend #1 prior to friend #1’s knowledge of your sexual identity?” and “how important in your life is your friendship with friend #1 now?” By asking two questions which encompass the time component, the responses to the question may differ. Without asking the participants a more specific question regarding how important the relationship was in relation to the time component, it is not possible to know if the participants’ answers reflected a change in the importance of their relationships after their friends learned about the participants’ sexual identity. This issue is discussed in the “recommendations for this study” section of this chapter.

Importance of the relationship and Satisfaction

The importance of the friendship of friend #1 and friend #2 was not statistically related to satisfaction with the relational outcome. For example, one participant whose friend #1 was important might have been satisfied with the relational outcome. Just as easily, another participant might have had an unimportant relationship with friend #1 and still been satisfied with the relational outcome.

One must be careful in associating importance in the friendships with specific relational outcomes. Some individuals might have important relationships which became more distant. Some individuals may have unimportant relationships which became more close. In either of these cases, the importance of the relationship do not necessarily play a role in determining whether the participants were satisfied with the relational outcomes.

Why did you disclose that you are gay/lesbian?

In response to the question, “why did you disclose that you are gay/lesbian [to friend #1]?” the participants gave several answers. The three most frequent answers given were: “So I do not need to hide who I am,” “Because I wanted to trust my close friend with the knowledge that I am gay/lesbian,” and “So we can talk about my sexual identity freely.”

The participants were given the option of responding to all items which apply. Some of the participants circled more than one response. Table 5.10 displays the responses, the number of times that particular response was circled, and the overall percentage rate of each particular response.

Table 5.10
Why did you disclose your sexual identity to Friend #1

Why did you disclose your sexual identity to Friend #1?	Number	Percent
So we can talk about my sexual identity freely	27	18.7%
Because I thought Friend #1 suspected	14	9.7%
To correct Friend #1	6	4.2%
Because I had a partner I wanted to be open about	14	9.7%
I wanted to trust Friend #1 w/knowledge that I am gay/lesbian	36	25.0%
So I don't need to hide who I am	43	29.9%
I didn't disclose that I am gay/lesbian	1	0.7%
Other	3	2.1%

The three participants who responded to the “other” category each had different reasons why they disclosed their sexual identity to friend #1.

In response to the question, “why did you disclose that you are gay/lesbian [to friend #2]?” the three most frequent answers were the same as those described for friend #1. These three answers were: “So I do not need to hide who I am,” “Because I wanted to trust my close friend with the knowledge that I am gay/lesbian,” and “So we can talk about my sexual identity freely.”

Again, the participants were given the option of responding to all items which apply. Some of the participants circled more than one response. Table 5.11 displays the responses, the number of times that particular response was circled, and the overall percentage rate of each particular response.

Table 5.11
Why did you disclose your sexual identity to Friend #2

Why did you disclose your sexual identity to Friend #2?	Number	Percent
So we can talk about my sexual identity freely	12	14.8%
Because I thought Friend #2 suspected	8	9.9%
To correct Friend #2	4	4.9%
Because I had a partner I wanted to be open about	10	12.3%
I wanted to trust Friend #2 w/knowledge that I am gay/lesbian	14	17.3%
So I don't need to hide who I am	24	29.6%
I didn't disclose that I am gay/lesbian	1	1.2%
Other	8	9.9%

Several of the eight participants who responded to the “other” category had similar reasons why they disclosed their sexual identity to friend #2. Two of the participants were interested in pursuing a romantic relationship with friend #2. One of the participants thought that friend #2 was “struggling, too” [struggling with the coming-out process] and

one of the participants knew that friend #2 had a brother who was gay, and therefore thought that friend #2 might be able to “relate.” Two of the participants disclosed their sexual identity so that friend #2 would not try to persuade the participant to have a relationship with someone of the opposite sex.

Why did you ask someone else to tell your friend you are gay/lesbian?

Not one participant reported that they asked someone else to tell their close friends (either friend #1 or friend #2) that they were gay/lesbian.

If you could make the relationship different, how would you want the relationship to be?

The participants were asked “if you could make the relationship different [with friend #1], how would you want the relationship to be?” A large percentage of the participants (45.7%) wanted the relationship with friend #1 to be somewhat more close or much more close than it was. And almost half (49.2%) of the participants wanted their relationships with friend #1 to remain the same as they were after the disclosure of their sexual identity. Table 5.12 displays the frequencies of the responses.

Table 5.12

If you could make the relationship w/Friend #1 different, how would you want it to be?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Much more close	15	25.4
	Somewhat closer	12	20.3
	Stay about same	29	49.2
	Somewhat more distant	1	1.7
	Terminated	2	3.4
	Total	59	100.0
Total		59	100.0

The results from a chi-square test indicated that significantly more participants chose the response “Stay about the same” than any other choice: $X^2(5, N = 59) = 64.559, p < .0001$.

The participants were also asked “if you could make the relationship different [with friend #2], how would you want the relationship to be?” A large percentage of the participants (79.0%) wanted the relationship with friend #2 to be somewhat more close or much more close than it was. A small percentage (11.6%) of the participants wanted their relationships with friend #2 to remain the same as they were after the disclosure of their sexual identity. And 9.3% of the participants wanted their relationships to terminate after friend #2 found out about their sexual identity. Table 5.13 displays the frequencies of the responses.

Table 5.13

If you could make the relationship w/Friend #2 different, how would you want it to be?

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Much more close	17	39.5
Somewhat closer	17	39.5
Stay about the same	5	11.6
Terminated	4	9.3
Total	43	100.0
Total	43	100.0

The distribution of responses was statistically significant: $X^2(5, N = 43) = 43.372$, $p < .0001$.

Discussion regarding "If you could make the relationship different, how would you want the relationship to be?"

The participants were asked "If you could make the relationship [with friend #1] different, how would you want the relationship to be?" About half of the participants wanted their relationships with friend #1 to be somewhat more close, or much more close than they were. And almost half of the participants wanted their relationships with friend #1 to remain the same. These results are consistent with the participants' reported levels of satisfaction.

It seems logical that those participants who wanted their relationships to remain the same were satisfied with their relational outcomes. Perhaps those individuals who were satisfied with their relational outcomes had made accurate predictions regarding their friends' future behaviors. This possibility would be supported by C. Berger and Calabrese

(1975). The participants may not have been surprised, then, when their relational outcomes turned out to be as they predicted them to be.

Whereas, some of the participants who wanted their relationships to become closer might have reported being only somewhat satisfied with their relational outcomes. These individuals may not have made accurate predictions regarding their friends' future behaviors. Thus, when their relational outcomes stayed the same, when they wanted their relationships to become more close, these participants may have reported being only somewhat satisfied with their relational outcomes.

With friend #2, 88% of the participants wanted their relationships to either be (1) much more close, (2) somewhat more close, or (3) they wanted their relationships to terminate after the disclosure of their sexual identity. In this case, those individuals who desired relationships which became closer might have reported being somewhat unsatisfied with their relational outcomes when their relationships became more distant. Likewise, those participants who wanted their relationships to terminate after their disclosure, but whose relationships with Friend #2 only became more distant, might have reported being somewhat unsatisfied with their relational outcomes.

11.6% of the participants wanted their relationships with friend #2 to remain the same. These participants may have reported being satisfied with their relational outcomes even though the relational outcome became more distant or terminated. One must be careful not to equate satisfaction with relational outcomes becoming more close or remaining the same. Some high levels of satisfaction may be brought about by terminated (or more distant) relationships. For example, after disclosing his/her sexual identity a

participant may find that his/her close friend holds a negative attitude toward individuals who are gay or lesbian. This participant may actually welcome the distancing, or the terminating, of the friendship. These results support Cain's (1991) research that "Disclosure may also relate their ability to select friends who are supportive and drop those unlikely to accept the revelation..."(p. 349).

If you could do it over again, would you want your friend to find out that you are gay/lesbian?

The participants were asked "if you could do it over again, would you want your friend [#1] to find out that you are gay/lesbian?" 96.7% of the participants responded yes, they did want their friend #1 to find out. The results from a chi-square test were statistically significant: $X^2(1, N = 60) = 52.267, p < .0001$. Table 5.14 displays the frequency counts.

Table 5.14

Do you want Friend #1 to find out?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	58	96.7
	No	2	3.3
	Total	60	100.0
Total		60	100.0

The participants were also asked "if you could do it over again, would you want your friend [#2] to find out that you are gay/lesbian?" 88.4% of the participants

responded yes, they did want their friend #2 to find out. The results from a chi-square test were statistically significant: $X^2(1, N = 43) = 25.326, p < .0001$. Table 5.15 displays the frequency counts.

Table 5.15

Do you want Friend #2 to find out?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	38	88.4
	No	5	11.6
	Total	43	100.0
Total		43	100.0

Discussion regarding “If you could do it over again, would you want Friend #1 or Friend #2 to find out that you are gay/lesbian?”

The participants were asked “if you could do it over again, would you want your friend to find out that you were gay/lesbian?” A significantly vast majority of the participants reported “Yes,” they wanted their friend #1 and friend #2 to know that they were gay/lesbian. These results were staggering. Even when the participants knew what the relational outcome was, they still wanted their close friends to know about their sexual identity.

These results support C. Berger’s theory (1987) that persistently high levels of uncertainty can induce stress on a relationship. And an increase in uncertainty can encourage individuals to “take steps to reduce their uncertainties about their relational

partners” (p. 52). By disclosing their sexual identity, these individuals are decreasing their uncertainty about their relational outcome. Knowing what the relational outcome will be can enable the individuals to begin to cope with the relational outcomes.

If you do not want your friend to find out that you are gay/lesbian, why not?

Of the two participants who did not want their friend #1 to find out that they were gay/lesbian, one participant responded that s/he did not want to face discrimination. The other participant responded “Because she flirted with me, and since she was straight, it bothered me.”

Five participants responded that they did not want their friend #2 to find out about their sexual identity. When asked “why wouldn’t you want friend #2 to find out?” one participant responded that s/he did not want friend #1 to tell anyone else, one participant did not want his/her friendship to become distant or terminate, one participant wrote “personal,” and two participants did not respond to the question.

Discussion regarding “If you do not want your friend to find out that you are gay/lesbian, why not?”

Those participants who did not want their friends to find out that they were gay/lesbian all seemed to want to avoid the negative consequences of having others know about their sexual identity. One participant wanted to avoid discrimination. Another wanted to avoid unwanted flirtation. One participant did not want the friend to tell anyone else, and another did not want his/her friendship to become distant or terminate.

These individuals may have had agreements with their relational partners that the topic of sexual identity was not to be discussed (Rawlins, 1983). Or, perhaps the individuals may have felt that the stage of the relationship was not at a level where this type of disclosure would be accepted (Altman, 1973).

If you were to do it over again, what would you want the circumstances to be when your friend found out you were gay/lesbian?

The participants were asked “if you were to do it over again, what would you want the circumstances to be when friend [#1] found out you were gay/lesbian?” 82.8% of the participants responded that they would want to tell friend #1. The results from the chi-square test were statistically significant: $X^2(4, N = 58) = 146.31, p < .0001$. Table 5.16 displays the frequencies.

Table 5.16

If you were to do it over again, how would you want Friend #1 to find out?

	Frequency	Percent
Valid I would want to tell Friend #1	48	82.8
I would ask someone to tell Friend #1	1	1.7
I want Friend #1 to bring it up/ask	1	1.7
Other	8	13.8
Total	58	100.0
Total	58	100.0

Eight participants circled the “other” category. Several of these participants wrote in similar responses. Three of the participants wrote that they would have told friend #1

sooner, and one participant reported that s/he “would have liked to not disclose so much so soon.” Two of the participants would have changed the timing/setting of the disclosure. Each of the remaining two participants who circled the “other” category had different responses.

The participants were also asked “if you were to do it over again, what would you want the circumstances to be when friend [#2] found out you were gay/lesbian?” 82.5% of the participants responded that they would want to tell friend #2. The results from a chi-square test were statistically significant: $X^2(4, N = 40) = 99.250, p < .0001$. Table 5.17 displays the frequencies.

Table 5. 17

If you were to do it over again, how would you want Friend #2 to find out?

	Frequency	Percent
Valid I would want to tell Friend #2	33	82.5
I want Friend #2 to bring it up/ask	3	7.5
Other	4	10.0
Total	40	100.0
Total	40	100.0

Four of the participants circled the “other” category. Each of these four participants had different reasons for how they would want friend #2 to find out.

Discussion regarding “If you could do it over again,
how would you want Friend #1 or Friend #2 to find out?”

The participants were asked “If you were to do it over again, how would you want friend #1 [and friend #2] to find out?” A significant number of participants reported that they would want to tell friend #1. The participants also reported that they would want to tell friend #2 (also statistically significant).

In the discussion of the event (above), the majority of the participants reported that they disclosed their sexual identity to their friends. So, the participants reported that not only did they disclose their sexual identity in the past, they also had a desire to do so in the future. It seems to follow that reasons for wanting to be the discloser of their sexual identity in the past would be the same as their reasons for wanting to be the discloser of their sexual identity in the future.

When asked “why would you want your friend to find out this way,” the participants reported “Because I want friend #1 to find out from me.” This same response was consistent for friend #2. Again, the participants’ reasoning for wanting to disclose is similar for the reasons they did disclose in the past, and why they would want to disclose in the future (so I don’t need to hide who I am, to trust my friend with the knowledge that I am gay/lesbian, so we can talk about my sexual identity freely).

Several participants clarified their reasons for desiring to have their friends find out about their sexual identity from them. One of these participants reported that he would have wanted his friend to find out from him because: “It would have been better for me

and my friend because I wouldn't of [sic] had to lie.” Another participant disclosed that he would have wanted his friend to find out from him, “so she is clear I'm not sexually attracted to her.”

Why would you want your friend to find out this way?

In response to this question, “why would you want friend #1 to find out this way,” the majority of the participants (84.2%) responded “Because I want them to find out from me.” The participants were given the option of responding to all items which apply. Many of the participants circled more than one response. Table 5.18 displays the responses, the number of times that particular response was circled, and the overall percentage rate of each particular response.

Table 5.18
Why would you want Friend #1 to find out this way?

Why would you want Friend #1 to find out this way?	Number	Percentage
Because I want Friend #1 to find out from me	48	84.2%
Because I don't want to be the one to tell Friend #1	1	1.8%
Other	8	14.0%

Five of the eight participants who circled the “other” category each cited a different reason they wanted friend #1 to find out this way. For example, one of the participants wanted friend #1 to know “so she is clear the I'm not attracted sexually to her,” one of the participants “ended up not wanting her to know,” and one participant reported “[b]ecause

I am (was) accepted for me! That is how my friends are.” Three of the participants did not give a reason.

In response to this question, “why would you want friend #2 to find out this way?” the majority of the participants (85.7%) responded “Because I want them to find out from me.” Again, the participants were given the option of responding to all items which apply. Many of the participants circled more than one response. Table 5.19 displays the participants’ responses when asked why they wanted friend #2 to find out this way.

Table 5.19
Why would you want Friend #2 to find out this way?

Why would you want Friend #2 to find out this way?	Number	Percentage
Because I want Friend #2 to find out from me	36	85.7%
Because I don't want to be the one to tell Friend #2	0	0.0%
Other	6	14.3%

Each of the six participants who circled the “other” category cited a different reason they wanted friend #2 to find out this way. For example, one participant wanted to get friend #2 “off my back,” one wanted an intimate relationship with friend #2, and one participant wanted friend #2 to know “so neither of us has illusions about the other.”

Discussion regarding “Why would you want your friend to find out this way?”

The majority of the participants wanted both friend #1 and friend #2 to learn about their sexual identity from them. The participants wanted to be the discloser of the

information. These results support Cain's (1991) findings that individuals want to be the discloser.

One participant responded that he wanted to be the person who disclosed so that the Friend #1 could be clear regarding his sexual attractions to her. This response supports Cain's (1991) findings that the disclosure might change the boundaries of the relationship.

Terminated Relationships

Eighteen participants reported that their relationships with friend #2 terminated after the disclosure of their sexual identity. 61% of these participants reported that Friend #2 terminated the friendship. The distribution regarding who terminated the relationship is displayed in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20

If rshp w/ Friend #2 terminated, who terminated it?

	Frequency	Percent
Valid I did	2	11.1
We both did	5	27.8
Friend #2 did	11	61.1
Total	18	100.0
Total	18	100.0

One of the participants who circled "Friend #2 did" also noted "Sort of – or I did."

Because the participant made a choice between the possible responses and circled "Friend

#2 did,” this response was counted as “Friend #2 did” rather than “We both did.” The results of the chi-square test indicated that a significant percentage of participants responded similarly to this question: $X^2(2, N = 18) = 7.00, p < .03$.

The sex of the friend and terminated relationships

The results of a chi-square test indicated that the person who terminated the relationship did not vary significantly with the sex of friend #2: $X^2(2, N = 18) = 2.618, p < .270$.

Sexual identity and terminated relationships

The results of the chi-square test indicated that the person who terminated the relationship did not vary between the gay participants and the lesbian participants:

$X^2(2, N = 17) = 2.550, p < .279$.

Discussion regarding Terminated Relationships

Out of the eighteen participants who reported that their friendships terminated after the disclosure of their sexual identity, the majority of these participants reported that friend #2 terminated the relationship. When the participants were asked “why do you believe your relationship turned out the way it did,” the participants’ responses varied. Some participants reported external factors, such as (1) friend #2’s religious beliefs, (2) friend #2’s negative attitudes toward gays/lesbians, or (3) friend #2’s fears HIV/AIDS or

fears that the participant might want to date them. Other participants reported internal factors, such as “because I was honest,” or “I waited so long to tell them.” Due to the wide range of responses to this question, one or two particular reasons for the termination of the relationships could not be pinpointed.

One must be careful when attempting to find meaning in why the relationships terminated. Some close friends may have terminated their relationships with the gay/lesbian participants because they do not want to associate with individuals who are gay or lesbian. Some participants may have terminated their relationships with their friends because they do not want to associate with individuals who have negative attitudes toward gays/lesbians. The point of trying to determine why the relationships terminated is not to focus blame on the participants or on their friends. The point is to determine if, perhaps, a certain method of disclosure leads to the termination of relationships. Or if, perhaps, the relationships terminated due to a person’s reaction to the disclosure of the sexual identity.

Recommendations for This Study

There are four changes to the questionnaire that might have helped to improve the participants’ understanding, or may have helped to clarify the directions. First of all, an additional question could have been added for friend #2: “Do you have a close friend whose relationship with you became somewhat more distant, much more distant, or terminated after the disclosure of your sexual identity?” If the participants responded

“No,” they could have then been instructed to skip to the demographic questions at the end of the questionnaire.

In this questionnaire, the first question regarding friend #2 asked the participants how their relationships with their friend #2 turned out after their friends learned about their sexual identity. Several of the participants circled “I did not have a relationship which became more distant or terminated after the disclosure of my sexual identity.” These participants were then instructed to skip to the demographic questions. Fifteen of the 64 participants accurately followed the instructions by circling the appropriate response to this question and skipping to the demographic questions as directed. However, five of the 64 participants skipped to the demographics without responding to this question.

A similar question could also have been added to the beginning of the questions regarding friend #1. Two of the participants reported that they had no friend which became more close or stayed the same after the disclosure of their sexual identity.

A second change in the questionnaire might have gleaned some additional information from some of the participants. The participants were asked the question, “Do you have a close friend who knows that you are gay/lesbian?” Those participants who did not have a close friend who knew that they were gay/lesbian were then instructed to turn in their questionnaires to the individual who distributed the questionnaires to them. Instead, the instructions could have directed the participants to skip to the demographic questions before turning in their questionnaires. Only one of the 64 participants did not have a close friend who knew that they were gay/lesbian.

A third change to the questionnaire would have also helped to improve the questionnaire. On questionnaire form #2, a typographical error existed on question #3. The question twice refers to friend #2, when indeed these questions were supposed to reflect answers regarding friend #1. This error was missed despite reviews from three separate individuals for this final draft of the questionnaire. Several participants corrected this error by handwriting in friend #1. Fortunately, the participants appeared to answer the questions in a consistent manner as if there was no typographical error.

A fourth change to both questionnaires may have helped glean more consistent information regarding the importance of the friendships to the participant. Two of the questions asked the participant “How important in your life is your relationship with friend #1?” and “How important in your life is your relationship with friend #2?”

A more specific question may have been “How important was your relationship with friend #1 before your friend found out about your sexual identity?” and “How important is this friendship now?” These two questions would incorporate the time component of the importance issue. Researchers in the future may wish to address this issue to help understand whether participants view changes in the importance of friendships after their close friends learn about their sexual identity.

In addition to these four changes in the questionnaire, two additional changes could have been made to improve this study. The first change which would have improved this study involves the distribution and collection method. The distribution and collection methods might have improved if the researcher had traveled to the seven different participating organizations and played a more hands-on role in distributing and

collecting the questionnaires. By physically participating in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires, a higher response rate might have been achieved. Due to lack of funding, however, this physical presence was not possible. Furthermore, the researcher's presence at the seven different organizations would necessarily have affected the anonymity of the participants. And maintaining complete anonymity and confidentiality for all the participants was vital to this study.

The second change to this study would be to obtain more equal distributions of participants who were gay, lesbian, and bisexual. By obtaining more equal distributions of groups, future researchers would be able to make more accurate correlations between various variables. Since this study was a random sample of individuals who attended support groups, the actual numbers of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals who participated in this study were determined by chance.

Recommendations for Future Studies

An area of interest that future researchers may wish to pursue involves the supports groups' influences on the participants' decisions. All of the participants in this study were members or facilitators for social support groups for individuals who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual. It might be interesting to determine if specific support groups advocate specific methods of disclosure. For example, some support groups may advocate having the gay or lesbian individual disclose their sexual identity to their friends. These groups may assert that the act of disclosing may play a large role in the coming-out

process. By telling someone else that they are gay or lesbian, they may be avowing their sexual identity. And this avowal may enhance their own self-identity.

It might also be interesting to find out if specific support groups support specific reasons to disclose. For example, some support groups may advocate that self-disclosure enables the individuals to have potentially closer relationships with their friends.

Furthermore, disclosing may enable individuals who are gay or lesbian to alleviate some of their emotional or cognitive isolation. Researchers may wish to incorporate these questions into their future research.

Researchers may also wish to extend this study by examining more individuals who have a bisexual sexual identity. Only four of the 64 participants in this study had a bisexual sexual identity. Because individuals who are bisexual teeter the line between individuals who have a gay/lesbian sexual identity and individuals who don't, these individuals may face different uncertainty contexts, and may face different relational outcomes.

This study could also be extended to examine youth who have gay/lesbian sexual identities. Due to the confidential nature of this study, youth were asked not to participate. As described in Chapter 3, individuals under the age of 18 would have needed a permission slip to complete the questionnaire. And, in order to obtain a permission slip, these youth would have had to disclose their sexual identity to a parental guardian. Youth may face different challenges when disclosing their sexual-identity. They may have different reasons to disclose, and they may end up with different relational outcomes. Researchers may wish to address these questions in future research.

Researchers may also want to learn more about why the sex of the friend is significantly related to the event and to the relational outcome. Are same sex friends easier to talk to? Are the participants disclosing to individuals of the same sex in an attempt to pursue romantic relationships with these individuals? These questions should be addressed in future research.

And finally, a future study might provide interesting questions with regard to (1) How do individuals disclose their sexual identity to their friends over time? (2) Does an increase in disclosures make the disclosure process easier for these individuals in the future? and (3) How does our society accept/reject individuals with gay/lesbian sexual identities in the future?

Concluding Remarks

Individuals who are gay or lesbian face myriad uncertainty contexts regarding their relationships with their friends when they are faced with the disclosure of their sexual identity. The results of this study indicated that the majority of the participants disclosed their sexual identity to their close friends. And they did so in an attempt to be honest, to avoid hiding who they are, and to be able to talk about their sexual identity freely. Most of the participants reported being quite satisfied with the relationships which became more close or stayed the same. And most of the participants reported being somewhat unsatisfied with the relationships which became more distant or terminated. The way in which the friends found out about the participants' sexual identity was not related to whether or not the relationship became more close or more distant. The participants

believed their relationships became more close because they were honest. However, the participants believed their relationships became more distant because their friends were homophobic.

The results of this study brought up many interesting questions regarding individuals who have gay or lesbian sexual identities. Seven different uncertainty contexts were identified in the literature review to help to explain why individuals who are gay or lesbian face uncertainty when the disclosure of their sexual identity is brought into the realm of their relationships with their close friends. However, the results of this study may not have been fully explained by these seven uncertainty contexts alone. Perhaps additional uncertainty contexts exist that have not yet been addressed by this, or other, studies. The existence of other uncertainty contexts is an area in which future research could be expanded.

In addition, research regarding the interrelatedness of the uncertainty contexts should be examined. Those individuals who are gay or lesbian who are contemplating disclosing their sexual identity to their close friends journey through a series of uncertainty contexts before making their decision whether or not to disclose. Having certain uncertainty contexts and not others might preclude individuals from disclosing their sexual identities to their close friends. On the other hand, the presence or absence of certain uncertainty contexts might encourage others to disclose their sexual identities to their friends.

The fact that over half of the participants reported that they had friendships which became more close after the disclosure of their sexual identity, half the participants had

friendships which remained the same after the disclosure of their sexual identity, and one third of the participants in this study reported that they did not have a friendship which became more distant or terminated, suggests that some relational outcomes become closer or stay the same despite the fact that the individuals' sexual identity was disclosed. These results suggest that some relationships can continue (some even closer than before) after the disclosure of a person's sexual identity. Furthermore, a huge percentage of participants still wanted their close friends to know about their sexual identity even when the relationships became more distant or terminated. These results should encourage gays and lesbians who are fearful of having a relationship which becomes more distant or terminates. Knowing that relationships can remain the same or become more close after the disclosure of one's sexual identity should encourage individuals to disclose their sexual identity to others, even when uncertainty exists regarding the relational outcomes.

These results lead the path toward future research to gather specific information regarding disclosures. By gaining more detailed information regarding a person's disclosure-process, future researchers might be able to discover ways to refine the "best technique" for the disclosure process. Is the disclosure of one's sexual identity best done in the morning or the evening? Should a person disclose one's sexual identity over dinner or with coffee? Does the disclosure earlier or later in the relationship result in a more favorable outcome? Will the disclosure of one's sexual identity be more socially acceptable in the future?

The social acceptability of having a gay or lesbian sexual identity is an issue which shall most likely change over time. And the social acceptability, or lack thereof, directly

affects whether or not individuals may wish to disclose their sexual identities to others, or even whether or not they wish to avow their own sexual identity.

In American society, having a gay or lesbian sexual identity is complicated by political agenda. This political agenda is particularly apparent in Oregon, with the rise in popularity of right wing politics (such as the Oregon Citizens' Alliance [OCA]). While the OCA is still a minority group, this group still wields political power. And this political power has a chilling affect on both the gay and lesbian population as well as on those people who are supportive of the gay/lesbian community as more people come to accept anti-gay legislation.

As more states attempt to enact, or have enacted, anti-gay legislation, our society is moving beyond social norms and socially acceptable behavior. The anti-gay legislation legitimizes the discrimination that the gay and lesbian community face. Those people who live in states which have such anti-gay laws enacted, or which are actively campaigning to get these anti-gay laws in place, are facing additional pressures not to disclose their sexual identities to others. With these political agenda in place, individuals who are gay or lesbian now face the additional uncertainty context of legal discrimination.

Despite these active political campaigns of anti-gay legislation, society as a whole seems to be more socially acceptant of people who have gay or lesbian identities. Tom Hanks, for example, recently won the Best Actor Oscar for his portrayal of a gay man with AIDS in the movie Philadelphia. In addition, the lead character on the program Ellen, just recently came-out on her prime-time television comedy program. Other television programs and movies are also introducing gay and lesbian characters in positive

ways. These portrayals suggest that publicly avowing a gay or lesbian identity may no longer be as socially unacceptable.

Another, more subtle, fact which shows the trend toward society's openness and acceptability toward gays and lesbians is the fact that the participants for this study were obtained by contacting social support groups for gays and lesbians. Prior research on gays and lesbians had to be done covertly, by soliciting participants in gay/lesbian bars and baths (Harry, 1982, 1984; Harry & DeVall, 1978; Myrick, 1974; Weinberg, 1970, 1974). The relatively easier accessibility to gays and lesbians should help researchers of this field in their future studies.

Not only does society's trend toward openness and acceptability aid future researchers, it also aids those individuals who are gay or lesbian. As social acceptability grows, the coming-out process should become easier for gays and lesbians. People may become more educated regarding individuals who have gay/lesbian sexual identities, and therefore their negative attitudes toward these people might change. And as people become more open and acceptant of individuals who are gay or lesbian, the coming-out process itself might change. Perhaps in the future the coming out process might become more like a societal ritual for young adults, somewhat similar to bar-mitzvahs or debutante balls.

The results of this study warrant consideration from individuals who are gay or lesbian. These people may wish to examine the participants' responses. By reading about the participants' experiences in this study, others may be able to make more educated

decisions when facing their own uncertainties. Furthermore, others may be able to learn about potential relational outcomes before experiencing them.

Individuals who are counselors and therapists for gays and lesbians may also wish to consider the results of this study. These individuals may find valuable information to help guide gays and lesbians in their decision-making processes.

And finally, those individuals who have friends who are gay or lesbian may wish to review the findings of this study. The results of this study may enable these individuals to help them make the coming-out process easier for their friends.

More studies like this one should be conducted to help individuals who are gay or lesbian in their struggle to decide whether or not to disclose their sexual identity to others. By learning about the potential benefits of disclosure, perhaps more individuals may feel more comfortable in disclosing their sexual identity to others. And, perhaps more studies like this one can help gays and lesbians in other areas as well.

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APPENDICES

GROUP REFERRAL AND DISTRIBUTION

BAY AREA GROUPS

NAME OF GROUP	REFERRALS	PARTICIPATION	NO CONTACT OR NO RESPONSE	OTHER
GLAD	1 referral	not appropriate	NO RESPONSE	
G&L Metropolitan Church	no referrals	not willing		
G&L Freedom Day Committee	1 referral	not appropriate		
Lavender Pages	11 referrals	2 unable 2 participated and gave referrals 4 willing but 3 participated	2 no response	1 fax
Pacific Center	5 referrals	2 participated	1 no contact	3 left messages 1 previously contacted

SEATTLE AREA GROUPS

NAME OF GROUP	REFERRALS	PARTICIPATION	NO CONTACT OR NO RESPONSE	OTHER
Multifaith AIDS Project	1 referral		NO RESPONSE	
DAWN	1 referral			
Seattle Gay Clinic		not appropriate		
Gay Counseling Center			no contact	
Lesbian Resource Center	2 referrals			
ABLE		not appropriate		
Seattle Counseling Service - 6 groups		1 participated 2 unable 2 willing, but unable	1 no contact	
TOTAL NUMBERS:	22 referrals	4 not appropriates 1 not willing 3 willing, but did not participate 8 participated	3 no contacts 2 no response	5 other

NAME OF GROUP	OPTION	# SENT
Pacific Center - Men's Group	A	55
Pacific Center - Women's Group	A	25
Pacific Center - Other Groups	D	5
Adult & Child Guidance Center	C	6
The Edge	B	35
Seattle Counseling Center	A	15
Lamda Center	A	25
Billy DeFrank Center	B	250
	Total Sent:	416

APPENDIX B

PLANALP, RUTHERFORD, AND HONEYCUTT'S (1988) QUESTIONNAIRE

Did you tell the person in the beginning of your relationship that you were gay?

Why?

Why not?

1. What kind of relationship does the other person have with you?

same-sex friend	opposite sex friend	dating partner
romantic partner	spouse	

2. If you are filling out this survey for a second or third time, is this person the same one as previously reported? ___ Yes ___ No If yes, please describe in a few words the previous incident so we can make the connection.

3. How long had you known the other person when the event occurred? (please specify in months)

4. How important was the relationship in your life?

Not important	very important
---------------	----------------

5. How confident were you of your general ability to predict how the other person would behave before the even occurred?

Not at all confident	very confident
----------------------	----------------

6. How accurate were you at predicting the other person's attitudes before the event occurred?

Not at all accurate	very accurate
---------------------	---------------

7. Describe in your own words what happened. Describe the circumstances under which your close friend found out you were gay/lesbian. Please check all the items which apply.
 - Did you reveal that you were gay/lesbian?
 - Did someone else tell your friend that you were gay/lesbian?
 - Did you ask someone else to tell your friend?
 - Did your friend bring it up/ask?
 - Did you tell your friend because you thought they suspected?
 - Did you tell your friend because you had a partner?
 - Did you want to tell them?
 - Did you **need** to tell them?
 - Did you correct them?
 - Other:

8. Did anything lead up to the event? Did you provide any clues which would help your friend "figure out" that you were gay/lesbian before the event?

used gender neutral language

used the terms "spouse" or "partner" in lieu of boyfriend/ girlfriend

hinted that your friends were gay/lesbian

other: please specify

9. If you answered yes to #8, did you know at the time that other things led up to the event or were you only aware of them afterwards?

Knew at the time

Knew afterwards

10. Why do you think your beliefs about the person or relationship were challenged (you may check more than one)

You made assumptions that turned out to be wrong, but would have been made by anyone.

You had insufficient or incomplete information to base your beliefs on.

You misinterpreted earlier information about your partner or your relationship.

Your partner really changed.

Other (please explain)

11. How do you think your partner would answer question #10?

Your partner would say that you made assumptions that turned out to be wrong, but would have been made by anyone

Your partner would say that you had insufficient or incomplete information to base your beliefs on

Your partner would say that you misinterpreted earlier information about him or her or the relationship.

Your partner would say that he or she actually changed

You don't know what your partner would say

Other (please explain)

12. How strong was your emotional reaction to the event

affected me very little

affected me very strongly

13. Was your emotional reaction more positive, negative or neutral?

very negative

neutral

very positive

14. How much did the event change your beliefs about yourself

not at all

very much

15. How much did the event change your beliefs about the other?

not at all

very much

17. How accurate were you at predicting the other person's attitudes right after the incident?

What are some of the characteristics of their relationships after disclosure has occurred?

18. Were your beliefs about the closeness of your relationship affected by discovering/revealing the new information?

19. Were your beliefs about the companionship you shared affected?

20. Were your beliefs about the emotional involvement you shared affected?

21. Were your beliefs about your honesty toward each other affected?

22. Were your beliefs about confiding in each other affected?

- a. Before your sexual identity was disclosed, did you believe you could reciprocate in the sharing of intimate details of your life?
- b. After your sexual identity was disclosed, did you believe you could reciprocate in the sharing of intimate details of your life?
- c. Did you find/do you believe that your communication with your friend was limited before they knew you were gay?
- d. Did you find/do you believe that your communication with your friend was limited after they knew you were gay?

23. Were your beliefs about duties and responsibilities being carried out affected?

24. Were your beliefs that no one else had the same kind of relationship with the other as you did affected?

25. Were your beliefs about providing support for each other affected?

26. Were your beliefs about each other's freedom/autonomy affected?

27. Were your beliefs about how fairly you treated each other affected?

28. Were your beliefs about how much you trusted each other affected?

29. Were your beliefs about the rewards you expected to get from the relationship affected?

3. How confident are you now in your general ability to predict how the other person behaves?

not at all confident

very confident

4. How accurate are you now at predicting the other person's attitudes?

not at all

accurate

very accurate

5. Do you feel differently about the event now than you did at the time it occurred? no, yes, if so, how?

6. If you had to do this over again, would you do anything differently? no, yes, if so, what would you differently and why?

7. Do you think the event fits into any of the following categories?

you found out your partner had another relationship, either romantic or friendship, that competed with your relationship.

your partner broke off contact or reduced closeness without any explanation

you discovered information concerning the other's sexual acts, desires or preferences that was unexpected.

you discovered the other lied, concealed information, or intentionally misled you.

you perceived there was a change in the other's personality, values or characteristic ways of behaving

you discovered the other revealed confidential information about you to another person.

no, the incident cannot be classified into any of the previous categories.

Thanks again for your help on this project.

APPENDIX C
PILOT STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

Coming Out to Close Friends

ID#: _____

INSTRUCTIONS:

- * Please answer each question.
- * If any question is not clear, please ask the person who distributed this questionnaire for help.
- * If at any time you feel emotional discomfort while answering the questions, you may discontinue answering the questionnaire, and return the questionnaire to the person who distributed it to you.
- * When you are finished, return this form to the person who distributed the questionnaire to you.

1. Do you have a close friend who knows that you are gay/lesbian? (**circle one number**)

- 1 NO (If no, STOP HERE and return this form to the person who distributed the questionnaire)
2 YES

If you have more than one close friend who knows you are gay/lesbian, **pick your CLOSEST friend** when you answer the remainder of the questions.

2. Is this close friend who knows that you are gay/lesbian the same sex or the opposite sex as you? (**circle one number**)

- 1 SAME-SEX
2 OPPOSITE-SEX

3. How important in your life is the relationship with this close friend? (**circle one number**)

- | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------|
| VERY
IMPORTANT | | | | | | VERY
UNIMPORTANT |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

4. What were the circumstances under which this close friend found out you are gay/lesbian? (circle **ALL** the items which apply)
- 1 YOU DISCLOSED THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN. (Please skip to Question #5)
 - 2 YOU ASKED SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL YOUR CLOSE FRIEND THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN. (Please skip to Question #6)
 - 3 SOMEONE ELSE TOLD YOUR CLOSE FRIEND THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN WITHOUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE/PERMISSION. (Please skip to Question #7).
 - 4 YOUR CLOSE FRIEND BROUGHT IT UP/ASKED. (Please skip to Question #7).
 - 5 OTHER (Please describe, then skip to Question #7):
5. If you circled #1 in Question 4, why did you disclose that you are gay/lesbian? (circle **ALL** the items which apply)
- 1 SO WE CAN TALK ABOUT MY SEXUAL IDENTITY FREELY.
 - 2 BECAUSE I THOUGHT THEY SUSPECTED.
 - 3 TO CORRECT THEM.
 - 4 BECAUSE I HAD A PARTNER I WANTED TO BE OPEN ABOUT.
 - 5 BECAUSE I WANTED TO TRUST MY CLOSE FRIEND WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 6 SO I DO NOT NEED TO HIDE WHO I AM.
 - 7 I DID NOT DISCLOSE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 8 OTHER (Please describe):
6. If you circled #2 in Question 4, why did you ask someone else to tell your close friend you are gay/lesbian? (circle **ALL** the items which apply)
- 1 SO WE CAN TALK ABOUT MY SEXUAL IDENTITY FREELY.
 - 2 BECAUSE I THOUGHT THEY SUSPECTED.
 - 3 TO CORRECT THEM.
 - 4 BECAUSE I HAD A PARTNER I WANTED TO BE OPEN ABOUT.
 - 5 BECAUSE I WANTED TO TRUST MY CLOSE FRIEND WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 6 SO I DO NOT NEED TO HIDE WHO I AM.
 - 7 I DID NOT ASK SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 8 OTHER (Please describe):

7. If you were to compare your relationship with your close friend BEFORE your close friend found out you are gay/lesbian, AND NOW, **what is your relationship with your close friend like now? (circle one number)**

- 1 MUCH MORE CLOSE
- 2 SOMEWHAT CLOSER
- 3 STAYED ABOUT THE SAME
- 4 SOMEWHAT MORE DISTANT
- 5 MUCH MORE DISTANT
- 6 TERMINATED

8. If the relationship terminated, who terminated it? **(circle one number)**

- 1 I DID
- 2 WE BOTH DID
- 3 THE CLOSE FRIEND DID
- 4 THE RELATIONSHIP DIDN'T TERMINATE

9. Why do you believe the relationship turned out or continued the way it did? **(circle ALL the items which apply)**

- 1 I WAS HONEST.
- 2 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS HOMOPHOBIC.
- 3 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS GAY/LESBIAN TOO.
- 4 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAS A FEAR OF HIV/AIDS.
- 5 MY CLOSE FRIEND FOUND OUT FROM ME.
- 6 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS UPSET THAT I WON'T WANT TO DATE THEM.
- 7 I LIED.
- 8 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAD AN EXISTING POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD GAYS/LESBIANS.
- 9 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAD AN EXISTING NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD GAY/LESBIANS.
- 10 MY CLOSE FRIEND FEARS I WILL WANT TO DATE THEM.
- 11 I WAITED SO LONG TO TELL THEM.
- 12 MY CLOSE FRIEND FOUND OUT FROM SOMEONE ELSE.
- 13 OTHER(S):

10. Please rank the items you circled in Question 9 from most important to least important. Please do not rank any of the items as "ties." If you only circled three items, then rank only those three that you circled.
For example: Most important 1, 8, 5 Least important

MOST
IMPORTANT

LEAST
IMPORTANT

11. How satisfied are you with the way the relationship with your close friend turned out? (**circle one number**)

VERY
SATISFIED

VERY
UNSATISFIED

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. If you could make the relationship with your close friend different, how would you want the relationship to be? (**circle one number**)

- 1 MUCH MORE CLOSE
- 2 SOMEWHAT CLOSER
- 3 STAYED ABOUT THE SAME
- 4 SOMEWHAT MORE DISTANT
- 5 MUCH MORE DISTANT
- 6 TERMINATED

13. If you could do it over again, would you want your close friend to find out that you are gay/lesbian? (**circle one number**)

- 1 YES (If you circled yes, **skip to question 15**)
- 2 NO (If you circled no, **skip to question 14**)

14. Why wouldn't you want your close friend to find out? (**circle ALL the items which apply**)

- 1 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT THEM TO TELL ANYONE ELSE.
- 2 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT OUR FRIENDSHIP TO BECOME DISTANT OR TERMINATE.
- 3 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO FACE DISCRIMINATION.
- 4 BECAUSE I AM NOT COMFORTABLE BEING GAY/LESBIAN.
- 5 OTHER (Please describe):

15. If you were to do it over again, what would you want the circumstances to be when your close friend found out you were gay/lesbian? (circle ALL the items which apply)

- 1 I WOULD WANT TO DISCLOSE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
- 2 I WOULD ASK SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
- 3 I WOULD WANT SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN WITHOUT MY KNOWLEDGE/PERMISSION.
- 4 I WOULD WANT MY CLOSE FRIEND TO BRING IT UP/ASK.
- 5 OTHER (Please describe):

16. Why would you choose the way you mentioned in Question 15 for your close friend to find out you are gay/lesbian? (circle ALL the items which apply)

- 1 BECAUSE I WANT THEM TO FIND OUT FROM ME.
- 2 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO BE THE ONE TO TELL THEM.
- 3 OTHER (Please describe):

17. What is your sexual identity? (circle one number)

- 1 GAY
- 2 LESBIAN
- 3 BISEXUAL
- 4 NONE OF THE ABOVE

18. Are you male or female? (circle one number)

- 1 MALE
- 2 FEMALE

19. How old are you? _____ years

Thanks again for your help on this project.

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE #1

Coming Out to Close Friends

ID#: _____

-
- * Please answer each question.
 - * If any question is not clear, please ask the person who distributed this questionnaire for help.
 - * If at any time you feel emotional discomfort while answering the questions, you may discontinue answering the questionnaire, and return the questionnaire to the person who distributed it to you.
 - * When you are finished, return this form to the person who distributed the questionnaire to you.
-

+++++

INSTRUCTIONS:

- * Think back to the time when other people were beginning to learn about your sexual identity.
- * You will be asked to pick two close friends at that time.
- * When picking these two friends, please keep in mind how your relationship turned out when those friends learned about your sexual identity.

FRIEND #1 * WHEN PICKING FRIEND #1, CHOOSE A CLOSE FRIEND WHOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU BECAME MUCH MORE CLOSE, BECAME SOMEWHAT CLOSER, OR STAYED ABOUT THE SAME AFTER HE/SHE LEARNED YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN.

- * Please think of **FRIEND #1** when you are answering questions 1-15.
 - * Instructions regarding friend #2 will appear before question #16.
- +++++

1. Do you have a close friend who knows that you are gay/lesbian? (circle one number)

- 1 NO (If no, **STOP HERE** and return this form to the person who distributed the questionnaire)
- 2 YES

2. When **FRIEND #1** learned about your sexual identity, did your relationship with **FRIEND #1** become: (Please circle only ONE answer)

- 1 MUCH MORE CLOSE
- 2 SOMEWHAT CLOSER
- 3 STAYED ABOUT THE SAME
- 4 I DID NOT HAVE A CLOSE FRIEND AT THAT TIME WHOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH ME BECAME MUCH MORE CLOSE, SOMEWHAT CLOSER, OR STAYED ABOUT THE SAME. Please skip to question #16

3. Is **FRIEND #1** the same sex or the opposite sex as you? (circle one number)

- 1 SAME-SEX
- 2 OPPOSITE-SEX

4. How important in your life is your relationship with **FRIEND #1**? (circle one number)

- | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------|
| VERY
IMPORTANT | | | | | | VERY
UNIMPORTANT |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

5. What were the circumstances under which **FRIEND #1** found out you are gay/lesbian? (circle ONE item)

- 1 YOU DISCLOSED THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN. (Please skip to Question #6)
- 2 YOU ASKED SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL **FRIEND #1** THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN. (Please skip to Question #7)
- 3 SOMEONE ELSE TOLD **FRIEND #1** THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN WITHOUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE/PERMISSION. (Please skip to Question #8).
- 4 **FRIEND #1** BROUGHT IT UP/ASKED. (Please skip to Question #8).
- 5 OTHER (Please describe, then skip to Question #8):

6. If you circled #1 in Question 5, why did you disclose that you are gay/lesbian? (circle ALL the items which apply)

- 1 SO WE CAN TALK ABOUT MY SEXUAL IDENTITY FREELY.
- 2 BECAUSE I THOUGHT THEY SUSPECTED.
- 3 TO CORRECT THEM.
- 4 BECAUSE I HAD A PARTNER I WANTED TO BE OPEN ABOUT.
- 5 BECAUSE I WANTED TO TRUST MY CLOSE FRIEND WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
- 6 SO I DO NOT NEED TO HIDE WHO I AM.
- 7 I DID NOT DISCLOSE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
- 8 OTHER (Please describe):

7. If you circled #2 in Question 5, why did you ask someone else to tell **FRIEND #1** you are gay/lesbian? (circle **ALL** the items which apply)

- 1 SO WE CAN TALK ABOUT MY SEXUAL IDENTITY FREELY.
- 2 BECAUSE I THOUGHT THEY SUSPECTED.
- 3 TO CORRECT THEM.
- 4 BECAUSE I HAD A PARTNER I WANTED TO BE OPEN ABOUT.
- 5 BECAUSE I WANTED TO TRUST MY CLOSE FRIEND WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
- 6 SO I DO NOT NEED TO HIDE WHO I AM.
- 7 I DID NOT ASK SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
- 8 OTHER (Please describe):

8. Why do you believe your relationship with **FRIEND #1** turned out or continued the way it did? (circle **ALL** the items which apply)

- 1 I WAS HONEST.
- 2 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS HOMOPHOBIC.
- 3 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS GAY/LESBIAN TOO.
- 4 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAS A FEAR OF HIV/AIDS.
- 5 MY CLOSE FRIEND FOUND OUT FROM ME.
- 6 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS UPSET THAT I WON'T WANT TO DATE THEM.
- 7 I LIED.
- 8 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAD AN EXISTING POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD GAYS/LESBIANS.
- 9 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAD AN EXISTING NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD GAY/LESBIANS.
- 10 MY CLOSE FRIEND FEARS I WILL WANT TO DATE THEM.
- 11 I WAITED SO LONG TO TELL THEM.
- 12 MY CLOSE FRIEND FOUND OUT FROM SOMEONE ELSE.
- 13 OTHER(S):

9. Please rank the items you circled in Question 8 from most important to least important. Please do not rank any of the items as "ties." If you only circled three items, then rank only those three that you circled.
For example: Most important 1, 8, 5 Least important

**MOST
IMPORTANT**

**LEAST
IMPORTANT**

10. How satisfied are you with the way the relationship with **FRIEND #1** turned out? (circle one number)

VERY SATISFIED						VERY UNSATISFIED
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. If you could make the relationship with **FRIEND #1** different, how would you want the relationship to be? (circle one number)

- 1 MUCH MORE CLOSE
- 2 SOMEWHAT CLOSER
- 3 STAYED ABOUT THE SAME
- 4 SOMEWHAT MORE DISTANT
- 5 MUCH MORE DISTANT
- 6 TERMINATED

12. If you could do it over again, would you want **FRIEND #1** to find out that you are gay/lesbian? (circle one number)

- 1 YES (If you circled yes, skip to question 14)
- 2 NO (If you circled no, skip to question 13)

13. Why wouldn't you want **FRIEND #1** to find out? (circle ALL the items which apply)

- 1 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT THEM TO TELL ANYONE ELSE.
- 2 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT OUR FRIENDSHIP TO BECOME DISTANT OR TERMINATE.
- 3 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO FACE DISCRIMINATION.
- 4 BECAUSE I AM NOT COMFORTABLE BEING GAY/LESBIAN.
- 5 OTHER (Please describe):

14. If you were to do it over again, what would you want the circumstances to be when **FRIEND #1** found out you were gay/lesbian? (circle ONE item)

- 1 I WOULD WANT TO DISCLOSE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
- 2 I WOULD ASK SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
- 3 I WOULD WANT SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN WITHOUT MY KNOWLEDGE/PERMISSION.
- 4 I WOULD WANT MY CLOSE FRIEND TO BRING IT UP/ASK.
- 5 OTHER (Please describe):

15. Why would you choose the way you mentioned in Question 14 for **FRIEND #1** to find out you are gay/lesbian? (circle **ALL** the items which apply)
- 1 BECAUSE I WANT THEM TO FIND OUT FROM ME.
 - 2 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO BE THE ONE TO TELL THEM.
 - 3 OTHER (Please describe):

+++++

FRIEND #2 * WHEN CHOOSING **FRIEND #2**, PICK A CLOSE FRIEND WHOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU BECAME MUCH MORE DISTANT, BECAME SOMEWHAT MORE DISTANT, OR TERMINATED AFTER HE/SHE LEARNED YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN.

WHEN ANSWERING QUESTIONS 16 THROUGH 30, PLEASE REFER TO FRIEND #2

+++++

16. When **FRIEND #2** learned about your sexual identity, did your relationship with **FRIEND #2** become: (Please circle one answer)
- 1 SOMEWHAT MORE DISTANT
 - 2 MUCH MORE DISTANT
 - 3 TERMINATED
 - 4 I DID NOT HAVE A CLOSE FRIEND AT THAT TIME WHOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH ME BECAME SOMEWHAT MORE DISTANT, MUCH MORE DISTANT, OR TERMINATED. Please skip to question #31
17. If your relationship with **FRIEND #2** terminated, who terminated the relationship? (circle one number)
- 1 I DID
 - 2 WE BOTH DID
 - 3 **FRIEND #2** DID
 - 4 THE RELATIONSHIP DIDN'T TERMINATE
18. Is **FRIEND #2** the same sex or the opposite sex as you? (circle one number)
- 1 SAME-SEX
 - 2 OPPOSITE-SEX
19. How important in your life is the relationship with **FRIEND #2**? (circle one number)

VERY
IMPORTANT
1 2 3 4 5

VERY
UNIMPORTANT
6 7

20. What were the circumstances under which **FRIEND #2** found out you are gay/lesbian? (circle **ONE** item)
- 1 YOU DISCLOSED THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN. (Please skip to Question #21)
 - 2 YOU ASKED SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL **FRIEND #2** THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN. (Please skip to Question #22)
 - 3 SOMEONE ELSE TOLD **FRIEND #2** THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN WITHOUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE/PERMISSION. (Please skip to Question #23).
 - 4 **FRIEND #2** BROUGHT IT UP/ASKED. (Please skip to Question #23).
 - 5 OTHER (Please describe, then skip to Question #23):
21. If you circled #1 in Question 20, why did you disclose that you are gay/lesbian? (circle **ALL** the items which apply)
- 1 SO WE CAN TALK ABOUT MY SEXUAL IDENTITY FREELY.
 - 2 BECAUSE I THOUGHT THEY SUSPECTED.
 - 3 TO CORRECT THEM.
 - 4 BECAUSE I HAD A PARTNER I WANTED TO BE OPEN ABOUT.
 - 5 BECAUSE I WANTED TO TRUST MY CLOSE FRIEND WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 6 SO I DO NOT NEED TO HIDE WHO I AM.
 - 7 I DID NOT DISCLOSE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 8 OTHER (Please describe):
22. If you circled #2 in Question 20, why did you ask someone else to tell **FRIEND #2** you are gay/lesbian? (circle **ALL** the items which apply)
- 1 SO WE CAN TALK ABOUT MY SEXUAL IDENTITY FREELY.
 - 2 BECAUSE I THOUGHT THEY SUSPECTED.
 - 3 TO CORRECT THEM.
 - 4 BECAUSE I HAD A PARTNER I WANTED TO BE OPEN ABOUT.
 - 5 BECAUSE I WANTED TO TRUST MY CLOSE FRIEND WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 6 SO I DO NOT NEED TO HIDE WHO I AM.
 - 7 I DID NOT ASK SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 8 OTHER (Please describe):

23. Why do you believe your relationship with **FRIEND #2** turned out or continued the way it did? (circle ALL the items which apply)

- 1 I WAS HONEST.
- 2 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS HOMOPHOBIC.
- 3 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS GAY/LESBIAN TOO.
- 4 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAS A FEAR OF HIV/AIDS.
- 5 MY CLOSE FRIEND FOUND OUT FROM ME.
- 6 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS UPSET THAT I WON'T WANT TO DATE THEM.
- 7 I LIED.
- 8 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAD AN EXISTING POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD GAYS/LESBIANS.
- 9 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAD AN EXISTING NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD GAY/LESBIANS.
- 10 MY CLOSE FRIEND FEARS I WILL WANT TO DATE THEM.
- 11 I WAITED SO LONG TO TELL THEM.
- 12 MY CLOSE FRIEND FOUND OUT FROM SOMEONE ELSE.
- 13 OTHER(S):

24. Please rank the items you circled in Question 24 from most important to least important. Please do not rank any of the items as "ties." If you only circled three items, then rank only those three that you circled.
For example: Most important 1, 8, 5 Least important

MOST
IMPORTANT

LEAST
IMPORTANT

25. How satisfied are you with the way the relationship with **FRIEND #2** turned out? (circle one number)

VERY
SATISFIED

1 2 3 4 5

VERY
UNSATISFIED

6 7

26. If you could make the relationship with **FRIEND #2** different, how would you want the relationship to be? (circle one number)

- 1 MUCH MORE CLOSE
- 2 SOMEWHAT CLOSER
- 3 STAYED ABOUT THE SAME
- 4 SOMEWHAT MORE DISTANT
- 5 MUCH MORE DISTANT
- 6 TERMINATED

27. If you could do it over again, would you want **FRIEND #2** to find out that you are gay/lesbian? (circle one number)
- 1 YES (If you circled yes, skip to question 29)
 - 2 NO (If you circled no, skip to question 30)
28. Why wouldn't you want **FRIEND #2** to find out? (circle ALL the items which apply)
- 1 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT THEM TO TELL ANYONE ELSE.
 - 2 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT OUR FRIENDSHIP TO BECOME DISTANT OR TERMINATE.
 - 3 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO FACE DISCRIMINATION.
 - 4 BECAUSE I AM NOT COMFORTABLE BEING GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 5 OTHER (Please describe):
29. If you were to do it over again, what would you want the circumstances to be when **FRIEND #2** found out you were gay/lesbian? (circle ONE item)
- 1 I WOULD WANT TO DISCLOSE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 2 I WOULD ASK SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 3 I WOULD WANT SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN WITHOUT MY KNOWLEDGE/PERMISSION.
 - 4 I WOULD WANT MY CLOSE FRIEND TO BRING IT UP/ASK.
 - 5 OTHER (Please describe):
30. Why would you choose the way you mentioned in Question 29 for **FRIEND #2** to find out you are gay/lesbian? (circle ALL the items which apply)
- 1 BECAUSE I WANT THEM TO FIND OUT FROM ME.
 - 2 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO BE THE ONE TO TELL THEM.
 - 3 OTHER (Please describe):
31. What is your sexual identity? (circle one number)
- 1 GAY
 - 2 LESBIAN
 - 3 BISEXUAL
 - 4 NONE OF THE ABOVE
32. Are you male or female? (circle one number)
- 1 MALE
 - 2 FEMALE
33. How old are you? _____ years

Thanks again for your help on this project.

APPENDIX E
QUESTIONNAIRE #2

Coming Out to Close Friends

ID#: _____

- * Please answer each question.
- * If any question is not clear, please ask the person who distributed this questionnaire for help.
- * If at any time you feel emotional discomfort while answering the questions, you may discontinue answering the questionnaire, and return the questionnaire to the person who distributed it to you.
- * When you are finished, return this form to the person who distributed the questionnaire to you.

+++++

INSTRUCTIONS:

- * Think back to the time when other people were beginning to learn about your sexual identity.
- * You will be asked to pick two close friends at that time.
- * When picking these two friends, please keep in mind how your relationship turned out when those friends learned about your sexual identity.

FRIEND #1 * WHEN PICKING FRIEND #1, PICK A CLOSE FRIEND WHOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU BECAME MUCH MORE DISTANT, BECAME SOMEWHAT MORE DISTANT, OR TERMINATED AFTER HE/SHE LEARNED YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN.

- * Please think of **FRIEND #1** when you are answering questions 1-16
- * **Instructions regarding FRIEND #2 will appear before question #17.**

+++++

1. Do you have a close friend who knows that you are gay/lesbian? (circle one number)
 - 1 NO (If no, **STOP HERE** and return this form to the person who distributed the questionnaire)
 - 2 YES

2. When **FRIEND #1** learned about your sexual identity, did your relationship with **FRIEND #1** become: (Please circle only **ONE** answer)

- 1 SOMEWHAT MORE DISTANT
- 2 MUCH MORE DISTANT
- 3 TERMINATED
- 4 I DID NOT HAVE A CLOSE FRIEND AT THAT TIME WHOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH ME BECAME SOMEWHAT MORE DISTANT, MUCH MORE DISTANT, OR TERMINATED. Please skip to question 17.

3. If your relationship with **FRIEND #2** terminated, who terminated the relationship? (circle **one** number)

- 1 I DID
- 2 WE BOTH DID
- 3 **FRIEND #2** DID
- 4 THE RELATIONSHIP DIDN'T TERMINATE

4. Is **FRIEND #1** the same sex or the opposite sex as you? (circle **one** number)

- 1 SAME-SEX
- 2 OPPOSITE-SEX

5. How important in your life is your relationship with **FRIEND #1**? (circle **one** number)

- | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|
| VERY | | | | | | VERY |
| IMPORTANT | | | | | | UNIMPORTANT |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

6. What were the circumstances under which **FRIEND #1** found out you are gay/lesbian? (circle **ONE** item)
- 1 YOU DISCLOSED THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN. (Please skip to Question #7)
 - 2 YOU ASKED SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL **FRIEND #1** THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN. (Please skip to Question #8)
 - 3 SOMEONE ELSE TOLD **FRIEND #1** THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN WITHOUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE/PERMISSION. (Please skip to Question #9).
 - 4 **FRIEND #1** BROUGHT IT UP/ASKED. (Please skip to Question #9).
 - 5 OTHER (Please describe, then skip to Question #9):
7. If you circled #1 in Question 6, why did you disclose that you are gay/lesbian? (circle **ALL** the items which apply)
- 1 SO WE CAN TALK ABOUT MY SEXUAL IDENTITY FREELY.
 - 2 BECAUSE I THOUGHT THEY SUSPECTED.
 - 3 TO CORRECT THEM.
 - 4 BECAUSE I HAD A PARTNER I WANTED TO BE OPEN ABOUT.
 - 5 BECAUSE I WANTED TO TRUST MY CLOSE FRIEND WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 6 SO I DO NOT NEED TO HIDE WHO I AM.
 - 7 I DID NOT DISCLOSE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 8 OTHER (Please describe):
8. If you circled #2 in Question 6, why did you ask someone else to tell **FRIEND #1** you are gay/lesbian? (circle **ALL** the items which apply)
- 1 SO WE CAN TALK ABOUT MY SEXUAL IDENTITY FREELY.
 - 2 BECAUSE I THOUGHT THEY SUSPECTED.
 - 3 TO CORRECT THEM.
 - 4 BECAUSE I HAD A PARTNER I WANTED TO BE OPEN ABOUT.
 - 5 BECAUSE I WANTED TO TRUST MY CLOSE FRIEND WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 6 SO I DO NOT NEED TO HIDE WHO I AM.
 - 7 I DID NOT ASK SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 8 OTHER (Please describe):

9. Why do you believe your relationship with **FRIEND #1** turned out or continued the way it did? (circle **ALL** the items which apply)

- 1 I WAS HONEST.
- 2 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS HOMOPHOBIC.
- 3 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS GAY/LESBIAN TOO.
- 4 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAS A FEAR OF HIV/AIDS.
- 5 MY CLOSE FRIEND FOUND OUT FROM ME.
- 6 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS UPSET THAT I WON'T WANT TO DATE THEM.
- 7 I LIED.
- 8 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAD AN EXISTING **POSITIVE** ATTITUDE TOWARD GAYS/LESBIANS.
- 9 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAD AN EXISTING **NEGATIVE** ATTITUDE TOWARD GAY/LESBIANS.
- 10 MY CLOSE FRIEND FEARS I WILL WANT TO DATE THEM.
- 11 I WAITED SO LONG TO TELL THEM.
- 12 MY CLOSE FRIEND FOUND OUT FROM SOMEONE ELSE.
- 13 OTHER(S):

10. Please rank the items you circled in Question 9 from most important to least important. Please do not rank any of the items as "ties." If you only circled three items, then rank only those three that you circled.
For example: Most important 1, 8, 5 Least important

MOST
IMPORTANT

LEAST
IMPORTANT

11. How satisfied are you with the way the relationship with **FRIEND #1** turned out? (circle **one** number)

VERY
SATISFIED

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

VERY
UNSATISFIED

12. If you could make the relationship with **FRIEND #1** different, how would you want the relationship to be? (circle **one** number)

- 1 MUCH MORE CLOSE
- 2 SOMEWHAT CLOSER
- 3 STAYED ABOUT THE SAME
- 4 SOMEWHAT MORE DISTANT
- 5 MUCH MORE DISTANT
- 6 TERMINATED

13. If you could do it over again, would you want **FRIEND #1** to find out that you are gay/lesbian? (circle one number)
- 1 YES (If you circled yes, skip to question 15)
 - 2 NO (If you circled no, skip to question 14)
14. Why wouldn't you want **FRIEND #1** to find out? (circle ALL the items which apply)
- 1 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT THEM TO TELL ANYONE ELSE.
 - 2 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT OUR FRIENDSHIP TO BECOME DISTANT OR TERMINATE.
 - 3 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO FACE DISCRIMINATION.
 - 4 BECAUSE I AM NOT COMFORTABLE BEING GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 5 OTHER (Please describe):
15. If you were to do it over again, what would you want the circumstances to be when **FRIEND #1** found out you were gay/lesbian? (circle ONE item)
- 1 I WOULD WANT TO DISCLOSE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 2 I WOULD ASK SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 3 I WOULD WANT SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN WITHOUT MY KNOWLEDGE/PERMISSION.
 - 4 I WOULD WANT MY CLOSE FRIEND TO BRING IT UP/ASK.
 - 5 OTHER (Please describe):
16. Why would you choose the way you mentioned in Question 15 for **FRIEND #1** to find out you are gay/lesbian? (circle ALL the items which apply)
- 1 BECAUSE I WANT THEM TO FIND OUT FROM ME.
 - 2 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO BE THE ONE TO TELL THEM.
 - 3 OTHER (Please describe):

+++++

FRIEND #2 * WHEN CHOOSING FRIEND #2, CHOOSE A CLOSE FRIEND WHOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU BECAME MUCH MORE CLOSE, BECAME SOMEWHAT CLOSER, OR STAYED ABOUT THE SAME AFTER HE/SHE LEARNED YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN.

WHEN ANSWERING QUESTIONS 17 THROUGH 30, PLEASE REFER TO FRIEND #2.

+++++

17. When **FRIEND #2** learned about your sexual identity, did your relationship with **FRIEND #2** become: (Please circle one answer)

- 1 MUCH MORE CLOSE
- 2 SOMEWHAT CLOSER
- 3 STAYED ABOUT THE SAME
- 4 I DID NOT HAVE A CLOSE FRIEND AT THAT TIME WHOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH ME BECAME MUCH MORE CLOSE, SOMEWHAT CLOSER, OR STAYED ABOUT THE SAME. Please skip to question #31.

18. Is **FRIEND #2** the same sex or the opposite sex as you? (circle one number)

- 1 SAME-SEX
- 2 OPPOSITE-SEX

19. How important in your life is the relationship with **FRIEND #2**? (circle one number)

VERY IMPORTANT						VERY UNIMPORTANT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

20. What were the circumstances under which **FRIEND #2** found out you are gay/lesbian? (circle ONE item)
- 1 YOU DISCLOSED THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN. (Please skip to Question #21)
 - 2 YOU ASKED SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL **FRIEND #2** THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN. (Please skip to Question #22)
 - 3 SOMEONE ELSE TOLD **FRIEND #2** THAT YOU ARE GAY/LESBIAN WITHOUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE/PERMISSION. (Please skip to Question #23).
 - 4 **FRIEND #2** BROUGHT IT UP/ASKED. (Please skip to Question #23).
 - 5 OTHER (Please describe, then skip to Question #23):
21. If you circled #1 in Question 20, why did you disclose that you are gay/lesbian? (circle ALL the items which apply)
- 1 SO WE CAN TALK ABOUT MY SEXUAL IDENTITY FREELY.
 - 2 BECAUSE I THOUGHT THEY SUSPECTED.
 - 3 TO CORRECT THEM.
 - 4 BECAUSE I HAD A PARTNER I WANTED TO BE OPEN ABOUT.
 - 5 BECAUSE I WANTED TO TRUST MY CLOSE FRIEND WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 6 SO I DO NOT NEED TO HIDE WHO I AM.
 - 7 I DID NOT DISCLOSE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 8 OTHER (Please describe):
22. If you circled #2 in Question 20, why did you ask someone else to tell **FRIEND #2** you are gay/lesbian? (circle ALL the items which apply)
- 1 SO WE CAN TALK ABOUT MY SEXUAL IDENTITY FREELY.
 - 2 BECAUSE I THOUGHT THEY SUSPECTED.
 - 3 TO CORRECT THEM.
 - 4 BECAUSE I HAD A PARTNER I WANTED TO BE OPEN ABOUT.
 - 5 BECAUSE I WANTED TO TRUST MY CLOSE FRIEND WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 6 SO I DO NOT NEED TO HIDE WHO I AM.
 - 7 I DID NOT ASK SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
 - 8 OTHER (Please describe):

23. Why do you believe your relationship with **FRIEND #2** turned out or continued the way it did? (circle **ALL** the items which apply)

- 1 I WAS HONEST.
- 2 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS HOMOPHOBIC.
- 3 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS GAY/LESBIAN TOO.
- 4 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAS A FEAR OF HIV/AIDS.
- 5 MY CLOSE FRIEND FOUND OUT FROM ME.
- 6 MY CLOSE FRIEND IS UPSET THAT I WON'T WANT TO DATE THEM.
- 7 I LIED.
- 8 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAD AN EXISTING POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD GAYS/LESBIANS.
- 9 MY CLOSE FRIEND HAD AN EXISTING NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD GAY/LESBIANS.
- 10 MY CLOSE FRIEND FEARS I WILL WANT TO DATE THEM.
- 11 I WAITED SO LONG TO TELL THEM.
- 12 MY CLOSE FRIEND FOUND OUT FROM SOMEONE ELSE.
- 13 OTHER(S):

24. Please rank the items you circled in Question 23 from most important to least important. Please do not rank any of the items as "ties." If you only circled three items, then rank only those three that you circled.
For example: Most important 1, 8, 5 Least important

MOST
IMPORTANT

LEAST
IMPORTANT

25. How satisfied are you with the way the relationship with **FRIEND #2** turned out? (circle **one** number)

VERY
SATISFIED

1 2 3 4 5

VERY
UNSATISFIED

6 7

26. If you could make the relationship with **FRIEND #2** different, how would you want the relationship to be? (circle **one** number)

- 1 MUCH MORE CLOSE
- 2 SOMEWHAT CLOSER
- 3 STAYED ABOUT THE SAME
- 4 SOMEWHAT MORE DISTANT
- 5 MUCH MORE DISTANT
- 6 TERMINATED

27. If you could do it over again, would you want **FRIEND #2** to find out that you are gay/lesbian? (circle one number)

- 1 YES (If you circled yes, skip to question 29)
- 2 NO (If you circled no, skip to question 28)

28. Why wouldn't you want **FRIEND #2** to find out? (circle ALL the items which apply)

- 1 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT THEM TO TELL ANYONE ELSE.
- 2 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT OUR FRIENDSHIP TO BECOME DISTANT OR TERMINATE.
- 3 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO FACE DISCRIMINATION.
- 4 BECAUSE I AM NOT COMFORTABLE BEING GAY/LESBIAN.
- 5 OTHER (Please describe):

29. If you were to do it over again, what would you want the circumstances to be when **FRIEND #2** found out you were gay/lesbian? (circle ONE item)

- 1 I WOULD WANT TO DISCLOSE THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
- 2 I WOULD ASK SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN.
- 3 I WOULD WANT SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL MY CLOSE FRIEND THAT I AM GAY/LESBIAN WITHOUT MY KNOWLEDGE/PERMISSION.
- 4 I WOULD WANT MY CLOSE FRIEND TO BRING IT UP/ASK.
- 5 OTHER (Please describe):

30. Why would you choose the way you mentioned in Question 29 for **FRIEND #2** to find out you are gay/lesbian? (circle ALL the items which apply)

- 1 BECAUSE I WANT THEM TO FIND OUT FROM ME.
- 2 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO BE THE ONE TO TELL THEM.
- 3 OTHER (Please describe):

31. What is your sexual identity? (circle one number)

- 1 GAY
- 2 LESBIAN
- 3 BISEXUAL
- 4 NONE OF THE ABOVE

32. Are you male or female?

- (circle one number)
- 1 MALE
 - 2 FEMALE

33. How old are you? _____ years

Thanks again for your help on this project.

APPENDIX F
PHONE SCRIPT

What am I doing:

I'm a graduate student at Oregon State University and I'm doing a study regarding how gay men and lesbians tell their friends that they're gay; and how their friendships change, or stay the same, as a result of their friends finding out that they're gay. Do you think that your group might be willing to fill out some questionnaires to help answer some of my questions?

Who will participate:

I have been calling social support groups for gays and lesbians in the San Francisco and Seattle areas. Basically, any participant of the group is eligible to participate, as long as they're over the age of 18.

How many people regularly attend your group?

How often does your group meet?

Confidentiality:

The participants will not have to divulge their names or identities in any way in order to maintain complete anonymity and confidentiality. Each participant will be asked to read a statement regarding consent, confidentiality, and their rights regarding their participation prior to completing the questionnaire.

Why am I doing this:

When my brother came out to me, he and I got really close. However, when my brother came out to my mom, he and my mom got further apart. So, that initiated my curiosity regarding why some relationships get closer and why some get further apart.

Process:

I will send you X number of questionnaires (1 questionnaire for each person who regularly attends the group meetings and five additional questionnaires), along with the attached consent forms. In addition, I will send you a script to read to the group which describes the instructions, consent form, and the purpose of the study.

Email information:

Does your group have email access? There is also an email script that you may utilize to send to your group to let them know of the questionnaires that will be distributed to your group. Please feel free to use this, just let me know whether or not the email script was used.

**** EMAIL SCRIPT IS AS FOLLOWS**

PLEASE E-MAIL THIS MESSAGE TO INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE PARTICIPANTS IN YOUR GAY/LESBIAN/BISEXUAL ALLIANCE GROUP.

"A masters student at Oregon State University is requesting volunteers to participate in answering surveys regarding the disclosure of your sexual identity to your close friends. These surveys are located in a box in the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual office. Normally, that student would administer the survey directly, but we want to ensure your anonymity in the event you agree to participate in the survey. Please feel free to come by the office to pick up a copy of the survey, and then return the completed surveys to the office. Thank you very much for your help!"

Other pertinent information:

The questionnaires should arrive on *. I will call you on * to make sure that everything arrived in one piece, and to ask if you have any further questions. Ok?

Thank you SO much for your participant. Now, if you have any questions or concerns, PLEASE call me. I'll be happy to accept the charges if you would like to call collect. And if I'm not there, please leave a message on my answering machine along with the best time for me to reach you.

Follow-up conversation:

Hi, may I speak with *? Hi. This is Karen Dixon, the graduate student from Oregon State. How are you? Did my package arrive all right?

Do you have any questions regarding how to distribute the questionnaires or about the questionnaire itself?

Your group meets on *, is that correct? Will you be able to distribute the questionnaires on that date? So the questionnaires will be distributed on *. Will you be distributing the questionnaires?

Please make sure that you write down how many people were given the questionnaires, how many people declined to participate, and how many people actually participated. Also, please send back ALL the questionnaires (EVEN THE BLANK ONES), scripts, and consent forms in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope.

Now, if you have any questions or concerns, PLEASE call me. I'll be happy to accept the charges if you would like to call collect. And if I'm not there, please leave a message on my answering machine along with the best time for me to reach you.

Thank you SO much for all of your help! Your participation is GREATLY appreciated!

APPENDIX G
LETTER OPTION 1

Karen J.N. Dixon
Department of Speech Communication
Oregon State University
Corvallis OR 97331-6199
(503) 674-9139 dixonk@ucs.orst.edu

Pacific Center for Human Growth
Attn: Bill Chartier
2712 Telegraph Avenue
Berkeley CA 94705

October 29, 1996

Dear Mr. Chartier:

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me last week regarding my thesis project. I really appreciate your taking the effort to be a facilitator for me.

I have enclosed several items in this packet. First, there is a script which I would like you to read to your group immediately before you distribute the questionnaires to them. At the bottom of the script you will note four blanks. I have filled out two of them (the name of your group and the number of surveys I have included in this packet). I would like you to count how many people are under the age of 18 (and thus cannot complete the questionnaire), as well as the number of people who were handed a questionnaire.

Also included in this packet are 55 questionnaires, each with a consent form attached, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

During our telephone conversation, you agreed to make an announcement on November 11th and again on November 25th to inquire if anyone in your group would be willing to complete the questionnaires. If members of the group are willing to participate, please read the script to the group and distribute the questionnaires.

For response rate purposes, I need to have you collect ALL the questionnaires (even those that are blank). After you have collected all of the questionnaires, please mail them, along with the script which you have completed, in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Per our telephone conversation, you agreed to return the questionnaires to me on November the 26th.

Thank you very much for your help. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, please do not hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX H

SCRIPT 1

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING SCRIPT BEFORE ADMINISTERING THE SURVEY:

"I am administering this survey for a masters student at Oregon State University. Normally, that student would administer the survey directly, but we want to ensure your anonymity in the event you agree to participate in the survey. Please read the informed consent document, and then complete the survey if you wish to participate. If you feel discomfort or other negative emotions while you are completing the survey, please feel free to stop filling out the survey. If you have any questions during the survey please do not hesitate to ask me for assistance."

_____ Number of people who are under the age of 18

_____ Number of people who were given a questionnaire

_____ Name of the Group

_____ Number of questionnaires included in the packet

APPENDIX I

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

The Department of Speech Communication at Oregon State University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

The purpose of this study is to determine why some relationships get closer, stay the same, become less close, or terminate after gay men's and lesbians' sexual identity is disclosed to their friends. We are interested in what happened to you if you have had your sexual identity disclosed to a friend. However, we will analyze the results across all participants in this study. Thus, no one will attribute anything you write on the survey directly to you.

Statement of Confidentiality: All of your survey responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. Because you will not be asked to sign this consent form, your name will not appear anywhere on the survey, making it impossible to identify what you, or any other participant, specifically wrote. No persons, except the researchers in this study, will ever read your survey. The researchers will retain your survey for three years after this study is completed. After three years have expired, your survey will be physically destroyed.

Statement of Risks and Benefits: This study is not designed to benefit you directly. However, you may request the results of this study and possibly learn the efficacy of certain disclosure behaviors and how those behaviors affect the subsequent relationship. The risk involved in participating in this study is limited to the risk you might experience as a result of completing the survey. The survey asks you to recall situations in which your sexual identity was disclosed to a close friend. The extent to which those memories are painful is the extent to which you are at risk to experience psychological discomfort. Feel free to discontinue your participation in this study if you experience discomfort or negative emotions while you are completing the survey.

Your participation is solicited although strictly voluntary. We assure you that your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. Your completion of this survey acknowledges your understanding of your rights and responsibilities, and desire to participate in this research study.

If you would like additional information concerning this survey, before or after it is complete, please contact me by phone, mail, or e-mail.

Sincerely,

Karen Dixon
Department of Speech Communication, Shepard Hall
Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR 97331-6199
(503) 674-9139 e-mail: dixonk@ucs.orst.edu

APPENDIX J
FOLLOW UP LETTER 1

Karen J.N. Dixon
Department of Speech Communication
Oregon State University
Corvallis OR 97331-6199
(503) 674-9139 dixonk@ucs.orst.edu

Pacific Center for Human Growth
Attn: Bill Chartier
2712 Telegraph Avenue
Berkeley CA 94705

December 20, 1996

Dear Mr. Chartier:

I am writing to you to find out how the questionnaires that I mailed to you in October are doing. As you may recall, at the end of October I mailed 55 surveys to the Pacific Center for you to distribute to your men's rap group.

I am interested in finding out what the status is regarding the questionnaires. Did the questionnaires arrive? Does your group need more time to complete or return the questionnaires?

I would really appreciate it if you could forward any completed questionnaires that you have received to date as soon as possible. Then, if you could please continue to collect the questionnaires if and when they come in, and mail them to me at the following address, I would be very grateful. And, if you still have any blank questionnaires, I would also appreciate the return of those so that they may be used again.

Karen Dixon
24050 SE Stark #234
Gresham OR 97030

The more questionnaires that are returned, the higher the response rate I have, and thus the happier my thesis committee is with my progress. I will compensate you for the postage, of course.

Thank you very much for your help. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, please do not hesitate to give me a call. And, as always, I will be more than happy to accept the charges if you wish to call collect.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX K
FOLLOW UP LETTER 2

Karen J.N. Dixon
Department of Speech Communication
Oregon State University
Corvallis OR 97331-6199
(503) 674-9139 dixonk@ucs.orst.edu

Pacific Center for Human Growth
Attn: Amy Woldridge
2712 Telegraph Avenue
Berkeley CA 94705

December 20, 1996

Dear Ms. Woldridge:

Thank you so much for taking the time to assist me with my thesis! Without volunteers, such as your group, I couldn't have done it.

When I was reviewing the questionnaires that you returned to me, I noticed that sixteen of the questionnaires were missing. I recall that you indicated over the telephone that several of the group members still had not yet returned their questionnaires. If you could please continue to collect the questionnaires if and when they come in, and mail them to me at the following address, I would be very grateful. And, if you still have any blank questionnaires, I would also appreciate the return of those so that they may be used again.

Karen Dixon
24050 SE Stark #234
Gresham OR 97030

The more questionnaires that are returned, the higher the response rate I have, and thus the happier my thesis committee is with my progress. I will compensate you for the postage, of course.

When I finalize my thesis and have the results of this study, I will get in touch with you to find out if you would like a copy of the results to share with your group.

Thank you once again. I really appreciate your help.

Sincerely,

Karen J.N. Dixon

APPENDIX L
FOLLOW UP LETTER 3

Karen J.N. Dixon
Department of Speech Communication
Oregon State University
Corvallis OR 97331-6199
(503) 674-9139

Pacific Center for Human Growth
Attn: Amy Woldridge
2712 Telegraph Avenue
Berkeley CA 94705

March 12, 1997

Dear Ms. Woldridge:

A few months ago, your group participated in completing questionnaires for my thesis project. You graciously returned these questionnaires to me. Unfortunately, several questionnaires were missing.

Would you please make an announcement to your group that I am still very interested in receiving any questionnaires that are still out there? The more questionnaires I receive, the more accurate the results will be. Even if the members of the group choose not to complete the questionnaire, but they still have it in their possession, I would still like the questionnaires returned for response rate purposes.

I would really appreciate it if you would could forward any questionnaires to me at the following address. And, if you still have any blank questionnaires, I would also appreciate the return of those so that they may be used again.

Karen Dixon
24050 SE Stark #234
Gresham OR 97030

I will compensate you for the postage, of course.

Thank you very much for your help. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, please do not hesitate to give me a call. And, as always, I will be more than happy to accept the charges if you wish to call collect.

Sincerely,

Karen J.N. Dixon

APPENDIX M
LETTER OPTION 2

Karen J.N. Dixon
Department of Speech Communication
Oregon State University
Corvallis OR 97331-6199

Billy DeFrank Center
Attn: Ralph Serpe
175 Stockton Avenue
San Jose CA 95126

November 4, 1996

Dear Mr. Serpe:

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me last week regarding my thesis project. I really appreciate your taking the effort to help me distribute my questionnaire.

I have enclosed several items in this packet. First, there is a script which I would like you to distribute to each of your group facilitators. This script describes what the questionnaires are about and where they will be located to be picked up and dropped off. Also included in this packet are 250 questionnaires, each with a consent form attached, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

I really appreciate your agreeing to distribute the scripts to each of the facilitators so that they can make an announcement to inquire if anyone in their groups would be willing to complete the questionnaires. If members of the groups are willing to participate, they can pick up the questionnaires in the main office (or at another location, if you prefer) and drop them off in another box located next to the empty questionnaires.

I have included construction paper signs (Pick up questionnaires here and Drop off questionnaires here). I would really appreciate it if you would put these signs next to the two boxes (one with blank questionnaires, the other box for the completed questionnaires).

I also really appreciate your agreeing to send back the questionnaires to me at the end of November. For response rate purposes, I need to have you collect ALL the questionnaires (even those that are blank). After you have collected all of the questionnaires, please mail them in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you could collect and mail the questionnaires back to me on November 27th, that would be great.

Thank you so very much for your help. I couldn't do this without you. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, please do not hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX N

SCRIPT 2

"A masters student at Oregon State University has sent questionnaires to the Billy DeFrank Center and is looking for people who might be interested in helping her with her thesis. The questionnaires are about Coming Out and what happens to friendships after people Come Out to their friends. Normally, that student would administer the questionnaire directly, but we want to ensure your anonymity in the event you agree to answer the questionnaire. If you would like to participate, the questionnaires are available in the main office of the Billy DeFrank Center. There are marked boxes for you to pick up and drop off your completed questionnaires. Please make sure that you read the informed consent document, and then complete the questionnaire. If you do not wish to participate, thank you for your time. If you feel discomfort or other negative emotions while you are completing the questionnaire, please feel free to stop filling it out. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask for assistance. Please only fill out the questionnaires if you are over the age of 18. Thank you."

APPENDIX O

LETTER OPTION 4

Karen J.N. Dixon
Department of Speech Communication
Oregon State University
Corvallis OR 97331-6199

Pacific Center for Human Growth
Attn: Group Facilitators
2712 Telegraph Avenue
Berkeley CA 94705

November 5, 1996

Dear Sir or Madam:

Amy Woldridge asked that I send you a letter regarding my thesis project. Ms. Woldridge suggested that I ask you if you would be willing to have your group participate in my thesis project.

I am a graduate student at Oregon State University, and I am asking groups of gay men and lesbians who meet in groups (support groups, rap groups, coming out groups, etc.) to complete questionnaires. These questionnaires are aimed at trying to find out how gay men and/or lesbians tell their friends that they are gay/lesbian, and then what happens to their friendships after their friends find out.

If you are willing to participate, I will ask each of you to read a script to your group which describes the project and its goals. Then, I would like each of you to distribute questionnaires (which have consent forms attached to them). Then, you would count how many people were given questionnaires (as well as how many declined from participating), and finally, you would collect the questionnaires and return them to me in a self-addressed stamped envelope.

I have enclosed a copy of the script, the questionnaire, and the consent form along with this letter for your review. As you can see, there is no place on the questionnaire for participants' signatures, thus creating complete anonymity. If you feel that your group would be willing to participate, please give me a call at the number listed above. When you call, we can discuss the logistics (including how many questionnaires your group will need, and when your group would fill out the questionnaires). Wednesdays are my down days, but every other day, including weekends, I am available.

Thank you very much for your help. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, please do not hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely,