COMING OUT:

A RITE OF PASSAGE TOWARD THE CREATION OF

LESBIAN, GAY, AND BISEXUAL IDENTITIES

By

Dai Davies

A Thesis Submitted to

Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

B.A. Honours in Anthropology.

April 2014, Halifax, Nova Scotia

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Approved: | Dr. Marty Zelenietz | |
| | Assistant Professor | |
| Approved: | Dr. Paul Erickson | |
| | Professor | |
| Approved: | Dr. Eric Henry | |
| | Assistant Professor | |

Date:      April 19, 2014

SIGNATURE PAGE


COMING OUT:

A RITE OF PASSAGE TOWARD THE CREATION OF

LESBIAN, GAY, AND BISEXUAL IDENTITIES



By

Dai Davies


A Thesis Submitted to

Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

B.A. Honours in Anthropology.


April 2014, Halifax, Nova Scotia


Copyright Dai Davies, 2014


|  |  |
|---|---|
| Approved: | Dr. Marty Zelenietz |
|  | Assistant Professor |
|  | _____ |
| Approved: | Dr. Paul Erickson |
|  | Professor |
|  | _____ |
| Approved: | Dr. Eric Henry |
|  | Assistant Professor |
|  | _____ |
| Date: | April 19, 2014 |

COMING OUT: A RITE OF PASSAGE TOWARD THE CREATION OF
LESBIAN, GAY, AND BISEXUAL IDENTITIES


By Dai Davies


## ABSTRACT

Coming out, or the public expression of a non-hegemonic sexuality, is an important process in the lives of many lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, among others. The last major anthropological study of coming out using the framework of the rites of passage was published in 1993 (Herdt & Boxer). Paralleling these methods in this thesis, I employ the framework of the rites of passage to analyze of the stories and the opinions collected during my interviews with 9 lesbians, gays, and bisexuals to explore how they create and express their lesbian, gay, or bisexual identities. It is through the coming out process that lesbians, gays, and bisexuals direct the formation of their sexuality and begin to unlearn the hegemonic heterosexist ideas that oppose these identities to arrive at a comfortable and authentic expression. Participants took an active part in this process, putting their identities to work through narratives, jokes, and the analysis of their life histories, activities that reinforced their sexuality. As well, within a largely solitary process, they searched for 'role' models and resources in which to ground their identity transformation, many taking advantage of the anonymity of the Internet to do this. These activities, as well as large gatherings focussed on lesbian, gay, and bisexual themes, such as the Pride Parade, create periods of time in which a community exists. It is into this community that many lesbians, gays, and bisexuals enter as they move throughout the coming out process.

April 19, 2014

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In Canada, as in many parts of the world, heterosexuality is assumed to be the default sexual identity of all people; therefore, we are born into a heterosexual world and immediately inherit a heterosexual identity. This is an assumption that forms the basis of various levels of Canadian society. For example, we grow up in a household where we are asked "'do you have a boyfriend' [to girls] or 'do you have a girlfriend,' [to boys]" in the process creating a man/woman pair, rather than "have you found someone" (Gwen [a participant in this research]).[1] The typical questions concerning relationships are rarely posed in a gender-neutral way, but are explicit in their assumption of heterosexuality. Heterosexuality is also the basis of larger structures in society, such as marriage, inheritance, and family. For example, the family is a concept that many directly link to heterosexuality due to the assumption that reproduction is necessary for the existence of the ideal family. As a result, those who are not heterosexual, such as lesbians, gays, and bisexuals are often seen as opposing or as existing outside of the concept of family (Weston 1991).

This hegemonic[2] way of understanding sexuality has serious legal and social implications for the lives of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. For example, in Canada it was only in 1969 that the government decriminalized same-sex sexual relations (Government of Canada 2013:para. 2). Furthermore, it was not until 1996 that the government prohibited discrimination based on sexuality, which was a "declaration by Parliament that gay and lesbian Canadians are entitled to 'an opportunity equal with other individuals to make for themselves the lives they are able and wish to have'" (Government of Canada 2013:para. 4). The hegemonic heterosexuality and

heterosexism[3] implicit in Canadian society create a context in which many lesbians, gays, and bisexuals feel the need to distinguish themselves from these systems of power to express their sexual identities.

One of the ways in which they can express their non-hegemonic identities is through "coming out." Coming out is the public declaration of a non-heterosexual identity; according to Charlotte, it is "the standard sit your parents down in the living room and tell them [experience]." Coming out involves the discussion of these identities with acquaintances, friends, co-workers, and/or family. As well, the active realization of one's sexuality is often thought of as a component of the term "coming out;" however, for the purpose of analysis, coming out will be used to refer to the social interaction of the public voicing of sexuality. The realization of sexuality will be referred to simply as 'realization.' Presently, lesbians, gays, and bisexuals are still part of the trend that compels them to voice publicly their non-hegemonic identity and coming out has become an established mainstream life-course marker. This is clear from the recent highly-publicized coming out events of various celebrities, such as Ellen Page (CBC News 2014). It is a significant event in the lives of many lesbians, gays, and bisexuals and is the main life-course marker unique to the community. The idea of coming out often causes much stress for the individual and can be a difficult process. The difficulty is due to the assumption of heterosexuality in society, the importance of heterosexual life-course markers such as a marriage that bears children, and the potential for discrimination. Neither coming out nor realization are isolated events, but form parts of a long-term process which can also include the movement from largely heterosexual social groups to ones that include sexual minorities. This process, however, is not the only option available to sexual minorities and within this one example of the process there exists much variation.

Coming out is a difficult process that continues throughout one's life, as each new acquaintance is a potential coming out story. To you, the reader, this thesis is one of my coming out stories. My coming out now as a gay male will, in some way, alter your relationship with this text and my sexuality has also been a major factor influencing my relation to the topic. Having gone through this process myself for the past three and a half years, my own experiences and theories have informed my work. My experiences have also put me in a unique position to be able to explore this subject, given that it is not extremely often that coming out stories are shared and discussed with heterosexuals. As described by Weston, "[coming out] narratives are customarily related to and for other lesbians and gay men" (1991:15). In addition to having come out myself, I have been on the other side of the event— I have had friends and acquaintances come out to me and I have had the opportunity to share my experiences with younger gay people. Therefore, my emic (insider) perspective has allowed me to share perspectives and listen to others who identify as being within the LGBT[4] community, individuals whose stories and experiences form the basis of this thesis.

Due to my advantageous position[5] as being part of the LGBT community and having experienced many of the different roles of coming out, I intend to explore the transformative aspects of this process. In doing so, I will explore how some lesbians, gays, and bisexuals in Halifax, Nova Scotia, go through the process of coming out and its connection to the expression and creation of their lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity. This transformative process is often referred to publicly and in the literature as a rite of passage or is expressed using the language of the rites of passage (Johnson 2013; Meeks 2011; Signorile 1996; Webb-Mitchell 2007). The rites of passage is an operational framework simply defined as the process by which individuals move from

occupying one role to another (van Gennep 1960[1908]). Due to this popular idea of

coming out as a rite of passage and an anthropological tradition of using this

framework to study coming out, the concepts of the rites of passage will form the

basis of this thesis.

## CHAPTER 2: WHY STUDY COMING OUT?

Academically, the inspiration for this work derives from the research of Herdt, a psychological anthropologist, and Boxer, a developmental psychologist (1993). This interdisciplinary work was based in the coming out process of youth through the "Horizons Coming Out Group" program in Chicago in the late 1980s. The researchers used van Gennep's concepts of the rites of passage (1960[1908]) as an analytical tool in their exploration of the topic. With my research, I use similar methods to examine the process of coming out in a different temporal and geographical context, adding new dimensions to our knowledge of this topic. Herdt and Boxer are often cited in the literature and there are few other anthropological studies available.

Herdt and Boxer state that for gays and lesbians to create a "culture," it is necessary that they create "institutions through which to socialize and affirm values," socialize young lesbians and gays in these values, and integrate the older homosexual generations (1993:101). I will also use this assessment of the future of the community throughout my analysis of the experiences of participants. The context in which Herdt and Boxer's study was conducted (i.e., the Horizons Coming Out Group) was a structured, weekly program, unavailable to many lesbians, gays, and bisexuals in Halifax. In fact, many participants who I interviewed for my research have never regularly attended any type of LGBT group, although some have attended informal student-run university society meetings. Therefore, the participants in my research have experiences of coming out that vary greatly from the youth who participated in the highly structured Horizon's program, moving my research into a different temporal, geographical, and social context.

In more practical terms, as there are a variety of public and highly polemic debates raging around and within the LGBT community, it is beneficial to incorporate more voices from within anthropology. As described by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* (1978), since the 18th century the discourses on sexuality have diversified, coming to include "demography, biology, medicine, psychiatry, psychology, ethics, pedagogy, and political criticism" (33). Since the 1870s, the discourse on homosexuality and the LGBT community has been dominated by psychology and medicine, not being accepted as a legitimate topic of study in sociology until the 1960s and 1970s (Rubin 2002:28). In anthropology it was not until the 1990s that the analyses of the topic in Western societies began to accumulate (Rubin 2002:52). With this thesis, I mean to contribute to the role of anthropology in the discussion of sexuality in the public as well as add to the tradition of LGBT studies in anthropology.

The main debates which continue to be discussed publicly include whether homosexuality is the product of nature or nurture and same-sex marriage. Furthermore, while there are many implications of the current debates, they are often largely impersonal and grounded in political and religious ideologies. For example, the nature vs. nurture debate is often conceived of as secularism versus religion. The discourse surrounding these issues is often far removed from the individual, lived experiences of LGBT people. The most significant aspect of my research is its basis in the real, lived experiences of participants. For example, Will was enthused at the idea of sharing his stories with heterosexuals through this thesis and Charlotte expressed that this work would finally give her the opportunity to sit down and think about her sexuality. Through looking at the experiences of real people, more depth to the portrayal of LGBT people can be pursued and ideally achieved. My aim is to

develop a greater degree of society-wide acceptance and respect of us and our experiences through the acknowledgement of our stories and opinions.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexuality as a Social Phenomenon

There is an extremely long and diverse history of same-sex sexual behaviours and relationships represented in the literature. An oft-cited example includes the same-sex relationships within ancient Greek society, such as the sexual and emotional relationship of the heroes Achilles and Patroclus in the epic Homeric poem the *Iliad* (Neill 2009). The ways that homosexual behaviour, being taken to mean the physical interaction between individuals of the same sex that leads to a culturally-accepted form of sexual arousal, has been expressed and conceptualized has varied greatly (Bolin & Whelehan 1999:4). There are various types of meanings imbued in the physical sexual act that can be observed in ethnographic data from cross-cultural studies. For example, for the Sambia of the highlands of Papua New Guinea, as studied by Herdt in the 1970s and early 1980s, homosexual behaviour was a necessary component of a boy's lifecycle. Prepubescent boys performed oral sex on unmarried men over the age of 15 and consumed their semen as it would pass into them life-giving power (*jerungdu*) which would aid in their physical development throughout puberty. Without the transfer of this energy, Sambia males understood that they would not become men and would be unable to impregnate their future wives. However, once a man married, all homosexual behaviour stopped; thus, homosexual behaviour had a very specific time-restricted social role in Sambian society (Herdt 1981). The modern mainstream Western conception of lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities has its distinct history of the development of a specific set of roles and is a relatively recent

development. The trend in the development of the understanding of non-hegemonic sexualities marks a movement from a simple negatively-assessed behaviour, to an inherent component of one's soul, to the nucleus of community building. Coming out is very much tied into these changes, being a result of the most recent historical phase.

In Western tradition, the first main shift in the conceptualization of same-sex relationships occurred in 1870 with the publication of Carl Westphal's *Archiv für Neurologie*. Westphal's text connected an individual's sexual behaviour with their identity, lifestyle, and soul. Prior to this date in Western society, same-sex sexual behaviour had been conceived of as a periodic sinful act (i.e., sodomy), rather than as a component of the holistic being of the person in question. Following Westphal's publication, the homosexuality of an individual was seen to penetrate all aspects of the life of the individual. The behaviour and the identity of the "homosexual," as they were termed by Westphal, was explained through the idea of a gender inversion, where (in the case of males) in the most profound elements of their self, there is a shift from masculinity to femininity (Foucault 1978:43). In being framed in this novel way by psychologists, homosexuality became an object of study for the purpose of determining causation often for the purpose of institutionalization and finding a cure (Sullivan 2003:11). While these antiquated ideas had serious implications on views of homosexuality and still impact discussions of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, they are often rejected by members of the LGBT community. A common statement used today in protest of the idea that homosexuality penetrates all areas of an individual's life is that one is not a "gay friend" or a "gay professor," two examples discussed by participants Josh and Alex, but a "friend or professor who is gay or who happens to be gay."

The concept of the Westphalian homosexual as the dominant form of explaining same-sex relations lasted approximately a century. During this time, the development of the concept of homosexuality and the public discussion of homosexuals were dominated by the field of psychology, which continued to view homosexuality as a form of perversion and deviance (Sonenschein 1966:73). Homosexuality remained the so-called "problem" of the individual caused by emotional deprivation or trauma experienced during one's lifecycle (Sonenschein 1966:76-77). According to McIntosh, the expectation of the rest of society was based on the idea that "he will be effeminate in manner, personality, or preferred sexual activity… that sexuality will play a part of some kind in all his relations with other men; and… that he will be attracted to boys and very young men and probably willing to seduce them" (1968:185). These ways of viewing homosexuality had serious repercussions on the lives of homosexuals, given that there are various laws which are derived from these ideas that criminalize homosexuality today in various countries and in the past in others. It was a trait only to be expressed in private. As a result, very few homosexuals were able to live a homosexual lifestyle as part of a homosexual community outside of the secretive atmosphere of the bars, bath houses, public washrooms, and transportation stations that they often frequented (Herdt & Boxer 1993:136). The lifestyle of homosexuals was characterized by police raids, arrests, the publication of the names of homosexuals in newspapers, and loss of employment (Herdt & Boxer 1993:32). Therefore the homosexual 'community' consisted of an anonymous subculture where sex was the nucleus of identity-building (Herdt & Boxer 1993:136).

It was mainly during the late 1950s and the 1960s that sociologists and a few anthropologists began to accept homosexuality and homosexual communities as a

topic of study. This early trend in studying the homosexual community originated at the University of Chicago as sociologists began to examine so-called "deviant behaviours" in large urban centres, which brought sociology into the spaces that were occupied by homosexuals. Homosexuals constructed communities based on the connection of homosexuality to identity. This eventually resulted in their categorization as a minority group and one worthy of study by social scientists (Sonenschein 1966:75). For decades, anthropologists, other social scientists, and missionaries had acknowledged the role of homosexual behaviour in small-scale traditional societies;[6] however, it was Sonenschein's critique that this acknowledgement was not extended to Western urban societies (1966:75). However, as previously stated, it was not until the 1990s that anthropologists began to produce extensive literature on non-hegemonic sexualities.

In the USA, the Gay Liberation Movement began in the late 1960s to the early 1970s, inspired by political movements such as the Black Power, Anti-War, and Women's Liberation Movements. While there were a few homophile organizations prior to this time and beginning in the 1950s, such as the Mattachine Society,[7] the number of organizations and protests diversified and exploded following the Stonewall Riots[8] of 1969 (Sullivan 2003:26). In continuing the trend of locating sexual orientation in the most profound levels of one's being, the movement entrenched the framing of sexual orientation as an inherent biological trait. However, it diverged from the medical and psychological conceptions of homosexuality as it called for sexual orientation to be the basis of a culture and a new system of values. As a part of this call for community and unlike the movements of the homosexuals, the Gay Liberation Movement explicitly rejected the privacy demanded by homosexuality and promoted coming out individually and as a community (Smith

1999:8). It became a central component of the new conceptualization of homosexuality as gay and lesbian to publicly express these identities in the form of protest and Pride Parades, for example. Coming out stems from existence within a context in which all persons are assumed to be heterosexual, so one must constantly reaffirm their lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity at events such as Pride Parades and through localized events such as coming out. Thus, like homosexuality, and sodomy prior to this, sexuality is intertwined with social attitudes/movements and the activities and needs of individuals, rather than a simple expression of biological affinity or psychological processes.

As coming out developed within the Gay Liberation Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, it was highly informed by the sociocultural context of this time. Both race and gender are intertwined with sexuality, greatly affecting people's experiences of the coming out process. For example, the concept of coming out has been criticized as embodying an ethnocentric ignorance originating from the racial oppression by whites and the systematic devaluation of black experiences during this period that continues to this day. This is expressed in the following excerpt:

> [The Gay Black Group 1982] questions the ethnocentric assumptions behind the exhortation to 'come out,' regardless of the fact that the families of black gays and lesbians provide a necessary source of support against racism. However, such concerns with cultural differences have been passed by, as the horizon of gay men's political consciousness has been dominated by the concern with sexuality in an individualistic sense.
>
> (Mercer 1994:132-133)

This lack of consideration is not localized to black communities but is informed by the racial inequalities and the relationship of an individual's racial background to the idea of the individualistic nature of coming out at any cost. These restrictions can

come from within a community, as opposed to in response to hostility from another group, given the utmost importance in some societies of procreative sexual relationships for various social reasons, such as the continuity of family lineages. In the research of Weston (1991), the idea of coming out was viewed as leaving and losing an already existing community by all except for whites, who viewed coming out as entering and gaining a community (134). As well, in terms of gender, Herdt and Boxer describe a greater percentage of lesbian youth had attempted suicide than gay males originating from a "trend of greater homosocial pressure on females" (1993:211). This pressure lead to a greater percentage of lesbians than gay males reporting that coming out had negative effects on various areas of their lives.[9] Therefore, coming out is not an option that is equally available to all and, as coming out is an institution promoted by the hegemonic LGBT community, other strategies toward the appropriate expression of a non-hegemonic sexuality must be developed parallel to this institution.

Studying Coming Out

Traditionally there have been a number of ways developed to examine the coming out process. Two of the main methods used by researchers have been the development/milestone paradigm and the social interactionist model. The basis of the development paradigm is the idea that an individual passes through a number of milestone events. The process is conceptualized as a bounded process, beginning at a starting-point that is determined by the researcher and ending at a second chosen point. According to Rust, the main issues with this type of analysis of coming out are

that it is linear and unidirectional, favouring the completion of milestones for the purpose of reaching a set goal (1993:52). This way of examining coming out often ignores the varied needs and goals of the individual and their particular sociocultural context. Rust, instead, proposes that a social interactionist model must inform social science researchers (1993).

Many insights are gained from social constructionist analyses of coming out. Social constructionist researchers do not assume *a priori* the existence of an individual's sexuality; sexuality does not derive from internal reflection, yet is constructed during social interactions based on adherence to the range of behaviours and actions attributed to the sexuality that is intended to be constructed. In her analysis of the sexual identities of lesbian and bisexual women, Rust discusses the changes in these women's sexualities through their 20s and 30s. She states that the constructed nature of sexual identity is obviated by the changes, not in the behaviours of these women, but by their roles, political attitudes, and relationships. Allegiance to one of these identities benefits them in some way through their connection to the worldviews associated with that identity (Rust 1993).

The construction of masculine identities by gay men in Australian gay clubs has been studied by Ridge, Plummer, and Peasely (2006), whose research examined this as a coming out into the gay community. Within the bounds of the clubs, which are described by their participants as one of the few homophilic spaces they can enjoy in a homophobic society, they discuss the various types of identity policing (public critiques of other men's bodies and actions) and community building through collective action (dancing and drug-use). The reconfiguration of masculinities and the gay self depends on the contrast of the self and the wider society and other gay men. Often being mediated by the use of mind-altering substances, and through the

suspension of social norms, the club scene takes the form of ritual in the constructing

of their identities.

The Rites of Passage

Anthropologists such as Herdt & Boxer (1993) and Weston (1991) have

studied coming out through the lens of the rites of passage or in a way that was

informed by this framework. The operational framework of the rites of passage will

be employed throughout this thesis. The rites of passage belongs largely to the

developmental paradigm as it assumes a linear progress toward a certain goal, yet

incorporates aspects of social constructionism due to its focus on the learning of

identity and consequently its presentation. The concept of rites of passage was first

developed by Arnold van Gennep in 1908 and has undergone subsequent re-

evaluations by scholars during the 20th Century. The concept is derived from van

Gennep's understanding of lifecycles; he states that "[t]he life of an individual in any

society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to

another" (1960[1908]:2). As an individual is in a constant process of identity and role

transformations, van Gennep states that "progression from one group to the next is

accompanied by special acts..." (1960[1908]:2-3).

The set of special acts consists of a rite of passage which is divided into three

phases: rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation. The first phase is

characterized by the sequestering of the individual or group that will be the focal point

of the rite of passage. The individual(s) is symbolically and/or spatially separated

from the rest of the society and placed under sanctions and taboos unique to this process. Once separated from the rest of society, the individual(s) is within a liminal state. According to Turner, rites of initiation into social maturity or cult membership are characterized by an extended liminal period (2009[1964]:168). Initiates are considered to be in an in-between state where they do not fully adhere to the expected categorizations that are present in the society and they are "outside society, and society has no power over them," making them a danger to the established order (van Gennep 1960[1908]:114). However, this does not mean that the liminal state is a period of chaos. The liminal phase, and the activities which take place during this phase, are integrated into the traditional knowledge and expectations of the initiates which is imparted to them by the older members of the society. Often older members of the society are present during the liminal phase as guides and instructors to the initiates. No matter whether alone or guided by an instructor, the initiate goes through a process of unlearning the responsibilities expected of their previous identity and then a learning of the responsibilities associated with their new identity (Turner 2009[1964]:171). Finally, rituals are performed marking the reincorporation of the initiate into the society within the bounds of their new identity. While all phases are present in all rites of passage, depending on its specific purposes, the relative importance of each of these rites, or stages, is variable (van Gennep 1960[1908]:11).

Coming Out as a Rite of Passage

The most commonly-cited work concerning the rituals of the coming out process was produced by Herdt and Boxer (1993) based on their research carried out

in 1987 in Horizons Social Services Centre that held weekly coming out meetings for youth. For the participants, it was the attendance of these weekly discussion sessions that suspended the norms of the wider homophobic society and provided an intermediate space for the exploration of their gay and lesbian identities. Here, youth discussed and were instructed in positive gay and lesbian identities, coming out, safer sex practices, and were cleansed of their internal homophobia taught to them by the wider society.

Also, certain rituals of incorporation into the gay and lesbian community were examined, such as the Pride Parade, the annual Horizons gay and lesbian prom, and the entrance into the bar scene. As stated by Herdt and Boxer, "the rituals of gay youth in America are not aimed merely at changing their social role in male/female relationships or their status in society. They are instead explicitly directed at changing the *whole conception of the nature and being of the desires of the youth* [italics in the original]" (1993:14). Therefore, it is during these rituals that the youth construct new non-hegemonic sexual identities. Like Rust (1993), they also discuss the issue of bisexuality, as it was constructed not as an identity, but as an intermediate transitional form for youth moving from heterosexual to gay and lesbian identities. According to Rust, the transitional notion of bisexuality is based on the push to emphasize attraction to either males or females, rather than both (1993:70-71). Through their research, Herdt and Boxer demonstrate that the operational framework and concepts of the rite of passage are useful in illuminating the experiences of gay and lesbian youth.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS

The preceding overview of the issues of theoretical and historical interest in the topic of coming out gives context to the data that form the basis of the current study. The data take the form of the narratives and opinions shared with me during interviews with nine individuals who identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Participants were restricted to those individuals who had lived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, for a number of years and were currently living in Halifax. The ethnographic present discussed in this text includes from October to November, 2014.

Participants were contacted through the use of the snowball sampling method. This method was most suitable to the research as it is used "for studying hard-to-find or hard-to-study populations" (Bernard 2006:192). The snowball sampling method is the process by which the researcher's contacts participate and/or recruit their contacts to participate and so on until this method fails to identify new potential participants or a sufficient number of individuals volunteer their time. Therefore, much of my work as an anthropologist prior to the interviews involved spreading the news of my research and my need for participants. In contacting my acquaintances, four of them (two heterosexual women and two bisexual women) acted as "seeds."[10] With the help of these four women, the two bisexual women having agreed to participate, I was put into contact with the seven additional participants. Other methods could have been used, such as through contacting one of the local university LGBT societies; however, I intended to converse with a more experientially-diverse group of individuals. The LGBT societies are one of the nuclei of the LGBT community for young people and through avoiding these spaces I was able to contact individuals that are, to different

degrees, part of the community and who were mostly not a part of these types of groups during their initial coming out process. This was intended to distance the research contextually from the research of Boxer and Herdt and move toward understanding a different lesbian, gay, and bisexual reality.

The interviews took place in coffee shops throughout the city. The themes of the interviews, among other topics, included how participants' early life affected their non-hegemonic sexuality and acceptance of it, their experiences following realization, their self-defined most significant coming out stories, and their relationship to the LGBT community. The interviews were semi-structured and based on a set of general questions. The semi-structured style allows for participants to share information pertinent to the research topic and is sufficiently flexible to allow other compelling or related topics to be pursued (Bernard 2006:212). As the interviews progressed (and my interview skills improved) they became much less structured, being composed of the exchange of our personal stories and opinions. This led to amore naturalized interaction. All participants granted me permission to audio record our interviews as well as take handwritten notes. The audio recordings, field notes, and expanded notes which are drawn from both original sources, are the basis of this thesis.

Of the nine participants, there were three lesbian women (Sam, Gwen, and Olivia), one gay man (Will), and two bisexual women (Isabella and Charlotte). Alex is a queer man, queer being a label that can be used to describe any and all non-hegemonic sexualities. Josh is a 'man who has sex with men' [this is a medical term applied to those men who do not identify as gay, but have sex with other men]. Owen is a gay genderqueer [genderqueer people reject binary gender, identifying as somewhere between or outside of the man/woman binary; thus, they are referred to using the singular 'they' or other chosen pronouns]. The final three participants (Alex,

Josh, and Owen) all, for some purpose or at some time, identified as gay; this is evident in their narratives as well as the fact of their self-election to participate in research concerning lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. All participants were white, middle-class Canadians in their 20s. Eight participants have studied or are currently studying at the Undergraduate level, and four are currently studying at the Master's level at a university in the Maritimes. As well, seven participants were in a relationship with their partners also living in Halifax and of them, the three of the lesbian women are engaged to their respective partners. A characteristic common to seven of the nine participants is that they are from smaller communities and cities in the Maritimes, though they have lived in Halifax for two or more years.

CHAPTER 5: DATA AND ANALYSIS

<u>The Realization of Difference</u>

     The beginning of one's journey toward creating and expressing a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity originates in the realization of their sexuality. In the sense of the rites of passage, realization represents the ritual of separation— the ritual that begins the process. Many rites of passage are initiated by the wider society as they are an integral social structuring mechanism. However, realization was generally motivated by a feeling of difference from peers. As realization is initiated by the individual, coming out differs from rites of passage that anthropologists have traditionally studied as it is a largely solitary endeavour. Participants often noted the feeling of difference as originating from same-sex attraction. Participants remember experiencing same-sex attractions from a young age; in the cases of both Alex and Sam this occurred between the ages of 13 and 14. Sam recalled talking to her friend about how she did not find boys attractive like the rest of their friends who had already begun dating.

     Participants provided various ideas throughout our conversations as to how realization occurs. Charlotte simply stated that "it just hits you" that you are lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Alex and Will both arrived at a different theory; Will's particular explanation of this idea is as follows:

     I don't know if like *knowing* the thing [homosexuality] exists will allow you
     to correlate thoughts in your head— like maybe you're attracted to a guy but
     you don't know that other people *are* attracted to guys. You're just like 'this is

weird' and then you wouldn't think to act on it because you didn't know that *anyone* had acted on it. I just kinda made that up now.

Will suggests that when an individual experiences same-sex attraction, it is crucial that they know about lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities to be able to express these desires. As previously stated, Canadian society is largely heterosexist which is why Will's proposed reaction to same-sex attraction would be "this is weird" because within this ideology there is no room for an appropriate expression of same-sex desire. Thus, any expression of same-sex desire would generally be accompanied by negative emotions due to the violation of these heterosexist ideals, giving imperative to not act on same-sex attraction. However, Will's idea presents an important insight on the constructed component of sexuality. In his scenario, not knowing that others share these attractions may not prevent this individual from acting on them; rather this individual will not obtain a model of *how* to act on them. To know about these identities, lesbians, gays, and bisexuals have a general culturally-acceptable model for expressing their same-sex desires. It is not only a culturally-acceptable expression that is significant, but one that accurately portrays the desires of participants. For example, Isabella desired a way to understand how she could have same-sex and opposite-sex attraction as she was not aware of bisexuality while living outside of Halifax. She considered identifying as a lesbian, but she decided against this so as to acknowledge all facets of her attractions.

The matching of same-sex attraction to the concepts lesbian, gay, and bisexual is present in the stories of participants. Olivia and Gwen talked about looking back at their experiences and injecting their histories with new meaning. While Olivia was talking about her childhood, she mentioned a variety of experiences "that are now like

'oh okay, that's sorta like, that's a sign.' But back then I wasn't thinking about it more than any other 10 year old's thinking about their sexuality I guess." It is going through this process of re-analysis of the past with a lesbian, gay, or bisexual point of reference that creates realization. As with all of our histories and memories, the narratives of participants are not inert or objective, but in retelling them, the narratives take on new meaning. As stated by Ochs and Capps, "personal narrative is a way of using language or another symbolic system to imbue life events with a temporal and logical order, to demystify them and establish coherence across past, present, and as yet unrealized experience" (2001:2). Since Olivia identifies as a lesbian now, the events of her childhood that previously had little meaning become signs of who she is now. In the case of Gwen, she always felt different from her peers, but she did not understand why until after she came out as a lesbian. She was first approached by a gay friend in high school who told her that she was a lesbian and this began the process of re-analyzing her past from the new perspective. Now she understands that her past feelings of being an outsider originated from her non-hegemonic sexuality.

However, the connection of the concepts lesbian, gay, or bisexual to experienced desires is not mandatory for the expression of these desires. For example, Josh is an outlier among the nine participants that I interviewed. He does not identify as gay, although he does experience same-sex attraction and has had romantic relationships with other men. As previously stated, this is not uncommon among those that do experience same-sex attraction. He generally tells others that he is gay for the sake of simplicity because people understand that one of the characteristics of this identity is attraction. However, apart from that similarity, he does not see same-sex attraction as a unifying characteristic of a LGBT community. In fact, when I inquired as to his participation in the LGBT community, he was quite confused and responded

by saying "they're just a group of people? [rising intonation]," thus negating even the existence of an LGBT community. As he did not see the need to see his same-sex attraction through the lens of 'gay,' his experience is vastly different from those of the other eight participants. In terms of creating these types of identities, it is the type of meaning ascribed to the feeling of difference that is most significant.

A major implication of the largely solitary nature of realization is that there is no model way of proceeding throughout the rite of passage. For most rites of passage, the initiate is not so isolated and they are directly supported by other members of the group. For example, there are often older members of the society that serve as instructors. In addition, and in cases where instructors are not present, there is preparation for the process transmitted to them through their participation in the society. Turner refers to the preparation as the "authority of tradition" (2009[1964]:170), a force that is built into all areas of society and transmitted through values and beliefs. Due to this preparation, the future initiates have an idea of what they will endure and how to go about completing the requirements of the rituals. However, as only a small part of the population goes through the coming out process, and it undermines many of the values and structures of society, many LGBT people are not prepared by either tradition or instructors.

Coming Out and Telling "War Stories"

As coming out is such a significant series of events in the lives of many lesbian, gay and bisexual people, they imbue value into retellings of their coming out.

In the interview, I asked each of the participants if they had any particular coming out stories that were *important* to them. Many of the participants reconstructed this question to mean, 'do you have any *good* coming out stories?' This caused many of my participants to apologize for not having any interesting stories to share with me. I quickly realized that there is a distinction between good and bad coming out stories and their worth was based on how they fulfilled certain narrative structures and goals. Upon first glance it seems strange that participants implicitly or explicitly described that good stories are stories in which the other person reacted negatively. Good stories involved "fights, explosions, being thrown out" (Josh); they are "humorous, when people go crazy, when people are homophobic about it" or cause awkward situations (Owen). A "boring/dull/bad" story is one characterized by blind acceptance. A middle ground also exists in the form of the "generic" coming out story as mentioned by Will. This type of story implicates that coming out simply *occurred* and entails little embellishment with detail.

The positive value of traumatic coming out stories was also noted by Weston (1991) who wrote that what is "shaping these narratives were cultural notions of what makes a good story (drama, coherence, climax) coupled with assumptions about what makes an individual coming out experience prototypical" (61). While this is most likely true, why is a good story dramatically traumatic instead of dramatic with a happy ending? These stories are not just stories that are good or bad, traumatic or not, but according to Isabella they are our "war stories." If they are truly to be war stories, they *must* contain the elements of suffering, conflict, and discomfort to fulfill this role.

The use of warfare as a metaphor for rites of passage by initiates is not uncommon in the anthropological literature. In the initiation rites of the Dinka in

Sudan the metaphor of war is used to represent the conflict between initiate and the initiator and the older generation (Deng 1972:70). The following example is a section of one of many songs that embody this theme. "We are provoking a war with Deng and Deng, the Chiefs, / And with Agok Mijok, our Father; / The big age-set is held back like a fleeing swarm of bees" (Deng 1972:71). As Dinka boys leave boyhood and enter manhood, the initiates are seen to be at war with the older generations and the control and authority that they exert over the boys. Therefore, they experience a period of stress and conflict much like lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. To go through this process, lesbians, gays, and bisexuals reject a life that they thought they were going to live, gaining one that is often terrifying to them. Sam, for example, was brought up by her family with expectations of marrying a man, having kids, and becoming a housewife. While she knew during the realization phase that this was not the life she was going to live, in coming out to her family she shared this fact with the people who were most invested in her living a heterosexual lifestyle. However, many reject the transformation caused by coming out, saying that "nothing has changed" (Isabella) and that the individual is still the same person. According to Josh, it is a simple "transfer of information," which in his case is accurate as he does not acknowledge any type of social aspect of sexuality.

The centrality of the struggle of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals was also succinctly stated by Sam: "We all know what it is like to be in a bad place." She frames this shared struggle as the force that unifies all LGBT people through their rejection of hegemonic-heterosexual values and the assumptions of heterosexism. Rites of passage are often traumatic in some way; take for example ritual scarification, a practice that forms part of initiation rites of various societies.[11] According to Herdt and Boxer, it is the ritual group that acts as a soothing support to

allow for the transformation of the inner world of the individuals taking part in the life crisis (1993:17). The solitude often experienced by participants during the coming out process did not provide a supporting network of people to guide them or empathize with them. Many participants described trauma or stress. For example, one of the reasons that Sam decided to come out was that when asked by a friend if she was gay, she became angry and lashed out at him. This was also the case for Alex when he was approached by his past girlfriends who thought he was gay: he reacted in anger. As well, one participant mentioned that she went through a phase of hating herself and considering suicide prior to coming out.[12] The topic of suicide was also mentioned by Will in the context of the university queer society that he helped to organize. Suicide was a taboo topic within the meetings and if it was brought up in conversation, it was a rule that the executive members of the group were to stop the conversation. They intended that the avoidance of the topic of suicide would prevent triggering reactions from the LGBT members of the group, as LGBT youth are "two and a half times more likely than heterosexuals to have attempted suicide" (Rainbow Health Ontario 2012:1). Will remembered that the taboo was once transgressed and as a result, members ran out of the meeting and many left to create a second group that would be "more accepting." The significant stresses experienced by lesbians, gays, and bisexuals are expressed in the ideal types of coming out narratives; however, they are juxtaposed to the avoidance of suicide, which is often seen as "ultimate coping" (Herdt & Boxer 1993:208).Therefore, through coming out and recounting narratives based on their trauma, lesbians, gays, and bisexuals express a shared value of expressing a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity no matter the struggle and in spite of it.

As it was first intended, coming out is viewed as a way to reconcile the private and the public allowing for the authentic expression of self. Many of the terms used to

refer to the purpose of coming out relate to authenticity. A variety of positive values are imbued in the act of "sharing" one's "true self" with those around them. These values are so important to the community that coming out is often done "no matter what the cost." Sam told me about one friend of hers who came out 15 years ago and has not spoken to her family since that time, but has always said it is worth it. In comparison, those LGBT people who do not fulfill the expectations of coming out are considered by many participants to "lie," "deny/repress/inhibit" who they are, and are considered morally wrong. In the less extreme words of Owen, "It's like almost they're *lying*[13] to people but then… maybe they're not *lying* to the people maybe they're just like not telling the whole truth." For example, Alex spoke of his friend who says that she is comfortable with being gay and accepts herself, yet refuses to come out to her family. He does not understand how she can be comfortable with herself, yet not share that with the people who are expected to be closest to her. The negative judgement of those who do not come out works to police the boundaries of the community, as they undermine one of its central values: authenticity.

However, as with most ideals, they are not rigidly fulfilled in practice. It was one of Marvin Harris' (2010[1979]) issues that what people do and what they *say* they do are not always equivalent. Some of the participants who expressed the necessity to come out discussed certain family members that they had not told about their sexuality. Most recognized the need to manage familial relations to provide a safe and comfortable family environment and protect other parts of their life. One of the main reasons for not coming out was that "it was not worth it." Family members who were not extremely close to participants often found out in some way, but were not a necessary part of the process. Also, relationships with potentially homophobic family members often need to be managed in a different way. For example, Isabella does not

want to come out to her family, as it would increase the amount of conflict within her family. Also, some participants were vocal about the practical issues of coming out. Owen depends on their grandparents' help to pay for university tuition, something they could not do on their own. To come out to them would put the completion of their education at risk. Sam discussed how she has seen many youth who go home after school one day and say to their parents that they are gay. She said many of them end up in LGBT youth shelters because they do not think it through. Thus, while coming out no matter the cost is highly valued, coming out in a thoughtful and cautious way is also valued. Finally, it is not necessary to come out to all members of one's original social group to be able to count themselves as being out, yet there are key groups, such as the nuclear family, that are perceived as being the most important. Sam was very passionate when saying that it is "important for *you* to tell those *you* think is necessary… [for your own] health, safety, and mental state."

It is during coming out that individuals put their identity into practice. The statement "I am lesbian/gay/bisexual" is a powerful, performative statement. A performative statement does not simply describe; it is "the doing of an action" (Austen 1962:5). It is much like the statement "I now pronounce you man and wife" during traditional, heterosexual Christian marriage ceremonies. This statement, in being uttered by a priest at a marriage ceremony, creates the bond of marriage between the bride and the groom (Austin 1962:13). This conception of performance is equally applicable to other behaviours. Charlotte likens coming out to bungee-jumping:

> I was standing there on the platform. I was like 'okay I know I have to do this
> and I know I'm going to like it after I'm done or even like while it's going

[on].' But it's gonna be really really hard to jump and I stood there and just finally did it.

A lesbian, gay, or bisexual person leaps from an identity and a certain expected life-trajectory into a new way of being through coming out. It is the statement "I am lesbian, gay, or bisexual" that initially creates their lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity within the existing relationship with the listener. However, it is often difficult to constantly and appropriately jump from that ledge to come out to new acquaintances. The direct and isolating components of the statement "I am lesbian/gay/bisexual" are what make it difficult to use. To overcome this issue, many participants used other strategies. For example, all of the lesbian and gay participants who were in a relationship, explained that their preferred way to come out is through discussing their partner and "slipping in that feminine [or masculine] pronoun" (Olivia). The pronoun method creates more comfort for participants through its subtlety. Also, Alex stated that telling someone (in his case his grandparents) about a romantic relationship is more appropriate than uttering a statement about an identity that connotes sex.

Coming out is a way of entering into different types of relationships with other people. It is not a separation phase in van Gennep's sense, but is a signpost used to direct the intended and potential construction of meaning in social interactions. This is shown by the responses of participants as to the purpose of coming out. For example, Owen said "It's actually funny 'cause when I came out I just was like 'oh yay!' And I was like 'I'm going to go buy a tight shirt and like a rainbow belt and I'm gonna dye my hair and stuff.' And that only lasted like three months maybe, not even." Although, in this case Owen's changes in appearance did not last long, it illustrates

the idea that coming out opens up a new range of possibilities for expression and interaction with others. Another participant talked about one of his past jobs where he was the only man among many women co-workers. They treated him as a heterosexual man and as an outsider until he brought up his boyfriend, at which point they (saying that they could all relate to each other now) began to treat him as one of them. They could now discuss relationships, knowing what type of relationship he would have with the stories they shared.

All of the statements concerning the struggle faced by lesbians, gays, and bisexuals suggest that the telling of coming out stories occurs generally in reference to a unifying concept of struggle that creates the community. The telling of these stories helps to create commonality between or among lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals who are sharing these stories while linking them to an abstract community through referencing this idea of shared struggle. This is one of the instances where one *does* a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity; where they put their experiences to work in an accepted way for an accepted purpose. As this is a common practice, those who do not have coming out stories to share or do not ideally have difficult experiences to share are unable to participate in this linking to the community.

Learning a Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity

The liminal phase of a rite of passage is often viewed by anthropologists as the most significant and central to the transformation of identity (van Gennep 1960[1908]; Turner 2009[1964]; Stevens 2009[1978]). According to van Gennep's

model, the liminal phase occurs following a separation from society through ritual. Generally in his discussion of rites of passage, the individual going through the life crisis is a passive object that is acted upon. They are separated from society: "he [or she or they] is subject to taboos," they are reborn through the actions of other individuals (van Gennep 1960[1908]:105). Rites of passage are social mechanisms that act upon groups for the purpose of putting order on all individuals in a society. However, the passivity of van Gennep's initiates is not applicable to the lesbian, gay, and bisexual people whose stories make up this thesis. Participants were not separated in van Gennep's sense but separated themselves. Through evaluating their histories through the lens of a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity, they came to the conclusion that they were lesbian, gay, or bisexual. As well, lesbians, gays, and bisexuals approach the people in their lives and courageously break away from the lives that these people expected them to live and begin to define their new space in social relations. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people's control of the rite of passage continues into the liminal phase. In the liminal phase, lesbians, gays, and bisexuals are consumed in a double process of unlearning past conceptions of what it means to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual and learning a positive identity. Participants created and crossed this metaphorical threshold and searched for resources to aid them in forming their lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity. They explored a wide range of different resources, role models, and strategies, adopting and discarding the values as needed.

Herdt and Boxer state that one must "unlearn the principal of 'natural' heterosexuality" and the heterosexist assumption that "to marry and parent with the opposite sex is the only right and normal mode of development" (1993:15). As lesbians, gays, and bisexuals begin searching for various types of resources and building a sense of these identities, they must also purge themselves of the narrow and

negative conceptions of homosexuality they had gathered throughout their lifetime. For example, most participants mentioned that they heard a variety of negative comments about lesbians, gays, and bisexuals throughout their lives and entered into this process harboring these ideas. The major idea that most participants had was that being gay, lesbian, or bisexual was wrong, abnormal, and inappropriate. These ideas were derived from a variety of sources such as from family members. One participant recalled going to get a haircut with his father and his father told the male barber, who he assumed to be gay, that he did not feel comfortable with him cutting his hair. The barber respected his wishes, moving on to the participant, who repeated what his father said, not fully understanding its meaning. The participant explained he engaged in various actions such as these without understanding why or what its implications were. They are these everyday actions that reinforce hegemonic heterosexism.

The ranges of expression available to lesbians, gays, and bisexuals according to hegemonic heterosexism have an impact on those who go through the process of coming out. Participants were enthusiastic in their descriptions of the expectations of the wider society that underlay their identities. The caricatures of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals are largely based upon Westphal's idea of gender-inversion from the late 1800s. This idea is also addressed by Herdt and Boxer, as the youth they studied in the late 1980s represented a generation in which the practice of gender inversion as physical and aesthetic expression garnered less prestige in the gay and lesbian community. They discussed how in earlier years, the Gay and Lesbian Prom was full of boys in dresses and girls in suits; however, within the community, gender inversion became associated with the older generation of homosexuals (Herdt & Boxer 1993:149).The wider society has not kept up with the changes in the attitudes within the LGBT community. Today, society expects lesbians to be extremely masculine and

to reject all things feminine; they know how to use power tools, have short hair, have no concept of fashion, and wear only plaid/hunting-style clothing. Gwen, deepening her voice, said that as a lesbian she would have the following outlook: "[I] play softball, I've got the cropped haircut, and I don't know how to dress good." Gays are expected to have many feminine characteristics such as a high-pitched voice and "creaky voice"[14] and are expected to use excessive hand gestures and have expertise in fashion. The restrictive scope of expression represented by the hegemonic view of gays and lesbians is the body of knowledge that is transformed for new use or unlearned throughout the process of coming out.

The transformation in the ideals and knowledge of participants was reported to occur during a specific range of ages and participants conceived of coming out as a stage of social development during this range. Many of the ways that participants viewed the process firmly established it as a necessary part of the life cycle for those who are a part of the community. However as previously discussed, to some extent, it is acceptable to manage how "out" one is depending on their particular situation. Participants associated coming out with a particular set of ages: according to two female participants, their coming out was late. They came out when they were 21 and 25 and they associated coming out and realization as normally occurring during or shortly after high school (generally from age 15-20). Much like the puberty rites described by van Gennep, the ideal ages for coming out do not necessarily coincide with any biological change, but with the phase of social development that that age is seen as representing. Alex mentioned that his uncle recently came out as gay while in his late 30s and he is viewed by Alex as acting as though he was in his 20s and immature. He said that his uncle participated in many of the activities of young people in their 20s: he went often to clubs, there meeting many sexual partners with whom he

hoped to have a loving relationship. Therefore, no matter at what biological age an individual comes out, socially, other community members see them as entering into the beginning of this new phase of life. The spaces of community participation are also representative of the conception of those who come out as youth. For example, many participants complained that the only spaces available for them were for young people: the gay clubs and university queer societies. Many participants, while attending university did not participate in the societies citing them as "high schoolish" or superfluous. There was also the critique that there were no spaces for older LGBT people or couples of any age. Thus both the coming out rite of passage as well as the representation of LGBT people revolves around youth.

Authenticity is also a major concern during the reformation of their self during this early, transformative period of life. Sam was most concerned with the club scene, as she thought she would be expected to transgress her past morals and values to fit in to her new community. She said that "If you're gay, you go to [the local gay club], you do a couple lines of coke, you go out and party, you go home with some random stranger off the [dance floor], and that's what I got [from what she saw of the community when she first entered it]." She knew many young people who engaged in this type of behavior. Ridge, Plummer, and Peasley (2006) discuss this danger "of becoming 'over exposed', and even being identified as a 'scene queen' [a gay man who is consumed with club life]" (11). Owen mentioned that this is a legitimate threat given the side of the community portrayed to younger lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. While they (Owen) were younger and searching for other gay people online, older gays targeted them for sex. They said that these types of interactions are the main exposure young people get to the community. Some have attempted to distance themselves from the various roles expected of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, such as

Isabella, who said "this is who I am. I don't need to fit into any kinda role— just gonna keep just being me."

The Internet was one of the resources that was utilized by the male gay/queer participants. They discussed how the Internet was one way to explore the sexual aspects of their identities through watching pornography. Many of the participants recall exploring porn prior to their realization. For example, Will spoke of how he would look for blogs containing gay furry porn.[15] While part of the reason for targeting these websites was the sexual component of sexuality, there were also conversations (conversations that were meant to be relatively private) and written works produced by LGBT people on the website. Will used online resources such as this to satisfy two main components of his sexuality: the sexual and the social. Will became a silent participant in these conversations, being there to observe and take from an example of a LGBT world view/perspective. Through reading these blog conversations, Will learned about topics important to some LGBT people and how they think about these issues.

The most important aspect of the Internet is the potential for anonymity while participating in social interactions. As stated by Cho in an analysis of Korean gay online communities, "because the bodies of the users are not directly visible to the users whose interactions are mediated by the computer screen, there has been the assumption that users can be anything they want online" (2011:21). Alex referred to the use of the Internet as the creation of a "fantasy." One participant, for example, created a "fake" dating profile on the Internet because he feared people would find out about it. This method creates a safe boundary in a public space between the self and the identity. However, friendships with other anonymous lesbian, gay, and bisexual people can be a real support. For example, Alex said that these anonymous

individuals were the ones who encouraged him by writing him statements such as "If you have no problem with this [the potential of being gay], and are clearly interested in it or curious, then why don't you go try it?"

In one participant's opinion, her main role as part of an LGBT community is in activism. Through debates she constructs her identity and puts it to work as a tool for education, yet without necessarily claiming the identity publicly. This is most obvious in one of her narratives of an unintentional coming out to her mother. While explaining bisexuality to her mother, she used the inclusive pronoun "we" instead of "they." Noticing that word choice, her mother repeated what she said and confronted her about it. The response she gave to her mother was that she meant "we" as in activists rather than "we" as in bisexuals.

Anonymity is significant as lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities are often conceived of as contagious magic. Contagious magic, as stated by van Gennep, is "based on the belief that natural or acquired characteristics are material and transmissible" (1960[1908]:7). In this case, it is the belief that if a person inquires into LGBT topics, they themselves must be part of that community. This was mentioned various times throughout the interviews. For example, one participant said that in high school, her peers decided that two of her friends were lesbians, bullying them for it. Since the participant was part of their group of friends, she was automatically assumed to be a lesbian as well. Issues such as this stopped her from attending Gay/Straight Alliance meetings during high school. Another participant said that "once that [the fact that you are exploring these themes] gets out, even if it's not true [that you are a lesbian, gay, or bisexual], it stays with you forever."

One other way that most participants were able to achieve an appropriate level of anonymity was through leaving their small communities to live in Halifax or other large Maritime centres. Eight participants moved from their home communities to a larger or different urban centre. One participant from a small Nova Scotian community said that if one does not first leave her community, then they do not come out. Therefore it was her idea that one must initiate a physical separation before they can separate themselves socially from their hegemonic heterosexual identity. In moving to a larger urban centre, they were also able to interact with new groups of people and acquire larger variety of different ideas relating to their sexuality. This was also the original mechanism that created the homosexual community in the early 1900s: "it is the growth of towns with large groupings of people and relative anonymity which provides the possibility... [for a subculture]" (Weeks 1990:36). Therefore, to manage the coming out process, the maintenance of anonymity is often a useful strategy while searching for resources and community engagement.

In contrast to the desire of anonymity, Herdt and Boxer write that gays and lesbians must integrate the older generations of the community into the younger groups for them to effectively create a "culture" (1993:101). I found that there was very little evidence of the integration of the older generation or even communication between younger and older lesbians, gays, and bisexuals of the same generation. Many participants claimed that they had LGBT friends and that that was sufficient for them. However, their lesbian, gay, and bisexual friends were often described as experiencing the same issues and challenges as participants; therefore, they cannot be seen as 'older generations.' Also, many of these friends were more a part of the post-coming out phase than the initial formation of their lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity. Sam was one exception as she was friends with an older lesbian couple who supported

her greatly throughout the process. For her, they were her "guiding point"— they let her test out the club scene, for example, where she once got "loaded-hammered-drunk" and they were the ones who "took care" of her and watched that she was safe. It was this relatively-controlled experience that allowed her to realize that she did not want to participate in those types of activities.

Various participants mentioned stories of lesbian or gay peers in high school who were constantly persecuted and beat up by their peers. However, the feelings that permeated these stories involved pity, sadness, and the desire to not be like their peers rather than as individuals to look to for guidance. These guiding points were also applied to various public figures that have come out as lesbian, gay, or bisexual in a highly publicized way, yet seemed to overcome the issues that it caused. For example, Gwen looked for inspiration to Ellen DeGeneres, a famous television personality and talk-show host, who is a lesbian. According to Gwen, DeGeneres came out and it ruined her career and she overcame that hurdle, so it instilled in her the idea that if DeGeneres could do it, then she can also. To see another lesbian, gay, or bisexual person succeed in the face of many struggles and live a relatively "normal life" (Will) opened a range of possibilities for participants in their own lives. Overall, the group of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals that I interviewed had little guidance throughout the process of coming out and have had to gather from disparate sources what it means to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual. In doing this, anonymity was extremely important throughout due to the magically contagious conception of lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities.

The Importance of Recognition

> He was my ex-boss. I came out to him because he had fired me because I was homophobic, apparently. We were at work, you know chilling or whatever, and he was talking about his boyfriend and talking about guys. So I made fun of [him]– not just like made fun of *gays*– but just poked fun at him just the same way I poke fun at my gay friends. It would have been fine if he knew I was gay but he thought I was being very like 'I hate you because you're gay.'… One of my friends was like 'I can't believe he fired you. That sucks, but I mean, you were being really rude. [I] can't believe you were [saying such homophobic things].' None of them knew I was gay apparently?

What the participant was teasing his boss about was that his boyfriend had a "gay lisp" and was very "flamboyant." Also, his boss was of slight build and had a uniform that was much too large to fit him. It was a men's large and the participant had a tight woman's shirt as it was the only uniform left. So the participant said "oh you're flamboyant— because he is flamboyant— so do you want the woman's shirt instead? He [the boss] complained about how big his shirt was all the time and he always wore tight shirts and stuff like that." When he finally came out to his boss, his boss would not admit that he didn't know the participant was gay. Even more confusingly, his attitude changed from one of insult to one of camaraderie and he wanted to spend time with the participant and his boyfriend as friends.

In coming out to his boss, the participant entered into a relationship with his boss that allowed for this type of joking. These jokes are referred to as "camp" talk, which is a traditional form of speech in the LGBT community. The defining principle of camp speech is that it is a speech variety that indexes a gay identity, meaning it is a behaviour that is interpreted as representative of a gay identity (Cameron & Kulick 2003:99). However, as previously shown, the form of speech is not a sufficient index

of identity, but depends on the perceived identity of the speaker. It is necessary for both speakers to be aware of the sexuality of the other participant in the conversation. As told by the participant, for a heterosexual person to use certain types of camp talk, such as (gender) inversion in this case (Cameron & Kulick 2003:100), old stereotypes of the cross-dressing homosexual are reinforced and imposed on the gay person; it is homophobic, and in this case, cause for being fired. However, a gay person who uses this speech form undermines hegemonic expectations of gays as it focuses on the fulfillment or deviance from stereotypes. This is similarly identified by Butler who writes that camp is political in nature as it "deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities" (1990:138). Another example of this is a joke aimed at me by Gwen who, after hearing me say that I didn't like the music of Cher that was playing in the coffee shop (or the fact that I would have to listen to the song again when going through the recordings), exclaimed "I thought all gay guys were supposed to like Cher!" Humour is created out of acceptable conversation among people who know the perspective of the other speaker/listener. It is coming out that is central to the development of this relationship and this type of humor, rather than the impetus for its creation.

Rather than indexing a gay identity, the use of camp style speech reinforces a gay identity that is identified by other visual or verbal cues, i.e., it cannot be analyzed in isolation from other indexical actions. As this type of speech is so limited in its potential acceptable use, it is a way of expressing a shared identity. This participant was not alone in the use of camp-style speech, as Olivia mentioned it during our discussion of the lesbian community. She does not think it is a requirement for her to be happy that she have gay friends, though she said "I really look forward to [my sports night] because it's older gay women and they're hilarious and they make these

awful crude jokes." She also mentioned that during her periodic get-togethers with her lesbian acquaintances, she enjoys being in a place where she can talk about things only gay women would understand and specifically tell jokes that only gay women would understand and find funny. For her, *this* is the lesbian community. The ability to tell jokes and engage in conversation only appropriate among lesbians was the community that she was "starving for" and "didn't get enough of."

Also, the issue of successfully expressing sexual identity to others was discussed by other participants. Given the many issues surrounding the individual's and society's acceptance of a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity, once participants began coming out they were faced with the issue of the recognition of their identity by others. For example, Will spoke of how one of his major preoccupations was being misidentified as heterosexual because he felt that he did not act "gay enough." While the definition of the terms lesbian, gay, and bisexual generally address sexual preference or attraction, according to McIntosh (1968) there are social roles and expectations of how gays, lesbians, and bisexuals will act. These expectations originate from two main sources: the wider society and the LGBT community. The lesbian, gay, and bisexual social roles are based on the fulfillment of a variety of performative actions that index and create these identities.

"Just Come Out Already!"

As seen previously, the misinterpretations of another's identity can have serious consequences for the types of interactions that transpire among individuals.

The denial of the existence of bisexuality is a frustration faced by many bisexuals. There is a general failure of other members of the LGBT community to recognize bisexuality as a legitimate identity. Bisexuality was a topic that I did not bring up with participants (other than those who were themselves bisexual) yet it was addressed by most participants in various ways.

Beginning from the perspective of bisexuals, the hegemonic and distilled representation of the LGBT community is problematic as it largely ignores their existence. Isabella stated that once she began to recognise her same-sex attraction she had no way to understand it. She knew of gays and lesbians; however, she could not reconcile her opposite-sex attraction with these identities and it was not until she relocated to Halifax that she encountered the idea of bisexuality. Isabella says that when she is in a relationship with a man, everything looks "very hetero[sexual]." She says it is a burden for her to not be able to always express her full self and have that recognized. More directly threatening to their identities are statements such as "you're not bisexual; you just think you are," which was said to Charlotte when she came out to a friend. Charlotte also made the comment about "lesbian sex," which would hypothetically be sex between her and another woman. I asked her since she is bisexual would it not be bisexual sex? She responded, puzzled, that she did not know what bisexual sex would be and suggested that possibly it would be sex involving her, a man, and another woman. She also said that while people have a certain set of characteristics to be able to "intuit" that people are gays and lesbians, it's different for bisexuals.

Many people do not have the same type of need to acknowledge all aspects of their sexual attraction in the identity they choose. For example, Owen, Alex, Olivia, Josh, and Gwen all discussed either having had sexual relations, a romantic

relationship, or attraction with people of the opposite sex, yet all identified as either gay (Josh for convenience) or lesbian. This was most clear when one gay participant told me a coming out story beginning with, "I had to come out to a girl I once got pregnant." There is space within these identities for opposite-sex attraction without it threatening the identity's coherence. Therefore, it is not only the types of sexual attractions experienced, but the types of meanings invested in them as was explained previously in the case of Josh's identity. Gwen was very suspicious of bisexuals, saying that many of them use the identity as a convenience rather than because they follow their heart. Her assumption is that it allows them to be promiscuous and choose from both men and women. She had a friend who identified as bisexual and had been in a relationship with another woman for seven years. A serious, seven-year same-sex relationship, for Gwen, means that her friend is a lesbian. The main issue here is that how can a person be pulled by their desires to two different sexes/genders but functionally, in a relationship, they can only express one half of themselves.

The general issue with bisexuality is largely performative. Lesbians and gays wonder how it is possible to live what they see as a contradiction; how is an internal desire put into practice? As stated by Simone de Beauvoir in her famous statement concerning the concept "woman," "one is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (2009[1949]:xv). This means that work is required to eventually develop an identity, rather than it being an innate quality. The same-sex relationship is one of the most significant performative aspects of lesbian or gay identities. This is evidenced by its ability to entirely replace the performative statement "I am lesbian/gay" during coming out, as previously explained. To have this central performance not be able to index their identity is extremely harmful to their existence as bisexuals.

This performative issue is compounded given that the function of bisexuality for, according to Owen, "most [lesbian and gay] people," is not to signal desire for both sexes/genders, but is itself a liminal phase used to transition from heterosexual to gay or lesbian. Owen, Alex, and Will all first came out as bisexual; however, it was not an end in itself, but a way for them to gradually form their gay identities. They embodied an identity through which they could potentially fulfill the heterosexual life goals that their families and society expected of them. Herdt and Boxer also discussed bisexuality as a form of transitional phase. Individuals who identified as bisexual threatened the identities of the youth and the councilors and caused a great degree of fear and confusion. Bisexuals threatened the boundaries of the new identities of the youth. The boundaries between heterosexual and homosexual that support the lesbian and gay identities of the youth were threatened by bisexuals who could casually traverse and transgress the boundaries (Herdt & Boxer 1993:130-131). Therefore, the use of a bisexual identity by gays and lesbians undermines the idea that it can be the basis of a long-term sexuality.

Rituals of Incorporation

The final phase of the rite of passage is the ritual of incorporation that brings one back into society embodying a new identity. To begin, it is important to understand what the "community" into which lesbians, gays, and bisexuals enter is. When I asked participants about the LGBT community, I received a variety of different answers. The one consensus, however, was that none of the participants felt like they were part of an LGBT community. Some participants felt that they did not

need to become a part of an LGBT community, others tried and "starved" for this type

of community but did not understand how to become a part. There is the sense, with

the exception of Josh who rejected the idea of a community, that there is some type of

community. However the varied relation of participants to the community is derived

from the lack of consensus of what exactly the "community" is. A variety of events

and spaces were described by participants as centres of the community. For example,

the community consists of Pride Parade, the gay club scene, university queer

societies, the LGBT dating scene, and certain sports teams. The sense of community

as a collection of event-based gatherings can be illuminated by Goffman's concept of

"focussed gathering" (1961). Focussed gathering, as explained by Geertz (2005:65), is

a periodic gathering of interchangeable actors that forms around a certain activity and

all actors that participate in this flow of activity are related in terms of the flow.

Therefore the above-identified spaces and events are expressions of this flow of mass

energy. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people's participation in this community is

reinforced by the existence of other groups that have become the mechanism of

boundary maintenance. Barth wrote that groups "entail processes of exclusion and

incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained *despite* changing

participation and membership in the course of individual life histories [emphasis in

the original]" (1998[1969]:10). In this case, the main group that is referenced in

opposition to the LGBT community is the heterosexual group. This is expressed in the

joke example previous, where the oppositions of heterosexual and gay were

maintained and policed by the boss as that particular type of speech was only

acceptable for gay people. Therefore the community is maintained through periodic

expressions of mass effort on the part of LGBT people and in its opposition to

heterosexuals.

An important example of focussed gathering is the Pride Parade. The Pride Parade in Halifax is an *en masse* event attended by upwards of 100,000 people (Halifax Pride 2014), LGBT and heterosexual alike. Some participants had mixed feelings about the parade, stating that they do participate, but have reservations. The reservations stated included its increasing commercialization, lack of activism, and how many LGBT people use it as pretence for partying, drinking, drug-use, and sex. Yet many individuals do derive meaning from the event, despite their feelings that the event has flaws. Isabella spoke about how it was most significant for her as it made her recognise that she was not alone as a bisexual. The feeling of isolation subsided for many other participants as well. The parade is also a place where Isabella could continue being "half in the closet"[16] as well as freely express herself. For example, she can freely attend, cheer, and take pictures, affirming her presence as part of the multitudes of other LGBT people also doing these activities. The Pride Parade is an example of the current conception of coming out and its management, whereby it is not always necessary for one to 'fully' come out, as it allows an individual to put themselves in an LGBT context while maintaining the partial-privacy of their sexuality.

The framework of van Gennep's rites of passage was bounded by the rites of separation and reincorporation and the assumption that within in this structure a community objectively existed. The above conceptualization of community as created through activity makes the identification of an end to coming out complicated. For many this may occur when they describe themselves as fully "out." It may also occur once the original goals of participants are fulfilled; when they can express their authentic self. I propose that there is no one ritual that abruptly ends the coming out process for such reasons as the maintenance of identity boundaries is continuous as is

the need to express the performative statement "I am lesbian, gay, or bisexual" (or similar statements that substitute it). No matter when or whether it is possible that the process actually be completed the various phases experienced and created by participants are the bases of their sexuality.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUDING REMARKS

Coming out is a process that is important in the lives of many lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. The most common definition of coming out is 'the public voicing of a non-hegemonic sexuality to friends, family, co-workers, and acquaintances' and it is part of a process that involves the transformation of many of the relationships and identities of those that engage in it. It is both conceived of as necessary (although many that see coming out as necessary are not, themselves, 'fully' out) and difficult, ideas that are caused largely by the heterosexist context that both assumes and values default heterosexuality over homosexuality.

The process of coming out consists of various general phases each involving the construction and expression of an individual's sexuality: realization, coming out, liminality, and reincorporation. The realization of a lesbian, gay, or bisexual sexuality is largely based on the construction of narratives and on the re-assessment of past life events from the perspective of these sexualities. It is at this point that same-sex attraction often gains lesbian, gay, or bisexual meaning. Coming out puts to work these new perspectives, transforming these individuals from an assumed heterosexual identity to a lesbian, gay, or bisexual in the context of their relationships with friends, family, co-workers, and/or acquaintances. Through the narration of coming out stories, lesbians, gays, and bisexuals create and reinforce their membership to an LGBT community and body of shared values including the overcoming of hardship. Liminality is a phase during which lesbians, gays, and bisexuals unlearn those conceptions of LGBT people created by the wider society and search for resources from which to learn from within the LGBT community. Prior to coming out,

anonymity is an extremely important component of the search for resources, influencing the types of sources used by participants and leading them to Internet sites, for example. The importance of the recognition of their identity by other LGBT people and heterosexuals has been shown to involve various negotiations of performative aspects. To not attain recognition as gay has led to being fired from a job in the case of one participant, whose camp humour was interpreted as homophobia. As well, due to the performative issues of bisexuality and its use by lesbians and gays as a form of liminal phase, the lack of acknowledgement of bisexuality as a legitimate sexuality was a struggle shared by both bisexual participants and was a topic discussed by most participants. Finally, rituals of incorporation into the LGBT community involve both focused gatherings and smaller group participation. For example, the annual Pride Parade was mentioned by most participants as a community space in which they were able to put into practice a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity. As well, participants expressed their sexuality when interacting with other lesbians, gays, and bisexuals through jokes, storytelling, and romantic relationships. However, there is no bounded community into which participants entered, but through the previously-mentioned activities a sense of community is created.

While the framework of the rites of passage has proved useful in illuminating the coming out process, it is not sufficiently flexible to encapsulate the ranges of behaviours in which participants engaged. According to participants, there is no consensus as to what the community is. Unlike the assumption of the framework of the rites of passage, there is no objective community into which participants enter upon completion of the rite of passage. Also, due to the lack of an objective community, there is no set end of the coming out process, as the community is constructed through the expression of learned behaviours in a context populated by

lesbians, gays, and bisexuals which is constantly changing. Since individuals transform throughout coming out in a way that works against hegemonic cultural values that favour heterosexuality, the way in which they enter the process and the support given them is vastly different from the traditional conception of a rite of passage. Finally, participants were not passive objects acted upon by other members of the society but actively constructed and directed their coming out process, moving toward an authentic expression of their identity that was comfortable to them.

As the framework of rites of passage were not able to express the entirety of the experiences of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual participants I interviewed, it is important that this process be studied more thoroughly using a different framework. This type of research can be extended to other members of the LGBT community who also face many challenges in the social acceptance of their identities. It is important that research be conducted by members of the LGBT community who reflect the full spectrum of sexuality. One of my most important suggestions is that this research be extended in the future to other racial groups. As the institution of coming out has been criticized as not being inclusive to black people (Mercer 1994:132-133), for example, it is important that anthropologists incorporate the experiences and strategies of sexuality creation, expression, and management of people of colour[17] into research. Areas for additional research also include those who have coming out stories that are not ideal, including young people who are disowned by their family or communities or are forced to leave home.

Finally, I hope that reading this thesis has illuminated a significant period of the lives of many lesbians, gays, and bisexuals and has given more depth to the often one dimensional caricature of these individuals portrayed by the media and entertainment. Increased representation and anthropological analysis of the stories of

individual lesbians, gays, and bisexuals is important for increased acceptance into

society. As well, for specifically lesbian, gay, and bisexual readers, I hope that value

can be drawn out of my research and the stories of participants for application in their

own lives.

## NOTES

[1] All participants' names used throughout this thesis are pseudonyms, used to maintain their anonymity.

[2] The concept of hegemony was developed by Gramsci and is used to describe the popularization of a certain set of values, ideas, and theories of the world (i.e., a world view), that is of the ruling class and secures the consent of the ruled population for this class to rule (Bates 1975:352). The term "non-hegemonic sexuality" to refer to all non-heterosexual sexualities, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc., is used by Castelar C. (2010:193).

[3] James T. Sears (1997) defines heterosexism as "a belief in the superiority of heterosexuals or heterosexuality evidenced in the exclusion, by omission or design, of non-heterosexual persons in policies, procedures, events, or activities" (17). Heterosexism is the wide system of values that systematically benefits heterosexuals and disadvantages non-hegemonic sexualities. It is out of this system of power that homophobia originates, it being a manifestation of the system.

[4] Many different acronyms are used to describe the community that includes lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. The acronym I use in this thesis, LGBT, stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans*. [4] Trans* stands for transgender [where one changes their gender expression], transsexual [where one, through surgery and/or hormone treatment, changes their sex], transvestite [where one, in certain situations or events, dresses and acts as the opposite gender]. The choice of LGBT is used for the sake of simplicity and as I began this research with the intention of including trans* individuals in the pool of participants.

[5] It was expressed by some participants that many members of the community are of the opinion that heterosexuals should not attempt to study the lives of LGBT people and that it was not a topic normally discussed with heterosexuals.

[6] See for example the "berdache" of the Zuñi discussed by Benedict (2010[1934]:152-153). Also, Chalmers mentions homosexual behaviour among Bugilai males [Melanesia] during initiation (1903:109). Finally, van Gennep discussed the ritual context of homosexual behaviours among the Ingiet of Melanesia (1960[1908]:171).

[7] The Mattachine Society was an American activist group purposed to promote unity, to educate homosexuals and heterosexuals, to reform laws concerning the criminality of homosexuality, and to assist the victims of a heterosexist and homophobic society (Sullivan 2003:21-22). The basic principle of groups such as this was assimilationist ["that homosexuals are 'just like everybody else'" (Sullivan 2003:24) and should assimilate into society] rather than revolutionary.

[8] The Stonewall Riots took place in New York City from June 26th through July 2nd, 1969, centred upon the Stonewall Inn following one of the routine police raids on the establishment. Police harassment was violently resisted by the community, a pivotal role played by the most oppressed sectors: racially diverse youth, many of whom poor and homeless, transvestites, and butch lesbians (Wolf 2009).

[9] The areas of life mentioned by Herdt and Boxer include grades, friends, self-esteem, work, hassles, future plans, family relationships, and other (1993:211).

[10] A "seed," as used by Bernard, is a 1st degree contact (2006:193).

[11] Ritual scarification involves the cutting of the skin according to culturally-specific patterns to create permanent scars. See for example initiation among the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1940), the Chambri (Gewertz 1998), or the Moba (Kreamer 1995).

[12] To fully ensure the anonymity of participants, some anecdotes, quotations, and stories are not attributed to a specific pseudonym. As well I have, in some cases, changed the pronouns used to describe participants. These alterations occur based on the subject matter or specificity of the narrative.

[13] Italics are used in statements of participants to express the emphasis they placed on certain words.

[14] Creaky voice is a creaking, low sound created by relaxing the vocal folds at the end of a sentence, characteristic of Valley Girl speech

[15] Furry porn is the artistic representation of anthropomorphic animals having sexual relations.

[16] To be "half in the closet" means that she has not told all of her acquaintances about her sexuality. This term was used by Isabella herself to describe her situation.

WORKS CITED

Austin, J. L.

    1962 *How to Do Things With Words*. London: Oxford University Press.

Barth, Fredrik

    1998[1969] Introduction. *In* Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Culture Difference. Fredrik Barth, ed. Pp. 9-38. Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.

Bates, Thomas R.

    1975 Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony. Journal of the History of Ideas 36(2):351-366.

Benedict, Ruth

    2010[1932] The Individual and the Pattern of Culture. *In* Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory. 3$^{rd}$ edition. Paul Erickson and Liam D. Murphy, eds. Pp. 147-160. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Bernard, Russel H.

    2006 *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 4$^{th}$ edition. Oxford: AltaMira Press.

Bolin, Anne, and Patricia Whelehan

    1999 *Perspectives on Human Sexuality*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Boxer, Andrew, and Gilbert Herdt

    1993  *Children of Horizons: How Gay and Lesbian Teens Are Leading a New Way Out of the Closet*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Butler, Judith

    1990  *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Cameron, Deborah, and Don Kulick

    2003  *Language and Sexuality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Castelar C., Andrés Felipe

    2010  *Identidades colectivas y reconocimiento: Razas, etnias, géneros y sexualidades*. Delfín Ignacio Grueso and Gabriela Castellanos, eds. Cali, Colombia: Universidad del Valle.

CBC News

2014  Ellen Page Comes Out as Gay: 'I'm Tired of Hiding.' February 14. http://www.cbc.ca/news/arts/ellen-page-comes-out-as-gay-i-m-tired-of-hiding-1.2538384, accessed April 13, 2014.

Chalmers, James

    1903  Notes on the Bugilai, British New Guinea. The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland 33:108-110.

Cho, Song Pae

    2011  Faceless Things: South Korean Gay Men, Internet, and Sexual Censorship. PhD. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois.

de Beauvoir, Simone

    2009[1949]  *The Second Sex*. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, trans. New York: Random House.

Deng, Francis Mading

    1972  *The Dinka of the Sudan*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E.

    1940  *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Foucault, Michel

    1978  *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume One*. Robert Hurley, trans. New York: Random House, Inc.

Geertz, Clifford

    2005  Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight. Daedalus 134(4):56-86.

Gewertz, Deborah B.

    1998  The Father Who Bore Me: The Role of Tsambunwuro during Chambri Initiation Ceremonies. *In* Rituals of Manhood: Male Initiation in Papua New Guinea. Gilbert H. Herdt, ed. Pp. 286-356. New Jersey: University of California Press.

Goffman, Erving

   1961  *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction*. Indianapolis:
         Bobbs-Merrill.


Government of Canada

   2013  Sexual Orientation and Human Rights.
         http://www.pch.gc.ca/eng/1355925591901/1355925767915, accessed April 9,
         2014.


Halifax Pride

   2014  "History- A History of Pride Marches in Halifax, Nova Scotia"
         http://halifaxpride.com/about/history/, accessed March 15, 2014


Harris, Marvin

   2010[1979]  The Epistemology of Cultural Materialism. *In* Readings for a History
         of Anthropological Theory. 3rd edition. Paul Erickson and Liam D. Murphy,
         eds. Pp. 311-321. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.


Herdt, Gilbert

   1981  *Guardians of the Flutes, Volume 1: Idioms of Masculinity*. Chicago:
         University of Chicago Press.


Herdt, Gilbert, and Andrew Boxer

   1993  *Children of Horizons: How Gay and Lesbian Teens Are Leading a New
         Way Out of the Closet*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Johnson, Jaye

    2013  #NCOD and Coming Out Still Matters: National #ComingOut Day Is October 11. October 11. http://gayagenda.com/ncod-and-coming-out-still-matters-national-comingout-day-is-october-11/, accessed April 16, 2014.

Kreamer, Christine Mullen

    1995  Transformation and Power in Moba (Northern Togo) Initiation Rites. Africa: Journal of the International African Institute (1):58-78.

McIntosh, Mary

    1968  The Homosexual Role. Social Problems 16(2):182-192.

Mercer, Kobena

    1994  *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Neill, James

    2009  *The Origins and Role of Same-Sex Relations in Human Societies*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc.

Ochs, Elinor, and Lisa Capps.

    2001  *Living Narrative: Creating Lives in Everyday Storytelling*. London: Harvard University Press.

Rainbow Health Ontario

    2012  RHO Fact Sheet: LGBT Mental Health.
        www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/admin/contentengine/contentdocuments/lgbt_mental_health.pdf, accessed April 13, 2014.


Ridge, Damien, David Plummer, and David Peasely

    2006  Remaking the Masculine Self and Coping in the Liminal World of the Gay 'Scene.' Culture, Health & Sexuality 8(6):501-514.


Ross, Loretta

2011  "The Origin of the Phrase 'Women of Color.'" YouTube. Western States Centre. http://youtu.be/82vl34mi4Iw, accessed April 16, 2014.


Rubin, Gayle

    2002  Studying Sexual Subcultures: Excavating the Ethnography of Gay Communitiesin Urban North America. *In* Out in Theory: The Emergence of Lesbian and Gay Anthropology. Ellen Lewin and William L. Leap, eds. Pp. 17-68. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.


Rust, Paula C.

    1993  "Coming Out" in the Age of Social Constructionism: Sexual Identity Formation among Lesbian and Bisexual Women. Gender and Society 7(1):50-77.


Sears, James T.

    1997  Thinking Critically/Intervening Effectively About Homophobia and Heterosexism. *In* Overcoming Heterosexism and Homophobia: Strategies that Work. James T. Sears and Walter L. Williams. Pp. 13-48. New York: Columbia University Press.

Signorile, Michelangelo

    1996 *Outing Yourself: How to Come Out as Lesbian or Gay to Your Family, Friends, and Coworkers*. New York: Fireside.


Smith, Miriam

    1999 *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada: Social Movements and Equality Seeking, 1971-1995*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.


Sonenschein, David

    1966 Homosexuality as a Subject of Anthropological Study. Anthropological Quarterly 39(2):73-82.


Stevens, Phillips, Jr.

    2009[1978] Play and Liminality in Rites of Passage: From Elder to Ancestor in West Africa. *In* Sacred Realms: Readings in the Anthropology of Religion. 2nd edition. Richard Warms, James Garber, and R. Jon McGee, eds. Pp. 175-185. Oxford: Oxford University Press.


Sullivan, Nikki

    2003 *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. New York: New York University Press.


Turner, Victor W.

    2009[1964] Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*. *In* Sacred Realms: Readings in the Anthropology of Religion. 2nd edition. Richard Warms, James Garber, and R. Jon McGee, eds. Pp. 167-174. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

van Gennep, Arnold

    1960[1908]  *The Rites of Passage*. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffe, trans. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Webb-Mitchell, Brett

    2007  *On Being a Gay Parent: Making a Future Together*. New York: Church Publishing, Incorporated.

Weeks, Jeffrey

    1990  *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*. 2nd Edition. London: Quartet Books.

Weston, Kath.

    1991  *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Wolf, Sherry

    2009  *Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics, and Theory of LGBT Liberation*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

**SAINT MARY'S**
**UNIVERSITY** SINCE 1802

**PATRICK POWER**
**LIBRARY**

Department Office
**T** 902.420.5534
**F** 902.420.5561

One University. One World. Yours.

# Research Ethics Board Certificate Notice

The Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board has issued an REB certificate related to this thesis. The certificate number is: _13-211_ .

A copy of the certificate is on file at:

Saint Mary's University, Archives
Patrick Power Library
Halifax, NS
B3H 3C3

Email: archives@smu.ca
Phone: 902-420-5508
Fax: 902-420-5561

For more information on the issuing of REB certificates, you can contact the Research Ethics Board at 902-420-5728/ ethics@smu.ca .