

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:       SCHOOLING, STRUCTURED INEQUALITY,  
  AND INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE: A  
  QUALITATIVE STUDY

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By applying sexuality as a category of difference to various schooling processes, it becomes apparent that schooling conditions students to function as heterosexuals in a heterosexual society and sanctions those who do not comply. Students' responses to this type of education are generally empirically unknown, and research tends to focus on the lack of psychosocial adjustment in gay and lesbian youth. A major focus of this study was to understand how female students make sense of their lives in schools and in a society that privileges heterosexuality. The backdrop for this study is the longstanding problem of fusing the micro-macro chasm in educational sociology (Archer, 1996).

This qualitative study used Consensual Qualitative Research (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) to analyze data collected through semi-structured, open-ended interviews with 15 women between 18 to 20 years old who did not identify as heterosexual while high school students.

What participants talked about in the interviews was neither a sense of possessing free agency in all aspects of their lives nor a sense that an overarching structure limited their opportunities in the environments discussed in the interviews. What participants suggested, instead, was that their individual experiences were shaped in a set of interrelated environments in ways that they perceived as both enabling and constraining.

One important implication of this study is that professionals in schools must be intentional in their institutional actions to deliver an enabling education so that students will not expect that any unequal power relations that exist in the larger society will be a naturalized, integral part of their school experience.

SCHOOLING, STRUCTURED INEQUALITY, AND  
INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

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## Chapter One: Introduction

### *Social Origins of Privilege*

In a stratified society, individuals are grouped by ascribed characteristics and these groups are assigned different status positions. Society imposes this fundamental split on groups based on socially constructed and paired concepts (e.g., white/black, male/female, gay/straight) that carry different status and cultural authority. Schooling is a powerful socializing institution that defers to these socially constructed status positions and shapes students' realities about imposed differences in culturally attuned ways.

In schooling, the sources of deliberate social ordering are masked by the inculcation of a deluding reality embodying a fragmented and distorted world view (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). These ideologies mask the socialization processes that circumscribe students' lives and create the illusion that the present social order is a result of natural forces. As philosopher Frye (1983) explains:

For efficient subordination, what's wanted is that the structure not appear to be a cultural artifact kept in place by human decision or custom, but that it appear *natural*--that it appear to be a quite direct consequence of facts about the beast which are beyond the scope of human manipulation or revision. (p. 34)

In this way, schooling contributes to the continuance of a hierarchal social order while simultaneously misleading students in matters of social engineering.

Schooling teaches valued and devalued groups to misread the social environment, thereby producing students who overlook or misinterpret the deeper

structural sources of inequalities, conform to the school's expectation for their group, and internalize their socially dictated status. Students defend their schooling experiences as natural, normal, and fair, despite being socialized for different roles in society and the different social consequences of those roles (see Oakes, 1985). One major impact of differentiation is the structuring of reality for members of both valued and devalued groups and a fundamental difference in feelings of entitlement and power.

Socially valued groups are associated with positive characteristics that appear neutral, natural, and universal (Beauvoir, 1949). Valued groups reap an unequal share of the rewards of schooling, yet they are often unable to perceive their special status and privilege as the result of structural advantage. Consequently, valued groups tend to exhibit behaviors that reflect a belief in the inherent naturalness of their privileged status. Schooling socializes students from valued groups to believe that everything they have and everything that they are is genuine and due to them.

Devalued groups are associated with the marginal, deviant, and specific (Beauvoir, 1949). While it may seem that lower status people should be highly motivated to seek the root cause of their situation, schooling systematically derails them from this pursuit. Although schooling suppresses independent thinking by both valued and devalued students, the consequences are especially poignant for groups who are systematically devalued. Members of groups who have been outcast and marginalized live in an environment where the oppressor's status is normalized and embedded in the culture. Schooling trains devalued students to internalize their status by identifying themselves through the eyes of their oppressors. This "arrogant eye" of

the oppressor "gives all things meaning by connecting all things to each other by way of their references to one point" (Frye, 1983, p. 80). Thus, a devalued person is neither seen nor worth seeing. Schooling processes further deflect inquiry into the role of school in the maintenance of the social order by socializing devalued groups to co-conspire in their own subordination. This is accomplished in various ways (e.g., the lowering of self-esteem, the repetition of unchallenged beliefs) that assure students will assume personal responsibility for altering their personal aspirations to a preordained outcome.

Not surprisingly, devalued groups tend to exhibit behaviors that reflect their devalued status. As Frye has stated, "We do become what we practice being" (1983, p. 34). Schooling so effectively derails students in their quest for a self-determined autonomy that even students who resist institutionalized devaluing do so in ways that result in a reinforcement of the dualism that disables them (e.g., see Goodman, 1962; MacLeod, 1995; Willis, 1977). The poor, white, adolescent boys of MacLeod's (1995) study understood on some level that a personal cost was being extracted from them by a schooling system entrenched in serving the dominant culture. Many of these boys elected to salvage and preserve their self-esteem by removing themselves from a schooling environment which they perceived as hostile and demeaning. This "choice," that is, to opt out of a credentialing process that robs them of their integrity, seals their educational failure and further cements their present class status.

Similarly, some girls do not experience schooling as a venue for self-definition, reflection, and academic stimulation and "choose" the early adoption of motherhood because it brings them "acceptance, credibility, and status that had

previously eluded them" (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 117) in schooling. While girls are rewarded for embracing and expressing the gendered role that is espoused in schooling, the penalty for advancing to motherhood prematurely is an abrupt disruption to their potential educational attainment. The individual actions of these girls, while seemingly taken to achieve emancipation from the systematic devaluing and erosion of their intellectual integrity, produces no challenge to the gendered structure of education and permits questions surrounding the beneficiaries of the contemporary schooling system and the systematic distribution of failure to remain unasked.

### *Social Origins of Resistance*

However pressing social institutions might be in their efforts to protect and maintain the status quo, the social world is neither absolute nor static. The status quo can and has been altered by people who have broken at least partially free of their socialization for subordination or domination. For many devalued people, socialization is not destiny. Throughout history, individual and community efforts have produced class-based, antiracist, and feminist social change in response to repressive social institutions. In this country's recent past, many participants and leaders of various movements for justice and social change were once public school students.

So just how do people acquire the ability to see the larger social forces that structure individual experience? The raw materials which can lead to the development of insight into the social world comprise the fabric of daily life, yet the degree to which people unravel these threads varies. A diverse body of theoretical literature

contributes to the understanding of how some devalued adults detect social structure and social ordering and develop an analytic framework from which to understand and critique the social world and specific institutional settings. For example, feminist theorizing on the origins of critical social awareness starts with the deconstruction of meanings associated with everyday engagements with the social world.

As Lemert (1997) says, when people "begin to look critically in the right place" (p. 22), abstract social structuring comes into focus. This critical insight originates in a curiosity, a questioning stance or an inability to overlook common justifications. Jaggar (1989) argues that devalued people's emotional responses to the dominant cultures' standard definitions of humor, wit, and the appropriate situations for anger may ignite investigations which lead to "alternatives to prevailing conceptions of reality" (p. 167). This can happen only if an individual does not dismiss emotions, particularly emotions that are incongruent with prevailing expectations, as irrational sources of knowledge. For example, the woman who puzzles over the difference between her positive feelings associated with her attraction for another woman and the anger and outrage it evokes in other people and groups may find in her emotions the catalyst for further inquiry in the prevailing social order.

Feminists also urge individuals to take serious account of the concrete experiences of their personal lives as the raw material for social analysis. The collective uncovering of commonalities and nuances of experiences, specifically the emotional, financial, physical, and psychic demands placed on women, become the path to new knowledge and the development of a consciousness about the structured oppression of women in a patriarchal society. Through the articulation of these

experiences, the codification of them in texts, the publishing and distribution of these books in alternative channels beyond the authority of publishing gatekeepers, a knowledge base is produced. These critiques of the social world are thereby available to people who may not otherwise have exposure to the raw materials that may ignite new insights into the structuring of individual and collective experiences.

While it is clear that some adults can read their social world, it is unclear from the educational literature how disenfranchised youth learn to think beyond their individual experiences in schooling. How do they discover that social institutions, particularly their schooling, molds their expectations, experiences, and opportunities and demands conformity to a larger system that is in opposition to their best interests? MacLeod (1995) found that the devalued students in his study are only able to describe a diffuse feeling that something is not right and none could provide what Mills' (1959) calls a "lucid summation" of how the order of the social world was influencing their personal experiences. In his follow-up study years later, MacLeod found the analytical ability of the young adults was only slightly sharper and the invisible structure that shaped their lives in school and after graduation remained largely invisible to them.

#### *Gay and Lesbian Students*

In order to further investigate how devalued students emerge as social critics while still in school, it is useful to focus on the experiences of one specific devalued group, in this study, female students who did not identify themselves as heterosexual high school students. Lesbian and gay youth occupy a devalued status in schooling as a result of gendered power relationships that are evident in all social institutions in a

patriarchal society. The allocation and enforcement of hierarchically related, gendered identities are intricate parts of contemporary schooling, where boys are socialized to masculinity and girls to femininity, and then each group is romantically reoriented to the other. Under the guise of education, schooling processes promote and modify students' behavior in gender "appropriate" ways. Students must "prove" to adults and peers that they reject one set of stereotypical behaviors and embrace another. Sanctions for student conformity to these rigidly scripted gender and romance roles remain largely unquestioned as the appropriate domain for monitoring and enforcement by school authorities, as evidenced by punitive actions taken by school authorities who perceive gays and lesbians as threats to gender norms and school safety.

The literature is silent on the impact schooling has on heterosexuals, as a group. Who would think of such a study? As Jeffrey succinctly states, "The fact that the social relationships in western male supremacy are organized on a heterosexual principle, i.e., based on the act of sexual intercourse, would seem as little worth comment as the fact that rain falls from the sky" (1990a, p. 287). As with other groups that are valued, little research attention has focused on the benefits schooling bestows on students in this group because few have thought to question it. As in the larger society, heterosexuals often fail to consider that the positive sanctions associated with heterosexual romantic partnerships are socially constructed and serve a broader interest in the maintenance of a patriarchal social order. Through schooling processes that maintain unexamined status positions, students come to believe that heterosexuality is the universal mark of normality and health.

Most public spaces are experienced by gays and lesbians as heterosexual places (Valentine, 1993), and schools are no exception. Gay and lesbian youth spend extended periods of their days in the heteronormative environment that permeates all functions, interactions, and social relations of schooling (Fine, 1993). Clearly this structuring partially accounts for how gays and lesbians come to see themselves as marginalized from the mainstream culture. Education literature is replete with studies that address the harm done to students by schooling that systematically devalues them. For example, the expectation of student adherence to rigid gender roles results in girls who devalue themselves because they are taught to judge themselves against a patriarchally defined standard of femininity. Brownmiller says that "to be insufficiently feminine is viewed as a failure in core sexual identity" (1984, p. 15), an evaluation structured by society, transmitted in school and internalized by girls.

A small, but growing body of work tends to focus on gay and lesbian youth who are visible to researchers because they exhibit behaviors that align with dominant perceptions about the behaviors of devalued groups (e.g., students who require mental health counseling or crisis intervention). The results of these studies of gay and lesbian students' experiences in schooling are largely predictable. Consequences of exclusions and stigmatization of gay and lesbian students include social alienation, low self-esteem, a risk of dropping out, educational failure, depression and suicide (see Gibson, 1989; Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 1993; Herdt, 1989; Herdt & Boxer, 1993; Heron, 1994; Savin-Williams, 1990; Uribe & Harbeck, 1992). Subtly, but effectively, these studies collude in perpetuating the socially constructed belief that gay and lesbian youth confront problems associated with

pathology that require understanding, support and compassion, not a reexamination of the social order. These studies are limited and provide an incomplete picture of student responses to schooling because they have concentrated solely on an examination of the link between students' devalued status and their futile and self-defeating reactions.

A fundamental question remains: How do some members of devalued groups manage to acquire the ability to perceive and evaluate the dominate social order and act in ways that do not reify the existing hierarchies of power and privilege? There is evidence that some gay and lesbian students immersed in the heavily indoctrinating environment of patriarchal schooling realize that they are getting a distorted and partial view of gender roles and sexuality. How is it then that these students come to reject or embrace a pathologizing view of themselves? How do they explain their present status in society to themselves and what factors nurture this analysis? Current research is silent on these issues.

The phenomenon of gay and lesbian student visibility is all the more compelling because many gay and lesbian youth spend most of their time with adults in the generally inhospitable and conservative settings of family and schooling. School-based opportunities for expression are especially important to gay and lesbian youth who come from traditional families hostile to their sons' and daughters' sexual orientation. In the schooling literature, advocates for critical pedagogy have argued that adult teachers can play an active role in helping students see how external powers organize their experiences. Yet a large rift exists between theory and praxis on this issue, as evidenced by the general failure of schools of education to produce teachers capable of critical self-reflection regarding the role of school in the reproduction of the

patriarchal status quo. Even gay and lesbian teachers, who may be most capable of offering an alternative perspective on the social world, are restricted from full participation in that venture due to archaic legal barriers and a lack of institutionalized protection from parental biases. Yet, simultaneously, another group of adults is visibly challenging the status quo. As Britzman (1996) points out, there are many predictions and assumptions, but very little empirical data, on how the larger gay and lesbian movement of the late 1990's is impacting gay and lesbian youth in school. Openly gay and lesbian adults are more visible as public figures (e.g., athletes, elected officials, authors, and actors) and the public discourses on gay and lesbian adults' issues (e.g., marriage, military service, health issues, and parenting) are accessible to youth more now than in any previous time.

### *Proposed Study*

In contrast to one-dimensional approaches that focus either on the negative impact of structure on experience or, alternatively, on experience without regard for structure, this study mapped how non-heterosexually identified female students in high school unraveled the relationship between social structure and their personal experiences. Using semi-structured interviews, this study examined the emergence of 15 student interpretations of complex social phenomenon shaping their lives.

This study used a qualitative research design due to the exploratory and largely uninvestigated nature of the phenomenon in question. A strength of a qualitative design is its emphasis on participants' experiences and the ways they make sense of those experiences (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). Within the epistemological framework of this study, the role of the researcher on lesbian youth was to "see

through the informant's eyes, conveying with integrity their understandings of their many worlds" (Sears, 1992b, p. 149).

Qualitative research also provides for a particular interpretation at a specific moment. Theory is derived from an inductive process that utilizes participants' words and contextualized experiences to describe a phenomenon (Sears, 1992b). To facilitate this process of theory building, this study used the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) design, a qualitative approach developed by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997). CQR uses a semi-structured interview process to study a few cases intensely.

Two research questions framed this study. The first question asked: In what ways do students see heteronormative social expectations organized, communicated, enforced and challenged in high school? This question considers the multiple influences that foster and impede an ability to see larger social forces structuring individual experiences in high school. To further map the political and philosophical frameworks drawn upon by participants, the second research question turns to the personal and social meanings students ascribe to heteronormative social expectations. Specifically, how do students characterize their critical perspective on heterosexual privilege and the role of schooling in promulgating privilege? Disempowered students do not automatically acquire critical perspectives on their status. To be critical of the status quo and the social order it maintains, students require a framework from which to decode and interpret the "reality" of the social world offered in schooling. This research question examined, through the words of the participants, how their conceptual frameworks are constructed and the epistemological processes which

develop and sustain their perspectives. The data raised new issues about schooling, structured inequality, and individual experiences.

## Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

### *Stratification*

The lack of autonomy between social institutions and powerful groups in society is not a superficial concern when that relationship contributes to the production of extremely different immediate and long-term consequences for valued and devalued groups. The ability of valued groups to maintain their status of privilege through institutional affiliations is further solidified when a constellation of institutions allows these groups to nurture tight and protective relationships with them (Walzer, 1983). Collectively, the intimate association between dominant groups and the institutions that serve society results in the ability of dominant groups to protect their status through institutional processes that favor and value them. The benefits of this relationship (e.g., medical care, police and legal protection, employment, and housing) are superior when compared to the services received by devalued groups who are prevented from forging strong institutional ties. Each individual institution that allows the seizure of its social function to advance the goals of controlling groups constitutes one vital subsystem in the maintenance and reproduction of privilege and oppression in a stratified society.

The role of schooling in the creation and perpetuation of social inequalities has been a central interest in the work of educational researchers. When interpreted broadly, schooling can be seen as aligning with the society it serves to create a national identity, socialize children into communities, and transfer a common knowledge base (Durkheim, 1956; Parsons, 1959). Yet, when examined through the lens of power relations, the close relationship between schooling and society is seen as

a source for unjust distributions of privileges, advantages, and benefits to valued students and the exploitation, oppression and disenfranchisement of devalued students. Collectively, reproduction theorists in education (e.g., Bowles & Gintis, 1976) reveal that schooling is neither neutral nor indifferent to the maintenance of power relations that structure society. Schooling ranks in the same league as other social institutions (e.g., the media, the military, the law, police, and courts) deployed by valued groups to maintain and protect their interests.

Since schooling is an institution that is closely aligned with the society it serves (Durkheim, 1956), a deeply stratified society can be expected to be reflected in schooling. In a society structured through a complex linking of capitalism, white privilege, and patriarchy, schooling can be expected to overprivilege or disadvantage students on the basis of gender, race, and class. Indeed, class, race, and gender theorists have teased apart the school-society relationship to uncover an array of processes through which powerful groups use schooling to rule and reproduce their power. Each of these perspectives starts with an analysis of difference, borne from the different historical trajectories of oppression, to explore the role of schooling in creating and perpetuating a stratified society. These conceptual frameworks are used to reveal the processes through which the close alignment between schooling and valued groups in society results in differentiated schooling experiences and outcomes for valued and devalued students. As a result of this ongoing work, it becomes obvious that many schooling processes systematically advantage valued groups and deter, demote, and misdirect devalued groups (Althusser, 1971; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Thus, the production of students who are autonomous in their analysis of the social world runs counter to the schools' aim of assimilating students to their predetermined race, class, and gender statuses. Bourdieu and Passeron argue that schooling structures reality differently for different groups of students to mystify these systems of privilege in society. If schooling is successful in instilling an ideology that is accepted and internalized by students, the intentionality of differentiation and its underlying sources are obscured and the status quo appears universal, natural and neutral. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) point to the role schooling plays in blinding devalued groups to the maneuvering of larger social forces and training those students to accept and even defend their own oppression. For valued groups, self-validating ideologies are promulgated which create a comfortable way for them to think about themselves without ever acknowledging the privileges they enjoy.

*Class.* Theorists who ascribe to a class analysis of social ordering focus on the beneficial relationship between groups who possess economic power and the social institutions that control the distribution of society's material, social, and cultural goods. Schooling becomes a site to study the systematic distribution of educational goods that reflect the students' class origins (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1973; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). A class analysis reveals that schooling protects and maintains the dramatic differences in the economic conditions of different groups while teaching students to misread the origins and naturalness of those class differences.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) linked the economy and the classroom by showing that schooling creates a trained and compliant working class. Their "correspondence theory" uncovered schooling processes that correspond to the norms and expectations

demanded in the workforce. Working class students are socialized to obey authority and to expect to perform routine and unchallenging tasks. In contrast, students of elite classes are presented with tasks that develop their abilities to think, strategize, and lead so that they may assume their position at the top of the class hierarchy.

These contrasting socialization experiences create a phenomenon whereby each set of students comes to believe in the naturalness of the resulting social order where working class students move into working class jobs, and elite students move into elite jobs. Through very complex and structured schooling processes, both sets of students are taught to believe that their eventual occupational outcome will be largely due to their own talents, efforts, and potential. The realization that schooling cooperates in the maintenance of a class-based society is then effectively erased from the realm of student awareness and responsibility for personal levels of achievement is shifted onto students who have been differentially prepared to compete (MacLeod, 1995).

Another way schooling shapes the experiences of working class students and limits their ability to compete is by promoting the success or failure of students on the social-class styles learned at home. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) argue that the pedagogy of schooling promotes and builds on the experiences, perceptions, linguistic codes, and norms, or "cultural capital," that elite classes provide to their children. In this way class power associated with being raised in an affluent home is converted by schooling into class advantage and students who possess devalued cultural capital enter the schooling race with a deficiency that puts them at a disadvantage. The disadvantage is compounded for poor children when their teachers' perceptions that

they lack the proper cultural capital results in their placement into lower academic tracks, where the amount and type of learning differs from higher tracks (Oakes, 1985). These processes also contribute to obscuring students' ability to see the power relations that contribute to the structuring of their individual experiences.

Devalued students are also disadvantaged by the withholding or misallocation of economic resources. In alignment with the interests of dominant groups, some schools enjoy an abundance of resources and services while others are left to fail as a result of depleted infrastructures. As direct beneficiaries of school funding formulas that protect local wealth, students from economically affluent districts have an advantage in resources from which to assure a quality and consistent education from the best educated and most experienced teachers in safe and well-furnished schools (Kozol, 1991). Privileged students learn the fallacy that there is an inherent naturalness in the allocation of resources for their use.

*Race.* An analysis of the power relations of race is used to unravel the socioeconomic, cultural, legal, and political processes that collectively protect white skin privilege. Harris (1998) traces how legal processes have "established and protected an actual property interest in whiteness itself" (p. 103) which allows owners of "whiteness" certain privileges, advantages, protections, and authority not granted to those without the property. Multiple social institutions work in tandem to guard and maintain the property right of whites and race theorists trace how the advantages associated with the possession of whiteness in the larger society translate into white privilege in schooling. Ogbu (1994) argues that the maintenance of white racial privilege is a significant consequence of schooling processes that "ensure that blacks

do not receive equal education in terms of quantity and quality" so that they cannot "perform as well or go as far as whites in schools" (p. 287).

The application of white standards to the daily treatment of blacks in schooling is the first of many experiences that will socialize whites into a valued status and devalue black students (Ogbu, 1994). Perry (1998) argues that the resistance to teaching the speech variety called Eubonics reflects the white power structure that is "repulsed by the people, by Black people, their language, their aesthetics, their rhythms, and their history" (p. 15). Non-white students are more often grouped into lower track, nonacademic classes and denied exposure to an intellectually stimulating curriculum (Oakes, 1985). The benefits for whites are compounded because lower-track students frequently receive instruction from teachers who lack experience, motivation, and enthusiasm. When controlled by white power interests, schooling contributes to blacks becoming a caste-like minority resembling other caste-like populations throughout the world who tend to do poorly in school (Ogbu, 1978).

White Americans harbor a deep-rooted belief in their own moral, cultural and cognitive superiority and use white racial "science" to prove it and their public voice to disseminate and legitimate it (e.g., Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). White students then benefit from the fantasy of white intellectual supremacy and the denial of intelligence in other groups when schooling processes make whiteness an educational asset. Whites also benefit from the ever-changing mythologies that associate the causes of high and low positional status with skin color rather than the unequal structuring of opportunities available to each group. These mythologies range from claims of

biological inferiority to the fictions of *culture of poverty*, *cultural deprivation*, *black underclass* and *the disadvantaged*.

*Gender.* A different link between schooling and the reproduction of the power relations of society is revealed by applying a feminist analysis. This framework studies the power relations of gender in the reproduction of a patriarchal society and concentrates on how the advantages linked with the possession of maleness, like the possession of material resources or white skin, is recognized and protected as a valued status, and rewarded with educational advantages. Gender analysis makes transparent "aspects of women's oppression that were previously obscured and to refine the conceptual apparatus needed for a more adequate understanding of women's situation" (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1984, p. xii). Using feminist frameworks, scholars uncover schooling processes that create gender advantages for boys and disadvantages for girls. A major aim of the work is to explain gendered practices in schooling as social and historical occurrences (Arnot, 1982; Kelly & Nihlen, 1982).

In preparation for their adult roles, schooling teaches children to accept and abide by certain socially mandated rules and behaviors (Parsons, 1959). Solomon (1985) and Woody (1927) provide evidence that changes in the education of girls and women keeps pace with society's historically contingent ideas about women's proper adult roles in the family, workforce, and society. A feminist analysis finds that training for women's adult roles is not administered with neutrality but related to the role of reinforcing women's subordinate status in a male-dominated society (see Best 1983, Delamont, 1990; Thorne, 1993). Limiting occupational aspirations and choices serves a patriarchal order by protecting male economic privileges in a capitalist system and

creating women's economic dependency on men. Schooling narrows girls' economic options by directing them to less challenging subjects while boys are encouraged to pursue math, science and technical careers that lead to high paying jobs. A focus on schooling processes that limit women's potential earning capacity reveals that schooling steers women away from male subjects toward female subjects (e.g., Sorensen & Hallinan, 1987) and fails to assure that boys and girls are prepared for equal roles in the workforce (AAUW, 1992, 1998). Socialization for a specific, gendered life is reinforced by exposure to a curriculum that reinforces women's absence in the occupational and cultural sphere (Kelly & Nihlen, 1982).

Spender (1982) catalogs a long history of women's subordination through schooling and questions the ideology which promotes schooling for girls as "benign and neutral, that it is a 'good thing', and the more one gets the better of one will be" (p. 1). Sadker and Sadker (1994) found that teachers work harder at teaching boys than teaching girls and that "girls are turned into educational spectators instead of players" (p. 13). They demonstrate the remarkable frequency with which teachers reinforce gender role expectations of "boys in action; girls inaction" (p. 42). As a result of schooling, boys and girls emerge from schooling with very different perspectives about their value, status, and capabilities.

*Analysis of power relations.* Race, class, and gender analyses provide valuable insights into understanding the role of schooling in the perpetuation of a stratified society through processes of differentiation and the inculcation of a belief system of the naturalness of the social order. Each of these conceptual approaches demonstrates that schooling plays a role in sustaining and protecting the social order and that both

valued and devalued students are taught to misread their social world in order to deflect serious challenges to the status quo. Each of these perspectives deeply analyzes the power relations of society and, as a result, each perspective has been dismissed as incomplete, of marginal value, and reflecting only the self-interested priorities of its advocates.

Of course, any new reading of the social order may be challenged on these grounds. For example, in educational research, the claim is made that economics, not race, is the real determinant of positional status created by schooling and the more significant, influential, or relevant link between schooling and society. However, at best, the devaluing of a race-based analysis reflects a serious lack of appreciation for the breadth and depth of information on social reproduction that different analytic approaches produce. At worse, the white power structure benefits from this dismissal by protecting the mythology of whiteness as "a positive or neutral category" (Feagin & Vera, 1995, p. 92) that does not require further investigation. This dismissal marginalizes issues of race as something of concern only to non-whites who then carry the burden of proof that their perspective has value.

The technique of silencing is familiar to those who speak critically to power. Gender analysis is often subordinated to the study of class relations or relegated to a marginal status in educational research. Feminist theories struggled to emerge from Marxist theory to claim an independent analytic role separate from that offered by a class analysis. As Hartmann explains, the struggle was to challenge the belief that "Marxism and feminism are one, and that one is Marxism" (1984, p. 172). Resistance to a gender analysis independent from a class analysis is evident by those who are able

to "acknowledge that the state is capitalistic; [but will] not acknowledge that it is male" (MacKinnon, 1989, p. 215). While the search for a single, unifying explanation of social reproduction may be laudatory, the consequences of such an approach may be the silencing of critical information emerging from the schooling experiences of specific populations.

*Sexuality.* If schooling is elevated to the status of other powerful institutions that are loyal to protecting dominant group advantages, any unequal power relation that exists in the larger society can be expected to be an integral part of schooling. Like race, class, and gender, sexuality is a cultural construct that organizes power relations in society (see Duggan, 1992; Jeffreys, 1990b; Katz, 1983; Raymond, 1986; Rich, 1984; Seidman, 1996; Wittig, 1992). Feminists (e.g., Jeffreys, 1990b; Rich, 1984), have argued that heterosexuality is a system through which patriarchal supremacy is organized and maintained in society. Leidholdt (1990) identifies heterosexual couplings as miniature replications of the power relations between men and women in the larger society. By rendering women sexually subordinate to men, Rich (1984) argues that males "assure their right of physical, economical, and emotional access" to women through the enforcement of "compulsory heterosexuality" (p. 223). She argues that heterosexuality is a political system that "has had to be imposed, managed, organized, propagandized and maintained by force" (p. 225) and Jeffries (1990) concurs that it takes concerted effort on the part of many social institutions to construct and protect heterosexuality.

Although Rich's (1984) classic essay written more than 20 years ago calls for heterosexuality "to be recognized and studied as a political institution" (p. 220),

educational researchers in the United States have not generally used sexuality as a category of social analysis nor as an approach to social reproduction through schooling. In contrast, several British feminist education scholars made this connection almost a decade ago in response to national legislation making it illegal for locally governed schools to "intentionally promote homosexuality" or to "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" (Jones & Mahony, 1989, p. xii). Using the policy document as a starting point, Jones and Mahony draw on feminist frameworks to argue that the state's control of sexuality through schooling processes "increases social control of girls and women" (p. xiii). They argue that stratification systems of power relations depend on the construction of two immutable gendered groups.

Marland's (1983) suggestion that the aggressiveness with which schooling "makes girls and boys more different than the forces of society would otherwise do" (p. 31) implies that schooling plays a significant role in organizing and policing student participation in the specific heterosexual roles created by a patriarchally defined social order. The social relations of patriarchy are organized through "hetero-relations" and masked by ideologies that make "heterosexual coupling seem natural and inevitable" (Raymond, 1986, p. 12). Heterosexuality is so rigorously and systematically imposed on youth that it becomes invisible as a social construct (Lugg, 1998). Because students who adhere to dictated standards of gender appearance and behavior are reinforced and rewarded by the ritualistic celebrations of masculinity and femininity in the formal and informal curriculum, heterosexuality becomes perceived as inherent, natural and normal.

### *Devalued Students: Gays and Lesbians*

In the perpetuation of the dominant culture, schooling is a powerful social machine with the authority to impose, form, and reproduce relations of power in society by directing significant energies into the presentation of a highly crafted reality. From this macro perspective, students from socially devalued groups have little say in the subordinate roles schooling creates for them or in the erasure of alternative realities. Indeed, it is hard to see how any armor could equip students to protect themselves from the complex, powerful and insidious school processes that perpetuate inequalities and then mask those oppressive practices with ideology, distorted knowledge, and indoctrination.

It is not remarkable that when individuals are pushed by powerful systems, they react in a variety of ways. In fact, *all* students must use coping mechanisms to navigate the power structure of schools and deal with the demands of adults. As Waller (1932) observed, students pick up cues about how teachers feel about them and respond by assuming roles, like class clown or bully. Students may also devalue school, withdraw into themselves, act out, overcompensate by excelling, or redirect their energies onto non-school relationships and activities. Students may cope with school by conforming, retreating, remaining non-committed or ambivalent (Merton, 1957). These student responses are not necessarily informed by contact with any ideology that questions the underlying purposes of the activities administered in schooling nor are these students necessarily conscious of the larger social forces to which they are reacting. While these examples of student responses represent genuine reactions to power, they are not examples of a socially informed and clear dissent from schooling norms.

Resistance is another student response to the imposition of schooling authority. In this response to schooling, students refuse to submit to social expectations, which may mean that they choose to disobey or not meet the expectations of schooling.

Resistance was originally described as a white working-class male response to schooling (Willis, 1977). Willis found that working class students played an active role in creating a working class identity for themselves that stood in the way of their progress. He discovered that "working class kids get working class jobs" because their choice of behaviors included truancy and the creation of a counterculture that dismissed the knowledge transmitted in schooling. This behavior resulted in a loss of skills that effectively locked them out of the middle-class job market. Resistance, like coping, is not enough to change the social order and may, in fact, be unconscious acts that help to reinforce and reproduce domination (see Farrell, 1990; Fine 1990; Raffini, 1986; Willis, 1977).

Gay and lesbian students' responses to schooling, as they have been studied thus far, have not been pursued much beyond their strategies of coping with the role assigned to them as "different" people (Kissen, 1991). The literature which focuses on the micro level experiences of gay and lesbian students in schools suggests that they simply carry out their assigned roles as devalued people in school. They overcompensate, accommodate, pass as heterosexuals, drop out, commit suicide, or simply count down the time until graduation (see Friend, 1998; Gibson, 1989; Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 1993; Herdt, 1989; Herdt & Boxer, 1993; Heron, 1994; McManus et al., 1991; Savin-Williams, 1990; Uribe & Harbeck, 1992).

These findings provide ample evidence that schooling devalues gay and lesbian youth effectively, but are gay and lesbian student responses to their marginalization as apolitical and self-defeating as the literature suggests? The selection of the sample in studies of gay and lesbian people impacts the findings because participants are typically identified on the basis of their involvement in a specific cultural context (e.g., at a bar, beach or restaurant). Like their adult counterparts, the most accessible sources of visible gay and lesbian youth are often in

isolated or segregated out-of-school contexts (e.g., clinics, shelters, and social service settings) where youth are visible because they are in crisis or are seeking peer support (Herdt & Boxer, 1993).

Additionally, relatively more gay white men stand in as group representatives than do lesbians and non-white people because patriarchy and white supremacy collude to produce different feelings of safety and power for these individuals. These two components of sample selection create an eclectic mixture of overprivileged people and extremely distressed people visible to researchers. In contrast, researchers need to ask: What might be learned from a purposeful sample composed of devalued students who are actively engaged in questioning the power relations of schooling?

#### *Challenges to Stratification*

The theoretical perspective presented thus far characterizes schooling as an institution that functions as an incubator of new generations who are being prepared to assume their place in the present social order. Students are taught to misread the complicated apparatus by which the stratification of society is sustained and to never clearly comprehend the extent to which social engineering has shaped and impacted their lives. Yet, while schooling collaborates in the maintenance of the social order, it is only one institution in a constellation of many that organizes the student's experiences.

Youth scan beyond schooling for information about their present status and their future potential. An alert scan of the environment can reveal that the imposition of the self-interested will of the dominant culture is not uniformly received with passivity, but actively contested, negotiated, challenged, subverted, and altered by a variety of groups who are systematically devalued. Attempts to interrupt injustices are advanced by organized social movements and the work of individual actors who strategize, challenge, respond, envision and create alternative realities. While there are specific schooling processes that devalue gay and lesbian youth and limit their

realities, other segments of society are actively engaging in the creation of alternative and affirming experiences of reality for gay and lesbian people. Social movements for change open up alternative ways of experiencing and interpreting the social world because these movements are grounded in ideologies that are anticapitalist, antiracist, antipatriarchal, and affirming of devalued people. As a result, some devalued students may become alert to critiques of the systematic strategies used to maintain the status quo in the larger society which they may then apply in their school.

The tension between institutions serving dominant groups and the responses of disenfranchised people is constantly evolving in ways that are dynamic, complex, and historically specific. Disenfranchised groups form alliances, depart, regroup, and create new patterns of challenges. Institutions change their tactics in response to real or imagined threats to the status quo by dissolving, restructuring, revising processes or devising new ones. Some students are able to see evidence of these patterns in their world. Some come to understand that schooling submits to the same reigns of power which exercise control of many powerful social institutions and actively collaborates in the maintenance of the social order by participating in the devaluing of students. Some students realize that school authorities can and should be challenged for the role they play in protecting the status quo.

#### *Normative Schooling Practices and Models of Change*

On a daily basis teachers, administrators, aides, specialists, counselors, librarians, specialists, and boards of education participate in the structuring of students' realities through the construction of normative standards. These standards reflect an institutional ethos that responds favorably to external demands for the valued and devaluing of students on the basis of their status in the political, economic, and cultural hierarchy (Walzer, 1983). Yet each schooling practice that structures students' experiences in ways that reproduce the status quo, also provides a symbolic

venue or opportunity to challenge the status quo and the role of schooling in devaluing gay and lesbian youth.

The limited body of literature on gay and lesbian youth identifies five institutional processes as representative of the many schooling processes that contribute to the valuing of heterosexuals and the devaluing of gender transgressors: (1) knowledge creation, (2) role modeling, (3) gender regulation, (4) symbols, and (5) regulating space. It is through these deliberate institutional processes that the power relations of society are reproduced and sexual identities are constructed, protected and controlled. Ironically, it is also through direct and indirect challenges to these processes that gay and lesbian youth promote liberating counter-realities.

*Knowledge creation.* Schooling legitimates the status of dominant groups by promulgating very specific knowledge that serves the interests of those groups. Knowledge is not an abstract, disconnected body of information created independently from human subjectivities (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Giroux (1988) argued that the official knowledge of schooling shapes and imposes a specific social reality on all groups. Students from dominant groups benefit when knowledge about all other groups is minimized, distorted, or ignored and a fabricated narrative places the dominant group at the center. This narrow band of knowledge is then perceived as neutral, natural, or normal. Protests from excluded populations about bias, distortion or falsehoods in the curriculum are then easily deflected as political attacks from special interests against an apolitical knowledge base. Spender (1982) argued that "if there is one area of knowledge that educationalists have created that has served them admirably, it is that education should be divorced from politics, that it should be impersonal" (p. 4). The knowledge transmitted in schooling systematically teaches about the value and significance of dominant groups and creates a learning environment that is hostile or indifferent to subordinated groups.

Schooling promotes heterosexist knowledge. One specific model of human relations stands alone in the curriculum to represent and to encompass all acceptable meanings of love, family, relationships, and desire. Heterosexuality is framed in universal and positive terms, while knowledge about gays and lesbians is ghettoized, pathologized, absent, distorted or essentialized (Friend, 1998; Irvine, 1997; Lipkin, 1993-1994; Sears, 1992a). The "absence of choice remains the great unacknowledged reality" (Rich, 1984, p. 202). Schooling promotes heterosexuality (Jones & Mahoney, 1989) by frustrating students' attempts to find accurate information and resources about gay and lesbian issues (Malinsky, 1997; Uribe, 1994). Professional development literature for teachers fails to illuminate the power relations of heterosexuality and instead promotes awareness of the problems of gay and lesbian youth (e.g., Besner & Spungin, 1995). The focus on "care" for the devalued student prepares teachers to misread both the causes and experiences of gay and lesbian youth. Simultaneously, the introduction of a more balanced knowledge base in schooling is blocked by other institutions (e.g., universities and academic publishers) that narrowly define the parameters of acceptable work on gays and lesbians. The investigation of sexuality as a stratification system is deflected by making sexuality something "private, individual, and consensual" and "off limits for political analysis" (Jeffreys, 1993, p. 20). These spoken and unspoken restrictions severely restrict writers and researchers from creating a more accurate and diverse knowledge base from which to rectify biases and distortions.

There is also a perception that researchers jeopardize their career status by studying gays and lesbians (Benkov, 1994; Savin-Williams, 1990; Sedgewick, 1993), leading to a silencing of discussion regarding gay and lesbian students (O'Connor, 1993-1994; Reed 1993; Sears, 1992; Unks, 1993-1994) and an absence of published empirical research on this population (Reed, 1993). Savin-Williams (1990) explicitly attributed his freedom to study gay and lesbian youth to his tenured status, which

corroborates Sedgwick's (1993) claim that institutional heterosexism in higher education and fear of "career death" of non-tenured faculty silence research on gay and lesbians. The fear of the negative consequences of conducting research on marginalized groups is not isolated to researchers who may identify as gay or lesbian, as openly heterosexual researchers face a similar career risk (Eyre, 1997). Graduate students in many disciplines also have expressed fear of having a gay or lesbian related study rejected by institutional gatekeepers (Benkov, 1994).

Yet, despite the barriers, the production of knowledge in a more formal format is evidenced in attempts to establish academic departments in higher education that originate from the standpoint of lesbian studies (Cruikshank, 1982; Garber, 1994; Rothblum, 1997), women's studies (Culley, 1985), and more recently, queer studies (Duberman, 1997). Simultaneously, scholars housed within traditional disciplines are debunking core heterosexist assumptions in their respective fields that had not previously been challenged (e.g., Badgett, 1992; Seidman, 1996). These efforts create an alternative vision from which to judge scholarship in the physical and social sciences, particularly scholarship that traditionally links homosexuality with the concepts of deviance or pathology or with other labels that mask heterosexuality from being perceived as a social, or man-made, construct.

An active production of knowledge about gays and lesbians that challenges traditional representations and presents alternative perspectives is proliferating beyond the realm of university-associated research. Gays and lesbians are producing and disseminating more accurate knowledge about the diversity of their lives in a variety of formats. The second wave of feminism and the gay and lesbian movement have been prolific in a variety of mediums, including novels, autobiographies, plays, newspapers, magazines, 'zines, films, speeches, music and visual arts. When traditional distribution channels are blocked, these works are distributed through a variety of alternative channels, including women's and gay and lesbian bookstores,

film festivals, theaters, and the internet. Even the street has become a venue to reclaim and recode words. For example, gays and lesbians have seized control of the word "shame." When protesters line the streets of a gay pride parade and yell shame to the participants, they reveal a belief that acts of "shame" are commonly understood and that they have the authority to distribute it in the street. When the participants in the parade point back at the protesters and shout shame back at them, gays and lesbians are communicating a different meaning of shameful behavior and a different perspective on reality.

The media provides alternative conceptualizations of self and exposure to different types of self-knowledge that are not available in schooling. A previous generation of gays and lesbians who grew up without those images plays a large role in creating them for today's youth (Singer, 1994). Unlike previous generations, youth know very well that there are others like them in other places, even if there are none where they are (Thompson, 1995). Anthologies written by and for youth provide an opportunity for youth to speak for themselves (Heron 1994). Britzman (1996) stated that assumptions of student agency and social isolation take on a new significance in the media saturated 1990's where gay and lesbian youth have historically unprecedented access to the public discourse that affirms and denies gay and lesbian identities. Thus, while creating knowledge is an important mechanism in legitimizing status interests, it is also an important mechanism for challenging those interests and creating critical awareness.

*Role models.* In theory, teachers have a role in nurturing alternative perspectives in students that can lead to awareness and purposeful action. Critical pedagogy suggests that teachers can play a central role in processes of social change by nurturing ways of thinking that will lead students to conceptualize and then act for social justice (see Apple, 1979, 1982; Apple & Weis, 1983; Freire, 1999; McLaren 1989, 1995). Freire (1999) theorizes that teachers can facilitate students' critical

consciousness by teaching them to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 19). This can be done through the teacher's use of critical discourses on economics, politics, culture, and education (Giroux & McLaren, 1992). The teacher, theoretically, is the conduit of information that sparks youth's understanding of the oppressive forces of the social world. However, the premise that students become critical analysts and agents of change through the guidance of teachers is severely limited in relation to gay and lesbian youth. This limitation stems from schooling processes that prevent teachers from fostering and enabling critical discussion of heterosexuality as a political system.

Gay and lesbian teachers and their allies are structurally barred from being resources for students even though many of them see an educational value in being "out" to their students (Jennings, 1994). Gay and lesbian teachers work in a social landscape structured by heteronormativity (Fine, 1993) and experience the "zealously monitored profession" (Fassinger, 1993, p. 119) from a structurally disadvantaged standpoint. In many cases the law prevents teachers from being "out" on the job. The result is an almost total absence of openly gay and lesbian adult role models in schools (Heron, 1994; Kissen, 1991; Malinsky, 1997; Martin, 1982; Uribe & Harbeck, 1992) despite estimates that more than a quarter of a million gay and lesbian adults teach in American schools (Harbeck, 1992). Fear of being mistakenly identified as gay or lesbian silences potential teacher-allies (Eyre, 1997; Harris, 1997; Sears, 1992) and reinforces the perceived absence of gays and lesbians in schooling. The conservative norms of the teaching profession may also prevent heterosexual teachers from being resources for gay and lesbian youth. This expectation of teacher agency enabling student agency, like many educational reforms, is "premised on the notion that teachers should be interested in change and should be able to deliver what they currently neither understand nor practice" (Ayers, 1992, p. 19).

In contrast to the occupational restrictions placed on gay and lesbian teachers, openly gay and lesbian professionals in fields other than education serve as adult role models. They often come to prominence because they seek to share equally in the opportunities and experiences enjoyed by heterosexuals, starting with the right to be open about who they are. These human resources of the gay and lesbian community constitute a new set of role models of excellence and achievement for adults and youth who have been previously denied them. Many of these individuals are in traditionally respected roles (e.g., Olympic and professional athletes, actors and actresses, politicians, and writers). Lawyers are challenging laws, including the revocation of teaching licenses on the basis of sexual orientation; seasoned advocates and lobbyists are negotiating for protective legislation; and openly gay and lesbian candidates hold public office, including seats on local Boards of Education. Individuals, especially when they gain public attention, may also serve as alternative role models and support the development of critical agency among gay and lesbian youth.

*Gender regulation.* Socialization is used to create individuals who will passively accept their rightful place in the social, economic, and political landscape. Schools, like all organizations, are natural environments for the emergence of heterosexual and homosexual romantic relationships. In the management of these relationships, organizations can choose not to respond or to take punitive or supportive actions (Quinn, 1983). When the response is punitive, people who do not conform to their heterosexual role are quickly recognized and swiftly sanctioned, making the schooling climate neither neutral nor asexual, but protectively heterosexual.

It is through the role playing that is "endemic to heterosexuality" (Jeffries, 1990, p. 134) that schooling teaches students how to become heterosexual. Gender roles originate in heterosexuality and heterosexuality informs these gender roles. As Stoltenberg (1990) theorized, "Sexuality does not have a gender; it creates a gender" (p. 33). To protect the patriarchy, then, schools must unambiguously teach and enforce

gender identities that clearly abide by strict constructs of maleness and femaleness (Pharr, 1985). Schooling teaches that these two gender roles "naturally" form the two parts to a complete union that will culminate for students in adulthood when they become either a husband or a wife. On the surface, gender makes "perfect sense" and provides an "orderly way to see the world" (Brownmiller, 1984, p. 15). Yet, the intentional choreographing of two genders with differing levels of authority and autonomy and a shared belief in the inherent naturalness of the division masks the perpetuation of a patriarchal system. This myth has been perpetuated by sexologists, psychologists, and other social scientists (Katz, 1983) and it is the youth who question the naturalness of a gender division who are evaluated, and taught to evaluate themselves, as unnatural.

For girls, gender role socialization in schooling means a nearly constant exposure to messages that indoctrinate them to docility, helpfulness, and the need for male admiration. For boys, gender role socialization instills competitiveness, aggressiveness, and a belief in male supremacy (Eder & Parker, 1987). Stereotypes of masculine women and effeminate men are used to keep people in line with their expected gender roles (Griffin, 1997). The gender role socialization is reinforced at nearly every level of contact between the individual and schooling (e.g., dress codes that enforce dominant ideas about what clothing a heterosexual boy or girl should wear, normative ideas about which sports boys and girls should play, and who should be a cheerleader for a sports team).

Yet on television, in books, on the job and in private homes, many lesbian and gay adults refuse to assume their assigned heterosexual roles. Unique to the gay and lesbian resistance movement is the "coming out story," a personal narrative affirming an "identity they taught me to despise" (Cliff, 1980) that asserts the truth about a life and makes an individual visible. Becoming visible also includes consciously rejecting visual clues to the acceptance of an imposed gender role. Gender differences are often

intentionally blurred through the selection of clothing, use of language (e.g., "queer") and behavior that confounds a viewer as to whether the actor is a boy or girl. Just as feminists have developed a consciousness that enables them to partially escape the expectations of patriarchy, gays and lesbians are capable of abandoning their assigned sex role training and forming an intimate same-sex relationship. According to Pharr (1985), every act of claiming a lesbian or gay identity is an act of resistance to the mandated socialization imposed by power structures.

*Symbols.* Rituals and symbols serve as vehicles for conveying meaning, usually by presenting one thing for another (Jones, 1996). Symbols in educational settings transmit cultural values, orient students to particular views held in common with other students and the larger culture, and validate norms for behavior (Ulrich, 1984). In addition, they can reinforce traditional patterns of social domination (Pondy, 1983) and affect how people perceive events and respond (Jones, 1996). School rituals, such as school dances, are nested in a cultural context rich in significant symbolism as they are used to transform or confirm the status of individuals in society. These symbolic ceremonies define the boundaries of the said, and the unsaid, in school life by reasserting and reaffirming the moral rightness of the norms associated with dominant groups. These events encourage and revive shared feelings that bind people together and keep them committed to a social system. These culturally produced ceremonies are dramatic, complex and symbolic and have a social meaning or message that is greater than what is stated (Jones, 1996).

Schooling celebrates heterosexuality through rituals and symbols. Schooling constructs an environment that teaches students how to become heterosexually oriented, how to evaluate and select a mate, and how to aspire to heterosexual relationships by providing opportunities to learn, practice, and rehearse heterosexual roles. An event that symbolizes this training is the prom. When the prom is viewed through the lens of sexuality privilege and oppression, the event becomes "a part of a

much more complex symbolic system expressing a pattern of meaning" (Pondy, 1983, p. 15) that is imposed as legitimate on students (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The stated rationale for the prom is a celebration of increased class status (e.g., junior to senior) that carries cultural meanings of social maturation and approaching adulthood. The prom, however, mirrors sanctioned public rituals of heterosexual celebrations in society, such as engagements, weddings, and anniversaries, that recognize heterosexual couplings and exclude gay and lesbian couples. When used in institutionalized settings, these activities "work as a form of ideological control to signal membership in relations of ruling as well as to signify that [heterosexual couples] are normal, moral, productive, family-centered, good citizens, and, most important, appropriately gendered" (Ingraham, 1996, p. 181). By dictating appropriate (i.e., heterosexual) ways for students to celebrate socially, sexuality privilege is translated into a school event. The appropriation of contemporary heterosexual symbols in society by adult gays and lesbians attaches new meanings to traditional symbolic ceremonies and expresses social criticism. Pondy (1983) has noted the contradictory nature of symbolic construction whereby a symbol is intended to have one effect but is reconstituted by active reinterpretation to have another meaning. Davalos (1996) argued that reinterpretation of symbolic events constitute social analysis. Using in-depth interviews with adult same-sex couples, Newman and Nelson (1996) found that although couples overtly celebrated Valentine's Day the same as heterosexual couples, with gifts, flowers, cards, and meals, same-sex couples used the holiday to engage in self-affirming activities and express their pride in the face of an oppressive society. One subject in this study suggested that the very act of "uniting against an institution is another way to express love" (p. 64).

Symbolic reinterpretation includes challenging and reinventing the core identities of social institutions, such as the family. Lesbian and gay men are expanding definitions of family by "emphasizing relational aspects with love and

commitment over any particular family structure" (Benkov, 1994, p. 7). Redefining a symbol is a strategy of resistance that "asserts our humanity in the face of dehumanizing forces" (p. 7). The creation of new meanings, traditions, and ways of celebrating can introduce new politics (Butler, 1990, p. xi). The ceremonial celebration of same-sex relationships is about love and devotion but also a demand for justice without the "transactional properties of heterosexual weddings. No one gives anyone away, no one agrees to obey anyone, and no one changes status" (Wishon, 1997, p. 112). To "refuse, confuse, and redefine" symbols of mass culture is also political work (Doty, 1993, p. 102).

Theorists have argued that many gays and lesbians resist and subvert symbols of popular culture by reading texts "against the grain," that is, by altering the codes and meanings to create a new and satisfying reading (Griffin, 1993, p. 4). For example, many lesbians read the intimate and primary relationships between the two female leads in television shows and movies such as "Laverne and Shirley," "Thelma and Louise," and the more contemporary "Xena: Warrior Princess" as lesbian narratives, despite the openly heterosexual identification of these characters. The same could be said for male leads such as "Batman and Robin" and "The Odd Couple."

*Regulating space.* Dividing space into public and private spheres and associating appropriate and inappropriate behaviors to each sphere has been used to "construct, control, discipline, confine, exclude and suppress . . . differences preserving traditional . . . power structures" (Duncan, 1996, p. 128). Gender, race, and class have been regulated by this boundary (Duncan) and it is generally assumed, as well, that sexuality should be restricted to private spaces. This assumption "is based on the naturalization of heterosexual norms" that makes heterosexuality "in public spaces nearly invisible to the straight population" (Valentine, 1993, p. 72) despite its almost constant appearance. As Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) noted, members of protected

groups are often unable to perceive of their special status and privilege from their standpoint of structural advantage.

In schooling, spaces are divided, regulated, minimized and monitored in ways that reflect and reinforce a hierarchical system of valued students and devalued students. Schooling institutes surveillance practices that control expressions of identity by regulating the demarcation of space within schools for heterosexual and homosexual youth. The amount and types of school space permitted to gay and lesbian students reflects status differentials, reinforces hierarchy and manages dissent. As a result, there are different obligations on gay and lesbian people in public spaces, including school. Heterosexuals in schools are given the privilege of openly expressing their heterosexuality, while gay and lesbian youth are only allowed "to be gay in specific spaces and places" (Bristow, 1989, p. 74). Cresswell (1996) argues that expectations about behavior in public space are "important components in the construction, maintenance, and evolution of ideological values" (p. 4). More specifically, Valentine (1996) says "control over the way that space is produced is fundamental to heterosexuals' ability to reproduce their hegemony" (p. 154). The hallway, lunchroom, locker room, and classroom are all unregulated opportunities for the taunting and harassment of gay and lesbian students (Herek & Berrill, 1992; Hunter, 1990; Pilkington & D'Augelli, 1995; Savin-Williams, 1995). A same-sex couple who exchanges a spontaneous kiss in front of a locker in the hall or stroll hand-in-hand to class does not evoke the same response from bystanders as a male and female engaging in the same behavior. Negative sanctions for transgression of spatial norms include stares and whispers, verbal, physical and sexual assault and threats of death. At a minimum these negative sanctions diminish the individual, reinforce the status quo, and reinscribe group borders. Allowing youth to terrorize their gay and lesbian peers without intervention leads to the assumption that this abuse is endorsed by school authorities. This is further evidenced when schooling authorities prohibit

same-sex dates to school events on the grounds that schools must protect them from peer violence.

Creating safe spaces through the creation of communities has been fundamental to gay and lesbian efforts to transform societal institutions. In urban cities, many gay and lesbian neighborhoods have been established with residential homes, businesses, and social recreation. Gay and lesbian community service centers serve adults and youth (see Herdt & Boxer, 1993) in ways that the dominant culture fails to serve. These neighborhoods have been seen as spaces for the creation of a distinct gay identity (D'Emilio, 1981) and have become political power bases for resistance. Geographical communities of lesbians have been less extensively studied although evidence of some spatially constituted communities of lesbians exists (Rothenberg, 1995). Although these geographically defined communities have been the major source of subjects sought by researchers, most gays and lesbians do not reside in or near these "gay" communities (Beemyn, 1997).

Yet, an ideology of community is shared by many in the gay and lesbian community. Reference to a "community" may mean a feeling of association, an actual social group, or a sense of belonging to a community "unified only by a shared dissent from the dominant organization of sex and gender" (Duggan, 1992, p. 20). Some women are drawn to the lesbian feminist community or women's community while others associate themselves with a gay community. Both gays and lesbians may join a softball team, frequent gay or lesbian owned stores or restaurants, vacation at gay or lesbian beaches and resorts, or attend concerts that are experienced as gay or lesbian friendly spaces. More recently, expansion of the lesbian and gay community may be the virtual community made possible by the Internet.

Not only does the gay and lesbian community make physical and conceptual spaces for itself, the community also names and challenges the exclusivity of public space claimed by heterosexuals. Public spaces can be opened and restructured in a

fleeting way, what Valentine (1996) calls "now you see us, now you don't," (p. 150) or consist of more targeted actions such as those engaged in by direct action groups such as ACT UP and the Lesbian Avengers. By using a variety of strategies to create "small fissures in hegemonic heterosexual space," gay and lesbians are challenging "the production of everyday spaces as heterosexual" (Valentine, 1996, p. 152), thereby "destabilizing unarticulated norms" (Duncan, 1996, p. 139). Based on a recognition that heterosexism is a spatially constituted discourse which can be "interrupted and undermined," some gay and lesbian adults have "confronted and contested the very production of public space" by engaging in actions that "pierce the complacency of heterosexual space" (Valentine, 1996, p. 152). These actions are collective and organized, such as a public kiss-ins at the shopping mall or steps of the Supreme Court, or less formal, such as a same-sex couple deciding to hold hands as they walk along a public beach.

#### *Summary and Justification for a Study*

Reproduction theory illuminates how schooling imposes, perpetuates, and protects a particular social order. Schooling promotes class, race, gender, and power relations that dominate in the larger society by permitting their expression in schooling processes. Many of the same processes organize and reproduce the experiences of students on the basis of heterosexuality. Heterosexuality becomes another protected status in schools through the valorizing and universalizing of heterosexuality, and the silencing, distorting, and pathologizing of homosexuality. These processes and their beneficiaries are then hidden by the promulgation of ideologies that erase the knowledge that schooling is promoting a specific social order. By applying sexuality as a category of difference to various schooling processes, it becomes apparent that schooling conditions students to function as heterosexuals in a heterosexual society and sanctions those who do not comply. Gay and lesbian students' responses to this type of education are generally empirically unknown, and research on gay and lesbian

youth tends to focus on their lack of "appropriate" psychosocial adjustment. Educational research has not yet captured the fact that victimization is just one dimension of the schooling experience for gay and lesbian students and it is possible that students incorporate understandings about the larger social world in their responses to schooling.

The idealistic role of the teacher inspiring students' orientation to social justice is unlikely for gay and lesbian youth so questions arise about the sources of students' alternative conceptions of reality other than the ones imposed in schooling. Perhaps enablers of the gay and lesbian students' understanding of the social world are found in the larger society. Like gay and lesbian youth in school, gay and lesbian adults spend the majority of their time in institutions that are generally inhospitable. It is not clear to what extent adult members of the gay and lesbian community enable students' reconsideration of the reality offered in schooling; however many adults subvert, alter, and challenge social structures that support heterosexuality or persecute gays and lesbians (see Katz, 1983; Kennedy & Davis, 1993).

When schooling fails to operate independently from the systems of power relations in society, the institution allows its function to be influenced, altered, and guided to advantage some groups and disadvantage others. In contrast to the women's and black civil rights movements which have informed the public and academic critiques of schooling and impacted school policies and practice, the adult gay and lesbian movement has not successfully permeated the status quo of heterosexist education. Likewise, many students never fully recognize that social engineering occurs in school so they respond with complicity and collaboration as a strategy for survival (Dworkin, 1983) because "quite simply, they see no way out from under" (p. 236). Often it is individual students who boldly confront institutional processes that limit, control, narrowly define, and intend to harm them on the basis of their devalued

status. These students have "enough sociological imagination to see the structures, and the effects they cause, for what they are" (Lemert, 1997, p. 144).

The now classic term "sociological imagination" was coined by Mills (1959) to describe an individual's ability to differentiate "between 'the personal troubles of the milieu' and 'the public issues of social structures'" (p. 8). This "quality of mind" results from knowing how to look beyond personal conditions to the larger social structures that organize and regulate experiences. This ability is not an innate skill but a perspective carefully developed through informal or formal learning. Practitioners of the sociological imagination "use information and develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves" (Mills, p. 5). Mills names the sociological imagination as the "mark of classic social analysts" who "grasp what is going on in the world, and understand what is happening in themselves as minute points of the intersections of biography and history within society" (p. 7). While possession of the sociological imagination is typically not associated with the skills of youth, Mills asserts that any individual has the capacity to attain this explanatory perspective.

How do alternative forms of reality offered in the social world beyond school contribute to the development of students' ability to account for their status in schooling? Do students purposefully act as a result of what they see through their sociological imaginations? Lemert (1997) gives examples of "brilliant sociology" conducted by amateurs. These amateurs see, even if nascently, the invisible structures regulating life, and then in some cases take action. But how do high school students develop this sociological imagination that enables them to see that they "contribute, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history, even as they are made by society and by its historical push and shove" (Mills, 1959, p. 6)? How do students, particularly lesbian students, acquire the ability to see that the

conditions of their lives flow from the interrelated nature of social structures that cooperate in the press upon them and that they can be agents of change?

This study addressed these questions. Using a series of in-depth interviews with lesbian youth, this study examined the tension between the purposeful training of students to misread the social environment and the societal sources students maximize to rethink the "reality" offered by schooling. It focuses on contemporary gay and lesbian students who may possess sociological imaginations (Mills, 1959) and investigates the manner in which these emergent social critics not only view but challenge reality through direct and indirect actions. Set against the backdrop of schooling processes that protect and reproduce heterosexuality and the strategies of the gay and lesbian rights' movement, this study will investigate the agency of youth by interviewing lesbian students about their high school experiences in order to move forward the discussion of devalued youth and schooling. In doing so, the hope is to extend existing theories of social reproduction, student agency, and social justice.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### *Statement of the Problem*

Social reproduction theorists in education examine the role of schooling in recreating class, gender and race hierarchies in society. By taking a macro institutional approach, they reveal schooling structures that maintain inequality by treating students differentially in accord with the economic, political and social needs of the dominant society. Revisionists of this approach counter that students react to and sometimes oppose the practices and ideologies they encounter in schools. This perspective reveals that schools are not monolithically oppressive and that students bring experience and values from other areas of their lives to generate a system of meaning and practice in response to the barriers they face. This research calls for an examination of the actual encounters between students and their schools and presents theoretical insights about students' reactions to dominant ideologies in schooling.

Educational researchers use class, race, and gender differences as the basis for investigating the role of schooling in the reproduction of the status quo and the effects of these processes on students. However, neither social reproduction nor resistance theories embrace heterosexuality as a gendered power relationship that pervades public school policies and practices and reproduces the status quo. Scant attention has been paid to understanding how students who "refuse to participate in the heterosexual social contract" (Cottingham, 1996, p. 17) develop critical stances toward the norms of schooling. Much of what is printed in the academic press and educational journals about gay and lesbian students are descriptions of the negative psychological costs associated with being different in a school setting. Thus, the major purpose of this

study was to investigate the experiences of lesbian students to move forward the theoretical perspective on oppression and student agency in schools. This study considered what can be learned from youth when their interpretation of their experiences is allowed to emerge in a semi-structured interview on heterosexual norms in schooling and society.

Two research questions framed this study. The first question asked: In what ways do students see heteronormative social expectations organized, communicated, enforced and challenged in high school? This question considers the multiple influences that foster and impede an ability to see larger social forces structuring individual experiences in high school. To further map the political and philosophical frameworks drawn upon by participants, the second research question turns to the personal and social meanings students ascribe to heteronormative social expectations. This question was: How do students characterize their critical perspective on heterosexual privilege and the role of schooling in promulgating privilege? Disempowered students do not automatically acquire critical perspectives on their status. To be critical of the status quo and the social order it maintains, students require a framework from which to decode and interpret the reality of the social world offered in schooling. This research question examined, through the words of the participants, how their conceptual frameworks are constructed and the epistemological processes which develop and sustain their perspectives.

This study used a qualitative methodology to analyze data collected through semi-structured, open-ended interviews with 15 women who did not identify as heterosexual while high schools students. This study examined the emergence of an

alternate reading of the social world by focusing specifically on the stances these students took on the imposition of a heteronormative environment (Fine, 1993) in schooling and the larger social world.

*Rationale for Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR)*

The qualitative research approach was chosen for this study because it best captured the details, complexities and nuances of the processes that create and sustain the fluid and complex dynamics of human life, including those that characterize the relationship between students and their schools. The goal of a qualitative study is not to posit an absolute truth about the social world (Sears, 1992b), as truth and reality shift as a result of history, culture, and circumstance (Lancy, 1993). The qualitative approach describes the characteristics of a particular phenomenon and discovers what meaning and understanding the phenomenon has for the participants (Hill et al., 1997). Qualitative research investigates phenomenon through a few cases intensively, utilizes open-ended interview questions to gather data, focuses on the context of the phenomenon, and uses an inductive process of analysis (Hill et al., 1997). From the viewpoint of this study, a qualitative research perspective, and CQR specifically, had four distinct advantages over a quantitative approach.

*Voice.* A major focus of this study was to understand how female students who did not identify as heterosexual in high school make sense of their lives in schools and in a society that privileges heterosexuality. The immense complexities of devalued people's lived experiences are not accessible without dialogue centering on how they perceive and experience the world, how they define their situation, and what meaning it has for them (Neuman, 1997). Qualitative researchers believe that the best way to

capture what meaning an experience has for participants is to ask them. By taking the research participants, their words, and their perspectives seriously, the process of discovery originates from and remains closely linked to their experiences and words. A qualitative approach to addressing the questions proposed in this study maximized opportunities for participants to characterize their experiences in their own voices.

*Context.* Qualitative research recognizes that the world is an evolving setting for the social creatures who inhabit it and that any science which investigates people in their social world must situate discoveries about people to their time, place, and context. This study focused on student interpretations of the social world during a specific time in their schooling, and under a specific set of conditions. Attending to the social context of the phenomenon under study was critical in these interviews where a statement from a participant only made sense in light of the context in which it is spoken. Qualitative research provided the researcher with opportunities to clarify the context in detail.

*Trust.* A power relationship exists between the researcher and the "researched" and is expressed through the interview, analysis and interpretation the participant's words. Historically, lower status subjects have been powerless in relation to the relatively higher status position of the researcher. This power differential, when misused, permits the researcher a public voice from which to disseminate findings and silence dissent. For example, as a result of widely publicized "research findings," many gay and lesbian youth find themselves classified as young people who are highly likely to take their own lives (Gibson, 1989) and these findings, standing alone, further stigmatize a devalued group with little access to a public voice.

Additionally, this study took place in a society stratified by age, class, race, gender, sexuality, geography and other significant variables. Participants may have elected to reveal or conceal information based on a variety of reasons, including real and perceived meanings associated with characteristics of the researcher. While the present study fulfills a degree requirement and strictly adhered to ethical standards for research collection, analysis, and interpretation, it must be recognized that from the participants' point of view, the data they supplied were mediated through several powerful channels (the primary researcher, her colleagues comprising the research team, and university committees) over which participants had no direct authority.

Trust, then, was a prerequisite for meaningful dialogue in the interviews and this fits with feminist interpretations of interviewing which validate the subjective experiences of the interviewee and recognizes the personhood of the interviewer (Oakley, 1981). As I was the primary instrument for data collection and the primary contact with participants, I played a central and highly visible role in this study and was committed to earning the right to be trusted by the participants as a prelude to gaining their rapport (Creswell, 1994). Such rapport was especially important when examining the life experiences of devalued groups. I attempted to create an atmosphere of openness, caring and trust by self-disclosing my own identity as a lesbian, and, as appropriate, my own schooling experiences if questioned by the participant.

*Exploratory.* The qualitative approach does not start with a particular theory to prove or disprove, but builds theory that is grounded in the systematic analysis of raw data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this study, the data are the spoken words of

students who discussed how they experience and analyze their social worlds. Categories and themes emerged from the data and those categories evolved as the researcher and her team continued to work with them. This approach allowed the researchers to be open to unexpected patterns and themes in the data. The goal of this approach was to uncover a general theoretical framework that helps explain the data (Wiersma, 1995) and to reconnect those findings with the academic literature. This approach was particularly appropriate for the exploratory nature of this study and the undeveloped nature of the empirical literature on the emergence of critical agency among marginalized students.

*Consensus.* According to Hill and her colleagues (1997), team members using CQR need "patience, attentiveness to detail, tolerance for change, flexibility, ability and openness for negotiation, and an eagerness to learn about the specific topic under investigation" (p. 564). This is required not only because the team spends a great deal of time working together, but because each member of the team must be able to discuss, argue, defend, concede, and rethink his or her position until a "single unified version that all team members endorse as the best representation of the data" (p. 523) emerges. Consensus is the centerpiece of CQR and speaks to the belief that a variety of opinions, perspectives, and experiences can enrich and deepen the process of analysis, as well as strengthen the validity of the findings.

### *Validity*

While qualitative studies do not use the traditional standards of validity, Maxwell (1992) argues that educational research using qualitative methodologies are implicitly guided, and ultimately evaluated, on issues of descriptive, interpretive, and

theoretical validity. The authors of CQR (Hill et al., 1997) share Maxwell's (1992) concern for validity in qualitative research. CQR includes protocols to assure descriptive and interpretive validity of the data so that the participants' "perspectives are presented with integrity and ... be recognizable to them" (Neuman, 1997, p. 28).

Qualitative research is measured by descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical validity.

*Descriptive.* Descriptive validity refers to the factual accuracy of the account. This is not about the meaning or interpretation of a participant's statement, but that the statements were reported as spoken (Maxwell, 1992).

CQR protocols addressed threats to descriptive validity procedurally by requiring that all interviews be tape recorded, transcribed verbatim and returned to the participant for review and correction. The coding of every line of transcript by a research team and the use of an auditor reduce introducing error by omission. As Maxwell (1992) points out, any concern about descriptive validity is resolved by an examination of the tape, transcript, or evolving documentation produced by the research team.

*Interpretive.* Interpretive validity is concerned with the accuracy in meaning ascribed to the participant's words (Maxwell, 1992). How accurate is the proximity between the participants' experiences and words and the researcher's account of them? Specifically, would the participants recognize the inferences made from their words? The threats to interpretive validity are partially secured by the paper trail, but in CQR a series of additional steps were followed to assure that analytical integrity is applied to the interpretation of the participant's words. Discussion until consensus among

analytically skilled individuals provides a more defensible analysis of the meaning of participants' words than the analysis produced by the work of a single researcher.

Accessing multiple interpretations was accomplished, in part, by forming an interdisciplinary research team with a variety of perspectives that, in sum, surpassed the perspective of any one individual.

According to Maxwell (1992): "Accounts of meaning must be based initially on the conceptual framework of the people whose meaning is in question. These terms are often derived to a substantial extent from the participants own language" (p. 289).

CQR relies on the words and concepts of the participants in order to understand a phenomenon from the participant's perspective. In keeping with the ethos of collaboration and accurate representation of data, CQR required that the raw and analyzed data be returned to the participant for comment, criticism, alterations, clarification, and additions. Participants were invited to check the work of the team to assure that participants recognize the inferences made from the experiences they shared in the interview. If the criteria for descriptive and interpretive validity are satisfied, then this study has accurately captured and described the insider's perspective of the participants.

*Theoretical.* Moving beyond descriptive and interpretative validity, theoretical validity rests on the ability of the final narrative to provide a sound explanation for the phenomenon under study (Maxwell, 1992). Theoretical validity is demonstrated in the final chapter of this study, where the emic perspective is abstracted and theoretically connected to the etic perspective, in this case, the scholarly literature on oppression and resistance in schooling.

### *Study Design*

*Recruitment.* The ability to cast a wide geographical net in search of participants was possible through the use of the internet. Although only two cases in the final sample were associated with the primary recruitment sources of organizations serving the gay and lesbian community (i.e., National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, the National Youth Advocacy Coalition, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network), many members of these organizations widely distributed the call for participants (Appendix A) through their electronic networks. It is impossible to track the electronic path traveled by the call for participants because all of the people who made contact with the researcher heard about the study from a source not on the original distribution list (e.g., a member of a family, faculty, friend, local organization or listserves). More than 50 potential interviewees in locations ranging from the mid-Atlantic region to the western states contacted the primary researcher.

*Case selection.* Research on marginalized youth poses particular challenges to the researcher who intends not to contribute to further marginalization of the population by using a sample of convenience. Prior studies cited in the literature review derived samples from segregated settings (e.g., hospitals, gay and lesbian youth programs outside of schools, and support groups) where these youth are visible and easily accessible to the researcher.

As do most qualitative studies seeking to understand what the social world means to different people, this study focused on a small sample of cases. Since the experiences of those select cases provide the starting point for and remain a central

concern of the study, the choice of cases was critical. The sample of 15 cases for this study was a purposeful one. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to deliberately select and acquire "cases that are rich in information because they are unusual or special in some way" (Marshall, 1995, p. 169).

In order to capture as much variety in school experiences as possible in the sample, participant selection was based on identifying students who lived in different geographic regions, attended schools of different size and student composition, and whose school experiences were markedly different than other students in the sample.

All respondents to the call for participants were telephoned by the primary researcher and pre-screened using the protocol for the screening interview (Appendix B). From the pool of respondents, 15 participants were selected based on their ability to vividly recall, describe and discuss positive and negative school experiences and to engage in a discussion of the meaning they attach to their experiences as non-heterosexually identified students in high school. All other respondents were eliminated from further consideration because they were not located geographically within reasonable travel distance of the researcher (less than 1,000 miles) or they were not able to sustain a basic question and response exchange with the researcher on the telephone.

To aid in securing participants who vividly recalled their school experiences and to reduce problems associated with reliance on retrospective interpretations of past events, participants had to be presently in school or had graduated no sooner than June 1999. Participants had to provide their written consent to be interviewed in-depth about their school experiences and be at least 18 years old.

Participants needed to self-identify as not heterosexual (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, or lesbian-identified bisexual) during high school. Although the terms "gay" and "lesbian" have been used throughout this study as a contrast to the heterosexually constructed male and female, it is clear that non-heterosexual identities today can be characterized more by a state of fluidity than any neatly defined category and "gay" and "lesbian". The use of "gay" and "lesbian" in this study should not be read as conveying a state of fixed identities but as a narrative device to achieve consistency and flow in the narrative.

*Participants.* A sample of 15 women participated in this study. Participants were 18 years old (9 cases), 19 years old (5 cases) and 20 years old (1 case). The participants identified their racial identities as White or European American (12 cases), African American or Black (2 cases), and Chinese (1 case). The participants identified their religious identities as Jewish (1 case), Unitarian (1 case), Catholic (1 case), Pentecostal (1 case), spiritual (2 cases), and no religious identity or affiliation (9 cases). Participants identified their sexual orientation as lesbian (8 cases), queer (2 cases), bisexual (1 case), dyke (1 case), fluid (2 cases) and "95% lesbian and 5% straight or just confused" (1 case). Participants graduated from high school in 1999 (9 cases), 1998 (5 cases) or anticipated graduating from high school in 2000 (1 case). Characteristics of participants' schools are identified in Appendix C.

*Multiple researchers.* Many qualitative researchers amass data, devise a method of coding and assessing patterns in their data, and conclude with an interpretation. As Hill and her colleagues (1997) argue, this solo effort raises the issue of introducing bias into the study and leaves little assurance that another researcher

using the same data set would produce like results. In contrast, data analysis in CQR requires a team of at least three people, including the primary researcher, to conduct the analysis and at least one auditor to review and provide feedback on the analysis.

This study used a diverse and qualified research team of four people who are homogeneous in strong analytic and critical abilities, but heterogeneous in prior exposure to the educational concepts under investigation, in academic backgrounds, in schooling experiences and in sexual orientations. All team members were trained in and had prior experience using CQR and were selected by the primary researcher.

All members of the research team (three judges and one auditor) had prior experience using CQR. The primary research team consisted of the primary researcher (a 37-year-old, white woman) and two Ph.D.'s in counseling psychology (a 50-year-old white woman and a 37-year-old white woman). A 37 year-old white female served as the auditor. The research team identified their sexual orientations as lesbian (2), fluid (1), and heterosexual (1).

### *Procedures*

*Interviews.* The primary researcher conducted a pilot interview and all 15 taped face-to-face interviews. The researcher called participants to arrange a mutually convenient time and place for face-to-face interviews. An overview of the interview protocol (Appendix D) and a consent form (Appendix E) were mailed to the interviewee in advance. Signed consent forms were collected by the researcher before starting the interview.

This study used audiotaped, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to collect data. The researcher completed one pilot interview and the

interview was revised based on the results of the pilot interview. The audiotaped, in person interviews with each of the participants lasted approximately two hours.

The same interview protocol was followed with each participant. The structure of the interview was based on Hill et al.'s (1997) guidelines for qualitative research and began with a "grand tour" question and then moved through each interview question. Participants were asked to discuss and interpret their experiences in school, with friends and family, and in society. Immediately after the interview, the interviewer recorded notes about the interview (i.e., length, flow of the interview, and reactions of the interviewer to the researcher). Interviewees received a token \$15 for their participation, a gesture four of the interviewees declined. These participants directed that the money be donated to an organization supporting gay and lesbian youth.

*Transcripts.* All transcripts were transcribed verbatim by the researcher and all identifying information (e.g., names of participants, schools, teachers, and friends) were removed from the transcripts used for analysis and replaced with pseudonyms. The participants' names and high schools were listed on a master list that was maintained and seen only by the researcher and the cassette tapes of the interviews were kept in a secure cabinet. Each tape and transcript was rechecked for accuracy by the primary researcher and participants were given copies of their transcripts to read and correct (Appendix F).

*Biases and expectations.* Hill et al. (1997) agree with Neuman (1997) that all researchers should be acquainted with a strong subject knowledge base before embarking on a study and says, that the "issue is 'forgetting' the literature when it

comes to analyzing individual cases so that the focus is on what the participant actually said rather than what the participant theoretically should have said" (p. 533). During data analysis, the team members distanced themselves from any scholarly knowledge base informing their perspective on the study in order to assume a listening stance with participants during the reading of the transcripts and in subsequent data analysis.

Prior to the coding of any data, the team reviewed the interview protocol and explored their biases and expectations by responding to the questions on the interview protocol as they expected participants to respond. Identification of biases and biases before working on the data allowed the team to be more attentive to the data and aware of biases when they arose.

The team biases fell into four areas. First, all team members acknowledged the significant age and education gaps between the researchers and the participants. The team members attended high school in different states during different years but imagined that high school today is probably easier for non-heterosexually identified women than it was for women when they were in high school. Second, the team expected that students who lived greater distances from a metropolitan area would experience greater difficulty in their communities. The team thought that a lack of contact with like-minded people, publications, and activities would negatively impact student's abilities to analyze their experiences as self-induced or socially constructed. Similarly, the team thought that students who were more political in their school experiences would operate from a feminist perspective. And fourth, the team expected that some schools are supporting gay and lesbian students and allow same-sex dates to

the prom, but that more schools are finding ways to prohibit the existence of such organizations and social activities. The team expected one or two "hero" teachers to be present even when a school is not on the cutting edge of change. Most of the team believed that schools wish that the gay and lesbian population would simply go away. The team had a difficult time imagining a student having a holistically positive school experience with this identity while in high school.

### *Data Analysis*

As qualitative research has quickly moved "from the status of a rather specialized alternative to a place of legitimacy alongside the quantitative approach to education research" (Lancy, 1993, p. ix) the methods of analysis are becoming more refined. The reduction and analysis of transcripts followed the systematic data analysis procedures of Consensual Qualitative Research (Hill et al., 1997). CQR originates in the field of counseling psychology and has been used and continually modified in a number of studies (e.g., Knox, Hess, Petersen, & Hill, 1997; Ladany et al., 1997; Williams et al., 1997). CQR uses a unique combination of protocols to improve the process of systematically analyzing transcripts from interviews.

*Preliminary analysis.* The preliminary work was done case by case. In preparation for coding, a list of domains (themes) was developed. The initial domains emerged from the themes in the interview questions, in consultation with the research team, and in relation to the literature previously reviewed. These initial domains continually evolved through consensus as new or more accurate domains emerged from the data. Each team member, working independently on a transcript, assigned each unit of thought (a singular thought expressed in a phrase or several sentences) on

the transcript to one or more of the domains. No material was left out and all content was coded into a domain. The team met to collectively discuss each transcript and the thought units they assigned to each domain, arguing, discussing, and referring to evidence in the transcript until they reached consensus. The auditor, a member of the research team with prior experience using CQR, brought another perspective to the process when she examined the results of the team's coding. The team discussed the auditor's comments and again reached consensus on any proposed changes. A "consensus version" of each transcript was created which contained all thought units sorted by domains. In this study, there were 15 consensus versions as there were 15 interviews. All consensus versions were mailed to participants for comment and revisions with a cover letter (Appendix G).

Hill et al. (1997) employ a strategy of removing two cases from analysis until the analysis of all other cases are complete. The data from the two cases are then introduced into the larger data set to determine if new relationships or patterns are present. If the patterns do not change then the results are considered stable and the categories of analysis are considered stable. If, however, new relationships emerge additional cases must be added until stability is achieved. A person not involved in this study (a parent of the primary researcher) was asked to select two numbers between 1-15. The cases matching those numbers, Cases 9 and 15, were set aside and later used to conduct the stability check.

Next, working on one consensus version at a time, each team member independently read and abstracted the raw data in each domain into core ideas that succinctly and clearly expressed the essence of what the interviewee said. Hill et al.

(1997) likens the process of writing core ideas to the process of writing "an abstract of a journal article, which summarizes the content of the article in fewer words but does not add anything extra to the article" (p. 546). The team then met to discuss the exact final phrasing of each core idea on each case until consensus was reached. Again, the auditor reviewed the work of the team for accuracy, clarity, and appropriateness of wording. The team then discussed the auditor's comments and again reached consensus on revisions. Before advancing to the across-case analysis, the final transcript, consensus version, and abstract of core idea was sent to the participants for their voluntary audit.

*Data interpretation.* The team started the next level of abstraction, analysis across cases, after the individual cases were analyzed. The team worked with a new document, a listing of the core ideas for all cases sorted by domain. Focusing on one domain at a time, the team looked for similarities across cases that clustered as distinct categories. These categories (groupings of similar data) represent sub-themes under the same domain. The team remained open to new or revised themes that emerged from the data during this phase. Each team member independently developed an initial set of categories that best captured the similarities of core ideas in each domain. The team then discussed to consensus the titles of the categories and the specific core ideas to be placed in each category. The auditor reviewed the cross-analysis and, as necessary, consulted the raw data. The team discussed comments from the auditor and incorporated suggested changes if agreed upon by consensus judgment.

The frequency of themes in each domain provided a systematic way of examining the representativeness of the results across the sample and the variations

within the sample. Themes were considered general if they applied to all cases, typical if they applied to more than half of the cases, and variant if they applied to half or less than half and at least two cases. Core ideas occurring in less than two cases were dropped from further consideration. After the cross-analysis was complete, two cases that were set aside before analysis were added to see if the designation of general, typical, and variant changed. The team also determined that new categories did not have to be added to accommodate the cases. The remaining cases did not alter the results substantially and the findings were considered stable. Stability meant that the results generally explained the phenomenon for the sample, though not necessarily the population from which the sample was drawn.

## Chapter Four: Results

As described in Chapter Three, this study analyzed interviews with 15 participants using the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) design, a qualitative approach developed by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997). CQR uses a collaborative team of researchers to analyze transcripts and develop an organized schema of data, as presented in Table 1 and reported below.

Although this study contributes to the literature on the interplay of structure and agency by using first-person accounts of students, it was initially burdened by the hopeless dualism found in that literature (e.g., Mehan, 1992). The data analysis team quickly became deeply mired in questions about the preeminence of structure or the preeminence of agency. Knowing that the participants were explaining important aspects of both structure and agency, yet lacking a conceptual template to adequately capture the phenomenon, the team's ability to come to consensus on an initial draft set of themes was frustrated. Consistent with other researchers who had found themselves unable to move forward with constructed and imposed dualisms, the team advanced by following the data, not the dictum (Hill, Thompson, and Williams, 1997).

As a result, the team found that what participants talked about in the interviews was neither a sense of possessing free agency in all aspects of their lives nor a sense that an overarching structure limited their opportunities in the environments discussed in the interviews. What participants suggested, instead, was that their individual experiences were shaped in a set of interrelated environments in ways that they perceived as both enabling (Appendix H) and constraining (Appendix I).

The analyzed data were divided into the major categories of Family, Peers, School, Society. Each of these domains are further divided into enabling or constraining categories. The term enabling was selected by the team to capture a set of specific conditions that the participant perceived as neutral or positive, as contributing to her sense of safety, well-being and growth, or as furthering gender or sexual equality. The term constraining was selected by the team to capture a set of specific conditions that the participant perceived as negative, arbitrary, or unjust. A fifth major domain captures data related to the student as an Agent of Change.

The findings, described below, represent lucid, nuanced accounts of the characteristics and mechanisms shaping the intersections of marginalized students and social structures. These critical encounters represent contacts between participants and specific environmental conditions where evidence of a constructed social reality were revealed.

Table 1 presents the 74 categories that emerged from the analysis. Categories were quantified based on the frequency of their occurrence in the sample. Following CQR procedures (Hill et al., 1997) the team considered a category to be "general" if it applied to at least 14 of the 15 cases, "typical" if it applied to more than half of the cases, and "variant" if it applied to half or less than half but more than 2 cases. Categories with less than 2 cases were identified in the domain of "other" and dropped from the analysis, either because they added nothing meaningful or because their content overlapped with results reflected by other domains. The categories were not mutually exclusive in that material from a case could appear in more than one category. After the two cases set aside prior to data analysis were added and the

stability check was performed, 67 categories retained the same frequency label (i.e., general, typical, and variant), four categories changed from typical to variant, two categories changed from variant to typical, and one category changed from general to typical. The team judged that the categories developed from the initial 13 cases fit the data found in the two additional cases and concluded that the categories of analysis were stable.

Table 1

Final Domains and Frequencies of Categories

Domain/Category	Frequency
<b>Domain: Family</b>	
<b>Enabling</b>	
Family allows or encourages student to voice opinions that are contrary to family's opinions; family allows student to transgress norms of her heterosexual family	Typical
Family expresses positive reactions to gays and lesbians; family has gay and lesbian friends and/or gays and lesbians in the family	Typical
Family members over time display positive personal growth and positive growth in relationships with student and other family members	Typical
Family provides student with a sense of core values and strength	Typical
<b>Constraining</b>	
Family discourages or disparages student's value system, expects student to adopt family's beliefs, or cautions student about her beliefs	General
Family threatens or uses physical violence, and/or the weapons used are words (disrespect, shaming, making fun, imposing guilt, interrogating, outing, silencing)	Typical
Family manifests "white elephant syndrome" (avoidance; not directly making intentions and feelings about student known; not defending, not taking seriously, no interest)	Typical
<b>Domain: Peers</b>	
<b>Enabling</b>	
Peers let student "open up the conversation" about sexual identity	Typical
Peers make it easy for student to disclose her identity and react positively to disclosure	Typical

Table 1

Final Domains and Frequencies of Categories

Domain/Category	Frequency
<b>Domain: Peers (continued)</b>	
<i>Enabling (continued)</i>	
Peers put student in contact with other non-heterosexual students	Typical
Peers create safe, welcoming spaces in school	Typical
Peers are more accepting of lesbians than gay men	Typical
Peers are co-learners about gays and lesbians; peers become involved in gay and lesbian issues; peers' opinions evolve; peers critique and question heterosexual culture	Typical
Diversity in peers contributes to an open community and a feeling of "home"	Variant
Peers openly accept other non-heterosexual people	Variant
Peers' enabling behaviors and attitudes emanate from intelligence and liberalism	Variant
<i>Constraining</i>	
Peers make school feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or not welcoming for gay and lesbian students	General
Peers spread rumors, use insults, threats and violence	General
Peers include or exclude other students based on perceptions of differences and similarities	Typical
Peers cast non-heterosexual students as sexual predators or appropriate marginalized sexual identities	Typical
Peers' attitudes and behaviors interfere with the development, continuation or deepening peer relationship	Typical

*Table 1*

*Final Domains and Frequencies of Categories*

Domain/Category	Frequency
<b>Domain: School</b>	
<b><i>Enabling</i></b>	
At least one individual gay and lesbian role model, ally, or advocate is present in school	General
Positive school experience	General
Relates to peers only	Variant
Relates to a combination of teachers, peers, and her involvement in the school	Typical
Presence of gay and lesbian teachers and administrators (presumed and real)	Typical
School provides some information about gays and lesbians	Typical
High school environment was made "surprisingly okay" for gays and lesbians	Variant
<b><i>Constraining</i></b>	
Heterosexual assumptions permeate schools (Heterosexual = normal)	General
School presents little or no information on gays and lesbians	General
Teachers make negative comments about gays and lesbians; teachers are silent or will not talk about gay and lesbian issues; teachers do not stop peer harassment	General
Students left to self-educate, form clubs, defend others, change or leave school, postpone experiences, or imagine a different setting after high school	General
Schools reflect local or regional norms	General

Table 1

*Final Domains and Frequencies of Categories*

Domain/Category	Frequency
<b>Domain: School (continued)</b>	
<i>Constraining (continued)</i>	
Negative school experience	General
Relates to peers	Typical
Relates to teachers/administrators	Typical
Heterosexually-identified students acquire greater benefits in school than non-heterosexually identified students	Typical
School monitors and restricts gay and lesbian students	*Typical
Compliance by adults in school maintains the heterosexual status quo	Typical
Gay and lesbian teachers fear being outted/ridiculed or fired; no openly gay and lesbian adults; rumors only	Typical
Interference in the development of student-teacher relationships; transitional or temporary adult leadership; knowledge/comfort gaps between adults/students	Typical
School reflects parental concerns	Typical
School reflects political conservatism and religion	Typical
Other inequalities in society are mirrored in school	Typical
<b>Domain: Society</b>	
<i>Enabling (Social change)</i>	
Gay and lesbian students have benefited from 20 years of social change	General
Student hopeful that students in 20 years will continue to benefit from social change	Typical

Table 1

*Final Domains and Frequencies of Categories*

Domain/Category	Frequency
<b>Domain: Society (continued)</b>	
<b><i>Enabling (Social change)</i></b>	
Visibility of gays and lesbians facilitates conversation, gives gay and lesbian community role models, helps in personal problem-solving and growth, or is a source of information	Typical
Social forces outside of school affect social change, which in turn may change schools	Typical
Student sees a role for school in changing the status of gays and lesbians in society	*Typical
Social change is partially enabled through personal experience and seeing alternatives	*Typical
School can extend multiculturalism/diversity and be serious about teaching it	Typical
Social change is continuous	*Variant
People can unite across differences; revive social obligation and social consciousness	*Variant
Families must change because families are co-educators of children	Variant
School can alter public opinion	Variant
<b><i>Constraining (Social inertia)</i></b>	
Media stereotypes, is anti-gay; presents simplistic, one-sided perspective	General
Being a non-white lesbian is like being a "minority within a minority"	General
Lower economic status means fewer opportunities	General
Women's appearances are judged; does not look like what people expect	General

Table 1

*Final Domains and Frequencies of Categories*

Domain/Category	Frequency
<b>Domain: Society (continued)</b>	
<i>Constraining (Social change)</i>	
Inequality in society is permanent	Typical
People learn not to critique the status quo	Typical
People resist critiquing the status quo	Typical
The root causes of discrimination against gays and lesbians are ignorance, misunderstanding, conservatism and fear	Typical
Discrimination, ignorance and misunderstanding become the "traditional" base of knowledge; a lack of access to information, a lack of exposure; a lack of social awareness and social obligation	Typical
Fear interferes with understanding or supporting gays and lesbians	*Variant
Challenge of being a woman and a lesbian in a man's world	Variant
<b>Domain: Student as agent of change</b>	
Student has voice in school (writing, speaking up in class, organizing); student transgresses heterosexual norms of school	General
Student has advice for her peers in high school	General
Student believes she has left a lasting impression on her school	General
Lasting impression will be sexuality-related	Typical
Lasting impression not sexuality-related	Variant
Student has changed her family	Typical
Student has changed her school	Typical

Table 1

*Final Domains and Frequencies of Categories*

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Domain/Category	Frequency
<b>Domain: Student as agent of change (continued)</b>	
Student will use her career choice to make change, be a role model, and change people one at a time	Typical
Student feels her appearance expresses a natural self; uses "passing" to avoid negative reaction or receive positive reaction; dresses to attract women; dresses to subvert expectations	Typical
Student seeks and finds information beyond school	Typical
Student and her generation are actively changing school and society	Typical
Student would promote self love, acceptance, motivation, strength and unity	Typical
Student uses sexual identity language to convey nuance, multiple meanings, shifting perspectives, empowerment, or transitions	Variant
Student wants to have a role in the future (but path unclear, energy low, or postponing action until more settled)	Variant

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Note: Frequencies represent the number of cases occurring in the category

General = at least 14 of the 15 cases;

Typical = more than half but less than 14 cases;

Variant = half or less but at least two cases.

\* = Categories that changed frequency label after adding the final cases.

Each of the categories in the domains of family, peers and school represented an encounter within one of these settings. These encounters revealed to participants something about their place in that setting and their place in the social world. Similarly, these encounters frequently triggered participants to assess the limits and possibilities of that setting.

### *Family*

Although the focus of the research questions were primarily on schooling practices, it became very clear that students analyze their school experiences through other mediating settings, such as their families. This dynamic resulted in participants who did not evaluate similar school practices in similar ways. For example, schools often ignore all aspects of non-heterosexual sexuality in students. One participant considered this practice enabling because she was judging school practices against an openly hostile and demeaning family situation that drained her emotional reserves. In contrast, another participant found the enforcement of non-heterosexual silence in schools constraining because she was drawing from her experiences with an accepting family that valued open discussion and multiple perspectives. Equally important, families in and of themselves are structures that have their own internal ability to enable and to constrain their members. Whether families intended to send strong messages of support or criticism, it is clear that participants astutely read family encounters around issues of sexuality for important information about the possibilities and limits of their place in the family and in the social world. These categories reflect the ways in which participants feel their families revealed something to them about their place in the family setting and their place in the social world.

*Family enables daughter.* When their families permitted them to voice opinions that were contrary to the family's opinions, and when daughters were allowed to transgress the norms of their heterosexual families without negative consequences, participants felt enabled (Typical). Participants were allowed "voice" in their families to express themselves in a variety of ways. Participants challenged heterosexist rules in regard to personal appearance (i.e., wearing a suit to high school graduation) and bedroom decorations (i.e., hanging posters of famous lesbians and a gay pride flag). They were able to challenge their families when homophobic comments were expressed.

Additionally, participants felt enabled when families expressed positive reactions to gays and lesbians or when the family includes gay and lesbian members or friends (Typical). The range of positive reactions from parents range from a father's tacit acceptance of other gay and lesbian students in school to more outspokenness and public support. One father, a teacher at his daughter's school, frequently challenged homophobic comments made by his students (i.e., on gays in the military: "I'd rather have a really strong gay guy watching my back than some wimpy straight guy"). The heterosexual mother of another participant decided to march in a rally in Washington, D.C. on behalf of gay and lesbian rights. Some participants read "no negative action" as a positive reaction, such as when a family maintained a silence of tolerance around a gay or lesbian member of the extended family.

It was enabling when participants experienced a positive shift or growth in family members and family relationships over time (Typical). One participant believes she had changed her family by making them a little more open-minded because while

the family "preached" support they also had to directly face their daughter's new sexual identity. Another participant explained that her father had to either reject his gay son and lesbian daughter or change his negative views on homosexuality. Other participants were still helping their parents adjust. One participant came out to her mother and then gave her mother time and space to work with it before engaging her in another conversation.

Furthermore, participants felt enabled when they were able to attribute their own core values to the strengths and influences of their families (Typical). One participant thought her mother's influence was the beginning of her learning about the social world, the beginning of her awareness to look around herself and look at things and why they work the way they do. Another participant felt that she had her mother's support in any healthy relationship with a man or woman because her mother's core belief that healthy sexual relationships are about who you love and having a good relationship with that person. Similarly, another participant has a family who taught her things that had nothing to do with her being gay, but the participant applied it to her sexuality (e.g., to be herself, that people will either accept her or they won't, and to speak her mind).

*Family constrains daughter.* Just as families revealed things to their daughters about their worth and potential, families also communicated less savory aspects of the social order. As will be similar to elements of the role of peers (discussed next), families often embody the role of social regulator and demand conformance to externally defined rules.

Participants felt constrained by families who discouraged or disparaged different value systems, expected or demanded that the participant adopt the family's beliefs, or cautioned the participant about her beliefs (General). One participant did not think her parents were making a "precautionary 'we don't want you to be gay'" decision but nevertheless her parents enrolled her in an all-girls Catholic school to encourage her to be more like them and to begin dating boys. Another participant received all pink Christmas presents (make-up and pajama pants in several shades of pink) from her parents the year she came out to them even though her parents knew she hated pink. Other parents made jokes about gays and lesbians, took down gay pride flags hung on bedroom walls, and expressed worry about "choosing a difficult life."

Likewise, participants felt constrained by families who threatened or used physical violence or they applied the weapons of words: disrespect, shame, guilt, interrogation, outing, or silencing (Typical). One participant in the study experienced extreme physical and emotional abuse from her parents that ended with the participant seeking relief from the legal system. Among the many abuses she suffered in her family home were beatings, interrogations, and solitary confinement. In other cases, family members told participants "fags were perverted," "you were the only lesbian on the planet" and "it's a phase, you'll get over it." Some participants were blamed for the health problems of their parents and accused of molesting other family members.

In contrast to verbal barrage, participants felt similarly constrained when the family manifested the "white elephant syndrome." In these situations the family practiced avoidance by not directly making their intentions and feelings about the

participant known to her, not defending the participant nor taking her seriously, or by showing no interest at all (Typical). Some daughters who had tried to discuss their sexuality with their families felt like it is an impenetrable silence that is "just kind of there." Their sexual identity was ignored, not believed, or not acknowledged.

### *Peers*

Peers emerged as a domain separate from other school experiences because although peers frequently occupied the same educational setting as the participants, they were encountered voluntarily and involuntarily in a variety of non-school settings (i.e., work, home, meetings, organized youth events, clubs). This section draws attention to readings of information conveyed by peers about the participant's place in the social world. Similar to the prior category of family, the majority of categories in the peer domain were described by participants as enabling.

*Peers enable.* Participants found it enabling when their peers let them "open up the conversation" about sexual identity (Typical). One participant said that after she came out other students were very warm and asked her questions. Another participant found that her heterosexual friends were comfortable with her teasing them about wearing make-up and liking boys. Another participant began reading about sexuality then circulating the books among her friends. Her friends, in turn, introduced her to additional books. Similarly, another participant made her friends her "lesbian mission" and would drag them to all of the different bookstores and make them read books and learn because she was trying to find out more information, too.

Similarly, peers enabled participants by making it easy for the participants to disclose their identity and by reacting positively to the disclosure (Typical). Some

participants took the opportunity to come out to the entire school in an environment of friends, some of who were gay, all of who were gay-friendly. Other participants did not come out to the entire school but had positive responses from a narrower band of friends. For example, a participant and two other students came out in a written assignment in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and quickly became friends. Other participants were hesitant to come out but felt encouraged after each positive experience to disclosure.

Also enabling were peers who put participants in contact with other non-heterosexual students (Typical). Some of these connections were informal, such as when one participant met another gay student on the first day of school and then introduced her to other gay and lesbian students. Other peer-to-peer connections were facilitated by school activities. One participant heard a panel of gay and lesbian speakers during her high school's cultural diversity week and wrote a question for the panel. A member of the school's gay and lesbian student support group saw the question and slipped her a note inviting her to join the group. Straight-identified peers facilitated connections among gay and straight students by taking leadership positions in high school Gay Straight Alliance clubs.

Likewise, participants felt that it was their peers who contributed to the creation of safe, welcoming spaces in school (Typical). Participants found spaces with their peers in the "gay corner" of the cafeteria that consisted of gay students and their allies. One participant felt most comfortable in the "freak areas," like the smokers' corner where all the "deviants" grouped together. This space worked because there weren't enough gay and lesbian students in her school to establish their own corner and the other deviants did not seem to care that the students were not heterosexual.

Peers also contributed to safety in settings where gender identity was less traditional (i.e., on the swim team with the girls who were less interested in proving their femininity than improving their athletic skills).

Furthermore, participants felt enabled as women when their peers' expressed a greater acceptance of lesbians than acceptance of gay men (Typical). Participants said that their peers see women as capable of love and intimate relationships but see gay men only involved in "really gross sex." Participants added that lesbians are more accepted than gay men by male peers because straight male high school students enjoy the idea of two women together sexually.

In another category, participants gleaned meaning from interactions where their peers were co-learners about gays and lesbians, were getting involved in gay and lesbian issues, and were questioning heterosexual culture (Typical). Participants noticed that the opinions of their peers evolved through these encounters that questioned the dominant culture. One participant equated the "aha" moments of her heterosexual friends to the process of discovery white people go through when they explore white privilege. Other participants pointed to changed peer attitudes after realizing that gay and lesbian students go through infatuation and break-ups with the same emotional intensity as heterosexuals.

In addition, participants described diversity in their peers contributing to an open community and a "feeling of home" at school (Variant). One participant thought her lack of negative experiences could be attributed to the high school where students were different in terms of race, ethnicity, part of city they come from, and upbringing and the school actively worked to overcome those differences. Similarly, one

participant attended a school so ethnically diverse that if a teacher slipped and said something wrong, student hands would shoot up to correct the teacher because both students and teachers at her school cared about eliminating cultural biases.

Participants were also enabled when their peers openly accepted other non-heterosexual students (Variant). Participants evaluated their setting by gauging peer responses to other openly gay and lesbian students. One participant described how one of the most popular girls in the school was openly bisexual and students embraced her. Another participant described 2 or 3 really out students in every grade who "did not get bothered." Another participant decided to come out to a whole group of students because she knew that since her friends loved her gay male friends, they would love her, too.

Lastly, participants said that peers' enabling behaviors and attitudes emanated from intelligence and liberalism (Variant). Some participants believed that advanced placement and honors students were probably more accepting of non-heterosexually identified students because those students were "brought up to value a lot of things that other people were not brought up to value." One participant elaborated by explaining that even if the honors students disagreed with homosexuality, they did not "get in your face" because there was an expectation about how to behave among students who "have money and come from good homes."

*Peers constrain.* Peer behaviors toward students with suspect sexualities were an immensely important clue used by participants to understand the prevailing social order. Additionally, there is little evidence in the data that the mechanisms peers used

to demand conformance to heterosexual norms were suppressed or systematically dismantled by school authorities.

Participants read aspects of the social order when they saw their peers making school feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or not welcoming for non-heterosexual students (General). Peers created "a stifling environment" and "a hurtful anti-gay undercurrent" and marginalized them to the "outskirts" of school life.

Similarly, participants saw peers spread rumors, use insults, threats and violence (General). One participant remembered a girl running down the hall screaming "If that dyke looks at me one more time like that, I'm gonna fucking beat her up." Another participant reassessed her school setting when she discovered that a student had written "dyke" on a friend's locker. One participant who was not out at her school felt so threatened by homophobic remarks and name calling by other students that she did not attempt to start a campus Gay Straight Alliance club.

Likewise, participants saw their peers include or exclude students based on perceptions of differences and similarities (Typical). A common theme was the self-segregation of students in the lunchroom, where there was "a black table, an Asian table, a white table" and possibly a "gay and lesbian table."

In addition, participants saw their peers casting non-heterosexual students as sexual predators or, conversely, appropriating marginalized sexual identities (Typical). Participants monitored many of their behaviors to avoid misperceptions about their sexuality (i.e., not coming out to friends so friends would not presume a sexual interest in them, not changing in the locker room to avoid false accusations of impropriety). In

striking contrast, participants explained how heterosexual peers claimed to be bisexual in order to be viewed as "open-minded" by other students.

Finally, participants described how peer attitudes and behaviors interfered with the development, continuation or deepening of peer relationships (Typical).

Participants felt that interference from peers prevented them from getting closer to female friends because friends are equally subject to the assumptions of other students and that meant submitting to having their sexuality scrutinized. Other participants discussed closeted students who would be "super gay" at clubs, but at school could not make contact in school without making their own sexuality more suspect.

### *School*

This section details the participants' experiences of constraining and enabling factors in school. For these purposes, "school" represents the adults in positions of authority in school (i.e., teachers, principals and administrators) and curriculum and instruction. The ways that opportunities and barriers based on sexual identity are crafted and expressed in school is not unfamiliar to marginalized students. It is noteworthy that participants identified almost three times as many categories in constraining (14 categories) as in enabling (5 categories). These points of interaction between the school and the participant reveal to participants something about their place in school and the social order.

*School enables.* Participants felt enabled when there was at least one adult gay or lesbian role model, ally or advocate present in school (General). Participants felt enabled even if it was only one adult in their school who expressed overt or covert support for gay and lesbian issues.

Additionally, participants knew or imagined that there were gay and lesbian teachers and administrators at their school (Typical). Some participants came out to teachers who were presumed to be gay. In an effort to identify safe adults, participants often guessed at the sexual identity of their teachers. The evidence they relied upon included "she's been seen at certain places," "he's amazingly gay friendly" and "he gives detentions if he hears somebody say the word faggot." For participants, identifying a gay or lesbian teacher or administrator, even if that person did not actively support gay and lesbian issues in school, validated the existence of an adult gay and lesbian community beyond school.

Furthermore, participants named at least one positive school experience related to their sexual identity (General). It was typical that their positive experience related to the combined efforts of teachers and peers (i.e., the presence of a sanctioned gay and lesbian group made up of students and at least one teacher) rather than an experience related only to positive interactions with peers (i.e., becoming closer after coming out to a friend).

Also enabling were the bits of information about gays and lesbians participants acquired in school (Typical). Conveyance of information was often outside of a classroom setting (i.e., counseling office, pamphlets, assemblies) and by individuals without teaching credentials (i.e., panels and guest speakers).

Lastly, participants said they had a high school environment that was made "surprisingly okay" for gays and lesbians (Variant). Some participants felt like being gay or lesbian didn't make a difference to feeling like a normal part of everyday life at the school.

*School constrains.* Participants said that heterosexual assumptions permeated schools (General). They said that there was "no mantra" but heterosexuality was so expected, so ingrained, it was barely noticed anymore. They explained that what is learned in school is considered neutral by straight people but "all you hear about were heterosexual love stories." Similarly, another participant thought her high school expected everyone to be straight because being straight is "normal" to the people who ran her school.

Likewise, participants said that schools presented little or no information on gays and lesbians (General). One participant said she never heard about the birth of the gay and lesbian civil rights movement when her class studied America of the late 1960s and she never heard about the assassination of openly gay San Francisco elected official Harvey Milk. One participant criticized schools for spending time joking about, but not dissecting, Monica Lewinsky's blue dresses and President Clinton's cigars. Participants said they received very little information to help them learn about themselves and their history. Many participants witnessed teachers refusing to discuss when an obviously gay author wrote about queer themes. For many students in English classes, "Walt Whitman was just a guy." Many participants discussed their perception that the topic of sexual identity was taboo in classes "even when the rest of the world was talking about it."

Also constraining were teachers who made negative comments about gays and lesbians, were silent or would not talk about gay and lesbian issues, and did not stop peer harassment (General). Participants read what might await them in the adult world through the behaviors of the adults in school. One participant shared that a couple of

teachers and the dean said faggot to each other jokingly when they thought no one could hear. Another participant heard an assistant principal make comments in class about "how many more fruits there were in a local gayborhood than there were in the market." When one participant told her teacher that she was accepted at a prestigious all-women's college, the teacher said the school was great but then in a hushed voice said "but I've heard they're all lesbians." Linked to the prior results reported in "peers constraining," participants described harassment from peers that was tacitly sanctioned by adult inaction.

As a result, participants said that they were left to self-educate, form clubs, defend others, change or leave school, postpone experiences, and/or imagine a different setting after high school (General). Participants identified significant gaps in their educational experience, including delayed realization of their identity and a lack of practice in having relationships before entering adulthood. Other participants assessed their high school experience and modified their expectations of college accordingly, lowering them to avoid future disappointment or raising them in expectation of a more accepting environment.

In another category, participants said that schools reflected local or regional norms (General). Participants in the study were keenly aware of a cluster of conditions that made their experiences in schools different from the experiences of participants in other schools. Participants said schools reflected what was defined as normal in that town or area. For example, one participant explained that high schools in suburbia assumed that their students were straight because "homosexuality is deviant and the suburbs do not have deviants."

Relatedly, participants described at least one negative school experience related to sexual identity (General). Negative experiences related to both experiences with peers and to experiences with teachers and administrators. Participants were hurt by personal attacks, mockery and social isolation from peers. Others participants identified negative experiences related to adults misusing their authority and not fulfilling their professional responsibilities.

Additionally, participants said that heterosexually identified students acquired greater benefits in school than non-heterosexually identified students (Typical). Participants calculated that straight students benefited more than they did in school because straight students learned more about themselves, openly talked about relationships, dated and showed affection, and received the benefits of clubs and social activities.

Similarly, participants took note of when schools monitored and restricted gay and lesbian students (Typical). Participants described principals who shut down GSAs, imposed parental permission slips when gay and lesbian issues were discussed, and reduced funding to GSAs.

Also identified as constraining were adults in school who complied with the maintenance of the heterosexual status quo (Typical). Participants thought that it is just easier for adults in school to ignore gay and lesbian students than risk "pissing people off" by addressing it. Participants believed that teachers can make curriculum and instruction "totally straight" so teachers can choose to discuss or to not discuss gay-related themes.

In contrast to adults in complicity with the status quo, participants said that gay and lesbian teachers feared being outed, ridiculed or fired and that there were no out adults in their school, only rumors of gay and lesbian teachers (Typical). Although participants presumed or imagined that there were gay and lesbian adults in school, participants identified various constraints an openly gay or lesbian would face. One participant recalled a teacher who "just has to be gay" but thought the teacher was not out because that would be risking trouble or a lawsuit if "one stupid parent" decided to say something. Participants thought that out teachers risked their professional lives, years of schooling, and getting fired "by ignorant people." Participants thought that a common misconception was that being gay or lesbian and being a teacher are incompatible. Other participants thought that gay and lesbian teachers could not be supportive of gay and lesbian issues in school because any support of gay and lesbian students would be perceived as "taking sides."

Also constraining was the interference in the development of student-teacher relationships, transitional or temporary adult leadership, and knowledge and comfort gaps between adults and students (Typical). Participants identified gaps that limited adults' ability to connect with gay and lesbian students, including discomfort levels and knowledge-gaps among teachers on the topic of sexual identities. Additionally, students who sought adult leadership for clubs or mentor relationships were more likely to find assistance from adults in schools who were near retirement, fully tenured, or in the counseling profession.

In another category, participants believed schools reflected parental concerns (Typical). One participant explained how parents greatly influence their children (i.e.,

gay bashing at the dinner table) and what is taught in their children's school (i.e., the firing of the New York City chancellor). Similarly, another participant whose school had a new principal thought it might be risky for the new hire to support gay and lesbian students and faculty because the high school is an elitist school with wealthy parents who want to support the status quo.

Similarly, participants believed schools reflect political conservatism and religious beliefs. (Typical). One participant thought her administrators were responsible for a school climate that resembled the 1950s more than the year 2000. Other participants thought that the political climate of the nation and what happens in the nation's schools were definitely linked. Participants discussed how conservative leadership will slow down or stall progress and that "Republicans will want to ban gay books and cut alternative education."

Finally, participants believed school reflects other inequalities in society (Typical). Participants drew parallels between the hierarchy of their school and society. One participant described how economic classes in her neighborhood sorted in her school: The AP students or elite group got more funding than the other half of the students who were from a different neighborhood. Another participant described her school as similar in structure to the president (principal), the cabinet (2 assistant principals, 1 guy and 1 girl), and the senate (teachers, but without votes) and students on the bottom of the hierarchy, especially minority students, with no rights.

#### *Social Change and Social Inertia*

The data in this section report the factors that participants identified as blocking or creating social change.

*Social change enabled.* Participants reported that gay and lesbian students have benefited from 20 years of social change (General). Participants concurred with each other that they were the beneficiaries of two decades or more of social change. They felt that attending school in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century had to be easier on them than it was on lesbians who attended their schools 20 years ago.

Similarly, participants were hopeful that gay and lesbian students 20 years from now will continue to benefit from social change (Typical). Participants related the pace of change in school to measured changes in the larger culture (i.e., change will "filter down to schools"). One participant predicts that a new generation of parents will change schools because her generation is more accepting and they will raise children who are accepting.

In addition, participants saw a role for school in changing the status of gays and lesbians in society (Typical). Participants believed in the value of school as a vehicle for social change as evidenced by participants who believed society can reduce misunderstandings between people through education and exposure.

Furthermore, participants said that schools can extend the idea of multiculturalism and diversity and be serious about teaching it (Typical). Participants believed that school can be institutions of social change if the curriculum reflects the diversity of our country, gay and lesbian teachers receive encouragement and acknowledgment, and rules are changed (i.e., "gender appropriate" clothing).

In additional, participants saw that social forces outside of school affect social change, which, in turn, may change schools (Typical). One participant thought that changes in the school today and in the future result from gay and lesbian visibility in

society. Another participant echoed that significant change in school will occur after society changes, a process that will be slow because "homosexuality is a hot topic and goes against religion and morals."

Participants also pointed to the positive effects of gay and lesbian visibility: the facilitation of conversation, role models for gay and lesbian community, help in personal problem solving and growth, and as a source of information (Typical). School experiences were mediated by the presence of alternative information, role models, and viewpoints. Participants were aware of gay and lesbian singers, artists and actresses and some drew strength ("you can do it too") from Ellen DeGeneres who came out on national television. Another participant, an avid reader, said gay and lesbian publications made her realize that there were lesbians out there that she could associate with who had different perspectives and different views from each other. Another participant admired the lesbian authors who have gotten to the point in their lives where they were doing something they love and she saw through their stories that she could follow her career dreams, too.

Likewise, participants expressed a belief that social change is partially enabled through personal experience and seeing alternatives (Typical). Participants pointed to the value of having multiple perspectives on a topic. One participant explained that people critiqued society when they had the information and when they "saw the other side." Another participant explained that some people do not critique heterosexist society because they were "not in tune to it, had their priorities elsewhere, and need a really personal thing to happen to them before they saw the situation as it is experienced by other people". One of the participants explained that people become

involved in politics ultimately because of the things that happened to them (i.e., a personal stake), not because of ideological desires to make the world better.

In another category, participants felt that people can unite across differences and revive social obligation and social consciousness (Variant). One participant thought that what is needed most of all is for straight allies to "take on the fight" because "all of the screaming and hollering by gays and lesbians (even if we swell to 20% of the population) won't make a difference if we don't have allies because we are still a minority." Another participant pointed out that all members of society must "smarten up" and realize that people are all brothers and sisters. Another participant believed that people were becoming complacent and had to be reminded that they are obligated to other people.

Additionally, participants identified families (as opposed to schools) as the source of social change because families co-educate children (Variant). One participant suggested that more families should follow the example of the families who raise their children outside of the traditional gender roles (e.g., where boys do the dishes and girls do the chores) and the families who let their children know that it's not acceptable to discriminate. One participant suggested that schools could be change agents if they initiate conversations with parents (e.g., explain why students at school are allowed to be completely open about their sexuality.)

Relatedly, participants saw schools as capable of altering public opinion on sexuality (Variant). One participant thought schools can play a role in changing the status of gays in society by teaching acceptance of homosexuals, as she believes schools did for relationships for blacks and whites. Another participant thought

changes will occur in schools first in the "lucky communities" and then those schools will "guilt trip" other schools into becoming gay friendly in an effort to be like elite schools.

Finally, participants saw social change as continuous (Variant). One participant thought that it is possible that there will be a time without discrimination but doesn't know because there is still discrimination against other groups. She thought discrimination against gays and lesbians will run the same course: things will improve, and then another group will become discriminated against. Similarly, another participant thought that society would eventually change so that it will not be acceptable to discriminate against gays and lesbians more than any other group, but she wonders who will be the next target group after gays and lesbians were considered equal.

*Social change constrained.* Participants identified the constraint of media stereotypes of gays and lesbians, an anti-gay media bias, and media presentation of simplistic and one-sided perspectives (General). One participant said that she does not see herself as being like the media images of adult gays and lesbians and she never heard anything positive or negative about gay and lesbian teenagers. One participant explained that healthy gay and lesbian youth are not sensational and newsworthy. The participant believes that news about healthy gay and lesbian youth might encourage everyone to see that being gay and lesbian is not as hard as everyone thinks and that idea might be hard for some people to accept.

In another category, participants felt that being a non-white lesbian was like being a "minority within a minority" (General). Few white women in the study had

thought much about the impact of their own race on their experiences and, instead, identified the constraints they perceived were experienced by non-white lesbians. One participant thought there were probably more difficulties and drawbacks to be a non-white lesbian because the lesbian would be a minority within a minority or, in the words of another white woman, "a lower class minority."

Relatedly, participants said that lower economic status translates into fewer opportunities in society (General). Participants perceived access to economic resources as a factor shaping experience. One participant thought that if she had far less money it would have shaped how she saw herself as a lesbian because she would not have been able to afford to go to the college of her choice and would have applied to a state university where she would not have felt comfortable being a lesbian. Another participant thought her economic class gave people respect for her because she was well-off, well-dressed, and going to a nice college.

In a different category, participants felt that women's appearances were judged and participants often did not look like what people expected (General). One participant said that if she was "all out butch" she would have had a really hard time just walking down the street or getting a job. Prior to coming out, another participant became more and more femme "to show" that she was straight. Another participant said that her appearance hindered her identification as an "official lesbian" to other people, thereby preventing her from meeting people.

Participants also felt constrained by a sense that inequality in society is permanent (Typical). One participant could not see a time when people were not treated differently on the basis their differences because "the human race has a strange

obsession with classifying people and some people will always fear what is different from them." Another participant echoed this point by adding a class analysis. She stated "people will always be divided up ... there will always be cliques in high school and through the rest of life. Before high school there will be the sandbox crew and the swing set crew; after high school it will be the people wearing Abercrombie and Fitch and the people wearing K-mart."

Relatedly, participant stated that people learn not to critique the status quo (Typical). Participants thought some people cannot see inequalities because not seeing is learned behavior. Other participants concurred, saying that people had been taught in families and schools not to "get it." One participant called it a brainwashing when "parents tell them one thing then school tells them the same thing." Another participant suggested that it is hard for people to think about and accept that it is possible for same-sex people to have relationships because they had been taught that there is "only one way so there is no place to put this idea."

Similarly, participants said that people resist critiquing the status quo (Typical). One participant said that people were not willing or were too lazy to understand that schools were predominantly about straight kids, and that the world is predominantly about straight people and men. Another participant concurs because gay and lesbian issues were "such a controversial thing" that it is easier for people to ignore it than risk thinking through what that means. Participants said people do not tackle inequalities for a variety of reasons: gays and lesbians are a convenient target for people who like to have power over others; some people benefit from the way it is;

and other people are like the "school yard bully magnified" who feel better by keeping other people down.

In another category, participants identified the root causes of discrimination against gays and lesbians as ignorance, misunderstanding, conservatism and fear (Typical). Participants were not sure people want to give up their ways. One participant did not think that decisions were being made to exclude gays and lesbians from schools but the absence is like a tradition, "like eating turkey on December 25," and it will not be dismantled until someone challenges it. Similarly, another participant compared the open acknowledgement of gays and lesbians in schools to the experience of her father being raised on "white bread with margarine every morning" and how bagels for breakfast will be a new weird concept for him and how he will think it is not good because it is not the way he was raised.

Relatedly, participants identified the sources of discrimination, ignorance and misunderstanding as deriving from tradition, a lack of access to information, a lack of exposure, a lack of social awareness and social obligation (Typical). One participant thought fear of gays and lesbians comes from not being taught about gays and lesbians. Another participant explained that people have a hard time dealing with things that are not a part of their situation. One participant believed that people in California had no idea they were banning gay marriage when they voted on a bill that said "a man and a man should not be able to marry" and that the voters did not think of the greater issues behind what they were voting on.

Participants also said that fear interferes with understanding or supporting gays and lesbians (Variant). One participant thought that it would not be easy to get society

to see gay and lesbian teachers as they see all teachers, as role models, not as deviants. Another participant explained that being a gay person scares people in the same way death scares people because people do not know what is going to happen. Another participant said whether she has a boyfriend or a girlfriend she is the same person but "they think we're monsters who want to kill or recruit children."

Finally, participants described the challenge of being a woman and a lesbian in a man's world (Variant). One participant said that even the queer community is very male dominated because the community is predominantly defined by the gay aspect not by the lesbian aspect. Another participant described how being a woman made her identity development a hundred times more difficult because heterosexual men had the "can I watch?" mentality. One participant saw how "looking like a woman" can be a real handicap in the professional world but that "not looking like a woman" may not open too many opportunities either.

#### *Agency in Context*

The team also categorized the ways participants had a say in shaping their experience in various settings. As these categories capture the ways participants felt empowered in the creation of their own experiences, there are no constraining categories.

*Capacity to act.* Participants felt that they had a voice in school (e.g., writing and speaking in class, organizing) and that they could transgress the heterosexual norms of their schools (General). One student wrote profiles in the school newspaper to dispel misconceptions about the school's Gay Straight Alliance, described the process of starting the club and the outcomes, and, as a result of the articles, she

became an information source about the club. Another participant created space by starting the GSA, conspicuously coloring her backpack in rainbow colors as a "little act of rebellion," and wearing pride rings given to her by her gay male friends toward the end of high school to "actively proclaim pride." For another participant, school silence generated anger and she became involved in planning the Day of Silence at her school. Another participant's way of breaking the heterosexual rules in high school was by holding hands and doing the "usual stuff you do" with someone you were dating.

The participants also believed they left a lasting impression on their schools (General). It was typical that the lasting impression was sexuality-related. One participant said she would be remembered at the school reunion as the "shy, Asian dyke." Another participant hopes the GSA will be around when she returns for her reunion so she can be remembered as the one who started it. It was variant that the lasting impression is not sexuality-related. One participant believed she will be remembered for weird stuff, like her advice column in the student newspaper and her reputation as a good writer. Another participant believed she will be remembered as the one who hung out with all those crazy free-spirited kids that were barely in school.

Furthermore, participants produced advice for their peers in school (General). It was typical that participants would promote self-love, acceptance, motivation, strength and unity with their peers. One participant would tell other lesbians "it's not that hard, it can be a lot of fun, and that proclaiming yourself a lesbian is an act of self-love." One participant would have liked to hear about an ordinary lesbian, who was not a lesbian superstar or in the gay papers, and who, like herself, wasn't really

connected to the community in high school and she thought it would have been interesting to read or write the story of an average lesbian, if such a person exists. Another participant started work on creating a website for every high school lesbian to consult when she is applying to college. The website connects high school students and college students to share their first hand experiences and opinions about the college climate (i.e., whether you were going to get support if you were called a dyke in the cafeteria or how the college will respond if you get death threats over e-mail).

Furthermore, participants felt that they had changed their families (Typical). One participant said she has taught her parents that she is ready to talk to them but it may be about things that they might not be comfortable with. Another participant felt she had changed her family by making them a little more open-minded. One participant thought she had made her mother happy by being happy.

Additionally, participants decided to use their career choice to make changes, to be a role model, and to change people one at a time (Typical). One participant saw herself creating change by becoming a psychologist and specializing in gay and lesbian youth and she would like area schools to refer people to her if the schools knew there was a need. Similarly, another participant saw herself changing society through her future role as a minister because she would influence on quite a few people. Another participant thought she and other gays and lesbians could have a definite influence and make a change in society by being positive citizens and positive role models.

In another category, participants managed their appearance (Typical). Participants re-claimed their appearance as natural, "passed" to avoid negative

reactions or receive positive reactions, dressed to attract women, and made intentional decisions about clothing to subvert expectations.

Participants also sought and found information about gays and lesbians beyond what, if any, was offered in their schools (Typical). One participant got information on lesbian life on her own, through books and literature and even though her school had a pretty good library she did not get her information there. Another participant got her information from the local lesbian community, on television and a book, "Annie on My Mind," at a public library walking distance from her house.

Additionally, participants felt that they had changed their schools (Typical). One participant felt she had changed her school because after she came out, so did others at her high school. Another participant thought she had changed her school by giving heterosexuals a new perspective about gays and lesbians. Another participant thought she had changed her school by being a role model, helping make it easier for other lesbians to come out, and bringing a lot of information from the outside world into school because a lot of students would not push themselves to find out.

Similarly, participants saw themselves and their generation as actively changing school and society (Typical). One participant thought that she had changed society because her actions had a ripple effect. Another thought she had changed society by doing volunteer work, interacting with and teaching people. One participant thought that change in the status quo was going to come from kids who, even if their parents were part of the status quo, were not tied into it yet.

In an effort to communicate the nuances of sexual identity participants used sexual identity language to convey multiple meanings, shifting perspectives,

empowerment, and transitions (Variant). One participant said lesbian, queer, dyke, and faggot and did not find it offensive although she knew other people did. If she knew someone was uncomfortable with those words, she did not use them and used gay or homosexual. Another participant came out in school as a lesbian, although she identified as bisexual for her parents. She decided she would make it easy and be bisexual since she was not sure if she liked guys. Both the student and her parents had wondered about the lesbian label because in the future she might meet "a real special guy."

Finally, participants wanted to play an activist role in the future but the path was unclear, their energy was low, or they were postponing action until they were more settled (Variant). One participant planned on donating to gay and lesbian causes once she achieves the status of a well respected, established professional. Other participants felt like they should be more active now but the demands on their time limited their contributions.

### *Summary*

The analyzed data illuminates points where individual experiences were enabled or constrained in specific, interrelated settings. These encounters revealed to students something about their place in those settings and their place in the social world. Similarly, these encounters frequently triggered students to assess the limits and possibilities of that setting.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

### *Introduction*

This interpretive study asked 15 women between the ages of 18-20 who did not identify as heterosexuals in high school to think through and beyond their individual experiences to discuss the impact of the greater social world on their lives in school in a stratified society. The results of this study move forward the discussion of devalued youth and schooling by mapping how non-heterosexually identified female students in high school unraveled some of the relationships between social structures and their personal experiences. The backdrop for this study is the longstanding problem of fusing the micro-macro chasm in educational sociology (Archer, 1996).

Empirical data from the participants on the relationship between individuals and institutions did not collapse cleanly into either macro or micro explanations of individual behavior. The results of this study suggest that structure and agency are inadequate tools for understanding individual experiences within complex social systems. This study suggests that marginalized students perceive the relationship between individuals and social institutions as more complex and less binary than either a demonized set of institutions forming a mallet of power or, conversely, as young individuals freely engaging in and negotiating power relationships in meaningful and empowering ways.

The patterns that emerged from interviewees suggests that using the contested dynamic of structure (macro) versus agency (micro) is of little help to understand how students actually experience and interpret the specific ways power is organized, fueled, destroyed or reconstituted in school and society. The data show that real life

interactions, relationships, and experiences in the social world are experienced and analyzed by students in some complexity through social interactions in various settings.

### *Decoding Social Structures and Schooling*

The first research question asked: How do students characterize their critical perspective on heterosexual privilege and the role of schooling in promulgating privilege?

The tension between heteronormativity and counter-heteronormativity (Fine, 1993) became visible to participants initially not through political science or sociology textbooks but through interactions with people in multiple, interrelated systems (i.e., peers, teachers and administrators, family members, coworkers, religious leaders, politicians, artists and pop icons). In a society where power relations on the basis of sexuality are contested, participants had to learn how to navigate through the myriad of enabling and constraining influences that peppered their existence. Interactions with an endless stream of social actors became the conduits of oppressive and liberatory frameworks participants amassed and then applied in their attempts to understand the social order. It is from participants' social interactions in this constellation of powerful structures that they developed and advanced their conceptual frameworks about sexuality and society and from which they drew an understanding of the factors that operationalize equality and inequality.

Participants recognized a socially constructed relationship to power and discovered that power was used to foster or inhibit them. Contrary to the suppositions of large-scale structuralists (Bourdieu & Paseron, 1977) participants did not

experience their life as wholly governed by constraining influences and, as a result, participants enacted individual and collective actions in response to structure. Yet at the same time, participants recognized and conceptualized broad social structures as constructing and dictating limits to their actions and responses in ways that microtheorists focusing on human agencies often ignore. That participants experienced and responded to constraining and enabling influences in every setting suggests that the relationship between agency and structure can be explored and mapped through an exploration of social interactions (MacLeod, 1995; Mehan, 1992).

Some have argued that schools are fixed structures purposefully training students to misread the social environment in order to reproduce the status quo (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1973; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). In contrast, participants in this study conceived of societal institutions, including schools, as primarily heteronormative but as permeable and responsive to social change. Their conceptual framework evolved as a result of turning to other societal sources and observing the trajectory of contested social rules on sexuality. Participants identified harsh aspects of school born from the close link between schools and the most prejudicial and punitive spheres of society while simultaneously identifying freeing aspects of school born from the close link between the most emancipatory spheres of society. If some aspect of their particular institutional setting of family, school, peers, or community felt terminally "fixed" by some aspect of homophobia, even a casual environmental scan produced evidence that positive change is a real possibility.

Participants described the significance of the linkages and relationships among multiple systems influencing their perceptions of the structure and permeability of the

social order. Participants explained that in terms of maintaining or dismantling heteronormativity, systems can be in-sync or one system can exert influence on another system. Constraining influences single out evidence when aspects of systems were out-of-sync, broken, ineffective or inappropriately applying pressure on another system to maintain heteronormativity. Participants generated explanations for the schooling experiences of lesbian youth by contextualizing schooling in relation to other systems of social organization. Within neighborhoods, for example, participants attributed enabling and constraining school practices to community factors such as the pervasiveness of religion, the diversity of families, and the desire for a progressive or traditional local school.

The recent development of support groups for gay and lesbian students in schools is an example of how participants' readings of schooling were also mediated through social interactions within systems, specifically the familial system. Participants' responses about the value of support groups varied because of their experiences in other settings. For example, one participant had a family who taunted and abused her on the basis of her sexuality. She perceived her school, particularly the support group, as a reprieve from her unbearable family life. She assessed a support group as enabling, in large measure because in it she found the safety denied to her at home. In contrast, another participant assessed a support group as insufficient to address the needs of gay and lesbian youth. She came to expect more from her school because of the personal empowerment she received in her family. She felt constrained by her school's inattention to gay and lesbian content integration in the curriculum, legal protection for openly gay and lesbian teachers, and unsafe hallways and gyms.

Decoding social structures was also advanced by knowledge about peers in other schools in other setting. Participants knew or knew about other gay and lesbian youth who had experiences that were more frightening or safer than their own experiences in schools, neighborhoods and families. For example, a part of their working knowledge was that other gay and lesbian students may feel isolated in rural communities while other peers were perceived to be enjoying access to cities with active gay and lesbian communities.

Participants also decoded their schooling in relation to larger society by tuning in to and capturing aspects of social inertia and social change orbiting in the spheres of politics, entertainment and activism. There was no shortage of material from which to draw on as high school students, including the legality of same-sex marriages and military service, and the decisions by actress such as Ellen DeGeneres and singer Melissa Etheridge to publicly discuss their sexuality. By drawing on and often sharing in these public discourses about tightening or loosening heterosexual norms, participants became alert to critiques of the systematic strategies used to maintain the status quo in the larger society and were further able to contextualize their experiences.

It is in the careful consideration of the contrasts and complementary social interactions in their environments that participants' understanding of the role of school in structuring their experiences and the experiences of other marginalized students was fueled and advanced. However, participants' interpretations about the essence of structured experiences varied because each of the interviewees went to high school while inhabiting a specific plane on the intersection of class and race in a hierarchical

society. This may have resulted from societal expressions of racism or classism superseding or intertwining with expressions of heteronormativity. Some participants invariably perceived oppression or opportunities more deeply based on being marginalized or being privileged. For example, non-white participants offered more sophisticated analyses about the interlocking nature of racial identities and sexual identities than did white participants. White participants predicted the experience of African American lesbian would be additionally marginalizing but remained largely silent about the impact of white privilege in their development. Similarly, through the lens of class identity, economically privileged students had given little thought to how class privilege structured their experiences in relation to sexuality while one participant linked her acute ability to dissect class privilege and sexuality to her marginalizing experiences as a daughter of a non-teaching staff member at an elite college prep high school.

### *Decoding Schooling*

In the perpetuation of the dominant culture, schooling is a powerful social machine with the authority to impose, form, and reproduce relations of power in society by directing significant energies into the presentation of a highly crafted reality (Giroux, 1988). However, as was just noted, participants did not simply parrot dominant heteronormative discourses as they analyzed the larger social world. Participants deconstructed schools as they did other structures such as family and peers. They saw a complex mix of relationships among people of different ages and statuses, with different levels of authority and resources. When participants analyzed the meaning of their school experiences they mined personal experiences in a variety

of out-of-school contexts to conceptualize the specific role of schooling in promulgating or dismantling heterosexual privilege.

All participants who attended schools organized around heteroprivilege did not perceive their school experiences as suffocatingly deterministic nor did they perceive themselves as disempowered in society. While students in this study easily recognized a master organizing structure of heterosexism as the backdrop to schooling and society, the impact of heterosexism in schooling on participants varied. Participants point to other compounding variables that altered the intensity of the schooling experience for gay and lesbian students, which, in turn, may have been an incentive to further investigate the relationships between school and society.

In order to be critical of heterosexual privilege in schooling and to envision alternatives, participants drew from a conceptual framework that facilitated their decoding and interpretation of the reality offered to them in school. That is, participants' analysis of the role of schooling in perpetuating or interrupting systems of heterosexual privilege was seamlessly culled from their ability to analyze complex experiences in a variety of other equally complex contexts. Participants carried their analysis of the social world with them into school.

Mehan argues for interpretive studies to examine the "mechanisms of cultural and social reproduction via a close interactional analysis of social practices, especially school practices" (1992, p. 4). Mehan urges an exploration of how school "arrangements promote inequalities for students" by identifying the "unique combination of people, cultures, and actions at individual schools" (p. 9). Mehan

echoes MacLeod by urging that the "interface between the cultural and the structural is critical to our understanding of social reproduction" (1995, p. 136).

The second research question asked: In what ways did students see heteronormative social expectations organized, communicated, enforced and challenged in high school? The question was a hybrid derived from combining two classic, yet incompatible assumptions about structure and agency. The first assumption in the question (i.e., "organized, communicated, enforced") stemmed from the macro-level work of structuralists who argued that schools are a part of a monolithic social system organized in particular ways to marginalize certain groups of students in service to the status quo. This question anticipated that participants would concur with the education literature on gays and lesbians (Friend, 1998; Gibson, 1989; Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 1993; Herdt, 1989; Herdt & Boxer, 1993; Heron, 1994; McManus et al., 1991; Savin-Williams, 1990; Uribe & Harbeck, 1992) by reading through their own experiences in school a pervasive, overarching oppressive structure toward non-heterosexual students.

In this study, participants identified and explained the specific macro-level processes that produced hierarchies through schooling. Participants confirmed the presence of the five schooling processes that the limited literature on gay and lesbian youth identifies as contributing to the construction of a sexual hierarchy in schools. Indeed, participants easily named additional schooling arrangements that operationalized and expressed inequality (e.g., constraints). Constraining elements were pervasive enough to allow for general themes to emerge across schools, even though all schools did not use the same strategies in service to heteronormativity. This

supports the idea that it is through deliberate institutional processes that the power relations of society can be reproduced and sexual identities can be constructed, protected and controlled (Friend, 1998; Irvine, 1997; Lipkin, 1993-1994; Sears, 1992a).

If schools are institutions of social reproduction, then how can schools where participants felt enabled be explained? The findings provide ample evidence that aspects of schooling devalues gay and lesbian youth and the majority of categories about schooling were, as expected, about constraints, yet there were a surprising number of enabling categories. One important aspect of this study was to shed light on how disempowered participants acquired critical perspectives on their status.

Interpreting the data from this study using only the constraining perspective would require narrowing the discussion of the findings to the ways that students feel limited and constrained while minimized the myriad ways they feel empowered, enabled, and influential in the same settings. The evidence in the enabling category captures the ways school made homosexuality *not* problematic. There is little space in the literature and nothing in the research questions guiding this study on the ways students see schools as sites where social norms are being reconstituted. Yet in the findings, the category of enabling captures and illuminates a series of institutional arrangements and social interactions that advance equality in schooling. Enabling factors are an important finding because it is evidence that schooling cannot systematically derail marginalized participants from uncovering the social order. Enablers are hints at ways to operationalize equality in schooling and are unexamined sites for information about facilitating social change via schools. Little attention has been paid to identifying

opportunity structures in school that create equality for non-heterosexual students in order for those practices to be codified and replicated.

These enabling and constraining interactions left students with specific impressions about their status in school and by extension gave them another set of experiences to assess and integrate with other information gleaned from other aspects of the social world. Just as participants used the external world to analyze schooling, they used schooling to analyze the social world.

In sum, participants offered insightful analyses of the workings of power to create inequality *and equality* in schooling. These are significant insights because participants used these experiences as windows to view possibilities in the world outside of school. That is, enabling and constraining elements of schools were used as a lens through which to see a larger social order.

### *Bounded Agency*

Drawing from the perspective of student-centered theorists, the latter part of one of the research questions asked how students challenge heterosexist practices in schooling. The question built on the critical notion that student responses to school can be characterized as much more than passive recipients of unleashed power. By asking participants how they challenged the misuse of power in schools, the latter part of the research question acknowledged that students actively assess school experiences and reflect on the efficacy of the actions they select. Participants took action when they saw, even if nascently, the invisible structures regulating their lives (Mills, 1959).

This study found that lesbian students' responses to schooling are neither as apolitical or as self-defeating as the literature suggests. Participants realized that

school authorities can and should be challenged for the role they play in protecting the status quo. They also recognized when schools were not held accountable for sustaining processes that produce hierarchies. The first step of naming the constraining components of a setting was a form of challenging them. Even though there are no developed criteria for measuring students impact on their schools, it was clear that students assessed the limits and possibilities within their environments and made decisions about their actions based on that assessment. Importantly, these assessments were based on their ability to accurately decode their social world as defined by the parameters of the setting as they read it. Participants said they actively impacted the multiple environments they occupied. For every schooling practice that attempted to structure participants' experiences in ways that reproduced the status quo, there also existed an opportunity to challenge the status quo and the role of schooling in devaluing gay and lesbian youth. Participants made transparent some of the conditions that circumscribed how power imbalances based on gender and sexuality were capable of being demolished or fortified, abandoned or enforced, modified or reified or simply ignored by their actions. For example, some participants spoke up, out and back, sought alternative education through books, while others postponed their social experiences, and imagined a more accepting or activist life in college.

But, then, how exactly does a researcher measure the degree to which any one individual's actions produced a challenge to the gendered structure of school or society? It is only possible to document that participants made direct and indirect challenges to the status quo and felt effective in their actions. Participants' decisions about acts of agency were "bounded" (Mehan, 1992) in relation to the enabling and

constraining factors participants perceived in their schools and also by their constellation of family, peers, and indirectly by components such as geography, politics, community, and religion. Mehan (1992) uses the term "bounded agency" to describe expressions of agency that are limited by the conditions a person finds herself in. Participant's range of responses to situations was, as Mehan notes, "not divorced from structure but bound by social relations and regulations" (p.11).

When specifically asked to explain the relationship between their personal experiences and the social world through the lens of sexuality, participants were articulate. By their ability to name constraining and enabling conditions, participants demonstrated that schooling fails in systematic attempts to derail marginalized students from critical analysis of power relations. Many of the students in this study unraveled the complexities of the ways power is organized in society outside of the school setting, with experiences with family and friends, and through independent reading. They then looked at schooling with a revised set of knowledge and experience.

Based on their ability to decode institutions through the identification and deconstruction of enabling and constraining actions and the balancing pressures and relationships they perceived among multiple institutions participants perceived institutions as permeable, not fixed. From this perspective on fluidity in the social world, participants exposed how social institutions, particularly schooling, molded their expectations, experiences, and opportunities.

### *Limitations*

Participants were required to be at least 18-years-old. While most participants were in high school or recent graduates, this age restriction introduced the limitation of retrospective recall of some of the participants. The passage of time as well as later changes in their lives may have affected their recall and interpretation of prior events (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). Additionally, participants self-selected to participate in the study so it is impossible to know how students who chose not to participate would have responded to the interview questions or the interviewer. The participant selection process may have privileged students with a stronger sense of self that may have resulted in minimizing the power of structure. After all, students must be astute in the navigation of hostile environments or risk greater harm.

As with all qualitative studies, the results from this small sample may not be generalized to other non-heterosexually identified female students. Additionally, the participants in the study were all female so the results may not be applicable to the male experience. Although a diversity of experiences is represented in the sample, the population was geographically limited to states in the midwest, northeast, and mid-Atlantic regions.

Finally, potential researcher bias is another limitation of this study. A systematic attempt was made to address this potential limitation by using a team of three researchers and an auditor. The primary research team worked to stay very close to the data, frequently using the student's words in developing the core ideas. Although the research team attempted to address the influence of researcher bias on the analysis of the data, it is possible that some of the findings resulted from the way

in which the interview questions were conceptualized and designed, the style of the interviewer and the prompts used, and the lenses through which the data were interpreted and attributed meaning.

### *Implications*

This study's basic findings contribute to the literature on the longstanding interest in measuring and explaining the role of schooling in marginalizing students in a stratified society. All of the participants in this study detected that social structures and social engineering influence personal experiences. The participants in this study provided "lucid summations" (Mills, 1959) of their high school years from diverse vantage points that ranged from a student who left high school without graduating to a student who entered an Ivy League college.

While schooling contexts constitute one vital aspect in a young person's development, all participants gave thoughtful "readings" through the prism of sexuality about the social meanings attached to everyday experiences (i.e., riding a subway, watching television, holding hands in public). It is a rarity in the literature to hear students generate social analysis about the ways equality and inequality on the basis of sexuality is operationalized. Subtly, but effectively, prior studies on gay and lesbian youth collude in perpetuating the socially constructed belief that gay and lesbian youth confront problems in school associated with pathology that require understanding, support and compassion, not a reexamination of the ways the social order is expressed or reconstituted in school.

These interviewees did not share a common set of school experiences nor did they respond to their school experiences uniformly. Each student experienced a unique

set of factors that shaped her high school years and each student responded in individual ways to her social world. The variety of student experiences represented in this study forces us to reconsider findings based on special populations. People naturally try to explain their social world, but few researchers seek the voice of marginalized students in this regard. The data from this study demonstrates the capacity for marginalized students to name and analyze multiple and layered patterns of influences shaping their personal experiences. Each student in the study identified a set of factors that shaped her high school experience and each student described her individual response to the social world. This study challenges findings derived from the commonly applied sample of convenience when studying a marginalized population. Researchers studying marginalized populations must be supported in their efforts to gain access and involvement from the widest possible range of people to create a more accurate knowledge base about the relationship between marginalized students, schooling, and society.

Fortunately most participants had access to other sources from which to develop a concept of reality than the one offered in school. Most of the interviewees offered fascinating explanations of the social order that may reflect their exposure to more sophisticated ways of thinking. It is unpredictable which students will be exposed to meaningful experiences with their families working through abstract concepts, such as equality, society, oppression, and identity. Schools commit a great offense when they constrain students with pedagogy that does not develop students' sociological imagination from which to analyze their own personal histories and the cultural milieu (Mills, 1959). This study added to participants' experiences by

enabling them to see that sexuality and schooling is a valued and important research area at the doctoral level, possibly reinforcing participants' prediction that colleges and universities will have more enabling practices than their high schools.

If alternative forms of reality offered by some students and teachers in school and experiences in the social world beyond school contributed to the development of students' ability to account for their status in schooling than access to alternative experiences are especially important.

Mehan urges sociologists to "collapse the macro-micro by showing how the social fact of inequality emerges from structuring activities to become external and constraining on social actors" (1992, p. 8). In addition to constraining factors, the participants in this study captured the ways that activities are structured and become external and enabling on social actors. Participants in this study linked constraining and enabling practices external to school processes (i.e., community norms, political conservatism) to the shaping of internal school practices.

This study demonstrates how students unravel social structure through the raw material of their daily lives. How much can be unraveled may be determined by the similarity and differences of their environments. Relatedly, without strong links to other realities the marginalization of participants might have been compounded. Resiliency is fragile with gay and lesbian youth if their non-school environment is not actively providing alternative realities about their status, a point made poignant by the suicide studies.

Some school practices asked students to postpone the developmental aspects of adolescent life, leaving participants with unmet needs and a hope that future students

would benefit by attending schools serving a more evolved and accepting society. A few participants who used this approach accompanied their analysis by a semi-paralyzing belief that as individuals they are powerless to initiate or influence change but must wait for it to occur. This is a particularly disabling stance for a marginalized student to adopt, as most interviewees are not convinced that society intends to become less hierarchical and less like the present status quo.

Of course the ability of any marginalized student to destabilize and radically transform their school remains slim. Yet, this study is rife with participants who felt very successful in transforming institutions, particularly their families. This suggests something about the possibilities of building relationships between adults and students in school that is based on some of the characteristics of families who are willing to enable their daughters. On the other hand, school-based opportunities for equality are especially important to youth who come from families hostile to their sons' or daughters' sexual orientation. In the schooling literature, advocates for critical pedagogy have argued that adult teachers can play an active role in helping students see how external powers organize their experiences. Professionals in schools can be more intentional in their institutional actions to deliver an enabling education so that students will not expect that the unequal power relation that exists in the larger society to be a naturalized, integral part of their school experience. Another striking implication for educators is that participants did not expect that all or most members of their school community would support them if they were not openly heterosexual. Instead, they projected their hopes into the future where they anticipated having a place somewhere in society once they completed their mandatory school experience, a

hope that will be impacted by external changes, such as a diminished civil rights movement for gays and lesbians.

The results of this study showed through the actual words of the participants a more nuanced interpretation of structure and agency in student lives. Students make sense of their school experiences through social and cultural interactions and against the backdrop of many other influential and interlocking systems, within and beyond schools. Participants' use of systems analysis in these interviews is important because it is characterized by the idea that oppressed people experience society differently from dominant groups but also differently from each other. Most participants experienced their school as partially oppressive, partially neutral, and partially liberating but participants made that assessment in relation to experiences in other systems. Additional work is required to explore the times when students see themselves as enabled and as constrained by the influences of systems as well as the important dimensions of the times they see themselves as active shapers of people, institutions, and systems.

## Appendix A: Call for Participants

{date}

Dear {leader of organization}:

I am a graduate student in the College of Education at the University of Maryland. My dissertation is about the experiences of women who did not identify as heterosexual while in high school. I am actively seeking women who graduated from high school in 1998 or 1999 to interview about their positive and negative schooling experiences. Studies on the experiences of lesbian high school students are sparse and I am seeking individuals who will help me fill that void by sharing their stories and analysis of schooling.

The initial interview requires approximately 30 minutes. Some participants will be asked to return for a longer, in-depth interview. Please get in touch with me through any of the following ways:

E-mail	jmschultz@erols.com
Telephone	(202) 884-9558
Mail	Jill Schultz, Graduate Student EDPA, College of Education Benjamin Building University of Maryland College Park, MD 20742

This study has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee.

Sincerely,

Jill M. Schultz

## Appendix B: Protocol for Screening Interview

### Introduction

The study you are volunteering for is about the agency of lesbians. Agency means the sense you make out of an experience, the ways you direct your own actions and the reasons behind the choices that you make. In this study, I am interested in the agency of lesbian high school students. The purpose of today's meeting is to talk about some of your experiences in high school and hear some of your thoughts about being a lesbian high school student. Your participation time today will be approximately 30 minutes.

Before we begin, I would like to draw your attention to several important items related to your participation in this study. First, let me assure you of the confidentiality of your participation. Although this interview will be taped and transcribed, after transcription the tape will be erased, and your name will never be connected with your transcript. Instead, a code number will be used.

Second, your participation in today's interview is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw your consent at any point. On the basis of today's interview, you may be asked if you would agree to a more in-depth interview. Let me assure you that there are no right and wrong answers to these questions. The decision on who will be asked to participate in the second interview will be based on an effort to best represent a variety of schooling experiences. Participation in the second interview is also voluntary and, again, you may withdraw your consent at any time.

Finally, I will be asking you to recall both positive and negative high school experiences. You should be aware that there is a slight risk that this may cause you personal discomfort. While I do not anticipate that happening, please remember that you may withdraw your consent at any time. If you should decide to withdraw, I will destroy all materials related to your participation in the study, including all information you provided to me.

Please take a minute to read and sign the consent form. Do you have any questions before we begin?

### Discussion/Interview Questions

1. [Find out how she identifies (lesbian, queer) and use that language]. "This study is about lesbian (or queer, etc.) high school students. How do you define 'lesbian'? Did you consider yourself to be out in your high school? As a lesbian student, did you feel like you fit in? Did you do anything to fit in? Did you do anything to intentionally not fit in? Probe: What did she do? Why?"
2. Tell me about a positive experience you had as a lesbian student?  
Explore/prompts: what happened; who was involved; why did it happen? what made it positive...?
3. Tell me about a negative experience you had as a lesbian student?  
Explore/prompts: what happened; who was involved; why did it happen? what made it positive...?

4. In what ways do you think straight women and lesbians have similar experiences as high school students? Prompts: For example, in the classroom, relationships with teachers, school activities. In what ways do you think straight women and lesbians have different experiences as high school students? What accounts for the similarities and differences in high school experiences for lesbians and straight women? Probe: How did you arrive at that (those) explanation(s)?
  
6. If you were writing a book for every lesbian high school student in America to read, what information would you make sure was in it? Why?

Thank you very much for your time today. As I said earlier, some people who participated in this interview will be asked to participate in a more in-depth interview. Would you be willing to discuss your high school experiences and your thoughts about lesbians in high school at greater length? [If no, thank participant for her time. If yes, ask for the best way/time to contact her to arrange interview at a mutually convenient time.]

## Appendix C: Protocol for Full Length Interview

### Interview Protocol

#### Introduction

Thank you again for agreeing to a more in-depth interview about your experiences as an lesbian high school student. Again, the study you are volunteering for is about the agency of lesbians. Agency means the ways you direct your own actions and the reasons behind the choices that you make. In this study, I am interested in the agency of lesbian students while in high school. The purpose of today's meeting is to talk in more depth about your high school experiences. Your participation time today will be approximately 1 - 2 hours.

Before we begin, I would like to reiterate several important items related to your participation in this study. First, let me assure you of the confidentiality of your participation. Although this interview will be taped and transcribed, after transcription the tape will be erased, and your name will never be connected with your transcript. Instead, a code number will be used.

Second, your participation in today's interview is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw your consent at any point. Finally, I will be asking you to recall both positive and negative high school experiences. You should be aware that there is a slight risk that this may cause you personal discomfort. While I do not anticipate that happening, please remember that you may withdraw your consent at any time. If you should decide to withdraw, I will destroy all materials related to your participation in the study, including all information you provided to me.

Please take a minute to read and sign the consent form. Do you have any questions before we begin?

#### Discussion/Interview Questions

##### School

1. What was the overall climate toward lesbians/lesbianism in your school? [Probe for illustrative examples of positive, negative and neutral climates in the same school setting. For example, where there any places in your high school that were more positive (then negative, and neutral) than others? Probe for how she accounts for these differences in climate in the same setting.] How might your experiences have been different if you were a lesbian in school 20 years ago? [Probe for specific illustrations and rationale.] How do you account for the change (or lack of change) from then to now?
2. What types of messages did you get in school about lesbians/lesbianism? [Probe for positive, negative, and neutral messages.] How were these messages similar to or different from messages you got about gays? straight girls? straight boys? How were those messages communicated to you? [Probe for examples.] How did this compare to the messages you were getting from your family, friends, co-workers, and the larger culture?

3. What roles do schools play in orienting students toward particular ways of thinking about homosexuality and heterosexuality? Why would schools do that? Who/what do you think determines what students learn about lesbians/lesbianism in school? What do you think determined what your friends learned/knew about lesbians/lesbianism? What do you think determined what you learned or knew about lesbians or lesbianism? [Probe for specific sources, specific messages, relationships.]
4. Were there other students in your school who were out? Were there any openly lesbian or gay adults in your high school? Why do you think there were so many (or few)? Do you think it is the same way in every high school? [Probe for rationale and sources of information.] Would you have liked more openly gay and lesbian teachers and peers? [If yes] What conditions would need to be present for that to happen? [If no] why not?
5. What strategies did you use to connect with other lesbians in your high school? What strategies did you use to connect with lesbians who did not go to your high school? How closely do you think your experiences match other lesbian high school students?
6. Did you ever feel that your high school expected all of the students to be heterosexual? [Probe for examples and rationale.] What advantages and disadvantages do you see in all lesbian (or lesbian and gay) school? Would you have gone to one? Why?
7. In what spaces in school did you feel most comfortable? [Probe for examples.] What made it comfortable? What did you do to intentionally create a comfortable space for yourself in school? (Probe for examples -- Did you make your locker clearly lesbian-identified? Wear a pride button on your backpack?) What parts of schools made you feel uncomfortable or made you feel that you were not welcome? [Probe for examples.] What made that part of school uncomfortable for you? What did you do to intentionally challenge your right to be in that space? What accounts for how spaces in school can feel? How important is it that school become more lesbian-friendly? Why? How can that be done?
8. In what ways have you ever violated, challenged, altered or played with heterosexist social rules in school? In places other than high school? (Probe for what she did, why she did it, and what that act means to her.)
9. How was the climate toward lesbians/lesbianism in your home similar to or different from the climate in your school? [Probe for examples.] What types of messages did you get at home about lesbians/lesbianism? [Probe for positive, negative, and neutral messages.] How does that climate compare to the climate at work? With friends? How do you account for the differences and similarities toward lesbian or lesbianism between and among different environments?

### Society

1. If you could divide up control of your life (as an openly lesbian high school student), what percentage would you say you controlled and what percentage was controlled by sources outside of yourself? [Probe for rationale.] Do you think it is like that for other lesbian students? Why?
2. The majority of gay and lesbian youth make it successfully to adulthood, yet we hear a lot about those who do not make it, specifically those who commit suicide. What information do you have about the lives of other gay and lesbian youth in this country? What accounts for the balance or imbalance in the representations made about gay and lesbian youth?
3. In the first interview, you told me about a positive and a negative experience you had in high school. Was [the positive event] as being created or influenced in any way by conditions outside of school? Was [the negative event] as being created or influenced in any way by any conditions outside of school?
4. In high school, how did you critique heterosexist culture? What part did you critique? [Probe for examples. t.v./media/movies/clothes/ attitudes/specific people/behaviors/political issues.]How is it that you were able to recognize [whatever she is critiquing] as something that you wanted to critique?
5. How did you express your critique of [cultural reference from prior question]? [Probe for examples -- conversations; eye rolling; boycotts; yelling at the television, writing a paper, etc.] Did anyone encourage you or join you in these critiques? Who? How? (Probe for examples.) Did anyone discourage or prevent you from expressing your critiques of these things? Who? How? Why? (Probe for examples)
6. How do you explain that some people critique heterosexism in the culture while others do not? How do your think your race affected your experience? How do your think your gender affected your experience? How do your think your class affected your experience?
7. From your perspective, then, what is the root cause of discrimination against lesbians?  
Can you see a time when people are not treated a certain way on the basis of gender and/or sexuality? [Probe for conditions required to make change.] Do you see schools as having a role in creating that change? [Probe for rationale.]
8. Do you see yourself as having a role in creating that change? [Probe for rationale.] Have you participated in any activities within your school or community around gay and lesbian issues? Issues of social justice and inequality? Other issues?

9. When you painted a picture in your mind's eye about how you would live your life as an openly lesbian woman after high school, what images did you evoke? [Probe for sources of these images.]

Conclusion

1. How did you change your high school? Probe for explanation. If you go to your 20 year high school reunion, what will your classmates remember about you?
2. How did your high school experience shape your thinking about being a lesbian in this culture?
3. Why did you decide to volunteer for this study? What value do you think your experience holds for people who care about lesbian students and their schooling?

## Appendix D: Consent Form

### CONSENT FORM

Code Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Dissertation Title: Lesbian students' critical agency: A qualitative study.

Doctoral Candidate: Jill M. Schultz

Dissertation Committee: Assistant Professor Robert Croninger, Chair; Professor Clara E. Hill; Assistant Professor Jeremy Price; Professor Steven Selden; Associate Professor Linda Valli

1. I state that I am over 18 years old of age and wish to participate in a study on the agency of openly lesbian high school students. I understand that the purpose of this exploratory study is to gain a clearer picture of the phenomena by interviewing recent graduates about their high school experiences.

2. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw participation and consent at any point in the study without consequence. I may also ask questions without penalty. If I withdraw, I understand that all information I have provided to the researcher will be destroyed immediately.

3. I agree to a pre-screening interview (lasting approximately a 20 minutes) to discuss my experiences.

4. If my case is selected for further study, I agree to be contacted directly by Jill Schultz. The purpose of this contact will be to schedule a longer audiotaped interview (1 to 2 hours) to discuss my high school experiences more fully. I agree to complete and promptly return a demographic form after the interview in the envelope provided.

5. I agree to have quotations from my interview(s) cited in publications that may come out of this study. I understand that my identity will be kept confidential and that any reference to me in published form will use a pseudonym. In addition, school names will not be identified. Participant confidentiality will be assured through the assignment of a code number to the tapes, transcripts, and demographic form.

6. I realize that there is a slight risk of personal discomfort associated with recalling positive and negative experiences in high school. I understand that the research is not designed to help me personally but that the researcher hopes to learn more about the agency of lesbian high school students.

7. If I have further questions, I may contact Jill Schultz at (202) 884-9558 or [jmschultz@erols.com](mailto:jmschultz@erols.com) or the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee in the Department of Education Policy, Planning and Administration (Dr. Robert Croninger, 301-405-2927) regarding my rights as a research participant.

8. I recognize that I have the right to review and correct the transcripts and consensus versions of my interviews.

9. I am aware that I may request a copy of this study's results.

My signature below indicates my willingness to participate in the dissertation conducted by Jill M. Schultz to satisfy the requirements for a doctoral degree in Education Policy, Planning and Administration at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix E: Letter to Participants Inviting  
Comments and Corrections to Original Transcript

Dear Participant:

I have completed the transcription from our taped interview and a copy is enclosed for your review. Please read the transcript and make any corrections you feel are appropriate. You are also encouraged to add to or delete material as necessary to describe your experiences more accurately and fully. Please make your changes by recording them on the attached form and mailing it to me in the enclosed envelope, or by e-mailing them to me, preferably within two weeks. You may keep the original transcript.

I greatly appreciate the investment of time you have made in this research project. If you have any questions, or if you would like to review any part of the transcript with me, please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 884-9558 or [jmschultz@erols.com](mailto:jmschultz@erols.com).

Sincerely,

Jill M. Schultz  
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix F: Letter to Participants Inviting Comments  
and Corrections to Consensus Version

Dear Participant:

I deeply appreciate your willingness to read and comment on how a team of researchers has come to understand your experiences as a lesbian in high school. The enclosed document is a Consensus Version of your transcript and reflects our understanding of what you expressed in your interviews.

Please read the Consensus Version and make any corrections you feel are appropriate. You are also encouraged to add to or delete material as necessary to describe your experiences more accurately and fully. Please make your changes by recording them on the attached form and mailing it to me in the enclosed envelope, or by e-mailing me, preferably within two weeks. You may keep the Consensus Version.

I greatly appreciate the investment of time you have made in this research project. If you have any questions, or if you would like to review any part of the consensus version with me, please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 884-9558 or [jmschultz@erols.com](mailto:jmschultz@erols.com).

Sincerely,

Jill M. Schultz  
Doctoral Candidate

## Appendix G: Consensus Version of Enabling Category

### I. Family

Family allows or encourages student to voice opinions that are contrary to family's opinions; family allows student to transgress norms of her heterosexual family

- 2 When family would watch Hong Kong cable show and see gay Chinese character, her mother would say that was bad. Student countered that it was not, it was really nothing.
- 3 Student doesn't know where her house-wife-type mother gets her information about gay and lesbian. Student e-mailed her mother a page of information on "What if your child was gay?" and it did help. Father is more worldly than mother and she thinks he gets his information from the variety of people he deals with at work and probably through the internet. She e-mailed information to her father even though she thought he wouldn't read it. At first father seemed to get it but then he would say "really stupid things" like commenting that he hopes she'll find a man in college and she would tell him that he was not getting the point. Student does stuff all the time to jar her parents into remembering that she is a lesbian, such as taking over a room in the basement and putting up the lesbian pictures and "all that good stuff."
- 4 Her parents subscribe to a hateful, little conservative newspaper for the sports section. She's been begging them to change it for years.
- 4 Turns out her image has changed many times, her bias against shaved lesbians has turned into love, and she brings them home to grimaces from her mom.
- 4 Student jokes that she changed her family by shattering her parents hopes and dreams. She took away all of their preconceived notions about what growing older would be like and replaced them with a new, positive image.
- 4 Student taught her family about gay and lesbian, tried to get their acceptance, and actually asked them to go to gay/straight pride march with her through e-mail because she was too scared to actually ask them.
- 5 Student jokes that she changed her family by giving them something else to talk about at the dinner table.
- 5 Student was on the phone and told her friend she would be right back because she was going to go tell her geeky 13 year old brother that she was gay. She told brother that she needed to tell him something, he asked "what?" and she said "I think I am a lesbian." He yelled "I'm watching Matlock. GET OUT!."
- 5 Student taught her parents that she is ready to talk to them about stuff but it may be about things that they might not be comfortable with.
- 5 Student could talk about gay and lesbian marriage with her mom, her aunt, or whoever she is comfortable with. Student is out to mother and aunt and both said they already knew. Student threw a joke into her speech about telling her mother she wasn't going to have a white picket fence, her mother said "I know,

- you're a lesbian" and student said "no, I just don't like picket fences!". Student can talk to her aunt. Student's uncle recently died and she was able to talk with him, he was her best friend in the family, and he taught her to play softball.
- 6 Student had to say that she wanted to watch the t.v. at a certain time so her family wouldn't watch something else. Student was embarrassed to say that she really wanted to watch Ellen's coming out show but she told her mom "I'm watching this, ok?". It was kind of awkward that mother was in the room when student was watching it.
- 6 Student's mother was very surprised when student came out to her. Student laughs when she remembers the look on her mother's face and mother said "what? are you sure?" and then "I hope you didn't expect me to throw you out of the house or anything!" because when student came out student asked "is it okay?". Mother said it was fine.
- 6 For awhile after student came out family didn't talk about it much at all until student's mother asked student her first choice college from the bunch that student was applying to. Student told mother "[the college student is currently attending]" and mother said she didn't think student should go to an all-women's college because of "those feelings you have." Student was struck by the way her mother phrased her comment, and was like "shut up, mom, go away, leave me alone, this is what I want to do." Parents consented to her choice of college. Father never said anything about going to an all women's college and when he took her to visit the college he was like "yep, it seems great!."
- 6 Student knows her family accepts her lesbianism. She thinks she could talk to her parents. Student's father is making her a room in the basement and commented "if you graduate college you can come back here with your boyfriend" and then added "girlfriend" when she just looked at him. She thought it was cool that he added "girlfriend" when she didn't even say anything and she isn't sure if she should've said something but she smiled and looked at him like "yeah, great."
- 7 In conversations with mother, student brings up that mother wears a ring, has picture of husband on her desk, holds hands with husband in public, kisses him goodbye, everyone knows he is her husband, and mother makes it very "obvious" that she is straight. She tells her mother that mother is not "flaunting" or "trying to make a point" but it who mother is and mother would resent it if mother was told she couldn't do those things anymore. Student says it's the same thing with her.
- 7 Student wants to wear nice wool trousers, a button-down shirt, and tie for graduation because that's how student feels comfortable, that's how she thinks she looks good and that's been "field-tested." Mother saw student's choice of clothing as "a very hostile thing" toward mother and rest of family and told student she resented it, and that it was not fair to mother and to rest of family. Student doesn't think it is fair that she has to "live by those standards." If mother asked her to not talk politics with her family on the basis that it would alienate them and student could never make them understand at dinner, student would have agreed because "you don't throw your pearls before swine." But

mother told student not to dress butchy or dykey and basically said not to tell anyone. Student's mother supports her critique of heterosexist culture, except when student wants to express it with her clothing (e.g., wearing a suit to graduation with all the family present). Student challenged heterosexist rules in her family by deciding to wear a suit to graduation and by convincing her mother to buy her men's chino's and polo shirts.

- 9 She had a really good high school experience. Her sexuality wasn't a big issue because her father taught at her school, was a big guy with a reputation for breaking up fights, and everyone knew that if they messed with her they would get it from him. She wasn't out during the first two years because she didn't want him to know, but then told him and it wasn't an issue. Student knows it's kind of weird to be an out lesbian at the school where your dad teaches.
- 11 Student's sister was one of the first people who confronted student about her sexuality and student totally flipped out on her because it was student's own thing and she just wanted to deal with it.
- 11 Student transgressed heterosexual space at home when her first girlfriend from four door away slept over with her all the time. Student's mother knew, didn't care or say anything, but student knows she wouldn't have been able to bring boys to the house and get away with that if she were straight.
- 11 Student and her mother are pretty vocal and student tries to educate mother because mother doesn't really know a lot of things. For example, student told her mother that it was not a "plastic penis" that the "scary" little neighbor boy threw it the yard, it was a dildo. Student thinks the boy threw it because mother's boyfriend is "an old guy and he hates little kids."
- 13 She voiced her pain a lot, speaks her mind, and is the first one to say something when she hears her family make comments about gay people. Student has a gay male cousin who died of AIDS and an uncle who is a priest who denies he is gay.
- 15 Student has a "cool" younger half-brother who was raised really well by his mother in a small southern town. Student told half-brother she was gay, #1 was her girlfriend, and asked how he felt about that. He had been drinking alcohol that her older brother gave him so he was drunk and said "I might not remember tomorrow but I don't care right now." Student asked if he thought he would care the next day.
- 15 Student and mother never talked about student's sexuality until student addressed it directly. Student did not come out to her mother until after a family crisis died down. Student said "mom, you know, I'm kind of gay." Her mother's first reaction was "does that mean you are not going to have my sense of fashion?." Mother was like "that's it?" and "I thought you were going to tell me you were smoking grass or something." Mother said mother didn't care, it was something mother considered because of student's "background" and mother noticed a lack of boyfriends. Student says mother just didn't know about all the boyfriends.

Family expresses positive reactions to gays and lesbians; family has gay and lesbian friends and/or gays and lesbians in the family

- 2 Student is similar to her brother in physical features, liberal perspective, and brother is gay. She thinks sister largely ignores the issue and thinks sister accepts her because they are related.
- 3 Student thinks that being an only child affected her parents reaction to her sexuality because they are stuck with her and they have no sibling to compare her to.
- 4 Student was in colorguard where the 1 in 10 rule was reversed and only one guy in colorguard was straight, but people think he is in the closet. Father was good friends with these people, thought it was okay and cool for them to be gay.
- 6 Student has a gay aunt she visited a lot in the summer when she was little but only sees the aunt now when the aunt comes over. Aunt lives pretty close to gay and lesbian city and student thinks if student went to visit aunt, it would be different than when she visited her aunt when she was little because she really would see her aunt living her life. Student thinks aunt was probably the first lesbian she knew. Student thinks when she was little she started to suspect aunt was gay and one day student's mom or dad said "you know, right?" and student replied "yeah."
- 7 Student's mother has k.d. Lang's release "Ingenue.". Mother has a lot of lesbian friends. Student's mother [and father] majored in [music] so mother was exposed to a lot of gay men.
- 7 Her step mom's best friend was step mom's gay brother and her sisters said things like "uncle [name] and his partner." It's hard to tell if her relative (a nun) is a lesbian because nuns and a lot of dykes give off the "I don't need men and I live a very happy life with a community of women that are interesting, thoughtful, and independent and we work together to do important things for the world and we want to change the world, and by god we are going to do it without men" vibe. Student realized she had more in common with the nun than anyone else student is in a relationship with because they were both sitting there going "What do we need men for? We're not going to play by the men's rules and we don't even need them in our lives!."
- 7 Student's family identifies as straight, but student gets a "big gay vibe" from one cousin; she also thinks her relative who is a nun is gay. But then again it's hard to tell because nuns and a lot of dykes give off the "I don't need men and I live a very happy life with a community of women that are interesting, thoughtful, and independent and we work together to do important things for the world and we want to change the world, and by god we are going to do it without men" vibe. When student first talked to nun she thought it was going to be "bizarre."
- 7 Student hopes her younger sister turns out to be a lesbian because it would be satisfying to prove to her dad that it's not her mom's fault.
- 9 [father who teaches in the school] challenges homophobic comments made by students (for example, on gays in the military: "I'd rather have a really strong gay guy watching my back than some wimpy straight guy"). As a result, at school father "takes flack all the time" and a lot of people hate him.

- 10 Mother never expressed negative views toward gays until the student came out as bi to her.
- 10 Student thinks her choice of a girlfriend has made her mother more supportive. Student is very picky and would not date someone with a "radical hairstyle or shaved head" because that is not her "type" and personal appearance is important to her upper-middle class parents.
- 11 For his age, stepfather is very cool and liberal and has four kids: one is a gay male, another was born a woman and got a sex change.
- 12 Mother will talk politically about how gay people are treated and how it's not right but mother does not talk specifically about student's sexually very much.
- 13 Student says her family knows about homosexuality because student can tell that her cousins (2m/1f) and a male uncle (a pastor) are gay.
- 14 Student has an extreme thought that her 10 year old brother might be gay, however, she is not about to share that with her parents and she's just hoping that things work out for him for the best for his life.
- 15 Student's mother took student's stepfather and nephew to MMOW "completely free and independent" of student. If student had not gone, mother would have been "pissed off" at her and gone without her. Mother had gay friends, told stories about them and the fun she had with them and has been to lesbian bars, so student always knew that as a lesbian she would have a friend, a person who was like her mom. Student thinks her mom is "the coolest of the coolest."

Family members over time display positive personal growth and positive growth in relationships with students and other family members

- 2 Student had planned forever about how to come out to mother but it came up unexpectedly in a conversation with her mother at the end of her senior year. Student surprised herself by disclosing in an unplanned way. Her mother was upset, and she was upset. Student wanted to tell mother because it hurts a lot more to keep it in. Coming out to her mother has brought them closer, even if her mother does not believe her. She feels like she has made odd, but okay progress with her mother and that they have reached a stale mate. She feels comfortable and had told her mother that if she wants to be oblivious about it then that's her (the mother's) decision.
- 3 Student is an only child and neither parent "jumped for joy" when she came out. She came out to her mother after her mother "made a stupid comment" implying that her friends' gayness was going to rub off on the student and she reacted by telling her mother it already had and stormed off. The next day her mother apologized, said she had expected it for a long time, that she had "a feeling," and was hoping it wouldn't turn out that way not because mother was terribly homophobic but because she thought student's life would be so much harder. Unlike what her mother thought, student thinks her life is different, not harder. On the level of understanding and learning about gay and lesbian, school and home were about equal. Her mother is still learning, adjusting and being okay. Student's father was also accepting, but he was different and it

- took a lot longer to win him over. Student judges from recent conversations with him that he is starting to change.
- 3 Student thinks her family has shaped her because they gave her a positive, pretty supportive response, even if they don't fully understand, are a little misinformed, and Dad still gets nervous when she does too many things that are gay. At one point her Dad checked in with her to make sure she wasn't going to "join some man-hating lesbian cult."
- 5 Student knew she couldn't come out to her uncle because he is a minister, said "fags are perverted," and asked why she was watching Ellen, the "perverted fag." Uncle is narrowminded, has to have his own way, and grumbled at student's mother's defense of her daughter. While student went outside and cried, student's mother starting reciting the bible to her brother to point out that he was wrong. Student was shocked because she didn't know her mother knew what a bible was. It was important that mother stood up for her.
- 6 Student came out to her sister by e-mail ("so how do you feel about me and [name of girlfriend] being more than friends?") while out of the country on a visit with her girlfriend. Sister said "really?" and that she suspected. Student thinks her sister had to have found something (e.g. a letter from girlfriend lying out on student's desk or reading over student's shoulder while she typed) because after awhile student stopped caring about hiding stuff. Sister was hurt student took a long time to tell her but was really cool with it, and sister said she was almost jealous of student because student has somebody and sister doesn't. Student and sister are pretty close but there are a lot of things student doesn't talk about with sister.
- 6 Student changed her family by making them a little more open-minded even though they were already open-minded because she thinks it's easy to preach but different when you really have to face it.
- 7 Student did tell her dad she was going to the prom with her girlfriend and she thinks it's funny that he asked if it was a girl from the team who actually is a dyke. Student told her dad that her girlfriend doesn't go to her school or any school. Father said "okay" and changed the conversation. Student thought "wait a minute, I just came out to you!." Student thinks she'll have to have another conversation with him because she wants to give him the chance to do something right.
- 7 Student's two sisters do not show any trace of homophobia. She doesn't think they will care [about student's sexuality] but thinks they will have a lot questions later, especially the older one in whom student sees a lot of herself.
- 9 Student thinks father had to either reject his gay children or change his views on homosexuality. Father changed his views almost overnight and student thinks this is because father loves them, would do anything for them, and is the fairest person she knows. Father is a really cool guy who hates bullies and stands up for the weak guy, tries to do what's right, and [father who teaches in the school] challenges homophobic comments made by students (for example, on gays in the military: "I'd rather have a really strong gay guy watching my back than some wimpy straight guy"). As a result, at school father "takes flack

- all the time"and a lot of people hate him. Student brings girlfriend home and father has said that he doesn't mind that student and her girlfriend are close.
- 9 Student thinks her parents are lucky because they are different from their parents. Student's parents came from homophobic families and grew out of it so well. Student expects having two gay children would definitely make parents adjust.
- 9 Student is a little ashamed that as a child she was looking through her brother's stuff while he was away at high school, found gay literature, took it to her father ("dad, what's this?"), and that started the "big controversy." Father went to brother's high school and told him "don't ever bring gay literature into my house." Brother doesn't know how parents found the literature, but student guesses he knows it was her. Brother came out to student when she was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and she was okay with it because they are close and she loves him no matter what. After her brother came out to her, she never was a kid who would say "oh, that's so gay" even though other kids thought that was a cool thing to say.
- 10 In the beginning mother told her not to tell anyone but mother has told student's grandmother (hasn't brought it up to student; probably hasn't said anything bad to mother) and aunt (asked student about it; seems okay) and student thinks it has helped her mother not to have bad reactions from part of the family she is close to. Student initially thought psychiatrist selected by her mother would be a little close-minded because he is from the same country as her family and well-known in the city's [native country]'s community. Student suspects that her mother is learning to accept it because she heard it from someone who "knows better." Student's family had never personally dealt with any gay and lesbians and because of her, she thinks they became more accepting of gay and lesbians. Mother grew more accepting and student thinks mother would rather see her with someone like #9, a well-established, smart person who treats student well, rather than a guy who is going to treat student badly. Mother never expressed negative views toward gays until the student came out as bi to her. Family's acceptance has made her feel more positive and better about herself. It is especially good to have her mother's acceptance.
- 10 Student's grandmother (hasn't brought it up to student; probably hasn't said anything bad to mother) and aunt (asked student about it; seems okay).
- 12 When student told her sister, the sister cried and student said she was kidding and the sister told her she knew she wasn't. Then the sister became very talkative about it, telling other people about her.
- 12 Student thinks her mother is working on it and since she doesn't really want to have that serious sexuality conversation with her mother yet, she is giving her mom time and space.
- 13 Student thinks she changed her family because they are more open to gay people now. She thinks it is different for gay men then gay women.
- 14 She would like to think that while the younger siblings don't know or understand now, someday when they do know they WILL understand because they have been influenced by the past 3-5 years of their lives.
- 15 Student thinks being gay has been good for her family, unified them.

Family provides student with a sense of core values and strength

- 1 It has always been important to student to be who she wants to be and to take control of her life. She thinks the value she places on being an individual comes from her parents, although she is not sure that they are very happy with where that led, or if (a daughter who came out as a lesbian) is exactly what they wanted. She guesses it backfired for them and it's their own fault. Student thinks children are not supposed to grow up and be their parents and she thinks it's "disgusting" to see when it happens.
- 4 Student thinks her family is decently smart. She thinks her father is smart, her grandfather is a super genius in math, and intelligence is genetic. Student and her father don't usually talk about life but she is open with her dad and they sit around and talk about science.
- 6 Student thinks it's weird that her parents instilled tolerance and acceptance of people into student, but parents didn't really talk about it and mother was really p.c. when she mentioned stuff.
- 7 Student can't be friends with a girl without hitting on her jokingly. Student's very high standards for friendship are similar to her standards for people she becomes involved with, so most of the people she is friends with she thinks of as "candidates" for a primary relationship. Like her parents, student is oriented toward having one relationship where each person is primary to the other, plus friends on the side. She tends to be involved with one person who becomes everything.
- 7 Student always thought of women as being as strong as her mother is. Student's mother raised her with a very feminist consciousness. Student was raised in a "very neo-socialist household." She is very much into the freedom to be who you are but at the same time she thinks laws are needed to back that up. She likes to have order but she doesn't like anyone telling her what to do. (18)Hence the interviewer's question about schools having a role in helping both male and female students think about something else (other than boys) posed a problem for the student. Mother talks about the bible as a reason people should try to change things, not as a reason people should be complacent. Her mother is a "very big feminist" who has had to work a lot to make her religion rest easy with her feminist consciousness. Mother doesn't think of sex as a sin. Mother is politically radical and socially conservative, really into the "life of the mind" and politics. Student thinks her mother felt like she was "put upon by society and by men." Student gets the feeling from her mother that it's very much about who you love and having a good relationship with the person you love and like student, feels "who am I to tell you how to live your life as long as you are not hurting people?." Student jokes, though, that her mother doesn't know anything about sex but must have had sex one time.
- 7 [impact of family] Student attributes her good taste in clothes and her way with women (e.g., a flirt and able to turn on the charm) to her father. From her mother, student got articulateness, the politics, the way she expresses herself,

and the attitude that being strong and being a woman are more compatible than a lot of people see. Student always thought of women as being as strong as her mother is. From her mother and her father she got her "incredible stubbornness."

- 9 Student thinks home and school are both character building institutions, however, student's family is loving and supportive, while her school cares less about the individual, less about the people and more about appearances and education. Student isn't sure all families are as loving and supportive as hers.
- 9 Student's source of strength to not get beaten down is having her family (particularly her family) behind her, which really helped. Student's family has made her really okay with her lesbianism and proud.
- 10 Mother grew more accepting and student thinks mother would rather see her with someone like #9, a well-established, smart person who treats student well, rather than a guy who is going to treat student badly.
- 11 Student doesn't think her family impacts how she thinks about herself as a lesbian. Student thinks that for her home life to be impacted she would have to "screw up" pretty bad in her personal life, more than her mom or dad did. Student thinks she is doing 10 times better already. Student says her mom cannot ever criticize her because, although it was not mother's fault, her mother married a child molester. In a certain way, mother is happy that student doesn't want to marry a man.
- 11 Mother has always been a feminist and she thinks mother's first husband did not want children and they were not planning on getting pregnant. They got divorced and mother had to raise first daughter and go to college at the same time. Mother is a very strong woman and has done very well on so little.
- 12 Student thinks her mother's influence was the beginning of her learning about the social world, the beginning of her awareness to look around herself and look at things and why they work the way they do. Her mother experienced segregation in the south and told her that she chose to raise her in a place without segregation. Mother was part of the civil rights movement, she did a lot of work, a lot of reading. Mother was hard core about it when student and her sister were young, and she used to sit for hours and listen to her mom talk about the world, how it works, how people are treating each other. Mother is a very fair, diplomatic person, who didn't put her daughters on a path, and never told them "don't do that" unless they were beating up on each other.
- 12 Student had to figure out how to graduate to please her mother. Student and her mother, a teacher for 15 years, often talk about schooling. Mother critiques schools by saying she doesn't want to discipline kids all day and there is nothing engaging about what teachers are supposed to teach. At student's sister's college orientation, student encouraged her bored mother to leave the orientation and attend a progressive education conference. Mother said conference was "exactly what she needed." Student encourages her mother to do something and reminds her that the school district "just can't fire" a veteran teacher and her mother agreed with her.
- 12 Since student was raised by a feminist mother who valued student's opinion, student did not hesitate to speak up at school.

- 12 Student's sister was also perceived as "different" from other students in high school. Student describes her sister as pretty normal, very kind and nice, a natural, earthy type whose only "difference" in terms of black aesthetics is her big afro. Together student and her sister have tried to figure out how they are being perceived by other people, why the sister was voted "Most Unique," and why they have had such similar experiences with people telling them they are "different."
- 12 Student thinks her mother's influence was the beginning of her learning about the social world, the beginning of her awareness to look around herself and look at things and why they work the way they do. Her mother experienced segregation in the south and told her that she chose to raise her in a place without segregation. Mother was part of the civil rights movement, she did a lot of work, a lot of reading. Mother was hard core about it when student and her sister were young, and she used to sit for hours and listen to her mom talk about the world, how it works, how people are treating each other. Mother is a very fair, diplomatic person, who didn't put her daughters on a path, and never told them "don't do that" unless they were beating up on each other.
- 13 Student's family has taught her things that have nothing to do with her being gay but student has taken things her family taught her and applied it to her sexuality. They taught her to be herself, that people will either accept her or they won't, not to try to impress people, and to speak her mind. Student tries not to make a "first impression" and tries to be herself all the time. Student is not vengeful but when people who are close to her are insensitive then she does something to hurt them. Student does not hold her tongue for anyone, except for certain situations where it would be really mean or nasty to speak her mind.
- 15 Student has always admired and respected her mother because mother was abused by father, then by stepfathers, and student thinks it's a wonder that mother didn't "get on drugs and overdose and die" or kill herself. Student thinks it is a wonder that student is where she is, too. Student sees her mother and herself as "complete survivors." Student thinks her mother now cherishes the time with student and student treasures her mom.

## II. Peers

Peers let student "open up the conversation" about sexual identity

- 2 Student began reading a lot on her own and circulating books among her friends. Her friends introduced her to dyke books and she has a collection of them at home. Her favorite author is Dorothy Allison, but she has been wary of starting Bastard Out of Carolina because she saw the movie and knows the content (incest and child abuse) is hard.
- 3 Her friends learned about lesbians: firsthand by dealing with her and her coming out process; by knowing a friend whose mom was a lesbian; and by being conscientious and doing research, especially through the internet. One straight friend has taken such an active role as an ally (i.e., organizing MMOW trip, introducing her to lesbian musicians) that the student and her friends are

amazed that this straight friend is not a lesbian. Student hopes this [straight ally] friend represents a whole new breed of woman because if the world were filled with people like her, it would be a perfect place. Student thinks that what we need most of all is for straight allies to take on the fight because all of the screaming and hollering by gay and lesbian (even if we swell to 20% of the population) won't make a difference if we don't have allies because we are still a minority.

- 3 She thinks she and her gay male friends have shaped each other since together they all came out, went through the turmoil, and grew into confident people. She has shaped her friends by giving them a different point of view and making them aware there is a "whole other side of the world." In particular she has given her straight ally friend a cause that she will probably espouse for the rest of her life and made a total liberal out of a conservative Jewish friend.
- 4 Student was friends with an ignorant male Christian homophobe who stayed her friend and talked with her all the time after he found out she was gay. Friend asked student if she was gay when he saw gay and lesbian pin she was wearing and student replied that pin could mean that she is a straight supporter because it says "Gay Straight Youth Pride March." Friend said "No, I think you are gay" and student said she was and asked what that had to do with anything. Friend was one of those people who said "faggot" in a demeaning manner. Student had a huge fight with friend on a list-serv with 30 people reading everything going on. Student knew gay people from the friend's town and heard rumors that friend used to say he was bisexual so student brought up the "reformed bisexual argument" and outted him on -line and friend went nuts. Student told friend she was not going to harass him or be a bitch or sink to his level anymore. She said she would like to be friends and proposed that she would not "shove gay stuff" in his face if he wouldn't bash in front of her. Friend agreed but broke the agreement at some point and student "freaked out" on him. Friend would accidentally say "faggot" or "that's so gay" and he'd look over at her and say "shit!." Friend got really good and eventually they had a conversation. Student considers [name of friend] her biggest, proudest success of her teaching.
- 5 Student's friends shaped her by being accepting and being able to talk to her.
- 6 Student thinks she has impacted her friends by helping to alter their stereotypical image of lesbians to one of lesbians being "like a normal person" walking down the street who doesn't even look different than an average person.
- 7 Student's [heterosexual female] "groupies" are nice to her, maybe in awe of her, and student is constantly telling them in class that they are wrong about things, and teases them about wearing make-up and liking boys. Student can't explain the groupies but thinks maybe they are amazed to "see someone who was so into that" and "who used to really play that game" "break out" and do something really different. Or maybe it's that they are intrigued by someone they don't like or they are trying to charm her.

- 7 Student was reading comedienne Kate Clinton's book Don't Get Me Started to her friends and they were laughing at Clinton's jokes about enjoying being a lesbian
- 7 A couple of girls who identify primarily as heterosexual but have "had whatever they have had" with girls have talked to student about their relationships and asked her questions. One girl has only confided this to student.
- 7 Student can look at her school experience only from a non-heterosexual viewpoint [meaning she can only rank her experience through the lens of sexuality]. She can tell interviewer the difference between being perceived as gay and being perceived as straight. She has given the same answer to a student at school who asked her "what's it like to be gay?." Student talks about heterosexist privilege, the difference between a man and a woman being gay, and the political aspects. When people say it sucks, she says she wouldn't trade it for the world because she gets to be with women.
- 10 Student doesn't think her experience differed much from straight students because her friends were very accepting, including a best friend who is Baptist who said student changed her outlook on gay and lesbian and made her more accepting.
- 11 Student had a lot of positive experiences as an out lesbian. Student's home and the home town high school her friends attended was 30 miles away from and twice as large the high school student attended but there was a lot of communication between the two schools. When student came out in March of her sophomore year, word spread quickly to her home town school. In May of that year student received a 3 page coming out letter from a friend at her hometown school. That friend was the first in a long chain of people who felt comfortable enough to talk first with the student. Student says this was a big positive experience and she feels honored by people coming to her and talking about their concerns and feelings. Student thinks she has changed her friends by forcing them to be really open, talking about things with them, and fielding questions. For her, answering questions is nothing personal.
- 11 Student has always been a leader so she "opened up the conversation a little bit" and more students started coming out (12 students were already out).
- 12 A lot of the students were very warm, asked her good (not stupid) questions about lesbianism.
- 14 Student made her friends her "lesbian mission" and would drag them to all of the different bookstores and make them read books and learn because she had to learn too at the same time. She was kind of their "lesbian diplomat" with the attitude "you're not a lesbian but that's ok, come on!"
- 14 One of student's friend's father who is bisexual took student and her friends with him to a gay and lesbian film festival and gay/l bookstore which was great. However, student was not out to parents so it was very risky to do those things.
- 15 Because student was a 5 (top) she and other students would get into huge philosophical discussions, sometimes about sexuality, before social studies

class and before the teacher arrived. Student gave her "two cents worth" but never initiated conversations on sexuality.

- 15 Student has changed her friends by giving them courage to come out and/or changing some of their perspectives about lesbians. Student says #1 gives credit to student for so many people coming out at high school because student encouraged friend to "just do it, just do it." Student and friend used to talk about how if one person came out, the rest would follow. Student and friend are both impressed by the reaction student received.

Peers make it easy for student to disclose her identity and react positively to disclosure

- 3 In her neighborhood, her best friends were two gay males who went to different high schools. Student hung out with her neighborhood friends in the summer and since they were two gay male friends, they were fine with her sexuality. She found a great group of friends who were completely supportive when she finally did come out.
- 6 When student came out to best female friend, friend was great about it and student could talk to friend about anything. Everyone she has told has been said that's great and fine.
- 7 She ranks her school at least a 5 because she was not afraid for her life, was treated with respect even if she was not respected, has friends and a group of straight girl groupies. One of the benefits to student's school is that they accept her not because they necessarily accept gay people, but they accept her because they know her. Student thinks it would be different if she just entered her school and said "oh, I'm gay, hi."
- 7 Student's best high school experience was realizing that friend completely supported her and straight friend didn't care about student's sexuality but about who student was as a person.
- 8 Student knows she can function in male society because she has been in all male classes. Male students were okay with student's sexuality. Male students competed with student academically based on her gender and she liked it. Student doesn't see how lesbianism is an advantage when working with men in the sciences. Student felt more comfortable disclosing her sexuality to boys and found their reactions interesting, non defensive or threatening, which she had not expected.
- 10 Student's positive experience was the acceptance she received from her friends when she came out. Most people said they like her for who she is and it didn't matter and one person was surprised not in a negative way because the person thought she was straight.
- 10 Student embraces that her school was very accepting. She thought that it would be difficult to come out but after coming out to one friend after another, she learned that real friends are accepting and don't base who you are on your sexuality.
- 10 Student doesn't believe that she ever had a negative experience in high school. She thinks students had to get accustomed to the school and it was not like a "big home" where everyone knows everyone else. Student was comfortable in most spaces, most of the time. Teacher, students, classmates all knew, were

- accepting and supporting. Student doesn't think her experience differed much from straight students because her friends were very accepting.
- 10 Student thinks her friends were open, loving, and supportive because they were bisexual or gay and/or they were friends with her before she came out and some friends said they knew she was a lesbian before student did.
- 11 The school was small, everyone knew everyone, everyone was a friend, students took her in stride and said she was "a little crazy." Student's sexuality was "one of those accepted things" and she definitely fit in. She picked her roommate in her junior year and the roommate was cool, it wasn't an issue for her at all. Student had a single during her senior year. Student had the opportunity to come out in a safe environment, around friends, some of who were gay, all of who were gay-friendly in a liberal, progressive high school. Student hates the word "progressive."
- 11 Student has gotten a good response from people she knows now in her home town and is comfortable with them.
- 12 It was also very easy to come out to friends. She was out after her freshman year. Student had a fabulous group of about ten friends: a lot of gay women, more bisexuals, and her best friend was/is a gay man who came out to her during their junior year and she was surprised because she never saw it coming. Her group was popular and the most gay friendly group of people you would want to meet.
- 12 The honors/AP students were people she had been in grammar school with and they were the judges of the [student writing] contest. Something tells her that if the teachers were the judge [of her lesbian-themed story], she wouldn't have won, unless a couple of the teachers were there to support her.
- 13 Student's positive experience was three students coming out in the same group assignment for a creative writing class in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. This was unplanned and student thought it was cool. The three students had to interview each other and ask two questions. Student was asked if she could marry anyone, who would she marry, and she said she wanted to marry a female. The class and teacher didn't react, it wasn't bad, it wasn't good. The three students who came out were like "YES!!" Student didn't know the other two students were gay and lesbian but she could tell the guy was gay because he fit every stereotype. Student was also asked if she could be any color, what color would she be, and she said that she would be clear because she wouldn't want to be black or white. She would be clear so people could see right through her and know how she feels, if she is lying or telling the truth, and then "we'd all get along." Student's favorite school was the one she attended two different times (school #1). Student had a lot of friends, no one cared what she wore (alternative, grunge, baggy pants, jeans, etc), and she could be herself.
- 14 People at school were incredibly supportive and pleased that she took her girlfriend to the prom. At the prom, when they were in the receiving line, out of her class of 800 students, a few homophobic people were hesitant, but everyone else was excited to meet her girlfriend, to shake her hand, and gf was the most popular one there.

- 14 Student started coming out to her immediate friends. All but one of student's friends were in AP classes even though they were from lower economic level area of town. Student and her friends were in orchestra together and did everything together. Initially student's friends were supportive of her coming out. Student feels like she was luckier than those people who weren't as popular with the student body because she had a close knit circle of friends. Because she was well-known, student body reacted to student's sexuality by saying that "they knew her, that was just her, and she was off the wall."

Peers put students in contact with other non-heterosexual students

- 2 Student found other lesbians through her friends.
- 3 Student supported her straight friend [in her efforts to start GSA] and thought, in part, that starting a GSA would help her see if there were other gay and lesbian in school.
- 4 Student met other non-straight youth at the off-campus youth group, volunteering for the AIDS Task Force, and 2 gay and lesbian youth support groups where she went to talk.
- 7 Student met other non-straight youth through the GSA, through female friends, a "clean dance club" for youth, and GLSEN. She has also heard a lot of gossip and stories as her circle of friends has grown, including details she preferred not to know, like how friends of her are in bed. She wonders if her college town will be worse because there will be "fewer straight alternatives." She started going on-line to gay chatrooms a few years back but it was really boring.
- 8 During cultural diversity week there was a panel of gays, including a student in HS who responded to student questions. Student wrote a question for the panel and a member of the support group saw the question and slipped her a note inviting her to the support group.
- 8 Student found other gay and lesbian students at the support group, but had no contact with gay and lesbian prior to support group. Student met other lesbians through a friend at another high school and social networking and GLSEN.
- 9 When she started school she was a "closeted bisexual" and started her coming out process after meeting a flamboyant gay guy on the first day of school who made it okay, more acceptable, and introduced her to a lot of people.
- 10 Student met other bisexuals and lesbians on-line which she thought was safer. Student didn't meet anyone off-line until the end of her sophomore year. Student had a social network outside of school because she wanted to have different kinds of friends, and she hung out with people who were Asian, Chinese and Filipino.
- 11 Student met lesbian in her home high school, at a youth summit, the youth group, and in GLSEN.

Peers create safe, welcoming spaces in school

- 1 The locker room was a neutral place because everyone was friends for the most part.

- 1 Student's sharing of her free period with her best friend in the cafeteria, Religious Center, or athletic office felt safe because no one else was there. She isn't sure "secluded" is the right word to describe it, but there wasn't the every day gossip and free periods weren't like the "annoying" lunch period.
- 2 The music office (also the male assistant principals' office) was a comfortable place since A.P. wasn't there much and gave free reign of his office to anyone. Students could just talk, hang out, play guitars. Student thinks it is odd that the comfortable place on campus was the office of a flaming homophobe (the A.P.) who used to make comments in class such as how many more fruits there are in a local gayborhood than there are in the market. It wasn't the kind of school or the kind of class where people would raise their hands and say "that wasn't right. You shouldn't say things like that." People would let stuff like that go all the time because it wasn't worth the time and you can't really change his ignorance, so let's move on. The other comfortable place was the newspaper office and student spent a lot of hours there because she was a part of that. Everybody came by because they had computers there.
- 2 The GSA started with an amazing 20 people and then it dwindled down to 3. The last couple of meetings were great and about 7 people attended. Her positive experiences involved the GSA, because it was a safe space in school.
- 3 It was good that lots of people felt free to question their identity and the GSA was an accepting place to explore that.
- 4 The cafeteria was neutral because nobody "screwed" with her there because they had the "gay corner" which was pretty much gays and allies.
- 4 Student thinks it is ironic that the safest place at high school was a closet. Student used to sleep in her closet at home when she didn't want to go to school and she didn't want her dad to know she didn't go to school. The BS's little downstairs room was a positive safe space because you could go there and cry if you got harassed.
- 6 Student's safe space was her AP English class because she sat next to her male friend and she thinks people were more accepting.
- 7 Student found the [swim] team to be a safer, more positive space (lots of Indigo Girl fans, less into being feminine than the other team, and cooler) but the [basketball] team was not a safe positive place, so it really depended on the group of people.
- 8 The more comfortable place (on the basis of her sexuality) was the one of two cafeterias that was not used by the jocks and prom queen lookalikes. Even though student was an athlete, she had more in common with the people in the other cafeteria. Even though student had something in common with athletes, she related more to people who were not athletes.
- 8 Gays and lesbians were invisible but there was a support group that met once a week that was started by a bunch of students who got the support from a nice social worker, counselor, and two other teachers.
- 9 Student felt more comfortable in the "freak areas" like the smokers' corner where all the "deviants" grouped together. There weren't enough gay and lesbian kids to have their own corner and the other deviants didn't care about homosexuals.

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- 9 While her friends were never close-minded people, they learned about lesbians through their friendship with her and that extended their world views. Student's friends, in turn, made sure she knew it was okay, made sure she was comfortable, and made her high school experience good. Student's good friends in high school were cool, liberal, well-adjusted people who went on to college and went on to do good things.

#### Peers are more accepting of lesbians than gay men

- 2 Student thinks it is easier to be a lesbian than a gay man in high school because it is less intimidating to other people and people don't understand what two girls would do together. There was an "idiot" at her job who asked her if she is a lesbian and told her that she can be a lesbian but that he hates gay men because it's dirty.
- 4 Student used to think that gay men had it easier than lesbians in this country but now she thinks lesbians have it easier, but it depends.  
 It's easier for lesbians because men accept lesbians easier than they accept gay men. Men accept lesbians easier than gay men because, and she is just now figuring this out, almost every man likes to see "two chicks go at it" and her boyfriend has admitted to this. She wouldn't mind seeing it but thinks that's a totally different subject.  
 Straight men find gay men too much of a threat to their masculinity and have a complex where they think everyone wants them so they don't care if men are gay, as long as they don't hit on them. She questions whether straight men think they are "God's gift to everyone."
- 5 She thinks women accept gay men because, as a stereotype, they can go shopping with them, as her gay male friend used to do to her and she hated it. [impact of gender] Student thinks it is easier to be a lesbian than a gay guy. People accept lesbians more than gay guys because when they see two men they don't see love, they see "really gross sex." Student thinks lesbians are more accepted because "there is more of it" on t.v. and people really respond to the media. She thinks women kissing is acceptable because of women's softness, soft hands, soft lips, and guys kissing is "just two five o'clock shadows making out."
- 6 Student thinks lesbianism is generally more accepted in the mainstream than is being a gay male, so it is probably easier to be a woman but she doesn't know. Student thinks the root cause of discrimination against gay and lesbian is that people think about sex because they define being a homosexual as having sex with someone of the same gender, and this makes people feel icky and they have queasiness about it. Student thinks it is easier for lesbians than for gay men because "they" think gay men just have sex but for lesbians people might think there is an intimate relationship.

- 7 Students thinks it is "horrible" for gay guys. The gay guys student knew in her high school were not out. Student doesn't think it's that big of a deal for girls because once a girl is considered "queer" (e.g., strange), everyone pretty much expects that she is not straight because she is not like every body else.
- 9 Student thinks it is easier to be a lesbian than a gay male because she hears gay males take more crap. The culture currently thinks lesbians are cool, neat, and guys continue to express their fascination with lesbians with the "can I watch?" syndrome.
- 9 The overall climate toward people who were presumed not to be straight was bad, and even worse for boys. A lot of her male friends were beat up by football players. Her locker was robbed once or twice, she had a note written to her, but no one really bothered to mess with her to her face.
- 10 Student thinks it is easier and more accepted to be a woman and lesbian than it is to be a man and gay because "guys like that" about women and people are disgusted by gay male sex. Because it's harder for the heterosexual community to notice that she is lesbian, it is easier for her.
- 11 Male students reacted to her by wanting to talk to her about sex, not politics. They were very interested in lesbians, but were like "whoa, that's weird" about gay men. Student is not sure why male students have an interest in lesbians but she thinks it might have something to do with women and private life and the sexuality of women and in that way it was easier. Until she talked to her friends, student used to say that she thought it was easier in school for gay guys than lesbians. She's now come to the decision that if it is easier for anyone, it is easier for the lesbians because "we" are accepted more and guys have a harder time on the football team and in the locker room with other guys.
- 13 Student thinks it is harder on gay men than gay women and that's why her gay male friend was confronted and she wasn't.
- 15 Student is glad she has the advantage of being a woman because men are less accepting of gay guys. Student says guys can be "kind of obnoxious at times" when they say "can you kiss your girlfriend, can you do this, can you do that" but student would rather them say that than "[sound of disgust], get the fuck away from me."

Peers are co-learners about gay and lesbians, peers become involved in gay and lesbian issues, peers' opinions evolve,  
peers critique and question heterosexual culture

- 2 In student's circle of friends they would make fun of heterosexual culture, like pointing at something as they were walking down the street and commenting on how phallic it looks. She thinks that just with their presence they made people more conscious of their assumptions that everyone is straight. Being around someone who isn't straight shocks people like a wake up call. She has friends who don't always see the good, who always point out the bad, and that helps her with her critiquing. Other immigrant, minority friends say they have seen worse in their countries and that what we have here is great. In contrast, some of her other friends are all about identifying what is wrong and should be changed in this society.

- 2 She learned about sexuality from people she met in high school and it was enlightening. She met her first openly lesbian woman, another student, while in high school and thought she was the most brilliant woman she had ever met.
- 2 Her best friend started the first gay straight alliance in the school this year after a previous attempt by another student failed the prior year.
- 2 Student's friends are enlightening, funny, great people who share what they know. Student has never met a mean lesbian so she has a pretty good picture of who gay people are and thinks they are pretty cool people, a lot more open, more willing to let in fresh ideas, think about things more, and are not be as judgmental as others because they have been judged.
- 3 Student's straight friend had been ticked off about student being outted to the school and it was the straight friends idea to start the GSA. She started a GSA with two straight friends in her senior year, passed it on to a friend, and the club continues today. The only huge hassle to forming the GSA came from the unsupportive administrator who was in charge of clubs. Students then got together with a teacher and went over the administrator's head to the supportive principal.
- 3 Student has been shaped by her supportive straight friends which has made her realize that unlike the "breed of lesbian" that hates straight people, she must be inclusive if she demands it of others. Her gay male friends shaped her by taking her around and introducing her to the "world of homosexuality" to the extent that gay males can do that for a lesbian since they are not women and are attracted to men. Each of her girlfriends has shaped her by teaching her a little bit more. Her first girlfriend "trained" her and yelled at her when she wouldn't hold hands in public. Her second girlfriend was a feminist who went to NOW meetings, refused to shave and segregated herself from men. Separatism is a practice student couldn't agree with. Student also learned from people on-line.
- 3 Student is not sure if the messages or non-messages or partial messages about lesbianism in school had much of an impact because she got most of her gayness or her "gay energy," from outside of school. Her sources of information included two gay male friends she has known for more than 13 years; trips to explore the gay part of the city with her friends; going on-line where everything she needed was right there; joining lists on the internet [that's how she met the interviewer]; and reading in the gay section of the bookstore when she got brave enough to go there.
- 3 Because she was straight for the first two years, she uses her own experience to compare the advantages of being straight/lesbian in high schools. She felt like as a straight girl she had to get the latest fashions, make-up, and stuff to uphold an image and to compete with other girls. After she came out she decided she didn't have to do that anymore, it didn't matter because there were no other lesbians in her school and it was kind of nice because she could show up in sweat pants. Student dresses better on weekends. Her friendships with women became less competitive because there was nothing to fight over.

- 3 Student critiqued heterosexism on t.v., particularly the lack of gay and lesbian characters. Her gay and lesbian friends encourage and discourage her in these critiques.
- 4 Student sits around with one of her female friends and they just analyze and analyze. They hit it off great from the time they met and they'd sit and pick apart everything. Once in 7th or 8th grade they analyzed MTV for 7 hours straight, from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. Student doesn't like MTV because it's demeaning and a lot of the music pushes the labels, which really bugs her.
- 4 Student has no clue how she and her friend got their ability to critique the larger culture and she doesn't know if her school or teachers helped her critique the larger culture. Student has always analyzed things and she and her friends have extremely analytical minds. Student believes in horoscope things and she and her friend are Geminis, the twins who can see both sides of things and are naturally good at analyzing. Student swears they have solved the social injustices of the world together and together they could do so much good.
- 4 Student thinks that being a non-straight person in school helped her take a better look at the world. She believes in equality for everybody and that if you're gonna scream for acceptance then you shouldn't be putting other people down. One of her male friends is racist and if someone who is dark skinned cuts him off in a car he will yell "stupid coon." This angers student because she questions how can you want acceptance and then be prejudiced and put somebody down by calling them a "nigger." Student will be attending a huge anti racism training conference so she can do training in her church. If she was straight she wouldn't have so many wonderful gay friends and people she met doing her volunteering. It has enriched her life.
- 4 Straight students don't know they get benefits until it is brought to their attention. For example, student has come to understand white privilege and the things white people haven't had to worry about through her involvement in anti racism training with her church.
- 4 Student and her friend talk about this stuff [white privilege] all the time.
- 4 She went out with guys and was a typical kid until she was 9 years old when she had her first experience with a girl. She didn't know what to name it until she was probably 13 or 14 when her first really close friend came out to her. He sounded uncomfortable but thought he was being all cool by coming out to her, but she said "I understand now!" and came out to him in the same phone conversation, saying "I just figured it out!"
- 4 Student's positive experience was enjoying being able to educate people, like in her history class, and her proudest achievement was educating [name of male student]. Student's other positive experience was the Day of Silence and the 50 participants.
- 4 Another female friend had a problem with student's sexuality because they had done things together (e.g. take a shower when they were in a rush) but it is just one of those things, friend has come around and is fine with it.
- 4 Her ex-best male friend never had any trouble except once, when a girl gave him trouble. Their female friend "flew over a table and pummeled" the girl, who never said anything after that and is now nice to them.

- 5 Student picked who she was going to be friends with on some basis other than the fact that they had been hanging out together since kindergarten. She didn't have many friends but they were very supportive, made her stronger and made her have pride. They are happy for her when she goes on an "awesome date" and they are "pissed" and feel her pain when her heart gets broken.
- 5 Student's speakers [at her senior project on diversity] included two friends.
- 6 Student's positive experience in high school: Student became friends with a male student in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Everyone thought the male student was gay but people stopped thinking that because he would always talk to student about a crush he had on her best female friend. In the summer before student's senior year, male friend came out to her as "bi." Even though student thought she was a lesbian, she figured it was easier to say "me too." Friend thought that was cool and then they started talking all the time because neither of them had anyone else to talk to. They said anything they wanted to say to each other, and in the back of their AP class, when they were supposed to be reading, they would be talking about whatever came to their minds that had to do with their sexualities. Student thought it was great because he was somebody who could understand where she was coming from. Student thought it was funny that male friend later said "screw being bi, I'm gay" and student again said "me too."
- 7 Student thinks it is "just sickening" that the queer people she knows are announcing "I'm engaged!" when they are . Student doesn't think the trend has to do with gay and lesbian push for marriage rights. She thinks it is just "women" and like the old joke about lesbians bringing the U-Haul on the second date. Student has a lesbian friend who has had several relationships and in at least 4 of them friend has said she is engaged.
- 7 Student thinks how she was treated [when she accidentally touched a straight woman] ties in with the idea that a guy and a girl can't be friends without "someone going on" between them. Straight people don't understand when student says a woman is not her type because the woman is "too straight." Student responds with question and answer: "Would you fall for a flaming gay man? No, you wouldn't."
- 7 On a prior visit to the restaurant student, her girlfriend, and male friend were sitting in a booth that gives other customers a good view of you but you can't get a good view of them. Student thinks people were blatantly staring at them the entire time because 1) they couldn't figure out male friend, who is very obviously a guy and anyone who's clued in can tell he's gay, 2) she's with gay male friend but she's very butch looking, wearing a sports bra, wife beater, jeans, boots, with her bleach blond hair spiked, 3) student and male friend were talking very loudly about sex, men, women, and what was going on, and 4) girlfriend is a cute "little skater punk chick" with a shaved head and purple bangs and it's hard to tell sometimes if she is a guy or a girl. In response to other people's stares, girlfriend said really loudly "I hate it when people don't realize how rude it is to stare." Student tends to sit and have staring contests with people and she thinks it's just really funny.

- 7 Student thinks it's probably not a good idea but when she uses public transportation she has staring contests with people who stare at her and her girlfriend, trying to figure them out because student and girlfriend "bend gender." Student says it depends on how she is dressed but if she is wearing her biker jacket and is with her "pretty obviously female" girlfriend people often can't tell if student is male or female and assume when it's hard to tell that they are a heterosexual couple. Student thinks this assumption is funny because the dynamics of her relationship with her girlfriend demonstrate that this is not true because girlfriend "wavers back and forth" between identifying as a woman and identifying as a man but mostly edging toward identifying as a man. Student says that's that's another issue entirely. Student says people might also notice that student is obviously female if they didn't just assume she is a "guy" in a heterosexual couple. Student says people also stare when they realize that she and her girlfriend are girls. Student says a lot of guys get very aroused by lesbians and has had guys say "let me get up in that, blah, blah, blah" and "I've always wanted to be with two women." Her reply is "too bad" and she thinks that it's really disgusting. When student and her girlfriend notice "suburbanites" shying away from them or staring at them, they start talking very loudly about annoying it is when suburbanites come to the city for "our" movies, operas, shopping, but at the same time don't want to deal with the crap, the diversity, the public transportation and paying "our" taxes and how suburbanites can't have it both ways. For example, she notices that baseball fans will drop off their cars and use public transportation to get to the game and suburbanites will be like "oh my god, there's black people, there's queer people, oh my god, oh my god. There's poor people everywhere." Once student and her girlfriend talked very loudly in this situation. Student said "you know what I hate? I hate suburbanites who want to come to the city and are all freaked out because they want to go to a game but they have to be routed to ride on a train with black people and queer people. Doesn't that bug you?." Girlfriend replied "yeah." Student then said "you know, I really hate it when people can't deal with standing around a bunch of dykes."
- 7 Once, while waiting for public transportation, student was facing girlfriend with her arm around girlfriend, and girlfriend was wearing a vest with a picture of two girls kissing, a pride flag, and a bumper sticker that said something like "love is not a choice" or "you don't choose love" (girlfriend tends to turn herself into a billboard). Student was facing two guys who were blatantly staring at girlfriend. Student was staring down one of the guys because he was her age and student was not afraid of him. Girlfriend asked student what she was looking at and because there were very few people on the platform student answered very loudly "that guy over there, that stupid suburban boy over there is staring at your back." Stupid suburban boy looked away and girlfriend, who is much more confrontational than student, looked at him and said something like "you better not be staring at me because that's really stupid. You better mind your own business or you better watch yourself. It's really dangerous to stare at these scary city people." Student knows who student can mess with and who she can't and she was petty sure that if other people on the platform knew

the stare-ers were from the suburbs and that she and her girlfriend weren't, then other people on the platform would take student and girlfriend's side even though she and gf were gay and the other people were not. Student stares back in some situations and depending on how threatened student feels, her stare can mean "you better figure out really quickly what it is you are trying to figure out," "yeah, we are both girls," "yeah, I'm a girl and yeah, we're happy with that" or "yeah, you better just leave me alone, I don't really care what you think."

7 Student thinks it's silly to call two girls who are demonstrative people and who hold hands in public "practicing visibility" but it is what she and her girlfriend do.

7 When student talks about trans rights and the way teenagers are treated in the juvenile justice system and DCFS [Department of Child and Family Services], she is not talking about it from an ideological perspective. It's a personal thing and student's perspective on the justice system and DCFS comes from her girlfriend's experiences as a gay youth and student's perspective on trans comes from her not being able to deal with the way people treat her girlfriend. Student thinks the whole way queer teenagers are treated is wrong. If a gay and lesbian person is not lucky enough to be born into a somewhat accepting family or does not come out until later, it is utter hopelessness because the person can't finish school, can't be with their family, has no support, no money, no where to go, and can't run away from an abusive foster family because that is breaking the law and they can get arrested. Student's girlfriend had a horrible experience and student thinks it's wrong to treat children like criminals whether they are gay and lesbian or not but it is exacerbated somewhat for gay and lesbian kids. Girlfriend was in the care of DCFS because she was treated badly by her family and it got worse when she came out. She ran away from a home, was grabbed by a favorite cool teacher who didn't know what was going on, arrested at school, put in double shackles, thrown head first into police car, and strip searched. Girlfriend was put in a foster home where the people had foster kids for the money, couldn't deal with her being queer and they tried to change everything about her overnight. Student's girlfriend has been staying with the family of a friend, doesn't want to overstay her welcome, and wants to move to area where student will be attending college. Student says her girlfriend can't take care of herself because she doesn't have a high school education or a full time job because girlfriend doesn't want any one else telling her what to do. It's not possible for student to take care of her girlfriend in college area because student is having a hard time keeping herself together and while she knows girlfriend can survive on her own, it would not be at a standard student would want to see for her girlfriend live.

7 Student realizes that a lot of her close friendships with females involved her calling a girl she was crazy about, becoming involved in a very intense friendship, and then breaking up. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade student stopped hanging out with her close friend because friend was mean to her, but the friendship was renewed in the middle of student's junior year and even more during senior

year after student came out and when they were the only two people who made the sport team all four years. Friend is very independent, strong willed, smart, a tomboy, who looked up to her older brother, has an attitude about her and is a very butch straight girl who doesn't dress butch. Student doesn't know if friend is gay, but everyone thinks friend is and student would like friend to be gay because 1) student could have a relationship with friend and 2) friend would be a "good addition to the movement." Student thinks friend already is a "good addition to the movement" because she is supportive and student told friend she was the "coolest straight" person student knew and friend thought that was funny because friend had also been told she was the "coolest white" person some people knew. Student's best high school experience was realizing that friend completely supported her and friend didn't care about student's sexuality but about who student was as a person. Student realized that she could have a friendship with a straight girl and not have them afraid that she was "getting out of line" and she could "hit" on her friend and friend wouldn't get "freaked out."

8 Student learned from experiences with different groups of students that she had a lot of misconceptions, for example, she was surprised that the Roman Catholic valedictorian of her school was gay and he came out to her.

8 Student learned about sex through friends and books from the public library.

10 Student found a lesbian in the poetry club in her sophomore year and student learned from lesbian who talked about it all the time, was OUT, and had a "I'm a dyke" sticker on her backpack.

13 Student realized that she didn't want to be like her friends. She realized that her friends wanted to be like her. She thought that saying she was not straight would mean that she would not be a role model because people would not follow her. She realizes now that people followed her even after they found out she was gay.

Diversity in peers contributes to an open community and feeling of "home"

2 She thought it was great that minorities (Blacks, Asians) were the majority in her school and she worries/is not too worried about being a minority in the very white college she will enter this fall.

3 Student thinks private schools most definitely provide students with a point of view and those schools brag about the connection between their curriculum and their values. There is less of that at public school, which is nice because you get information from all over the place. Her school was so ethnically diverse that if a teacher slipped and said something pertaining to one culture 10 hands would go up to correct the teacher because at her school everyone was wrestling to make their point, people were interested, and people knew and cared about cultural bias. She thinks that at other schools students would get annoyed with a student who corrected a teacher and tell that student to "shut up, sit down" or "why are you interrupting?."

3 In comparison to a typical school in her city, her school was odd because they had a lot of white students, about half the school. She remembers watching a video yearbook and being amazed at how much diversity the school had. There

were whites, Jews, Asians, so it was almost "perfectly split." It was noticeable that the students were 75% women, and the administration was about even between m/f, even among the Assistant Principals. Although she doesn't know why there were so many female students, she likes to say it's because women are smarter. The high percentage of females made for a "very interesting atmosphere" where a lot of the guys were passive and they didn't want to "mess" with all the women.

- 4 She had friends from all the groups like "freaks," "popular, snobby, rich friends," "preppies" and "computer nerds [who] are very interesting." She is only now getting into role playing (like Dungeons and Dragons) so she didn't know what the computer nerds were talking about during role playing conversations at the time. She also hung out with one male friend a lot.
- 10 Student doesn't believe that she ever had a negative experience in high school. Student thinks her lack of negative experiences can be attributed to the high school where students are different in terms of race, ethnicity, part of city they come from, and upbringing. She thinks students had to get accustomed to the school and it was not like a "big home" where everyone knows everyone else.
- 10 Student thinks the conditions in her school were created because students came from all over, not just the local neighborhood, and people wanted to get into her school. Student thinks her school has a reputation of being liberal because of the 40 different clubs (e.g. black student union, polish club) students get to join and learn from. Student thinks the "real world" to her was the social one she shared with her high school community of positive friends: the open bisexuals (real and trendy), the pot smokers, and the lawn people who got in trouble for smoking cigarettes. She thinks [#9]'s "real world" was limited to the people [#9] knew and her small school. The members of the unfunded GSA and the Christian clubs became very good friends.

Peers openly accept other non-heterosexual people

- 3 One of the most popular girls in the school was openly bisexual and everyone loved her because she was a really fun person and her bisexuality was a part of her personality, one of her delightful quirks.
- 3 There were 2 or 3 really out students in every grade and they did not get bothered.
- 3 Since she was the last to come out she had a whole supportive circle around her and she knew that since her friends loved her gay male friends, they would love her too.
- 7 Student and her girlfriend will not be first same sex couple attending a school event: two girls went together to the prom two years ago and another female couple went to a semi-formal during student's freshman year. There was "no real big fight" about either. Student remembers seeing two girls go to the prom together when she was still in the closet, and thinking "wow, I can do that some day if I want to, if I need to" and "I'm not the only person and I am not alone."
- 8 (4B,2G)everybody knew there were some gay teachers and nothing happened.

- 8 Gays and lesbians were invisible but there was a support group that met once a week that was started by a bunch of students who got the support from a nice social worker, counselor, and two other teachers.
- 11 Student learned that there was a precedent set by some rather "infamous lesbians" and lesbian couples in the past that everyone knew about. One of the wings of the four residence halls was called the "dyke wing" the year before student was a sophomore because everybody in it was a lesbian. Student doesn't know if the wing was perceived in a certain way but there was a certain acceptance and knowledge of l/g on campus.
- 13 School #4 ranks 9 because although there was no support group, there were so many lesbian students who were "high up" (e.g., class president) and student could tell that there were gay people in the school, it was accepted, and students wouldn't be shut out because they were gay or looked gay.
- 14 Student was one of first to catch on to instructor's sexual orientation but others would ask, "who is that guy he is always going home with and what's that little rainbow sticker on the back of his car?" Other students put it together that "geez, he's a homo" but nobody ever had a problem with him.
- 15 Student's friend who came out in high school was met with a combination of people who were fine and people who disrespected friend's trust.

Peers' enabling behaviors and attitudes emanate from intelligence and liberalism

- 3 Although her high school is technically "public," admission was based on high standardized tests scores earned in junior high. Student thinks this was good because her classmates were fairly intelligent and open to things. Student has not really considered whether the climate would have been different if her school had more males. Based on the experiences of other people she knows, she thinks more males in her school probably would have made it worse; but then again that may not have been the case because of the whole intelligence factor. Smart people are more inclined to be open and to listen.
- 3 She thinks her high school experience was unusual, and she feels lucky when she compares her experience with most students she knows who hated school and had trouble with students and teachers. She doesn't know if it was the "smart people" (teachers and students) that created the atmosphere of her school but it was a great place, something special, very open, and community-based.
- 4 Student held hands with another woman in the English office during a literary magazine meeting and people raised their eyebrows but that was it and she thought that group of students would be okay with it. Student never held hands in the hallway.
- 6 Student was a part of the smart crowd and she thinks the AP students were probably a lot more accepting compared to some in the lower [meaning lower than AP] classes. Student is not a sociologist but from what she has seen, AP students are probably more accepting because people who do well in school are brought up to value a lot of things that other people aren't and a lot of things go hand in hand. For example student was brought up to really value education, like who she is, and be really accepting of other people. Student

thinks there was not a lot less pressure to fit in among people in the higher [AP] classes because it wasn't always cool to be smart so it's kind of like a cycle of less and less pressure to fit in. Student's friends weren't in the AP classes but were in the higher classes. School had a couple of AP classes, then A, B, C classes.

- 6 Student's safe space was her AP English class because she sat next to her male friend and she thinks people were more accepting. Then again, there were a couple of people in that class who were really religious. Student's sister went to senior prom with the religious valedictorian who felt that gay and lesbian was wrong but he would be nice to the gay people that he met because he was a very nice guy. Student thinks AP students think that they are thinkers and analyzers so they think they are going to be more accepting of other people.
- 9 Student groups gave out different messages: the hicks definitely gave out a message that it was not okay; her friends were very open and liberal.
- 9 While her friends were never close-minded people, they learned about lesbians through their friendship with her and that extended their world views. Student's friends, in turn, made sure she knew it was okay, made sure she was comfortable, and made her high school experience good. Student's good friends in high school were cool, liberal, well-adjusted people who went on to college and went on to do good things.
- 11 Her school was very, very well funded, with a lot of liberal kids from white collar families but were not necessarily rich. Student had the opportunity to come out in a safe environment, around friends, some of who were gay, all of who were gay-friendly in a liberal, progressive high school. Student hates the word "progressive."
- 12 The honors/AP students ran the stuff that keeps the school looking presentable, such as the literary magazine, academic decathlon, and the school newspaper. The honor students are a lot more accepting than the general population. Even if they disagree she thinks maybe they won't get in your face because: there is an expectation about how to behave, they have money, they come from good homes and schools. They have to "be smart," "be progressive," keep moving and know what's going on because they are the "smart kids." She was a kind of a novelty for the honor students, like "this is our gay friend."

### III. School

At least one individual gay and lesbian role model, ally, or advocate is present in school

- 2 Her positive experiences involved the GSA, her friends, and a lesbian teacher. The lesbian teacher, because she taught the best class she has ever taken, treated her as her "pet," and got close with her. The teacher was not openly lesbian to the school, but came out to people she trusted, including student. The club, because it was a safe space in school and she took a part in creating it.
- 2 Advisor of the proposed GSA, who was the greatest and had connections with PFLAG, threatened to involve the ACLU about the club's formation.

- 2 Student thinks coming out at school is a really huge issue for teachers because their jobs are at stake. For example, she thinks the teacher who took a leadership role in the club did so because it wouldn't matter if he got fired because he was close to retirement.
- 2 Her newspaper advisor (the same one who pulled her into the room after confirming that another teacher was a lesbian) was a mixed bag who "of course" supported her writing on gay and lesbian issues but then he had the right to edit.
- 3 Principal let students speak at a faculty meeting about the formation of the GSA and students received a great reception from teachers who congratulated them and offered their support. On the bus going home, she had an excellent conversation with one of her teachers. She considers this experience one of her shining moments in high school.
- 3 Student later found out through an administrator that her principal [who supported GSA] was gay. Student hears that the principal is becoming more out, i.e. bringing his partner to school functions, and she thinks this is because he is close to retirement.
- 3 Student thinks their "cause" (the GSA) was helped by having the backing of a gay principal and 75% of the faculty who said "you have to let them have this." Student explains faculty support was the result of having teachers who were really excellent, really intelligent and were "hippies, in their hay-days."
- 3 She thinks her high school experience was unusual, and she feels lucky when she compares her experience with most students she knows who hated school and had trouble with students and teachers. She doesn't know if it was the "smart people" (teachers and students) that created the atmosphere of her school but it was a great place, something special, very open, and community-based.
- 3 Teachers were very open in their support of the GSA, and the teachers who were working with the GSA had a very "I don't care" attitude, had been teaching for a dozen years, were well loved, and knew that no one was going to bother them.
- 4 Student met BS when she was dragged to a counselor's office and then referred to BS because she was "flipping out" and counselors couldn't handle her -- student's brother had just fought with a kid who made fun of student because her mother was dead. The BS ran the GSA and different groups and during freshman year student was in Bereavement and then Anger Management groups with her. BS was there through all of student's high school years until she left in December of student's senior year. BS encouraged student's ability to analyze, helped student understand the fluidity of sexuality and about the boxes, and diffused labels in the groups she ran. Student loves BS, thought she was really great, absolutely wonderful and still keeps in contact with her through e-mail. BS is no longer at student's high school and that gets student fired up. Female BS during student's freshman and sophomore years loved her job, did as much as she could, including scheduling and running 20 groups and meeting with students on an individual basis. Student loved the BS and thought she was great. The BS's little downstairs room was a positive safe space

- because you could go there and cry if you got harassed. Student also sat in her closet in the dark and had anxiety attacks.
- 4 Male principal during student's freshman and sophomore years was awesome and nice. Principal was known as the "drunken principal" because kids broke into the school, drank part of the bottle of wine they brought with them, and left a "half drunk bottle of wine" in principal's office. Student doesn't know if he was a drunk but she knows he was really nice to her. For example, principal let the school know student's brother was hit by a car and where to go if they wanted to visit him by announcing it on the intercom. Student blames principal #2 [for getting rid of the BS] and resents him a lot even though she dealt with him on a more personal level later in the year and he did try to help her graduate on time.
- 4 Most of the teachers were very gay friendly. A lot of the teachers lived outside of the town though some of them grew up in the town. She really thinks her Far East history teacher is gay but she doesn't want to assume so she won't say he's gay but he is "amazingly gay friendly" and yells at people and gives them detentions if he hears somebody say the word 'faggot'. A lot of other teachers will also yell. One of her current summer school teachers is very down on it and student thinks he has "admitted" that he's not straight but she can't remember. Student thinks it is odd that a lot of the teachers are very progressive. Her political theory teacher was great and a "flaming liberal" but student thought teacher had to be kind of liberal because of her field.
- 4 Student says it is stereotypical, but the only out teacher was the female gym teacher who had a "wife" and they had kids. The gym teacher's "wife" carried the first child and student thinks it is great that the gym teacher's brother gave his sperm so the child was "still within the blood lines." Teacher is now pregnant. Student knows this because she had teacher for gym and teacher knew about her. During student's junior year teacher was a part of the GSA, and behavioral specialist told student a lot about the teacher. She has met the whole family: the "wife" and the cute son.
- 4 Student's senior year was safer for her because she found that the people who she spent the most time with in her classes accepting her sexuality more and there was a new police officer at school. The officer is her ex-best friend's uncle but who she considers family and calls "uncle." She has talked to him about her identity and would go to him when she felt unsafe. Student's ex-girlfriend works with the officer.
- 4 The official curriculum had absolutely no messages about gay and lesbian. Teachers had (supportive) messages in their "personal speeches."
- 4 Student is not sure if high school expected that all students would be straight because they had "[behavioral specialist] and a lot of the teachers."
- 4 Particular teachers do a good job trying the best they can to bring in other opinions but they have to do it outside the curriculum (and can't force their opinions on people) but they have to be careful or they'll get in trouble. Teachers do the best they can.
- 4 Student's favorite class was a history class she took with her best [gay male] friend in her sophomore year. They were "the gays" at the back of the room.

The class was too difficult for her friend and they both failed it. The teacher was pretty cool, let them (student and her friend) sit together, and let students talk for 10 to 15 minutes at the end of class. Nearly everyday the students would get into conversations with a few people or the whole class would turn around ask student and her friend "stupid questions" and they became the "Gay Dictionary."

- 4 The English teacher was not in class when [popular student was making homophobic comments to student] but when teacher came in later and asked student why she had been in the hallway, teacher yelled at the class and teacher made the popular girl go to the guidance office for the period because he was nice.
- 5 A safe, positive space was definitely the guidance room. Student spent all of her time there doing homework or talking with the teachers. Student says the teachers were like her friends, they were the people who actually talked to her in school, and she thought they were amazing. Student thinks her English teacher is wonderful and taught her how to write so she could do her project. The first person student came out to was a "fantastic" [male] guidance counselor.
- 6 She thinks her graduation speech about "being yourself" was a great speech, people talked to her after the speech, her English teacher told her others had said it was one of the best speeches they had ever heard at graduation, student spoke from her heart and said a lot of things that people need to hear but aren't really willing to hear.
- 7 It seemed to student that the coach liked her so much (e.g., coach begged her to participate in another sport coach coached, they would lift weights together, coach was nice to her) and it was hard for student because she felt close to coach and really liked coach a lot. On a trip, in the back of a very small van carrying the team, a girl make a joke and student said "well, actually, I do like girls." For a few weeks after the van ride coach was different and then was even nicer than ever. Student thinks a part of it was coach telling herself "I'm going out with a guy so, okay, I'm straight after all." Student told coach about her girlfriend and coach said "oh, that's so sweet, ooooh." It "sucked" that student broke her hand in sports but she "felt all tough, so it was cool."
- 7 Student doesn't know the ins and outs of the creation of the GSA but it seemed that lesbian principal was supportive "behind closed doors."
- 7 Student feels like she is supposed to lead and her coach told student she wanted student on the team because coach knew student was a real leader who could make people do things and make people feel the need to do things, even if people didn't want to do them. Student wants to be a leader, not a martyr. For years student had a male [swim] coach. Student's female [swim] coach in her senior year is the only thing that makes student wish she wasn't graduating.
- 8 There was a support group that met once a week that was started by a bunch of students who got the support from a nice social worker, counselor, and two other teachers. Student found out about support group by accident during diversity awareness week.

- 8 Student came out to 60-yr-old male martial arts teacher who was thought to be conservative, from the old school, and homophobic. Student experienced teacher as awesome, nice, yet slightly perverted and semi-senile. Student and teacher had weird conversations. During conversation when teacher was joking around, he asked her if she would kiss boys. He went from boys to dogs then student said she would kiss girls. Teacher laughed and student thought response was nice because he did not say anything like "you evil...." Student had gay icons on her bag so that whoever recognized them knew who she was. Student didn't care about concealing her identity to teachers. Student was also out to theater and chemistry teachers, who were presumed to be gay or gay friendly.
- 8 Most positive aspect of school was support group and the teacher involved with it. Student would have gone insane without the group because she got to see other gays and lesbians. Student's parents had told her she was the only lesbian on the planet. In support group student found others with similar problems with their families, similar problems with certain other things. Student visited nice teacher (who was involved in support group) after graduation.
- 8 Kids wouldn't come out because of personal security. It would be easier for a student to come out if you were in fine arts because the teachers were more accepting, and more difficult if you were in athletics.
- 8 The best part of school was the support group, especially the male teacher who offered help if she needed it. It felt like a lifeline that she never thought she never had.
- 8 Student learned from the example of her gay chemistry teacher that you don't have to fit certain stereotypes. She learned from direct observation of her lesbian chemistry teacher that her career choice was not limited to gym teacher (there was a lesbian gym teacher) and that she could pursue a career in science.
- 8 Everybody knew there were some gay teachers and nothing happened. Students just didn't tell their parents. Having these role models who led normal lives was a positive thing. Watching her gay and lesbian teachers taught her to pick her battles.
- 8 Student was aware of singers, artists and actresses (e.g. the actress on "Married With Children" who was also an activist) who were lesbians but did not have a lesbian role model in the sciences until she met her lesbian chemistry teacher.
- 9 She had a really good high school experience. Her sexuality wasn't a big issue because her father taught at her school, was a big guy with a reputation for breaking up fights, and everyone knew that if they messed with her they would get it from him. She wasn't out during the first two years because she didn't want him to know, but then told him and it wasn't an issue. Student knows it's kind of weird to be an out lesbian at the school where your dad teaches. She thinks the climate was different for her than for other people because of her dad's presence and she thinks she was respected for being self-confident, aggressive and smart. Maybe she was made fun of but not to her face.
- 9 [father who teaches in the school] challenges homophobic comments made by students (for example, on gays in the military: "I'd rather have a really strong

- gay guy watching my back than some wimpy straight guy"). As a result, at school father "takes flack all the time" and a lot of people hate him.
- 9 In her junior year, student proposed and defended at the state capital building a mock bill legalizing gay marriage. Student thought the sponsor, the YMCA, would not let her do it, but the club's advisor (her psych teacher) thought it was a great bill and that she should do it.
- 10 A GSA was formed in her junior year, one of two GSAs in the city, the other school being a competitor. The principal wanted the GSA as a sign of acceptance. School had about 40 other student clubs, covering everything from sports to ethnic backgrounds.
- 10 Student thinks the conditions in her school were created because students came from all over, not just the local neighborhood, and people wanted to get into her school. Student thinks her school has a reputation of being liberal because of the 40 different clubs (e.g. black student union, polish club) students get to join and learn from.
- 10 Student's school was neutral and did nothing to imply that all students should be straight; the creation of the GSA and the straight, married-with-children principal's support for it with Board of Education was a symbol of acceptance. Student's teacher also supported her by letting her miss 15 minutes of class to go to the GSA meeting.
- 10 Student also thinks heterosexual space was challenged when the GSA club president went to the principal because the GSA poster was ripped down and the school then instituted a new rule that students can't rip down posters that have been approved for posting.
- 11 There are lots of different answers to why student chose to be open about her sexuality in high school. She jokes that "you can't get girls when you're hanging around a closet." Student had the opportunity to come out in a safe environment, around friends, some of who were gay, all of who were gay-friendly in a liberal, progressive high school. Student hates the word "progressive." Student went to a magnet high school for a "bunch of...they like to say 'gifted'" students. Student thinks she was very fortunate to go to a [elite magnet] high school with a very staunch liberal environment.
- 11 The administration is accepting as it can be and they are nice to students, especially in recognizing gay and lesbian students.
- 11 Student thinks that any gay and lesbian person in power (e.g., a lesbian principal or gay guidance counselor), would be more sensitive and more worried about gay and lesbian students. One of the administrators at her high school had a gay son and it helped to know that afterwards.
- 11 Usually students were able to find a resident counselor to take them to a gay and lesbian youth meeting and pick them up 3 hours later. Student thinks RC agreed with student (and her reasons for being off campus in a car to attend gay and lesbian support group) and just shoved it under the rug because students weren't out "joyriding and getting ice cream." RC was very supportive and had taken students to gay and lesbian meeting several times.
- 11 English and history were probably more accepting places.

- 11 The dorms were positive spaces because even if a rc wasn't cool, the next one was. Most RC's were liberal and pretty because the person hiring them was the lesbian GSA sponsor. They had to be accepting or lose their jobs. Student thinks the rc's were superficial some times but some were very intelligent and were there to help students try to be accepted.
- 11 The dorms were positive spaces because even if a rc wasn't cool, the next one was. Most RC's were liberal and pretty because the person hiring them was the lesbian GSA sponsor. They had to be accepting or lose their jobs.
- 12 Student recalls one teacher who she had a very good relationship with (babysat for teacher, hung out after school) who fought hard with the administrators to teach something other than what the Board of Education dictated. On the side, the teacher would give the student books to read, such as The History Your Teacher Never Taught You, which gave the student her first introduction to looking at her society and realizing it differed from what was being presented to her in school.
- 12 She did not feel lied to by teachers and felt that her teachers were great, political and progressive. Even in religion class Catholicism was presented as one of many religions. Teachers were already assigning readings that she would later read in high school. It was a small school and teachers and students spent a lot of time talking to each other in class which resulted in a really good sense of self and difference.
- 12 Even in the midst of a hostile climate and unsupportive teachers, some of the women really did care about the students and thought that students were reacting naturally to their surroundings. For example, a p.e. teacher, one of the oldest women in the school, gave her an opportunity to pass her class and also shared that her opinion of the student differed from other teachers who thought the student and her friends are bad. This made the student feel much better because student felt she had to be on the defensive in school and student made sure she had this sweet teacher for gym the following year.
- 12 Student knows she had to have at least one positive experience related to her sexuality but she can think only of a mildly positive one. Student had not yet mastered the art of coming out and her female English teacher, who reminds her of her mom, helped her by saying "are you trying to tell me your are a lesbian?" and then "yeah, well I knew that" and it was okay. Safer, more welcoming space was English class. She also embraces the good relationship she had with her wonderful English teacher who taught her a lot.
- 13 Students mother was really closed-minded and the only people who understood her were the counselors. At school #3 student would go to class then eat lunch and chill and have fun with her counselor for the rest of the day. School #3 ranks 5 because student had a female counselor who was the only one that kept student line" and made sure student went to class and had her work done. Student was only out to her counselor at school #2.
- 13 School #1 ranks 10 because they were good. Student was a "bad ass kid" in high school and school #1 was the only high school to keep student "in line." Some schools were a refuge from her family, some schools were not. School

- #1 was a refuge, she loved it there and looked forward to going with her book bag and riding the orange school bus on the back roads.
- 13 The most positive places in school were the times she was with the teachers. Student always was with the teachers and has so many teacher-friends from high school #1. She liked her teachers, has always been friends with teachers, and has always liked teachers more than students. Some schools were a refuge from her family, some schools were not. She didn't care one way or the other about school #3 and she went because she knew she could talk to her teacher and read in the library.
- 13 Student says that not all teachers are (stupid and uncaring) because there are teachers in the suburbs (school #1) who made sure everything was right, the curriculum was perfect, that students went to class and study hall, and they made sure students of all races didn't fight. Student loved school #1 because they kept her in line, and thinks it was maybe like that because it was a suburban school and they had more money.
- 14 Student took ballet lessons from an instructor who danced with a prominent ballet academy. Instructor was not on the regular school staff and students went to him for lessons. He was a very out gay man and was absolutely just fantastic, cool, phenomenal and incredible. Student and her parents thought ballet was the greatest thing even though she was like a "bull in a china shop." Students knew ballet teacher was gay because he fit the stereotypes everybody thinks of as "the gay man." Even though student's uncle is gay, ballet teacher and his entire gay staff were really the first people in the gay community that she had contact with aside from reading books and periodicals and she thought it was cool. She wasn't out to her ballet teacher but he would kid her like he knew she was gay but she just wasn't telling him, although ballet teacher gave her the opportunity to come out. Knowing the ballet instructor and his gay staff validated the existence of a gay community.
- 14 The next day was Monday, student was out of it and a wreck, and student had black eye, cuts, scrapes and bruises. Student didn't want to go to class, so it was skip school or sit in guidance counselor's office. Guidance counselor was student's "saving grace," "the coolest woman in the entire world" and student found out later g.c. was a closeted lesbian. Student sat in GC's office and social worker said they could call DHS because mother had obviously "kicked the shit out of student" but student felt responsible for her siblings and didn't want them to be without a home, and her mother was pregnant and that made it harder. School social worker called in parents.
- 14 Student didn't have enough money to pay for her cap and gown for graduation so home-school association stepped in and paid it. Student applied to 8 colleges hoping to go to the one that would offer the most money. Student didn't have enough money to pay application fees so guidance counselor wrote letters to the colleges who then waived application fees. Student thinks colleges are like a big industry and if you don't have the money, you can't go.
- 14 Student and girlfriend took their cameras, found the girl smoking outside in the middle of a group of basically the whole class who were just waiting to see student's reaction, and student told girl that she needed a picture of her so she

- could "remember what the true face of ignorance looks like" then started taking pictures of her while girl stood there freaking out. It was the moment when student felt really good about herself. Everybody, including the female guidance counselor, started clapping.
- 14 Positive places in school were her counselor's office and one of the male guidance counselors, who had worked at a very lesbian positive college, would ask her to sit down and talk like he wanted to be her friend more than anybody else ever did; he was a great, really positive person.
- 14 Even though student's uncle is gay, ballet teacher and his entire gay staff were really the first people in the gay community that she had contact with aside from reading books and periodicals and she thought it was cool.
- 14 Algebra teacher was hard core, not a positive person, and knew that student was an out lesbian in school but would still talk about "fags in the military." Student was really pissed off at first, but over time she thought about how it must feel to other students who weren't out; so she had a conference with teacher and the guidance counselor and told him to stop doing it, it isn't ok and it's not fair for him to do it.
- 15 Student spent free periods talking with advisor who was "kind of in the same place" about the high school because when advisor came to the school she thought it was a "very special place" and what she was supposed to be doing in her life, now she absolutely hates it, doesn't get along with anybody, and her only friend left. Advisor is Jewish, not from U.S., and had a rough time. Student and advisor would share stories about their lives which student thought was really cool and helpful.

#### Positive School Experience

Relates to peers only

- 1 A positive experience was her friendships, especially the (female) friend who after accompanying student to college "cried in the backseat" of student's parents' car on the long drive home. Another positive experience was her pretty cute (male) date for the senior prom. Student most embraces her "important" friendships, not the "stupid little" ones.
- 6 Student's positive experience in high school: Student became friends with a male student in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Student thought it was great because he was somebody who could understand where she was coming from. Middle school was really hard for student because she thinks there is a lot more pressure for younger kids to fit in and kids can be so mean to each other. She most embraces leaving middle school and starting 9<sup>th</sup> grade (high school) which was great because she thinks in high school people just don't really care anymore and they go off to their own little groups. Once student hit high school she felt sort of free to be herself. Student also embraces her senior year because she had some good times. She doesn't like to think about the "middle" (the time after 9<sup>th</sup> and before senior year).
- 7 Student's best high school experience was realizing that friend completely supported her and friend didn't care about student's sexuality but about who

student was as a person. Coming out and realizing she had finally found a place.

- 2 Relates to a combination of teachers, peers, and her involvement in the school. Her positive experiences involved the GSA, her friends, and a lesbian teacher. The club, because it was a safe space in school and she took a part in creating it. Another positive experience was being a senior and being completely open about her identity ("yeah I like girls") with people with whom she felt a connection and having them be okay with it.
- 3 Student's positive experience was attending a faculty meeting to talk about the GSA. A friend told the student's story to the faculty. During their planning of the presentation, they built in an option for the student to decide whether or not to come out. Student most embraces the final semester of high school where she and her friends felt secure in who they were, had learned how to relate to each other, found the faculty who were supportive, and felt like they'd found their place within the school.
- 4 Student's positive experience was enjoying being able to educate people, like in her history class, and her proudest achievement was educating [name of male student]. Student's other positive experience was the Day of Silence and the 50 participants. Student was proud of her hard work organizing the Day of Silence and that a lot of people participated. Student stayed up all night the night before making 30 signs. Student had an anxiety attack and freaked out in the middle of the day so she broke the silence. She hadn't been to school in two weeks and she went only for this event. Her teachers were angry with her because she didn't ever go to school and she came in for one day. Student dropped out a week after the Day of Silence. Student was walking around the school [before the interview] and found one of the signs that she had made still up that said "a closet is for clothing." Student also embraces the great article she wrote for the school newspaper about the GSA in her junior year when she was pretty out and most people knew. She didn't realize until after it was published that anybody who read the paper would know she was gay.
- 5 Student's positive high school experience (related to sexuality) was the diversity project. Student decided to do her senior project (a graduation requirement) on Diversity and Youth. There was a question and answer session to her presentation. Student most embraces the experience of coming out to someone who was not a friend, had a "big mouth," and asked student after the presentation if it was true that student dates girls. At that point student didn't care and she answered "yes." Student took pride in herself not just as a lesbian but also as a softball player and writer. [most embraces] Student jokes that she most embraces recess. Student didn't have a lot of memorable moments. She is proud of playing softball and being co-captain of the team her senior year. Student's next most positive experience was coming out to friends and family during her high school career. Her next most positive high school experience was getting an "A" on her public presentations final on South Park.
- 5 A safe, positive space was definitely the guidance room. Student spent all of her time there doing homework or talking with the teachers. Student says the teachers were like her friends, they were the people who actually talked to her

in school, and she thought they were amazing. Student thinks her English teacher is wonderful and taught her how to write so she could do her project. The first person student came out to was a "fantastic" [male] guidance counselor.

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- 8 Most positive aspect of school was support group and the teacher involved with it. Student would have gone insane without the group because she got to see other gays and lesbians. Student's parents had told her she was the only lesbian on the planet. In support group student found others with similar problems with their families, similar problems with certain other things. Student visited nice teacher (who was involved in support group) after graduation. Without support group student would have found another group or spent more time at the off campus group for gay youth at Uniterarian Church. Having a place to talk about problems and get suggestions from mental health professionals was awesome. The best part of school was the support group, especially the male teacher who offered help if she needed it. It felt like a lifeline that she never thought she never had.
- 9 Student's positive experience involved several supportive teachers who knew about her sexuality and one English teacher who she was able to talk with about student's girlfriend. Student embraces her high school experience because dealing with "those kinds of people" and "that kind of administrators" on a daily basis built her character and gave her the tools to deal with homophobia.
- 10 Student embraces that her school was very accepting. She thought that it would be difficult to come out but after coming out to one friend after another, she learned that real friends are accepting and don't base who you are on your sexuality.
- 11 Student had a lot of positive experiences as an out lesbian. Student says this was a big positive experience and she feels honored by people coming to her and talking about their concerns and feelings. The school's GSA was formed when student was a sophomore and she took it over [became president] as a senior. The GSA was a mixed experience. It was positive because it was a good group of kids and they showed movies that kids wouldn't normally be able to see on t.v. or at home but the lack of funds was depressing, hard to deal with, and just one of those things. Student says a lot of kids don't want to rent gay and lesbian movies (i.e., like "The Incredible Adventures of Two Girls in Love") and take them home because if parents casually ask the title, kids have to fumble, say the name of a different movie (i.e., "The Thomas Crowne Affair"), and say they want to watch it in their rooms. Student says many kids don't know about a lot of movies, and that while she has always been connected to art houses in the city, it takes time and transportation to get there. So student showed movies at school and a lot of kids came. The members of the unfunded GSA and the Christian clubs became very good friends. Student most embraces the gay community part of her high school experience.

- 12 Student knows she had to have at least one positive experience related to her sexuality but she can think only of a mildly positive one. Student had not yet mastered the art of coming out and her female English teacher, who reminds her of her mom, helped her by saying "are you trying to tell me your are a lesbian?" and then "yeah, well I knew that" and it was okay. It was also very easy to come out to friends. Student embraces the END of high school. She is happy that it is over and she will never have to do it again. She also embraces the good relationship she had with her wonderful English teacher who taught her a lot. She aced a law class and that made her interested in considering a career in law. Student's younger sister had same law teacher and he questions what's wrong with the two of them because they are quick to say "no, that's not right!."
- 13 Student's positive experience was three students coming out in the same group assignment for a creative writing class in <sup>th</sup> grade. This was unplanned and student thought it was cool. The best part of high school was graduation, it was so beautiful.
- 14 Prom pictures [of humiliated bully] were her favorite high school experience related to sexuality. The only thing that could've paralleled the prom pictures would have been if student and her date had been nominated prom king and queen.
- 15 A positive experience was an anonymous person putting a card with proverbs and psalms in student's locker during a really rough time in student's personal life in sophomore year. The cards belonged to religious teacher. Student thought religion teacher was "cool" and really liked her class because while they didn't see "eye to eye" on anything, student realized later that teacher heard student and let her debate it out and that made a difference to student. Student went back to religion teacher and told her she liked her class. Student's best experience was leaving high school. It was not hard for student to leave high school, but when she did "everyone knew she was not going to make it" because she was a student with grades that weren't great, she was going to be kicked out of honors, and she seemed like a "fuck-up." Student most embraces "getting out."

Presence of gay and lesbian teachers and administrators (presumed and real)

- 1 Had student known her identity she would have made a decision not to come out at school and only tell whoever she thought was "utmost and necessary" and who would not repeat it, probably 2 people. Student knows she could have talked to the p.e. teacher who was presumed to be gay. Student was an athlete and was definitely aware of the stereotype of athletic women. A coach/p.e. teacher was assumed to be gay, they all knew who was gay but no one KNEW until after they graduated. Student knows that p.e. teacher is a lesbian because teacher has been seen at "certain places" and teacher came out to a couple of students who were lesbians and had graduated.
- 2 Her positive experiences involved the GSA, her friends, and a lesbian teacher. The lesbian teacher, because she taught the best class she has ever taken, treated her as her "pet," and got close with her. The teacher was not openly

- lesbian to the school, but came out to people she trusted, including student. The club, because it was a safe space in school and she took a part in creating it.
- 2 Advisor of the proposed GSA, who was the greatest and had connections with PFLAG, threatened to involve the ACLU about the club's formation.
- 2 Student attended a lesbian social event (not at school) and saw her teacher in the stand waving to her, and this was the oddest moment. That teacher is open at school and no one really cared.
- 2 Student thinks coming out at school is a really huge issue for teachers because their jobs are at stake. For example, she thinks the teacher who took a leadership role in the club did so because it wouldn't matter if he got fired because he was close to retirement.
- 3 Student later found out through an administrator that her principal [who supported GSA] was gay. Student hears that the principal is becoming more out, i.e. bringing his partner to school functions, and she thinks this is because he is close to retirement.
- 4 Most of the teachers were very gay friendly. A lot of the teachers lived outside of the town though some of them grew up in the town. She really thinks her Far East history teacher is gay but she doesn't want to assume so she won't say he's gay but he is "amazingly gay friendly" and yells at people and gives them detentions if he hears somebody say the word 'faggot'. A lot of other teachers will also yell. One of her current summer school teachers is very down on it and student thinks he has "admitted" that he's not straight but she can't remember. Student thinks it is odd that a lot of the teachers are very progressive. Her political theory teacher was great and a "flaming liberal" but student thought teacher had to be kind of liberal because of her field.
- 4 Student says it is stereotypical, but the only out teacher was the female gym teacher who had a "wife" and they had kids. The gym teacher's "wife" carried the first child and student thinks it is great that the gym teacher's brother gave his sperm so the child was "still within the blood lines." Teacher is now pregnant. Student knows this because she had teacher for gym and teacher knew about her. During student's junior year teacher was a part of the GSA, and behavioral specialist told student a lot about the teacher. She has met the whole family: the "wife" and the cute son.
- 5 Student's [female] guidance counselor in senior year mentored student on her senior project and had insight because her brother is gay. Student swears the [female] vice principal who is so awesome to talk to is gay, too. Student came out to a lot of the teachers, including a [female] English teacher and a [female] gym teacher. Student thinks the teachers she came out to were gay. There were no out teachers. Student assumed some of her teachers were gay and lesbian and other students said that teachers had told them, but student didn't actually hear anything.
- 5 Student learned that one of the teachers was gay when she saw he was a facilitator at gay and lesbian support group. The facilitator at the youth support group is a drama teacher and he cried when he came out to his class.

- 7 Student and friends are convinced coach is a lesbian and it's not just because they want coach to be. When student tells her friends that the coach likes her, but friends [lovingly] make fun of her and say "no, you are crazy about her." Student got weak in the knees when coach talked about coach's history: an unbroken athletic record at college and a risky, adventurous, physically demanding job. Student jokes that while coach was talking and student was swooning, student did manage to keep herself from asking if coach wore a uniform at her job. Student says coach has a great smile, "exudes pure undistilled butch," and has the "gall" to wear men's button down jeans (the tight 501's), and plaid shirts ("stop! It's so unfair, you are so cruel. It's so not right!"). Student says she wasn't the best athlete, but student tried harder than most people in one sport because she loved the sport, the coach was there, and student was one of coach's favorites. Student and friends were like "nooooooooo!" when reminded that coach is dating the "disgusting" male [sport] coach.
- 8 Student had gay icons on her bag so that whoever recognized them knew who she was. Student didn't care about concealing her identity to teachers. Student was also out to theater and chemistry teachers, who were presumed to be gay or gay friendly.
- 8 None of the teachers were openly out but some were presumed to be gay given their personal circumstances.
- 9 Student took a piece of paper with the word "dyke" written on it that someone had written to her, put it in her locker, "discovered" it, and then showed it to her p.e. teacher who was assumed to be a lesbian. Without disclosing her (teacher's) sexuality, teacher talked to student confidentially about the assumptions made about teacher's sexuality and related that teacher had similar experiences. While student thinks p.e. teacher "hated my guts," student thinks teacher's full disclosure would have made her feel more at ease.
- 11 One chemistry teacher drove a truck with a rainbow cat sticker and no one but the gay kids knew what that was. There were a couple of gay and lesbian RC's, including the sponsor of the GSA.
- 13 Student was sure her "love," a female teacher, was gay but she was scared to ask her.
- 14 Student took ballet lessons from an instructor who danced with a prominent ballet academy. Instructor was not on the regular school staff and students went to him for lessons. He was a very out gay man and was absolutely just fantastic, cool, phenomenal and incredible. Student and her parents thought ballet was the greatest thing even though she was like a "bull in a china shop." Students knew ballet teacher was gay because he fit the stereotypes everybody thinks of as "the gay man." Even though student's uncle is gay, ballet teacher and his entire gay staff were really the first people in the gay community that she had contact with aside from reading books and periodicals and she thought it was cool. She wasn't out to her ballet teacher but he would kid her like he knew she was gay but she just wasn't telling him, although ballet teacher gave her the opportunity to come out. Knowing the ballet instructor and his gay staff validated the existence of a gay community.

School provides information about gay and lesbians

- 2 In the GSA, student learned about gay men from pamphlets, visiting other schools who had more established GSAs and a trip to the Gay and Lesbian Center, which has a great library.
- 3 She doesn't remember any negative messages about lesbianism in high school, it was mostly neutral. She remembers one exception: She thinks it was good that the teacher in her senior humanities class did not hesitate to discuss the sexual orientations of Virginia Wolff and Audre Lorde as part of their work. Student sensed that teachers were imparting information on their own as a way to do their part to help out. For example, the teacher who later helped start the GSA brought worksheets and articles about homosexuality and gay violence to students in his required social studies class.
- 3 Her high school expected that teenagers were sexual beings: students got pulled aside several times for the "big talk" in gym class; they had to take a term of health; they had posters in the school; condom distribution from the nurse and other people; and AIDS awareness group. Student thinks that schools in cities with such large populations have to do a lot of educating (e.g. condoms, AIDS, sexual health) or things "could really get out of hand." She says that the education/prevention program about sex is a directive from the commissioner of schools.
- 4 The BS ran the GSA and different groups and during freshman year student was in Bereavement and then Anger Management groups with her. BS was there through all of student's high school years until she left in December of student's senior year. BS encouraged student's ability to analyze, helped student understand the fluidity of sexuality and about the boxes, and diffused labels in the groups she ran.
- 7 School brought in speakers (a Methodist minister who was suspended in 98 for marrying gay couples, who protested at the Methodist convention, and who predicts a schism in the Methodist church) and speaker was interesting and everyone loved him. The school canceled then brought in a local gay and lesbian theater company and everyone loved it.
- 7 This semester student chose an elective on the basis that the class was reading James Baldwin and Notes of a Native Son and she felt good to see "someone who is gay."
- 7 One of the original Black Student Association members came back and talked at student's high school about how the BSA started out as a "bunch of angry black activists," some of whom became Black Panthers in the '60s. Student thought those original members sounded so cool.
- 8 Gays and lesbians were invisible but there was a support group that met once a week that was started by a bunch of students who got the support from a nice social worker, counselor, and two other teachers. Having a place to talk about problems and get suggestions from mental health professionals was awesome. During cultural diversity week there was a panel of gays, including a student in HS who responded to student questions. Student wrote a question for the panel and a member of the support group saw the question and slipped her a note

- inviting her to the support group. The event was made this sort of gay (there was a panel of gays) but not really, cultural diversity week.
- 10 Homosexuality was neither forced nor excluded but a part of the "normal curriculum" because it was brought up. Student thought her history teacher was gay and during a class discussion on WWII he brought up the holocaust, the pink triangle, the whole thing. Student thinks teacher elaborated on a little bit more than what was in the book because he wanted students to learn, to make it known. Student had studied this material in her native country [Eastern Europe] so it was not new to her. In English class, gay authors and poets (e.g. Oscar Wilde) were discussed and the student was a little surprised to hear gay authors identified. Homosexuality was not brought up in shop classes because there was no way to bring it up. Student took a lot of math and biology and there were no famous gay and lesbian chemists or mathematicians introduced and student doesn't think there are any.
- 10 Student thought it was really good that teachers brought up gays as a part of history, that it was not a "hush-hush" thing. It was nice. She does not recall any negative reactions in class to gay history.
- 14 Father is a computer guy so family had about 12 computers in house with Internet access. Parents never put parental lock on Internet because student was in upper level courses and had to know about this stuff regardless of what parents wanted.
- 15 A positive experience was an anonymous person putting a card with proverbs and psalms in student's locker during a really rough time in student's personal life in sophomore year. The cards belonged to religious teacher. Student thought religion teacher was "cool" and really liked her class because while they didn't see "eye to eye" on anything, student realized later that teacher heard student and let her debate it out and that made a difference to student. Student went back to religion teacher and told her she liked her class.

High school environment was made "surprisingly okay" for gay and lesbians

- 2 Student attended a lesbian social event (not at school) and saw her teacher in the stand waving to her, and this was the oddest moment. That teacher is open at school and no one really cared.
- 3 The climate toward non-straight differed. The administration and most of the students were positive, fairly warm, and welcoming. She thinks her high school experience was unusual, and she feels lucky when she compares her experience with most students she knows who hated school and had trouble with students and teachers. She doesn't know if it was the "smart people" (teachers and students) that created the atmosphere of her school but it was a great place, something special, very open, and community-based. She feels like she went to a school of love and support, not the one of hard knocks.
- 5 Classrooms were not negative spaces because teachers were there. Student thinks her teachers were very welcoming. Teachers would "get right on your ass" if you "rag on anyone" or make fun of any group of people. Student thinks her teachers had to be accepting, warm, and supportive on some level because if they sent the message that they thought it was disgusting they might face a

lawsuit or something like that. If teachers heard [student saying "dyke"], they would literally say "cut the shit" to students. HS#1 was small and there was a good community because they'd been together since 7<sup>th</sup> grade and students and teachers knew each other by first names so they could talk to the students like that. Student also thinks teachers were different from the students because they weren't from the town, they weren't used to the ways of the town, and they were teaching at a brand new school. The one exception was her local "one in a million" English teacher. Student doesn't even like to think about what it would have been like if the teachers were less supportive. Even if teachers weren't supportive student would have finished high school because she would be the first family member in a long time to go to college.

8 High school was really good and nice. If student doesn't count experience at home, HS was awesome. Student didn't experience "homophobic crap" at school. Homosexuality wasn't obvious at school but it wasn't horribly closeted. High school was surprisingly okay, even when factoring in the sexuality piece.

10 School was very accepting. Being gay didn't make a difference to student feeling like a normal part of the school and it was just a part of everyday life. The school had a lot of security because of its size and she doesn't think any of the student fights were over sexuality. The school was too big for any one to concentrate on one person or on her.

11 Overall high school climate toward people not presumed to be straight was very good. The school was small, everyone knew everyone, everyone was a friend, students took her in stride and said she was "a little crazy." The school was a safe place without any undercurrents of violence or threats. There were 7 security officers on 24 hour duty doing rounds mostly to keep outsiders from getting in.

12 Student's Catholic junior high school experience was different than high school. In her junior high school she felt a strong "love peace vibe," a nice place where they were very accepting, very patient. In 8<sup>th</sup> grade the gay choir director died of AIDS and the teachers told the students the cause of his death and answered their questions about how he got it by saying he probably got it from sexual contact. Everyone had known he was gay and no one said anything about it. She had already had two teachers who had earlier died of AIDS so while this loss was hard it was not shocking. She doesn't remember any homophobic remarks, just everyone mourning, crying, being really upset.

#### IV. SOCIETY

GAY AND LESBIAN students have benefited from 20 years of social change

- 1 Student thinks 20 years ago it would have been worse to be in a questioning mode because there would have been more nuns teaching. Now there are only a few nuns; they are retiring.
- 2 Student thinks that because she went to school in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century she has had it easier than lesbians who went to her school 20 years ago. It would have been a horrible time because the school would not be crowded, her presence would be felt, and it would be a lot harder to be anonymous and hide.
- 3 Student thinks being a lesbian in her high school 20 years ago would have been a lot worse than her experience was because gay and lesbian issues were not heard of to the same extent but she is not sure.
- 3 She thinks there might have been something dark and sinister about the removal of the chancellor for his support of "Heather Has Two Mommies" after the uproar by conservative parents in the early 90's. She thinks if that happened today the chancellor would be able to keep his job because homosexuality is more dispersed now, more known.
- 3 Student says the world is changing and that, in turn, has helped shape her school into a more supportive environment. She points to gays and lesbians becoming more familiar, almost household discussions now and she guesses that visibility of openly gay and lesbian people in entertainment ("Ellen" episode, lesbian rockers coming out left, right and center, "Will and Grace") has really helped. She's thinks the effects of this getting into the spotlight are still reverberating and she not sure how much effect they had two years ago.
- 4 Student thinks it would have been a lot worse and hard to be a non-heterosexual 20 years ago in her school because things were a lot less accepting.
- 5 Student thinks being a lesbian in her high school 20 years ago would have been a lot harder, very stressful, and it would be like challenging tradition. She thinks that people have been learning about gay and lesbian for awhile but it is still new. She thinks that while students may have been out 20 years ago, she doesn't think it would have been accepted by other people.
- 6 Student thinks it would've been so much worse to have been a lesbian at her school 20 years ago. She thinks that 20 years ago she wouldn't have been able to think it would be easier once she was out of high school because the world wasn't as accepting. When she was in school, she would picture graduating and being free and open and just going somewhere and starting over. A lot of her feels she needs an entirely new environment to change her image. She is now thinking that she is going to be totally out in college next year, but she has to start then, not now.
- 6 Student doesn't really know why they don't give this information (safe sex for gay and lesbian) in school, but she knows that in the past schools didn't even teach sex ed.
- 7 Twenty years ago school had no queer/straight alliance and there wouldn't be one for another 20 years. She thinks it would have been a lot harder because

people came out later, in college or post-college. At the same time student thinks the school would have had a more academic atmosphere so there might have been other alternatives. In the 80's things were fairly political but moving away from it. Students 20 years ago would have missed out on the beginnings of the gay movement and would not have been there when it became more mainstream. Student's high school changed the rules about wearing skirts to school in the late '60s, early '70s.

- 8 If living as a lesbian 20 years ago, student would have had an alternative lifestyle that had no name and lived with a "roommate" forever and ever. She thinks people ignored it more then than now. It could have been cool if she lived in the '60's but horrible if she lived in the suburbs. Student would have reacted by being more closeted and being out to a select few.
- 9 As a lesbian in her high school 20 years ago, student thinks she probably would have been more easily beaten down and have had a little less self-respect.
- 11 Student's school wasn't around 20 years ago but if she were a lesbian in her home school 20 years it would have been a lot harder, she doesn't know if she would have been out, and doesn't know but hopes she would have been an activist.
- 11 Student thinks things are getting better because the teachers she knows are having a lot easier time now than 10 or 20 years ago.
- 12 Student thinks it was probably worse for gay and lesbian students in her school 20 years ago.
- 13 Student thinks if she were in high school 20 years ago she wouldn't have come out, wouldn't have cut her hair and would wear dresses for the rest of her life. Student thinks she wouldn't have much freedom because of close-minded people.
- 14 Student thinks there is NO way she could've been out, separated from her parents, gotten financial support from the administration, or been openly welcomed by the student body 20 years ago. She feels that she has it 100x's better than those who came before her.
- 15 Student doesn't know if her high school would have been different 20 years ago. It's oppressive.

Students hopeful that gay and lesbian students in 20 years will continue to benefit from social change

- 1 Student likes to hope that in 20 years the Catholic church "will get a little better" about the idea of contraception. Student likes to think that public schools will be different in 20 years but she thinks that it will take longer.
- 2 Student hopes lesbian students attending her school in 20 years will have a better experience than her and thinks her school will definitely progress.
- 3 Student does not know if she should be realistic or hopeful when predicting the life as an out lesbian at her high school in 20 years, either way it will be a little or a lot better.
- 4 Student thinks being a non-heterosexual student at her high school in 20 years will be better.

- 5 Student doesn't know if there will be a time when gay and lesbian get same benefits as straights and it's hard to say because we are in a transition stage in the acceptance of gay and lesbian. Student sees a slow but sure uphill fight with some downfalls on the way. She is sure "they" will get there soon.
- 5 Student thinks it will be a lot easier for lesbians in her school 20 years from now because of the way it is going. For example, Jerry Falwell will probably be dead. Student is sure there will be another "Falwell" to take his place, but like Hitler, there will be only followers and no one else will be as big of a leader.
- 6 Student would like to think that in 20 years it will be easier to be a lesbian in her high school. She thinks in the future the world will be a little more accepting and maybe some of that will filter down to schools and then there will be a sense that at some point things will get better.
- 9 Student hopes a lesbian in her school 20 years from now will have a good experience, but she doesn't think 20 years is enough time to make a really significant change in her school.
- 10 Student had very good experience in school and thinks school will improve even more and be more open in the future.
- 11 Student hopes that in 10 years an out lesbian will experience a lot more acceptance at student's high school and hopefully the atmosphere on campus will be more open and accepting of ideas.
- 12 Student is hopeful that her school will be better in 20 years.
- 13 In 20 years, gay and lesbians will be in the curriculum and people will be able to walk around naked. There will be same-sex marriages in 20 years and student is going to "make it so."
- 14 She has some faith that it will change.
- 15 Student thinks her school will be a lot different 20 years from now because her generation is pretty accepting and they will raise a generation of people who are accepting. She thinks she might be a little overly optimistic but there has been a lot of change in the last 20 years.

Visibility of gay and lesbians; presence of gay and lesbian media; images of self; facilitates conversation; gives gay and lesbian community role models; helps in personal problem-solving and growth; source of information

- 2 Changes today and in the future are the result of consciousness and gay and lesbian visibility in society, even if the media does not always provide accurate images of gay and lesbian.
- 2 Student thinks she has been completely shaped by the GLBT media. It's definitely been her outlet, something she can rely on, particularly the comic character Hothead when she needs to vent after a bad day. Hothead gives her pride that she is an outsider and that she can deviate and still be embraced by a whole different group.
- 2 Student is concerned that the suicide data might be inaccurate but sees how it can be used to show why students need safe places such as GSAs.

- 3 Student and others promoted gay and lesbian youth suicide statistics to show the need for a GSA. Although the battle was not uphill, she felt armed with this data.
- 3 Student says the world is changing and that, in turn, has helped shape her school into a more supportive environment. She points to gays and lesbians becoming more familiar, almost household discussions now and she guesses that visibility of openly gay and lesbian people in entertainment ("Ellen" episode, lesbian rockers coming out left, right and center, "Will and Grace") has really helped. She's thinks the effects of this getting into the spotlight are still reverberating and she not sure how much effect they had two years ago.
- 3 She cheered "Ellen" because the show had a gay lead.
- 4 Now she understands more of the fluidity of sexuality. She saw the movie "Chasing Amy" and it changed her life. There is a scene where a woman is in love with a guy but is trying not to be because she calls herself a lesbian, but then she remembers that she opened herself up to girls in the first place because she thought your soulmate could be anywhere out there and she questions cutting out either half of the population.
- 5 Student was coming out when Ellen came out on t.v. and while she knew the show was "fake" it was about life experiences that student was also dealing with, like the "first girlfriend ever" and the "sex thing." Student wrote Ellen a letter but thinks Ellen probably never got it. Student says Ellen helped her a lot and she learned a lot from Ellen.
- 5 Student is not into lesbian music, likes one Melissa E. song and Tracy Chapman, doesn't really listen to Ani DeFranco and owns one Sarah McLaughlin CD. Student is more of a "gay man listener" and also listen to the artists her 9 year old sister likes. Student loves all types of music and calls herself a "very diverse person."
- 5 Student thinks being gay and lesbian is " 'allowed' in a sense in certain areas" because this is the new millenium and gay and lesbian is talked about more, it's talked about when you meet new people, and people are coming out. You learn about it through hands-on experience.
- 5 Student has heard that 1 in 10 kids are supposedly gay and lesbian/b and that 1 out of 3 of those try to commit suicide. Student thinks the suicide statistics are harsh and sad and she thinks she is one of those people. Being gay and lesbian is not accepted in a good way and gay and lesbian people get down because they feel different, that they are bad, and that they might as well die. Student thinks that we hear about healthy gay and lesbian youth because if 1 in 3 commit suicide, there are 2 that don't. She thinks that if it was said in a different way it would be different. She thinks the reason we don't hear it that way is because "they" are trying to ask the person who picked on a gay and lesbian person to ask themselves if they want to feel bad if the gay and lesbian person commits suicide and to get that person to think picking on gay and lesbian people is not good. Student thinks if those students heard about healthy gay and lesbian kids it would be like "okay, we can still pick on them." Student does not think information about healthy gay and lesbian youth is suppressed because we don't hear about healthy Americans in general. We hear about the

- ones with cancer and AIDs. Health doesn't provide a lot to talk about because everyone knows in a way what it's like to be healthy.
- 5 Student learned from the media that gay and lesbian is a part of any society but it will be hard, "just like being Jewish and teaching in a Catholic school," and something gay and lesbian have to overcome. Student thinks the media gave her the idea that there was something to overcome and that she could overcome it.
- 6 Student thinks Boys Don't Cry is a great movie, done really well and really heart wrenching. She watched it with friend #1 who really liked it and her sister who liked it but was weirded out by it. Student has a friend whose straight roommate watched the movie, ran out of the room screaming and crying when Brandon Teena was shot, and said it was a great movie. Student thinks it would be interesting to compare the perspectives of lesbians, gay men, straight men, straight women and transexual/transgendered people on that movie.
- 8 Student was aware of singers, artists and actresses (e.g. the actress on "Married With Children" who was also an activist) who were lesbians but did not have a lesbian role model in the sciences until she met her lesbian chemistry teacher.
- 9 Student thinks it's cheesy but she drew strength ("you can do it too") from Ellen's coming out. Student doesn't think the media have shaped her ideas negatively because she is not reading Christian journals.
- 10 Student thinks media portrays people like Martina and Melissa, not just as gay, but as good role models.
- 10 Student has only heard positive things about gay and lesbian from the media except when George Michael was called a "fag." Student thinks out gay and lesbian artists consciously try to be positive role models and not give gay and lesbian a "bad name."
- 10 Student thinks that the media does of a lot "undertone gay things" that are not explicit but are in there and make you wonder (e.g. the Haunting). She liked Better Than Chocolate, fell asleep toward the end of Two Girls In Love, and ordered HBO for a month in order to tape If These Walls Could Talk because she is a big fan of Sharon Stone. She thought ITWCT showed the hardships lesbians had to go through to be accepted, especially in the second segment which focused on the lack of acceptance of butch lesbians.
- 11 She and her friends are making a movie about that called "The Faggot Hunter." The martyr in the story is a guy who hunts gay people for sport. The focus of the movie, the undertone, is that he is not really a hater. In the end, a radical gay queer character "Raoul X" who attends a lot of protests ends up killing him. Student thinks things are politically charged right now. She disagrees with a lot of things in the gay and lesbian community but she thinks there are a lot of people she can't say that to and she must bite the bullet instead. Student feels like the gay community is "infested" with hate for a lot of things right now. She thinks the hate may be for ourselves, but she wonders where slogans like "God hate Fred Phelps" get the gay and lesbian community. Student thinks it is important to be accepting of everyone else and it's not really what you say, but how you say it and how you go about with your message. Student is one of

the few gay and lesbian people she knows who will say she listens to Dr. Laura and likes it. It has nothing to do with gay and lesbian stuff. She thinks Dr. Laura is very sensitive to the needs of kids of divorced relationships. Student listens to talk radio and Rush Limbaugh and while she doesn't agree with any of his politics she thinks he is an amazing entertainer, is amazed by the way he manipulates things to make them seem like they agree with him, and is amazed that 18 million people listen to him and none notice that he is making up every thing he says. Student says she can't tell people she listens to Rush Limbaugh and her parents get mad at her for it because it is just not acceptable. Student thinks it is ridiculous that all these people are protesting Dr. Laura. Student thinks there is a certain amount of family that does not exist in this country any more, in certain ways we never had it, and family structure was very constricting and didn't accept a lot of people. But student thinks that right now we have nothing, that kids and adults have no direction, no sense of community, home or themselves. Student gets into fights with her mother about this because her mother has been divorced twice and is on her third husband and "we" can't say that she made a mistake because now it is acceptable to get divorced. But she thinks that if a person has kids there has to be some kind of responsibility and forethought.

11 Student is a journalist, reads all the time, and it made her realize that there are lesbians out there that she can associate with who have different perspectives and different views.

12 She admires the lesbian authors who have gotten to the point in their lives where they are doing something they love and she sees through their stories that she can get there too. Student remembers reading a lesbian writer who talked about the attacks on her own beauty.

14 According to her parents, sister, who subscribes to a lot of the same political thought and theory as her parents, was going through student's room and found a folded up pride flag (that supportive friends had given her) shoved under the mattress, a couple copies of Off Our Backs, Ms., and other great feminist stuff. Student got other information from PBS which she thinks is great because they talked about gay farmers and have the Advocate sponsored stuff. The media, PBS more than anybody else because she didn't have cable, along with periodicals/magazines (like Time and Newsweek) were her sources of information about gay and lesbian youth.

Social forces outside of school affect social change, which in turn may change schools

1 Student likes to hope that in 20 years the Catholic church "will get a little better" about the idea of contraception.

2 Changes today and in the future are the result of consciousness and gay and lesbian visibility in society, even if the media does not always provide accurate images of gay and lesbian.

2 Hothead was a cult thing no one knew about and now it is at Barnes and Noble.

3 She thinks that the political climate of the nation and what happens in the nation's school are definitely linked. She thinks as time goes on it will become easier, unless there is a "huge Republican takeover of the government and

- country." While she can't picture her city becoming totally conservative, she thinks conservative leadership will slow down or stall progress and that Republicans will want to ban gay books and cut a lot of stuff about alternative education. With liberals in leadership, she thinks it might get a lot better.
- 6 She thinks society and school influence each other. She thinks in the future the world will be a little more accepting and maybe some of that will filter down to schools and then there will be a sense that at some point things will get better.
- 6 She thinks that college kids really influence society because there are always college kids with certain ideas they are radical about and then it takes the world awhile to catch up.
- 7 A Lesbian Revolution is needed to make change and student jokes the first move is not to tell the school about the lesbian revolution, then we "kill all the lawyers" except we let the "gorgeous ones who work for the LLDF" {Lambda Legal Defense Fund] stay, student will lead and her "straight groupies" will follow.
- 9 Student thinks that significant change in school will occur when society changes, something that won't happen overnight because homosexuality is a hot topic, goes against religion and morals.
- 10 Student thinks gay and lesbians are gradually going to get their rights because homosexuality is being recognized more.
- 10 Student thinks gay and lesbians are gradually going to get their rights because lot of stuff is happening like the gay marriage ban in California and other states like Vermont who are doing something.
- 10 Student thinks gay and lesbians are gradually going to get their rights because more people (like senators) are coming out.
- 13 Student thinks society could change through a female president.
- 13 There will be same-sex marriages in 20 years.
- 14 Student thinks whether or not schools can have a role in creating social justice and social change depends on the school.
- 15 Student can see a time when people are not treated differently on the basis of sexuality. Student thinks there are things gay and lesbians can do, like set up a gay community, move to P-town, and grow in visibility. Gay and lesbians need to "expand" in number, even though 1 out of 10 is a pretty big number.
- 15 Student thinks lesbians don't get a lot of "slack" from guys, unless they want the lesbian, can't have her, and want to change her.
- 15 She thinks she might be a little overly optimistic but there has been a lot of change in the last 20 years.

Student sees a role for school in changing the status of gay and lesbians in society

- 1 Schools can play a role.
- 2 She thinks if we are going to make changes and reduce misunderstandings between people, we should start in school.
- 3 Student believes that education in school can eliminate discrimination.
- 4 Student thinks schools can help make change. Schools could have a role because they are the "second largest basis of life" in the beginning learning stages.

- 5 Student hopes that schools have a role in changing society.
- 6 Student thinks to some extent schools probably have a little role in changing society.
- 7 Student thinks schools can make changes
- 8 Schools could help
- 9 Student sees role for schools in this change because educators have a big influence on children's lives.
- 10 Student thinks schools can play a role in changing the status of gays in society\
- 11 Student sees a role for schools in creating change through education and exposure.
- 12 Student thinks society can be changed through schools, even though her own school experience was not a model of change.
- 14 Student thinks K-12 schools should absolutely have a role.
- 15 Student thinks that schools can be change agents

Social change is partially enabled through personal experience and seeing alternatives

- 1 Student thinks people can come to the idea that society can and should change when they see an alternative. Student thinks people critique when they have the information and when they "see the other side."
- 2 Changes today and in the future are the result of consciousness and gay and lesbian visibility in society.
- 2 If people had the information sometimes they would be more understanding.
- 3 She thinks that if the majority of people were shown positive images of gay and lesbian from early on, the problems we have today would disappear.
- 5 Student thinks "how we are doing it now" will make change happen. She thinks that politicians who are gay and lesbian or who have a gay and lesbian family member will put more "heart and soul" into making change because it's their life. Like with her project, it's a part of the person so the person puts more effort into it. Student thinks that the "all-American, upper class, Chelsea Clinton types, daddy's little girls" won't know on what to base what they think is good for society because they are not gay and don't live through it.
- 5 Student thinks people don't understand heterosexism because they think along personal lines, like youth who don't think about health insurance because they are on their parents' policy. Student thinks other students don't see discrimination because they see that gay and lesbian youth go through heartache just like them, they get F's in science like them, and the price for pizza is the same for everyone. Student says that those students don't see that she can live with, but cannot marry the person she falls in love with, and they don't see that paying for your girlfriend's pizza can feel uncomfortable. Student thinks that people can't understand unless they "live in that person's shoes." She will never understand why it is different to be black even though she knows what happened in history. She knows that there are people whose skin is a different color but to a lot of people that means their "heart is made of black and all they do is sit on welfare" but that's not what it is to student. Student thinks we are taught to see things this way and straight people are taught to see straightness as normal.

- 7 Some people do not critique heterosexist society because they are not in tune to it and have their priorities elsewhere. She doesn't know why that changes for some people. She thinks people have to have a really personal thing happen to them before they "see" and then they become involved in politics ultimately because of the thing that happened to them (e.g., a personal stake), not because of ideological desires to make the world better. Student thinks there is always a personal stake and if you don't admit that, then you are fooling yourself and you are not going to get anywhere. Student thinks it is not wrong to gain something and it's not wrong to look at something and say "what am I going to get out of this?" because you are the one who is going to have to live with it in the end. And that's not to say you should do everything for personal gains, but you have to understand how it is going to affect you personally.
- 8 People can learn to be tolerant of other people and their beliefs. For example, when student came out to RA whose religion was against homosexuality, RA was nice. Student thinks that if people were more aware that other types of beliefs exists that would create more acceptance in people.
- 9 The California bill banning gay and lesbian marriage pissed her off because her brother and his partner of multiple years live there. Student critiqued heterosexual culture by researching and writing her own marriage bill at the mock court. Student was encouraged [in her gay and lesbian marriage mock bill] by Y advisor/psych teacher, English teacher, and brother. Student was discouraged by her mother who said "I don't want you to get beat up or something." When mother rolled her eyes (like "that's what you are doing?") student got mad because she assumed her mother thought she picked this topic because she is gay. Student told her mother it is a legitimate bill and that it was important to her.
- 14 She thinks her school is moving toward [more openness to gay and lesbian], even after the experience they had with student being so righteous; one or two teachers were opening up and starting to come around.

Schools can extend idea of multiculturalism and diversity and be serious about teaching it

- 1 Student thinks kids should be educated and given more information, not just why they shouldn't be doing things. Schools can play a role by teaching that gay and lesbian is okay and maybe kids will hear it and figure it out.
- 2 She thinks if we are going to make changes and reduce misunderstandings between people, we should start in school. She sees schools as a resource where if parents are racist or homophobic young people can get alternative information.
- 3 Her school celebrated Women's History month, and if they wanted to be more welcoming they could have had a Gay Week, something her friend tried to start this year. For more teachers to be out, she thinks administrators would have to be open and straightforward in their support and create policies together to safeguard themselves in every way from a "crazy parent." She thinks that it is very important for public schools to be neutral.

- 4 Student thinks that schools can be institutions of social change if the curriculum of the schools reflect the diversity of our country. If people understood that diversity is a strength and one of the reasons our country works so well and geared the curriculum to it, maybe we wouldn't need to refer to people as Black, White, Gay, Straight, but just as a person. School could have been more welcoming by making gay and lesbian not such a "hush hush" thing. School could have been more welcoming by having gay and lesbian as part of the curriculum, even a short story that had something to do with the beauty of two men or two women in love. Student thinks schools can help make change by educating people the correct way. She is not saying she knows how to do that, but could probably figure it out if she thought about it long enough. Schools can do things like have bathrooms for everyone, not separated by gender.
- 5 School could have been more welcoming by talking with the students, helping them understand that gay and lesbian is a way of life, and this is how gay and lesbian live. She thinks that would have made it easier to come out and even if there weren't gay and lesbian students, the result would be more understanding straight kids.
- 6 In school assemblies that discussed things like race but nothing was said about homosexuality. In health class they talked about AIDS, the origin of AIDS, and safe sex but there was no mention of "what if you are gay." Student had no idea until she went to college that women could sexually transmit diseases to other women and she was surprised to learn that it is possible for women to have safe sex with each other. Student thinks school could at least mention what safe sex practices each pairing (men/men, men/women, women/women) can use. If her school had a GSA student might have said that she would go to it sometime but she would not have been an officer. But student isn't sure about that because if the school had a GSA the environment in the school would have been slightly different and maybe she would have gone to GSA.
- 6 Student thinks to some extent schools probably have a little role in changing society. She thinks schools could change just a little bit by saying that "it's okay for people to be different" and "we are not going to have an environment here where anyone is condoning any sort of discrimination" instead of remaining silent. Schools impact the people with in it. Homosexuality never came up and student thinks school should have mentioned or said something about it. Student thinks her school could have been more welcoming if they just said something.
- 6 It said "the school does not discriminate on the basis of blah, blah, blah" on the bottom of papers that were sent to parents but they didn't say they didn't discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and student thinks people did discriminate on that basis a lot.
- 7 In school, student thinks gay and lesbian teachers should receive encouragement, acknowledgment, and more than lip service, plus invitations to school events that involve spouses should be extended to "significant others of any gender and at any stage in the relationship."

- 7 Student thinks there should be a much better system for bringing problems to the forefront, especially in public schools in her city. Student talked to a public school teacher who said the cancellation of a GLSEN training student wanted to attend was an example of how the board of education is homophobic and marginalizes GLSEN and marginalizes queers.
- 7 Student thinks schools can make changes by eliminating rules about "gender appropriate" clothing.
- 7 Student sees two options to change schools: a command from high ( the president saying "no public school can do this, that or the other") or a grassroots movement (like what's happening now in the gay movement).
- 8 In addition, schools could help bridge the two cultures together so that students don't get fragmented and feel like they live in two separate worlds (for student, American and Eastern European worlds).
- 9 Student thinks that athletes "rule the school," popular kids rank at the top, smart nerds are at the bottom, and that this is something that schools perpetuate (for example, as reflected in yearbooks) because it is tradition, it looks nice and is comfortable for people. Student does not think anyone benefits from this.
- 10 Student thinks schools can play a role in changing the status of gays in society by teaching acceptance of homosexuals because now they don't really do that. Student thinks there was a "big thing against the blacks" in the '50s, schools taught people to accept the blacks, and schools could do the same for homosexuals. Student would solve the problems in other schools by making homosexuality a part of the curriculum without a negative tone, maybe in a special class. She thinks that there is a negative and a positive side to heterosexuality but that schools present only the positive side. Student thinks the fear of gay and lesbian comes from not being taught about gay and lesbian s and that's why it should be taught in the schools.
- 11 Student sees a role for schools in creating change through education and exposure. Schools could change things a lot by dealing with more than racial issues in diversity and not doing it because it's trendy, but because schools are interested in exposing student to new things. Getting kids while they are young is the first step. She thinks lesbian fiction and non-fiction should be integrated.
- 11 Student thinks that in addition to considering a teaching credential, the ability of a teacher to contribute to the creation of a community of people who are accepting should be taken into account through a really selective process.
- 11 Student thinks incorporating gay and lesbian issues in teacher training is a good idea but she doesn't know if someone's point of view can be changed through sensitivity training.
- 11 Student thinks there are two kinds of homophobia: the hatred kind and the "I don't want to talk about it" kind. Student doesn't think the "I don't want to talk about it" kind is any better than the hatred kind but she thinks that's the level of a lot of teachers and climates right now. She thinks people need to be pulled over in to the accepting homophobia, which is something that is not brought up a whole lot nor really put to the test, and can look a lot like the "I don't want to talk about it" kind of homophobia.

- 12 Student realized that the teacher didn't understand how important she is, how important she was to the student, how she had to be strong. Student wrote her feelings in a letter to her teacher. When student visited teacher, student saw the letter tacked on the wall and the teacher let her know she reads it when she feels like shit. Student thinks we need more teachers like this one.
- 12 Student would like to have gone to a progressive school, one where they have "all aspects of everything," where they understand the importance of multiculturalism, and where the equilibrium among students is maintained even in the lunchroom.
- 13 Student thinks what is needed is to put compassion, truth, and tolerance in everyone: this would make school the place for change.
- 14 Student thinks changes will occur first in the "lucky communities" and then will guilt trip the rest of them into doing some work in being gay friendly so they can be like the elite schools. Student thinks changes will occur first in the "lucky communities" and then will guilt trip the rest of them into doing some work in being gay friendly so they can be like the elite schools.
- 14 In 10 years she thinks it won't be such a big deal for same sex couples to go to the prom.
- 14 She says school is almost like a concentration camp where kids practically live when their parents ship them off to spend 7 to 9 hours there a day. She can't imagine anybody thinking that school wouldn't have an influence on somebody's thoughts for the rest of their lives. Student supports bussing kids in from different districts so kids don't get such a jaded view of life by only seeing the same people on a regular basis.
- 14 Student says that in a perfect world, in 20 years from now English teachers will say "this is a transgendered/lesbian author" and gay history would be included in American history courses (e.g., this person, Barney Frank, was the first out such and such). However, student doesn't honestly see this happening in the town she grew up in; it would be lucky to get "Walt Whitman was a gay man" in there.

#### Social change is continuous

- 1 She thinks things have changed immensely and will continue to change. Student thinks by the time a genetic basis is found, more people will accept gay and lesbian as natural than will want to combat against "people born this way." Student thinks people are born with a preference but isn't sure.
- 1 Student thinks that it is possible that there will be a time without discrimination but doesn't know because there is still discrimination against blacks and "you would think there wouldn't be." She thinks discrimination against gay and lesbian will run the same course, things will improve, and then another group will become discriminated against. She likes to think that in the future [discrimination against lesbians] won't even be thought about.
- 3 She thinks that society will eventually change so that it will not be cool to discriminate against gay and lesbian more than any other group, but she wonders who will be the next group after gay and lesbian are considered equal.

- 6 Student hopes there will be a time when people aren't treated differently on the basis of sexuality but she points out that people are treated differently on the basis of just about anything (e.g., race, class, gender). She thinks things can get better but questions if we can make that disappear for good, it will take time to tell.
- 12 She is hopeful for change, she works for it, but the pace of change is slow and she predicts change will take centuries.
- 13 Student thinks homophobia will be gone in 20 years.
- 15 Student thinks change is evolutionary and points to interracial marriage being illegal in the '70s in most states. Her stepfather is black and footage from her parents' marriage was used on a television show about racism in the early '90s.

People can unite across differences; revive social obligation and social consciousness

- 3 Student hopes this [straight ally] friend represents a whole new breed of woman because if the world were filled with people like her, it would be a perfect place. Student thinks that what we need most of all is for straight allies to take on the fight because all of the screaming and hollering by gay and lesbian (even if we swell to 20% of the population) won't make a difference if we don't have allies because we are still a minority.
- 4 She thinks that we would all have to "smarten up" and realize that we are all brothers and sisters.
- 6 For schools to be more gay and lesbian friendly, people need to be brought up with an acceptance of different people.
- 7 Student thinks people are becoming complacent and have to be reminded that they have an obligation to other people. She thinks it is important to remind "mainstream queer society" that there are others out there (e.g., transgendered), just as the women's suffrage movement reminded people that women were left out of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment. She also points to [other exclusions in historical social movements] -- the women's movement "not paying attention to lesbians" and the black movement not paying attention to women.
- 8 People can learn to be tolerant of other people and their beliefs. For example, when student came out to RA whose religion was against homosexuality, RA was nice. Student thinks that if people were more aware that other types of beliefs exists that would create more acceptance in people.
- 11 She thinks it takes a lot of courage to start a gay organization that says "gay lesbian straight" education network but she thinks that's the way to go.
- 11 Student does not see a time when people are not treated differently and she doesn't think that being treated differently is necessarily a bad thing. She thinks we are all different because of the communities we are in.
- 11 Student thinks it is fine that people don't critique the culture. Student thinks it is important to give people a lot of freedom to have their own values based on their religion or on their community. Student is not going to tell someone they are wrong if their religion says that homosexuality is bad because it's their religion and their ideas, as long as those people are not killing homosexuals. She jokes "don't tell any one" she said that.

### Families must change because families are co-educators of children

- 2 She thinks if we are going to make changes and reduce misunderstandings between people, we should start in school. She sees schools as a resource where if parents are racist or homophobic young people can get alternative information.
- 3 Student believes that education in families, school, and everywhere can eliminate discrimination.
- 3 Student believes that education in families can eliminate discrimination. More families should follow the example of the families who raise their children outside of the traditional gender roles (e.g. where boys do the dishes and girls do the chores) and the families who let their children know that it's not okay to discriminate by race. From an early age children should be given the impression that discrimination is not okay.
- 4 Schools could have a role because they are the "second largest basis of life" in the beginning learning stages.
- 6 For schools to be more gay and lesbian friendly, people need to be brought up with an acceptance of different people. She thinks parents don't do enough of that and don't talk to their kids about how hard it is to go through HS being yourself without letting all the pressure change how they would normally act and be. Student says on tv you see ads where everyone has to "be cool and be a certain way" and she thinks parents and society don't do enough to show people you can just be who you are without trying to fit in or making other people fit in.
- 8 Student thinks that schools should communicate to parents that we should not treat lesbians differently. She thinks the change in attitudes toward lesbians has to come from parents. In addition, schools could help bridge the two cultures together so that students don't get fragmented and feel like they live in two separate worlds (for student, American and Eastern European worlds).
- 14 Student feels people like her partner who grew up in very gay friendly homes and high schools allowed them to be the women they are today.
- 14 Student thinks K-12 schools should absolutely have a role, especially with the increase of LGBTQ parents.
- 15 Student thinks that schools can be change agents if they initiate conversations with parents and explain, for example, why students are completely open about their sexuality.

### Schools can alter public opinion

- 3 In an ideal world schools would alter the public opinion on gay and lesbian.
- 4 Student thinks that schools can be institutions of social change if the curriculum of the schools reflect the diversity of our country. If people understood that diversity is a strength and one of the reasons our country works so well and geared the curriculum to it, maybe we wouldn't need to refer to people as Black, White, Gay, Straight, but just as a person. Schools can do things like have bathrooms for everyone, not separated by gender.

- 7 Student thinks schools should encourage political activity, not only on the part of the GSA's. Student thinks a republic is based on being involved in politics and if you are not involved in politics for yourself "then just get out of there."
- 10 Student thinks schools can play a role in changing the status of gays in society by teaching acceptance of homosexuals because now they don't really do that. Student thinks there was a "big thing against the blacks" in the '50s, schools taught people to accept the blacks, and schools could do the same for homosexuals.
- 12 For [progressive schools where they understand the importance of multiculturalism] to exist, student thinks everything in society would have to change and everyone would need to come from the same place. She's not a communist but questions whether communism might be a part of that change.
- 13 Student thinks society could change through open minds, books, and education.
- 14 Student thinks changes will occur first in the "lucky communities" and then will guilt trip the rest of them into doing some work in being gay friendly so they can be like the elite schools. Student thinks changes will occur first in the "lucky communities" and then will guilt trip the rest of them into doing some work in being gay friendly so they can be like the elite schools.

## Appendix H: Consensus Version of Constraining Category

### I. FAMILY

Family discourages or disparages student's value system, expects student to adopt family's beliefs, or cautions students about her beliefs

- 1 Student doesn't think her parents know anything about homosexuality except, as a result of the church and her upbringing, her mother knows it is wrong. Her father doesn't think it is natural. Student thinks it was by design that she wound up in a school that was a lot like her home. She doesn't think her parents were making a "precautionary 'we don't want you to be gay'" decision but "without a doubt" she wound up at an all girls Catholic school because her parents wanted her to be like them and have their morals. Her parents liked that she was not dating boys. She wonders what the point of that and "dragging her through the whole confirmation ordeal" is now. Student encourages herself in her critique of religion and her parents discourage her.
- 1 Her dad's side of the family made "comments and stuff all the time." Student couldn't understand how her aunt (her mother's sister) "totally blew off" and justified her hearing-impaired daughter's living with a woman by basically saying that her daughter was retarded and didn't have a clue. Student says aunt is ignorant like that.
- 2 When family would watch Hong Kong cable show and see gay Chinese character, her mother would say that was bad. Her family discourages her from critiquing this society because they lived through the cultural revolution in China and it was awful.
- 3 She came out to her mother after her mother "made a stupid comment" implying that her friends' gayness was going to rub off on the student and she reacted by telling her mother it already had and stormed off.
- 3 On the level of understanding and learning about gay and lesbian, school and home were about equal. Her mother still doesn't understand why girls would dress like boys. The first Christmas after student came out her presents from her mother were pink (make-up and pajama pants in several shades of pink) even though student hates pink. She thinks her mom was trying to make her feminine. Student's father was also accepting, but he was different and it took a lot longer to win him over. At first he seemed to get it but then he would say "really stupid things" like commenting that he hopes she'll find a man in college and she would tell him that he was not getting the point.
- 3 Student thinks her family has shaped her because they gave her a positive, pretty supportive response, even if they don't fully understand, are a little misinformed, and Dad still gets nervous when she does too many things that are gay.
- 4 Her father does not do a lot of social injustice analysis and she remembers him yelling about O.J. being a "stupid nigger" during the trial.
- 4 Student used to have a real problem with internalized homophobia because her dad made fun of her and made little jokes as soon as she came out. He didn't say gay and lesbian was wrong but he made her feel like it was wrong. Student

was in colorguard where the 1 in 10 rule was reversed and only one guy in colorguard was straight, but people think he is in the closet. Father was good friends with these people, thought it was okay and cool for them to be gay, but is wasn't right when it came to student.

- 5 Student's parents took down the big rainbow flag student had in her room. Parents asked student if she knew what the flag meant. She told them it was a cloth showing pride and support and they said if family members came over they would ask questions. Student went over "stereotypical stuff" (e.g., the length of her hair, the time since her last date with a boy, the club she says she goes to without saying what the club is) with her father to show that the rest of the family may already know about her but is not saying anything. Sometimes student hates her family but she loves them with all her heart. She would not let anything happen to them even if it means keeping her pride inside and not coming out.
- 5 Student's family life was not that different from her school experience. She felt like a black sheep, an outsider, an outcast, with no one to talk to. She hated sitting at dinner or going places with them. Student felt very different from her family and when she came out to them they were very uncomfortable with it. She wondered who she would talk to if she got her heart broken. Her father is still uncomfortable with it but her mother talks with her and she let her mother read her journal when she got her heart broken. It's a lot better now but parents won't let anyone sleep over because they ask "what about the future?" and parents think lesbians are "hornballs," promiscuous and have sex with everyone. Parents got their ideas about lesbians from their upbringing and what they heard about it. Student thinks people can only "base stuff" on what they have learned about (e.g., she can't talk about calculus because she never learned it).
- 6 Student thinks it's weird that her parents instilled tolerance and acceptance of people into student, but parents didn't really talk about it and mother was really p.c. when she mentioned stuff. Student thinks her mother feels it's okay, but student feels mother is almost doing it out of obligation.
- 6 For a while after that family didn't talk about it much at all until student's mother asked student her first choice college from the bunch that student was applying to. Student told mother "[the college student is currently attending]" and mother said she didn't think student should go to an all-women's college because of "those feelings you have." Student was struck by the way her mother phrased her comment, and was like "shut up, mom, go away, leave me alone, this is what I want to do."
- 6 Student changed her family by making them a little more open-minded even though they were already open-minded because she thinks it's easy to preach but different when you really have to face it. Mother said it was fine and that she worried because student's life would be harder.
- 7 Student sees her father on a regular basis but they have never gotten along all that well because he "feels the need to purge" student of everything that seems like her mother, which basically is student's whole personality. Student also sees that her younger sister has the nervous habits student used to exhibit after

- spending time with her father. She thinks her father does not like women who are strong or intelligent and he has never been and will never be a "life of the mind kind of guy" yet he married two intellectual women in a row.
- 7 Student hasn't come out to her dad but he may know. Father always criticizes student's weight, although she is thinner now than she has been in a long time. She was boney as a child; she sees her sisters doing the same things she did and observes that "you don't need to encourage little girls to get thinner" because they will pretty much do it on their own. She "didn't have the heart" to tell him she was doing more sports because she was in love with the coach.
- 7 Student wants to wear nice wool trousers, a button-down shirt, and tie for graduation because that's how student feels comfortable, that's how she thinks she looks good and that's been "field-tested." Mother saw student's choice of clothing as "a very hostile thing" toward mother and rest of family and told student she resented it, and that it was not fair to mother and to rest of family. Mother told student not to dress butchy or dykey and basically said not to tell anyone.
- 7 Mother has a problem with student "flaunting." Student's mother says student is "picking a fight with the world" and "has no idea what she is starting." Student concedes that she is sort of picking a fight with the world when she hold hands with her girlfriend in public because they have had problems but student is very demonstrative and used to hold hands with guys.
- 7 Student thinks a lot of people pay lip service to supporting her critique but don't really want to. Student's mother supports her critique of heterosexist culture, except when student wants to express it with her clothing (e.g., wearing a suit to graduation with all the family present).
- 7 Student hopes her younger sister turns out to be a lesbian because it would be satisfying to prove to her dad that it's not her mom's fault.
- 8 Parents wanted student to be Americanized but called her homosexuality a phase that they blamed on her getting too Americanized.
- 8 Student made a "sick choice" to have very little social life to avoid offending her family. Student says her parents helped make sure she was a miserable, suicidal teenager. Mother started making fun of student, bringing up disgusting images to make sure student "wouldn't do that" and saying "it's a phase, she'll get over it."
- 8 Student's appearance hindered her identification as an official lesbian to other people. Her mother said "but she was pretty."
- 9 Student's extended family has made student glad she is not close to them and she has started to think of them in a different light because they are homophobic and if they knew she was a lesbian they wouldn't really want her around. Student challenges her extended family by not talking to them or keeping it business-like.
- 10 Mother never expressed negative views toward gays until the student came out as bi to her. Mother took student to a psychiatrist, paid a lot of money for a session, and did not hear what she wanted to hear from the doctor who told mother it was "normal, the way that she is, this is not really going to change though you might hope for it, you've got to accept it."

- 10 Student's parents liked her ex-boyfriend a lot and in the beginning parents hoped she would date a boy again.
- 11 Mother is a very strong woman but unwilling to admit her own mistakes as a parent and student feels bad for pointing them out. Student has problems with mother marrying for a third time because she feels like if someone has a kid, then screws things up, the person shouldn't try again. Student thinks a parent's personal life goes second. She doesn't see any reason that "we" (student and mother) need to marry again, even if he is a nice guy and provides a lot of emotional and financial support.
- 11 Student's mother discourages student from criticizing her at all because mother doesn't like to feel guilty. Student thinks mother's "screwed up" generation doesn't want to feel guilty. Student's mother gives her the whole "ungrateful, guilty speech" and student pretty much falls in line because there is no reason to bother mother because it's pretty much over with, there is nothing that can be changed, and student has given up.
- 11 Student says she can't tell people she listens to Rush Limbaugh and her parents get mad at her for it because it is just not acceptable.
- 11 Students' parents don't talk and she has been talking "between" them since she was 8. She jokes that she should have gone into corporate communications because that would be easy after talking to her parents. Student's father is a "big shot" who can pay for anything, has money squirreled away for his retirement, but he will only pay exactly what her mother pays for college and her mother doesn't have any money. Student's father thinks he is getting taken if he pays any more than that. Student think is it ridiculous, frustrating, and she hates fighting about money which she thinks is one of the lowest things that someone can do.
- 11 Student critiques heterosexist culture when she critiques values and raising children, the same thing she critiques her mother for.
- 11 Student's mother said brother-in-law said he would be disappointed if his son turned out gay. Student thinks she formed a lot of her opinion of her brother-in-law from that comment and student guesses she doesn't really trust men.
- 12 Mother caught her reading a book about lesbians. Mother reminded her that while she has never told her what she can and cannot read, she can't believe everything she reads in a book. Mother has a hard time dealing with student's sexuality.
- 13 Student's family says homosexuality is wrong. It was not until student got to high school #4 that student stopped trying to not be gay. Student had "a lot of men" because she had to prove to her family that she wasn't gay because they would quote the bible and student would say "fine, I'm not gay." It was such a big battle.
- 13 Aunt and family told her they don't want her to "do it here," that she should go to church more, that they don't think she is gay because she wears skirts and acts feminine, that there is "no need to be gay because it is wrong," she's going to hell, etc. She said "fine," everyone hugged, and she went to her bed.
- 14 Parents told friends it was friends' fault and friends need to leave student alone.

- 14 Student and parents had never discussed student going to college because parents never thought student was very intelligent. Older brother settled for a local college so parents never considered that student would want to go away from home even though she told them several times she wanted to.
- 14 Student had a "skewed dating history in her parent's house" and in her freshman year they were "not amused" and it was a big problem that she was dating an African American boy. Parents didn't care what he was like, he was black and that's all they needed know.
- 14 Mother went "crazy," gave the Jesus speech about student not sharing parents' values, not knowing what to make of student, student being a bad person and going to hell.

Family threatens or uses physical violence, and/or the weapons used are words (disrespect, shaming, making fun, imposing guilt, interrogating, outing, silencing)

- 1 Student doesn't know why she was open to gay and lesbian since she got such heavy negative messages at home and school and didn't have any gay and lesbian peers.
- 4 Student has a family but she doesn't like them because they are mean. Student's family has made her feel bad about her sexuality but she has learned to deal with them and that has helped her cope. Student compares climate at home and school as similar because for a long time her family made fun of her because they didn't know how to deal with it. She lives with her father and brother and their way of showing affection is by punching her in the arm or walking by and slapping her. She doesn't blame them, that's what guys do, and she has gotten used to it. She is an "incredibly soft, tender" person and she is one for softly putting her hand on some one and saying "I love you."
- 5 Student knew she couldn't come out to her uncle because he is a minister, said "fags are perverted," and asked why she was watching Ellen, the "perverted fag." Uncle is narrowminded, has to have his own way, and grumbled at student's mother's defense of her daughter. While student went outside and cried, student's mother starting reciting the bible to her brother to point out that he was wrong. Student was shocked because she didn't know her mother knew what a bible was. It was important that mother stood up for her.
- 8 Student's brother outted her to parents after he saw her at a gay café. Student didn't speak to brother for two years. Student felt brother's action made her life pure hell and created more tension in the family. Student thought brother should have known, but didn't, the consequences of what he said to her parents. Her dad responded by saying that she hid a side of herself from them. Father started blaming his health problems on her. Mother started making fun of student, bringing up disgusting images to make sure student "wouldn't do that" and saying "it's a phase, she'll get over it." Student's parents had told her she was the only lesbian on the planet. It was great when she was at school from 5:45 a.m. until 7 p.m. because school was not as painful or hurtful atmosphere as home. Comparatively, home life made school look good. Student was afraid for her life because her mother threatened to have her

- brother beat her up or hurt her in some way. She remembers always feeling afraid and always locking her door. Student blanked out the memory of [threats of violence from family] these things until she reread a journal she was keeping at the time. Student divided her life into fragments.
- 10 In the beginning mother told her not to tell anyone.
- 11 Student's sister was one of the first people who confronted student about her sexuality and student totally flipped out on her because it was student's own thing and she just wanted to deal with it.
- 13 Student took her girlfriend to meet her family. Student, two of her brothers and her girlfriend got high. Student's brother said student "moved up" with this new girlfriend and asked student questions about relationship with girlfriend ("when are you all breaking up?") to find out when he could "get her [gf]." Student says brother always says stuff to piss her off and this made student so mad that she wanted to go over and "smack the shit out of him." Student says she is not at all like her three brothers.
- 13 The backdrop for student's schooling experiences was a family who was hassling her very much. Student's family "forced" her out when she was 14 and in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and it was horrible. Her aunt, a pastor, found one of student's diaries and called the family (mother, aunts, brothers, cousins, brother's girlfriend) over to the house. Student was sitting in a chair up against the wall and everyone surrounded her. She felt like she was in court and about to go to the death sentence. They asked her questions about the bars and how many girls she had "had." Her aunt accused student of molesting a cousin ("what if you get so horny that you have to go get your cousin?"). Student cried and questioned how aunt could accuse her of something that only a monster would do. She told them she was not going to answer their questions because she couldn't believe they were doing that to her and that they were acting like no one else in the family was gay. Student's uncle cried because he thought she was going to "blaspheme the bible." Student says her family knows about homosexuality because student can tell that her cousins (2m/1f) and a male uncle (a pastor) are gay. Student's family listened to her. Student thinks the mean things her family said about her homosexuality made her want to throw it in their faces more.
- 14 Student knew there was a gay neighborhood in the city but even after student got her driver's license the day she turned 16, she was not permitted in the city because parents thought city was too dangerous. Occasionally student made little treks into the city and hung out in the big, "avant-gardie" cultured area of the city which is really a Gap store, a bunch of other crap slung along the street, and cool art and now it pisses off student. She didn't know enough about gay culture to understand how to find the right places to meet other people her age. Halfway through junior year student's sister found out somehow that student was gay. According to her parents, sister, who subscribes to a lot of the same political thought and theory as her parents, was going through student's room and found a folded up pride flag (that supportive friends had given her) shoved under the mattress, a couple copies of Off Our Backs, Ms., and other great feminist stuff. Sister, who is an altar server and a devout young

Catholic girl, took the stuff to her parents instead of talking to student about it. If sister had talked with student first, and student would've seen how uncomfortable sister was with it, student probably would have talked to parents about it. Sister told parents, and sister becoming enraged, upset, frustrated, and screaming at her parents about it made things a hundred times worse. Student was attending a fund raiser and had gone out to get some food at a grocery store when parents came in while she was standing in line joking with a couple of her friends. Mother yelled student's first and last name and told her to "drop your stuff, we're going," which is usually the code for something's really wrong. Student was worried someone was hurt and when student asked what is going on, mother said loudly, in front of the whole store, "We're going shopping for tuxes for the prom." It clicked for student and she thought "holy shit, I'm in trouble." Friends picked up on what was happening and asked "what do we say?," student said to "say nothing." Father grabbed her keys, drove friends back to fund raiser and after mother and student drove home in silence, "all hell broke lose." Parents had "ransacked" her room and knew everything because they had found letters from old girlfriends. Parents sat student down at kitchen table, screamed at her nonstop and got physically violent. Student didn't say a word and didn't know what to say and just sat there feeling horrible and guilty and these were things she never felt before because student had always been an open person. Mother screamed about being disappointed that student "wants to be a man" and not being able to imagine her daughter "with her face in some girl's pussy," words that are not attractive coming from your mother and it was hard and that felt like a weapon being thrown at student.

- 14 Parents took door off student's bedroom so they could always see and know what student was doing. She was not permitted to talk on the phone and had to quit the debate team because African-American boyfriend was also on the team.
- 14 Mother pulled out pen and paper and demanded the names of the girls or women student's been with. Student asked why mother was talking about sex because student had not had sex. Mother wrapped student's 3 feet of hair around her fist and demanded the names of anyone student dated. Student said no, that she was not going to ruin their lives like "you're trying to do to mine right now." Mother threatened to call the police, student still refused [to write down names of anyone student had dated], and mother became physically violent with student while stepfather stood by and silently watched.
- 14 Family was in process of rearranging bedrooms because mother was pregnant again (eventually lost baby not long after the student's trauma) and student and sister were going to share a room. Student wasn't permitted to sleep in same room with sister because parents didn't want student influencing sister or making sister uncomfortable because student was "unnatural."
- 14 Student fell asleep because she was exhausted and upset but mother came in screaming and became very violent again.

- 14 Student's friends kept calling but were not permitted to talk to student. She was not permitted to be alone in the same room with the two younger siblings who adored her. Student wasn't allowed to talk on the phone.
- 14 Parents set up appointment with student's doctor in an attempt to put student on "behavioral medicines" to "cure" her. Doctor refused and said it was "unethical" and told parents they were "absolutely off their rocker" and had completely "distorted views." Student said the doctor is a good man.
- 14 Parents moved all of student's things to the dining room, student slept on couch, dressed in dining room, had to use the bathroom on the first floor, and aside from using the shower on second floor bathroom, was not permitted on the upper two floors of the house where everyone slept. School became a place where student was there in body but not spirit. Student was minor with nothing and no place to go. Father had student's bank accounts and completely controlled her life. Student said she could run away but with \$2 and no keys, where was she going to go, so there was no getting around it, she had to stay.
- 14 Mother started calling student's teachers and telling these teachers that mother had never met that student was a lesbian. Until that point student had separated her scholastic life from her sexuality.
- 14 Student got pissed off and accused mother of violating student's personal space [by outing student to her teachers] and mother responded by saying that if all of student's friends know then mother could tell whomever the hell mother wanted. Student told mother it wasn't fair and mother proceeded to kick student (who was in her pajamas) out of house at 12:30 in the morning, in the middle of February. Both parents pointed to the door and said "get the hell out of my house." Given parent's violent track record and mother sitting there chopping food with a knife, student felt physically threatened, left, went to friend's house and student's parents dead bolted door behind student.
- 14 Student had a curfew and 21 minutes to walk a mile and a half from school to home.
- 14 Parents realized student couldn't permanently live on the couch so they converted an 8 x 7 space into a room. Student spent most of her time in that space, mostly sleeping or reading if she had a book she liked and she wasn't into drugs or alcohol so she wasn't doing that. Student didn't see the use of doing homework because she'd been doing it for all those years and it had not really gotten her anywhere.
- 14 The day after parents threw student out of house, student did not go to school so parents reported her to the police as a runaway. Student did not know parents had done reported her to the police as a runaway and when pseudo mother felt she had to let someone know where student was and called student's guidance counselor to let her know student was safe, guidance counselor couldn't keep it confidential and had to call student's parents. While at pseudo mother's work, police charged in and told her she had to go with them and if she refused she'd be arrested. Student was taken in handcuffs to police station. While at police station she was told she either had to go home with parents or go to Juvenile Hall. Student went home with parents.
- 14 DHS came to student's house later that day and in front of parents and rest of

- family asked her if she felt safe in her home. In order to not hurt the rest of the family (e.g., kids grow up without a home, no education, no money) student denied feeling unsafe and wondered what else she could say in that situation.
- 14 Pseudo parents agreed to let student live with them but student's parents wouldn't let her live anywhere but in their own house because in small town "everybody knew everybody's business."
- 14 Parents were contacting student's teachers and administrators and had school look into what ballet teacher was doing. Ballet teacher was put on probation for influencing students "this way."
- 14 Parents outlined demands (e.g., no use of their name in the media, could claim student on taxes for the year, no contact with family, stay within certain number of feet from the house).
- 14 Student says she practically spent more time with her siblings than her mother did, she took them everywhere, read them books or took them out while the older kids did homework. She was "insanely close" to the kids and had almost a mother and child relationship with them. To lose them is heartbreaking.
- 14 Student wasn't allowed to go to her junior prom because of her parents.
- 15 Student's young life was pretty traumatic because her stepfather was very abusive to her and her mother and stalked them for many years. Student's family moved a lot and student attended a new school pretty much every year until she started her Catholic middle school. Student attended her private high school because it was close and it seemed like the "next best step" in her education, but it "sucked."

Family manifests "white elephant syndrome" (avoidance; not directly making intentions and feelings about student known; not defending, not taking seriously, no interest)

- 1 Student didn't get any messages about homosexuality at home. Student doesn't know if father goes either way on [supporting or condemning homosexuality]. She thinks there is no way her sister would speak up if someone was "cracking on gays"; similarly, she doesn't think her father would say anything to his brother if he said something. Her mother doesn't have much to say about it and is "just kind of there."
- 2 Younger sister largely ignores the issue. Student was terrified of telling her mother. Student had planned forever about how to come out but it came up unexpectedly in a conversation with her mother at the end of her senior year. Student surprised herself by disclosing in an unplanned way. Her mother was upset, and she was upset. Student doesn't think her mother believes her and student thinks her mother thinks student is young and will find the right man in college. Student wanted to tell mother because it hurts a lot more to keep it in. Coming out to her mother has brought them closer, even if her mother does not believe her. She feels like she has made odd, but okay progress with her mother and that they have reached a stale mate and without a girlfriend, her mother brushes it off.
- 3 Student is an only child and neither parent "jumped for joy" when she came out. Father is more worldly than mother and she thinks he gets his information

from the variety of people he deals with at work and probably through the internet. She e-mailed information to her father even though she thought he wouldn't read it. Her parents subscribe to a hateful, little conservative newspaper for the sports section. She's been begging them to change it for years.

- 4 Student and her father don't usually talk about life.
- 4 Student asked brother and father to go to gay/straight pride march with her through e-mail because she was too scared to actually ask them and they didn't respond. Brother decided to go to a concert instead and she understood her father not going because he had a picnic for his work.
- 4 Stepfather stood by and silently watched [when mother became physically violent].
- 6 Student has a gay aunt she visited a lot in the summer when she was little but only sees the aunt now when the aunt comes over. Aunt lives pretty close to gay and lesbian city and student thinks if student went to visit aunt, it would be different than when she visited her aunt when she was little because she really would see her aunt living her life. Student thinks aunt was probably the first lesbian she knew. Student thinks when she was little she started to suspect aunt was gay and one day student's mom or day said "you know, right?" and student replied "yeah." Parents don't talk about it much.
- 6 Student says she still took a while to come out to her parents after watching the Ellen coming out episode. Student doesn't think her mother had any reaction to watching the show with student.
- 6 Student thinks it is interesting that she thought she would come out to her dad before coming out to her mom (because she is closer to her dad), but student came out first to her mom. Student's girlfriend also found this really weird. Student's parents aren't bad with it, and student thinks it is also weird that her dad is almost better with it than her mom and she doesn't know why that is.
- 7 Student has not told her dad. She thinks he knows and doesn't care, but she thinks he doesn't want to talk or think about it. Student did tell her dad she was going to the prom with her girlfriend and she thinks it's funny that he asked if it was a girl from the team who actually is a dyke. Student told her dad that her girlfriend doesn't go to her school or any school. Father said "okay" and changed the conversation. Student thought "wait a minute, I just came out to you!" Student thinks she'll have to have another conversation with him because she wants to give him the chance to do something right.
- 7 In the past, mother has said in general that student is "not required" to come out to people [and student is making decision about telling extended family]. Student feels that for the first time in her life she is really going by her own standards in regard to what she wants and what she feels she needs to do. And she feels like she needs to tell her [extended]family because she can't deal with sitting around and wondering for 15 years whether they will accept her. It is not acceptable to her that they "all of a sudden find out" that she has a kid and lives with a woman and she is frustrated with the idea of being questioned when she is 25 about when she will get married. So student wants to give them the chance to "do the right thing" now, at a changing point in her life, before

she goes off to college. She has decided that she will not tell them anything about herself that they don't ask, but she knows they are going to ask her what she has been doing in school, what clubs she is in, and who she went with to the prom. She jokes that her answers to those questions (e.g., GSA and prom date is her girlfriend) will solve the problem.

- 7 Student remembers getting very mixed messages about gay and lesbian people while growing up. She doesn't think her parents really cared, but her step dad made weird borderline comments so she could never tell if he was being derogatory or trying to make light and she's not really sure what was up with that.
- 8 When she was growing up [in Eastern European country] people didn't talk about gays and lesbians. The only image student got while growing up in [Eastern European country] and living at home was that there were no lesbians and gay men were in prisons.
- 8 Prior to coming out, homosexuality was ignored and never talked about at home, although her parents surmised that there is a cousin who is in a gang and on drugs that he was also gay.
- 9 Mother also loves student but is not quite as supportive as father, although she is okay with it. Mother had a strict Catholic upbringing, not the most open-minded person, and is concerned about appearances, especially what her own parents and siblings might think. Mother's information about lesbianism comes from student.
- 9 Student and mother never ever talk about student's lesbianism which student thinks is weird, even though student doesn't think she would talk to her mother about her boyfriend if she had one, because student "wouldn't want to go there" with mother.
- 10 Student is not on good terms with her step-father but it has nothing to do with her sexuality. She doesn't think he cares about her sexuality and he has never made negative or positive comments about it.
- 11 Student is out to her father but they don't talk about it, it's the "white elephant syndrome" with him. Student thinks father does not live in the real world and doesn't know any thing that she thinks.
- 12 Mother will talk politically about how gay people are treated and how it's not right but mother does not talk specifically about student's sexually very much. Student thinks she is working on it and since she doesn't really want to have that serious sexuality conversation with her mother yet, she is giving her mom time and space.
- 14 Student had to go home with parents and no one was talking to her.
- 14 Parents never showed up for the court dates.

## II. PEERS

Peers make schools feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or not welcoming for non-heterosexual students

- 1 The most negative place was lunch because everyone was there, telling and repeating stories.

- 1 Student was treated as a straight person "but there were whispers, whispers" and if she were out she doesn't know if it would have been a whole lot different, but thinks it would have been "more vicious" and definitely, without a doubt "more bloody"(emotionally). People would talk ("she's a lesbian") and point students out but no one would ever walk up and directly ask if someone was a lesbian. The climate was bad for people who were presumed not to be straight. Students could come out to their best friends, but no further than that until after graduation because of gossip and "twisting of things" among students and a lack of support from faculty.
- 2 The climate was kind of stifling for people who were presumed not to be straight.
- 2 The cafeteria was a more negative place as a lesbian because individuals are out there in the open with their peers and what they think of you, there is no middle man, there is no teacher. Students just have to deal with it.
- 3 Most people didn't care but a small group of people who she talked to everyday stopped talking to her.
- 3 Prior to that she was hanging out with her m/f friends who were dating so she was "forced to hang out with his stupid friends." She was coming out and simultaneously dealing with "negative reactions from these idiots." It was stressful and panned out to her whole life.
- 4 Student held hands with another woman in the English office during a literary magazine meeting and people raised their eyebrows but that was it and she thought that group of students would be okay with it. Student never held hands in the hallway. In the hallway student couldn't build a group around her because everybody was going to their different places so student was alone and anyone could do basically anything to her. She really hated the hallways because she would get pushed around and would hear the "inevitable" like "dyke!" because she was known as the "lesbian chick." Everyone knows about her, even the younger kids, and she thinks it's weird how they somehow know her name.
- 5 Student would sometimes go to the "helping room" to sit and chill because it was a place that was comfortable and no one picked on her there.
- 6 Overall climate in school was that people didn't like other students who were either out or presumed to be gay and lesbian. School wasn't overtly bad but it definitely wasn't good. Student thinks that the majority of people didn't like the idea of it, and didn't talk about, acknowledge or accept it, but the school was very cliquy so it varied depending on the group of people. Among peers at work there was definitely this "don't even mention it" thing because people are going to be not good about it. Student couldn't have done the rainbow flag thing in high school because people would have looked at her weird though probably some people wouldn't have understood it. Student thinks people think lesbians look like the only girl she knew who was out: out girl had short hair, wore jeans, shorts, Nike shoes, t-shirts. Student thinks that's how the girl felt comfortable and that's probably because she was more obviously gay. A lot of people shied away from the out girl because they were weirded out by her. Student thought out girl was nice, but didn't really talk to her that much.

- 6 A less friendly or less safe space on campus were the C classes because there was a lot more pressure to fit in. Student guesses those students felt the need to go around and be really not accepting of different people and she hates to say that because she sounds so snooty. Student can't explain why she thinks the students in C classes would be so different from the students in the A and AP classes. The only reason she can think of is that it has to do with students upbringing and by the time students reach high school a lot of students values are just in them. Student thinks that in any kind of group people have to fit the mold of that group and that being around people who think a certain way makes people think they have to fit that as well.
- 7 The [basketball] team was not a safe positive place. Student quit sports team in her junior year because she hated the coach, the team wasn't talking to her, and she hated playing the sport. If she felt the team was ostracizing her because she was gay she thinks she would have stayed on to prove to herself and to them that she wasn't there for them, she was there for herself. Well, maybe just to spite them, too.
- 7 The school climate for people who were presumed not to be straight depends on who you are and who you hang out with. Some people had a lot of problems with it.
- 7 Before people realized she was queer, everything was wrong and people would say things that would make her feel horrible, like "I think you look so gay."
- 8 There was a hurtful anti-gay undercurrent that you couldn't see but it was there.
- 8 The more comfortable place (on the basis of her sexuality) was the one of two cafeterias that was not used by the jocks and prom queen look-alikes. Even though student was an athlete, she had more in common with the people in the other cafeteria.
- 10 A Christian group of students who met at the flagpole to pray in the morning wasn't as accepting but didn't bother gay and lesbian students or knock them down. None of the gay and lesbian students joined the Christian club because it was "sort of taboo" to join and none of them wanted to join a group that "went by the Bible" and thought that being gay was wrong. A friend of student's who "claimed" to be bi joined the Christian group and student guesses her friend "turned" toward straight because maybe the club influenced him negatively. Student thinks that while it wasn't directed at her, there was one incident where the Christian group (that was not accepting and didn't think a club for gay and lesbian student was right) tore down the GSA posters. That is as far as it went. Student would stay away from the area that the Christian group used for morning and afternoon prayers. Student would like to exclude the memory of the people, probably the Christians or the jocks, who tore down the poster. Though it wasn't loud or said, it was known that they were the negative ones.
- 11 Student thinks gay and lesbian student get relegated to the outskirts and put with all the "Leftist, crazy people."
- 12 The overall climate toward gay and lesbians was pretty ignorant. When kids would say something she would say she "I don't care," "whatever," or if they asked ridiculous questions she and her friends would say "what are you talking

- about?!" Less welcoming space was the concert choir room because of the vibes coming from the "mean weirdos" inhabiting that space. Student avoided science/math area because she was always cutting those classes.
- 13 Less positive school space was the lunchroom (schools 2 and 3) because everybody was there and all heads turned when students walked in.. School #2 ranks 4 because everybody acted straight no matter what, everybody was into hip hop ("fuck the faggots"), black people said "you got to go straight" and "ooh, don't come near me."
- 14 Student started coming out to her immediate friends. All but one of student's friends were in AP classes even though they were from lower economic level area of town. Student and her friends were in orchestra together and did everything together. Initially student's friends were supportive of her coming out. Her sexuality went from being something that was a part of her life to the identifying label for her from the rest of the students, administrators, and teachers. It suddenly went from being something that was a part of student's life to being the forefront and focus of her life. No longer was student "[name], the girl who is the class president," it would be "(name), the lesbian who happens to be class president."
- 15 The climate was "don't ask, don't tell." Students never asked if other people were gay but they talked about them behind their backs. There was no possibility to be a non-straight person in high school, no one saying "I'm gay and you are just going to have to live with that." There were people who student figured were gay because they "acted like it." There was a couple who everyone "knew" were together but the couple wouldn't admit it until they broke up.
- 15 There was no safe space at high school; sexuality was "100% censored, taboo."
- 15 Sexuality was taboo in classes, except for introductory social science class, where student has heard that a teacher asked the class what they would do if their child was gay. A student replied that she would not approve and would disown her child. Student heard that the class' reaction was "WHAT?" and student can't image what the teacher was thinking. Student questions why someone would say something like that in a classroom and thinks it's the equivalent of saying "I hate niggers."

Peers spread rumors, use insults, threats and violence

- 1 The boys she and her friends were friends with were the ones who made more derogatory remarks ("oh, you're a dyke") that were more damaging than the rumor-spreading done by girls.
- 2 The majority of students saw themselves as heterosexual and used "gay" as a negative term, even when it made no sense, such as "you're so gay!."
- 3 The only other negative experience student had was when an "idiot, probably a freshman" tore down GSA flyers, but this did not personally affect her.
- 3 Student rejects the second term of junior year when she was outted to the school by another student. The only experience that marred her high school experience was when a male student (her friend) outted her to the entire school to get at his ex-girlfriend (also her friend) because he figured that would get at his ex more than anything else.
- 4 One day a popular girl got "really bitchy" to the student and called her a dyke. The day after the incident she ended up being in class with the popular girl who "started with the 'carpet muncher' comments" and kept on going until she had the entire class, except for one friend of the student's who was in the class and identified as gay but was closeted, making snide remarks.
- 5 The overall climate toward people who weren't straight depended. Some students didn't say anything, some students said things behind her back, and then there was the "type" of male student who would hurt her by picking on her on the bus and calling her a "stupid dyke." Student dealt with it. It hurt student when other students called her "dyke," "fag," or talked behind her back but student thinks her bipolar illness took the hurt to a different level.
- 5 Sometimes her friends think being a lesbian is "gross" and they don't like when she talks or jokes about it.
- 5 Although she and another gay female student (a freshman people said was "trying to be boss" by coming out) were the only out students in her school, she is sure she was not the only gay student.
- 6 Her friend #2 works there and was dating a couple of people there; she would flirt with them and one of her boyfriends would make a crack about a "homo" and friend wouldn't do anything about it even though student was standing right there and it hurt student.
- 6 Student can think of one specific negative experience: student remembers a girl running down the hall screaming "If that dyke looks at me one more time like that, I'm gonna fucking beat her up." This happened while student was walking down the hall with her friend, who was friends with the only out lesbian in school, and student thinks the yeller may have been talking about friend's friend. Student's reaction was "oh my god."
- 6 Student remembers being in drama club and the first time she saw a particular student she didn't know if the student was a boy or girl and she didn't know if he was gay or whatever. A lot of people were "just like, okay, whatever" toward this boy and student thinks that other guys especially had to "put on this show" [behave a certain way] that they got really grossed out by the boy.
- 7 Student heard a boy she knew call out "hey you queer" or something like that and student thought he was talking to her. She had just got her hair cut, was

wearing tight dark grey jeans, black boots, black cotton tank top with no frills, biker jacket and her sunglasses. Student didn't think of herself as queer, was still going out with guys, and considered herself straight. She went up to him and asked him to repeat what he said. He said he was talking to his friend and it was a joke.

7 Coming out empowered student to do other things that would further establish her as "outside" but coming out also made it hard to stay at school and deal with people's "stupid attitudes."

8 Student had a negative experience when somebody wrote "dyke" on a friend's locker and insulted a coach by referring to her as a dyke.

8 Kids wouldn't come out because of personal security. Student had a negative experience when somebody wrote "dyke" on a friend's locker and insulted a coach by referring to her as a dyke. Student felt threatened by homophobic remarks and name calling which contributed to her not starting a GSA because she did not know what would happen.

9 School could have been more welcoming by doing more to keep students from harassing other students because it happened all the time and school wasn't strict enough with the "homophobic bastards."

9 Student thinks she was not the "normal gay student" who is less self-confident, more of a target, a victim, like those who got beat up and pushed into lockers. One of student's gay friends "totally changed his outlook and his attitude" and no one "screwed" with him again. Student thinks being ambitious, cool, smart, and popular trumps being gay in the eyes of other students because they respect those qualities.

10 In one class she was jokingly called the "straight basher" because she once made a feminist comment about guys and was not hiding her sexuality.

10 Student thinks that while it wasn't directed at her, there was one incident where the Christian group (that was not accepting and didn't think a club for gay and lesbian student was right) tore down the GSA posters. That is as far as it went.

11 Negative experiences were problems with homophobia. Students wrote "homo" on the dorm of her friend and he didn't talk much about it so she guesses it was no big deal.

12 Expressing herself was such a fundamental part of her experience in junior high school and she was very accepting of others, yet in high school people seemed to have a weird instinct to attack everything that people would do or say that was slightly different. During student's freshman and sophomore year student took a lot of abuse. By the time she was a junior and senior she had seen so much stuff in and out of school, felt like she was living in a hostile climate in general, and felt like everyone was against her for some "bullshit reason" even though she had done nothing to them. She didn't care anymore and handled the situation by deciding that if people insulted her, they should expect to be screamed at. She thinks about how she could have done better in school, not gotten herself into situations, if she had more positive experiences with adults and students. But there was a hard issue: she knew no adult would support her if a student were to do something to her.

- 13 School #2 ranks 4 because everybody acted straight no matter what, everybody was into hip hop ("fuck the faggots"), black people said "you got to go straight" and "ooh, don't come near me." She heard stuff like "oh look at that faggot walking down the hall" and "don't ask her how she is, she's a dyke." Student and her two best female friends were called "oreo cookies" because one day in choir she and her black friend were on either side of their white friend on the riser.
- 13 Student's gay male friend asked for her help because he had said something to one of the boys in the locker room and friend was going to get beat up by the boy. Student knew the boy who was going to beat up her friend (they were pretty good friends) so she told the boy that if he fought her gay friend he would have to fight her because "we're all gay." Fight didn't happen because boy didn't want to fight student because boy and student were pretty good friends.
- 14 The bully student punched in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and who called her a dyke in the hallway was at the prom and came up to the table full of student's friends and told student and her girlfriend that she was going to take their picture. Student politely told the girl "no" and asked her to leave but girl explained that she was GOING to take the picture and "laugh about it years from now," then she stuck the camera in their faces, took the picture and walked away. Student was shocked because she had never dealt with intense homophobia outside of her home before.
- 14 When student started to come out the girl found out because the whole town knew she was having problems with her parents and moved out of their house. In the hallway the girl would taunt student by calling her a dyke and student was like, "well you suck dick."

Peers include or exclude other students based on perceptions of differences and similarities

- 1 Student sat with the same group of people (jocks, even though she didn't make the team) from freshman year until the day she graduated. The other lunch tables included honors, the nerds/social rejects, and the "black girls" who used to sit together in one corner of the cafeteria. There were two lunch periods (freshmen/sophomore; junior/senior) and the jock table was the only one that was always occupied by the same group. Student jokes they were like a "psycho cult." Not in the beginning, but as the jocks became juniors/seniors, people who weren't jocks also migrated to their table. Student thinks these (lunchroom) cliques come from people who have things in common.
- 2 Students separated themselves in the cafeteria by minority, like a black table, Asian table, white table, although there was no gay and lesbian table. The AP students were their own group. Most of student's friends were Jewish. Sadly, there were only a few freaks because of the early morning school schedule no one had the energy to be one. Student thinks students divide themselves by groups because it boils down to people liking to be around other people they are comfortable with.

- 4 Except for the small area where student lives, student's town is a "rich bitch" town. The popular people in school are the rich people with nice cars and good looks. Most of the cars in the school parking lot were nice cars, convertibles. Student had an older car with a replacement hood. A few "farmer people" also went to the school.
- 5 The lunchroom was divided: popular kids who smoke pot and were into sports in the back corner, preppy good two shoes kids in the middle, drama on the side, skaters on the other side. Student says "where you sit is where you are." There was no gay and lesbian table because there were only two out students and they had lunch at different times. Student sat by herself in the lunchroom, was sometimes joined by a female student who the school said was a "loser," or she sat with the teachers or the handicapped kids because she felt more comfortable with them, they didn't judge her, and they took her in.
- 5 When student started high school she was a straight A student but she became a C student after her family moved, her grandmother died, and she was an outcast. She didn't want to deal with anything, got in to drugs, and ended up in the hospital in her senior year. She didn't get into drugs because of "the lesbian thing" and using drugs wasn't like her. When she got back from the hospital she knew things had to change. There was so much going on and she couldn't deal with it any more. There was a part of her that hated being an outsider and one of reasons she was an outsider was because she was not heterosexual. That really "bugged" her.
- 5 Student thinks that if she was popular and came out that it could have been different with the other students because it wasn't just not being straight that made her an outsider. Student doesn't know what she could have done to be popular. She tried it once by sitting with the popular kids, eating what they ate from the cafeteria, and calling them from home, but they weren't used to her trying to be popular. Student gave up because it was not her and she wanted to go back to being herself. Other students starting talking with her at the end of her senior year when they realized that she "didn't give a fuck" but that didn't make up for all those other times.
- 7 Her school did not have many macho guys as a lot of places but anything involving them (the really raunchy disgusting guys) and anything involving the "really preppy into themselves, wanting to be really feminine and in control at the same time straight girls" was pretty uncomfortable. Also student felt very threatened by a lot of the "black girls" at school because she felt that the "feminine thing" was even more important to them than it was to her white friends. Student knows that sounds weird and horrible and hopes no one hears her admit it; finds it kind of weird because some of her strongest supporters have been black girls and she has grown up in [city]. Student wonders if her perception of black girls comes from a "general white middle class guilt fear" but she doesn't know. Student has had more problems with white girls than black girls. Student thinks that compared to black girls, white girls are much less socially aware, much less aware of what it means to be discriminated against, and more likely to overlook discrimination because they have no point

of comparison. However black women notice that white women are treated differently.

- 7 Student goes to a very elitist school. Student had to struggle to fit in because 1) she was middle class and paid "half price" because her mother was a member of staff, 2) her clothes reflected that she was from the middle class, and 3) her primary identification from very early on (4<sup>th</sup> grade) was as a feminist. The kids band together, the "haves" and the "have nots," and she thinks it was especially clear in middle school who had what. She remembers a group of girls who had a horrible competition to see who could go the longest without wearing the same outfit. Student has a five day rotation because she has narrowed down her wardrobe to "wife-beaters and pants." Student thinks she was not invited to parties in part because of her lack of wealth, and in part because she doesn't fit in socially. She tried to fit in but she couldn't try very hard for very long.
- 8 People who had similar beliefs grouped together in the cafeteria. People with radically different beliefs sat in a really small group. People who dress differently or had spiked hair would sit together outside the cafeteria.
- 10 She didn't hang out with people from school because they were "stuck to themselves, stuck to their own groups" and student doesn't like that.
- 11 Student is a big social kind of person not but was not in high school because she didn't think she "fit the mold" and if a student didn't fit the mold, she didn't fit in. Student never wore dresses, never wanted to go to the dances. She was not physically excluded but she felt excluded from a lot of the social activities that went on.
- 12 Student's experience in her multi-cultural neighborhood made her assume that the whole world was like that. She experienced "serious culture shock" when she got into high school and found a whole different set of rules set for her by her "own people." The rules included having black friends not friends who were white or different, singing in the choir, and playing sports. Student felt like she was supposed to do these things but it contrasted with how she grew up. She thinks [alienation between students happens in] high school because it is a very "unsure time" when students don't know themselves, other people, and what is going on and at the same time students are going through lots of changes. Students want to be perceived as normal, not get picked on, not be the butt of a joke, have others think they are cool, wear the right clothes and be popular. It was very hard for her to not be herself, it's not good for her soul. She thinks there was a difference in what she saw as important and what other potential allies were striving for which created an alienation between them. Student thought she was perceived as strange by other students in high school.
- 12 There was an active conversation about race at her school because it was a black school with a mixture of kids from poor and middle class areas. There was a "one-sided conversation" going on, a mentality that students had to be black, proud, strong, and smart because the world is against you. She thought that many kids knew that racism was out there (O.J. for example) but didn't understand racism or what it meant to be discriminated against like their parents know. The only way they could show they knew about racism was to

- take it out on the white teachers and the few white students. For example, if a white teacher said the wrong thing it would spark an entire controversy about racism. She thought this was ridiculous and unwarranted because living where they do African-American kids can pretty much do what they need to do.
- 12 Student's beauty was always being attacked ("what the fuck are you wearing?," "what did you do to your hair?"). Student wore what she felt like wearing but she knew she was not beautiful to a lot of people.
- 13 Student walked the way she wanted to walk (stocky), and she didn't always feel like walking the way people wanted her to walk (cutesy) and people thought she was weird.
- 13 While student was at high school #1 student couldn't understand black people and didn't particularly like them because she was always rejected by them no matter where she went. She thinks people in general are really closed-minded and the "ghetto blacks" that she hung around with were very closed-minded because they couldn't understand the variety in her music (hip hop and alternative) or her variety in her clothes (casual and grungy). Her nonconformance to their expectations was seen as "trying to be white." She fought all the time in school #2 and had to beat up a lot of people. Student doesn't think the fights had anything to do with her sexuality. She thinks black students thought she was weak and they could talk to her any way they wanted because she wasn't too small or too big and she walked with her head down so she could see where she was going.
- 14 Once student got into the beginning of her junior year and wasn't dating anyone, had long hair then cut it short, people would ask if she was a lesbian. Later, student's haircut was used as a weapon against her. Her sexuality was questioned and it became a big joke in high school. People were saying "faggot" and "dyke. It threw the other students that both student and her gf wore dresses to the prom. She jokes, they were confused about which one of them was the boy.
- 15 Unless she absolutely had to, student never sat at the jock table because jocks got everything they wanted, were the worst thing about the school, and were on top with everyone else underneath. For example, if a jock and a "run of the mill" "C+" student were fighting, the C+ person would be "out the door" and the jock would not get kicked out for anything. Student felt more at home as the only white person in her 75-student middle school than she did in her high school because she felt more accepted, she knew everybody and they knew her. She was comfortable with the people but she doubts if she would have told them she was gay.
- 15 The lunch tables were divided; there were tables for blacks, honors, dumb-ass, and "I-should-be-in-special-ed" students. Student thinks other students didn't know/kind of knew ("she's kind of stupid, she'll be with me") about tracks.

Peers cast non-heterosexual students as sexual predators or appropriate marginalized sexual identities

- 1 Student and her straight female friends were all very touchy feeling, hugging and kissing each other but student thinks that if someone in the room was gay

- and lesbian, then some of the touchy feel-y friends probably would not kiss them because they would be scared of them or something.
- 2 One drawback to being lesbian in school is that, without knowing you, people will think you are dirty, evil, or will harm their children and you carry a lot of fear and shame around the first couple of years.
- 6 Student's friends would sometimes joke that they wanted student's body and two of her female friends would joke that they were "pretend lesbian lovers." Student thought it was kind of funny but what's weird is that she used to almost join in on the joke. After she met her girlfriend she started to think the "joke" was really weird and she felt awkward and uncomfortable when they would do it. After student came out to one of the jokers they still joked a little but it kind of died down or they didn't do it around student. Student never came out to the other friend involved in the joking.
- 7 The other part of the confusion [about student accidentally touching another female] was whether friend was gay because she was very popular and desirable by both genders and can play on the heterosexual privilege when she wants to.
- 7 Student started going to the GSA meetings more in her sophomore year and she thinks she really joined to make herself come out and a "really cute girl" she liked was in the club. Student couldn't go out with the girl because the girl was doing the same thing student was: saying she was "bi" but getting involved only with guys.
- 7 Student has noticed that a lot of "straight acting" girls have a thing for Angelina Jolie, the kind of girls who say "I'm gay but that's only a part of me." Student questions how being gay can only be a "part" because for student being a dyke is who she is, it's everything, it touches every single part of her life. Girlfriend has said that people tend to think "being gay" is when you are having sex and "outside of that it is nothing" but it's "24 hours, you can't turn it off or ignore it." Student doesn't like saying "straight acting" because it strikes her the same way as saying "act white," "act black" or "act female."
- 7 Student takes it as a given that lesbians/dykes are political and if someone is [calling themselves a "lesbian" or "dyke] and is not political she thinks of them as a "poser," someone who pretends to be someone they are not.
- 7 She doesn't think it's fair "to go into a group that identifies as dyke (they're big, butch, scary, political, and damn it they like women) and call yourself a dyke while you sleep with men, without explaining that."
- 7 Student says it's traitorous to be feminist and straight in some areas, it's bizarre, and these identity conversations will never end.
- 7 Student was pretty good friends with a girl during student's first year on sport's team. Student and girl were on a bus with other people, student was smacking girl's shoulder and hit girl's "boob or something," bus hit a bump, and student laughingly fell over on to friend. Everyone was looking at student funny and friend told her later that people had whispered "[interviewee]'s gay, [interviewee] is all excited because she is a dyke." Student was didn't want to be involved with friend, wasn't attracted to friend, friend was not her type and far "too straight" for student, and student wasn't hitting on her, it was a

- mistake. Student felt horrible, like some personal part of her was "put on display."
- 8 Student did not come out to a lot of women because she thought they would be threatened that she would hit on them. That was her experience when she came out to her best friend, who six months later also came out.
- 8 Some students claimed to be bi so they would to be viewed as "open-minded" by a small group of students. There were not many gay and lesbians in school and the focus was on how cool it is to be bisexual. It upset her that people claimed to be bisexual because it's not easy to do something deviant. Student saw bisexual identity as suburban kids trying to separate themselves from other people. Student is unsure what makes someone a "real" bisexual because it is more than just dating experience with more than just one gender. Student realized that she was a lesbian before she had same sex experiences. Student is clear that an "unreal bi" is claiming that identity just because everyone else was doing it. Student was pissed and annoyed that other students decided that they were bisexual because it was cool even if they never considered being with a person of the same gender.
- 9 Student and her male best friend were the only out students in her senior year. There were lots of students who were "bisexual chic" who used bisexuality as a convenient way to make themselves different, rebel against the whole high school hierarchy, and draw attention to themselves. While it was a "step down" to be a bisexual, those students saw it as a "step up" because of the attention they received. Student thinks a real bisexual is someone without a preference and who does not decide they are "going through a phase" and change their sexuality the next week. She believes bisexuals exist and she has met a few, but not at her high school.
- 10 Student came out as bi toward the end of her sophomore year. Student was a "real" bisexual because she was "having experiences" not just saying it.
- 11 Student thinks there was a backlash to the forming of the GSA from students who kidded about wanting to start a straight kids' club. Student says she is pretty liberal and a kidder herself but she thought that was annoying and showed a lack of sensitivity.
- 12 Student does not want to say that the overall climate toward people who were presumed to not be straight was hostile because she was never afraid that she was going to get beaten or attacked yet she felt that people were saying something, or making things up about her and her friends (who were a part of the ravers subculture). Students would ask them if they were a vampire cult, and make up rumors about them and crack, and about them having sex all the time.
- 14 Student's most uncomfortable moments were getting dressed for swimming because of the one or two people that she had to worry about when she had to have complete nudity in a room full of other wet, naked women. That was something that could really turn into a not okay situation because of what people would think.
- 15 Student thinks students who were comfortable with each other and always touching were acting like bisexuals even if they did not call themselves

bisexuals. Student doesn't like dating bisexual women because an "actual relationship with a woman is too intense for them." She thinks that she hasn't "adopted the identity" of a lesbian or might be told she is "not a lesbian" because a lot of lesbians wouldn't agree with her point of view that "love is love" and she would not "cheat" herself out of an opportunity for love on the basis that the person she loves has a penis.

Peers' attitudes and behaviors interfere with the development, continuation or deepening of peer relationships

- 1 School was made unsafe and awful because people misconstrued closeness between friends "however they wanted." For example, student and her friend were talked about because they were so close and spent so much time together. Students made up stories about seeing students kissing in hallway or if they wanted to say students were "sleeping with each other in the bathroom" they could, just so they had a story to tell, which might increase the storyteller's status in some groups. Student's negative experience was everyone (students) assuming whatever they wanted whenever they wanted, and people assuming she was lesbian because she was close with another woman. Basically this was used to hurt her. On a couple of occasions, student almost kissed her best friend but didn't because she didn't know if she wanted to do it and she thought it would freak out best friend.
- 2 She thinks people knew that she and her close friend were not straight and they were considered The Dykes at school. People thought that they were dating. The school was too large for everyone to know everyone else's business, but people did approach her and ask if she was dating her friend since people saw them as Lesbians and made the assumption that they were a couple.
- 3 There was a scarcity of lesbians at her school so opportunities for dating, friendship, and having someone she could identify with were limited. Most people didn't care but a small group of people who she talked to everyday stopped talking to her. Most people didn't care [about gay and lesbian], but there was one little close-minded group of students who remained that way through graduation. The group and the student just avoided each other all senior year.
- 4 Most of her friends have come around and those she lost she didn't consider friends of much consequence.
- 7 Student was didn't want to be involved with her friend, wasn't attracted to friend, friend was not her type and far "too straight" for student, and student wasn't hitting on her, it was a mistake and an assumption made by her friend. Student felt horrible, like some personal part of her was "put on display" and it felt unfair. Student didn't even know she was doing anything.
- 7 Student was discrete and pretty good at hiding her feelings for girls and didn't think her friend or anyone else could tell student had a huge crush on her apolitical friend (while student was going out with her boyfriend). Students would ask student, the friend, and their friends if student and friend liked each other and students in the school talked as if she and her friend were going out. This upset student so much because she knew this wasn't happening because

of the way she was acting but because she and her friend are gay, friends, and were always together. Neither of them hung out much with the other gay girl in school. Student was upset that students would assume that about her and her friend.

- 7 She was also upset because the interference prevented student from getting closer to her female friend because friend was "totally freaked out" by the assumptions and there was no way friend was going to get involved with student with "all that scrutiny."
- 8 Student had separate groups of friends in high school, one who knew she was gay and the other who was into academics did not. Student selectively disclosed personal information. Students thinks people she did not come out to had a lot of misconceptions about lesbians. She was afraid to come out to them because they had sheltered lives and she didn't know what they knew.
- 10 Students thought she and her best friend were dating until friend said "I'm straight" but she didn't yell it out.
- 12 Closeted students would be "super gay" and in her face at clubs, but at school they couldn't communicate with her or each other at school without making their own sexuality more suspect. She was a kind of a novelty for the honor students, like "this is our gay friend."
- 12 She became isolated from her peers although it wasn't hard because there was nothing that they did that she wanted to do with them. The isolation was harder on her when she came into her identity as an African American because she didn't have relationships with African American women because they had spent so much time isolating themselves from each other. She had to relearn how to connect and that's a whole other piece.
- 13 While student was at high school #1 student couldn't understand black people and didn't particularly like them because she was always rejected by them no matter where she went. She thinks people in general are really closed-minded and the "ghetto blacks" that she hung around with were very closed-minded because they couldn't understand the variety in her music (hip hop and alternative) or her variety in her clothes (casual and grungy). Her nonconformance to their expectations was seen as "trying to be white."
- 13 Student doesn't know if she has changed her friends. She used to only have straight friends and they didn't mind that she was gay but they didn't really talk about it.
- 15 Student had a "pretty effeminate" boyfriend she was with for 9 or 10 months. She had sex with him because she thought they would always be friends. They don't talk much any more because he has a hard time dealing with the "fact" that she is "more into girls than guys" and she is understanding.
- 15 Although student is friends with students from school, they never struck her as intellectual and she has very few "fond memories" of them. It was like there was no depth to people and "everybody wears a mask," becoming different people in and out of school.

### III. School

Heterosexual assumptions permeate schools (Heterosexual = normal)

- 2 There was no mantra but heterosexuality was so expected, so ingrained, it was barely noticed anymore.
- 2 School wouldn't let students put up safe sex pamphlets and she doesn't know why, she just thinks they were backward. She thinks the school distributed condoms but no one wanted them because it was such an embarrassing experience to go to the school nurse to get them.
- 3 Student thinks her Catholic grammar school education assumed that students were heterosexual, especially in religion class where students are taught things (like no pre-marital sex) that they later ignore.
- 4 What is learned in school is considered neutral by straights but if you're gay, or non-straight, and all you hear about are heterosexual love stories (e.g., the beautiful story about the star crossed lovers), it's negative. Everything is always assumed straight. Student thinks schools completely neglect gay and lesbian dating relationships. She asks how often students read plays that have to do with two women in love. Everything is always assumed straight. Student's college stands in contrast to her high school which wasn't diverse in any way, shape or form and diversity was not celebrated. Student totally definitely thinks that her school expected that all kids were going to be straight.
- 4 School teaches us nothing about non-heterosexuality. Particular teachers do a good job trying the best they can to bring in other opinions but they have to do it outside the curriculum (and can't force their opinions on people) but they have to be careful or they'll get in trouble.
- 5 Student thinks her high school expected everyone to be straight because being straight is "normal" to them. Student thinks schools assume students will have boyfriend/girlfriend problems but students have them in different ways than school think about it. Student thinks schools know students are sexual people but they are probably in denial.
- 6 In English class students read a poem by lesbian writer (whose name student wishes she could remember) but student thought that was a little negative because when [female] teacher brought it up, student wondered why teacher was bringing that up and student was like "who cares?." Student doesn't know why teacher brought it up. Teacher did not bring up sexuality for the straight authors, but student thinks that is probably because most people are straight. Student thinks schools orient students toward particular ways of thinking about homosexuality and heterosexuality by not talking about homosexuality and making it so "hush hush."
- 7 Human sexuality teacher did talk about orgasms and how it takes women longer to "finish" than men so a "thoughtful guy will help his partner out." All of the information in the human sexuality class was "in the confines of marriage, blah, blah, blah." Teacher told student he and his wife waited until marriage to have sex with each other. Student thought it was great that teacher

- had the courage of his convictions but, as far as she was concerned, she saw his behavior as "tantamount to advocating your religion in class."
- 7 Student's human sexuality course freshman year was taught by a fundamentalist Christian male teacher who had a gay son who was a member of GSA. Son was there as an alternate viewpoint, who brought in speakers from the ex gay ministries every year, who was "trying to come away from it" through prayer, and who saw his Christianity as incompatible with his wanting to be around gay people. (Student wishes him luck, but doesn't think prayer was working or will work because son appeared to be depressed, repressed, and very scared.)
- 8 Sex education class was taught by lesbian teacher but content was all heterosexual. Speakers talked about gay and lesbian stuff. One mandatory class that oriented students to thinking of themselves as straight involved a mock marriage to someone of the opposite sex . It was assumed students would get married. Another class assumed that everyone was going to have a child.
- 9 Student thinks school basically expected students to be straight because they never addressed the issue of gay and lesbian students. Student thinks that through their attitudes her school actively worked to create and promote a heterosexual environment and heterosexual students. The school gave the "short end of the stick" to kids who are different or "deviant." For example, she found out [through her father who teaches at the school] that last year's principal (the male one) kept a "hit list" of students who were considered homosexual or who dressed differently and several of student's friends were "called down" and questioned about a gay student who was a nice, clean-cut, academically oriented guy, who was also student's good friend. Student doesn't know why that kind of authority [meaning short end of the stick to kids who are different] is used against students except that the school is old-fashioned and wants to have a really clean cut image.
- 10 She thinks that there is a negative and a positive side to heterosexuality but that schools present only the positive side.
- 11 Student thinks that gay and lesbian students experience "different feelings of inclusion and exclusion than straight kids" because schools are run by straight people. Student thinks the situation is more "negligence" than "treachery" on the part of the administration.
- 11 Student was The Voice in her English and history classes by standing up and pointing out historical figures or authors who were gay. Student thinks teachers were amused when she spoke out and they certainly let her talk. Student's English class dealt a lot with eroticism and themes in literature and so homosexuality "obviously" came up in sexual perversion, along with other weird stuff.
- 12 The administration was run by women and very matriarchal, which she says is about right in the black community. They thought that gay male students were misunderstood cute little novelty dreaded Bohemian children so they got away with more than she did. To administrators, she was not like a woman at all, was not going to be a woman, dressed like a boy, was confused and in need of therapy because to them she was "out of her fucking mind."

- 13 Student thinks schools work to make students straight by not teaching. Student didn't get any messages in school about being a lesbian and she doesn't remember any teacher introducing the topic. Student thinks gay and lesbian issues never come up in the curriculum that is taught (e.g. Beowulf or "what's the root of x squared times whatever"). Student thinks heterosexuality comes up in the love stories in the curriculum. Schools want to come out with new classes but gay and lesbian is never brought up. Student doesn't know who is making decisions to not include gay and lesbian in curriculum but at school #3 student's friends have a lesbian course.
- 13 Student thinks that her high school expected everyone to be straight. Student jokes that the wizard behind the curtain was an individual teacher at school #4 who said a GSA was "not becoming of the school" and said there was no money to start one, yet student had a sponsor for the GSA and money wasn't needed to start one. Student thinks schools work to make students straight by not teaching.
- 14 She absolutely felt her school expected all students to be straight.
- 15 Student doesn't know that her school was that naive to think that all students would be straight but they didn't make provisions for the non-straight students.

School presented little or no information on gay and lesbian

- 1 Student did not have (access to gay and lesbian people or gay and lesbian information) in high school. In school there was a lot of silence about a lot of "stuff," including homosexuality, except for a discussion about different discriminations in an introductory social science class.
- 2 Student learned absolutely nothing about lesbianism in school.
- 3 Student never heard about Stonewall when her class studied the late '60s and she never heard about the assassination of Harvey Milk. She found this information on her own.
- 4 School teaches us nothing about non-heterosexuality.
- 5 Student did not get messages about lesbians because it wasn't really talked about in school. Teachers didn't discuss it with students because it was too controversial. Student thinks it might come up in sociology but it would not be talked about in math. It was not discussed in English or history. The message was "don't ask, don't tell." Student thinks that gay and lesbian issues are a part of growing up because everyone is going to know some one who is gay, be someone who is gay, or have a sexual relationship once or twice but schools don't help students learn about themselves; instead they spend time joking about, but not dissecting, blue dresses and the President's cigars. Student remembers discussing Ellen's coming out on t.v. in psychology class but not to a certain extent.
- 6 Student got nothing really about lesbianism in school.
- 7 School taught "zip" about lesbianism.
- 8 Student did not learn much about lesbianism in school.
- 9 Lesbians were not included in the curriculum at all. Student did not bring up heterosexism/homophobia in school because it was a "buried type of issue" that received gasps when brought up. Student never wanted to "cause trouble" because she was thinking of the flack her dad would take.
- 10 Student would solve the problems in other schools by making homosexuality a part of the curriculum without a negative tone, maybe in a special class. She thinks that there is a negative and a positive side to heterosexuality but that schools present only the positive side.
- 11 There was nothing at all official in the curriculum about lesbians.
- 12 School taught her nothing about being a lesbian and her administrators and teachers did not talk about it.
- 13 Student didn't get any messages in school about being a lesbian and she doesn't remember any teacher introducing the topic.
- 14 There was no mention of lesbianism/homosexuality in school, she jokes even Walt Whitman was just a guy.
- 15 The topic of sexuality was taboo in classes.

Teachers make negative comments about gay and lesbians; teachers are silent or won't talk about gay and lesbian issues, teachers don't stop peer harassment

- 1 In school there was a lot of silence about a lot of "stuff," including homosexuality, except for a discussion about different discriminations in an

- introductory social science class. Because it's a Catholic school, birth control was talked about but not "promoted." Unless students did their own research outside of the school they would not know that a woman they were studying in class was also a lesbian. Student thinks kids should be educated and given more information, not just why they shouldn't be doing things. She knows there is "that whole thing" about teaching kids about birth control is like telling them "to go out and have sex."
- 2 A lot of books had homosexual or homoerotic references, but there wasn't any real acknowledgment or discussion about it. Just silence. Student's school was backward not just in gay and lesbian issues but in sex ed where two days was spent on anatomy and menstruation and no information is given on how to use a condom. Student thinks teacher flew past that because teacher got really embarrassed or something. Student didn't learn much.
- 2 A couple of teachers and the deans yelled "faggot" to each other jokingly when they thought no one could hear, but everyone hears. Her explanation is that teachers yell "faggot" because they are people too.
- 2 Student thinks it is odd that the comfortable place on campus was the office of a flaming homophobe (the A.P.) who used to make comments in class such as how many more fruits there are in a local gayborhood than there are in the market.
- 2 She did not go to the prom but her friend wrote a controversial article for the school paper about cross-dressing. The "demented" student affairs administrator argued that if girls cross-dressed it would be acceptable, but if boys cross-dressed it would be bad, which made it seem like if boys cross-dressed it would be more offensive.
- 3 The word "gay" was never mentioned and she remembers the first time she found the word "sex" in a book was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 5 The hallways and the lunchroom were negative spaces because it was everyone for themselves. That's where student was called "dyke" and people looked at her and laughed when teachers weren't around. She thought it was pathetic and wore a Walkman because she didn't want to hear it and she didn't talk about people.
- 6 Student thinks schools orient students toward particular ways of thinking about homosexuality and heterosexuality by not talking about homosexuality and making it so "hush hush." Student wants to bring up a story about her English teacher, who student thought was amazing and loved a great deal. Teacher had a gay friend who teacher would talk about a lot in class. Everybody knew who he was, his name, that he lived next door to teacher, that he was a great cook and loved to shop. Student thinks teacher brought up her neighbor in class because the class was like a family, teacher would talk about what she did the day before, and the way teacher described neighbor made him seem like a character. He would sometimes be brought up in class just because he was funny. The way teacher talked about gay friend made student think teacher thought "he's gay, it's fine, who cares." When student told teacher she was going to all-women's college, the teacher said the school was great but then in a hushed voice said "but I've heard they're all lesbians." Student says teacher

- might have been joking. Student thinks it was weird that teacher even brought it up. Student guesses that she expected a different reaction from her teacher and student didn't feel the need to come out to teacher.
- 7 Student doesn't remember any moment when someone in school talked [academically] about "this person [in history, literature, etc.] is a lesbian." Student read Herman Melville in class last quarter and she would have said something before class was over if she realized that he was gay. It was never touched on but student points out that the book had homoeroticism (e.g., the title "for god's sake!"), there are no women in the story except for the ones who are peripheral, unnecessary and slighted by men, and the men are bonding, having close relationships and sleeping in the same bed. Student comments "oh, yeah, [Melville]'s straight!."
- 7 In human sexuality class, teacher [described elsewhere] was talking about homosexuality and said that a lot of people say when a guy comes out he is "gay" and "brave" but that teacher thinks it's "sad for [gay guy] because it's such a dangerous lifestyle to lead."
- 8 In suburban schools [like the one student attended] there was nothing that was specifically lesbian-related which made lesbians invisible. Topics which were focused on were all about issues dealing with AIDS and gay men but most of the people who were out were lesbians. Lesbians issues and women's health don't seem to be so big or are ignored. It may be because there are more influential gay males than lesbians and because society privileges being male.
- 8 The message in sex ed class was not to have any sex. Student thinks lesbian sex is safer than other stuff. Student thought teacher didn't want to be responsible for student behavior.
- 9 School could have been more welcoming by doing more to keep students from harassing other students because it happened all the time and school wasn't strict enough with the "homophobic bastards."
- 10 Student would solve the problems in other schools by making homosexuality a part of the curriculum without a negative tone, maybe in a special class. She thinks that there is a negative and a positive side to heterosexuality but that schools present only the positive side.
- 11 Student did not get her analysis of gay and lesbian politics from school because in school they didn't talk about gay people.
- 12 School taught her nothing about being a lesbian and her administrators and teachers did not talk about it. Student's law teacher tried to talk about gay marriage and gay adoption and how gay couples shouldn't have children because they will teach them to be gay. Students thought about her own experience and asked teacher about straight parents/gay kids. He just grumbled.
- 12 There were many examples of "little ignorances about homosexuality" that she heard from her teachers. Student had a psych teacher who was "out of her mind" and would talk about working for NASA, CIA. Student would sit in class and wonder how someone who made up facts was still teaching. In a rambling lecture, teacher said that homosexuality is a reaction to one's environment, and people who turn out gay have been hurt by the opposite sex

or have identity problems. She was staring at the student when she said that homosexuality is abnormal, needs to be worked on very hard to be sure it is stopped, and is something that individuals need to take upon themselves. She decided not to let the crazy psych teacher tell her some ridiculous thing, that she was not going to hear it. Student said "that is a bunch of bullshit," and "what school did you graduate from"? Teacher threw student out of the class. Student wound up in hallway without a pass which meant security guards would eventually come by and take her to the office and process her. Student's law teacher tried to talk about gay marriage and gay adoption and how gay couples shouldn't have children because they will teach them to be gay. Students thought about her own experience and asked teacher about straight parents/gay kids. He just grumbled.

- 12 The administration was run by women and very matriarchal, which she says is about right in the black community. They thought that gay male students were misunderstood cute little novelty dreaded Bohemian children so they got away with more than she did. To administrators, she was not like a woman at all, was not going to be a woman, dressed like a boy, was confused and in need of therapy because to them she was "out of her fucking mind." She got a lot of hostility from administrators. For example, on a day when her AP chemistry class went to meet professionals in the field of science, the head guidance counselor publicly reprimanded her by saying "you can't dress like that, and you can't be a bum. And you can't look like that and you can't just be yourself all the time." Her gay male friend was sitting beside her in the seminar, wearing the same clothes as her. She felt like she was attacked and he wasn't because he was "this adorable boy." This angered the student because the guidance counselor gave other students permission to be disrespectful to student and insulted student's intelligence. Another example is when student was chasing a "big scary lesbian" (who later became her best friend) who was running away with student's book and student accidentally almost knocked over the head p.e. teacher. Student apologized and the teacher said "hey, don't touch me. I don't play that gay shit."
- 13 Student didn't get any messages in school about being a lesbian and she doesn't remember any teacher introducing the topic.
- 14 School refused to even discuss when an obviously gay author wrote about queer themes. She particularly noticed when there was an author that the rest of the world knows is queer but the English teachers wouldn't talk about it.
- 14 Negative spaces included the dean's office, the principal's office, the classroom of her junior year algebra teacher would talk about "them fags in Vietnam.." Until that point student had separated her scholastic life from her sexuality although student always wrote term papers on gay issues (e.g., how homosexuality has influenced the media), especially in classes taught by homophobic instructors.
- 15 Sexuality was taboo in classes, except for introductory social science class, where student has heard that a teacher asked the class what they would do if their child was gay.

Students left to self-educate, form clubs, defend others, change or leave school, postpone experiences, imagine a different setting after high school

- 1 When student imagined life after high school, she saw herself going to college, majoring in science, and getting into sports/athletic training. She did not see a husband and kids. She saw the possibility of a girlfriend, but she didn't necessarily see it. She thinks it is interesting that while she usually analyzes things, she didn't analyze or think more about her imagined "possibility" of a having girlfriend after high school.
- 1 The impact of school on her is that if she had not been in such an "uptight setting" she might have realized sooner who she is, which would have been healthier. Student was not able to practice having relationships or learn from them in high school and "as stupid as those little high school relationships are, they're not" because she is learning those things now, when she is 20, in her second serious relationship, and at a different point in her life. Student felt freedom when she left high school. She didn't have a chance to figure out who she was while in high school because of where she was and what she was involvedn.
- 2 School is a powerful place that changed her world for better and for worse. People have told student that she will love college but she doesn't believe them. She doesn't want to go to college with high expectations because she figures if college turns out not to be great, she won't be disappointed. She jokes that she is now jaded and cynical, like the quote that says a cynic is an "idealist who can't deal with things." She wonders if that is a pretty bad attitude for an 18 year old to have and sees her disappointment with her high school experience as having a lot do with her present outlook.
- 2 Student doesn't think she ever looked ahead to imagine her life as a lesbian after high school. She is going to take life as it comes but she doesn't look forward to being an adult. She doesn't see herself having children and although there is an expectation she thinks it's great that she has the choice to say that having children is not what she wants to do. Student thinks lesbians are becoming more vocal about wanting to have children and it's like a babyboom in the community. But she sees lesbians getting married, divorced and/or having a baby as a lot to take on, with legal and political pitfalls. Student doesn't trust the justice system to do what would be right and she doesn't want to go there.
- 3 Student imaged her lesbian life after high school as meeting someone normal (not a crazy lesbian with a shaved head), settling down, and everything being all rosy and dandy. She did not picture herself having children. Turns out her image has changed many times, her bias against shaved lesbians has turned into love, and she brings them home to grimaces from her mom. However, she was right when she imagined her life would be harder because of the college she chose to attend.
- 3 Although the school had a lot new resources, she never thought about going to the school library for information. She imagines they have really blase books like "so, you're gay, now what do you do?" because they have books on what it means to be Asian in today's world and all that.

- 4 When student looks to the future, she sees herself in college and hopes she has a roommate who is not going to be uncomfortable with her identity. Student is going to be a minister, something she has a real passion for. She is going to have two kids and has already picked a name for the first one based on student's identification as a hippie. She wants to live somewhere out of the way but diverse, and doesn't know if she can actually find that place. She doesn't want to raise her children in a place like her nice, calm home town because it's all white and if she (half-Irish) and her boyfriend (almost full blooded Irish) "breed" their children will be "pale little ghost." Student doesn't know if she would mind being a racial minority in a different community because she already is a minority.
- 5 When student paints a picture in her mind about her future she sees happiness with whoever she is with, guy or girl. With her parents she has had the white picket fence, dog, and the guy mowing the lawn but she is going for happiness and love because that is all you really need.
- 6 When she was in school, she would picture graduating and being free and open and just going somewhere and starting over. A lot of her feels she needs an entirely new environment to change her image. Student has an image that she's going to meet some woman, fall in love, and live in a suburban home with a white picket fence.
- 6 Student learned the rule that she shouldn't challenge heterosexual space because nobody did, there wasn't a model for her to follow, and it felt like if she did something she would be out there for everyone to see.
- 6 Student thinks the impact of being denied information in school was feeling really alone and not feeling like she fit in anywhere. Through television student was getting a stereotype that in order to be a lesbian she had to be butch or be a "cult girl" who wore black all the time. Student didn't feel like she fit those stereotypes, she didn't feel like she fit in with straight people, and she didn't feel like she fit in with gay people. Student questioned "where am I?". Student thinks that if there had been more information, it would have made her feel more comfortable.
- 7 When student identified as straight or bisexual she saw herself getting engaged and married by 25 and having children. Student now questions how she can know at 25 who she will want to be with when she is 75.
- 7 Student doesn't want to go to a college like the state university because, in part, she can't stand the idea of closeting herself. She went to visit the State U. with her mother and mother was afraid student was going to get beat up by a frat boy and basically forbade student to go there, which is fine with student because student told mother she didn't want to go to school there. By going to [all women's college] student challenged the expectation that she would continue the family tradition of going to Big 10 schools. She doesn't think her family expected a woman to be the first to cross a social class line.
- 7 Visiting women's college and realizing "this is where all the dykes are" and that there was a college option where she wouldn't have to start out by telling everyone "I'm gay" and then hoping.

- 8 Student felt bad because she was not comfortable enough to defend the coach [against the insult of being called a "dyke"] and wishes she would have said "you have no right to call her this!."
- 8 Death threats made against principal (re: Diversity Week) made student think it was not safe to start a GSA.
- 8 Gays and lesbians were invisible but there was a support group that met once a week that was started by a bunch of students who got the support from a nice social worker, counselor, and two other teachers.
- 9 In her mind's eye, student saw herself as a student on a liberal college campus, surrounded by cool, liberal intellectuals. She knew that there would be no more "red necks" once she got to college.
- 10 In high school student pictured a future gay and lesbian life like the one she is now living: a very social life with lots of (primarily gay) friends in her "close circle." Ten years from now student will probably be continuing to live the life she wants. She'll still be in school (because pre-med takes a long time), living on her own with her girlfriend and away from her family.
- 11 Student imagined life after high school as the "normal life" only with a woman. The normal life includes a dog, a house, and a picket fence. Gas prices are too high to include a SUV.
- 11 Student applied to her high school because she did not fit in her home high school, she didn't feel comfortable, there were a couple of incidents of homophobia involving gay students who had come out before her and she definitely wanted to leave the home school.
- 11 The impact of not seeing herself in the curriculum made student separate her professional and scholarly life/scholarly thoughts from her personal life. Student thinks she was helped in alienating herself from her work, and through this alienation she learned to look at Truth through a different lens. She learned that there are two Truths: the one "out there," owned by History, the world, or the government, and a personal truth of certain things she knows to be true. Student doesn't know if the two Truths have made her self-righteous but she supposes it could have.
- 11 Student did not get her analysis of gay and lesbian politics from school because in school they didn't talk about gay people. She credits herself for the content and school for the analytical ability. She also credits the people she has encountered and talked to.
- 12 Student has a cheesy stereotypical image of her lesbian life after high school. She was going to have an apartment, a girlfriend, a cat, they'd cook dinners together, and go to lesbian parties, eat at lesbian restaurants and live among the lesbians. She thought she would be free to do her own thing, think about nothing but her own thing, and not have to look back. Thinking about not having to deal with her high school got her through. She doesn't know why she thought a huge lesbian community would sprout up around her and that she could live in that lesbian bubble. She is not even sure she would choose it if it was her given to her because that would be ignoring so many things. She now spends a great deal of time alone and many of her friends aren't gay.

- 12 Students weren't given anything new to work with and it felt like her education was not progressive enough.
- 12 Student wishes she had the option of leaving high school early and going directly into a free community college.
- 13 When student painted a picture in her mind about living life as a lesbian after high school, student saw an image like "Leave it to Beaver" on t.v. , even though she thought it was fake. Student can't wait to have an argument over what her 8 kids are doing, how the money is spent, and why the children can't go over to their friend's house. She can't wait for family trips to Disney World because she has never gone and she has thought about big picnics, taking her kids hiking, and putting rows in their hair while they sleep. Student was not living this type of life herself. Student wants to give her kids the knowledge that she didn't have, teach them the things she wasn't taught, instill things into them that people didn't instill her ("truth, compassion, love and all that") so they can have open minds. Student hopes that when her children get to be the age when they have their own life that they will use what she has given them so they won't become like her. Student thinks she still has a lot to learn. In 20 years student will have her house, with her 8 children, and her "wife."
- 14 Student was seriously bitter in high school because [people did not come to her aid even though] all the people knew her so well because she was involved in everything and was practically on every other page of the yearbook, so the student body was like "yeah, whatever, it's [name] that's just a part of her."
- 14 In high school student didn't know much about "gay culture" (e.g., she questioned "what the hell is a dildo?" when her mother referred to one). She thinks she was the biggest naive lesbian in the world which made her question if she was really a lesbian if she didn't know any of that stuff. What she went through was pretty hard and disturbing.
- 14 Algebra teacher was hard core, not a positive person, and knew that student was an out lesbian in school but would still talk about "fags in the military." Student was really pissed off at first, but over time she thought about how it must feel to other students who weren't out; so she had a conference with teacher and the guidance counselor and told him to stop doing it, it isn't ok and it's not fair for him to do it.
- 14 In 20 years student will have graduated from law school and will be a lobbyist, have her first trial, own a home, and have a car again.
- 14 Student always promised herself that she would be happy, confident and honest about who she is, without a doubt, and without changing a pronoun to describe the person she is with. Even though it's socially unacceptable, she's not going to restrict herself from talking about her sexuality and if someone has a problem with that she thinks "damn it, it's my right to be comfortable and happy and I'm covered under the same umbrella as everybody else."
- 15 School was oppressive and students "fell into a role in school and had to live it out."
- 15 Student left high school because she felt like an emotional, sexual and social outcast and it was not at all the place for her. (10,2E) When student left school (dropped out) "everyone knew she was not going to make it" because she was

- a student with grades that weren't great, she was going to be kicked out of honors, and she seemed like a "fuck-up."
- 15 Student's first instinct in high school was not to say anything about sexuality because she knew what she would have to deal with and that's what's makes it hard.
- 15 The impact of messages about sexuality on student was that it "became not even an option" and couples just kept quiet or went "behind closed doors" but one open, anarchist girl, who student thought was bi, had a "gay-friendly or gay pride button" among the many buttons on her bag. Student thinks people made their own choices not to be visible. Student felt sexuality was something she could "figure out when the time came" either in or out of high school when the opportunity presented itself.
- 15 Student left school and planned to complete school at home in a year then go to college.

#### Schools reflect local or regional norms

- 1 Student thinks other student's experiences are probably 50/50, good/bad. There are probably a lot of really good places to go to school and be gay and lesbian: liberal schools and boarding schools that aren't religion based that are more understanding. And bad places to go to school and be gay and lesbian: Catholic schools, small gossipy towns where everybody knows everybody. Student wouldn't wish growing up gay and lesbian in a small town on anybody and she is glad she lives in a city because there are things to do and places to meet gay and lesbian people, even though she didn't do that when she was in high school.
- 2 Student doesn't know what her ideal high school would have been like but it would not resemble her high school or the cookie cutter stuff on t.v. She contrasts these images to a "really awesome" arts-oriented high school close to her school with an established GSA, where everyone seemed so great and it had an open, happy environment. Students visited established GSAs at other high schools.
- 2 Student thinks her experience in major city is not that bad, but she doesn't know about students outside of the city.
- 3 Student thinks the situation of having teachers and a principal who are not "out" and a couple of kids who are is typical. But she also knows that at some schools, like the one a few blocks from her own, teachers and principals are out to an inner circle of people who they know either don't care or who are also involved in activism.
- 3 Student thinks private schools most definitely provide students with a point of view and those schools brag about the connection between their curriculum and their values. There is less of that at public school, which is nice because you get information from all over the place. Her school was so ethnically diverse that if a teacher slipped and said something pertaining to one culture 10 hands would go up to correct the teacher because at her school everyone was wrestling to make their point, people were interested, and people knew and cared about cultural bias. She thinks that at other schools students would get

- annoyed with a student who corrected a teacher and tell that student to "shut up, sit down" or "why are you interrupting?."
- 4 Student lives in a "really ignorant" community so the general student body and their attitudes would bring the school ranking down. She is sure people would have burned a cross right in front of her desk if they could have.
- 4 Student thinks schools and society reflect each other. School is not a bubble and is definitely a huge part of society. All the white kids in her school reflect exactly the attitudes and behaviors of the greater community.
- 5 Student doesn't think schools see their job as turning out "straight" kids. She sees schools believing their job is to educate students so they can get a job. Likewise, she sees churches as seeing their job as providing an education in regard to religion. Students learn about sexuality through youth groups and t.v. Students do not learn to be gay and lesbian, they realize it and it comes from within. Compared to more "uptight conservative" areas, HS#1 and HS#2 will let students do what they want (e.g., boys can try out for cheerleading, girls can try out for football) and those schools say "be what you want to be." Student thinks this is probably pretty unique but that it should be typical. At HS#1 and HS#2, if a boy was on the cheerleading squad things would get said, like "he's a fairy."
- 5 Student thinks the attitude of other students in schools depends on where they were brought up and what was defined as normal in their town. Student thinks that judging from her town her experience is probably common: at a small school like her HS#2 there aren't many out kids, but in bigger schools, like her HS#1, you have a "whole section," the gay guys, the lesbians, and the trendy bisexuals.
- 6 A lot of the people she meets come from high schools that had GSA's. That is such a foreign thing to her, and she tells those people she wishes she could have gone to their high school.
- 7 Although student has not been assaulted, girlfriend has been physically assaulted in rural areas where she has lived but student thinks girlfriend probably would have gotten into trouble in the city, too.
- 7 If student had not gone to her high school as the result of being the daughter of a staff member at the university, she probably would have gone to St. [name] Catholic school which is run by Jesuits so academically it is very incredibly competitive but it is also really creepy, strict, and rule bound. Student thinks that school would have been "hell" because they have a "no touching rule" which includes no high fives in the hallway and no touching people of either sex; there is high homophobia; students aren't supposed to be sexual but "inherently asexual"; and there is a really strict dress code (no clothing more than two sizes too big). Plus there is prayer before class, prayer before meets, detention is called Justice Under God and it is a closed campus. Student couldn't deal with all those rules and she doesn't do well with authority or priests. Student doesn't know the St. [name] Catholic school's thoughts on gender appropriate clothing and she doesn't want to know because she thinks it probably would make her too mad. Girls are required to wear a bra and student wonders how they enforce that rule. Student thinks the bra rule is interesting

because while she would not have gone braless before, she is now binding and that's not a bra. If student did not go to her high school or the St. somebody school, she guesses that theoretically she would have gone to [public inner-city school]. She doesn't think her parents would have put her there when she was younger because 1) she is sheltered in a lot of ways, 2) didn't have very good defense mechanisms (e.g., couldn't defend herself physically or defend herself verbally when she got upset, 3) had mood swings and cried easily for very little reason, and 4) was anxious and depressed. She "wouldn't last a minute in the public school" because people pick on these weaknesses like sharks. Student doesn't think she could last in the school now because she can't stand the idea of closeting herself.

8 High schools in suburbia assume that their students are straight because homosexuality is deviant and suburbs don't have deviants. The image of the suburb is a family, 2 ½ kids, a dog and a picket fence. Gay and lesbian happens in the city, bad neighborhood, and boys town. Homosexuality is not recognized in the suburbs because their image is of bad gay men who stalk little boys which threatens their identity as safe havens. Schools don't recognize that straight kids have sex and that there is any other sex that kids could have. Student thinks the gay rights movement affected the suburbs but schools chose to ignore it, because they can. Suburban schools can make the curriculum totally straight if they want to. Teachers can chose to discuss or not discuss gay-related themes in literature.

8 Student thinks the impact of schooling on her generation of lesbians depends on where the student went to school. In suburban schools [like the one student attended] there was nothing that was specifically lesbian-related which made lesbians invisible. Topics which were focused on were all about issues dealing with AIDS and gay men but most of the people who were out were lesbians. Lesbians issues and women's health don't seem to be so big or are ignored. It may be because there are more influential gay males than lesbians and because society privileges being male.

9 Student thinks that if she were in charge of the school, she would not restrict the activities of gay and lesbian students but beef up on security to make sure nothing happens [to same sex couples at the prom]. Student doesn't know why her principal didn't think of this solution. Student thinks principal's solution [not permitting same sex prom dates] did not serve the gay and lesbian students and may fit with the principal's attempt to maintain the reputation of the school as a place where "bad things" do not happen. Student was once called an "insinuator" and a "troublemaker" by an administrator for writing an article in the school newspaper about an intra-departmental argument.

9 Student's public school was a little island, a place where "culture never hit," that was connected to the homophobia of the greater world through the influence of religion. The school was in a very religious town, home to a college whose religious affiliation dislikes homosexuals, and high school students' homophobia was probably based on their religion and their ignorance. The school was cut off from gay and lesbian issues in the larger world as evidenced by the lack of gay and lesbian support groups.

- 9 Student thought it was rare, really weird and not at all common to have a lesbian principal and lesbian teacher living together as a couple, far from a big city, in a basically rural area. She is pretty sure it's more common in urban areas.
- 9 Student thinks teachers/principals thought they should "be quiet" about their sexuality because they were in a very closed-minded religious community, had to maintain personal appearances, and keep their jobs.
- 10 In contrast to her school, student thinks other schools worry about their reputation as "normal schools" where students can be "safe from the gays" and the board of education and the community would see the presence of gays as a loss of status for the school. District schools don't care.
- 10 Student thinks she did not have negative experiences in high school because of the large size of her school, because she did not go to school in an unaccepting, small town and because there were more classes in her school so more topics were covered.
- 11 Student thinks her high school was not the real world but probably prepared her for it. She doesn't think college will be the real world because it is a very, very sheltered place where people go and learn, unlike her "real world" summer job with "a bunch of idiots who can't do anything." Student thinks her small, boarding high school sheltered her enough to definitely get good self-confidence that will take her out to the real world and lead her to accomplish things. Student never lacked charisma but at her home high school had a hard time with her self-confidence, had no really close friends, and lacked a support base and she overcame these at her boarding school.
- 11 Her home friends [friends from her first high school] did not "talk as liberal" [as her second high school] and the town does not have a great education level so the climate was a little more closeted, a little more foreboding, scarier, but not necessarily unaccepting.
- 12 [middle school]She did not feel lied to by teachers and felt that her teachers were great, political and progressive. Even in religion class Catholicism was presented as one of many religions. Teachers were already assigning readings that she would later read in high school. It was a small school and teachers and students spent a lot of time talking to each other in class which resulted in a really good sense of self and difference.
- 12 Student's high school was a totally different place than her junior high school. High school was chaotic, loud, with people fighting and bringing guns to school. Student was "strange" to most of her fellow high school students. When student came to high school she had been a super straight A student who didn't have much problem with school. During her second year her focus was outside of school and school became secondary. School environment was very oppressive, a "pain in her ass," and she began her "rebellion" during her sophomore year. She played basketball but eventually decided that she didn't like being at school and didn't want to be a part of it anymore and so she and her friends didn't go much. She doesn't think this was a conscious decision. Within student's clique of artistic friends, most eventually dropped out of school or, like the student, barely got through. Student had to figure out how to

- graduate to please her mother. Student didn't realize at the time but has been told by others that she was part of a clique (of artists). Student's strategy for graduating was to show up only when she had to, doing just enough to get through. Student didn't go to her AP chemistry class for a month, not because it was too hard, but because it "wasn't happening." She told herself it was ridiculous to miss so much class and she told herself she needed to finish the class. When she went back to the class she was suspended for 3 days. Being pulled out of class made her feel very seriously trapped, like so many people were just trying to punish her. Student questioned the sense of taking her out of class for 3 additional days when she was trying to go back to class. Student was told that as an AP student she should be doing better. Student decided that if they didn't want her there, she didn't want to be there. In her junior year, student failed every class she wasn't interested in and passed p.e. and English.
- 12 Student's experience in her multi-cultural neighborhood made her assume that the whole world was like that. She experienced "serious culture shock" when she got into high school and found a whole different set of rules set for her by her "own people." Student went to high school in a very segregated city where there are strong ethnic neighborhood identities and everyone stays in their own part. The rules included having black friends not friends who were white or different, singing in the choir, and playing sports. Student felt like she was supposed to do these things but it contrasted with how she grew up.
- 12 Student thinks the schools' openness to gay and lesbian teachers depends on where the school is, so schools in New York, Provincetown, California, and places where a lot of the population is gay will have more out teachers in comparison to the area student lives in.
- 12 The administration was run by women and very matriarchal, which she says is about right in the black community. They thought that gay male students were misunderstood cute little novelty dreaded Bohemian children so they got away with more than she did. To administrators, she was not like a woman at all, was not going to be a woman, dressed like a boy, was confused and in need of therapy because to them she was "out of her fucking mind." She got a lot of hostility from administrators.
- 13 Student thinks the schools' openness to gay and lesbian teachers depends on where the school is, so schools in New York, Provincetown, California, and places where a lot of the population is gay will have more out teachers in comparison to the area student lives in.
- 13 Student thinks school climates toward gay and lesbian depends on where the school is and you never know in advance if a school is going to be open-minded or closed-minded or if they are going to like you or not. She thinks if a school starts off with a lot of variety then it will finish with a lot of variety but some schools don't get that much variety.
- 13 Some teachers today will go on strike because they aren't getting any money and other teachers (schools 2, 3, and 4) cuss at students in the classroom. Student thinks teachers today are different than the teachers in the "olden days" who cared about their students and student wants teachers back in the school who love to teach no matter what, who really love the kids, and who can help

- kids with problems. Teachers are stupid, not trying to teach, and worried about their paychecks. Student thinks teachers are supposed to be working for change and that's how they were "back in the day." Student thinks city teachers stopped caring because students stopped caring and it's sad.
- 14 Student thinks her experience has been different from other lesbian students she knows because most times the student body and the administration have been more negative at other public schools. In her case there were one or two people (as there always are) but the rest of the students were pretty positive, but it was the administration and teachers who were very negative, which makes a different kind of twist.
- 14 Student says that in a perfect world, in 20 years from now English teachers will say "this is a transgendered/lesbian author" and gay history would be included in American history courses (e.g., this person, Barney Frank, was the first out such and such). However, student doesn't honestly see this happening in the town she grew up in; it would be lucky to get "Walt Whitman was a gay man" in there.
- 14 You get the whole gamut of teachers, sometimes you get the "Jesus freak," sometime you get the "Barney Frank" teacher. In a conservative town and school, you tend to find conservative teachers, not Sandy the granola lesbian or Pierre the ballet dancer. Student thinks schools are definitely just like society rather than isolated little bubbles. Student thinks teachers are like the "dysfunctional diplomats" between students and the outside world. She thinks that everything that goes on in the outside (racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, religious bias) goes on within a school and is magnified like a 100 times because it's younger people who aren't as informed and don't have access to the outside world like adults do. Societal influences in a town really bend and shape the ways things are in school. Student has friends whose schools have GSAs even though they go to conservative schools because they live in a very liberal town. When student brought up the idea of a GSA it started a massive scandal in her town, like "not here, not in our town."
- 14 Student grew up in very conservative, religious, very white republican Catholic family which means her parents were very racist and biased against anybody who is not white republican Catholic. Both in her house and in the town you lose face if you were a registered democrat. Parents had very set goals and values and expected the family (8 children) to follow them accordingly. Student says parents were based in the sort of "Jerry Falwell school of thinking only with a Catholic twist" meaning "you're going to sit down and tell us all your sins so that you can be forgiven."
- 14 Everybody from the town went to student's high school and that's how everybody got to know where you are from and that's where caste system becomes such a big deal. Student remarked that it was interesting to see that academic tracks were also broken down by geographic distinctions (e.g., students in AP and honors from more economically sound neighborhoods, and lower level and ESL courses were taken by people who live in less economically sound areas). Student jokes that her high school alumni association would want to get rid of transcripts. Societal influences in a town

- really bend and shape the ways things are in school. Student has friends whose schools have GSAs even though they go to conservative schools because they live in a very liberal town. When student brought up the idea of a GSA it started a massive scandal in her town, like "not here, not in our town."
- 15 Student thinks it is hard to say how common her experience in private school is because the dropout rate is not very high; but she thinks the restrictiveness is definitely common. Student thinks her city is gay friendly and has a lot of places to go if you are gay.
- 15 Student knows people who were out at a local public school in the suburbs and didn't run into much trouble. Student has two friends in a private school who were dating, class was "against them," and they became "outcasts." Student's friend who came out in high school was met with a combination of people who were fine and people who disrespected friend's trust.

### Negative School Experience

#### Related to peers

- 1 Student jokes that she rejects everything but the friendships. Student's negative experience was everyone (students) assuming whatever they wanted whenever they wanted, and people assuming she was lesbian because she was close with another woman. Basically this was used to hurt her.
- 3 Student rejects the second term of junior year when she was outted to the school. Prior to that she was hanging out with her m/f friends who were dating so she was "forced to hang out with his stupid friends." She was coming out and simultaneously dealing with "negative reactions from these idiots." It was stressful and panned out to her whole life. The only other negative experience student had was when an "idiot, probably a freshman" tore down GSA flyers, but this did not personally affect her. The only experience that marred her high school experience was when a male student (her friend) outted her to the entire school to get at his ex-girlfriend (also her friend) because he figured that would get at his ex more than anything else. Most people didn't care but a small group of people who she talked to everyday stopped talking to her.
- 4 Student rejects the "whole ignorance thing." One day when the popular girl got "really bitchy" to the student and called her a dyke, the student "went mad house" on her and made a comment to her about not wearing underwear. The day after the incident she ended up being in class with the popular girl who "started with the 'carpet muncher' comments" and kept on going until she had the entire class, except for one friend of the student's who was in the class and identified as gay but was closeted, making snide remarks. Student went outside and cried and was really angry. It was one of the few times she almost started a fight, though she has been in quite a few.
- 5 Student does not reject any of her high school experience because it was all a learning experience and she is growing from the things that she hated most. Student doesn't have a lot of negative stories to tell or a huge horror story. But she most hated her freshman year when she didn't know where she belonged in school, at a lunch table, at home, at work, in an activity, and she felt like she didn't belong anywhere. Student's negative experience was certain people not

talking to her because of her sexuality. She didn't get much said to her face but students would tell her what other students said about her. Student thinks her negative experiences were influenced by the narrow minds of other students. She thinks if a student has narrowminded parents, the student has a better chance of being narrowminded. She thinks there are a lot of narrowminded people who are used to their own thing and who aren't used to change or difference.

- 5 Student's negative experience was certain people not talking to her because of her sexuality. She didn't get much said to her face but students would tell her what other students said about her.
- 6 Student didn't have an overtly negative experience in high school because she wasn't really out in high school and everyone she has told has been said that's great and fine. Student can think of a general thing that was a negative experience: Student wasn't really sure who she was and she would walk down the halls in school and "torture" herself with thoughts. She would look at men and women and "torture" herself with questions: Who am I looking at? Who am I attracted to? Am I attracted to him? Am I attracted to her? Student would walk down the hall with her best female friend and in a sing-song voice say "I am messed up, I am messed up." Friend would look at her and ask what student was talking about and student would say "I am messed up." Student can think of one specific negative experience: student remembers a girl running down the hall screaming "If that dyke looks at me one more time like that, I'm gonna fucking beat her up." This happened while student was walking down the hall with her friend, who was friends with the only out lesbian in school, and student thinks the yeller may have been talking about friend's friend.
- 7 Student was pretty good friends with a girl during student's first year on sport's team. Student and girl were on a bus with other people, student was smacking girl's shoulder and hit girl's "boob or something," bus hit a bump, and student laughingly fell over on to friend. Everyone was looking at student funny and friend told her later that people had whispered "[interviewee]'s gay, [interviewee] is all excited because she is a dyke." Student was didn't want to be involved with friend, wasn't attracted to friend, friend was not her type and far "too straight" for student, and student wasn't hitting on her, it was a mistake. The other part of the confusion was whether friend was gay because she was very popular and desirable by both genders and can play on the heterosexual privilege when she wants to. Student felt horrible, like some personal part of her was "put on display" and it felt unfair. Student didn't even know she was doing anything. Student thinks how she was treated ties in with the idea that a guy and a girl can't be friends without "someone going on" between them. Straight people don't understand when student says a woman is not her type because the woman is "too straight." Student responds with question and answer: "Would you fall for a flaming gay man? No, you wouldn't."
- 8 Student had a negative experience when somebody wrote "dyke" on a friend's locker and insulted a coach by referring to her as a dyke. Student felt bad

- because she was not comfortable enough to defend the coach and wishes she would have said "you have no right to call her this!." There was a hurtful anti-gay undercurrent that you couldn't see but it was there.
- 9 Student's negative experiences included a "red neck" taunting her by saying she looked like Melissa Etheridge; crappy shoes that she was planning to replace being stolen from her locker; and being harassed in gym.
- 9 The most uncomfortable place was the women's locker room which was awful, although student knows the men's locker room was 10 times worse. Student was harassed, not in any outward way, but by the rude things other women would say and do, as if they thought that student would get "all hot and bothered" when they undressed.
- 10 Student would like to exclude the memory of the people, probably the Christians or the jocks, who tore down the poster. Though it wasn't loud or said, it was known that they were the negative ones.
- 11 Negative experiences were problems with homophobia. Students wrote "homo" on the dorm of her friend and he didn't talk much about it so she guesses it was no big deal. Student thinks there was a backlash to the forming of the GSA from students who kidded about wanting to start a straight kids' club. Student says she is pretty liberal and a kidder herself but she thought that was annoying and showed a lack of sensitivity. Student thinks there were some students who were insensitive but the vast majority of students were very receptive to the GSA.
- 13 Student's gay male friend asked for her help because he had said something to one of the boys in the locker room and friend was going to get beat up by the boy.

#### Related to teachers and administrators

- 1 Student rejects the structure, the petty rules.
- 2 Student most rejects teachers who claim to be professionals but who hated to teach, didn't want a career in teaching, didn't like their students, had no interest in what they were teaching, and were just kind of stuck. She had no interest in being taught by them. Going through the process of forming the SGA club with the administration was not a positive experience.
- 5 The hallways and the lunchroom were negative spaces because it was everyone for themselves.
- 8 Student was angered when teachers heard but did not intervene in homophobic and sexist name calling in the classrooms.
- 9 Student rejects the school's censorship of things that the school wasn't willing to admit went on for the sake of public image. Student's attempt to write for school paper kept getting stymied and that especially "pissed" her off.
- 9 At the time, student didn't want to tell a teacher [about harassment from other students in the locker room] because student was in the closet and she didn't want it to get back to her dad because it would be weird for her to have him know about her "whole life" even though she thought he would be supportive. Student doesn't think gym teacher knew about harassment until she "told her" [with note], then student was out of p.e. and then it "wasn't a big deal."

- 11 Student had a negative experience that turned out okay. Student has a reputation for being able to get herself out of any trouble that she got herself into and she doesn't like rules, tries to break them, and thinks she needs to get over that. There was a staunch rule that students were not allowed to have cars on campus (could result in expulsion) but student's mom would pick her up and student would bend the rules by using the car to return to school and take her friends out. Usually students were able to find a resident counselor to take them to a gay and lesbian youth meeting and pick them up 3 hours later. (RC's were not permitted to use the school van because that counted as funding.) Student and 2 friends could not find a RC to drive them, so they left without signing out, drove the 3 miles from school to the gay and lesbian meeting, student's two friends were spotted getting out of the car by an RC and called down to the office after the 10 p.m. check, and received a week sign-out restriction. Student got an e-mail from her RC the next day asking what had happened while the RC was away. Student wrote a page and a half e-mail about what she did, the reasons she did it, the lack of funding, the lack of support, how students have to turn to their own defenses, and if the RC was going to punish her then the RC should just do it but that she did it for the right reasons. RC never responded. Student thinks RC agreed with student and just shoved it under the rug because students weren't out "joyriding and getting ice cream." RC was very supportive and had taken students to gay and lesbian meeting several times. Students who got in trouble were amazed that student did not and student was pretty proud of herself and jokes that it is all about the manipulation of communication.
- 12 Student thinks it is sad that she has so many negative experiences and had to struggle to find one positive one to discuss in the interview. She thinks that imbalance really captures her high school experience. Student has been processing her high school experience for the past couple of years and she is beginning to realize how negative it was. She thinks about how she could have done better in school, not gotten herself into situations, if she had more positive experiences with adults and students. But there was a hard issue: she knew no adult would support her if a student were to do something to her.
- 13 The worst part about high school was attending high school #2 where a teacher made it horrible. School #3 wasn't all that bad.
- 14 Student's worst experience related to sexuality was being rejected by so many adults when she came begging, sobbing, and crying for help. These were the same adults who had pledged to be there for her and whose job it was to take care of her, but said "nope, sorry, nope, no" without any consequences to themselves for not fulfilling their responsibilities to her or not doing their jobs.
- 15 Student's worst experience, when she knew she had to "get out of there," was immediately after a death in the family. Student informed school of the death and her need to take time off. When she returned two weeks later she asked her math teacher for an additional day to study before a test and teacher said she had to take the test with everyone else. Student was livid, went to her advisor, asked if the teacher had been informed of the death, which teacher

had. Student told advisor that she was upset with the teacher's treatment. Student took and failed the test. Student most rejects "being in it."

#### Heterosexually-identified students acquire greater benefits in school than non-heterosexually-identified students

- 1 Straight girls had the benefit of being surrounded by people who were like them. Student thinks that an out lesbian at her school would have to have someone else or she would, without a doubt, leave.
- 1 Straight girls have no worries about receiving an unimaginable emotional battering.
- 1 Student and her straight female friends were all very touchy feeling, hugging and kissing each other but student thinks that if someone in the room was gay and lesbian, then some of the touchy feel-y friends probably would not kiss them because they would be scared of them or something. (Ally agrees.)
- 2 One drawback to being lesbian in school is that, without knowing you, people will think you are dirty, evil, or will harm their children and you carry a lot of fear and shame around the first couple of years. It's an additional burden that gay and lesbian students have to carry around.
- 2 Gay and lesbian kids also have to go through the process of coming out, which is not fun.
- 3 There's a lot straight students don't have to worry about. Student thinks straight people don't have the inner turmoil that non-straight students have (e.g., should I tell this person I'm straight?, will they hate me?, am I gonna get beat up). Straight students don't know they get any benefits until it is brought to their attention.
- 4 The drawbacks to being non-straight is getting beat up. Student thinks that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. Even though at first glance she looks like a weak person, and has 30 self-inflicted scars on her arm, she is one of the strongest people ever because she's been through so much.
- 5 Straight students benefit because they get to learn more about themselves; it is more talked about; and they learn about famous people like themselves. It's like people learning about their religion. Student thinks straight students get the benefit of being more themselves because they don't have a "big lie hanging on their shoulders" and they [girls] don't have to go on dates [with boys] just so other people think they are "quote, unquote normal." Gay and lesbian students don't get to know much about their own (gay and lesbian) background. Student doesn't know much about her own gay and lesbian background and she doesn't think it is right that students don't get to learn that. Student thinks gay and lesbian students can't be themselves and that that's a shame.
- 6 Student thinks the benefits of being straight in high school are being able to talk about relationships with people. Being able to walk down the hall holding hands and nobody will look at you like "what the hell are you doing?" [Straight students] totally fit in everywhere. Student thinks society accounts for the freedom straight kids have in school to learn about relationships and the lack of that same space given to gay and lesbian kids.

- 8 Student thinks one difference between lesbians and straight kids is that gay and lesbian students have to decide whether to tell the truth or lie about who they have been out with whereas straight kids don't. Straight couples get the benefit of holding hands and making out in the hallway and you rarely see lesbians doing this and never gay men. Same sex couples didn't have much problem at the prom.
- 9 Straight people fit in, could date people and show physical affection. There were no lesbians to date so she dated straight women who considered it a lark. She thinks that if she were straight she wouldn't have dated because the pickings were so slim.
- 11 Student thinks one difference between straight female students and lesbian students in school is that it is harder for lesbians to have personal relationships with teachers if the student is worried about the teacher finding out the student is lesbian or has a girlfriend. Student thinks personal relationships can be the most influential but that lesbians and all gay people are alienated from having them. Another difference between straight students and gay and lesbian students was the absence of funding for the GSA because it was a "controversial issues" club.
- 11 The most obvious difference between straight students and gay and lesbian students was the social events. Student is a big social kind of person not but was not in high school because she didn't think she "fit the mold" and if a student didn't fit the mold, she didn't fit in. Student never wore dresses, never wanted to go to the dances. She was not physically excluded but she felt excluded from a lot of the social activities that went on.
- 11 Student thinks straight students got the normal benefits, including feeling more comfortable. Students thinks gay and lesbian student get relegated to the outskirts and put with all the "Leftist, crazy people." There were not really any right wing gay and lesbian students.
- 12 Heterosexual high school students probably get the advantage of more self-esteem. It is less stressful for heterosexual women to fit in because they don't have that thing telling them they never will. She thinks heterosexual women have better self-esteem because they get their beauty reaffirmed without even being told. She thinks that straight women probably examine themselves constantly to fit into a mold from the magazines but gay women also struggle with why they have to look a certain way and heterosexual women can just go with the flow and blend right in. From her experiences with her straight younger sister student realizes that heterosexual women have image issues but she doesn't think her sister has as much of a female/feminine issue (what is a woman? What is a woman supposed to be? How is a woman supposed to look?) as she has from high school.
- 12 What students wrote in her yearbook made her feel larger than life, they glamorized her life. When they wrote that "she was so real, all the time" she wants to know if they realize how hard that was and how they didn't make it any easier for her. They didn't realize that coolness came with a backlash. They were safe, they didn't get attacked, they didn't have to hold their ground.

- Students only saw that she looked together and thought that was easy for her, but it was not.
- 13 Straight students get the benefits of clubs and social activities in school. Gay and lesbian students are not getting these benefits because schools don't want to bring it up because it is a hot and sensitive topic, people are homophobic, scared, and stupid. Student thinks it is stupid when somebody doesn't want to learn about what they don't know and somebody else is offering to teach them.
- 14 Straight kids definitely had non-verbal benefits because they didn't have to feel uncomfortable with the high school vernacular (e.g., "you're a fag, you're a this or a that"). She thinks those kind of remarks are just as bad as walking around shouting racial remarks to people.
- 14 Straight kids didn't have to worry about basic things like getting dressed for gym. Student's most uncomfortable moments were getting dressed for swimming because of the one or two people that she had to worry about when she had to have complete nudity in a room full of other wet, naked women. That was something that could really turn into a not okay situation because of what people would think.
- 14 In the future she thinks it won't be such a big deal for same sex couples to go to the prom but she thinks they will still have to pick and choose moments when they hug in the hallways, whereas straight kids don't have to. She has some faith that it will change.
- 15 Student thinks it is hard and a disadvantage for students who are out (but a lot harder for the students who are not out, who are still questioning in their heads) to see straight couples kissing and hugging at school, on the street, and at home.

#### Schools monitor and restrict gay and lesbians students

- 1 There are strict rules around prom dates so same sex dates wouldn't happen (no alumni, no girls from other schools). You could split a ticket with someone from the same school, so unless juniors and seniors were dating, there was "no way to pull it off" (i.e., go as a female couple). For the most part student liked the people but she didn't like the school because the structure was twisted and screwed up, with many "really stupid rules" and not enough attention paid to the important things. The "biggest issues" were socks not covering ankles, skirts that were too short, and blouses not being tucked in. The school would take away, or threaten to take away things if students didn't do "exactly what the school wants you to do." For example, students might get their diploma but not be allowed to graduate with their class and students were told "we won't let you do the prom if you do this or that." A lot of the rules were inconsistent, for example, a friend (who has the lesbian older sister) had a baby in spring semester of her senior year and still graduated with her class. Student thought the rules and inconsistent enforcement was "stupid."
- 1 She rejects the rigid structure, the petty rules. Student doesn't know that the rules restricted who she could become because while hair couldn't be dyed a weird color, for the most part students could do whatever they wanted to their hair. Student could have worn a rainbow necklace to school if she wanted to

- because no one would have noticed ("it wouldn't have triggered"), but couldn't have worn her goddess necklace. She had access to the internet at school but it was "very watched over." Student jokes that school kept a list of websites students visited and fingerprinted the keyboard.
- 2 Going through the process of forming the club with the administration was not a positive experience. "Demented" administrator attacked the student who was the founding member of the GSA by stating all of the restrictions on the GSA. Student says the situation was ridiculous. Student thinks the ½ year it took to start the GSA was too long as most clubs start once they have an advisor and signatures. She doesn't know how long it should take, but blames the administrator for delaying the formation of the GSA. Student says administrator had no life, that the school was her life and that this is sad. One tactic used by administrator to keep it a straight school was to assert that the GSA should be part of the diversity club, suggesting there was no need for the GSA. Student's article on schools' attempt to derail the GSA were edited. Student wrote about administration being difficult, how they were main barrier, and drew a comparison between the quick start-up time of the art club and the longer start up time of the GSA which had the same advisor.
- 4 The one word student has for new male principal during student's junior and senior years is "Nazi." Principal was not really a Nazi, but he used to be in the military, is bald, has strong features and is a tyrant. New principal hassled Behavioral Specialist through student's junior year but they still had the large GSA split into three groups and BS still ran 22 groups. In student's senior year BS had 5 groups and principal picked what kind of groups they were and who was in them. BS's job was made into 75% paperwork and students weren't allowed in her office unless it was a study hall. Student did not have a study hall because she had 7 classes. BS left the high school because of principal.
- 4 The best friend, his mother, and the principal were interviewed by the newspaper. The principal said he was fully in support of the GSA and his gay students. But then principal shut down the GSA.
- 5 A week before her presentation the principal was going to cancel it because it was a controversial topic. Student "bitched and moaned and complained" (e.g., student told principal that if her presentation was canceled she would not graduate because she was not going to start all over on a new senior project). The principal and student decided that students who wanted to attend her presentation at the school-wide assembly in the auditorium had to get parental permission slips signed, which student thinks is lame because students don't have to go to senior projects and she didn't think a lot of students would go because of her topic.
- 9 She thought it was a crime that the school didn't have a gay support group because there were a lot of students who needed it.
- 9 Student thinks for their own safety the lesbian principal did not allow same sex dates to go to the prom after a boy came to the prom in a dress and "got his ass beat." She thinks the principal's restriction on gay kids was strange but was the result of a real concern because there were some "real morons" in the school. Student would not have placed the restriction.

- 9 Student didn't want to be in p.e., thought it was good that she got out of class because she was gay, and did not feel restricted by not attending p.e. .
- 9 Student thinks the choices given to gay and lesbian youth who are being harassed in school are similar to the choices given to gay and lesbian in the military. Gay and lesbian students have two choices: remove themselves from the situation or stay and risk the consequences. Student thinks this situation is not right. At the same time she wouldn't want to see her friends get beat up so it may be the best choice to have them leave.
- 9 Student thinks that if she were in charge of the school, she would not restrict the activities of gay and lesbian students but beef up on security to make sure nothing happens [to same sex couples at the prom]. Student doesn't know why her principal didn't think of this solution. Student thinks principal's solution [not permitting same sex prom dates] did not serve the gay and lesbian students and may fit with the principal's attempt to maintain the reputation of the school as a place where "bad things" do not happen. Student was once called an "insinuator" and a "troublemaker" by an administrator for writing an article in the school newspaper about an intra-departmental argument.
- 11 Another difference between straight students and gay and lesbian students was the absence of funding for the GSA because it was a "controversial issues" club. Student thinks the school would have been sued if they had done that to a club like the Asian American Student Association. There was a staunch rule that students were not allowed to have cars on campus (could result in expulsion) but student's mom would pick her up and student would bend the rules by using the car to return to school and take her friends out [to gay and lesbian student activities in the community]. RC's were not permitted to use the school van because that counted as funding.
- 14 School also encouraged students to think about themselves as hetero by not forming GSA because they thought there was only one glt student there so it wasn't necessary.
- 14 She did have some negative experiences with students; for example she took her girlfriend to her senior prom, they were the first gay and lesbian couple in the school's history to buy tickets and go the prom and there was a big discussion about whether it would be allowed to happen but student said it was her constitutional right and threatened to take the school to court just as she had taken her parents. She confronted the principal, dean and school board, saying "you need to respect me because I am still your student and I'm not a minor anymore" (she was 18). So they let it happen and people at school were incredibly supportive and pleased.
- 15 School was very overtly oppressive. For example, if a student was not living with parents or legal guardians, she could not graduate. The implication was that if students were living with boyfriends they would not graduate but students who were "kicked out" of their parents houses were also unable to graduate and student thinks that is outrageous, narrow-minded, and the worst thing to do to somebody. The message student got from her school was that lesbianism was wrong; that the restriction on PDA on school premises resulted from two women who were caught kissing.

Compliance by adults in school maintains the heterosexual status quo

- 1 There are lines teachers/advisors can't cross and when they do they hear about it. Two examples: STD's were a focus in health classes but teachers didn't want students to ask too many questions because even though they were trying to protect students, teachers weren't supposed to "endorse" students' sexual behavior; student knew from other teachers that her advisor did not return to her job because she was not married when she got pregnant. (Student had many advisors in her four years). Decisions about what students are learning are made by the archdiocese, the principal and department head.
- 1 Lesbianism can be "hidden" (unlike pregnancy) and people "can't necessarily tell" by looking and students could be told that they "shouldn't be talking about this. There are freshmen here that are only 13 and 14 years old and they shouldn't be exposed to that..."
- 1 Student did not have a teacher who tried to give her more information than the curriculum demanded. She is not saying teachers are completely behind the school and supporting the way it is, but they are working there and teachers' jobs are on the line. Teachers who try to "take that step" (and make change) get shot down and it's hard for teachers to get to the point of being the "one controlling it rather than taking commands." Student doesn't understand why the lesbian teacher took a job at her school because student could never work there, would never want to condone any of that, could never teach something and leave things out just because her boss told her to, could never ask students to find information somewhere else (or the hard way). She doesn't see the point of not stating all of the facts, so she wouldn't be there, she wouldn't do it, she thinks it's wrong, and it's plain and simple: "Systems like that screw up people like me."
- 2 Student asked teacher's male co-worker if teacher was a lesbian and he confirmed. But the next day he pushed her into a room right before a test and firmly told her not to tell anyone. She was not intending to tell anyone. His reaction showed her how serious the situation was, yet she questions how serious it would be if more people knew because there is an openly lesbian and openly gay male teacher.
- 3 Teachers think school is a bubble and this mind set is reflected by what happens in school, for example: student notices that problems get nicely ignored; controversial current issues are not brought up in class; teachers are afraid that students will get out of hand so they discuss non-controversial issues because no one is going to get emotional and start a "ruckus"; fights get ugly when discussing modern issues and there is a real disagreement that goes down to the family members and how students were raised (can get religious in nature); and teachers are kept in line by "50 parents" appearing at their door when they say something that can be considered "off color."
- 4 School teaches us nothing about non-heterosexuality. Particular teachers do a good job trying the best they can to bring in other opinions but they have to do it outside the curriculum (and can't force their opinions on people) but they have to be careful or they'll get in trouble. Messages about gay and lesbian in

school depended on who student was around. The official curriculum had absolutely no messages about gay and lesbian. Teachers had (supportive) messages in their "personal speeches."

- 6 There is a lot of silence because gay and lesbian is "such a controversial thing" student guesses that it is just easier for people to ignore it than risk "pissing people off" (by addressing it). Student thinks that public schools don't want to say "be accepting of gay people" because they don't want to piss off religious people.
- 6 Parents were pissed about diversity awareness week and female principal got death threats. The event was made this sort of gay (there was a panel of gays) but not really, cultural diversity week.
- 8 Student doesn't know who is making the curriculum but thinks the school board has something to do with it and that teachers probably just go along with it. Suburban schools can make the curriculum totally straight if they want to. Teachers can chose to discuss or not discuss gay-related themes in literature.
- 9 The "sex program" was "horrible" because the teacher was religious, believed in and taught abstinence, and did not support the students' efforts to distribute condoms because it would "promote sex." Student thinks teacher presented this "insane" perspective because of the religious community and the leeway from the principal to teach whatever he wanted.
- 12 Student feels she did not get a good education. She feels the teachers were not allowed to teacher her the truth because they had to teach her what the Board of Education wanted her to know. The result was spending 8 years reading the Constitution, learning basic American history, math, chemistry and the same old authors in English (Chaucer, Canterbury Tales, Shakespeare).
- 12 Student recalls one teacher who she had a very good relationship with (babysat for teacher, hung out after school) who fought hard with the administrators to teach something other than what the Board of Education dictated. This was an isolating experience for the teacher and she did not get much support from her co-workers.
- 13 Student thinks teachers are homophobic and don't want to bring things up because it causes too many problems. Student thinks lesbian high school students can't get GAY AND LESBIAN information now because schools are scared of sharing that information and they don't have any common sense because they think that if students had this information they would run right out and "become gay." She jokes that their idea is "one book and you turn them gay" and while this is laughable the funny thing is that they actually might burn all the books.

Gay and lesbian teachers fear being being outtedridiculed or fired, no openly gay and lesbian adults in school, only rumors

- 1 She thinks the school probably "came up with something" else (not related to sexuality) when they asked a lesbian teacher not to return to her job. Student is sure she could find out what happened.
- 1 No one was out in student's school, not the kids, adults, principal or nuns. Only other gay and lesbian people student knew about were adults [outside of

- school]. Student knew that she could be a gay teenager but she didn't know where the other ones were or how to find them.
- 2 Student thinks coming out at school is a really huge issue for teachers because their jobs are at stake. Student would have wanted more openly gay and lesbian teachers but thinks fear of their losing jobs prevented it. For example, she thinks the teacher who took a leadership role in the club did so because it wouldn't matter if he got fired because he was close to retirement.
- 3 Student doesn't think there were many gay and lesbian teachers, maybe one or two but they were not out.
- 3 Student recalls one teacher who "just has to be gay" but thinks teachers were not out because that would be risking trouble or a lawsuit if "one stupid parent" decides to say something. She thinks the (closeted) gay teacher doesn't want to be in trouble with the new principal or with the students who like to disrupt teachers they don't like.
- 5 Student thinks teachers are risking their professional lives, all those years of schooling, and getting fired by ignorant people if they come out. Student thinks that people don't understand that being gay and lesbian and being a teacher are not incompatible. She thinks that same thinking would prevent a gay and lesbian president from ever coming out of the closet because America would think that is wrong because he would "teach us to have sex with men, not how to help China out."
- 5 There were no out teachers.
- 5 Student talked to a teacher about her future work [with children] and learned from the teacher that it is hard to be a teacher and an out lesbian.
- 6 Student doesn't know of any out adults at school and there were no hints that any adults were gay and lesbian. There was one gym teacher that was joked about, but student doesn't know.
- 6 She doesn't know a whole lot about the issue [gay and lesbian teachers] but she thinks gay and lesbian teachers don't come out because of a fear of getting fired.
- 7 Lesbian principal wouldn't officially announce her position on the GSA because she felt she had to stay "neutral" and student thinks that's wrong. Principal doesn't hide that she is a lesbian but doesn't have a picture of her partner up, only pictures of her kids, which student thinks is sad. Student gets a "vibe" that her advisor has a partner but he doesn't have a picture of the person she is "pretty sure" is his partner up. Student thinks the faculty isn't out because the lesbian principal doesn't really talk about it and principal makes it a non-issue. Student thinks a lot of the gay and lesbian faculty feel they can't be supportive of gay and lesbian issues because that would make it seem like they are "siding." Student thinks it might be better to have a straight principal rather than a lesbian principal. Next year's principal is a straight, white male, principal and student thinks it is going to be interesting. Student thinks a straight principal would have more freedom to be supportive because he already has his "niche" and doesn't have to fight for it, he won't have to keep up a facade, and it's easier to be accepting of "deviation" if you know your place or your position is secured. Student thinks a lot of straight white men are

more accepting than people give them credit for, yet she doesn't understand why a lot of straight white men have an "attitude toward everyone who is different" because she can understand the "threat to their position" but they have had power for so long that it is not going to go away just because they are accepting of someone who is different. Student thinks that it might or might not be a threat to the new principal if he supports gay and lesbian students and faculty. The new principal will be under a lot of scrutiny by everyone during his first year because high school is an elitist school with wealthy parents who want to support the status quo and the parent's association has a lot of weight. Student thinks this is really sad and she thinks it will be hard for him to break away from the parents' association and gain the freedom to do stuff. Student thinks there was a lot of pressure for lesbian principal to stay in the closet because while lesbian principal acknowledged her lesbianism by not trying to lead a heterosexual or celibate lifestyle, at the same time lesbian principal never talked about it. A lot of lesbian principal's decisions were not supported by the Director and faculty feel mistrustful of her because of how she handled certain things so student thinks there was a feeling that lesbian principal didn't really have the "power to lead in that way" and a lot of faculty members didn't feel comfortable coming out. Student thinks gay and lesbian movement is one of the few movements where students have to be the leaders and student thinks that is sad and wrong. Student's school stopped being experimental a long time ago and the principal changes every couple of years.

- 7 Student thinks the faculty isn't out because the lesbian principal doesn't really talk about it and principal makes it a non-issue. Student thinks a lot of the gay and lesbian faculty feel they can't be supportive of gay and lesbian issues because that would make it seem like they are "siding."
- 8 Gays and lesbians were invisible. At pride parade, everyone seems proud, gay, and everything, but even though teachers went they were kind of hiding.
- 8 It would have been great if teachers would be political and out without losing their jobs. Student thinks teachers were not out because of job security and how the community, which was religious and conservative, would react.
- 9 A very Christian teacher who was uptight about losing her job told students not to write about gay and lesbian in the school newspaper. Student thinks teachers/principals thought they should "be quiet" about their sexuality because they were in a very closed-minded religious community, had to maintain personal appearances, and keep their jobs. There were no out teachers and student guesses there were 3 gay and lesbian teachers, probably more. The gay and lesbian teachers definitely tried to hide. Some teachers were not discreet and "made mistakes." For example, students discovered the "secret" that the female principal and a female teacher were living together because a magazine with the principal's name on it had the home address of the teacher. This same teacher also decorated her walls with rainbows and the "lesbian symbol" of the dolphin.
- 10 There were no out teachers, and a p.e. teacher who was rumored to be gay. Student thinks that even though the school was accepting, teachers feared

losing their jobs or getting replaced because of the competition to teach at her school even though the salary isn't that high.

- 10 There were no out teachers, and a p.e. teacher who was rumored to be gay.  
11 There were rumors but there weren't really any gay and lesbian teachers.  
11 Even at her school where teachers have job security she thinks gay and lesbian teachers do not come out because of worries about acceptance and approval from students and, especially, colleagues. Out teachers get students who snicker and things like that.
- 13 Student thinks her experience of having no out teachers is similar to other students because teachers don't want to lose their jobs because an "asshole" student outs the teacher in anger. Student thinks gay and lesbian teachers in schools are like gay and lesbian people in the military and student thinks it is a scary thing that a gay and lesbian person can lose their job by saying they are gay and lesbian. Student thinks some, but not all, gay and lesbian teachers and administrators have that fear.
- 13 Student did not have any openly gay and lesbian teachers.  
14 For there to be more out teachers it would have to be more socially unacceptable to be so discriminatory against people but she doesn't think that will happen in 20 years.
- 15 The climate was "don't ask, don't tell." Students never asked if other people were gay but they talked about them behind their backs. Faculty and administrators were "completely intolerant." A p. e. teacher who "acts" gay, has a "gay haircut," and had the "whole gay thing going on." People had asked the teacher about it and teacher denied it and said it bothered her that people would think it. Teacher brought her "roommate" to three different high school occasions and was asked to leave her job. Student thinks a message was sent by the school when the teacher who brought a roommate to high school event was asked to leave her job.

Interference in the development of student-teacher relationships (e.g., teacher is unprofessional, lacks commitment or interest); transitional or temporary adult leadership; knowledge and comfort gaps between adults and students

- 1 Student thinks schools are still being run by a generation who think a certain way and who expect teachers to mold and/or break students, not make friends with them. Administrators don't like teachers who befriend students because that is the "epitome of evil." Student thinks that is ridiculous, because the way people learn things is by trusting the people who are teaching them.
- 1 In public high schools the teachers need to be more educated before then can educate students and she doesn't know who is going to do that.
- 1 Student could have talked to her advisor, who was one of the people student could talk to but who student may not "want to listen what they have to say"; advisor would not have said student was "going to hell" but advisor would have made it clear that advisor "doesn't think it's right." Advisor would have sat there and listened. It is safe for lesbian students to be themselves after graduation.

- 2 Certainly the people who ran the school expected and assumed everybody was straight. It was a very disconnected school where people didn't worry about other people's business because they had their own stuff to deal with. Student thinks that it is only recently it's been okay and relatively safe to come out. She thinks that assuming everyone is straight makes it easier for schools because they won't have to deal with GSAs or a whole new chapter of things that a whole lot of teachers and administrators can't really deal with themselves, who haven't self-educated or who don't know how to guide. Student sees this approach as working in the short term but not in the long term.
- 2 Student learned absolutely nothing about lesbianism in school. A lot of books had homosexual or homoerotic references, but there wasn't any real acknowledgment or discussion about it. Just silence. Student's school was backward not just in gay and lesbian issues but in sex ed where two days was spent on anatomy and menstruation and no information is given on how to use a condom. Student thinks teacher flew past that because teacher got really embarrassed or something. Student didn't learn much.
- 2 Her best friend started the first gay straight alliance in the school this year after a previous attempt by another student failed the prior year. Student was a founding member of the GSA and found that the whole process of talking to administrators and getting votes from the student council took a lot out of her. The administration was out of step with the students and didn't represent the students at all because the administrators were so against the club while the student council was like "yeah, sure." She thinks a lot of homophobes work in the administration, the main one being the "demented" administrator who sets up all of the student clubs. This situation is "ridiculous."
- 2 The GSA started with an amazing 20 people and then it dwindled down to 3. The last couple of meetings were great and about 7 people attended. Students in club were worried because the advisor (who threatened to call the ACLU) is on the cusp of retiring and members are not sure what will happen to the club, although she hopes that someone else will take his place. The school would have been more welcoming if they didn't give students and teacher a hard time over the GSA.
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- 2 Student doesn't think anyone benefits by keeping schools as they are and she sees change happening. A large number of students from her school won an academic competition which was hyped as evidence of making significant steps toward progress. Student thinks the academic awards are important but

the formation of the GSA is equally important as evidence of progress because it has brought her school into the 21<sup>st</sup> century because it acknowledges something that's been kept under wraps for a long time. Despite the potential to make the school look more progressive, student doesn't see principals taking the lead in forming GSAs. The school would have been more welcoming if they took down the front that the school is great because the kids aren't having a good time at all.

- 2 The best metaphor to describe her school is a big train station of people coming and going but not really connecting. The atmosphere of the school made people not want to bother with demanding more academic challenges. A lot of people hated the school's administration. The school had a very restrictive environment: students couldn't go out for lunch, security guards roamed the school, and because of overcrowding and split schedules for different classes, there was little contact between the classes much less within the classes. It was a very disconnected school where people didn't worry about other people's business because they had their own stuff to deal with. Student thinks that it is only recently it's been okay and relatively safe to come out.
- 2 The school and her home were in a pretty bad neighborhood, which she describes as divided by a street with blacks on one side and Orthodox Hasidic Jews on the other. She doesn't know what security guards were doing because they were not around when people needed them, such as when there was a slashing outside the school. She calls this situation "silly."
- 2 High school wasn't that great because there were very few good teachers and a lot of mediocre ones, no school spirit, and she didn't care for a lot of the people she encountered. Student most rejects teachers who claim to be professionals but who hated to teach, didn't want a career in teaching, didn't like their students, had no interest in what they were teaching, and were just kind of stuck. She had no interest in being taught by them.
- 2 The administration was out of step with the students and didn't represent the students at all because the administrators were so against the GSA while the student council was like "yeah, sure."
- 4 The five guidance counselors at school with 1,500 students did not have a lot of time to sit and talk with students about their problems, so if a student was bad or if they couldn't handle a student, they were sent to the [female] Behavioral Specialist. Student thinks colleges are more liberal because in college you live as a community with one another and when college students live together they have to understand each other more than in high school. Seeing that someone in class is upset and not knowing why is a totally different story than seeing a dorm-mate upset in class and knowing what conversation they had with a parent the previous night. You need support systems for that. High schools do not offer these kinds of support systems because they are less funded, students don't pay a lot of money to go there, it's less important, and it's just easier to "turn a blind eye." She thinks it would be more important to have support systems in high school.
- 4 Student doesn't know why schools allow places in the school to be dangerous for some students. Student thinks that her high school was extremely

- overcrowded (1,500 students) and they [people in authority] can't see every thing that goes on. Everybody gets pushed and shoved, it's loud because everyone is talking, and it's not always possible to hear when someone yells "stupid dyke" or something like that.
- 4 Schools aren't intervening in those negative messages about gay and lesbian because the people who run the schools were brought up in those same institutions and it will move forward when more of student's generation get to be principals.
- 4 It was really hard for student and other people after the BS left; student didn't have anywhere to go then so she stayed home. Student couldn't go to guidance because her first guidance counselor who was cool and knew a lot about the student had left, and the new (replacement) counselor (male) was "blah" and student didn't like him.
- 4 It was really bad after the behavioral specialist left and student thinks quite a few people dropped out because she wasn't there. Student blames principal #2 and resents him a lot even though she dealt with him on a more personal level later in the year and he did try to help her graduate on time. She harbors a lot of anger toward the principal who she thinks made the behavioral specialist leave and also "screwed" with her ex-best friend.
- 4 The five guidance counselors at school with 1,500 students did not have a lot of time to sit and talk with students about their problems, so if a student was bad or if they couldn't handle a student, they were sent to the [female] Behavioral Specialist.
- 6 There were really bad teachers who shouldn't have been teaching because student doesn't think they were qualified.
- 6 Student wants to bring up a story about her English teacher, who student thought was amazing and loved a great deal. Teacher had a gay friend who teacher would talk about a lot in class. Everybody knew who he was, his name, that he lived next door to teacher, that he was a great cook and loved to shop. Student thinks teacher brought up her neighbor in class because the class was like a family, teacher would talk about what she did the day before, and the way teacher described neighbor made him seem like a character. He would sometimes be brought up in class just because he was funny. The way teacher talked about gay friend made student think teacher thought "he's gay, it's fine, who cares." When student told teacher she was going to all-women's college, the teacher said the school was great but then in a hushed voice said "but I've heard they're all lesbians." Student says teacher might have been joking. Student thinks it was weird that teacher even brought it up. Student guesses that she expected a different reaction from her teacher and student didn't feel the need to come out to teacher.
- 6 Student thinks her school thought students were a little sexual because they were teaching about sex ed. But she thinks it's kind of ridiculous and scary that sex ed and puberty is taught in 11<sup>th</sup> grade because by then everyone's already had sex and puberty was five years ago. She says students already know this information and questions if that's supposed to be cool.

- 7 Student thinks there was a lot of pressure for lesbian principal to stay in the closet because while lesbian principal acknowledged her lesbianism by not trying to lead a heterosexual or celibate lifestyle, at the same time lesbian principal never talked about it. A lot of lesbian principal's decisions were not supported by the Director and faculty feel mistrustful of her because of how she handled certain things so student thinks there was a feeling that lesbian principal didn't really have the "power to lead in that way" and a lot of faculty members didn't feel comfortable coming out. Student thinks gay and lesbian movement is one of the few movements where students have to be the leaders and student thinks that is sad and wrong. Student's school stopped being experimental a long time ago and the principal changes every couple of years.
- 7 Student did not really have the opportunity [to verbally "stick it" to her teachers and administrators like she did with homophobic students and strangers] because they were kind of p.c. and she's not stupid, she doesn't like to offend people who are grading her.
- 7 Student wonders what is going to happen when the lesbian principal leaves after this year. Student doesn't think high school will hire a principal with "a real backbone." Student would like to see someone who would be strong and say "no, this is wrong" or "no, this is not right" but "they" don't want anyone like that in there. Student thinks that is sad and that is the way life is because wealthy people are the ones who are going to have the power. Power will not go to the people who are the "real leaders" and the people who are looking out for what is best for other people.
- 7 School brought in speakers (a Methodist minister who was suspended in 98 for marrying gay couples, who protested at the Methodist convention, and who predicts a schism in the Methodist church) and speaker was interesting and everyone loved him. The school canceled then brought in a local gay and lesbian theater company and everyone loved it. People said to student that they "couldn't believe what goes on in places" and that was very difficult for student because people didn't want to look at what goes on in their own school.
- 7 In school, student thinks gay and lesbian teachers should receive encouragement, acknowledgment, and more than lip service.
- 7 People at school wanted to say they were liberal and they were willing to look at things outside their own community but they would deny their own homophobia. For example, during this same time, a bunch of groups the school identified under the term "diversity" groups wanted to define themselves as "ethnic" groups, which the GSA students argued was not legitimate because the proposed change would only leave out the GSA group. Student thinks a lot of it was a real misunderstanding but became a "big dispute" and "big debacle."
- 8 Student doesn't know why teachers ignored the name calling and threats but would act if a student screamed the "F word." Student was angered when teachers heard but did not intervene in homophobic and sexist name calling in the classrooms.

- 8 Kids wouldn't come out because of personal security. It would be easier for a student to come out if you were in fine arts because the teachers were more accepting, and more difficult if you were in athletics.
- 8 Culture encloses us in an invisible little way and puts blinders on that makes it difficult for people to critique culture. For example when students are screaming faggot and dyke teachers put blinders on and ignore the part is hurtful and painful for people who are gay. They excuse it by saying "what the hell do kids know, anyway, at this point?."
- 8 Student thinks that her school did not assume all students were heterosexual. Though most health programs are set up as mostly heterosexual, there is acknowledgment to some small extent that gay students are present and everyone has to hear this because health is mandatory. Teachers in health classes bring in speakers when they are not comfortable talking about gay and lesbian health issues.
- 11 Student thinks the college admissions process and the college admissions counselor was a more closeted thing until she got down to it. She put the GSA on her resume and applied for gay scholarships. Her admissions counselor knew about it, it was impossible for him not to know, but they didn't talk about it. She worried about him knowing because she thinks the college counselor is instrumental in helping students get to college or at least they were told that. Even if students didn't believe that it was true, no one wants to create bad vibes with college counselors.
- 11 Student thinks the school atmosphere was liberal but the administration was scared of the GSA (formed when the student was a sophomore). The religious and gay clubs did not get funded by the school. Student says the GSA got support for what it did, but the absence of financial support showed that the school did not take the GSA seriously.
- 11 Student thinks that gay and lesbian students experience "different feelings of inclusion and exclusion than straight kids" because schools are run by straight people. Student thinks the situation is more "negligence" than "treachery" on the part of the administration. Student thinks incorporating gay and lesbian issues in teacher training is a good idea but she doesn't know if someone's point of view can be changed through sensitivity training. Student doesn't think a lot of people think about some of the things they teach in sensitivity training. Student thinks there are two kinds of homophobia: the hatred kind and the "I don't want to talk about it" kind. Student doesn't think the "I don't want to talk about it" kind is any better than the hatred kind but she thinks that's the level of a lot of teachers and climates right now. She thinks people need to be pulled over in to the accepting homophobia, which is something that is not brought up a whole lot nor really put to the test, and can look a lot like the "I don't want to talk about it" kind of homophobia.
- 11 She really enjoyed herself in high school but she doesn't think she took advantage of all the opportunities (e.g., mentorships) that were presented to her at one of the best schools in the nation. Student wasn't interested in the opportunities at the time and did what she could to get by. Student thinks that as a young girl she was dealing so much with fitting in, figuring herself out,

- and dealing with working all kinds of issues out that worrying about academics and creatively producing things became #2. She does not think this choice was conscious. Student thinks she was mixed up, not messed up, not destructive.
- 11 Student guesses that her high school expected everyone would be straight, but she doesn't think it was too tough or that they made it terribly difficult to be gay and lesbian. Student doesn't think schools actively work toward orienting students to a particular identity; it's just that they don't know any better right now.
- 12 Student points to a recently hired lesbian teacher who was very kind, very nice, very personal with her students (letting them call her on the phone). This year, after teacher was told that she couldn't have that kind of relationship with students, teacher packed her bags and left. Student doesn't understand what the administration is doing because they are firing good teachers.
- 12 School taught her nothing about being a lesbian and her administrators and teachers did not talk about it. Students, however, were talking about it.
- 12 Something tells her that if the teachers were the judges of the literary contest instead of the students, she wouldn't have won with a gay themed story, unless a couple of the teachers were there to support her.
- 12 Student thinks it is sad that she has so many negative experiences and had to struggle to find one positive one to discuss in the interview. She thinks that imbalance really captures her high school experience. Student has been processing her high school experience for the past couple of years and she is beginning to realize how negative it was. She thinks about how she could have done better in school, not gotten herself into situations, if she had more positive experiences with adults and students. But there was a hard issue: she knew no adult would support her if a student were to do something to her.
- 12 Students weren't given anything new to work with and it felt like her education was not progressive enough. The school was not a magnet for the intellect or creativity of the students. There was no activism in student's high school.
- 13 At school #3 she knew there were so many gay people in the school, they were positive and not hearing anything said when people were called "faggot" would piss her off because she knew teachers knew the students were gay. Student doesn't think the lack of intervention by teachers in the name calling had any impact on her because she was used to it and teachers "don't give a fuck."
- 13 There was a race conversation going on in one high school and student facilitated groups in different classes on race relations because there was lot of fighting between "opposite races." Student noticed it was never two black guys fighting and if it was it ended but if "opposite races" were fighting the school would need to have a meeting. This was because they were stupid. Student thinks that the school intervened in fights between different races because if they didn't there would be riots while schools didn't intervene when someone yelled "faggot" because if only two people are out in a school they are not going to be able to start a riot.

- 13 School #2 ranks 0 because it was horrible, she was bad, never went, got suspended, got into fights with teachers, and the school's attitude was "we don't give a fuck what she does."
- 13 Some teachers today will go on strike because they aren't getting any money and other teachers (schools 2, 3, and 4) cuss at students in the classroom. Student thinks teachers today are different than the teachers in the "olden days" who cared about their students and student wants teachers back in the school who love to teach no matter what, who really love the kids, and who can help kids with problems. Teachers are stupid, not trying to teach, and worried about their paychecks. Student thinks teachers are supposed to be working for change and that's how they were "back in the day." Student thinks city teachers stopped caring because students stopped caring and it's sad.
- 13 Student did not hit it off with one female teacher who sweated a lot and it made student mad when teacher dripped on student's work. Teacher was mean and nasty. Student didn't want to cuss teacher out but student did because teacher needed it. Student asked teacher why teacher was mean to people and student told teacher "you ain't my mother." Teacher replied "that's your problem, if your mother teaches you like I do, then you wouldn't be the bitch that you are." Student called the teacher a "fat fuck" and told teacher never to call her a bitch again. Student got kicked out.
- 14 Student's worst experience related to sexuality was being rejected by so many adults when she came begging, sobbing, and crying for help. These were the same adults who had pledged to be there for her and whose job it was to take care of her, but said "nope, sorry, nope, no" without any consequences to themselves for not fulfilling their responsibilities to her or not doing their jobs.
- 14 Student had never been to the principal's office (large school of 3,500 students) but one Monday morning went to his office and demanded that he protect her because he had a duty to protect all of his students. Principal refused to do anything about the obvious fact that her parents were beating her and the fact that she was starting to fail out of every class. She questioned how an educator could look into someone's sexuality just because he doesn't agree with it. Principal completely ignored her in every way humanly possible.
- 14 Guidance counselor tried to argue with the administration but they didn't listen. Dean of her class said it was a family problem and school couldn't help her. Student was shut out by every single administrator at her school even while guidance counselors were like "you need help."
- 14 Although ballet teacher gave her the opportunity to come out to him she felt adults were too parental, she wasn't at the point of talking to adults about her sexuality, and she perceived ballet teacher as a father figure.
- 15 Even though sexuality was on the "bottom of her list" it still had a huge impact. Student thinks that if she had gone to a school that she felt more a part of, she probably would have been proud of her sexuality, and she would have had someone to identify with which would have made the other stuff she was going through not so upsetting. Student didn't feel like she identified with anyone and having a different sexuality from others felt like a "majorly" profound difference.

## Schools reflect parental concerns

- 1 Student thinks people can't "see" because not seeing is learned behavior. For example, she sees prejudice in her dad's siblings and her nieces/nephews have fallen into that which means those children will teach their children the same thing. Student thinks that cycle needs to be broken but she has no clue how to break it.
- 1 Student's ranking (including sexuality) could go down because there were a lot of "really ignorant" people because the school was so sheltered and Catholic. Student thinks what students said (about her closeness to women) was based on complete ignorance. Student doesn't want to say all students who attend all girls' Catholic schools are raised Catholic, strict, but gay and lesbian were "definitely completely looked down upon."
- 1 She thinks that despite what a person is born with, school and families can shape people into one sexuality and that can "really screw you up."
- 2 People have been taught not to "get it," they have been brainwashed: parents tell them one thing then school tells them the same thing, it's a vicious cycle, you reap what you sow.
- 3 Teachers think school is a bubble and this mind set is reflected by what happens in school, for example: student notices that problems get nicely ignored; controversial current issues are not brought up in class; teachers are afraid that students will get out of hand so they discuss non-controversial issues because no one is going to get emotional and start a "ruckus"; fights get ugly when discussing modern issues and there is a real disagreement that goes down to the family members and how students were raised (can get religious in nature); and teachers are kept in line by "50 parents" appearing at their door when they say something that can be considered "off color."
- 3 Student thinks parents greatly influence their children (i.e., gay bashing at the dinner table) and what is taught in their children's school (i.e., the firing of the chancellor). In an ideal world schools would alter the public opinion on gay and lesbian but the result of that would be that parents saying schools are "promoting a lifestyle." She thinks that it is very important for parents to be open
- 3 Student recalls one teacher who "just has to be gay" but thinks teachers were not out because that would be risking trouble or a lawsuit if "one stupid parent" decides to say something. She thinks the (closeted) gay teacher doesn't want to be in trouble with the new principal or with the students who like to disrupt teachers they don't like.
- 3 She thinks schools aren't as fault as much as parents who are just crazy. For more teachers to be out, she thinks administrators would have to be open and straightforward in their support and create policies together to safeguard themselves in every way from a "crazy parent."
- 3 She thinks there might have been something dark and sinister about the removal of the chancellor for his support of "Heather Has Two Mommies" after the uproar by conservative parents in the early 90's. She thinks if that happened today the chancellor would be able to keep his job because

- homosexuality is more dispersed now, more known. She thinks the chancellor lost his job because it was a controversial time in city politics, mayors were changing, schools were not improving, and that incident was the last straw.
- 4 Student compares climate at home and school as similar because for a long time her family made fun of her because they didn't know how to deal with it. She lives with her father and brother and their way of showing affection is by punching her in the arm or walking by and slapping her.
- 5 Student thinks her negative experiences were influenced by the narrow minds of other students. She thinks if a student has narrowminded parents, the student has a better chance of being narrowminded. She thinks there are a lot of narrowminded people who are used to their own thing and who aren't used to change or difference.
- 6 For schools to be more gay and lesbian friendly, people need to be brought up with an acceptance of different people. She thinks parents don't do enough of that and don't talk to their kids about how hard it is to go through HS being yourself without letting all the pressure change how they would normally act and be. Student says on tv you see ads where everyone has to "be cool and be a certain way" and she thinks parents and society don't do enough to show people you can just be who you are without trying to fit in or making other people fit in.
- 6 Student thinks schools can only do so much because students are in their home environment so much more than they are at school.
- 7 Attempts to start the GSA had gone on for years and the parents' association had been really mad about it.
- 7 Student thinks that it might or might not be a threat to the new principal if he supports gay and lesbian students and faculty. The new principal will be under a lot of scrutiny by everyone during his first year because high school is an elitist school with wealthy parents who want to support the status quo and the parent's association has a lot of weight. Student thinks this is really sad and she thinks it will be hard for him to break away from the parents' association and gain the freedom to do stuff. Student thinks there was a lot of pressure for lesbian principal to stay in the closet because while lesbian principal acknowledged her lesbianism by not trying to lead a heterosexual or celibate lifestyle, at the same time lesbian principal never talked about it. A lot of lesbian principal's decisions were not supported by the Director and faculty feel mistrustful of her because of how she handled certain things so student thinks there was a feeling that lesbian principal didn't really have the "power to lead in that way" and a lot of faculty members didn't feel comfortable coming out. Student thinks gay and lesbian movement is one of the few movements where students have to be the leaders and student thinks that is sad and wrong. Student's school stopped being experimental a long time ago and the principal changes every couple of years.
- 7 Student thinks it might be better to have a straight principal rather than a lesbian principal. Next year's principal is a straight, white male, principal and student thinks it is going to be interesting. Student thinks a straight principal would have more freedom to be supportive because he already has his "niche"

and doesn't have to fight for it, he won't have to keep up a facade, and it's easier to be accepting of "deviation" if you know your place or your position is secured. Student thinks a lot of straight white men are more accepting than people give them credit for, yet she doesn't understand why a lot of straight white men have an "attitude toward everyone who is different" because she can understand the "threat to their position" but they have had power for so long that it is not going to go away just because they are accepting of someone who is different. Student thinks that it might or might not be a threat to the new principal if he supports gay and lesbian students and faculty. The new principal will be under a lot of scrutiny by everyone during his first year because high school is an elitist school with wealthy parents who want to support the status quo and the parent's association has a lot of weight. Student thinks this is really sad and she thinks it will be hard for him to break away from the parents' association and gain the freedom to do stuff. Student thinks there was a lot of pressure for lesbian principal to stay in the closet because while lesbian principal acknowledged her lesbianism by not trying to lead a heterosexual or celibate lifestyle, at the same time lesbian principal never talked about it. A lot of lesbian principal's decisions were not supported by the Director and faculty feel mistrustful of her because of how she handled certain things so student thinks there was a feeling that lesbian principal didn't really have the "power to lead in that way" and a lot of faculty members didn't feel comfortable coming out. Student thinks gay and lesbian movement is one of the few movements where students have to be the leaders and student thinks that is sad and wrong. Student's school stopped being experimental a long time ago and the principal changes every couple of years.

- 7 Student wonders what is going to happen when the lesbian principal leaves after this year. Student doesn't think high school will hire a principal with "a real backbone." Student would like to see someone who would be strong and say "no, this is wrong" or "no, this is not right" but "they" don't want anyone like that in there. Student thinks that is sad and that is the way life is because wealthy people are the ones who are going to have the power. Power will not go to the people who are the "real leaders" and the people who are looking out for what is best for other people.
- 8 Parents were pissed about diversity awareness week and female principal got death threats. The event was made this sort of gay (there was a panel of gays) but not really, cultural diversity week.
- 12 Parents pass on their negative image of homosexuality to their kids. Men and boys have a thing about masculinity and they have to prove they are not queer or sissy. For example, if there is a gay boy in class and they have to swim together, the boy thinks he has to beat up the gay boy to prove he is not a "pussy."
- 14 Guidance counselor tried to argue with the administration but they didn't listen. Dean of her class said it was a family problem and school couldn't help her. Student was shut out by every single administrator at her school even while guidance counselors were like "you need help."

- 14 Parents were contacting student's teachers and administrators and had school look into what ballet teacher was doing. Ballet teacher was put on probation for influencing students "this way."
- 14 Student is "pretty down" with the fact that we live in a heterosexual society and is constantly reminded of that on a regular basis because she doesn't live in the gay district, works in a gay-unfriendly environment, and grew up in a non-gay-friendly environment and unsupportive home. Student says that "unsupportive home" is an understatement.
- 14 She says school is almost like a concentration camp where kids practically live when their parents ship them off to spend 7 to 9 hours there a day. She can't imagine anybody thinking that school wouldn't have an influence on somebody's thoughts for the rest of their lives. Student supports bussing kids in from different districts so kids don't get such a jaded view of life by only seeing the same people on a regular basis.
- 15 Student thinks it's hard to say what the school could have done to be more welcoming, given the Catholic affiliation and parents who were the "sickest, most ignorant bunch" of people. However, normally student likes parents. Student still thinks that schools orient students to think about themselves as straight because of parents. Student agrees with interviewer that: the quality of education depends on the voice/power/authority/perspective of the parents in the community; a community of gay and lesbian parents ("gabyby" boom) will produce totally different schools; and that a resurgence of the radical right will produce schools with that viewpoint.
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- 15 Student thinks that sex is a taboo topics for parents and their children. Student thinks that unless parents point out and critique things, everything will seem natural and "just a part of the scenery" and what students don't know about will remain un-critiqued. Student thinks the ability to critique is a learned behavior because people have "free will." Children do it naturally from a very young age, and critiquing gets more structured as people develop, get more intellectual, and have more things to say. Student thinks kids may not be aware

they are critiquing but they "give it to you how it is" without worrying if it polite, because it is just natural for them.

- 15 Student's mother worked for city public schools and has told student how public schools would never get away with the stuff that happened to student in her private high school because parents are voters, in power, and would "be the first ones knocking at our door, complaining." Student has noticed that's just how it is.

#### Schools reflect political conservatism and religion

- 1 Unless there is breakthrough medial research determining sexual orientation is genetic/hereditary, the Church will just try to disprove of gay and lesbian because Catholic schools teach according to the bible. Student doubts the pope will ever say the bible is wrong. Student thinks that change in Catholic high schools is a "lost cause" because she says (jokingly) for that to happen, the pope would need to be killed. She thinks there will always be a group on the bottom because "people obviously think that way" and the big part religion plays.
- 1 Student doesn't think the absence of lesbians could be questioned by students because it was "evident" that the "whole Catholic religion" is against it, as it is against birth control. Girl's Catholic school expected students to be straight. Student thinks it is because of the "whole Catholic thing" of not accepting, not condoning gay and lesbian; that gay and lesbian is an "evil," something that can be controlled if not brought up. Student thinks there is a possibility of things being different if she went to public school but doesn't know because she never went to public school.
- 1 Student says there are lines teachers/advisors can't cross and when they do they hear about it. Two examples: STD's were a focus in health classes but teachers didn't want students to ask too many questions because even though they were trying to protect students, teachers weren't supposed to "endorse" students' sexual behavior; student knew from other teachers that her advisor did not return to her job because she was not married when she got pregnant. (Student had many advisors in her four years). Decisions about what students are learning are made by the archdiocese, the principal and department head.
- 2 Student thinks the administrators are responsible for a school climate that resembles the 50s more than the year 2000. The principal of her school was an religiously conservative man and she thinks he brought his values into the school even though the students were not of his faith. This did not work and the principal was not liked by the student and others.
- 3 She thinks that the political climate of the nation and what happens in the nation's school are definitely linked. She thinks as time goes on it will become easier, unless there is a "huge Republican takeover of the government and country." While she can't picture her city becoming totally conservative, she thinks conservative leadership will slow down or stall progress and that Republicans will want to ban gay books and cut a lot of stuff about alternative education. With liberals in leadership, she thinks it might get a lot better.

- 4 Schools aren't intervening in those negative messages about gay and lesbian because the people who run the schools were brought up in those same institutions and it will move forward when more of student's generation get to be principals. Student thinks schools are run by the radical right and the Christian Coalition. Student doesn't know much about her school board but it seems that they are the ignorant people who think you're gonna burn in hell if you're gay and they control the schools and the curriculum. Student has two anti Christian Coalition bumper stickers.
- 6 Student thinks that public schools don't want to say "be accepting of gay people" because they don't want to piss off religious people.
- 6 Because gay and lesbian is "such a controversial thing" student guesses that it is just easier for people to ignore it than risk "pissing people off" (by addressing it). Student thinks that public schools don't want to say "be accepting of gay people" because they don't want to piss off religious people.
- 8 Student thinks teachers were not out because of job security and how the community, which was religious and conservative, would react.
- 8 People are getting richer so they don't care about the condition of other people's lives. Money, more conservative time, and religion are going to make it hard to raise people to oppose something. Student says global change in attitude toward homosexuals will not happen because of the influences of Conservative Republicans and religious people who are into the Bible. Student doesn't think you can change people's interpretation of the bible. Religion will play a large part in whether or not we are no longer treated differently as lesbians. Since the bible says it is wrong, student questions her authority to say the bible is wrong, and doesn't think change will happen soon, if at all.
- 8 It would have been great if teachers would be political and out without losing their jobs. Student thinks teachers were not out because of job security and how the community, which was religious and conservative, would react.
- 8 Student thinks things are moving in a conservative direction which is not a good thing for lesbians in school 20 years from now. People are getting riches so they don't care about the condition of other people's lives. Money, more conservative time, and religion are going to make it hard to raise people to oppose something. Student says global change in attitude toward homosexuals will not happen because of the influences of Conservative Republicans and religious people who are into the Bible. Student doesn't think you can change people's interpretation of the bible.
- 9 Student's public school was a little island, a place where "culture never hit," that was connected to the homophobia of the greater world through the influence of religion. The school was in a very religious town, home to a college whose religious affiliation dislikes homosexuals, and high school students' homophobia was probably based on their religion and their ignorance. The school was cut off from gay and lesbian issues in the larger world as evidenced by the lack of gay and lesbian support groups.
- 9 Student thinks teachers/principals thought they should "be quiet" about their sexuality because they were in a very closed-minded religious community, had to maintain personal appearances, and keep their jobs.

- 15 Student agrees with interviewer that: the quality of education depends on the voice/power/authority/perspective of the parents in the community; a community of gay and lesbian parents ("gaby" boom) will produce totally different schools; and that a resurgence of the radical right will produce schools with that viewpoint.
- 15 Student thinks it's hard to say what the school could have done to be more welcoming, given the Catholic affiliation and parents who were the "sickest, most ignorant bunch" of people. However, normally student likes parents.

Other inequalities in society are mirrored in school

- 1 Student thinks her school both reflects society and is a bubble. She thinks her school wanted to be a bubble to protect students. Student doesn't know what students were being protected from.
- 2 Half the students who are admitted to her school must have a 90 or over average from junior high school and there is talk of raising this to 95, which she calls ridiculous and a part of the school's ego. The AP students or elite group definitely get more funding than the other half of the students are from the neighborhood. There is underlying stuff about this split. The neighborhood kids have shitty classes, are taught in remade bathrooms, or in the basement next to the cafeteria. The school facilities were not that great but neighbor kids were taught in classes in these "little holes in the wall." No one would talk to the student about the "underlying stuff" and she wanted to write an opinion piece for the newspaper. Student thinks people are aware of the situation but no one is willing to say anything. Teachers fear for their jobs and the administrators don't talk about it because they are the ones doing it. Student thinks the split might not happen if the school was not as crowded, but is not sure about that. In good schools, schools are a part of the community they are in, but her school was more like a very isolated bubble.
- 2 Student thinks society accounts for the freedom straight kids have in school to learn about relationships and the lack of that same space given to gay and lesbian kids. Student thinks heterosexuality is seen as the norm, it's hard to be different, and there is a reluctance to break down barriers. Student agrees that schools are not on the forefront of change and thinks it's because schools want to please parents and please the majority. She thinks a part of it is that gay people are a minority.
- 3 Student does not think school is a compete bubble separate from society because the student body definitely reflects the times and the political climate of the nation and what happens in the nation's school are definitely linked. However schools don't change as drastically as society because schools are enclosed. She thinks some teachers think school is a bubble and they don't ever leave that bubble. Teachers think school is a bubble and this mind set is reflected by what happens in school, for example: student notices that problems get nicely ignored; controversial current issues are not brought up in class; teachers are afraid that students will get out of hand so they discuss non-controversial issues because no one is going to get emotional and start a "ruckus"; fights get ugly when discussing modern issues and there is a real disagreement that goes down to the family members and how students were raised (can get religious in nature); and teachers are kept in line by "50 parents" appearing at their door when they say something that can be considered "off color."
- 4 Student describes her school as similar to the president (principal), the cabinet (2 assistant principles, 1 guy and 1 girl), and the senate (teachers). Teachers don't even get to vote on some things. Students are on the bottom with no

- rights, especially the minority students. Student gets angry when schools teach about how great democracy is but when you are in school you have no rights.
- 4 Student thinks schools and society reflect each other. School is not a bubble and is definitely a huge part of society. All the white kids in her school reflect exactly the attitudes and behaviors of the greater community. She is sure people would have burned a cross right in front of her desk if they could have.
- 6 She thinks schools are so close-minded and that a lot of politics are involved, but in families it's easier.
- 7 Student thinks that her school expected all of the students to be straight and she thinks schools expect that because American society is based on the "family unit."
- 7 Student's impression is that there are a few more girls than guys in her school. The school is making a transition, over the last 10 years, from students who are the children of academics and staff members from the local university to students who are the children of very wealthy parents who want their kids to go to a good school. The school is being separated from the community the school is in because "they" are "freaked out" by the non-wealthy, non-white people, as evidenced by the fence they are trying to build to keep "them" off the property and the really high tuition.
- 8 High schools in suburbia assume that their students are straight because homosexuality is deviant and suburbs don't have deviants. The image of the suburb is a family, 2 ½ kids, a dog and a picket fence. Gay and lesbian happens in the city, bad neighborhood, and boys town. Homosexuality is not recognized in the suburbs because their image is of bad gay men who stalk little boys which threatens their identity as safe havens. Schools don't recognize that straight kids have sex and that there is any other sex that kids could have. Student thinks the gay rights movement affected the suburbs but schools chose to ignore it, because they can. Suburban schools can make the curriculum totally straight if they want to. Teachers can choose to discuss or not discuss gay-related themes in literature.
- 12 Schools are not little bubbles, they are just representations of the outside. Schools are influenced by homophobia, by society, the way gay people are treated and represented by the media and in different neighborhoods.
- 12 There is so much homophobia in the black community that it is like you just cannot be gay, it is not possible, it doesn't exist. Student felt that everyone's reaction to a documentary about James Baldwin shown in her English class was shock but then they decided he was a "good" gay person, an exception to the rule. [teacher said Baldwin was gay]. This reminds her of the same dynamic as happens in race relations. Student says lesbianism was not discussed in school because, from the perspective of the black community, it wasn't there, why should teachers talk about what isn't there, that would not be necessary.
- 12 Student went to an inner city high school that was predominantly African American (7 white kids, a couple of Latinos, out of a graduating class of 400) and served students from poor areas and middle class families. Although people think of her neighborhood as a ghetto. Many parents who lived in her

- neighborhood would not send their children to the neighborhood school, but to very, very "uppity" schools.
- 12 School was divided: there was a general population of students on the average track who weren't getting AP credit and weren't on support, the supports (the ones never seen because they were in "lockup somewhere in the school or being escorted by cops because they were really bad"), and the honors/AP students.
- 13 Student thinks the school is not distinct from society because there is discrimination on the job and in schools, people bring guns and violence into the school, what you see on the street you see in school, and homophobia is in the world and in school. Schools used to be a bubble but not any more. Student thinks the schools' openness to gay and lesbian teachers depends on where the school is, so schools in New York, Provincetown, California, and places where a lot of the population is gay will have more out teachers in comparison to the area student lives in.
- 13 Student thinks schools work to make students straight by not teaching. Schools want to come out with new classes but gay and lesbian is never brought up. Student doesn't know who is making decisions to not include gay and lesbian in curriculum but at school #3 student's friends have a lesbian course.
- 14 You get the whole gamut of teachers, sometimes you get the "Jesus freak," sometime you get the "Barney Frank" teacher. In a conservative town and school, you tend to find conservative teachers, not Sandy the granola lesbian or Pierre the ballet dancer. Student thinks schools are definitely just like society rather than isolated little bubbles. Student thinks teachers are like the "dysfunctional diplomats" between students and the outside world. She thinks that everything that goes on in the outside (racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, religious bias) goes on within a school and is magnified like a 100 times because it's younger people who aren't as informed and don't have access to the outside world like adults do. Societal influences in a town really bend and shape the ways things are in school. Student has friends whose schools have GSAs even though they go to conservative schools because they live in a very liberal town. When student brought up the idea of a GSA it started a massive scandal in her town, like "not here, not in our town."
- 14 Everybody from the town went to student's high school and that's how everybody got to know where you are from and that's where caste system becomes such a big deal. Student remarked that it was interesting to see that academic tracks were also broken down by geographic distinctions (e.g., students in AP and honors from more economically sound neighborhoods, and lower level and ESL courses were taken by people who live in less economically sound areas). Student was from next level down from the really well off neighborhood. Father was a professional and parents live in big single home with giant yard, white picket fence, and family is Catholic. Student had all the right credentials and right background which led her into things that other people didn't have. Student was predominantly AP and honors in high school. Student jokes that her high school alumni association would want to get rid of transcripts.

- 14 Student didn't have enough money to pay for her cap and gown for graduation so home-school association stepped in and paid it. Student applied to 8 colleges hoping to go to the one that would offer the most money. Student didn't have enough money to pay application fees so guidance counselor wrote letters to the colleges who then waived application fees. Student thinks colleges are like a big industry and if you don't have the money, you can't go.
- 15 Student still thinks that schools orient students to think about themselves as straight because of parents. Student agrees with interviewer that: the quality of education depends on the voice/power/authority/perspective of the parents in the community; a community of gay and lesbian parents ("gaby" boom) will produce totally different schools; and that a resurgence of the radical right will produce schools with that viewpoint.

#### IV. SOCIAL CHANGE

Media stereotypes gays and lesbians, is anti-gay, presents simplistic and one-sided perspective

- 1 Student thinks it is "funny" but not quite the right word to describe stereotypical images of gay and lesbian in the media. She does not see herself as being like those images or those images having any impact on how she sees herself. (Student was not aware of a gay and lesbian movement, not aware of gay and lesbian characters on t.v., not actively searching for alternative reading material and not involved in activist movements.) She has read some in the gay and lesbian genre, mostly magazines, and she has a subscription to Curve and Out.
- 1 Student didn't hear anything positive or negative about gay and lesbian teens. She heard zero.
- 2 Student has friends who are suicidal but not because they are gay and lesbian. Student thinks that we don't hear much about gay and lesbian youth who are fine because they are not sensational and newsworthy. Student thinks that news about healthy gay and lesbian youth might encourage everyone to see that being gay and lesbian is not as hard as everyone thinks and that might be bad for certain people.
- 2 Changes today and in the future are the result of consciousness and gay and lesbian visibility in society, even if the media does not always provide accurate images of gay and lesbian.
- 3 The media is everywhere, constantly gives messages, even subliminally and a large portion of the media is very anti-gay, with the message that gay and lesbian are "bad, wrong, wrong...." She thinks that the messages have affected her over the years and while sometimes she realizes the media's effects on her, other times it is less evident. Student thinks that negative articles can build up and affect how people think about gay and lesbians. Even though barely anyone one stands up against her she feels like she is fighting because of the media's message. Her parents subscribe to a hateful, little conservative newspaper for the sports section. She's been begging them to change it for years.

- 3 Student critiqued heterosexism on t.v., particularly the lack of gay and lesbian characters. Her gay and lesbian friends encourage and discourage her in these critiques. She criticized shows like "Will and Grace" to her friends because while the show has been on for a year, none of the characters has had a significant relationship. She knows that parts of the gay and lesbian community think that any representation is a step forward and shouldn't be knocked. She thinks the more representative gay and lesbian characters on t.v. have been the minor ones on straight shows. She compares her own life to representations of gay and lesbian life on t.v. and notices big discrepancies.
- 3 Student has noticed that gay and lesbian youth who aren't in distress, immediate danger or on their "last legs emotionally" aren't "shown around." She thinks that a more complete picture of gay and lesbian youth is not presented by the gay and lesbian community because showing distressed youth shows the community is being hurt and needs help, while showing happy, healthy gay and lesbian people does not bode well. She sees the imbalance of information as more that gay community's fault to an extent; which is good but it also has a bad side. She thinks that if teachers are only exposed to the suicide information they are seeing a stereotype and not realizing that gay and lesbian youth are all over the place (e.g. , as heads of their newspapers, important figures in their schools) and NOT sitting around depressed. She knows from personal experience that gay and lesbian people are happy, but she never sees them when she opens a newspaper, or visits a gay and lesbian website where the message is "woe is me...here look at the statistics...I'm 16 and I hate my life."
- 4 Student doesn't remember the statistics about gay and lesbian youth suicides but she knows there are more. Student thinks it's funny, but not really, that interviewer asks if she has heard much about gay and lesbian youth success stories. She knows a few successes, for example at a gay and lesbian youth support group meeting student met a 23 year old openly gay male who ran as a candidate for the town's school board and got an award. Student thinks we don't hear about healthy gay and lesbian youth because they are trying to keep us down there, trying to make us think this is a "bad lifestyle," that no one "this way" is going to succeed, and trying to "force us to change." She thinks that is so wrong.
- 6 Student has heard that a third of teen suicides have to do with sexuality. Student thinks we don't hear about people like her who don't really have that many negative experiences because people tend to flock toward the experiences that sound really amazing, like people having horrible experiences.
- 6 The media shapes her ideas about being a lesbian through the whole stereotype thing. Through television student was getting a stereotype that in order to be a lesbian she had to be butch or be a "cult girl" who wore black all the time. Student didn't feel like she fit those stereotypes, she didn't feel like she fit in with straight people, and she didn't feel like she fit in with gay people. Student says on tv you see ads where everyone has to "be cool and be a certain way" and

- she thinks parents and society don't do enough to show people you can just be who you are without trying to fit in or making other people fit in.
- 7 Student has heard of the gay and lesbian suicide studies. It makes student mad when people say gay and lesbian kill themselves because being gay and lesbian is an "aberration." Student sees two problems: 1) People look at teenagers who are just being teenagers and they want to classify it as a mental illness. 2) People do not pay any attention to the emotional problems of people who are "functioning in a way that is acceptable." Student falls into category #2. Student has struggles with her own emotional problems, her family has problems, and she is scared that she is going to have a breakdown or "lose it" if is not able to take it when she goes to college. Others are surprised when they discover student has only been out a few months. Student's girlfriend questions why student doesn't get all worked up or if even if she is bothered when they fight. Student thinks it is hard for girlfriend, who has been out for a long time, to remember that student has only been out a few months and to consider how much emotion student has gone through in that time. Student's breakup with her boyfriend was a traumatic loss because he was the most important person in her life before they got into a romantic relationship together and had been each other's primary emotional relationship for many years; the relationship was serious from day one; a pregnancy scare made student realize it was her last chance to have him be the father of her children, something she wanted more than any one else she had ever been with and still wouldn't mind; and he had been a friend during her other relationships. Student is still friends with ex-boyfriend but student and her girlfriend broke up, in part, because student thinks it is "too bad" if girlfriend can't deal with him or handle student hanging out with "ex-boyfriend" turned friend when he returns to town. Student doesn't think her girlfriend realizes that "he was always mine, I was always his, and that's gone." Student thinks people view being strong and independent as good traits but independence could be a defense mechanism borne from fear of being alone. She says loneliness is being mistaken for independence, shutting yourself off is mistaken for strength, and shutting off emotions because they can't deal with things is mistaken for nothing bothering them. Student was trying to say that people look at suicides of gay and lesbian youth but they don't look at relationship problems in general. Student thinks a lot of the teen suicides are tied with the high homelessness rate of queer teens.
- 8 Student thinks it is awful that suicide rates are high and she wouldn't wish what she went through on her worst enemy. She would like to do something to make a difference (i.e., in suicide rates) but she doesn't know what she would do. When she is rich she can contribute to causes. She could raise awareness if she were more open or if she were to get to a place of influence then she could come out and challenge people's stereotypes. She would like to be a role model one day but that is so much pressure to have that status and to not be able to chose when to disclose. It would be great to come out despite the consequences but sometimes you chose to hide it to live your life. You don't hear a lot of gay youth success stories because technically you are supposed to be happy but many assume that to being gay is not an easy route. It has to be

hard, treacherous, miserable, and just weird and that's why we don't hear a lot of gay youth success stories. Usually her example of gay and lesbian youth is "miserable, suicidal teenager." Her only positive success story came from a guest speaker at school who was not a stereotype worked as a mechanic and whose parents accepted him after a long while. Student says her parents helped make sure she was a miserable, suicidal teenager.

- 8 The media portray lesbians in suits (i.e. K. D. Lang) and she did not ever see a femme lesbian. When she saw these images she felt she did not fit into those categories. She did not question if she was a lesbian because she didn't look like that, but she did question whether she was supposed to wear a suit.
- 9 Student thinks that the gay and lesbian teen suicide statistics suggest a lack of support in some people's lives. She thinks that we don't read about healthy gay and lesbian teens because they are not "interesting" material, although she thinks she would be a good example for a homophobic person to read about. She is not sure if more gay and lesbian youth have problems or if the problems are highlighted more because that's the "interesting stuff."
- 10 Student was shocked that so many youth kill themselves because she doesn't think lack of acceptance by others should be an issue. If gay and lesbian people are comfortable with themselves it shouldn't really matter what people think because there will always be somebody who thinks gay and lesbian are wrong or "sinning."
- 10 Student has only heard positive things about gay and lesbian from the media except when George Michael was called a "fag." She thinks that everybody makes mistakes, straight people do the same stuff as gay and lesbian, but there will always be people saying "oh that gay guy did blah blah blah" and if a gay and lesbian makes a mistake or does something illegal, it's "there's that homosexual smoking pot again." For example, Whitney Houston does it but if Ellen does the same thing it would make a "bigger hype."
- 10 Student thinks more straight adults than straight teens are very closed minded and that "Christian groups" who say loving someone of same sex is a sin and people like Dr. Laura should be banned. Although she "wants to kill Dr. Laura," thinks Dr. Laura is "in the wrong all the way," and doesn't know why people listen to Dr. Laura, student has not taken any action to protest her. She suspects if Dr. Laura provoked her by saying something really offensive and really radical about "killing off all the gays," she would do something, like write to the media and even petition to get laws against it.
- 10 She thinks a lot of "gay movies" (e.g. Go Fish) are just strictly about being gay and she doesn't think gay and lesbian should be the big issue in movies that gay and lesbian make it. "Go Fish" made too big of a deal of a lesbian sleeping with a straight guy, even though she doesn't understand why a lesbian would do that. She thinks that maybe gay and lesbian movies center too much on being gay and lesbian rather than on being people who "require acceptance among the heterosexual world." She thinks that gay and lesbian issues in the movies should be masked (but not really), blend and go with the flow in order to achieve gradual acceptance.

- 11 The media, personal research and the internet shaped student's friends' ideas about lesbianism. Student is not criticizing the media when she says she thinks the media does a good job of telling A truth and that truth is about hate.
- 11 She is wary of statistics, doesn't trust numbers, but thinks the studies we get are fairly accurate and there are probably even more suicides that have not been caught. Like other portions of the population, gay and lesbian youth have other stresses they have to deal with on their own. It's hard to find community and a sense of self; at least youth from racial minorities have parents who have dealt with those same problems throughout their lives. Student has heard the suicide statistics "turned and said the other way" to show that gay people are crazy because they kill themselves.
- 13 Student hadn't really heard much about gay and lesbian killing themselves although student has a friend who recently died of a drug overdose and student is not sure it was a suicide attempt or friend was unaware of drug mixture. It was horrible. Student attributes her own hospitalization in part to her own struggles with sexuality identity and what her family was putting her through. She started drugs because she was going through "shit" with her mom, her aunt and family and they were pressuring her to "do this" "do that" "be straight" and people were thinking that her situation was "horrible." Student's friend offered her drugs and she took them, it was good, and she kept taking them.
- 13 [impact of media]Student thinks that no matter what the media says ("all homosexuals are going to hell"), like everyone else she has her own beliefs, she shapes and decides for herself.
- 14 In high school, the only thing student knew about gay and lesbian youth was that they were killing themselves. There were no books in the public library about gay and lesbian but the high school had a couple of books on social and political issues. Student wanted to read these because they talked about gay people but after she read them she ended up feeling "oh great, they all kill themselves."

Being a non-white lesbian is like being a "minority within a minority"

- 1 Student has never really seen herself as a white woman. She doesn't really know, but thinks there are probably more difficulties and drawbacks to be a non-white lesbian because the lesbian would be a minority within a minority.
- 2 Student hopes sharing her experience will show that there is more than one set of students educators are catering to. And that all of the lesbians are not white and all of the Chinese girls are not straight.
- 2 She thought it was great that minorities (Blacks, Asians) were the majority in her school and she worries/is not too worried about being a minority in the very white college she will enter this fall.
- 2 Student thinks her race (Chinese) has made her not as open about her sexuality and it's like being a "minority within a minority."
- 4 Student thinks that if she were black or Asian and lesbian she would be in a lower class minority.
- 5 Student points to black, female politicians who are trying to fit in on the basis of skin color and being an African American l/g would make it even harder to

- fit in. That would be another thing "holding you down from being quote, unquote normal." Student thinks being white is an advantage now because whites are not a minority, although they are supposed to be in 2005.
- 6 Student thinks her race (white) made being a lesbian a little easier but she had no clue about race/class and gay and lesbian in high school.
- 7 She thinks it's horrible to say but the truth is that she is more scared to talk about gay and lesbian around people who are not white. She definitely raises her voice/stares in the neighborhood near her school, especially when she was in the predominantly white part because white people tend to be very non-confrontational and non-social (e.g. "I don't want to talk to someone who is not sitting at my table."), which is good because you don't get the "harassing people who aren't sitting your table thing" and bad because you don't the "talking to people who aren't sitting at your table thing." She will raise her voice/stare if she is in a place where she feels comfortable, on her own ground, where she knows what she is doing, and knows where all the exits are.
- 7 Unlike the public school system in [another major city], the [city's] public school system can be very much for the minority groups in a lot of ways.
- 7 She thinks statistically speaking it seems demonstrated that it is easier for white upper class people to come out. Her theory is that they have a lot easier time coming out because of the "white bred Protestant ethic" of "hands-off" (plus Asians also seem to not care what goes on in other people's families, just their own). She doesn't think that's true for Catholics, very fundamentalist Christians, or non-white populations who have communities based on large groups of families. She thinks it is easier to come out if you are a "have," but if you are a minority you don't want to compound it. Student has shared her theory with a couple of black students and they seemed to think she was right so she feels comfortable saying this because she is not a "lone person theorizing," although she knows the people she talked to do not represent their entire culture.
- 7 Student thinks the white community provides more flexibility in gender roles, less emphasis on being macho and being feminine, and more "free reign" to do what you want. Student thinks the largely black local public school has a culture based on being a Real Man and a Real Woman and being gay and lesbian doesn't fit in there.
- 7 The white hippies of the 60's and 70's allowed white women to be much less feminine and they didn't have to wear make up and white men were allowed to be more feminine meanwhile "militaristic groups" like the Black Panthers were "very much into" being macho and manly and a famous black male revolutionary whose name student can't remember said "the only place for women in the movement is on their backs." Student acknowledges this all happened while there were some black hippies, the attitude of "women's place is on their backs" was also present in the white hippie movement, traditional gender roles were present during the 60's and 70's, and white men still faced the same macho requirements.

- 7 Student thinks her race has made it easier because there are some deviations allowed and she only has one other minority status to fight, even though being queer is not a minority status, it's just the way she is treated.
- 8 Student doesn't think her (white) race made it more difficult to be a lesbian. She thinks her background made it more difficult than her race did. Student thinks black lesbians have three strikes (woman/black/lesbian) against them and she only has two (woman/lesbian).
- 9 Student thinks she could talk about the impact of her race (white) if she lived in a more diverse community (3 black students in her high school) since she has no idea what it would be like to be black and to be a lesbian.
- 10 Student thinks her whiteness make it easier being a lesbian. She thinks it's harder for blacks in the gay community because, from what she knows, they are very religious and males are supposed to have a wife and a macho look.
- 11 Student thinks she understands certain race relations because of her homosexuality. She understands being a minority and being underappreciated. Student sees herself definitely benefiting and having an advantage from being white and middle class because she has heard that it's very, very hard to come out as a lesbian in the black and Latino communities. She thinks this makes sense because the lower economic development in those communities leads to a lesser acceptance of homosexuality.
- 12 The administration was run by women and very matriarchal, which she says is about right in the black community. They thought that gay male students were misunderstood cute little novelty dreaded Bohemian children so they got away with more than she did. To administrators, she was not like a woman at all, was not going to be a woman, dressed like a boy, was confused and in need of therapy because to them she was "out of her fucking mind." She got a lot of hostility from administrators. For example, on a day when her AP chemistry class went to meet professionals in the field of science, the head guidance counselor publically reprimanded her by saying "you can't dress like that, and you can't be a bum. And you can't look like that and you can't just be yourself all the time." Her gay male friend was sitting beside her in the seminar, wearing the same clothes as her. She felt like she was attacked and he wasn't because he was "this adorable boy." This angered the student because the guidance counselor gave other students permission to be disrespectful to student and insulted student's intelligence. Another example is when student was chasing a "big scary lesbian" (who later became her best friend) who was running away with student's book and student accidentally almost knocked over the head p.e. teacher. Student apologized and the teacher said "hey, don't touch me. I don't play that gay shit."
- 13 Student doesn't see a lot of famous black lesbians and she thinks that black lesbians in general think they are supposed to look and be butch or try and look like men. She doesn't understand why if you are black, you have to be butch. People think student is butch but she is everything and can be butch or femme when she wants to. Student thinks it would be harder if she were a white lesbian because white lesbians get picked on more than black lesbians, white

- lesbians get called "dyke," "bulldagger," "faggot," and it is usually white guys who call people names. Student thinks people think weird.
- 13 People do not say anything to her and her friend when they walk down the street and only once in a while do black people call anyone names (on a certain street). This happened once and student and her friends turned around and cussed every last one of them out. People think that just because you are gay and get harassed gay and lesbians won't do anything but student says it's as plain and simple as "fuck that" and "I'm going to cuss your ass out."
- 14 Student says being in an interracial relationship really made her see that her being white gave her some privilege in gay and lesbian culture; she had never really thought about that until her first IR relationship. All of her past girlfriends have been women of color or women who do not identify as white (e.g., Latina, Asian, Jewish) and it has really opened her eyes as to how easy it is for student to walk into a pride event because everybody's like her.
- 14 Student had always kind of noticed how her parents reacted to race and that she felt completely different from them, but she didn't actively seek to learn about different cultures as much as she now does. Student says interracial couples are treated phenomenally horrible.
- 15 Student thinks it is harder to be a nonconformist in the black community and black, gay men have it "hardest in this country." Student does not mean this to sound "narrowminded by any means" but it is hard to be black and not into R&B, bar-b-que, "that whole thing."

#### Lower economic status means less opportunities

- 1 Student's parents received financial aid to pay for private high school. Student's parents did not shun her, but if they did, student would not be walking away from much. Student thinks it can be harder for people who risk losing money to come out, but that money is stupid reason not to come out because who you are is more important than what you have. Unlike her ex-girlfriend, she is not used to having everything she wants. Student is broke and in debt from relationship with ex-girlfriend after ex-girlfriend's \$\$ parents let it be known she was not welcome home. Student thinks it is "huge" that ex-girlfriend walked away.
- 2 Student thinks of herself as lower class and does not think her class has impacted her lesbianism. She lives in a city with a lot of resources so she does not feel held back by not having enough money, although she thinks she would feel held back if she were somewhere more constricting. Cheap public transportation helps although it adds up.
- 3 Student is middle class and she hasn't been able to afford the latest chic lesbian fashion and body piercing, although she has an earring.
- 4 If student had more money people would not have called her "PWTT," poor white trailer trash, and she got that a lot. She also could have changed her appearance with better clothes and a nice car. A lot of her gay friends are upper class, including a gay male friend whose got a superiority complex because his family is rich. Student doesn't care about money and the nice clothes and car don't really matter. She thinks people would still look at her the

same [in regard to identity] but they might pretend to be her friend for the money.

- 5 [impact of class] Student thinks people think all lesbians are "white trash" or all gay people live in trailer parks and this is what she has seen. At HS#1 student hung out with people who were "jokingly called the white trash" which is where all the outsiders came together. If she had stayed at that school it would have been easier because there would have been more people like her. But she liked being at HS#2 and coming out because it showed her that she could do it. Student thinks a better financial state makes it easier on that person's emotional state. At the same time it is harder for an upper class woman to be gay because people will say "can't she get any guys?."
- 5 HS#2 was in a "very uptight, very conservative" upscale community where the housing developments are a place to show off your worth. In HS#2 a lot of things depended on "your bank account, not your personality" and student didn't like that. Student doesn't know if her perception of the area [as a place to show off wealth] applies only in the schools or if after graduation the perception of the area is the same or not. Student felt like she was an unwelcome outsider when she moved into the town and started school. Student thinks it was harder being non-straight in HS#2 than HS#1. Although she wasn't "out of the closet" until her senior year, student thinks everyone knew because she dressed "stereotypically" (e.g. like a guy and wearing a hat) and got her clothes at Wal-Mart. While that was normal at HS #1, it seemed to her that if she didn't shop at the Gap once a week she was not welcome in HS#2. Student didn't like that the students in HS #2 liked to "show off their money." Students' parents didn't have \$50 for a pair of sneakers and she doesn't see why she needs \$50 or \$70 sneakers when she can go to Payless and get a pair for \$.95 and another pair for half off. Compared to the community of HS #2, student's family was lower income, but they were still pretty well set. Student tried for a month to fit in by shopping at the Gap. Student didn't fit in and became an outcast because she hung out with an outsider, a student no one liked, on her second day of school. Student doesn't know what made the other student an outsider. Student knows that since she came to HS#2 in 11<sup>th</sup> grade she was "not as well put" as everyone else and that the students who had been going to school together since kindergarten set "their little terms."
- 6 Student thinks that if she had far less money it would've somewhat shaped how she sees herself as a lesbian, because she probably wouldn't have been able to afford to go to the college of her choice and would have gone to a state university where she would not have felt comfortable being a lesbian. She says she is comfortable, like middle class, but was able to afford her college because they gave her a lot of scholarship money.
- 8 Student doesn't think economic class shaped her thinking about lesbianism, but her mother told her to be a lesbian you have to be rich. Mother works with gay men who say they have had lots of relationships with women, got sick of it, and started sleeping with men. She thinks her parents think being gay means sleeping with people for money. Her parents told her that a person has to have

- enough money and influence to come out and still have the money to back him/her up.
- 9 Student thinks her economic class gave people respect for her because she was well-off, well-dressed, and going to a nice college.
- 10 Student knows people from different classes but no one from the lower classes. She doesn't know how class shaped her identity as a lesbian.
- 11 Student thinks her middle class status has made it a lot easier and put her in the normal community of lesbians. She thinks that people higher in the "food chain" are just involved with sexuality and have too much money to worry about it. If student had less money she would have had fewer opportunities, would probably still be in hometown without the opportunity to leave, not only to go the city on weekends and meet new people but to go to college in another city. She thinks it is really important for her to get out of her hometown.
- 12 Student thinks being middle class gave her certain advantages over black lesbians from a lower class: the opportunity to have experiences through travel, the opportunity to leave her neighborhood to find lesbian neighborhoods in the city, to do lesbian things, find lesbian people, and go get information. She did not experience the isolation of lower class black lesbians who are confined to their own (non-lesbian) neighborhoods where "information" does not flow in. She remembers meeting a kid who had only been downtown two times and didn't know the names of the streets and this seemed bizarre to her because she had been navigating downtown alone since she was 11. She thinks the proximity of her high school to a major research university gave her a chance to gain information about a lot of things, including homosexuality and activities in the city.
- 13 Student thinks her class doesn't like gay and lesbian people, although she thinks no economic class likes gay people, although in every class there are open and closed-minded people. She doesn't understand transgendered people but she thinks some people do. Student wonders why someone would want to be the opposite sex if god created them as a man or woman.
- 14 Student's class affected her in that it was really nice to have a lot of money, a car, and other things. She jokes that it's way more fun to be a rich lesbian than a poor one because you are way more desirable because there aren't too many of them. Student thought it sucked when she lost everything and had to sell her viola but reminded herself she could get through it. There is definitely privilege with money.
- 15 Student's parents have money but student doesn't see any of it because of parents' debt. At one time family had "money coming out of everywhere" and if student needed something she got it and student liked living like that. At another, earlier time student would come home from school to nothing: no water, gas, electricity, or heat. This is a difficult question for student to answer because she has rich and poor friends from all walks of life and she doesn't know where she fits in.

Appearance as woman/lesbian is judged; feels like appearance makes her not "fit in"; not looking like other people expect (not looking like a dyke or not looking straight)

- 2 She thinks if she was "all out butch" she would have a really hard time just walking down the street, getting a job.
- 3 Prior to coming out, student was becoming more and more femme "to show" that she was straight.
- 4 She gets "really weird" about labels and gender roles and she usually avoids being too "girlie" unless she is going to a wedding or prom when she just gives in to gender roles.
- 6 It feels weird to student to break the image people have of her and she doesn't like people thinking things before they really know her. Student also felt that way in high school. Student thinks that people look at her and don't think she could be gay because she wears skirts, has long hair, and other things. Student feels like some people don't feel she's worthy to be a lesbian because she doesn't have "the look" like the short hair. Student thinks people think lesbians look like the only girl she knew who was out: out girl had short hair, wore jeans, shorts, Nike shoes, t-shirts. Student thinks that's how the girl felt comfortable and that's probably because she was more obviously gay. Student doesn't like talking about this because she feels like she is endorsing stereotypes and she hates that. For example: if she is wearing jeans and a t-shirt people think she is dressed that way because she is a lesbian; if she is wearing a skirt, people will think "she's a lesbian but she's wearing a dress." Student says she doesn't fit the mold of a lesbian by the way she dresses and that she's just herself, she's attracted to women, "big deal." Student dresses the way she dresses and acts the ways she acts and it is just her. Student hates it when people who know she is gay make a connection between her being a lesbian and the way she is dressed. Student thinks the reason she has trouble telling people she is a lesbian is because she doesn't want people thinking things in the back of their minds.
- 7 She has always looked very feminine and for a long time dressed feminine with short skirts and high heels. She has a pair of 4" high heels that she wore to the prom in her junior year during her "trying so hard to be straight stage." She did the "whole little sex pot thing" but it didn't fly well for her.
- 8 Student's appearance hindered her identification as an official lesbian to other people. Student questions if she is supposed to wear something to be identifiable and that pisses her off.
- 9 Student's girlfriend recently convinced her to cut her hair short, although she didn't want to.
- 10 Student thinks that because she isn't a "typical" lesbian it's easier for her because she doesn't get that "well there goes a dyke" stuff. She has always been the way she is and she doesn't think that changing her hairstyle or her dress should have anything to do with her sexuality.
- 11 Student maybe feels like she had to be "more normal" to fit in. She tried to "veer away" from the image of the traditional lesbian "ladies in a mini-van driving around the country going to women's music festivals." Student "hates" to be able to define herself by a store, but she distances herself from the traditional lesbian image by shopping at the Gap and Banana Republic. There were lesbians at student's school who looked more traditional; student's last

girlfriends was "earthy," an alternative type who never has and never will fit in no matter where she is. Student never went to dances in high school because she doesn't like to wear dresses and never got into "that culture." She never felt comfortable fitting in, not because she had a girlfriend, but on the basis of clothes.

- 11 Unlike some of her friends, student has never been able to "hide" so her appearance has made it an issue for her.
- 12 Student thinks that her lesbianism and her feminism have allowed her to choose what she will and will not wear, say, do, take or believe. Some of these choices have been received with hostility from men who think she is overstepping the boundaries of what a woman is supposed to be. Since student was raised by a feminist mother who valued student's opinion, student did not hesitate to speak up at school. Student did not understand why the male students had a problem with her or that she wasn't supposed to know or say certain things because she was a woman. She thinks a lot of ways women are treated (including herself) are because they are women. The way she chooses to act as a woman are constantly under attack. Student knows that other people are making judgments about her appearance and that what she finds beautiful in herself is different from society's definitions of beauty. Although she doesn't think she should have to know what's expected to "look right," she often relies on her sister's opinion. Student sees herself as pretty but not butch or femme. Beauty issues have been a serious thing for her and the older she gets, the more serious it gets.
- 12 Heterosexual high school students probably get the advantage of more self-esteem. It is less stressful for heterosexual women to fit in because they don't have that thing telling them they never will. Student's beauty was always being attacked ("what the fuck are you wearing?", "what did you do to your hair?"). Student remembers reading a lesbian writer who talked about the attacks on her own beauty. Student wore what she felt like wearing but she knew she was not beautiful to a lot of people. She thinks heterosexual women have better self-esteem because they get their beauty reaffirmed without even being told. From her experiences with her straight younger sister student realizes that heterosexual women have image issues but she doesn't think her sister has as much of a female/feminine issue (what is a woman? What is a woman supposed to be? How is a woman supposed to look?) as she has from high school.
- 13 She has been called "dyke" because people think that her short hair and boyish clothes are butch.
- 14 Student cut her hair for herself, because she hated bushy hair, not to assimilate into lesbian culture. She usually wears it very short, almost shaved because the longer hair is, the more obnoxious it is because it has to be washed and styled. Her straight friends have told her she looks like a lesbian because she has short hair. Once student got into the beginning of her junior year and wasn't dating anyone, had long hair then cut it short, people would ask if she was a lesbian. Student did not cut hair as part of her coming out. Student hated her long, bushy curly hair so it was just time for it to come off. Student started to lose

- her hair when she was ill which caused little bald spots so she got a "Shirley Temple" curly bob cut.
- 14 Her straight friends have told her she looks like a lesbian because she has short hair and large rimmed glasses. She jokes with interviewer that all lesbians have the same look because lesbians shop at the same places and are only shown the lesbian merchandise.
- 14 Student thinks nothing about her appearance has shaped her sexuality. She's heard that her clothing is stereotypically lesbian though she doesn't believe there is gender on clothing even though they put "men's" and "women's" clothes on opposite sides of the store.
- 14 When you do hear about the lesbian community, it's "big, burly butch women who wear flannels and baggy jeans and ride motorcycles" or the "granola lesbian with the Birkenstock sandals and broomstick skirt who plays the guitar" and she feels like "ok, I don't fit" either of those. Student thinks coming out as a lesbian, you deal with "what does this mean to my gender?" because women are placed into such gender-specific categories.
- 15 People appreciate student's "au natural" look and think she is sexy because of the way she dresses. Student doesn't necessarily feel like she has to bother with make-up, wears it when she feels like it, and doesn't wear it much now because #1 doesn't like it.

#### Inequality in society is permanent

- 1 Student likes to think that public schools will be different in 20 years but she thinks that it will take longer. She doesn't think it will ever be ideal. Student predicts that more students will be out to each other in 25 years but the atmosphere will remain silent and negative toward gay and lesbian and time will not change that. Student thinks that it is possible that there will be a time without discrimination but doesn't know because there is still discrimination against blacks and "you would think there wouldn't be." She thinks discrimination against gay and lesbian will run the same course, things will improve, and then another group will become discriminated against. She thinks there will always be a group on the bottom because "people obviously think that way" and the big part religion plays.
- 2 Inequality will always be with us because that is the way people are built. Student can not see a time when people aren't treated differently on the basis of some difference. She doesn't think it will be this way forever because everything changes but it's crazy to think that everyone is going to be great about everyone else's differences. Inequality will always be with us because people don't like or they are hesitant about what that don't understand.
- 3 She does not see a time when people aren't treated differently on the basis their differences because the human race has a strange obsession with classifying people; some people will always fear what is different from them; and every couple of decades a new group will become a target. She thinks that society will eventually change so that it will not be cool to discriminate against gay and lesbian more than any other group, but she wonders who will be the next group after gay and lesbian are considered equal.

- 4 Student definitely does not think that people will stop being treated differently on the basis of race, class, religion, etc., any time soon. She jokes that perhaps people will stop being treated differently on the basis of race, class, religion, etc., when we get to the time when Star Trek takes place.
- 5 Student thinks people will always be divided up, there will always be cliques in high school and through the rest of life. Before high school there will be the sandbox crew and the swing set crew; after high school it will be the people wearing Abercrombie and Fitch and the people wearing K-mart. Student thinks members of different groups get different things. For example, a student might be in a popular crew but won't get to know everyone one on one. The gay group will be smaller, but everyone will really get to know each other. Student thinks popular students have their popularity in common and then interest grows, while gay students start with more interests in common, like how they came out.
- 6 Student hopes there will be a time when people aren't treated differently on the basis of sexuality but she points out that people are treated differently on the basis of just about anything (e.g., race, class, gender). She thinks things can get better but questions if we can make that disappear for good, it will take time to tell.
- 8 People are getting riches so they don't care about the condition of other people's lives. Money, more conservative time, and religion are going to make it hard to raise people to oppose something. Student says global change in attitude toward homosexuals will not happen because of the influences of Conservative Republicans and religious people who are into the Bible. Student doesn't think you can change people's interpretation of the bible. Religion will play a large part in whether or not we are no longer treated differently as lesbians. Since the bible says it is wrong, student questions her authority to say the bible is wrong, and doesn't think change will happen soon, if at all.
- 9 Student thinks that unfortunately the time when we aren't treated differently on the basis of our sexuality is a long way off.
- 11 Student thinks that the lower classes will always be treated unfairly by the upper classes and that we are defined more by class than sexuality. She wrote a short essay about how lower class gay and lesbian will always be treated unfairly and be discriminated against because of the "community" they are in, and how the strong gay movement doesn't give a damn about them. Student thinks that everyone who makes less money is always going to have less power.
- 12 She is hopeful for change, she works for it, but the pace of change is slow and she predicts change will take centuries.
- 13 Student thinks homophobia will be gone in 20 years but racism will always be around because people used to "beat on black people" and discrimination is going on now, and it will go on forever and ever.
- 14 Student says that in a perfect world, in 20 years from now English teachers will say "this is a transgendered/lesbian author" and gay history would be included in American history courses (e.g., this person, Barney Frank, was the first out such and such). However, student doesn't honestly see this happening in the

town she grew up in; it would be lucky to get "Walt Whitman was a gay man" in there. She thinks it will be at least 10 years before you see more incorporation of gay history. She thinks it won't be such a big deal for same sex couples to go to the prom but she thinks they will still have to pick and choose moments when they hug in the hallways, whereas straight kids don't have to.

- 14 For there to be more out teachers it would have to be more socially unacceptable to be so discriminatory against people but she doesn't think that will happen in 20 years.

#### People learn not to critique the status quo

- 1 Student thinks people can't "see" because "not seeing" is learned behavior. For example, she sees prejudice in her dad's siblings and her nieces/nephews have fallen into that which means those children will teach their children the same thing. Student thinks that cycle needs to be broken but she has no clue how to break it.
- 1 For example, student critiques "the whole Catholic religion" ("some random person wrote the bible" and "the whole evolution thing") because she had another point of view: student was once a science major.
- 2 People have been taught not to "get it," they have been brainwashed: parents tell them one thing then school tells them the same thing, it's a vicious cycle, you reap what you sow.
- 6 Student thinks it's hard for people to think about and accept that it is possible for gay and lesbians to have relationships because they have been taught only one way so there is no place to put this idea.
- 8 Culture encloses us in an invisible little way and puts blinders on that makes it difficult for people to critique culture. For example when students are screaming "faggot" and "dyke" teachers put blinders on and ignore the part is hurtful and painful for people who are gay. They excuse it by saying "what the hell do kids know, anyway, at this point?."
- 12 If people are not taught to think, then they are not going to be socially conscious, to break down their society, to deconstruct it so it can be seen.
- 13 People's mind's are closed and "society has put in them" that they cannot change, that they are supposed to be a certain way, that they are supposed to jump as high as they are told.
- 14 People tend to go with what is first told to them and for most people they are first told through religion.
- 15 Student thinks that sex is a taboo topics for parents and their children. Student thinks that unless parents point out and critique things, everything will seem natural and "just a part of the scenery" and what students don't know about will remain un-critiqued. Student thinks the ability to critique is a learned behavior because people have "free will." Children do it naturally from a very young age, and critiquing gets more structured as people develop, get more intellectual, and have more things to say. Student thinks kids may not be aware they are critiquing but they "give it to you how it is" without worrying if it polite, because it is just natural for them.

People resist critiquing the status quo

- 1 She thinks that there are too many people who don't try to understand, who don't think they need to understand.
- 2 People are not willing or are too lazy to understand that schools are predominantly about straight kids, and that the world is predominantly about straight people and men. People don't want to put energy into starting or changing something, some people are set in their ways. If someone doesn't feel like getting the information or doesn't want to look behind what they are given, they don't have to.
- 3 She thinks that some people are hard-core bigots.
- 3 Some people don't "get it" for a variety of reasons: gay and lesbian are a convenient target for people who like to have power over others; some people benefit from the way it is; and other people (and groups of people) are like the "school yard bully magnified" who feel better by keeping other people (groups) down.
- 4 Straight people are ignorant, scared of us, and don't want to take the time to understand our "motivation."
- 6 Because gay and lesbian is "such a controversial thing" student guesses that it is just easier for people to ignore it than risk "pissing people off" (by addressing it).
- 7 Some people do not critique heterosexist society because they are not in tune to it and have their priorities elsewhere.
- 8 Student says global change in attitude toward homosexuals will not happen because of the influences of Conservative Republicans and religious people who are into the Bible. Student doesn't think you can change people's interpretation of the bible. People like Pat Robertson benefit from ignoring the knowledge that exists because it is easier to stay within their comfort zone and preserve their present beliefs . Gaining that knowledge would mean they would have to connect it to their religious beliefs that they grew up with.
- 12 Some people choose to ignore things that are a part of their situation.
- 13 People don't change because they are "stubborn assholes."

The root causes of discrimination against gay and lesbians are ignorance, misunderstanding, conservatism, and fear

- 1 Student thinks the root cause of discrimination against lesbians is ignorance. She thinks that there are too many people who don't understand.
- 2 The root of discrimination against lesbians is misunderstanding.
- 3 Student thinks the root cause of discrimination against lesbians is ignorance.
- 4 Student thinks the root cause of discrimination is ignorance about gay and lesbians.
- 5 Student doesn't think decisions are being made to exclude gay and lesbian stuff from schools. Student thinks gay and lesbian stuff is absent in the schools because it is tradition, like eating turkey on Dec. 25, and it will be like that until someone challenges it. Student thinks schools are caught up on

technology but are behind in this "trend" (e.g. gay and lesbian info and who Melissa E. is dating).

- 5 The root cause of discrimination against lesbians is ignorance, people not being used to change or being different. Student compares this to the experience of her father being raised on "white bread with margarine every morning" and how bagels for breakfast will be a new weird concept for him and how he will think it is not good because it is not the way he was raised. She's not sure people will want to give up their ways.
- 6 Student thinks the root cause of discrimination against gay and lesbian is that people think about sex because they define being a homosexual as having sex with someone of the same gender, and this makes people feel icky and they have queasiness about it.
- 8 The root of discrimination against homosexuals is misunderstanding and a lack of information.
- 9 Student thinks the root cause behind discrimination against lesbians is tradition, that someone decided a long time ago it was "bad," people hear that when they grow up, they are too ignorant to think for themselves and unwilling to change their values. Student points to other countries where it is not that big of a deal. Student thinks discrimination against lesbians could have something to do with patriarchy and women's status, but less now than 20 years ago.
- 11 We have perpetuated the conservative beliefs of the founders of America (people who were "too prudish for England" and not the Italians who "stop at 1:00 and go to sleep for the rest of the day"). Homosexuality in other countries and past times was dealt with completely differently. She thought about answering that the root cause was patriarchy.
- 12 The root of discrimination is ignorance.
- 13 Student thinks the root cause of discrimination against gay and lesbian is ignorance.
- 14 Student sees ignorance as the root cause of discrimination against gay and lesbian.
- 15 The root cause of discrimination against people who identify as homosexual or bisexual is the sexual threat ("threat of the same sex") and "what they think about what you think about them."

Discrimination, ignorance and misunderstanding comes from a lack of access to information, a lack of exposure, a lack of social awareness and social obligation

- 2 It's not easy to access alternate information, it's not there in front of you and there is not enough communication.
- 3 Some people don't "get it" for a variety of reasons: because they are unaware that there is a problem to begin with; they don't know any gays, gays are just "those people."
- 4 Straight people don't know what a gay person is about, straight people are ignorant.

- 5 Student thinks gay and lesbian stuff is absent in the schools because it is tradition, like eating turkey on Dec. 25, and it will be like that until someone challenges it.
- 7 Student thinks people are becoming complacent and have to be reminded that they have an obligation to other people. She thinks it is important to remind "mainstream queer society" that there are others out there (e.g., transgendered), just as the women's suffrage movement reminded people that women were left out of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment. She also points to [other exclusions in historical social movements] -- the women's movement "not paying attention to lesbians" and the black movement not paying attention to women.
- 7 Power will not go to the people who are the "real leaders" and the people who are looking out for what is best for other people. Student doesn't think high school will hire a principal with "a real backbone." Student would like to see someone who would be strong and say "no, this is wrong" or "no, this is not right" but "they" don't want anyone like that in there. Student thinks that is sad and that is the way life is because wealthy people are the ones who are going to have the power.
- 8 The root of discrimination against homosexuals is misunderstanding and a lack of information.
- 9 Student thinks people who can't critique society are uninformed, ignorant, have never met a gay person, don't know anything about it. She thinks that people in California had no idea they were banning gay marriage when they voted on a bill that said "a man and a man should not be able to marry" and that the voters did not think of the greater issues behind what they were voting on.
- 10 Student thinks the fear of gay and lesbian comes from not being taught about gay and lesbians and that's why it should be taught in the schools.
- 12 People have a hard time dealing with things that are not a part of their situation. For example, if a person is not gay or lesbian, they may not be able to understand what it means to be gay.
- 12 Student thinks a lot of ignorance is the result of a lack of education and that her own experience illustrates that point. She feels that the black community has not been given the opportunity to learn a lot of things and her community (African American) needs to make more room for creativity and expressing self in different ways.
- 14 She thinks people are afraid of what they don't know.
- 15 Student thinks change will come about when reasonably educated people are persuaded out of their prejudices. Student thinks persuasion is a powerful tool.

#### Fear interferes with understanding or supporting gay and lesbians

- 3 She thinks that change [creating safeguards against "crazy" parents so more teachers can come out] will be easy compared to getting society to see gay and lesbian teachers as role models as they see all teachers, not as deviants. She thinks schools can change to an extent but will still have trouble unless society changes.

- 4 Being a gay person scares people in the same way death scares people because they don't know what's going to happen. Student says whether she has a boyfriend or a girlfriend she is the same person but they think we're monsters who want to kill or recruit children.
- 6 Student thinks the root cause of discrimination against gay and lesbian is that people think about sex because they define being a homosexual as having sex with someone of the same gender, and this makes people feel icky and they have queasiness about it. Student thinks it is easier for lesbians than for gay men because "they" think gay men just have sex but for lesbians people might think there is an intimate relationship.
- 10 Student thinks people listen to Dr. Laura and/or don't critique straight culture because they fear gay and lesbian and believe that if straights "let" gay and lesbian "out," gay and lesbians will behave like "animals out of their cages" who "stampede all over and spread diseases."
- 10 Student also thinks people don't stand up for gay and lesbians because they fear being labeled and she thinks this is the very same thing as during the nazi period.
- 10 Student thinks radical lesbians are the root cause of discrimination against lesbians because they try to force people to like them because they are homosexuals. It never works to force anything on anybody and it's the same thing as heterosexuals trying to influence gay and lesbian to be straight.
- 11 Student is not going to tell someone they are wrong if their religion says that homosexuality is bad because it's their religion and their ideas, as long as those people are not killing homosexuals. She jokes "don't tell any one" she said that.
- 14 She thinks people are afraid of what they don't know.
- 15 The root cause of discrimination against people who identify as homosexual or bisexual is the sexual threat ("threat of the same sex") and "what they think about what you think about them." Actual discrimination and hostility toward student and her group comes from women who don't want gay women around them for fear of what lesbians are thinking about them and fear of being "hit on." Women feel differently toward gay men: they "love 'em, love 'em, love 'em." Student thinks straight men are also threatened by gay men but it's a lot more hostile because of testosterone.

#### X. Student as Agent of Change

Student has voice in school (writings, speaking up in class, organizing); student transgresses heterosexual norms of school

- 1 Student did not do anything in high school to suggest that not everyone there was straight.
- 2 Student thinks students have to make their own comfortable, safe places in high school. She did it with the GSA and her own small circle of friends who felt safe around each other and said whatever they wanted. Student rolls her eyes at the idea of putting up rainbow stickers because it seemed kind of corny

- and she was shy about it, although she had a friend who plastered them all over her body.
- 2 Student wrote profiles in school newspaper to dispel misconceptions about GSA, just the whole process of starting the club and the outcomes (it was huge/it wasn't huge). People knew about it when it came out. As a result of the articles student became an information source about the GSA.
- 2 Student challenged the heterosexual climate of her school in an English class by attempting to generate a conversation about the obviously aggressive nature of the all-female characters in the play the class was reading. The teacher said she didn't notice those characteristics. The student made a second observation about all of the class readings having underlying sexual frustrations and the teacher's response was "thank you, okay." The teacher picked the readings from a list and while she doesn't think the teacher selected particular readings consciously because of these themes, the student hopes so.
- 3 She doesn't remember challenging heterosexual space in the classroom.
- 3 Student created space by starting the GSA, conspicuously coloring her backpack in rainbow colors as a "little act of rebellion," and wearing pride rings given to her by her gay male friends toward the end of high school to "actively proclaim pride."
- 3 Student's positive experience was attending a faculty meeting to talk about the GSA. She did not think anything horrible was going to happen but was a nervous wreck because although she was not new to being a lesbian, she was new to activism, not used to outing herself to large crowds, and about to out herself to the entire faculty. A friend told the student's story to the faculty. During their planning of the presentation, they built in an option for the student to decide whether or not to come out. The student elected not to remain silent, spoke up, and let the faculty know it was her story that had just been shared. She made this decision because she figured it would personalize more it to them. The faculty gave her a great reception and, on the bus going home, she had an excellent conversation with one of her teachers. She considers this experience one of her shining moments in high school.
- 4 The impact of silence has made student angry and that is why she has been involved in planning the Day of Silence at her school. Student and three other people participated in the Day of Silence during her sophomore year and she was the only one who didn't talk and break the silence. Student intends to continue organizing the Day of Silence in school even when she is not there any more. Once the school gets used to the fact that gay and lesbian people are there and people support having the Day of Silence on a larger scale, she is going to start with the curriculum, school board and the official stuff.
- 4 Student's favorite class was a history class she took with her best [gay male] friend in her sophomore year. They were "the gays" at the back of the room. The class was too difficult for her friend and they both failed it. The teacher was pretty cool, let them (student and her friend) sit together, and let students talk for 10 to 15 minutes at the end of class. Nearly everyday the students would get into conversations with a few people or the whole class would turn around ask student and her friend "stupid questions" and they became the "Gay

Dictionary." For example, students asked "will you have sex with a girl for \$1,000?" and student replied that she would probably do it for free if she was in love with the person. Some people mind being the gay dictionary but student didn't and would rather have other students learn from her about gay and lesbian than be ignorant.

- 4 Student made a comfortable space for herself by wearing buttons all over her bag (e.g. "Kiss me twice I'm bisexual" and "If God had intended for people to be bisexual, he would of made two sexes").
- 4 Student challenged the heterosexist environment of school with lots and lots of rainbows and talking about gay and lesbian openly.
- 5 Student selected diversity as her topic for her senior project because the town was conservative, they hadn't seen much of gay and lesbian people except on TV or if they knew someone, and they "didn't really have a good taste of it." Student knew her senior project was the last thing she was going to do for her school. She wanted to do something that she could be proud of and put her heart and soul into, even though she is shy when doing presentations in front of people and knew that people would snicker when she got up to speak because she was not a popular student. Student's project was influenced by going to the off campus gay and lesbian youth group and wanting to show people the real her and what's really in her heart. She read coming out stories, heard the good and bad of coming out, and wanted to be a part that by by coming out with a "bang!.." She did go out with a bang because didn't get to out herself. Student didn't come out by her own choice and the whole school found out she was a lesbian when the guidance counselor "happened to mention" that she was gay when he introduced her at her senior project. Student was still figuring out if she was going to come out in her presentation or not. Student thinks presentation was really, really good, the audience gave her a standing ovation and she got many good comments back. Teachers wrote on student's report card that if her project "sucked" they were going to fail her but she got A's in one class because her project was so good and she also tried to keep up her other work. Also, student challenged space in school by doing her project and by wearing a "little dinky rainbow thing" on her bag. Student was stuck and couldn't get necklaces, bracelets and pride stuff because she didn't know where to get them, the accessory store in the mall didn't carry them, and she didn't have a credit card to shop on the internet.
- 5 Student might have done something in high school to make it her space but she doesn't remember.
- 5 Student answered questions for other students about what it meant to be gay and lesbian after she came out.
- 6 Student she doesn't think she challenged heterosexual space anywhere (school, mall, etc.).
- 6 She thinks her graduation speech about "being yourself" was a great speech, people talked to her after the speech, her English teacher told her others had said it was one of the best speeches they had ever heard at graduation, student spoke from her heart and said a lot of things that people need to hear but aren't really willing to hear. She remembers thinking "I'm going to be up there

- speaking to this entire class and no one is going to know" [about her sexuality]. She remembers thinking this speech was her last impression on people and there were a lot of people in the audience who had hurt her in the past and it was her way of saying "I'm over it and I don't care what you think about me" and that it was a long time ago when she wasn't happy with who she was.
- 6 She thinks her graduation speech about "being yourself" was a great speech, people talked to her after the speech, her English teacher told her others had said it was one of the best speeches they had ever heard at graduation, student spoke from her heart and said a lot of things that people need to hear but aren't really willing to hear. She remembers thinking "I'm going to be up there speaking to this entire class and no one is going to know" [about her sexuality]. She remembers thinking this speech was her last impression on people and there were a lot of people in the audience who had hurt her in the past and it was her way of saying "I'm over it and I don't care what you think about me" and that it was a long time ago when she wasn't happy with who she was.
- 7 In the class students were supposed to talk about an experience they had with hate and student thought that was pretty easy. She talked about seeing "Boys Don't Cry" with her girlfriend at a very trendy movie theater. After the movie everyone was somewhat affected but not horribly affected and people stared at student and girlfriend who were holding each other, sobbing. Student also thought it was really interesting that people were staring at them (girlfriend was packing, student was binding) because student thought student and girlfriend were the closest thing to a transgendered person (or a person who is a woman (sex-wise) who actually lives life as a man) those people have probably ever seen.
- 7 Student has done research for a history class on the feminist anarchists at the turn of the century, for example, Margaret Anderson who said "screw all of this, screw all of you, I'm going away" and moved off to a farm with her girlfriend.
- 7 Student made her space at school more comfortable by telling people to shut up, by getting an attitude that if people thought she was strong and brave then she would be and she'd be treated as such, and by being out.
- 7 Student wore a women's lib patch on her bag and was out as a feminist. She wore a pride bracelet that her girlfriend gave her but took it off when they broke up. Student doesn't generally wear rainbow flags because it seems to her like commercialization of the movement. She knows some people think commercialization, corporate backing, and money behind a movement is the only way to get places. Student would like to change things in general but student questions whether it is more important to change things for queers or to change things in general.
- 7 Student plans on violating heterosexual social rules at school by wearing a tux to the prom.
- 8 Student wore pride rings during senior year as she became more comfortable with herself and cared less.
- 8 Student had gay icons on her bag so that whoever recognized them knew who she was.

- 8 Student never came out verbally in a classroom through she wrote on gay-related topics. Being a lesbian felt very natural to student ("like my hair is brown, I'm a lesbian") even though in her family it was never discussed. S's only concern was that other people may not be fine with it. It didn't matter to student if she didn't come out in the classroom but is not sure if that's an excuse.
- 9 Student challenged heterosexual space in school by being honest, being like "yeah, I'm not ashamed of it. Screw you if you have a problem with it," which really "got into some people's faces." She thinks being "one of those out, out, out gay people" is "ridiculous." During freshman year student was physical with other students a couple of times, but didn't date anyone from the school because there wasn't anyone. After freshman year student only dated people who did not go to her school.
- 10 Student had pictures of her friends who were gay and a rainbow mobile in her locker, a rainbow on her backpack, and a rainbow bracelet that was a gift from a heterosexual friend.
- 10 Student did not demonstrate gay PDA but she did challenge heterosexual space in school by holding hands and kissing girlfriend goodbye. People gave them looks but she let them think what they wanted because that was beyond her point of caring, it was her space too, and if it didn't matter to her "less out" girlfriend then it didn't matter to her.
- 10 Student's way of breaking the heterosexual rules in high school was by holding hands and doing the "usual stuff you do" with someone you are dating.
- 11 Student was the kind of student who stayed in her room a lot, studied and slept. Student had books, magazines, and quotes from the Advocate in her dorm and never really had to come out to a roommate.
- 11 Student intentionally wore her "I heart being gay t-shirt" to school, raised her hand to say Oscar Wilde was gay, and did other little things to kind of "get it out there." She thinks she definitely crossed a boundary by just being herself.
- 11 Student wore "I [heart symbol] being gay" t-shirt to school and nobody ever cared.
- 11 Student doesn't think she changed her behavior in order to fit in. She started talking about it "really loudly," for example saying things in class about gay and lesbian people, to attract attention to herself. Student thinks her behavior was a reaction to her own fear and homophobia and an overcompensation for her nervousness.
- 11 Student got an e-mail from her RC the next day asking what had happened while the RC was away. Student wrote a page and a half e-mail about what she did, the reasons she did it, the lack of funding, the lack of support, how students have to turn to their own defenses, and if the RC was going to punish her then the RC should just do it but that she did it for the right reasons. RC never responded. Students who got in trouble were amazed that student did not and student was pretty proud of herself and jokes that it is all about the manipulation of communication.

- 11 Student intentionally wore her "I heart being gay t-shirt" to school, raised her hand to say Oscar Wilde was gay, and did other little things to kind of "get it out there." She thinks she definitely crossed a boundary by just being herself.
- 11 When student was in charge of GSA she had a club webpage with a link to the newspaper story on the club; she thinks the new club members are kind of lazy because the webpage is not kept current.
- 12 After she won first place for a gay story she wrote for the school's literary magazine gay AP English teacher asked why she was not in his class. When she reminded him that he "dissed" her, he said "I don't know what I was thinking."
- 12 Student won the literary contest with a gay themed story she originally wrote as an English assignment addressing how a person from the inside of society would look at people from outside of society. She was surprised that she won, given that it was a gay story. She wrote about a little girl who can see beyond her mother's stereotypes and disgust for lesbians and can connect to the real feelings the couple have for each other. The student presented it at the award reception so 100 students heard it and she thought that was cool and great. The honors/AP students ran the stuff that keeps the school looking presentable, such as the literary magazine, academic decathlon, and the school newspaper. The honors/AP students were people she had been in grammar school with and they were the judges of the contests.
- 12 She decided not to let the crazy psych teacher tell her some ridiculous thing, that she was not going to hear it. Student said "that is a bunch of bullshit," and "what school did you graduate from"? Teacher threw student out of the class. Student wound up in hallway without pass which meant security guards would eventually come by and take her to the office and process her. Student's law teacher tried to talk about gay marriage and gay adoption and how gay couples shouldn't have children because they will teach them to be gay. Students thought about her own experience and asked teacher about straight parents/gay kids. He just grumbled.
- 13 To make a more comfortable place for herself in school, student started and went to a GSA.
- 13 Student stayed up all night to write a report on Nikki Giovanni for an English class and she was happy to get the highest grade in the class. Student always did good in English.
- 13 Student started the GSA at school #3 to say that everyone at school is not straight.
- 13 To make a more comfortable place for herself in school, student started and went to a GSA.
- 13 Student stayed up all night to write a report on Nikki Giovanni for an English class and she was happy to get the highest grade in the class. Student always did good in English.
- 14 Mother started calling student's teachers and telling these teachers that mother had never met that student was a lesbian. Until that point student had separated her scholastic life from her sexuality although student always wrote term

- papers on gay issues (e.g., how homosexuality has influenced the media), especially in classes taught by homophobic instructors.
- 14 When student brought up the idea of a GSA it started a massive scandal in her town, like "not here, not in our town."
- 14 Student said it was her constitutional right (to bring a same sex date to the prom) and threatened to take the school to court just as she had taken her parents.

Student has advice for her peers in high school

- 2 Student would promote self love, acceptance, motivation, strength and unity
- 2 Student would tell other lesbians that it's not that hard and that it can be a lot of fun. She would tell them that proclaiming yourself a lesbian is an act of self-love.
- 3 Drawing on her own junior high school experience of being disliked for her differences (variously a nerd/geek/Girl Scout/smart one/straight, narrow, and fairly religious student) she would write a book for lesbians about embracing differences. She thinks it would be hard, but necessary to communicate her point in a way that does not sound like an After School Special. Student clubs tried hard to avoid falling into that trap when delivering their messages but it always happens.
- 4 Student's big sister has told her to write an autobiography and student has been thinking about doing it because she's been through "a hell of a lot." Student's story is not even in the box of a "normal gay story." She has had a difficult life, is not a perfect person, but she thinks it would give people a lot of strength to know that she is still alive through "all this shit."
- 5 Student would write a book about how all you need is to be happy with yourself. She says it takes a long time to not care about what other people think but as soon as you do that, happiness follows. Student thinks that self-esteem brings pride in self and the ability to accomplish more. She does not think that she has any self-esteem.
- 6 If student wrote a book for all high school lesbians to read, she would say "you are not alone, even if you think you are." Student thinks letting them know that they are not alone is the most important thing.
- 7 Stand up for yourself and for others, be out, and live your life the way you want to lead it, in a way that is important and necessary for your happiness. If you feel like you are doing this, but feel that you are doing nothing, then think about the people who did that for you and helped you when they didn't even know you existed. Do it because it's worth it to help another person who is in the closet like you once were, and who you may not see or hear, but who is seeing and hearing you.
- 7 Remember you have a community but that you do not have to like every gay person you meet in the community, which can be "tight, gossipy, small, and narrowed-minded."
- 7 Think about how people treat you (e.g., people tell lesbians they are "choosing the wrong thing") before you criticize [transgendered] people for their binary thinking about genders (e.g., "why would you want to be a man when you can

- be a woman in so many different flavors?") and before you criticize bisexuals for not being able to "make up their minds." Before you criticize the Christian Coalition, try and think about what it is they want, what they are looking for, what is going on in their lives. And that doesn't mean they are right. It's important to figure out what they are thinking and what they are doing.
- 7 Don't be a "knee jerker" just because other people are reactionary or because people look at you as a statistic or as a stereotype. Don't criticize the people who fit the stereotypes because the stereotypes are there for a reason. Don't criticize the people who don't fit the stereotypes because diversity is essential. We can't say "honor diversity" if we are going to say "as long as it's just butch/femme relationship lesbians, no butch on butch, no femme on femme, no transgendered, no gay men, no drag queens, no drag kings, no bisexuals, and no one celibate."
- 7 Things aren't going to get better by killing people and things are not going to get better by killing yourself.
- 9 Student would write a biography about her "whacky" high school experience from which readers would glean the key to living the lesbian lifestyle in high school. She would talk about presenting yourself with a strong image so that no one will "mess" with you. She can't sum it up. No one has written this type of book because she is one of the only ones who stood tall.
- 12 She almost wants to say "you are not alone" but that won't cut it. She would follow the example of the writers she admires and share her experiences, her story, show that there is something after high school. She admires the lesbian authors who have gotten to the point in their lives where they are doing something they love and she sees through their stories that she can get there too.
- 14 Student jokes that she would write a book about how to take your parents to court and win every time. She would probably write about how to survive in society, not just in school, and how to seek out resources and to empower yourself while doing it. It wouldn't be self-help so much as a motivating book on how to survive in society and keep a sane head on your shoulders because it's important to be sane and possible to go insane if you don't take care of yourself.

Student believes she has left a lasting impression on her school

Lasting impression will be sexuality-related

- 1 Seriously and without a doubt, students at her reunion will remember mostly that she is gay. They may remember the sport she played.
- 2 At the reunion students will remember her as the "shy, Asian dyke."
- 3 At her reunion, she hopes the GSA will still be around so she can be remembered as the one who started it. She thinks it would be nice and cool if she had a good "public reputation" so people would say "yeah, we saw her on...blah blah blah."
- 4 At her reunion, student will be thought of as: inconsequential by a lot of people; the "lesbian chick"; the one who left the legacy (by younger students); the one who answered gay and lesbian questions in history class [from earlier

in transcript]; the one who lectured the economics class on saying "dude, that's gay."

5 Student thinks people at her reunion will look at her in several different ways depending on who they are. She might be remembered as the one who dropped out of math class, the one who did the big project that really helped out the school, the one who gave them free food at the restaurant or they may not remember her. Student is hoping that students see a big difference in her high school in 20 years.

6 At 20 year reunion she will not be remembered as the lesbian, but as the AP student. When student was in HS she remembers thinking "I'm going to be coming back to this reunion with a girlfriend and it's going to be so cool." At the reunion, all the students will question what happened to her because they never knew about her identity but she will say that she didn't change.

7 Student thinks that she gives the impression that she was a "big scary dyke lesbian feminist" and she may be remembered that way at her reunion. But student thinks she may not be giving other students enough credit because she is realizing that people look at other people as individuals, for no other reason than the school is so small, they have known each other for so long, and there were a little over 100 students in each class.

8 Student thinks she would take some sort of girlfriend to her 20<sup>th</sup> HS reunion, but she isn't sure how her 5% straight side might develop in the next 20 years.

9 At reunion, student thinks she will be remembered for weird stuff, like her advice column in the student newspaper and her reputation/fame as a good writer.

10 At her 20 year reunion student will be remembered as the "straight basher" and the "player" because there was a bit of truth in the reputation that she was a player among the girls in her sophomore and junior years.

11 Student thinks she will be remembered as the lesbian and gay activist at her reunion.

12 At her reunion, people will probably say she's the one who hung out with all those crazy free spirited kids that were barely in school; someone may remember the writing award but she doubts it; and they will probably remember her general appearance.

13 At her reunion student will be remembered as a leader.

14 Student thinks people will remember the public humiliation of the prom (see previous story) when she goes to her high school reunion in 20 years. Lasting impression will not be not be sexuality-related or student's sexuality will be introduced at reunion.

15 Student doesn't think she will be remembered at the 20 year reunion because in other people's eyes she was a "fleeting moment." If she is remembered, it will be as a "crazy woman."

Student will use her career choice to make change, be a role model, and change people one at a time

1 Student sees herself creating change by becoming a psychologist and specializing in gay and lesbian. She would like area schools to refer people to

- her if the schools know there is a need. In her own search for a psychologist's business card at a women's bookstore and a gay and lesbian community center, she thought it was sad that she found only one card. She thinks there may not be enough psychologists who know enough about gay and lesbian to think they can "take it on" and that it is hard to find psychologists who do know enough. She knows that many people listen to what psychologists say, whether or not the psychologist has any basis for what they are saying. She thinks her career choice is partly the result of her school, her parents, and all kinds of stuff.
- 4 Student sees herself changing society through her role as a minister because she will have influence on quite a few people. In the next few years she will probably be teaching religious education. Student was supposed to teach the curriculum of social justice to 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders, which she says is perfect for her, but she was needed to teach first graders. She doesn't know what she will be teaching them, but she's not going to say "Hey little kids! I'm a lesbian." She'll just teach tolerance and those things. Student used to want to be a teacher but a minister is a teacher and she feels like she would do more good as a minister. She thinks she would get out of hand as a teacher because she jokes that she would probably scare the kids, screw them up or something. Student thinks "they" like the more subordinate people who don't do stuff like that. Student vows to get back at "nazi"-like principal though she doesn't yet have a plan. Student says she could come back in 20 years and say that she's become a minister like she wanted.
- 5 Student thinks everyone has a role in changing society if they put their mind to it. She thinks she has a role and changes society every day when she talks to people and educates them about her life and uses her experience to show others. She can't educate people about Melissa or Stonewall because she doesn't know about them.
- 5 Student's experiences have not made her cautious about taking a job working with children because she is not going to bring her girlfriend to class and make out in front of her students and the oldest kids she would work with would be 14. She would want her students to look at themselves and being a lesbian would help kids who came out to her because she could say "I understand" and "trust me." Student thinks it would be scary and risky if she was walking down the street, holding her girlfriend's hand, and saw one of her students. She thinks she might face restrictions in a job with kids right now but she is looking on the bright side of everything.
- 6 Student hopes that one day she (and other people) will have an influence on society. She would like to become a journalist and write stuff that people would read, think about, and affect them in some way. Student doesn't know if she sees a role for herself in changing society. She'd like to know that she just touched people's lives and affected them in some way. Maybe changing people throughout her life will have an impact on society because she'd like to think that the people she touched will then teach other people.
- 7 A Lesbian Revolution is needed to make change and student jokes the first move is not to tell the school about the lesbian revolution, then we "kill all the

- lawyers" except we let the "gorgeous ones who work for the LLDF" stay, student will lead and her "straight groupies" will follow.
- 7 Student sees herself as having a religious "calling" to be a leader of social change. Student feels her calling is very much a calling from god, a spiritual, religious thing (but not within the church hierarchy), and she thinks if there is a hell and there are sins it would be a sin for her to ignore her calling. She doesn't discuss her calling with a lot of people because 1) the lesbian community is into the "whole atheist thing or earth mother goddess thing" and there is not a lot of commanding going on unless it is from the women themselves, 2) her friends, even her straight friends, are "very atheist" and student thinks it's sad that it's "in" to not believe in anything, 3) while she is a Catholic, the idea of a god from within or god speaking directly to people isn't exactly a Catholic viewpoint (even though supposedly that's how the saints came about) and the church will think you are crazy, talking about mysticism, and will be like "oh my god, lock her away! Excommunicate her!." It's hard for her to reconcile her Protestant belief (god within and speaking directly to her) with Catholic identity. Student doesn't think people should believe in (religious) institutions because an institution is a bunch of people and inherently not god. Student feels her calling is very much a calling from god, a spiritual, religious thing (but not within the church hierarchy), and she thinks if there is a hell and there are sins it would be a sin for her to ignore her calling.
- 7 Student sees herself in 20 years 1) not devoid of companionship but not in a long-term relationship (but she thinks that might be because right now she doesn't want to be in a long-term relationship), 2) being really involved in getting things done in the community, maybe by being something awesome like a lawyer for LAMBDA Legal Defense, 3) not necessarily making a whole lot of money but still doing poetry and art, 4) definitely being a speaker or orator, and 5) fighting for transgendered rights. Student wants to be like the "gorgeous" female lawyer from LAMBDA Legal Defense who worked on a "really big deal" case and lawyer's picture was in the newspapers, not just the queer newspapers, and student saw lawyer at pride fair. Student forgot the name of the lawyer and the case.
- 7 Student thinks that fighting for transgendered rights is the next step. She thinks it is important to fight for people's rights who 1) feel that they are really men but given women's bodies, 2) feel they are neither "male" nor "female," and 3) feel they are both "male" and "female." Student says she is not an expert but she thinks the lesbian movement has moved away from the idea of not having to fulfill stereotypical gender roles into the idea that lesbians can fulfill stereotypical gender roles and still be with other women. Student does not think this is a good thing. She thinks it is also important to fight to make it okay for women to wear men's clothing to work and make it okay for women to not look like women.
- 8 She would like to be a role model (scientist) one day but that is so much pressure to have that status and to not be able to chose when to disclose. It would be great to come out despite the consequences but sometimes you chose to hide it to live your life. Student continues to consider what she will

encounter as a lesbian in a male dominated field. Student is not sure that by telling people you are gay you change them, even if you are important person, though her friend claims otherwise. Student is not active in other political issues although she is a vegetarian and contributed to PETA [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals] in the past. Student wants to be an activist so that she doesn't hurt her family.

- 9 Student sees a role for herself in changing society but she doesn't feel like she can go out and be an activist.
- 10 Student thinks she and other gay and lesbian can have a definite influence and make a change in society by being positive citizens and positive role models. If a straight person knows a gay and lesbian person and accepts the person, the gay and lesbian person is shaping the heterosexuals' life in a way and then acceptance be spread one person at a time.
- 11 Student thinks she will have a role in creating change. Student defines herself by the public work she does, not by her private life. She sees a connection between how she handled high school and how she will lead her adult life. For example, she would prefer to live in a cardboard box in the parking lot of K-Mart and go to work at a studio with a camera than to live in a big house and have a little office.
- 13 Student sees herself as being part of the change, feels like she has been through everything and thinks that if she was there with her friend, the friend would not have died from an overdose.
- 14 Student jokes that she can have a role in changing society because she is about not dumping sewage into drinking water and other eco-rights. She thinks she can change things by getting people to first think about the issue as human rights rather than lgbt rights, saying "I'm [name], I'm a human, I'm a woman and I'm a lesbian somewhere after that." Student wants to go to law school.
- 15 Student left school and planned to complete school at home in a year then go to college.

Student feels her appearance expresses a natural self; "passing" to avoid negative reaction or receive positive reaction; dressing to attract women; dressing to subvert expectations

- 1 Student doesn't really know if she looks like a lesbian, some people say she does; doesn't think people she is not out to at work would be surprised if they found out; and even though it is not at all important for her to pass, student thinks that she can look straight if she wants to in contrast to someone with a shaved head.
- 2 Student thinks she is not identifiable as a lesbian and is passable as straight. It is important for student to pass because she is not ready to deal with everything yet and passing makes it easier. She just recently cut her hair and she discovered it's true that the world shifts when you have a haircut, such subtle things like guys don't approach her as much on the street. People discouraged her haircut although she wanted to cut it for a long time. The hair cut "subconsciously maybe, yes probably" had something to do with her sexuality

and being more identifiable. She thinks she is taking the harder way but that is the way she is right now.

- 3 After she came out, she intentionally subverted heterosexual norms and demonstrated that she had settled on an identity by cutting off her hair and stuff and entering her "purposeful butch phase." Student thinks that because she is not completely femme or butch, it is easier to maintain the appearance (of androgyny) that she wants. Student is now a "happy little androgynous person."
- 4 Student says she is fat and after years of struggle, she is getting to the stage where she is becoming accepting and comfortable with her own body. Student had "small spurts" of anorexia problems and the longest she has gone without eating was 8 days until a group of 8 friends held her down on the floor and forced her the greasiest thing they could find in the school. Student says she has had some good friends. Student's insight into self-acceptance came because she was getting older, about to graduate from high school, and she was figuring a lot out about why she was being burdened with one more category (e.g., race, religion, body image). Student says people say to be skinny for health reasons but we live 80 years if we are lucky and that is not a long time. Student questions why she should be on a diet if she is happy with the way that she is and she is going to die anyway, even if it's 5 or 10 years early. Student is healthy, with normal blood pressure and cholesterol. She thinks what she is supposed to weigh is too skinny for her height and she weighs twice that.
- 5 [impact of appearance on student] Student dresses for comfort, likes guys' pants because they are comfortable and it's more comfortable for her to look "guyish" even though some people think that's a stereotype. She "swears to god" somewhere they messed up and she should have been a guy because she has peach fuzz on her face, has what to her sounds like a deep voice, and she feels like she should be one.
- 7 Student expresses her criticism of [women's bodies being made into commodities] in a personal way by eradicating her own feminine appearance. She did the "whole little sex pot thing" but it didn't fly well for her. Student doesn't shave but it's not because she doesn't have personal hygiene habits or her own standards of attractiveness. Student tries to subvert her natural look (e.g., student was "born" with these features: thin, long legs, slender fingers, "big boobs," looks like she is wearing make-up when she is not, and long shoulder length hair) and not look feminine or like a woman in society's traditional way.  
Student has her own standards of what's attractive and she knows she didn't make them up, but got them from other things and people (e.g., to some extent she dresses the way she does because she know other women find it attractive). Student thinks as long as you dress the way that makes you feel comfortable there are going to be people who find you attractive, no matter what as long as you have that confidence.
- 7 Student thinks it's un-p.c. to talk about butch/femme, but she thinks of herself as "somewhere in the realm of butch" because of the way she acts. She has always looked very feminine and for a long time dressed feminine with short

skirts and high heels. She has a pair of 4" high heels that she wore to the prom in her junior year during her "trying so hard to be straight stage." Student is pretty sure she wanted to acknowledge that bisexual part of herself and then make it just a part of her so she could say she was attracted to girls without ever being involved with a girl and still be straight. Student says it was a way of forcing herself to be straight, which she thinks is weird. Student says she has always been the butch one in her relationships with guys. She had to be in charge and in control. Opening doors for guys when they opened doors for her started as a "feminist thing," but student realized she enjoyed opening doors for people, carrying things for people, showing she was strong, and all those things that seem to be associated with being butch. When she goes out with friends she "tends to go for" androgynous or butch. Student tries to subvert her natural look (e.g., student was "born" with these features: thin, long legs, slender fingers, "big boobs," looks like she is wearing make-up when she is not, and long shoulder length hair) and not look feminine or like a woman in society's traditional way.

7 When she goes out with friends she "tends to go for" androgynous or butch. To some extent she dresses the way she does because she know other women find it attractive.

7 [Looking or not looking like a woman] is a very personal struggle for her. She calls her own thinking on the subject "binary" — she sees that "looking like a woman" can be a "real handicap" and you "don't get a lot of chances if you look like that" but she also thinks that in some ways it would be better for women if we all looked feminine and did our jobs well. Student likes to cross dress and look like a man and she thinks she is successful when people actually think she is a man. She thinks it's weird that she doesn't think that means she is "dressing as a man," she thinks she is "dressing like a woman who wears tuxes and stuff," like her personal hero who does that so well, gorgeous musician k.d. lang.

8 She never felt comfortable with the butch-femme thing and wears comfortable clothing that is not totally femme.

9 Student thinks her chin-length hair had a lot to do with people accepting her because she did not look like a "typical lesbian." Student thought she passed.

10 Student thinks that because she isn't a "typical" lesbian it's easier for her because she doesn't get that "well there goes a dyke" stuff. She has always been the way she is and she doesn't think that changing her hairstyle or her dress should have anything to do with her sexuality.

11 Student is mistaken for a guy all the time. A gay man once said she was the cutest guy at a party. Student thought that was hysterical, was amused, and flattered because she is a cute guy and girl.

12 Student thinks that her lesbianism and her feminism have allowed her to choose what she will and will not wear, say, do, take or believe. Some of these choices have been received with hostility from men who think she is overstepping the boundaries of what a woman is supposed to be.

- 12 In lesbian environments student is calm, gets a feeling of well-being and doesn't think about whether she is wearing a skirt or a suit because she knows she's going to be fine and that it's okay because she is with women.
- 13 Student's clothing is based on wanting to feel comfortable and her haircut is a result of disliking to "do" hair. Cutting her hair had nothing to do with her sexuality, but she jokes that if it were related, all of her hair would go.
- 13 Student's clothing is based on wanting to feel comfortable. Student likes everybody and likes doing a lot of things and didn't want to wear, listen, or be only one thing because she is versatile and dresses to fit her mood. For example, sometimes she wants to be a dyke (a "serious, straight up bit butch bull daggar"), sometimes dresses feminine, sometimes dresses punk when she is happy.
- 14 She's a big fan of shopping in the men's department because it makes her happy.

Student seeks and finds information beyond school

- 1 Student's "first actual experience with anyone who was gay" was the gay male co-worker in the retail store her senior year. People knew about friend's older lesbian sister but she wasn't around much because she was away at college and it wasn't talked about to any extent at that time.
- 2 Student got information on lesbian life on her own, through books and literature. Even though her school had a pretty good library she did not get her information there.
- 3 Student is not sure if the messages or non-messages or partial messages about lesbianism in school had much of an impact because she got most of her gayness or her "gay energy," from outside of school. Her sources of information included two gay male friends she has known for more than 13 years; trips to explore the gay part of the city with her friends; going on-line where everything she needed was right there; joining lists on the internet [that's how she met the interviewer]; and reading in the gay section of the bookstore when she got brave enough to go there. Although the school had a lot new resources, she never thought about going to the school library for information. She imagines they have really blasé books like "so, you're gay, now what do you do?" because they have books on what it means to be Asian in today's world and all that. Although the school had a lot new resources, she never thought about going to the school library for information. She imagines they have really blasé books like "so, you're gay, now what do you do?" because they have books on what it means to be Asian in today's world and all that. Student thinks her school could have been more inclusive and, for example, told students James Baldwin was gay when his work was discussed, but overall thinks they did a pretty fair job.
- 3 Student never heard about Stonewall when her class studied the late '60s and she never heard about the assassination of Harvey Milk. She found this information on her own.
- 5 Student read gay and lesbian fiction, non-fiction and coming out stories. She got Am I Blue? at the library at HS#2 but didn't want to ready the other books

there like What is Homosexuality? because she already knew the answer. She got the Coming Out Stories at the public library. She saw a friend reading Annie on My Mind, started reading the friend's copy, thought it was cool, and bought it at Borders.

- 5 Through a conversation with a friend who went to NA, student learned that while someone might think they can tell what an alcoholic looks like, only another alcoholic can tell who another alcoholic is. Student says this taught her how to use her gaydar. To find gay and lesbian kids, student starts small, hunts for information, looks for subliminal hints based on the stereotypical and non-stereotypical people she has seen at the gay and lesbian support group in town #1, asks questions and considers their answers. In town #2, only gay kids in that town can recognize another gay kid. Student thinks that if a gay kid from town #2 was put in a school in LA, the town #2 kid would be "screwed." Student jokes that gaydar was put in her head as soon as she said out loud that she was gay. When student said she aloud that she was gay, she jokes the she got the welcome package and said screw the toaster oven; she was given gadar which was more useful.
- 5 Student found the one other lesbian at her school and found other gay and lesbian youth at off campus gay and lesbian youth group, reading stuff, and going on the web. Student answered questions for other students about what it meant to be gay and lesbian after she came out.
- 6 Student got information about being a lesbian and the lesbian community on t.v. and she found the book "Annie on My Mind" within a library walking distance from her house. She thinks it's a good book, she loves it and has read it three or four times. Student hid the book ("Annie on My Mind") in her room and wouldn't let anyone see that she was reading it. The book was the first thing student really read about gay and lesbian during one of the periods where she thought she was gay, then she would put it aside. She sort of forgot about it but didn't forget about it.
- 7 Student figured things out by reading a lot, researching things before she went into them, and having a gay uncle was a good excuse to start reading about lesbians. She has felt "drawn" to reading about gay and lesbian since at least 6<sup>th</sup> grade but she doesn't know why.
- 7 Student gets her history of social movements through reading a lot. She finds stuff to read everywhere and has always been one of those people who will read anything. Because she lives in an university town, the local bookstores are pretty good. There is a big queer section at school library (two years ago gay and lesbian organization donated books) and no one reads those books but her. The librarians are supportive, which is good.
- 7 Student has conversations with her mother, some of her teachers, everybody who will listen. She reads a lot and listens to what people are saying around her.
- 8 Student did not learn much about lesbianism in school though she tried to figure out what it meant for her. Student read stuff to understand what was happening to her. Student read some interesting lesbian and feminist books and books at the public library.

- 8 Without support group student would have found another group or spent more time at the off campus group for gay youth at Unitarian Church.
- 9 Finding out that her older brother was gay changed student's thinking about (her sexuality/homosexuality). She was not okay with homosexuality until he came out to her, which started her thinking differently about sexuality and about herself.
- 9 Student met other lesbians at a youth group, through gay male student who knew all the gay and lesbian people and brought them together, and on AOL. Student had a lot of bad experiences meeting people off-line because they lied about their "hot and slender" appearances. The one positive experience was meeting [#10] on AOL when she was 16.
- 11 Student is not really offended by her reality not being incorporated into History because she has learned to educate herself in a different way about the gay and lesbian community. She is very interested in watching her favorite documentaries, Before Stonewall and After Stonewall, which she thinks are wonderful. She has never been attracted to women's studies courses or gay and lesbian history courses although she probably will be in the future and it is not something she has grown into yet.
- 14 Student started to look at own social issues and learning more and questioning more about things when she was home-bound for half of her sophomore year due to illness. Student had time to be by self, do stuff on the Internet, and make up own curriculum and was almost having a home schooling experience
- 14 Even though student's uncle is gay, ballet teacher and his entire gay staff were really the first people in the gay community that she had contact with aside from reading books and periodicals and she thought it was cool.
- 14 Student got other information from PBS which she thinks is great because they talked about gay farmers and have the Advocate sponsored stuff. The media, PBS more than anybody else because she didn't have cable, along with periodicals/magazines (like Time and Newsweek) were her sources of information about gay and lesbian youth.

#### Student has changed her school

- 1 Student changed her school because after she came out, so did others at the her high school. She doesn't want to say she set the example that it's okay, but she doesn't know. Even though she has graduated, everyone at her school knows she is gay and student took her first girlfriend with the shaved head to one of the important school rituals.
- 2 Student changed her school with the Alliance, by knowing people, and by telling other people.
- 3 Student has changed her school by forming the GSA and creating a safe place for students; making the school more aware of gay and lesbian issues; spurring teachers who were mildly active into being pro-active just by being there; and hopefully making a long-term impact through the longevity of the GSA.
- 4 Student changed her school by doing the Day of Silence, the GSA, and educating a lot of people. She will continue to change her school by still doing the Day of Silence.

- 5 She thinks students went to her presentation because they wanted the experience or they wanted out of class but she thinks those who came enjoyed it very much. Student feels her presentation definitely changed the climate at HS#2 because she saw change in the other students. The male student [who called her "stupid dyke" on the bus"] didn't say another word to her except "dyke" after the presentation and a female student who always picked on gay people apologized to student because female student didn't realize gays had it so hard. People changed and started talking to her because they realized she had "balls" to do the presentation, they saw how emotionally upset she was when the presentation was threatened with cancellation, they saw her practice her speech in creating writing and public presentation classes, and they knew she skipped classes to work on it. Student thinks people knew and were okay with her sexuality or they let it go because there was only a month or two until graduation.
- 5 Student changed her school because a friend told her that student's senior project was the reason she got the courage to start the GSA. Student thinks that was pretty big. She thinks she helped people understand who she was so people could understand the lesbian part through knowing her. When she was a senior she taught the sophomores that not all seniors are jerks, it is okay to be themselves, and other little important things.
- 6 Student would like to think she had some sort of impact on her school, but doesn't know if she changed it. She is most proud of graduating second in her class but she feels almost like she didn't belong there. She worked really hard but isn't one of those genius types you can easily identify. She gave a speech at graduation and really just talked about being yourself.
- 10 Student changed her school by giving heterosexuals a new perspective about gay and lesbian. For example, she guesses her best friend previously thought lesbians were radicals who "stay away from straight people." Most of her friends were heterosexual and she was friends with all the gay and lesbians she knew in her school.
- 11 Student thinks she has changed her school by helping make it easier for other lesbians to come out, she sees herself as a good role model, and she helped bring a lot of information from the outside world into school because a lot of students wouldn't push themselves to find out.
- 12 Student changed her school because people tell her little sister they had her older sister and she was a troublemaker! Student also impacted little sister's education.
- 12 Student thinks she had an impact on her English teacher. Her teacher was tired, looked beat, had been struggling with the administration to get a book to read with the students, and said she just couldn't do it, she needed a break. Student realized that the teacher didn't understand how important she is, how important she was to the student, how she had to be strong. Student wrote her feelings in a letter to her teacher. When student visited teacher, student saw the letter tacked on the wall and the teacher let her know she reads it when she feels like shit. Student thinks we need more teachers like this one.

- 13 Student thinks she only really changed one of her four schools by starting the GSA. She recently met a guy who had been a member of that GSA and she is sure the GSA still exists. Student wasn't out until her second year at school #1 and since she left she didn't have a chance to see her friends' reactions to her or to see if she could start a GSA.
- 14 Student changed her school by forcing them to look at an issue they didn't want to look at because they were being pulled into local newspapers, court and every which way and direction. She "shoved their eyes open, stuck her face into it and said 'you're going to listen to me and that's just how it's gonna be'."
- 14 She thinks her school is moving toward [more openness to gay and lesbian], even after the experience they had with student being so righteous; one or two teachers were opening up and starting to come around.
- 15 Student has changed the faculty, staff, and some student's perspectives but doesn't think she necessarily changed the school. She was very vocal about her treatment and matters of oppression at the school and people know what happened and will take that with them.

Student and her generation are actively changing school and society

- 1 Student thinks it is her generation and the generation before her that will "need to step in and try and make changes."
- 1 Student thinks she is "one of those people" who doesn't know (or has no clue) how to change society. She guesses that she influenced society in "a really tiny way" by "adding" another lesbian.
- 2 Student thinks that she has changed society because her actions can have a ripple effect.
- 3 Student hopes this [straight ally] friend represents a whole new breed of woman because if the world were filled with people like her, it would be a perfect place. Student thinks that what we need most of all is for straight allies to take on the fight because all of the screaming and hollering by gay and lesbian (even if we swell to 20% of the population) won't make a difference if we don't have allies because we are still a minority.
- 3 Student thinks she has changed society by changing the minds of people which she hopes will branch out and affect a larger group of people.
- 4 Student has changed society by doing lots of volunteer work, interacting with and teaching lots and lots of people lots and lots of things.
- 4 Student thinks being a non-heterosexual student at her high school in 20 years will be better because she will probably be influencing it or, if she is not around, she'll have someone else do the "dirty work" for her.
- 5 In her own little way student is doing her fair share of telling people to take pride in themselves. But she doesn't think she has changed the world at all because hasn't done any big significant thing, like she didn't show how to make a nuclear bomb or anything.
- 5 After the presentation student saw a change in herself. Student felt she started changing after the presentation because she started saying "what's up, what's going on?" to other students. Her experience with her senior project made her

- more courageous and confident because she came out. (She has come out at every job since.) Student is growing from her experience with the project and has learned that if you take pride in what you do then everything will be all set.
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- 5 Student thinks the school will start to become more open and accepting in the future because since student graduated, a GSA has been started in the school by an out [female] student. While not many students are coming out, a lot of straight students go to show their support.
- 6 Once you are out of school it is easier to look back and ask "well, what can be done?." Student thinks her generation may be the one that realizes that school is the next place to focus on, but student feels like there really isn't much she can do, other than affecting some people.
- 7 Student thinks change in the status quo is going to come from kids who, even if their parents are part of the status quo, are not tied into it yet.
- 11 She thinks it takes a lot of courage to start a gay organization that says "gay lesbian straight" education network but she thinks that's the way to go.
- 12 If student could go back to high school, she would definitely start a mass movement comprised of political teenage lesbians, like the ones she meets all the time, who can mobilize and get in front of city-level school administrators to demand what they want and need. She would like to see such a movement in the future. Student feels like if she had found someone who was willing to organize students, she could have gotten on the same wavelength and been a "little bit like screw the system" too.
- 13 Student doesn't think she has changed society, but maybe she has through the changes she made in her schools and family.
- 15 Student thinks her school will be a lot different 20 years from now because her generation is pretty accepting and they will raise a generation of people who are accepting.
- 15 Student does not think she has changed society because society is big and this country has 250 million people in it. Student agrees that it's too much to take credit for changing society when you are young and all you did is come out to a few people. She thinks that in the long run she may be able to influence people because she is a persuasive person, hardly ever loses debates, and she would definitely argue for gay and lesbian. An adult relative once told student it was good that student was gay because student is so good at explaining things and student "will be one of the people who really make a difference."

Student would promote self love, acceptance, motivation, strength and unity

- 1 Student would create a website of resources, organizations, and information for other high school lesbians to consult so they can get in touch with other people and know they are not the only ones. Student doesn't think enough information would fit in a book.
- 3 She would have liked to read about other students who have successfully started GSAs. She'd also would have liked to hear about an ordinary lesbian, who isn't a lesbian superstar or in the gay papers, and who, like herself, wasn't really connected to the community in high school. She thinks it would have been interesting to read the story of an average lesbian, if such a thing exists.
- 7 If student were to write a book for every dyke in high school to read she would make sure the following ideas were in it: Don't be in a hurry to set up your own institutions when the institutions aren't working. Don't be in a hurry to start a revolution because real revolutions kill people, set up at least as much knee jerk systems, suppress counter revolutions, and then there is no diversity. And don't take student's word for it, or any one's word for it, but don't reject it by slight of hand either.
- 8 Student does not think she would write a book for every lesbian HS to read. If she were to write a movie for every lesbian HS student to see, she would show different perspectives and different types of lesbians, like a happy couple walking along, not just people who are out there, like drag queens and people with different colored hair. Her chemistry teacher made a movie about how you just see shocking stuff during the pride parades. Student would make a movie about hidden lesbians like herself.
- 10 Student would make a "normal movie" to show teenage lesbians that lesbianism is just one part of life. For example, the story might be about a couple who has a problem with the mafia except the couple would be gay, not a husband and a wife.
- 11 Student is working on creating a website for every high school lesbian to consult when she is applying to college. The website would put high school students and college students in touch to share their first hand experiences and opinions about the college climate (e.g., whether you are going to get support if you are called a dyke in the cafeteria or how the college will respond if you get death threats over e-mail). Student thinks education (e.g., a great school for architecture) is an important factor in deciding on a college but a lot of lesbians come out in college and don't think about climate issues. Student thinks high school students go about selecting a college blindly and make climate less of a priority than they should. Student thinks that it is obvious that going to a college where students feel safe is going to help the student more than going to one where the students do not. The name safecampus.com is taken but she will find other name.
- 13 Student would write a book about how great sex is and how to please your lover. Student thinks lesbian high school students can't get that information now because schools are scared of sharing that information and they don't have any common sense because they think that if students had this information they would run right out and "become gay." She jokes that their

idea is "one book and you turn them gay" and while this is laughable the funny thing is that they actually might burn all the books.

Student uses sexual identity language to convey nuance, multiple meanings, shifting perspectives, and empowerment

- 3 Student came out in the middle of her junior year. Student calls herself a "lesbian," but also often identified as "queer" because the people she hung out with were semi-activist who "defy convention." She thinks "queer" is a hard word to define but thinks it is a term for someone lesbian, straight, bi, or gay who cares about the "political community" and conveys more "moods or attitude." In contrast, she sees "lesbian" as just describing a sexual orientation, that is, a "gay" woman, a woman who likes women. Among her friends "dyke" is reserved for the butch lesbians (like her friend who cross-dresses) and a "femme" is self-evident. Student thinks the labels get too confusing. She tells her male friend that he is gay, not queer, because he cruises and shops and fits too many of the stereotypes and he doesn't care about the community or politics.
- 4 She has said "lesbian," "queer," "dyke," "faggot" and doesn't find it offensive though other people do. If she knows someone is uncomfortable with those words, she won't use them but will use "gay" or "homosexual."
- 4 She has been going to a gay and lesbian community youth group since she was 14; it's for people 14-22. They now have a sign in sheet that says 'orientation' though they didn't when she started. Most people put "girls," "guys," "homo," "queer" and people look at her funny because she writes "people" because she doesn't like labels. To her "I like people" just means that she's open and loves everybody, she feels a love for all of humankind and thinks anybody out there could be the right one for her. She believes it's reclaiming the word, like Black people say "N...." She believes that others can't hurt her by calling her a dyke if she proudly calls herself one.
- 5 Student's identity went from a) realizing things were different for her, b) to identifying as bisexual, c) then as lesbian, d) and now as someone who does not care about gender, race, or religion, but dates people who have a "good personality and a heart of gold." Student hates using social labels. In 9<sup>th</sup> grade student started realizing that something was "different" with her. Student didn't realize what it was, only that she had a boyfriend and felt uncomfortable holding his hand or dancing with him. She felt the stares of other people but she couldn't understand what was wrong. In 10<sup>th</sup> grade student started high school #1, met gay people for the first time, and started slowly but surely coming out, but she wasn't really "out out."
- 5 Student then came out to everyone as a lesbian, although she identifies as bisexual for her parents. She decided she would make it easy and be "bisexual" since she wasn't sure if she liked guys. Both the student and her parents have wondered about the "lesbian" label because in the future she might meet a real special guy.

- 5 Student now realizes that she has grown since 10<sup>th</sup> grade, doesn't need a label, and people who know her know she prefers to be identified not by a "sexual preference" but by her name.
- 5 Student used to think that everyone has to be straight, bisexual, or something. Student never knew the words to use to identify herself. Student starting using "gay" and "lesbian" after she came out and was called "Gay [name]." She used "lesbian" because it is p.c. and she didn't want to be known as a "dyke," "butch dyke," "biker dyke" or "fag" because unless it's a joke, those words have the power to hurt and it's like calling someone a "nigger." Student thinks she is not just a lesbian or "whatever [she] is." Student questions why she has to have a social label. Student thinks that we have social labels because without them America gets confused. She jokes that when America gets confused we don't know anything, which makes us like our politicians. She says social labels are used because we need to know who people are (e.g., religion) and where they fall (e.g., a part of customer service or a popular kid who is a future politician), but not their names, just their group or clique (e.g. the gay clique). Student says we are used to being in groups and people don't realize we are about more than that. Student identifies as a "prissy white girl from a small conservative town." Student thinks answering the question of religious identity is hard and is like the "whole label thing." She was brought up Baptist, doesn't know exactly what she is now but she believes in God and somewhat in "his word." Student doesn't believe in the rules of religion (e.g., "you have to be a certain religion," "you have to go to this church"). She thinks people can call themselves whatever they want and that people either believe in God or they don't.
- 7 Student usually identifies as a "dyke" but it depends on the group she is with. Sometimes she identifies as "queer" because it is easier. With straight people her age she identifies as "dyke." With older people she identifies as "lesbian" because using "dyke" gets them all "up in arms" because they see it as a derogatory word. Student thinks it's not worth fighting about, but words like "lesbian," "girl," "bisexual" and "woman" are all used as derogatory words and anything can be made into an insult. Student chooses not to see "dyke" as an insult nor to let other people define words for her.
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- 11 Student thinks a lot of people are "pretty anal" about what they are called but student is not offended by a lot of it, she is lenient about language, uses a lot of language for gay and lesbians jokingly. She goes by "lesbian," "queer," and identifies under the "blanket" term of "queer youth." She knows "queer" offends a lot of people.

- 12 "Dyke" is a word she hears lesbians using more now, and she sees how claiming such a strong word, one that had such a negative connotation in her high school, can be really empowering.
- 14 Although student doesn't use the word "dyke" and it is something she doesn't identify as, she understands people using it as term of empowerment and trying to reclaim the word.
- 14 Identifies as "queer" in a crowd of other lesbian, gay, transgendered people. Student has taken lot of women's studies classes and it's very easy to say "I'm queer" in that setting and have it cover just about everything she feels versus saying "I'm a lesbian." Sees identifying as "queer" as a political decision, sexuality and gender as very fluid, and "queer" covering spectrum of things that all intermix. (18)Student hates that she keeps shortening what she is saying to "gay" and during the interview decides that she is going to say LGBTQ (Q is for questioning).
- 14 Student's identification depends on where student is. Generally identifies as "queer" but identifies as "lesbian" in situations where it is potentially socially unacceptable (e.g., at work where conservative doctors and staff who are older and don't understand what student is talking about or where student is coming from; at college depending on specific professor; with friends' parents and sometimes straight friends' parents). Student thinks it is generally acceptable to say "I'm a lesbian" rather than "I'm a queer."

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