SEXUALITY IN THE MEDIA AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AMONG LESBIAN, GAY, & BISEXUAL ADOLESCENTS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

LGB teens' feelings, desires, and physical attractions run contrary to the heteronormative standards of American society. As such, LGB youth often experience feelings of sadness and dejection that can lead to depression and suicidal tendencies (Russell & Joyner, 2001). Evaluating the factors that could possibly influence the emotional well-being of LGB youth would be an important undertaking given the hindrances LGB adolescents face during sexual socialization. The purpose of this dissertation was to study the portrayal of sexuality in media popular with LGB adolescents and to assess the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being among LGB teens. In particular, this dissertation distinguished between mainstream media and gay- and lesbian-oriented (GLO) media. GLO media were defined as any media outlet specifically designed, produced, and marketed for gay and lesbian audiences. Two studies were conducted to serve as the initial investigation in a program of research that will be designed to better understand the role of media in the lives of LGB individuals.

The first study of this dissertation was a content analysis of the television programs, films, songs, and magazines most popular with LGB teens as determined by self-reports of media consumption in a survey of media use. A total of 96 media vehicles composed the content analysis sample, including 48 television programs, 22 films, 25 musical artists, and 6 magazines. Using a coding scheme that was adapted from previous media sex research, Study 1 measured the frequency of sexual instances as well as the type, nature, and source characteristics for each sexual instance.

Results of the content analysis suggest that heterosexuality reigns supreme in mainstream media. When LGB sexuality is depicted in mainstream media, it is often sanitized. LGB sexual talk is rarely sexual; rather it is primarily about the social or cultural components of being

lesbian, gay, or bisexual. LGB sexual behavior is also rare in mainstream media, which tend to depict LGB individuals as non-sexually as possible. LGB sexuality in mainstream media exists, but is more about proclaiming LGB identity than actually living it. GLO media depicted LGB sexuality more frequently than mainstream media did. GLO media often depict LGB sexuality in a more realistic manner. LGB sexual talk is about LGB identity, as well as the relational and sexual aspects of being a sexual minority. LGB sexual behavior is commonplace in GLO media, depicting LGB individuals as sexual beings. LGB sexuality in GLO media is prevalent and relatively authentic.

The second study was a survey that assessed the relationship between media exposure (both mainstream media and GLO media) and LGB teens' emotional well-being, considering self-discrepancy as an important mediating variable in that relationship. Study 2 also considered age, sex, and sexual identity commitment as possible moderating variables in the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. In Study 2, emotional well-being was defined as lower levels of dejection-related emotions. LGB adolescents (N = 573) completed a questionnaire that was used to investigate the relationships between media exposure and emotional well-being.

Results of the survey indicated that mainstream media exposure was not significantly associated with dejection-related emotions. In contrast, GLO media exposure was negatively related to feelings of dejection even when controlling for age, sex, race, perceived social support, school climate, religiosity, geographical location, sexuality of peers, and motivation for viewing LGB inclusive media content. Neither age nor sex moderated the relationships between media exposure variables and dejection, but sexual identity commitment did act as a moderator in the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection. The negative relationship between

GLO media exposure and dejection was stronger for participants lower in sexual identity commitment than for participants higher in sexual identity commitment. In addition, the magnitude of discrepancies between the actual self and the ideal self mediated the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection for LGB adolescents low in sexual identity commitment. However, self-discrepancy did not mediate the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection for LGB teens highly committed to their sexual identities.

Results of both the content analysis and the survey are discussed in terms of implications for theory and method. Practical implications of this dissertation's findings are also discussed, as well as directions for future research.

Dedicated to every gay, lesbian, or bisexual adolescent who has ever felt scared, isolated, or depressed due to his or her sexual orientation. It gets better.

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Chapter 1:

Sexual Identity Development and Emotional Well-Being

Sexual socialization is a hallmark of adolescence. In spite of this, discussions of sex and sexuality in public schools are minimal; health care professionals receive little training on communicating healthy sexual practices with youth; and parents remain hesitant to talk about "the birds and the bees" with their children (Brown, Steele, & Walsh-Childers, 2002). The absence of such potentially influential socialization agents leaves media to educate American teen audiences about sexual norms. Roberts, Henriksen, and Foehr (2004) acknowledged the importance of the media during sexual socialization, stating that "adolescents' high levels of exposure make both incidental and intentional learning about sex from media virtually inevitable" (p. 499). In recognition of media's role in the sexual socialization of adolescents, scholars have turned their attention to quantifying sexual content in the media and examining attitudinal and behavioral effects of exposure to sexual content in the media.

Although scholars continue to engage in research on sex, media, and adolescent development, most published studies have focused exclusively on the effects of mainstream media outlets that present primarily heteronormative images to heterosexual youth. Kivel and Kleiber (2000) stated that most research on adolescent development "…assumes that development is inherently heterosexual and that successful transition from adolescence to adulthood includes developing attraction for and attachment to individuals of the opposite gender" (p. 215-216). Examining the relationship between media exposure and sexual minority adolescent development is largely uncharted territory.

The absence of media effects research on lesbian, gay, bisexual, or sexually questioning (LGB) adolescents is a significant oversight given the arduous experiences of many sexual

minority individuals during adolescence. Although LGB youth experience many of the same obstacles to development as their heterosexual peers, feelings, desires, and physical attractions that run contrary to the dominant messages and norms of a heterosexual society can greatly retard their sexual development. Sexual minority status in adolescence has been linked with a variety of psychological distresses related to sadness, dejection, and depression (e.g., Anderson, 1994; Anhalt & Morris, 1998; Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; Busseri et al., 2006). For example, Diamond and Lucas (2004) found LGB youth to report higher levels of depressive symptoms than heterosexual youth experience (Cohen's d = .57). Scholars have attributed the correlation between LGB sexual identity status and depression among adolescents to the pressure of coping with adversities associated with sexual identity so early in life (Russell & Joyner, 2001). One recent study by the Massachusetts Department of Education (2006) concluded that LGB youth were almost four times as likely as heterosexual youth to attempt suicide. Furthermore, a report on teen suicide from the American Psychological Association (2001) stated that suicide is the number one cause of death among teens identifying as lesbian or gay.

Given the hindrances LGB adolescents face during sexual socialization, it seems important for researchers to examine the factors that could possibly influence the emotional well-being of this vulnerable population. Considering the research suggesting a relationship between media exposure and sexual outcomes among heterosexual teens (e.g., Brown et al., 2002; Dubow, Huesmann, & Greenwood, 2007; Ward, 2003), it is plausible that media exposure could also influence adolescents who are in the process of developing sexual affinities for the same sex.

The objective of this dissertation is two-fold: (1) to employ content analytic methods to quantify depictions of sexuality in media considered popular among LGB teens and (2) to utilize

survey methodology to investigate the relationship between LGB adolescents' media consumption and emotional well-being. The combination of content analysis and survey methods allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the media landscape and the role media may play in the lives of LGB teens, a population at a heightened risk for depression and suicide. Given the strong correlation between LGB sexual identity and depression, the remainder of the first chapter of this dissertation reviews sexual identity as a construct, specifically outlining what is known about the formation of a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity. In the second chapter, the media's portrayal of sexuality is addressed, as is the literature detailing how media might influence LGB individuals' emotional well-being as they develop sexual identities. Chapter three presents the methodology and findings of a content analysis of sexuality in media popular with LGB adolescents. The fourth chapter reports the methodology and findings of a survey examining the relationship between LGB adolescents' media exposure and emotional well-being. The fifth and final chapter of this dissertation discusses conclusions derived from the findings of the content analysis and survey studies before detailing the implications of this research for theory, methodology, and society more practically.

By examining the relationship between LGB adolescents' media exposure and emotional well-being, this dissertation advances our understanding of the factors influencing a population vulnerable to psychological distresses related to depression and suicide. Findings from this dissertation research could be used to create resources better suited to assist parents, educators, and communities in understanding the complexities of growing up lesbian, gay, or bisexual. A more educated and understanding public could, in turn, provide LGB youth with the support system needed to overcome many of the adversities of growing up gay, lesbian, or bisexual in a heteronormative society.

Adolescent Identity Development

Conceptualizing Identity

Reflecting on identity as a broad construct provides insight into sexual identity more specifically. As such, this dissertation considers identity more generally before discussing theories of sexual identity development. Erik Erikson could be considered the father of identity conceptualization. In *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, Erikson (1968) wrote of the ego identity. The ego identity refers to both a conscious feeling of subjective personhood as well as an unconscious striving for continuity over time. Identity, influenced by a vast range of factors, is constantly under construction, negotiation, and transformation. In conceptualizing identity as a developmental process, Erikson (1968) presented an eight-stage lifespan sequence of identity development. The stage that Erikson called 'identity vs. role confusion' marks the stage most salient during adolescence. Given that most LGB individuals begin to realize sexual affinities for the same sex during adolescence (Downey, 1994; Savin-Williams, 1990; Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2000), it is the 'identity vs. role confusion' stage that is most relevant for understanding sexual identity development. During 'identity vs. role confusion,' adolescents seek some resolution between having a solid identity free of obscurity, and total confusion about their roles in life. Adolescents are required to synthesize their childhoods in ways that allow them to both maintain internal feelings of continuity and manifest an adult identity that would be considered acceptable by society (Erikson, 1968).

In order to establish some form of balance between identity achievement and role confusion, adolescents go through identity crises (Erikson, 1968). Although on the surface an "identity crisis" may be perceived as an impending catastrophe, this is not the case. Rather, the identity crises that teens muddle through act as critical turning points in the life histories of

adolescents. An identity crisis is a period of exploration during which time teens must choose how they will define themselves among meaningful alternatives. An identity crisis concludes when, after a period of exploration, an individual confirms and commits to the attribute of personal identity that was previously absent. Although Erikson's notions of identity are regularly cited in the identity literature, he provided no direct method for studying the identity formation process. James Marcia aimed to provide such a method.

Identity Statuses

Marcia's (1966) attempt at operationalizing Erikson's notion of identity examined how individuals select meaningful directions towards formulating a sense of who they are through two variables: crisis and commitment. Marcia's crisis is synonymous with Erikson's identity crisis. Commitment refers to the degree of personal investment in the respective choices made by the adolescent and the decision to make life choices that would reinforce the identity cultivated from an identity crisis. The identity-status model developed by Marcia (1966) identifies four different styles by which adolescents approach the identity versus role confusion stage: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achieved.

Diffusion. Diffusion is the least developmentally advanced identity status. Absent from diffused identities are any strong identity-defining commitments or internally consistent set of values and goals. In addition, the diffused individual has not experienced any type of exploration as described by Erikson's identity crisis (Cramer, 1997; Marcia, 1966).

Foreclosure. Identity foreclosure represents a high level of commitment without a period of exploration. The individual with a foreclosed identity carries unquestioned childhood ascriptions into adulthood. People who follow the foreclosure pattern adopt a single set of values and goals, typically those of their parents.

Moratorium. Individuals in moratorium are in the process of actively searching and trying to find meaningful resolutions to questions about their identity. Those in moratorium are in the process of trying to discover identity-defining commitments. The more exploration individuals engage in before committing to any given identity, the more prepared they are to deal with life tasks in an independent, effective, and efficient manner (Berzonsky & Kuks, 2000).

Achieved. Identity-achieved adolescents have incorporated a set of commitments after a period of exploration. Those who have reached identity achievement have undergone moratorium and have come to an autonomous resolution. Identity-achieved individuals tend to have higher levels of self-esteem and extraversion and lower levels of neuroticism than do individuals in other identity statuses (Clancy & Dollinger, 1993; Orlofsky, 1978).

The Self

The product of the identity development process is often equated with the self-concept, or simply the self (Leary & Tangney, 2003). The self is both a cognitive and social construct that refers to the characteristics an individual attributes to his or her person (Harter, 1999). As a cognitive construct, the self develops as emerging cognitive abilities allow for changes in the structure and content of the self. As a social construct, the self develops through socialization. If the self is considered the outcome of the identity development process, then factors influencing identity development logically also influence the self. Interpersonal communication and media exposure, for example, can influence the self (Harter, 1999). Beliefs about the self are often thought to be strongly tied to emotional well-being (Kroger, 2006), an important assumption given the focus of this dissertation on the emotional well-being of LGB teens. One theory that explains how the self is related to an individual's emotional well-being is self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, Klein, & Stauman, 1985).

Self-discrepancy theory. Self-discrepancy theory postulates that turbulence in the self can cause emotional distress. Specifically, self-discrepancy theory claims incompatible beliefs about the self will induce negative emotional states (Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1985). According to self-discrepancy theory, individuals have multiple domains of the self. Individuals have an actual self; the actual self is composed of beliefs about who they think they are. The actual self is synonymous with an individual's self-concept. Self-discrepancy theory notes that beyond the actual self, individuals also have an ideal self. The ideal self represents the attributes that someone would like to ideally possess. The ideal self represents an individual's hopes, aspirations, or wishes for him/herself. One of the primary assumptions of self-discrepancy theory is that an individual is motivated to reduce any discrepancy between the actual self and the ideal self in order to maintain emotional well-being.

When a discrepancy arises between the actual self and the ideal self, dejection-related emotions (e.g., dissatisfaction, disappointment, sadness) are induced. Dejection-related emotions can lead to depression; over time, depression can lead to suicidal behaviors. Dissecting the creation and activation of discrepancies between the actual self and the ideal self among LGB teens may be a promising line of research for scholars interested in the emotional well-being of LGB youth because of the heightened risk for depression and suicidal behaviors among this vulnerable population.

To review, the identity formation process as described by Erikson and Marcia involves resolving identity crises so that an emerging sense of self can be integrated into one's life. Beliefs about the self and discrepancies in the self are often tied to an individual's emotional well-being. Although identity development is a primary task of adolescence (Erikson, 1968),

sexual identity development is a particularly salient aspect of the self that garners much attention during adolescence (Chilman, 1983; Gagnon & Simon, 1987).

Sexual Identity

All adolescents, regardless of sexual orientation, develop a sense of who they are and what they feel sexually; they all go through "the process of mastering emerging feelings and forming a sense of oneself as a sexual being" (Brooks-Gunn & Graber, 1999, p. 158). The literature on sexual identity reveals three elements of adolescents' sexual selves: (1) gender identity, or feelings of being male or female; (2) gender roles, or the expression of gender given societal norms; and (3) sexual orientation, the sexual interests of an individual (Kroger, 2007). Research on sexual identity has largely focused on gender identity and gender roles (Kroger, 1989). Little research, however, has examined sexual orientation among heterosexual adolescents as an important element of the sexual self. Although several scholars have claimed that the lack of research on sexual orientation during adolescent identity development is surprising (e.g., Buzwell & Rosenthal, 1996; Kroger, 2007), such a gap seems quite logical for reasons detailed below.

Heterosexual sexual identity. The sexual identities of heterosexual adolescents are typically foreclosed identities. There is little consideration of exploring alternative sexual orientations. Rather, everyday cues from family, peers, the media, schools, and other socialization agents reinforce the normative nature of a heterosexual identity (Rotheram & Langabeer, 2001). Essentially, being a member of the heterosexual majority living in a heterosexual society creates no need for a sexual identity crisis. This concept is very similar to findings revealed in the literature on racial identity formation in the United States. White adolescents do not typically go through an extensive exploration of their racial identity because

they are part of the majority population. However, the formation of a racial identity can be taxing for racial minority youth (Markstrom-Adams & Spencer, 1994). Sexual orientation is not a salient aspect of identity for heterosexual individuals. Consequently, it is logical that sexual orientation has not been given much attention by identity scholars. However, just as racial identity can be salient to racial minority youth, the sexual identity formation process for sexual minority teens can be an arduous and complicated process that can create grief and turmoil (Remafedi, 1987; Rotheram & Langabeer, 2001; Savin-Williams, 1990; Striepe & Tolman, 2003). The unique obstacles that sexual identity creates for adolescents who stray from the heterosexual norm warrant further exploration.

Sexual behavior vs. sexual orientation. One must understand the difference between sexual behavior and sexual orientation before being able to explore the sexual identities and emotional well-being of LGB teens. An individual's sexual orientation symbolizes a consistent, enduring self-representation that incorporates a meaningful understanding of sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Larson, 1982). Consequently, the term "LGB adolescent" (and derivatives of the term) will be used throughout the remainder of this dissertation to describe adolescents who have an acknowledged sexual affinity for individuals of the same sex or adolescents currently struggling with their sexual identities, whether or not they are homosexually active (Isay, 1988; Radkowsky & Siegel, 1997). Sexual behaviors do not predict sexual identity and sexual identity does not translate to sexual behavior. Many adolescents who accept the self-representation of lesbian, gay, or bisexual are homosexually virgins (Anderson, 1994; Boxer, 1988; Remafedi, 1987). On the other hand, many adolescents who will grow up identifying as heterosexual have reported extensive and prolonged homosexual behaviors during adolescence and early adulthood (Malyon, 1981; Ross-Reynolds, 1982). Although the synchrony

between sexual identity and sexual behavior is highly variable among adolescents, it should be readily apparent that research still contends LGB adolescents are more likely than heterosexual teens to engage in homosexual behaviors and to do so for longer periods of time (Bell, Weinberg, & Hammersmith, 1981).

This dissertation examines the emotional well-being of LGB teens. Consequently, only those adolescents who are questioning their sexual orientation or who have accepted the label of lesbian, gay, or bisexual are of interest in the current study. If adolescents develop and understand their sexuality as heterosexual regardless of their homosexual experiences or experimentation, then it is probable that they would subscribe to the foreclosed heterosexual sexual identity (Savin-Williams, 1990). To understand the uniqueness of the LGB identity formation process, one must be cognizant of the theoretical models that have been constructed to investigate sexual identity development among LGB individuals.

Lesbian, Gay, & Bisexual Identity Development

Theoretical Models

Comprehending the theoretical models of LGB identity development hinges on understanding the relationship between homophobia and LGB identities. Some level of internalized homophobia, or fear of the sexual unknown, has to exist for an adolescent to arrive at an LGB identity (Savin-Williams, 1994). That is, a teen has to understand that being lesbian, gay, or bisexual is outside of societal norms in order for a sexual identity crisis to occur. Without homophobia, there is little motive for adolescents to develop a distinct LGB self. As previously discussed, heterosexual adolescents do not have to go through a strenuous process to understand that they are heterosexual. This idea can best be exemplified by the differences in sexuality in northern Europe and North America. Little discrimination is made based on sexual orientation in

many northern European countries. Consequently, patterns of identity development between heterosexual, gay, and lesbian adolescents are nearly identical (McConnell, 1994). In contrast, North American LGB adolescents tend to learn to be homophobic before they discover they are sexually attracted to their own sex. It then follows that the theoretical models explaining sexual identity examine the process couched within the heterosexual norm held by American society.

Approximately 30 years ago, a number of theoretical models of LGB identity development emerged. Cass (1979), Coleman (1982), Dank (1971), Plummer (1975), and Troiden (1979) all proposed models that explained LGB sexual identity development as occurring through sequential stages mirroring Erikson's conceptualization of identity development as a systematic process. Although subtle differences exist between the models, the central themes that emerge in the stages of each model are quite similar. Each model essentially proposes a quadripartite conception of sexual minority identity formation: (1) feeling different, (2) exploration, (3) acceptance, and (4) integration. In the first stage, an individual must become aware of homosexual feelings. Exploration, similar to that of an identity crisis, defines the second stage. The third stage is marked by an acceptance of an individual's sexuality and an understanding that an LGB identity is a normative attribute of the self. The fourth stage occurs when an individual has not only accepted a sexual minority identity, but begins to integrate the LGB self into other aspects of his or her life.

These stages of development are not linear nor are they standardized for all who experience them. Rather, there are individual differences in the rate of progression and timing of the process. Individuals begin the process at different ages, reach various stages at different ages, may digress back into a previous stage at any time, and may reach stages at a faster or slower rate than others (Cass, 1979; Savin-Williams, 1990). Even recent theoretical approaches to the

development of an LGB identity closely follow the steps proposed in earlier research. For example, Rosario, Schrimshaw, and Hunter (2008) proposed a new model of LGB identity development as consisting of identity formation and identity integration. However, these two steps can easily be extracted and summarized as the four steps described above. For example, Rosario et al. (2008) state that identity formation consists of "a process of self-discovery and exploration" (p. 267). Self-discovery and exploration closely mirror the first two stages detailed in earlier models. Even as new models are developed, the concepts presented in the original models of sexual minority identity development greatly influence the way modern scholars attempt to describe this process. To better understand the development of an LGB identity, each stage of the four-stage sexual minority identity process previously defined will be explicated in greater detail below.

Feeling different. Regardless of the developmental model employed, feeling different from others is the first step in the development of a homosexual identity. Troiden (1979) referred to this stage as "sensitization." A sense of apartness and isolation typifies the sensitization stage. In their study on sexuality, Bell, Weinberg, and Hammersmith (1981) found that 84% of gay males and 74% of adult lesbians reported feeling different growing up, while only 11% of heterosexual males and 10% of heterosexual females reported feeling different. The origins of sensitization are unclear in the literature. This is not only unsurprising, but it is logical. Consider the response one would receive when asking a heterosexual man when he first became aware of his heterosexuality. Relatively few heterosexual adults could precisely pinpoint when they first became aware of their sexual orientation; it should then be expected that the first signs of "feeling different" are unclear for most LGB individuals as well. Although sexual orientation

may be present in rudimentary forms even before the age of 3 (Savin-Williams, 1990), a continual feeling of being different emerges during early adolescence (Straver, 1976).

According to Marcia's (1966) identity statuses, during the sensitization stage LGB adolescents still have foreclosed sexual identities. Generally speaking, adolescents are socialized into a society where heterosexuality is portrayed as the only acceptable outlet for sexual expression. Teens are presumed by themselves and others to be heterosexual because of the constant reinforcement of heterosexuality. Teens are expected to begin finding the opposite sex interesting and forming relationships. With all of the pressures to conform to the heterosexual norm, sexually questioning adolescents increasingly question what their "feeling different" means. Sanders (1980) noted that LGB individuals only know that they are uninterested in intimate relationships with the opposite sex during early adolescence. They cannot yet delineate exactly what they do want. That is, early adolescents who are experiencing sensitization are unable to link their lack of attraction to opposite-sex peers to the possibility that they are homosexual. These assumptions of LGB identity development during early adolescence support broader research explaining the compartmentalized cognition and lack of abstraction present during early adolescence (Kroger, 2007).

Exploration. The growing realization that being different may mean being homosexual increases exponentially during mid- and late adolescence (Coleman, 1982; Remafedi, 1987; Troiden, 1979; Savin-Williams, 1990). Sensitization can act as a catalyst for a sexual identity crisis among youth questioning their ascribed heterosexuality. In essence, the stage of exploration is synonymous with Marcia's (1966) concept of moratorium. It is during exploration when adolescents actively search for information that could be utilized to label their sexuality. The lack of gay or lesbian role models, peers, or images in teens' communities can make

exploration laborious. Prolonged sexual exploration that does not lead to the discovery of useful sexual information can create feelings of dejection that can induce depression or self-destructive behaviors (McConnell, 1994). Eventually through exploration, an individual may begin to realize that an LGB identity is within the realm of possible sexual identities and that an LGB identity may be the missing attribute of the self that would rationalize the sensitization previously felt.

After a period of exploration, if an adolescent can justify an LGB sexual identity as plausible, the next stage can be entered. The last two stages, acceptance and integration, are when the teen accepts and incorporates the LGB sexual identity into his or her sense of self. The final two stages have many similarities and are not separated into distinct stages by all of the theoretical models of LGB identity development. As such, they are combined in the discussion of these stages below.

Acceptance and integration. LGB adolescents have moved from Marcia's (1966) moratorium to identity achievement when, after a period of exploration, they have committed to an LGB sexual identity. Identity achievement would be reached in the last two steps of the sexual minority identity formation models: acceptance and integration. In these stages, LGB individuals accept their sexual identities and begin to tell others. These stages are in and of themselves a process for LGB youth, one that is commonly referred to as the "coming-out" process. The coming-out process is a developmental process through which gay adolescents accept their affection and sexual preference for individuals of the same sex and choose to integrate this identity into their personal and social lives (Coleman, 1982). Simply put, coming out refers to the identification of oneself as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Coming out first occurs internally (i.e., the stage of acceptance) and then occurs externally in the form of sharing sexual identity with others (i.e., the stage of integration). The transition to acceptance is not an easy one. McDonald (1982) wrote:

> … coming out involves adopting a nontraditional identity, restructuring one's self-concept, reorganizing one's personal sense of history, and altering one's relations with others and with society… all of which reflect a complex series of cognitive and affective transformations as well as changes in behavior. (p. 47)

The coming out process is not a discrete event but rather a process that occurs and evolves through the lifespan. A lesbian woman, for example, is constantly coming out; there is always a new acquaintance, new co-worker, or new neighbor to whom she has not disclosed her sexual identity. Although the process continues throughout the lifespan, the first audience one comes out to is usually oneself (Ponse, 1980). It is coming out to this audience of one that requires an internalized, cognitive change in self-concept.

When adolescents are able to label their feelings as homosexuality, they must recognize that the frequently articulated guidelines for future behavior, ideals, and expectations, meant to ensure a successful heterosexual identity, are no longer available or relevant to their lives. The realization becomes even more difficult to grasp when this loss is not replaced by a readily adoptable, positive replacement. Individuals accepting LGB sexual identities must attempt to make meaning of the sexual self with very little information or experience to use as a starting point. LGB individuals are not born into a minority group, rather they must self-identity during adolescence. The inability to develop a sense of group identity creates further complications for an LGB adolescent attempting to answer the question, "who am I" (Harrison, 2003). Belonging to a group of individuals who share similar identity struggles can provide a shared sense of

survival or a common cause that can be a powerful coping mechanism for uniting individuals and assisting them with differences in identity and discrimination based on that identity (DeVos, 1982; Tajfel, 1978).

Gay adolescents have few if any opportunities to learn how to manage their sexuality in a positive manner. For example, Patterson (1994) argued that the absence of individuals in open, lifelong same-sex relationships that include children can leave LGB teens without a family model to identify with and, in turn, create beliefs that they are forever banned from creating any type of family life for themselves. Positively integrating their sexual orientation into their self-concept can be a difficult task. As a result, LGB teens typically give more significance to their sexual identity than heterosexual adolescents do, making it not just another component of the self, but a primary focus of their self-concepts (Hammersmith, 1987).

Once LGB sexual identities have been accepted, they must be integrated into the lives of LGB individuals. Dank (1971) noted that one factor that influences integration is time. The longer individuals identify as LGB, the more likely they are to accept themselves and to deny society's possibly negative evaluation of their sexual identities. Tripp (1975) also suggested that the more committed people are to their sexual identities, the more likely they are to evolve adaptive mechanisms to protect the self against social rejection. To survive, LGB individuals often develop even higher levels of coping skills and self-regard than the average individual (Gagnon & Simon, 1973). In essence, with time LGB individuals are often able to adapt their sexual identity into their sense of self and create mechanisms for protecting their sexual identity.

Environmental Influences

Attempting to explain the process of LGB sexual identity formation without detailing possible environmental factors would be futile. Environmental factors can influence the rate at

which individuals move through the sequential stages of the sexual identity models. In fact, the lack of salience these factors have in the LGB sexual identity development models is one of the most often cited critiques of the models' explanatory power (Hammack, Thompson, & Pilecki, 2009). The family, peers, the school, the community, religion, and media are all variables that are highlighted in the literature as influencing the development of sexual identities for LGB adolescents.

Family. Parent-child relationships undergo changes during adolescence with periods of increased conflict (Kroger, 2007). This increased conflict can lead to distancing between parents and their children during the early adolescent years. For heterosexual teens, support from peers can protect their ego during these conflicts. LGB adolescents, however, may not have supportive peer networks and, in turn, believe that their hidden sexual identities are the causes of parental conflicts. This perception then makes it difficult for them to maintain a positive sense of self (Radkowsky & Siegel, 1997). Graber and Archibald (2001) noted that the conflicts youth experience with parents should ultimately lead to more supportive, nurturing, and compassionate relationships between the child and parent. However, LGB teens often perceive a lack of parental support, even after conflicts have been resolved. The perceived lack of support then creates even more challenging relationships between sexual minority adolescents and their families, especially when adolescents come out to parents.

Coming out to parents is one of the greatest causes of stress among LGB teens who have internally accepted an LGB sexual identity but have not publicly come out or integrated the sexual identity into their lives (Rotheram, Hunter, & Rosario, 1994). There is no formula for coming out to parents. In fact, ways in which children disclose their hidden sexualities to parents are as varied as the children themselves (Uribe, 1995). Research shows the motivations for

coming out to family members include the desire to be honest and reduce the strain of deception, increased confidence and self-esteem resulting from self-acceptance, and anger towards the family that has reached a breaking point (Boxer, Cook, & Herdt, 1991). The negative reactions that many parents have upon their children's disclosure of LGB sexual identities can exacerbate many problems that LGB adolescents face. Remafedi (1987) found that 43% of a sample of 29 self-identified gay male adolescents in Minneapolis/St. Paul reported strong negative reactions from their parents about the males' sexual orientation.

Whereas family support can facilitate identity development in other aspects of the self-concept (e.g., vocational decisions, morals and values), the family can hinder the development of an LGB sexual identity for teens. Many parents believe that they have caused their children's homosexuality, a belief that puts the family and the youth in an irresolvable conflict that can lead to estrangement and violence (Hunter & Schaecher, 1987). For many youth, the conflicts that arise from their sexualities set the stage for rejection, ranging from a simple begrudging acknowledgement of the adolescent's sexual identity to a forceful ejection from the household. In sum, family life can create mentally exhausting obstacles to contentment for many LGB adolescents, especially those who have yet to outwardly disclose their sexualities to their parents. For LGB teens, relationships with peers may pose similar problems.

Peers. The peer group becomes increasingly important for experimentation with new roles and exposure to new ideas during adolescence. It is vital that adolescents be accepted by peers with whom they can establish relationships outside of the family (Anderson, 1987). Ackard and Neumark-Sztainer (2001) found that teens expressed more confidentiality within friendships than in any other relationship. It is within the safety of friendships that adolescents are willing to self-disclose personal information about sensitive topics like sex (Berndt & Savin-Williams,

1993; Di Iorio, Kelley, & Hockenberry-Eaton, 1999). For LGB adolescents, the vague feeling of being different typifying the beginning of the sexual identity development process can lead to feelings of isolation from peers (Gover, 1994; Martin, 1982). In response to the feeling of being different, many LGB teens date members of the opposite sex in order to fit in with their peers (Zera, 1992). The artificial relationships LGB teens develop with members of the opposite sex can increase feelings of sadness and depression. In addition, the development of close friendships is often hindered for LGB teens because they feel the need to distance themselves from same-sex peers for fear that closeness will be misunderstood (Martin & Hetrick, 1988; Zera, 1992). Taken together, it seems that during a time of identity development when acceptance from peers is so crucial, LGB teens are more likely to feel isolation than inclusion.

School. The school is far from a safe haven for adolescents developing LGB sexual identities. Instead, school can be a frightening and isolating experience for LGB teens. Studies of LGB adolescents continually report that anywhere between 20% and 60% of LGB adolescents report being victimized in middle school or high school (Berrill, 1990; Pilkington & D'Augelli, 1995; Garofalo, Wolf, Kessel, Palfrey, & DuRant, 1998). A recent national survey of over 6,000 self-identifying LGB adolescents between the ages of 13 and 21 revealed that the school climate towards LGB students has remained damaging (GLSEN, 2007). Nearly 90% of LGB students reported being verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation. Almost 50% of students reported being physically harassed at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation. Warren (1984) observed that when students had disclosed their sexual orientation to teachers in hope of enlisting their aid, very little help was offered. Even if a teacher does desire to act as a role model for teens, he or she may fear being accused of sexual exploitation or of "promoting" homosexuality or "recruiting" defenseless and vulnerable youth into homosexuality

(Rotheram & Langabeer, 2001). In addition, many gay and lesbian teachers and administrators fear the negative consequences (e.g., harassment, job loss) of revealing their sexual orientation (Anderson, 1995; Lyons & Atwood, 1994). Consequently, teachers are unlikely to be an available or a supportive resource for LGB teens.

In many cases where adolescents are victimized at school for their sexual orientation, law enforcement officials are replaced with school administrators to keep such matters internal for the school. When this occurs, LGB youth are often encouraged to conform to avoid being attacked (Rivers & D'Augelli, 2001). The national survey described above (GLSEN, 2007) found that 60% of teens who were harassed in school did not report the incident to school staff because the students believed that little or no action would be taken or the situation would just become worse if reported. Of students who did report an incident, over 30% said that school staff did nothing in response. The literal request to conform to heteronormative standards in schools diminishes an adolescent's ability to explore, possibly hindering any impending sexual identity crisis and thereby increasing feelings of dejection.

Community. In the pilot study for a project focusing on the long-term consequences of victimization in school, Rivers (1995) found that most LGB participants recalled being bullied not only in school, but also in their communities. LGB participants could remember situations where they were physically abused, verbally abused, or simply frightened in locations such as public buses, city streets, and shopping malls. Many LGB adolescents report trying to pass as straight in public settings when dealing with police officers, sales clerks, or waiters/waitresses (Pilkington & D'Augelli, 1995). The lack of positive gay role models available for LGB adolescents has a significant impact on the social acceptability of homosexuality and, in turn, on how adolescents perceive their LGB sexual identities. Both Davies (1996) and Rothblum (1990)

suggested that the lack of positive lesbian and gay role models in the community has a negative impact on the emotional well-being of LGB youth.

Religion. Religion is a very influential and powerful socialization tool. For LGB adolescents, religion can also be one of the most difficult childhood prescriptions to confront. The traditional theological assumption of most Western religions is that homosexuality is unnatural (Moon, 2002). Adolescents raised with strong Western religious teachings in the household often hold higher levels of internalized homophobia (Uribe, 1995). Internalized homophobia can hinder a questioning adolescent's ability to move from a foreclosed heterosexual identity to a period of moratorium or exploration.

Media. Dank (1971) found that men who were questioning their sexualities were facilitated in fostering a sexual identity by entering a new social setting that allowed them to become more knowledgeable about homosexuality and ultimately led to a greater understanding of their own sexual self. Dank noted that such knowledge can be gained through media outlets, and he concluded that books, magazines, and pamphlets were outlets for gay men to utilize in accepting their sexuality. Cass (1979) wrote that "reading books, listening carefully to any discussion of homosexuality, [or] consulting a professional counselor" (p. 223) were examples of information-seeking practices by adolescents exploring their sexual identities. Likewise, nowadays "reading books" may be replaced with watching television, renting gay- and lesbian-oriented films, or reading magazines targeted to gay and lesbian consumers.

Consider the environmental factors that have been reviewed in this chapter. Researchers agree that the interpersonal relationships sexual minority adolescents have with their families and their peers tend to be more obstructive than assistive in developing sexual identities. Adolescents are fearful of possible repercussions from disclosing sexual curiosities to families or peers.

Schools, communities, and religious institutions are unavailing for sexually questioning youth. The absence of information and support from family, peers, or other common socialization agents often leaves the media with the crucial responsibility of sexually socializing adolescents who may be developing LGB sexual identities (Fejes & Petrich, 1993; Gross, 1991; Raley & Lucas, 2006). Indeed, entertainment media may serve as the primary information source for LGB adolescents who are seeking information, communication, or support regarding their sexuality (Bond et al., 2009; Cover, 2000; Padva, 2007; Rotheram & Langabeer, 2001).

In the days before the Internet, films and television programs that included coming out storylines were often an adolescent's first contact with issues and sexual desires of LGB individuals (Edwards, 1996). In one survey of 56 self-identifying LGB adults (average age = 24), over 70% reported some form of media as their primary means of gathering information and learning about LGB lifestyle, culture, and sexual behaviors (Bond et al., 2009). Previous research implies that the media play a role in the development of sexual identities for LGB adolescents, but *how* important are media messages about sex and sexuality in the sexual identity development of LGB youth? Is the emotional well-being of LGB youth associated with exposure to sex and sexuality in the media? Questions such as these have yet to be answered. Given the social hindrances faced by many LGB adolescents, studying the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being is not only justified, but seems essential to understanding the sexual identity development of this vulnerable population.

Conclusion

Chapter 1 of this dissertation reviewed the origins of identity development and the self-concept. Self-discrepancy theory was then introduced to explain how discrepant beliefs about the self can influence emotional well-being. The broad identity concepts were then related to lesbian,

gay, and bisexual identity development more specifically. Using early developmental models, this chapter discussed how an individual comes to self-identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual before reviewing the environmental factors thought to influence the development of a sexual minority identity. The media are an environmental factor that have received little attention from scholars, but could have a profound impact on sexual minority youth seeking validation of their sexual identities. In the second chapter, the media's portrayal of sex and sexuality are addressed. Gay- and lesbian-oriented (GLO) media are also introduced in Chapter 2 before reviewing the limited body of literature on the effects of media exposure on LGB adolescents' sexual identity and emotional well-being.

Chapter 2:

Media, Sexual Identity, and Adolescence

Adolescence is a time of sexual transformation. Teens must rely on external sexual socialization agents to learn about sex because of a general lack of any direct sexual experiences during early adolescence (Brown et al., 1990). Entertainment media are often the primary sources from which adolescents learn sexual norms critical to development (Strasburger, 2005). In one study of American teens, over 90% of participants reported that they turned to television and film for information about sex; approximately 30% looked to a parent or guardian for the same information (Bachen & Illouz, 1996). In a more recent national study, 13- to 18-year-olds ranked television, film, and magazines as more useful sources of sexual information than parents, religious leaders, counselors, and therapists (Sutton et al., 2002). The seemingly inherent ability of media to serve as sexual socialization agents has led Jane Brown and colleagues (2005) to describe entertainment media as the "sexual super peers" of modern American teens.

The attention given to media as influential sexual socialization agents has spawned a body of effects research examining the relationships between media exposure and sexual outcomes (see Ward, 2003). Although the empirical value of this research is of paramount importance to understanding heterosexual adolescent development and sexual health, attention to sexual identity in this literature is absent. Instead, interest lies primarily in sexual attitudes and behaviors as outcome variables. A rationale for an aversion to studying sexual identity was explained in Chapter 1: sexual identities of heterosexual adolescents are typically foreclosed identities that are consistently reinforced by a heteronormative society (Rotheram & Langabeer, 2001). Being a member of the heterosexual majority strongly bolsters the belief that heterosexual teens' sexual selves align with society's sexual mandate and, therefore, these teens have no need

for a sexual identity crisis. Heterosexual identity is deeply rooted in the self-concept from birth, but sexual attitudes and behaviors are still foreign to most early adolescents (Kroger, 2007). The socializing impact of the media is particularly potent when adolescents have limited personal experience or knowledge in a topic (Wright, 2009); scholars have a sound rationale for studying sexual attitudes and behaviors of heterosexual adolescents instead of sexual identity. Teens questioning their sexualities often have no knowledge or personal experiences with homosexuality and, as such, must rely entirely on socialization agents to help them through sexual identity crises (Savin-Williams, 1995). One variable that scholars are beginning to associate with the identity development and emotional well-being of LGB teens is media exposure.

This chapter will first review content analysis studies and arguments made by critical scholars about the depiction of LGB sexuality in the media. The scant research examining the possible effects of media exposure on LGB adolescents will then be reviewed. An introduction to media that specifically target gay and lesbian audiences is also included in this chapter. Gay- and lesbian-oriented media (GLO media), a concept that will be explicated later in this chapter, have yet to receive much attention from media scholars but could be of great relevance to LGB adolescents. This chapter concludes by utilizing social cognitive theories to predict the relationships between media exposure and the sexual identities of LGB adolescents.

Sex and Sexuality in Entertainment Media

Mainstream Media

Defining "media." It is important to understand the frequency of sexual content in entertainment media if we are to analyze the possible relationships between media exposure and emotional well-being. Stepping back, one must first understand what is meant by entertainment

media, referred to throughout this dissertation simply as media. Exposure to media incorporates exposure to television, film, music, magazines, and websites. American youth 8- to 18-years-old spend an average of 4.5 hours a day with television and 2.5 hours a day with music (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010), making television and music important to include in any study examining media's influence on adolescent development. Films were included because adolescents make up the largest demographic segment of moviegoers (Wright, 2009) and it has been argued that films' formulaic and redundant depiction of romance and sex may be an especially significant source of information about relationships and sex for adolescent moviegoers (Bachen & Illouz, 1996). Magazines were included in the study because previous research suggests that heterosexual adolescents reference magazines for sexual information more than they reference any other medium (Pierce, 1993; Walsh-Childers, Gotthoffer, & Lepre, 2002).

Although adolescents spend the most time with television and music, time spent using computers to access the Internet is increasing at a rate faster than any other medium (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). The perceived anonymity and safety of the Internet make it a highly attractive medium for seeking information about stigmatized issues, giving websites great practical importance to adolescents hunting for information related to sex and sexuality (Cooper, McLoughlin, & Campbell, 2000). Therefore, television, film, music, magazines, and websites are the media of interest in this dissertation. The portrayal of sex and sexuality in each of these media will now be reviewed.

Television. Sex is increasingly represented on television. Dale Kunkel and his colleagues have tracked the portrayal of sex on television for over 10 years through the only ongoing content analysis of sexual content on television. In their most recent report, Kunkel et al. (2005)

found that both sexual talk and sexual behaviors on television have steadily increased over the past decade. For example, 56% of television shows had any sexual content in 1998. In 2002, that number increased to 64% and in 2005 that number rose to 70%. Sexual content is even more pervasive in television programs popular among teen audiences relative to sexual content on television overall (Eyal et al., 2007; Fisher et al., 2004; Kunkel et al., 2005).

Scholars continually come to similar conclusions when conducting content analyses of sex on television. First and foremost, talk about sex is rampant. For example, Kunkel et al. (2005) found that 35% of television programs contained sexual behavior, but 68% of television programs contained talk about sex. When sex is discussed on television, it is most often discussed in a humorous context (Fisher et al., 2004; Iannotta, 2008). When it comes to sexual behaviors, the most frequently depicted behaviors on television are not sexual intercourse, but kissing and physical flirting (Cope-Farrar & Kunkel, 2002; Kunkel et al., 2005; Sapolsky & Tabarlet, 1991). For example, Kunkel et al. (2005) found that 72% of all sexual behavior on television was kissing or physical flirting; only 14% of all sexual behavior on television was sexual intercourse. When sexual intercourse was portrayed, only 14% of sexual intercourse depictions included talk of precautionary behavior or negative consequences that could be associated with sex (e.g., emotional distress, pregnancy, or sexual transmitted infections; Kunkel et al., 2005). Thus, American teen audiences are being exposed to a plethora of sexual portrayals on television, many of which are framed in a humorous context with little to no regard for the risks and responsibilities associated with sex. Cope-Farrar and Kunkel (2002) concluded a content analysis study of sex in the media by stating that television "provides plenty of opportunity to observe messages about sex and sexuality, as sexual content is clearly an important part of television's agenda" (p. 76). For this conclusion to be valid, the scholars would

need to clarify that television provides plenty of opportunities to observe messages about *heterosexual* sex and sexuality. The sexual content argued by media scholars to be so prevalent on television is actually heterosexual content. In fact, the words "homosexual," "gay," and "lesbian" are entirely absent from the Kunkel content analyses previously mentioned. The absence of any examination of LGB characters in large, commonly-cited content analyses of sex on television is not surprising.

Studies often conclude that, historically, television has either ignored homosexuality or has portrayed it in a highly stereotypical manner (Capsuto, 2000; Gross, 2001; Ivory, Gibson, & Ivory, 2009; Tropiano, 2002). The promotion of heterosexuality is especially true among adolescent characters on television; boys by definition like girls and girls by definition like boys (Briggs, 2006; White & Preston, 2005). Scholars have only recenly begun to use content analytic methods to quantify portrayals of gay and lesbian characters on television.

According to one content analysis, gay male and lesbian characters were represented in only 7.5% of the dramas and comedies in the 2001 fall television schedule for six commercial broadcast networks (Raley & Lucas, 2006). Not a single bisexual character was found on network television. In a similar study, Fouts and Inch (2005) analyzed 125 lead characters from 22 television situation comedies on network and cable television. The authors found that only 2% of all central characters on situation comedies were homosexual. One study in particular sheds light on just how rare homosexuality is on television. Fisher et al. (2007) used a coding scheme that was adapted from Kunkel's large-scale content analyses (Kunkel et al., 2005) to analyze the portrayal of gay and lesbian individuals on television. Using the same coding scheme as Kunkel et al. (2005) provided Fisher et al. (2007) the opportunity to compare the findings from each of the two studies of sex on television. Fisher et al. (2007) conducted their content

analysis across two seasons, examining three composite-week samples of programs from six commercial broadcast networks and five cable networks during prime-time hours. The researchers found that nearly 8% of episodes contained same-sex behavior and 13% of programs contained nonheterosexual sexual talk. The latest findings of the Kunkel et al. (2005) content analysis of heterosexual sex on television revealed that 35% of programs contained sexual behavior and nearly 70% contained talk about sex. Comparing the Fisher et al. (2007) findings to those of the *Sex on TV* analyses (Kunkel et al., 2005), we see a stark difference in the portrayal of sexual orientations on television. Indeed, content analyses using samples as small as four television shows (Evans, 2007) and those using samples as large as 2,715 programs spanning across multiple seasons of both network and cable programming (Fisher et al., 2007) have concluded their studies with practically identical statements: gay and lesbian characters are no longer absent from television, but they are still remarkably rare (Evans, 2007; Fisher et al., 2007; Fouts & Inch, 2005; Raley & Lucas, 2006).

Although television has a history of ignoring sexual diversity, characters who identify as LGB are increasingly visible in mainstream television programming (Padva, 2007). Gay or lesbian characters accounted for 3% of all primetime scripted series regulars in the 2009-2010 broadcast network fall lineup, double the number of lesbian or gay series regulars just two years ago (GLAAD, 2009). Gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals were not only more visible than ever, but they were portrayed in a diverse set of roles and characterizations. A police officer on NBC's *Southland* disclosed his homosexuality to his police partner. A high school student once bullied by the football team came out as openly gay on FOX's *Glee*. The new head of pediatric medicine on ABC's *Grey's Anatomy* was briefly involved in a lesbian love story with a fellow castmember who has been openly bisexual for several seasons. Two gay males were introduced as loving

parents of an adopted child in ABC's *Modern Family*. If television is indeed becoming a more sexually diverse medium, such acceptance is evolving at a glacial pace. Nevertheless, if television programming begins to represent diverse and inclusive LGB characters that cumulatively reflect the wide range of roles that gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals occupy in American society, the LGB community could ultimately be gaining respect on mainstream American television (Evans, 2007; Hart, 2000).

Film. The portrayal of sex in films largely mirrors the portrayal of sex on television. In summarizing the research examining the content of film, several studies have concluded that films are rife with sexual scenes, most often between unmarried heterosexual couples who have just met and who are often high school- or college-aged (Brown, Greenberg, & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1993; Demsey & Reichert, 2000; Pardun, 2002; Wright, 2009). Through cultural analyses of modern film, some scholars (Demsey & Reichert, 2000; Greenberg et al., 1993) have argued that film contains stronger messages about sexual activity and more concrete models for observation than television.

From star-studded blockbusters like *Brokeback Mountain* to biographical films like *Capote*, depictions of gay and lesbian characters seem to be thriving in Hollywood scripts. Shugart (2003) argues that gay men have been reinvented in contemporary popular films in her essay examining the films *My Best Friend's Wedding, Object of My Affection,* and *The Next Best Thing*. Although scholars note an increase in the number of gay and lesbian characters emerging from Hollywood and appearing in movie theaters, agreement on the meaning of this new LGB visibility has yet to be reached. Some maintain that images of LGB characters in film continue to reinforce stereotypical representations, presenting characters who are reduced to their homosexuality (Gross, 2001; Walters, 2001). The few quantitative content analytic studies of

film that have included variables measuring homosexuality have reinforced the arguments of critical scholars claiming that references to homosexuality in film are stereotypical (Dempsey & Reichert, 2000; Greenberg et al., 1993). Others have argued that gay and lesbian characters have evolved in today's films, creating a "normal gay" representation whereby gay men serve purposes in the plotline unrelated to their sexual orientation (Gamson, 2002; Seidman, 2002). A concensus about the depiction of LGB characters in film has yet to be reached.

Music. Adolescents' iPod libraries are filled with songs reinforcing the significance of sexual desires. An analysis of the top 20 singles each year over a 10-year period revealed that 85% of songs contained references to sexuality (Edwards, 1994). In another study of the most popular songs among adolescent audiences, Primack et al. (2008) found that over 35% of songs contained strongly implied or explicit references to sexual intercourse. In the last 20 years, there has been a steady increase in the sexual explicitness of lyrics in popular songs (Christenson & Roberts, 1998). One has to look no further than the titles of popular songs to see the sexual nature of music lyrics today. For example, "S & M," "It Feels So Good," and "Just Can't Get Enough" are titles of just three of the many songs that topped the Billboard music charts as of May 2011. The sexual explicitness of song lyrics is mirrored in music videos; one analysis concluded that 50% of pop and rap music videos contained sexual imagery (Tapper, Thorson, & Black, 1994). Smith (2005) argued that music video producers have become even bolder in their use of sexual imagery so it is reasonable to assume that sex in music videos has remained constant over the years or even increased.

Musical artists have yet to embrace the LGB audience in their lyrics or music videos; references to same-sex attraction are hard to find in popular music. In a book chapter summarizing the portrayal of sex in music and music videos, Jeffrey Arnett does not make a

single reference to lesbian, gay, or bisexual sexualities (Arnett, 2002). Still, gay and lesbian artists themselves can be successful in the music industry. Artists like Melissa Etheridge and Elton John have continued to have profitable careers as musicians after publicly coming out of the closet as lesbian and gay, respectively. Artists like Lady Gaga and Adam Lambert have been open about same-sex attractions from the beginning of their success and they continue to be popular with young audiences. Although openly gay musicians could be important sources of information and identification for LGB teens, little is known about the lyrics of these artists' songs in relation to sexuality.

Magazines. Although magazines are a print medium, their reliance on increasingly sexual stories and images is no different from television, film, or music. Wray and Steele (2002) posited that magazines popular among adolescent audiences glaringly push a heterosexual standard that teens are urged to meet. Magazines targeted towards adolescent female readers often trivialize sex, sending messages to young readers that they are to be sexually educated and experienced (Kilbourne, 1999). For example, the cover of the April 2010 edition of *Seventeen* magazine included the headlines, "Sneaky Ways To Tell He's Cheating" and "My Mom Hooks Up With Guys My Age!" Magazines glamorize sex, but they may also provide useful information about the complexities of sex and sexuality. Walsh-Childers (1997) argued that magazines, often in the form of advice columns, present adolescents with health coverage regarding sex and sexuality moreso than television, film, or music.

When teens flip through the pages of their favorite magazines, they are not likely to view any material that questions their assumed heterosexuality. Only one reference to homosexuality existed in an analysis of 16 issues of *Seventeen* magazine (Wray & Steele, 2002). In one issue, an advice column explained to a concerned reader that any feelings of lesbianism or bisexuality

were probably just experimental, alluding only to future heterosexual relationships for the girl. Never did the advice columnist present healthy, realistic alternatives to heterosexual relationships. Wray and Steele (2002) concluded that magazines popular among adolescent audiences continually omit any reference to homosexuality unless defining sexual curiosity as a stage or phase that is likely to pass.

Websites. The Internet is a unique medium, argued by some to be adolescents' primary source of sexual information (Ryan & Futterman, 1998). Unlike other media, quantitative content analyses have yet to examine the sexual content of websites that teens visit most often. Although little is known about the kind of sexual content being consumed by adolescents on the Web, the Internet is quickly being adopted by its users for sexual purposes (Stern & Handel, 2001). When adolescents get wired to the Web, they gain access to the largest sexuality information database in existence. In fact, Norton (2009) reports that the terms "sex" and "porn" are the fourth and fifth most popular search terms among American adolescents, respectively. "YouTube," "Google," and "Facebook" are the only search terms more popular than "sex" and "porn."

Unlike exposure to other media discussed in this proposal, Internet use is a highly interactive process. Although teens can choose the television shows they watch or the magazines they read, they are limited by the television shows and magazines that are produced and distributed from within the media industry. Conversely, the Internet provides teens with a dynamic medium whereby they are in control of what they read, what they watch, and what they listen to on websites they visit. Teens are taking advantage of the profound amount of control offered by the Internet and are increasingly using this resource as a vital portal of information about sex and sexual norms (Subrahmanyam, Greenfield, & Brendesha, 2004).

To summarize, heterosexual sex remains a salient theme in the stories American media tell to entertain attentive teen audiences on the small screen, on the silver screen, in lyrics, in print, or on the computer monitor. With the possible exception of the Internet, LGB characters are still a unique find in mainstream media. Gross (2001) argued that the dearth of LGB characters in the media has led to a symoblic annihilation of sexual minorities: if American audiences do not see LGB people, they must not serve any purpose in society (if they exist at all). Huntemann and Morgan (2001) seconded Gross' assumption about media's depiction of LGB sexualities, stating that "…the paucity of positive [LGB] role models in the media is disturbing" (p. 315).

LGB characters may not be the lead in many blockbuster films or grace the cover of *Cosmopolitan*, but LGB teens are not limited to media targeted to general audiences for information about sex and sexuality. Adolescents questioning their sexuality have a niche media industry to turn to for information, entertainment, validation, or escape. Magazines and film that are designed and targeted toward gay and lesbian audiences have been produced for decades (Gross, 2001). Recently, cable television has joined this niche market, referred to throughout this dissertation as gay- and lesbian-oriented media, or GLO media.

Gay- and Lesbian-Oriented Media

GLO media are defined as any media outlet specifically designed, produced, and marketed for gay and lesbian audiences. GLO media are important to making arguments about associations between media exposure and LGB teens' sexual identities because late adolescents exploring their sexuality report that they search for media inclusive of gay and lesbian characters (Bond, et al., 2009; Evans, 2007; Kivel & Kleiber, 2005). To better comprehend the possible role

that GLO media exposure plays in the identity development and emotional well-being of LGB adolescents, GLO media will be further explicated.

GLO television. It was only within the last decade that television began to target specific programming to LGB audiences. In 2000, Showtime began airing *Queer as Folk*, a program following the lives of five gay men in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The show became well-known for its frank depiction of gay culture in America, as well as vivid depictions of same-sex sexual behavior (Rodman, 2009). *Queer as Folk* became extremely popular among both LGB and heterosexual audiences, eventually becoming the highest rated television show produced by Showtime.

Four years after the introduction of *Queer as Folk,* Showtime produced *The L Word*. *The L Word* was a program portraying five lesbian and bisexual women in the gay-friendly, trendy West Hollywood neighborhood of Los Angeles. The show received critical acclaim and instant popularity (Glock, 2005). Following the success of Showtime's GLO programming, Viacom launched Logo. Logo is an American cable network geared to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered viewers that airs movies, series, and specials focusing on the culture and lifestyles of sexual minority individuals. Because GLO television programs target LGB audiences, they may be more likely to contain inclusive portrayals of LGB characters that speak to sexually questioning teen audiences who are exploring their sexual identities.

GLO film. Mainstream film may be portraying gay and lesbian characters at an increasing rate, but films specifically produced for LGB audiences are commonplace among art theaters, community organizations, and independent video stores. The queer cinema has received much attention by critical media scholars and is often celebrated as producing refreshingly original and daringly deviant films. Beginning in the late 1980s, filmmakers in this new queer

cinema, many gay themselves, created films that portrayed the real-life struggles and situations that LGB individuals face (Murray, 1996). Many of these films included vibrant coming out stories, expanding the traditional coming-of-age film to a unique audience of LGB individuals (Nowlan, 2006).

GLO music. Unlike television and film, the music industry has yet to embrace the LGB community as a targeted audience. There is no GLO music label and there is only one gay radio station in the United States (a talk radio station for an LGB audience that is only available on satellite radio). One may make the logical claim that openly LGB musical artists might write and sing songs about their sexuality, but no empirical research has examined the musical stylings of openly LGB musical artists.

GLO magazines. Magazines, moreso than any other medium, have long had their place in gay culture. Small regional magazines have been published by and for the gay and lesbian community for more than 50 years (Gross, 2001). At their inception, these publications were of poor quality. They were printed by their respective authors and distributed only in neighborhoods with a high concentration of LGB individuals in large cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. The underground magazines' objective was to spread the word about current happenings in their respective communities (Gross, 2001). Today, the GLO magazine industry acts as a repository of useful information for LGB teens. For example, *The Advocate* is the oldest continuing LGB magazine in the United States. It has become an important reference to understanding gay lifestyles in the United States (Sender, 2001). Stenback and Schrader (1999) found that GLO magazines were the most helpful sources of information for women questioning their sexuality. Magazines such as *The Advocate* are important sources of information that continue to thrive.

GLO websites. The content of websites that are geared to LGB audiences is largely a mystery. The Internet provides a plethora of websites available to eager LGB teens searching for information about sexuality; however, no content analysis study has examined the websites that LGB adolescents might employ for sexual socialization. Even with no knowledge about the content of GLO websites, scholars have argued that the sheer number of GLO websites provides sexual minority teens an attractive outlet for harvesting information about homosexuality (Alexander, 2002; Campbell, 2005; Shaw, 1997). Cooper, McLoughlin, and Campbell (2000) noted that "lesbian women, gay men, and bisexuals use the Internet more often than their heterosexual counterparts for experimentation, networking, communication, and the expression of a variety of sexual behaviors" (p. 525).

To review, the sexual climate in mainstream media continues to evolve. LGB individuals are being depicted more frequently even if the increase is occurring at a glacial pace with no clear sign that the nature of the depictions has moved from demeaning stereotypes to more validating portrayals. GLO media, although rarely part of mainstream popular culture, do exist. Over time GLO media have transitioned from newsletters that were handed out in secrecy to a Viacom cable television channel. GLO media have become increasingly accessible to a wider range of individuals, including LGB youth. If media depictions of LGB individuals are evolving, the next logical step is to question what effects these depictions might have on media consumers, especially those who identify as LGB. The next section will review the few studies initiating this line of research.

Effects of Media Exposure on LGB Youth

Sexual Identity

The sexual identity development of LGB adolescents may be influenced more by the media than by any other socialization agent. Sexual minority adolescents rarely have first-hand contact with other real-life LGB teens upon whom they can draw information, guidance, or validation (Savin-Williams, 1995). Instead, LGB adolescents grow up in heterosexual communities with few gay role models. Because most LGB teens have little to no interpersonal interaction with other LGB individuals, adolescents engaged in a sexual identity crisis are more likely than heterosexal adolescents to rely on the media for information about sexuality (Fejes & Petrich, 1993; Gross, 1991; Gross, 2001; Huntemann & Morgan, 2001; Raley & Lucas, 2006; Ryan & Futterman, 1998). The absence of a supportive peer group, family, school, or community only increases the importance of the media in educating sexual minority adolescents about their sexual identities (Brown, Steele, & Walsh-Childers, 2002). Indeed, television programs and films including storylines dealing with coming out are often a sexually curious adolescent's first contact with same-sex desires, affection, and relationships (Edwards, 1996).

A handful of studies have been conducted with samples of LGB individuals that examine the relationship between media exposure and variables related to identity development and emotional well-being (e.g., self-esteem). The few studies that have been been conducted reinforce the importance of the media for this vulnerable population. In one survey of self-identifying LGB adults (average age = 24), over 70% of participants reported some form of media as their primary means of gathering information and learning about LGB lifestyles, cultures, and sexual behaviors when they were teens (Bond et al., 2009). The study used open-ended questions to retrieve detailed anecdotal evidence from study participants about their

information-seeking practices during the time in their lives when they were in the exploration stage of LGB sexual identity development (i.e., their sexual identity crises). The open-ended responses illuminate the importance of media for LGB adolescents' sexual identity development. It is important to note that participants in this particular study were not prompted to consider media as a source of information. Instead, many discussed the media spontaneously without any priming in responding to questions about sexual idenity development. One 18-year-old gay male participant noted, "…it was good to see characters such as Will from *Will & Grace* or Marco from *Degrassi* because they showed other gay people were out there" (p. 41). A 22-year-old gay male participant reiterated the importance of the media: "I would watch television shows or movies that I rented that had gay characters in them." (p. 43).

LGB characters in the media seemed to be perceived as helpful for participants, even if they were sparse. For other participants, however, the stereotyped nature of many portrayals of LGB people in the media hindered the development of their LGB identities. One 22-year-old bisexual female participant stated that "the media gave me a lot of misinformation. It was like a what-not-to-do guide. I hated the misrepresentation of bisexuals as loose" (p. 42). A 19-year-old gay male participant noted that the media reinforced the stereotypical "mesh-and-rollerblades-wearing notion of a gay man" (p. 44) and that such portrayals made it difficult to understand his own sexuality because he did not fit this stereotype.

This study suggests that the quality of depictions of LGB sexuality may play a stronger role in LGB adolescent development than does the quantity of depictions. It seems that validating portrayals of LGB people in the media may aid the development of LGB identities but that demeaning depictions of LGB characters in the media may hinder the development of LGB identities.

In a similar study, ethnographic interviews with 16 self-identifying gay men in early adulthood were used to investigate media's role in the development of self-esteem (McKee, 2000). Common themes that emerged from the interviews were that parents provided little information about homosexuality and that the only information about gay men or lesbians received at school was in the form of jokes or insults. The media provided the men in McKee's sample with depictions of gay characters that were needed to overcome feelings of isolation and, in turn, improve the mens' self-esteem and commitment to their sexual identity. For example, one participant in this study stated,

> [I watched] anything that had some sort of gay content in it, because when you're first coming out, you want to know as much… because you're stuck in this awkward position in the heterosexual world, you want to just get an identity with something" (McKee, 2000, p. 9).

McKee's findings strengthen the hypothesis that validating portrayals of LGB individuals in the media can positively influence the sexual identities of LGB adolescents struggling to understand what it means to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Freymiller (2005) found similar results in an interview study of 22 self-identifying gay and lesbian adults (average age = 28). When asked about the portrayal of LGB characters on television, participants generally found depictions to be useful for understanding LGB lifestyles and for creating a sense of identification with others, but participants also were concerned with stereotypical depictions of sexual minorities that further demeaned the viewers' sense of self. Participants in the study overwhelmingly expressed a desire to see a broader range of LGB characters on television.

Although these studies serve as a foundation to help understand how media might be interpreted by LGB individuals, the studies asked adult participants to think retroactively about their sexual exploration. Only one study published to date has focused specifically on asking adolescents themselves. Evans (2007) conducted a focus group with six self-identifying gay or lesbian adolescents that focused on the importance of media in their lives. Five of the six focus group participants reported that they were scouring television for LGB characters in an effort to find any kind of role model to provide acknowledgement or validation during their sexual exploration stage of identity development. Focus group participants reported that they watched any program they could find with LGB characters, although they reported mixed feelings about portrayals that they deemed unrealistic or hurtful. Evans (2007) surmised from the interviews that television needed to portray LGB people in more positive, non-stereotypical roles and in much greater frequency in order to give sexual minority youth a wider array of depictions for identification and validation. Without more diverse portrayals of LGB individuals, the flood of stereotypical or demeaning depictions could ultimately influence teens' beliefs about themselves and any subsequent emotions arising from those beliefs.

The World Wide Web has received attention from new media scholars for its ability to serve vulnerable populations like LGB adolescents. The World Wide Web could alleviate many of the stresses conceived from a sexual identity crisis. Websites littered with information about sexuality can provide a window of self-exploration previously unknown to LGB teens. Through a series of Internet studies, McKenna and Bargh (1998) found that participation in new groups during the sexual identity formation process led to greater self-acceptance and disclosure of hidden sexual identity to family and friends.

In sum, anectodal evidence from interview and focus group studies suggests that the *way* LGB sexuality is depicted may be just as influential in the development of sexual identities as the frequency of depictions of LGB sexuality in the media. Validating portrayals of LGB individuals seem to increase adolescents' commitment to their sexual identities, whereas demeaning portrayals of LGB individuals only further the heteronormative standards set by every other socialization agent in adolescents' lives. Investigations of media's influence on LGB individuals' identities have been initiated, but very little is known about the portrayal of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals in the media and the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being of LGB teens. Moreover, no research has specifically examined the relationship between GLO media exposure and the emotional well-being of LGB adolescents.

Understanding Effects: Theoretical Approaches to Sexual Identity

The theories most relevant to media effects on LGB sexual identity focus on social cognition and the processes by which an individual uses information from the media to make judgments. Sexual scripting theory (Simon & Gagnon, 1984), a theory stemming from social information processing models, is particularly relevant to the study of sexualized media exposure. Although sexual scripting theory can be utilized in the context of media effects, the theory does not address the complexities of identity. As discussed in Chapter 1, self-discrepancy theory acknowledges identity as an important construct in understanding emotional well-being, a particularly important outcome variable considering the vulnerability of sexual minority youth. Both of these theoretical approaches are detailed in turn.

Sexual Scripting Theory

Sexual scripting theory is an extension of script theory more generally (Simon & Gagnon, 1984). Scripts are mental schemata about routine events and social interactions that are stored in

memory (Abelson, 1976). A script typically includes information about a certain life event, appropriate behavioral responses to that event, and likely outcomes of each behavioral response (Weis, 1998). For example, adolescents may have a script for a first date. They may have expectations about what should happen on a first date and how it should happen. Scripts can be acquired from personal experiences or through observation. Learning scripts from the media becomes more likely when individuals have little prior knowledge about a given situation (Harris, 2004). Hence, adolescents who are exploring their sexuality and have little prior knowledge or experience with sex are likely to learn sexual scripts from the media (Brown et al., 1990; Gagnon & Simon, 1987; Kim et al., 2007). One national survey found that 40% of adolescents relied on information from the media to better understand how to talk with their romantic partners about sex and romance (Kaiser Family Foundation, 1998).

Janis (1980) argued that media not only provide very concrete narrative scripts (e.g., the first date script), but they also provide more abstract scripts related to social norms and values. Janis (1980) used the "overcoming adversity" theme as an example of an abstract script that many television programs and films employ to reinforce a social value (i.e., overcoming adversity makes you a stronger person). Teens may not only learn behavior scripts from the media, but they may learn sexual values. When scripts become institutionalized, they acquire a normative character (Laws & Schwartz, 1977). In other words, scripts about social norms can be learned from the media and are especially likely when the audience does not have prior knowledge or experience with the script referent.

Sexual scripting theory is an extension of script theory that contends that sexual scripts are internalized cognitive organizations that entail more than sexual behavior, but include our scripts for sexual beliefs, perceptions, and meanings associated with some particular sexual

referent (Gagnon & Simon, 1987). Societal institutions are responsible for the development of social norms and cultural definitions that guide an individual's sexual scripts (Simon & Gagnon, 1984). According to sexual scripting theory, exposure to depictions of LGB sexuality in the media could create beliefs about sexual social norms and values consistent with these portrayals. The abstract sexual scripts about which sexual behaviors are socially valued and which are condemned eventually become part of one's memory through continual exposure to consistent representations of that given script (Ahn, Brewer, & Mooney, 1992). Sexual scripting theory explains how the accessibility of sexual content in the media may influence the beliefs that LGB teens hold about their own sexuality. According to sexual scripting theory, media exposure may be directly related to LGB adolescents' emotional well-being, as represented in Figure 1. Self-discrepancy theory would then posit that identity can influence the emotional well-being of adolescents striving for information to help them carve out an LGB identity and act as a mediator in the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being.

Self-Discrepancy Theory

As noted in Chapter 1, self-discrepancy theory postulates that incompatible beliefs about the self will induce negative emotional states (Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1985). Self-discrepancy theory claims that individuals have an actual self (beliefs about who they are) and an ideal self (beliefs about who they would like to be). When a discrepancy arises between the actual self and the ideal self, dejection-related emotions are induced. Individuals are motivated to reduce any discrepancy between their actual self and their ideal self. The magnitude of self-discrepancies can be reduced by altering the actual self to better fit the ideal self or by adjusting the ideal self so that it more closely aligns with an individual's actual self.

Higgins (1987) expressed the importance of magnitude and accessibility in predicting emotional well-being. An individual is more likely to suffer discomfort associated with a self-discrepancy if the self-discrepancy is easily accessible. Harrison (2001) noted the need to understand how media exposure affects the accessibility of self-discrepancies. Using an adolescent sample, Harrison (2001) found that body-specific self discrepancies mediated the relationship between thin-ideal media exposure and eating disorder symptoms. If research examining the relationship between exposure to thin-ideal media and body image dissatisfaction has utilized self-discrepancy theory to explain this association, it is probable that self-discrepancy theory could be applied to the study of media exposure and other components of the self as well.

In this dissertation, the outcome variable of interest is emotional well-being. As stated in Chapter 1, most research on LGB teens has signaled complications with their emotional well-being stemming from sadness, dejection, and depressive symptoms (e.g., Anderson, 1994; Anhalt & Morris, 1998; Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; Busseri et al., 2006; Diamond & Lucas, 2004). Dejection, as defined by self-discrepancy theory, can lead to depression which, over time, can lead to suicidal tendencies. Sexual minority youth are at a heightened risk for both depression (Russell & Joyner, 2001) and suicide (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2006). Consequently, dejection-related emotions are of greatest interest in this dissertation. Thus, the term "emotional well-being" is defined here as the absence of dejection-related emotions.

Self-discrepancy theory allows for the examination of identity as a mediating variable in the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. However, determining if self-discrepancies are being created or are simply being reinforced by media exposure is beyond the scope of this dissertation. If a relationship between exposure to sexualized media and self-

discrepancies is found, it will remain unknown whether the self-discrepancies were created by media exposure, were activated by media exposure, or were the catalyst for media exposure. We know from experimental research on media effects that media can activate existing self-discrepancies (Harrison, 2001), yet sexual scripting theory would posit that media also can create discrepancies in the self by providing individuals with scripts that are considered social norms, but are contrary to their own feelings or experiences. The data collected for this dissertation will not distinguish between activation and creation, but will establish whether a relationship exists between media exposure, self-discrepancies, and emotional well-being. Given that no research has examined the possible relationship between media exposure and self-discrepancies among LGB teens, this dissertation is a valuable first step towards understanding the factors associated with emotional well-being among LGB adolescents.

Applying self-discrepancy theory to sexuality, an adolescent may see her actual self as a lesbian, but her ideal self as a heterosexual female happily dating a popular male athlete. According to sexual scripting theory, the teen may have learned to value heteronormative sexual scripts: she is expected to grow up, marry a successful, strapping young man, and have a traditional family. The discrepancy between the actual self and the ideal self that LGB adolescents may experience could be activated or created by exposure to media portrayals of LGB people. If individuals learn sexual scripts from the media, these scripts may serve as the basis for the ideal self. Self-discrepancy theory can then be utilized to explain the role of the sexual self in the association between media exposure and emotional well-being.

Assume that an adolescent who is questioning her sexuality enters the sexual identity developmental stage of exploration (as described in Chapter 1). As she begins to explore, she discovers GLO media and begins to read lesbian-oriented magazines and watch television

programming on LOGO, a GLO cable network. Narratives in GLO media provide the sexually questioning adolescent with the information needed to alter her sexual scripts to include lesbian as a possible sexual identity. In turn, her ideal self is altered; she no longer feels the need to maintain a heterosexual lifestyle in order to grow up happy and successful. As the magnitude of the discrepancy between her actual self and her ideal self lessens, the teen feels less dejected. In this example, media exposure transformed the adolescent's sexual scripts which influenced her ideal self and, ultimately, her emotional well-being. This theoretical framework, with self-discrepancies mediating the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being, is displayed in Figure 1. The assumptions of sexual scripting theory and self-discrepancy theory together build a clear theoretical rationale for the study of LGB adolescents' media exposure and the relationship between media exposure, sexual identity, and emotional well-being. Formal hypotheses from these theoretical perspectives are presented in subsequent chapters.

Conclusion

There is a period in all adolescents' lives when information about sex becomes increasing salient. Relying on media to obtain information about sex is commonplace. A burgeoning body of literature suggests that exposure to sexualized media is related to sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors among heterosexual adolescents. Less is known about the depictions of LGB sexuality in the media and how those portrayals may relate to LGB teens' sexual identity development and emotional well-being.

The research carried out for this dissertation employs sexual scripting theory and self-discrepancy theory to frame an exploration into LGB sexuality in the media and sexual identity development. The primary goals of this dissertation research are to content analyze media popular with LGB teens and to explore possible associations between exposure to those media

and emotional well-being. Chapter 3 of this dissertation will detail the design, procedure, and results of a content analysis of media popular with LGB teens (Study 1) as a first step toward better understanding media's depiction of sexuality and sexual orientation. Chapter 4 will then explain the design, procedure, and results of a survey of LGB adolescents exploring the relationship between media exposure, sexual identity, and emotional well-being (Study 2). Chapter 5 will then present the conclusions and implications of the findings of both Study 1 and Study 2.

Chapter 3:

Study 1: A Content Analysis of Sexuality in Media Popular With LGB Adolescents

Sex is pervasive in American entertainment media. However, research quantifying sex in the media has primarily measured depictions of heterosexual sexual talk and sexual behavior. Media scholars must reach beyond the heteronormative boundaries of most published content analyses of sex in the media in order to more comprehensibly understand the role media play in the sexual socialization of youth. A content analysis of LGB sexuality in the media is warranted given the role that media likely play in the sexual socialization of LGB adolescents as discussed in Chapter 2. This chapter opens by enumerating the benefits of content analysis research for this topic. Previous content analysis studies of LGB sexuality in the media are then reviewed to justify why more work needs to be done in this area. Hypotheses and research questions are proposed before presenting original data that assess the depiction of both heterosexuality and LGB sexuality in media popular with LGB adolescents.

Rationale

Content Analysis as Method

Content analysis is a technique for the systematic, objective, and quantitative description of media content (Gunter, 2002). Content analysis is one of the most frequently used methods among media researchers because it is an efficient way to investigate the media landscape (Neuendorf, 2002). The reliance on quantification is arguably one of the most important qualities of content analysis for media researchers. By quantifying media messages, scholars are able to succinctly make generalizable arguments about media content (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000).

Content analysis research provides scholars with an understanding of media content that can serve as the foundation for future research examining possible effects of exposure. For

example, McKee (2000) found when interviewing gay males that they often noted the quantity of depictions of gay men in the media did not influence their self-esteem as much as the quality or nature of the depictions (McKee, 2000). Although McKee's study suggests that examining the context of depictions of LGB sexuality in the media is important, few studies have taken on this task. Although much content analysis work has been done measuring heterosexual sex in the media, little is known about the depiction of LGB sexuality in the media (Fisher et al., 2007). The research examining sexual minorities in the media that does exist is now reviewed to justify why more detailed content analysis research on LGB individuals is needed.

Existing Research

Of the studies quantifying sex in the media, only four (i.e., Evans, 2007; Fisher et al., 2007; Fouts & Inch, 2005; Raley & Lucas, 2006) have empirically analyzed the portrayal of LGB characters. These studies, summarized in Table 1, have served as an important first step in documenting the depiction of LGB sexuality in the media. However, they are limited in several ways. First, research has focused solely on one medium: television. The focus on television is problematic given the wide variety of media that adolescents are exposed to throughout the day. According to a national survey, adolescents spend on average 7 to 8 hours per day using some kind of media: almost 4.5 hours watching television, 2.5 hours listening to music, 1.5 hours on the computer, and approximately 30 minutes with movies and print media (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). Although it is important to understand the sexual content of specific media, the singular medium perspective is insufficient for understanding the range and quantity of sexual messages in the media that teens are exposed to throughout a typical day.

Another important shortcoming lies in the sampling procedures of previous content analyses. Raley and Lucas (2006) analyzed a convenience sample of five episodes of nine prime-

time TV shows that were chosen because of the scholars' knowledge that these programs had at least one reocccuring LGB character. Fisher et al. (2007) utilized a composite week sampling plan to obtain two large annual random samples of television programs. Fouts and Inch (2005) coded one episode of 22 randomly selected situation comedies. Although each of these scholars used varying sampling methods, all of these studies concluded that LGB characters were scarce on television. The ability of studies using varying coding schemes to come to an identical conclusion about the portrayal of LGB individuals on television is insightful, but the sampling decisions made by the researchers limit the studies' applicability. A content analysis that can be used as the framework for correlational survey research on the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being needs to quantify the depiction of LGB sexuality in the media that LGB adolescents *consume*. If adolescents are not watching the 22 situation comedies in Fouts and Inch's (2005) content analysis, then they are not likely to be affected by the depiction of LGB sexuality in those respective television programs. Evans (2007) took the approach of crafting his content analysis sample by using the television shows that were most popular with gay youth as reported by 100 self-identified gay survey participants. However, Evans only analyzed the four most popular television shows in his study, making his conclusions difficult to generalize.

The array of variables that have been coded in the few studies measuring LGB portrayals on television is yet another weakness worth noting. For example, Fisher et al. (2007) coded variables that were adapted from Kunkel et al. (2005): same-sex sexual behavior and talk about nonheterosexual sexual issues. However, Raley and Lucas (2006) coded the number of jokes made with homosexual themes, the number of times a character displayed affection for another same-sex character, and the number of times LGB characters interacted with children. The

authors posited that televised interactions with children normalizes LGB sexuality. With such a wide variety of variables measured in the very few studies quantifying LGB sexuality on television, it is challenging to validly compare their respective conclusions to one another or to the existing body of literature on heterosexual sex in the media. Although constructing a new coding scheme affords the researcher greater flexibility, it sacrifices meaningful opportunities for comparison. Indeed, one of the criticisms Kunkel et al. (2003) levied against previous content analyses of sexual content on television is that "idiosyncrasies across the research strategies employed rendered comparisons from one project to another difficult" (p. 2). Alternatively, using coding schemes similar to previous research creates the opportunity to make useful comparisons.

The Present Study

The present study addresses limitations of previous content analytic work measuring LGB sexuality in the media. Instead of focusing solely on television, the sample for this content analysis spans media, quantifying depictions of sexuality in television, film, music, magazines, and websites (referred to as "media vehicles" for the remainder of this chapter). Second, rather than rely on arbitrary inclusivity rules to create the sample, media consumption reports from an online survey of self-identifying LGB teens were used to create a sample of media actually used by LGB adolescents. Third, rather than constructing an original coding scheme, the coding scheme for the present study was adapted from earlier studies of sex on television (Kunkel, et al., 2005). These techniques provided a more comprehensive content analysis of LGB portrayals in media popular with LGB adolescents than found in earlier studies.

Frequency of Sexual Depictions

The first question worth addressing in the present study is the prevalence of heterosexuality in mainstream media. Previous content analyses quantifying the depiction of

LGB characters have not coded depictions of heterosexuality, missing the opportunity to make frequency comparisons between heterosexual and LGB content. Content analyses measuring heterosexual depictions consistently conclude that heterosexual sex is a mainstay in American media, specifically television (Eyal, 2007; Fisher et al., 2004; Kunkel et al., 2003; Kunkel et al., 2005; Ward, 2003). Conversely, studies show that television programing has generally either ignored homosexuality or has portrayed it in a highly stereotypical manner throughout history (Fisher et al., 2007; Fouts & Inch, 2005; Gross, 2001; Raley & Lucas, 2006). The first hypothesis applies conclusions about television to media more broadly.

H_1: Heterosexuality will be depicted more often than LGB sexuality in mainstream media popular with LGB adolescents.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, LGB adolescents are not limited to mainstream media for information about sex and sexuality. Adolescents questioning their sexuality can glean information, entertainment, validation, or escape from GLO media as well. Chapter 2 defined GLO media as media specifically designed, produced, and marketed to a niche audience of gay and lesbian consumers. Understanding the portrayal of LGB individuals in GLO media is important because GLO media may play a role in the sexual socialization of LGB teens. Late adolescents exploring their sexuality have reported searching for media specifically inclusive of gay and lesbian characters (Bond, et al., 2009; Evans, 2007; Kivel & Kleiber, 2005). Because GLO media attempt to attract and keep an LGB audience, GLO media may provide the outlet that these adolescents seek for information and validation.

H_2: LGB sexuality will be depicted more often than heterosexuality in GLO media popular with LGB adolescents.

Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 compare the depiction of heterosexuality to the depiction of LGB sexuality in mainstream media and GLO media separately. However, comparing mainstream media and GLO media directly may also provide insight into the sexual landscape of media popular with LGB adolescents.

H_3: Mainstream media will depict heterosexuality more often than GLO media.

H_4: GLO media will depict LGB sexuality more often than mainstream media.

Nature of LGB Sexual Depictions

Although measuring the quantity of depictions of LGB sexuality is important to understanding how LGB people are evolving in the media landscape, the natureof LGB sexual depictions may be just as important if not more importantthan the frequency of these depictons (Bond et al., 2009; Evans, 2007). Diverse portrayals of LGB people in the media are needed to provide LGB youth with a wider array of depictions for identification. More positive, normalized, non-stereotypical depictions of LGB individuals in the media is often cited by LGB study participants as a missing component that would assist them in their sexual socialization and eventual acceptance of their sexual identities (Bond et al., 2009; Evans, 2007; Freymiller, 2005; McKee, 2000). Without more diverse portrayals of LGB individuals, exposure to stereotypical or demeaning depictions could influence teens' beliefs about their sexual identities and their subsequent emotional well-being. The following research question is posed because the nature of LGB depictions is plausibly more important than the simple presence or absence of LGB individuals in the media.

RQ_1: What will be the nature of LGB sexual depictions in mainstream media popular with LGB adolescents?

The nature of GLO media depictions of LGB individuals will likely be validating because the creators of GLO media are often gay themselves (Murray, 1996) and GLO media are targeting LGB audiences. In addition, advertisers in GLO media are attempting to associate homosexual acceptance with their product or service in an effort to get their share of LGB individuals' disposable incomes (Becker, 2006). Hence, primarily validating portrayals of LGB individuals are expected in GLO media.

H_5: Validating depictions of LGB sexuality will occur more often than demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality in GLO media popular with LGB adolescents.

Research question 1 and Hypothesis 5 compare validating depictions of LGB sexuality to demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality in mainstream media and GLO media separately. However, comparing the nature of LGB sexual content in mainstream media and GLO media may also provide insight into the sexual landscape of media popular with LGB adolescents.

H_6: Mainstream media will depict demeaning portrayals of LGB sexuality more often than GLO media.

H_7: GLO media will depict validating portrayals of LGB sexuality more often than mainstream media.

Context of Sexual Instances

Sexual talk. Although previous studies have measured LGB sexual talk, none have studied the type of talk that occurs. Fisher et al. (2007) measured "non-heterosexual talk," but did not detail what constituted non-heterosexual talk. If media do play a role in the sexual socialization of LGB adolescents then it would be insightful to understand the *type* of talk that is occuring when LGB sexuality is discussed in the media. The research question below attempts to better understand the context of sexual talk in media popular with LGB adolescents.

RQ_2: What type of sexual talk is depicted in both mainstream media and GLO media popular with LGB adolescents?

Sexual behavior. Several researchers have indicated that if LGB sexuality is depicted in the media, it is not sexual at all. LGB individuals are unable to physically express their sexuality because sexual images of LGB individuals are threatening to heterosexual audiences that consider same-sex displays of affection to be "flaunting" sexual orientation (Bruni, 1999; Gross, 1994). Producers of mainstream media are often cautious to depict any same-sex physical behavior such as hand-holding or kissing because of the public's fear of such imagery. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H_8: LGB sexual behavior will be less frequent than heterosexual behavior in mainstream media.

However, GLO media do not have the same constraints as mainstream media. GLO media are targeting LGB audiences and, as such, are more likely to turn a deaf ear to the heterosexual majority and display physical sexuality between same-sex characters. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H_9: LGB sexual behavior will be more frequent than heterosexual behavior in GLO media.

Age. Age is an important variable to consider if one is interested in the relationship between media exposure and adolescent development. Previous research suggests that nearly all LGB characters on television are adults (Fouts & Inch, 2005). If there are no LGB adolescents portrayed in the media, sexual minority youth may have no *peer* role models with whom to identify. This lack of any opportunity to identify with LGB characters in the media could lead to

continued feelings of isolation and alienation. The findings of Fouts and Inch's (2005) content analysis of LGB characters regarding age provide justification for the seventh hypothesis below.

H_{10}: Adults will initiate LGB sexual instances more than any other age demographic in mainstream and GLO media.

Sexual orientation. The current study examines the depiction of LGB individuals as one cohesive group. However, previous research shows that gay men, lesbians, and bisexual individuals are not portrayed equally in the media. Gay males are most often the source of LGB sexual talk or same-sex behavior in the media (Fouts & Inch, 2005). Not only does this further symbolically annihilate sexual minority women from the media, but it indicates that homosexual characters are often scripted to be preoccupied with their sexual orientation. The over-representation of LGB talk by gay male characters could reinforce differences rather than similarities between LGB and heterosexual individuals. In accordance with Fouts and Inch's (2005) findings, the eighth hypothesis is proposed.

H_{11}: Gay males will initiate LGB sexual instances more than any other sexual orientation in mainstream and GLO media.

Differences by Medium

All previous hypotheses and research questions consider all media as one cohesive socialization agent. However, there could certainly be differences in the depiction of sexuality by medium. The third and final research question addresses possible differences across various media.

RQ_3: How will depictions of heterosexuality compare to depictions of LGB sexuality across various media (e.g., television, movies, magazines, music)?

Method

A systematic sequence of events served as guidelines to meet the objectives of the content analysis as described above. Following Neuendorf's (2002) framework for valid and reliable content analysis research, variables were first conceptualized and operationalized, a coding scheme containing these variables was developed, a sample of media content to be analyzed was assembled, coders were trained, and coders engaged in coding the sample. The method portion of Chapter 3 details each of these steps by defining the sample, the unit of analysis, each variable, and the coding process. The final step of the process, reporting the results, is executed in the results and discussion sections of this chapter.

Sample

The sample was obtained through a nonrandom sampling method known as purposive sampling. In purposive sampling, decisions regarding inclusion in the sample are based on the rationale for the content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002). Riffe and Freitag (1997) argued for the importance of purposive sampling, noting that many studies use purposive sampling when interested in specific messages that could theoretically influence specific individuals or groups. In the present study, the interest lies in the depiction of sexuality in media most popular with LGB adolescents. Purposive sampling is preferable to random sampling because the current study's objective is to examine media popular with a very specific audience.

To determine the media vehicles that are popular among LGB adolescents, one must turn directly to the population of interest: LGB teens. In order to compose a sample for the current study, a nationwide sample of LGB adolescents (N = 573) completed an online questionnaire about their media exposure (this survey constitutes the research reported in Chapter 4; further procedural details are provided there). The questionnaire contained a sample of media vehicles

from each medium. Participants reported how often they were exposed to each media vehicle on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*Never*) to 4 (*All of the Time*). The media vehicles included on the questionnaire were based on general popularity as determined by external sources described below.

The television shows included in the questionnaire were based on Nielsen television ratings for the 2009-2010 programming season on December 6, 2009; January 11, 2010; and January 31, 2010. Films were determined using DVD sales records (on December 6, 2009; January 3, 2010; and January 17, 2010), and the highest grossing films of the last five years. DVD sales were retrieved from Nielsen VideoScan DVD sales data. The highest grossing film data were retrieved from the Internet Movie Database (imdb.com). Musical artists were included on the questionnaire if they were listed among the top album sales, top digitally downloaded songs, or most listened to radio songs as determined by the Billboard 200, Billboard Hot Digital Songs, and Billboard Hot 100 Airplay, respectively (on December 6, 2009; January 3, 2010; and January 17, 2010). All Billboard ratings are powered by Nielsen SoundScan. Magazines were included on the questionnaire if they were among the top 10 magazines targeted to adolescent audiences as determined by circulation statistics from the Magazine Publishers of America Audit Bureau of Circulation or if they were included in previous research examining the types of magazines adolescents enjoy reading (i.e., Treise & Gotthoffer, 2002). The most trafficked websites were included on the questionnaire as determined using data from Compete Inc. and Experian Hitwise. Compete Inc. is a web analytics company that uses a sample of two million U.S. Internet users who provide permission to analyze the web pages the users have visited. Experian Hitwise measures the activity of 10 million U.S. Internet users daily.

Starting with lists of media vehicles yielded by companies such as Nielsen and the Magazine Publishers of America Audit Bureau of Circulation is valid because LGB adolescents are likely consuming much of the same media that their heterosexual parents, siblings, friends, and community members are also consuming. Indeed, using statistics from commonly-cited corporations like Nielsen may garner a strong sense of face validity in determining what media are "popular." However, it would be naïve to argue that a questionnaire containing media popular among the general public would subsume all media popular with sexual minority adolescents. In an effort to surmount this validity hurdle, collaborative brainstorming sessions were held with a separate, informal group of adolescents who self-identified as LGB.[1] Media vehicles that were not included in the previously determined sample of popular media but that were cited by more than one LGB adolescent in the brainstorming sessions were also included on the questionnaire. The final questionnaire asked adolescents to report their media exposure habits for 60 television shows, 25 films, 25 musical artists, 25 magazines, and 25 websites. Given that it was unknown at the time of the survey which media vehicles would be reported as popular with LGB adolescents and subsequently used for the content analysis, an attempt was made to archive recordings of all media vehicles included on the questionnaire in the event that they would be included in the final sample.

In addition to the close-ended Likert-type scales for the 160 media vehicles, three open-ended items were provided for each medium.[2] The open-ended items were provided in the event that a media vehicle popular among the participants was not an option on the questionnaire. For each open-ended item, participants not only listed the name of a media vehicle, but they also reported their consumption habits on the same 5-point Likert-type scale that was used in conjunction with the media vehicle titles listed on the questionnaire. To be certain that the

questionnaire was exhaustive, participants were asked if there were any media vehicles that they enjoyed that were not mentioned in either the close-ended or open-ended media exposure questions in the survey. No participant reported this to be the case. More detailed logistics of the survey and demographics of participants are detailed in Chapter 4.

The next logical step to constructing the content sample for the present study was to determine what constitutes a media vehicle that is "popular" as opposed to one that is not popular. Media scholars using identical procedures to determine media popular with a specific population have included every media vehicle that at least 10% of participants reported using, arguing that this criterion provides breadth (spanning media) and depth (covering an adequate number of vehicles in each medium) to a content analysis (Pardun, L'Engle, & Brown, 2005). Although Pardun and colleagues (2005) originally chose the 10% cut point arbitrarily, the final sample sizes of each medium in their study (containing one episode of each television show, one edition of each magazine, one edition of each newspaper, every song from each album, and each movie) were within range, or in some cases larger than previous content analyses of the medium. Similar criteria were used in crafting a manageable number of media vehicles for inclusion in the sample of the present study. Any television program, film, musical artist, magazine, or website that at least 10% of participants reported consuming *Sometimes*, *Often*, or *All the Time* (the 3 highest answer options on a 5-point Likert-type scale) were included in the sample. The cutoff criterion was lowered to 5% for open-ended responses in order to include more media vehicles that may have been excluded from the original list of media on the questionnaire. A total of 96 media vehicles met the selection criterion, including 48 television programs, 22 films, 6 magazines, and 25 musical artists[3]. The mainstream media vehicles that were included in the

sample for the content analysis are listed in Appendix A; the GLO media vehicles that were included in the sample for the content analysis are listed in Appendix B.

Most media scholars who content analyze television programs select more than one episode of a given television program, although the number of episodes chosen per television program varies from study to study (Neuendorf, 2002). To maintain a manageable sample, two episodes of each television program, two issues of each magazine, and two songs from each musical artist were selected for the sample. Selecting multiple examples of each media vehicle helps ensure that the depictions of sexuality in those randomly selected for the sample are characteristic of the media vehicle more generally and not atypical for that respective media vehicle. For example, television programs may concentrate on issues related to homosexuality in one specific episode, only to ignore homosexuality for the remainder of the season. Selecting multiple episodes of each media vehicle helps to avoid contaminating the sample in a way that may skew the results. Therefore, the final sample for the content analysis consisted of two randomly selected episodes of each television program, and each movie, two randomly selected issues of each magazine, and the two most popular songs from the most recent album of each musical artist that met the popularity criterion as described above. Both song lyrics and accompanying music videos were included in the sample to represent each song.

Television shows were randomly selected from the fall or winter 2009 season if the television show was in production at the time of data collection for the content analysis. However, due to the popularity of television shows on DVD and on the Internet, original episodes of several television shows adolescents reported consuming were no longer airing. For television shows that were no longer in production, the two episodes included in the content analysis sample were randomly selected from the last season of original content. Magazine issues

were randomly selected from all available issues from July 2009 to April 2010. The two most popular songs from musical artists' most recent album were derived from the same parameters used to determine the musical artists that were included in the sample.

The sample sizes of each medium for the current study were generally similar, or at times larger, than previous content analyses of the medium. For example, Fouts and Inch's (2005) content analysis of homosexuality on television examined one episode of 22 different situation comedies; the sample for the present study included two episodes of 48 television programs. Saucier and Caron (2008) include 4 magazine titles in their analysis of gay male magazines; the sample for the present study included two issues of 6 magazine titles popular with LGB youth. Signorelli (1997) sampled 15 movies in her content analysis of gender; the sample for the present study included 22 movies.

Units of Analysis

Once the sample was composed, the next step was to determine units of analysis (Neuendorf, 2002). The unit of analysis refers to the segment of a text that is parsed out for coding in any given content analysis (Baxter & Babbie, 2003). In the present study, two units of analysis existed: a micro-level unit of analysis measuring each individual sexual interaction and a macro-level unit of analysis measuring each media vehicle as a single cohesive text. Each of these levels of analysis are described below.

Micro-level unit of analysis. Most content analysis studies measuring sex have used time intervals or scenes as the units of analysis (Eyal et al., 2007; Eyal & Finnerty, 2009; Fisher et al., 2007; Fisher et al., 2004; Kunkel et al., 2005). Unlike content analytic research that examines one medium, the present content analysis sample must be unitized in a manner that allows for comparison across media. Studies that attempt to make balanced comparisons across

media have used the smallest possible unit of analysis based on the formal features of the media vehicle (Brown et al., 2005; Pardun et al., 2005). Brown and colleagues (2005) rationalize the use of extremely small units of analysis by arguing that they would more validly carry equal weight in each medium than larger, more conceptual units of analysis. The basic structure for unitizing in the current content analysis has its foundation in this logic.

In an attempt to equalize units across media, units of analysis were employed that captured each individual sexual interaction. This micro-level unit of analysis was referred to as a sexual instance. Mirrored after the PAT (perpetrator/act/target) micro-level unit of analysis utilized in the National Television Violence Studies quantifying violence in the media (e.g., Smith & Donnerstein, 1998; Wilson et al., 1997), the sexual instance was a summary unit of analysis. A sexual instance was defined as any sexual interaction where the nature of the interaction, the scene wherein the sexual interaction occurs, or the type of sexual interaction remained constant. A new sexual instance occurred if the nature, scene, or type of sexual interaction changed. Hence, the "NST" in sexual iNSTance served as a convenient acronym for the nature/scene/type interaction unit.

As defined later in this chapter, the nature of the sexual instance could have been heterosexual, LGB validating, or LGB demeaning. If the nature of the sexual instance changed, then a new unit of analysis was created. For example, assume a character was sharing a story about her male friend having sex with her female friend. Now assume that in the same scene the character transitions into telling a story about her disgust that a different male friend of hers had sex with another male friend. The talk about same-sex sexual behaviors would constitute a new unit of analysis because the nature of the sexual talk changed from heterosexual to LGB demeaning.

The ‘S’ in sexual instance refers to the scene. For television programs, films, and music videos, each scene was defined as a sequence in which the place and time generally hold constant (Kunkel et al., 2005). Most scenes can be thought of in the same sense as a passage in a story; a scene ends when the primary setting shifts in time, place, or characters in a way that extensively interrupts the flow of related action. In our analysis of television programming, a commercial interruption always signaled the end of a scene and, therefore, the end of a unit of analysis. When coding song lyrics, each verse constituted a scene. When coding magazines, every page constituted a scene.

The type of sexual instance refers to the type of sexual talk or sexual behavior. If the sexual talk changed, a new unit of analysis was created. If sexual behaviors changed but the nature and the scene remained the same, only the most explicit sexual behavior category was coded. The unitizing rule regarding behavior was created to avoid over-coding sexual behavior because explicit sexual behaviors were often immediately preceded by other sexual behaviors. For example, assume that a male and a female character began touching one another’s face in a scene from a film. Now assume that these two characters began kissing and eventually were depicted in a manner that suggested oral sex was occurring. If the nature of this behavior (in this case, heterosexual) did not change and the scene did not change, only “intimate touching” would be coded instead of coding “physical flirting,” “romantic kissing,” *and* “intimate touching” as 3 separate sexual instances (these types of sexual behavior are defined later in Chapter 3).

Macro-level unit of analysis. Sexuality was measured at the media vehicle level as well. This macro-level unit of analysis allowed for quantifying sexuality as an overall theme of each television show, film, song, or magazine in addition to the micro-level sexual instances.

Instance-level Variables

To determine the most important variables in a content analysis of sexuality in the media, measures were adapted from past research on sex in the media. Using previous research is common practice when creating valid measures for content analytic research (Neuendorf, 2002). By using previously validated coding schemes, scholars are able to make comparisons to baseline data established through the results of previous research. To construct an entirely new coding scheme would allow for greater flexibility, but it would sacrifice meaningful opportunities for comparison (Jensen & Jensen, 2007). As such, the parameters for coding sexual content originated from the now foundational *Sex on TV* studies conducted by Dale Kunkel et al. (2005) for the Kaiser Family Foundation. Thus this dissertation is part of a tradition of scholarship employing the operational definitions formulated for the *Sex on TV* studies when analyzing sexual content in the media (i.e., Brown et al., 2005; Chandra et al., 2008; Collins et al., 2004; Eyal & Finnerty, 2009; Fisher et al., 2004; Fisher et al., 2009; Jensen & Jensen, 2007; Pardun et al., 2005). For the present study, the *Sex on TV* measures were given greater breadth and depth to include concepts related specifically to LGB sexual talk and sexual behavior. Some of the LGB-specific measures were adapted from measures used by Fisher et al. (2007) in their content analysis of LGB characters on primetime entertainment television while others were created specifically for the present content analysis.

Sexuality was defined as any depiction of sexual activity, sexually suggestive behavior, or talk about relationships, sexuality, or sexual activity. In essence, sexuality was broken down into two categories of sexual content: sexual talk and sexual behavior. Sexual talk and sexual behavior are explicated in detail below.

Sexual talk. Sexual talk involved a wide range of types of conversations that may involve first-hand discussion of sexual interests and topics with potential partners, as well as second-hand exchanges with others that conveyed information about one's prior, anticipated, or even desired future sexual activities. Sexual talk was defined using the categories of sexual talk in previous research (Kunkel et al., 2005), but also adding two categories of talk to expand the breadth of previous research on sex. Most of the content analytic research on sex in the media has been concerned with the portrayal of sex (i.e., Brown et al., 2005; Chandra et al., 2008; Collins et al., 2004; Eyal & Finnerty, 2009; Fisher et al., 2004; Fisher et al., 2009; Jensen & Jensen, 2007; Pardun et al., 2005), but not with *sexuality* more broadly. Given that the objective of the present study was to examine what LGB adolescents are exposed to in the media and how it might influence their sexual identity, it is important to consider aspects of *sexuality* beyond the act of sex. In addition to coding sexual talk as it has been coded in previous research, two new categories of sexual talk were added to the present study: relationship talk and LGB talk.

According to sexual scripting theory, exposure to heterosexual relationship talk may reinforce the schemata related to dating and romance as solely heterosexual acts. Continually viewing the trials, tribulations, and rewards of heterosexual relationships on television or reading about heterosexual dating advice in magazines could be associated with the sexual identities of LGB youth just as strongly as exposure to talk about sexual interests between heterosexual individuals. In addition, previous research has not quantified talk about the LGB community. Exposure to this type of talk could be an important factor for LGB teens' understanding of what it means to be LGB. Therefore, sexual talk was coded using the categories from past research (Kunkel et al., 2003; Kunkel et al., 2005) and the two additional categories devised for this study: relationship talk, talk about sexual interests, talk about past sexual experiences, talk

towards sex, sex crimes, sexual advice, LGB talk, and other. Each category of sexual talk is further defined below.

Relationship talk was coded whenever talk concerned intimate relationships between two people with a romantic interest, but was not explicitly related to sexual intimacy. Any talk of sex was coded in one of the other sexual talk categories, but talk about intimate, romantic relationships entirely void of any reference to sexual behavior was coded in this category. Most often relationship talk was about dating or marriage. Dialogue about the absence of a romantic relationship or about previous romantic relationships that no longer exist were also included as relationship talk.

Talk about sexual interests was defined as comments about one's own or other persons' sexual activities or interest in sexual topics. This included sexual relations they were having now, those they may want to have in the future, and those they have had in the past short of intercourse.

Talk about past sexual experiences included comments about a single specific instance of past sexual activity as well as references to ongoing sexual relationships from the past that are over, in which people were sleeping together. At times, talk about past sexual experiences occurred even though it was made known to the audience that the sexual act never actually occurred. These instances were included as talk about past sexual experiences.

Talk toward sex involved intimate or seductive comments meant to encourage or solicit sexual activities between two potential partners. These efforts to promote sexual activity must have been conveyed directly to the desired sexual partner. Efforts to solicit sex included those that referred to the immediate future and solicitation for more long-term encounters in the future.

Talk about sex-related crimes was defined as any dialogue referencing illegal acts such as rape, incest, forced sodomy, molestation, etc.

Sexual advice was defined as the delivery of sincere advice about sex or sexuality from an authority figure. Advice from peers or siblings was coded as "talk about sexual interests," not as sexual advice.

The definition of *LGB talk* was adapted from the Fisher et al. (2007) study of LGB characters in the media. LGB talk greatly differed from the other sexual talk categories because it was less about sexual acts and more about sexuality. LGB talk reflected the sexual interests or concerns of non-heterosexual individuals, most often gay men and lesbians. Talk about bisexuality was also included. Broadly, LGB talk was defined as any dialogue specific to the cultural or social elements of lesbian, gay, or bisexual lifestyles. However, LGB talk was only coded when references made about LGB individuals did not fit into any other sexual talk category. For example, if a straight character asked about a gay pride parade, it would have been coded as LGB talk. This is an instance of referencing LGB lifestyles, but it is void of any sexual reference that would justify coding the comment as another category of sexual talk. In a second example, consider a lesbian adolescent who is talking to her friends about the first time she had sex with a woman. This dialogue would be coded as talk about past sexual experiences, not LGB talk.

An additional "other" category was provided for coders. Verbal exchanges that met the criteria for sexual talk but could not be classified into any of the sexual talk categories were coded as "other." References to places that had sexual innuendo in their names (e.g., a strip club named "Loosey Goosey's Spread Eagle") are an example of sexual talk that would be coded as other.

LGB talk. Fisher et al. (2007) coded talk about non-heterosexual sexual issues. However, in that study coders simply decided on a "yes/no" scale if the talk was about non-heterosexual sexual issues. For the current study, talk coded as LGB talk was further coded into subcategories of LGB talk. Much could fall into LGB talk as a broad category of talk about sexuality; coding LGB talk into more specific categories of LGB talk expands on previous research and enriches the conclusions that are possible in the present study. LGB talk was additionally coded into the following categories of talk: equality, coming out, gay culture, stereotypes, insults, reaffirming, speculation, and other. Each of these LGB talk categories are defined below.

Talk of equality was defined as comments that referred to the struggle for equal rights among LGB individuals. Talk about equality included references to political or social issues that directly affected LGB individuals or the LGB community. In an episode of *Top Chef*, one of the chefs voices her dislike for a challenge that requires her to cook for a bachelorette party because of the inequalities associated with marriage in the United States. This chef's talk about marriage would be coded as equality under LGB talk. Marriage, however, is a unique example. If a reference is made specifically about the fight for marriage equality, such as the example from *Top Chef*, it would be coded as equality under LGB talk. However, if dialogue occurs between two same-sex individuals about their marriage, this would be coded as relationship talk.

Coming out was defined as the process of recognizing one's own sexual identity or the discussion of others' sexual disclosure. Facing one's sexuality, overcoming the obstacles of telling others about their sexuality, or others finding out about a character's sexuality from a third party would all be considered coming out talk. For example, in an episode of *Glee* one of the cast members comes out to his father. Their continual discussion of his sexuality would be coded as coming out under LGB talk.

Gay culture referred to comments that are about lifestyle habits and/or occurrences that are unique to the LGB community. For example, comments about the symbolism of the rainbow, gay bars, drag queens, or gay pride would be coded as gay culture. Coders were instructed to use the context of the dialogue to help determine if the talk was gay culture or if it better fit into another category. For example, talk about gay parenting could be considered gay culture. However, if the conversation is about inequality in adoption policies, the conversation would be coded as equality talk, not gay culture.

Stereotype talk was defined as comments about LGB individuals that are entirely based on socially constructed stereotypes of LGB people. Comments coded as stereotype talk do not fit into any of the other categories of LGB talk. For example, talk about gay men being fashionable or effeminate would be coded as stereotype talk if the talk did not fit into any other LGB talk category. Talk about lesbian women being butch, playing sports, or rushing into relationships would be coded as stereotype talk if the talk did not fit into any other LGB talk category. In essence, the inclusion of this category was important but also made the categorical organization non-mutually exclusive. Talk could easily be about gay culture but also be a stereotype of gay men; talk that is considered a joke or an insult is also likely to include a stereotype. In order to alleviate this concern, talk was considered for all other LGB talk categories before being coded as stereotype talk.

Insults were references to LGB lifestyle or behavior that were insolent or spoken with contemptuous rudeness used to influence oneself or other. This included remarks involving gay references used as the punch line of a joke or to poke fun at oneself or other in an effort to provoke laughter or cause amusement. Because humor is subjective, the following criteria were used to determine if a comment was a joke: (1) traditional humor such as jokes with a lead-up

and a punch line, exaggeration, sexual innuendo, double entendre, and sarcasm, *or* (2) the presence of laughter immediately following a comment coming from any of the characters or from a laugh track (Fisher et al., 2007).

Reaffirming constituted gay references made by heterosexual people to distance themselves from homosexuality or to validate their heterosexuality. For example, in an episode of the television program *30 Rock*, Liz questioned Tracy about why he would have watched an all-male pornographic film. He replied, "I test myself once a year. I was A-Okay." This dialogue is using homosexuality to reaffirm Tracy's heterosexuality and would be coded as reaffirming.

Speculation was defined as talk that questions a person's unknown sexual orientation. For example, in an episode of *The Simpsons*, Marge's sisters are sitting at a coffee shop when they noticed an attractive man sitting alone at a table. Selma then says to Patty, "That guy over there—straight or gay?" This type of speculation about others' orientation was coded as speculation. It is important to note the subtle difference between coming out talk and speculation. If two people are guessing about the sexuality of another individual, this would have been coded as speculation. If an individual is questioning his or her own sexuality, this would have been coded as coming out talk.

Coders were also provided with an "other" category for LGB talk similar to the other category for sexual talk more generally. Coders were instructed to use this category sparingly, coding only LGB talk that did not fit into any of the other categories as "other."

Sexual behavior. Sexual behavior was defined as actions that convey a sense of potential, likely, or actual sexual intimacy. Sexual behavior was broken down into categories of behavior: physical flirting, romantic kissing, intimate touching, implied sexual intercourse,

depicted sexual intercourse, and other. These categories of sexual behavior are identical to those measured by in the *Sex on TV* studies (Kunkel et al., 2005)[4] and are further defined below. *Physical flirting* involved the character using his/her own body in a provocative or enticing way meant to promote sexual interest in another or playful behaviors designed to get the attention of another in whom one has a romantic interest. Physical flirting also included touching of another person in whom a character has a discernible romantic interest when it was done as an expression of affection in a way that is not used to arouse a partner sexually. For example, intimate touching that is done or could take place in public settings (e.g., a man caresses his partner's cheek with his hand) would have been considered physical flirting.

Romantic kissing was kissing occurring between two people with a romantic interest. In addition to mouth on mouth kissing, romantic kissing involved lips or tongues touching any place on the body above the shoulders, as well as intimate or seductive kissing of the hands. Kisses given in the context of comfort or condolence, or between family members, friends, or others who do not have a romantic interest in one another were not coded.

Intimate touching was defined as touching another's body in a way that is not typically displayed in public and was meant to be sexually arousing. In many cases, intimate touching was thought of as the touching of what are typically considered erogenous zones (e.g., chest/breasts, stomach, thighs, and genital areas). The criteria for distinguishing touches that should be coded as physical flirting and those that should be coded as intimate touching was two-fold: intimate touching would not typically occur in public and must be meant to be sexually arousing.

Implied sexual intercourse was coded when situations occurred where sexual intercourse was not directly shown but was strongly implied. In order for a unit of analysis to be coded as implied sexual intercourse, the unit must depict a couple's actions immediately before or after an

act of intercourse that is clearly inferred by the immediately adjacent scenes (considering both time and place) or associated narrative. For example, consider a scene where a couple is kissing, groping, and undressing one another as they stumble into a darkened bedroom. The scene dissolves to black before any further sexual act is depicted. This unit would be coded as implied sexual intercourse.

Depicted sexual intercourse was coded when intercourse occurs and *any* portion of the bodies of those engaged in the act is shown while intercourse is occurring. Such depictions needed not be graphic in terms of nudity. For example, consider a scene where a couple is shown only from the shoulders up, lying in bed engaged in sexual intercourse. It is clear from their body movements in the scene what is happening. This would be coded as depicted sexual intercourse.

A sixth category called "Other" was also given to coders for coding sexual behavior that did not fit any of the previously defined categories. Examples of sexual acts that were coded as "other" include masturbation, mimicking a sexual act, voyeurism, and bestiality..

Nature. The nature of any sexual instance was coded. As previously mentioned, diverse portrayals of LGB people in the media are often cited as vital to providing LGB youth with a wider array of depictions to serve as normalized, non-stereotypical role models for identification (Bond et al., 2009; Evans, 2007; Freymiller, 2005; McKee, 2000). Coding the nature of sexual instances was an attempt to unravel the inherent quality of the sexual instances and the tendencies for sexual instances to portray sexuality in one of several ways. Sexual instances were coded as heterosexual, LGB validating, or LGB demeaning. Sexual instances were coded as heterosexual if the talk or behavior involved or referenced individuals of the opposite sex.

LGB demeaning was defined as talk or behavior degrading LGB individuals, belittling them and lowering their dignity. LGB demeaning portrayals included attempts to exclude LGB

people from mainstream social norms, possibly making homosexuality seem odd, eccentric, or abnormal. Demeaning sexual content may downplay the causes of LGB people, argue against LGB equality, condemn LGB individuals, tease LGB individuals solely because of their sexuality, or otherwise reaffirm that LGB sexuality is a dangerous, unhealthy way of life.

LGB validating was defined as talk or behavior substantiating or humanizing LGB individuals. Talk or behavior that showed LGB individuals as equals to heterosexuals was coded as validating. Talk or behavior that portrayed LGB individuals as normal, living a healthy lifestyle where problems arise but can also be solved was coded as validating. Validating portrayals can further the causes of LGB people, press for LGB equality, offer/provide support to LGB individuals, or otherwise reaffirm that a lesbian, gay, or bisexual sexuality is no different from a heterosexual lifestyle.

LGB validating did not necessarily equate to positive depictions of LGB sexuality, nor did LGB demeaning necessarily equate to negative depictions of LGB sexuality. Instead, the context of the sexual instance was coupled with the definitions of LGB demeaning and LGB validating to help determine whether a sexual instance was LGB demeaning or LGB validating. For example, LGB validating sexual talk could have been talk that humanized a gay male character by portraying realistic difficulties that the gay male faced in his life. *Seventeen* magazine included an editorial article connecting the coming out process to bullying and eventual suicide. The article focused on talk about depression and suicide among LGB teens, clearly not crafting a positive image of a gay adolescent. However, because the story depicted realistic difficulties that many LGB individuals can relate to, it would be coded as validating.

Most sexual behavior that is between same-sex individuals was coded as validating. For example, Lady Gaga passionately kissed a female dancer in her music video for the song,

"Telephone." This example would be coded as LGB validating because the behavior shows bisexual women engaging in the same behavior that heterosexuals are often seen engaging in throughout music videos.

It was determined that no sexual instances about LGB sexuality could be considered neutral. Scholars have suggested that the rarity of depictions of LGB sexuality in the media mean that *any* depiction that is not demeaning sexual minorities more than likely will be assisting, especially for sexually curious adolescents seeking any information they can about LGB sexuality (McKee, 2000). For example, an article in one issue of *Game Informer* magazine, the author discusses a lesbian war character in a new video game, simply mentioning the character's romantic background involving other women. There is no real demeaning or validating quality to the particular text, but it would be coded as validating because it normalizes LGB sexuality.

Other coded variables. The demographic characteristics of those engaging in sexual instances were also coded. Gender of the source and target (i.e., male, female, can't tell) and age of the source and target were analyzed using definitions from previous content analysis research on sex in the media (Smith et al., 1998). Age was determined using all available cues in the media vehicle including physical appearance, vocal characteristics, and behavioral patterns (e.g., school attendance, employment), as well as dialogue/text that might reveal age information. Characters were sorted into four age groups: child (12 years-old and younger), teen (13 years-old to 20 years-old), adult (21 years-old to 64 years-old), and elderly (65 years-old and older). Sexual orientation of source and target (i.e., heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and sexually questioning) was coded using definitions provided by the University of Illinois Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Resource Center (Pacley, 2009).

Media Vehicle-Level Variables

Focus. The focus variables were measured at the media vehicle level. After completing the coding of each media vehicle, coders were told to make an overall rating of the media vehicle based on their evaluation of sexual themes. Coders made judgments about the extent that sexual instances permeated the media vehicle taken as a whole, either in terms of its one central plot (in movies or songs) or its major parallel story lines or segments (in magazines and television shows). Each media vehicle received three separate focus scores: focus on heterosexuality, focus on demeaning LGB portrayals, and focus on validating LGB portrayals.

A scale was developed to measure the focus of each media vehicle mimicking the scale developed by Kunkel et al. (2005) to measure the degree of a scene's focus on sexual talk. Coders made judgments about the focus of the program on heterosexuality, demeaning LGB portrayals, and validating LGB portrayals on three separate 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from 0 (*None*) to 4 (*Primary*). Coders were instructed to rate each media vehicle on each scale independently without regard for the judgment made for that respective media vehicle on the other two scales. For example, a film could receive a rating of 0 (e.g., contained no sexuality whatsoever) or a 4 (e.g., extremely sexually explicit, containing sexual instances that were heterosexual, validating, and demeaning) on all three scales.

Coding

Coder selection. Undergraduate students were recruited from media courses in the Department of Communication at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. Six coders were selected from an applicant pool of 22 undergraduate students. Several variables were taken into account in selecting coders: age, sexual identity, earned grades, and interest in the project. Age and sexual identity may not seem like important attributes in coder selection. However, selecting

coders still in adolescence or just removed from adolescence increases the likelihood that the coders will interpret media in the same way LGB teens might understand the media content. In addition, many co-cultures in American society have their own slang or verbiage that is recognizable to the in-group but would have little meaning to those outside the community. Because terminology exists among LGB individuals that is specific to those identifying as LGB, having coders involved with the project who identify as LGB increased the likelihood that coders would be able to decipher the context of LGB talk, as well as assist heterosexual coders in fully comprehending such talk during training. The coders (M_{age} = 19.17, *SD* = .75) consisted of one gay male, one bisexual female, three heterosexual females, and one heterosexual male.

Coder training. Coder training has been argued to be the most important part of the content analysis process (Neuendorf, 2002). Coders become familiar with the study's mechanics and peculiarities through training sessions. Training sessions for the present study occurred in three stages beginning in December 2009. Three separate stages of coder training were needed to be sure that coders were reliably transitioning from one medium to the next. For example, the first stage of training took place from December 2009 to March 2010 and consisted of approximately 30 hours of classroom training on coding television and film. From March to May 2010, coders then analyzed the television programs and films in the sample.

The second stage of coder training occurred in May 2010. This stage consisted of an additional 10 hours of classroom training on coding music videos and song lyrics. Once reliability was established, coders then analyzed music videos and song lyrics. The final stage of coder training was conducted in June 2010, when an addition 20 hours of classroom training was used to craft reliable coding procedures for the coding of magazines. In total, coders participated in approximately 60 hours of classroom training.

In each of these stages of coder training, coders first became familiar with the intricacies of the codebook and worked as a group to analyze short segments of media similar to the type of media they would code in the full sample. As training progressed, coders began pilot coding media vehicles similar to those in the sample. Pilot coding is important because coders need to learn to individually code based only on the instructions and definitions provided in the codebook and not to rely on extraneous sources of information (e.g., the coder's history of exposure to the media vehicle being analyzed) in interpretations (Neuendorf, 2002). Throughout the pilot coding of television and film, definitions were revised, categories clarified, and coding forms were revamped until the coders were able to analyze the material using the codebook and coding forms correctly, reliably, and efficiently. Changes to the codebook did not take place after coders began analyzing media vehicles that were part of the sample. The ultimate goal of pilot coding is to be sure that both the researcher and the coders are comfortable with the coding scheme before final coding commences (Neuendorf, 2002). In other words, a measure of reliability between the coders needed to be established before commencing coding on the full sample. Coders did not begin coding the actual sample until intercoder reliability coefficients were considered acceptable, as described below. Tables 2 and 3 provide the initial reliability coefficients calculated using pilot coding data that were deemed acceptable and, consequently, ceased that stage's training and transitioned into coding the sample.

Reliability. Intercoder reliability is the degree of agreement or correspondence among two or more coders who code the same content using the same coding scheme (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). Intercoder reliability has been acknowledged as the most critical reliability component to any content analysis (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). Intercoder

reliability is assessed by calculating a numerical index of the extent of agreement between the coders after the coders have independently recorded the same units of analysis.

Intercoder reliability for the nominal variables at the instance level of analysis was calculated using Fleiss' *kappa*, an agreement-based coefficient that accounts for chance agreement (Fleiss, 1971). Fleiss' *kappa* is an extension of Cohen's *kappa*, one of the most widely used coefficients in social science research (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). Unlike Cohen's *kappa*, however, Fleiss' *kappa* can account for more than two raters (Fleiss, 1971). Raw percent agreement was calculated as a measure of unitizing agreement. Intercoder reliability for the ordinal variables at the media vehicle level of analysis was calculated using the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC; Shrout & Fleiss, 1979).

A small subsample of media vehicles was coded by all of the coders on the project each week. At the completion of the coding process, that subsample of media vehicles equated to 20% of the full sample, an acceptable portion of the sample for intercoder reliability measurement (Neuendorf, 2002). Media vehicles used for inter-coder reliability are listed in Appendix C. Reliability coefficients were calculated on the weekly subsample to monitor the coders' performance during the coding process. Substantial agreement ($k > .60$, ICC > .70) occurred each week of coding for every variable (Landis & Koch, 1977). Table 1 displays the percent agreement on unitizing and the reliability coefficients for each sexual instance level variable during each week of coding. The intraclass correlation coefficients for media vehicle level variables can be found in Table 2.

Coding procedure. After each stage of training was complete, the actual process of analyzing the sample took place. Media vehicles were randomly assigned to each coder for evaluation. The coders performed their work individually in a laboratory on the campus of the

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The lab consisted of multiple television work stations and computer work stations specifically designed to meet the needs of the present study. Coders were instructed to view each media vehicle alone without consultation from anyone. As previously noted, the reliability of each variable was monitored each week using a subsample of the media vehicles assigned. Continual tracking of reliability insured that the coders were consistently making quality judgments throughout the coding process.

Results

Analysis Plan

The hypotheses and research questions posed in this content analysis deal with frequencies of depictions of sexuality in media popular with LGB adolescents. Several hypotheses concern the frequency of LGB sexual instances, regardless of the nature of the depictions. Depictions of LGB sexuality overall were calculated by summing depictions of validating LGB sexuality and demeaning LGB sexuality; this provided information about the quantity of depictions of LGB sexuality regardless of the nature of the portrayal.

For all hypotheses and research questions, descriptive statistics are provided regarding the depiction of sex in media, either as percentages or as means, depending on the unit of analysis utilized to investigate the hypothesis or research question. Chi-square goodness of fit tests were computed to examine the distribution of categorical variables within mainstream media or GLO media separately. Chi-square tests were computed to examine differences between mainstream media and GLO media. When chi-square tests were computed, post-hoc comparisons were performed using the chi-square analog to the Scheffe procedure for the F-test (Weiss & Leets, 1998).

For all analyses, only values significant at the $p < .05$ level were considered significant. Many of the tests involved large sample sizes, which could produce statistically significant results even if differences are relatively small. Therefore, results were also dissected from a practical perspective. For all percentage comparisons, a difference of at least 10% was stipulated before making the assertion that the difference was meaningful. Throughout the results, then, percentages said to be significantly different from one another are both statistically ($p < .05$) and practically (10%) different. This conservative significance rule was consistent with steps taken in previous content analysis research using large samples to better report meaningful results (e.g., Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Wilson et al., 1997).

Frequency of Sexual Depictions

Hypothesis 1. The first hypothesis predicted that heterosexuality would be depicted more often than LGB sexuality in mainstream media popular with LGB adolescents. Depictions of heterosexuality were pervasive in mainstream media. Analyses revealed that 98% ($n = 143$) of mainstream media vehicles in the sample contained at least one depiction of heterosexuality. Depictions of LGB sexuality were much less likely; only 22.6% ($n = 33$) of all media vehicles in the sample contained at least one depiction of LGB sexuality. In other words, nearly every media vehicle contained at least one depiction of heterosexuality, but less than one in four media vehicles contained at least one depiction of LGB sexuality. The difference between depictions of heterosexuality and LGB sexuality in mainstream media is further illustrated by examining the frequency of sexual instances.

The frequency of heterosexual sexual instances was high compared to the rate of LGB sexual instances in mainstream media. A total of 2,735 sexual instances were coded in the mainstream media sample. A majority of the sexual instances in mainstream media were coded

as heterosexual (n = 2,334; 85.3%). Sexual instances coded as LGB constituted 14.7% (n = 401) of all sexual instances in mainstream media. In other words, for every five depictions of heterosexuality that LGB adolescents would be exposed to in mainstream media, they would be likely to see one depiction of LGB sexuality. A chi-square goodness of fit test was significant, χ^2 (1, N = 2,735) = 1,366.18, p = .00. Hypothesis 1 was supported; heterosexuality was depicted more often than LGB sexuality in mainstream media popular with LGB adolescents.

Hypothesis 2. The second hypothesis predicted that LGB sexuality would be depicted more often than heterosexuality in GLO media popular with LGB adolescents. Analyses revealed that 92.9% (n = 26) of the GLO media vehicles in the sample contained at least one depiction of LGB sexuality. Of the 28 GLO media vehicles in the sample, only two songs did not include any depiction of LGB sexuality. Although depictions of LGB sexuality were prominent in GLO media, depictions of heterosexuality were also common. Over half (n = 18; 64.3%) of the GLO media vehicles in the sample contained at least one depiction of heterosexuality. In other words, nearly every GLO media vehicle contained at least one depiction of LGB sexuality, while approximately six in ten GLO media vehicles contained at least one depiction of heterosexuality.

Comparing the frequency of LGB sexual instances to the frequency of heterosexual sexual instances in GLO media provides further insight into the sexual landscape of GLO media. A total of 912 sexual instances were coded in GLO media. A majority of the sexual instances in GLO media depicted LGB sexuality (n = 772; 84.7%). Sexual instances coded as heterosexual constituted 15.4% (n = 140) of sexual instances in the GLO media vehicles in the sample. In other words, for every one depiction of heterosexuality that LGB adolescents are exposed to in GLO media, they are likely to see nearly six depictions of LGB sexuality. A chi-square goodness of fit test was significant, χ^2 (1, N = 912) = 437.97, p = .00. Hypothesis 2 was supported; LGB

sexuality was depicted more often than heterosexuality in GLO media popular with LGB adolescents.

Hypothesis 3 and hypothesis 4 required comparisons to be made between sexual instances that depicted heterosexuality or LGB sexuality in mainstream media and GLO media popular with LGB teens. A McNemar test was conducted comparing heterosexual and LGB sexual instances by media type (i.e., mainstream media and GLO media). A McNemar test was conducted rather than a chi-square because it was possible for media vehicles to include both heterosexual sexual instances and LGB sexual instances; that is, the proportion of media vehicles containing heterosexual sexual instances were correlated with those depicting LGB sexuality. The McNemar test was statistically significant, χ^2 (1, N = 3,647) = 1,535.43, p = .00. To dissect the specific differences that were predicted in hypothesis 3 and hypothesis 4, chi-square analogs to the Scheffe procedure (referred to as Scheffe post hoc tests) were conducted. These tests are detailed below for each hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 3 predicted that mainstream media would depict heterosexuality more often than GLO media. Using the chi square analog to the Scheffe procedure, post hoc comparisons revealed that depictions of heterosexuality in mainstream media (85.3%) were significantly more likely to occur than depictions of heterosexuality in GLO media (15.4%), t = 22.34, p < .001 (see Table 4). Hypothesis 3 was supported; mainstream media were more likely to depict heterosexuality than GLO media.

Hypothesis 4. The fourth hypothesis predicted that GLO media would depict LGB sexuality more often than mainstream media. Scheffe post hoc tests revealed that depictions of LGB sexuality in GLO media (84.7%) were significantly more likely to occur than depictions of LGB sexuality in mainstream media (14.7%), t = 31.94, p < .001 (see Table 4). Hypothesis 4 was

supported; GLO media were significantly more likely to depict LGB sexuality than mainstream media.

Nature of LGB Sexual Depictions

Research question 1. The first research question concerned the nature of depictions of LGB sexuality in mainstream media popular with LGB teens. Analyses revealed that less than a quarter of all 146 mainstream media vehicles popular with LGB adolescents (n = 35; 24%) contained at least one validating depiction of LGB sexuality, while even fewer (n = 28; 19.2%) contained at least one demeaning depiction of LGB sexuality. At the sexual instance level of analysis, 68.6% (n = 275) of all LGB sexual instances in mainstream media were validating and 31.4% (n = 126) were coded as demeaning to LGB sexuality. A chi-square goodness of fit test was significant, χ^2 (1, N = 401) = 55.36, p = .00. Mainstream media were more likely to include validating depictions of LGB sexuality than to include demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality.

The first research question could also be addressed at the media vehicle level of analysis. The media vehicle level of analysis provides larger units, which in turn produces information about the overall portrayal of sexuality in each media vehicle rather than examining the nature of each sexual instance at the micro-level unit of analysis. As previously outlined, coders were instructed to use a 5-point Likert-type scale to code the focus of each media vehicle on validating depictions of LGB sexuality, on demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality, and on heterosexuality. A t-test was computed to compare the means of media vehicle level focus variables measuring nature of depiction. There was a statistically significant difference between the focus on validating depictions of LGB sexuality and the focus on demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality in mainstream media, t (82) = 2.22, p < .05. As displayed in Figure 2, mainstream media focused more on validating depictions of LGB sexuality (M = 0.46, SD = 0.96) than on demeaning

depictions of LGB sexuality (M = 0.30, SD = 0.62) at the media vehicle level of analysis. The data suggest that mainstream media were likely to depict LGB sexuality as validating more often than they were likely to depict LGB sexuality as demeaning both at the sexual instance-level of analysis and at the media vehicle-level of analysis.

Hypothesis 5. Hypothesis 5 posited that validating depictions of LGB sexuality would occur more often than demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality in GLO media popular with LGB adolescents. Analyses revealed that nearly every GLO media vehicle popular with LGB teens (n = 26, 92.9%) contained at least one validating depiction of LGB sexualities and more than half (n = 17, 60.7%) contained at least one demeaning depiction of LGB sexualities. At the sexual instance level of analysis, 82.6% (n = 638) of all LGB sexual instances in GLO media were coded as validating, while only 17.4% (n = 134) of all LGB sexual instances in GLO media were coded as demeaning. A chi-square goodness of fit test was significant, χ^2 (1, N = 772) = 329.04, p = .00. GLO media were more likely to include validating depictions of LGB sexuality than to include demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality.

Hypothesis 5 can also be examined at the media vehicle level of analysis. A t-test was computed to compare the means of media vehicle level focus variables measuring nature of depiction. There was a statistically significant difference between the focus on validating depictions of LGB sexuality and the focus on demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality in GLO media, t (14) = 6.63, p < .001. As displayed in Figure 2, GLO media focused more on validating depictions of LGB sexuality (M = 3.20, SD = 0.94) than on demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality (M = 1.13, SD = 1.11) at the media vehicle level of analysis. Hypothesis 5 was supported; validating portrayals of LGB sexuality occurred more often than demeaning portrayals of LGB sexuality in GLO media popular with LGB adolescents.

Hypothesis 6 and hypothesis 7 required comparisons to be made between validating LGB sexual instances and demeaning LGB sexual instances in mainstream media and GLO media popular with LGB teens. A McNemar test was conducted comparing validating and demeaning LGB sexual instances by media type (i.e., mainstream media and GLO media). A McNemar test was conducted rather than a chi-square because it was possible for media vehicles to include both validating and demeaning LGB sexual instances; that is, the proportion of media vehicles containing validating and demeaning LGB sexual instances were correlated. The McNemar test was statistically significant, χ^2 (1, N = 401) = 30.26, p = .00. To dissect the specific differences that were predicted in hypothesis 6 and hypothesis 7, Scheffe post hot tests were conducted. These tests are detailed below for each hypothesis.

Hypothesis 6. Hypothesis 6 predicted that mainstream media would include demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality more often than GLO media. Scheffe post hoc tests revealed that demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality in mainstream media (31.4%) were significantly more likely to occur than demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality in GLO media (17.4%), t = 2.67, p = .05.

Differences between mainstream media and GLO media can also be examined at the media vehicle level by computing t-tests to compare the focus on demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality in mainstream media and GLO media. A statistically significant difference existed for demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality, but in the opposite direction than that predicted by hypothesis 6. GLO media (M = 1.13, SD = 1.11) were more likely to focus on demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality than mainstream media vehicles (M = 0.30, SD = 0.62), t (96) = -4.14, p < .001. Hypothesis 6 was partially supported; mainstream media were more likely to depict demeaning LGB sexuality at the sexual instance level. However, at the media vehicle-

level of analysis, GLO media were more likely to focus on demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality than mainstream media.

Hypothesis 7. The seventh hypothesis predicted that GLO media would depict LGB sexuality as validating more often than mainstream media. Scheffe post hoc tests revealed that sexual instances validating LGB sexuality in GLO media (82.6%) were significantly more likely to occur than depictions validating LGB sexuality in mainstream media (68.6%), $t = 4.43$, $p < .05$.

Differences between mainstream media and GLO media can also be examined at the media vehicle level by computing t-tests to compare the focus on validating and demeaning depictions of LGB sexuality in mainstream media and GLO media. The focus of mainstream media on validating depictions of LGB sexuality ($M = 0.46$, $SD = 0.96$) was significantly lower than the focus of GLO media on validating depictions of LGB sexuality ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.94$), $t\ (19) = -10.34$, $p < .001$. Hypothesis 7 was supported; GLO media were more likely to depict validating LGB sexuality than mainstream media.

Context of Sexual Instances

The remaining hypothesis and research questions concern the context of sexual instances in media popular with LGB adolescents. The type of sexual talk and the type of sexual behavior were examined. In addition, the sources' age and sex were examined.

Research question 2. The second research question concerns the type of sexual talk that is depicted in both mainstream media and GLO media popular with LGB adolescents. In order to examine this research question, the frequency of sexual talk was analyzed separately for mainstream media and GLO media. Results regarding the frequency of sexual talk in mainstream media are detailed first.

A total of 1,777 sexual talk instances were coded in mainstream media. Frequencies for sexual talk categories in mainstream media are displayed in Table 6. A chi-square analysis comparing heterosexual talk and LGB sexual talk by sexual talk categories was statistically significant, χ^2 (7, N = 1,777) = 997.70, p = .00, V = .75. Scheffe post hoc analyses were performed to determine significant differences between the percent of sexual talk that depicted heterosexuality and the percent of sexual talk that depicted LGB sexuality in each of the sexual talk categories. Relationship talk (t = 13.73, p < .001) and talk of sexual interests (t = 6.77, p < .001) were more likely heterosexual than LGB. No sexual talk category except LGB talk (t = 4.69, p < .001) was more likely to be coded as LGB than to be coded as heterosexual in mainstream media.

When sexual talk was coded as LGB in mainstream media, it was coded as LGB talk 60.5% of the time. Given this finding, each sexual instance coded as LGB talk was further coded to dissect the type of LGB talk discussed in mainstream media. Table 7 displays the frequencies of LGB talk categories in mainstream media. A chi-square goodness of fit test examining the distribution of LGB sexual talk categories in mainstream media was significant, χ^2 (6, N = 187) = 100.75, p = .00. Mainstream media were most likely to depict LGB talk as talk about equality (38.5%) and insults (17.1%).

The second research question does not just concern sexual talk in mainstream media, but also the type of sexual talk that is depicted in GLO media popular with LGB adolescents. In GLO media, 670 sexual talk instances were coded. Table 8 shows the frequencies of sexual talk categories in GLO media. A chi-square analysis comparing heterosexual talk and LGB sexual talk by sexual talk categories was statistically significant, χ^2 (6, N = 670) = 82.67, p = .00, V = .35. Scheffe post hoc tests revealed that relationship talk (t = 2.44, p < .05), talk of sexual

interests ($t = 2.46$, $p < .05$), and LGB talk ($t = 14.42$, $p < .001$) were significantly more likely to be LGB than to be heterosexual in GLO media.

LGB talk was the most common sexual talk category coded among GLO media vehicles. Table 7 displays the frequencies of LGB talk categories in GLO media. A chi-square goodness of fit test examining the distribution of LGB sexual talk categories was significant, χ^2 (6, $N = 283$) = 159.68, $p = .00$. GLO media were most likely to include LGB talk about coming out (38.2%) and gay culture (22.6%).

Hypothesis 8. Sexual behavior was the focus of the eighth hypothesis. Hypothesis 8 stated that LGB sexual behavior would be less frequent than heterosexual behavior in mainstream media. A total of 959 sexual behavior instances were coded in mainstream media (see Table 9). A chi-square analysis comparing heterosexual sexual behavior and LGB sexual behavior by sexual behavior categories was statistically significant, χ^2 (5, $N = 959$) = 70.67, $p = .00$, $V = .27$. Scheffe post hoc analyses revealed that physical flirting ($t = 13.88$, $p < .001$) and romantic kissing ($t = 4.63$, $p < .001$) were significantly more likely to be heterosexual than LGB in mainstream media (see Table 9). Although not statistically different, each category of sexual behavior was more likely to be coded as heterosexual than LGB. Hypothesis 8 was supported; LGB sexual behavior was less frequent than heterosexual behavior in mainstream media.

Hypothesis 9. Sexual behavior was also the focus of the ninth hypothesis. Hypothesis 9 predicted that LGB sexual behavior would be more frequent than heterosexual behavior in GLO media. There were 243 instances of sexual behavior in GLO media. Table 10 details the frequency of sexual behavior categories coded in GLO media. A chi-square analysis comparing heterosexual sexual behavior and LGB sexual behavior by sexual behavior categories was statistically significant, χ^2 (5, $N = 243$) = 27.77, $p = .00$, $V = .34$. Romantic kissing ($t = 2.94$, $p <$

.01) and physical flirting ($t = 2.93$, $p < .01$) were statistically more likely to be coded as LGB than heterosexual in GLO media, as determined through Scheffe post hoc analyses. Hypothesis 9 was supported; LGB sexual behavior was more frequent than heterosexual behavior in GLO media.

Hypothesis 10. The tenth hypothesis predicted that adults would initiate LGB sexual instances more often than any other age demographic in both mainstream and GLO media. A chi-square goodness of fit test was statistically significant for both mainstream media, χ^2 (2, N = 394) = 599.77, p = .00, and for GLO media, χ^2 (3, N = 769) = 1,678.36, p = .00. As displayed in Table 1, adults were overwhelming the source of LGB sexual instances in mainstream media (91.4%), while teens only initiated LGB sexual instances 7.61% of the time. In GLO media, adults were the source of LGB sexual instances a vast majority of the time (88.6%), but teens did initiate LGB sexual instances occasionally (10.7%). Children and the elderly rarely, if ever, were the source of LGB content. Hypothesis 10 was supported; adults served as the source of LGB sexual instances more than any other age group.

Hypothesis 11. The eleventh hypothesis predicted that gay males would be the source of LGB sexual instances more often than any other sexual orientation in both mainstream and GLO media. A chi-square goodness of fit test was statistically significant for both mainstream media, χ^2 (4, N = 389) = 456.03, p = .00, and for GLO media, χ^2 (3, N = 769) = 541.25, p = .00. As displayed in Table 12, gay males were the source of LGB sexual instances most often in both mainstream media (57.1%) and GLO media (57.6%). In mainstream media, heterosexuals were more often the source of LGB sexual instances than lesbians, bisexuals, or sexually questioning individuals. In GLO media, lesbians were more often the source of LGB content than heterosexuals, bisexuals, or sexually questioning individuals. Hypothesis11 was supported; gay

men were significantly more likely to be the source of LGB sexual instances than other sexual orientations in mainstream media and GLO media.

Sexuality across Media

Research question 3. Research question 3 concerns differences in the nature of sexual instances across the media included in the sample. The sample contained media vehicles from four different media: television (n = 96), films (n = 22), songs (n = 50), and magazines (n = 12). An average of 39 sexual instances occurred per film. Magazines contained an average of 32 sexual instances, television programs contained an average of 19 sexual instances, and songs contained an average of 15 sexual instances. Although it may seem like film and magazines depicted sexual instances with greater frequency than television and music, the average amount of time that one spends with each medium must be considered in order to make accurate comparisons. For example, a film may take 2 hours to watch. A song, however, may only take 3 minutes to hear. Using the average length of each media vehicle in the current sample, computations reveal that individuals would statistically need to view 5 pages of a magazine in order to view a sexual instance. The same individual would likely be exposed to at least one sexual instance after watching 3 minutes of a film, 2 minutes of a television program, or listening to 12 seconds of a song.

Within mainstream media, heterosexual sexual instances were always more common than LGB sexual instances. Table 13 details the frequency of sexual instances in mainstream media by medium. A chi-square analysis of mainstream media comparing heterosexual and LGB sexual instances by medium was significant, χ^2 (3, N = 2,735) = 489.86, p = .00, V = .42. Scheffe post hoc tests showed that television (t = 27.39, p < .001), film (t = 4.71, p < .05), songs (t = 23.40, p

< .001) and magazines (t = 16.95, p < .001) all contained more heterosexual sexual instances than LGB sexual instances in the sample of mainstream media.

The nature of LGB sexual instances is broken down by medium in Table 14. A chi-square analysis of mainstream media comparing the nature of LGB sexual instances (i.e., validating and demeaning) by medium was significant, χ^2 (3, N = 401) = 7.71, p < .05, V = .14. Scheffe post hoc tests showed that mainstream television (t = 2.52, p < .05), film (t = 6.45, p < .01), songs (t = 24.49, p < .001), and magazines (t = 2.84, p < .05) all contained more LGB validating sexual instances than LGB demeaning sexual instances.

The frequency of LGB sexual instances was different in GLO media. Table 15 details the frequency of sexual instances in GLO media by medium. A chi-square analysis of GLO media comparing the sexual instances by medium was significant, χ^2 (2, N = 912) = 253.05, p = .00. Scheffe post hoc tests showed that television (t = 19.98, p < .001) and film (t = 11.87, p < .01) were more likely to include LGB sexual instances than to include heterosexual content. GLO songs, on the other hand, were significantly more likely to be heterosexual (t = 5.42, p < .05) than to be LGB in nature.

The nature of LGB sexual instances in GLO media is broken down by medium in Table 16. A chi-square analysis of GLO media comparing the nature of LGB sexual instances (i.e., validating and demeaning) by medium was significant, χ^2 (2, N = 638) = 40.02, p = .00, V = .23. Scheffe post hoc tests revealed that television (t = 17.74, p < .001), film (t = 5.12, p < .01), and songs (t = 33.16, p < .001) all contained more LGB validating sexual instances than LGB demeaning sexual instances.

Discussion

The results of the content analysis indicate that depictions of heterosexuality are prevalent in mainstream media popular with LGB adolescents. Both heterosexual sexual talk and heterosexual sexual behavior were more likely than LGB sexual talk or LGB sexual behavior in mainstream media popular with LGB adolescents. Although heterosexuality was a persistent theme in mainstream media, the data revealed stark differences in the depiction of sexuality between mainstream media and GLO media. The results suggest that depictions of LGB sexuality are widespread in GLO media popular with LGB adolescents. Both LGB sexual talk and LGB sexual behavior were more likely than heterosexual sexual talk or heterosexual sexual behavior in GLO media popular with LGB adolescents. To better understand the depiction of sex and sexuality in the sample of media popular with LGB adolescents, both mainstream media and GLO media are discussed separately and comparatively below.

In mainstream media, heterosexuality seems to dominate when sex is portrayed; over 85% of all sexual instances in mainstream media were heterosexual. It may seem that the results of the current study lend support to many of the critical/cultural scholars arguing that media invariably portray sexuality as heterosexual (e.g., Ivory et al., 2009). If one considers the estimates of LGB identifying individuals that reside in the United States, however, it becomes clear that the current study's findings actually refute scholars arguing that media ignore sexual minorities. Given that approximately 5% of the United States population identifies as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (Romero, et al., 2007), one would expect approximately 5% of the sexual instances in mainstream media to depict LGB sexuality. Although a vast majority of the sexual instances in this study were coded as heterosexual, 15% of sexual instances were coded as depicting LGB sexuality. If 15% of sexual instances depict LGB sexuality and only 5% of

individuals identify as LGB in the United States, then LGB sexuality may be overrepresented in mainstream media. This possible overrepresentation holds true when examining sexual talk and sexual behavior separately: over 17% of sexual talk instances and nearly 10% of sexual behavior instances were coded as LGB in nature in mainstream media.

The inclusion of LGB sexuality in mainstream mediain the current study may, at least in part, be driven by economic forces. Becker (2006) argues that the fastest growing class in America is composed of upscale 18- to 49-year-old active consumers with disposable income who define themselves as socially liberal. According to Becker (2006), portraying LGB sexuality may be a convenient signal to show just how open-minded media producers are in an attempt to lure the sought-after demographic of social liberals with disposable income in an intensely competitive media market. Even though the frequency of depictions of LGB sexuality seems high compared to real-life statistics regarding the number of LGB individuals in the United States, one must consider the context of LGB sexual instances to fully understand mainstream media's depiction of LGB sexuality.

Talk about heterosexual relationships was the most frequent category of sexual talk in the mainstream media vehicles popular with LGB adolescents. Talk about heterosexual sexual interests was also significantly more common than other categories of sexual talk. Of the sexual talk that was coded as LGB in nature, 60% was coded as LGB talk. LGB talk was defined as any dialogue specific to the cultural or social elements of lesbian, gay, or bisexual lifestyles. LGB talk was only coded when references made about LGB individuals did not fit into any other sexual talk category. Talk about LGB relationships, LGB sexual interests, or LGB sexual experiences were far less common than talk about LGB as a sexual identity. Given that a majority of LGB sexual talk was about the cultural and social elements of being lesbian, gay, or

bisexual, further dissecting LGB talk could be insightful for quantifying the portrayal of LGB sexuality in mainstream media.

In this sample, mainstream media often addressed LGB equal rights, but mainstream media also depicted LGB sexuality as insults. The insults category of LGB talk also included jokes and mocking. It seems that mainstream media rarely depict the relational or sexual elements intrinsic to sexual identity. Instead, mainstream media pigeonhole LGB sexuality, focusing on the cultural and social aspects of LGB identities. Most often mainstream media portray LGB sexuality through the inclusion of talk about equality or by using LGB sexuality in the context of an insult or joke. For example, in the television program *American Dad*, the protagonist's neighbors are a gay couple. The gay couple is rarely shown talking about their relationship or their sexual behaviors. Rather, they are the "gay couple" next door, often used as the catalyst for arguments over homosexuality or as the target of a joke. In the television program *Ugly Betty*, the gay assistant to the antagonist shares a similar role with the gay neighbors in *American Dad.* Unlike heterosexuals in mainstream media who often talk about their relationships, sexual interests, and past sexual experiences, LGB characters in mainstream media are sexual only by proclamation, void of any sexual expression.

This finding supports previous content analysis research that concluded that gay and lesbian characters' sexualities are central to their role in the plotline of television programming; rarely are gay and lesbian characters on television depicted in situations where their sexual orientation does not add comedic value or interesting twists to the plot (Fouts & Inch, 2005). The absence of talk about LGB relationships, sexual interests, or sexual experiences in the media seems to sanitize LGB sexuality, further differentiating it from heterosexuality. Exposure to mainstream media could reinforce differences between LGB sexuality and heterosexuality rather

than normalize LGB sexuality. The lack of sexual talk about LGB relationships or sexual interests could provide sexually questioning adolescents with little information needed to better understand how their sexual feelings fit into their social world. Sexual talk about LGB sexuality in mainstream media is, ironically, not very sexual.

With regards to sexual behaviors, heterosexual physical flirting and heterosexual romantic kissing were significantly more likely to occur than any other sexual behavior depicted in mainstream media. Sexual behaviors between LGB individuals were not as common in mainstream media. LGB physical flirting and romantic kissing each constituted less than 5% of the sexual behavior in mainstream media. More explicit LGB sexual behaviors like intimate touching, implied intercourse, and depicted intercourse were nearly nonexistent in the sample. However, sexual behavior between two people of the same sex constituted nearly 10% of all sexual behavior in the sample. Much like sexual talk, if LGB individuals comprise approximately 5% of the United States population, then LGB sexual behaviors are likely being overrepresented in the media. Scholars have suggested that the justification for avoiding sexual situations with LGB individuals in media stems from the public's fear of homosexuality (Bruni, 1999). Producers of media want to attract the widest audience possible and, as such, are often cautious to depict LGB sexual behaviors (Gross, 1994). The current study refutes this claim; although LGB sexual behaviors were far less common than heterosexual behaviors, sexual behavior between LGB individuals composed a representative proportion of the sexual behaviors portrayed in the media sample.

Although this finding may seem to spark conclusions that mainstream media are depicting sexual orientations equally, one must remember the findings from the third research question examining medium differences. The inclusion of LGB sexual behavior in the current

study is primarily due to the inclusion of film in the sample. Over 81% of all LGB sexual behavior in the mainstream media sample was in the films. Several of the films in the mainstream media sample focused on sexuality themes or included gay, lesbian, or bisexual lead characters. These films were included in the mainstream media sample rather than the GLO media sample because they were not marketed and produced *specifically* for an LGB audience and, therefore, did not meet the requirements of inclusion as GLO media. For example, the film *Bruno* was included in the mainstream media sample. *Bruno* is a fictional documentary following a gay Austrian male fashion designer as he attempts to succeed in the United States by flaunting his sexuality in any way possible. Films are often reported as important sources of information for adolescents (Angell, Gordon, & Begun, 1999; Stepp, 1996). Adolescents can be highly selective in their film choices and, in turn, can choose to consume films that reinforce preexisting notions or behaviors (Stepp, 1996). Hence, it is not surprising that sexually questioning teens reported exposure to films that might help them learn and understand what it means to identify as LGB.

Research suggests that any portrayal of LGB sexuality in the media can make a questioning adolescent feel included (Bond et al., 2009; McKee, 2000). However, LGB individuals have also reported that more inclusive and normalized portrayals of LGB individuals in sexual situations would be substantially more helpful for teens struggling with their sexual identities (Evans, 2007; Freymiller, 2005). When comparing the frequency of validating and demeaning depictions, the data revealed that over two thirds of LGB sexual instances in mainstream media were validating and approximately one third were demeaning. The current study suggests that mainstream media are more likely to depict LGB sexuality in a validating context than in a demeaning context. Scholars debate the diversity and inclusivity of LGB

characters on television (Evans, 2007; Hart, 2000), but the results of this study reinforce the argument that the LGB community is slowly gaining respect in the media. LGB sexuality is quite possibly overrepresented in the media and is more likely to be depicted in a validating context than in a demeaning context, but talk about LGB sexuality is specific to the sexual identity itself rather than about the relational and sexual attributes of being LGB. Rather than portraying characters who just happen to be lesbian or gay, mainstream media are depicting lesbian and gay characters—characters whose sexuality is vital to their role in the media vehicle.

Although LGB sexual behaviors seem to be represented in mainstream media, a closer dissection reveals that LGB sexual behaviors are predominantly limited to film. Even with the high frequency of LGB talk coded as insults and the lack of LGB sexual behaviors, it remains clear that mainstream media are depicting validating LGB sexual instances that LGB adolescents may learn from during sexual exploration.

GLO media provide LGB adolescents with a media landscape that portrays sexual norms differently than mainstream media. Analyses revealed that nearly every single GLO media vehicle in the sample contained at least one depiction of LGB sexuality and over half of GLO media vehicles in the sample contained at least one depiction of heterosexuality. In GLO media popular with LGB adolescents, 85% of sexual instances depicted LGB sexuality, while only 15% depicted heterosexuality. In other words, for every depiction of heterosexuality that LGB adolescents are exposed to in GLO media, they are likely to see nearly six depictions of LGB sexuality. Depictions of LGB sexuality were more common than depictions of heterosexuality in GLO media popular with LGB teens.

GLO media vehicles are designed, produced, and marketed to gay, lesbian, and bisexual audiences. As such, it is not surprising that GLO media contained more depictions of LGB

sexuality than mainstream media. However, over half of GLO media vehicles contained at least one depiction of heterosexuality. GLO media may be likely to contain depictions of heterosexuality in addition to depictions of LGB sexuality because heterosexuality is such a pervasive societal norm that avoiding portrayals of heterosexuality is nearly impossible, even in television programming, films, and music specifically designed for LGB audiences.

Interestingly, the proportion of sexual instances that depicted heterosexuality in mainstream media was the same proportion of sexual instances that depicted LGB sexuality in GLO media. In mainstream media, 85% of sexual instances depicted heterosexuality. In GLO media, 85% of sexual instances depicted LGB sexuality. In the current study, mainstream media and GLO media were literally opposites of one another in terms of their depiction of sexuality.

LGB talk was the most prominent type of sexual talk in the GLO media popular with LGB adolescents. Talk about LGB relationships and LGB sexual interests were also common in GLO media. Relationship talk was significantly more likely to depict LGB sexuality than to depict heterosexuality in GLO media. No sexual talk category was more likely to depict heterosexuality than to depict LGB sexuality in GLO media popular with LGB adolescents. Sexual talk in GLO media depicted a variety of realistic aspects of being LGB including relationship talk, talk of sexual interests, and talk of sexual experiences. For example, in one episode of the television program *Queer as Folk* included in the sample, two male characters in a romantic relationship dealt with the effects of drug addiction on their relationship and their sex life. Unlike LGB sexual talk in mainstream media, LGB sexual talk in GLO media normalized LGB sexuality by showing the relational and sexual complexities involved in being LGB.

Although LGB relationship talk and LGB talk of sexual interests was common in GLO media, LGB talk was the most frequent sexual talk category coded in GLO media. Sexual

instances that were LGB talk were most likely to be coded as talk about coming out. The concentration on coming out talk is important given the possible relationship that exposure to GLO media could have with the emotional well-being of LGB adolescents. For example, *Coming Out Stories* is an unscripted television program on the *LOGO* television network that chronicles the lives of three individuals as they struggle with coming out to their loved ones. Exposure to programming like *Coming Out Stories* could influence the development of a sexual identity among LGB teens who have little exposure to coming out narratives from other socialization agents in their lives.

The most common sexual behaviors in GLO media were LGB romantic kissing and LGB physical flirting. Although not statistically different, LGB individuals were more likely than heterosexual individuals to be portrayed engaging in nearly every category of sexual behavior in GLO media popular with LGB adolescents. The findings on sexual behavior in GLO media reinforce the sexual talk findings: GLO media depict the sex involved in LGB sexualities. As predicted, GLO media do not seem to have the same constraints as mainstream media. GLO media are targeting LGB audiences and, as such, are less likely to worry about the response from heterosexual audiences and more likely to depict physical sexuality between LGB characters. GLO media do not sanitize LGB sexuality by only depicting the social or cultural aspects of LGB sexuality. Rather, GLO media portray LGB sexuality as sexual, including depictions of sexual behaviors like physical flirting, romantic kissing, and intimate touching.

Data indicated that a vast majority of all depictions of LGB sexualities in GLO media were validating. Although validating portrayals of LGB sexualities occurred more often than demeaning portrayals of LGB sexualities, demeaning portrayals did constitute nearly one-fifth of all LGB sexual instances in GLO media.

GLO media may be depicting demeaning portrayals of LGB sexuality because LGB characters in GLO media poke fun at one another, much the same way that heterosexual characters tease one another in mainstream media. Audiences who are exposed to GLO media may be comfortable with LGB characters demeaning one another, but the same audiences may take offense to heterosexual characters demeaning LGB individuals. For example, *The Big Gay Sketch Show* is a program on the LOGO television network. It is a live sketch comedy hour, much like *Saturday Night Live*. Sketches in the program often poke fun of the gay lifestyle in a manner that would cause a stir if done on a mainstream television network. LGB individuals may give producers of GLO media the privilege of being part of the LGB community. Thus, GLO media producers are given the right to portray in-group teasing in ways that mainstream media would be chastised for doing.

The current study also examined age and sexual orientation as characteristics of the source of sexual instances. Age is an important variable to consider if one is interested in the possible relationship between media exposure and adolescent development. If there are no LGB adolescents portrayed in the media, sexual minority youth may have no *peer* role models with whom to identify. The same logic was used for examining the sexual orientation of the source of LGB sexual content: if the current study supports previous research, then a majority of LGB sexual instances will be initiated by gay males, leaving women and bisexual males with few role models with whom to identify.

Adults were overwhelmingly the source of LGB sexual instances in both mainstream media and GLO media popular with LGB teens, a finding that supports previous research (Fouts & Inch, 2005). Adolescents were the source of LGB sexual instances only rarely in mainstream media, but adolescents were significantly more likely to be the source of LGB sexual instances

than children or the elderly were in GLO media. This lack of opportunities to identify with LGB teen characters in the mainstream media could lead to continued feelings of isolation and alienation among LGB youth.

Gay males were the source of LGB sexual instances more frequently than any other sexual orientation in both mainstream media and GLO media. This finding also supports previous research concluding that gay males are most often the source of LGB sexual talk or same-sex behavior in the media (Fouts & Inch, 2005). In mainstream media, heterosexual individuals were significantly more likely to be the source of LGB sexual instances than were lesbians or bisexuals. The present study lends support to the argument that bisexual individuals continue to be symbolically annihilated from the media (Bond et al., 2009). In media designed, produced, and marketed for LGB audiences, heterosexuals were significantly more likely to be the source of LGB sexual instances than were bisexuals. This lack of any opportunity to identify with lesbian or bisexual characters in the media could lead to feelings of isolation and alientation for young women and men who identify as bisexual.

The final research question was crafted to examine any possible differences in the portrayal of sex and sexuality by medium. Interestingly, the findings suggest that the composite "media" findings nearly mimic those of each medium independently. The one noteworthy exception is mainstream film. Mainstream films, although not statistically significant, were more likely to include LGB sexual instances than other mainstream media. As mentioned previously, teens have active control over the films they view. Teens often select films that reinforce their previously held attitudes and beliefs or films that assist them in learning or understanding a previously foreign concept (Stepp, 1996); the latter is especially true for topics related to love, romance, and sexuality (Bachen & Illouz, 1996). It is logical then that LGB teens would select

films that contain LGB themes or characters. Films in the mainstream media sample included *Bruno*, *Brokeback Mountain*, and *Milk*, all of which have gay lead characters but were deemed mainstream media rather than GLO media because they were marketed and produced for general audiences rather than marketed as queer cinema. The decision to operationalize GLO media as media designed, produced, and marketed to a niche audience of gay and lesbian consumers may have allowed for higher levels of sexual instances in film than other media.

The current study strengthens our understanding of the depiction of LGB sexuality in the media by examining media popular with LGB adolescents as determined through a survey of LGB teens rather than relying on a convenience sample of media content found in many of the previous studies on LGB sexuality in the media (Evans, 2007; Fouts & Inch, 2005; Raley & Lucas, 2006). The current study is also among the first to examine the depiction of LGB sexuality across media rather than relying on a sample composed solely of television programming. By extending the sample beyond television programming, the current study can more comprehensively summarize the depiction of LGB sexuality in the media diets of American adolescents identifying as LGB.

Although the inclusion of multiple media is a strength of the content analysis, it is also the most prominent limitation. The current study did not include any websites. The initial design of the content analysis included an examination of websites popular with LGB teens. However, because of access limitations, social networking sites could not be included in the content analysis in the same manner as television programming, films, songs, and magazines. As such, the questionnaire for the survey specifically asked participants to think beyond social networking sites and only report the websites that they visited for entertainment or information. Participants only reported visiting social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube even after

they were told not to report on websites such as these. The popularity of social networking sites is telling in and of itself; however, limitations involved in knowing exactly what participants were being exposed to on social networking sites were a validity concern. Consequently, social networking sites were not content analyzed in the current study. Research suggests that the Internet has become a vital resource for adolescents questioning their sexuality (Ryan & Futterman, 1998; Tikkanen & Ross, 2000) so the lack of any websites in the current sample limits our knowledge on the frequency and context of LGB sexuality depictions in the media. Future research should investigate the motivations for browsing social networking sites and the content that LGB teens select to view on these websites to better understand their role in the sexual socialization of this population. Even with this limitation, the present study makes an important contribution to our understanding of the portrayal of sex and sexuality in media popular with LGB adolescents.

In sum, heterosexuality reigns supreme in mainstream media. When LGB sexuality is depicted in mainstream media, it is often sanitized. LGB sexual talk is rarely sexual, rather is it primarily about equality or insulting LGB individuals. LGB sexual behavior is also rare in mainstream media, depicting LGB individuals as non-sexually as possible. GLO media, on the other hand, often depict LGB sexuality in a more realistic manner. LGB sexual talk is about both the LGB identity and the relational and sexual aspects of being LGB. LGB sexual talk in GLO media is also often about coming out, a topic that may be extremely salient to adolescents who are likely exploring the coming out process themselves. LGB sexual behavior is commonplace in GLO media, depicting LGB individuals as sexual beings.

According to the sexual scripting theory, LGB adolescents who are heavy media consumers will be more likely to access sexual scripts in terms of the depiction of sex and

sexuality prominent in the media landscape. Adolescents who are heavy consumers of GLO media, for example, may have higher levels of emotional well-being than light consumers of GLO media. Heavy consumers of GLO media are exposed to the relational and sexual characteristics of an LGB identity that adolescents may need to better understand how their sexual identity fits into their sense of self and into their society more generally. However, valid claims cannot be made about the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being using content analysis methods. Instead, it is necessary to take an additional methodological step to examine the possible relationships between media exposure and adolescent emotional well-being. Study 2, a survey of LGB adolescents, constitutes the next step in understanding this relationship and is described in the following chapter.

Chapter 4:

Study 2: Media Exposure, Identity, and Emotional Well-Being

The results of the content analysis (Study 1) revealed that sexuality is pervasive in media popular with LGB adolescents. Mainstream media predominantly portray sexuality as heterosexual. Compared to findings from previous content analyses of LGB characters on television (Fouts & Inch, 2005; Raley & Lucas, 2006), references to LGB sexuality are increasing in mainstream media, but they often reveal little about the relational or sexual component of being lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Portrayals of sexuality in GLO media are more often LGB in nature than heterosexual. GLO media often depict LGB sexuality as authentically sexual, revealing a more realistic portrayal of the emotional and physical components of LGB sexuality. The next step is to examine the possible relationship between media exposure and LGB adolescents' emotional well-being. Evaluating possible associations between media exposure and LGB teens' emotional well-being is important to gain a better understanding of how LGB teens form their identities and perceive themselves in their social worlds, especially considering that media often serve as the primary sources of sexual information for American adolescents (Strasburger, 2005).

The purpose of Study 2 was to investigate the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being among LGB adolescents. An online survey was conducted with over 500 self-identifying LGB adolescents to examine this association. This chapter begins by discussing the very few studies that exist on media exposure and sexual identity. Sexual scripting theory and self-discrepancy theory are then reviewed as the theoretical rationale for the hypotheses of the current study. Important control variables, moderators, and mediators are then considered. The

methodology of Internet data collection with vulnerable populations is addressed before concluding the chapter with the results of the survey study.

Existing Research on Media & LGB Sexuality

The emotional well-being of LGB adolescents may be more influenced by media than by any other socialization agent. As outlined in Chapter 2, LGB teens rarely have the opportunity to communicate or identify with other LGB youth in face-to-face situations for fear that disclosing their sexual identities to others will lead to ostracism and isolation from family, friends, and their communities (Gross, 2001; Huntemann & Morgan, 2001). The avoidance of interpersonal communication about sexuality only enhances the importance of the media as sexual socialization agents for LGB youth (Brown, Steele, & Walsh-Childers, 2002). The few studies that have explored the media's relationship to LGB adolescents' well-being have concluded that media are often the primary sources of sexual information for LGB teens (see Chapter 2). Although LGB teens garner information about sexuality from the media, LGB individuals often struggle to identify with the highly stereotypical LGB characters they see portrayed in the media (Evans, 2007; Freymiller, 2005). Still, exposure to LGB sexuality in media has been shown to increase self-esteem in LGB teens because it reminds adolescents, many of whom are struggling to feel included, that they are not alone (McKee, 2000).

The literature examining media's influence on LGB individuals is limited in quantity, methodology, and scope. First, previous work in this area has measured television as the sole predictor variable. As discussed in Chapter 3, the media diet of the average American adolescent includes an array of television programming, films, music, and magazines (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). To more comprehensively understand the role that media play in the lives of LGB teens, scholars must begin to investigate media consumption beyond television. Second,

studies in this area rely predominantly on interview or focus group methods for data collection. Although the depth of the data in these studies provided a solid foundation for understanding media in the lives of LGB teens, these methods limit the breadth of this research. The studies on media exposure and LGB adolescents' emotional well-being cited in this chapter have sample sizes ranging from 6 to 54. Small sample sizes make this literature difficult to generalize to a larger LGB adolescent population. Also, three of the four studies on media and LGB adolescents previously mentioned (Bond et al., 2009; Freymiller, 2005; McKee, 2000) collected data retrospectively from adult populations. Research suggests that it is between the ages of 14 and 19 when adolescents begin to realize their sexual feelings, especially those adolescents developing sexual feelings towards peers of the same sex (Downey, 1994). With the exception of a focus group study with a sample size of 6 (Evans, 2007), none of the remaining studies on media exposure and LGB adolescents' emotional well-being actually sample adolescents. The lack of survey research on adolescent samples warrants the initiation of more extensive studies on media exposure and LGB adolescents' emotional well-being.

The Present Study

The present study addresses the limitation of previous research examining the relationship between media exposure and LGB adolescents' emotional well-being. First, the present study broadens the conceptualization of media by examining exposure to film, music, and magazines in addition to television. Second, this study utilizes survey collection tools on the Internet to collect data from LGB teens across the nation to garner a more representative sample than those samples utilized in previous research.

In order to address the hypotheses and research questions driving Study 2, a review of the most relevant theories is needed. The first of these theories, sexual scripting theory, focuses on

social cognition and the processes by which an individual uses information from the media to make judgments. Sexual scripting theory attempts to unveil how people acquire, store, and use sexual scripts. Sexual scripts are mental schemata about sexual beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors that are stored in memory (Gagnon & Simon, 1987). Scripts about sexual social norms can be learned from the media, especially when media consumers have little prior knowledge from their own lived experiences (Harris, 2004). According to sexual scripting theory, exposure to depictions of LGB sexuality in the media could create beliefs about sexual social norms and values that reflect the portrayals of LGB sexuality in the media.

Exposure to depictions of LGB individuals in the media could be related to the value that LGB individuals place on their own sexuality. Study 1 revealed that depictions of LGB sexuality in mainstream media were sanitized and nearly nonsexual. Although LGB sexuality was less common in mainstream media than heterosexuality, depictions of LGB sexuality did exist; in fact, LGB sexuality constituted 15% of all sexual instances in mainstream media. LGB participants in previous studies have noted that any representation of LGB sexuality is better than no representation at all; simply seeing LGB sexuality in the media helped LGB teens cope with the obstacles often associated with developing an LGB sexual identity (Bond et al., 2009; McKee, 2000). Heavy exposure to mainstream media would reinforce the importance of heterosexuality but would also provide sexual scripts that are inclusive of LGB sexuality. According to sexual scripting theory, exposure to mainstream media could then allow LGB teens to expand their sexual scripts to include alternatives to heterosexuality, thereby decreasing their feelings of dejection. Based on the sexual scripting theory, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> H_1: A negative relationship will exist between LGB adolescents' exposure to mainstream media and their feelings of dejection.

However, Study 1 findings suggest that only GLO media depict the sex inherently characteristic of LGB sexual identities. Scholars have surmised that more realistic portrayals of LGB individuals in the media would be helpful to adolescents struggling with their sexual identities (Evans, 2007; McKeen, 2000). GLO media could provide the information LGB teens need to process and label previously foreign feelings about their own sexualities much more readily than mainstream media. Based on LGB individuals' self-reports in previous research (Bond et al., 2009; Evans, 2007; Freymiller, 2005) noting the importance of realistic portrayals of LGB individuals in the media, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_2: A negative relationship will exist between LGB adolescents' exposure to GLO media and their feelings of dejection.

H_3: The negative relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection will be stronger than the negative relationship between mainstream media and dejection.

Moderation

The relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being may be moderated by several variables. Moderation occurs when a relationship between two variables is dependent on a third variable. The third variable is referred to as the moderator (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In the current study, it is hypothesized that age, sex, and sexual identity commitment will moderate the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. Each of these moderators is rationalized below.

Age. Young people can realize that the sensation of "feeling different" means that they may be attracted to individuals of the same sex at any age. However, scholars have argued that limited cognitive abilities in early adolescence put a strain on understanding these feelings and that most individuals solidify their sexual identities in mid- or late adolescence (Kroger, 2007).

In addition, the findings from Chapter 3 revealed that a majority of LGB individuals initiating LGB sexual talk or LGB sexual behaviors were adults. Older teens may identify more with LGB sexual instances in the media given the infrequency of LGB teens in the media. Older teens may also be better able to apply sexual messages in the media to their own lives than will younger teens. Age, therefore, may moderate the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. Hence, the following moderating hypothesis is proposed:

H_4: The negative relationships between media exposure and dejection will be stronger for older adolescents than for younger adolescents.

Sex. Both previous research (Fisher et al., 2007) and the findings from Study 1 concluded that depictions of non-heterosexuals in the media are nearly always depictions of men. Lesbian women are far outnumbered by gay men on television. Given these findings, males and females may not identify with LGB characters in the media in the same way. If there are more men portrayed as non-heterosexual in the media, the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being may be stronger for males than for females. Hence, the following moderating hypothesis is proposed:

H_5: The negative relationships between media exposure and dejection will be stronger for male adolescents than for female adolescents.

Sexual identity commitment. As discussed in Chapter 1, sexually questioning teens typically go through a period of exploration before solidifying their sexual identities. It is during this period of exploration when adolescents actively search for information that could be utilized to label their sexuality (Coleman, 1982). The lack of gay or lesbian role models, peers, or images in teens' communities only increases the importance of media during this exploration process (Evans, 2007). Eventually through exploration, individuals may begin to realize that an LGB

identity is within the realm of possible sexual identities and that an LGB identity may be the missing label that would explain feelings previously misunderstood. After a period of exploration, if an adolescent can justify an LGB sexual identity as plausible, the stages of acceptance and integration can be entered (Plummer, 1975). These stages do not necessarily correlate with age. Hence, it is important to examine sexual identity commitment as a possible moderator separate from age.

Adolescents who are still exploring their sexual identities may be more influenced by depictions of LGB sexuality in the media than will adolescents who have achieved their sexual identities. Teens low in sexual identity commitment are searching for information to help them understand how an LGB sexual identity would alter or influence their more global sense of self and how they fit into their world (Dank , 1971). Individuals low in sexual identity commitment may invest more in mediated depictions of LGB individuals because they are craving information to justify their impending commitment, whereas LGB teens who are high in sexual identity commitment may be less influenced by media's portrayal of LGB sexuality because their commitment is set. As such, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> H_6: The negative relationships between media exposure and dejection will be stronger for adolescents low in sexual identity commitment than for adolescents high in sexual identity commitment.

Mediation

Sexual scripting theory explains how the accessibility of sexual content in the media may influence the emotional well-being of LGB adolescents, but it does not clearly identify the role that sexual identity plays in any relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being.

Self-discrepancy theory clarifies the role that identity may play in mediating the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being.

Self-discrepancy. Self-discrepancy theory postulates that discrepancies between the actual self and the ideal self will induce dejection (Higgins et al., 1985). The actual self is a person's representation of attributes that he or she possesses. The ideal self is a representation of attributes that he or she would like to possess (Higgins et al., 1986).

The discrepancy between the actual self and the ideal self among LGB adolescents could be exacerbated or relieved by media exposure. LGB adolescents often learn about LGB culture, LGB communities, and LGB sexual behaviors from the media (Bond et al., 2009). Media's portrayal of LGB sexuality could then influence sexually questioning adolescents' beliefs about what it means to be LGB and how identifying as LGB can be interwoven into their global sense of self. Hence, LGB adolescents' self-discrepancies could mediate the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. LGB adolescents who are heavy media consumers may be exposed to messages that provide them with depictions of LGB sexuality that they were unlikely to receive from other socialization agents. These depictions can be employed by LGB teens to determine that their sexual identities can be interwoven into their sense of self while still living the lives that they desire or expect to have, thereby altering their conceptions of their ideal self. The following hypothesis is predicted on these grounds:

H_7: Self-discrepancies will mediate the relationships between media exposure and dejection among LGB adolescents.

Control Variables

There are several variables that could predict both media consumption and emotional well-being: perceived social support, school climate, religiosity, geographical location, peer

sexuality, and motivation. Because any relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being could be derived from their joint association with one or more of these variables, it is important to statistically control these variables when conducting data analyses (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Controlling for extraneous variables like school climate and geographical location will nullify any possible influence of these variables on the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being by reducing the variance of these variables to near zero (Cohen et al., 2003). The rationales for controlling for perceived social support, school climate, religiosity, geographical location, peer sexuality, and motivation are detailed below.

Race. The interwoven relationship between racial identity and sexual identity could influence the emotional well-being of LGB teens. Individuals who do not identify as White must often deal with multiple oppressive identity crises and they must often do so in non-supportive environments. Black gay males often report feeling isolated from the Black community because of their sexual identity and from the gay community because of their racial identity (Loiacano, 1993). The struggle to be both Black and LGB in America can cause increased feelings of ostracism. Thus, controlling for race reduces the possibility that this extraneous variable is responsible for the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being.

Perceived social support. The social support that LGB adolescents perceive to have from family, peers, and important others in their lives can influence both their media exposure and their emotional well-being. Family support can facilitate identity development in other aspects of the self, but the family can hinder the development of LGB sexual identities for teens. Many parents believe that they have caused their children's homosexuality, a belief that puts the family and the youth in an irresolvable conflict that can lead to estrangement (Hunter & Schaecher, 1987). In addition to complications at home, many LGB youth have feelings of

isolation from peers (Martin, 1982). Perceiving that they have some form of social support can greatly enhance adolescents' coming out experiences and acceptance of their LGB identities. Vincke and Bolton (1994) reported that men who perceived low levels of social support during the coming process were more likely to be depressed and to report extremely low levels of self-acceptance. Perceived social support from family, friends, and important others in the community could influence the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. If adolescents believe they do not have the social support needed to deal with the complex and convoluted process of accepting their LGB identities, they are likely to have lower levels of emotional well-being. In addition, individuals who feel like they have weak support systems tend to be heavier consumers of media than do individuals with strong support systems (Perse & Rubin, 1990). Controlling for perceived social support minimizes the possibility that perceived social support is responsible for the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being.

School climate. The school is far from a safe haven for adolescents developing LGB sexual identities. Instead, school can be a frightening and isolating experience for LGB teens. A recent national survey of self-identifying LGB adolescents between the ages of 13 and 21 (N = 6,209) revealed that the school climate towards LGB students continues to be damaging (GLSEN, 2007). Nearly 90% of LGB students reported being verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation, and almost 50% reported being physically harassed. Research at the Harvard Medical School found that LGB teens are nearly five times as likely to be absent from school because of fear about safety and more than four times as likely to have been threatened with a weapon at school (Garofalo et al., 1998). The pressure to conform to heteronormative standards in schools diminishes LGB adolescents' motivation to be affiliated

with school functions like sports or extra-curricular activities (GLSEN, 2007), leaving them more time to spend with the media. Controlling for school climate limits the possibility that school climate is responsible for the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being.

Religiosity. Mainstream religious communities in the United States tend to discourage any type of sexual experimentation; high levels of self-reported religiosity are related to a delay in sexual experimentation and a reduction in sexual activity among adolescents (Collins et al., 2004). Attractions, feelings, and emotions for same-sex others often run contrary to the deeply rooted religious beliefs of adolescents (Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993). Religious beliefs about sex and sexuality could then influence LGB adolescents' emotional well-being. Specifically, LGB teens who identify strongly with religion may have a more strenuous journey toward identifying with an LGB identity. In addition, adolescents who are strongly connected to their religion tend to spend less time with the media (Francis & Gibson, 1993). Thus, controlling religiosity reduces the possibility that this extraneous variable is responsible for the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being.

Geographic location. Adolescents who live in large, urban metropolitan areas are often afforded the opportunity to explore sexuality through locally-based organizations, centers, and services. However, adolescents in rural areas are geographically isolated from larger gay communities (Andersen, 1994). Adolescents living in rural communities might therefore have more obstacles to overcome in developing an LGB sexual identity. LGB individuals who are rurally located are also known to spend more time with the media than are those who have more urban home lives (Tikkanen & Ross, 2000). It seems reasonable that geographical location may

also be related to media exposure and emotional well-being and should be controlled in the data analyses.

Peer Sexuality. The friends of LGB teens can influence their emotional well-being. Research suggests that contact with other LGB youth helps sexual minority teens feel more positive about their sexuality (Schneider, 1991). LGB peers may provide LGB teens with a resource for information about LGB sexuality and entertainment that would otherwise only be afforded by media. Conversely, individuals who do not have alternative sources of information (e.g., LGB peers) may rely more on media as outlets for information about sex and sexuality. Accordingly, perceived peer sexuality was controlled in data analyses.

Motivation. In addition to the above variables, it is important to consider the motivation of the media consumer. The chief disadvantage to testing the above hypotheses using a survey is that the causal relationship between variables remains indeterminate (Baxter & Babbie, 2003; Gunter, 2002; Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). Instead of being able to make a claim that media exposure causes changes to emotional well-being, the present study will only be able to distinguish the degrees of association between media exposure, self-discrepancy, and emotional well-being. In an attempt to make stronger claims with correlational data, researchers have measured and controlled for participants' motivation to consume media, often referred to as selective exposure (Chaffee & McLeod, 1971). If media exposure variables significantly contribute to emotional well-being even after controlling for motivation, then the media-dejection relationships will be significant even for LGB adolescents who do not seek out media inclusive of LGB sexuality. Such a finding would suggest that any significant relationships between media exposure and emotional well-being must exist for reasons other than the simple

explanation that LGB teens seek out media congruent with their sexualities. Accordingly, motivation for consuming LGB inclusive media was controlled.

Method

Procedure

The survey was conducted online. One of the advantages of Web-based surveys is the ability to reach a group that is normally difficult to access because the population is small or group members are difficult to find (Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002; Zhang, 1999). Heckathorn (1997) refers to these populations as "hidden populations." Hidden populations exist when the size and boundaries of a population are unknown or when strong privacy concerns exist because membership in the population involves stigmatized behavior. Both of these qualifications for hidden populations are characteristic of lesbian, gay, and bisexual adolescents. Due to the hidden nature of LGB individuals' identities, the use of Web-based surveys is becoming increasingly popular as a method of accessing this sexual minority (Riggle, Rostosky, & Reedy, 2005).

In addition, participants tend to be more open and honest in their responses on Web-based questionnaires than on paper-and-pencil questionnaires, especially when responding to sensitive topics like sexuality (Joinson, 1999; Wright, Aquilino, & Supple, 1998). Most online surveys are done in solitude. The researcher is unseen and unheard. Consequently, participants perceive online surveys as providing more privacy and anonymity than more traditional survey methods (Riggle, Rostosky, & Reedy, 2005). It seems that participants may reveal more valid information at a higher disclosure rate when completing online surveys than in more traditional survey methods. The ability to reach the target demographic and the increase in privacy provided to participants justify conducting the survey online.

Given that the survey was conducted online, the recruitment procedures were also completed using computer-mediated communication. Mailing lists, online groups, and bulletin boards were the primary means of recruitment for this study. These recruitment procedures have been used effectively in previous online research targeting specific populations because their subscribers usually share a common interest or concern (Kaye & Johnson, 1999). The use of advertisements and announcements through mailing lists, online groups, and bulletin boards is not only an effective method of recruitment, but these techniques are the most widely used methods of recruiting LGB samples (Riggles, Rostosky, & Reedy, 2005). In order to recruit participants for the present study, announcements were sent to LGB-oriented groups throughout the United States through electronic mail. Advertisements were also posted on websites and chat rooms targeting LGB teens.

Obtaining parental consent for adolescents who do not feel safe revealing their sexual orientation to their parents could have caused risk to participants that outweighed the potential benefits of the study. Verbal and physical abuse, cutting off financial assistance, and abandonment are all very realistic consequences that LGB adolescents face in disclosing their sexual orientation to parents/guardians (Savin-Williams, 1994). Because of this, "outing" LGB teens to their parents for the purpose of parental consent could be very harmful. Researchers have found a way around the issue of parental consent in previous studies of LGB teens by utilizing web-based survey tools. In one study, the IRB determined that parental consent was not necessary "because… there was a certain level of risk that participants might experience in seeking parental consent, especially when not already 'out' to family members" (Detrie & Lease, 2007, pp. 183-184). Such an approach was approved by the University of Illinois IRB for the current study.

Once participants hyperlinked to the website containing the survey, the first page that they viewed contained the assent/consent form (Appendix D). Participants had the opportunity to click the "Next " button and move on to the questionnaire or they could simply direct their web browser away from the questionnaire. It was clear in the assent/consent form that by clicking "Next Page," individuals were voluntarily choosing to participate in the study. Participants then filled out the online questionnaire (Appendix E). Once participants completed the questionnaire, they were brought to a webpage thanking them for their participation and reminding them of teen assistance services that were mentioned in the assent/consent form.

A total of 1,007 adolescents viewed the homepage of the survey. Of the 1,001 who navigated to the survey, 573 adolescents chose to participate in the study. Although a true response rate cannot be calculated because the size of the population is undeterminable, if one considers the percentage of individuals who participated in the survey from the number of individuals who visited the homepage of the survey (e.g., the consent form), the survey for Study 2 would have a response rate of 57%.

Participants

Cross-sectional data were collected from a convenience sample of self-identifying lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth (N = 573). Participants ranged in age from 13 to 19 years (M = 16.49, SD = 1.30). Research shows that it is within these years that most adolescents begin to realize their sexual feelings, especially those adolescents developing sexual feelings towards peers of the same sex (Downey, 1994). Just over half of the participants were female (52.9%, n = 303) and just under half were male (47.1%; n = 270). The self-reported sexual identity of the participants varied. Forty-five percent (n = 258) identified as gay, while bisexual (27.6%, n = 158) and lesbian (23.4%, n = 134) identities were also common. A smaller portion of the sample

identified as queer (1.9%, *n* = 11) or as questioning/just curious (2.1%, *n* = 12). A majority of the adolescents identified as White (69.3%, *n* = 397) or as racially mixed (16.4%, *n* = 94). The remainder identified as Black/African American (5.8%, *n* = 33), "Other" (5.4%, *n* = 31), Asian (1.4%, *n* = 8), or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (0.2%, *n* = 1). Two percent (*n* = 9) of the sample chose not to select a racial identifier.

No survey research examining the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being among LGB teens currently exists in the published literature. However, previous research on media and sexual attitudes among adolescents has reported effect sizes ranging from .21 when examining television as the medium (e.g., Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999) to .25 when measuring magazine readership (e.g., Kim & Ward, 2004) to .29 when measuring music video exposure (e.g., Greenson & Williams, 1986). Given that these effects sizes are all within the range of .20 to .30, a power analysis using .20 concluded that a sample of 340 participants was necessary in order to achieve power of .80 (Cohen, 1988). The present study met this requirement with a sample of 573 participants.

Predictor Variables

The objective of the present study was to examine media as a socialization agent in the sexual identity development of LGB adolescents. As such, the main predictor of interest is media exposure generally. The universal experience of "media exposure" is of more interest than exposure to specific types of media. In addition, over 30% of the time adolescents spend with media is time spent multi-tasking with different media (Rideout, Foehr, & Robers, 2010). Measuring overall exposure to television, movies, magazines, and songs as a composite index rather than measuring exposure to each medium separately provided for a parsimonious examination of the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being as the initial

step in understanding the role of media in LGB teens' sexual identity development and emotional well-being. The two predictor variables were mainstream media exposure and GLO media exposure.

Mainstream media exposure. Mainstream media exposure was an index composed of participants' responses to items measuring the frequency of exposure to the mainstream media titles considered popular among LGB teens (Appendix A). Details on what defined mainstream media as popular are outlined in Chapter 3. Participants reported frequency of exposure to each media vehicle on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*Never*) to 4 (*All the time*). Self-reported frequency of exposure to the 81 media vehicles were then summed to create an overall mainstream media exposure score.

GLO media exposure. GLO media exposure was an index composed of responses to items measuring the frequency of exposure to the GLO media vehicles considered popular among LGB teens (Appendix B). Details on what defined GLO media as popular are outlined in Chapter 3. Participants reported frequency of exposure on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*Never*) to 4 (*All the time*). Self-reported frequency of exposure to the 15 media vehicles were then summed to create an overall GLO media exposure score.

Criterion Variables

Dejection. As discussed in Chapter 2, emotional well-being was defined as a low level of dejection-related emotions. The emotions measure developed by Higgins et al. (1986) to measure dejection was used to operationalize emotional well-being. The emotions measure was developed using the Multiple Affective Adjective Check List (Zuckermann & Lubin, 1965) by selecting items that measure dejection specifically. The measure asks participants to think about their emotions from a chronic state rather than as momentary affect. Participants indicated how much

they usually feel the dejection-related emotions on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Always*).Twelve items measured dejection-related emotions (e.g., *discouraged, not good enough, disappointed,* and *sad*). The internal consistency of the 12 items ($\alpha = .85$) was satisfactory. The majority of this dissertation discusses the "emotional well-being" of LGB teens. However, the criterion variable is measured in negative emotion; therefore, mathmatically negative relationships between the predictor variables and dejection indicate positive relationships between these predictors and emotional well-being.

Mediating Variable

Self-discrepancy. The selves questionnaire (Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1985) was used to measure ideal self discrepancy. The questionnaire has demonstrated high test-retest reliablity and predictive validity (Higgins, 1999; Higgins et al., 1985; Higgins et al., 1986; Strauman & Higgins, 1987). The measure asks participants to list up to 10 traits or attributes associated with different domains of the self (i.e., the actual self and the ideal self). After identifying each attribute, participants rated the degree to which the respective attribute reflects their self-concept on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Only a little*) to 4 (*Extremely*). Participants first completed the list measuring their actual selves, or who they think they are.

To be sure that participants were primed to be thinking about their sexuality when filling out the selves questionnaire, two questions regarding their sexuality ("What sexual identity best describes how you would label yourself?" and "How 'out' are you with your sexuality?")[5] immediately preceded the selves questionnaire. The inclusion of the two questions about sexuality increased the likelihood that participants would have sexually-relevant constructs activated when filling out the selves questionnaire. Some scholars would argue no such precaution was needed because the sexual identities of LGB individuals are much more central to

their self-concept than the sexual identities of heterosexuals (Eliason, 1996; Savin-Williams, 1995). Consequently, considering their sexuality just prior to being asked to describe themselves should have made the inclusion of attributes related to their sexual orientation a virtually instinctual response for participants.

Further, the stem question written by Higgins et al. (1985) was altered for the current study to prime participants to think about their sexual selves and to be age-appropriate:

> These first questions are just to help us learn what kind of person you are. These are easy questions and there are no wrong answers. The questions are about <u>you</u>, so you're the one who's the expert! Fill in as many spots as you can, but if you can't think of 10 words that's OK. Think about yourself in terms of the identity that you chose in the first question. We want you to list some words that describe yourself in terms of that identity. What kind of person are you? List some words that describe the kind of person you think you actually are. After you list each word, tell us how much you think this word describes who you are, using the options below each blank.

Participants then filled out the ideal list from the standpoint of the self (Harrison, 2001). The ideal list required participants to "list words that describe the kind of person you would ideally be if you could be perfect." The selves questionnaire was scored according to the protocol developed and validated by Higgins (1987). Each attribute listed by participants in their actual self lists was compared with the attributes listed in their ideal self lists using *Webster's New World Thesaurus,* 3rd edition (2003). The comparisons were made by the same undergraduate students who served as coders for Study 1, after undergoing a separate training session for coding self-discrepancies. The comparisons yielded four attribute relationships: synonymous attributes that differ by no more than one rating point were classified as *matches,* synonymous

attributes that differ by two or more ratings points were classified as *mismatches of degree*, attributes that were antonyms were classified as *mismatches*, and attributes that are neither synonyms nor antonyms were considered *non-matches*. Non-matches were excluded from the calculation of self-discrepancies. Self-discrepancies were calculated by subtracting the total number of matches from the total number of mismatches. True mismatches were weighted twice as much as mismatches of degree (e.g., Harrison, 2001; Higgins, 1987; Tangney, Niedenthal, Covert, & Barlow, 1998). In sum, the following standard formula was used to provide self-discrepancy scores for each participant in the study: 2(*n* mismatches) + (*n* mismatches of degree) – (*n* matches).

Moderating Variables

Demographics. Age and sex were two demographic variables considered as possible moderators in the present analyses. Age was measured using a single item asking participants to report the age that they turned on their last birthday. Sex was measured using a single item asking participants to report the sex that they were born. Participants were allowed to select "male," "female," or "intersex." No participant selected intersex as his/her biological sex.

Sexual Identity Commitment. Sexual identity commitment was measured using the Meaure of Sexual Identity Exploration and Commitment (MoSIEC). The MoSIEC is a 22-item measure with 4 distinct factors assessing commitment, exploration, sexual identity uncertainty, and synthesis/integration in a manner consistent with Marcia's (1966) model of identity development reviewed in Chapter 1 (Worthington, Navarro, Savoy, & Hampton, 2008). Sample items include, "My sexual values are clear to me" (commitment), "I am actively trying to understand my sexuality" (exploration), and "My sexual needs match well with who I am" (synthesis). Items were rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*Very*

uncharacteristic of me) to 5 (*Very characteristic of me*). The measure is relatively novel and to date has only been employed in research with adults. As such, a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to determine if the underlying 4-factor structure for the 22 items of the MoSIEC remained consistent with an adolescent sample.

Five factors emerged from the factor analysis. The five factors accounted for 66.16% of the variance. All items loaded onto the factors as proposed by the scale's originators (Worthington et al., 2008) with the exception of two items that accounted for the fifth factor (and 5.42% of the variance). These two items that created the fifth factor had loaded onto the exploration factor in previous research. These items measured exploration in the past tense. Given that the other 6 items measuring exploration were in the present tense, it is not surprising that an adolescent sample would not think about exploration in the past tense in the same way as an adult. These two items were removed from further analyses. Items measuring exploration were then reverse coded so that higher scores on all items represented higher commitment to sexual identity. The internal consistency of the scale was satisfactory ($\alpha = .88$). Means of responses to the 20 items were then calculated to create commitment scores for each participant. Higher scores represent more sexual identity commitment; lower scores represent more sexual identity exploration.

Covariates

Race. Race was measured using the single-item measure used by the United States government to measure race during the 2000 census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Participants reported their race/ethnicity by selecting one of the following options: White, Black/African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Two or more races/Mixed, or Other.

Perceived social support. The multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS) was used to measure perceived social support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988). The scale measures perceived support from family, friends, and significant others. The scale has demonstrated good internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and construct validity (Zimet et al., 1988). Internal consistency was high in the present study ($\alpha = .89$). Participants indicated how much they agreed with each of 12 items using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (S*trongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*). Given that the scale was used to measure perceived social support among adolescents, the 4 items concerning significant others were edited to reflect the participant's perceived social support from "important others," defined for the participants as "people in your school or community who may be important in your life, like your teachers, principles, coaches, community leaders, religious leaders, or other adults who you interact with on a regular basis." In addition, items were adapted so that they were easily understandable to an adolescent audience. For example, "There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows" was altered for the questionnaire to, "There is an important other with whom I can talk about the things that make me happy and the things that make me sad." Other sample items include, "My family really tries to help me," and "I can count on my friends when things go wrong."

School climate. The school connectedness items from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health was used to measure perceived school climate (Resnick et al., 1997). The scale has been used as a covariate in previous research examining the relationship between media exposure and sexual attitudes (L'Engle, Brown, & Kenneavy, 2006). The school connectedness measure consists of the following three items: "I feel happiness when I'm at school," "I feel teachers care," and "I have trouble getting along with teachers" (reverse coded). Participants

responded to each statement on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*All the time*). Responses to each item were summed across the three items to produce a school climate score for each participant. Internal consitency for the school connectedness measure was lower than other measures in the current study ($\alpha = .65$).

Religiosity. A three-item scale was used to measure religiosity. Participants were asked to indicate their responses to three questions: "How religious are you," "How often do you pray," and "How often do you attend religious services?" Possible responses ranged from 0 (*Not at all*/*never*) to 4 (*Very*/*very regularly*). The scale has demonstrated good internal consistency when administered to both undergraduate students ($\alpha = .89$) and high school students ($\alpha = .77$) in previous research (Schooler & Ward, 2006; Ward, Hansbrough, & Walker, 2005; respectively). In the current study, $\alpha = .77$. Responses to each question were summed to produce a religiosity score for each participant.

Geographic location. Geographic location was determined using a single item developed for the present study. Other methods of collecting participants' location were considered too intrusive for a study advertised to participants as entirely anonymous. Following the question, "Which of the following best describes where you live," participants choose an option on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*rural country home*) to 5 (*large metropolitan city*).

Peer Sexuality. Peer sexuality was measured using a single item developed for the present study. Following the question, "How do your closest friends identify sexually," participants chose an option on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*My friends are all straight*) to 5 (*My friends are all gay/lesbian/bisexual*).

Motivation. To measure motivation, participants were asked to think about 10 hypothetical media vehicles and then to report the likelihood that they would choose these media

vehicles if given the opportunity. For example, participants were asked if they would watch "a new television show about crime." Participants then reported the likelihood they would choose to watch/listen to/read each media vehicle by responding *yes*, *maybe*, or *no*. Of the 10 hypothetical media in the questionnaire, 4 were directly related to the LGB community. For example, participants were asked if they would read "a magazine about gay and lesbian teen hangouts" or watch "a new movie that stars an openly gay actor." A motivation score was created by summing participants' responses to the 4 items directly related to the LGB community ($\alpha = .77$). This method of measuring motivation is consistent with previous research attempting to control for motivation in cross-sectional data analyses (Brown et al., 2005; Chaffee & McLeod, 1971; Harrison & Cantor, 1997).

Additional Variables

Positive mood inducers. The sample for the present study was drawn from a vulnerable population of adolescents questioning their sexual identities. In an effort to minimize potential risk to the participants, positive mood-inducing items were included in the questionnaire. First, positive mood-inducing items immediately followed the multidimensional scale of perceived social support. Participants were provided with items like, "I feel good about myself" and "I think I am a unique person." Participants responded by indicating *yes*, *no*, or *maybe*. These questions were strategically placed so that they followed the most intrusive scales in the questionnaire. In addition, the imagination mood-inducement procedure (Westermann et al., 1996) was the final measure in the questionniare. Participants were instructed to imagine a situation from their lives that has evoked happiness. They were then asked to write down the imagined event in an open-ended essay format, trying their best to re-experience the situation

that made them happy in the first place. Including the imagination mood-inducement procedure was the final attempt to ensure that the participants left the study in a positive mood.

Results

Analysis Plan

Hierarchical linear regression analysis was used to test for the presence of main effects of mainstream media and GLO media exposure on dejection. To reduce problems with multicollinearity, all variables except for the criterion variables were mean-centered. This approach is consistent with standard procedures used to combat multicollinearity in hierarchal regression models (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Predictor variables were entered into each analysis in three steps. Age, sex, race, perceived social support, school climate, religiosity, geographical location, peer sexuality, sexual identity commitment, and motivation were entered into the first block because these variables could be related to both media exposure and emotional well-being. After removing these possible sources of variance, the second block contained mainstream media exposure and GLO media exposure. The third block of the regression model consisted of two-way interactions to test for moderators.[6] In order for a variable to be considered a moderator in the present study, the interaction term had to explain more of the variance in media exposure than the previous steps entered into the analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Descriptive statistics for the variables in the current study appear in Table 15. Zero-order correlations among predictor variables and criterion variables can be found in Table 16.

To test the hypothesis predicting mediation, path models of the data were crafted following the regression-based mediation procedures outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). A variable functions as a mediator when it meets the following conditions: (a) the predictor

variable significantly contributes to the variance in the criterion variable; (b) the predictor variable significantly contributes to the variance in the presumed mediating variable; (c) the presumed mediating variable significantly contributes to the criterion variable; and (d) a previously significant relationship between the predictor variable and criterion variable is no longer significant when the presumed mediating variable is controlled. Although this regression-based mediation model was originally crafted for experiments involving treatment variables (Judd & Kenny, 1981), the method is also valid for cross-sectional data. All statistical tests were conducted at the $p < .05$ significance level (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Direct Relationships

The first three hypotheses predicted that media exposure variables would have a significant negative relationship with dejection among LGB teens. As a reminder, emotional well-being was defined as the absence of dejection-related emotions. Any mathmatically negative relationship between media exposure and dejection should be interpreted as a positive relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being.

Hypothesis 1. The first hypothesis predicted that there would be a significant negative relationship between LGB adolescents' exposure to mainstream media and feelings of dejection. As indicated in Table 17, the covariates contributed significantly to LGB adolescents' dejection, F_{change} (10, 548) = 17.61, $p = .000$. In particular, teens reporting high levels of social support were significantly more likely to report lower dejection than were teens who reported low levels of social support ($\beta = -.31$, $p < .001$). Teens reporting more comfortable school climates were also more likely to report lower dejection ($\beta = -.25$, $p < .001$). Adolescents reporting higher levels of commitment to their sexual identities were also more likely to report lower dejection ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .001$). The addition of media exposure variables significantly improved the model,

F_{change} (2, 546) = 5.01, $p < .01$. However, mainstream media exposure did not significantly contribute to dejection (β = -.05, $p = .25$). Hypothesis 1 was not supported; mainstream media exposure was not significantly negatively related to LGB teens' feelings of dejection.

Hypothesis 2. The second hypothesis predicted that there would be a significant negative relationship between LGB adolescents' exposure to GLO media and feelings of dejection. As mentioned above, the addition of media exposure variables significantly improved the regression model, F_{change} (2, 546) = 5.01, $p < .01$. As indicated in Table 17, exposure to GLO media contributed significantly to dejection (β = -.10, $p < .05$). LGB teens reporting heavier exposure to GLO media reported significantly lower levels of dejection than did LGB teens reporting lighter exposure to GLO media. This factor accounted for an additional 2% of the variance after all of the other variables were controlled. Hypothesis 2 was supported; GLO media exposure was significantly negatively related to LGB teens' feelings of dejection.

Hypothesis 3. The third hypothesis predicted that the relationship between GLO media exposure and feelings of dejection would be stronger than the relationship between mainstream media and feelings of dejection. Mainstream media exposure (β = -.05) was not signficantly related to dejection, whereas GLO media exposure (β = -.10) was significantly related to dejection. A test of the difference between the slopes (Paternoster et al., 1998) was significant, t (2) = 23.5, $p < .01$. This hypothesis was supported; GLO media exposure was a stronger predictor of dejection than mainstream media was.

Moderation

Hypothesis 4. The fourth hypothesis predicted that the relationships between media exposure and dejection would be stronger for older adolescents than for younger adolescents. As indicated in Table 17, the two interaction terms inclusive of age were not signficant predictors of

dejection. Hypothesis 4 was not supported; age did not moderate the relationship between media exposure and dejection.

Hypothesis 5. The fifth hypothesis predicted that the relationships between media exposure and dejection would be stronger for males than for females. As indicated in Table 17, the two interaction terms inclusive of sex were not signficant predictors of dejection. Hypothesis 5 was not supported; sex did not moderate the relationship between media exposure and dejection.

Hypothesis 6. The sixth hypothesis predicted that the relationships between media exposure and dejection would be stronger for adolescents low in sexual identity commitment than for adolescents high in sexual identity commitment. Table 17 reveals that the interaction between mainstream media exposure and identity commitment was not statistically significant but the interaction between GLO media exposure and identity commitment was statistically significant ($\beta = -.10$, $p < .05$). A simple slopes test (Aiken & West, 1991) was conducted to interpret the interaction effect for GLO media. The unstandardized simple slope for GLO media exposure 1 *SD* below the mean of sexual identity commitment was -.02 ($p = .001$) and the unstandardized simple slope for GLO media exposure 1 *SD* above the mean of sexual identity commitment was .00 ($p = .72$). The interaction between GLO media exposure and identity commitment on dejection was then diagrammed. As indicated in Figure 5, the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection was stronger for adolescents reporting low levels of sexual identity commitment than for adolescents reporting high levels of sexual identity commitment. Hypothesis 6 was partially supported; identity commitment did not moderate the relationship between mainstream media exposure and dejection. However, identity commitment did moderate the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection, as predicted; the

relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection was significantly stronger for adolescents lower in sexual identity commitment. Given the significant interaction between identity commitment and GLO media exposure, subsequent analyses examining the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection were separated by sexual identity commitment.

Mediation

Hypothesis 7. The seventh hypothesis predicted that self discrepancy would mediate the relationships between media exposure and dejection. Because there was no significant relationship between mainstream media exposure and dejection, only GLO media exposure was examined as the predictor variable in the mediation model. Given the moderating effect of sexual identity commitment on the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection, two separate mediation models were constructed using GLO media as the predictor variable. One model included participants reporting higher sexual identity commitment; the other analyzed participants reporting lower sexual identity commitment. High and low commitment groups were determined by a media split (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The analyses examining the mediating role of self-discrepancy in the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection among higher-commitment teens are detailed first.

For highly committed LGB teens, the first requirement of demonstrating a relationship between the predictor variable and the criterion variable was not met. As indicated in Table 18, the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection approached significance ($\beta = -.11$, $p < .10$) among higher-commitment teens. The second requirement for mediation also was not met. As indicated in Table 19, GLO media exposure did not significantly contributed to self-discrepancy among higher-commitment teens ($\beta = .07$, $p = .36$). Although the second requirement was not met, the third requirement of demonstrating mediation was satisfied. As

indicated in Table 20, the presumed mediating variable significantly contributed to dejection, controlling for GLO media exposure ($\beta = .20$, $p < .001$). The mediation prediction, diagrammed in Figure 6, was not supported when examining adolescents higher in sexual identity commitment. GLO media exposure and ideal discrepancy were significant contributors to dejection, but GLO media exposure was not a significant contributor to ideal discrepancy. The direct negative relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection was not reduced to non-significance when ideal discrepancy was controlled.

The same regression-based mediation procedure was conducted to examine the hypothesized mediating relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection among lower-commitment adolescents. The first requirement of demonstrating mediation was to test the relationship between the predictor variable and the criterion variable. This requirement was met. As indicated in Table 18, exposure to GLO media was significantly related to dejection ($\beta = -.12$, $p < .05$) among LGB teens who reported lower sexual identity commitment. The second requirement for mediation was to demonstrate that GLO media exposure significantly contributed to self-discrepancy. As indicated in Table 19, the second requirement also was met: a significant negative relationship existed between GLO media exposure and ideal discrepancy ($\beta = -.19$, $p < .01$). The third requirement of demonstrating mediation was to show that the presumed mediating variable significantly contributed to dejection, controlling for GLO media exposure. As indicated in Table 20, this requirement also was met: ideal discrepancy significantly contributed to dejection ($\beta = .17$, $p < .001$) even when controlling for GLO media exposure. With these three requirements satisfied, Baron and Kenny (1986) argued that mediation is occurring if a previously significant relationship between the predictor variable and the criterion variable is reduced to non-significance when the presumed mediating variable is

controlled. If mediation is not at work, then controlling the presumed mediator should have no effect on the magnitude of the predictor-criterion relationship. As indicated in Figure 7, the mediation prediction was supported for GLO media exposure as the predictor and self-discrepancy as the mediator for dejection, but only for lower-commitment adolescents. The significant direct negative relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection was reduced to non-significance when ideal discrepancy was controlled.

Some scholars have argued that relying on the steps approach is limiting because it does not provide a direct hypothesis test for mediation and lacks statistical power (Dearing & Hamilton, 2006). MacKinnon et al. (2002) noted that Type-II errors occur more frequently with this method of testing mediation than they do with alternative tests for mediation. This high Type-II error rate reflects the requirement that the predictor variable be significantly related to the criterion variable before controlling for the mediator. One method to more rigorously test for mediation is to reinforce the findings from the Baron & Kenny (1986) mediation test with a Sobel test (Sobel, 1982 as cited in Dearing & Hamilton, 2006). The Sobel test for mediation in the model using participants low in sexual identity commitment was indeed significant, $z = 2.04$, $p < .05$. This test strengthens the argument for the mediation model outlined in Figure 7.

Hypothesis 7 was partially supported. Self-discrepancy did not mediate the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection among LGB adolescents higher in sexual identity commitment. However, self-discrepancies mediated the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection among LGB adolescents lower in sexual identity commitment.

Discussion

The primary purpose of the present study was to assess the relationships between media exposure and emotional well-being among LGB adolescents. A significant relationship did not

exist between mainstream media exposure and dejection after controlling for age, sex, race, perceived social support, school climate, religiosity, geographical location, peer sexuality, sexual identity commitment, and motivation for exposure to media inclusive of LGB sexuality. This finding could be explained by the findings of Study 1 suggesting that the context of LGB depictions in mainstream media differ from those in GLO media. Mainstream media portrayed LGB sexuality less often than did GLO media. When LGB sexuality was depicted in mainstream media, it was often sanitized. LGB sexual talk was rarely sexual; rather LGB sexuality was primarily depicted as the punch line to a joke or discussed as a social or cultural issue. LGB sexual behavior was also rare in mainstream media, depicting LGB individuals as non-sexually as possible. Exposure to depictions of LGB sexuality in mainstream media likely relays the message that LGB individuals exist in society. However, because mainstream media depict LGB sexuality as a social or cultural issue, LGB sexual instances in mainstream media may not resonate with adolescents. The tokenistic, simplistic depictions of LGB sexuality in mainstream media may not equip LGB teens with the information that they need to better understand and label their feelings. Participants in several interview studies have noted that depictions of LGB sexuality in the media helped them recognize that other lesbian, gay, and bisexual people exist in society and that there was a community to which the participants could belong (Evans, 2007; McKee, 2000). Yet, participants also noted that depictions of LGB sexuality that were stereotypical or void of sex were less helpful for understanding their sexuality. For example, one participant in McKee's (2000) study noted,

> …movies [that had] the guy who'd run around like a little girl, and everybody would laugh at him like he was the clown. I didn't want to be the clown. I thought of myself as

> being average, slightly above average intelligence and ability, I didn't want to be the class clown, I didn't want to be the butt of jokes … These images I was getting until I was fifteen, and I didn't like myself a great deal up until I was fifteen … I was going through phases where I really needed to label myself, I needed that clarity ... that was what I was searching for. (p. 10).

Consider Fox's Kurt Hummel, a gay male character on *Glee,* and Angela Montenegro, a bisexual detective on *Bones*. Kurt is a member of the glee club. He has a high vocal range, his attire is fashionably eccentric, and his mannerisms are often feminine and flamboyant. Angela Montenegro is one of the few reoccurring bisexual characters on network television (GLAAD, 2009). Angela, a forensic scientist who specializes in facial reconstruction during criminal investigations, is very much a free spirit with a masculine energy. Plot lines involving Angela's romantic interests often depict her inability to commit to either a man or a woman. Both Kurt and Angela fit stereotypes of gay men and bisexual individuals. Kurt is fashionable and feminine; Angela is free spirited and unable to commit to a relationship, let alone to one sex or the other. The findings from Study 1 of this dissertation support the argument that Kurt and Angela are not oddities; indeed, they are representative of depictions of LGB sexuality more generally in mainstream media. Although Study 1 found that LGB sexual instances are typically validating in mainstream media, LGB sexual instances are still ornamental, nonsexual depictions of LGB individuals that may fall short of providing LGB teens with the information needed to clarify their sexual identities.

A significant negative relationship existed between exposure to GLO media and dejection, even when controlling for age, sex, race, perceived social support, school climate, religiosity, geographical location, peer sexuality, sexual identity commitment, and motivation for

exposure to media inclusive of LGB sexuality. This finding supports sexual scripting theory. LGB teens likely receive little information about LGB sexuality from interpersonal socialization agents in their everyday lives (Savin-Williams, 1995). Consequently, learning scripts about societal sexual norms from media becomes more likely (Harris, 2004). The data revealed in Chapter 3 suggest that both mainstream media and GLO media are depicting LGB sexuality, but that GLO media depict the sexual nature of LGB sexuality more explicitly and realistically. GLO media may provide adolescents with information about LGB sexuality that was not provided by any other sexual socialization agents. In line with sexual scripting theory, exposure to LGB sexuality in GLO media could expand sexual scripts for sexually questioning teens beyond the heterosexual norms that are typically instilled by family, peers, schools, and communities.

Take *Queer As Folk* as an example. *Queer As Folk* is a television drama about gay males and lesbians living in Pittsburgh. The GLO television program was popular among the LGB teens in the current study. Two of the protagonists in *Queer As Folk* are Michael and Ben. Michael and Ben are married. Michael worked at a large discount store at the beginning of the series but eventually followed his dreams of opening a comic book store. Ben is a college professor. At one point in the series, Michael and Ben become foster parents. Storylines involving Michael and Ben on *Queer As Folk* are often framed around issues related to child rearing and relationship obstacles, issues that any heterosexual couple would also incur. Should a male adolescent questioning his sexuality be exposed to *Queer As Folk*, he would see the depiction of two gay males in a lifestyle that the adolescent had likely never previously thought could be occupied by gay men. In turn, LGB sexuality may now be added to previously developed sexual scripts as a normal, socially acceptable sexual orientation that would no longer

be perceived as an obstacle to traditional rites of passage such as relationship commitment and parenting.

All representations of LGB sexuality do not have to mimic heterosexual scripts to assist sexually questioning teens, however. Instead of fitting LGB sexuality into previously developed sexual scripts, LGB teens may also expand their sexual scripts. For example, one of the GLO television programs that was popular among the LGB teens in the current study was *Exes & Ohs* on the LOGO television network. *Exes & Ohs* is a drama about the dating life of a lesbian documentary film maker who has a vivid imagination and a long list of former lovers. The program follows her failed navigation of the lesbian dating scene and the drama that ensues. Should a female adolescent questioning her sexuality be exposed to *Exes & Ohs*, she would see the depiction of lesbian relationships that she had likely never previously viewed. Although *Exes & Ohs* does not present LGB individuals in traditionally heterosexual roles like Michael and Ben on *Queer As Folk*, the program may provide the information needed to expand the sexual scripts that the teen had previously based on other, more heteronormative sexual socialization agents. Expanding her sexual script could assist in sexual identity development and, in turn, increase her emotional well-being. The significant negative relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection supports the argument that media exposure may influence the emotional well-being of LGB teens by altering their sexual scripts to validate their LGB sexualities.

Perceived social support and school climate had the strongest relationships with dejection in the hierarchal regression models created for this study. This finding lends support to scholars who have argued that supportive acknowledgement of heterosexual individuals close in relation to sexually questioning youth can begin to bridge the gap between the identity development stages of acceptance and integration (Tasker & McCann, 1999). Many LGB teens will base their

expectations of family members' responses to their sexuality on very general ideas about conventionality and whether difference is accepted and appreciated within the family or whether the family is intolerant (Berg, 1985). As such, teens who perceive that family members, peers, important others, and school officials will be supportive when they begin to openly disclose their sexuality will likely report higher levels of emotional well-being than will adolescents who do not think they have strong social support networks in the family, among peers, or at school.

It is also important to note that perceived social support and school climate are variables likely intertwined with and influenced by media exposure. Completely disconnecting parents, peers, and school officials from media does not reflect the fact that these important interpersonal resources are likewise influenced by media exposure. Studies show that exposure to gay and lesbian characters in film and on television has been associated with more positive attitudes toward LGB sexuality among heterosexual individuals (Riggle, Ellis, & Crawford, 1996; Bonds-Raacke, 2007). Parents, therefore, plausibly derive some of their conceptions about sexuality from media and integrate those conceptions into their parenting practices as well as into their communication patterns with their children. Future research should continue to dissect the possible influence of exposure to LGB sexuality in the media on parents, teachers, and others who may be vitally important interpersonal contacts for sexually questioning youth attempting to explore and solidify their sexual identities.

Although perceived social support and school climate were the strongest predictors of dejection, GLO media exposure also significantly contributed to dejection when perceived social support and school climate were controlled in the regression model. Although a relationship existed between GLO media exposure and dejection, the causal relationship between the predictor variable and the outcome variable cannot be determined given the cross-sectional

nature of the data (Baxter & Babbie, 2003; Gunter, 2002; Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). As such, motivation to consume media inclusive of LGB sexuality was measured in an attempt to control selective exposure (Chaffee & McLeod, 1971). Motivation to consume media inclusive of LGB sexuality was not a significant predictor of dejection. Consequently, the negative relationship between media exposure and dejection was significant even for LGB adolescents who did not seek out media inclusive of LGB sexuality. This finding suggests that the significant negative relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being must have existed for reasons beyond the explanation that LGB teens seek out media congruent with their sexualities. The inclusion of motivation in the regression models certainly does not prove that GLO media exposure causes less dejection, but it does strengthen the argument.

Three variables were analyzed as possible moderators in the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. Hypothesis 4 predicted that age would moderate the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. This hypothesis was not supported. The failure to reject the null hypothesis here supports the assumption interwoven into LGB identity development models that the stages of LGB identity development are not linear nor are they standardized for all who experience them. Rather, identity scholars have argued that individuals begin the process of sexual identity development at different ages, reach various stages at different ages, may digress back into a previous stage at any time, and may reach stages at a faster or slower rate than others (Cass, 1979; Savin-Williams, 1990). A second possible explanation involves the lack of variance in age in the sample. Very little variance in age could have made differences by age difficult to detect. As such, age was not a significant predictor of dejection, nor were any interactions involving age significant contributors to dejection in the hierarchal regression model predicting dejection.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that sex would moderate the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. This hypothesis was based on the finding from Study 1 that a vast majority of LGB sexual instances in media were initiated by gay men. Lesbians were only occasionally the source of LGB sexual instances in both mainstream media and GLO media. This hypothesis was not supported; the relationships between media exposure variables and dejection were not moderated by sex. One possible explanation for this null finding lies in the salience of depictions of lesbian and bisexual women in the media. Although not as common as depictions of gay males, lesbians were occasionally the source of LGB sexual instances in mainstream media (8.18%) and GLO media (27.57%) in Study 1. Although sexual scripting theory assumes that continual exposure to a sexual script makes the script more accessible and, in turn, more likely to be retrieved when making judgments (Laws & Schwartz, 1977), exposure to one salient depiction of lesbian sexuality may be all that is needed for a sexually questioning female adolescent to better comprehend how the label "lesbian" could fit into her sexual identity. The idea that one powerful depiction could influence an individual is the foundational assumption of the drench hypothesis of media effects (Greenberg, 1988). The drench hypothesis posits that a single salient image can have powerful effects on young media consumers who identify with the respective image.

A second possible explanation for the lack of moderation is that sexual minority female adolescents may identify with portrayals of LGB sexuality even if they depict males instead of females. Participants in Kivel and Kleiber's (2000) study noted that exposure to LGB individuals in television programs and film assisted them in coming to terms with their LGB sexualities even if the participants' sex was not the same as that of the non-heterosexual character. Given that sex did not moderate the relationship between media exposure variables and dejection, Study 2 may

lend support to the argument that LGB youth may identify with non-heterosexual media characters regardless of the characters' biological sex. Future research more closely dissecting sex differences in media exposure and emotional well-being would be useful for determining how important the sex of media characters is for identification among sexual minority youth.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that sexual identity commitment would moderate the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. This hypothesis was partially supported. Identity commitment did not moderate the relationship between mainstream media exposure and dejection. Identity commitment did, however, moderate the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection as predicted; the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection was significantly stronger for adolescents lower in sexual identity commitment than for adolescents higher in sexual identity commitment. GLO media often depicted LGB sexuality in a more nuanced, sexualized fashion. Study 1 concluded that LGB sexual talk in GLO media was about the LGB identity and the relational and sexual aspects of being LGB. LGB sexual behavior was commonplace in GLO media, depicting LGB individuals as sexual beings. The negative relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection was significantly stronger for LGB teens reporting lower sexual identity commitment than for LGB teens reporting higher sexual identity commitment. According to the models of sexual identity development outlined in Chapter 2, it is during exploration when adolescents actively search for information that could be useful for labeling their sexuality. GLO media may be providing sexually questioning adolescents with the sexualized, realistic portrayals of LGB sexuality that they are seeking to help them understand and label their feelings.

Adolescents who have already gone through the exploration stage of sexual identity development and have come to accept their own sexual identity as LGB may not be as influenced

by the sexualized, realistic portrayal of LGB individuals that GLO media offer. Once an adolescent commits to his or her sexual identity, depictions of LGB sexuality in mainstream media and GLO media reinforce the acceptance of an LGB identity. For adolescents who are intensely exploring their sexuality, depictions of LGB sexuality in GLO media may actually assist in understanding and labeling their feelings. The claim that GLO media provide teens who are exploring their sexual identities with sexualized, realistic portrayals of LGB sexuality needed to understand and label their feelings is supported by the mediation models derived from the seventh hypothesis reviewed below.

One of the principal objectives of the present study was to examine the role that sexual identity played in the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. Applying self-discrepancy theory, the magnitude of discrepancies between an adolescent's perceived actual self and perceived ideal self was predicted to mediate the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. This hypothesis was partially supported. Self-discrepancy did mediate the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection, but only for LGB teens lower in sexual identity commitment. As noted when discussing hypothesis 6, this finding could reflect the context of LGB sexual instances in GLO media. Support for the mediation model among lower-commitment teens suggests that increased exposure to realistic depictions of LGB sexuality decreases the magnitude of ideal self-discrepancies, which in turn decreases feelings of dejection. GLO media exposure may be related to ideal self-discrepancies due to the broader context of LGB sexual instances in GLO media. The content analysis in Study 1 revealed that adolescents exposed to GLO media would consume diverse sexual portrayals of LGB sexuality.

Identification with a media character is one of the most important determinants of the media's impact (Dubow et al., 2007). GLO media may provide sexually questioning teens with

varied representations of LGB sexuality that teens could identify with and learn from during sexual exploration. Consider the GLO film *Another Gay Movie*. The film portrays four gay male high school students who have made a pact to lose their virginity before their high school graduation. The protagonists are stereotyped, but not because of their sexuality. One of the characters is the star athlete, another is the school bookworm. The four gay males in the film have very little in common outside of their attraction to the same sex. The realistic, diverse depictions of LGB sexuality in GLO media may provide an LGB teen with the information needed to alter his or her ideal self and, subsequently, decrease the magnitude of the difference between the actual self and the ideal self.

Although self-discrepancies mediated the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection for LGB adolescents lower in sexual identity commitment, self-discrepancies did not mediate the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection for LGB adolescents highly committed to their sexual identities. In fact, GLO media exposure was not significantly related to the magnitude of self discrepancies among highly committed teens at all. LGB teens who are low in identity commitment are attempting to understand how their sexual identities fit into their self-concept. Exposure to LGB sexuality in GLO media may then influence beliefs about the self among teens with highly malleable self-concepts. GLO media exposure may not have the same influence on LGB teens highly committed to their sexual identities because they have achieved their sexual identities and have committed to those identities; thus external sources of information like the media wield relatively little influence. However, GLO media exposure was still negatively related to dejection among LGB teens highly committed to their sexual identities.

One possible explanation for this relationship is that LGB teens high in sexual identity commitment are attempting to find their in-group. After accepting an LGB sexual identity, many

individuals continue to struggle due to the absence of any group identity (Harrison, 2003). As outlined in Chapter 1, belonging to a group of individuals who share similar identity attributes can provide a shared sense of survival or common cause (DeVos, 1982; Tajfel, 1978). LGB characters in GLO media may compensate for the lack of real life LGB peers, providing LGB teens with a sense of group identity that can be a powerful coping mechanism for uniting individuals and assisting them with differences in identity and discrimination based on that identity.

A second possible explanation for the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection among LGB teens high in sexual identity commitment lies in the type of information that LGB teens seek from media. Tripp (1975) suggested when detailing models of sexual identity development that the more committed people are to their sexual identities, the more likely they are to learn adaptive mechanisms to protect the self against social rejection. LGB individuals often develop even higher levels of coping skills and self-regard than the average individual does (Gagnon & Simon, 1973). LGB teens low in sexual identity commitment may be learning information about LGB sexuality that they then use to understand their sexualities, but LGB teens who have committed to their sexual identities may be using GLO media to learn how to create mechanisms to protect their sexual identity. Garnering information about identity protection may lower feelings of dejection among those teens highly committed to their LGB sexual identities.

A third possible explanation for the direct relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection among LGB teens could lie in the comedic nature of GLO media. All of the GLO films and 50% of the GLO television programs that were popular among LGB teens were comedies. The inherently comedic nature of GLO media could be self-deprecating for LGB teens and, in

turn, relieve feelings of dejection. If the humorous undertones of GLO media are influencing dejection, GLO media may make LGB teens feel better about their sexual stigma but might not directly influence identity.

Another possible explanation for the significant relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection lies beyond the content of GLO media, involving the media viewing experience. Co-viewing may be an important variable for understanding the role that media play in emotional well-being among LGB teens. Adolescents are highly likely to consume media with others, mainly with their peers (Dubow et al., 2007). Co-viewing with peers can strengthen group identity and peer relationships among teens (Huntemann & Morgan, 2001). If teens are consuming GLO media with others, it could be the interpersonal component of the media experience that is lessening feelings of dejection rather than the content of the GLO media that they are consuming. Future research should examine the role that co-viewing plays in the relationships between media exposure, sexual identity, and emotional well-being among LGB adolescents.

A discussion of the effect sizes in Study 2 is warranted given the rather small relationships between media exposure variables and dejection. According to social scientific convention, an effect size of .10 is considered small; an effect size of .30 is considered medium; and an effect size of .50 is considered large (Cohen, 1988). Applying these standards, one can easily conclude that the overall direct effect of GLO media exposure ($r = .12$) on dejection was small. Although this effect size is small, it is not trivial. In response to critics who belittle communication research for small effects, Gerbner et al. (2002) wrote,

> …a range of 5% to 15% margins in a large and otherwise stable field often signals a landslide, a market takeover, or an epidemic, and it overwhelmingly

tips the scale of any closely balanced choice, vote, or other decision. (p. 50)

The effect sizes in the present study were small, but they may have significant repercussions. LGB adolescents are four times more likely to commit suicide than heterosexual teens are (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2006), possibly due to their heightened risk for a variety of psychological distresses (e.g., Anderson, 1994; Anhalt & Morris, 1998; Diamond & Lucas, 2004). In October of 2010, a string of gay adolescent suicides sparked a national debate about the vulnerability of sexual minority teens. Talking heads in the news media debated the factors that may have been associated with the emotional health of gay adolescents engaging in suicidal behaviors. The emotional well-being of LGB teens was framed by the news media, the government, and LGB advocacy groups as a public health issue following the suicide outbreak (McKinley, 2010).

Statistical effects that are small in size could still be vitally important for understanding the stressors involved in sexual identity development and in creating interventions to assist sexually questioning youth during the trials of adolescence. For example, Bushman and Anderson (2001) presented a scenario that they used to justify the importance of small effect sizes in the media violence literature; this scenario can be adapted here. In the present study, the media exposure variables accounted for an additional 2% of variance in dejection after all other covariates were controlled in the primary hierarchal regression model in the present study. Should concern be raised over such a small percentage? There are an estimated 86.4 million adolescents living in the United States (U.S. Census, 2010). Applying the assumption that 5% of the population is LGB (Romero et al., 2007), 4.3 million American teens will go through a sexual identity crisis and ultimately achieve an LGB sexual identity. If 2% of these teens will have lower levels of dejection-related emotions following media exposure, then media exposure

would increase the emotional well-being of over 85,000 teens. It took only six gay teen suicides to create a public health issue garnering attention from pundits, parents, and the President.

In sum, GLO media exposure was negatively related to feelings of dejection even when controlling for age, sex, race, perceived social support, school climate, religiosity, geographical location, sexuality of peers, and motivation for viewing LGB inclusive media content. Neither age nor sex moderated the relationships between media exposure variables and dejection, but sexual identity commitment did act as a moderator in the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection. The negative relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection was stronger for participants lower in sexual identity commitment than for participants higher in sexual identity commitment. For lower-commitment adolescents only, the magnitude of discrepancies between the actual self and the ideal self mediated the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection, a finding that is consistent with their increased receptivity to information that could help them solidify their sexual identities.

Limitations

As with any study, there are limitations to this research that must be acknowledged. As previously noted in this chapter, the cross-sectional nature of this study does not allow for causal inference. The correlational data do not distinguish whether GLO media exposure causes heightened levels of emotional well-being among LGB teens or LGB teens who are more emotionally stable are seeking out GLO media. Previous studies using focus group or interview methodologies have concluded that sexually questioning teens seek out media during the exploration stage of sexual identity development and that depictions of LGB sexuality in the media influence sexual identity formation and self-esteem related to sexual identity (Evans, 2007; McKee, 2000). Marcia (1966) also argued that once individuals commit to an identity,

they are more likely to make life choices that reinforce their achieved identities. Thus, it is likely that the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being is one of mutual causation: exposure to LGB sexuality in the media predicts emotional well-being of LGB teens, which in turn predicts increased exposure to LGB sexuality in the media. Findings from previous qualitative work coupled with the findings of the present study create a formidable argument in favor of future longitudinal research that would provide scholars with support for the causal relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. Measuring media consumption and emotional well-being over time, as LGB teens move from sensitization to exploration to acceptance, could better answer questions about the adversities and obstacles that sexually questioning youth must cope with as they develop their sexual identities, and the ways that GLO media may help them surmount these obstacles.

A second limitation concerns the operationalization of media and the measure of media exposure. Study 2 did not include any measures of exposure to websites. The accessibility and perceived anonymity of the World Wide Web make the Internet an attractive medium for adolescents seeking sexual information (Ryan & Futterman, 1998). Websites on the Internet could provide sexually questioning teens with a dynamic medium whereby they are in control of what they read, what they watch, and what they listen to. LGB teens could be taking advantage of the accessibility and perceived anonymity offered by the Internet. The Internet also provides teens exploring their sexualities to connect with other teens exploring their sexualities. One study found that LGB individuals who participated in an online gay community during the exploration stage of sexual identity development were more likely to accept their sexual identities and disclose their sexual identities to family and friends (McKenna & Bargh, 1998). Future research should examine the relationship between information-seeking via computer-mediated-

communication and the emotional well-being of LGB teens to expand on the findings of the current study and more comprehensively understand the role media play in sexual identity development.

News media were also absent from the current study. This could be considered a limitation in understand the role of media in LGB sexual identity development and emotional well-being. Political and social issues related to LGB sexuality continue to create headlines. In 2010, gay teen suicide and the repeal of the military's anti-homosexual 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy made headlines for months. In 2011, same-sex marriage continues to garner airtime during news broadcasts. A *NewsBank* search revealed over 55,000 news stories about "gay," "lesbian," or "homosexual" individuals in 2011. Exposure to news media covering stories about LGB individuals and social issues could impact LGB teens. The framing of news coverage of LGB individuals and social issues could influence the ideal self, thereby influencing emotional well-being. Future research should examine the depiction of LGB individuals and social issues in news media and the relationship between exposure to news media and sexual identity development. Although the current study did not include websites or news media, it was among the first studies of its kind to examine media exposure among LGB teens beyond entertainment television. Studying only television is insufficient for understanding the range and quantity of sexual messages in the media that teens are exposed to throughout a typical day. Including measures of exposure to film, music, and magazines more completely represents the daily media diets of American teens.

An additional limitation of this study is in the data collection procedure. Several limitations manifest from online surveys. The primary limitation to online surveys is the validity of responses and their sources. The web-based questionnaire used in the present study was

potentially reachable by anyone who has a Web browser with an Internet connection. Consequently, unintended audiences could easily have accessed and participate in the survey if they so chose. Although it is highly unlikely that someone would pose as a sexually questioning teen to fill out an academic survey, there has not been an effective way to screen and filter out unintended participants (Zhang, 2000). The dependence on self-selection is a second concern with online surveys that should be addressed. It is unknown how much participants in the current study represent LGB adolescents more generally. It is also unknown whether LGB teens who could have participated in the survey but did not differ in some way from LGB teens who chose to complete the online survey. Although utilizing the Internet for data collection creates inherent limitations, the use of an online survey is also arguably one of the major strengths of the current study.

One of the primary obstacles to conducting large-scale surveys with LGB adolescents is the difficulty in obtaining a sample. As mentioned in the Method section of this chapter, LGB teens are considered a hidden population: a group that is normally difficult to access because the population is small or group members are difficult to find (Heckathorn, 1997; Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002). Consequently, most previous research on LGB teens has used adult samples to retrospectively examine sexual identity development during adolescence (Huntemann & Morgan, 2001). In fact, only one study examining the influence of media on identity development has asked adolescents themselves rather than relying on adult reflections on their teen years (Evans, 2007). The current study is among the first of its kind to use online methods to reach a large sample of LGB teens. Within a matter of two weeks, over 1,000 adolescents recruited from website advertisements and gay-straight alliances had visited the homepage of the survey and nearly 60% of those teens completed the survey. The advent of online survey tools

has and will continue to transform the way that hidden populations are reached for data collection purposes.

Chapter 5:

Conclusion and Implications

LGB teens' feelings, desires, and physical attractions run contrary to the heteronormative standards of American society. As such, LGB youth often experience feelings of sadness and dejection that can lead to depression and suicidal tendencies (Russell & Joyner, 2001). Evaluating the factors that could possibly influence the emotional well-being of LGB youth would be worthwhile given the hurdles LGB adolescents face during sexual socialization. The purpose of this dissertation was to study the portrayal of sexuality in media popular with LGB adolescents and the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being among LGB teens. In particular, this dissertation distinguished between mainstream media and gay- and lesbian-oriented (GLO) media. GLO media were defined as any media outlet specifically designed, produced, and marketed for gay and lesbian audiences. Two studies were conducted to serve as the initial investigation in a program of research that will be designed to better understand the role of media in the lives of LGB individuals.

The first study of this dissertation was a content analysis of the television programs, films, songs, and magazines most popular with LGB teens as determined by self-reports of media consumption in a survey of media use. A total of 96 media vehicles were included in the content analysis sample, including 48 television programs, 22 films, 25 musical artists, and 6 magazines. Using a coding scheme that was adapted from previous media sex research, Study 1 measured the frequency of sexual instances as well as the type, nature, and source characteristics for each sexual instance.

The second study was a survey that assessed the relationship between media exposure and LGB teens' emotional well-being, considering self-discrepancy as an important mediating variable in that relationship. In Study 2, emotional well-being was defined as lower levels of

dejection-related emotions. Over 500 LGB adolescents completed a questionnaire that was used to investigate the relationships between media exposure and emotional well-being. Participants in the survey were asked to report how often they consumed each of the media vehicles that included in the content analysis sample. By doing so, the survey provided the opportunity to conduct analyses examining the link between emotional well-being and the media vehicles specific to the content analysis.

Conclusions

Taken together, a number of conclusions can be drawn from the two studies that constitute this dissertation: First, GLO media are reaching out to their niche audience by presenting LGB sexuality in authentic, realistic, and diverse contexts that are often absent from mainstream media. The findings of Study 1 support the conclusion that heterosexuality reigns supreme in mainstream media. When LGB sexuality is depicted in mainstream media, it is often sanitized. LGB sexual talk is rarely sexual, rather is it primarily about the social or cultural components of being lesbian, gay, or bisexual. LGB sexual behavior is also rare in mainstream media, which tend to depict LGB individuals as non-sexually as possible. LGB sexuality in mainstream media exists, but is more about proclaiming LGB identity than actually living it. GLO media depicted LGB sexuality more frequently than mainstream media. In fact, 85% of sexual instances in mainstream media were heterosexual and 15% of sexual instances were LGB; on the other hand,15% of sexual instances in GLO media were heterosexual and 85% of sexual instances were LGB. GLO media often depict LGB sexuality in a more realistic manner. LGB sexual talk is about LGB identity, as well as the relational and sexual aspects of being a sexual minority. LGB sexual behavior is commonplace in GLO media, depicting LGB individuals as sexual beings. LGB sexuality in GLO media is prevalent and relatively authentic.

Second, a relationship exists between LBG adolescent exposure to GLO media and emotional well-being. Study 2 concluded that mainstream media exposure was not significantly associated with dejection-related emotions. In contrast, GLO media exposure was negatively related to feelings of dejection even when controlling for age, sex, race, perceived social support, school climate, religiosity, geographical location, sexuality of peers, and motivation for viewing LGB inclusive media content. Neither age nor sex moderated the relationships between media exposure variables and dejection, but sexual identity commitment did act as a moderator in the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection. The negative relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection was stronger for participants lower in sexual identity commitment than for participants higher in sexual identity commitment.

Third, the relationship between GLO media exposure and emotional well-being can be mediated by beliefs about the self. In study 2, the magnitude of discrepancies between the actual self and the ideal self mediated the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection for LGB adolescents low in sexual identity commitment. However, self-discrepancy did not mediate the relationship between GLO media exposure and dejection for LGB teens highly committed to their sexual identities.

The results of the studies composing this dissertation suggest that media may have a positive influence on the sexual identity development of LGB teens. The literature on media effects has traditionally focused on the negative outcomes of media exposure (see Strasburger, Wilson, & Jordan, 2009). However, the results of Study 2 of this dissertation bring forth a relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being among LGB teens that should be considered positive. As such, this dissertation adds to the literature on educational media and pro-social media messages, suggesting that all media exposure is not necessarily bad for all

individuals under all circumstances. The remainder of this chapter details recommendations for future research on media use among LGB teens before concluding with the academic and practical implications for this line of research.

Recommendations for Future Research

The studies in this dissertation combine to form the first step in better understanding how media exposure is related to the identity and emotional well-being of LGB youth. Several recommendations were made for future research in the discussion sections of Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. The primary ideas for future research emerging from Study 1 and Study 2 are reviewed and expanded below.

First, future research should examine the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being over time. Chapter 4 of this dissertation stressed the cross-sectional nature of Study 2 as a primary limitation to the interpretation of the findings. The correlational data do not allow for causal inference. The correlational data do not distinguish if GLO media exposure causes heightened levels of emotional well-being among LGB teens or if LGB teens who are more emotionally stable are seeking out GLO media. Previous studies using focus group or interview methodologies have concluded that sexually questioning teens seek out media during the exploration stage of sexual identity development and that depictions of LGB sexuality in the media influence sexual identity formation and self-esteem related to sexual identity (Evans, 2007; McKee, 2000). As noted in Chapter 4, the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being is most likely one of mutual causation: exposure to LGB sexuality in the GLO media lessens feelings of dejection, which in turn predicts increased exposure to LGB sexuality in the media. Findings from previous qualitative work coupled with the findings of the present study create a formidable argument for future longitudinal research that would provide

scholars with support for the causal relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. Measuring media consumption and emotional well-being over time, as LGB teens move from sensitization to exploration to acceptance, could better answer questions about the adversities and obstacles that sexually questioning youth must cope with as they develop their sexual identities.

Second, attention must be given to the Internet and computer-mediated communication. Seeking information about sexuality online is highly likely among adolescents who may consider their sexuality to be stigmatized by society. Utilizing websites on the Internet is perceived to be an anonymous activity that can be done with ease (Cooper et al., 2000). Beyond the Internet, new technologies are making computer-mediated communication even more accessible. For example, mobile phones have advanced in their computing ability and connectivity in recent years. One popular mobile phone application utilized by over one million gay men is called Grindr (Mowlabocus, 2010). Grindr harnesses the GPS capabilities of the mobile phone, allowing users to not only create their own profile and view the profiles of others, but also to identify how near the corresponding individual is to their current location. Imagine the reaction of a sexually questioning teen who thinks that he is alone in the world when he activates Grindr and discovers that other gay males not only exist, but are located in his geographical vicinity. The lack of interpersonal interactions with LGB individuals in teens' real lives may be supplemented by computer-mediated communication with LGB individuals. The Internet and other new technologies are allowing sexually questioning teens to connect with like others in ways not previously possible. Future research should examine the content of websites popular among LGB teens and the relationship between information-seeking via computer-mediated communication and the emotional well-being of LGB teens. Research on the Internet and new technologies will

expand on the findings of the current study and more comprehensively help scholars understand the role media play in sexual identity development.

Third, future research should examine how the depiction of LGB sexuality in media influence heterosexual individuals important to the social support networks of LGB teens. Exposure to gay and lesbian characters in film and television has been linked with more positive attitudes towards LGB individuals (Riggle et al., 1996; Bonds-Raacke, 2007). Given the importance of social support among LGB teens, future research should continue to dissect the possible influence of exposure to LGB sexuality in the media on parents, teachers, and others who may be vitally important interpersonal contacts for sexually questioning youth attempting to explore and solidify their sexual identities.

Finally, Study 2 examined the relationship between media exposure and feelings of dejection while controlling for age, sex, race, perceived social support, school climate, religiosity, geographical location, sexuality of peers, sexual identity commitment, and motivation for exposure to media inclusive of LGB sexuality. However, there are other factors that could play a role in the relationship between media exposure and feelings of dejection that should be considered by scholars interested in the sexual development of LGB teens. One possible third factor in this relationship is the home environment. The current study controlled for perceived family support, but the home environment may influence a sexually questioning teen's media diet and their emotional well-being as well. For example, adolescents who are raised in a home where parents value diversity and open-mindedness may not only feel less dejection for questioning their sexuality, but may feel more comfortable bringing GLO media into the home.

Another possible third factor is the personality of the individual. For example, extraversion may play a role in LGB teens' sexual identity development and media use. Teens

who are extremely extraverted may find disclosure of their sexual identities to peers to be a manageable task because they find talking about deeply personal issues to be easier than introverted individuals. Conversely, extraverted teens may find openly disclosing sexual identity to peers to be a strenuous task because they assign greater value to their social networks than introverted individuals. In addition, introverted teens spend more time with the media (Page et al., 1996). Hence, the complexities of adolescents' personalities may influence both their sexual identity development and their media use. Future research should consider factors like extraversion when investigating the role of media in LGB teens' sexual socialization.

A final third factor warranting attention is co-viewing, as discussed in Chapter 4. Adolescents are highly likely to consume media with their peers (Dubow et al., 2007), an activity that can assist teens in developing their relationships with one another (Huntemann & Morgan, 2001). If teens are consuming media with their peers, it could be the social component of the media experience that is lessening feelings of dejection rather than the media content. However, sexually questioning teens who have not yet disclosed their sexuality to others are likely consuming GLO media in solitary for fear that showing an interest in LGB themes or storylines might out them to their peers and lead to ostracism or isolation. Future research should examine the role that co-viewing plays in the relationships between media exposure, sexual identity, and emotional well-being among LGB adolescents.

Academic Implications

Theoretical implications. The research conducted for this dissertation has several academic implications. First, theoretical implications exist. Script theory has traditionally predicted how individuals utilize mental schemata about life events to guide behavior (Abelson, 1976). Janis (1980) argued that scripts not only provide information about behaviors, but also

inform individuals about societal norms and values. The findings of Study 2 could lend support to Janis' notions that media may influence sexual scripts beyond sexual behavior. Exposure to authentic, realistic LGB sexuality as depicted in GLO media could expand sexual scripts for sexually questioning teens beyond the heterosexual scripts that are typically instilled by family, peers, schools, and communities. In other words, scripts about social norms can be learned from the media and are especially likely when the audience does not have prior knowledge or experience with the script referent. In addition to reinforcing the social norms and values component of sexual scripting theory, the adaptation of the self-discrepancy as described by self-discrepancy theory should broaden the application of this important social psychological theory.

The basic premise of self-discrepancy theory is that incompatible beliefs about the self will induce negative emotional states (Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1985). Specifically, when a discrepancy arises between the actual self and the ideal self, dejection-related emotions arise. Initial research utilizing self-discrepancy theory examined the multiple dimensions of the self (i.e., the actual self and the ideal self) by asking participants to report on their global self-concepts. It was only recently that scholars began to utilize self-discrepancy theory to examine more specific domains of the self-concept. For example, scholars have invoked self-discrepancy theory to look at body-specific selves and the relationship between body image self-discrepancies and eating disorder symptoms (e.g., Harrison, 2001).

Study 2 of this dissertation was among the first to utilize self-discrepancies to measure incompatible beliefs about sexual identity. Participants in Study 2 were primed to consider their sexuality and were then asked to complete the selves questionnaire measuring their actual and ideal selves. Discrepancies between the actual self and the ideal self were related to dejection as predicted by self-discrepancy theory for participants lower in sexual identity commitment. Study

2 supports the idea that self-discrepancy theory can be utilized to validly examine domain-specific self-concepts rather than only measuring the global self-concept. If researchers have shown correlations consistent with the theory's prediction when measuring body-specific self-discrepancies, other scholars would be justified to employ self-discrepancy theory for examining other varying attributes of the self.

This dissertation also sheds light on the foundational theoretical models of LGB identity development. As discussed in Chapter 1, the theoretical models of sexual identity development note that individuals begin the process of sexual identity development at different ages and progress through the stages at various rates (e.g., Cass, 1979). The results of Study 2 support this concept; neither age nor sex predicted dejection or self-discrepancies. The results of Study 2 did find that sexual identity commitment moderated the relationship between media exposure and emotional well-being. This finding lends support to the importance of differentiating exploration and acceptance as two separate stages in models of sexual identity development.

The inability to reject the null hypothesis regarding age should be of great interest to scholars who study adolescent development. Very often, scholars equate age with development (Kroger, 2007). However, in Study 2 this was not necessarily the case. Such a finding sparks the question, "What is development?" Future research should continue to consider the possible relationship between age and sexual identity development for LGB teens.

Methodological implications. Second, methodological implications exist. The Measure of Sexual Identity Exploration and Commitment (Worthington, Navarro, Savoy, & Hampton, 2008) was utilized to measure how committed participants were to their sexual identities. The scale is a 22-item measure that claims to capture 4 distinct factors of sexual identity: commitment, exploration, uncertainty, and synthesis/integration. Prior to Study 2 of this

dissertation, the measure had only been used to examine sexual identity among adults. Nearly all of the items in the measure factored exactly the way that the scale's creators had predicted even when using an adolescent sample. Study 2 seems to validly expand the utility of the Measure of Sexual Identity Exploration and Commitment; the measure can be used with adolescent samples as well as adult samples to measure sexual identity commitment.

Study 2 also reinforces the value of the Internet as a data collection tool, especially when scholars have interest in collecting data from populations that would be considered stigmatized or otherwise difficult to access. Within a matter of two weeks, over 1,000 adolescents recruited from website advertisements and Illinois schools had visited the homepage of the survey and nearly 60% of those teens completed the survey for Study 2. Although there are limitations inherent in Web-based surveys (as outlined in Chapter 4), the Internet has and will continue to change the way that hidden or stigmatized populations are reached for data collection purposes.

Practical Implications

One of the primary aspirations of conducting social scientific research on LGB adolescents is that research findings could be used to inform practical interventions and educational opportunities. Primarily, exposure to GLO media was negatively correlated with dejection. News media, politicians, and advocates for LGB youth have framed depression among LGB youth as a national public health issue in recent years (McKinley, 2010). If exposure to GLO media is related to fewer dejection-related emotions, exposure could at the very least be encouraged as a form of entertainment for sexually questioning youth. Beyond incidental exposure for entertainment purposes, GLO media could also be used as an intervention tool. Audiovisual tools could be created for counselors or school systems that mimic the depiction of LGB sexuality in GLO media. These tools could then be used by counselors or school systems to

provide sexual minority teens with the information and validation needed to achieve an LGB sexual identity without the emotional obstacles typically faced by sexually questioning youth.

The importance of social support and school connectedness were discussed in Chapter 4 given the significant contributions of these covariates in the regression model predicting dejection. GLO media could be used to educate individuals other than LGB adolescents themselves, and inspire them to provide additional support to LBG youth. Given the relatively authentic and realistic depiction of LGB sexuality in GLO media, GLO media exposure could be encouraged for families, peers, and school officials who are seeking out information about LGB sexuality to assist them in sympathizing and connecting with their LGB children, peers, and students. For example, gay-straight alliances (GSA) are becoming popular in high schools across the United States. In California alone, over 50% of high schools have a gay-straight alliance (GSA Network, 2011). The GSA is typically a student organization meant to provide a safe and supportive environment for LGB youth and their heterosexual allies. Incorporating GLO media into activities and lessons taught by the GSA may not only help heterosexual teens empathize with LGB youth, but if GLO media are enjoyed as entertainment by heterosexual youth it could help to build a common cultural repertoire. GLO media could then be used to spur discussion, build bonding, and generally harness a more positive environment for LGB youth.

GLO media could also be used as a means of broaching the topic of sexuality with children. For example, Collins et al. (2003) surveyed adolescents following NBC airing an episode of *Friends* that discussed the effectiveness of condom use to prevent pregnancy. The researchers found that adolescents who watched the *Friends* episode with a parent were more likely to have then talked about condom use with their parents. They concluded that the television program gave parents the opportunity to initiate a conversation about safe sex with

their children (Collins et al., 2003). Should parents use media depictions of LGB sexuality in a similar fashion, it would allow parents to initiate conversations about sexuality with their children that might increase children's perception that they would receive parental support during sexual development regardless of their sexual orientation. Hence, media could not only be used by LGB teens themselves, but by the important others who are part of the important social support system of sexually questioning teens.

A final practical implication of this dissertation falls with the media producers. The large-scale survey that constituted Study 2 of this dissertation supports previous focus group and interview studies that call for more realistic, validating, and diverse portrayals of LGB sexuality in the media. Exposure to GLO media was negatively related to feelings of dejection. Mainstream media producers should take note of this relationship and consider the possible influence of authentic LGB depictions on adolescents when writing LGB characters into scripts, song lyrics, or magazine articles.

The recent controversy over "the kiss" in ABC's *Modern Family* exemplifies media producers' struggle with depicting LGB sexuality. *Modern Family* is a situation comedy about three related families. One of the three families consists of a gay couple and their adopted toddler. Throughout the first season, the gay couple was never shown kissing. One particular episode showed all of the heterosexual couples in the cast kissing while the gay couple hugged. This scene caused a stir among LGB rights advocates (Itzkoff, 2010). The producers of *Modern Family* countered the criticism by noting that an episode involving a kiss between the gay couple was already in the works. When the episode aired, the kiss between the gay characters was incidental and occurred in the background of a scene that depicted a heterosexual kiss in the foreground. If media producers were encouraged to portray LGB sexuality realistically,

mainstream media exposure might also foster greater self-acceptance among LGB teens. It is of utmost importance that scholars continue investigating media's influence on LGB youth in an effort to better equip sexually questioning adolescents with the education and validation needed to successfully steer through the arduous process of sexual identity development.

Table 1

Review of Content Analytic Studies Examining Lesbian, Gay, & Bisexual Depictions in the Media

Study	Medium	Sample	Variables Measured	Findings
Evans (2007)	Television	6 episodes of 4 television series known to feature gay and lesbian characters	Acknowledgment of sexual orientation; positive/negative reactions to sexuality; sexual behaviors; interaction with others	Gay and lesbian characters were asexual; young gay characters most likely to be received negatively; larger gay community rarely shown
Fisher et al. (2007)	Television	Composite week of programming from 11 networks over 2 seasons (N = 1,276)	Same-sex sexual behavior; talk about non-heterosexual issues	Approximately 15% of programs contained talk or behavior related to LGB individuals; cable networks were more likely to depict LGB sexuality than broadcast
Fouts & Inch (2005)	Television	5 episodes of 9 prime-time television series	Jokes with homosexual themes; gay or lesbian characters shown displaying affection; interaction with children	Most gay and lesbian representations were in the form of ridicule; gay and lesbian characters not prevented from interacting with children
Raley & Lucas (2006)	Television	22 television situation comedies known to feature gay and lesbian characters	Sexual orientation; verbal comments	Only 2% of characters were gay or lesbian; no depictions of bisexuals existed; all characters were gay males and young adults

Table 2

Weekly Fleiss Kappa Correlation Coefficients for Instance-Level Variables

	Sexual Talk	Sexual Behavior	LGB Talk	Nature	Source Gender	Source Age	Source Orientation	Target Gender	Target Age	Target Orientation	Unitizing
Television											
Week 1	.87	.95	.69	.93	.98	.96	.96	.95	.94	.91	.79
Week 2	.88	.86	.77	.96	.99	.90	1.00	.97	.97	.97	.76
Week 3	.92	.92	.68	.95	1.00	.93	1.00	.96	.96	.95	.79
Week 4	.92	.91	.72	.95	.99	.95	.95	.92	.98	.96	.81
Week 5	.92	.92	.72	.95	.99	.94	.96	.92	.99	.95	.81
Week 6	.93	.93	.74	.96	.99	.96	.91	.88	.98	.96	.82
Film											
Week 7	.96	.91	.89	.94	.99	.96	.98	.94	.98	.94	.82
Week 8	.96	.92	.89	.94	.99	.96	.98	.94	.99	.95	.84
Music											
Week 9	.99	.99	N/A	1.00	1.00	.97	1.00	.97	1.00	.97	.87
Week 10	.96	1.00	N/A	.99	.99	.93	.96	.94	1.00	.94	.80

Table 2 (continued)

Week 11	.98	1.00	N/A	.99	.99	.93	.96	.94	1.00	.94	.85
Magazine											
Week 12	.95	.94	1.00	1.00	.98	.98	.98	.98	.98	.98	.97
Week 13	.96	.94	1.00	1.00	.97	.99	.97	.99	.99	.99	.97
Week 14	.94	.96	1.00	1.00	.97	.98	.96	.98	.96	.98	.97

Note. Week 1, Week 9, and Week 12 are pilot reliability tests using content not in the final sample. Pilot reliability was not conducted for films because of the nearly identical coding procedures between television and film as the two audio/visual screen media in the content analysis. Fleiss Kappa is not calculated for unitizing; unitizing is raw percentage of agreement between coders on whether a unit contained sexual content or did not contain sexual content.

Table 3

Weekly Intraclass Correlation Coefficients for Vehicle-Level Variables

	Heterosexual Focus	Demeaning Focus	Validating Focus
Television			
Week 1	.97	.98	.96
Week 2	.97	.94	.74
Week 3	.99	.90	.96
Week 4	.99	.93	.97
Week 5	.99	.93	.98
Week 6	.99	.95	.99
Film			
Week 7	.95	1.00	1.00
Week 8	.94	1.00	1.00
Music			
Week 9	.99	.99	1.00
Week 10	.74	.74	.99
Week 11	.98	.98	.99
Magazines			
Week 12	.74	.74	1.00
Week 13	1.00	1.00	1.00
Week 14	1.00	1.00	1.00

Note. Week 1, Week 9, and Week 12 are pilot reliability tests using content not in the final sample. Pilot reliability was not conducted for films because of the nearly identical coding procedures between television and film as the two audio/visual screen media in the content analysis.

Table 4

Frequency of Sexual Instances in Mainstream Media & GLO Media

	Mainstream Media	GLO Media
Heterosexual	85.3 (2334)[a]	15.4 (140)[b]
LGB	14.7 (401)[a]	84.6 (772)[b]

Note. Columns sum to 100% of sexual instances in mainstream media and GLO media, respectively. Within rows, percentages having no superscripts in common are both statistically different ($p < .05$) and practically different (10% or more). Numbers in parentheses represent raw number of sexual instances in each category. $N = 3{,}647$ total sexual instances.

Table 5

Frequency of LGB Sexual Instances by Nature in Mainstream Media & GLO Media

	Mainstream Media	GLO Media
LGB Validating	68.6 (275)[a]	82.6 (638)[b]
LGB Demeaning	31.4 (126)[a]	17.4 (134)[b]

Note. Columns sum to 100% of LGB sexual instances in mainstream media and GLO media, respectively. Within rows, percentages having no superscripts in common are both statistically different ($p < .05$) and practically different (10% or more). Numbers in parentheses represent raw number of sexual instances in each category. $N = 1{,}173$ total sexual instances.

Table 6

Frequency of Sexual Talk in Mainstream Media

	Heterosexual	LGB
Relationship	43.2 (767)[a]	2.8 (49)[b]
Sexual Interests	24.3 (431)[a]	3.2 (56)[b]
Past Sexual Experiences	4.8 (85)[a]	0.2 (3)[a]
Towards Sex	3.3 (59)[a]	0.3 (5)[a]
Sex Crimes	2.3 (41)[a]	0.4 (7)[a]
Sexual Advice	0.3 (5)[a]	0 (0)[a]
LGB Talk	0 (0)[a]	10.4 (185)[b]
Other	4.6 (82)[a]	0 (1)[a]
Total % Sexual Talk	82.8 (1,471)[a]	17.2 (306)[b]

Note. Within rows, percentages having no superscripts in common are both statistically different ($p < .05$) and practically different (10% or more). Numbers in parentheses represent raw number of sexual instances in each category. $n = 1{,}777$ total sexual instances coded as sexual talk in mainstream media.

Table 7

Frequency of LGB Talk in Mainstream Media & GLO Media

	Mainstream Media	GLO Media
Equality	38.5 (72)	10.6 (30)
Coming Out	12.3 (23)	38.2 (108)
Gay Culture	8 (15)	22.6 (64)
Stereotypes	10.7 (20)	12 (34)
Insults	17.1 (32)	6.7 (19)
Reaffirming	8 (15)	5.7 (16)
Speculation	5.4 (10)	4.2 (12)

Note. Columns sum to 100% of sexual instances coded as LGB talk in mainstream media and GLO media, respectively. Number in parentheses represents raw number of sexual instances in each category. n = 470 total sexual instances coded as LGB talk.

Table 8

Frequency of Sexual Talk in GLO Media

	Heterosexual	LGB
Relationship	6.6 (44)[a]	19 (127)[b]
Sexual Interests	5.8 (39)[a]	18.4 (123)[b]
Past Sexual Experiences	0.5 (3)[a]	2.1 (14)[a]
Towards Sex	0.5 (3)[a]	3 (20)[a]
Sex Crimes	0 (0)[a]	0.2 (1)[a]
LGB Talk	0 (0)[a]	42.1 (282)[b]
Other	0.2 (1)[a]	1.9 (13)[a]
Total % Sexual Talk	13.4 (90)[a]	86.6 (580)[b]

Note. Within rows, percentages having no superscripts in common are both statistically different ($p < .05$) and practically different (10% or more). Numbers in parentheses represent raw number of sexual instances in each category. $n = 670$ total sexual instances coded as sexual talk in GLO media.

Table 9

Frequency of Sexual Behavior in Mainstream Media

	Heterosexual	LGB
Physical Flirting	56 (537)[a]	2.8 (27)[b]
Romantic Kissing	22.7 (218)[a]	3 (29)[b]
Intimate Touching	4.9 (47)[a]	1.8 (17)[a]
Sexual Intercourse: Implied	2.2 (21)[a]	0.7 (7)[a]
Sexual Intercourse: Depicted	2.1 (20)[a]	0.3 (3)[a]
Other	2.2 (21)[a]	1.3 (12)[a]
Total % Sexual Behavior	90.1 (864)[a]	9.9 (95)[b]

Note. Within rows, percentages having no superscripts in common are both statistically different ($p < .05$) and practically different (10% or more). Numbers in parentheses represent raw number of sexual instances in each category. $n = 959$ total sexual instances coded as sexual behavior.

Table 10

Frequency of Sexual Behavior in GLO Media

	Heterosexual	LGB
Physical Flirting	14.4 (35)[a]	25.9 (63)[b]
Romantic Kissing	4.5 (11)[a]	28.8 (70)[b]
Intimate Touching	0.8 (2)[a]	7.8 (19)[a]
Sexual Intercourse: Implied	1.2 (3)[a]	2.1 (5)[a]
Sexual Intercourse: Depicted	0 (0)[a]	4.9 (12)[a]
Other	0 (0)[a]	9.5 (23)[a]
Total % Sexual Behavior	21 (51)[a]	79 (192)[b]

Note. Within rows, percentages having no superscripts in common are both statistically different ($p < .05$) and practically different (10% or more). Numbers in parentheses represent raw number of sexual instances in each category. $n = 243$ total sexual instances coded as sexual behavior.

Table 11

Frequency of Source's Age

	Child	Teen	Adult	Elderly
Mainstream Media				
LGB Instances	1 (4)	7.6 (30)	91.4 (360)	0 (0)
GLO Media				
LGB Instances	0.3 (2)	10.7 (82)	88.6 (681)	0.5 (4)

Note. Rows equal 100% of all LGB sexual instances in each type of media. Within rows, percentages having no superscripts in common are both statistically different ($p < .05$) and practically different (10% or more). Numbers in parentheses represent raw number of sexual instances in each category.

Table 12

Frequency of Source's Sexual Orientation

	Heterosexual	Gay Male	Lesbian	Bisexual	Sexually Questioning
Mainstream Media					
LGB Instances	31.9 (124)	57.1 (222)	8 (31)	0.3 (1)	2.8 (11)
GLO Media					
LGB Instances	13.7 (105)	57.6 (443)	27.4 (211)	1.3 (10)	0 (0)

Note. Rows equal 100% of all LGB sexual instances in each type of media. Within rows, percentages having no superscripts in common are both statistically different ($p < .05$) and practically different (10% or more). Numbers in parentheses represent raw number of sexual instances in each category.

Table 13

Frequency of Sexual Instances in Mainstream Media by Medium

	Heterosexual	LGB
Television	90.2 (1052)[a]	9.9 (115)[b]
Film	59.2 (385)[a]	40.8 (265)[b]
Songs	99 (567)[a]	1.1 (6)[b]
Magazines	95.7 (330)[a]	4.4 (15)[b]

Note. Rows sum to 100% of all sexual instances in mainstream media. Within rows, percentages having no numerical superscripts in common are both statistically different ($p < .05$) and practically different (10% or more). Numbers in parentheses represent raw number of sexual instances in each category.

Table 14

Nature of LGB Sexual Instances in Mainstream Media by Medium

	LGB Validating	LGB Demeaning
Television	61.7 (71)[a]	38.3 (44)[b]
Film	69.8 (185)[a]	30.2 (80)[b]
Songs	100 (6)[a]	0 (0)[b]
Magazines	86.7 (13)[a]	13.3 (2)[b]

Note. Rows sum to 100% of all sexual instances in mainstream media. Within rows, percentages having no numerical superscripts in common are both statistically different ($p < .05$) and practically different (10% or more). Numbers in parentheses represent raw number of sexual instances in each category.

Table 15

Frequency of Sexual Instances in GLO Media by Medium

	Heterosexual	LGB
Television	10.1 (63)[a]	89.9 (563)[b]
Film	10 (22)[a]	90 (198)[b]
Songs	83.3 (55)[a]	16.7 (11)[b]

Note. Rows sum to 100% of all sexual instances in mainstream media. Within rows, percentages having no numerical superscripts in common are both statistically different ($p < .05$) and practically different (10% or more). Numbers in parentheses represent raw number of sexual instances in each category.

Table 16

Nature of LGB Sexual Instances in GLO Media by Medium

	LGB Validating	LGB Demeaning
Television	87.4 (492)[a]	12.6 (71)[b]
Film	68.2 (135)[a]	31.8 (63)[b]
Songs	100 (11)[a]	0 (0)[b]

Note. Rows sum to 100% of all sexual instances in mainstream media. Within rows, percentages having no numerical superscripts in common are both statistically different ($p < .05$) and practically different (10% or more). Numbers in parentheses represent raw number of sexual instances in each category.

Table 17

Descriptive Statistics for Control, Predictor, and Criterion Variables

Variable	Response Options	Number of Items	Score Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Perceived Social Support	0 – 6	12	.25 – 6	3.92	1.11
School Climate	0 – 4	3	0 – 4	2.40	.85
Religiosity	0 – 4	3	0 – 4	.88	.91
Geography	0 – 4	1	0 – 4	2.01	.98
Peer Sexuality	0 – 3	1	0-3	1.60	.72
Motivation	0 – 2	4	0 – 2	1.53	.49
Identity Commitment	0 – 5	20	.95 – 4.85	3.60	.64
Self-Discrepancy	n/a	n/a	-10 - 18	1.65	3.35
Mainstream Media Exposure	0 – 4	130	7 – 216	76.85	34.05
GLO Media Exposure	0 – 4	30	0 – 44	10.60	8.66
Dejection	0 – 4	12	0 – 3.33	1.66	.61

Note. Scores were calculated as means of the scale items for all predictor and criterion variables except for geography, peer sexuality, self-discrepancy, and media exposure variables. Scores for geography and peer sexuality were single-item measures. Scores for self-discrepancy were calculated using the algorithm discussed in the method section. Scores for GLO media exposure and mainstream media exposure were calculated by summing responses to the 30 items and 130 items respectively measuring GLO and mainstream media exposure.

Table 18

Zero-Order Correlations for Study 2 Variables

Variable	Dejection
Age	-.01
Sex	-.12**
Race	-.07
Perceived Social Support	-.38**
School Climate	-.33**
Religiosity	-.01
Geography	-.11*
Peer Sexuality	-.04
Motivation	-.06
Identity Commitment	-.20**
Actual : Ideal Discrepancy	.25**
Mainstream Media Exposure	-.13**
GLO Media Exposure	-.17**

Note. Sex (0 = male, 1 = female) and race (0 = White, 1 = other races) were dichotomously coded. Higher scores on dejection represent less emotional well-being, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Table 19

Summary of Hierarchal Regression Analysis Predicting Dejection

	B	SE	β	ΔR^2
Step 1				.24***
Age	.02	.02	.03	
Sex	-.06	.05	-.05	
Race	-.01	.01	-.02	
Social Support	-.06	.01	-.31***	
School Climate	-.18	.03	-.25***	
Religiosity	.02	.03	.03	
Geography	-.03	.02	-.04	
Peer Sexuality	.02	.04	.03	
ID Commit	-.16	.04	-.17***	
Motivation	.02	.01	.06	
Step 2				.02**
Mainstream Media	.00	.00	-.05	
GLO Media	-.01	.00	-.10*	
Step 3				.01
Main x Age	.00	.00	.02	
Main x Sex	.00	.00	.03	
Main x ID Commit	.00	.00	.03	
GLO x Age	.00	.00	-.07	

Table 19 (continued)

GLO x Sex	.00	.00	.04
GLO x ID Commit	-.01	.01	-.10*

Note. Sex (0 = male, 1 = female) and race (0 = White, 1 = other races) were dichotomously coded. Higher scores on dejection represent less emotional well-being. All coefficients are from the final model *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Table 20

Summary of Hierarchal Regression Analysis Predicting Dejection by Identity Commitment

	Low Commitment				High Commitment			
	B	SE	β	ΔR^2	B	SE	β	ΔR^2
Step 1				.23***				.22***
Age	.04	.02	.08		.00	.03	.01	
Sex	- .05	.07	-.04		-.08	.07	-.07	
Race	.00	.02	-.01		-.01	.02	-.04	
Social Support	-.06	.01	-.31***		-.06	.01	-.30***	
School Climate	-.22	.04	-.28***		-.15	.04	-.23***	
Religiosity	-.02	.04	-.03		.05	.04	.08	
Geography	.13	.21	.04		-.05	.04	-.09	
Peer Sexuality	.03	.05	.03		.01	.05	.01	
Motivation	.02	.02	.07		.01	.02	.02	
Step 2				.02*				.01
GLO Media	-.01	.00	-.12*		- .01	.01	-.11^{+}	

Note. Regression model serves as step 1 for Baron & Kenny's (1986) mediation model. Low commitment $n = 284$, high commitment $n = 288$. Sex (0 = male, 1 = female) and race (0 = White, 1 = other races) were dichotomously coded. All coefficients are from the final model, $^{+}p < .10$, $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$.

Table 21

Summary of Hierarchal Regression Analysis Predicting Self Discrepancy

	Low Commitment				High Commitment			
	B	SE	β	ΔR^2	B	SE	β	ΔR^2
Step 1				.04				.03
Age	.15	.16	.06		-.02	.16	-.01	
Sex	.15	.45	.02		-.20	.41	-.03	
Race	.10	.10	.06		.07	.09	.05	
Social Support	-.03	.06	-.03		-.11	.06	-.12	
School Climate	-.29	.27	-.07		-.04	.24	-.01	
Religiosity	-.29	.23	-.08		.23	.22	.07	
Geography	.13	.21	.04		-.14	.21	-.04	
Peer Sexuality	-.17	.31	-.04		.01	.30	.00	
Motivation	-.16	.11	-.09		.05	.11	.03	
Step 2				.02*				.00
GLO Media	-.08	.03	-.19**		.02	.03	.07	

Note. Regression model serves as step 2 for Baron & Kenny's (1986) mediation model. Low commitment $n = 284$, high commitment $n = 288$. Sex (0 = male, 1 = female) and race (0 = White, 1 = other race) were dichotomously coded. All coefficients are from the final model,*$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 22

Summary of Hierarchal Regression Analysis Predicting Dejection from Self Discrepancy

	Low Commitment				High Commitment			
	B	SE	β	ΔR^2	B	SE	β	ΔR^2
Step 1				.04				.03
Age	.03	.02	.07		.00	.03	.01	
Sex	-.07	.07	-.05		-.08	.07	-.07	
Race	.10	.10	.06		-.01	.02	-.05	
Social Support	-.05	.01	-.31***		-.05	.01	-.28***	
School Climate	-.21	.05	-.27***		-.15	.04	-.23***	
Religiosity	-.01	.04	-.01		.04	.04	.07	
Geography	.00	.03	.00		-.05	.03	-.08	
Peer Sexuality	.03	.05	.04		.01	.05	.01	
Motivation	.03	.02	.08		.00	.02	.01	
Step 2				.02*				.00
GLO Media	-.01	.00	-.09		-.01	.00	-.13*	
Self Discrepancy	.03	.01	.17***		.04	.01	.20***	

Note. Regression model serves as step 3 for Baron & Kenny's (1986) mediation model. Low commitment $n = 284$, high commitment $n = 288$. Sex (0 = male, 1 = female) and race (0 = White, 1 = other race) were dichotomously coded. All coefficients are from the final model, *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

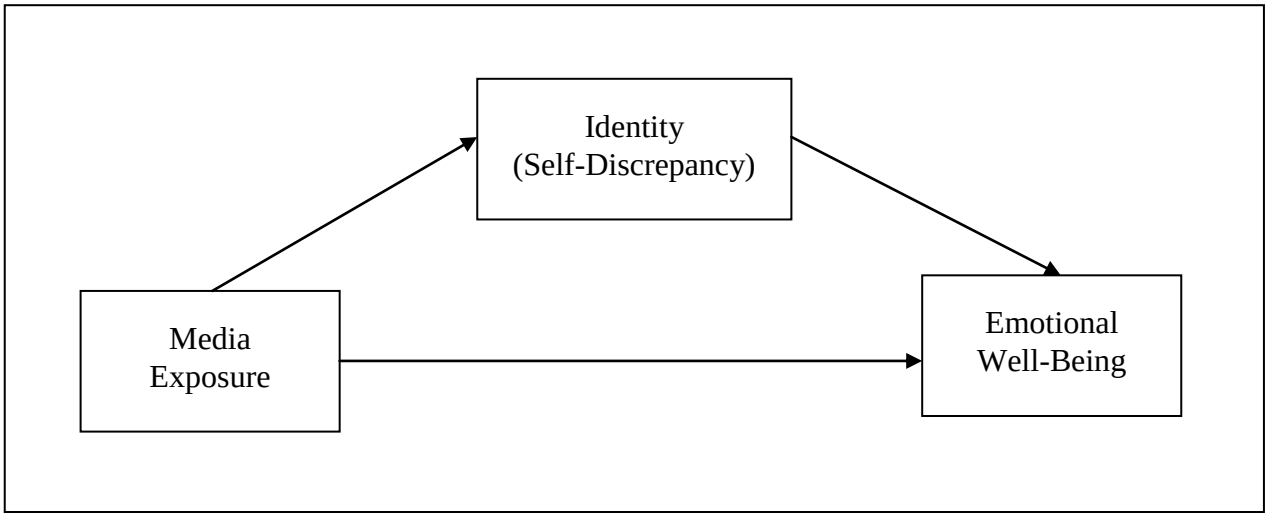

Figure 1. The proposed mediating model for the relationship between media exposure, self-discrepancy, and emotional well-being among LGB adolescents.

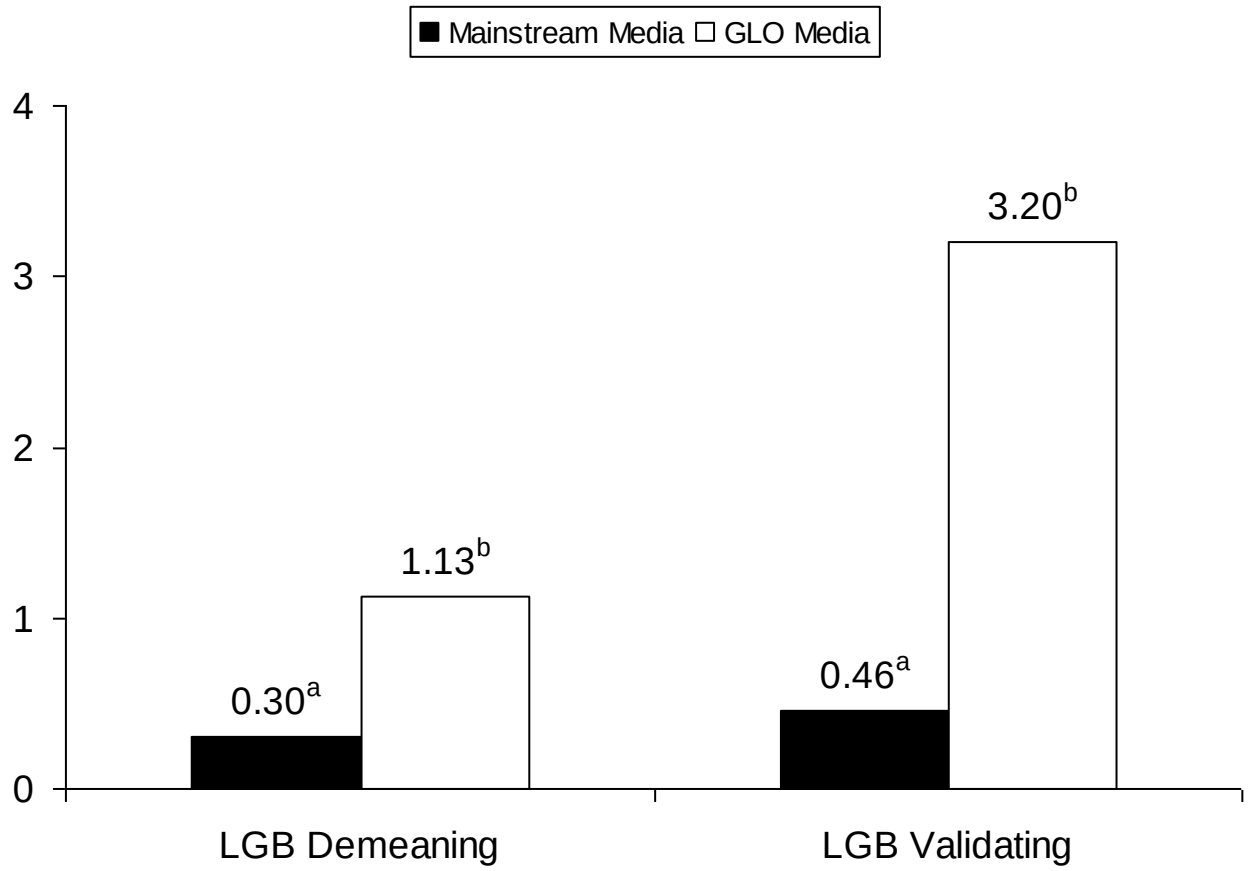

Figure 2. The focus variables, measuring the focus on LGB sexuality at the media vehicle level of analysis. Focus on demeaning and validating portrayals of LGB sexuality could range from 0 (no portrayal) to 4 (primary focus). Within columns, bars with no matching superscript are statistically different ($p < .05$).

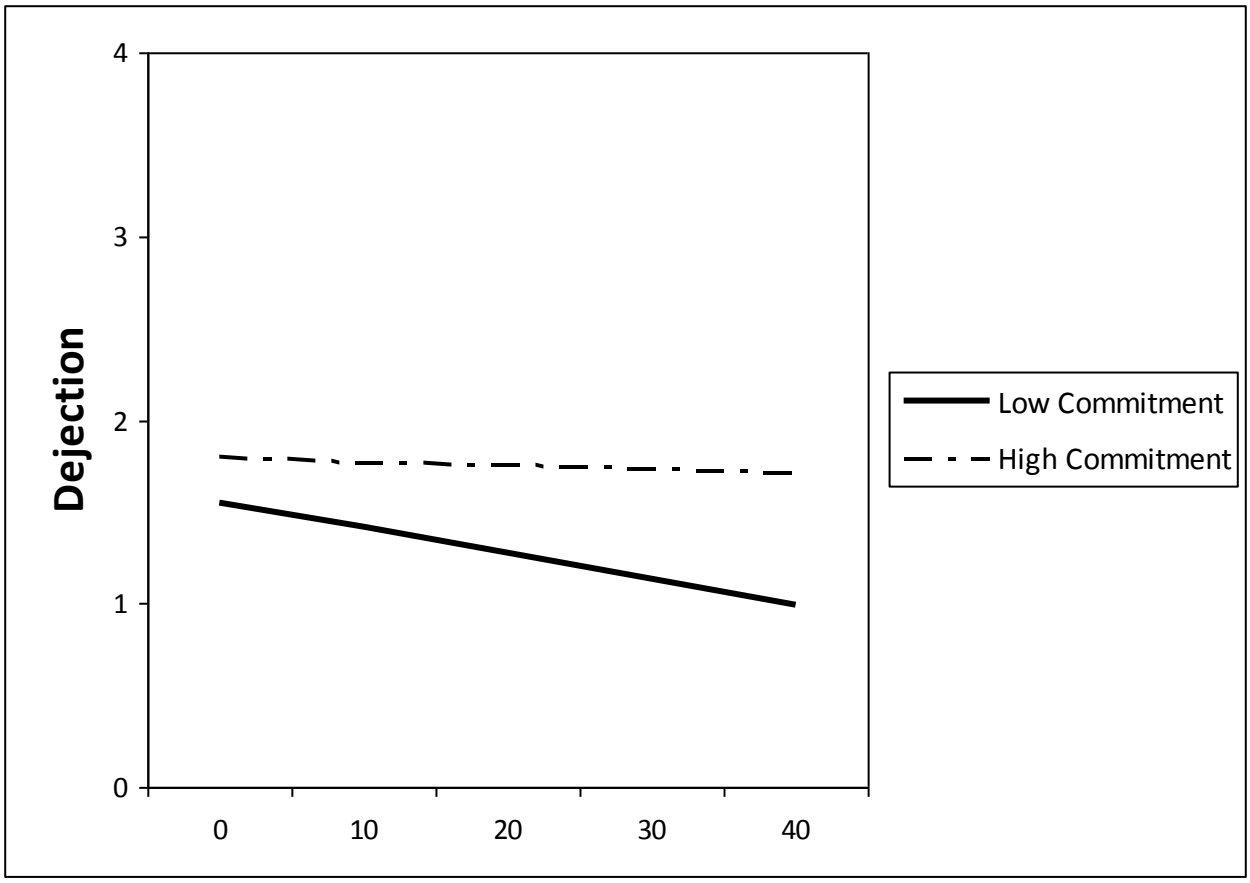

Figure 3. Interaction between GLO media exposure and sexual identity commitment on dejection. The X-axis represents GLO media exposure. Higher scores on dejection indicate less emotional well-being.

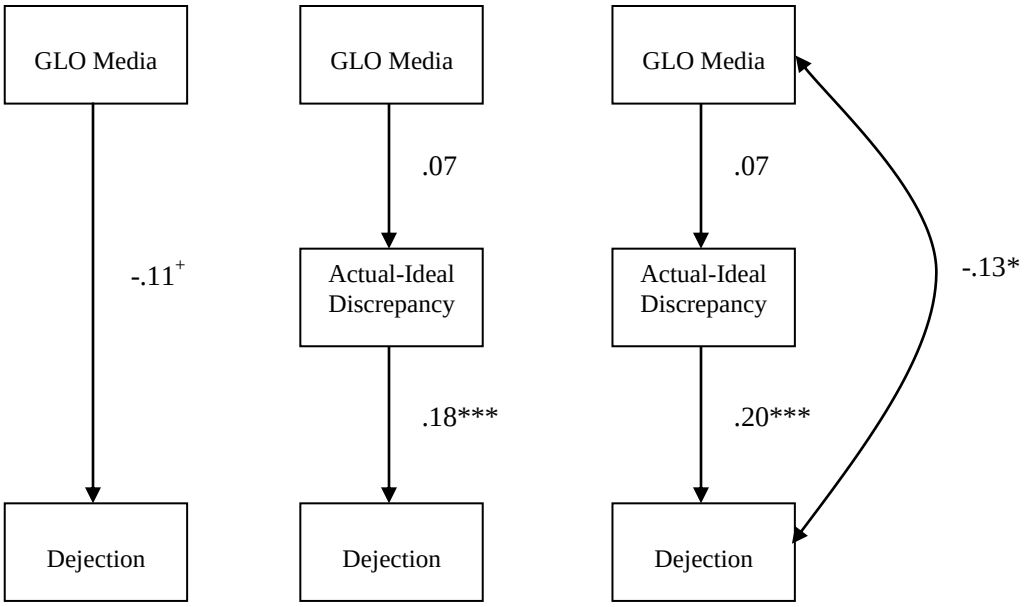

Figure 4. Path analyses predicting dejection from GLO media exposure and self-discrepancy for adolescents reporting high commitment to their sexual identities (n = 288). Higher scores on dejection indicate less emotional well-being. Mediation is indicated if straight path on the left is significant and curved path on the right is not significant, $^{+}p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

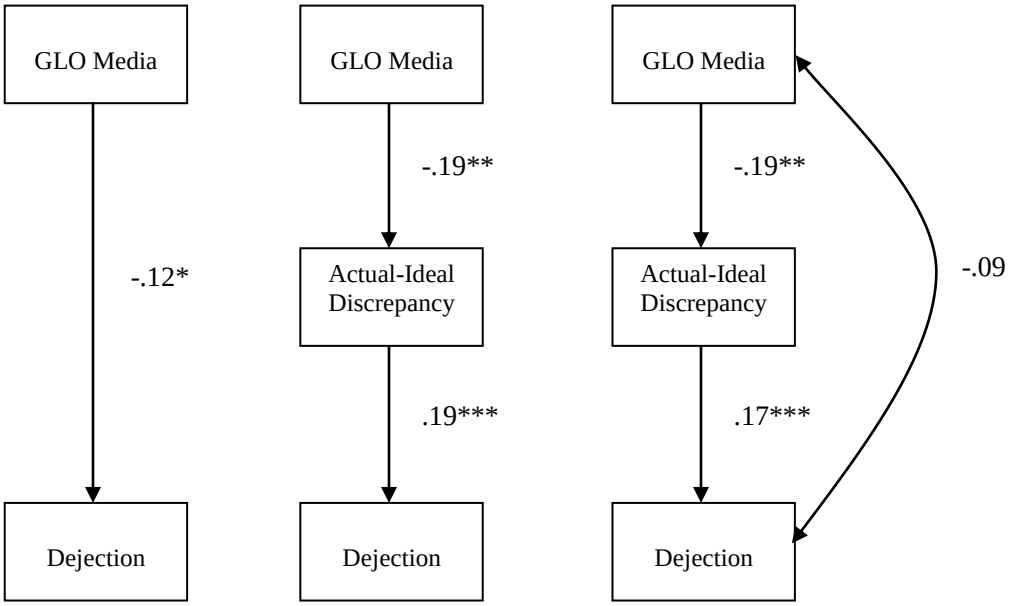

Figure 5. Path analyses predicting dejection from GLO media exposure and self-discrepancy for adolescents reporting low commitment to their sexual identities (n = 284). Higher scores on dejection indicate less emotional well-being. Mediation is indicated if straight path on the left is significant and curved path on the right is not significant, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Footnotes

[1]The brainstorming collaborations consisted of 6 individuals (3 in each session) with a mean age = 18.50 (*SD* = 0.55). Participants were recruited from the University of Illinois LGBT Resource Center. Three participants reported being gay males, two reported identifying as lesbian females, and one self-labeled as a bisexual female. Sessions were organized as semi-structured interviews that ran 60 minutes long. The interviews started with the question, "What television shows can you just not miss seeing each week?" From this starting point, questions were asked to better understand the specific television shows that each participant reported watching and what the participant's motivation was for consuming that program. Once a medium was exhausted in conversation, a similar question was posed regarding film, musical artists, magazines, and websites. Pizza was provided as incentive for participation.

[2]Participants were given 10 open-ended scales when measuring website consumption because of the vast array of websites available for browsing online. All other open-ended media scales (i.e., television, film, musical artists, and magazines) had three blank items.

[3]The questionnaire specifically asked participants to think beyond social networking sites and only report the websites that they visited for entertainment or information. However, participants only reported visiting social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube even after they were told not to report on websites such as these. This is telling; however, social networking sites are idiosyncratic to each participant. The limitations involved in knowing exactly what participants were being exposed to on social networking sites were a validity concern. Consequently, these websites were not content analyzed in the current study.

[4]Kunkel and colleagues (2005) referred to kissing behavior as "passionate kissing." However, during coder training, coders expressed difficulty determining passionate kissing from

other types of kissing even with a clear operational definition. The term "passionate kissing" was changed to "romantic kissing" to better reflect the definition of the category, thereby increasing intercoder reliability.

[5]The two questions used to prime participants to think about their sexuality constitute Ginsburg's "outness scale." The outness scale was developed through focus group research involving self-identifying lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer youth in urban programs serving sexual minorities in Philadelphia and has been used in health communication research on sexual minority adolescents (Ginsburg et al., 2002).

[6]Three- and four-way interactions were also tested. However, all three- and four-way interactions were non-significant. They were removed from the final model to preserve degrees of freedom.

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Appendix A:

List of Mainstream Media Included in Content Analysis Sample

Television Programs*

30 Rock	*America's Next Top Model*	*American Dad*
American Idol	*Bones*	*CSI*
Dancing With the Stars	*Degrassi*	*Desperate Housewives*
Dexter	*Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*	*Family Guy*
Glee	*Gossip Girl*	*Grey's Anatomy*
Heroes	*House*	*How I Met Your Mother*
iCarly	*Jersey Shore*	*Law & Order: SVU*
Modern Family	*NCIS*	*Project Runway*
South Park	*So You Think You Can Dance?*	*Survivor*
The Amazing Race	*The Big Bang Theory*	*The Biggest Loser*
The Cleveland Show	*The Office*	*The Real World: DC*
The Simpsons	*The Vampire Diaries*	*Two & a Half Men*
Ugly Betty	*Will & Grace*	

Films

500 Days of Summer	*Avatar*
Brokeback Mountain	*Bruno*
Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs	*Gamer*
Harry Potter & the Goblet of Fire	*Harry Potter & the Half-Blood Prince*
Inglorious Basterds	*Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*
Milk	*Paranormal Activity*

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End

Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest

Rent

The Dark Knight

The Hangover

Twilight

Tyler Perry's I Can Do Bad All By Myself

Up

Magazines*

Cosmopolitan

Game Informer

People

Rolling Stone

Seventeen

Teen Vogue

Songs

Try Sleeping With a Broken Heart, Alicia Keyes

Unthinkable, Alicia Keys

Single Ladies, Beyonce

If I Were a Boy, Beyonce

Imma Be, Black Eyed Peas

I Got a Feeling, Black Eyed Peas

Womanizer, Britney Spears

Circus, Britney Spears

Temporary Home, Carrie Underwood

Cowboy Cassanova, Carrie Underwood

Sexy Chick, David Guetta

When Love Takes Over, David Guetta

Replay, Iyaz

Solo, Iyaz

In My Head, Jason Derulo

Whatcha Say, Jason Derulo

Do You Remember, Jay Sean

Down, Jay Sean

Empire State of Mind, Jay-Z

Onto the Next One, Jay-Z

Never Let You Go, Justin Bieber

Baby, Justin Bieber

My Life Would Suck Without You, Kelly Clarkson

Already Gone, Kelly Clarkson

Tik Tok, Kesha

Blah Blah Blah, Kesha

Party in the U.S.A., Miley Cyrus

When I Look At You, Miley Cyrus

Fireflies, Owl City

Vanilla Twilight, Owl City

Rude Boy, Rihanna	*Hard*, Rihanna
Love Story, Taylor Swift	*You Belong To Me*, Taylor Swift
Hey, Soul Sister, Train	*If It's Love*, Train
Bedrock, Young Money	*Roger That*, Young Money

*Two episodes of each television program from the 2009-2010 season and two editions of each magazine title were randomly selected to be included in the sample.

Appendix B:

List of Gay- and Lesbian-Oriented (GLO) Media Included in Content Analysis Sample

Television Programs*

Bad Girls	*Coming Out Stories*	*Exes & Ohs*
Noah's Arc	*Queer As Folk*	*Roundtrip Ticket*
RuPaul's Drag Race	*Shirts & Skins*	*The Big Gay Sketch Show*
The L Word		

Films

Another Gay Movie	*But I'm a Cheerleader*

Songs

Whataya Want From Me, Adam Lambert	*For Your Entertainment*, Adam Lambert
Bad Romance, Lady Gaga	*Telephone*, Lady Gaga
We Are Golden, Mika	*Blame It On the Girls*, Mika

*Two episodes of each television program from the 2009-2010 season were randomly selected to be included in the sample.

Appendix C:

List of Media Included in Reliability Sample

Television Programs*

American Dad	*American Idol*	*Degrassi*
Dexter	*Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*	*Glee*
Grey's Anatomy	*Heroes*	*House*
How I Met Your Mother	*iCarly*	*Modern Family*
Noah's Arc	*RuPaul's Drag Race*	*Shirts & Skins*
Survivor	*The Vampire Diaries*	*Two & a Half Men*

Films

Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs

Milk

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End

The Dark Knight

Magazines*

Game Informer	*Seventeen*

Songs

Cowboy Cassanova, Carrie Underwood	*Sexy Chick*, David Guetta
Empire State of Mind, Jay-Z	*Never Let You Go*, Justin Bieber
Already Gone, Kelly Clarkson	*Party in the U.S.A.*, Miley Cyrus
Vanilla Twilight, Owl City	*Hey, Soul Sister*, Train

*Only one of the two episodes of each television program and one edition of each magazine was included in the reliability sample.

Appendix D:

Text of Survey Homepage Acting as Teen Assent/Consent Form

Hi! Welcome to our webpage. My name is Brad Bond and I come to you from the Department of Communication at the University of Illinois to ask for your help on a research project about teens just like you. I am conducting this research under the direction of Dr. Kris Harrison and we are interested to learn about the way you see yourself and the kinds of things you like to watch, read, and listen to. If you do this project, you will answer the questions on the pages that follow this welcome note. We will ask you questions about how you see yourself and how you think others see you. We will also ask you some questions about your parents, your school, your friends, and the TV, movies, music, websites, and magazines that you like. It will take you about 30-45 minutes to answer our questions. We will ask you questions like, "If you had to describe your sexual identity in one or two words, how would you describe it" and "On Saturdays, about how many hours do you usually spend watching television?"

Your participation in this project is voluntary. This means that you can decide whether or not you want to do this project. If you want to stop this project at any time, you can stop. If there are questions you do not want to answer, you don't have to answer them. All of your answers will be anonymous, which means that no one will ever be able to connect you to your answers, not even us. All of your answers will also be kept confidential, which means no one but the researchers will ever see them. Your participation in this project will not affect your standing with the organization or group that informed you about this study. However, do remember that your parents or guardians can track your Internet use. If you want to participate in the current study but do not feel that your home environment offers privacy, you can complete the survey elsewhere (e.g., a public library or a friend's home).

By participating, you will be helping researchers understand the lives of teens. The more that researchers can learn about teens like you, the more we can share our findings with people like parents and teachers in hopes to help them understand what teens like you feel and think. By answering our questions, you may also learn something about yourself!

Answering some of our questions might make you uncomfortable. If this continues to cause you discomfort, you could talk to someone about your feelings. You could visit Teen Line's website [hyperlink to website] or you could call and talk to a teen counselor at 1-800-852-8336.

If you have any questions about this study you may email Dr. Kris Harrison at krishar@illinois.edu or Brad Bond at bbond2@illinois.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Illinois' Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 (collect calls accepted if you identify yourself as a research participant) or via email at irb@illinois.edu.

If you'd like to participate, please indicate that you are between the ages of 14 and 19 below and then click the "Next" button below. If you chose not to participate, you can simply direct your web browser away from this page. You can print this page if you would like to keep a copy of this form for yourself.

University of Illinois Approved Consent Form Valid until [date].

Appendix E:

Survey Questionnaire

These first few questions are just to get you thinking about who you are and how you identify.

What biological sex were you born with?

0 Male
1 Female
2 Intersex

What sexual identity best describes how you would label yourself?

0 Gay
1 Lesbian
2 Bisexual
3 Queer
4 Questioning
5 Just Curious
6 Other _____

How 'out' are you? In other words, who knows about your sexuality?

0 Out to no one
1 Out to a few people
2 Out to some people
3 Out to most people
4 Out to everyone

How old are you?

(open-ended)

How old were you when you first realized you had feelings for the same-sex?

(open-ended)

These first questions are just to help us learn what kind of person you are. These are easy questions and there are no wrong answers. The questions are about you, so you're the one who's the expert! Fill in as many spots as you can for each question, but if you can't think of ten words for each spot that's OK.

What kind of person are you? List some words that describe the kind of person you think you actually are. After you list each word, tell us how much you think this word describes who you are, using the options below each blank.

(1)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(2)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(3)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(4)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(5)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(6)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(7)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(8)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(9)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(10)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

What kind of person would you be if you could be the <u>best</u> person possible? List some words that describe the kind of person you would ideally be if you could be perfect. After you list each word, tell us how much you think this word describes who you would be, using the options below each blank.

(1)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(2)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(3)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(4)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(5)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(6)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(7)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(8)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(9)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(10)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

What kind of person do your <u>parents</u> think you are supposed to be? List some words that describe the kind of person your parents believe you should be or you ought to be. After you list each word, tell us how much you think this word describes how your parents think you should be, using the options below each blank.

(1)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(2)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(3)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(4)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(5)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(6)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(7)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(8)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(9)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

(10)_____

1	2	3	4
Only a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much	Extremely

Please indicate how much you usually feel the following emotions by selecting one of the responses. "Usually" means on an average day, not necessarily right now.

ENERGETIC	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
DOWN	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
CALM	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
GUILTY	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
HAPPY	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
DISCOURAGED	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
SAFE	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
AFRAID	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
PLEASED	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
WORRIED	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
MORALLY GOOD	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
DISAPPOINTED	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
PROUD	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

ASHAMED	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
PEACEFUL	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
NERVOUS	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
CHEERFUL	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
NOT GOOD	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
AT EASE	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
RESTLESS	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
RELAXED	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
SAD	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
EXCITED	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
TENSE	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

You're doing a great job! Now we'd like to ask you a few questions about your media use. We're interested in the kinds of things you watch on TV, the movies you watch, the websites you browse, the magazines you read, and the music you listen to. Let's start by talking about the television shows you watch.

TELEVISION

Here is a list of television shows. Please mark how often you watch each show by selecting one of the options below.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All of the Time
American Idol	1	2	3	4	5
One Tree Hill	1	2	3	4	5
How I Met Your Mother	1	2	3	4	5
Dancing with the Stars	1	2	3	4	5
Heroes	1	2	3	4	5
90210	1	2	3	4	5

Gossip Girl	1	2	3	4	5
The Biggest Loser	1	2	3	4	5
Melrose Place	1	2	3	4	5
Shaq vs.	1	2	3	4	5
Wipeout	1	2	3	4	5
Glee	1	2	3	4	5
The Amazing Race	1	2	3	4	5
Vampire Diaries	1	2	3	4	5
Survivor: Samoa	1	2	3	4	5
Bones	1	2	3	4	5
Grey's Anatomy	1	2	3	4	5
The Office	1	2	3	4	5
24	1	2	3	4	5
Family Guy	1	2	3	4	5

There could be some television shows you watch that we didn't mention. Please list the television shows you watch that we might have missed. After you have typed in the name of each television show, tell us how often you usually watch that show using the options below. You don't have to fill in all three blanks if there are not three television shows you watch that we didn't list. If you watch more than three television shows that we didn't list, please tell us the three you watch most often.

(1) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(2) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(3) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

MOVIES

Here is a list of movies. Please mark how often you watch each movie by selecting one of the options below.

	Never	Once	Twice	Three Times	More than 3
All About Steve	1	2	3	4	5
Inglorious Basterds	1	2	3	4	5
The Final Destination	1	2	3	4	5
Gamer	1	2	3	4	5
District 9	1	2	3	4	5
Halloween II	1	2	3	4	5
Julie & Julia	1	2	3	4	5
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	1	2	3	4	5
Extract	1	2	3	4	5
The Time Traveler's Wife	1	2	3	4	5
State of Play	1	2	3	4	5
Duplicity	1	2	3	4	5
The Last House on the Left	1	2	3	4	5
Fighting	1	2	3	4	5
Adventureland	1	2	3	4	5
Sunshine Cleaning	1	2	3	4	5
I Love You, Man	1	2	3	4	5
17 Again	1	2	3	4	5
Bring It On	1	2	3	4	5
Hannah Montana: Movie	1	2	3	4	5

We know there are a lot of movies on DVD you probably watch. Here, please list the movies that you watch most often that we didn't list above. After you have typed in the name of each movie, tell us how often you usually watch that movie using the options below. Select sometimes if you watch the movie every now and then, most of the time if you watch the movie more than other movies but not all the time, or all of the time if you watch the movie as often as you can.

(1) _____

Once Twice Three Times More than 3 Times

(2) _____

Once Twice Three Times More than 3 Times

(3) _____

Once Twice Three Times More than 3 Times

WEBSITES

Here is a list of websites. Please mark how often you visit each website by selecting one of the options below.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All of the Time
LoveToKnow.com	1	2	3	4	5
Gurl.com	1	2	3	4	5
Atomicteen.com	1	2	3	4	5
Seventeen.com	1	2	3	4	5
Perezhilton.com	1	2	3	4	5
People.com	1	2	3	4	5
XY.com	1	2	3	4	5
Gay.com	1	2	3	4	5
Planetout.com	1	2	3	4	5
Youthresource.com	1	2	3	4	5
Mogenic.com	1	2	3	4	5

Queerattitude.com	1	2	3	4	5
Outproud.org	1	2	3	4	5
Advocate.com	1	2	3	4	5
The Gay Youth Corner (thegyc.org)	1	2	3	4	5
Gayteens.org	1	2	3	4	5
Entertainment Weekly (ew.com)	1	2	3	4	5
Hippocampus.org	1	2	3	4	5
Espn.com	1	2	3	4	5
Yahoo.com	1	2	3	4	5

There are LOTS of websites that we didn't ask you about. Here, please list the websites that you visit most often for information or entertainment purposes. Do <u>not</u> list websites that you only visit for communicating with your friends like Facebook or MySpace. Instead, list websites you visit to read or watch things that you find informative or entertaining. After you have typed in the name of each website, tell us how often you usually visit that website using the options below. Select sometimes if you visit the website occasionally, most of the time if you visit the website almost every day, or all of the time if visit the website every day.

(1) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(2) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(3) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(4) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(5) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(6) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(7) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(8) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(9) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(10) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

MAGAZINES

Here is a list of magazines. Please mark how often you read each magazine by selecting one of the options below.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All of the Time
American Cheerleader	1	2	3	4	5
Cosmo Girl	1	2	3	4	5
Girl's Life	1	2	3	4	5
J-14	1	2	3	4	5
M	1	2	3	4	5
Seventeen	1	2	3	4	5
Teen Link	1	2	3	4	5
Teen Vogue	1	2	3	4	5

Teen Voices	1	2	3	4	5
Twist	1	2	3	4	5
Teen Ink	1	2	3	4	5
The Advocate	1	2	3	4	5
Cybersocket	1	2	3	4	5
Out	1	2	3	4	5
XY	1	2	3	4	5
Genre	1	2	3	4	5
Instinct	1	2	3	4	5
Curve	1	2	3	4	5
Gay Life	1	2	3	4	5
Gay Times	1	2	3	4	5

Here, please list the magazines that you read most often that we didn't include in the list above. After you have typed in the name of each magazine, tell us how often you usually read that magazine using the options below. Select sometimes if you read the magazine every now and then, most of the time if you read almost every issue, or all of the time if never miss an issue of that magazine.

(1) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(2) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(3) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

MUSIC (SONGS)

Here is a list of musical artists. Please mark how often you listen to each musician or musical groups by selecting one of the options below.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All of the Time
The Black Eyed Peas	1	2	3	4	5
Jay Sean	1	2	3	4	5
Miley Cyrus	1	2	3	4	5
Jay-Z	1	2	3	4	5
Kings of Leon	1	2	3	4	5
Taylor Swift	1	2	3	4	5
Mariah Carey	1	2	3	4	5
Pitbull	1	2	3	4	5
Jason DeRulo	1	2	3	4	5
Drake	1	2	3	4	5
Keri Hilson	1	2	3	4	5
Shakira	1	2	3	4	5
Cobra Starship	1	2	3	4	5
Mario	1	2	3	4	5
Colbie Caillat	1	2	3	4	5
Jordan Sparks	1	2	3	4	5
Fabolous	1	2	3	4	5
Jason Aldean	1	2	3	4	5
Lady Gaga	1	2	3	4	5
Katy Perry	1	2	3	4	5

Here, please list three musical artists that you like to listen to that we did mention above. If you can't think of the name of the artist, try your best to write down a specific song that is performed by the artist. After you have typed in the name of each musician/group, tell us how often you usually listen to that musician/group using the options below. Select sometimes if you listen to the artist every now and then, most of the time if you listen to the artist more than other musicians but not all the time, or all of the time if you listen to the artist as often as you can.

(1) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(2) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

(3) _____

Sometimes Often All of the Time

Now we want to ask you some more general questions about the amount of TV you watch, the number of movies you watch, the number of magazines you read, the websites you visit, and how often you listen to music.

*We're going to start by asking you about the **TV** you watch. Let's get started!*

Think about the typical school day. About how many hours of TV do you usually watch on a school day?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

On Saturdays, about how many hours of TV do you usually watch?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

On Sundays, about how many hours of TV do you usually watch?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

*Now we want to know about the **movies** you watch.*

Think about the typical school day. About how many hours do you usually spend watching movies in a theatre, at home, or at school?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

On Saturdays, about how many hours do you usually spend watching movies in a theatre or at home?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

On Sundays, about how many hours do you usually spend watching movies in a theatre or at home?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

*Now we want to know about your use of **websites**.*

Think about the typical school day. About how many hours do you usually spend browsing websites on the Internet?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

On Saturdays, about how many hours do you usually spend browsing websites on the Internet?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

On Sundays, about how many hours do you usually spend browsing websites on the Internet?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

*You're doing great! We still want to know about the magazines you read and the music you listen to. Let's start with **magazines**.*

Think about the typical school day. About how many hours do you usually spend reading magazines?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

On Saturdays, about how many hours do you usually spend reading magazines?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

On Sundays, about how many hours do you usually spend reading magazines?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

*We're interested in how often you listen to **music** as well.*

Think about the typical school day. About how many hours do you usually spend listening to music?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

On Saturdays, about how many hours do you usually spend listening to music?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

On Sundays, about how many hours do you usually spend reading listening to music?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 More than 8

If you heard that the following kinds of media were coming out soon, would you want to watch, read, or listen to them? For each topic description, select no, maybe, or yes. No means you would not want to watch, read, or listen to the media described. Yes means that you would for sure want to watch, read, or listen to the media described.
A reality TV show about a high school in New York City.

NO MAYBE YES

A magazine about gay and lesbian teen hangouts.

NO MAYBE YES

A website dedicated to politics.

NO MAYBE YES

A new movie that stars an openly gay actor.

NO MAYBE YES

The album of a singer who is already famous for being in movies.

NO MAYBE YES

A website dedicated to teens' coming out stories.

NO MAYBE YES

A magazine about high school sports and student activities.

NO MAYBE YES

The album of a singer who sing about having a crush on someone of the same sex.

NO MAYBE YES

A TV show about lesbian and gay teens and their families.

NO MAYBE YES

A new movie about crime.

NO MAYBE YES

We'd like to ask you some questions about your friends, family, and other important people. When we ask you about "important others," we mean people in your school or community who may be important in your life, like your teachers, principles, coaches, community leaders, religious leaders, or other adults who you interact with on a regular basis.

There is an important other in my life who is around when I am in need.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

There is an important other with whom I can talk about the things that make me happy and the things that make me sad.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

My family really tries to help me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

I get the emotional help and support I need from my family.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

I have an important other who can really comfort me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

My friends really try to help me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

I can count on my friends when things go wrong.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

I can talk about my problems with my family.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

I have friends with whom I can share when I'm happy and when I'm sad.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

There is an important other who cares about my feelings.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

My family is willing to help me make decisions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

I can talk about my problems with my friends.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Decide if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement below.

I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

I am able to do things as well as most other people.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

I take a positive attitude towards myself.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

I wish I could have more respect for myself.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

I certainly feel useless at times.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

At times, I think I am no good at all.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Below are some statements about your sexual identity. For each statement, decide if the statement is very unlike you, unlike you, somewhat unlike you, somewhat like you, like you, or very like you.

I have a firm sense of what my sexual needs are.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

I know what my preferences are for expressing myself sexually.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

I have never clearly identified what my sexual needs are.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

I have a clear sense of the types of sexual activities I prefer.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

I do not know how to express myself sexually.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

I have never clearly identified what my sexual values are.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

I am actively trying new ways to express myself sexually.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

I can see myself trying new ways of expressing myself sexually in the future.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

I am open to experiment with new types of sexual activities in the future.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

I am actively experimenting with sexual activities that are new to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

I am actively trying to learn more about my own sexual needs.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

My sexual values will always be open to exploration.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

I went through a period in my life when I was trying to determine my sexual needs.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

I went through a period in my life when I was trying different forms of sexual expression.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

I sometimes feel uncertain about my sexual orientation.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

My sexual orientation is not clear to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

My sexual orientation is clear to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

My sexual values are consistent with all of the other aspects of my sexuality.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

The sexual activities I prefer are compatible with all of the other aspects of my sexuality.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

The ways I express myself sexually are consistent with all of the other aspects of my sexuality.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

My sexual orientation is compatible with all of the other aspects of my sexuality.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

My understanding of my sexual needs coincides with my overall sense of sexual self.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very unlike me	Unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very like me

These next three questions are about your school.

I feel happiness when I'm at school.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All the time

I feel teachers care.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All the time

I have trouble getting along with teachers.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All the time

These questions are about your sexuality. Just mark how much you agree with each statement below. Remember, if any questions make you feel uncomfortable you do not have to answer them.

I have tried to stop being attracted to the same sex in general.

0	1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

If someone offered me the chance to be completely straight, I would accept the chance.

0	1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

I wish I weren't gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

0	1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

I feel that being gay/lesbian/bisexual is a personal shortcoming for me.

0	1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

I would like to get professional help in order to change my sexual orientation from gay/lesbian/bisexual to straight.

0	1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

Now we want to know how much you agree with the following things you might say about yourself. For each statement, please circle YES if you agree, NO if you disagree, or MAYBE if you aren't sure.

I feel confident about who I am.

YES MAYBE NO

I often feel happy.

YES MAYBE NO

I have a lot of fun with my friends.

YES MAYBE NO

I think I am a unique person.

YES MAYBE NO

I feel good about myself.

YES MAYBE NO

You're doing a great job! And you are almost done! Now we just have a few very important questions about who you are.

How would you describe your race or ethnicity?

Open ended

How religious are you?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Religious	Very Religious

How often do you attend religious services like church?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Every once in a while	Sometimes	Regularly	Very Regularly

How often do you pray?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Every once in a while	Sometimes	Regularly	Very Regularly

Which of the following best describes where you live?

0 Rural country home
1 Small rural town
2 Small city
3 Suburban community
4 Large urban city

How old are most of your closest friends?

0	1	2	3	4
Much younger than I am	Younger than I am	The same age that I am	Older than I am	Much older than I am

How do your closest friends identify sexually?

0 My friends are all straight.
1 Most of my friends are straight, but I have at least one gay/lesbian/bisexual friend.
2 I have a mix of straight and gay/lesbian/bisexual friends.
3 Most of my friends are gay/lesbian/bisexual, but I have at least one straight friend.
4 My friends are all gay/lesbian/bisexual.

We'd like to end with one more question about you. For this question, we want you to type out your answer in the form of a story.

Think about a time when you had a lot of fun with your friends or your family. Try your best to imagine that great time you had with your friends or family as if it were happening all over again. Now, tell me about it! Write out what happened that made this time so much fun!

(open-ended)

Curriculum Vitae

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EDUCATION

PhD	2011	Communication University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Advisor: Dr. Kristen Harrison Dissertation: *Sexuality in the Media and Emotional Well-Being among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adolescents*
MA	2006	Speech Communication University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
BA	2004	Communication Bradley University, Peoria, IL

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Motivations for using new media technologies among marginalized populations.
- The portrayal of sexuality in media and subsequent sexual health effects of exposure.
- Depictions of marginalized populations in media and subsequent effects of exposure.

PUBLICATIONS

Bond, B. J. (*in press*). Sexual alienation: A review of factors influencing the loneliness of gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents. In S. J. Bevinn (Ed.), *Psychology of loneliness*. Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science.

Bond, B. J., Hefner, V., & Drogos, K. L. (2009). Information-seeking practices during the sexual development of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals: The influence and effects of coming out in a mediated environment. *Sexuality & Culture, 13*, 32-50.

Bond, B. J. (2009). Out online: The content of gay teen chat rooms. *Ohio Communication Journal, 47*, 233-245.

Bond, B. J. (2009). He posted, she posted: Gender differences in self-disclosure on social network sites. *Rocky Mountain Communication Review, 6*, 29-37.

Coe, K., Tewksbury, D., Bond, B. J., Drogos, K. L., Porter, R. W., Yahn, A., et al. (2008). Hostile news: Partisan use and perceptions of cable news programming. *Journal of Communication, 58,* 201-219.

Harrison, K., & Bond, B. J. (2007). Gaming magazines and the drive for muscularity in preadolescent boys: A longitudinal examination. *Body Image, 4*, 269-277.

Knobloch, L. K., Miller, L. E., Bond, B. J., & Mannone, S. (2007). Relational uncertainty and message processing in marriage. *Communication Monographs, 74*, 154-180.

Aronson, E., Biegler, H., Bond, B. J., Clark, R. A., Drogos, K. L., Garcia, M. A., et al. (2007). Norms for teasing among college students. *Communication Research Reports, 24*, 169-176.

UNDER REVIEW

Bond, B. J. (*under review*). The portrayal of sex and sexuality in entertainment media: A content analysis of media popular with lesbian, gay, and bisexual adolescents.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Bond, B. J. (2010, November). Me and my gay self: Bridging models of identity development and models of gay identity development. Paper to be presented at the annual meeting of the National Communication Association, San Francisco.

Bond, B. J., Wilson-Kratzer, J., Drumheller, K., Northrup, S., Opffer, E., Silverman, R., et al. (2010, November). Building the LGBT academic community: Bridging and communicating identity and experience. Panel to be presented at the annual meeting of the National Communication Association, San Francisco.

Klatt, C., Bond, B. J., Kuznekoff, J., Edwards, J. (2009, November). The pros and cons of using new media in communication research. Panel presented at the annual meeting of the National Communication Association, Chicago.

Songer, T., Bond, B. J. Duck, S., Lambert, A. N., Ledbetter, A. M., Stern, D., et al. (2009, April). Families connecting during deployment: The zero to three military project. Panel presented at the annual meeting of the Central States Communication Association, St. Louis.

Garcia, M. A., Bond, B. J., Dobosh, M., Wilbrandt, D. J. (2009, April). Managing (organizational) change as a graduate student. Panel presented at the annual meeting of the Central States Communication Association, St. Louis.

Bond, B. J. (2009, February). Coming out of the cyber closet: A look into the role of the Internet in the lives of gay youth. Workshop presented at the Midwest Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Allies College Conference, Bloomington, IN.

Bond, B. J., Drogos, K. L., & Wilson, B. J. (2008, November). Portrayals of the elderly on children's television programming: A content analysis. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Communication Association, San Diego. **Top paper in Communication and Aging.**

Bond, B. J. (2008, November). The invisible minority: Portrayals of visible physical disability in children's television programming. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Communication Association, San Diego. **Top student paper in the Disabilities Issues Caucus.**

Bond, B. J., & Harrison, K. (2008, November). Media-induced fright reactions: The case of the Virginia Tech massacre. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Communication Association, San Diego.

Bond, B. J. (2008, April). The construction of race on websites of American Indian mascot proponents: The Honor the Chief Society. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Central States Communication Association, Madison, WI.

Bond, B. J. (2007, November). Out online: The content and context of gay teen chat rooms. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Communication Association, Chicago.

Bond, B. J., & Hefner, V. (2007, November). Information seeking practices in the sexual self-realization of homosexuals: The role of the media. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Communication Association, Chicago.

Bond, B. J., & Hefner, V. (2007, October). Coming out of the cyber closet: The Internet as a tool during the sexual self-realization of LGBT youth. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Internet Researchers, Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Conrad, K., Bond, B. J., & Roe, J. (2007, October). Self-disclosure on online social networking communities: The impact of privacy perceptions and gender. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Internet Researchers, Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Knobloch, L. K., Miller, L. E., Bond, B. J., & Mannone, S. (2007, May). Relational uncertainty and message processing in marriage. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, San Francisco.

Coe, K., Bond, B. J., Drogos, K. L., Porter, R., Yahn, A., Zhang, Y., et al. (2006, November). Hostile news: Partisan perceptions of cable television news programming. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Communication Association, San Antonio.

Harrison, K., & Bond, B. J. (2006, August). Ideal-body print media and pre-adolescent boys' drive for muscularity. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, New Orleans.

Hefner, V., Drogos, K. L., & Bond, B. J. (2006, June). The Terri Schiavo case: media effects on end-of-life decision making. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Dresden, Germany.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

Guest Speaker (2010, May). *From the Closet to Cable: The Influence of Media on the Development of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identities.* Quench lecture series, University of Illinois Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations.

Guest Speaker (2009, February). *Graduate School in Communication*. Career & Intern Information Night, University of Illinois Department of Communication.

Panelist (2007, August). *LGBT Issues in the Classroom*. University orientation panel for the University of Illinois Office of LGBT Concerns.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Teaching Assistant, Communication, University of Illinois (2004-present)
Courses: CMN 101: Principles of Effective Public Speaking
CMN 199: Study Abroad Pre-Departure
CMN 199: Reality Television & Society
CMN 321: Persuasive Speaking
CMN 277: Media of Public Discourse
CMN 368: Sexual Communication
CMN 396: Sex in the Media

Part-Time Faculty, Fine & Applied Arts, Parkland College (2005-present)
Courses: SPE 101: Introduction to Speech Communication

Research Assistant, Dr. Dale Brashers, University of Illinois (summer 2008)
Interview research on patient/provider communication practices.

Research Assistant, Dr. Barbara Wilson, University of Illinois (summer 2007)
Content analysis examining educational/information television programming.

Research Assistant, Dr. Kris Harrison, University of Illinois (summer 2006)
Longitudinal research examining pre-adolescents' media exposure and body image.

Research Assistant, Dr. Leanne Knobloch, University of Illinois (summer 2005)
Experimental research on uncertainty management among married couples.

Peer Leader, Department of Communication, University of Illinois (2005-2006)
Worked in a team of four experienced teaching assistants and the faculty course director to develop and execute proper training for first-year teaching assistants.

AWARDS & HONORS

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching by a Graduate Teaching Assistant (2011). A college-wide award recognizing sustained excellence in undergraduate teaching and having a positive impact on undergraduate student learning.

Ruth S. & Charles H. Bowman Award (2010). Awarded to the department's most outstanding graduate student based on student's total record of scholarship, teaching, and service. Highest honor bestowed on a graduate student by the Department of Communication, University of Illinois.

Honorary Coach (2010). Awarded to faculty and graduate students for outstanding classroom instruction to student athletes. University of Illinois Division of Intercollegiate Athletics.

Attendee (2010). National Communication Association Doctoral Honors Seminar. Salt Lake City, Utah.

Luke Award (2009). $4,000 monetary award granted for expenses related to dissertation research. Acorn Equality Fund.

Phi Kappa Phi Academic Honor Society (2009-present).

Top Four Competitive Paper Award (2008). Communication and Aging Division, annual National Communication Association conference.

Top Student Paper Award (2008). Disabilities Issues Caucus, annual National Communication Association conference.

Stafford H. Thomas Award (2006). Awarded to graduate student for outstanding departmental service by the Department of Communication, University of Illinois.

List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent (for student evaluations in the top 20% campus-wide). Fall, 2004; Fall, 2006.

Asterisked List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent (for student evaluations in the top 10% campus-wide). Spring, 2005; Fall, 2005; Spring, 2006; Spring, 2007; Fall, 2007; Spring, 2008; Fall, 2008; Spring, 2009; Summer, 2009; Fall, 2009, Spring 2010.

ACADEMIC REVIEW

Editorial Board Member (2007-present). *Rocky Mountain Communication Review*.

Ad-hoc Reviewer (2010-present). *Men & Masculinities.*

Ad-hoc Reviewer (2009-present). *Sexuality & Culture*.

Ad-hoc Reviewer (2008-present). *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*.

Reviewer (2007-present). Mass Communication Division, National Communication Association.

Reviewer (2008-present). LGBTQ Communication Studies Division, National Communication Association.

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Board Member (2009-present). LGBT Resource Center Advisory Committee, University of Illinois Office of Student Affairs.

Graduate Student Representative (2008-2009). Educational Policy Committee of the University Senate, University of Illinois.

Speech Judge (2007-present). David Jones Speech Contest, Parkland College.

President (2005-2006). Communication Graduate Student Association, University of Illinois.

Intern Supervisor (2005-present). Department of Communication, University of Illinois.

Volunteer (2004-2006). National Communication Association annual conferences.