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**RESALLYING QIDS:  
RESILIENCE OF QUEER YOUTH IN SCHOOL**

**by**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education  
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To

Mary  
who persuaded me to start this course,  
Jim Toy  
who helped me to chart it,  
Fred Goodman  
Who piloted me through it,  
and Rodney  
who encouraged me to stay it,  
this adventure  
dear to my heart.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

### **My Parents:**

Mom: "It's just the way you are, honey. It's in your genes."

Dad: "Oh, *that's* what it is. I thought it was something serious!"

### **My Children:**

Amy: "I love you, Dad. If that's who you are, that's who you are."

Bas: "I have no problem with that, Glenn. Do you?"

Trisa: "It used to be Mom-n-Dad. Now it's Mom . . . and Dad. That hurts."

Mia: "You ain't seen nothing yet!"

Luke: "I accept you. What is hard for me is your leaving Mom."

Joe: "We all have a right to be happy!"

### **My Soul Mates:**

Mary: "You have to be true to who you are, Glenn. It's a mission for you!"

Rodney: "You are the love of my life!"

### **My Self:**

"There's something I want to share with you. I'm Gay."

## **PREFACE**

*ReSallying Qids: Resilience of Queer Youth in School* is controversial. Not only because of content but also by design.

For some people, talking about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer-gender and Queer-sex youth – Qids – is discomfoting in itself. Beyond this amorphous fear of the foreign or taboo, this exploration enters uncharted waters. Participants are not only talking about school – they are in school. They implicate high school, they implicate middle school, and they disturb the innocent waters of elementary school, even early childhood education. Qids have experiences that bend standard resilience models. They call for discomfoting reform to school curriculum, school life, and the way schools conceptualize and practice student-educator relationships.

Members of my committee occasionally referred to this project as a persuasive document, a political discourse, or a point of view. In some degree and in certain places it is all of the above. By intention, however, it is first and foremost a provocation to help break the stupor of silence and open dialogue in the school community about Qids:

- becoming conscious of Queer-gender and Queer-sex youth in school
- recognizing the pervasiveness and danger of homophobia and heterosexual presumption Pre-K-12
- worrying and getting angry about the grave disservice homonegativity poses to youth, Queer and Straight alike

- **examining in earnest the school community's role in the reproduction of oppression, oppressed and oppressor**
- **motivating and enabling determination in the school community to break the cycle of socializing new generations to gender and sex dysfunction**

To these sometimes valued and often contested ends, this project attempts to engage the reader in interactive and sometimes provocative means.

First is self-disclosure. I distrust the notion of researcher objectivity. I take care to present each participant in her own voice. Yet my own voice is intermingled. I asked the question, I wrote the title, I designed the question. I had lots of thoughts, feelings and beliefs about this before I ever started, or I never would have started. Hence, I have gone to pains to explicitly locate myself in this research and to let you, the reader, understand my preconceptions and prejudices. I invite you to do the same. While I bring an identifying and empathic point of view, I believe it has encouraged participants to be candid and added value to their testimony. Taking time to consider what you bring before you read and then as you read would, I maintain, be honest and scholarly.

Second is some degree of empowerment of the reader. I have designed this dissertation with the hope of providing you raw data of sufficient amount, interest, representativeness, clarity, and – especially initially – reserve of analytical interruption to allow you to understand the participant and think with some independence about their testimony. You are, of course, confined by my selecting and organizing of the words herein. Because the words upon which I based my findings are included, I hope you are at least able to determine whether you agree or disagree with me. Perhaps, too, there is enough data for your own theorizing if you are so inclined.

Third is language presenting Queer youth in fresh terms. Terms borrowed from theories of disorder, disease and degeneracy are removed. This project dismisses diminutive words and assertively selects or creates words of its own, designed to be positive and inclusive. Absent the baggage of pejorative connotations, it helps us to more simply focus on the issue: resilience of Qids in school. The language used herein is meant to be consonant with the Qids' stories and my theories of resilience in the face of Queer related stress.

Whatever I say herein, it is just my theory. If I strike you as bold I encourage you to be bold as well. After all, this is about what we can do to make our schools work better for the life, liberty and happiness of all our youths. Support for and, therefore, education of Qids is a disturbingly weak link in the mission of our public schools and all schools which purport to serve our public purpose. The atmosphere of Queer presence in our society suggests an urgency for our listening to Qids speaking to us about how we hurt and help them in our schools. We need to take stock, learn and work together regarding Qids feeling part of our schools, valued in our schools, and succeeding in our school.

Understand that this is not a project aimed at our helping Qids. Rather, it is aimed at our allowing Qids to help us. They are hurt, they are reduced, not because of who they are but because *we* reject *them*, that is, the value and meaning they bring to us and our lives. We are numb, we reduce them, discarding their value and meaning, severing them from us. And in so doing *we* are not *We*.

May we be one. May we be *We*.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **CONTEXT**

#### **Research**

**Qids (pronounced “kids”) – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Gendered and Queer Sexed Youth – go to school. While some schools and numerous school members act as if or even claim to have “no gays” in their midst, they are there; arguably ten per cent of the enrollment, ubiquitously present across all races, all religions, all classes, all regions.**

*ReSallying Qids: Resilience of Queer Youth in School* looks at the stressors Qids experience because they are “different” in their gender or sex, different from a constructed norm of heterosexism. This study then proceeds to examine how school communities contribute to this stress and what schools can do to begin to reinforce Qids’ efforts to thrive so Qids clearly see themselves reflected throughout the school, valued by the school, and learning in the school.

In a series of narrative interviews, ten informants explicate their stresses both outside and inside school. They describe their efforts to respond, sometimes bouncing back, sometimes falling back; how their school has helped or hurt them; and what they want from their school community. *ReSallying Qids* reports and examines their testimony beginning with their challenged and responding bibliographic context, their stressors, their resilience assets and their schools.

While insights gleaned are intended to improve the lot of Qids, surely they will have salience for the preciously queer in each of us.

## Researcher

It is inescapable. When the researcher enters the research she brings herself. Acknowledging her presence is a first step in reducing usurpation of the participant's message. She seeks an egalitarian location within the research, an acknowledgment of "We" in the margins of the text.

Feminist, Third World and Queer scholars warn that, to the extent that the researcher assumes an aloof position outside and above and acts as if he weren't present in the research, social science is a tool of domination (Fine 1994). Qualitative research is colonizing discourse when the researcher distances self from other, speaking *about*, implying the ability to speak for "Them" better than "They" can speak for themselves. The qualitative researcher has an opportunity to unpack distancing notions of scientific neutrality, universal truth and researcher dispassion (Fine 1994). Rather than whitening oneself out, the researcher serves the search better if she un.masks and fills in the spaces where her words would be if she were speaking (hooks 1990).

This introduction acknowledges my presence: "the researcher" is "I." This dissertation is an intellectual enterprise. But it is soiled in the human yearning for meaning, for mattering. *ReSallying Qids* emanates from a place carved by my life and what matters to me. It investigates stress in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer youth to find how schools can less hinder and better help their resilience.

At first blush, the presence of the researcher may seem to introduce the spoiling element of bias. As the researcher conducting this qualitative study, I will, in the following section, expose myself as inextricably connected to the experiences being investigated in this study. Does my lived experience impact the research? Yes. Does understanding me influence the reader's understanding and assessment of the process and its results? I would think so. This empowers the reader also to enter the study on a more equal footing. A population such as Qids has reason to be wary when detractors of Queer

youth are numerous and a researcher's work may not be in their best interest. I propose that the bias I introduce may be a potential benefit. The reader may find ways that my perspective has not helped to usefully design the research, to encourage the candor of participants, to effectively gather data and to insightfully educe meaning from the texts. Then again, the reader may find ways in which my perspective has been beneficial.

This introduction progresses from the researcher to the research. It begins with my personal discovery followed by sexual and gender identity theory, then queer theory, the former comforting my discomfort and the latter discomforting my comfort. Identity theory validated my experience of myself. Queer theory raised the possibility of sufficient complexity and chaos to interrupt *modus operandi* that hurt us and to tolerate the ambiguity-laden process of inventing more joyous and diverse selves. *Resallying Qids* is then discussed directly, its purpose stated, language introduced and defined, limitations noted and the remainder of the study sketched. May the resilience charted herein help make discouragement escapable.

### **Background**

I consider this dissertation the keeping of a promise; a promise to myself as a child; a promise, I remember thinking at the time, to future children. "When you grow up, never forget what it's like to be a kid." I remember being nine, thinking this thought and wondering why I was thinking it or what it meant, just sensing that I really needed to remember.

I had clear moments all my life when I knew I was gay. Each such moment, however, I attacked in zealous terror, "No! You are not! You can not!" Until one moment in 1991.

I was 44 and wanted more each day to die. I sat slouched, mumbling low in my counselor's office when the words first slipped out in a quick slur retracted almost in the

same breath they were uttered, "I'm gay." "Excuse me?" said my counselor. I hesitated. "I'm gay." "I'm sorry," he relentlessly pursued, "I didn't hear that. Could you please repeat it a little louder?" I paused and drew a breath. "I'm gay!" For the first time, the word was out, the word I never dared utter. A howling thunderstorm of anguish began pouring out.

This story of struggle began for me when I was nine. At least since five years old I recall TV cowboys of my dreams; Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, the Lone Ranger and Tonto and oh! The Cisco Kid and Poncho! I had crushes on teen-age boys whose names I didn't even know. Then I was nine.

It was a swelty morning and we were just coming inside from an active morning recess. Even though Miss O'Brien had opened the windows, 52 third grade bodies lent a pungent smell to the room. Three boys had been whispering and giggling their way into the classroom signaling a plot. Danny, the one who sat nearest the front, simultaneously eyed his two coconspirators to his back and left and read their nod. His right knee in his seat, he planted his right elbow on his desk propping his chin in his hand and raised his left hand, waving it in the air. Miss O'Brien was doing the do-all-know-all-see-all-over-the-glasses teacher maneuver as she instructed the class to be seated, captured the wayward, counted out and passed out each row's papers with her moistened fingertip. Noting the waving hand, "Yes, Danny?" Danny gave a quick smirk to his friends, "Miss O'Brien, what does it mean when two men kiss?" He slouched down quickly into his seat, his hand slightly covering his grin. I don't remember her entire response except for the words, "they go to hell." Everything seemed to suddenly darken around me. I felt I was falling backward into a bottomless pit.

By Christmas I was in a horrid depression. My solution was to stay extremely busy all day and avoid going to bed until my parents absolutely forced me. Time in bed felt, indeed, like hell, endless torment. I tried to stifle my sobbing in my pillow. One night, my big sister, Dianne, came in my room. "Glenn, why are you crying?" We were

very close; she bought none of my denial. I had no words to explain. Mustering all the courage in my nine year old heart, I remember saying, "Dianne, I love men. I'm going to live to be 60 or 70. I'm not going to be able to make it that long. I'm going to go to hell!" My voice broke into renewed sobs. She held my shoulders in both her hands. "Glenn, God loves you the way you are. . . Laugh." I cried. "Laugh." I couldn't stop my tears. "Laugh!" I commanded my tears to stop. I commanded my shoulders to let her hands rock me. Yes, I laughed.

I excelled academically at school. Outside the classroom was another matter. Social times were excruciating. Recess and lunch hour were the worst. I liked the girls, played with them and was their champion jump roper. With the boys I was always the last one chosen for a team and called by sissy, girl or Queer more often than by name. I vowed never to forget what my childhood was like.

Fourteen years, seminary, and several denied crushes on guys later, I met Mary. I liked her instantly. She was fun, witty, a provocative conversationalist, someone I felt I could grow with. She danced with verve and had this wonderful soprano voice. She quickly became very special to me. I was apprehensive and knew something was misaligned in me but believed 1) that it was wrong and 2) I would overcome it. We married. We loved. We had four beautiful children.

When I became a dad my earnest wish was that my children would never have as painful a childhood as I. My wish did not come true. Trisa was beautiful, gifted, a school leader, an athletic and vocal star. Yet, coming home one spring day, Mary and I found our frosh daughter in the basement planning to take her life. It wasn't until three and a half years later that she told us, to our great relief, that she was lesbian.

While Trisa's world was changing for the better, Luke's was getting dark. Her coming out reinforced for him the understanding of his own sexuality. Luke was my third child and the older son. At his birth I remember the welling up inside me, Don't let

him be like me. Now he was telling me he was. I didn't want to hear that; I didn't want him to hurt as I did.

Nor was the journey easy for Amy or Joe. The oldest and two years ahead of Trisa in school, Amy spent her last year and a quarter in high school in her own closet, unable to share with anyone the trauma she was experiencing at home and wondering, as she told me years later, If my friends knew what was really going on in my life would they still be my friends? It was a Jeckl and Hyde time of high stress at home and idyllic projection at school. By the time Joe came through the small Catholic high school from which his three siblings had graduated, the word was trickling out that he had a lesbian sister and a gay brother, a word that reverberated with such increasing viciousness that we decided to transfer Joe to a different school.

A Saturday morning in October 1996, Mary and I were out for breakfast at a National Coney Island in our community. It had been our tradition the last eight years to take Saturday mornings together, hiking a mile or two to some restaurant and having a leisurely breakfast filled with stories and our reflections and questions of the week before returning home. This Saturday would be different. After years of counseling, support groups, nights of bitter prayer, extended arguments with myself, bibliotherapy, journaling, and a straight female therapist whom I despised because she wouldn't make me straight, I knew the time had arrived to face the truth and share it with Mary with whom I had always been true. Amidst long pauses . . .

"Mary, there's something I have to tell you."

"What is it?"

". . . . . I'm gay."

Through our years together, Mary was my best friend. She had much to do with my ultimately choosing to come out instead of committing suicide. We negotiated our way through coming to grips with this fact, separating and divorcing. Nothing in my life was ever harder than telling her or leaving her.

I crossed the stream.

Since 1997 I have been living gay and out. Rodney and I have been partners and lovers for three years. Happiness and peace gradually began replacing my stomach's chronic ache. Every now and then a memory of some earlier event in life returns. Inevitably, a primitive memory reconstructs the ache within the experience. But now ache has been replaced by zest. As a child in school, I didn't know such happiness was possible and certainly never dreamed such peace and joy for myself.

I consider this dissertation the keeping of a promise, a promise to myself, a promise to future children: "When you grow up, never forget what it's like to be a ~~kid~~ Qid." I hope I have not. I hope this dissertation illuminates the lives of Qids and their experiences in school. May it help generate hope and real solutions beyond pain.

### **Sex and Gender Identity**

Sex and gender identities, though related, are distinct. Sexual identity describes how one is attracted; to the opposite, or same, or either sex (gender?). Gender identity describes one's sense, one's experience of oneself; male or female or androgynous.

American society has normatized the attraction of dominant male-man toward a receptive female-woman. However, sexual attraction and gender can and do vary together or separately in individuals. Some individuals offend this norm because they are same-sex attracted. Some individuals offend this norm because they do not sufficiently approximate the role assigned to their genitalia or may be unsettlingly difficult to classify. Some cross both boundaries of sexual desire and gender expression.

While the *expression* of and value attached to sexuality and gender are within the realm of personal and collective choice, gender and sexual *orientations* are reported as involuntary by most people (Besner and Spungin 1995). Far from being a preference



(Money 1988), being gender or sexually variant is often considered ostracizing and is vigorously denied and resisted by the individual.

Shortly after the popularization of the term "homosexual," Freud hypothesized it was simply a stage normal in adolescent sexual development. Adult homosexuals, he reasoned, were persons whose development was arrested in this stage (Besner and Spungin 1995). Some psychoanalysts espouse a non-Freudian theory that homosexuality results from a bad relationship with one's father. Isay counter-theorized that adult gay men reported father-bonding problems as a secondary effect of other emotional stressors including frustration that they were disappointments to their fathers and embarrassment that they felt early erotic attractions to their fathers (Isay 1996).

Varieties of models attribute sexual orientation to a variety of sources. Biological models, for example, attribute sexual orientation to genetic, hormonal and other biophysical factors. Social and psychological models claim that biology provided neutral neural circuitry that responds to the experiences of the individual. Interactive models describe biological predisposition influenced by relationships and experiences (Besner and Spungin 1995). Subsequent search for the presence of an opposite sex hormone, particularly testosterone deficiency in males and excesses in females, causing cross-sex brain organization has produced inconsistent results (Banks and Gartell 1995; Byne 1995; Gooren 1995). There is no evidence that the hormones which determines secondary sex characteristics such as breast development in females and lowered voice pitch in males, may also impact sexual orientation and little evidence that hormonal influences during fetal life wire certain parts of the brain for sexual orientation (Doell 1995). Current hormone research suggests the brain grows and shrinks temporarily rather than

permanently in response to exposure to or reduction of hormones. Perhaps physiology, including the brain, interacts with experience (Fausto-Sterling 1995).

Genetic and brain cell research is more delineating. Hamer et al. claimed 99.5 percent certainty that there is genetic material on the X chromosome which predisposes a male to become homosexual (Besner and Spungin 1995). Researchers are discovering apparent differences in the hypothalamus in relation to biological sex and sexual orientation. For example, between the ages of 2 and 4, a cluster of cells in the preoptic area begin to decrease in number in girls, but not in boys, until, at young adulthood, the number of cells is twice as great in men as in women (Swaab, Gooren et al. 1995). While this gender differentiating research did not distinguish between homosexual and heterosexual orientation in men could it have shown male/transgender differences? The question was not addressed.

Although the preoptic area of the hypothalamus did not yield sexual orientation differences, other areas did. The suprachiasmatic nucleus has twice as many cells in heterosexuals as in homosexual men, and an area referred to as the INAH-3 is twice as large in homosexual as heterosexual men (Swaab, Gooren et al. 1995). The anterior commissure is smallest in heterosexual men, larger in women, and largest in gay men (Besner and Spungin 1995).

Research and popular emphasis often center on “homosexuality” and “gay and lesbian” issues. Yet the implicit gender conflict may be even more profound. Lesbians and gays are often harassed for appearing “butch” or “femme.” When lesbians and gays describe their harassment and discrimination, it is often related to gender non-conformity in behavior, mannerisms, or dress.

Gender discrimination appears more frequently and more pervasively than sexual orientation in childhood. In the case of boys, terms such as gay, pofter and queer are used with no explicit homosexual connotation. Rather, they are targeted at boys who are considered “soft,” “egg heads,” less athletically inclined, and less restrained in gender roles (Plummer 1999). Gender variance and crossing genders or “transgendering” is a phenomenon newborn in research. Though currently falling into disfavor, it has been common to correct penile “aberrations” or circumcision “accidents” by simply removing the male genitalia, reconstructing a vagina and reassigning gender, perhaps with some attendant gender role counseling and training (Colapinto 2000). The current evidence that gender identity is a psychological rather than an anatomic reality and gender identification is not necessarily with one’s biological sex (Besner and Spungin 1995) remains strange to many.

Society and its educational institution, school, reproduce and enforce a prototype male and female in which 1) genitalia are non-ambiguous and match psychological gender sense for one of two proscribed gender identities, 2) each of the two thinks and acts within a social script and 3) each is attracted solely to its discrete “opposite.” Control gender, society seems to say, and we control sexual deviation. Sadly, this regime infringes in varying degrees on the internally congruent and free expression of most of its members and jeopardizes the basic mental and physical well being of many.

The expression and meaning attached to gender and sexuality are tools of culture varying over the geography of space and time (Lipkin 1999). “*My*” gender and “*my*” sexuality however, whatever their source or cultural location, are a fundamental, personal discovery of who-I-am to which an individual is likely to lay tenacious claim.

## **Sexual Identity Theory**

Vivienne Cass caught my attention as I first began probing the issue of resilience in Queer youth. Her name and her model for sexual identity formation surfaced frequently. She is the most extensively studied theoretician on this topic (Eliason 1996). Her ideas, superimposed on the fresh process of my own coming out, imprinted deeply on the transition-softened ground of my ego. This and the following section, "Queer Theory!" log key ideas that have influenced my thinking about how we know our gender and sexual selves.

Sexual identity has been at the heart of lesbian and gay studies defining most of its streams of thought or paradigms including essentialist identity<sup>i</sup> (1975-present), the social construction of identity (1976-present), and difference and race (1979-present) (Escoffier 1992). The process of sexual identity formation is sometimes simply called "coming out (Cass 1984b)." Ethnographies of homosexuals written in the early and mid-1970s implied a similarity in the coming-out process. By the end of the decade, a plethora of theoretical models had been posed, all of them assuming coming out was a developmental, systematic progression and all of them proposing some number of stages of development (Cass 1984a). Cass perceived all of these theoretical descriptions as more or less universally including several components; coming out to self as homosexual, developing a positive attitude about one's identity, the desire to come out to others and increasing contact with other homosexuals (Cass 1984b).

Though retrospective and lacking reliability safeguards, three of these models had some qualitative review, namely those of McClellan, Troiden and Weinberg. Troiden's

---

<sup>i</sup> Essentialism conceptualizes sexual identities as universal forms, at their core the same globally. Social construction emphasizes cultural context as the determinant of how and whether various sexual identities are expressed. Race and individual differences are sometimes the primary factors considered as mediators between one's sexual identification and its expression.

model attracted considerable attention. He hypothesized four stages of identity development, 1) "sensitization" to feeling gender odd, 2) "identity confusion" regarding one's sexual desire, 3) "identity assumption" as homosexual and 4) "commitment" to and love of oneself and others as homosexual (Troiden 1989). A flexible theoretical framework enriches his model. To Troiden, a gay man, coming out is a form of resocialization. Sexual preferences develop according to socially scripted sexualities; exist on the levels of how one perceives oneself, how one perceives others perceiving one's self, and how one presents oneself; are complex and continuously emerging (Eliason 1996).

Cass theorizes a six-stage model of 1) "identity confusion" expressed as Could I be homosexual? 2) "identity comparison," I may be homosexual, 3) "identity tolerance," I am probably homosexual, 4) "identity tolerance," I'm homosexual and okay, 5) "identity pride," I'm proud of myself and will stand up for my homosexual community, and 6) "identity synthesis," I belong in, contribute and relate to the whole community (Cass 1984a; Eliason 1996; Lipkin 1999). Cass introduced "identity foreclosure," the notion that an individual can, at each stage, choose not to proceed any further and stop or regress in her development

A validity study of Cass' six stage model found a high degree of consistency between how respondents defined themselves and their responses to questionnaire items describing sexual identity. Cass, herself lesbian, found both males and females fell into her six postulated categories and follow the process predicted by the model (Cass 1984a) (Eliason 1996). Falling into and following the process, however, depend on self-concept and identity, the former influenced by the response of society and the latter requiring reference to a specific social category (Cass 1984b). Homosexual identity as a "true" self immutably established by early childhood is a comforting model (Katz 1975) bringing with it the benefit of minority group recognition and social negotiation positioning for acquiring a higher social status and civil rights (Cass 1984b; Eliason 1996).

Nevertheless, on the heels of the tide of essentialist theorists came a wave of constructionists describing sexual identity as a social role rather than a condition, a social construction (Lipkin 1999). They argued that homosexuality is an experience, not a perception, in process rather than set, and that substituting a pathologized model of sexual diversity for a gay affirmative one could undermine more radical, beneficial conceptions of being human (Eliason 1996). In the early 1980s, Cass critiqued her own work:

Is homosexual identity fact, construct or simply fanciful illusion? The answer, it would seem, is all three! . . . (H)omosexual identity can only arise in those societies where the homosexual categorization is acknowledged. In this sense, homosexual identity is hypothetical, constructed out of a need to control and restrict rather than a reflection of any actual concrete form (p. 121) (Cass 1984a).

By the 1990s, evidence was mounting for the fluidity of sexual identity. Boundaries, for example, between categories of lesbian and bisexual women became recognized as quite fluid (Rust 1993). Pragmatically, developmental theories omitted important identity markers of race, ethnicity, gender difference, class, education, age and other personally important aspects of lives influencing one's assertion of self. Categories that comfort white middle class gay men and, to a lesser extent, white middle class lesbians can become stressors to multiply marginalized people of color who seek to define themselves less in Western terms. Adrienne Rich captured this notion as "white solipsism (meaning) the tendency to think, imagine and speak as if whiteness described the world (in Escoffier 1992)." Differences in how lesbians and gay men express gender non-conformity and how they understand their relationship have led to the development of distinct models of lesbian identities both as a developmental process and as a choice (Lipkin 1999).

## **Queer Theory!**

Queer is not Gay. Gay politics arise from belief that same-sex oriented individuals form a class oppressed by society yet with a rightful claim to the full and equal benefits of society. “Full” and “equal” commodify these social benefits as measurable, distributable and accumulable. Mimicking precedent strategies of minoritized people – for example, People of Color and Women – the gay movement seeks entry to an equal share of benefits purporting that, but for the object of their desire, gays are the same as non-gays. They endeavor to change society's perception of them from different to same. So assimilated, they believe that they achieve equality.

It is precisely assimilation of difference into the same that Queer intends to interrupt (Pinar 1998). First, Queer regards the assimilationists' strategy of the civil rights era as insidious deception because, by naively accepting the capitalistic usage of the terms freedom and justice, it enabled centers of privilege while weakening the credibility of those whom, on its part, it disenfranchises. Secondly, Queer enjoys its unorthodoxy. To gain acceptance in heterocentrist terms would be a loss.

Queer theory will be presented here in the voice of Queer writers followed by my view of its place in this research.

### **In Queer Voices**

“Queer theory” is an imperative sentence, denorming and deviating, queering theory. Sloughing the status quo conventions which denounce sex and gender Queer people, it is perpetually reinventing the terms of liberation in the drama of freeing it. Queer sloughs and destabilizes centers and heterocenters thinking fluidly about people, relationships, and society. It shifts energy from status quo strategies of acquiring entitlements to engaging an epistemology of deviance (Pinar 1998).

Queer theory's sexual subversion emanates from postmodernism's deconstruction of notions such as rationality, norms, and identity (Tierney 1997) obviating the deconstruction of the supposedly natural norms of gender and sexuality as power-effects of and for compulsory heterosexuality (Pinar 1998)

Ceaselessly differentiating and rhetoricizing, Queer incites language to self-invention, accelerating freedom and thus motivating the de-stabilizing of norms and the elevation of deviance (Pinar 1998). It permits gender, sex, desire, and love to spontaneously deviate (Jagose 1996). Aggravating and playful, it teases us to embrace our degrees of queerness, to elevate the wayward and the disenfranchised among and within us.

Queer regards boundaries with irreverence. Who is homosexual? One avowedly straight man reported of his intercourse with men, "It's not important to me. I do it with men on occasions. It's more important that I am married and love my wife." Another, "I am also not really gay. Gay sex is something that I do 2 or 3 times a week. It amounts to so little of my time (Bartos et al. 1993)."

Homosexuality, however, is the brand attached by self-deputizing straights; it is no home for Queers. Its linguistic invention embodied deviance and ritualized naming, shaming and punishing. In one motion it terrorized the masses into forswearing sexual variance, then fugitizing deviants. "Homosexuality" implicated its ranks as co-perpetrators, expelling from under their mantle persons neither hetero *nor* homo.

Four percent of children born annually may display some sort of anatomical or genetic difference that challenges dichotomous assumptions about maleness and femaleness (Harbeck 1997) p. 7. Anatomically male or female transpersons disrupt the gender system asserting they are not the gender they seem – and perhaps lack compulsion or propensity for either gender as socially constructed. And even if simply a female-to-male or male-to-female attracted to a man or a woman, or both, trans befuddles gender. Intersexed, hermaphrodites, are anatomically ambiguous: "Which one?" or "Both?" For



transes and inters, “homosexual” can be irrelevant, a site of intensified repression, an additional term of silencing for the person whose gender crosses “man” with “woman” and whose desire center say “homo” or “androgynous” or “either” or “neither” . . . or “hetero”! They turb the foundational social fixation, “Is it a boy or a girl?” Trans and inter stretch the borders.

Yet there is a queerer place still, a mentality of declassified people, destructing constructs or constructing without one. It is about all of us, each a surprise of desire and lack thereof, commonality and uniqueness, clarity and confusion both individual and collective regarding our genders, our desires, our selves. In the scrutiny of numerous cultural histories, the modern invention of binarized male vs. female, hetero vs. homo, and normal vs. perverse sexuality may be a most queer linguistic fix entrapping our creative embodied power (Dynes 1992; Foucault 1978; Murray 1997).

### **Queer Connection to ReSallying Qids**

*ReSallying Qids* makes no claim regarding Queer Theory. The point of this brief consideration is that it is pertinent.

Among LGBTQ people there is skepticism about using the template of straight people as a means to harmony and joy with their Queer gender and sex. In the LGBTQ population there is distrust of non-queer people doing research about Queer people and about non-queer people drawing conclusions about Queer people. Chapter 2 will provide examples such as research of straights denying the heightened risk of suicide for Queers and the invention and application of the word “homosexual” itself with ensuing classifications as perverse, criminal and mentally ill.

There is also in Queer theory a pride that Queer people bring a message of freedom and joy – gayness – about oneself for anyone who wishes to hear it.

This researcher understands these visions. The informants in this study are Queer. That doesn't make them totally different from non-queers, but it also doesn't assume that, as stated at the beginning of this section, "but for the object of their desire, gays are the same as non-gays."

Queering theory is a pre-emptive strategy of gender and sex Queer people to value their location and their re-locating rather than the norm. An exercise in voice, *ReSallying Qids* is founded on LGBTQ youth's self-examining their pain and what they did about it, rendering their tales of liberation, sometimes discovering and sometimes inventing their achievement of peace and happiness in crisis.

Queer theory will not be imposed on informants. However, it will help the researcher be open to more variation in their responses, to hear and facilitate that which is Queer as it surfaces in conversation, and to acknowledge it in analysis of results.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to reveal how Qids – simply for who they are – are hurt in and by schools and what schools can do to change that.

Re-Sallying Qids focused on school where two crises for Qids collide; youth and compulsory attendance. Youth is turbulent, much less with the stress of feeling or being ostracized as Queer (Goodman 2000), then being trapped in a Q-hostile school environment (Walters and Hayes 1998). Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer youth – Qids – can and often do face a treacherous environment. Many face this hazard with dangerously little support, often without even the refuge of an understanding, protecting family. Simultaneously, there is a pattern of homophobia commencing in childhood, increasing through early adolescence and peaking in late teens before dissipating somewhat in early adulthood (Plummer 1999). As a primary peer context and

a key socializing site, school is an especially intense experience for Qids, heightened all the more if family support is lacking. This study was an investigation of how some Qids survived and even thrived in school and during their school years.

Youth can be a perilous time. When a youth is in danger, the community tends to rally around her. Individuals may pay a substantial personal price to protect her. But not always. This research of Queer youth makes no assumption that the social protection tendency applies to the situation of Queer youth.

Why is a child rejected? Something about them is repulsive. Something different. Difference can discomfort. The difference may be a child's skin. Perhaps it is her origin. Perhaps her appearance or dissymmetry or belief or physical feature, inability, culture, class, or something else suspect, odd or unfamiliar.

Gender and sex are valued marks in society. Culture holds expectations. Boy. Girl. Boy meets girl. They intercourse – hopefully within certain proscriptions. The system remains intact. But some people are outside this gender and sex scenario. Boy may intercourse boy or girl, girl. Even more perplexing, someone transgresses the simple assumption: “Boy. Girl.” These differences can trigger fear, rejection, hate and abuse responses in society and in our schools. In the examination of these crises, not all outcomes may be tales of conquest. An interplay of failure and triumph may provide its own valuable perspective, gradations of foreground and background.

A qualitative study, information will be collected by interviewing a variety of sexual minority, gender, and culturally diverse informants currently enrolled in schools in a large metropolitan area in the Midwestern region of the United States. This inquiry will garner ingredients and recipes of resilience – from common to idiosyncratic. Queering quantitative notions, this study is curious about resilience expressed in both the mean and what clusters about it as well as the full range of variation and the most deviant outliers. Norm and deviation will speak together. We may discover resilience trails as well as resilience trail blazing.

“Re-Sallying Qids” focuses on these sexual minority students, Qids in school. Its purpose is to explore their school – high, middle, elementary, early childhood – experiences and identify their crises and coping resources and strategies. How do Qids sally past obstacles? What accounts for this resilience in the school culture?

### **Language<sup>ii</sup>**

Language can’t be ordered individually, as if from a Sears catalog. It is forged collectively, in the fiery heat of struggle (Feinberg 1996). An investigation of the language to discuss Queer people reveals a lack of generally acceptable terms, due in part to the short history of social visibility and an even shorter history of Queer research, and due as well, perhaps, to our poor understanding of Queer gendered and sexual people or simply our poor understanding of gender and sex (Plummer 1999).

In this section, I try to formulate workable definition of key terms. As pertinent to usage in this study, denotations and connotations of words are discussed. In the absence of workable terms, the researcher took the liberty to develop new terms. New terms may have no usage beyond this study. They were developed, however, because of what I deemed the needs of this study and the absence of reasonably sufficient comparable terms to meet that need. Of particular concern was inclusivity and respect toward the people by whom and about whom this study was written.

“ReSallying” references both “resilience” and “sallying.” “Resile,” shoots from “sel-“ meaning to jump or spring; in derivative form, to sally. To re-sile is to sally again, to spring back or to resume a former position. Numerous theories, stories and studies describe the wide-eyed Qid sallying into life, then set back with the dawning that she is

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<sup>ii</sup> My committee requested that it be noted they understood and approved of the idiosyncratic use of the letter Q and derivative vocabulary as it is used herein. As Fred Goodman, my chair, pointed out to me, given that the problem resides in silence and silencing we might say that *ReSallying Qids* is 99% about vocabulary.

non-hetero and apparently non-acceptable or worse. The question, therefore, “What does it take for the Qid to resile, to ‘re-sally?’”

While this research was primarily concerned with response in the face of an obstacle, a setback, minor setbacks or absence of setbacks merited note, especially in relation to gender and sex issues. Resilience – and sallying – were examined as an interactive personal and institutional psychosocial phenomenon.

The researcher introduced three terms and one abbreviation of his own making: the terms Q, Qid, and Qaracter and the abbreviation Q-ID. In addition, the word “Queer” is capitalized throughout, except when it is used to stand for the derogation, “queer.” Queer is used as the inclusive term for people who do not identify as heterosexual in gender or sexual desire.

“Q” is a prefix attached with a hyphen to modify a word indicating that it is 1) Queer referred, 2) by and about people who are Queer, 3) Queer associated or 4) Queer allied as in “Q-community,” “Q-bias,” “Q-gender,” “Q-sex” or “Q-stressor.” Q is a reminder of inclusivity, Gay + Lesbian + Bisexual + Transgender + . . . + Q.

“Qid,” like “kid,” refers to a youth; also a dependent. A Qid is unorthodox in her gender or/and sexual orientation identity. Qid and kid are both pronounced the same. The auditory similarity making the two indistinguishable to the ear mimics the Q-phenomenon of apparent indistinguishability from straights, invisibility.

Among its meanings, “character” includes “a person conspicuously different from others, a Queer or eccentric person<sup>iii</sup>.” A Qaracter, is a Q-informant. Qaracter refers to the ten particular Qids in this study who inform this research. Being Queer affects, perhaps even effects, one’s world view generating new and different meanings. These

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<sup>iii</sup> These definitions can be found in Webster’s New Twentieth Century Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, Second edition, The World Publishing Company (Cleveland and New York), 1958.

words are intended to serve the purpose of troubling a reader hopefully to the point of empathizing with a Queer youth who feels left out of the world and the need to be spoken into it.

“Identity” as used herein signifies how one claimed and named oneself. It could shift in one’s shifting life contexts. If there is a sense in which it conjures sameness or “identicalness,” it is the sense one has of coherence between one’s perceived and desired self and the sense one has of fitting in the world. In relation to the informants themselves, identity is based on the claims and references of each and the identifying word(s) she assigns herself. Q-ID is an abbreviation for Queer Identity.

“The Closet” and “Coming Out” are Q-cultural metaphors depicting this struggle between denying/hiding one’s identity and acknowledging/expressing it. Woof and warp of the Q-community’s understanding of identity construction, these images were addressed in both the interviews and the survey conducted for each informant in this study.

Q-people are in search of a name. Increasingly visible in American society and finding themselves self-consciously trying on words in the public boudoir, they are sloughing off sterilizing and shaming terms and reaching for a verbal mantle of pride. “Homosexual” has been recognized as medicalizing Q-people’s gender and sex. They regard that word as deriding their gender difference or/and same sex attraction and implying they are deviant, sick, undesirable, immoral and bad (Owens 1998).

Yet homosexuality, the term for abnormality, generated the normality default, “heterosexuality” and the norm, “heterosexism.” Heterosexuality encompasses a utopian social image beginning with unambiguous genitalia, gender beauty and prowess, and male and female coupling. Heterosexism as a code enforces right body parts, right gender expression and a right desire. Heterosex terms, however, particularly “heterosexual,” should not be automatically politicized or mis-politicized. Persons attracted to their opposite gender can describe themselves as heterosexual. A Q-gender

person, for example a transsexual male-to-female attracted to men, may describe herself as heterosexual yet not associate with the heterosexual politics of gender and/or sex.

“Queer,” historically a derogation of unrightness, has been reclaimed by some lesbians, gays and others firstly to fill the function once performed by gay – inclusion of both males and females (Donovan 1992) – and secondly to deconstruct limiting and fragmenting notions of gender and sex diversity. At once noun-adjective-verb, it represents the undefining of sexuality from the perspective of gender and sex marginalized people. Queers say, “We’re not defining ourselves in normists’ terms or any terms. We’re constructing our lives, our selves, our meanings in our own words.” It says to people declaring heterosexually, “Homosexual is your opposite. We’re not your opposite. We’re Queer.” Queer liberates people to possibility beyond the fear of the stranger without and within (White 1995).

“Sexual orientation” herein refers to the signatures of erotic desire that include spontaneous sexual stirrings, affectional attractions, thoughts, fantasies and emotional and romantic feelings (Owens 1998). Sexual identity is one’s sense of her sexual orientation (Savin-Williams 1990).

“Lesbian,” “Gay” and “Bisexual” are terms respectively standing for female attracted to females, male attracted to males, and female or male attracted to males and females (Bass and Kaufman 1996). Lesbian and gay shed the negative medical and psychological connotations of homosexual. These words which include the element of self-definition are preferred by lesbians and gays and express some shared social and psychological attributes of acceptance and identity (Owens 1998) (Donovan 1992).

“Bisexual” and “Transgendered” people often struggle with misunderstanding from heterosexuals and gays (Donovan 1992). Bisexuals are sometimes viewed as fence sitters needing to choose a side (Owens 1998) and transgendered people as an embarrassment to the more “normal” gay community. Susan states, “I’m not at all

confused. . . . People are really saying that my bisexuality confuses them (Bass and Kaufman 1996).”

Transgendered people are presently congealing and gaining embryonic acceptance (Youth Resources, 1998). Transgender is an umbrella term including persons who experience degrees and types of gender conflict. Among a multitude of over sixty expressions of resolution are crossdressing for political or social activism (crossdresser, “drag”), crossdressing for erotic purposes (transvestites fetishist), crossdressing for emotional comfort (transvestite), expressing self as a blend of genders (androgynous), gender-crossing (transgenderist), living in internally congruent gender perhaps including genital modification surgery male-to-female or female-to-male (transsexual), living in gender conventionally associated with gender identity and congruent genitalia (man/woman) (Rodgers 1998) (Youth Resources 1998).

Intersexed persons, sometimes called hermaphrodites, are persons born with genitals which show characteristics of both sexes (Youth Resources 1998). Their important and unique experiences, while not researched and unfortunately not reflected in this research, are occasionally referenced. LGBTI do not express the full range of non-heterosexual gender and sexual diversity. Blurring boundaries further are numerous variations; androgen insensitivity, for example, in which genital women are found to be chromosomal males with inherited inability to utilize their own testosterone (Bolin 1998) or multiple personality order in which two or more gender variable personalities co-consciously integrate themselves within an individual (Henkin 1998).

LGBT is the abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. LGBTQ, a relatively new designator, adds the identification of Queer, Questioning, and generally inclusive.

Straight is the common term for a gender and sexual orientation conforming heterosexual. In contrast to straight, gay, when used alone, includes one who is not gender and/or sexual orientation conforming heterosexual. Q includes the same. While



gay is historical, Q is novel. Gay for some has connotations of non-inclusivity of women, bisexuals and transgenders, while Q for others stirs discomfort associated with radicalism.

Throughout this study, female personal pronouns will be used for general discussions. When a specific person is being referred, the personal pronoun of her or his usage will be applied. Female pronouns and terms (e.g., sister, girl) are applied not only to females but often to males as well among LGBTQ people.

### **Limitations of Study**

This study sought Q-students currently enrolled in Midwestern primary, K-12<sup>iv</sup>, schools. One notable exception, included because of the importance of her information, was the single transsexual informant, an adult residing in Toronto. A potentially vast population, the ten actual participants became a rare find once screened through the sieves of a) being out, b) being willing, and c) having the support and consent of their parent(s)/caregiver(s). While the group included some variety of age, culture, gender and orientation, it was not a “random sample” or even a representative one. The results of this study make no claim to generalizations about Q-youth and their school experience.

Informants participating in this study were anomalies. They were “out” about their sexual differentness not only to themselves but also to an extended, complex network of people. They had been found through Q-organizations or, at the very least, Q-friendly circumstances such as a sexual minority panel. Their parent(s) or caregiver(s) supported them to the extent of granting consent for their participation and, in most cases, providing a home site for the informant’s interviews.

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<sup>iv</sup> Pre-kindergarten and pre-school were not mentioned by any Qaracter in this study. Many of them may simply have not attended pre-school. While this study probably has some pre-school pertinence in that Qaracters referred to life events occurring when they were four and three years old, preschool is not directly addressed.

Study of the Q-community constantly confronts the challenge of invisibility – not only to the public, but even to oneself – and accessibility. This difficulty was exacerbated by its focus on minors. So this study might correctly be perceived as an examination of exceptional narratives rather than typical ones.

Q-people are normal-wary. Until the mid-1970s, they were either ignored or treated as social deviants and criminals. Wounded by extraneous generalizations and labels, Qs seek – at least for now – to deconstruct the experience of homosexuality, to create space amidst social rubble and remove socially constructed masks. They call for knowledge and understanding in which idiosyncrasy and inclusion rather than categories and hierarchies are of central importance. In that mode, partly by default and partly by design, *ReSallyng Qids* revealed useful patterns and possibilities for how Qids can survive their school years.

### **Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

Chapter 2 reviews literature relevant to this study, including resilience, Queer social history, contemporary American schools and the Qids who attend them. Chapter 3 explains methods for *ReSallyng Qids*.

Chapters 4 through 7 comprise the analysis and deal with relevant research issues for educators and the school community regarding Queer youth in schools. Chapter 4, *Qaracters*, introduces stress and resilience in a holistic biographic context. One of my intentions in this research was to examine Queer stress in context so that its relative weight and importance could be understood. Chapter 4 also provides the important opportunity to begin to see the invisible child. Out of sight is out of mind. The reader can begin to see that the invisible is not entirely invisible. She will become aware of the issue of “being different” and how important it is to create classrooms and schools where “different” and all sorts of diversity are talked about and welcomed.

Chapter 5, Stress, compares and contrasts Qaracters' life stressors and Q-stressors so as to clarify the relative frequency and intensity of Q-stressors in the lives of Qids. The pain of closeting one's identity can be deep and long lasting. The majority of these stressors, especially Q-ID stressors, occur in school. Chapter 6, Resilience, systematically explores characteristic beliefs and resilience strategies of the ten Qaracters who participated in this study. While Qaracters called on numerous positive personality assets to overcome difficulties, access to the protection of positive family relations and external support structures was difficult. Chapter 7, School, focuses on the most important social structure in Qids' lives, their school community and culture. Qaracters' testimony addressed how their schools were hurtful and how they were or could be helpful. Chapter 8, Conclusion, summarizes this study, its achievements and shortcomings, questions that it surfaced, and the possibilities for next-step research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

The literature of both experience and research weave a complex yet clear image of school as a troublesome place for Qids<sup>y</sup>. Schools reproduce the bias of society toward a heterosexist norm and the fears and prejudices of society against those who don't fit this norm and are perceived as a threat. Usually treated as deviants or not treated at all, Qids wrestle with feelings of non-existence, worthlessness and depression. This sexual marginalization is multiplied when it intersects with race, class and gender. Internal and environmental resources can help a Qid survive. There are ideas and some fledgling school curricular and cultural innovations to counter homophobia in American schools.

Following a broad socio-historical overview of the problematization of homoeroticism and gender deviation, the review will narrow its consideration to schools and the LGBTQ youth who attend them. This review will begin with the topic of resilience, this study's focusing element.

#### **Resilience**

Decades of retrospective research selecting people exhibiting behaviorally defined dysfunction such as drug abuse, school failure, and criminal involvement attributed their maladaptation to risk factors experienced earlier in their lives – e.g., poverty, parental

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<sup>y</sup> See "Language," pp. 18-23.

mental illness or substance abuse, death, divorce, physical or sexual abuse and war. Resilience research stemmed from observations of high-risk individuals who did not fit the psychological distress response mold (Dumont and Provost 1999). Challenging the subject boundaries of this risk hypothesis, cross-cultural longitudinal studies of the last two decades, pioneered by Norman Garmezy and colleagues at the University of Minnesota, found that 50% to 70% of the children who experienced these risk factors contradicted the forecast dysfunctions and instead developed social competence to overcome the odds (Benard 1996; Garmezy 1984; Garmezy 1991; Henderson 1996; Henderson 1998; McMillen 1999; Rutter 1987; Werner 1982; Werner 1992).

This shift in emphasis from adversity's casualties alone to all subjects of adversity – casualties as well as survivors – and the discovery of the predominance of survivors is variously referred to as strength, hardiness, coping, empowerment, solution-focused and resilience research (McMillen 1999). Resilience research was founded on the seminal work of Garmezy (1984, 1985, 1991), Rutter (1985, 1987), and Werner (1982, 1992) (Zimmerman 1994). Historically applied to botany and zoology, Garmezy was the first to apply resilience research to a human's capacity to recover from psychological trauma or to successfully adapt despite risk or adversity (Garmezy 1984; Garmezy 1985; Gordon and Wang 1994). Horowitz' review of resilience literature noted it focused on stresses of 1) birth trauma, 2) children's behavioral disorders, 3) children's exposure to environmental toxins, 4) animal sensory deprivation and 5) childhood psychopathology (Gordon and Wang 1994). More numerous in current research literature are studies of resilient children growing up in chronic poverty, experiencing severe family trauma or enduring the horrors of contemporary war (Werner 1995).

There is no universal definition of resilience (Henderson 1998), though it generally refers to factors and, more recently, processes interrupting the trajectory from risk to maladaptive outcomes (Zimmerman 1994). Some researchers integrate internal and external "protective factors" into the concept of resilience while others extract them,

regarding resilience as strictly internal to the person (Wolin and Wolin 1998). Resilience as applied to humans is frequently described in a prosaic parlance as one's capacity for self-righting, adjusting, bouncing back from adversity, repairing oneself (Benson 1996; Dyer and McGuiness 1996; Henderson 1996; Howard 1996; Tiet, Bird et al. 1998; Werner and Smith 1992), and often becoming stronger in the process (Henderson 1998). Some consider it inborn (Werner 1982), the capacity for attitudes, beliefs and behaviors to survive and thrive (Benard 1996). Rutter (1985, 1987) has added the dimension of one's initiating action to mediate risk.

Minimalistically, resilience means one has had a relatively good outcome in the face of a relatively high-risk psychosocial experience (Rutter 1999). Joseph defined resilience as the ability of an individual to overcome – rather than surrender to – life's challenges (Joseph 1994). This ability has been found to vary enormously between children. One explanation for this disparity is the variety of risk factors and protective factors involved (Rutter 1999).

As they are referenced in various models of resilience, risk factors refer to conditions or variables associated with compromised health, well-being, or social performance. Protective factors refer to the mechanisms and processes that decrease the likelihood of such negative outcomes (Voydanoff and Donnelly 1999). Factors of risk and protection, however, defy neat categorization and may undulate between roles of risk and protection (Rutter 1999).

Extracting three models from the extensive "Project Competence Studies of Stress Resistance and Children," Garmezy (1984) created the template for resiliency theory models, three generic models each accommodated by a multiple regression linear expression. The compensatory model equated the positive or negative outcome to the sum of stresses (negative risk factors) and attributes (positive compensatory factors). In this model, the compensatory factor and the risk factor operated independently on the outcome (Zimmerman 1994). A compensating factor, while not necessarily apparent

under non-stress conditions, could be elicited by a given adverse event (Carver 1998; Dekovic 1999; Voydanoff and Donnelly 1999). In this additive tug-of-war, the relative power of stresses of attributes was a factor of both the numbers and the relative strength of each.

A second “challenge” model treated stress as a potential benefit. Provided the degree of stress was not excessive, stress in small doses inoculated the individual against future or more aggressive strains of stress (Garmezy 1984; McMillen 1999; O'Connor 1997; Rutter 1999). Rutter (1999) described a steeling effect which he compares to the development of immunity from successfully overcoming mild infection. McMillen (1999) depicted four pathways to benefit: 1) realizing increased coping skill as a result of coping with adversity, 2) improving one's life due to a “wake-up call” experience, 3) translating support in time of need into a more positive view of people and the world, and 4) finding more meaning and purpose in life through the process of struggle. He qualified his benefit thesis with the notion of thresholds; minor adverse events might not trigger re-evaluation of one's life while too severe an experience could prove overwhelming (Fontana and Rosenheck 1998, McMillen and Fisher 1998, Rutter 1987). He pointed out that children, having less control of their life structures, would have less access to the four pathways he proposed (McMillen 1999).

The third “immunity-versus-vulnerability” or “protective factor” model, posited a conditional relationship between stress and attributes wherein a given attribute would directly effect a stressor, amplifying it. The presence of certain attributes, i.e., protective factors, would provide an immunity to a certain stressor (Garmezy 1984). Over time, the focus of research has shifted from identifying protective factors to understanding underlying protective processes (Luthar, Cicchetti et al. 2000). The protective process could work either as a risk/protective or protective/protective mechanism. In a risk/protective process, a protective variable could intervene to reduce the possible

negative outcome from a risk. In a protective/protective process, one protective variable could enhance the effect of another in avoiding a negative outcome (Zimmerman 1994).

The challenge and protective factor models both conceived of adaptation as potentially instigated by stress. The repertoire of protective coping skills might be enhanced and expanded in the process itself of coping with disruptive, stressful or challenging life events (Henderson 1998; McMillen 1999; Wolin 1998). In developmental terms, the resilience outcome of one stage could prepare one to undertake the work of each successive developmental stage (Blum 1998).

Curious to determine what these protective resilience factors might be, researchers sought traits and configurations that accounted for resilience. Moving beyond an individual attribution notion, protective factors would include both personal and environmental resources potentially present in positive interpersonal and institutional relationship including family, friendships, agencies and expressions of community (Dumont and Provost 1999; Dyer 1996). On the basis of his own work and a review of the research of others regarding stress-resistant children, Garmezy organized protective factors into three categories: 1) positive personality characteristics including relational skills and self-esteem; 2) positive family relations and 3) external support systems that reinforce a child's efforts (Garmezy 1984). Wermer and Smith's landmark Kauai Longitudinal Study reported that elementary school students demonstrated communication and problem-solving skills, used their talents effectively, took pride in an interest or hobby, were outgoing and autonomous, believed in their own effectiveness and had a positive self-concept (Wermer and Smith 1982).

Easy-going temperament (Rutter 1999; Tschann, Kaiser et al. 1996), intelligence (Masten, Garmezy et al. 1988; Rutter 1999), success in school (Dekovic 1999), spirituality (Farber, Schwartz et al. 2000; Henderson 1996), a sense of power or control over one's life (Henderson 1998), and commitment or a sense of purpose in life (Farber, Schwartz et al. 2000) are often mentioned as resilience indicators. Joseph (1994)



portrayed resilient persons as 1) problem solving proactively, 2) reframing life's struggles positively and constructively, 3) responding good-naturedly and 4) believing they have some control, some power over their lives. Sybil and Steven Wolin (1998) described resilience as seven internal strengths – insight, independence, relationships, initiative, humor, creativity, and morality – expressed with successively more complexity through three developmental phases: child, adolescent, and adult.

More elusive to describe is the process whereby one child develops and uses these skills and another does not (Sagor 1996). In addition to individual characteristics, resiliency requires social and contextual protective ingredients (Pollard, Hawkins et al. 1999). While researchers create different recipes regarding the mix of internal qualities and external resources, the importance of a supportive social network and the power of even one caring person are standard ingredients (Dekovic 1999; Henderson 1996).

Well-functioning parents are associated with the development of competence in children (Masten 1999). Empathic parents who are emotionally responsive, give nurturing involvement, hold developmentally appropriate expectations, and give reliable care to their young children are a sensitive, positive predictor of resilience (Cowen 1996; Dekovic 1999; Wyman, Cowen et al., 1999). Youth with little parental support and involvement are more susceptible to problem behavior (McCord 1992) which increases in relation to increased family adversity (Rutter 1999). In adolescence, the absence of caring adults has less bearing on problem behavior than punitive parenting and behaviorally deviant peers (Dekovic 1999; Voydanoff and Donnelly 1999). A mixture of family support, school responsiveness, and student involvement in school and community appear to alter or even reverse potentially negative outcomes for youths (Benard 1996; Catterall 1998).

Teachers commonly associate such qualities as social competence, optimism, energy, cooperation, curiosity, attentiveness, helpfulness, punctuality and task-focus with resilience (Sagor 1996). A troubled student might show little motivation, withdraw or act

out, express low aspirations, lack self-esteem and self-confidence (Dekovic 1999). A resilient student might exhibit a pattern of good social skills, an internal locus of control, intelligence, androgynous behavior and independence (Henderson 1998). Some would suggest one additional ingredient on the teacher's recipe for a resilient student – the teacher. All resilient Kauai study participants pointed to at least one teacher who was an important source of support; who listened to them, challenged them and rooted for them (Werner 1995). Rutter reported similar findings from his study inner-city London youths (Rutter, Maughan et al. 1979).

A leading advocate for the application of resilience to school, Henderson (1996, 1998) argued resilience theory provides a coherent, research-based framework for helping schools achieve the goal of success for all students. She enumerated six research-based themes describing how schools can provide the environmental protective factors that foster individual resilience; 1) develop strong positive bonds with children; 2) set clear and consistent boundaries; 3) teach life skills including cooperation, conflict resolution, resistance and assertiveness, communication, problem solving, decision making, healthy stress management; 4) set high expectations; 5) construct meaningful participation. Sixth, and most crucial, schools can provide caring and support. The younger a child, the less access she has to pathways of benefit and the more necessary it is that schools provide support (McMillen 1999). In fact, Henderson (1998) maintained, "It seems almost impossible to successfully overcome adversity without the presence of a trusting relationship, even with a single adult, that says 'You matter!'"

Early resilience work focused on personal qualities of "resilient children," at times referring to them as "invulnerable" (Luthar, Cicchetti et al. 2000; Rutter 1985). The image of self-made invincibility in the face of major crisis suggested an absolute resistance to damage and troubling sequitors including blaming the victim of hardship for her troubles and pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps attitudes and policies (Rutter 1985; Wolin and Wolin 1998). The scrutiny of research revealed a more mundane, relevant

picture of the ordinary person challenged daily to resile and succeeding more often than not sustained by a rich blend of personal and environmental supports (Henderson 1996). “Microevents” or daily life hassles are now recognized as accounting for more mental health variance than macroevents, such as job loss, moving, or death. (Dumont and Provost 1999). Survivors do not shed their injuries; they bear both the psychological damage and the enduring strength of their struggle (McMillen 1999; Wolin and Wolin 1998). Individual differences – innate or acquired or circumstantial – credited with disposing one child to surmount certain events that devastate another (Brown and Rhodes 1991) seem only one element of an interwoven triad of protective factors. Personal resources interact with the benefits of functional family, and external support (Brown and Rhodes 1991) which are in turn the objects of stress and the subjects of resilience (Benson 1996).

Resilience research remains full of variation and paradox. Mounting evidence indicates that 1) particular characteristics rarely serve solely risk or protective functions, 2) individuals who seem resilient on one index often don’t on another and 3) individuals are frequently unequally resilient across contexts (Freitas and Downey 1998). Gender, belief, socialization and culture all mediate stress and distress (Blum 1998; Cramer 2000). It is erroneous to assume any event is universally perceived as stressful, much less that it would have the same impact on every person who experienced it (Blum 1998). Response to and outcome following adversity vary with age, status as child or adolescence, economic status, level of skill and perceived need (Dumont and Provost 1999; McMillen 1999)).

Seeming contradictions abound in resilience findings. While many studies indicate a strong locus of control related to resilience, hardier persons with symptomatic HIV are more likely to display a lowered sense of control over their world, a surrender (Farber, Schwartz et al. 2000). Peers, neighbors, even IQ and aggression are in some instances protection factors and in others risk factors (Dumont and Provost 1999; Freitas

and Downey 1998; Morrison, Robertson et al. 1998). Acting out or rebelliousness, rather than a risk, can promote strength when it increases one's involvement with others, allows for experimentation with new ideas and people, and assists the resolution of earlier traumas (Dugan 1989). Struggle which, when suffered alone or in silence, would have been stress, can become a source of success when shared as a collective experience within a community (Blum 1998; O'Connor 1997).

Resilience characteristics can be peculiarly type specific and subtle. For high-risk boys and girls, there is an association between the presence of rules and structure in the home and a successful adaptation in later life (Werner 1982). Yet the misguided rigor of care givers who admonish and intervene to change traits they consider gender discordant may damage a child's development of emotional resilience (Isay 1999). Survivors of life threatening events can vary widely on their positive sense of benefit between events. For example, survivors of plane crashes and tornados vary in their sense of benefit 55% and 91% respectively at the time of the event and 35% and 95% respectively when asked an identical question three years post-disaster (McMillen 1999). Findings such as these lead Rutter to state emphatically that the first crucially important message to learn from resilience research is that there are multiple risks and protective factors involved and an amazing array of outcomes to adversity. No factor is intrinsically protective. Rather than having an effect that is each its own, each variable changes the effect of another variable (Rutter 1987; Rutter 1999).

Moving beyond the examination of traits, a Cognitive-Affective Personality system attempts to find stability and coherence in personality. Researchers in this vein are beginning to examine individual personality patterns as a promising way to find reliable variation across psychologically related situations (Freitas and Downey 1998). Development of more complex models may better reflect the complexity of resilience and make possible the designing of more interesting and useful interventions which

simultaneously address the interwoven web of intra, extra and interpersonal issues (Dekovic 1999; Freitas and Downey 1998).

This study is interested in Queer youth in school, their coming to terms with their gender and sex identity, and the role of school as both a risk factor and a protective factor. Resilience research has tended to focus more on the contribution of personal characteristics to resilience and less on environmental factors, notably social institutions such as schools (Zimmerman 1994). Yet environmental factors, particularly family and social institutions, are important protective components (Garmezy 1984; Werner 1982; Werner 1992). Studies repeatedly point out the importance of close relationships with supportive adults such as teachers and the importance of schools in fostering resilience and positive outcomes for students (Luthar, Cicchetti et al. 2000). Schools figure prominently as influencers in the lives of children (Garmezy 1991). Because, for so many Queer youth, society is disapproving and their families are unsupportive or rejecting, the prominence of schools assumes a greater emphasis (Rutter 1985).

Queer individuals tend to experience special Q-stressors including (a) the imposition of heterosexist ideology, (b) rigid gender roles, (c) the lack of any positive information regarding their gender/sex orientation, and (d) direct experiences of anti-Queer stigma (Massey 1998). If schools function as a resource to Qids in dealing with such Q-stressors, competence outcomes, even in the face of the chronic adversity, are likely to be enhanced (Masten 1999). Schools which promote experiences of pleasure, success, and accomplishment for Qids may foster a sense of self-worth and empowerment (Rutter 1985). Moreover, when schools are a resource to their students at an early age, they provide added advantage (Masten 1999). This study examines how the qualities of individual Q-students and the assets of the schools they attend promote resilience positive outcomes for Qids.

## **Heterogeneous Homosexual History**

“History is one of the places where we find ourselves. It’s as if we don’t exist in the past then we don’t exist in the present. In order to create a place for us in the present, we have to be able to find ourselves in the past as well (Ferrari 1997).” “Some of the glorious people in American history have been Lesbian or Gay. But it’s much easier to think that Henry James was asexual than to think that he was enamored of men; and because of that, we’ve been delivered a lot of lies in history (Ferrari 1997).” In 1976, Jonathan Katz introduced his pioneering history of Lesbians and Gay men in America explaining his motivation as a fear that each successive generation “would think they were the first gay people on earth (Katz 1976; Hogan and Hudson 1998).”

Schools teach history. Do they teach Queer History? Any Queer History? History is taught so that we can see ourselves. What Queer youth can see herself in our schools? History is taught so that others can see Qids as well. History is a visioning and valuing process. Yet Qids face invisibility and devaluation in so many school spaces as a matter of course.

I believe it is important to provide this overview in this review. No one knows Queer history. Schools don’t teach Queer history – even morsels referring to a lesbian author or Stonewall. Therefore, Queers are dismissed because they don’t seem to exist. Their triumphs and pains are irrelevant. This history says they do exist, and they have, since the beginning of recorded history and across all cultures. Their lives matter. Their triumphs and pains matter. We cry and laugh and live and die together. Dealing with Queer love and gender and sex may be discomforting. It does Queer us all. We humans are diverse sexes and genders. These are assets. If this were understood, this paper would be irrelevant.

### **Practice**

It is argued that heterosexuality is a modern Western gender-desire system popularized in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Foucault 1981; Lipkin 1999). Assuming gender is discrete and compressing gender and sex into one, this collapsed, polarizing syllogism proposes all people are either biopsychological female or male opposites, opposites attract, therefore one desires the opposite exclusively (Money 1988). In this system, homoeroticism, androgyny, transgendering and queering are linguistic vagabonds.

Coined by Karoly Maria Kertbeny in 1868 (Hogan and Hudson 1998) and making its first public appearance in an 1869 pamphlet arguing the repeal of Germany's sodomy laws (Jagose 1996), Dr. Karl Westphal staked claim to "homosexuality" in a sociological article published a year later (Foucault 1981) birthing a new class, "homosexuals." In short order, scientists assigned them feelings, behaviors and demeanors. This Eurocentric model of a rather homogenized homosexuality asserted that contemporary western same-sexuality is a novel social construction (Murray and Will 1997). It implied that homosexuality was a brand new creation representing a progression from pre-modern repression to modern visibility and freedom when, in fact, the term "homosexual" and its formulation were the new technology (Lipkin 1999). Classifying homosexuals as abnormal, homosexuality categorized and binarized all sexuality with its implication of a contrasting class of normals, "heterosexuals" (Pinar 1998)

Variant-sex attraction and activity, documented across the historyscape, were generally viewed as idiosyncrasies embedded in affectional and sexual repertoires. Evidence of same-sex desire and love appear in early accounts of civilization (Besner and Spungin 1995; Jagose 1996) with art from as early as 12,000 B.C. suggesting homoeroticism (Hogan and Hudson 1998). Sexual arousal and behavior between members of the same biological sex have been reported in most societies and in many nonhuman species (Ford and Beach 1951; Walters 1998).

Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Islamic culture in North Africa and Southeast Asia had visible homosexualities. Whereas a single-pattern Western European model may have

been delimited first by the papacy's centralizing authority and then by the rise of modern nation states, diverse Islamic traditions birthed elaborate sexual expressions (Lipkin 1999). In contrast to the single-pattern modern Western European expression, Islamic expressions were varied, elaborate and long-standing in social tradition (Murray and Will 1997).

A proliferation of Asian Q-sexualities are documented over several millennia. From Sumatra through the outreaches of the Melanesian islands, indigenous people institutionalize younger boys fellating older ones throughout adolescence, ingesting potency as a prerequisite to marriage (Money 1988). Resistant even to the Spanish colonial inquisition, a long tradition of homosexualities continues to thrive in the Philippines where a wide variety of Q-sexualities is practiced ranging, for example, from pederasty to male-identified adult exclusive homosexuality to gender-differentiated lesbianism pairing of a male-identified lesbian with a hetero-identified female. From 700 B.C. until the 20<sup>th</sup> century A.D., bisexuality was considered normal in China and non-egalitarian same-sex relations were profuse and diverse. Japanese accounts since the 11<sup>th</sup> century document pederast practices of Buddhist monks with acolytes and samurai with their pages. From about 350 A.D. forward, the Korean elite military force, *hwarang*, bonded by homoerotic loyalties, as did the Korean all-male theater communes. These oriental practices persisted until vigorous modernization campaigns at the end the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dynes and Donaldson 1992).

At least 130 tribes of the Americas' First Nation are known to have had an ancient standing of "berdaches," men who presented as women and trysted or married with other men. Spanish explorer Cabeza de Vaca, recorded, "During the time that I was thus among these people (1528-1536) I saw a devilish thing, . . . one man married to another . . . effeminate men and they go about dressed as women, and do women's tasks (Katz 1976)." Pere Jacques Marquette noted in his Mississippi exploration diaries, 1673 to



1677, they were “persons of consequence, . . . summoned to the Councils. Nothing can be decided without their advice.”(Miller 1995)

### **Stigmatization**

The Holiness Code of Leviticus, c. 450 B.C., prescribed death for a man who lies with a male as with a woman. Stigmatizing gender disparity is an ancient Western practice (Foucault 1988). Socrates belittled love given boys wearing rouge and jewelry (Plato). Seneca chided youth who competed “in bodily softness with women . . . born feeble and spineless . . . taking others’ chastity by storm, careless of their own (Seneca).” While these sentiments were an antecedent to modern homophobia, they were substantially different in degree and connotation. In the cases of Socrates and Seneca, they were spoken in the context of the Greek practice of pederasty by sympathizers (Foucault 1988).

A conversion of Europe’s attitude toward same-sex sex began about 1250 A.D. In the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century, Thomas Aquinas invoked the natural law to theologize sex between same-gendered persons mortally sinful (Besner and Spungin 1995; Masters, Johnson et al. 1985). Civil entities began inverting the status of same-gender sex from legal to capital crime punishable by death (Blumenfeld and Raymond 1993). Some evidence suggests that, as late as 1700, many or most European men still had sex with adolescent males and with women (Katz 1990); but, with the rise of industrialism and capitalism, loyally supported by Christendom (Katz 1976), sexual practice began to change (Trumbach 1996). The new economic order imposed new social prescriptions (Anonymous, 1996). A continent previously characterized as frank and open regarding sexual practice became sexually repressive and demonized sex within the same gender (Katz 1976).

A “Victorian Era” of sexual repression commenced, say some, with the development of capitalism (Foucault 1978; Trumbach 1996). Requiring intensive work by the masses of people, capitalists believed a compulsory work ethic essential to their economic goals. Architects of capitalism sought to leverage control of the worker through control of the worker’s sex. (Eisen and Kenyatta 1996). The codes of church and state dominated sexual language ensuring the birth rate, labor capacity, and perpetuation of social balances favorable to the capitalizing leaders, nations and institutions (Foucault 1978). A defined, delimited, classed-aside homosexuality emerged in synchrony with the rise of modern nation states (Murray and Will 1997).

Enlanguaged, same-sex love began speaking the standards of sex-deviance. It policed freedom of sex instilling sexphobia through homosexphobia (Foucault 1988). Marketed globally, homosexual classification spawned elaborate norms not only in sexuality but in medicine, ethics and law. As societies imported western science and values including binarized systems of gender and sexuality, (Dynes and Donaldson 1992), a discourse of censorship spread even to cultures with long traditions of sexual fluidity (Morrish 1996).

### **Resistance**

In Seneca Falls, New York, July, 1848, Elizabeth Stanton and Lucretia Mott convoked the fist women’s rights convention (Hogan and Hudson 1998). Returning from post World War I occupied Germany where he had witnessed the rise of the powerful homophile movement to repeal laws banning sex between same-sex individuals, Henry Gerber created the first gay rights organization in the United States, the Society for Human Rights, and began publishing the society’s newsletter, *Friendship and Freedom* until he was imprisoned without charges and removed from his postal clerk position (Ferrari 1998).

Gerber's dilemma, homosexuals reluctant to organize for fear of reprisal, changed with World War II. The war congregated large numbers of Gays and Lesbians in single-sex community (Katz 1976). When it concluded, so did the military's tolerance of suspected queers. Men and women were dishonorably discharged in the tens of thousands, sent home on "queer ships." While some despaired, others formed port city communities (Lipkin 1999). Alfred Kinsey opened a new era in sex research and public discussion with publication of his 1948 work, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, reporting, for example, that 37 percent of American men had one or more homosexual experiences to the point of orgasm (Masters, Johnson et al. 1985). In this environment, Mattachine (founded in 1950 by Henry Hay) and Daughters of Bilitis (founded in 1955 by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon) succeeded in attracting large numbers of gays and lesbians and mobilizing social protests (Hogan and Hudson 1998; Katz 1976).

Resistance to a police raid of the Stonewall Inn, June 28, 1969, marked the beginning of the American Gay Liberation Movement (Hogan and Hudson 1998). The Gay Liberation Front founded on the heels of Stonewall allied with the aspirations of other freedom initiatives for peace, gender and racial equality. Splits soon followed with the Gay Activists Alliance setting a more mainstream, gay focused agenda. Lesbians, objecting to their erasure in the male-centered gay collective, felt torn between identifying with gay men or the emerging feminist movement (Lipkin 1999).

February, 1973, the National Organization for Women declared lesbian and gay rights a top priority. Later that year, the American Psychiatric Association's board removed the "psychiatric disorder" status from homosexuality (Griffin 1996; Hogan and Hudson 1998). The Gay Rights Movement grew steadily but relatively quietly through the mid 1970s. Anita Bryant's 1977 crusade against lesbian and gay rights, conceived as a campaign against Dade County's ordinance banning housing and employment discrimination, galvanized the "Gay Rights Movement" centering it in the national

spotlight and creating an enduring public consciousness (Hogan and Hudson 1998; Taylor 1994).

The struggle for equality has yielded conflicting, sometimes seemingly schizophrenic results:

- Same-sex acts decriminalized by California in 1975 were recriminalized by Arkansas in 1977.
- In 1989, while the National Endowment for the Arts threatened withdrawal of funds to prevent the Corcoran Gallery of Art from showing Robert Mapleson's homoerotic art, the U.S. Postal service issued a lesbian and gay rights commemorative stamp.
- In 1995 Oregon State voters nullified Portland's 1992 lesbian and gay equal rights amendment (Hogan and Hudson 1998).
- In 2000 California and Colorado became the 31<sup>st</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> states to ban same-sex marriage while Vermont became the first state to approve same-sex civil unions (Leland 2000).

The maturing struggle is presently complex and instable. A more visible, almost trendy inclusion in arts and culture may be signaling freedom and acceptance victories (Leland 2000). More people claim to know someone openly gay, express greater comfort and less moral condemnation and support equal rights in employment and housing (Leland 2000; Lipkin 1999). Opposition to gays teaching in elementary school dropped from 58% in 1992 to 36% in 2000 and support for job protection jumped from 56% in 1977 to 83% in 2000 (Leland 2000; Walters and Hayes 1998). Yet a rising tide of states are passing legislation to simultaneously ban same-sex marriages in their borders and some banning same-sex partner adoptions (Leland 2000). As the struggle for rights and recognition continues, violence against homosexuals – including violence in school and on school campuses – has kept apace becoming the category of highest frequency for

murder and serious hate crimes. (Berril 1990; National Gay and Lesbian Task Force [NGLTF] 1984; Sears 1992).

Among youth, there is both more consciousness and more volatility regarding Q-issues and Q-people. Qids may feel more pride and more vulnerability at the same time, especially in the pressurized environment of school (Lipkin 1999).

### **School Environment**

Among western societies, the United States is distinguished for its hostility toward homosexuals (Owens 1998). Homophobia, the conscious prejudice and bigotry against gay people, and heterosexism, the “invisible advantage” privileging heterosexual people (Jennings 1996), reproduce and flourish in American society (Johnson 1996) and in its microcosm, American schools (Pinar and Grumet 1976), which are described as a sexualized culture hostile to LGBTQ students (Reed 1994).

Beginning in pre-school, heterosexuality saturates the school playground and classroom in imagined futures, traditional games and rhymes, games involving running and catching, sexist harassment, conversations and gossip (Epstein 1996). Sol, an elementary school student, noted in her school research project, “It is a common thing to call kids names which makes fun of gay and lesbian people. Kids do it all the time” (Kelley-Jones 1997). Middle school Qids, especially vulnerable (Owens 1998), realize their difference and the generalized or personal repugnance toward who they are ( Pohan and Bailey 1997; Reed 1992). While American middle school and high school bodies are preoccupied with sexual identity, it is a proscriptive preoccupation, ubiquitously heterosexualized and antihomosexualized ( Farrell 1990; Reed 1994). Hetero students and staff are generally unselfconscious about the charged heterosexist environment. Q-students and staff are not.

By default, schools tell Qids, “You don’t belong here.” Throughout school, Qids are submerged in an environment that sanctions the neglect of their values and dismisses their legitimacy (Walters 1998). Culturally prescribed heterosexism laced throughout the formal and informal fabric of the school hinders the formation of a positive homosexual identity (Harbeck 1994) damaging these youth both personally and academically (Uribe and Harbeck 1992). Some researchers note schools’ unwitting denial of the existence of gay students (LGBTQ-silent curriculum, dismissing reports of antigay violence, tolerance of queer slurs, etc.) (Elia 1994; Kielwasser and Wolf 1994) and their resistance to policy formulation, much less implementation, which would help ensure a safe learning environment for Qids (D’Emilio 1990). Textbooks across disciplines exhibit a heterosexual bias and presence but routinely omit significant events, themes, or contributions of Q-persons (Kielwasser and Wolf 1994). Well-meaning staff are unprepared to address these issues. Even faculty who are themselves non-hetero, usually fear repercussions from advocating fair treatment for gay students. In this way, schools isolate Qids from other Qids and from the student body (Haaga 1991), and inspire self-repudiation, disguising, and a general failure to thrive (Walters and Hayes 1998).

Historically, society abuses and ridicules Qids and schools ignore them. Both abuse and silence victimize (Anderson 1997; Edwards 1997). Queer slurs in school are distinguished from other derogatory slurs by their tolerant reception; calling another student faggot, dyke or queer seldom draws the simplest reprimand (Anderson 1997; Matheson 1998). School staff often admit to homophobic verbal bullying but fail to address it. Though administrators and teachers sometimes acknowledge assaults on pupils believed to be gay (Cooper 1998) they fear repercussions (Walling 1983); in five out of six schools, they do little or nothing about it (The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network [GLSEN] 1999). The recommendations of the National Educational Association, American Federation of Teachers, and National Association of State Boards of Education to address Q-students’ needs remain largely unheeded (Anderson 1997;

Reese 1998). The persistent silence of schools regarding LGBTQ issues instills fear in Qids and Q-faculty alike keeping both in hiding (Anderson 1994). Would-be ally educators keep silent avoiding controversy, cultural taboos and their own homophobia (Walling 1993).

The victims are many: 10% of youth who are LGBTQ, to begin with, 10-15% who have Q-parents or family members (Rubin 1995), and another 8% of youth who, though not self-identified as LGBTQ, are the object of homosexual harassment (Harry 1989). In fact, queerphobia hurts everyone, queer and straight alike (Mandel 1996; Capper 1999). It germinates hatred and limits each person's own self-definition in arts, sports, intellectual pursuits, career choices, personal expression and human relations (Grayson 1987; Schwartz 1994). Suspect if they express their true feelings to each other, boys banish emotion and empathy judged "feminine" and girls abandon authentic same-gender relations when their sexuality may be called into question (Lipkin 1999).

### **Marginalized Qids**

The increased visibility and acceptance of the adult Q-community may have, ironically, contributed to the vulnerability of Qids in school (Due 1995; Owens 1998) by increasing the likelihood of their being categorized as "dykes" or "faggots" as knowledge and awareness of lesbian and gay pop and media figures became more wide-spread (Rofes 1997). Qids are in peril and need attention (Lipkin 1999; Stover 1992). Burgeoning discourse about Q-people, culture and issues, while increasing the likelihood students will label or assault their peers as LGBTQ or pull Qids out of the closet before they are ready (Bagley and Tremblay 1997), has not translated into a more Q-friendly school environment as one might intuit (Rofes 1997). Conversely, Qids' self-awareness, too, has increased resulting in their self-identifying and coming out at typically younger and younger average ages, tumbling in two decades from the post-high school early 20s

to the middle school early teens ( Anderson 1994; Cook and Pawlowski 1991; Govern 1994; Harry 1993; Newman and Muzzonigro 1993; Vary 1998). In a decade spanning the publication of *One Teenager in Ten* and *Two Teenagers in Twenty*, Heron (1994) anticipated Q-teens would be happier and less at risk. Instead she observed suicidal ideation on the rise. “What is clear,” she stated, “is that the isolation and self-hatred that our society imposes on gay teenagers can kill them, has killed them, and continues to kill them.”

Q-sexual orientation seems a non-volitional desire imprinted early, perhaps near or at conception (Gonsiorek 1988), unrelated to the sexual role modeling of adults and varying only slightly with respect to the sexual orientation of natural or adoptive parents<sup>vi</sup> (Owens 1998). Qids often report feeling different from other children from their earliest memories (Newman and Muzzonigro 1993). Denying it or attempting to fundamentally alter it can have serious detrimental results (Walling 1983). Nevertheless, throughout its institutions, American society teaches and enforces heterosexuality embedded in a rigid gender system beginning with “Is it a boy or girl?”, assigned clothing color and design, gaming, behavioral expectations, message and tone of voice and virtually every aspect of socialization.

Sensing as small children that they are “different,” Qids are often acutely aware of their gender and sexual idiosyncrasy and its possible or likely repudiation at home, at

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<sup>vi</sup> A modest and likely biological genetic effect would explain this variation by parental sexual orientation Swaab, D. F., L. J. G. Gooren, et al. (1995). “Brain research, gender, and sexual orientation.” Journal of Homosexuality 28(3/4): 283-301.

LaVay, S. (1998). A difference in hypothalamic structure between heterosexual and homosexual men, Simon LeVay.



church and almost certainly at school ( Crosbie-Burnett and al. 1996; Reed 1992).

Denigrated by a barrage of negative social messages, Qids hide and disguise, developing “acceptable” gender persona or “passing” as hetero, seeking acceptance at the price of internalized rejection (Johnson 1996; Town 1996). Pubescent Qids may harbor conflicting feelings about their sexual desires, aware to varying degrees of non-hetero feelings yet every bit as indoctrinated in the social mores that hetero is good, healthy, normal and queer is bad, sick, deviant (Reed 1992). They anguish that they are queer, that they will be recognized, and that they will be outcast (Anderson 1994; Reed 1992; Reed 1993; Walling 1983). Both desiring and fearing honesty before family and community, Qids experience internal dissonance – depression – expressing itself through pervasive loss of pleasure, feelings of sadness, change of appetite, sleep disturbance, slowing of thought, poor school performance, dropping out, low self-esteem, and strongly expressed feeling of guilt and failure (Governor’s Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth 1993; Reed 1992).

Where minoritized children ordinarily turn first for safety and support – home – Qids frequently feel reviled and alienated ( Anderson 1997; Achtenberg 1994; DeCrescenzo 1994). Most minority youth facing hostility and discrimination count on their family for understanding and support. In contrast, Qids anticipate danger at home ranging through rage, to abuse, to rejection and even to ejection from their home (Crosbie-Burnett and al. 1996; Gover 1994; Reese 1997). Qids distrust social services which, often disbelieving or disapproving, may hurt a child and be a source of wounding rather than healing (Martin and Hetrick 1988). At the same time, schools abdicate their mission to develop self-esteem and human potential becoming mute, denying Qids access to necessary information and understanding about their own sexuality (Harbeck 1992). Abuse at home coupled with marginalization at school associate with school problems, running away, dropping out of school, substance abuse, prostitution, and self-destructive behavior (Savin-Williams 1994; Uribe 1994).

On a typical school day, a Qid will hear 26 anti-gay comments (GLSEN 2000). Although Qids report wanting teachers to interrupt homophobic behavior, 97% of the time teachers will not intervene (Kissen 1993; GLSEN 1999). Ordinarily invisible, Qids enjoy no respite from bigotry either from embarrassed or intimidated harassers or from would be defenders (Ginsberg 1998). Educators recognize at least a portion of the verbal bullying and physical assault against Qids which takes place on school campuses (Cooper 1998). Unwilling to address gay and lesbian issues, however, they are unresponsive to the perpetration of name calling and queer-negative curriculum and policy (Butler 1994). Few see the consequences of severe, long term erosion to self-esteem. Schools may project onto Qids that acceptance requires masking their identity (Town 1996). But disguising one's sexual identity is psychologically endangering and bears an emotional price:

- chronic personal shame and guilt
- conflict between alienation from self and alienation from school peers (Reed 1993)
- depression (Martin and Hetrick 1988)
- sexual carelessness and increased risk of disease (Cooper 1998)
- promiscuity and pregnancy (Cooper 1998)
- diminished school performance and dropping out (Reese 1997)
- alcohol and substance abuse
- suicidal ideation and attempts (Youth 1993)

On the other hand, coming out also includes risks. Exposing one's true identity results in ridicule, harassment and abuse. The out Q-youth may experience fighting and victimization, alcohol and substance abuse, threats and assaults. Qids who are more gender atypical, or self-identify or act on those feelings at a younger age face higher risk of self-destructive behavior (Remafedi, Farrow et al. 1991). Younger Qids may be at higher risk due to immaturity, need for peer group identification, inexperience and

dependence on parents (Remafedi 1985). However, moving from mere tolerance to acceptance of one's Q-identity greatly mitigates this risk (Brady and Busse 1994).

Suicide demarcates the troubled waters of both internally recognized and externally imposed Q-identity. A 21-year longitudinal study of 1,265 New Zealanders found Q-identified subjects 6.2 times more likely to have reported a suicide attempt (Fergusson, Horwood et al. 1999). A study in Belgium found gay and bisexual males about twice as likely (12.4%) to attempt suicide as heterosexual males (5.9%) and lesbian and bisexual females about five times as likely (25.0%) as heterosexual females (5.4%) to attempt suicide (Vincke and van Heringen 1998).

Suicide among youths is becoming a growing concern in the U.S. While the rate of suicide increased only slightly in the total population between 1960 and 1988, it tripled among 15 to 19 year olds during that same period, from 3.6 to 11.3 per year per 100,000 (Asher 1997; Fisher and Shaffer 1990; Wong and Hart 1994). Reports of significant suicide problems have a long history in gay and lesbian communities. Although suicidologists have examined adolescent suicide in substantial depth, they have generally been reluctant to accept or research this Q-suicide proposition (Asher 1997; Deisher 1989; Millard 1995; Muehrer 1995; Tremblay 1996). A few have dubbed it a misconception (Moscicki 1995). One popularly cited study reported only three out of 120 examined suicides were homosexual (Shaffer and al. 1995). The study 1) failed to acknowledge the post-mortem problem of sexual orientation identification and 2) discounted existing evidence in twelve cases including homosexual activity, male effeminacy and gay best friends (Tremblay 1996). To date, suicidology sheds little light on Qid suicide to either confirm or deny the high risk hypothesis.

Suicide attempts among Qids is particularly alarming because of its 1) frequency, 2) lethality and 3) risks associated with youth and development (Remafedi, Farrow et al. 1991). One third of first attempts occur within a year of coming out with a mean age of 15 (Remafedi 1985). Nearly all gay and lesbian suicides occur before 21 years of age

(Pollak 1985). Younger gay adolescents may not only face more serious problems and be more dependent and vulnerable, but are less emotionally and physically developed, hence, at greater risk (Tremblay 1996).

While not making claims about causality (Deisher 1989), an expanding body of evidence from the discipline of Q-research links sexual orientation harassment and homophobia to many, perhaps most, teen suicide attempts and successes (Tremblay 1996) (Bell and Weinberg 1978). Underestimation due to dependence on self-reports perpetually plagues LGBTQ research. Q-youth workers, for example, typically find that Qids in counseling for attempted suicide rarely inform their therapist of the role of sexual orientation in their attempt or even that they are Q-sexually oriented (Martin and Hetrick 1988). Yet self-report studies consistently report the likelihood of Qids attempting suicide is about three to four times as great as the general youth population (Remafedi, Farrow et al. 1991; Rotheram-Borus and al. 1994). The Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Youth Suicide estimated that gay male and lesbian youth suicide rate were two to six times the average for youth and account for 30% of completed youth suicides (Gibson 1989). A review of twelve published studies with mixed amounts of lesbian, gay and bisexual self-identified found a mean of life-time suicide attempts at 30.5% overall with a 44.1% reattempt rate (Tremblay 1999). Five large scale self-identify studies for Minnesota, Massachusetts, Vermont and Washington reported a range of suicide attempt from 2.5 to seven (7) times greater among LGB youth (Tremblay 1999).

Q-researchers have attempted to find segues around self-reporting to a more complete and representative sampling of Q-people. Unable to access more "at risk" population such as street and institutionalized youth, Bagley estimated 37.5% or more of male youth suicide attempters were gay or bisexual (Bagley and Tremblay 1997).

Qids at school age are at particularly high risk. The largest ever sample pool of 3,533 same-sex participants found attempted suicide rates for males reported in 1978 at the age caps of 25, 20 and 17 were respectively 6 times, 13 times, and 16 times more

likely to occur for gay males than for their heterosexual counterparts. These accounted for 40% of all suicide attempts by males reported to age 25, 56% to age 20, and 64% to age 17 (Bell and Weinberg 1978). A study published in 1997 of males 18-27 years of age found homosexual and bisexual males accounting for 62% of suicide attempters and 13.9 times more at risk for a serious suicide attempt (Bagley and Tremblay 1997).

A 1995 Seattle Public School Study of Adolescents, sampling over 7,400 youths found Q-youths not only four times as likely to attempt suicide but nearly seven times as likely to make a serious attempt resulting in receiving medical attention. Additionally, it found that heterosexual youth who were targeted as homosexual had substantially identical elevated levels of suicide attempt and attempts resulting in medical treatment as homosexual youths (Seattle Public Schools 1995). To the extent these findings reflect human experience, the onus for Qids being in crisis would rest on the homophobia they encounter rather than their sexual orientation.

### **Multiple Margins**

Establishing a gay identity is not a unitary process; it interacts with the axes of race and social class (Katz 1990). Cultural messages inform and transform youths' attitudes about sexuality (Marshall and Suggs 1971; Suggs and Miracle 1993). Many Q-students who face double or multiple discrimination as lesbian or bisexual or Jewish or working-class or differently abled are devoid of models and blinded by invisibility, seeing themselves nowhere in the school culture or curriculum (Morrow 1997). In the school contexture, this translates into a sexual orientation disadvantage being compounded with economic, social and family, racial and ethnic, and gender discrimination (Oakes 1985; Rosenbaum 1976).

Poverty constrains. In blue collar communities, stereotyping is relatively more common; gender roles are polarized and considered synonymous with heterosexual

identity. Homosexuality is seen as gender confusion. Qids from blue collar communities are more likely to cross-dress or to conform to the “sissy” and “tomboy” stereotypes of these communities (Lipkin 1999; Tremble, Schneider et al. 1989). Lack of access to relevant counseling and education disadvantage Q-youth in poverty (Tremble, Schneider et al. 1989).

Numerous circumstances can further marginalize Qids. Risks of rape and assault are all but inevitable for Qids in institutional settings, residences, group homes or shelters (Martin and Hetrick 1988; O'Brien, Travers et al. 1993). 53% of gay-identified street youths in Los Angeles reported attempted suicide at least once, 47% more than once (Kruks 1991). A family's religious proscriptions and/or heterosexual regulation making non-heterosexuality a transgression fosters self-hatred in sexual minority youth ( Epstein and Johnson 1994; Macdonald and Coper 1998). Abuse and assault up the chances of risk behavior such as unprotected sex (Remafedi 1994). Abuse and/or minority sexual orientation status are linked to 87.5% of male youth suicide attempts (Bagley, Wood et al. 1994; Schneider, Farberow et al. 1989).

Integrating racial or ethnic identity with a) coming out to one's family, b) finding a niche in the Q-community and c) Q-sexual orientation are exacerbated for minority youth in American society. Feeling welcome and comfortable within a social sphere can be particularly difficult for racial/ethnic minorities who must juggle two, often opposing, identities (Chan 1989; Monteiro and Faqua 1994). In many minority populations, being queer is seen as something picked up from exposure to the dominant white culture. (Tremble, Schneider et al. 1989).

Black gays express the need to 1) find validation in the gay community, 2) find validation in the Black community and 3) integrate these identities (Loiacano 1989). They may perceive themselves as a double threat to white, heterosexual men (Mac an Ghail 1994). While they are not rejected by their families to the extent that White homosexuals often are (Greaves 1987), the moral condemnation against homosexuality is

greater in Black than in White communities (Staples 1982). With estimates ranging from 40% to over 60%, gay and bisexual males of color have a substantially higher rate of suicide than their white counterparts (Remafedi, Farrow et al. 1991; Tremblay 1996; Uribe and Harbeck 1992). Social agencies intended to support Qids at risk of dropping out sometimes fail to help Qids of color because they ignore the interaction of racial and sexual identity (Snider 1996).

In Latin families, the influences of religion and sex role identity (e.g., *machismo*, *Marianismo*) are particularly salient (Weyr 1988). Latinos generally receive a poorer formal education and are less likely to be assimilated into the dominant culture than are Blacks or Whites (Bonilla and Porter 1990). Latino youth are especially likely to maintain restricted attitudes about homosexuality and harbor a great deal of homonegativity (NGLTF 1984).

Qids in multiple margins often find themselves in the dilemma of a minority racial or ethnic culture which would reject them for being queer and a queer community which would reject them for being racially or ethnically minority (Tremble, Schneider et al. 1989) (Beck 1982). A gay Chinese youth summarized his predicament, "I am a double minority. Caucasian gays don't like gay Chinese, and the Chinese don't like the gays. It would be easier to be white. It would be easier to be straight. It's hard to be both (Tremble, Schneider et al. 1989)."

Among the Q-community – and at times as victims of gay male assimilationism – bisexuals, transgenders and women experience heightened marginalization. Whereas over 30% of gay men report suicide attempts, those numbers exceed 50% for transgender persons (Harry 1988) (Huxdly and Brandon 1988). Lesbians are invisible as women in a male-dominated world and as lesbians in a gay world (Rogers 1994). As females tend to report elevated levels of suicide ideation and attempts, lesbians are at higher risk simply by virtue of their gender discrimination (Magnuson 1992; Hershberger, Pilkington et al. 1997). In patriarchal society, women experience inequality ranging from danger for

going out at night to job discrimination; yet a male partner who makes going out at night safer or compensates for the income differential are rewards withheld from non-hetero women (Epstein and Johnson 1994).

Racial and ethnic minority lesbian women can experience their ethnicity and their lesbianism as at odds. While suicide rates for lesbian and bisexual female youths is higher than for their male counterparts (Bell and Weinberg 1978), attempt rates for lesbians of color is almost double the rate of white lesbians (Tremblay 1996). Seeing the closet as a sexual orientation option but not a racial one, a lesbian woman of color feeling both discriminations to be too much may choose to disguise her lesbianism (Rogers 1994) finding more sense of self and belonging in her heritage (Akane 1994). At times the demands of the white gay and lesbian community on Black or Asian lesbians forces a choice in which the woman opts for her community of color (Epstein and Johnson 1994).

Marginalization means a Qid risks being depowered and closeted. Four of five Q-attempters have not disclosed their sexuality to any supportive persons before their first attempt (Schneider, Farberow et al. 1989). Remafedi suggests that, victims to social and internalized homophobia, suicide may be the only way some LGBTQ youth can conceive of coming out (Bull 1994). Multiple, nested discriminations are likely to erode self-concept and weaken already challenged coping techniques (Icard 1986). As margins are multiplied, so is a Qid's likelihood of having a fragmented self with its incumbent shame and self-hatred.

### **Changing School**

“Young lesbian, gay, bisexual and Transgendered Americans are required by law to go to school – an environment these students say is incredibly hostile,” states Kevin Jennings, National Director of GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. “At the very least, schools owe students a safe, harassment-free learning



environment – and in this capacity, they are failing (GLSEN 1999).” An increase in the number of students declaring their homosexuality coupled with a sharp rise in abuse and violence toward them is promoting interest among educators in meeting the needs of Qids (Schwartz 1994).

This portion of the literature review considers the practical question, “What can schools do for Qids?” While striving for comprehensiveness, it is striking how little, how very little of this comes from actual praxis. Excepting some rare, bold projects – usually isolated and with limited service parameters – the literature references speculative recommendations and a modest number of research findings (GLSEN 1999).

Spurred by the effective work of various oppressed minorities, most educators are likely to express support for the inclusive principle, namely, that all students have the right to learn in a conducive, safe environment free from physical and psychological abuse (Schwartz 1994). Advocates and allies in the education community are committed to the extension of these principles to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. They intend to challenge the practices reinforcing and reconstructing the sexual and gender hetero/homo and male/female binaries in U.S. classrooms and the school environment (Shively, Jones et al. 1984). Initiatives to date are usually in urban areas. Such initiatives include policy, staff development, support groups, curriculum development and special schools (Smock 1994).

The Massachusetts Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth with watershed public forums for sexual minority youth identified seven gay and lesbian problems to be addressed by their state: 1) harassment in school, 2) isolation, 3) suicide, 4) poor school performance, 5) dropping out, 6) lack of adults role models and 7) familial misunderstanding (State of Massachusetts 1993). In response to these problems, the Commission’s first annual report recommended:

1. school policies protecting gay and lesbian youth

2. training in crisis intervention and violence protection for teachers, counselors and school staff
3. school-based support groups for students
4. information and libraries for gay and lesbian youth
5. gay and lesbian inclusive curricula (State of Massachusetts 1993)

These common sense recommendations are frequently reiterated (Bapst 1991; Dunham 1989; Schwartz 1994; Smith 1989; Smock 1994) with one important addition; out teachers and staff role models ( Bapst 1991; Staff; 1997). While reform in practice can and does follow innumerable convoluted routes, conceptually there is a logic progressing from policy formation to teacher training to program development and implementation.

Increased consciousness brought about by the Gay Liberation Movement, the decreasing age for coming out falling from early adulthood into adolescence – from college to middle school – and the rise of hate-based violence against Qids (Armstrong 1994; Stover 1992) created an urgency for school leaders to examine their own attitudes regarding sexual orientation (Spear 1999) and to work for an accepting, safe school environment insured by the policies of the district (Bishop, Williams et al. 1994). Recent court cases such as Davis vs. Monroe County, Georgia, 1999, and Nabozny vs. Ashland Public Schools, 1996, are creating awareness among school boards and school board members that they are liable for sexual harassment (Jones 1999; Spear 1999). Guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education and the Office for Civil rights make it clear that boards have a responsibility to ensure Qids 1) safety in school, 2) ability to learn without distraction and fear and 3) the opportunity to graduate (Jones 1999; Spear 1999).

Lesbians and gays are two to four times more likely than heterosexual youths to seek counseling. At odds with their needs, however, is the frequent and even biased attitude of two thirds of counselors toward non-heterosexual clients (Burke 1995;

Coleman and Remafedi 1989; Owens 1998; Prince 1997). Counselors need unambiguous encouragement and reward to be welcoming to sexual minority students, to help Qids develop integrated identities, and to foster in them self-disclosure skills for making healthful decisions regarding coming out (Burke 1995; Krysiak 1987). Empathy plus willingness to employ skills counselors already use to help other minority students experiencing deleterious effects of marginalization is a good starting point (Pope 1995).

Teachers are the front-line source of protection, encouragement and instruction. Even the solitary teacher can become effective by informing herself about Q-people, creating a safe and equitable classroom and helping create a safe and equitable school (Lipkin 1999) (See Appendix N.). Qids want teachers to intervene against homophobic behavior (Rofes 1989). Yet students calling others faggot, queer, mama's boy, dyke rarely are held accountable giving heteros and non-heteros alike the message that Qids are fair game for harassment and cruelty (Mathison 1998). Eighty percent of prospective American teachers hold negative attitudes toward lesbian and gay people and one-third can be classified "high-grade homophobes ( GLSEN 2000; Owens 1998)." Alarmed by findings such as the Calgary study reporting that gay male youths are 14 times more likely to commit a serious suicide attempt, some individual teachers and a few groups of teachers are beginning to feel seriously obliged to tackle homophobia in school (Dwyer 1997).

Training for teachers, whether in schools of education or school districts, being almost non-existent, the need for diversity training including sexual minority youth is acute (Kissen 1991; Walters and Hayes 1998). Pre-school through high school teachers need confidence and empowerment to create a safe, non-shaming environment for Qids; to accept the likelihood that some of their students are lesbian or gay or bisexual or transgender; to work willingly with gay parents and colleagues; to negotiate coming out as sexual minority persons or allies; to support Qids through their teaching, listening, and sponsoring of social activities and support groups for Qids; to develop sexual minority

inclusive materials and curriculum; to reject texts excluding non-hetero people, materials and assignments; and to build and use a rich base of classroom, departmental and school resources regarding queer issues (Bapst 1991; Chasnoff 1997; GLSEN 1999; Pryde and Mech 1995; Walters and Hayes 1998). National and local gay education and/or service organizations, bringing experience and understanding of queer issues and life, present a unique resource to begin the training underpinning an effective strategy for educational and social fulfillment of Qids in school (Schwartz 1994).

Out staff are essential. Closeted LGBT teachers present a risk to Qids who often recognize teachers-in-hiding and deduce a self-devaluing message that being gay is shameful, an identity to repress or disguise (Owens 1998). A highly closeted profession, teachers experience the dilemma that, even should they have the rare privilege of contract and policy support, they may be subject to repercussions for simply advocating fair treatment for Qids, much less coming out as LGBTQ (Walters and Hayes 1998). Nonetheless, teachers coming out create a synergy for Qids coming out which in turn creates a powerful opportunity for diffusing homophobia—namely, the opportunity within the school community for all members to develop positive, personal relationships with LGBT peers (Engstrom 1997).

Positive classroom discussion about sexual and gender diversity in which the teacher ensures the inclusion of marginalized perspectives by setting the terms of discussion, commenting, and asking pointed questions can simultaneously help break down the walls of silence and construct an environment of recognition and acceptance (Andrews 1990; Warshauer 1993). Writing, like discussion, has the potential to elicit diverse discourse where straight and gay cultures can meet and grapple (Kissen 1991). Panel discussions can be a low risk means of effectively challenging students' stereotypes of gays and lesbians as unsafe for children and as sexual perverts (Nelson and Krieger 1997) (Walters and Hayes 1998).

Beginning in Massachusetts in 1993, Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) had spread nationally and increased to 100 in 1997 and to nearly 700 by 1999 (Cloud 1997; Jones 1999). As a school sanctioned organization, GSA's give gay and straight students a safe place to discuss sexual orientation issues (Bennett 1997; Ginsberg 1998). LGBT students consider these groups to be vitally important places where they can overcome their fear and isolation and find encouragement to remain and succeed in school (Ginsberg 1996; Smock 1994). An outgrowth of the Massachusetts Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, Massachusetts' current 150 GSA's have been a catalyst to state-sponsored inservices through which the Boston chapter of GLSEN has inserviced hundreds of teachers and counselors about LGBTQ issues.

Heterosexual-identifying youth consider the opportunity to grow and socialize in a supportive environment a given. Not so Qids (Dunham 1989). As with straight youth, school sanctioned activities providing Qids an opportunity to play their identities can help them form and integrated self as a competent gay person (Reed and Geddes 1997).

A myriad of opportunities exists within the formal curriculum. Health education on sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases could sensitively include gay and lesbian youth (Staff 1997). Usually it doesn't. While Qids often enroll in courses that include health and sexuality in their title so as to gain understanding and validation of their identity, most such courses avoid the issue of sexual orientation or anything LGBT (Walters and Hayes 1998). Yet health curriculum incorporating sexual orientation (Kirsch 1992) and entire courses on a sexual orientation already exist (Bohan 1997).

Language Arts and English surface inordinately often as the site Qids identify where queer issues spontaneously emerge (Kissen 1991). Language and communications, even English as a Second Language (ESL) (Schweers 1997), are classes where Qids can access their culture and be validated in the recognition of their personal experience (Pope 1995). English teachers have the opportunity to identify and include quality LGBTQ literature and subtexts in their curricula (Athanases 1996; Greenbaum

1994; Sumara 1993). Young Adults (YA) novels tend to poorly represent LGBTQ's as tragically flawed or amoral or merely background figures (St. Clair 1995). Correcting this deficiency, well-developed bibliographies suggest ample alternatives (Cart 1997) (Williams 1993). Equipped with an understanding of the developmental issues gay and lesbian youth encounter, teachers can help students see and unravel their sexual minority prejudices (Smith 1994; Vare and Norton 1998).

Libraries are at best ill equipped and often totally unequipped as a resource for Qids (Fischer 1995). Age-relevant materials are needed (Anderson 1994; Caywood 1993). Creating significant, user-friendly library holdings on a full spectrum of sexual minority topics and interests for Qids allows sexual minority youths to learn about and understand themselves on an individual basis as questions arise in their lives (GLSEN 1997).

As laudatory as they are rare, isolated LGBT counseling, course work or library programs are inadequate to the socially nested identity task, a task of broad personal and cultural proportions (GLSEN 1997). In response, some theorists have proposed a multicultural approach to LGBT issues while a few activists have started programs and schools. Los Angeles' Project 10 is a comprehensive teacher-developed 9-12 program transplanted successfully to other school districts (Lipkin 1992). It includes everything from education to support groups and school community programs (Lipkin 1992; Rofes 1989). Harvey Milk in New York and Walt Whitman in Dallas are two store front schools representing radical private efforts to meet the needs of Qids at risk (GLSEN 1997; Rofes 1989; Schwartz 1994).

If culture means a system of knowledge, values and traditions which a group and its members use to make sense of and live their lives, there is Q-culture. Facing tasks comparable to racial and ethnic minorities, the LGBTQ community constitutes such a group (Mathison 1998; Pope 1995). From reading and discussing young adult literature with transgender characters, to opening the canons of every discipline to relevant queer

issues, to diversifying heterosexist school culture, to creating a rich straight through gay context of human relations in the school, there is fertile opportunity to create a school culture wherein every student can find her or his own reflection (Gaard 1992).

Educators are challenged to reform the practices of American schools which reinforce and reconstruct the sexual and gender hegemony (Shively, Jones et al. 1984). The needs Qids seek to be filled are simple: to be treated like other kids, to be supported, and to be free of negative comments made by students or teachers about sexual minorities (Owens 1998). Students can relate to the values and the goals of the school as a whole, but only after they see themselves credibly reflected in that learning community. Curriculum needs to link knowledge to the communal-cultural contexts of its members. Qids' learning needs to be wedded to their lives (Wang and Gordon 1994).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODS**

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to reveal how Qids<sup>vii</sup> – simply for who they are – are hurt in and by schools and what schools can do to change that. This statement implies my own hunches and beliefs. I entered this study believing school represented crisis possibilities for development or damage for Qids. School was for Qids, as for many youth, their entry into society and their first clue as to how society would embrace them. I believed school didn't embrace them. I wondered if it even saw them.

I believed school was a site of suffering for many Qids. Were teachers and the school community aware of this pain? Not very. Were they even aware of the presence of Qids in their midst? Not often. Did the suffering begin early in school? For me it did. Would teachers realize this? Not too likely. Would they do anything about it? Less likely.

One strong conviction motivated me to investigate this topic in the first place: Qids needed an about face from their school. It was serious. Qids were hurt at and by school, often deeply and at grave risk. School thwarted Qids development depriving them of critical words and information regarding their identity at moments when they were ready and needing the information to make sense of themselves. School refused to let Qids see themselves in the reflection of Q-people in the curriculum and Q-staff in the

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<sup>vii</sup> See "Language," pp. 18-23.



school. It left Qids not only alone, but vulnerable to the torment of their peers. School perpetuated the formation of both oppressed and oppressors.

Qids, school, all of us had a great deal to lose. The good news and the bad news were the same: the loss was unnecessary. I had one overarching hunch about the changes that would be required. Given the stark absence of knowledge and strategies to address the issue, school communities would have to begin with basics; basics about curriculum, basics about school life, basics about human relationships. In that it introduces ten Qids and presents their real experiences of hurting and healing at school, this study is itself a first step in redress.

*ReSallying Qids* shows the school community how youth who don't follow the heterosexual recipe for gender and sexual orientation suffer and the role of school as both perpetrator and healer. The application of the findings of this research may increase the congruence between the needs of Qids and the policy, practice, environment and curriculum of schools.

Based in a large metropolitan area in the Midwestern region of the United States, *ReSallying Qids* examined stresses and responses of ten LGBTQ informants, Qaracters, prior to high school graduation or leaving school. The result was a wide range of life stressors and responses, both related and unrelated to matters of sexual orientation and gender, casting light on the relative importance and pervasiveness of their gender and sex issues and the significance of school – sometimes as unwitting accomplice and others as principle – in both hurting and helping them.

The experiential material of this study was as wide as the teased recollections of Qaracters allowed. Stressors were sometimes major events such as moving, coming out, or divorce; and sometimes chronic hassles such as bullying, name calling, or family rejection. The material constituting these youths' struggles spanned Santa Claus to suicide. Settings included the academic and social spaces of schools, K-12, and off school locations of home, work and social activity. People included a spectrum of school

players – students, bus drivers, teachers, assistant principals, hockey team members, secretaries, superintendents, hall monitors, board members – as well as anyone in the Qaracter’s life experiences whom she introduced into the script – step-parents, cousins, bullies, romances, grand parents, neighbors, Q-community, friends, step-siblings – and, centrally, themselves.

It is hoped that this information will help school communities to better appreciate the problems Qids face in life and in school and to respond robustly. This study provides educators information to:

1. increase perceptivity of “Queer” and “different” youth.
2. sensitize to the breadth and depth of the challenges Qids face
3. gain awareness of both the destructive and constructive roles of school in the lives of Qids
4. reform school policy, practice, curriculum and culture so as to create a resilience conducive experience for Qids
5. take steps to make schools a place where Qids see themselves reflected, valued, included and – given these prerequisites to learning – receive a quality education.

### **Design**

*ReSallying Qids* was a qualitative examination of the stresses and responses of ten LGBTQ people expressed through in depth interviewing supplemented by a questionnaire eliciting demographic data, written answers to questions about stress and descriptions of one’s gender and/or sex identity experiences.

I chose qualitative research in general and a multiple interview process in particular because of the suitability of the genre and process for addressing the question, “How do Queer youth resile in school?” At this juncture, the question would not, I

believe, yield as usefully and meaningfully to quantitative techniques. Basic questions of an open-ended nature need first be asked. What stresses Qids as Qids? What kinds of resources and processes may be at work in this Q-specific process? Is it Q-specific? What, if anything, is going on regarding stress and resilience in a Qid's secret space of Q-invisibility? Participants would be asked to deal with painful and complex material, both emotionally and mentally taxing. Anticipating that content could be substantial, that the memory recall work could be difficult, that Qaracters would sometimes be asked to share memories that they had avoided or perhaps never had the opportunity to share, and that the work might require some patient and perhaps extensive questioning, I concluded multiple interviews would help assure the usefulness, appropriate thoroughness, and integrity of data.

Each Qaracter completed three interviews. These interviews closely mirrored the three phases of an interviewing technique called "narrative interview." Narrative interviewing is a technique that recognizes and attempts to reduce the distortion caused by the interviewer and the interview situation. To achieve this, it is structured in three phases. The opening phase strives to establish a setting of respect and trust through a "narrative impulse" which leads into a general opening question. Intended to allow the informant to speak with as little interruption as possible, the researcher assumes an active listening role speaking only to help the informant focus on and complete her story. In the second phase, the researcher asks clarifying questions and invites the informant to retell and elaborate her original story. In the third phase, the informant is encouraged to provide insight to her story, to analyze, synthesize and evaluate what she has shared (Dictionary of Education PLUS).

Generally, the first interview began conversationally with the informant and I getting to know one another. This friendly exchange transitioned into the protocol script (See Appendix C.), beginning with an explanation about the study, the interview, the voluntary nature of the Qaracter's participation, and an opening invitation as follows:

“So let’s talk about trouble. Let’s talk about pain; pain in your life—rejection, loss, conflict, stress. Pain — things that hurt. You can start anywhere. It doesn’t matter. What comes to your mind when you think about something that really hurts, something in your life?”

Following the first interview, I organized this material into stress events and circumstances. At the beginning of the second interview, I reviewed these with the Qaracter who concurred or modified them. After reaching defining statements of stressors comfortably agreeable to the informant, the interviewer proceeded to ask question which clarified and expanded these elements extracted from the first interview.

At the conclusion of the second interview, each Qaracter completed a paper and pencil instrument called the “Qids Survey,” (See Appendix D.) a tool constructed for this study, which sketched 1) identity information, 2) critical life events, 3) Q-ID events, 4) Q-ID factors and 5) Q-ID closet experience. Section 4, Q-ID factors, was based on Vivienne Cass’ six stages of queer identity formation. It included 26 items, four or five regarding identity formation and identity foreclosure for each stage. Each item called for a checkmark and an optional comment; the checkmark to indicate whether or not the Qaracter recalled having the described experience and the comment space for the Qaracter to explain as and if she so desired. Section 5, Q-ID closet experience, addressed four topics about the closet; being in it, time before it, entering it, and exiting it. It raised two novel research issues about the closet, namely, recollections of a time before the closet and recollections of the experience or process of entering the closet. This information was incorporated into the third session of interviewing.

In the third interview, I asked the Qaracter more reflective questions regarding strategies and qualities which helped or hindered her in bouncing back and changes in schools that would make a positive difference for her and other LGBTQ youth.

This investigation sought themes, practices, variations and inventions Qids used to triumph — survive and thrive — over adversity in a school-context textured by a web

of people, circumstances and life events in a Qid's life. The voice of Qids was the medium. To assure a richness of voice, this study sought eight to ten participants who were:

- youth in school who could address crises confrontation near the present tense
- a blend of informants across non-heterosexual orientation, gender and race
- at least one Transgendered person as temporally near school as possible

Each participant engaged in three interviews, ordinarily 50 to 75 minutes in length. Iterative and mediated by the content of the preceding interview(s), these researcher and informant discussions explored:

- **Stress:** The informant described stress in her life: locations, circumstances, intensity, importance, responses.
- **Q-identity:** The informant reviewed her life stress material for completeness and insight, and explicitly explored Q-orientation related stress within the context of her general life stress.
- **Resilience:** The informant explored personal attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors evoked by and influencing how she responded to stress.
- **School:** The informant explicated perceptions of the helping/hurting, active/passive, curriculum/culture rules of school relative to her general and Q-identity stress events.

The interviews were iterative in that 1) five to 16 events were examined per informant repeating the protocol process and 2) often the same event or circumstance was discussed repeatedly — either by design or digression — in different contexts. The second interview was mediated by the first, the third by the second. The first interview extracted and enumerated stressful episodes. The second interview examined these episodes in depth. The third interview sought insight into stress episodes and delved into the Q-identity factors raised through the interviews and the Qids Survey.

Together, each Qaracter and I:

- named crisis/stress events and episodes
- detailed these events
- described the time/space circumstance locators of each crisis
- defined crisis triggers
- examined the formal and informal role of school in these events
- examined her/his own role in these events
- evaluated the relative resilience or oppression of the outcome
- examined the impact of the individual, the school, and other factors on the outcome
- evaluated these roles
- probed the meaning of the outcome proposed resilience-conducive environments, strategies and metaphors

At the end of this interview, I provided each Qaracter a resource pamphlet listing local counseling, support, and advocacy referral services (See Appendix F.).

### **Participants**

Most studies of LGBTQ youth and their school experience are extrapolated from data gathered on participants who are out of school. This study sought participants who were in school. A problem arising from involving in-school participants was simply identifying them. The three screen of being out, being willing and being permitted were formidable obstacles. Only after throwing a wide net was I able to enlist ten qualifying participants.

There were two important advantages, however, that made the in-school criterion important. First, in-school participants were likely to be substantially less at risk for the retrospective problem of distorting data. Studies based on recollection lose valuable

information regarding how children learn about their sexuality and gender (Besner and Spungin 1995). Although discussion about experience is always more or less retrospective, the span of retrospection was shorter. All in-school informants at times were talking about crises and events still in process. Furthermore, to the extent that school was itself stressful and the hiatus of graduation represented a release from that stress, interviewing in-school informants provided a desired perspective from within the stress rather than outside of it.

The process of recruiting informants for this research reinforced the notion that high school graduation is a defining moment of liberation for queer youth. When asked about potential in-school informants, adult coordinators of organizations for Qids often responded, "Can they be graduates? I have a lot of terrific candidates you could interview who just graduated!" In one youth group of African American males, numerous recent graduates asked why they couldn't be included. "The emotional experience is much more intense when you're still in school," I rejoined. A chorus of nodding heads confirmed.

The process of simply finding informants challenged and at times seemed to allude me. Yet, time after time, colleagues or friends or people whom I hardly knew would say, "What you're doing needs to be done." I began with the goal of identifying eight to ten willing and able Qids currently attending schools in a large metropolitan area in a Midwestern state for interview. By my making presentations at meetings and/or providing promotional materials for distribution (See Appendix A.), potential participants were recruited from virtually every non-school source in the metropolitan area of over four million people including community queer youth support groups and family support groups such as PFLAG (Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). While some participants came forward directly from such groups, others surfaced through secondary contacts, for example, school counselors and faculty sponsors of school support groups.

“ReSallying Qids” used two sets of sieves in finding participants, one social and one demographic. The social requirements were that, to qualify as a Qaracter for this study, the prospective informant: 1) be out, 2) be willing and interested to participate, and 3) if she were a minor, receive parent(s)/caregiver(s)’ permission. The demographic requirements were that the prospective informant: 1) be a resident of the Midwest study area and 2) be in school. Seven met these standards. Three presented some variation. All ten Qaracters met the social requirements – out, willing and permitted. Eight met the demographic requirements – currently enrolled in school within the study area. The three informants with variants were a thirty-two year old who lived in Canada, an elementary school student who fit the requirements but was half the median age, and a foreign exchange student. I debated how to handle their testimony in this study.

Craig came as a foreign exchange student from a small community in Switzerland. A senior, he was originally placed in a home in Louisiana. His being gay, however, became an issue there. He was promptly transferred to the Midwest where he was placed in the home of a Q-activist family. On the other hand, Craig resided in and attended a school in the study area. While much of his testimony reflected his Swiss experience, he also had substantial testimony regarding American high schools which resonated with other Qaracters’ experiences. Furthermore, he was an adolescent as were seven other informants. While he brought variance to the group, many others brought their own unique features; for example, Andy who described his sexual orientation as “fluid,” Geena who was in middle school, and David who had moved to the Midwest from a rural Missouri experience and attended a special school-within-a-high-school program.

I chose not to note Craig’s testimony in any exceptional way in this study for two reasons. First, he met the criteria for participation. Second, he was similar to most of the other participants in age and number of years in school. In contrast, I decided the



testimony of two other informants, Jewel and Lian, was exceptional and called for special consideration.

Because she never attended Midwestern U.S. schools and particularly because of her age, consideration of how Jewel's voice spoke to this study was more complex. I had hoped to find a transgender participant. Due to practical limitations, I understood from the very beginning of the design that the criterion of being currently in-school might prove unrealistic in this case. Transgendered Qids very rarely identify prior to high school graduation. Yet given the potentially more complex Q-identity experiences of these youths and the heightened obstacles to their identity acknowledgment, their inclusion would be of special value to the topic of study, shedding light on the matter of resilience for Transgendered students and, perhaps, as a minority within a minority, magnifying crisis-resilience phenomena for the broader spectrum of Qids. I worked for months with two well-connected trans specialists. In fact, a willing in-school candidate was eventually identified. However, parents would not grant consent for her participation. Finally, on the recommendation of one of the Midwest's leading trans organizers and medical practitioners, I decided to interview Jewel<sup>viii</sup>, a 32-year-old male-to-female transsexual from a comparably large metropolitan area in Canada. While the deviation from the criteria and a commensurate different handling of the data is acknowledged, I believe that the data is a fitting and valuable contribution to this research. Jewel provided the interesting and important testimony I had hoped for regarding transsexual youth in school. Additionally, her testimony on gender difference shed surprising and important light on the other participants, particularly their early experiences of ridicule and rejection.

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<sup>viii</sup> Names of the ten participants are fictitious. They were assigned A to J, masculine or feminine as the informant referred to herself.

The third exceptional informant was a second grade gay male, Iian. Parents who had heard about the research approached me. The parents were his two lesbian moms.

My committee and I spent considerable time discussing Iian's place in this research. Due to his age, it was questioned whether it was wise to even include him. In time, we came to the decision that his inclusion was valuable for the information he provided regarding his youthful experience and for the important questions his participation raised. What *might* a child understand about her sexual orientation? What *could* the implications be for schools? While this research did not establish puberty or child-bearing status, Iian was likely to be prepubescent and other informants were likely to be pubescent or postpubescent. Equating the meaning of Iian's words to those of the other informants lacked a basis. While his words were not deficient, our ability to understand them as he meant them might well be. Therefore, his interesting and useful testimony is bracketed with a caveat: we are likely to have less understanding of Iian's words than we are to understand the words of older informants. While our understanding of others' words are always limited and our understanding of all informants herein is limited, especially to the extent their experiences differ from our own, Iian's age and experience differential increases that limitation.

With that caveat, I wish to proceed to an incident that occurred while describing Iian to a colleague. After listening briefly, the colleague responded skeptically, "How do you know he's not just saying that to please his parents?" One might suggest, as did my colleague, that, in contrast to gay youth who feign being straight to avoid social disapproval, Iian feigned being gay to avoid his lesbian moms' disapproval. However, there were substantial differences between the analogy and Iian's circumstances. Pressures on Qids to heterosexually conform were ubiquitous. They included conforming expectations not only from immediate family but also from extended family, friends, neighbors, church, the media, school and society. Even in this study, informants reported, "I didn't know there was anyone like me," or "I thought I was the only person

like me in the world.” They were immersed in heterosexuality in every place and time of their lives.

Iian was not immersed in homosexuality. He lived with an older hetero sister in his moms’ home. He spent a comparable amount of his home time with a heterosexual father who shared Iian’s joint custody with one of the moms who was his biological mother. He faced, as he testified, anti-gay harassment in school and society. Except for his mothers, Iian had to deal with all the heterosexual persuasion of society that his peers in heterosexually parented households faced. His claim “I’m gay” was made with relaxed animation. His testimony was internally consistent across three interviews. His answers were original; his responses spontaneous; his affect versatile. He appeared credible.

At eight, Iian was age exceptional. The next two youngest participants were 13 and 16 respectively. Iian’s school experience extended only into second grade, while theirs extended into eighth and tenth grades. Iian’s youthful difference was obvious in the topics he chose and the length of his discussions. The total length of his three interview transcripts was roughly one fourth of the average length of the other nine Qaracters in the study. His answers were less involved and his experiences were considerably fewer. The wording of my protocol was geared to an older participant. At times I had to adjust my words and questions to Iian’s understanding. Nevertheless, Iian usually demonstrated understanding of the questions. Some of his concerns were more juvenile than those of the other Qaracters; what he would dress up as for Halloween or what gifts he would receive for Christmas. Most of his stressors, however, were typical; sibling problems, being bullied and the death of a grandmother.

As I examined Iian’s interviews in the context of all *ReSallying Qids*’ interviews, I became aware of a valuable contribution Iian could make to this research. This study sought to minimize the effect of retrospection. Many informants herein testified they had an awareness of their sexual orientation at Iian’s age or younger. All the study’s

Qaracters described at length experiences and stressors occurring in their earliest years of school and childhood, notably, Q-ID experiences and stressors. Yet, ironically, all nine older Qaracters could be faulted for a condition this study sought to avoid, retrospective distortion. Iian's testimony was both about his young childhood and during his young childhood. In Chapter 4 when his scenario is presented, we will give consideration to the credibility of his testimony and alternative explanations to his self-perception. Suffice it to say for now, he met the criteria for participation and I accepted the opportunity to interview him.

This study makes no claim to being representatively inclusive. Qaracters, as is apparent from what has already been stated, were not representative. Four elements of this exclusivity included their being out, still being in-school, parental permission and recruitment sites. The majority of informants were primarily or secondarily invited to participate through their affiliation with a Q-organization such as PFLAG (Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbian and Gays) or GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network), or a school support group, or a community support group. Although, as is discussed in the following chapter, the age of coming out is falling, many Qids who are out aren't out to parents and aren't out enough to be comfortable with the level of public visibility they would perceive associated with participation in this research.

The number of LGBTQ youth who were visible and within the outreach parameters of the promotion of this research was a fraction of 1% of potential participants. In an area of over one quarter million high school students alone, an estimate of less than 500, 0.2%, youths frequented the organization recruitment sites: three regional PFLAGs, eight regional high school LGBTQ support organizations, and

three Queer youth support groups<sup>ix</sup>. Some of these were post-school and most of those still in-school were unwilling to participate. I was aware that some such unwillingness could likely and simply be due to disinterest or inconvenience. Others, however, were verifiably wary. Of those who were out, accessible and wanting to participate, parents usually did not grant consent. After presenting to some groups, for example, I would hear comments such as, "I know my parents won't let me," or "I don't dare ask my parents. They'd have a fit." A number who took parental permission forms after a presentation would return the following meeting reporting that their parent(s)/caregiver(s) would not allow them to participate.

When a youth was still in school, interested, comfortable to broach the issue at home and able to get consent form their parent or caregiver, they were clearly exceptional and questionably representative. Each of these qualifications in and of themselves signified that the Qaracter had taken steps in her identity development and that she had achieved at least a modicum of support from home. While these factors reduced the likelihood of a participant's being "representative," they increased the likelihood that the Qaracter had some degree of resilience with which to inform this research productively.

A great disappointment to me was the inability to recruit even one person of color to this study. While I was able to work with groups that included substantial populations of color and while an urban organization specifically for African American LGBTQ youth was interested, welcoming and repeatedly approached, the hurdles of being in-school and getting parental permission proved daunting. The latter group appeared to me to be highly effective in producing pride, self-confidence and leadership.

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<sup>ix</sup> This estimate is made on the basis of a combination of my first hand knowledge of these organizations and information provided by other persons with direct knowledge of others of these organizations. These figures include 25 for each of three PFLAG, 25 for each of eight high school support groups, and 75, 50 and 25 for each of three community support groups.

Yet, as an adult supervisor for the African American group attested, black Qids are extremely hesitant to take any risk of being identified as gay or lesbian to anyone, especially family and peers, while they are in school. One youth was adamant about his wish to participate, even to the point of tentatively scheduling his first interview, but could not get parental permission. The fact that I was white may have further confounded my ability to recruit Qids of color.

Ultimately, ten Qids participated including five gay males, two lesbians, one male bisexual, one female bisexual and one male-to-female transsexual (See Appendix H.).

### **Data Collection**

Each Qaracter participated in three interviews. The data collection period spanned a year period from August 21, 1999 through August 20, 2000. Each set of three interviews took place in a period of time ranging from two days to four weeks with 5 days being most common.

I sought interview locations which both assured quality data and gave parents of minors visual and physical access to the interview site. Spanning a distance of seventy miles across a metropolitan geography, the majority of Qaracters interviewed at home. I explained to parents and caregivers the preference for space that would 1) allow confidentiality of interview while 2) assuring their ability to monitor to their satisfaction. All parents and caregivers were able to provide a satisfactory site meeting both criteria. In one small home, the room the parents suggested was the participant's own bedroom on the first floor yet to which the parents had clear, continuous visual access through a wide open door. The only other option in this home was a basement that appeared a poorer option in terms of both interview quality and parental monitoring for minors. Kitchen, living room and family room were other at-home sites. In two cases, parents approved of

an alternative site; a university library in one case and a teacher workroom in another. In both of these cases, a glass door window allowed for public view at all time.

I conducted all interviews. This may have provided more consistency in the interviewing process and allowed for a certain equity among interviewees. I believe that my being Q-identified as a gay man was helpful in establishing participants' trust and encouraging their candor. At the same time, my sex, gender, and race favored white, gay males. My experience as a gay man and my vivid memories of childhood influenced this whole process from its selection, to its design, to its execution. When the reader reads the words of the Qaracters, I am in the margins. My experiences and prejudices have already been suggested in Chapter 1. My childhood influenced the protocol suggesting questions which I believe are important, interesting and useful. I hope that my prejudice had more influence on the quality of the design than the content of Qaracters' answers.

Participants and parents of minor-age participants signed an agreement form (See Appendix B.) describing the study, activities and terms of participation, specifics of confidentiality, and obtaining their signature of consent. Participants were compensated \$15 per hour of interview.

Interviews were audio taped on both a primary recorder using a lapel microphone and a back up table recorder. While one or the other recorder failed in two instances, all interviews were successfully audio taped. The primary recordings were then transcribed by two transcriptionists. I reviewed segments of these transcripts for consistency with audio recording. These transcriptions were then formatted for quantitative analysis.

### **Analysis**

Formatted transcripts were imported to a qualitative analysis software program called QSR NUD\*IST 4. QSR stands for Qualitative Solutions and Research, a software development company in Melbourne, Australia. NUD\*IST 4 stands for Non-numerical

Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing, the fourth edition, 1997.

NUD\*IST 4, usually referred to as N4, is a computer package which helps researchers to handle qualitative data by providing a system for naming, defining, and organizing coding; computerizing the coding process; and providing text search capabilities.

Prior to importing transcript documents to the N4 project file, documents were prepared so as to be analyzable in units of sentences or short paragraphs.

I developed coding by conducting preliminary open-ended analysis of twelve interviews; four Qaracters' sets of three interviews (See Appendix G.). I selected two gay males' sets of interviews and two females' — one lesbian and one bisexual — sets of interviews. Initially, I read these transcripts noting observations, concepts and reflections about the text in the margins of the transcripts, a process referred to as coding. These notes were then organized into codes and organized into headings (parent nodes) on an "index tree." Numbers of second and third generation nodes called "child" and "grandchild" respectively are noted in parentheses:

1. Life stressor: Issue or event named by RQ respondent as significant stressor in her life
2. Q-ID stressor: Stressor depicted as Q-event or condition by RQ respondent or including Q-sex or gender reference
3. Stress event: A specific Life or Q-ID stressor (7 child nodes)
4. Stress condition: Routine, ongoing, Life or Q-ID stressor situation (7 child nodes)
5. Margin: Making or breaking point (3 child nodes)
6. Family: Person identified by informant as parent, caregiver, sibling, extended family member (6 child nodes)
7. Friend: Person identified by informant as friend (6 child nodes)
8. School: Informant's reference to or critique of school; student, teacher, staff, grade, school location, school experience (16 child nodes)



9. **Other people:** References to people other than family, friends, school (5 child nodes)
10. **Early self:** Reference to a time before RQ's awareness of sex or gender orientation or RQ's first such awareness (3 child nodes)
11. **Closeted self:** Text describing RQ's closet experience or pre-coming out (11 child nodes)
12. **Coming out self:** Text describing RQ's coming out to another or to oneself (10 child nodes)
13. **Coming out and Q-ID strategy:** Text describing RQ's strategy in coming out (23 child nodes)
14. **Coming out response:** Reference to response to RQ's coming out or gender or sex orientation (5 child nodes)
15. **Self perception:** RQ's expression or description of how she sees herself; quality or characteristic she refers to herself or sees missing (28 child nodes)
16. **Belief, value:** Expression of belief or value attributed to RQ informant (14 child nodes)
17. **Positive reference:** Reference to a positive person, environment, influence, perception, feeling, experience for RQ (6 child nodes, 8 grandchild nodes)
18. **Negative reference:** Reference to a negative person, environment, influence, perception, feeling, experience for RQ (6 child nodes, 14 grandchild nodes)
19. **Resilience:** Reference to or insight about resilience, the ability to spring back in the face of difficulty (6 child nodes, 16 grandchild nodes)
20. **Gender:** Demographic of RQ's stated gender (4 child nodes: transgender, female, male, other)

21. **Sexual orientation: Demographic of RQ's stated sexual orientation (8 child nodes: trans, bisexual, lesbian, gay, queer, other, dynamic, heterosexual)**
22. **Age: Demographic of RQ's age (3 child nodes: <14, 14 to 16, >16)**
23. **Quote: Statement of RQ that captures an important, relevant, or interesting idea or makes a point**
24. **Story: Node address for compiling each story of RQ, including stress events and conditions (94 child nodes, 4 grandchild nodes)**
25. **Theme: Test that captures a thematic quality or characteristic of a particular RQ**

Code 23, Story, included over 90 sub codes, namely, the stories or events which individual informants related. These codes were developed in the process of coding each interview set rather than in the open-coding process.

In addition to the index tree, five stand-alone "free nodes" were created 1) sexual experience, 2) sex orientation texts, 3) name-calling, 4) gender texts and 5) devaluing students. Stand-alone "free" codes included sexual experience, sexual orientation text, name-calling and gender text. Another 20 sub-codes were developed after the open-coding process. These exceptions were made when a clear, persistent theme presented itself. In all, the coding system included 352 codes and sub codes referred to by N4 as "parent nodes" (25), second generation or "child nodes" (280), third generation or "grandchild" nodes (42), and free nodes (5).

Each interview in each set was then read and coded separately. These codes were used as the principal tool for organizing, comparing and contrasting, and analyzing data.

Chapter 4, "Qaracters," provides a sense of the breadth of stressors each Qid faced. The problem, of course, was how to represent them well without presenting their interviews in entirety. Chapter 4 includes about 3% of what informants actually said. What was the 97% that was not included? And how was the 3% that was included

manipulated? The basis for selection began with codes. Striving to allow the data to create insight not by interpreting it but by allowing it to speak clearly, Chapter 4 focused on about two-thirds of the 98 story nodes as well as eight other families of nodes:

1. (6) Family
2. (7) Friends
3. (8 6) Elementary & Preschool School
4. (8 7) Middle School
5. (8 8) High School
6. (10) Early Self
7. (f 2) Sexual Orientation Text
8. (f 3) Name Calling
9. (f 4) Gender Texts

Because of the iterative nature of the interviewing, interview content benefited by the development of details in the retelling and revisiting of material, yet also included more or less repetitious information. More importantly, I made choices about what was interesting, relevant and, in my judgment, thematic of the Qaracter. Within the codes under consideration, I made an effort to include issues which the informant emphasized, matter which the informant spoke about at length, words that were representative of the informants vocabulary, and material that the informant specifically referred to as important.

Emphasizing voice in this study, I made a priority of representing results in the words of the Qaracters themselves. Results through Chapters 4 through 7 use the words of the Qaracters taken usually from their interview transcript text. In a few cases, particularly related to the closet and coming out, text was used from Qaracters' written comments on their Qids Survey form.

I made editing decisions about text that seemed repetitious, unclear or peripheral. The following example is provided as illustration. The transcript appears first followed

by the narrative excerpt as it appears in Chapter 4. Actual words used in the extract for Chapter 4 are underlined in the transcript:

Transcript:

I mean I was with Amnesty and I wrote letters for poli -political prisoners. I started that my freshman year, and I - prisoners of conscience. I did a lot of activities with my school um simulating things -issues like sweatshop labor and and um and and human rights, basically. And that's how I got involved was was through Amnesty International. And then my sophomore year, it it kind of became more close to home because we had this this racially motivated fight. Or actually that was junior year, excuse me. We had this racially motivated fight. And and the community became completely divided on it. And it was a really terrible thing and and we had to deal with- this is the first time we've ever outwardly had to deal with issues of race. And that um I got interviewed by the by the paper, the Ann Arbor News, about it. And um and so people began to associate issues of equity with me because I - there was a - I was on the front page of the newspaper. My my face was this big. And because I I had been vocal about and so they had they had gotten my name from X and they had interviewed me about about this this racially motivated fight that I had seen and I, you know, had some theories about why it had happened and um I was um associated like I said, with with that and then it happened that you know At the end of my junior year I did that presentation with you and that just motivated it even more. And I just I have such passionate feelings about about human rights in general.

Transcript as edited and appearing in Chapter 4

“My freshman year . . . I got involved through Amnesty International ” “I wrote letters for political prisoners.” “My (junior) year, it became more close to home because we had this racially motivated fight. The community became

completely divided on it. (Reporters) got my name from Julie Richards and interviewed me.” “I was on the front page. . . associated with that. . . I have such passionate feelings about human rights.”

In order to preserve the intentions of Qaracters, in editing and editing decisions I used care that:

- All words in quotation marks were the exact words of informants.
- All words were used in a a way which retained the original meaning.
- Phrases, fragments and sentences that were proximate and sequential were connected with ellipses within the same quotation mark set.
- Phrases, fragments and sentences that were not sequential were in different quotation mark sets. Following the promise of anonymity, names (e.g. Julie Richards, Washington Middle School, *Q-News*) were fictitious substitutions for actual names. Fictitious names were assigned A to J to informants in the order they were interviewed and by the gender of their self-reference.
- Words in parentheses were inserts representing an actual word of the informant or an implied missing word or an appropriate replacement for a pronoun.

Chapter 5, “Stress,” turns attention to patterns of stress and response. It looks at both factors in the Qaracter and factors in the Qaracter’s environment contributing to their duress. Its material was found predominantly in the nodes and subnodes related to:

1. (1) Life Stressor
2. (2) Q-Stressor
3. (3) Stress Event
4. (4) Stress Condition
5. (5) Margins
6. (10) Early Self

## 7. (11) Closeted Self

Examining Qaracters' "Resilience," Chapter 6, involved particular attention to their assets of belief, behavior and resources for overcoming adversity. Primary nodes and their subnodes in this examination were:

1. (13) coming Out and Q-ID Strategies
2. (15) Self Description
3. (16) Beliefs or Values
4. (17 5) Positive Feelings
5. (19) Resilience

Chapter 8, "School," looked at people in the school community, school sites, and the structure and practices of schools that were reinforcing or detrimental to the efforts of Qaracters to bounce back from stress. Node 8 included the subnodes related to these topics.

N4 provided me techniques to cross-reference nodes. While at times a bit cumbersome, these techniques were useful for exploring important or interesting questions; for example, the overlap of affirming (node (14 3&4)) or discouraging (node (14 1&2)) expressions of coming out response with positive and negative references (nodes 17 and 18) and students (node (8 1)); or simultaneous presence of positive and negative feelings (nodes (17 5) and (18 5)) in the process of coming out (node 12).

### **Approval**

The University of Michigan IRB (Internal Review Board) Behavioral Sciences Committee approved this study February 23, 1999.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **QARACTERS<sup>x</sup>**

#### **Introduction to Qaracters and the Presentation of Their Testimony**

A fundamental problem for the school community is the inability of teachers, administrators, staff and adults to spot Queer youth and to recognize Queer duress. While later chapters analyze the testimony of Qaracters in terms of their stressors, responses, resilience, and the place of school in their stressors and resilience, this chapter's function is synthesis; seeing each Qaracter as a whole. Representative text from each Qaracter's testimony is presented in a quasi-story format condensing their testimony to representative and key testimony focusing particularly on Q-ID stressors, response and resilience.

Who were the Qids in this study? Chapter 4 provides overview information regarding the Qaracters and includes a condensed version of the interviews of each, a coherent presentation, albeit a construction, of their testimony. While in the taxonomy of thinking synthesis follows analysis, this chapter begins the reflection on the data so that the reader has the opportunity to know the ten informants before their experiences, thoughts and events are dissected. There is additional benefit in knowing the Qaracters – albeit it to a limited degree – before analyzing them; putting a face on Q-people is a particularly effective method to both dispel misconceptions about them and also to establish an empathic reference, an intellectual identification with their experience. An

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<sup>x</sup> See "Language," pp. 18-23.

additional reason for these syntheses is to allow the reader some small opportunity to critique the data herself; allow her to form her own insights; and challenge, reject or improve the findings as she may wish.

Chapters 4 through 7 present the data of this study and analyze its meaning. As these chapters progress and build upon one another, the reader will hopefully gain a knowledge not only about resilience and stress, but about the ten Qaracters who are providing the critical information regarding their experiences, feelings and insights. While effort is made to repeat necessary text, effort is also made to eliminate repetition that would become monotonous and cumbersome. Besides beginning the presentation of results, this chapter provides context for a thoughtful understanding and interpreting of findings presented in subsequent chapters regarding stressors and resilience germane to these ten Qaracters and the role of school regarding the challenges Qids face and the reinforcement of Qid's efforts.

Following this introduction, Qaracters life-long experience of stress in resilience in and out of school, Queer and non-Queer related, are presented on an individual basis. First, eight Qaracters who were adolescents attending schools in the study area are introduced. Then synopses of two Qaracters who stretched those boundaries are presented; one an eight year old, and one a 32 year old and the sole Transsexual in the study.

Eight Qaracters were adolescents ranging from thirteen to eighteen years of age, one was 32 (transsexual woman) and one was eight (gay male). All were white, one lesbian participant claiming a fraction of First Nation, Native American. At the time of the interview one was in elementary school, one in middle school, seven in high school and one no longer in school. While eight were residents of the Midwest, one high schooler was an exchange student from Switzerland and one, the transsexual woman, resided in a Canadian metropolis.



Regarding gender, six Qids were male, four female, including one “M to F,” male to female transsexual woman (See Appendix H). Regarding sexual orientation, one specified her orientation as heterosexual (M-to-F transsexual), one as fluid (male), two as bisexual (one female and one male), two as lesbian and four as gay.

Section Four of the Qids Survey (See Appendices D and E.) was a twenty-six item checklist and commentary section on Q-identity recollections. Meant to be used to supplement the interview protocol and to identify possible Q-ID stress and resilience issues that did not surface in the first two interviews, these items were written based on Cass’ six stage model of sexual identity formation (See p. 10.). There were 20 identity formation items, three or four items mimicking each stage’s identity formation characteristics. On average, nine out of ten Qaracters indicated recollection of each of these items. There were six identity foreclosure items, one mimicking each stage’s identity disclosure description. On average, three or four out of ten Qaracters indicated recollection of each of these items. This might indicate a relatively high level of identity formation behavior and a relatively low amount of identity foreclosure behavior.

Decisions were made regarding what to include and what to exclude from these synopses. The first decision was the pragmatic one to limit text used in this chapter to 3% of the more than 1,000 pages of testimony. Given that parameter, these synopses attempted to 1) include elements of interviews which were explicitly important to Qaracters or to which they committed extensive testimony, 2) construct a framework for understanding the testimony of Qid informants and their testimony throughout the remainder of the results and 3) highlight illustrative stressors and resilience text, particularly those relevant to Q-ID issues. A number of stressors, particularly life stressors, were not mentioned. I used some general guidelines for exclusions and inclusions. In the process of exclusion, I strove to eliminate:

- Interesting but unnecessary redundancies
- digressions and impertinent material

- passages which might overcomplicate and confuse the synthesis
- incomplete or truncated testimony , for example, in deference to a Qaracter's decision not to pursue a certain event or thought
- testimony that lacked insight
- unclear or labored transcript

At the margins the last tales, the last testimony extracted were passages I deemed would be better handled in subsequent analysis.

In the process of inclusion, I looked for:

- text which compressed a Qaracter's thematic material clearly and succinctly
- material which more readily established patterns
- text with robust images
- texts which fit together coherently with other synopsis texts
- text coded to three nodes – quote, story, and theme – for the purpose of understanding the individual informant

Almost all Q-stressors were included while a number of life stressors were not. The reason for this had to do with the different purpose of each in this research. The examination of Q-stressors was at the heart of this study. Life stressors were included in order to provide perspective on the relative scope and significance of Q-stressors within each Qaracter's gestalt. Except in the cases of several under-developed stressors, all life and Q-stressors are presented later.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 include more text from the 97% not included in these synopses. When it is important and applicable, however, material used here is repeated in later chapters. Other material appears in subsequent chapters which, while not the same, is similar to text included in these synopses. While effort was made to avoid duplication, some was judged valuable to the understanding and interpretation of this data.

### **Part One: Eight Adolescents**

The following seven characters are all U.S. citizens who have resided in the Midwestern United States six or more years, all adolescents, all in school, and all experiencing same-sex attraction.

#### **Andy**

Andy journeyed from chronic experience of being “very, very unhappy” to “euphoric.” On the way, family and friends sparked his resilience. Feeling alone, unhappy and powerless much of elementary through middle school, he began to emerge after his parents began to intervene in his seventh grade year. Andy designated his orientation “fluid.” Through the course of his interviews, his sexual orientation descriptor shifted to bisexual, then to gay. While he stands now approaching six feet, being short epitomized his childhood experience of rejection and pain.

Andy described elementary school as “difficult.” “In elementary school I was always very short. I guess you would call it the class scapegoat. I used to get beat up a lot.” One time while he was taking a beating the principal came running out. Though “she was concerned that I was okay,” Andy felt humiliated. Humiliation marked Andy’s elementary experience. “Someone would provoke you and then it was very humiliating because, you know, ‘What are you going to do about it?’ and spit on your food.”

On the occasions when Seth, the neighborhood bully, would beat him up, he would invariably feel humiliated. “Just the fact that it was happening again, you know. I’d been beat up by this guy and here I’d be lying, everyone was laughing.” He described a vivid incident on the playground when his face was “mushed” into the mud. Everyone

thought that was funny. I just remember the people around laughing.” What did Andy do about it? “Not much,” he said. “And of course you don’t wanna tell the teacher.”

Eventually Andy developed a way of “making up for {the humiliation}. . . I was always a class clown.” “If I was unhappy, it was always easier get attention.” Later he explained taking this role because “I didn’t have any close friends.” But in his final analysis Andy stated, “I don’t think I was helping myself much at all. I think that, you know, I was drawing more attention to myself. I was crying about it. I played with my toys and didn’t talk to anyone. I don’t think I really overcame anything in elementary school.”

His family moved to France for his sixth grade year. It proved a reprieve. He counted as his friends all his classmates at St. Martin. “The whole class was so small it was basically a group of us.” “Europe was a good time.” Andy believed it was because school “was a much more disciplinary environment.” His first example? Lunch. “Schools have cooks prepare meals and you use plates and knives and forks and sit down at tables to eat. There would be a lunch supervisor to make sure the kids didn’t get out of control.” That year the class clown “went away. I think it helps that the first three months I didn’t know French.” When asked about other manifestations of his clowning such as gestures and making faces, Andy answered that he probably could have “but I didn’t.”

Entering seventh grade back in his community of origin, Andy went from his best year to his “worst.” “We came back in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. I was around a lot of the peers that I’d been in elementary school with. So I changed schools (from elementary to middle school) and the same thing happened, starting on the first day of class.” He described

how Isaiah, one of a trio of his new bullies, “kicked me in the back of my seat commenting, ‘Something has hit me from behind! I’m sure you like that!’”

The class clown emerged once more. “I just didn’t fit in for some reason. I went out and got beat up or got insulted. I didn’t have friends. Whenever I had a problem I wouldn’t go to anyone with it. Well, I might need to talk to my parents, but never be just sort of like, ‘I’m having a bad day.’”

“It was just a bad year. I got terrible grades and felt terrible about myself. I was really unhappy. I had no friends.” He described the year in a visual, “a house that had rusted cars in the front yard.” Beat up and bullied, Andy approached teachers for help. He described their answer as “no answer—just fight back. Great advice.” He withdrew. “I wouldn’t talk to anyone. I’d be very self-pitying. ‘Oh, this is terrible. I’m so unhappy. People hate me’ sort of thing.”

He gravitated toward the “outcast” table. “We were very segregated. There was the popular boys table and the jock boys table, and the same with the girls.” He noted “that all the popular tables for the most part were white Anglo Saxon students.” “Then there was this one table in the far corner.” For two or three days, he tried to establish ground with people he’d known from elementary school, but “they had picked up where they left off. So I just moved to the table with the least people—this one over in the corner—and that was where the other outcasts were sitting.”

Andy had awareness of his sexual orientation in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. When asked for an illustrating story, he referred to the outcasts. “I was with this group of kids who were misfits. We basically decided ‘We’re gonna get girlfriends.’ I went with someone for about 5 days. Then I noticed that every other misfit had dropped his girlfriend, too.”

Andy later commented that, “up to about eighth grade people were making assumptions about my sexual orientation even before I knew what my sexual orientation was.”

While the sequence wasn't certain, altering home and school events commenced in the later part of Andy's seventh grade. Apparently his parents brought the bullying concerns to the school administration whom Andy represented as responding, “Tough it out. If he gets into a fight, he can fight back.” Probably shortly thereafter he decided to visit Fern Valley, a private junior high and high school. On the day he was scheduled to visit, he had an American folk history presentation and said he “couldn't possibly do it. You know, I didn't want to go! And my parents said, ‘Okay, fine, we'll cancel it. No problem but we'll reschedule it.’ And so they were very careful to reschedule for a day that I didn't have anything going on. So I went and loved it.”

Either the end of seventh grade or the ensuing summer, Andy wrote his parents a note “basically sort of saying, dear Oliver and Rachel, I'm a homosexual. I've always been a homosexual. Deal with it. I'm happy. I hope you're happy, too.” “They wrote a nice little letter back to me saying ‘Andy, this is great. If you'd like to talk about it with us, you can feel comfortable with it whenever you do. You can either talk to us together or individually. If you're interested in perhaps talking to a therapist or a counselor, we can still arrange that.’”

“I just really made friends in eighth grade.” He wrote a two page paper for health class about homosexuality. “The health teacher was a lesbian. She made all these nice little comments like ‘good thought,’ great wording.” Yet his gains were not solidified. His coming out had gotten placed on a back burner. “I sort of got caught up

in other things.” He mentioned a group of friends that “had their own little scapegoat. It was Werner. I used to make fun of him. I’m ashamed of it now.”

In ninth grade the tables turned. While in a meeting regarding his community service projects, a girl rushed in and said, “Andy, don’t go out of the room! People are outside who want to take you to the pole.” Andy waited it out with his community service moderator, “a very nice teacher.” Andy added that another person had been taken to the pole the year before, ran away, and never returned to the school—Werner.

“I began wondering about it again in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.” “I knew I was having all these different feelings and questions. Someone would call me a faggot or something like that and that was sort of confusing because it’s like ‘Are these people right?’” “My freshman year my grades were just awful. I sort of had a really negative picture of who I was and my abilities.”

Things improved in tenth grade. “The beginning of 10<sup>th</sup> grade we went on a trip” to a national park. “I ended up sleeping under the stars chatting with some friends. Girls, of course. I came out to them. I’d say that it was turning a point.” Midyear, the “nice teacher” who waited out the flagpole incident with Andy also brought a community organization conference to his attention. Attending the February conference, he met “BLTQ kids and their art group. “I went the weekend after to the art group and trudged through the snow and there were all these wonderful people, and I felt very much sort of in the right place.” “The real change” in 10<sup>th</sup> grade occurred “when I went down over my spring break for two weeks to visit my grandparents. My grandmother is a professor . . . She roped several other students to show me around. One of them was taking a course at

the law school called 'Politics and the Libido.' . . . I was able to share my opinion. . . People said, 'Wow. You're smart!'"

"Things just started changing," Andy reported. "I stopped taking jockey comments quite as seriously. I made a group of friends." June I went to the gay pride march in Lansing. I managed to sit in a float actually." Andy added almost parenthetically, "but there's one thing we didn't really talk about. After YAPS I co-started with a senior at my high school the Fern Valley Gay Straight Alliance." Since these events Andy reported numerous times feeling "euphoric."

"I'm happy to have one semi-coherent life," Andy concludes.

### **Bruce**

Bright-eyed and vivacious, Bruce, a tenth grader, spoke about friends, school and home-life with jubilation. His face glowed between degrees of smiles and glee. The unhappy sixth grader whom he would later describe was out of view.

His parents divorced when he was small. At four, he found himself in the "tough position" of having to choose between living with his mom or his dad. He chose his dad. "The way things turned out I think I made the better decision. She isn't holding down a job. She is mentally abusing." His step-siblings "don't have grades and don't have a really good shot at going to college." "I knew at that age that my father was in college and was going for a good job."

"I knew I had feelings probably about three. Between six and eight I realized that there was a name for it." During his early elementary years in Missouri, "They didn't really use (gay) as a dis. They really didn't realize you could use it as a type of way to hurt someone." In the middle of fourth grade, Bruce and his dad moved back to southeast



Michigan. "I finally learned when I came up here. They started calling people 'fag,' 'queer,' 'homo.'" As he explained, "All the kids have been AOK except for the guys. They're afraid of you coming on to them." Overall "I really didn't have a big problem in elementary. I only came in halfway through (fourth grade) and I was still invited to some birthday parties and hung out with friends."

Assuming a more somber demeanor, Bruce stated, "Middle school is like a very bad place." He referred to sixth grade as his "lowest point." "I was unhappy. I was an outcast. I'd feel like I didn't belong in the world." "That was when sexual orientation was actually becoming a big issue with every kid in my school," he explained. "They really made fun of kids for being who they were. If you acted any more feminine than any other of the guys they'd label you as gay or queer." Bruce was one such kid. "They'd call me queer, of course, cause I hung out with a lot of girls and I didn't really date them." Nevertheless, he didn't think it was related to his sexual orientation. "Most kids didn't really realize until after a few months of really getting to know me that I was different from them in that type of sense." During this time, Bruce experienced "a lost feeling. Maybe there's nobody else out there like me."

Relief came in two forms: friends and internet. In seventh grade. "I just started over. I joined the tech team and met a lot of my friends just by talking to other kids in class." Bruce also found "the internet really opens up the world. I didn't really get much information on it. It would just let me know that there were other people out there like me, realizing that I wasn't alone in the world."

Bruce stayed closeted in middle school. "There were no support groups and counselors. You really didn't want to say anything." Even in eighth grade, "though they

had known me for two more years of their lives, they just totally would throw me out of their lives just because I was gay,” he calculated. “I didn’t feel at all anybody was really mature enough to handle it.” However, in eighth grade was “I kind of got caught.” Bruce’s parents “found out I was going into gay chat rooms. Then they found out I was going into porn sights.” He was outed.

That wasn’t what Bruce had planned. He worried about coming out in high school. “I had read how acceptance has been really bad for other people.” Also, “the school district might even start treating me different or harass me.” “I really was waiting till I got to college, out of state.” College “would be an easier time in my life to come out. I’m already out on my own. I don’t have to worry about having them to support me or being kicked out. I’d be safe.” I’d write a little letter to my parents saying I was gay. . . . But it didn’t happen that way.”

Bruce was safe anyway. His mom (step-mom) responded, “I’m totally for you. It’s just that I don’t want you going to these porn sites.” His dad was “cool.” His sister (step-sister) was “raised to accept people” and “loved me at first sight.” When she learned he was gay it “didn’t make a difference to her.” His mom “told the rest of my family.” His dad’s side “really accepted it well.” While grandma thought it was a “phase,” Grandpa Lou responded, “Who cares? Have him bring his boyfriend to Thanksgiving!” His mom’s side “really accepted it” and Grandma Arlene “loves me even more now. Loves me to death.” Ultimately, Bruce reported, “I haven’t had one experience that was bad except for my real mom at first. And now my real mom totally accepts it, too.”

Bruce was starting to think “it’s not right for me not to be truthful with my friends about this and halfway through ninth grade year was when I started coming out to a lot of my friends.” His best friend, Leeann, was first. “She told me, ‘OK, when did you finally figure this out?’” “A lot of my girlfriends like it more because now they have a shopper to go to the mall with them and to check out guys with.” “Most of the guys, in front of parents that we know are not OK, they’ll like maybe put their arm around me.”

His friends go beyond acceptance to celebration. “Leeann brought up the AIDS Walk. I organized the team.” His friends were mad that I didn’t invite them” to go along to the Lansing Pride March. “They wanted to have a good time and they really wanted to support me.” “So this year we’re gonna go with the Gay/Straight Alliance.”

When Bruce talks about his high school friends, he is not speaking in the context of the total population of nearly 5,000 students but “a little section of the school called Sunshine.” Sunshine “is really cool.” “Most of the kids are fairly well educated. They really don’t care if a person has a different sexual orientation.” Sunshine, he explains, is a 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade school-within-a-school which accepts 200 frosh per year. You have “the same people in all four of your main courses” and many additional “special courses.” “We go all over the place with this group of kids and just learn things.” Interdisciplinary in approach, “the classes combine. They show connections between all four classes.” Catalyst to his participation in Sunshine, “My parents just thought it’d make it easier for me for my high school experience.”

Bruce says, “I’ve really considered myself lucky with this type of acceptance.” While he has confidence in the tolerance level at the school, he notes that “there are kids at my school who really don’t get that.” Bruce finds high school “kind of fun. There’s so

many clubs, like the Gay/Straight Alliance” which, he adds, “I helped to bring about.” Bruce’s first two years of high school included knowing and working with an out gay Sunshine teacher and his dad’s support and leadership regarding an LGBTQ issue before the school board. Bruce is optimistic that “I can get involved in the school and make good friends and have an ability to find good teachers and have good classes to where I will strive in school and be able to get into a good college.”

### Craig

Craig’s testimony brought a special flavor to the research. Rooted in a different cultural experience, the elements of his story validate the feelings and events in the lives of other native U.S. Characters. His Central European background may be evident in moments of his testimony including particular experiences, relationship and conceptualizations. His story provides its own insight and understanding.

Craig had one major hurt in his life—“school. Because in Switzerland I never told anyone that I was gay, but everybody kind of knew. And they harassed me and I didn’t even tell them and actually that hurts.” Craig was slender. His dark hair and eyebrows contrasted with the smooth lines of his face. He was a foreign exchange student completing his senior year in a southeastern Michigan high school at the time of the interview.

“First grade I was never very popular because I was very weak.” “The other people, they were the bulls—big, huge bulls—very strong animals. Because I was weak, I was shorter than the other ones, they called me a lamb.” “Especially in the locker rooms where I was together with all the guys, they called me ‘lamb’ all over again,

'lamb, lamb, lamb.' Sometimes sort of like minutes they screamed it at me and that was pretty much terrible."

Once he told his parents about this "and they went to school and talked to students. They didn't even bother with the teacher. They just went to the students and bitched at them. It stopped for a month or two." Because his dad coached soccer, "when he bitched at them it helped a lot for one or two months. Then it started again." Yet "I actually felt always good about myself because my mom always told me 'You have to be happy with yourself.'"

By 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Craig became more aware of his difference. "I started to like boys and everybody else liked girls so I just pretended that I like girls, too." "I tried to be like all the other boys. I always have to hide my homosexuality. I didn't want the other people to know that I was gay." "Sometimes I wouldn't really watch. 'Oh, don't let my arm get up there!'"

Craig had one "very good friend and we were a whole lot together (in) the woods and playing there." "Because I had never had very much friends, student friends, I was friends with all the teachers. They were nice to me and we had a great time." Positive experiences gave Craig perspective. "I knew I was not happy because when I was together with friends and together with my family I was happy, I was happy."

Sixth grade, the last year in elementary school "was the worst. I never had good friends there. People started to call me gay."

In the first high school year, I had my girlfriend (laugh)." His effort to pass as straight didn't work. The name-calling that started in school spread into the community. "I heard it everywhere I went when I walked through the streets in my village, when I

went to school. I heard it just everywhere, and I really learned to live with it. Of course, sometimes (I was) afraid to go to school. I hated it.” Later Craig makes a correction: “Actually, I liked school. I just hated to go there to be around other kids.” “I never told it to some teacher. I never told it to my parents. And I think if they would have known, they would have done something.”

Craig came out to himself in the second year of high school. “I thought that that’s just normal that guys like guys, but they get together because. . . I don’t know why. Then I realized that that’s actually not true because guys love girls and I did not.

Thinking about friendship in high school Craig stated, “I had my couple of friends who were mostly freaks (laugh), the people nobody else was together with. My last grade, I had one very good friend, a girl. I told her that I was gay and she was fine with it. She knew more gay people than just me and we went together to swimming pools. . . We used to watch the boys there, so we had fun.” He then recalled, “I had some more friends, mostly girls actually. They didn’t know I was gay. But I’m pretty sure they know I’m gay but they just didn’t ask.”

Name-calling escalated through high school. In the final year “they started to call me fag and queer. The last half year I really hated to go to school and I hated to go outside of my house because everywhere I went people started to point with their fingers at me. You could hear them laugh wherever I went and in every room I went, I could hear something about me and I just didn’t go outside of my house anymore without my parents or without a friend.”

In fact, Craig “realized pretty early that I was gay and I never had anyone actually to lean on who I knew he was gay, too, so I could think I’m not alone by myself in my

world. But I never had somebody like this until I was in twelfth grade and I could go to bars and discos. It was a pretty hard time when I thought I was by myself . . . just me. And there was nobody else.”

Craig was not sure he had any alternative except to hide. “I used to lie to them all the time. I didn’t like it. I actually had to because I was not ready yet to come out. I was afraid that people could be mean to me or my parents wouldn’t accept it.”

The last couple of months before coming out to his parents, Craig was “really down.” I was just really very, very far down and I knew it can’t go on like this. I was completely at my end and I knew I had to do something now.” “I actually thought a lot about killing myself at this time. I knew I had to do something and just end my life wasn’t the real answer to do that. So I just tried to come out.” Craig found some affirmation watching talk shows. “I started to watch talk shows, and I saw all gay people in there and thought, “Oh. There we go!”

An opportunity arose “the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February last year. I remember.” “I came home with my ‘girlfriend’ at 2 o’clock in the morning. My mom was sitting there—my dad drove her home—and she was like, ‘I want to talk to you about sex with girls.’ And I was like, ‘Mom, I will never have sex with girls.’ ‘You want to have sex with boys?’ I was like, ‘Yes!’” “It’s a year ago now, and they accept me very well.” “As soon as I was out at home, I started to really act like who I was. I didn’t care any more.”

After Swiss high school, Craig came as an exchange student to the United States. “It was just to go away from all the people, from the people who harassed me. Just to leave everything behind me for at least a year, to don’t have to see the faces and just to be my myself.” His stint in the United States had a surprise beginning. “I came on the first

of August, but first they sended me to a home in Alabama. Then they found out I was gay, and I had to leave there. So I cam to Michigan.” He fared better in Michigan, being placed with a family who themselves had raised a gay son and who were Q-activists in the metropolitan area. With them he found “good parents” without whom “I don’t think I would still be here.”

Harassment started before the end of his first week in Michigan. “One guy who sexually harassed me.” Craig and his American mom and dad “went to the principal.” The offender was made to apologize. “In hallways people elbowed me or called me ‘fag’ or ‘queer’ or ‘homo.’ . . . One guy started to really sexually harass me.” It escalated. “He grabbed my butt. Of course I went to the principal.” The principal refused to act because there were only student witnesses, no teachers. Invited by the assistant superintendent to report harassment incidents, Craig found he was “in there every day. I don’t think he knew from the beginning just how much harassment there actually is.” He reported numerous incidents involving both students and teachers. Both Craig and his parents followed through consistently.

Another benefit of Craig’s schooling in America was living with supportive, activist parents who connected him to the local community and organizations. “I go to Affirmations. I go to 3 different PFLAG chapters (laughing). I really know very, very much gay people!” The impact was substantial. “I never had a whole lot of courage . . . I never knew gay people, and I didn’t know what to stand up for. Now I know a whole lot of gay people. I have a whole lot of gay friends. I just have more courage to say something because I know I’m not alone.” “I’m very strong now. I learned to handle a



lot through the dark times I was in. Now I can handle absolutely everything cause I can talk to somebody.”

### **David**

David took a beating for friendship and trust. “Kindergarten through first grade I was closed really inward and wouldn’t let anyone see me.” “When I was younger I got teased a lot. I wasn’t out to myself. I wasn’t out to anybody. But it felt like they knew something about me that I didn’t.” David related how he felt ostracized, particularly on the school playground. “Not like they knew I was gay or anything, but that I wasn’t like them in some way.” There was something there, something that was, you know, didn’t make me like the rest of them.”

As young as third grade “they said stuff like ‘Oh well, he’s such a fag and don’t hang out with him cause. . .’ That hurt..” “I didn’t have many friends” There were Rita and Lars. But “I didn’t have a best friend relationship with them. They were the people that I talked to mostly.”

In fourth grade I remember being in class with none of my friends and the three biggest bullies in the school. They loved to pick on me.” “Matt is this massive guy. In fourth grade he’s big. He would bully you around. . . One time when they were playing soccer they kicked a soccer ball over in my direction and when I threw it back they were laughing because I threw like a girl. . . He wouldn’t beat the crap out of you, but it was scary.”

Near the end of that year, “I had met this new kid named Drew. Over the summer we had gotten to know each other better. In fifth grade we were friends.” In fifth grade

**“I started allowing myself to be more friendly.” “I needed somebody. I needed friends, so I guess I decided, Hey, let myself be seen. That was even still before I came out.”**

**David described the lengths he went to in order to have friends. “I became this person. I hung out with the cool people.” “It was cool not to do your homework and it was cool to swear and it was cool to talk about sex. It didn’t seem right, but it was cool (laugh).” “It was just cool to hang out with friends after school and on weekends because I never really did that.” “It was fun to be this other person, to have like two separate lives, one at school and then one at home. It was interesting having to remember what you told the people at school so you didn’t get caught in a lie somewhere. I realized later that they weren’t real friendships, the friends that I had made with the cool people.”**

**“In my sixth grade year, I was going out with this girl. My supposed best friend, Drew, just to spite me, asked her out. They both betrayed me so hugely. That made me realize he wasn’t who he said he was” “He lied, and I couldn’t trust him anymore.” “In sixth grade, I think I learned how to make real friends. Be honest with them as best I knew about myself at the time.” “If I’m not honest with them, they’re not gonna be honest with me.”**

**During this time “I remember starting to have this general attraction to older men. I spent a lot of time on the internet just talking to people. . . They claimed to be GLBT or whatever. We would just talk, you know? And it was like a happy release.” David described a period from ten to fourteen when he was exploring and telling himself “it was just a phase.” “I like to go talk to GLBT people on the internet. For four years I did that.” I told myself “oh, I’ll get over it. I just did it for fun. Finally I realized this is for real. This is me.”**

David described being engrossed in high school “because of the theatre things that I do and the Rainbow Alliance things that I do. That’s my playground. That’s where I spend all my time.” David acclaimed Tracy Hobbs, an out gay counselor and Rainbow supporter. “He’s great. We come up with an idea and he says ‘Great! Let’s get on with it.’ He’ll do anything for this group.” “It’s cause of the contact, the human contact that I get there.” On the other hand, “There are those people who hate me, and who hate everything I stand up for. There’s a group of them in my third hour. I guess I’m lucky. I have friends in there, so I’m not sitting all alone. . . . One time we were watching a movie and somebody had turned off the lights. This kid said, ‘Oh, don’t turn off the lights cause I wouldn’t want to get raped by some gay guy.’ . . . “I told this to my teacher. He said, ‘OK. I will take care of them and then you do what you need to do.’ I told my counselor.” Ultimately it went to “our vice principal (who told the offender) ‘Hey, look. Next time you say something, you’re out of here.’ They haven’t said anything so idiotic since.”

David had two poignant stories of friendship, both related to his honesty and coming out. I told my best friend, Vance, and he flipped out. We sat there in silence. I guess he was afraid because he didn’t know anybody who was gay or lesbian.” He asked questions “so he could (emphatic) be able to trust me. ‘You never had a crush on me or anything like that?’ He’s like a brother to me. Of course not.”

When David was in fifth grade, he met Lara when she came to his older sister’s birthday party. “Then last year we had met again. We started hanging out. We both sing in the choir at school and we were accepted to go to the State Honors Choir. In three days we had become really good friends. She was the first person I came out to.” He

feared she, too, might “flip out.” But if “she doesn’t flip out” he would “have someone there.” She didn’t. The two became closer friends.

At one point, David confided in Lara that he had had a “huge crush” on Vance’s brother. Lara thought Vance already knew, “So she had mentioned something and he’s like ‘What?’ He thought that was wild (emphatic) and psycho.” David missed Vance. “We’d sit up and talk all night, just eventually talk ourselves to sleep.” “I would like to, you know, hang—spend more time together with him and just do the stuff that we used to do, hang out and spend the night at each other’s houses and stay up talking all night again.”

Lara “always told me ‘You’re OK. You’re OK.’ She’s the one who convinced me to start going to the meetings after school, the Rainbow Alliance. Two of her friends ran it last year, and now her and I run it this year.” “We went in front of the staff one morning when they were having a staff meeting and we gave a presentation. We gave them the low down (laugh): ‘We’ll make this a better place for everybody, not just BLGT people.’” “She was always there to tell me that I was OK and that she was OK with me being OK.”

### **Emile**

“When I (was) four or five” “I took a girl and a boy into a closet. Kind of felt them up.” As Emile remembered their parents’ reactions, “‘Don’t play with Emile again. Nope. Emile is bad.’ Right. It’s like, ‘Mommy, what’d I do?’ But years later I kind of wanted to forget about that (and) I didn’t really address homosexuality.” Days before his research interview, however, Emile resurrected this story and shared it with his mother.

“My mom’s like ‘All little kids do that.’ I was like, ‘No. All little kids do not do that.’ And I was like, ‘Mom, I am bisexual.’”

Emile wrestled with his own homophobia. This contest created a complex dialogical landscape. “I haven’t always been tolerant of homosexuality. Up until eighth grade I kind of was like, ‘No. I’m not gonna be like that. No. I’m not gay.’” “I grew up in an environment where people would say ‘That’s bad.’ . . . Unfortunately I learned to adopt to their homophobic ways.”

“In second grade I would kiss boys.” “I would kiss boys and act gay, and eventually people would condemn me, call me a faggot, and I stopped acting like that.” “Before eighth grade I just denied it. I just put it out of my mind. ‘Oh, I’m not gay. I’m not bi.’”

“Eighth grade was the first true sense of alienation. I had just moved from a small closed-minded town in northern New England, and people immediately sensed that I was different. I had no idea what was popular, what was cool, how to dress, what music, what trends were popular. . . I was extremely vulnerable.” That year “I experienced rejection, made suicide attempts, losing friendships with two very important, very special people in my life.” He emphasized that these attempts “were not directly related to my being or my thinking I was bisexual, cause I didn’t even think that actually until a little bit later.”

In this vulnerable state, Emile found “Middle school was definitely a place of fear. . . the way some guys talked using the word faggot.” I was “called a faggot many times, almost to the point where I believed that I was.” “I was trying more to conform. At least part of the year I wanted to be part of the popular people.”

Interspersed with this school experience was a contrasting experience at Emile's Unitarian church. "They feel that school does not teach a sufficient amount about sexual education. They decided to do some(thing) to seventh and eighth graders and I was put in their program, 'Our Whole Lives,' or OWL. . . They teach tolerance."

Conflict between his church and his school experience brought about a crisis. "Everybody (in OWL) basically except for me was for and pro homosexuality and didn't have a problem with it. I guess I just got tired of being the dissident there cause I was also the dissident at school. I kind of felt out of place at school where most of the people were against homosexuality. So I decided (to) choose one or the other. I chose to accept. I'm proud of my choice." Simultaneously, he noted, "Even anyone who's straight and is remotely for (emphatic) such things as gay marriage, gay rights, lesbians—you know, all that—is subject to not only alienation but degradation." Nonetheless, when some students ridiculed gays during a government class, "I took a stand: 'I don't like when people use the word faggot or use the word gay. It is a sexual slur.' I was really proud."

"I was questioning whether I was heterosexual in eighth, ninth grade." Emile attempted to fit in. "I started wearing like black and arm braces and tight ripped jeans. . . . First it kind of meant something to me that I would be accepted. But I realized that I wasn't gonna be accepted, no matter what I did."

"1998 (9<sup>th</sup> grade) was a year of a lot of emotional turmoil." "I'd lost friends. I was kind of feeling worthless, and I was kind of feeling like 'Oh what does it matter if I do drugs. Who cares?' you know. 'Screw life.' I still tolerated homosexuality, and I felt, well, I kind of viewed homosexuality still as a low practice." "I hung out with people who were doing drugs, smoking marijuana, cigarettes. . . And these friends are

having sexual relationships. I took it upon me to meet somebody and get sex as quickly as possible. . . I got what I wanted, and what I wanted wasn't what I expected." "I didn't really enjoy my sexual experience, which was one of the reasons I kind of was open to homosexuality almost?"

The first time I figured out that I was definitely bisexual was August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1998. "I was at camp . . . and this other guy who was, I guess, bisexual, just leaned over and kissed a man. Another guy was like, 'You just kissed a guy.' I had to defend him, so I went over and kissed him. . . Anyway, I found out I was gay just before my sophomore year. August of 98—er, not gay, um, bisexual."

Early his sophomore year, Emile transferred to another high school and "immediately joined the Gay Straight Alliance. I thought that was a really cool thing. . . I thought the Gay Straight Alliance was one of the coolest bunch of people. . . I really liked them." His junior year, Emile became president of the GSA. "We've got plenty of homophobia among the staff as there is among students. . . . We're trying to get more teachers to get those safe zone stickers and let people know. If that's the least we accomplish with GSA, hey, we've done something."

### Faye

"I had trouble vocalizing when I was younger, but I did what I could within my comfort. But as an older person—I don't know who influenced me." She spoke at length about her "alcoholic family." She described herself as becoming intense and worried "about other people. I want to solve everybody's problems." "I feel like I should help other people and not myself."

“My father was, is an alcoholic.” “Even though I was only five, six years old . . . I still knew it was going on.” My mom “had enough and she took us to Massachusetts where . . . her sister and brother in-law (lived). Returning back to Michigan to her dad “he started crying and I gave him a big hug and I said, ‘Daddy, what’s wrong?’ . . . He always says now that that is the reason why he sought help—was me.”

Faye closeted herself in lower elementary. “I used to have relationships with boys and girls and this never seemed to be an issue . . . until about second grade. “That seems to be the magic age when kids start to be real critical, . . . to discover a little bit about sexuality and to realize about gender roles.” “It got a little weird (when someone said) to me ‘You’re a faggot.’ because I kissed another girl. . . I had no idea what that meant, but I knew that it was something bad and I knew that it had to do with girls being with girls and boys being with boys. . . I thought ‘I’m not gonna do this ever again. It’s bad.’ I could hear the stigma in the word ‘faggot’ even though I didn’t know what it meant.”

All through elementary school and middle school, I would go to therapists. . . . In like third grade, they asked me to draw a picture of how I was feeling. I drew a picture of a rainbow and somebody smiling. . . That wasn’t how I was feeling. That was just what I thought that she wanted to see.” “I remember crying a lot. I remember not being happy and having people think that I was happy.

My family was “very supportive. If I ever had any questions, they would answer them.” Faye wanted to protect her parents. “If I was okay, then they—I didn’t want them to feel bad. My problems were not (my dad’s) fault, and I didn’t want him to think that they were . . . I wanted to accept responsibility.” . . . “But because the pictures I drew were smiley, because I didn’t seem to be having a problem . . . now if I try to talk about it, or when I tried to talk about it then, even right after the experience, it was like I was going back on what I had said; that I was okay. I’m not okay and I wasn’t okay.”



“I was such an isolationist. I would spend hours in my room by myself and my parents were so worried about me, but really I was chilling and writing poetry. Eight, nine, and ten years old and I would just write and write and write. Which is still how I deal with things. . . . When I was eight I was writing poetry that actually got published. I sent it and I didn’t tell my family.” Faye reflects, “I wouldn’t think that young person would wri—It’s very dark, a lot of talking about aloneness.”

“I was an intense kid. . . . I was always worried, . . . worrying about other people. . . . I thrive on other people’s conflict (laugh). . . . I developed co-dependence as a trait from my parent—my mother (pause) and her mother and her mother (laugh).”

Faye assessed her response as “pretty detrimental. That caused me a lot of problems later . . . . It caused me to continue to put up more and more walls and separate myself from people . . . . which is something I still deal with today . . . . the fact that I have relationship problems as a result of it. Just trusting people.”

At the end of elementary school, Faye’s grandpa died. “It was sudden. Two days.” At that time in my life I had a real death complex. I was kind of a morbid person. . . . (H)aving the first person die that I knew was an end of innocence. I was twelve, so that that was the end of my childhood.”

“I aligned myself with some people in elementary school and junior high (who) were quiet themselves. We would do really quiet things and just play by ourselves.” Faye attached the word “alone” to this period of her life. An “early bloomer” “reading things that elementary schoolers don’t read and listening to Bob Dylan and protest songs,” she reasoned “nobody can relate to your interests, really.”

“Music (and writing) has been a thread through all of this.” “I’ve written probably 40 songs since I got to high school. I’ve shown like two of them to people because I write them for myself.” Writing helped me “organize the feelings of sadness or loneliness that was happening. If I wrote it down, I had to organize it in my head.” “It worked for me!” “Whenever my friends are having problems, especially about sexual orientation, that’s what I recommend for them.”

In “high school I met my friend Erica. She is a wild thing (and) very social. I started hanging out with her and we would go to big parties. . . . She brought me out of my shell.” “Michael was in my French class, and we were just immediately drawn to each other. He’s also very, very social and very flamboyant . . . and he’s gay. And Erica I met through music . . . and she’s bi. (laugh)”

“I got involved through Amnesty International . . . my freshman year.” “I wrote letters for political prisoners.” “My (junior) year, it became more close to home because we had this racially motivated fight. The community became completely divided on it. (Reporters) got my name from Julie Richards and interviewed me.” “I was on the front page . . . associated with that. . . . I have such passionate feelings about human rights.”

Faye recalled October 18 that year. “The most painful time in my life was when my grandmother died.” After her grandpa died, “I would go over there probably every day and I would cook her meals, went grocery shopping for her, did her medicine. . . . She had a stroke and went into a coma. . . . I went and visited her every day. I brought pictures of my grandfather. I just talked to her like she was still awake and she came out of it. I was there when she woke up and we had this wonderful week afterwards. . . . I drove myself. That was my thing. . . . I was with her every day, just holding her hand and

taking care of her and swabbing her mouth. It really gave me more of a sense of closure, death being a step.” “I knew that she was dying. I knew it was all in how I handled it.” My grandfather’s death “was so sudden and I never had any sort of closure. With my grandmother, it was so much a process.” “I wrote her obituary. It was a cleansing thing for me.” “I was completely heart broken, but it was really a positive experience for me.”

Months later, “the biggest thing in my life—the social studies class. I aligned myself with lots of LGBT support groups and I did a two day presentation dealing with sexual orientation and homophobia . . . I had no idea the support that was out there or that it was OK. It was really a great experience for me. . . . That was really kind of a turning point for me.”

“A lot of people were up in arms about it in the community. Wes Noil, the Christian right advocate in our town . . . got this group of like 50 parents come into Julie Richards’ room even though it had nothing to do with her (class) . . . They associate Julie Richards and myself with any issue of equity.”

The administration “wanted to interrogate me by myself. ‘Is there a reason why you’re doing this? Is it because you’re gay?’ And I said, ‘Is that any of your business at all?’ . . . That was followed by people who would write ‘dyke’ on my locker. Friends of mine told me that they couldn’t be friends of mine anymore . . . against their catholic faith.” “I went to the school board meeting to talk about what had gone on and Wes Noil verbally attacked me and told me I was gonna go to hell. . . . A teacher told me that I should just stop distracting kids in class, that I was trying to indoctrinate them into becoming gay.” The local paper aired the matter “from May to September.”

She noted “Julie Richards has been great. She’s the reason I was able to stay. . . . When I was called down to talk to all the administrators, I went down and got her and said ‘You have to come with me.’ She came down and she completely stood up for me.”

In the end, “it was really a positive thing. I put myself out on a limb. I still deal with stigma. . . . Speaking out . . . empowered me. It gave me strength to keep going on.”

### Geena

Geena has ideas. “At school its frustrating because it’s very intolerant to gays. I tried to open myself up to let people know there’s people like me.” Thirteen and finishing middle school, she “really want(s) to go to Harvey Milk High School. People wouldn’t be so afraid . . . and they would celebrate (gay pride) more. . . . I want to be able to do studies on teens who are gay and lesbian, something in psychology maybe . . . (start) a little commune so that kids would be able to have a place to go if they get kicked out of the house or when they want to do some kind of rehab.”

“When I was three or four I was molested by a neighbor boy, about 13 Or 14. He made me suck his penis. . . . I just knew it was wrong.” About an hour later, “I mustered the strength to go to my mom.” On an upbeat note, “We sued him and now I have \$17,000 in my college accounts (giggles). There’s a good thing that came out of there.” She perceived the event as fragmenting her family. “Everybody in my family like after that—it sort of fell apart and everybody seemed disconnected and always walked on eggshells around me. . . . Dad and I (pause) we were really close before and we’d go out to fly kites and stuff and he was a really cool dad. But after that he thought it was his

fault cause he couldn't like protect his little girl. We lost that connection. He got really withdrawn and he wasn't very happy. It tore our family apart."

"I grew up around gays . . . but then as I got older they started talking about hate crimes and things. I was like, 'Oh, wow! That's a bad thing!' "From the time I was eight I knew I was a lesbian. I didn't like the little boys. I had a crush on little girls in my classes. I thought it was wrong in the sense of when I told a friend she was like "god hates fags.' Those words stuck in my head. . . . I do remember entering the closet . . . from the time I was eight to ten.:

I left the closet "unsubtly." "I got the local gay newspaper, rented *Desert Hearts* and bought the book *Is It a Choice*. I left these things out and about my room. I started to talk openly about gay things to my mother." Eventually Geena told her mom "'I'm a lesbian.' She was like 'You are? Well, I think you're a bit too young to know that.' And she just left to go to the store. . . . I was kind of hoping she'd react some other way . . . but it's a good thing she didn't kick me out."

In school "I was the supreme goddess chick. Everybody loved me (giggles)! I wouldn't let people like be intolerant to any differences. First I was outspoken about gays and then I was like . . . 'don't say the 'n' word.' If you think about it, we're all minorities, no matter who. Americans are mutts." Her extended family was not excepted. "They were very racist and I would be outspoken about that."

"6<sup>th</sup> grade . . . I was trying to make the popular girls down like the outcasts and make the outcasts rise up. And I was just there and I had to move. Everything fell apart. I was the leader and I was just getting ready to come out. Then my parents got divorced." Life became complicated. "We moved to Littleton." Her mother's best friend, Sue,

moved in with them. Sue brought in her ex-boyfriend “without checking out his whole morality. My mom and Sue would go out like every night of the week and go party and stuff and it was like, ‘Hello, I’m the teenager.’” Geena was eleven.

“I really was craving attention. I was taking it as it came.” Sue’s ex-boyfriend “would give me attention and he’d really listen. I liked that. Then he took the relationship too far. . . . One day he took me into my little sister’s room . . . I told him no. He started kissing me and touching me and I told him no. But he didn’t stop. He took off my clothes. . . . After a while . . . I got enough strength to kick him . . . He was all buff and it was hard to get him away from me. . . . I hurt his jewels, but he got off, all right!” Subsequently “Sue got sick. The house burned down Sue moved out and in with my dad after she got out of the hospital from being sick.”

I didn’t tell anyone for a while until I didn’t have my period for a couple of months. I was like, I gotta talk to my mom . . . It was like 12 o’clock at night . . . I was sitting there with my teddy bear crying on the couch” I don’t want to do it . . . I don’t want to do it. . . . We went to the doctor’s and she told me that I had HVV. . . . I was like ‘which is?’ and she explained the whole genital warts thing . . . that it was very high up in me. Over the past year we found that that made me so I couldn’t have kids.”

“I’ve always wanted kids, you know, a family. . . . I’ve always thought that would be really cool. I was like ‘I can’t have kids. That sucks. But then I was like, ‘well wait a minute! I’m a lesbian . . . the other one can have kids!’”

“One day when I was going out with my ex-girlfriend, I was over at my dad’s house and I really wasn’t thinking about it and I was holding her hand and I walked into the house and I still was holding her hand.’ Dad reacted. “‘You’re not welcome at my

house.’ He said I was a threat to his children—his stepchildren—and I was like ‘That makes me feel good. I’m your child!’” It hurt. “It still does because he’s my dad.”

“I made kind of the mistake, quote unquote, of bringing a book to school, *Is it a Choice* when I was first sort of stepping on grounds really lightly at my school. . . . People started asking me questions and I tried to give them intelligent answers . . . But they just like knock that down and say ‘Oh, you’re such a fag.’” “That really hurt.”

“I used to have a lot of friends at school but then one got pregnant. My other friend started to do heroine and I didn’t want to be a part of that. The other ones like started to party and got really sidetracked . . . I’ve had a couple of friends I was starting to make but people would accuse them of being gay for hanging out with me. They just stopped hanging out with me.”

“I made these rainbow pants and I wore them to school. . . . My lesbian teacher got it. ‘I love your pants! . . . Careful, though.’ . . . They were my favorite pants, so I wore them another time and these girls were like ‘Why do you have rainbows on your pants?’ I explained to them what it was.” On the school bus home, she encounters the girls. “I’m like ‘I don’t want to deal with this today.’ We just won like four awards for our robot cause we are like the most awesomest thing ever. I go on the bus. ‘Bitch, coming up here with your Skittle pants.’ . . . I sit down. I look forward. . . . The bus driver looks back a couple of times and everybody’s screaming ‘dyke’ and she just goes back to driving.” The girls move by her. “We’re gonna beat your ass whenever you get off this bus.” When “it was my time, I went to get off and they started to hit me and kick me and punch me. Then I just walked and the bus driver was looking in the mirror and she could see . . . She didn’t say anything.” “I went to the office the next day with my

mom. . . . The assistant principal gave the girls a warning. Usually they would get suspended.” “It was the first hate crime I ever faced. I am now able to discuss the subject first hand and able to help others. So, it was more like an empowering thing.”

Geena explains how she coalesced “my little crowd.” “I’d sort of sit there reading my little book, like ‘hmm, hmm, hmm.’ *Is It a Choice* is my favorite book to read, you know. It’s like 30 answers to frequently asked questions about gays and lesbians and transgenders. So I’m sitting there reading and then Carl comes over and he whispers ‘You’re gay?’ and I said ‘So are you, right?’ and he’s like ‘yeah.” So it just spreads around. . . . We have our little winks and stuff.” “There’s about 10 of us . . . and three of us are out. We sit with our lesbian teacher at lunch cause she lets us have our little meetings and stuff. We discuss issues in the community and coming out things.” “We all talk about our feelings and we reflect on the day of what happened.”

Facing high school the following fall, Geena confides “I really want to go to Harvey Milk High School. . . . I’ve been going to bookstores trying to find teen stuff and seeing if they know something about Harvey Milk I look at the back in the contents. I got some stuff.” She accessed websites and eventually got application forms. “My friends and I were talking, and . . . we all want to do something like social work or psychology and education. We were thinking we might wanna up north buy some land, maybe a hundred acres (with) some little building . . . so that kids would be able to have a place to go.”



### Hannah

“I looked up to and felt close to strong women.” “I liked being a tomboy . . . I hated wearing dresses. . . . If I had paid any attention, which I didn’t, or it had been in my frame of reference at all, which it wasn’t, I probably would have noticed a lot sooner.” “It just wasn’t something that was talked about, something that I’d ever thought about.”

Hannah’s opening monologue went directly to her story of coming out to her parents. “Pain in my life, in association with me being queer, is not a big factor. It’s not something that I am forced to deal with very often. I’ve got fairly supportive parents, very supportive parents, really.”

“I came out to my parents before I think I probably should have because it wasn’t something that I was entirely comfortable with yet. . . . I was telling my dad about a friend of mine who’d been kicked out of her house because her parents found out that she was bi. . . . (I was) sort of testing the waters? Then he asked me if—he asked me if I—if it was something that I’d every thought about? Cause, you know, he was sort of starting to guess. When I said, ‘well yes, actually,’ I think he was completely taken by surprise.”

“My mom has had a lot more difficulty. She was raised by her Victorian grandmother and she doesn’t talk about sex . – Ever (emphatic)! Whether I was straight or queer, she doesn’t want to think about it or talk about it . . . but especially since (sigh) I went to the homecoming with my friend, Dora and Dora was in a suit. The whole day my mom was like ‘there’s no problem here.’” “Finally, we just had this big fight about it . . . It’s just difficult for her to see all the things that she had envisioned for my life.”

Hannah recalls that “Elementary school was terrible. And middle school. I was really unpopular and I don’t necessarily know why. I was raised an only child by older parents. I was treated like a little adult. So I had in kindergarten the vocabulary and I didn’t connect with kids my age.”

“In third grade we were going to Country Farms. I dressed up as a boy. I like being a tomboy. I have always been a tomboy (emphatic). I never connected it to my queer identity at all. I hated wearing dresses—not like obsessively, vehemently—but it was not a happy thing. I guess I was different early. If I had paid any attention, which I didn’t, . . . I probably would had noticed a lot sooner than I did.”

There was another part to Hannah’s life; horses and her barn family. “I sometimes feel kind of schizophrenic cause I have dual lives.” Barn-and-horses marbled with home-and-school through her interviews. “I ride horses competitively. I started when I was eight. . . . I was thrust into this world of horses and it became a big part of my life.” “I had like a second set of parents.” “My trainer, Ann, is maybe one of the most formative people in my life. I respect and love her more than—I mean she’s just an incredible and strong woman. . . . She’s like a second mother to me.”

Back at school, “For many years I was picked on and made fun of and it was really terrible. . . . That continued on into middle school, the same kids that made fun of me in all of elementary school made fun of me in middle school. I (laugh) hated elementary school. I remember thinking that it was gonna be different in middle school, and it wasn’t, until eighth grade.” “I was different, but I didn’t necessarily want to be. I just was. Then in middle school, I found friends that respected it.” “I found a close

community of friends. . . . I think kids started to grow up. Being intelligent was not the end of the world. . . . Being an individual was not the end of the world.”

“I have a lot of queer friends in my age group . . . and I think that’s why we’ve all had fairly good experiences coming out because there’s such a group of support . . . since so many of us are queer (laugh), I mean like friends that I’ve had since middle school, and we’ve all been very good friends for many, many years and all of a sudden, you know? It all turns out (laugh) that we’re all queer!”

“Eighth grade I became close to a few people, especially Kris, and I was doing well with my horse . . . I was bonding with people out at the barn, and then eighth and ninth grade year sort of fell apart. Ninth grade . . . all of my friends that I had been close to went to Taft High and I went to Harding. I was lost, bewildered.”

“My freshman year this whole thing was happening. I had to sell my first horse, which was really painful for me.” “The man who used to live with (Ann) was like a second father to me. They had a really ugly breakup. . . . There was a lot of emotional issues. So my whole freshman year I made a concerted effort not to think about my sexuality. . . . I remember walking down the halls, thinking about the ways that I had always pictured my life . . . husband and blablabla.” “But that’s not what I feel.” “Ninth grade I was interested in everything queer. I may have thought about it and not thought about it because that would be like admitting something and I couldn’t deal with it at that point.”

“I actually didn’t come out really. I (laugh) met this girl and we hit it off. I was at a sleep over (my sophomore year) at her house and we kissed for the first time. I was like ‘Well maybe I’m queer.’” “The only really coming out experience I think I’ve ever

had that was like typical—and I was really nervous—was coming out to my best friend, Kris, . . . and she was completely cool with it. She was like ‘I know.’” “I was agonizing over how to come out to Ann . . . and Ann was great with it.”

“My mom didn’t deal with it at all when I first told her. Then a week later, my girlfriend at the time, Rachel and I were up in my room watching TV, and my mom came in and started folding clothes at my dresser. She was being such a bitch. She flew off the handle and started yelling and flipping out and Rachel was like, ‘OK, I’m gonna leave now.’ . . . (Mom) said in disbelief or anger or whatever hurtful things that I don’t think she realized at all were hurtful, like, the reason I thought this way was because I was hanging out with the wrong crowd or I didn’t wear attractive clothes so I didn’t have any boyfriends, or I’d never had a long term boyfriend, so how could I know . . . and I was too young to know that cause I was 15.” “It still bothers (my dad). . . He had always envisioned himself having this really strong relationship with my future husband. . . My mom and I . . . still don’t talk about it, but we don’t talk about anything personal.”

“I would worry about coming out to people, but I would do it anyway, and it was fine. . . . As I kept doing it, I became more comfortable with it as it became more of a part of my life. . . . It was important for me to be able to be out. I felt like I was lying . . . that people weren’t knowing me. . . . My eleventh grade, I had thought about doing this speech in front of the whole school, and I decided not to because there was still some fear . . . about backlash with the teachers and students.” “Junior year I was president (of GSA).” “I’m glad to be out so that I have those opportunities, but I’m . . . labeled and identified, ‘Oh, Hannah the lesbian.’”

“In school it can be very difficult. I often feel like I’m defined by my sexuality. I’ve chosen to be out and put myself in a position so that it’s a known fact.” “During diversity week I gave a speech. . . . I’ve been out whenever it’s come up. . . . In philosophy class last semester we had to write a paper on ‘Who am I?’ then read it aloud to the class . . . I didn’t identify myself as queer . . . because I knew it would come up and that would be it. People would lose . . . the whole person. One kid who knew had to raise his hand and ask, ‘So what’s your sexual orientation.’ I answered it and then it became this big lesbian inquisition.” “Health class in Michigan everything is directed toward straight kids. Unless there’s a queer kid in the class who stands up and says something. I did in my health class and I nearly failed.”

Being lesbian “was not in my frame of reference growing up, so the reading that I did and . . . things that I did to find a community were very helpful to me. . . . Now I find that community not just with GSA people or queer people, . . . but to deal with issues in the GSA in our limited queer environment . . . was important in my coming out experience. . . . I am close to a teacher who’s queer and she has been really helpful. . . . Taking a stand and being vocal and known in the school has been helpful to me.”

### **Part Two: Significant Others**

While all interviewees were unique, two lay outside the anticipated research box. Their testimony was important and valuable. They were “significant others” because these were, indeed, significant to the other eight informants. Jewel brought to the foreground gender crossing issues of the nine Q-sex informants. Iian represented exceptional access to a much younger Qid’s testimony and childhood Q-experiences. He

eliminated a great deal of retrospection, an issue this study was intended and designed to reduce as much as possible.

Iian and Jewel were the last two Qaracters interviewed for this research. Both pushed the boundaries of inclusion and lent important perspective. Iian was (though in the box) a younger participant, half the median age. Jewel was 32, Canadian and, fortunately, transsexual.

Iian was an unexpected find: a verbally abled eight year old gay male. Being aware one is gay at eight would be no surprise to the Q-community. He was comfortably within bounds of estimates of first Q-sexual identity awareness as established by numerous studies at a mean age between 6 and 11 years old (Cantwell 1996; Ryan 1998). What would be a surprise was, first, that he had the basic vocabulary to express what he was feeling and experiencing, words that in most cases are simply not taught and, second, that they were words of pride in contrast to the only words most young Qids might know, words of derision and shame. Iian did much to illuminate the dark myth of the closet and to deconstruct the centered role of coming out in Queer identity formation. Most of all, he provided the most age-proximate testimony regarding Q-ID and Q-stressors.

As anticipated in the design of this study, I had to look beyond the K-12 school population and beyond youths to find a transsexual participant, Jewel. She was a standout. Jewel was the only heterosexual in the study. In addition to the closet and coming out, her experience as a transsexual included the unique stress of public display during transition from male to female. Her resolution included blending versus coming out. Her Q-ID was not about sexual orientation but about gender. Yet she brought into focus the relevance of gender in sexual orientation and the primitive phobias about

gender, fully as rudimentary if not more so than sexual orientation, and the relevance of gender in sexual orientation crisis, especially in the pre-adolescent experiences of the other Qaracters.

Like eight other Qaracters in this study, Jewel experienced the closet. Her closet experience may have been the longest and most dramatic. Jewel also, however, brought a uniquely transsexual phenomenon to the table. At least as powerful as her closet experience was her transitioning experience. “One thing that I knew about transition and the transsexual process, was that it didn’t happen in a vacuum. You essentially had to do it very publicly, and while you’re still integrating with society.” Because of the value of this information, I included a portion of it in her testimony synthesis. It will not be treated later in the study, but is include here as food for the soul of the reader.

Any disappointment I may have felt about Jewel not fitting the design’s criteria were outweighed by the valuable variation she introduced. Jewel’s transsexual experience broadened the Q-ID parameters in important ways. In some ways she helped to bring into focus what was Midwestern phenomena and what was more generalizable. Her school situation, while not supportive, lacked the antagonistic edges of the other nine.

Iian was a precious surprise. Eight-year-old LGBTQ youths aren’t rare; they’re simply rarely accessible. I wasn’t sure I’d be able to find eight to ten participants. I had wished to find elementary school participants, and wrote the design to include them if, perchance, I would be so serendipitously fortunate. But I didn’t expect it, much less a second grader. Before I went to interview Iian, I was skeptical, not because he was too young but because it was so difficult to identify participants in high school, much less a

second grader. I entered the interview process with my ears attune for anything phony about his testimony. What might be possible alternative explanations to his testimony? Pleasing his moms? Seeking attention? Being coerced or persuaded? Being confused? Simply being gay? After his story, I entertain these alternatives. First of all, however, I simply accepted his story because I had no reason to reject it. It could be valuable or worthless.

### Iian

Iian was eight, in second grade, in the joint custody of his dad and his lesbian moms and sallying forth. He had his first sense that he was gay “when I was six. I was thinking one night, ‘Hey, maybe I’m gay!’ . . . I knew from the start it was okay.” “The only thing that frustrates me . . . it’s a kid named Troy. He says ‘your mom’s fat’ and stuff.”

“Troy sometimes kicks you for no good reason (or) throws mud. He does it to everybody in my classroom. Either I strike back or I go and tell the teacher about it . . . or just chase him off.” Comparing home life’s, “(Mine) is a lot better than Troy’s, because he gets beaten whenever he’s at his house. . . . We don’t get disciplines like that. Either we go to our room or we have to say ‘Sorry’ to one another.”

In his investigation of difficult issues in his life, he surfaced “My sister, we do sibling rivalry;” and “the dog down the street when I was six ran into our garage . . I climbed on top of the car. . . . (The dog) took one of my sister’s (dolls) and ran off.”

Atop his list of important concerns were Christmas and friends. At Christmas “I think of my moms and if Santa Claus came or not! Cause I can add to my collection of



posters that you can see over on the wall.” But if Santa left no posters, “I wouldn’t really care. It’s just a toy.”

Iian names three best friends. “They stand up for me and I stand up for them. And they also like gay and lesbians!” “It’s very weird to have a friendship like this, how I’m having a friendship with them. Very rare. Because they both like the same thing that I like.” “All my friends’ family are straight except for them, and their parents don’t mind if my parents are gay at all. My friends’ parents don’t mind if my moms are gay or not. They just don’t even care. It’s still the same thing cause they’re married. They don’t see what the difference is.”

Iian shared concern about “another friend, Dan, who got in a car crash. (I felt) really sad. . . . He had to go to the hospital.” When he came back to school, “He couldn’t run and stuff, so he could just walk and swing. I ran up and hugged him right when he came back into the building! He can run now and he can run an awful lot!”

The following portion of Iian’s transcript discusses coming out.

Researcher: Did you ever come out to others?

Iian: What does that mean?

R: Did you ever tell other people that you’re gay?

I: Yeah. I usually yell it on the school playground.

R: Oh? What do you say?

I: I say “Gay is cool!” really loudly.

R: Is that important to you?

I: Yeah.

R: Why?

I: Because gay *is* cool.

R: Okay. Do you do that now?

I: I've been doing that for about two months.

R: Who are the people that are around you or that you yell it to?

I: Um, I just yell it to anybody who can hear it!

R: Did anybody else ever say "Iian is gay?"

I: I think so, probably, because it's spreaded around the whole school.

R: Do you know who they are?

I: No. I don't know what people spreaded it.

R: When did that happen?

I: Um, it happened about on the 5<sup>th</sup> day I yelled out "I'm gay!"

R: Hmm. Did anybody ever do anything mean to you because of your saying you're gay?

I: Yeah, they call me "gay wad."

R: And who did that?

I: Fourth and fifth graders.

R: Did they do anything else?

I: No, that's basically it.

R: Okay. Was that important to you?

I: Being called a "gay wad?"

R: Yes.

I: In a way, yes, because I am gay (giggles). So I just say "Thanks for the compliment."

Asked if he was completely out he responded, “No, (not to my three) friends. Because they’re gay too.” Would he want to change being gay? “(emphatic) No way! (laughs)”

Iian describes himself as “happy. The thing I’m trying to do is die of old age when I die. A hundred. Actually, I would be 108 since I’m eight years old.” “I want other people who are gay to be able to yell out they’re gay from the highest place. . . . I want to be a fun (person). And I am a fun one and I am a person and I’m already doing it right now.”

Earlier I raised the question of my colleague who doubted Iian’s sincerity. Having presented some key text from Iian provides an opportune moment to consider his doubt, a doubt that others may share. I preface this reflection with the caution stated in Chapter 3: while our understanding of others’ words are always limited and our understanding of all informants herein is limited, especially to the extent their experiences differ from our own, Iian’s age and experience differential increases that limitation.

For one whose recollection was that she was conscious of her own sexual orientation at or before eight years of age, it is likely to be feasible that someone else could have that experience as well. Someone who has no such recollection might be more skeptical. Others who have researched sexual identity have documented that the age of awareness among gays and lesbians has been dropping sharply the last two decades and that the average age has been even lower than eight in some research populations (Cantwell 1996). Even those describing an older age of awareness often note a generous standard deviation which would allow for the possibility of a young child claiming their gay or lesbian orientation at seven or eight years of age.

Additionally, social circumstances might create discrepancy between the sexual orientation consciousness among Straights versus the self-consciousness process among Queer youth. Queer youth, as the term implies, often feel “different” at a young age. This different feeling may precipitate self-consciousness about the same-sex objects of their attraction. On the other hand, Straight youths seem less prone to feel different and less likely to have a sexual orientation consciousness until after they come into contact with or learn about gay or lesbian people (Litzenberger 1997).

While it would seem that Iian could feasibly know that he were gay, is he gay? If Iian is not being sincere in his declaration, there must be an alternative motive or mix of motives accounting for his declaration, “I’m gay.” I brainstormed with several colleagues about alternatives and their possible manifestations. Five emerged:

1. His moms are lesbian and he felt claiming to be gay would please them.
2. He felt a need for attention and this was a way of getting attention.
3. He was coerced or persuaded to believe that he was gay.
4. He was confused about being his sexual orientation.
5. He actually was gay.

For each of the five, I looked for evidence of the presence of that alternative and a lack of evidence contradicting that alternative. Evidence supporting the presence of that alternative would be text explicitly or implicitly affirming that alternative or perhaps affect or body language signals conveying like messages. Evidence contradicting the alternative would be contradictory testimony or behavior.

For the pleasing moms alternative, I looked for evidence of valuing approval, attempting to please others, avoiding conflict, or acquiescing to others. At home Iian

would conflict with his older sister. His moms sometimes required him to go to his room or apologize. While he complied, he showed no signs of being particularly guilty over his actions or their consequences or of avoiding conflict to placate his moms. At school, he was not hesitant to confront the bully, Troy, striking him back or telling the teacher or chasing him. He provided no evidence that he was striving to please his moms or that he was a pleaser in other aspects of his life.

Needing attention might be indicated by concern about lack of friends or love or by loneliness. Getting attention might be demonstrated through acting out, clowning behavior, or trying to be the center of attention. Iian spoke of three special friends reflecting that he consider their friendship “very rare.” He noted other friends at school and in his family’s social network. Shouting out on the playground “Gay is cool!” might have been an attention mechanism. At home and in the classroom, he seemed to cooperate with his teacher and parents, not to act out. In the interview process itself he didn’t talk about being gay until I asked. He didn’t seem in need of attention or anxious for my attention. I noted one potential attention-seeking act within his interviews, the playground call, but an overall lack of need for attention.

Was Iian coerced or persuaded that he was gay? If he were, indicators might include being rote in his interview delivery, lack of spontaneity, signs of prompting such as using words awkwardly or using words that seemed foreign to him for his age. Iian’s expression of being gay was novel. Shouting out “I’m gay” seemed something an adult gay would have been unlikely to recommend. On the other hand, he was ignorant of a basic concept that a Q-adult would have been likely to discuss with him, coming out. When asked, “Did you ever come out to others?” He replied, “What does that mean?”

Iian's words seemed very much his own. At one point, given the option to talk first about home or school he chose home. His first comment was "It's basically fun." And described his home as "a happy place." When asked what made it happy, he replied, "Being myself." Home did not seem a site of coercion.

Perhaps Iian was confused about his identity. If so, he may have made inconsistent statements, expressed doubts, been hesitant or indecisive, or lacked confidence. But there was little about which Iian was indecisive or uncertain. Whether it was a threatening dog or bully, he knew when he wanted to retreat and when he wanted to stand up for himself. When asked if he ever wished he wanted to change being gay, his answer, as recorded by the transcriptionists, was "(emphatic) No way! (laughs)."

Perhaps Iian's statement "I'm gay" reflected truth about himself. Certainty, spontaneity, comfort, spiritedness, lack of hesitation, pride, and a happy demeanor could indicate an internal sense of integration with what he was saying. Whether talking about his first clear realization, "Hey, maybe I'm gay!" or the acceptance he experienced with his friends' families, or being called "gaywad" by fourth and fifth graders, Iian conveys ease and comfort with himself. Iian's words and demeanor through the three interviews were spirited and seemed very much his own. He was happy and proud of himself, said so, and acted so. Based on what I could observe, I decided that the most plausible option was that Iian was telling the truth about himself when he said "I'm gay." I felt that what he said following the above reasoning lent face validity to his testimony. What would he declare about himself in ten years? I can't say. However, childhood and adolescent homosexuality has been found to be enduring and likely to continue as a lasting

orientation in adult life (Bell 1981). Hence, if it is likely that Iian is sincere in his declaration, it is also likely that it is deeply rooted and will persist.

### **Jewel**

Jewel's great hurt was "having my body betray me." "I was about four. My parents were in the back yard and I remember going up into my parents room and getting out my mum's makeup and really going all out on my face . . . then going downstairs, out the back door and saying, 'Look at me!' and having my mum and dad just turn white. I think that was the first time I really tried to say, 'I'm not a boy.' Mum took me inside to the washroom and just started erasing my face." Mum said "Boys don't wear make up. This is wrong," and made I knew it made them uncomfortable. "Soon after that I discovered my mum's closet and would dress up."

"I remember dressing up with Melinda and Harmony on occasion. It just felt right." "It didn't matter to them. . . . We didn't even know the difference really between boys and girls. . . . I didn't see any difference in who they were as girls and who I was as a supposed boy. (Melinda and I) didn't play house in the traditional way. We were two mummies." Then "their parents (were) getting divorced and having to sell the house. . . . It was just devastating when they moved." "I ran home and cried for the rest of the day. Nothing was ever the same."

"The year after that was when I would start going to the hospital (for) hyperactivity. . . . A lot of the teachers were glad I was on Ritalin. I was very expressive. I did not control my emotions that well." "I was never a great student. We had the

apitude tests once a year . . . fill in the dots. I used to make designs and happy faces. It just didn't seem useful."

"By the time I realized I was interested in boys, there was always sort of the cute boy in the class that I'd be going, 'Wow. He's so neat,' and at the same time there'd be girls in the class that I'd be going "Wow, it'd be really cool to be her.'"

"I wanted to be a woman when I grew up. And there's nothing more vague than saying you'd just like to be a gender." "Until the point that I actually learned there were people who were changing sex. Renee Richards was the first one I learned about. Until that point, I had an unfounded fantasy to be a girl.. 'OK. I'm gonna do this.' And I was still eight or nine. . . . You're a child. You belong to your parents . . . . It was good to know, but I filed it away for future reference. I knew I wanted to do it, but I also knew that I wasn't alone."

Friends would give me "pieces of clothing cause I'd say, 'Oh, I love that.' By the time I was twelve I had a pretty good wardrobe." "There's only one time (mum) took away clothes and that was when I was in the hospital. She had found a bra on my bed. While I was in the hospital she took me out to one of the meeting rooms and brought them out of her bag and said, 'Is there something you really want to tell me?' I gave her 'I don't remember. I don't know.'"

"I was constantly picked on by two or three people from fourth to sixth grade for being different. I didn't know why they were picking on me. I guess it was because I acted like a girl. . . . People would take turns beating me to the ground. I figured my secret must have been out. . . . I told my parents and my parents would go visit the school." The school did "nothing."



“I felt good that I had friends that would stick up for me. When I was younger it was the girls and I’m like ‘These are my people.’ . . . In grade eight, that’s basically where the girls left off and the boys began. No, (they weren’t my people). Some of them were really cute and I did have crushes on a couple of them, but I didn’t feel gay. I didn’t feel attracted to them as a boy.”

‘I wanted to change. I was starting to feel pressure to tell somebody how I felt. . . At the time I . . . I had a paper route, so I’d deliver papers in . . . girls’ tops and Jewels and sneakers, but always making sure that no one saw me. . . . I noticed other people were changing. Girls were developing breasts. I had experienced some growth and that had cause a lot of happiness. . . . Maybe I was a girl after all and finally my body is coming to save me. But it eventually stopped.” “I was becoming different from other girls. Realizing the ambiguity of childhood was over.” “That’s when I stopped going out and really started concentrating on trying to find a solution.”

“I was between twelve and thirteen when I decided to see if there was anything on transsexuality and sex changes at the public library. . . . I tried three libraries before I found information. I found one book, an autobiography by Jan Morris called Conundrum. I read it at the library cause I was terrified to take it out. . . . The fact that she went for surgery and transition spoke to me, but waiting until middle age . . . like I wanted it as soon as possible.”

“Until about grade eight, grade nine, teachers that I didn’t have assumed I was a girl. . . . ‘Stop bothering that girl.’ . . . Acknowledgment from an adult thinking that I was who I thought I was, was the best feeling on earth. But then getting back down to

reality and turning around and seeing my friends who were rolling on the ground laughing was a different story.”

“When I finally hit the point where my voice had recognizably changed and I started getting facial hair. . . . I felt like it was the end of the world. . . . It was painful knowing that I would no longer be androgynous. . . . I thought about suicide.” “I was just looking for a solution that would provide an escape. . . . My ultimate decision to leave school was based upon the need, one, to work so I could afford to live independently of my parents and, two, not to have to deal with my parents when the time came to go full time.”

“From looking back now and knowing just how little school had to do with your life – at least within that context and who you have to know and deal with and socialize with for the rest of your life – I should have just gone all out.”

Jewel’s mother told her later in life that “she had always guessed and asked the questions, like ‘Do you have anything to tell me?’ . . . She asked colleagues at the university she worked at if anybody had heard of something like this and most said, ‘Oh, it’s just a phase.’ . . . She would have much rather I would have been gay, which is strange but still logical because when a transsexual transitions it’s like gambling. You never know who you’re gonna become.” “I think she did the best she knew how to do.”

“My dad was clueless . . . I’d say ‘I want to tell dad,’ and mum would always say, ‘No, no, no. He’s not ready for it.’ By the time I had decided that I (was) going full time, I said to my mum, ‘It’s time to tell him.’ My mum basically said, ‘I told your father already.’” What finally brought home to dad “the realization that this wasn’t a phase was when I told him I’d scheduled surgery. He stopped what he was doing and gathered me

and my mum into the living room, took out his clipboard and started asking questions.

‘Who told you you’re a woman?’ ‘How do you know for sure?’ It was extremely hurtful because he didn’t take it from me that I knew who I was.”

Later, “I get home with my brand new birth certificate that has my new name on it and I’m so proud.” Dad’s response, “Why didn’t you change your last name? You changed everything else. Do you really think the world is gonna see you as a Jewel?”

“It was four or five months later I had a date for surgery and wanted to ask my mum if she wanted to be there for me. She said she didn’t know if she could get the time off. . . It would have been a hard time to deal with the symbolic . . . killing off her son. . . . I got us first class tickets to Chicago and then a little puddle jumper to Appleton, Wisconsin.” “We’re flying over . . . Lake Michigan . . . she turns to me and says, ‘Wow. This must be some trip. Finally getting what you’ve wanted for your whole life.’ We shared a hotel room for . . . one day before I checked into the hospital. There were also some younger TSs in the area with their families. We all had dinner the night before. . . . My mum met other transsexuals for the second time.”

“The news after surgery was essentially he had done a 180 and written up a birth announcement for inclusion into the family’s newsletter at Christmas, which goes out to approximately 400 families. . . . It was shocking to have him just do that and the next time I saw him after that he just gave me a big hug.”

“In May of 98 . . . I got a phone call from mum saying that my grandmother had died. . . An hour later (mum called back) saying that my dad had spoken with my aunt and uncle saying that they would prefer my presence be in the male gender. . . . Grandmother was never told outright what I was going through, but she had given

various clues through my life. When she'd been in ICU she had made a lot of comments to me to the effect 'I've always loved your hair. You should have been born a girl.' I felt I definitely owed it to me to be who I was . . . while I was conscious of not wanting to make an issue of it. I felt I could at least honor her memory with who I'd become. I told my mum that I'd rather not go if the case was I'd have to go buy new clothing to attend. . . . My dad basically hit the roof, called my aunt and uncle and said that if I wasn't going to be there, then none of our family would be there."

"I wore a dark skirt suit. My parents picked me up. We got to the funeral home, had my moments with my grandmother, and saw my aunt and uncle, cousins, who avoided me during the service. Just before my dad's eulogy, my dad introduced me to all of the distant relatives that hadn't seen me since I was a baby, . . . with a big smile on his face. . . . it was an amazing moment because watching him and watching all these relatives that I hadn't seen, who knew I was born a boy, but saw the pride in his eyes and his face and his smile and their recognition of it and turning to him and saying 'Your daughter is very beautiful. You should be lucky.'"

"That was the last time I saw my aunt and uncle and my cousins. When my dad and mum got home, my dad just threw his arms around me for like ten, fifteen minutes."

## CHAPTER 5

### STRESSORS

#### Introduction

The stressors of Qids<sup>xi</sup> are characterized by invisibility. Secreting one's Q-self often carried over indiscriminately into secreting other aspects of Qaracters' lives. Bibliographic literature often depicts a Qid covering her pain and being viewed by school adults as a "good girl" or a "good boy." In other words, an endemic quality of Qids in suffering is lack of easily evident symptoms. Coupled with society's blindness toward Q-gender and Q-sex, educators are likely to overlook Qids in crisis – or even to overlook Qids' presence, for that matter.

Chapter 4 presented ten Qids giving an idea of what various other Qids in school might look like. Chapter 5 looks at the crises the Qids of *ReSallying Qids* experienced. What were the stressors the Qaracters reported in their lives? How did they or did they not deal with them? This chapter addresses these questions and examines the stressors, both life stressors and Queer identity stressors, reported by Qaracters.

Before beginning the first of three in-depth interviews the research was introduced to the informant as "a study of queer youth . . . and what hinders or helps them bounce back in the face of obstacles they face in their lives and in school." It began with an invitation and question:

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<sup>xi</sup> See "Language," pp. 18-23.

**“Let’s talk about trouble. Let’s talk about pain; pain in your life – rejection, loss, conflict, stress. Pain – things that hurt. We can start anywhere. It doesn’t matter. What comes to your mind when you think about something that really hurt, something in your life?”**

Hence, while the interest in queer youth was introduced immediately, the initial question was broad and open ended, intentionally inviting an unrestricted gamut of stressors rather than those related in part or whole to an informant’s queer identity. The entire first interview was, in fact, the response to this narrative impulse.

Following the first interview, I organized material from the first interview into stress events and conditions. Interview two began with

- a discussion of each stressor
- the expressed preference of the informant as to whether or not to include each
- the informant’s recommendations regarding combining, splitting, adding and ordering the discussion of stressors
- a brief statement of description of each.

Also following this first interview, the informant completed a paper and pencil instrument called the “Qids Survey” including two pertinent sections, # 2 critical life events and #3 Q-ID events (See Appendix D.). These items yielded some additional stressors. A third source of stressors was a small number of events and conditions that surfaced spontaneously during the second and third interviews.

### **Stressors**

Stressors were characterized as either life stressors or Q-stressors. The death of a grandparent, for example, would be a life stressor, and being beat up because one is lesbian would be a Q-stressor. Based on Qaracters’ testimony, life stressors were subdivided into family crisis, death, loss, abuse, move, and miscellaneous. Q-stressors were subdivided under the headings anguish, harassment, coming out, activism risk and

miscellaneous. Some stressors, however, resisted grouping under life stressors or Q-stressors. The most common such cases involved ridicule or ostracization at school. Such cases were placed in a third group, ambiguous stressors.

Stressors were also divided along the dimension of acute events and chronic conditions. Events were single stressful occurrences at a fairly specifiable moment. Conditions were sustained distressful factors or circumstances or environments which manifest through daily hassles and microevents. Chronic conditions were protracted or lacked an end-in-view.

Initially 126 stressors were identified (See Appendix I). Further scrutiny determined that some events and conditions were actually components of a larger encompassing stressor condition. Ultimately, the 126 stressors were reduced to 83 (See Appendices J, K, and L.). The 83 stressors were sorted into 33 acute events and 50 chronic conditions. In the experience of the ten Qaracters, life stressors tended more often to be events while Q-stressors were more often conditions.

### **Life Stressors**

Informants related 36 life stressors (See Appendices J, K, and L.). Life stressors included:

- 12 family crises such as divorce, sibling conflict and alcohol abuse
- eight deaths including four grandparents, a brother, a friend and two animals
- four losses including declining grandparents, the sale of a horse, and a friend moving
- four instances of abuse, one physical, one psychological and two sexual
- four inter-city or inter-state moves

- four miscellaneous stressors including being frightened, having sex, and a conflict with a teacher.

Life stressors events outnumbered conditions, 27 to 9.

### **Life Stressor Events**

Events of death and loss were frequent traumatic life stressors. Qids usually succeeded at proceeding through their grief – and occasional apprehension – to resolution. Resilience strategies included talking with trusted others such as parents, seeking information and understanding, thinking and finding meaning, and grieving in a socially supportive context, particularly the family. Qids sometimes sought to be involved in a concrete way, exerting a sense of power. Their youth was a factor in resources they had available. Yet it would be an oversimplification to say that these youthful Qids were not resourceful.

In fourth grade, Bruce faced the unfolding tragedy of a friend missing for four months, then found murdered. Investigation led to the girl's uncle as the perpetrator. Bruce was "shocked that a family member would do that, and then later (that) the parents knew he was gonna do this." Bruce sought some control. Determined to get maximum information, he watched the news on as many channels as he could. It was "a very scary and sad time in my life. It happened in my school. She lived really close to me. I was thinking, 'My god, it could have been me!'" Bruce talked to his dad about it. When the school made counseling available, however, "I didn't go to the counseling. It just didn't feel right sharing feelings about that at that time, with somebody else. I was still sorting out what I was feeling about it. It's just an adult figure that I really didn't know. I don't feel right sharing personal feelings with (a stranger)." He added, "At that age I think a kid is really scared to share feelings like that, even to their parents."



Emile was seven when the family dog died. “I was pretty sad. I was old enough to know that he was gonna die.” His father had explained to him that the dog had bone cancer. His parents shared their grieving as well as humorous stories with Emile about his dad getting the dog as a gift for his mother and the dog peeing on his dad’s shoe. They discussed his illness, its severity, and putting him to sleep. The final morning, Emile fed his own breakfast to his dog. Emile concluded, “It was painful to lose him. . . . (but) I was glad to put him to sleep instead of making him suffer.”

Sometimes efforts to resolve the loss were difficult and less than complete. Jewel’s loss of her friends, Melinda and Harmony, touched her deeply. Laden with valued implications about identity and her being accepted as a girl – being one of “two mummies” when they played house, or dressing up as women together and how that “just felt right” – simply wasn’t replaceable.

It was never the same again in terms of just being kids and hanging out and knowing that everything would be the same. There was a boy across the street and eventually other boys and girls - there was a family of girls up the street, that were in the neighborhood. But they were the ones I grew up with from my earliest memories up to that point when they moved away. Those were my people. I had bonded with them and while I became friends with other kids in the neighborhood there wasn’t that closeness.

She immediately noted, “I guess the year after was when I would start going to the hospital for sick children (due to) hyperactivity.” The opportunity her friendship with Melinda gave her to play out the contradiction Jewel felt between her male body and female spirit was a rare find for her. When they moved, Jewel lost both her friends and a most special friend, Melinda, and a creative outlet for playing through a major stress.

Faye’s grandfather “was the first person I ever knew who died. It was so sudden. He was there and then he was gone. . . . When he died it made me very aware ‘Well, we’re all gonna die,’ a very depressing type of thing.” Wanting resolution which she

couldn't find in her grandfather's death, Faye turned her attention to her grandmother. She described their relationship as "very, very close."

I took care of her because she couldn't take care of herself, cause my grandfather died six years ago. . . . She had a stroke and went into a coma. I went and visited her every day and brought pictures of my grandfather and talked to her like she was still awake and she came out of it. . . . It was the most wonderful experience I've ever had. I was with her every day, just holding her hand and taking care of her and swabbing her mouth. It really gave me more of a sense of closure and of death being a step as opposed to something so sudden.

Faye's experience with her grandmother, bonding and being intimate through declining and dying, allowed Faye to address the tough question of death raised by the sudden loss of her grandfather.

Bruce had to make a tough decision when he was four: which parent would he live with? "My grandma helped me. She told me that it's my decision. My mother I think was probably out to hurt me." Did he see that at the time? "a little bit." "I knew at that age that my father was in college and was going down to St. Louis for a good job offer and my mother, I don't even know if she had a job except for being a waitress." He described the judge calling him to her chambers "because she didn't want either of my parents in there being able to sway my decision. She just found a way to get me to talk . . . trying to get me to start trusting her." In hindsight, "I think I made the better decision because (my mom) isn't holding down a job at all (and is) mentally abusing (my step brothers and sisters)." Though only four, Bruce demonstrated use of judgment and, perhaps more notably, independence in the face of parental manipulation. Additionally he had the support of a caring grandmother and a sensitive judge.

Geena was molested at the age of three. "I just knew it was wrong, so I got up and waited like an hour and I mustered the strength to go to my mom. And she was cooking has browns and I told her and she got really mad." At thirteen, she looked back and quipped about the law suite and the \$17,000 award that she will use for college.

“Yeah, there’s a good thing that came out of there. But for years after I wouldn’t eat hash browns! (giggle)” As a toddler, Geena demonstrated a moral sense, optimism, and the ability to seek help. She developed the ability to reframe and respond with humor, finding the comic in the tragic. Family tension followed, however, leading ultimately to her family’s breakup and ensuing instability.

### **Life Stressor Conditions**

The nine condition life stressors were spread among five of the informants, one of whom was Geena. Following her being molested, it was Geena’s perception that “everybody seemed pretty disconnected and they always walked on eggshells around me and they still do. Its like they feel guilty or something.” She related,

Dad and I, we were really close before and we’d go out to fly kites and stuff. He was a really cool dad. But after that it felt like he thought it was his fault cause he couldn’t protect his little girl. We lost that connection. He got really withdrawn and he wasn’t very happy. So, it sort of like tore our family apart.

Geena lacked social support and resources to do anything proactive. Yet she did not become negative and she did not give up.

Sexual abuse visited Geena again when she was eleven. Following divorce, Geena’s mother changed residences and Geena transferred schools in rapid succession. Her mom shared one residence, a farmhouse, with her friend, Barb. Barb had invited her boyfriend to come live in that house. “I really was craving attention then,” Geena explained, “He’d really listen to what I had to say. I liked that. Then he took the relationship too far. . . . I told him ‘No’ and he started kissing me and touching me. . . . After a while I kicked him (giggles) . . . I kind of hurt his jewels. I told him to go downstairs or I was gonna tell my mom.” This time Geena was reluctant to tell her mom. She waited through two missed periods. When she did, her mom responded “Well are you OK?” The following day they went to her doctor where she found out she had HIV,

genital warts. "I've always wanted kids." That was no longer an option. "The good part is I don't have AIDS and I'm not pregnant (giggles)." Geena's rebutted her grief, "Well wait a minute! I'm a lesbian. The other one can have kids!" Later, with her girlfriend, she went to an LGBTQ community center where she heard a speaker talk about artificial insemination and adoption. She read on the issue and found social services through which she might have foster children or adopt. Creative, proactive, problem solving, Geena was prevailing.

Faye grew up in an alcoholic family. She recalled months of separation from her father. "It was very traumatic for a six year old." Faye was "very sad and confused about what was going on." Perhaps in response to these feelings "I pretended I didn't get what was going on, that I was OK and I just didn't understand. If I had told them they would have maybe treated the situation like, 'we need to explain everything that's going on to Faye.' . . . but again, I was six years old." At the time of the interview when she was eighteen, Faye assessed her response as detrimental. "That caused me a lot of problems. It caused me to continue to just put up more and more walls and separate myself from people which is something I still deal with today and I'm still seeking help for right now."

David, too, was raised in an alcoholic family. His Dad's entry into Alcoholic's anonymous seemed "good at the time" because David was coming out to his parents and "I was afraid that they were gonna kick me out." David perceived his dad's AA counselor a mediator, talking to his dad and giving him books and research information regarding sexual orientation. While Faye directly associated her alcoholic family to her relational problems David did not. He did, however, describe thinly veiled metaphorical stressors of double lives and the difficulty trusting or being trusted due to lies. Each time the question of his dad's alcoholism came up, David referred to it as "good." On the one hand, his life seemed touched particularly in terms of his relational skills. On the other hand, David had been able to reframe the experience constructively. "It was good for the

family. . . . It cut down on a lot of the tension. . . . Now he's always here. He's more reliable. It's good knowing that I can rely on somebody."

Three Qids listed a chronic stressor regarding siblings: Bruce of his four half brothers and sisters, David of his younger brother and Iian of his older sister. When David was eight and his sister was nine, his parents had a third child, a boy. "When he was four they moved him into my room and all of a sudden I had this extra responsibility. I didn't like it." Though he felt restricted in what he could say or do in his bedroom and having to always keep his things put away "because of the little one," he thought "It was good that there was somebody there that I did have responsibility over." "I regret that I don't have a real good relationship with my little brother because we're always getting on each other's nerves. Other than that, I think it's good that we are spending nights in the same room – annoying each other (laugh)."

Iian considers "sibling rivalry" one of his stresses. "Sometimes (my older sister) takes some stuff of mine into her room and sometimes I take stuff from her room to my room." "First we get into a big argument and then we start calling each other names." "We start fighting sometimes, we do physical violence, stuff like that." When asked "Does it help?" Iian responded "sometimes it does." He appreciated how his mom's handled it. "Either we go to our room or we have to say 'Sorry' to one another."

Iian had another tale of chronic stress, the story of a bully, Troy. "He says 'Your mom is fat' and stuff like that. . . . He does it to everybody in my class room. . . . Either I strike back or I go and tell the teacher about it." Iian noted that if he would hit, he would get in trouble, but if he told his teacher, "Troy gets in trouble." Asked what he would do if one of his friends was kicked or bullied, "I would basically do physical violence against him because I really want payback on what he's done." I asked, "Would you hurt him?" He responded, "That's what physical violence means." I asked, "How?" Iian answered, "Throwing mud at him. I would yell at him." Iian did not lack a sense of

personal power. Both Iian's moms and his teacher were socializing him away from "physical violence." Iian recognized their helpfulness.

Bruce had on-going concern for his two step-sisters and two step-brothers. He described situations when he came to visit them: His mother "was normally either out with her girlfriends or out at work." "Mark (the step-father) was drunk on the couch" and "my little sister Sally was about ten or eleven and was more acting like a mother than my mom was." "While my mom left for work I said, 'OK, Sally, you're off duty. . . . Then I took over for the weekend while she got to go out and have fun with her friends.'" "I felt good about giving her a break. But whenever I came back from my mom's, I was always touchy. . . . Probably trying to get the rest of the brothers and sisters to listen to me and do what was right. Get into bed on time, eat dinner, not stay out too late. My brother Dale was about six and he started smoking." "Dad and (new) mom really recognized that at first and they wanted me to stop going." Bruce decided to reduce his visits from once every couple of weeks to once every couple of months. While empathic toward his brothers and sisters, Bruce struggled between his valuing behavior and his insight into the depth of the problem, perhaps disengaging from a potentially unhealthy enabling role.

Stressors evidently interacted with one another. When they did, they might increase negative effect – as in the case of Geena's sexual molestation and family disintegration – or they might cause some deflation of effect – as the effect of David's alcoholic family and coming out stressors on one another. Faye responded to the irresolution in the death of her grandfather by developing a close relationship to her grandmother and being a presence and support to her through her dying and death.

Qaracters employed a number of proactive problem solving strategies demonstrating insight, creativity, independence and principled behavior. They demonstrated a complex array of resilience strategies for divergent stressors. These Qids often had to address stressors in their early youth. Their immaturity and dependence challenged and limited their response repertoire. Nevertheless, they were often able to

respond effectively. They frequently reported satisfaction regarding the outcome of their stressor.

All these youths had stress in their lives, some a rather large amount. These youth tallied numerous resilient marks in the face of troubles in their life, loss, stress, pain. Their responses to stress were good, sometimes remarkable. When they described their internal state, they sometimes used the word "sad." Death evoked the strongest terms of pain. A young child at the time, Craig was "very sad" when he heard that his grandma died. Faye described herself at her grandpa's death as having "a real death complex. I was kind of a morbid person." Discussions of their life stressors included no references to psychological illness, chronic depression, suicide ideation or suicide attempts by any Qaracters.

### **Ambiguous Stressors**

Ambiguous stressors tended to resemble Q-stressors. One event and eight conditions were ambiguous stressors (See Appendix J.). These included five conditions involving name-calling such as faggot or sissy and harassment for perceived gender or orientation issues. Yet the Qaracter specifically disclaimed them as Q-stressors. Three other ambiguous stressors had to do with friendship and one with isolation. Of these later four, three included Q-references and one was described in vague terms. Ambiguous stressors which include Q-references have been subsumed under Q-stressors, specifically in the section "Before the Closet," and in the discussion regarding being perceived and/or treated as "different."

### **Q-stressors**

Five events and 33 conditions were Q-stressors (See Appendix J.). When the Ambiguous Stressors are included with the Q-stressors, they total six events and 41

conditions (See Appendices K and L.). The first obvious distinction between Qid informants' life stressors and Q-stressors was the predominance of acute events in the former and chronic stress conditions in the later. A second was the difference in the role of school. While rather peripheral in life stressors, school was center stage for Q-stressors, the epicenter of their social lives, their predominant location for gender and sex identity and socialization.

The five Q-stress events were four instances of coming out and a move to the United States to escape harassment. Stressor conditions were comprised of:

- nine cases of anguish ranging across a gamut of issues such as living a double identity internalized homophobia against oneself and feeling one's body had betrayed her
- nine cases of sustained harassment all involving school
- four instances of on-going opposition to one's human rights activism and one miscellaneous stressors, moving to the USA to avoid harassment

Coming out accounted for eleven stressor conditions.

Although they attached meaning and spoke at length regarding events and conditions that existed within their closet experience, no Qaracter volunteered the closet per se as a stressor. Perhaps this was because "the closet" was perceived more as a general concept or manifestation of stress such as depression or grief than as a stressor such as the death of a family member or being outcast in school. In contrast to coming out which was described as an act or series of acts including specific people and concrete interactions, the closet was referred to more as a state.

Queer identity stressors were different from life stressors regarding schools. Whereas life stressors were notably absent school connections, 23 of the 38 Q-stressors were partially or exclusively school related. Like Q-stressors, eight of the nine ambiguous stressors, most of which resembled and flowed into Q-stressors, were involved in part or exclusively with school. Whether or not a particular Q-stressor



directly involved school, all these stressors were brought to school. All of them interacted in students' dominant social experience of school. All of them influenced the Qaracter's ability to be happy and to succeed and learn at school.

In contrast to the randomness of certain life events such as death and loss, Q-stressors proceeded more or less progressively for the eight adolescent Qaracters. While each person's path had its own variations, it was common to hear a shifting majority of Qaracters speak of an arrangement of prototypic elements:

- a time of some initial unburdened gender or sex awareness or recognition about their Q-selves
- feeling and being perceived as "different"
- instance(s) of being shamed or a gradual inculcation into shame
- shaming avoidance strategies
- internal conflict
- conflict resolution

Woven throughout these stations were stressors expressed in ridicule and rejection, harassment, anguish, coming out and risk taking.

These quasi-developmental experiences were organized around the image of the closet – before, entering, during – and coming out. "The closet" and "coming out" were special issues of focus in this research. Metaphors used widely in the American Queer community, the closet (secreting one's sexual orientation from self and/or others) and coming out (revealing one's sexual orientation) have been popularly used as Q-terms expressing a Q-communal perception of hiding and revealing one's identity as usual precursors to one's Q-ID integration in our contemporary society.

Qaracters' testimonies regarding Q-stressors were organized in a more or less temporal sequence beginning with before the closet, proceeding to entry into the closet, to being in the closet and finally coming out of the closet. Before the closet was, by definition, a time untroubled by Q-stress. When a Qaracter recalled a closet entry, the

precipitating Q-stressors were instances such as ridicule or shaming. Except for two instances involving a four-year-old Qaracter prior to school enrollment, these instances occurred in the social spaces of school. The closet itself was marked by experiences of anguish and harassment, again, virtually all on school sites involving school community members. Coming out was for eight Qaracters a defining stressful process unto itself. Those venturing into activism, usually involved with school, exposed themselves to risks of controversy and opposition.

### **Before the Closet**

*ReSallying Qids* consciously examined the entry side of the closet, a research task unique to this study. It articulated two new questions, “Do you remember a time before the closet?” and “Do you remember going into the closet?”

Qaracters’ testimony suggested that Qids may enter school with a definite impression about their sexual selves as people who have attractions and desires. Three indicated no consciousness of their Q-gender or Q-sex until ten or more years of age. Seven Qaracters referred to an initial Q-awareness age ranging from three to eight.

Eight Qaracters specifically referred to experience “before the closet.” These first feelings were unaccompanied by feelings of guilt, stress or rejection. Prior to social rejection, Qaracters’ narrations indicated they were satisfied with their unremodeled sense of themselves. They usually lacked a comparative sense of how other kids felt in terms of attractions and desires, a sense of how they fit – or didn’t – in the social order, and a vocabulary, much less strategy, for negotiating difference.

An exuberant four-year-old Jewel “didn’t know it was wrong. I was excited to feel the way I did and I wanted to tell the world that this is who I was!” Faye, who described herself as bisexual, “used to have relationships with boys and girls. This never seemed to be an issue.”

Craig “always knew.” “It is a long time ago, but I just didn’t care because I did not know what was ‘wrong with me.’” “I thought that that’s just normal that guys like guys.” “I was like six years old. (But) nobody ever talks to you about gay people when you are so young and how should you know what you are when nobody ever talks to you?” The issue Craig raised regarding the void of discussion and even the lack of basic words was a regular feature in the discussion of Q-stressors. Q-language deficit handicapped Qaracters’ ability to conceptualize and understand themselves. For several it took years just to figure out a name for their experience, longer still to find a positive example of themselves in print, or better, in life.

Iian had language, concepts and examples. “I already knew from the start that being gay was okay.” This simplified matters for him. “I was thinking one night when I knew about gay and lesbians. I was thinking Hey, maybe I’m gay!” Issues of sexual orientation were a fact of his family and apparent in his social network. “All my friends’ family are straight except for them, and their parents don’t mind if my parents are gay at all.” He made three supportive friends who “stand up for me and I stand up for them. And they also like gay and lesbians!”

Two Qaracters distinguished between an early, less reflective awareness and a subsequent greater consciousness. Bruce “had feelings when I was about three.” “I was more attracted to men in movies than the female characters. I just forgot about it, though, and thought it was normal.” “I was probably six years old when I actually got the label to what I was feeling.” David became self-conscious of his same-sex attraction at ten years old. “Before that the ‘different’ feelings I felt I thought were normal. I’ve never been someone else. So I had nothing to compare it to.” However, the social context of school would quickly incubate comparisons.

The experience of being peer labeled and socially isolated was the dominant distress which eight Qaracters described regarding their elementary school experience. A common refrain throughout elementary school and beyond, all eight located its onset in

the primary grades, K-3. The distress was described in two varieties, one a vague sense of being “different” and the other targeted at being “queer.” One Qaracter experienced ridicule of the “different” variety, three “queer,” and four both. For all five who experienced ridicule as different – for example “short,” “weak,” “not cool” – there were at least occasional references to being queer or gender odd; for example, one girl noted as a “tomboy,” one boy mocked as “gay,” and three boys shunned as “bad at sports.” Of these five, four later experienced Q-ID harassment.

“My first recollection of being different was when I was between three and four and hanging out with some friends down the street,” Jewel recalls. In school “I learned that expressing myself differently than expected, especially (by) teachers, would be labeled a disruption.” “The feeling that other people laid upon me (was) that it was wrong to be different.”

Craig’s estrangement at school was mirrored in his several friends who “were mostly freaks.” “Nobody else would be friends with me, so I had to take the ones I could, the ones nobody liked.” He then volunteered, “They weren’t harassed because they were gay, they were just different.”

Boys were harassed by classmates for failure to meet gender expectations. Andy “just didn’t fit in for some reason. I went out and got beat up or got insulted. I didn’t have friends.” “In elementary school I was . . . the class scapegoat. . . . I remember being made fun of for being different. Oh yes. Whatever you can think of – having too big of a head, being (short), being smart, talking too much. I remember feeling kind of out of place, a misfit with the other kids of my same sex.” “One of my ways for making up for it was I was always the class clown. . . . If I was unhappy, it was always easier getting attention.”

Being different turned ugly for Hannah, too. “Elementary school was terrible.” She speculated that it might be her being an only child, acting too adult, or her large vocabulary. “I was really unpopular, and I don’t necessarily know why. . . . for so many

years I was picked on and made fun of. The same kids that made fun of me in all the elementary school made fun of me in middle school. I hated (laugh) elementary school!"

This undifferentiated sense of not belonging often included overtones related to Q-ID. In the early grades, Qaracters described harassment with direct references to gender norming. They themselves, however, did not label these as Q-ID. They sometimes even made a point to say they were not Q-ID related. "I always kind of felt that way," Geena noted, "not because of my sexual orientation but just because I'm different and outspoken and liberal." Lack of physical prowess was mentioned by boys as setting them apart. Perhaps this gender offense provided their peers a concrete justification for estrangement.

Andy recounted, "I saw myself as kind of a mistake." "I never felt superior . . . on the playground. I'd never scored a goal in ten seasons of soccer." David was never picked for kickball and felt "out of place . . . in elementary school":

Not like they knew I was gay or anything, but that I wasn't like them in some way. Something was different. I knew that I didn't like playing sports. There were some things that I enjoyed like the other guys liked. But like just something, there was something there. Something that was, you know, didn't make me like the rest of them.

"In first grade, (Craig) was never very popular because I was very weak. I wasn't a very good athlete in sports – I was terrible (laugh) – and so the people used to tell me, "lamb." Especially in the locker rooms where I was together with all the guys. 'Lamb, lamb, lamb!' Sometimes minutes they screamed it at me." Craig acted by telling his mom. She went to the school. "It stopped for a month."

The experience during middle school of moving to a new community helped Emile focus on the distinction he experienced between being unpopular for being different and being unpopular for Q-associated reasons. Moving to a college town in the metropolitan area, "I figured that people were gonna be a little bit more welcoming of

homosexuality, but I didn't know too much." In this context, he spoke of "the first time" and "the second time" he experienced "true alienation."

People immediately sensed that I was different. I had no idea what was popular, no idea what was cool, how to dress. . . . I was extremely vulnerable. I felt a little different as in I was kind of naïve. First it kind of meant something to me that I would be accepted, but I realized that I wasn't gonna be accepted, no matter what I did. . . . (Second) I realized the popular people were . . . often closed minded, often you can't exactly be an advocate of gay rights and be popular.

Qaracters were, as Emile said, "vulnerable." They were at a loss as to what to do to resolve these stressors. "I was crying about it." Andy explained. "(I'd) play with my toys and not talk to anyone. So, I don't think I really overcame anything in elementary school." Particularly in the early elementary years, Qaracters' repertoire of defenses and responses were few. Besides being young, they were unpracticed in rebounding. They persisted for a long time, sometimes many years, finding resolution in the quest for friendship segueing into the coming out process. But before the coming out was the entering in.

### **Entering the Closet**

While nine Qaracters remembered exiting the closet, several had difficulty recalling how they got in it or what happened while they were in it. Testimony revealed the presence of denial, self-rejection and self-repression that may have blocked some recollection of certain aspects of the closet. Evidence also indicated that the lack of concepts, models and vocabulary further blurred Qaracters' ability to see their gender and sex selves. Nevertheless, six Qaracters said they entered the closet and narrated what happened.

Andy, depicted entering the closet as "more of a gradual process. . . . I remember a rather uncomfortable middle school existence. . . . I discovered it in coming out of it."

David and Hannah, both Q-identifying in high school, described the closet as a short-lived experience. When David “figured out I was gay, I told my friend Lara about three weeks later.” Hannah “was not consciously closeted for long. Once I became comfortable enough with it myself, I came out pretty rapidly to friends, family, (and) eventually the whole school.” Each, however, had interesting qualifiers, David, that as young as third grade he was called a fag and Hannah that, had she paid any attention or had it been in her frame of reference, she probably would have noticed a lot sooner.

Five Qaracters related a specific incident with the onset of the closet. Jewel “learned I felt different.” “I was approximately four years old and was wondering why others weren’t concerned with what I was feeling. I felt it was ‘wrong.’” “Others, parents and relatives, didn’t wish me to express my difference. I quickly learned to hide how I felt.”

“I was like six years old,” Craig recalled. “I wasn’t attracted to girls. . . . I just really realized that I started to like boys and everybody else liked girls so I just pretended that I liked girls, too, because everybody else did. I just didn’t want anybody to know I was gay – so I started to hide it”

Although Geena “grew up around gays” she started hearing adults “talking about hate crimes and things like that and I was like, “Wow. That’s a bad thing!”

From the time I was eight I knew I was a lesbian. I didn’t like the little boys around my neighborhood. I had crushes on the little girls in my classes. When I told a friend, she was like, “God hates fags!” And those words stuck in my head. . . . That sort of made me go into the closet.

Jewel and Emile had closeting experiences prior to school. Jewel related

I was about four and my parents were in the back yard and I remember going up into my parents room and getting out my mum’s make up and like really going all out on my face and I must have looked horrible but - then going downstairs and going out the back door and saying, “Look at me!” and having my mum and dad just turn white. And I think that was the first time I really tried to say, “I’m not a boy.” And my mum took me inside and brought me to the washroom and got the washcloth and just started erasing my face and saying that boys don’t wear make up and this

is wrong and (pause) just making sure that I knew that it wasn't very comfortable for them to have me do that.

From this point forward, Jewel said, "I quickly learned to hide how I felt." Emile's experience, about the same time in his life, involved getting a boy and a girl to get naked with him in a closet. When discovered, the other children's parents expressed their dismay, "'Don't play with Emile ever again. Emile is bad.'" Emile asked "Mommy, what did I do?"

The bisexual informants, Emile and Faye, related kissing both girls and boys when they first went to school. Both related it was not a problem at the beginning. "I would kiss boys, act gay. Eventually people would condemn me, . . . call me a faggot, and I stopped, said Emile. "I eventually adopted to their homophobic ways and thinking that gayness is bad."

Faye recounted:

I remember someone saying "You're a faggot" to me in second grade because I kissed another girl and she kissed me back. . . . I had never heard that word before then. I had no idea what that meant (laugh) but I knew that it was something bad and I knew that it had to do with girls being with girls and boys being with boys. Then I thought, I'm not gonna do this ever again because it's a bad thing. Because I could hear the stigma in the word "faggot" even though I didn't know what it meant exactly.

She described her onset of silence giving it a social context:

When you're in kindergarten and pre-school and the first grade, it's okay. You're not gonna have any sort of sexual relationship with anyone, so if you kiss a girl and you kiss a boy, it's okay. . . . I never worried about it until about second grade. That seems to be the magic age when kids start to be real critical of each other. Kids tend to discover a little bit about sexuality and they start to realize about gender roles."

Four of the Qaracters reported a pattern of experience: at an early age they did something which exposed their Q-gender or Q-sex; they were observed; the observer(s) conveyed the message, "that's bad;" they internalized the message and stopped. While two related closeting experiences prior to school, they had school closeting experiences



as well. Andy's closet lacked a defining moment. Besides being older, Hannah differed from these four in that she did not perceive herself bullied into the closet and seemed to be hiding only from herself. "There was a lot of emotional issues that I was dealing with. So my whole freshman year I made a concerted effort not to think about my sexuality." However, in all six cases, school was a silencing and conforming setting. Students were the frontline enforcers.

And whom did Qaracters completely fail to mention in their elementary school silencing, shaming, and conforming scenarios? . . . even in a passing reference? Adults: teachers, principals, staff, anyone. At a time in school when we might expect children are receiving the most adult presence and support, hours of testimony failed to surface a single spontaneous or solicited comment about a teacher or an aide or a playground supervisor. No adult in the school community was perceived to directly or – perhaps more noteworthy – remotely impact this insidious aspect of their school's culture. There was no evidence that adults in the elementary school community intervened in these moments of trial for Qaracters or that they in any way prepared them for these events or discouraged Qids' adversaries. Elementary school adults were irrelevant – no words, no warnings, no messages, no assurance, no rules, no education, no consolation, no resource. Qaracters never so much as hinted they could imagine turning to their elementary school teacher or their teacher turning to them.

### **Living in the Closet**

Thus far, testimony regarding Q-stress has described an awareness of gender or sex difference disassociated from guilt, followed by experiences of social reprobation. These experiences were usually associated with school. And usually the Qaracter lacked fundamental resources (such as vocabulary, knowledge, or an ally) and fundamental

recourses (such as a school culture norms, or rules, or adult intervention). In this context, Qaracters responded with flight, seeking space and means to hide – closeting themselves.

These narrations suggested that the phenomenon of the closet was a reactive formation to social scorn, usually played out by school children in their school social space. This data implicated forces in schools complicit in this ostracization.

The closet contained both threat and possibility. While only six Qaracters had memory to reconstruct their entering the closet, nine described being in the closet or closetesque experience. These Qaracters confronted a problem of rejection, sometimes real and sometimes perceived, often with experiential basis in school and society. The closet was described as 1) an immediate protection, 2) a place of pain and loneliness, and 3) a buffer affording the Qaracter time to reconnoiter her circumstances and prepare for asserting her identity.

Qaracters described closet strategies falling roughly into two types referred to herein as deflectors and resisters, the former describing efforts exerted on others and the latter describing efforts focused on oneself. Deflectors were behaviors to prevent the detection of others. These included lying, hiding, passing and avoiding others. They seemed to stem primarily from one's fear of being found out and the social consequences. Resisters were cognitive processes to resist, ignore or escape one's Q-ID. These included denying, avoiding oneself and wishing. These were more apt to stem from one's own internalized fear about their Q-gender or Q-sex, that is, internalized homophobia.

Both sets of strategies were ultimately insufficient. They often failed to fool others, particularly one's classmates, who used their observations and intuitions to crack the cover of imposture. They didn't succeed in fooling one's self. They didn't satisfy the Qaracter's interrelated needs to be genuine and to be loved for who they really were. Eventually these Qaracters had to seek some terms of peace. That search, however, took them through treacherous terrain.

## Deflecting

Bruce enumerated common fears of Qaracters regarding human and social relations and delineated why one might use the protection of the closet: “Not being accepted, maybe being shunned by all my friends. Losing my life when I could hang out with friends. And then of course maybe being physically beaten. Those problems. I’d seen that out on the news.” He then alluded to the dangers of school and his plan to stay closeted until he entered college:

I had read how acceptance has been really bad for other people and then possibly even being kicked out of classes. I don’t know what would happen or maybe the school district might even start treating me different or harassment and all that stuff. I didn’t want any of that stuff to happen to me. In college it’s more like you’re individualized. Other people really don’t notice you.”

The most direct deflection was sometimes simply to lie. “In school (in Switzerland) when people ask when I was still in the closet – and people they used to ask me all the time ‘Are you gay?’ – I used to be like ‘No I’m not.’ I used to lie to them all the time and I didn’t like it. I actually had to because I was not ready yet to come out.”

Some hid fairly unnoticed. Others had more difficulty maintaining invisibility. Craig reasoned “I didn’t want anybody to know I was gay because everybody harassed me. I figured the harassment would be worse as soon as they know.” He felt that “I always have to hide my homosexuality.”

Craig then took his hiding a step further. “I didn’t want the other people to know that I was gay. So I tried to act like all the other guys . . . normal.” “I pretended that I liked girls, too, because everybody else did.” Craig had two girlfriends, one for several weeks and one for three months. He moved from hiding to acting. This performance, the attempt to convince others that one is straight, is called passing.

Other Qaracters also took on opposite sex girlfriends and boyfriends. Andy

was with this group of kids (in middle school) who were misfits. Their big thing was “okay, we’ve got to get girlfriends.” . . . I sort of tagged along for some reason, and someone said, “Andy, your girlfriend’s about

to call you.” I said “Who?” “I just hooked you up!” “Oh, that’s cool!” so, I went out with someone for about five days.

Geena “had a boyfriend who now I know is gay. That’s kind of funny. We sort of liked the normality of that, you know, more acceptance.”

The need to pass implied that the Qaracter had some manifestation of being sex or gender different. Andy noted “There was always this question of feelings and thoughts that didn’t appear to be the same ones as those of my middle school compatriots. I remember it being rather confusing. There was the question of how I related to a lot of traditional gender roles, and I don’t think I fit those from the start.” Faye and Hannah referred to clothing and hair styles; Craig and Jewel to self-presentation; Jewel, Bruce and Craig to opposite gender friendship and play; David, Craig and Andy to difficulty with boys’ sports. While sexual orientation was the focus of Q-ID for nine of the informants, gender identity issues were explicitly present for six. Only three made no such reports: Iian, Emile and Geena. In Jewel’s case, of course, it was the focus of Q-ID. Among the others, however, whose primary Q-ID issue was Q-sex, Q-gender was a relevant secondary perception related to their estrangement from peers and their closet experience.

Sometimes Qaracters strategically avoided dealing with their Q-ID. Emile absented himself from any discussions about homosexuality or bisexuals. Andy “wouldn’t talk to anyone” about his problems. Faye “used to avoid personal confrontations.” “I figured if I didn’t let anybody in in general, then I wouldn’t have to deal with that issue. That’s why I put up walls.” One expression of Faye’s avoidance was complex. “I would always have some sort of issue,” she explained. “I feel like you need to take responsibility for other people and look beyond yourself.” But within this altruism was another personal motive. “By doing that, I also took some attention off myself – on purpose, definitely on purpose.”

### Resisting

Qaracters struggled to accept their own queer identity. They went to lengths to shut it out of their lives. Craig dated to try to pass as straight to others. At the same time, engaged in self-persuasion, “I just always tried to think that I like girls. I always *wanted* to have it like this and *wanted* to be like this and so I just thought I *was* like this. I just tried to change myself (*Italics mine.*)”

Sometimes what a Qaracter was trying to avoid was herself. In Hannah’s case, “I may have thought about it and not thought about it because that would be like admitting something and I couldn’t deal with it at that point.” In this type of instance, there tended to be an association with internalized homophobia. Hannah remembered “feeling uncomfortable when I was dealing with my own homophobia.” Emile, who struggled with accepting his bisexuality, portrayed an elaborate context of homophobia at home, in the community, at work, and most especially at school. “I eventually, unfortunately learned to adopt to their homophobic ways and think that gayness is bad.” Consequently, “I didn’t want to be gay. I was like ‘I’m not gay. I look at girls.’ People are calling me a faggot, but I’m not gay, I’m not gay!”

Denial helped some Qaracters avoid pain. David noted that “The internet was something I liked to do. For four years I did that.” He told himself, “I’ll get over it. I just did it for fun. It was just a phase. It wasn’t something for real.” I remember trying to ignore the question about my being queer or different. First I didn’t want to realize it because I didn’t know anything like me, and I wasn’t sure if its good or its normal or are there any other people like me. Me being gay – that’s what I tried to ignore and just thought its gonna go away.”

Jewel “felt it was wrong, and while I knew it wasn’t gonna go away . . . I just wished that I would wake up one day and everything would be normal and I wouldn’t have to do anything about it.” “I would wish at night to wake up in the body of a girl, living a girl’s life, with a girl’s name. After several years of this it became evident.

Wishing and praying is not enough.” She found herself having to come to some tough terms with herself:

There was no magic, no god, no force that would make me who I wanted to be. There was nothing I could do about it, at least at that point. As much as I wanted (to be female) and as much as I obsessed over it, it just wouldn’t happen. It was sort of a collective, progressive understanding that there was no help. There was no hope. . . . I didn’t know of any solution, so I figured, why bother dealing with it? Why bother thinking about it?

Yet this dormant time was not devoid of practical value and possibility. Jewel’s assessment was based on realistic thinking about the present and growing resolution regarding her future. Appraising her situation, Jewel acknowledged her dependence on her parents who would not advocate for her and had “essentially helped in the process of putting it down.” Hopelessness was a temporary circumstance “until I understood more about it, . . . until I actually went outside the house to a library to research it.”

For lack of other space and opportunity to reflect on themselves safely, Qaracters employed another strategy which the closet afforded: introspection, questioning. Hannah “was in the closet while I was questioning and while I was going through the process of coming out to myself. . . I definitely did have to realign my perceptions of my life.” Faye described herself as “always questioning my own everything; my own sexuality, my own views, my priorities. . . . Even when I was six years old, I was questioning what was going on” adding, “That was painful for me.” When Emile went into the closet, he “questioned everybody’s calling me a faggot. . . . At first I didn’t want to be gay. . . but eventually that wariness stopped and I said ‘Look, I don’t care what people say and (laugh) gay is not a bad thing and gay people are not disease infected.’”

Qaracters’ closets were full of stress and pain. Andy pointed to ninth grade, shortly before beginning the process of coming out. “Oh, it was dark. I had gotten a D in my English class. I did very badly grade-wise. It was dark. It was dreary. I wasn’t having fun. It was a bad, bad time.”

In the following dialogue, Bruce described a time from sixth grade.

Interviewer: Were you aware of your sexuality?

Bruce: Yeah. I was. But I wasn't ready to share it with anybody.

Interviewer: How were you feeling about it?

Bruce: I'd feel like I didn't belong in the world.

Interviewer: Say that again?

Bruce: I didn't belong in the world. Kind of like a lost feeling. Like maybe there's nobody else out there like me or whatever. . . . You're the oddball. You're the weird person. Nothing you can do about it.

In the long term, the closet became futile. Besides being a bad experience and usually seeming to become worse as time progressed, Qaracters found hiding and its strategies detrimental to their positive sense of self, being known as who they were, and friendship. In the shorter term, others, notably their school peers, saw through their masquerade.

David puzzled, "when I was younger, I got teased a lot, but I wasn't out. I wasn't out to myself. I wasn't out to anybody. If felt like they knew something about me that I didn't and (laugh) I guess they did." Geena's façade failed as well. "I had a boyfriend, too, but everybody could tell because I would be like 'Hey, Nicole (her crush), how ya doin?'"

By acknowledging that the vast majority of his sixth grade classmates "didn't realize it until after a few months," Bruce revealed both that he had a short window of time to establish friendships before the onset of Q-perspectives and Q-biases and that being closeted provided only short-term cover for his Q-ID. Within a few months, peers would figure it out. "In middle school I was made fun of. They'd call me queer, of course, cause I hung out with a lot of girls and I didn't really date them. They knew I was just their friend, a really good friend."

Craig tried dating one of his really good girl friends. Yet, he confessed, “Everybody knew, but I never told it to anybody.” “Boys actually never wanted to play with me because they somehow figured out that I was probably gay even though they didn’t know a word for that.” Despite his efforts to pass as straight, his give away was quite similar to Bruce’s. Prompted to reflect more deeply, “Would you be able to see differences?” he replied, “I was just always together with the girls. I didn’t like the guy stuff – running around and beating each other up. I was never into that.”

### Hurting

Bruce described the closet as “a terrible place” explaining that “a person should be able to be themselves in their own life.” For Craig, the closet was “not real. I live a lie and that’s not what I want to do.” Faye lamented that, while people were around her, they were unavailable to hear her deepest concerns and hurts. “I always felt like I was by myself. . . . like there’s nobody there that gets it and that gets what I’m about, who understands me.” In their confinement, they sometimes did things to their detriment. Yet, while a difficult time, Qaracters displayed resiliency even in the closet. Despite lack of alternatives and dearth of resources, they began to acknowledge who they were and to plan and make preparations for their sallying forth.

Andy described a trusting relationship with his parents. School, on the other hand, was a long term experience of name-calling and social torment. This polarity may have created a sequencing of events which made more psychological than temporal sense. In seventh grade, he “wrote a letter to my parents . . . describing this dire perspective in me. . . . ‘I’m a homosexual. I’ve always been a homosexual. Deal with it. I’m happy. I hope you’re happy, too.’” His parents responded favorably. In eighth grade he risked writing a paper on homosexuality for his teacher whom he heard referring to her partner as “she” and whom he noticed “had a little triangle pin.” He inferred in the paper that he was homosexual, referring to himself as “us.” His teacher responded “good



thought, great wording,” and he was happy about the risk he’d taken. Yet that same year, when peers would call him a faggot, he would make an internal query, “Are these people right?” In ninth grade he recalled, seemingly afresh, “noticing that I was getting attracted to males as well as females.” On his Qids Survey form he wrote in next to the sexual orientation category “fluid.” In the course of the interview, however, he regularly referred to himself as gay. Clarification of his use of terms prompted a short discussion which made it evident that he thoroughly understood the differences of meaning. Andy’s differences in response may well have reflected an audience sensitivity and security. Where he felt safe, with his parents, for example, or interviewing with a gay man, he would talk more easily and frankly about himself. Where he felt unsafe, in this case at school, he became unsure and retreating.

Called a faggot, Emile screamed internally “I’m not gay! I’m not gay!!” He viewed homosexuality as a “low practice.” He changed this attitude, learning tolerance through his church.

I was put in their program “Our Whole Lives” or “OWL.” . . . They teach tolerance. At first I was a little reluctant to accept this and (didn’t) wanna hang out with these people. . . . But through time I basically met some friends there who were really compassionate people. . . . I eventually decided that these are really cool people. In middle school I was kind of in a tie between “I don’t want to hang out with these bunch of homophobes (middle school class mates) who hate people” but “I don’t want to hang out with these people who are gay and stuff.” Eventually I decided to hang out with the people who are gonna be tolerant.

He took a further step and decided to “defend gay people,” a stance which he took on several occasions in school over the next year.

While Qaracters named numerous Q-stressors both going into the closet and coming out of it, they listed relatively few stressors during it. The closet may have helped quell attack. However, Qaracters described substantial internal strain associated with being in the closet. Perhaps coming out was precipitated by the perception that the strain of hiding surpassed the risk of social rejection.

The oppressive nature of her school was stressful to Geena. “There is so much hatred at my school . . . so much oppression. The community is at each other’s throats.”

I don’t like my school district. I don’t understand. My school is basically minorities. Either the kids are mixed or they’re African American or Latino. So I don’t understand why they would oppress gays. They’re a minority and they’ve been oppressed. . . but I guess they just don’t see that.

Geena’s closing comment indicated her understanding. Furthermore, hostility toward her did not deter her championing of others. When people were being racist “I would be very outspoken about that. I’ve always been the little one to cause controversy (giggles). . . (When) there was too much talk of gays in a derogatory way I wouldn’t let anybody talk that way. . . . I wouldn’t let people be intolerant to any differences.” In her two-year term in the closet from eight to ten years old, Geena’s qualities of altruism and optimism were in evidence even as she was experiencing her own oppression.

Jewel’s thinking was both creative and scientific, compassionate and calculating. At four she donned female make-up and announced gleefully to her parents “I’m a girl!” but understood her parents’ message of disapproval. At the same time, she continued to value her parents, sensing her mother’s quest for understanding and her perennial question to Jewel, “Is there something you want to tell me?” In school she faced discouraging dilemmas:

- a male body out of synchrony with her female self
- seeking acceptance as a girl
- feeling betrayed by her body at puberty
- facing the social, legal and medical hurdles of sex change

By eight years of age, she knew that, although a formidable task and largely socially disapproved, it was possible to be surgically aligned. Frustration that this procedure was rare and usually performed in the 40s, lifetimes away from the perspective of her age, did not stop her.

Androgynous in presentation, she managed impressive feats at school. “Friends (gave) me pieces of clothing cause I’d say, ‘Oh, I love that!’” “I felt good that I had friends in school that would stick up for me, and some of them were really cute. And when I was younger it was the girls who would stick up for me, and say ‘Get away!’ and ‘Stop it!’ and and I’m like, ‘These are my people!’”

Puberty struck her a cruel blow.

I noticed other people were changing. Girls were developing breasts. I had experienced some growth and that had caused a lot of (pause) happiness and pain, because I loved what was happening. I didn’t quite understand it. I thought maybe for some unfounded reason, maybe I was a girl after all and finally my body is coming to save me. But it eventually stopped and I started getting hair in funny places.

At the beginning of middle school, Jewel “was feeling isolated in terms of who I felt I was, in comparison to other girls. . . . and recognizing that the ambiguousness of childhood was over.” “I felt a sense of loss because I no longer fit in with the people I identified with.” “When I finally hit the point where my voice had recognizably changed and I started getting facial hair . . . I felt like it was the end of the world.” Jewel faced her struggle in total isolation. She did not blame school. School was simply irrelevant to her life. Throughout her interviews, she was understanding of how totally ill-equipped her society was to help her. Alone in middle school she “started delving deeper into the information and reading medical journals and actual case histories.”

I thought about suicide and got really into reincarnation, cause I was thinking if anything was gonna save me it was gonna be reincarnation. And I would be born normal and wouldn’t have to worry about this issue. And then I figured - I think I was about seventeen - that suicide wasn’t an answer because it wouldn’t help me. It wouldn’t help my family, and it wouldn’t help my friends. And I think the one thing that kept me living after I made the decision was that I was going to do this. There was no questions. There was no contemplation. I knew one hundred percent I was gonna find a doctor who would do the hormones. Would it be worth suffering up until that point? Could I be happy? And I decided it was worth the risk.

Through years of complete misunderstanding, how did Jewel persist in her lonely pursuit? She was not even in her society's ability to imagine. She knew that; and she knew if she were to change her body, it would be through her efforts. "The most disconcerting thing I learned was that if I had shouted at the top of my lungs, 'I'm a girl! I want to live as a girl! I want this to be my life!' nobody would have done anything to help me." Jewel revealed a powerful composite of mental and emotional problem solving strengths. She used her mental skills to learn, analyze and evaluate. She visualized a possible future and, in the balance, maintained optimism and resolution. Despite her stresses, she was never blaming, appreciated her family, made and maintained her friends.

### **Coming Out of the Closet**

All Qaracters who were in the closet reported coming out of the closet. Besides the many risks Bruce enumerated regarding coming out of the closet – losing friends, physical danger, negative repercussions regarding both the social and academic aspects of school – Qaracters were aware of the possibilities of hatred, discrimination, being thrown out of their homes and even losing the love of those whom they cared for the most. Against these negative possibilities, Qaracters' beliefs and wants prevailed in their decisions whether or not to reveal their identity to others, to come out of the closet.

Before examining *how* Qaracters came out, it is instructive to examine *why* they did so. Among their motives were 1) being accepted as they really were, 2) the desire to live, and 3) above all, honesty. "In sixth grade," David explained, "I think I learned how to make real friends. . . . be honest with them as best I knew about myself at the time." David and Lara sang together in the school choir. They had developed a strong friendship. He judged that "she was the type of person that would be there to talk to." Yet, on the other hand, "I thought she might run around telling everybody. She might

flip out completely. She might hate me.” In the balance, he decided to risk coming out to her. He “wanted other people to know.” “The big thing would be honesty which would build trust.”

Qaracters frequently made mention of the value of being accepted and real with their family. Hannah “always felt I’ve been very close to my parents. . . . I felt like it was necessary for me to come out and I did.” A prime reason for Geena’s wanting to come out to her father “is so that I can bring my girlfriend, if I have one, to different functions that everybody else would bring their others to.” “I (would) want her to be treated like my sister’s boyfriends were and they were accepted in the family.” David was apprehensive about telling his family.. “I didn’t know how anyone would handle it, especially my family. They were controlling most of the things that I did, like where I lived, what I ate, and I had no idea what they would do. Being completely out (I) don’t have to wonder, ‘What should I say? What should I do?’”

For Jewel and Craig, coming out was directly connected with the choice to live. “The last couple of months before I came out to my parents,” Craig reflected, “I was just really very, very far down. . . . Everything was scary . . . and of course, I hated school. I just couldn’t live anymore like this. I just didn’t have the power to do that, and I was just completely at my end, and I knew I had to do something.

After his parents, the next people Andy came out to were his two closest friends. When asked “Why?” he replied, “Because they were and still are my closest friends. I was very honest with them and they are very honest with me.”

Honesty was a cornerstone of the motive for coming out. “I think it’s a lie when you tell them you’re straight when you’re not,” said Craig. “I just don’t like to lie at other people because I don’t want them to lie at me. . . . I did a whole lot for me like coming out to be honest with all the people and I made me a lot of friends and I’m just proud of that.” He summed up, “I was in the closet my whole life and I think it’s over now. I don’t want to go back in there because the life is a lot better for me now.”

Motivated by the desire for life, acceptance and honesty, Qaracters faced the stress of coming out. Nine of them described coming out among stressor events and/or conditions.<sup>xii</sup> Contained within coming out events were both revelations initiated by the Qaracter and being outed, a revelation initiated by a third party. Qaracters described fears related to coming out not only to others, but to themselves.

Coming out to others included a variety of family members, friends, and acquaintances. Generally, when the individual(s) to whom they were coming out were valued, Qaracters feared loss of intimacy. Four Qaracters came out first at home and four came out first at school. In all cases, school was the site of one or many coming out stressor events. When those to whom they were coming out were significant people in their lives, Qaracters feared loss of intimacy. When those to whom they were coming out were less significant or in cases of mass outing such as to a class or student body, Qaracters feared risk of harassment, harm or reprisal.

Qaracters' stress over coming out was not about certain loss but about potential loss, the unknown, the unpredictability of how anyone would react, even one's own parents. They didn't know the outcome, but they knew the potential catastrophe. Good fortune, including not being kicked out of their homes, was usually the outcome for the Qaracters of this study – without which they wouldn't have been able to participate in this study. While several had reason to believe their parents might be accepting, such as Q-friends of parents or generally tolerant parental attitudes, even these lacked certain knowledge that their parents would be tolerant of *this* issue or that their parents would accept *them* as Queer. In fact, at times “tolerant” parents and parents with gay or lesbian friends were less than accepting. Such was the case for Hannah whose mom matched

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<sup>xii</sup> Because the coming out stressors of Jewel occurred post-high school, they were not included.

both criteria of being tolerant and having gay friends yet who greeted Hannah's coming out with rage and lingering stressful relations with her daughter.

In their initial outing foray, four Qaracters came out first at home and four at school. Those who came out first at school, usually did so to a special friend. While all Qaracters provided evidence of some positive regard for their parents, those who came out first to their parents made regular positive references to them.

Bruce's coming out was exceptional in that his parents outed him. "My plan for coming out was waiting till I got to college, out of the state. I'd wrote a little letter to my parents saying I was gay. . . . But it didn't happen that way."

I was shocked (laugh). "How did you know?" I don't know. I was happy that I wasn't hiding anything from them now. I didn't have to hide my feelings. (I felt) freedom. "Yeah! I can start to spend the night at girls' houses." Which of course I did start doing. I just knew that I was safe and they wouldn't care either way.

Through his short ordeal, Bruce "sat there thinking . . . just letting her do all the talking and nodding my head." Throughout his interviews, Bruce's love and confidence in his mother were evident. In the moment of stress, he seemed to display a strong, intuitive reliance on those feelings and their positive relationship.

Craig had "a very good relationship with my parents," but was apprehensive, nonetheless about how they might react. His coming out to them occurred as a spontaneous event at the end of his high school career in Switzerland.

I went home with my ex-girlfriend at like 2 o'clock in the morning and my mom was sitting there – My dad drove (my girlfriend) home – and she was like "So, I want to talk to you about sex with girls." And I was like "Mom, I will never have sex with girls." Then she was like "You want to have sex with boys?" I was like "Yes!" and that's actually how I came out to my parents and she accepted me very well. Then my dad came home and she explained it to him. He accepted it actually very well, too. And me and my mom we talked a lot about it, just being gay and how it feels like. It was actually great. I'm very glad I had such good parents.

For Faye, the “event” of coming out to her mom actually spanned several years. Her bittersweet experience intersected her interview process. “We were talking about sexuality two years ago. I was like, ‘Mom. I like girls and boys.’ (laugh) ‘I like them both’ and she basically told me that she doesn’t believe in bisexuality. And I said, ‘Well believe it or not, here it is (laugh).’” Preceding Faye’s second interview, Faye’s mother approached her

and she said, “Is there something you want to tell me about you sexuality, because I will listen now. Cause I wasn’t listening, and I will listen now.” This is last night. This is totally recent. I said, “Well yeah. It does ring a bell.” And I said, “I’m I’m bisexual mom.” (laugh) And she said, “Well thank you for telling me, and I believe you this time.” Which was really affirming, you know, and we’ve been having battles about my hair. She said “Do you want to look like a boy? Are you trying to look like a boy?” “NO. I just want to look – cut my hair.” (laugh) I had some philosophy behind it about freeing myself from gender stereotypes and she just didn’t get it. She got it last night (laugh). I put that down as a turning point. Last night was a turning point to me – for me. Amazing.

Faye’s experience clarified that the coming out experience was not a one time conversation. It is a process not only for the Qaracter but for the person with whom they are interacting.

David and Andy used letters to come out to their parents. Letters may have provided the opportunity to allow parents time to think before conversing or to dissipate an anticipated rejecting or explosive confrontation. David had “gotten so sick and tired of leading a double life. I was out to a lot of my friends at school. And at home I had to keep real quiet and be careful what I said.” David chose a hectic moment in the household to write a letter to his parents and conceal it in his mother’s purse:

It was the day before the opening day of the musical last year. I actually played the lead role and so I was way crazy and stressed out, and they knew that (Laugh). And my grandparents had come up to see it. There was just a ton of stuff going on. I had wrote them a little letter and I’d put it – ugh it was a long letter – put it in my mom’s purse. In the morning before I went to school they had found it. Right away.



After my grandparents left, after musical, after a lot of things had settled down, probably a week after I had put it in there they had come and said, "Hey. We found it." And you know, "We're really worried," and we had sat down and had long conversation about it. My mom's Southern Baptist. Her parents are Southern Baptists. Their views are that being gay is a sin – that and I was afraid that they were gonna kick me out. My dad's counselor had told him that maybe he had done this because he know that you wouldn't kick him out if his grandparents were there (laugh) and that you wouldn't say anything if his grandparents were there. Maybe I did subconsciously but consciously, I just – I'd gotten so sick and tired of leading a double life. . . . So it was kind of scary. Obviously they didn't kick me out, which was good. (laugh) But um, it was - it definitely got scary."

Through his course of action, David may well have hedged the odds of his being accepted and being welcome to continue living at home. He succeeded in establishing a basis for his acceptance and his parents' and family's gradually integrating their new understanding of who he was.

The Characters who reported first came out to a close friend or best friend at school all had a positive experience. Geena first told her friend, Nicole. "I came out to her and she was like, "Oh really?" and she just felt all honored cause you know it was the first person I told." Hannah recalled first telling her best friend, Kathy, "that I had a crush on this girl, Allie (laugh) who was a year ahead of us – but I wasn't saying 'I'm a lesbian.'" I was just saying 'I have a crush on a girl.'" Months after this testing of the waters, Hannah was "very nervous coming out to Kathy." "And she was completely cool with it and was like, 'Oh, I know.'"

Emile "had been very honest with close friends and they in some sense returned the favor. Once I came out to them we became much closer friends." About the same time, Emile chose to profess his sexual orientation publicly as a member of a sexual orientation panel during his school's celebration of Diversity Week. The context of a school-condoned program seemed a successful tactic in his case providing him a certain level of protection, sanction and credibility.

Andy's freshman year was a "dark" time. Andy was thinking about "it" again, being gay. His grades were "awful." Harassment continued. A mob gathered to take him by force and tie him to a flagpole was prevented only through the protection of a teacher. The beginning of tenth grade marked change.

We went on a trip in Canada. I ended up sleeping under the stars chatting with some friend, girls of course. . . . They were the first people that I told besides my parents in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. . . . (One of them) was joking saying, "Andy, you're very homophobic." I said, "Well, no I'm not." And that's how the conversation started.

"We became much closer friends" Andy observed. "It was very much easier to be honest and not be holding things back." "It was a turning point." While Andy's school experience elementary through middle and high school was marbled with name calling and bullying, he was gathering support. Following a seventh grade year which he described as his "worst" in which he was bullied, insulted, beat up, friendless, his parents had helped him to decide to transfer to a private school in eighth grade. While still troubled, he successfully developed a group of girl friends in eighth grade, the same group to whom he came out in tenth grade. In his interviews, Andy mentioned three teachers at this school who had been supportive to him.

First coming out provided a cathartic relief. In a short time, however, Qaracters found themselves wanting to come out more. Bruce's parents outed him at the end of eighth grade. "And then I started to think, Yeah, it's not right for me not to be truthful with my friends about this. And halfway through ninth grade year was when I started coming out to a lot of my friends."

Qaracters described a contest of fear versus honesty and the smaller battles within that contest. Values such as pride, integrity, altruism and honesty often eroded their fear. Hannah tells her story:

I felt like it was important for me to be able to be out. I felt like I was lying when I wasn't saying who I felt like I was - that people weren't knowing me. That I was withholding. Which I was. And you know there

are still always new situations where it comes up. During my eleventh grade year, I had thought about doing this speech in front of the whole school, and I decided not to do the speech because there was still some fear. I was fairly out. And I did do the panel discussion and I organized the panel with a couple other people, and but I didn't end up doing the speech because I felt like it was something that I wanted to wait to do my senior year, when I was leaving. I had a fear about backlash with the teachers and students. And it was a stupid fear looking (laugh) - I mean I guess it wasn't a stupid fear but I have gotten nothing but positive feedback from doing it this year.

One of the good fortunes of Hannah was "my network with friends. . . . Since so many of us are queer (laugh), I mean friends that I've had since middle school, and that we've all been very good friends for many, many years and all of a sudden, you know? It all turns out (laugh) that we're all queer."

First coming out narratives were full of value references – life, family and friends, being real, honesty. In reflecting on the people to whom they were considering first coming out, they spoke in positive terms. These Qaracters exercised good judgment and, while a more illusive quality to verify, good intuition. Whether coming out first at home or at school, Qaracters tended to select someone with whom or some setting in which they felt safe. They all succeeded in orchestrating the mix of people, strategies and circumstances toward a successful outcome. What they didn't do was also illuminating. They didn't predicted calamity. They weren't disparaging about the people they were selecting. They never came out in an argument, retaliation, or hostility.

These eight Qaracters had outcomes that were positive in various degrees. While their experience sheds light on the possibilities of a receptive coming out environment, they could not clarify what they didn't experience, namely, rejection. These Qids chose people they valued to come out to first. What would their outcomes have been had people they valued, parents and best friends, rejected them?

### **Post-Coming Out Q-stressor incidents**

The high profile of schools in the coming out process was apparent. The initial step of coming out at school was only the beginning of challenges Qaracters faced. School became the primary site for repercussions following coming out. Qaracters seemed up to these challenges.

Iian reported no secreting of his identity. He was never in the closet, so he had never “come out.” He was simply “out.” He was out at school. When asked if he remembered being made fun of, Iian responded affirmatively. “Mostly every time I yell out ‘I’m gay’ some people call me ‘gay wad.’ I take it as a compliment. I say ‘Thank you for calling me a gay person.’ Unless it’s a different name. (Then) I would run after them with a piece of mud.” He felt “in a way proud” of the action he took. Iian’s actions were self-assertive. He used reframing to construct a positive outcome. He felt good about himself.

“ In school it can be very difficult (to be out),” Hannah explained

I often feel like I’m defined by my sexuality because I’ve chosen to be out and put myself in a position so that it’s known. . . . Although I’ve chosen to put myself in that position, it’s very frustrating. The shit that I’ve gotten, the flack that I’ve gotten from people since coming out. . . . But I think that I had sort of a healthy outlook coming out and it wasn’t something that was really surprising or terribly painful.

Two stories detailed prolonged duress to the Qaracter. In both cases, the school was the site of their controversy. Students, teachers, administrators and parents contributed to the individuals’ stress.

“I think that they’re very passive in that they say that they’re ‘zero tolerant,’” Geena says of her school district, “but they’re not really.” Geena described numerous incidents of name-calling, intimidation, and physical assault at her middle school. In her hostile environment, she tread a subversive line between searching for other Qids and trying to make things better for them and, in the process, outing herself to adversaries.

She listed several titles of lesbian novels and Q-guides for youth which she carried and read at school. She wore her own homemade rainbow pants. On the one hand, her visibility occasioned confrontations with classmates. On the other hand, her signs of identity drew other Qids about her and allowed them to form “my little crowd.” She identified, befriended and allied with a lesbian teacher who supported her, gave her advice, and would sit with Geena's group when they met over lunch to discuss Q-issues, their daily lives, and how to support one another. Geena bubbled with ideas and enthusiasm.

Yet Geena wanted out. Having been in several middle schools in her city, she saw the problem as system-wide. The idea of all of high school lying before her and the possibility of continued struggle seemed an almost interminable burden. “It makes me want to go to Harvey Milk” in New York City, a storefront high school for run away Qids. Attending schools of racial and ethnic minorities, Geena, an enthusiastic advocate for diverse oppressed people, lamented, “I just don’t understand why they would oppress people because they themselves have gone through oppression for so many years.” At such moments throughout her interviews, Geena invariably employed an idiogrammar that seemed to pull her out of doldrums and energize her. “I thought Harvey Milk would be kind of happy for me. (giggles) I like to make a stand. I felt very good. I was like ‘Ha!’ So, I just felt very high and mighty. I was like ‘Ha,ha ha ha ha!’ Like ‘Yeah! Grrrrrr’” like a little Amazon! Roar!’ (giggles).”

Faye was a perceived threat to the community. Following her coming out, Faye’s passion about human rights readily included Q-rights. In her social studies class, she organized and hosted a two-day panel of local Q-leadership “dealing with sexual orientation and homophobia.” She described this as “the biggest thing in my life. . . . It has really shaped the last year and a half of my life.”

I had no idea the support that was out there. It was really a great experience for me. In the papers, people are writing things about me. I

had “dyke” written on my locker on a daily basis. I had a teacher who told me that I should stop or else people are gonna know that I’m a heathen and I’m going to hell. As president of Amnesty, I had the Diversity Festival, and that caused more things.

I’ve had a lot of pain in the last year, just dealing with people’s attitudes towards me, you know? I don’t even feel comfortable talking about it sometimes . . . even telling my family, really. I’m kind of embarrassed about it because I feel there are so many people who deal with things so much bigger because of their sexual orientation. I have friends who have been beaten with baseball bats and had their heads flushed down the toilet because they’re gay. I should help other people and not myself.

I had never been called a name in my life before, you know? I had never really been teased before. I didn’t know what to do with it, really (laugh). I hadn’t hurt anybody at the school.

At the school board meeting I got in a rather heated discussion with a parent who was very upset about the conversations I’ve had in class. His son had been in my soc class. This man attacked me and told me I was gonna go to hell in a very threatening manner. This was in front of the entire school board and the superintendent. Not once did they step in.

I moved on. I took my dad and I didn’t go to meetings by myself because I was very nervous. But I just moved on. I kept going to meetings and I kept talking (laugh) and I kept bringing up issues that people didn’t want to hear, but I just protected myself physically. They can say what they want, but I’m not gonna be deterred.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **RESILIENCE**

What did Qaracters<sup>xiii</sup> believe and do in response to stress? Chapter 5, which focused on stressors, included responses to stress, both deficits and assets. Its coverage of resilience was episodic and secondary to considerations of stress. Chapter 6 focuses on resilience assets systematically, examining prevalent values and characteristic behaviors Qaracters used to resile. While most stress occurred in school and all stress was brought to school, these Qids in school were often left to their own devices. School adults were sometimes unaware, sometimes irrelevant, sometimes inept, sometimes helpful, sometimes hurtful.

#### **Resilience Theories and the Testimony of Qaracters**

Images of Compensatory, Stealing, and Protective models (Garmezy 1984; McMillen 1999; Rutter 1999) of resilience have been reflected throughout the events presented and discussed in this study. The findings of this study found corroboration in the resiliency theory templates. While Qaracters seemed more vulnerable as young children and to have developed a better repertoire of resiliency strategies with experience, the models help us understand their set backs as well as their successes.

In the immediacy of incidents of being harassed, being beat up, or social reprimand, the simple addition of stresses and attributes seemed useful. Furthermore, whether the outcome weighed more toward risk or more toward assets may have varied

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<sup>xiii</sup> See "Language," pp. 18-23.

with age, as assets seemed to increase with experience and maturity. In his experience as a four year old getting naked in the closet with two other children, for example, Emile seemed thoroughly powerless and shamed. In second grade, both Emile and Faye kissed same gender peers. Both were reprimanded by peers, and both resolved immediately not to do that again. Incidents of name calling and bullying left David and Andy powerless. When a bully beat up David in third grade, David reported doing “nothing. Yup. Nothing. I just let him do it. He was bigger than me (laugh).” He considered his inaction, however, “stupid. Should have done something (laugh)!”

As a child in elementary school, Craig had few defenses against the attacks of other boys. By the senior year of high school, however, he had developed more resilience skills and eventually developed the attitude, “I am not the kind of person who just says ‘Okay, just harass me and I won’t do anything.’” He brought issues to the attention of his parents and to the attention of his school administrators, sometimes on a daily basis. He lost his fear of his enemies.

There were narratives suggesting that Characters experienced a steeling effect, that is, a manageable amount of stress in successive stress incidents occasioned their development of increasing resilience and resistance to future similar stressors. David learned successive lessons in friendship.

I'm sure I learned, in the third grade, how to deal with people making fun of me so I wouldn't let that bully beat me down and keep me – stop me from doing what I was doing. In the fifth grade I learned, you know, I let people knock me down so I was able to make friends, even based on lies, and then learned how to deal with friends and have friends and play and what not. And took that into the sixth grade and learned that lies don't make friends.

Challenged by successive stressors, Faye seemed to become progressively strong and autonomous. In the interaction of an alcoholic family, her avoidance of confrontation, and her attempts to deny the truth about her self, Faye was shy and withdrawing six-year-old. She found this strategy “caused me to continue to put up more



and more walls and separate myself from people.” Yet at the same time, she was developing altruism. Distracting herself from her own pain, she reflected on the suffering of others and committed her reflections to prose, poetry and music. She found worth in bonding closely with her grandmother, caring for her, and being a special presence to her at the time of her dying and death. When a “wake up call” came in the form of a racial incident at her school, Faye was prepared.

I have such passionate feelings about human rights in general. . . . I did a lot of activities with my school – issues like sweatshop labor and human rights. My (junior) year, it became more close to home because we had this racially motivated fight. I got interviewed by the paper about it. She talked to me and – something clicked inside me. I just started talking. I was so angry about the situation. It helped me come out of my shell a little bit, because I had a reason to. . . . I decided I needed to assert myself if people were going to listen to me. I always had these feelings, but I never knew how to get them out. And so I figured out how, and then that transferred into other parts of my life.

Bruce’s steeling was the result of successive risks and positive outcomes, many coming outs and many cumulative successes.

Really I've had all positive experiences. . . . I had had twelve or thirteen of them easily. Those scared me at first but since I had all positive types of feedback from my friends and the rest of my family about being gay, I really did not care if my real mom was against it or not.

The impact of protective factors, likewise, was evident fairly frequently. In the face of risk, Characters’ achieved successful outcomes through the application of their attitudinal and behavioral assets. Jewel’s quality of resolve, for example, to be a girl and a woman despite seemingly universal opposition and staggering odds; Bruce’s focused commitment during middle school to building a large friendship base before coming out; Geena’s cognitive habit of reframing a sterilizing rape into an opportunity to be compassionate and help others:

I think being molested really helped me so that I could connect more with people who have been and try to help them understand that they're not the only one, you know. I don't know why, but people are always so open with me – some things I just don't want to know but (giggles) some of

them will tell me that and its like "Well I understand cause this happened to me," and they're like "Wow!" you know, and that makes them be able to tell their parents and they get helped about that.

This sampling of resiliency responses pointed out that the compensatory, protective and steeling models were reflected in the experiences of this study's Qaracters. Because certain stress can promote strengthening, it isn't necessary that all stress is removed. What is necessary is equipping Qids with assets – personal and perhaps more so external – to resilie. The models provided a degree of insight and explanatory value for understanding these Qaracters' triumphing over obstacles. Stressors can be a Q-benefit providing Qids have the resources to deal with them.

Not surprisingly, Qaracters provided expressions of resilience which resembled resilience factors as described in the literature review section of this study (Garmezzy 1985; Henderson 1998; Joseph 1994; Werner 1982; Wolin 1998). The terms may have varied, but the connections and parallels were apparent. On the other hand, adjustments may and are likely to vary across domains of stressors (Luthar 1991; Luthar, Doernberger et al. 1993). Evidence indicates that adolescents who experienced adjustment in one domain did not necessarily experience successful adjustment in another (Fischer 1980; Rutter 1985; Rutter 1993). For example, adjustments individuals made to war or to poverty or to critical illness or to social stigma, although they had similarities to one another, differed in type and degree due to the unrelatedness of these various forms of stress.

This study's informants were responding to the adversity of being Queer in a Queer rejecting society, particularly kindergarten through twelfth grade school society. While the descriptions they gave of themselves and their behaviors echoed competencies, assets, and strengths creating positive outcomes in other contexts, Qaracters descriptions also provided insight into the important idiosyncrasies related to responding to their particular duress.

In designing *ReSallying Qids*, I was concerned with the pragmatic issue of helping school communities understand the personal and environmental ingredients for resilience of Queer youth in schools. However, in the interest of enlightened restructuring of the school culture, I also strove to provide insight. Thus, Chapter 5 presented a somewhat in-depth exposition of findings of the life-contexts of these students' experiences including as full a range of the stressors, both Q-stressors and life stressors, as the reasonable limits of my data gathering would allow. This depth also occasionally allowed, when investigating resilience to Q-stressors, deeper understanding regarding the source of that resilience to surface. Hence, one could begin to see not only assets related to Q-resilience, but also what made them cogent. Testimony often made clear, compelling connection between a Q-type stressor and the development of a corresponding Q-type resilience; for example, addressing ostracization with seeking friends, or having compassion for others who were oppressed, or hiding in the absence of familial and social supports.

Nothing Qaracters said substantiated that the values and traits they ascribed to themselves were innate. Nothing in this research indicated that their resilience ability or lack thereof was inaccessible to other Qids. The dynamics from one's gender or sex self-awakening through the closet and coming out would seem to indicate that the attitudes, skills and resources for self acceptance were not all in place from the start. Potential assets did, however, require learning and strengthened with exercise. Supporting and challenging forces in their own lives seemed to provide the ingredients for their development. At many times it was explicit that a quality developed in them which, at a prior time, simply was not present.

### **Values: Qaracters' Resilience foundations**

As they discussed troubles in their lives, Qaracters at times testified generally about the kinds of people they saw themselves to be and at other times the responses they made. Both provided a mirror to the stress in their life and its shaping influence. They provided evidence about how they responded to stress, about whether those responses were positive and, if so, by what criteria.

All Qaracters evidenced beliefs and values regarding themselves, others, and standards for their behavior. They spoke frequently and often passionately about a number of personal values and qualities which contributed to outcomes which they valued and felt good about. Values frequently referenced and manifest included care for others, care for self, learning, optimism, leadership, service, friends, Q-friends, and honesty.

All Qaracters expressed care about other people. They expressed one or a combination of empathy, altruism and tolerance. As for himself, Bruce says "I really don't worry about making a lot of money. . . . My dream's just been making a difference in society and hopefully for the better." In the here and now, Bruce had concern about the living situation of his step-sister and her siblings and made great effort to help her out.

My little sister Sally, who's the oldest of my sisters, she was about ten or eleven and she was more acting like a mother than my mom was. She was cooking the meal. She was washing the dishes, doing the laundry, taking care of the kids, making the lunches for um school, getting Eddie and Jamie, the two younger ones, off to school and daycare and then leaving for school herself. And then when mom was at work and Jake was drunk on the couch, she was watching all the kids, like a baby-sitter. She never got to go out and hang around with her friends or anything.

When I was out there, I gave Sally a break and told her to go out and play with her friends. While my mom left for work I said, "OK Sally, you're off duty. Go spend the night at one of your friend's houses or whatever." And then I took over for the weekend while she got to go out and have fun with her friends. I wanted to keep going out there because I didn't want

Sally to totally have no life. I wanted her to be able to have some fun and realize that this isn't the only things she's going to be able to do in life.

Like Bruce, Faye expressed her caring in response to the needs of a family member, her grandmother, who was alone and could not take care of herself. She was aware that this quality which she held dear was enmeshed in her experience as part of an alcoholic family. It had a dark side.

I thrive on other people's conflict (laugh). I can't deal with injustice. And even from a young age, when I was little, I would read the paper and read that people in Africa didn't have enough to eat, or were developing disease. it made me so sad and my stomach hurt. These are people I'd never met, and the empathy that I felt for them really upset me. And that's why I've just – I've taken the activist route in a lot of different issues – to ease that pain in my stomach, because I get so upset. . . . I've developed co-dependence as a trait from my parent- my mother (pause) and her mother and her mother (laugh). Typical alcoholic wife.

Hannah considered herself “very lucky” and was aware of other Qids who were less so. She took times to talk to “one of my good friends” who lacked support in his family. “Knowing that he has someone that he can turn to, I think that's very helpful for him.” Geena supported her friend, Carl, in his coming out, giving him a book to read. “He's still kind of afraid. He's like, ‘I don't know what my mom will do,’ so he wants me to go with him.” Geena agreed. Hannah's and Geena's compassion, however, reached beyond queer identity. Hannah shared activist friends concerns about world hunger and freedom issues. Geena characterized herself as “the supreme goddess chick” who, before she was out, was popular and loved at school. A leader, “I wouldn't let people be intolerant to any differences.” She idolizes her teacher, Ms. Tate. “If somebody has a problem, she sticks up for them. She really cares about her students and wants there to be diversity and have everybody be tolerant. . . . She's an awesome spirit.”

If care for others was in part a reaction to their own experience of hostile social forces, so too, perhaps, care for themselves. Jewel learned to respond to being beat up. She “learned quite quickly a way to sort of protect myself from a lot larger people, poking them (in the throat). . . . I eventually learned how to stand up for myself.” When

Craig was called “lamb” early in his school career, he was afraid and didn’t know how to react. “I never had a whole lot of courage . . . but I have it now! It comes when you have to train yourself.”

Characters referenced learning, both formal education and the lessons of life, as important to them. Bruce clearly visualized his education path.

I really have to do my homework a lot. Normally between two and three hours, . . . Then I also study two or three days in advance for every test. So on the night before I can just skim through the book and just say, "Yep. Know it." . . . And with that type of study habit that I have going right now, I'm normally getting a 90% or above on every test that I have. Then I also have a regular job . . . on the weekends. . . . I'm also doing community service up at Washington Middle School, which is where I . . . was involved in the Drama Club. . . . It counts as my community service and then I also just try and get community service things I can do during the summer. I'm involved in Spanish Club. I like trying to make it to Student Council meetings and I'm also involved in the Gay/Straight Alliance. So I figure OK, I have extra curricular activities. I have community service. I have a job and I'm being a 4.0. There's not many colleges that will turn me down with those types of qualifications.

Geena “used to have a lot of friends at school.” However, when one got pregnant, another started doing heroin and another got sidetracked partying, “I didn’t really like to be around them. . . . I’m focusing on my studies cause I’m gonna be in advanced classes (in ninth grade) next year.”

David worked studiously on developing friendship-making skills. A next area of interest for him was “better people skills.”

A lot of times when I get stressed out in a situation . . . I start yelling at other people. . . . Sometimes I’m too passive. So I get the extreme passive or the extreme aggressive. There’s never a happy in between assertiveness. That’s one thing that I would change.

Jewel faced an epoch learning challenge. She had the smallest shreds of information. Yet from age four forward, she set her goal, taking action when she could, waiting and holding on to her vision when she could not.

Everybody usually has some idea of what they want to be when they grow up. Whether it’s a profession or a wife or a husband or a father or a

mother. . . . They know in most circumstances that yes, they can have children. They can go to school and become an architect or a veterinarian. But in the case of myself, as a transsexual, I didn't have a profession of choice and I wanted to be a woman when I grew up. And there's nothing more vague than saying you'd just like to be a gender. . . .

Renee Richards was the first one I learned about but, up until that point (since age four), I had an unfounded fantasy to be a girl; to be a woman. I would wish at night to wake up in the body of a girl, living a girl's life, with a girl's name, and after several years of this it sort of becomes evident. But wishing and praying is not enough. So when I did learn of that, that gave me a goal. It was like, "OK. I'm gonna do this." I was still eight or nine at the time, and as a child, . . . you belong to your parents. And your parents do with you whatever they wish. So I put that to the back of my mind, . . . It was good to know, but I filed it away for future reference. . . .

After knowing that it was possible yet having others reinforce the feeling of wrongness. I had decided that I was gonna learn more about it but at eight my mobility was limited. . . . I was between twelve and thirteen when I decided to see if there was anything on transsexuality and sex changes at the public library, and looked through the card catalog and found two or three books on it. I'd go look and usually they weren't there. Usually I tried three libraries. . . .

When I was fourteen I started reading medical journals and finding out more about the process, and learned that Toronto had the Clark Institute and also learned that they wouldn't really see you, or at least recommend you for surgery until you were twenty-one. . . .

I do see . . . in people that I meet that they have jobs but they aren't happy doing what they're doing and I've had the luxury, in their eyes, to become who I've always wanted to be. And have the extra time to develop happiness and continuity within my soul. It took more work than the average person will ever go through but I'm glad to be here.

Optimism coursed through the interviews. When Bruce chose at age three to live with his dad, his mother was "laying a huge, thick coat of guilt on me. . . . I basically ignored it, or tried to. Then I tried to look at the better things of getting to go to Missouri." He explained that "during hard times I try and look at the good things . . . and that normally gets me through those times." David stated "I don't let the little stuff bother me." In one of his stories, he related

Heather had called me one day. So I told her. . . . I come to school the next day and everybody's asking, "Oh, wow! You're gay?" . . . I knew that she had (outed me) because the people who had asked me told me. . . . I just let it go. Nobody had threatened me. It wasn't a bad situation.

Geena habitually saw silver lining in her most challenging situation. Molested at age three, she pointed out that it provided \$17,000 for her college fund. Beat up in middle school, she framed it "the first hate crime I ever faced. And I am now able to discuss the subject first hand and able to help others out who face such things by understanding where they are coming from. So, it was kind of like more like an empowering thing." Outed to the entire middle school, she seized the opportunity to encourage her Queer compatriots. Raped at age eleven resulting in infertility, Geena lamented, "I've always wanted kids you know, a family. . . . but then I was like 'I can't have kids' you know. That sucks. But then I was like 'well wait a minute! I'm a lesbian – the other one can have kids!'"

Through service and leadership, Qaracters expressed a sense of mission. Six attended high schools with a Gay/Straight Alliance or similar support group. All six were members. All six were presidents. Two were involved in the founding of their organization.

Lara and I run the GLBT group. Our group had to fight. We've been running campaigns, "Promote Tolerance, Celebrate Diversity." We've been going to teachers and we went in front of the staff one morning when they were having a staff meeting and gave a presentation. We gave them the low down, I guess you could say.

Transferring schools, Emile "joined the GSA in November of sophomore year, as I came to Cherokee High School. I was really glad that other people were in it. I met other gay people, other bisexual people and other lesbians. That's when I first started to take a stand." By his senior year, Emile was his GSA president.

Faye found her service of president of her school's LGBTQ organization

helped me to align myself with people that are similar to me. . . . Getting involved in Q-community groups has helped me feel less alone. . . . I can relate to people who have the experience "I don't fit in." That's the reason



I got involved. That's the reason why I'm president of it now. Injustice makes me more upset than anything.

About the time of his coming out to friends, Andy was experiencing a snowballing effect, leaving his shell of "not talking" to people and getting involved.

Our school has a requirement of 10-hours starting in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, but I started earlier. I started when I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. . . .that community service teacher, I guess I was helping her out one day or something, and she told me "oh, well, if you're interested in community service, here are all these other opportunities. You're just not gonna get credit for it." And so I . . . started doing a lot of volunteering, and then I started doing more volunteering, things that had more youth in them. So, by 10<sup>th</sup> grade I started meeting people. But community service is just something that I do and that I feel strongly about so, I do a lot of it. It makes one feel empowered.

Universally, Qaracters valued friends. Friends were at once the antidote to a Qaracter's loneliness and the motive for her coming out. At bottom, there seemed to be a longing for more than comfort, friends who would love one as she really was and for whom she really was. Iian listed friends as one of his top priorities and noted three particularly good friends. He recognized their special relationship as "very rare." "All my friends' family are straight except for them, and their parents don't mind if my parents are gay. . . . they don't see what the difference is." Craig came to the United States "to start a new life here. . . . Just be out of the closet, being yourself, and have friends."

Friends directly mitigated – sometimes even reversed – the impact of Q-stress. A mother of one of the barn boarders told her mother that Hannah was lesbian. Her mother "flipped out and e-mailed my sexuality from person to person . . . in the State Combined Training Association." At first upset, Hannah's mood changed with the support of the barn director and her friend, Ann. "Ann was livid. It was great (laugh). Ann's very supportive of me. This being a part of me, she would support me in anything."

It was important to Qaracters to have Q-friends with whom to talk, people who understood them at a more implicit level. As David explains,

I like to talk to Lara and we talk about everything. Everything. But – there’s something missing and it’s that she doesn’t have the experience of a GLBT person. Every day I think it would be nice to have somebody around that just understands every thought . . . issues that I wouldn’t have to explain.

Many Qaracters were emphatic that they wanted true friends, people who knew them as they were. Ironically, the honesty they feared was the very thing they wanted. Truth in relationships was the longing that overcame Qaracters’ fears motivating them to come out of the closet. Hannah’s sentiment echoed most Qaracters when she said, “I felt like it was important for me to be able to be out. I felt like I was lying when I wasn’t, that people weren’t knowing me; that I was withholding. Which I was.” The move from shame to esteem paralleled the inside to the outside of the closet. “I’m just proud of myself,” Craig stated. “I did a whole lot for me by coming out, be honest with all the people. I made me a lot of friends and I’m just proud of that.”

### **Behaviors: Qaracters Resilience Strategies**

While early inquiries into resilience emphasized personal qualities, subsequent research made the importance of external factors increasingly clear. Resilience was seen as including an interplay of 1) the child, 2) her family, and 3) her wider environment (Luthar, Cicchetti et al. 2000) (Masten and Garmezy 1985) (Werner and Smith 1982) (Werner and Smith 1992). A dilemma for Qaracters was their lack of access to the later of these two elements, the support of their families and the external support systems which reinforce Qids’ efforts. In effect, they were shut out from their external supports and shut in their closet.

When it came to the matter of their Q-ID, the support of family was rarely assumed. School and society regularly projected a hostile heterosexist environment which either ignored or demeaned them. For Qaracters, the resilience tripod of self, family and community was missing two legs. This one legged tripod of resilience factors translated into three words, “I felt alone.”

Their experiences coming out of the closet sometimes exceeded their expectations, as in the case of Bruce. Sometimes not, as in the case of Geena. Coming out of the closet itself was depicted as a mixture of desperation to flee loneliness and courage to be honest without knowing the outcome. Qaracters had no direct evidence that they would be accepted. The very words and concepts for who they were were unspeakable. They had ample indication that they would be rejected. The stakes for being themselves appeared high.

The responses of Qaracters, while varying in type and degree per individual, formed something of a collective *modus operandi*. Their transcripts included stress response strategy themes. While these were not intended as a classification system, they were grounded with frequency and intensity in the data. These were grouped around five fields: retreating from hostility, learning about Q-identity, making friends and allies, coming out, and consolidating their Q-social position.

### **Retreating from Hostility**

What was the closet Qaracters experienced? Did the hiding behaviors operationally defining the closet represent, or to what extent did they represent, a negative or positive outcome? Because of the exploratory nature of this study, material surfaced that the protocol did not anticipate. The event or process of going into the closet was anticipated and investigated directly. However, this process of investigation surfaced unknown or little known nuances of the closet that were not anticipated. I would hesitate to say that this study established the various forms of hiding which describe the closet operationally to be resilient behaviors. On the other hand, I would be equally hesitant to say that closeting represented a negative outcome. Did closeting serve in some way, to some degree as a resilience function, interrupting the trajectory from risk to problem outcome (Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles et al. 1999)? Dodging some rejection

and holding on may have sufficed for the temporary purposes of reducing injury, surviving trauma and buying some time to develop competencies for achieving a more permanent eventual resolution to the problem of rejection and its consequent dangers.

As discussed in Chapter 5, verbal and physical abuse and ostracization by their peers was not only a substantial stress in elementary and middle school, but a chronic stressor and, for most Qaracters, the biggest stress they experienced in that extended period of schooling. It was common that Qids noted their gender or sex orientation when they were young and common that they were fairly clear about it, stating simply such things as "I was attracted to boys," or "I wanted to be a girl." These statements, provided under this study's rubric "before the closet," lacked the confusion which sexual identity formation theorists purported as an initial formative stage (Troiden 1979; Cass 1984a; Troiden 1989). Furthermore, while Q-ID theory proposed that a stage of comparison followed the stage of confusion (Cass 1984a), Qaracters who noted their gender or sex orientation as early as four years old suggested a reverse order of experience progressing from knowledge of their sex or gender self to peer comparison to confusion.

Early self-identifying Qaracters described a matter-of-fact awareness about their sex or gender self. Comparison experiences, usually in school, their first significant social context, followed. These were bad. Not only were they perceived as different by their peers, but as befitting name-calling, rejection and physical violence because of this difference.

In their initial experiences and awarenesses of their Q-ID, Qaracters were not confused about who they were. They were confused, even surprised, that who they were was unwelcome, as in the case of Jewel at four years of age excitedly presenting herself to her parents as a girl exclaiming "'Look at me!' and having my mum and dad just turn white." They were confused about how other people felt. They were confused at the seeming impenetrable wall of unacceptability and the absence of any window of support. Craig stated, "I realized pretty early that I was gay and I never had anyone actually to

lean on.” Qcharacters sometimes said or implied a learned confusion. David “looked at guys and dreamed about guys.” At first “I had nothing to compare it to.” Once he did have something to compare it to he reasoned “The ‘different’ feelings I felt I thought were normal,” and “I thought it was just a phase.” Then he reported “I just didn’t want anyone to know I was gay. So I started to hide it.”

Qids were perceived as “different” by their peers. As Jewel said, “Other people knew I was different. They couldn’t put their finger on it.” Peers’ reaction to this difference was mocking, rejection and violence. In response to the Qids Survey item “I remember being made fun of for being different,” all ten said “Yes.” One wonders about the perception of being seen as “different” and why “normal” reaction of children, even Qcharacters’ friends, was condemnation, rejection and harm. In primary grades, their difference was cause for Andy’s and Jewel’s being beat up and Geena’s friend retorting to Geena’s telling her she was lesbian with the denouncement “god hates fags.” Further complicating their confusion was the lack of a “You’re okay” message from someone in their family, their social network, or school.

Iian was the exception. “I already knew from the start that being gay was okay.” While he included himself with the other nine as “being made fun of,” he had a source of explicit accepting messages from his friends and their families and, presumably, though never stated directly, from his lesbian moms. Iian’s experience questioned the institution of the closet and suggested ideas about how the closet could be deconstructed. Likewise, the pre-existing condition of acceptance from some parents and friends as well as the relatively short closet sojourn of others suggested rejection by self or others was not inevitable. The socially constructed detour of the closet could be shortened or avoided through education, communication and a receptive environment.

Nevertheless, the closet was a real experience for almost all Q-informants. While it was a place of torment, learning and strengthening were taking place within its confines. Qcharacters used the closet as a segue to discovery about themselves,

establishing friendships and allies, and coming out. Prior to coming out and following it, Qaracters armed themselves with attitudes and skills for consolidating their Q-position in society, in school.

### **Learning about Q-identity**

Who am I? Are there others like me? Qaracters sought to learn who they were, to find a name for themselves, to find out about other people like themselves and to know what possibilities they had in life.

Closeted Qaracters sought resolution of their confusion through thinking and learning. Hannah described how, during her freshman year, she was “in the closet while I was questioning and while I was going through the process of coming out to myself,” I had a “curiosity about all things Queer.”

Emile learned through people. He wrestled with himself through eighth grade telling himself “No, I’m not gonna be like that. No. I’m not gay. I’m not – no. Gay is bad.” That year he enrolled in a program in his church, “OWL,” “Our Whole Lives.”

They teach just about everything – contraception, sexuality, sexual roles, gender roles, sexual awareness, homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality. They teach tolerance. At first I was a little reluctant to accept this . . . but through time, I met some friends there who were really compassionate people and they obviously didn’t have a problem with someone’s sexuality.

At a campfire, he defended another male who was challenged for kissing a man at a campfire by giving him a “smooch on the cheek to let him know that I would be supportive.” In that moment “I found out I was gay.” He was eager to join his high school GSA, though at first he did so under the guise of being an ally. It allowed him to meet “some really cool people” and to gain comfort with himself.

Reading provided vicarious experience for Hannah to become comfortable with herself. “I did a lot of reading about Queer issues and Queer people because I hated

being uncomfortable with Queer issues.” Geena used books – bibliographies, novels, expository – to learn about her sexuality and about being lesbian.

Jewel was “very precocious because I’d done a lot of research on the difference between males and females by the time we had health class.” “I was about between twelve and thirteen when I decided to see if there was anything on transsexuality and sex changes at the public library. . . . I tried three libraries . . . five if you include the reference libraries . . . before I found the information.”

Bruce found that “the internet was pretty good” for meeting his needs.

It makes it so much easier than going to the library. You don’t have to worry about checking out books, about the subject . . . the librarian giving you any looks or anything. . . . I really didn’t get much information on it. It would just let me know that there were other people out there like me. Realizing that I wasn’t alone in the world like this and it is possible for me to meet somebody else.

“I wasn’t alone in the world” marked a watershed for Bruce who, at his “lowest point,” felt “I didn’t belong in the world. . . . lost. Like you don’t belong anywhere. You’re the oddball. You’re the weird person. Nothing you can do.” Gone was his depression and powerlessness.

David, too, valued the Internet..

I remember starting to have this general attraction to older men. I spent a lot of time on the Internet(laugh) just talking to people. . . . We would just talk. It didn’t matter what – we’d just talked and like they claimed to be you know, GLBT or whatever. . . . And it was a happy release

Faye clarified her thoughts and feelings through creating. “I would spend hours in my room . . . chilling and writing. . . . any of my friends who come to me with problems, especially relating to their sexuality, the first thing I’ve suggested to them that’s worked for me is writing. Writing is cleansing.” “I would make music and read and write. . . . It certainly immediately relieved my feelings of pain . . . (but) it was not really solving the problem. . . . All I knew was how to make the pain go away

immediately. So long term? Probably not so good. Short term? The best thing I could have done.”

Validating, clarifying and confirming, having a name for what they were was important. Sometimes the word itself provided new definition. Craig expressed frustration that “nobody ever talks to you about gay people when you are so young and how should you know what you are when nobody ever talks to you? I mean, you can’t read minds.” Late in high school, he finally found out what he was when he saw gays on TV talk show. “Oh, there we go!” “People started to talk about gay people and then I realized, ‘Oh, that’s me.’”

Jewel was eight when she heard of the first transsexual, Renee Richards.

It was funny how I learned that. It was up at my aunt and uncle’s cottage – the unaccepting relatives – sitting at the dinner table and my aunt and uncle are talking about the sex change tennis player. I just remember thinking, “Wow! That’s possible?” So it – my interest in my transsexuality – progressed from a, “Wouldn’t it be nice.” To a “Wow. This can really happen.” I knew I was different but it was a case of knowing I wasn’t normal, and knowing people just didn’t change sex. You were either a boy or you were a girl, and that was the end of the story. After about five, I really didn’t tell people, “I’m a girl.” Or “I wish to be a girl.” Or “I want to be a girl.” It was essentially told to me by my mother when she found me in clothes and make up, essentially, this is not what boys do. I quickly learned that it wasn’t something to be proud of or something to really express outwardly, and so at eight I had sort of found a word for how I felt and it was “transsexual”.

Faye was bisexual and “really needed to put a name to what I was feeling.”

I always sort of knew, but I never really had a name for it (laugh). And I met some people at school that were not straight and – I wrote it down. It made me think that maybe that was a name for what I was. Cause I always thought you’re gay or straight and that’s kind of it (laugh). And it’s not. There’s such a spectrum between, I think, and I realized that I was in that spectrum in between. I had a lot . . . of friends who were kind of feeling the same way I did. We had a lot of conversations ‘Well, this is how I feel. This is how I’ve always felt.’

Faye reflected that “that was very important to me at the time. I feel pretty confident now.”



Much as a scientist takes delight in a discovery, informants were pleased to discover who they were, to confirm who they always felt they were. Within the realm of Queer, bisexual tends to be peripheral and transsexual even more so. These Q-peripheral youth seemed to perhaps put even more emphasis on the need to learn and put more time and energy into that endeavor. Mentions of school in this educational process were few and sometimes unflattering. The only positive resource for education mentioned at school was Gay Straight Alliance type extracurricular groups. In Hannah's assessment, "The administration tries to a point, I'm sure. But the principal and the administration don't want to piss off too many parents."

### **Making Friends and Allies**

Friends were lost and missed after Qaracters were different identified. All Qaracters placed importance on making friendships and interaction with their friends. They wanted friends and devoted reflection, practice and effort to developing a circle of friends. They worked to encircle themselves with friends before, during, and after coming out; friends who knew them and accepted them as they were.

For many Qaracters, friends were the most important people involved in their coming out and being out. Among the things important to him, Bruce listed "getting good grades in school. Then, of course, acceptance from friends." Sixth grade had been a low point for Bruce. He decided to approach seventh grade "like it was a whole new life. I just started over with friends. I joined the tech team which did the announcements and I met a lot of my friends in that. Then just by talking to other kids in classes." Bruce continued to develop his friendships through eighth grade. He planned to wait a year or two before coming out to them because he felt they weren't "mature enough to handle it. Even though they'd known me for two years of their lives, they'd just totally throw me

out of their lives just because I was gay.” “I really wasn’t ready to take that risk at the time because I was just now starting to have fun with them.”

After his coming out, Bruce noted that most of his current friends were “ones that I met in middle school.”

David’s story of friendship was involved and dynamic. “Kindergarten through first grade I was closed, really inward and wouldn’t let anyone see me.” Name-calling and bullying began in third grade. He wanted friends, however, and was determined to get them. “I didn’t have many friends up until about the fifth grade. . . . I want people to like me, regardless of who I am.” Through trial and error of pretense and lying to have friends, David finally found in sixth grade “how to make real friends. . . . If I’m not honest with them, they’re not gonna be honest with me.” He began making friends through mutual interests of music and theatre. This is where he found friends who were there for him. He said of one such friend whom he met through choir. “I’m still friends. He knows who I am.”

Meeting Q-people and people of their particular variety of Q-people was important. Meeting a counterpart bisexual or lesbian seemed to provide special validation and comfort. “I was 15 at the time and I went out . . . into bars, . . . and I saw gay people,” Craig claimed. “It helped me a lot. . . . I didn’t feel that alone anymore.” Craig decided to leave Switzerland for “at least a year. . . . I wanted to start a new life. . . . Just be out of the closet, being yourself, and have friends, of course.” Craig put a premium on being with gay people. “It’s just fun. . . . they actually understand you.” In the Midwest, he had the opportunity to attend the gay movie, *Trick*. “I was very excited. It was the first time I saw (a crowd of) gay people. It’s like ‘Wow! There are a whole lot of us!’”

When asked the best way to meet people, David answered, “I see school as a great way to meet people because they’re there (laugh)! They have to be there. . . . Anything

that I do in general, I try to meet somebody.” (R: And LGBT people?) “Yeah. Yeah. Especially. Especially.”

The cultivation of true friends and friendship based on honesty brought Qaracters fun, happiness, empowerment and esteem.

### **Coming Out**

Although Qaracters often entered the closet friendless, they didn’t leave it that way. In fact, half the Qaracters, seemingly unwittingly, had a cadre of Q-friends. Qaracters tried to come out first to their friends or parents, in other words, people from whom they had the most reason to believe they would receive a warm welcome. They were largely successful. In this context, coming out, “wasn’t a very long, difficult process because,” Faye said, “I had surrounded myself with so many people who for them it was no problem.” She added, “Some of the people that I shared with I’d known for quite some time, but I didn’t know that they were bisexual.” It would be interesting to know if these coincidental alignments with classmates and other students were fate or intuition or a subconscious process. What Faye was able to say about her linkage with empathic friends and same sex orientation friends regarded the outcome: “It really helped me out. . . . I’m not a freak. There’s nothing wrong with me. . . . That is the reason why I felt comfortable enough to tell my mom about my sexuality. I think that it’s all connected, very much so.”

All ten Qaracters remembered first coming out to themselves as Queer. David recalled “It was really scary to tell myself I was gay. . . . I said it out loud. That is what helps.” As scary as that was, however, the second scariest thing I’ve ever done (was) coming out to special or close family and friends,” and the scariest thing of all was “coming out completely to friends, family, and school.”

For Hannah, the scariest thing was coming out to herself. Her story about coming out to herself revealed complex feelings and dynamics.

The uncertainty scared me of not being sure what my sexuality was. I was very stressed out. I sort of made the declaration to myself and as it sunk in it became very comfortable eventually. . . . I felt a lot of relief once I finally admitted it to myself and was proud of it as a part of me, as who I am.

I had so ingrained ideas about what my life was gonna be. . . . Once I realized that there are happy lesbian couples, because – you know, we’re all ingrained with these ideas about queer people from when we’re very young. . . . Once I was comfortable with queer adults, I was fine.

Testimony included a number of coming out strategies. Sometimes Qaracters developed plans, though more often timing was a matter of readiness, urge and circumstances. Hinting – intentional or otherwise – was the least direct means. Sometimes Qaracters used letters. By far the most frequent method for coming out was talking.

Craig planned to come to the United States for a year so he could start fresh and come out. Yet overall, coming out was less a planned event and more a threshold where the assets of self-care and will exceeded the risks of shame and fear of being out. Emile came out as he sloughed off his homophobia and gained pride in himself; David once he had true friends and the example of another out and proud gay youth; Faye and Geena as their desire for parental acceptance and their anger over injustice rose.

Bruce planned to “wait till I got to college, out of state. I’d write a little letter to my parents.” In fact, he left a trail of evidence that his parents found.

I didn’t really have to say it to my parents. They just assumed it because they had – they check up on where I go on the Internet somehow. But they found out I was going into gay chat rooms and all this stuff. Then they found out I was going into porn sights. So that really triggered my mother into saying, “OK. It’s a for sure thing now. He is. He’s discovered it himself.”

From this moment forward, Bruce “knew that I was safe and they wouldn’t care either way.” “I was happy that I wasn’t hiding anything from them now. . . . freedom!”

Andy imagined going to his eighth grade lesbian English teacher’s office “to just knock on her door and say, ‘You don’t know me, but I’m about to tell you about one of the things that’s sinking my life.’” What he actually did was leave a big hint, a writing assignment for which he chose as his topic “homosexuality.”

When I wrote the paper I was talking about societal prejudice. When I later read it, I realized I’d written it in such a way that it sort of almost said the people who are against it and “us,” “homosexuals.” I think it was like me sending a coded message that I was in that “us.” . . . She made all these nice little comments like “good thought,” “great wording.”

Geena’s “hints” were sometimes planned and sometimes “mistakes.” “One day I was over at my dad’s house and I wasn’t thinking about it and I was holding (my girlfriend’s) hand.” At another time, “I made kind of the mistake – quote unquote – of bringing a book to school, *Is It A Choice?*, when I was first sort of stepping on grounds like really lightly at my school to see if it’s okay.”

As a medium, writing provided a distance between the parties but between the revelation and the response. In David’s case, this may have been the desired effect. “My mom’s Southern Baptist. . . . Their views are that being gay is a sin, and I was afraid that they were gonna kick me out.” David chose a time when “there was just a ton of stuff going on,” the day before the school musical. He was the lead and his grandparents had just come in from out of town to see it. “So I had wrote them a little letter and I’d put it . . . in my mom’s purse.” About a week after the play, David’s dad approached him.

“Hey. I gotta talk to you for a second.” And I’m like, “Oh. OK?” I think I had a pretty good feeling that I knew what he was talking about. And he said, “Well we found your letter and um you know, I want you to know that we still love you. You’re still our son and that’s not gonna change.”

Whether one planned or hinted or wrote, letting another know one was Queer eventually came down to talking with them. The first instances of saying out loud, “I’m

who I am” took courage. Emile decided the time had come for him to be honest with his mom. Their conversation began with a discussion of his taking “a girl and boy into a closet and kind of felt them up.”

My mom’s like, “Well you know all little kids do that.” I was like, “No. All little kids do not do that. Mom, I am bisexual and you know.” It was like, “All right. Just be careful.” And that’s basically her final words and I guess she was a little reluctant. She was like, “Are you really feeling this way?” I was like, “Yeah, mom. I am.”

The stories of telling were sometimes simple. Bruce effervesced how his first dozen coming outs were positively received; that often his friends told him, “I already knew,” or “I wondered when you’d figure it out”; that good friends became better friends. Other times the stories were more complex as in Faye’s coming out to her mother. “Two years ago I was like, ‘Mom, I like girls and boys. I like them both.’ And she basically told me that she doesn’t believe in bisexuality. And I said, ‘Well, believe it or not, here it is.’” Then recently “she said ‘Is there something you want to tell me about your sexuality? Because I will listen now. I wasn’t listening. I will listen now.’”

Being outed by others was a problem for Geena. Upon seeing her with *Is It a Choice?*, one of a group of girls who frequently harassed Geena said to her:

“You’re a dyke.” . . . So I got some of my friends in my little group and we went down (to the office). . . . The next day they had a little announcement over the PA and explained that that is sexual harassment. . . . And they outed me muchly. She went around and told everybody. . . . I’m like, “Oh well!” So I start openly talking about my girlfriend with my friends, like “April is so wonderful!” . . . and then Carl is like, “Girl, you’re making me jealous!”

Geena made the most of a bad situation of being outed. Two others used outing strategically. Bruce’s mother was articulate and supportive. He let her bear the news to extended family with favorable results. Craig reported that,

While I was here (in the U.S.) my mom told it to all the family and they were all okay with it. . . . I was like two months before I come, “When I’m gone you could tell it to anybody wouldn’t you?!” . . . Yes, while I was here my mom told it to all the family and they were all okay with it.

There was an article about me in *Q Midwest News* and my mom showed it to anybody and I mentioned my uncle in there. My uncle was so proud he ran through the whole town and showed it to anybody “Look that’s my s... whatever!” (R: nephew?) Yeah exactly. That was funny.

Some coming out outcomes were disappointing. David’s relationship with his best friend was no longer the same.

My best friend – I had told him and he flipped out. I was spending the night at his house and we were talking and I said, “Well I need to tell you something.” And so I told him and he was like, “Oh.” And he was (pause, sigh). We sat there just in silence for a while. He was thinking about whatever he was thinking about. . . . The questions that he had asked were kind of so he could (emphatic) be able to trust me. Like, “You never had a crush on me or anything like that?” I’m like, he’s my best friend. He’s like a brother to me. No of course not. . . . Well we’re not as good of friends anymore. . . . We’re involved in so many activities that we don’t see each other that often anymore.

As he assessed the outcomes of his coming out, however, David was relieved. He had been “sick and tired of leading a double life.” “I feel more comfortable around people who know stuff about me.”

Andy described his coming out to his two best girlfriends “tremendously empowering.” Faye surmised that “someone would see that I was more relationship confident.” Craig said coming out to his parents was “a very, very big step” which he celebrated “as my second birthday. . . . I always call it my second birthday because today my life really started. Today I could really be myself and I thing that’s something to be proud of.” The balance sheet for coming out was heavily positive.

### **Consolidating Their Q-social Position**

Consolidating their fledgling Q-social position required Q-social adaptation and action. Following the initial process of coming out, Qaracters faced both reactive and proactive challenges. Sometimes they were rejected or attacked. They were toughened and emboldened. While they may have been reticent about Q-phobic attitudes or comments in the past, they now felt urged to respond. These consolidating strategies

expressed themselves in forms such as assertiveness, self-defense, aggression, resisting rejection and social action.

When confronted with peers' challenges, Qaracters developed diffusing responses. On numerous occasions, Geena was asked in an apparently threatening manner, "Are you gay?" She would respond, "If I were I don't think that you would have to worry about it." Some guys responded to Bruce, "Okay. That's fine, as long as you don't come on to me." His rejoinder was "'Pat, you're not that cute. Stop being so full of yourself.' And all the girls are just like 'Thank you. I've been waiting for somebody else to tell him that.'"

David described the internal messages he gave himself. "During the times that people are deliberately trying to make me feel uncomfortable, I would look at them and I'm thinking 'How can you be so ignorant? How can you think of me less as a person?' . . . It helps me think more highly of myself."

Craig's demeanor changed from meek to assertive. Out, he described himself as "not the kind of person who just says "Okay, just harass me and I won't do anything."

There are incidents with students all the time. Just today someone called me a "fucking faggot" in the hallway. The assistant superintendent told me that every time something happens, come into my office and tell me that. . . . I kept reporting it and I think they just know, don't mess with Him – you get in trouble."

Before coming out, Faye "used to try to avoid personal confrontation. I don't . . . anymore." Emile, too, became more forthright, saying to a "girl who I thought was homophobic, 'I'm part of the Gay/Straight Alliance and I am bisexual. If you've got a problem with that, don't associate with me!'"

Particularly when their basis of support was strong, out Qaracters dismissed rejection. Hence, Bruce could say without hesitation "I did not care if my real mom was against it or not," and Craig could assert regarding friends he lost when he came out, "I



don't care. . . . I don't need friends like this." Hannah felt the same. "If I had friends that were *not* Queer-friendly, why would I want to be their friend?"

A frequent mark of post-closet consolidation was the willingness to speak out and take a stand. Faye believed "speaking out was good for me cause I had so much bottled inside me. . . . It empowered me." While at times "I feel alone, I'm standing up for who I am . . . and I am very proud of it." In a discussion following a video promoting tolerance, Emile addressed students who had "cackled and giggled" during a segment on Q-people, "You know, I don't like when people use the word faggot or use the word gay. It is a sexual slur." "I took a stand," he said, and "I was really proud.

Geena saw her school as hypocritical, saying "that they're zero tolerant, but they're not. . . . I was finishing up reading a bit on my Stonewall book getting really armed with anger. Grr. How can I sit there and let that kind of stuff happen?" She discussed two incidents of teachers' failing to reprimand students for Q-slurs. She brought it to the attention of both. "One teacher was annoyed, but she did reprimand them. (The other) just told you to get back to your class. . . . I just felt kind of good that I actually said something." She delighted in "causing controversy," but noted, "Gotta be careful where to pick your fights." Within her hostile school environment, Geena displayed subtlety and boldness in her approach and avoidance with conflict as in her dealing with Hope.

I don't like to deal with Christians too much (but) I make a lot of people understand a bit more of where I'm coming from . . . like with Hope. She was, 'Well that's wrong' the first time I talked to her. And I was like, "Well, why do you think that's wrong?" And she was like, "Cause the Bible says so." And I was like, "Does it really?" We got in a big discussion about it and now, if she hears somebody say "fag" she's like, "Shut up. That's derogatory." . . . So I felt empowered with giving her that information and education.

“Shocked” that there wasn’t a Gay/Straight Alliance in his high school of 5,000 students, Bruce helped to start one. He described his involvement with GSA in the ninth grade orientation night.

We were actually invited also to have a table. . . . Most of the time a lot of parents were not happy about it. They just kind of snickered. But then again we had easily about 25 parents coming up to us and saying “Thank you. You do not know what a great idea this is and I’m really hoping that my child will join up in this. We really promote tolerance.” . . . Just the fact that parents would come up and say that they supported this group really made us feel good.

Standing up for themselves gave Qaracters a sense of satisfaction. They felt better about themselves when they said or did something which confirmed who they were. They frequently expressed feeling proud or empowered in relation to speaking up, even when they didn’t necessarily effect the full results for which they may have hoped.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **SCHOOL**

#### **Introduction**

Qaracters<sup>xiv</sup> frequently volunteered their perception that school was an important feature in their lives. It was where they planned their lives, made their friends and experienced what they perceived as a microcosm of society. In the interviews, Qaracters were prompted with a series of questions related to the school environment to help elicit discussion of how the school was helpful or hurtful in regard to a specific stressor and in general. At the conclusion of the interview, they were also asked “What changes in school would be important to you?” Besides the responses at these prompts, Qaracters spontaneously made evaluative comments and suggestions regarding school throughout their interviews.

School communities sometimes met these Qaracters needs. Often times Qaracters described their school and even their school system as being deaf and blind, irrelevant, or adversarial to their needs. This chapter examines what happened at and around schools in order to help schools and the people who comprise them hear and see the possibilities for making schools work for Qids. Testimony indicated that K-12 schools were primary sites of stress and places where Qaracters had to arm themselves against dangers to their bodies and spirits – with or without the support of the school community and its members.

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<sup>xiv</sup> See “Language,” pp. 18-23.

### **School as Site of Stress and Resilience**

Testimony about school sometimes referred to a congregation of students, teachers and staff, sometimes a system, and sometimes a mixture of people and system. The two interplayed. Individuals and groups exercised agency. The system, on the other hand, affected what people did or did not do and their efficacy. Qaracters described how individuals and groups made a difference on their lives. They also testified that there were things schools did as a rule, habit, or practice that effected the ease or difficulty with which they managed their stressors and coming to terms with their Q-ID.

Schools had a lead role in Qaracters stress, especially their Q-ID stress. Contrary to the idea that sex and gender identity issues are particularly germane to high school and perhaps middle school, the testimony of Qaracters coded to elementary school was about equal to testimony coded to middle school and to high school. Q-stress was a big concern for many Qaracters from the early elementary years. The issues along the K-12 continuum of development were not completely discrete one from another. Yet they raised distinctions and progressions important for Qids and of value to the school as a community of support.

#### **Elementary School**

According to the testimony of Qaracters, three Q-ID related phenomena were happening in elementary school:

1. They were likely to experience ostracization for being different or for being queer. Ostracization for being queer sometimes regarded sex offense and sometimes gender offense.
2. They were being Q-identified, sometimes by themselves and sometimes, it seemed, by their peers.

3. The stress was creating behavioral manifestations. On some occasions they would withdraw, including closeting themselves. Other times they would act out their distress.

All Qaracters with the exception of Bruce narrated incidents and conditions of harassment, isolation, name calling and bullying in the primary years, grades 1-3, of elementary school. Four Qaracters were ostracized for a variety of reasons – size, strength, intelligence. All four experienced ostracization for gender non-conformity as well. Two more Qaracters were reprimanded harshly by their peers for same-sex kissing, a behavior that could be either a heterosex offense or a gender offense. Gender non-conformity seemed carefully and effectively policed, investigated and punished by school urchins<sup>xv</sup>.

Chapter 5 documented how David, Craig and Andy were chastised for being different or weak and how all three were also mocked for their inability in sports. They had a hard time figuring out why they were made fun of. Andy puzzled, “I just didn’t fit in for some reason.” At times he attributed it to his being “short” noting that some friends once told him that was probably the issue. Then he noted that others, his brother included, were short and had no such problem. He then figured that it was something else, perhaps his “personality,” and that his being short “exacerbated it.” At the same time, he noted gender deficiencies: he wasn’t good at sports, even soccer which he played frequently, and he wasn’t good at fighting.

Hannah had problems from kindergarten. She wasn’t sure if it was her vocabulary or being an only child. What she did know was “Elementary school was terrible.” She also noted that “in third grade we went to Stoneybrook Farm. . . . I dressed

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<sup>xv</sup> How were these gender norms learned? What was the perceived need or felt reward for policing?

up as a boy. . . . I liked being a tomboy. I have *always* been a tomboy (emphatic), but I never connected it to my queer identity at all. I hated wearing dresses.”

Six of these small children were Q-identifying themselves even before school began: Jewel adorning and presenting himself as a girl, Emile exploring a boy and girl in a closet, Bruce knowing he liked men at about three or four. How would life have been for them if they were in a situation like Iian which allowed them to say to the world, “I’m gay!”?

Others did the honors for David. Starting in third grade, “I got teased a lot. But I wasn’t out to myself. I wasn’t out to anybody. It felt like they knew something about me that I didn’t.”

These young Qaracters headed toward the closet. Sometimes a single incident was the one straw too many. Emile (bisexual) and Faye (also bisexual) both kissed boys and girls. In second grade, both were observed, scolded by their peers and vowed “I’ll never do that again!” At the same age, Geena told a friend she was lesbian, was affronted by her friend saying “god hates fags,” and closeted herself.

Jewel and Andy took a different approach. Both were regarded as different by peers. Both were bullied. No one in elementary school seemed to pay attention. No one seemed to deal with it. As a clown, “I remember my teacher getting so desperate,” Andy shares. “He had this little piece of wood that he would sometimes use with students he couldn’t control in other ways. . . . I got the board treatment.” Jewel

learned that expressing myself differently, especially (than) teachers expected, would be labeled a disruption. I think a lot of a teachers were glad I was on Ritalin (laugh). . . . I was very expressive. I did not control my emotions that well. Extreme happiness. Extreme sadness. Anger. . . . I was never a great student. When we had the aptitude test once a year. . . . I used to make designs and happy faces. . . . I never studied for school. If something interested me, I would go all out. But if something seemed irrelevant or not useful, my mind would be doing others things. I had a very active imagination, out in my own little world. So I guess part of the Ritalin was to bring me back to what’s happening here and now.

Andy and Jewel probably did not succeed in endearing their elementary school teachers. Then again, why should they think themselves endearable?

Conversely, literature cited in Chapter 2 indicated that non-Q-youth may be targeted as “queer” and that the results can be as devastating as for Q-youth. The point is that something seriously amiss is happening to our littlest children in school.

Sex and gender are both separate and interwoven in ways that confound and evade our ability to understand (Halperin 2000). Elementary students may be attuned to issues of sex, but they seem even more sensitively attuned to issues of gender. Early in elementary school, children were policing one another for compliance to gender norms. Many Qaracters were found in violation. The penalty often carried with it incarceration in the closet of oneself.

Being different and being a gender offender were two manifestations of this study’s Qaracters. What was the response of elementary schools? As well as Qaracters could remember, nothing.

Testimony of Qaracters suggested several reasons for this non-response. First, while Qaracters felt and thought about their Q-ID, the only reported verbalization of it in elementary school was Iian’s playground proclamation, “I’m gay!” Only Iian made an ostensible verbal statement. Others stated that they had the idea that they were Q-ID. But even if they wanted to say so, they couldn’t have for one simple reason; they had no words. Second, teachers lacked sensory readiness to pick up the non-verbal messages. Faye’s “really good” and “very cool” primary teacher “knew exactly what was going on” regarding Faye’s family crisis surrounding alcoholism. Yet, while Faye confided her pain about her family, she didn’t share “questioning my own sexuality (which) I always did even when I was six years old . . . that was painful to me.” “I felt comfortable saying things to her that I didn’t feel comfortable saying to other people. . . . But I still didn’t share with her how I was feeling really.” Faye’s reticence may have suggested another silencing mechanism: the lack of cues that this is a speakable issue.

Two issues seemed foundational to the inability to see Q-ID in Qaracters: sexual illiteracy of children and de-sexualization of children by adults. Adults and teachers in our society may not have a mind-set to see Q-gender, much less Q-sex, in five and six year olds. In a society which constructs “children” and classifies them as asexual or pre-sexual, the sexual is not expected. Qaracters expressed Q-ID as young as four. Rather than perceiving them as sexual, adults perceived them as bad. The language of sex and gender was treated as a controlled substance. Qaracters literally had to do extensive probing to find the words “gay,” “bisexual,” and “transsexual”; not only to find, but simply to find *out* that there were other lesbian or gay people; in a sea of Queer people, to discover another Q-person like themselves. Who they were or might be was kept secret.

Fully as disconcerting as the failure to access children to simple Q-language, Q-images and Q-people was the failure of elementary schools to address more apparent and relatively non-taboo matters of name-calling, mockery and ostracization. Qaracters’ elementary schools seemed to exonerate themselves from responsibility for intervening in what participants described as episodes and chronic conditions of harassment.

Elementary schools don’t need to identify who is Queer and who is not. Any child, Qid or kid, suffers when she is made a scapegoat. It might help these children if the elementary school community began addressing the issue of children being singled out as different, or as queer, or as gender bending. The community might ask itself “What are our expectations regarding ostracizing and being ostracized? What do we intend to do about this?”

### **Middle School**

Several Qaracters described middle school as their darkest moment. In the passage through these years:



1. Qaracters were very concerned about friendships. It was at the top of their criteria for determining their happiness.
2. It was a period of questioning. Some Qaracters who seemed to have self-identified at an earlier age were evidently re-asking and re-answering the same question, not so much changing their answer as changing the meaning and value they assigned to that answer.
3. There was a lot of unhappiness and fear.

In elementary school, there was no evidence of intervention in Q-bias. Qaracters were unaware of any school adults who policed the gender policing students. In middle school, adults showed some level of awareness. On a few occasions they intervened. But their efforts were ineffective or even counterproductive, seemingly lacking the underpinning of a policy and practice context.

Qaracters made note of how they were doing with friends during the approximate sixth through eighth grade window of time. They equated “good years” and “bad years” corresponded with having friends or not having friends. Andy stated that seventh grade was “a bad year. I got terrible grades. I was really unhappy. . . . (I had) no friends.” Bruce called sixth grade his “low point.” He explained that “in sixth grade I was really like an outcast. Kids would make fun of me and not respect me. But then in seventh grade I got in a group of friends and kids respected me.”

The terms of their Q-identity and the value attached to it were apparently different now, prompting some Qaracters to ask afresh “Who am I?” One factor in this process seemed to be the term of comparison: now Qaracters were aware that others had alternative ways of feeling and being attracted. Craig, for example, who said he knew he was gay all his life, placed his coming out to himself “in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.” His coming out wasn’t about his having same sex attraction, however, but about his attraction being different. “I thought that that’s just normal that guys like guys . . . and then I realized that that’s actually not true because guys love girls and I did not.”

Emile recalled eighth grade as a time of rejection, “suicide attempts, losing friendships . . . being called a faggot almost to the point of where I believe that I was. I was questioning whether I was heterosexual. . . . Middle school was definitely a place of fear.”

In terms of middle schools, Geena had a unique standing among the Qaracters: she was the only one to come out and be out in middle school. Geena had a comparatively high amount of overall stress and the most incidents of harassment in school. She sustained a great deal of stress with little family or school supports. Yet she seemed at the time of her interviews to be quite resilient, displaying considerable optimism and creating for herself a network of friends, especially the “little crowd” of Qids she coalesced and led. She had one major support to which she kept referring, Ms. Tate, a caring teacher. Without her, Geena said, “I’d be having a really bad time at school.”

In several instances, adults at middle school intervened when they thought a Qaracter was in trouble on the playground, but their efforts didn’t seem to accomplish benefit. Sometimes interventions were counterproductive. Andy described an occasion at school when he was being beat up and the principal came “running out and brushed me off.” Andy felt less helped than humiliated. Beat up on another occasion, Andy sought some help from a teacher who advised him “Fight back.” “Great answer!” Andy snapped. He described his middle school as an experience of bullying and rejection. I asked him if he had “any recollection of support from principals, janitors, monitors, teachers.”

Not really. The only thing I can remember was fourth marking period of eighth grade. I got all B’s and the teachers decided it was time to hold a conference with me and my parents to discuss what might be wrong. I basically ended up saying how unhappy I felt with all of these people who were so mean to me and all that. . . . I think I remember my homeroom teacher being worried about me and asking me if I was alright, if I was okay. But nothing really came out of that.

Jewel told how teachers' lack of knowledge unwittingly made her feel good but also humiliated.

Up until about grade eight, grade nine, teachers that I had and knew who I was, treated me like a boy. Teachers that I didn't have, assumed I was a girl. So when my friends would be playing with me, they would basically be running up to stop them picking on me to the exclamations of "Pick on boys!" Or "Stop bothering that girl!" (I felt) good and embarrassed. The acknowledgment from an adult thinking that I was who I thought I was, was the best feeling on earth. But then sort of getting back down to reality and turning around and seeing my friends who were rolling on the floor laughing, was a different story. And I do wish I could have said, "Yeah. But I am." And had I done that I don't know what would have happened.

Being outed by others was a problem for Geena. "There's this group of girls and I think that they're set on outing me." One day, one of the girls from the group called her a dyke

One day I took it to the principal's office, a different day aside from the bus incident. They denied it. I was like "Well I don't think so, honey." So I got some of my friends in my little group and we went down (to the office) and we discussed the improperness of handling that situation with the assistant principal. We were discussing how that is sexual harassment and if they don't deal with it better that my parents can take them to court, that it's now a law in our state. . . . The next day they had a little announcement over the PA and explained that that is sexual harassment. . . . so I want to cause controversy, you know. That's my thing (giggles). And they outed me muchly. . . . It was spread around the whole school within one hour.

Geena saw her school as hypocritical, saying "that they're zero tolerant, but they're not. . . . I was finishing up reading a bit on my Stonewall book getting really armed with anger. Grr. How can I sit there and let that kind of stuff happen?" She discussed two incidents of teachers' failing to reprimand students for Q-slurs. She brought it to the attention of both. "One teacher was annoyed, but she did reprimand them. (The other) just told you to get back to your class. . . . I just felt kind of good that I actually said something."

Not many instances of adult intervention were documented in middle school. Those that were mentioned seemed ineffective. Teachers recognized *something* was wrong but gave Qaracters no indicators that they knew *what* was wrong. In one instance Geena's principal took action and the results backfired. From other testimony about her school, including teacher apathy and complicity in perpetrating Q-disparagement, the action of support was performed in an unprepared environment unable to sustain it systemically.

### **High School**

Bruce thought about the issue of coming out in middle school. He decided it wasn't a good idea because "in middle school there were no clubs . . . no support groups and counselors. You really didn't want to say anything, too, because it was such a small school . . . only about 800." Bruce came out in ninth grade. In fact all Qaracters – except Iian who was out in elementary and Geena who came out to herself in elementary school and to her peers in middle school – came out in high school.

1. Eight Qaracters came out to classmates and peers at school.
2. Qaracters perceived themselves having more options, more assets for dealing with their Q-ID, both within and outside the school. Gay/Straight Alliances played a prominent role. Furthermore, the establishment of a GSA brought with it supportive faculty who would sponsor it, often one or more out Q-faculty member.
3. The environment at individual schools played a prominent role on Qaracters sense of happiness. Environments varied from adversarial to somewhat supportive.

4. Students had a stronger sense of empowerment and agency. They had not only more assets to access, but more ability to access and exert control over and within support systems.

Qaracters' school experience options were more complex. In Bruce's perception, in middle school "the only extra-curricular activities they had were sports. Basically all you could do is go to and from school." Qaracters spoke of high schools as larger, more complex social structures. They took class and choir trips; belonged to theatre guilds, social action organizations, foreign language clubs, and student government; and served on school and district committees. Impressively, six of the seven Qaracters currently in high school were not only members but also presidents and even founders of their schools Gay/Straight Alliance or the equivalent Q-student organization in their school. The one high school student not in a GSA, Craig, was in a school that didn't have a GSA – which he noted with regret. What Craig did have was access to the area PFLAG chaired by his host parents. When Emile "moved to Cherokee High School, I immediately joined the GSA. I thought that was a really cool thing that they had it . . . one of the coolest bunch of people." For Hannah, "the GSA was very much a community for myself," adding, "To deal with issues in the GSA in *our limited Queer environment* . . . was really important (Italics mine)."

While the value attached to Gay/Straight alliances was exciting, it was also troubling: at the time of the study, in the metropolitan area included in this study I was aware of only eight GSAs. While there is no formal mechanism for tracking GSAs and GSA-like organizations, my contact with various knowledgeable sources produced, I believe, a fairly accurate list. This meant that only a very few Qids had access to such an organizational asset which the Qaracters of *ReSallying Qids* deemed so vitally important to them. The GSA provided an opportunity for Q-association as well as a less obvious but precious asset, one or more faculty sponsors who were Q-teachers or Q-allies. A number of Qaracters mentioned the importance of out teachers in their high school.

These teachers were often sponsors for their school's GSA. How would this study's characters have fared without the GSA and the faculty allies and out Q-teachers who advised them? Would they have experienced an even more "limited Queer environment" or no Queer environment or anti-Queer environment?

David described his school as "pretty neutral."

Our administration is all for equal rights, so they say. There are a few things that they still restrict the GSA from doing. They have to approve every poster that is posted on the wall and they have to approve our showcase. But other than that, they're very, very quick for anything that anybody says or does against anybody.

Several times, Andy attached the word "euphoric" to his tenth grade year. He came out to two of his best girlfriends while on a school camping trip in the fall. That year his community service teacher connected him to a Q-youth conference which in turn connected him to a Q-youth art group. He co-founded the GSA in his high school and, in the spring, visited a prestigious Southeastern university, getting a big ego boost when he participated in university classes and was complimented on the quality of his discussion contributions. "It really all happened in 10<sup>th</sup> grade!" he exclaimed. "Doing well with my grades, making a lot of friends, feeling more equal." Yet he sees his high school as unwelcoming.

"A lot of gay youth, including myself, are not exactly made to feel totally at home. Issues discussing that sort of thing are cancelled by the principal because of possible controversy. There are needs that are not met. . . . Those who don't have this issue seem to rise higher and faster and have less trouble functioning socially and less inner conflict. . . . It's very uncomfortable being a kid who is questioning his sexuality. Being more comfortable with one's sexuality allows one to stop devoting so much energy towards this conflict and apply it to other places . . . like the concept Freud used (about) neuroses, that all the energy was being diverted, not toward the ends, but toward this other problem."

School was at the periphery rather than the heart of Andy's euphoria.

A second semester sophomore, Bruce spoke highly about the experience he was having as an enrollee in a school-within-a-school. Though there were 5,000 students on

his high school campus, he was enrolled in a program for 200 frosh and 200 sophomores. “You get to build big friendships with them. You really have your own little group.” He described how the teachers planned jointly, team taught, created interdisciplinary units and accommodated around each other. The team included an out gay male teacher. Bruce was happy and confident. When his school principal succumbed to parental pressure to take down a Gay Pride Month bulletin board displayed by his gay teacher, he got angry and went with his father to the school board. He noted that, in such a large high school, there were very few other out students and that the overall atmosphere was probably not supportive.

The response following a two-day presentation on sexual orientation and homophobia which Faye orchestrated for her social studies class was “really a turning point for me.”

I had no idea the support that was out there. It was really a great experience for me. But there was a lot of stigma around that. In the papers, people are writing things about me. I had dyke written on my locker on a daily basis. I had a teacher who told me that I should stop or else people are gonna know that I’m a heathen (laugh) I’m going to hell.

So all these parents were calling the school and I was being pulled out of (class) by my principal and the rest of the administrators. . . . The administrators are asking, “Is the reason why you did this because you’re gay? That was the first question that came out of their mouths. Not concern for my welfare!

“Support that was out there” indicated the community, not the school, as the locus of support to Fay’s efforts.

Even when their school was adversarial, these Qaracters in high school found strength in themselves and support in people and agencies around them to be proactive and confident.

### **School as Agent of Stress and Resilience**

Qids related numerous incidents of school as a protective factor. Faye was close to her grandparents, especially her grandmother. When her grandfather died suddenly and unexpectedly when she was twelve, Faye was shaken. She became a best friend to her grandma. Five years later, as her grandmother was failing, she wanted to be with her, to hold her hand and to have closure. In the final weeks her grandma was alive, Faye had an arrangement with the school secretaries and teachers that, if there was a problem or she wanted to be with her grandma, she could leave school. One teacher especially helped her through.

Emile's first meaningful experience with death occurred when he was seven and his dog died. He was very sad. The next day in his second grade classroom, he wrote about his grief in his journal. He described his teacher relating on a friendship level. She read his journal and wrote back to him that she, too, had a dog and understood his loss.

Suspecting his eighth grade teacher was lesbian, Andy ventured out writing an essay on homosexuality. Though he considered his essay mediocre, he was rewarded by glowing verbal and written accolades by his teacher.

On the other hand, school's record was less compassionate at other times, especially in responding to issues of harassment and bullying. Qids were more likely to cite other students as immediate agents in their stress and resilience. Staff played a significant role through their example and tone and through the use of their power and decision-making.

#### **Students**

Qaracters often made or implied a link between students' behaviors and the attitudes and actions conveyed by the school adults and school system. Bruce's description connected these elements.



The majority of my friends all accepted me. Where I go to school, we're in a little section of the school called Sunshine. Most of the kids are fairly well educated in this area. They really don't care if a person has a different sexual orientation, at least the majority that I know. We talked about it in English, and sometimes in History. A lot of the kids will just wonder why the heck these people are being treated this way, why we're being treated with such disrespect. . . . There have been a few people who will come up and say, "Hey, you idiot. What's up with this?" Then the few people I'm sitting next to are like, "Shut up. Go sit down." . . . The kid goes and sits down and he never says another word. He's afraid because this time the majority of people in my classes accept me and they'll defend me. . . . I've really considered myself lucky with this type of acceptance. There are kids at my school who really don't get that type of acceptance.

As described here and several places above, this school-within-a-high-school had structural features that may have made it more tolerance conducive. As a special election, it may have attracted students who were bright and/or tolerant. It was small. Bruce spoke of it as a good place to make friends. Students may have had better opportunity to know each other. It's faculty, too, may have been select, probably shared a philosophy of learning, may have had a heightened commitment, and may have created a particularly interesting learning environment. The faculty sponsor for the GSA, an out gay man, was a member of this team. It provided Bruce a nurturing incubation.

While Bruce found unusual support in Sunshine, other students found support on a smaller scale in organizations. Besides GSA's, certain organizations tended to be Q-receptive. Faye noted that members of her Amnesty International club "vocalized their support for me." Emile "joined a theater guild . . . Most of the people there were actually lesbian and/or gay. I affectionately term them the 'Thespian lesbians.'" David found that "working in the theater with the kids that I do, they're real open."

*ReSallying Qids* documented numerous stories of intolerance. In their reflections on this matter, Qaracters noted double standards and variations of standards among teachers. Craig observed that, at his school, "if somebody would call a black man a n\_\_\_, I mean, this guy would be kicked out of school very fast. . . . And I, because I'm gay, I

have to bring an adult, not just an adult, a member of the staff who has seen the thing they did.” Emile contrasted his fourth period class lead by a teacher who “understood homosexuality” and “brought it up more than once” in class to others in which “people would say, ‘That’s gay,’ or ‘You’re a faggot,’ and the teachers did not do anything. There were not teachers who stood up for what needed to be stood up for. . . . It made me angry.”

Within the mural of testimony was a heterosexist pattern of greater homophobia among boys and greater tolerance among girls. In examining patterns of gender discrimination in elementary school, I noted the male phenomenon of boys chastising boys for failure to gender conform and perform. According to male Characters, the pattern persisted and mutated. When he moved to the Midwest in fifth grade, Bruce said that boys “started calling ‘fag,’ queer,’ ‘homo,’ that type of stuff. . . . Most of the girls were just disgusted with the guys for doing this, even in fifth grade getting on their backs for making fun of gay people.” Things shifted going into middle school

when sexual orientation was actually becoming a big issue with every kid in my school. They really made fun of kids for being who they were or if you acted any more feminine than any other of the guys they’d label you as gay or queer. The girls really didn’t do anything to them cause they were afraid because they were just starting to like the boys and they don’t want to be labeled as a lesbian. . . . So middle school is a very bad place for that type of thing, more so than high school because the high school girls realize that men aren’t god’s gift to them. . . . They’ll stand up for what they believe.

Bruce believed “all the kids have been AOK except for the guys. They’re afraid of you coming on to them.” He noted this male fear in middle school and again in high school.

In his middle school, Andy recalled the jock boys’ table and his relegation to the outcast boys’ table. Experienced as the object of ridicule, he observed, “No one was always just mean and bad. Some of the people who could be quite nice when you were playing one-on-one wouldn’t be that way when you were in a group.”

In the examinations of stress, resilience and schools, the spectrum from tolerance to intolerance was experienced broadly by Qaracters in school, including everything from violent attacks experienced by Andy and Jewel (as a boy) to enthusiastic support by peers as Bruce experienced. While students seemed often to exercise a rather free reign uninterrupted by adults, particularly in elementary school, adults and the systems they created exercised influence over students behavior toward Qaracters; perhaps, too, over other Q-perceived people.

### **Staff**

Qaracters spoke frequently about teachers and about half as often about administrators and boards. Other testimony regarding staff involved counselors, secretaries, a hall monitor, and a bus driver. They discussed anti-Q community pressures, particularly the effect of parental pressure upon administrators.

In sex education class, the teacher was leading a discussion “about the differences between men and women.” Emile volunteered, “Women are more accepting of homosexuality. And the teacher’s like ‘Oh, we haven’t talked about sexual orientation.’” There were many indicators that Qaracters’ teachers didn’t know and were not prepared to deal with Q-gender and Q-sex either in the classroom or on the playground.

Getting no help from his teachers, Andy enlisted the help of his parents to intervene in the trouncing he was receiving from other middle school boys. The message of “toughing it out” “got my parents (curious about) the wisdom of the forces that be at Jupiter Middle School. ‘Oh yeah, tough it out. If he gets into a fight he can fight back.’” Andy’s parents transferred him at the year’s end.

Craig recalled no effective intervention to name-calling through his entire school career. In his Midwest high school he went to a counselor to report.

A teacher was making gay jokes in classroom. I went to the counselor and she was like “Okay, I go down to him and talk to him” and the next

couple of days in the classroom still gay jokes were made, and I didn't understand why was he still doing that. So my (host) dad went into the counselor office and she said, "I actually told Craig that I will go to the teacher and talk to him, but I never did because I think when I talk to him it might get worse. . . . That's good that an adult actually comes in here. . . . We can't really do anything when a student is here."

Craig recalled other situations with several other male teachers. In a conversation with a teacher, a student called another teacher "gay." "Oh, yeah, he is," responded the teacher, "and he really likes you very much." In another classroom, a student commented about a picture of Ronald McDonald in the newspaper, "He looks like a homo," and the teacher said 'Oh, yeah, that's why they call him McFag.' . . . The situation in this classroom is now out of control."

Faye's physics teacher "started posting Christian Coalition propaganda on the walls about how immoral homosexuality is. On his walls of his room! The administrators refused to encourage him to take them down." Faye's experience allowed for a comparison of how staff at the same school responded differently to the same student in a life stress situation and in a Q-stress situation. When her grandmother was dying and she needed understanding about leaving school and extensive time commitments with her grandmother, "I had some fabulous teachers who really helped me through it." Months later, taking "a lot of abuse from people in the community" for her social studies presentation on Q-issues, she reported that, "with the exception of three teachers, (teachers responded) very negatively."

Q-teachers were much on Qaracters' minds. It was disconcerting to them that their Q-teachers were not out. Andy's gaydar was active. "Everyone thought that our shop teacher in middle school was gay. Later I learned through random means three years later that she was. I figured out that the Spanish teacher was gay and that the gym teachers were gay." In his following sentence, he assessed the gay friendliness of his schools with the words "not very."

Often Characters identified closeted gay and lesbian teachers. Sometimes they were inspired by them. But the closeting disappointed them. “There’s just such a long way to go,” Hannah complained. “There are so many teachers who are not out.” Asked how it might have affected his life had he come out in school in Switzerland, Craig had no answer. “I don’t know because I don’t have any role models. No other students. No teachers.”

Q-teachers and Q-allies made a substantial difference. Emile considered an ally teacher “one of my idols. She was definitely open about homosexuality. She wore a pin that said, ‘I love my lesbian daughter’ and more pins that said ‘I’m straight but not narrow.’” Two staunch supporting counselors in David’s school sponsored his GSA. His testimony indicated that they inspired him and that they cleared the way with administrators and the board for the GSA’s projects including teacher training at his high school and in local middle schools. He considered Mr. Walsh “great. We come up with an idea and he says, ‘Great! Let’s do it!’ and he goes and gets all the information.” Bruce’s out gay male teacher “got our wheels moving and said we need to get this thing (GSA) into this high school now and start promoting tolerance.”

Geena’s testimony dramatized the importance of one caring teacher.

Ms. Tate’s like the ultimate Amazon. I want to grow up to be just like her (giggles). . . . She really cares about her students. . . . And everybody gets along with everybody. She won’t tolerate anybody using any derogatory words. It’s just fun and happy and nice to be in there. I have so much respect and admiration for her cause she has like an awesome spirit.

What if you didn’t have that?

I don’t know. I’d be having a really bad time at school, and I don’t think that I’d be able to get as good grades as I do.

How important is she to you?

She’s very important.

What would it be like if she weren’t there?

Hell. Because I mean, she brings a smile to my face. Every time I see the rainbow flag, you know, its sort of like we understand. We connect on different levels . . . and she makes me smile. I just love her class cause she treats all her kids, not just me, as an equal, as if they were adults. She treats everybody like she'd want to be treated.

I'd like more positive role models and more gay teachers. If everybody knew Ms. Tate was, it'd be like "Wow! And we liked you?" I think that would be cool. But it's not that safe for her to be out.

Administrators set a tone in their schools. Their attitudes and actions regarding Q-issues had repercussions throughout the school. Usually they were adversarial or non-helpful. In one case they were supportive. Anti-Q parental and community pressures were seen as coloring administrative decisions.

A bulletin board that Mr. Opper had put up five successive years in celebration of Gay History Month was taken down by the principal. "It's the new ninth graders as well as their parents," Bruce assumed. "The years before, Mr. Opper hadn't gotten any complaints. It was just this year. . . . I wasn't surprised that they took them. But . . . the school should be teaching diversity."

Following the Diversity Festival at Faye's high school, "a parent came. They called me out of class down to the office, all four administrators, including the superintendent. . . . They were grilling me about what I had said and about why . . . 'Is it because you're gay?' . . . I said, 'Is that any of your business at all?'" Against the background of the hostility she experienced from teachers, students, parents, the community, the school board and administrators, Faye concluded, "I don't think that my high school is a safe place to be out."

Within a week of Craig's enrollment in his Midwestern high school "people started to harass me. . . . It started pretty quick with one guy who sexually harassed me" grabbing his buttocks and verbally insulting him. "We went to the principal and he talked to him, pretty bad, I guess, because he apologized afterwards . . . but the harassment went on and on." Craig went back to the principal "but they were like, 'He

says he didn't do it so we actually can't do anything.' And no teachers did see it. I had a lot of witnesses but just students. They don't help." Craig was bitter that a school counselor had failed to act on his reporting to her a teacher making Q-derogatory remarks in his classroom. He considered the principal ineffective. "The school actually doesn't help me. The only help I get is from my parents. If somebody else's parents aren't very supportive, they don't get any help."

Craig believed his school treated Queer youth and incidents of Q-discrimination less seriously than other student issues. So did Geena. Beat up on her school bus, the school principal gave her attackers a warning. "So she gave the girls all warnings instead of kicking them off the bus like she was supposed to for any fight. I was really upset."

David had the unusual experience of fairly supportive administration. "Our administration is all for equal rights. There are a few things that they still restrict the GSA from doing. They have to approve every poster . . . and our showcase. But other than that, they're very, very quick for anything that anybody says or does against anybody." Hannah's depiction of blasé leadership unwilling to ruffle parental feathers was more typical. The administration tries to a point, I'm sure. But I think that the principal and the administration feels they don't want to piss off too many parents."

While only a small part of the interview testimony, ancillary staff's actions were informative. Geena related two stories, one regarding a hall monitor who scolded two gay boys for a kiss on the cheek but said nothing to a co-ed couple deep kissing nearby. Geena questioned his unequal treatment and he rebuked her. The other story related to Geena's bus fight. "The bus driver looked at me in the mirror and she saw them hitting and kicking me. She didn't do anything about it." There were no repercussions – until Geena's mother came to school. The bus driver was then moved to a different route. Nor did the girls who beat up Geena get suspended – until Ms. Tate intervened on behalf of Geena. On the matter of tolerance for Qids, the leaders were not leading.

### **Lack of Access to Reinforcing Support Systems**

Researcher: Before you were you were out, what kind of resources did you have?

Bruce: I don't know. I'd just ignored it. I would of had to ignore it. That's about it. Cause I wouldn't want to let on who I was.

As discussed in Chapter 2, resilience theory suggested three groups of protective factors which helped a child avoid a negative outcome to a risk factor:

1. Positive personality characteristics including such things as relationship skills and self-regard
2. positive family relations
3. external support systems that reinforce the child's efforts to thrive

As Bruce suggested, numbers 2 and 3, family and external support systems, become unavailable when one cannot "let on" who she is. In Qaracters, excepting Iian, somehow, sometime, several messages converged to create crisis; hetero-gender/sex is normative, different-gender/sex is bad and I'm different. Qaracters faced a dilemma regarding lack of access or difficult access to the environmental resources of their families and schools to reinforce their efforts. They didn't know if it was safe to seek the support even of their families. They assumed a defensive posture, the closet.

A pivotal challenge of the closet occurred at school: avoiding rejection and making friends. To overcome ostracization, Qaracters had to figure out how to make friends; friends with whom Qaracters could be themselves as much as possible and to whom they might one day be able to share the Q-aspect of who they were.

Many Qids never come out in school. Many Qids who do come out in school do not achieve acceptance or sufficient acceptance to ignite pride in who they are and to act on that pride. However, in one way or another, all ten Qaracters in *ReSallying Qids*



eventually sallied or resallied out. It wasn't necessarily perfect – sometimes far from it – but they seemed to keep advancing and resiling.

The struggles confronted between the time of entering the closet and the time of exiting the closet were sometimes arduous. But as they first retreated from perceived danger, researched and learned about their Q-identity, worked to make friends, came out, and began consolidating what they had learned and accomplished, they gained the possibility of positive family relationships and external support. They even made possible the ability to create and lead external support structures that reinforced their efforts.

Craig found protection and sustenance in both his natural parents in Switzerland and his host family parents in the United States. He described “a very good relationship with my parents. . . . Now that I know that my parents are very accepting, I would have come out earlier.” Beginning classes as a senior in a Midwest high school, Craig began to be harassed on an almost daily basis beginning only days after he arrived. Speaking of his host family parents, he said, “Actually if I didn't have such great parents, I don't think I would still be here. I would have gone home to Switzerland. But I have great parents and they help me a lot and I'm actually happy here...with all that shit that's going on.”

As research indicated earlier, Qids do not always have the kind of family support Craig experienced. Many do not. The support of the external support system of school is critical to Qids. Qaracters craved even one support person or one support structure at school. When given an inch, they truly tried to stretch it a mile.

Closeting was a response to the loss or feared loss of environmental support. Coming out was portrayed as the process of figuring out how to access those supports, usually beginning with classmates and school mates. Bruce, who acknowledged no access to external resources while he was in the closet, powerfully visualized resources available to him now. He associated being in the closet with lack of connection to

resources, the feeling of “not being in the world.” When he came out of the closet, he associated that experience with a web of support from which he drew “bravery.”

Well, the bravery in my life I got from all my support that I got when I came out. I've been out for over a year now, so I've had a lot of support which really builds up a lot of bravery. The knowledge of it is that I've gone to a lot of Pride events, how they get a lot of people together. The news, the media are there; about pressuring the state legislature; and I've also seen when they're trying to pressure the school board or another administrator to do something.

I've helped to bring about a Gay/Straight Alliance at the high school and I've had to do many of those same things to get a Gay/Straight Alliance to even be brought onto an agenda at the high school. Then also the (Gay Pride Month) bulletin boards of Mr. Opper and Mr. Pimento (two out gay teachers). We had to try and pressure the school board into actually even listening to us talk. So my dad used the media against the school board on that matter, too. He called up channel 5. Channel 5 called up the school board. “Are you refusing to listen to a parent that's within your school district?” and of course this group was like, “No, no, we're not.” . . . so I really just learned from just seeing, hearing and being aware of what's happening in the world around me. . .

I probably wouldn't have as much bravery as I have, but I would probably have enough self-knowledge to actually know that the ACLU exists. Talk to them. Try to get a lawyer in on it. Or even then I'd know about the Qids' community support group and I'd go asking for help there. Seein' what kind of ideas they have, how I could go about doing this. See if I could get any bravery from going in there. Speaking with them and see if I could build up my self-esteem by going to those youth groups.

In his testimony, Bruce made a clear connection between access to external support systems that reinforced his efforts and his feelings of bravery and self-esteem. It was unfortunate that the school was not one such asset. It was more unfortunate that the school was an obstruction against which he needs to bring his resources to bear.

Andy recalled one external resource that helped him resile and begin to escape his closet. Some teachers had incorporated Q-issues into their instruction, discussion of Q-authors, for example, in English or Q-figures in history. He called these moments “reference points.” “I would probably try to incorporate that sort of thing into my curriculum. You know whether it be like a class discussion about that sort of thing. . . or

just talking about different authors over the course of history, like Henry James, who were gay or who had experiences with other men, things like that. Just to sort of put the issue out there and allow the kids who were questioning their sexuality – at least in the ways that I was – some reference points.” As described in Chapter 6, Qaracters demonstrated strong qualities of belief and action. Internal qualities are good but insufficient. Encouragement and support from outside oneself provide the assurance that one is okay and going in a worthwhile direction.

To the extent that school made their resources available or unavailable to Qaracters, they were helpful or hurtful. By now, the reader has gleaned from this presentation of Qaracters accounts many ideas not only about what this research suggests in terms of restructuring schools for Qids but what they themselves deduce beyond it. I conclude this chapter with what is perhaps obvious to the reader, but not obvious in the culture and practice of our schools. For starters, what do we need to delete and what do we need to add in our schools to welcome and incorporate the assets of Qids into our school communities?

### **School as Hurtful**

Hannah found her school ineffective in combating Q-ignorance. Two teachers and some out students risked running a Gay Straight Alliance and speaking out, but she had no sense of support or even awareness of tolerance toward Qids in many members of the teaching staff, the school administration, or the district.

It feels like the teachers sometimes almost make an effort not to do anything. People will say stuff in class . . . I remember just going off to my government teacher last year because this kid had just been going off toward me, calling me all sorts of names and “dirty dyke”. . . . This teacher sat there listening and didn’t say anything. It’s so frustrating. (It) seems like there’s just so far to go.

A Diversity Week (student-made) video was most offensive. It was put on by the Black Student Union. It talked a lot about racial tensions and racial

issues which are very necessary topics to be discussed and very important. But then they had these six or eight people of color being interviewed on camera talking about “What would you do if your best friend said he or she was gay?” And they would say “As long as they don’t hit on me. As long as they don’t hit on me.” Then one of the girls (in the video), who happened to be in my class, said “I think that’s disgusting. I think it’s wrong.” . . . If I had been interviewed and I said, “Well, as long as a black person doesn’t come on to me. I think they’re disgusting,” I would have been expelled with good reason because it’s obviously a racist, bigoted thing to say. But these blatantly homophobic, derogatory things were not only tolerated, but endorsed by the school.

The administration tries to a point. But I think the principal and the administration feels they don’t want to piss off too many parents. I know the Reproductive Health Committee for our school district because I’m on it. The only people that are on it are weirdly conservative, crazy parents and a few ministers. I go nuts every time I have to sit through a meeting. There’s just such a long way to go. There are so many teachers who are not out . . . The teacher that I have felt the closets to, a queer teacher, is not out, and she’s an English teacher. She can’t be out. It’s hard for her to be out.

School is . . . very supportive of people academically, but its’ not supportive of people personally, other than like drug intervention programs. . . . The health education classes are so archaic. Everything is directed towards straight kids. . . . Unless there’s a queer kid who’s willing to speak up and be out – and the school doesn’t make it easy – then no issues get raised. I did in my health class and I nearly failed. . . . The mechanics of sex and anatomy are taught, but sexuality as an evolving concept are not even thought of. And gender is not thought of..

As the GSA’s become more visible it’s definitely been helpful. But that’s not the school itself. That’s kids and two teachers who are taking a big risk in their careers to be out. The rest of the teachers aren’t out. . . . It’s frustrating that teachers are closeted.

The school just doesn’t . . . make any effort to enforce the harassment policies. It just doesn’t bring up any issues. The administration and the school itself doesn’t think about things unless there’s the GSA or Queer kids or really strong allies to bring up the issues. Everything the school does (sigh) and issues they bring up in their efforts to be accepting, they don’t think about Queer issues or Queer kids.

Hannah’s monologue could be summarized as making six points. Her school was hurtful to her and, in her perception, other Qids because:

1. Teachers and staff were not helpful

2. Rather than employing the power of diversity, the diverse were fragmented.
3. Leaders lacked vision and the courage which vision can help motivate.
4. There was not a curriculum of who-we-are.
5. She and Qids needed Q-association: the GSA and out Q-teachers.
6. The school community needed to create genuine systemic tolerance.

Her points easily organized Qaracters' text coded to node (8 16), "school not helpful."

Leaders in school have a special opportunity to establish a tone and direction of helpfulness. When Faye went to the board seeking support for diversity, she was instead threatened by an attending parent and provided no protection by the board. Additionally she noted, "They refuse to comment and won't deal with and LGBT issues without extreme pressure. Craig found "they don't really protect me" at school. "They don't want to talk to all the students. The just wait until something happens and talk to this one student. That doesn't help."

Qaracters were disturbed about anti-Q sentiment especially when it came from a person belonging to an oppressed class. It was perplexing. The power of diverse people can be open by accepting people on their own terms, for who they are. Emile shared an interesting story pointing out the power of unity in diversity.

This one guy who's terribly hypocritical because he's such a racist. . . would ask Jewish people, "Hey did your grandparents die in the holocaust?" And this Jewish person says, "I felt like getting revenge . . . I felt like striking him." So he (hypocrite) was sitting near me and – I don't even know how it arose – but he was just like, "I hate gay people. All gays should be lynched." . . . The Jewish person . . . commented, "How do you know you're not gay?"

In all this testimony, school leaders were usually merely half-heartedly supportive or even oppositional to Qaracters and their needs. The best that school leaders mustered was to allow Q-leadership of teachers and students to function. While no persons or groups of persons in formal authority initiated tolerance as related by Qaracters, the

receptive leadership which David experienced in his school seemed to be working, allowing his school experience to be a happy one. Comparatively speaking, it appeared heroic compared to leadership that was also reactive but succumbed to external protest placing the good of students second.

Craig protested “We don’t have any gay history month things or something like other schools do. In all the classes I was, we never talked positive about gay people. The only thing I ever heard was negative about gay people, sometimes by teachers, sometimes by students, and teachers didn’t do anything against it. We don’t have Gay/Straight Alliances. We have actually nothing.” “The history books completely ignore it,” Emile notes, not to mention, as Hannah points out, in sex education “everything is directed towards straight kids.” The curriculum vacuum could hardly be larger. The total lack even of a reference to Q-people in some schools suggests a gaping need. Perhaps the empty slate is best. Perhaps better than a curriculum written by the established curriculum forces would be an invitation for the Q-community in the school to Queer the curriculum; for all diverse groups, in fact, to imprint the curriculum not simply with content about them but first and foremost with who-they-are.

Dissociation was the most often and most strongly expressed hurt. Craig described a fearful situation in his school. “People who I know are gay just don’t want to be seen around me because people could think they are gay. To meet people you actually have to go to a youth group, cause it’s very difficult (to meet Qids). If you have a Gay/Straight Alliance or something in school, that’s of course different, but we don’t.” Andy concurred, saying that there was nothing supportive for Qids “within the schools until we started our Gay/Straight Alliance.” Association was mentioned and discussed with animation. Emile “joined the GSA as soon as I came to Cherokee High School. . . . It provided people I could talk with. People I felt I could trust. People who I could relate to. And that was a big thing!”

Fundamental to the establishment of Gay/Straight Alliances were teachers, usually Q-teachers, who were out and forging space for their school's GSA members to take action. Faye described the risk that supportive teachers took in backing her. "They have been so supportive. But two of them were not tenured, so they were afraid that they would lose their job, which, you know, rightly so." No one said that it was easy to be an LGBTQ-teacher and out. When they spoke about the topic, they recognized that a teacher being out included risk, risk they understood but lamented. As long as their Q-teachers were not fully accepted and could not be freely out, they knew that they, too, were not truly accepted and free at their school.

Qaracters testified to their experience that genuine, systemic tolerance was sorely lacking. Geena's episodes of harassment from students and disregard by school staff taught her that, at her school, "they say they're zero tolerant, but they're not really." As Andy stated about his school, "Gay youth are not made to feel at home." "I don't see a way they could learn about that sort of thing (the things that would make them feel at home) or get support for that sort of thing."

### **School as Helpful**

This section is better read, I believe, with one prefacing thought: Schools need to be queered. If schools are to be of benefit *to* Qids, they need to benefit *from* Qids. They need to let Qids imprint them and Queer them. Indeed, schools would be revolutionized if they not only took advantage of the impressionability of students but also allowed themselves to be impressed by students.

Helping Qids is foreign to schools. In some schools where there is no dealing with Qids, it may be beyond foreign – it may approach unimaginable. If the matter feels foreign, it probably is. It is Queer matter.

Read from the perspective of “Queer Theory!” addressed in Chapter 1, it suggests not the inclusion or assimilation of Qids into school, but the mutuality of Qids queering educators and educators educating Queers. The school can begin to be perceived and appreciated as helpful to Qids when Qids begin to be perceived and appreciated as a value to the school. Comparably, one could say that the school can begin to be perceived and appreciated as helpful to Feminine People or to People of Color when Feminine People or People of Color begin to be perceived and appreciated as helpful to the school; in other words, when the school becomes “Feminized” or “Colored” or “Queered.” The hurtful school dominated and was non-receptive to the exertion of force upon it. The helpful school interacts.

Practically speaking, schools begin with some first step, perhaps an inservice about LGBTQ youth. As an action step, administrators and teachers may put up “Safety Zone Stickers” or some message in the school and classroom to let Qids know that the adults recognize they’re there and are committed to protecting and helping them. Then they may tackle including Q-people in social studies and literature or a Pride celebration during October, Gay History Month. Queering insists, however, that the school and its Queer parts dialogue. They affect each other. It is not sufficient to talk about Q-people. It is necessary to engage in a synergistic conversation with them and to allow them to have an impact on the school.

Be Colored. Be Feminized. Be Queered. It won’t change any of the following recommendations. But it will change the quality, direction and power of the recommendations. This vision of Queering and Feminizing and Coloring the school, diversifying it is, I suggest, necessary if the school is to be a liberating educator for all its members. Do schools want to be liberated? Do educators want to be liberating educators? There is much in the history of education suggesting to the contrary. That said, I argue for the implications and implicators of my research.



## **Helpfulness as Addressed in the Literature**

In Chapter 2, we found that model policy, programs and practice were meager and that answers to the inquiry, “What can schools do for Qids?” derived mostly from suggestions, not praxis. We noted several general principles, namely, that Qids have a right to learn in a conducive environment free of distraction and fear; to pursue their education to graduation safe and free from psychological and physical harm; and to enjoy the assurance of well crafted and well executed policy in that pursuit (Bishop 1994; Jones 1999; Schwartz 1994). Beyond these fundamental principles, literature noted educators were virtual Q-illiteracy and made numerous suggestions revolving about teachers and their development and training so as to:

1. Understand that it was very likely that some of their students are LGBTQ
2. Be alert to and intervene in situations of Q-phobic behavior or speech (Rofes 1989)
3. Instill confidence and empowerment to create a safe, non-shaming environment for Qids
4. Engage positive classroom discussion on Q-matters (Andrews 1990; Warshauer 1993)
5. Work willingly with Q-teachers and Q-parents
6. Be prepared to help Qids know it’s okay to be LGBTQ and to help them negotiate coming out if and as they do so
7. Support Qids through their teaching, listening, and sponsoring of club and social association with other Qids
8. Adjust their curriculum to reflect Q-people and Q-culture
9. Reject texts which fail to represent or poorly represent Q-people and build Q-issue resources for classroom use

(Bapst 1991; Chasnoff 1997; Pryde 1995; Walters, 1998). Lipkin (1999) made a useful checklist of what individual teachers can do to 1) inform themselves about Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer people and about homophobia, 2) create a safe and equitable classroom, and 3) create a safe and equitable school (See Appendix N, “What One Teacher Can Do.”).

To provide leadership toward this training and development agenda, schools need to realize that there is a rich resource in the Q-community and Q-organizations, often in their own community and sometimes within regular professional education organizations, to assist them and/or help them find assistance. The added benefit of using such resources is to begin to understand Q-issues from the most knowledgeable source, Q-people (Schwartz 1994). Other suggestions from the literature for how schools might help Qids included:

1. Q-abling counselors, encouraging and expecting them to be supportive of Qids (Burke 1995; Krysiak 1987)
2. Supporting school sanctioned social events (Reed 1997)
3. Developing curriculum which is comprehensively inclusive and reflects Q-people, Q-community, Q-culture and Q-contributions (Bohan 1997; Walters 1998)
4. Funding a school library media center plan to resource and support Qids accessing materials geared to their needs and age-appropriate interests (Anderson 1994; Caywood 1993)
5. Opening special schools or pull-out programs tailored to the needs of Qids (Lipkin 1992; Rofes 1989)
6. Creating a conducive environment for Q-teachers to be out including the explicit administrative and district support for out Q-teachers and Q-staff role models.

Out staff have a particular significance first because their known presence provides someone with whom a Qid can identify and a model and second because their being closeted present a risk to Qids who often recognize these teachers as LGBTQ but deduce from their hiding that Q-ID is a source of shame, something to be hidden (Owens 1998).

### **Helpfulness as Extracted from Qaracters' Testimony**

While their suggestions were not identical, Qaracters in this study produced a web of suggestions with much in common with those that flowed from the literature. Similar to the literature's suggestion-rich and praxis-poor situation, Qaracters' testimony provided a relative abundance of evidence regarding school as hurtful, but a paucity of evidence regarding school as helpful. The paucity highlighted the point of the need schools have to be helpful to Qids and to know how to be helpful to them. Before examining what this study's data said about helpfulness, this section first considers the privilege of the ten Qaracter participants, the limitation that privilege set on the topic of "school as helpful," and the school community's foreignness with this matter. The examination of helpfulness as experienced by the Qaracters then follows, beginning with the testimony of David who felt helped by his school.

This research has observed and examined the resilience of Qaracters in school. These Qaracters, however, were privileged. In addition to their personal positive characteristics, all of them received a base level acceptance from one or more parent. Some of them had enthusiastic acceptance from their family. Parents of all eight minors gave written permission for their participation in this study, even offering their home and their hospitality for conducting this research. Additionally, all Qaracters had supportive friends. While they spoke as Qids in school, they could not speak representatively regarding stress and resilience of other Qids in school even in the Midwestern metropolitan area from which they were selected. Often finding protective factors and

processes apart from school in their families, this study's Qids may have had less need for school support than other less family advantaged Qids.

Given this limiting qualification, I believe the issue of "resilience of Qids in school" requires as thoughtful as possible an extrapolation of what this data says about schools as a category of protective factors and processes for all Qids, especially those who may have less personal and family resources upon which to draw. While clearly limited by my participants' advantage, I proceed, acknowledging my limitation and looking forward to the day of the breaking of the silence that hinders access to the asset of Queer youth.

Because most suggestions of Qaracters regarding school helpfulness were proposals, not examples, I decided to address the issue of school helpfulness by looking at what Qaracters said as well as what their circumstances implied. When Qaracters were prompted by the query, "What was helpful," they frequently answered "not much" or "nothing."

David's school experience was the most positive. It offered a good starting point for the examination of school helpfulness. "There are those people who hate me and who hate everything I stand for, a group my third hour," David claimed. "I'm lucky that I have friends in that class that I can sit next to." Despite the people who hated him, David felt empowered at his school. Beginning with a detailed episode of how an expression of bigotry played out in his third hour, he proceeded into a wider exposition of Q-awareness and support not only in his school, but also in his school system. His monologue made references to both change agents and systemic support.

We were watching a movie and somebody had turned off the lights. This kid said, "Oh don't turn off the lights cause I wouldn't want to get raped by some gay guy." That struck me as so stupid! . . . I didn't say anything to him directly. I talked to my teacher and I said, "They've been saying stuff and I don't think it's really appropriate." He took care of them. He moved them down to the front of the class and he talked to them. "You can't be saying that kind of stuff."

During the conversation I was having with him I said, "I was told that if anyone says anything to me like that, that I can go report it up in the office and they'll take care of them, too." He said, "Okay. I will take care of them and then you do what you need to do." So I went up during my lunch hour and I told my counselor who's one of the facilitators of the group that we run in the high school. She said, "You know he can be suspended for this," and I said "Okay. Let's get on that!" She gave his name and what he said to our vice-principal who talked to him, I guess, and said, "Next time you say something you're out of here." They haven't said anything so idiotic since. They've toned it down a lot since they've been moved and they've been talked to.

We had to fight to get these people who said such outrageous things suspended, the group that Lara and I run, the GLBT group. Our group had to fight. We've been running campaigns. "Promote Tolerance. Celebrate Diversity" is our big main theme right now. We went in front of the staff one morning when they were having a staff meeting and we gave a presentation. We gave them the low down. "This is what we're about. We'd really appreciate if you could do something about it anytime you hear people making these derogatory comments. Say something! Tell Mrs. Quinton who's one of the counselors and we'll take care of these kids. We'll make this a better place for everybody, not just BLGT people. Even if they say racial comments – and we don't even hear that anymore. Anything that's ridiculous in the sense of intolerance, let us know and we'll take care of them."

They've been doing a really good job. The teachers and the administration, they're doing a great job. We've passed out signs that say "Promote Tolerance. Celebrate Diversity." All of my teachers that don't move from their classroom have them posted.

The administration, you know, they don't just support us because they're afraid of a lawsuit. They support us because they believe it's important. I mean, that's what they lead us to believe. They're good people . . . so they make it a good place.

Ms. Quinton and Mr. Walsh both set up with the board and the principals (our making presentations) at the middle schools. We found that more of the freshman coming into high school were the biggest problem. There were more freshmen coming in who would use derogatory comments. So we figured it out and said, "Hey, why don't we go over to the middle schools and say something to the teachers. Say we've really been noticing that a lot of freshmen coming in are saying these kinds of things. We think it's important that anytime you hear somebody saying something you say that that's not okay." They loved it. . . . I think all in all, it went well.

As things stand right now I think they're doing everything we ask them. Every time an issue comes up, they jump on it.

I don't hate going to school as much as I used to (laugh) cause I used to not want to get up in the morning and go to school every day because I just saw nothing there for me. And now, it's great. It's this huge window of opportunity. And I love school (laugh)!

In comparison to any other school described in this study, David's case was exemplar. Elements of his story progressed from an incident of Q-bigotry to David's approaching a receptive teacher to discuss the situation and actions to be taken. In turn, that teacher took a proactive approach while also empowering David. Counselors and administrators backed them up. The dynamic of bottom up action resembled an earlier episode in which David related that counselors, Ms. Quinton and Mr. Walsh, approached the administration and school board to establish their GSA-type student organization. David's story portrayed members of this school community, listening, learning, and becoming part of the solution.

The testimony of Qaracters usually suggested the image of change, whether accomplished or attempted, as starting from the bottom up; Hannah noting that nothing was said about Q-issues unless Queer students spoke up, Bruce describing fighting with the school board for Gay History Month bulletin boards, and Craig talking about Qids having no support in his school unless parents like his stood up for them. While responses to "school helpful" prompts were limited because Qaracters perceptions and experiences of school as helpful were limited, nevertheless, listening to their testimony on these prompts and throughout their interviews provided useful insight into how schools can be assets to Qids in coping with their Q-stressors.

Who they were as different, Queer and discomfoting as that may have seemed to some student and adult members of the school community, was owned and valued by Qaracters. They said Queer and Queering things. Emile found value in embracing his differentness.

First it kind of meant something to me that I would be accepted, but I realized that I wasn't gonna be accepted, no matter what I did. So I went against the trend. . . . You can't exactly be an advocate of gay rights and be popular in most schools (Laugh). I wanted to be non-conformist. Not someone who just doesn't follow any trend, but someone who goes against – specifically. A dissident. Like you know, is seen as a punk I guess. Wear ripped jeans and arm braces and spikes. . . . I was made fun of, but at least I wasn't – it kind of made me who I was. It made me glad that I'm not a teen trying to be popular, a teen trying to fit in. It made me feel like I was someone who would go against the trend, run against the wind. . . . People who support or advocate gay rights in school are gonna be seen as non-conformists and don't fit in.

Bruce's friends were Queered by who he was:

My best friend Leeann brought up the AIDS walk. So I just organized the team. I got about five or six people on our team and we went out on our own. We went crazy and stuff. Natasha my best friend went up to like four or five drag queens and said, "Oh my gosh! Do you know how pretty you look?" She was just making friends with everybody, of course. Every quarter mile there's people trying to get your hopes up . . . All my friends just started going "Whooh! Whooh!" . . . And of course the Pride March at the state capitol . . . When I came back all my friends were like "Why didn't you take us?" . . . They wanted to have a good time and they really wanted to support me. Most of my friends really want to get involved with other communities and try and support them. All my friends just are nice, fun-loving people.

Qaracters often said things indicating that their path to accepting themselves meant resisting assimilation, an issue never clearer than in their tales of the oppressive stress of the closet and the liberatory resilience of coming out. They repelled relatives' and friends' rejecting them and came to claim their differentness, suggesting that the helpful school would interact empoweringly with this difference.

### **Classroom Interactions**

Qaracters looked to individuals who would support them fearlessly and wholeheartedly. This type of support was conveyed in Bruce's testimony above. Recall also the high level of support he received from both his immediate and extended family.

Craig was pleased with the support he received from both his birth parents and his host family parents. “Now I can deal with my problems because I have somebody to talk to. . . . I can handle absolutely everything cause I can talk to somebody.”

In second grade and under stress, Faye lacked family support.

My parents separated. My dad left. You know, major abandonment issues there (laugh). I mean nothing’s permanent, so why trust anything, you know? But I had a really good teacher that year. She was very cool about it and she knew exactly what was going on. . . . I trusted her because she helped me trust her. She gave me a reason to. She was very gentle and supportive and I felt comfortable saying things to her that I didn’t feel comfortable saying . . . to other people.

When her family was in crisis, Geena found that “nobody really paid attention” to her. Rejected by her dad and disappointed with the response from her mom “who wasn’t really there for me,” Geena found a special support in a teacher. She doubted her ability to keep going without that middle school teacher’s support. It was not unusual that, when Qaracters needed someone to turn to and no one was “available” for them at home, they would turn to someone at school. That someone was a teacher.

In the cases when teachers were sought regarding life stressors, they were usually available and supportive. When Qaracters were feeling anxiety due to Q-stressors, however, they rarely even considered teachers an option for talking, listening, or any form of help. Sometimes they tested the water, cautiously asking or commenting about homosexuality. They were more likely to seek an avowed Q-ally like David’s counselor, Ms. Quinton, or an out Q-teacher like Bruce’s teacher, Mr. Opper. Often lacking teacher allies, they spied out suspected Q-teacher. Hence, Andy’s carefully listening to coded language regarding a female teacher’s companion and observing symbols such as her triangle pin; Hannah’s discovering her valued lesbian teacher contact; and Geena’s exchanging, through symbols such as her flag pants and her teachers pride flag, messages of lesbian identity with her middle school teacher.



Some teachers in this study presented a Q-phobic attitude. However, there were probably other teachers who were Q-friendly as well. Those mentioned were few. One reason for this could be that the silence imposed on Q-sex and Q-gender that disabled Qids also disabled Qids' teachers. This study contained insights for Q-abling teachers:

1. Throughout their K-12 experiences, Qaracters had Q-stressors and Q-needs and Teachers K-12 were a valuable potent asset.
2. The espionage atmosphere created by silence, wherein Qaracters couldn't risk identifying themselves or felt compelled to use coded means to find out if a teacher were Queer or Q-friendly, was obstructive. Silence needed to be broken.
3. Kindergarten through early elementary was laden with gender manifestations of Qids. These issues seem intensified for boys and for Jewel as a boy-embodied-girl.
4. Sexual orientation discrimination was strongly manifest in middle school.
5. Discrimination of Qaracters was based on perception. Other students who may not have been Q-gender or Q-sex but were perceived as such may also have been objects of peer and adult discrimination.

Q-abling teachers need not be concerned with identifying students who are Q-gender or Q-sex but rather with students who are *perceived* as such and discriminated because of it. Whereas Jewel received messages that gender difference was unacceptable, Q-abling teachers would work with students learning to accept and appreciate gender differentness and androgyny and to reject giving or receiving pressure to gender conform.

To make themselves available to students who feel hurt and scapegoated, teachers need to give messages that they are approachable and safe. That message may be impossible to transmit in a classroom that doesn't address LGBTQ issues openly. Emile rated each of his teachers as Q-allies based on whether or not they brought Queer content into their curriculum and their comfort in dealing with it either when structured into their

lesson plans or when raised spontaneously in the classroom dialogue. He knew to whom he could and could not speak. Teachers need to be attune to, observing, and addressing Q-bigotry in general conversation and in assault on Qids or Q-perceived students.

Qaracters looked for a classroom in which they were recognized and respected. Classmates' jokes and mocking, even when not focused at a particular a person, "hurt," as Craig said. Geena told of how teachers would not intervene, when she brought Q-derogatory language to their attention. Too often teachers couldn't hear it. Perhaps they couldn't hear how much it hurt. Qaracters asked teachers to stand up against this bigotry. They wanted them to do something.

They believed the classroom were sites for learning about Q-issues. Hannah was grateful for teachers who would "sit down and have class discussions. She appreciated her philosophy teachers helping the class to constructively discuss LGBT issues. Though he had not experienced any Q-oriented discussions at his school, Andy surmised that such discussions "could have been helpful."

Qaracters valued friendship. A Q-friendly classroom could start with ground rules for a safe and respectful environment. Beginning with the youngest members of the school community, stories, discussions, activities, books, pictures, videos and simply talking about Q-people would give Qids messages from teachers that there are other people like them, that they are okay, and that their teacher is okay with them. At the same time, all students receive the message that there are LGBTQ people, that Q-people are an asset to them, and that their teacher appreciates Q-people. Qids often got classmates who were tormentors. They wanted classmates who were friends. Teachers who establish a Q-positive climate in the classroom and within their students increase the possibility of friendship for all and of school being a pleasurable experience for all.

### **School Interactions**

23 of 38 Q-ID stressors were associated in part or exclusively with school. Those that didn't occur at school were either family related or internal conflict issues. Eight of the nine ambiguous stressors, most of which resembled Q-stressors and were connected to them, were associated in part or exclusively with school. When her second grade companion met Geena's announcement that she was a lesbian with the vitriolic statement, "god hates fags," Geena's confusion was confounded by the lack of any countering "You're okay" message from any other source including the school at which this event happened. Whether school was a neutral or complicit site in the collision of Qids with reprobaters was less important than examining these important problems on their premises and developing interventions.

Qaracters viewed schools as capable of making a difference. At each level, schools had Qaracters experiencing Q-phenomena and needs. Elementary schools encountered Q-ostracization particularly regarding gender, unsynchronized Q-identification both by Qaracters and by their classmates, and stress manifestations of these problems. In middle schools Qaracters were sometimes re-answering the question "Who am I?" in light of the new meaning and value of puberty. They were struggling for friendship and experiencing feelings of unhappiness and fear. Qaracters most often came out in high school, a time and place where they felt more options and more power. Yet high schools ranged from adversarial to somewhat supportive and Qaracters often came out and became Q-active despite or even against their high school. All of this suggested that schools could begin some focused assessment of what kind of environment they were providing for Qids and what they could do about it.

Qaracters spoke of school as a communal unit that could make a difference through communal events. They assigned to it specifically three tasks:

1. assuring a welcoming and safe environment
2. affording them the right to associate and
3. celebrating comprehensive diversity, a kind of solidarity in diversity

A welcoming and safe elementary school environment, for example, would appreciate gender diversity. In the middle school, it would translate into addressing the body worries of its students with reassuring education recognizing and appreciating the sexuality of all students and all Qids. The safe, welcoming high school would foster student and Qid empowerment. It would foster group and inter-group pride and action.

Qids valued the ability to associate together. They spoke of having a place in school where Qids could meet and feel safe. While high schoolers lauded their Gay Straight Alliances which achieved this purpose, Geena created her own such informal group in middle school. Iian stated, "I think they should have like this one thing after school where all the people who are gay and lesbians, who are in the closet, can come and tell everybody they're gay and lesbian."

Qaracters saw schools as breaking the anti-Q silence. Bruce suggested that schools have zero tolerance for any form of harassment and make diversity a prominent issue through a Month of Diversity. He saw diversity as all-encompassing, leaving no room for harassment of any kind. He was concerned to educate Qids as much as possible because "they're teased so much that they can't even think or take notes." Qaracters spoke frequently about schools celebrating diversity. Whether a Gay History Month or a Matthew Shepard Day, such events could have the effect of creating shared value and community.

Qaracters felt it was important that diversity be neither incomplete nor fragmented. In eighth grade, Emile described watching "a program, 'Erasing the Hate.' I was afraid that they were gonna forget about homosexuality, but they didn't." Conversely, when he spoke of a diversity celebration, he encouraged as complete a diversity as possible, being sure to include even obscure ethnic groups in his school. Geena drew a connection between the hatred among minorities in her school and the school's failure to celebrate its diversity as a whole. Schools that helped students were seen to be communities that brought together and celebrated all their diversity.

## **System Interactions**

A Q-empowerment school system reinforces Qids efforts to find acceptance, learn, and contribute by the development of policy and allocation of budget to support the school community and classroom in breaking Q-silence, teaching tolerance and celebrating diversity. Qaracters saw school systems doing this in two ways, (a) empowering teachers and (b) supporting a curriculum of diversity.

Qaracters spoke of teacher education as a first step toward schools and classrooms of diversity. Teachers often appeared to Qaracters to lack the most basic Q-technology: terminology about LGBTQ's; images of Q-people as real human beings; facts about Q-people in the arts and sciences; information about the Q-people, Q-community and Q-resources in their own hometown.

Some of this technology is challenging not only to Straight teachers, but to Queer ones. Jewel provided a challenging example for most people. As a girl in a boy's body, Jewel was unimaginable to her schools. The school community could not conceive of who she really was and, in turn, she could find no enduring relevance in the school. "Transgender" is an umbrella term for numerous categories and subcategories. As a "Transsexual," Jewel's need to cross from one sex to another meant layers of transitions in appearance, voice, hormone treatments and surgery. The phrases and images important to her life would be new to most educators' eyes and tongues. Yet, to begin to understand Jewel is to begin to slough off fear regarding the proscriptions of gender in school culture and variations of "gender offense" or "gender crossing" in action, affect, dress or appearance.

Andy proposed "a committee on discrimination (to) educate teachers about . . . ways to reach out to youth." Yet he felt this would probably fail because "parents would be unhappy" and the superintendent would acquiesce. Even under the duress of an extended onslaught of community and parental reaction to Faye's two-day presentation of

Q-issues in social studies class, she knew there was no teacher training or even briefing on relevant Q-issues. Today, metropolitan areas such as the one in this study have ample, capable agencies from college and university campuses to community organizations prepared or even designed to provide useful education for teachers and staff<sup>xvi</sup>. The system that wishes to educate its teachers can. Whether a planned or crisis intervention, resources are available.

Teacher need clear policy and messages from their district that not only support but encourage them to be Q-advocates and allies. Emile considered a teacher who was open about homosexuality to be “one of my idols.” Yet he also remembered “a teacher was threatened to be fired because she taught a book that had homosexual characters.” One piece of evidence to Lian that his school “accepted me (was) my parents are lesbian . . . They don’t mind if a gay or lesbian comes in the building.”

Q-teachers and staff need to know their school system not only allows but values their being out and known to students and to parents. It is welcoming to Qids and Q-parents. It provides the school community with positive messages about Q-people they see and know and with whom they interact. For Qacters, looking for someone with whom they could identify was hard. Finding them and realizing that these Q-teachers felt unsafe to be out sent them troubling and discouraging messages about their school and about themselves. To support Q-youth, school systems must support their Q-teachers.

The short sentence, “Teach diversity,” came from the lips of several Qacters and summed up a recommendation from almost all of them. With that came the imperative, “Start early.” Andy believed that “in elementary, if the school had been very much more

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<sup>xvi</sup> Many urban campuses have LGBT offices of some sort. These may include speakers’ bureaus and teacher education services. Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) has hundreds of local chapters which address the needs of Qids and their families. The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), also with local chapter service areas centered in large and some middle size cities, is the largest national LGBTQ organization serving the needs of Queer youth and their schools.

open about diversity, a lot of the things that I experienced wouldn't have happened.”

Qaracters believed diversity could be learned. Emile pointed to his example of his church's program in which he learned to accept Q-people and eventually came to accept his own bisexuality. Craig cited his school's complete lack of any reference of pride to Q-people or issues. Qaracters suggested actions from references ranging from noting Q-people and issues within regular course content, to courses on sex and gender identity and Q-ID, to comprehensive curriculum revision, K-12.

Qaracters testified that some important sources of Q-ID information came to them through television shows and the internet. There are numerous educational websites that would be interesting and informative to teachers and students alike, educational websites designed specifically to inform a youth audience. Qaracters found the web important to them. The web could resource all diversity aspects of curriculum at little or no cost, with ample material, and with easy accessibility (See Appendix J). “Make it a theme,” Bruce urged. “Try and relate a news story or something of diversity every single day that we have announcements. Maybe even for eighth graders, create a class for tolerance<sup>xvii</sup>.” Much testimony provided reason for teaching units on diversity from the very beginning and throughout the K-12 experience.

Qaracters were concerned about sex education. Several noted that it was Q-exclusive, solely heterosexual in content, too vague, and began too young. “I would change sex ed,” Emile said. “They need to talk about homosexuality.” Frustrated by what he saw as poor instruction “using euphemisms” and being fearful something “might offend some people,” Emile maintained, “Ignorance will not solve anything.” “You need to learn about homosexuality, health, reproduction, basically anything about sex at a

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<sup>xvii</sup> The National Middle School Association created a diversity curriculum, “Opening the Door to Diversity” as a resource guide to teachers. NMSA, 4151 Executive Parkway, Suite 300, Westerville, OH 43081.

younger age. I learned it at 13 and 14 (when) kids have already started having sex.” Qaracters, whose diversity was sex-based, referred to sex education within the context of diversity education.

In this discussion, the word “diversity” was used while “inclusion” was avoided intentionally. When they spoke about their participation and entry into the life, culture and curriculum of the school, Qaracters said they wanted to be “accepted,” not “included.” Rather than on the terms of their similarity to others, they wanted to be accepted on the terms of their diversity, their unique identity. “Include” can mean “to enclose; to shut up or in.” Diversity – the quality, state, fact or instance of being diverse; difference; dissimilitude, unlikeness – is a more Queering term. In the process of opening itself to Qids, the helpful school would not only allows them to receive an education, but to give one, to be one, to the entire school community.

This study has suggested a number of general and specific recommendations to the school community regarding its overall responsibility to Qids and to the student body regarding Q-sex and Q-gender diversity. These suggestions proceed both from the comments made from Qids regarding how schools can be helpful and from the needs they expressed regarding how schools are often not helpful. Some of these are more comprehensive while others are more particular to elementary, middle, or high school:

**Pre-K-12: Help staff collaborate to accommodate Qids in the schools’ curriculum and life:**

- Understand there are Qids in school, pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. Be open, observant, and responsive to the possibilities of how Q-ID may be impacting her needs, feelings, and experiences in both academic and social school sites.
- Educate school leaders, teachers, and staff to be aware and helpful to students and the student body regarding gender and sex identity and diversity. Use LGBTQ resources in the community as well as students



and the school system's own GSAs and support groups to help in this education process. Pay special attention to the most misunderstood such as Transgender Qids.

- Work collaboratively to establish expectations for the school community's professional and adult members regarding diversity and Q-diversity.
- Help students work collaboratively to establish ground rules for class discussion conducive to respectful dialogue and safe consideration of different points of view. (See Appendix O, "Establishing Ground Rules.")
- Assure Qids and bullied students of pro-active safety and support from the school community system.
- Support diversity, including gender and sex diversity, with policy, rules and implementation. Involve the diverse school community as the experts in development of the school community's expectations regarding respect for all its members.
- Develop diversity curriculum supported with resources. Involve the diverse school community as the diversity experts.
- Reward teachers who are Q-friendly and out Q-teachers so they may serve as models to Qids and non-Qids alike.
- Support Q-families.

**Elementary School: Interrupt gender rigidity and distress:**

- Understand that young children perceive their society's gender expectations and enforce them on one another.
- Recognize there are children experiencing rather terrible duress, often related to perceived gender nonconformity.
- Teach and use supportive materials which break out of gender and sex-role stereotypes.

- **Teach for natural gender and sexual literacy. Including gender and family diversity in the discussion of diversity allows children to bring up concepts and terms themselves. The teacher can make sure concepts and words are accurate.**
- **Correct derogatory gender and sex comments or words (e.g., “That’s gay.”)**
- **Teach toward diversity including gender diversity.**
- **Help children to develop rules regarding name-calling and bullying, work with them to determine what should happen when someone name-calls or bullies, and follow through on living up to the rule.**

**Middle School: Help Qids grappling with Q-identity:**

- **Provide positive Q-inclusive sex education allowing Qids to see themselves and address the question “Who am I?”**
- **Understand that Qids are increasingly coming out in Middle School and that the middle school and its staff need to be prepared to provide Qids safety and support into and through this process.**
- **Help students needing support regarding themselves or loved ones by establishing Q-support groups and/or a Gay/Straight Alliance.**
- **Assure students supportive teachers and supportive counseling services. Provide clear signs such as “Safety Zone” stickers and LGBTQ support messages in the classroom and on the counseling office bulletin board that Qids can discuss gender and sex issues safely with adults in the school.**

**High School: Accommodate Q-association:**

- **As in middle school, make known to students the presence of Q-support groups, Gay/Straight Alliance and supportive teachers and counselors.**
- **Understand the Qids’ need to explore relationships and to enjoy the social contexts high school provides for this development (e.g., same sex dates at**

dances, posters including less gender-typical individuals and hetero-couples).

- Support and/or sponsor Q-events (such as National Coming Out Day on October 11, or October LGBTQ History Month)
- Provide Qids with connections to Q-organizations and Q-events that might help their Q-ID development (As an example, See Appendix F and Appendix M.).

Child of the American society, the American school has been both heir and incubator to society's heteronormativity, Q-phobia, and Q-hatred. The acts of commission and omission resulting in a school culture of Q-rejection and a Pre-K-12 curriculum of Q-ignorance are legion. If school is to fulfill its ideal of creating capable and motivated citizens, Qids need to be able to look at their school and see themselves reflected and valued. If educators wish to make this so, they will need great commitment and, perhaps, greater courage.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **CONCLUSION**

This conclusion provides the opportunity to assemble some reminders, theories, pertinent to how Qids bounce back when they hit adversity in school. Some of these theories, especially regarding resilience and sexual identity formation, are about twenty years old. Some are young, having been designed along with this research. Others – perhaps the largest number – are just being conceived even as this project ends. They are all just theories. They will run a course. Hopefully, in their time, they will provide some meaning and improve the quality of life for some people. Perhaps their greatest contribution will live on in their curious progeny.

#### **Summary**

I engaged in this study because of my concern about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Gendered and Queer Sexed Youth – Qids – and the risks involved in the loneliness and rejection they often confront. Particularly, I was interested in the social context paramount to many of them, school.

Qids have a unique dilemma of invisibility. What is especially problematic about their invisibility is that it applies even at home. It creates a fundamental crisis in Qids relationship with their family and its members. Other oppressed groups may have a degree of invisibility with which to deal. But one crucial invisibility they do not have is invisibility to their families.

Confounding this problem of familial invisibility is an intrinsic conflict between a Qid's Q-ID<sup>xviii</sup> and her parents' hetero-identity. Childbearing defines most families as heterosexual. With few, though an increasing number of exceptions, the child was probably conceived heterosexually and spent part or all of her childhood reared in a heterosexually parented household of a female and male. Not only would that female and male represent a heterosexual sex norm, but often a heterosexual gender norm as well. The gender norms regarding familial and work roles and social presentation are fairly apparent social constructs, they are nevertheless deeply psychosocially imprinted.

In the context of her family, a Qid may face several problems. First, apparently unlike her parents, she may not be heterosexual in the orientation of her affection. Second, perhaps also apparently unlike her parents, she may not be heteronormative in her gender orientation. In fact, both of these aberrations may present some varying degree of problem for her. Third, her parents may not know about her difference. Finally, the Qid lives in a heterocentrist society and has been saturated with negative and shaming messages about her value and badness as a Queer youth versus a Straight youth. She has one looming reason to suspect that her parents may feel the same way society does toward her – they are straight. While they may not both be straight, they probably are, and although they may accept her, she doesn't know that and the stakes if they don't like her or reject her are high.

This challenging bind can create stress in the Qid, so much stress that she is at risk for self-destructive behavior. She may give up on her life, turning to drugs or alcohol. She is at heightened risk of sexual disease and even an unplanned conception. As the truth about herself takes on increasing personal and social value, she may experience a commensurate increase in anxiety and depression. Her grades may drop.

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<sup>xviii</sup> See "Language," pp. 18-23.

She may disengage from various aspects of her lives, including dropping out of school. Ultimately, she may attempt suicide or pay the ultimate price of her life.

It was my hope in designing this study to find how Qids could deal with this substantial and serious challenge. I was especially interested in school because in our society it is, overall, the unrivaled social institution and environment in the lives of youths five to eighteen years of age. I am personally and professionally aware of the problem school often poses for Qids. I wanted to find out how school's stressfulness, particularly its Q-stressfulness, could be reduced and school's assets for Qids might be increased.

### **Study**

To do this I decided to conduct a series of in depth interviews with eight to ten Qids who were still in school. By finding participants still in school, I hoped to reduce the retrospective distortion of time, most of all the perception-altering experience of high school graduation. A fairly broad search produced exactly and only ten participants. All of these were out, willing, and, in the case of the eight minor participants, permitted to participate by the parent(s)/guardian(s). Hence they were exceptional. There was substantial variation in orientation and experience though none in racial composition; all were white, one being part Native American. These ten participated in a narrative interview protocol examining the stress they experienced, life stressors and Q-ID stressors. They explained how they responded and were supported in their response.

Two stand-out participants included Jewel, a 32 year old transgender Male to Female Canadian woman and Iian, an eight year old gay male. While these varied conspicuously from the others – Jewel being twice the median age, Q-gendered and Canadian and Iian being half the median age and a never-closeted out gay male – they enriched the individual and collective data. Jewel's gender issues brought to the fore the

undercurrent of gender issues among many of the nine Q-sexed Qids. Iian's advantaged youth perspective gave a close up view of early elementary experience. Additionally, he demonstrated the possibility of being young and out without closeting.

### **Stressor Findings**

Qaracters identified stressors that I arranged into three categories: 36 life-stressors, 38 Q-stressors and 9 ambiguous stressors. Upon analysis, it became evident to me that the ambiguous stressors were actually Q-stressors that I misidentified either because the interviewee had disclaimed them as Q-related or because I overlooked the Q-gender basis of the stressor. I combined these two categories leaving life stressors and Q-stressors. Q-stressors outnumbered life stressors by about 30%. Stressors were subdivided between acute events and chronic conditions. Among the life stressors, acute events were prevalent by about three to one. Among Q-stressors, chronic conditions were prevalent by about seven to one. Chronic conditions tended to have a more serious enduring stress impact than acute events. Hence Q-stressors were more numerous than life stressors and also more stressful. Much Q-stress revolved around entering, exiting and being in the closet.

### **The Closet Findings**

A unique inquiry of this study involved Q-experience prior to the closet, entering the closet, and events precipitating entering the closet. In sequence, *ReSallying Qids* examined Qaracters' experiences before the closet, entering the closet, during the closet, coming out of the closet, and following the closet.

Seven Qaracters reported a memorable awareness of their Q-ID prior to the age of eight and as young as three or four years of age. There was an absence of guilt or stress with these first feelings. There was also no sense of being different. School changed that

providing a large social context allowing peer-comparisons. Here Qids came to realize “I’m different.” Being peer labeled and socially isolated was the predominant distress of the very young Qids in the primary grades.

The unfavorable comparisons of Qids in these early years were of two types: being “different” or “queer” and failing to comply with peers’ gender expectations. Ostracization accompanied both. Qaracters who experienced being labeled different usually also experienced gender disapproval. Qaracters recalled a specific incident or recollection followed by a statement of condemnation or a fear of rejection that provoked them to commit to hiding their Q-identity.

Qaracters exercised two hiding strategies in the closet, deflectors and resisters. They used deflectors to prevent the detection of others. Resisters helped them to avoid their own dealing with their Q-ID. While not a solution to the rejection and ostracization they were experiencing, these hiding mechanisms may have served a beneficial purpose. When Qaracters entered the closet, they were wary that the resources of family and society, including school, were unavailable to them. Lacking almost any external protection, they were challenged to devise a strategy for mobilizing sufficient protective factors to have an honest social life, to be open about who they were and accepted as they were.

Pain, perhaps exacerbated by the evolving meaning and value puberty placed on their Q-ID, agitated the need to come out of the closet. Qaracters expressed being motivated to come out by the desire to live, to be accepted, and to make themselves known honestly as they really were.

### **Findings About Resilience**

Coming out of the closet brought with it positive outcomes of pride, self-confidence and empowerment. While it spawned its own stressors, coming out of the



closet, for these Qaracters, was in the balance an act of resilience. While the closet was marked by shame, lack of self-worth, and depression, Qaracters' coming out experiences resulted in feeling good about themselves, finding acceptance and even improved relationships. They enjoyed varying degrees of access to the resources of familial support and/or friends to stand by them. While their initial coming out forays were split between family and friends at school, the bulk of their coming out experiences were to friends at school.

Following their coming out, school became the primary site for repercussions. Although sometimes frustrated and distressed by the treatment they received from students, faculty or community, Qaracters did not succumb. Out of the closet, they became active for Q and human rights.

Resilience was expressed through Qaracter values and behaviors in the face of risk. These were often adaptations to their Q-stressors.

Qaracters' testimony surfaced habits of thought and action describing belief and values. They expressed care for others, care for themselves, learning, optimism, leadership, service, friends and honesty. Qaracters related their empathy or care for others to their own sufferings. They saw ways that they could be more understanding and more helpful to others because of what they had experienced.

Care for themselves often arose from a need to protect themselves, a reaction to hostility, self-defense. The participants in this study tended to place a high value on learning. They were often enrolled in advanced placement classes and spontaneously described mature study habits and aspirations involving their education and career. Their curiosity to learn also translated into interest in learning about themselves and their Q-ID, particularly while they were still in the closet. Self-examination was the precursor to the first step in coming out, coming out to oneself.

Qaracters exhibited the habit of optimism, even in the trying circumstances of some of their most traumatic stressors. They had a developed sense of mission, interested

in service and leadership. This value was already evident in their lives at school where all six Qaracters who were in a school with Gay/Straight Alliance were not only members of that group but served as its president.

Perhaps because they had experienced so much peer rejection, Qaracters placed a high value on friends. Many of them developed friendship studiously. Whether or not it was conscious, an accelerated development of a circle of friends often immediately preceded coming out. A special value was also placed on Q-friends whom Qaracters felt could more fully understand them. The honesty that Qaracters feared while in the closet was the very thing they sought in order to cultivate true friendship.

Five fields of stress response strategies emerged from the data: retreating from hostility, learning about Q-identity, making friends and allies, coming out, and consolidating their Q-social position. When Qaracters realized that who they were was unwelcome and that they had few or no identifiable allies, they retreated. This strategy in the case of the ten study Qaracters appeared a protective factor providing them a vantage point from which they often initiated work of self-discovery and friendship. They used this retreat position first to crack the silence about themselves and find a name for who they were, then perhaps to crack their isolation and discover other people like themselves.

Qaracters cultivated a circle of friends. For many Qaracters, friends were the most important people in their coming out. When they came out, Qaracters not only had friends but a cadre of Q-friends whom, they weren't apparently conscious, were also Qids. Coming out included coming out to oneself first. While they may have initially come out to others by dropping hints or writing a letter, coming out invariably came down to talking with the other person face-to-face. Sometimes Qids were outed by others. Sometimes the experience didn't go well. Whatever their experience, all Qaracters advanced in asserting their identities.

As they progressed in coming out, Qaracters faced challenges for which they braced themselves. While closeted, they were quiet about Q-phobic statements and

actions. Now out, they responded to an urge to act. Their responses were courageous, often imaginative. Whether or not they accomplished what they hoped, they reported feelings of pride, self-confidence, and empowerment

### **Findings About School**

*ReSallying Qids* began its examination of schools with the consideration of ways in which schools were sites of stress and resilience. There were substantial Q-stressor issues throughout the continuum of elementary, middle and high schools. In elementary school, over half the Qaracters experienced ostracization for being different. Over half, often the same ones, also experienced ostracization for being Q-identified. The hurt they encountered manifest in some instances as self-isolation and in other instances as acting out the distress.

Friendship was a focal concern in middle school. Qaracters spoke of middle school as a time of questioning. They often mentioned feeling unhappy and fearful during this period. Other than sports programs, not a high interest among this study's participants, Qaracters perceived middle school as providing few non-academic options to students, much less resources for Qaracters to deal with their Q-ID.

In high school there were clubs and more social options. Eight Qaracters came out in high school. When they were closeted, schools had been institutions of Q-silence. When these Qids came out, schools responded to them tentatively, sometimes even adversarially if they were self-assertive and active. High schools didn't seem to know how to respond.

Students and staff were agents of stress and resilience. Qaracters most often received positive response as a Q-identified person from friends, those closest to them. Small, cohesive groups such as theatre groups and clubs were also often able to provide a welcoming environment than the large school milieu. Intolerance was more likely to be

the response from individuals and groups who were emotionally unconnected from the Qaracters. Boys expressed more homophobia than girls and girls were more tolerant than boys. Straight males feared gay males “coming on” to them.

Few staff were prepared to converse with Qaracters constructively or to intervene in Q-discrimination effectively, much less to set a Q-tolerant classroom tone or to address Q-issues in the curriculum. On numerous occasions Qaracters encountered teachers who permitted Q-negative language or made Q-negative comments and or told Q-derogatory jokes themselves. Teachers were usually insensitive to the emotional impact of these remarks and actions on these Qaracters. In some instances, teachers applied different standards, permitting Q-slurs when, Qaracters believed and hoped, they would find racist or sexist slurs impermissible. Usually following some investigation, Qaracters identified Q-ally teachers and/or Q-teachers who supported them. Administrators were generally seen as blasé, acquiescing to the demands of parents and vocal community members.

Lack of access to reinforcing support systems plagued Qaracters. They ventured out of the closet largely on their own in the hope that people dear to them would accept them. These Qaracters had the good fortune of winning this wager or enough of it enough times to sustain them as they needed. To the extent that schools made resources available to Qaracters, they were helpful or hurtful.

### **Hurtful Schools**

In hurtful schools, teachers and staff missed teachable moments, missed opportunities to be helpful, failed to protect Qaracters, and at times fostered anti-Q sentiment. These schools tended to misunderstand diversity. They did not see how diversity was a resource to them. Therefore, rather than creating a climate of appreciation, they created one of animosity between diverse groups. Lacking vision, leaders responded reactively to crisis. Qaracters found themselves irrelevant, reflected

neither in the school's curriculum nor in its culture. It was difficult, perhaps even risky, to Q-associate. These schools allowed numerous pockets of intolerance including student social spaces and many classrooms. Administrators and teachers responses to intolerance were generally lackluster if not complicit.

### **Helpful Schools**

One school was characterized as helpful. At that school, teachers and administrators were characterized as responsive to Q-needs and effective in addressing incidents of Q-bias. They acted promptly. When Qids, their Q-group or Q-sponsors asked for something they usually got it. Qaracters in other schools reported other incidents of support. These were, however, isolated incidents or cases of one or several faculty who supported them. All the other schools referenced by Qaracters lacked the critical mass needed to create a Q-supportive environment. Qaracters had ample material for demonstrating how schools were hurtful. However, they had little to draw on other than their imagination when discussing helpful schools. While Qaracters' testimony provided pertinent data regarding school helpfulness, it was less direct and required some extrapolation.

Just as Qaracters lacked beneficial Q-experiences, so did teachers and the rest of the school community. This void provided a potential advantage: considering the possibilities of helpfulness at a deeper level of interaction, meaning that, rather than schools making up curriculum and social opportunities for Q-youth, schools and Qids interact: Qids Queer Educators and Educators Educate Qids. Looking at the broader context of multi-diversity, this would mean not only "Queering" the school but "Feminizing" and "Coloring" and progressively "Diversifying" it. This process would mean diversities bringing their contributions to interact with other diversities' contributions. School becomes an interactive agency rather than a controlling agency.

Diversities, on the other hand, see themselves reflected in the school and in one another motivating in them receptivity to education. This is very different from scenarios related by Qaracters in which minorities disparaged and “hated” other minorities, seeming to compete for as much of the goods of the “majority” as they could get.

Q-supportive action and reform that Qaracters described tended to come from the bottom of the system and move upward. Hence, sites of positive interaction were considered in order from the classroom to the school to the school system.

In the classroom, Qaracters perceived teachers as having the important role of model. Qaracters frequently talked about the importance of teachers, even just one supportive teacher. Q-abling teachers wouldn’t necessarily be able to identify Qids. They would, however, need to become sensitive and alert to circumstances of ostracization for being “different” or perceived by peers as gender inadequate or wrong. This would be a prerequisite for a teacher’s striving to be a resource to students who were perceived as Q-gendered or Q-sexed. To make themselves available to these students would also require their transmitting explicit positive Q-messages through classroom rules and instruction. As a starting point, these teachers would develop classrooms where Qaracters and diverse students would be recognized, reflected and respected.

Schools enjoyed the possibilities that came with their status as a community. Qaracters looked to school to be a welcoming and safe community providing them the right to freely associate with other Qids and allies and the opportunity to celebrate diversity in solidarity with the school’s full complement of diversity. To be sure, Qaracters felt strongly about honoring all diversity.

School systems had the power to allocate assets and resources through policy and budget. Qaracters recommended that school systems do this through teacher development and a curriculum of diversity. Qaracters spoke about teacher development beginning with teacher training. To break the Q-silence, teachers, like Qaracters, needed everything from basic Q-vocabulary, to understanding of the complexities of

Transgender, to knowing Q-people and Q-resources in their own community. In order to be effective Q-allies, the school system needed to be clear that it perceived a teacher's taking a Q-positive stand, making Q-positive messages, and teaching Q-positive content as the system's own expectation in promoting its mission. Likewise, the school system needed to take the position that Q-teachers were a desired asset of diversity to the system and that the system recognized they were able to provide a greater benefit if they were out. The school system could engage a curriculum of diversity wherein the range of LGBTQ issues from sex education to history, culture and family life were discussed interactively with the important issues and values of the school systems' diversity wealth.

## **Theory**

### **Resilience**

*ReSallying Qids* was spawned from concern about the risks Qids face in school and what might differentiate between that risk resulting in loss or triumph. Resilience captured the notion of triumph over adversity. Its theorists proposed three general ways in which it might work, three formulations which may be used in combination for predicting a relationship between risk and assets which would equal a positive outcome (Garmezy 1984). First, that stress and a compensating variable(s) are added together and, if the compensating variable(s) were larger than the risk, the outcome would be a resilient one (Garmezy 1984; Zimmerman 1994). Second, that stress within a moderate range, that is, large enough to be challenging yet not so large as to become unmanageable, if overcome, steeled or inoculated the individual for a subsequent stress (Rutter 1987; Zimmerman 1994). Third, that protective factor(s) are engaged or magnified in the presence of a stressor, dampening its impact and resulting in a positive outcome

(Garmezy 1984; Rutter 1987; Zimmerman 1994). How well is the cloth of resilience patterned to fit the Queer youth's stressed body?

While there has been an initial and recurring tendency to use terms such as compensating variable, asset, and protective factor to refer exclusively to one's personal attributes such as self-esteem, initiative or temperament (Joseph 1994; Wolin 1998), other theorists include affectional ties that encourage trust, reward children for their efforts, and provide them positive role models (Dekovic 1999; Garmezy 1985; Henderson 1998; Werner 1995). Sometimes a child's winning ways may help her access these affectional ties (Werner 1995). Other times there is simply a good family and/or support structure in place for the child to access (Voydanoff 1999). This tension, between the agency of the child to access resources and the agency of others to help the child, obscures the distinction between the purely personal explanation of resilience and the commingling of personal with external protective factors to explain resilience.

Personal assets alone seemed insufficient to explain Qaracters' ability to come out, be out, and be proactive. There were times when Qaracters reached out to get the support they needed. But there were also times when someone was there reaching out when the Qaracter needed her. To credit the Qaracter as the agent of resilience because she accepted help may be stretching the matter to fit the form. Qaracters exhibited laudable qualities, but they were not self-made victors. Interactions with other people were occurring. It took two – or more – for Qaracters to resile from their closet.

Qaracters described their resilience to Q-stressors more in terms of relationships to others than personal attributes. This study's participants had many personal qualities. Lacking any safe and certain harbor other than their own selves, these qualities were miserably ineffective in bringing about a positive resolution to their loneliness and isolation, often over large chunks of Qaracters' life times. Craig joked that it took him ten years to come out of the closet. It wasn't entirely a joke. In his story, he suffered chronically, daily and painfully for the entire duration of his Swiss schooling. Faye's



self-isolating was equally long. When they finally moved beyond their pain, Craig credited his parents and Faye her friends. Qaracters gave little credit to themselves, an issue we'll regard more closely in a moment.

The simple compensating model of resilience may have been more descriptive of simple stress events than ongoing microevents or chronic stressors. Faced with a specific here-and-now contest, the superiority of assets over stress seemed to help Bruce in his divorce custody predicament to choose to live with his Dad. Conversely, Faye's inability to find closure in her Grandpa's death gave the balance to risk factors and left her unresolved in her grieving. In chronic conditions, however, which described most Q-ID stressors, something more complex than the simple addition of risks and assets was at play and the compensatory model appeared less fitting.

During the time of entering and residing in the closet, Qaracters were routinely subject to derogation of their gender and sex propensities. Sometimes they were harassed. Sometimes they were physically threatened or beat up. Sometimes they were called names. Often they heard insults and negative messages against Q-people. One might think that the frequency of these multiple microevents might represent an environment of challenge in which the Qaracter would eventually become steeled or inoculated against such attacks, that some of this array of assault would fit the parameters of "moderate stress" conducive to steeling. That didn't seem to happen. Even small doses of stress seemed to have the effect of pulling the closeted Qaracter down, depressing her. In Andy's case, for example, they seemed to contribute to a steady decline. Others described lows of depression. Did these experiences consistently fall outside the moderate range for challenge? Were Qaracters simply unwilling to rise to the occasion? These questions are informed, I suggest, by how Qaracters handled similar stress events *after* they had come out of the closet. After the closet they confronted harassment. They developed attitudes of courage and assertiveness. They met the challenges. Even when Geena failed to get the results she wanted, she experienced pride

for her efforts. While in the closet, steeling didn't seem to happen. The notion of a moderate steeling stress seemed inadequate to explain behavior to stress in the closet or the reaction to the stress of being in the closet and the initiation of the coming out response.

Coming out resembled the protective factor model in which the stressor itself instigates adaptation engaging a protective mechanism (Garmezy 1984). The protective mechanism, however, often didn't look like a "protective factor." The heightening stress of the closet seemed to trigger coming out. The Qaracter seemed at a bottom or low point, sometimes stating that the pain had become unbearable, that she couldn't continue to live with the lie, or even in Craig's case that he wanted to die. Qaracters described the factor that moved them as a need: the need to be honest, the need to be accepted, or the need to live. The moving factor for attempting to overcome the adversity of the closet seemed more accurately described as a *need* for a protective factor rather than the protective factor itself. Particularly at the beginning of the coming out process, Qaracters lacked the protection of self-esteem, positive family relations and external support systems. They were responding out of want; want for self-esteem, want for acceptance from family and friends, want for social support.

In David's and others' cases, coming out appeared more an act of desperation than resilience. Yet it would seem to represent an extraordinary case of bounding back against the serious odds of low self-esteem and depression. In every case of coming out, Qaracters described their competence as much improved after coming out. They were better able to relate, to meet their needs, to experience a sense of confidence and self-worth, and to contribute to the community. While resilience expressed the sense of the process this study's Qids experienced as they attempted to escape their closets, theoretical models of resilience seemed to lack powerful explanatory value, particularly in regards to describing the phenomenon of the debilitating impact of nearly all Q-

stressors encountered while still closeted and to account for the act of coming out despite the lack of protective factors.

How did they achieve this positive outcome? In the face of danger, Qaracters sometimes simply moved forward because they felt they couldn't stay back any longer. They were compelled. They gambled. They won. But what would have happened had they met formidable opposition? Given the stress and the assets at the time, one might have predicted a negative outcome for Bruce, for example, facing his outing by his mom. What Bruce didn't know in advance was that his parents were very supportive of his sexual orientation, even forging a support base for him with his extended family. Bruce became confident and enthusiastic. What if, on the other hand, his outing was accompanied with hostility, rejection, being thrown from his home? Bruce used the opportunity he had. What if he didn't have that support? The protective factors were unknown before the crisis. They were discovered after it. Qaracters did not act knowing that support would be there to bring about a positive outcome. They beat the odds not by overcoming a risk but by taking a risk. The risks Qaracters took were sometimes thoughtful, favorable ones. They tallied as many indicators of receptivity as they could. Nevertheless, the great unknown was missing: will she accept *me*? The proof of the risk was made apparent with a number of important losses. Hannah lost to her mom, Geena to her Dad, David to his best friend. Each model of resilience is a formula: some type of relationship between asset(s) and stress adjusted with weights and a constant yields a predictable outcome. Predictability, however, was precisely what Qaracters lacked.

Surviving the closet may resist being resilience modeled. Why? The issue surfaced in these Qaracters involved assets. In the separate investigations of all 83 stressors, Qaracters were asked a series of questions regarding themselves as agents of stress:

Looking at yourself in this event, how do you feel in general about how you thought and behaved in this situation?

Were there things you thought or did that hurt you? What? How? What motivated you? Where did this come from or how did you learn this?

Were there things you thought or did that were good for you? What? How? What motivated you? Where did this come from or how did you learn this?

How would you assess what you thought or did to help or hinder yourself? What do you like about yourself in this situation? What things would you like to change or develop?

Again at the conclusion of the third interview, Qaracters were given a broad opportunity to consider “In difficult, stressful situations, what helped you bounce back? Was it things inside yourself?” and “What are some of your qualities or strengths that helped you out?” One of the large research surprises for me was how little information the application, repetition, and adaptations of this line of questioning yielded. At times the lack of information from the larger questions made it difficult to follow up with the clarifying ones. The issue was not that Qaracters lacked positive personal qualities. When it came to the issue of their bouncing back from difficulty, particularly regarding the Q-stressors that formed the majority of their strife, they tended to attribute it to relationships. They cited people who helped them; family, friends, Q-teachers, people they met in Q-associations or organizations. However, this attribute was not available to them before they came out or as they came out but only after the fact.

Hence, there is here a problematic disconnect. Qaracters lacked access to reinforcing support systems. Even more rudimentary, Qaracters in the closet didn’t even know whether or if family, friend or institutional systems of support, “protective factors,” existed. In the closet, the entire categories of social and relational assets are unknowns. This profound problem not only confounds resilience theory. It creates a dilemma for Qids.

## **Perpetuating Heterodysfunction**

American society perpetuates the power centering system of heterosexism. All children are required to meet its standards, to pass stringent tests of competency. What is peculiarly unschoolish about this is that the prefects are seemingly the children themselves.

From the first question, “Is it a boy or girl?”, to pink and blue color norming with a baby’s first wrap, gender is taught with ferocity. First messages of word, tone of voice, images and expectations cooed to infants are rife with snail and spice images. In an ingenious, richly complex process, little children are established as the foot soldiers of heterosexism, enforcing deeply understood, intricate codes of male and female. Set in the context of their first large, pervasive, and daily social context – school – they teach, police, and reinforce with relentless consistency.

Within the testimony of these Qaracters, entry into school seemed a catalytic event for converting deeply engrained heterosexism into a socializing force among children, small children. For the Qaracters in this study, Q-ID stressors could and often did begin almost at once in school. Peers in primary grades were adept, sometimes ruthless, at policing gender. Teachers were oblivious to powerful social dramas in which students were apparently classified as accepts and rejects.

If the Qids of *ReSallying Qids* were any indication, children are rigorously acculturated into society’s heterosexism. This heterosexism appears to be so deeply and pervasively assumed that it loses visibility. If teachers see it at all, they don’t seem to see it as something they can or should do anything about. Children’s suffering for deviation from the male-boy/female-girl dichotomy seem unimportant to anyone who might be a guardian of young children in school. Heterosexism enjoys the status of an autonomic social muscle. Qids and their peers enter school readied to exercise it, searching for and stigmatizing peers who fall too far from the appropriate gender pole.

Children inclined toward the heterocenters are rewarded for sloughing off whatever of themselves doesn't fit. Children disinclined toward that center are not only punished by their peers for their difference but may become self-punitive as well. The self, whether sacrificed in conformity or castigated for difference, is an inestimable loss, the price tag of heterocentrism.

Elementary and preschools are seminal sites of this reproduction and reduction of the human spirit. Any teacher of the young who heard a child call another child gay, who had a hunch that one of the boys is ostracized because he is small or weak or not good at sports, who observed bullying, or who heard the term "girl" used as a derogation, was probably also in the presence of a child experiencing the pain of Q-stress. Many liberal minded people advocate interventions in high school. Yet much is lost in waiting for years, allowing a generation of children to be damaged and preparing them to continue the cycle of destruction.

The notion that sexual awareness begins at puberty is a myth intensely reinforced by a society which ubiquitously conspires to cocoon its young from all things sexual and systematically deprives them of the simplest knowledge or words of empowerment. As this practice of deprivation implies, children are not asexual beings. If they were, their intellectual bondage would not be necessary. The practice of desexualizing children and carefully grooming them into gender polarities is a fundamental element of the perpetuation of heterosexism.

Beginning with a child's first experience of school, the school community has an opportunity to discourage both heterocenters of gender and sex and castigation for Q-gender and Q-sex. Members of the school community need not be able to determine whether a child is transgender or bisexual or gay or lesbian. They need to place their focus on the curriculum, entering the process of growing awareness, developing the habit of removing gender proscription, recognizing Q-difference appreciatively, and creating a classroom climate of diversely inclusive diversity for the understanding and celebration

of all types of human Queerness and difference. Classroom rules, expectations, language, messages, curriculum and resources provide the tools for diversity education. Teachers of our youngest students can begin by reflecting and making decisions about stories that are read, pictures that are displayed, language used, figures of speech, letters to parents, classroom rules, dress expectations, games played, parental roles rehearsed, lyrics sung, and all manner of peer interactions.

On the bottom line, schools, the communities which form them, and the individuals who member them have a choice to make: whether to reproduce or transform society. Often the action chosen is to alleviate the pain. If we can elevate some people of color to higher visibility in sports and politics, perhaps racial oppression won't hurt so much today and the more sensitive conscience will feel salved. Perhaps in some incremental sense some beneficial affect may have been achieved. If we are to make any impact transitioning from anesthetizing pain to reducing the cause of and effect of homophobia, we need to either construct a critical mass of values and belief to shift perception of benefit in society to favor diversity or focus human energy and support on the individual to empower her to rebuff being oppressed or oppressive.

### **Sexual Identity**

Within this heterodysfunction reproducing society, Cass (1984) and Trioden (1989) proposed their stages of Q-sex identity development. The disparity between the distended homosex identity formation process and the heterosex identity lack thereof lead one to wonder *What is sex identity formation?* It would seem that both Queer and Straight identities are effected by heterocentrist assumptions and that, if these centers shifted or fell or were somehow altered, so, too, would be these identities.

Perhaps because their microsocial experiences were a bit less heterocentered or heteroassumptive than others, Qaracters rewrote some aspects of these developmental

theories. Troiden begins with sensitization to feeling gender odd. Qaracters described an earlier experience, one of simply being aware of their gender or/and sex self and not necessarily having any comparative base against which to call themselves odd. It was not unusual, however, that, after this simple rather non-judgmental awareness they would have a comparative experience in school and, indeed, were likely to feel odd. Cass and Troiden then both suggest a stage of identity confusion. Qaracters, however, seemed more identity certain than confused. What was confusing to them was how people responded to them. They didn't expect reprimands for kissing someone of the same sex or for having gender feelings opposite to their peers. Confusion followed a burgeoning Q-ID clarity when that clarity deferred to disapproval.

Stage theories seemed less descriptive for some Qaracters such as David and Hannah who moved rather quickly from self-acknowledgement to a full scale coming out or for Iian for whom they seemed almost totally irrelevant. When I first read Cass' six stage theory, I found myself replying "Yes!" "Yes!" I came out in my upper forties. Teens and younger, this studies Qaracters' experiences suggest that being able to come out and find relative support condenses these stages making them less distinct and less important. Confusion, comparison, tolerance, acceptance, pride, synthesis – they were all evident in the course of the study. Their presence in individual Qaracters, however, ranged from fairly to hardly evident. If ages of coming out continue to drop, and research suggests it is dropping rapidly, the Q-sexual identity formation constructs may change as well.

### **Limits**

Some limitations of this study were fairly obvious to me as I began this research and others have become clearer to me in the process of the research itself. I knew that the design calling for students still in school who were out, willing, and permitted to



participate would be a limit itself. This certainly would not constitute any “representative” group. There are important stories of stress and resilience to be told about multiply marginalized Qids and Qids with more hostile family and school environments. I suspected from the start that I’d have to violate my meager parameters to get at least one transgender participant – and I did. I knew the number would be small and I knew the fact that I was doing all the interviewing would confine the perspective. Nevertheless, I chose to do this study judging that my perspective could be used to the benefit of the research. I felt that the reflection on school in school, regardless of who participated, was ground breaking and useful. However limited, this was an important start.

The parameters of resilience theory provided a stepping stone, I hoped, to some further insight into rebounding from the obstacles of Q-ID stressors. Placing these in the context of all stressors, non-Q and Q alike, helped establish the relative importance of Q-ID stressors and differentiate them other stressors Qaracters experienced.

Even though I situated the question of resilience in a place and community of school, I confess to entering this process focused on the individual and learning that Q-resilience was a community event. Had I as certain a hunch when I started about the systemic nature of heterocentric reproduction, the focal role of children in this process, and the schizophrenic behavior of schools for our young protecting children in so many matters yet leaving them so vulnerable to hetero oppression, I would have pursued a different line of questioning, perhaps, examining more carefully the relationships and roles of students and adults. Had I, of course, I would have sacrificed some of the rich knowledge Qaracters shared about their personal experiences.

I become more and more keenly aware of the importance and limit of time. This phenomenon is changing before our very eyes. I have just read, for example, in the January 2001 edition of the “PFLAG Detroit” newsletter that the National Youth Advocacy Coalition reported a four year drop from 19 to 15 years of age in a five year

period, 1995-2000, of young people involved with their agency “coming out publicly” and a growing phenomenon of youth coming out before puberty. The implications could be huge for many elementary schools with virtually no resources and for middle schools in which friendships and alliances are already precarious issues.

*ReSallying Qids* hopefully provides a useful thimbleful of knowledge and, for me at least, raises a torrent of questions. What the ten Qaracters had to say was enormously instructive. Yet for each of these ten there are scores of Qids suffering in deeper silences or mired in irresolvable conflict with their religious environment or coming out to a chorus of rejection or multiply marginalized by poverty, race, ethnicity or ability. These ten were the very small tip of a very large, heavy, deep iceberg. So much unseen!

### **Future Research**

Clearly, this research cannot be considered definitive and certainly not of long lasting value. Society is changing rapidly and in complex ways. Children are coming out younger, yet oppositional groups are becoming more vocal and active. When children come out younger, they may also be facing greater risks in a society and in schools that have not made any significant accommodation for them. There is a need for follow up research and regular research reporting, first to hear from a lot more Qids and second to read the constantly changing weather patterns of civil gains and losses, social mood, phenomenological shifts, the changing social climate, local conditions and the impact of all these variables on Qids, their peers, and society.

Several phenomena from this research may merit special future attention. First, there would be, I believe, great value in conducting more divergent research of Qids in school –at all ages and all levels. Getting below the boundary of graduation gives front-line data of great importance regarding Qids’ school experiences. Future research has to press boundaries scratched or untouched by this research: gender crossing and gender

bending; what schools have to do with closeting; how the closet can be deconstructed; the experience of children of multiple ostracizations or multiple marginalizations; how Qids learn Q-phobia; why youth police gender; margins at which Q-stress arouses strength or presents danger; Q-perception as a problem for Queer and Straight offenders alike, for the perpetrators and the outcast alike. And are there other Iian's? If so, do they represent a desired future? How do we go there? Perhaps the future *ReSallying Qids* suggests is how to help Qids and Kids sally in the first place.

Second is the further investigation of the finding that Q-ID stressors can and often do begin almost at once in school. If this is true, then the notion that Q-issues are best postponed until high school is profoundly troubling. Q-ID is a matter for little children in our society's elementary schools. Jewel helped open my eyes to the gender distress of children. At times her invisibility was so complete that I imagined her as a ghost walking through school. When she appeared, on the playground for example, teachers saw a girl and scolded "Stop hurting that girl!" – while the children rolling in laughter saw a boy. It was surreal. Yet the pain young Qaracters felt about being different or being gender-wrong was very real. At least for the Qids of *ReSallying Qids*, messages of "You're *not* okay!" were present more often than not in the primary grades of elementary school. These messages were consequential to the Qaracters and resulted in their withdrawal behavior of closeting and bad feelings about themselves. If this is true, we need to know and we need to do something about it.

Third, the investigation needs to move its gaze from Qids, the identified patients, to the pathologized school family. The plight of Qids in school usefully point to the fact that there is a problem, but it's not them. What is the social interest in reproducing itself heterocentrically and how are children co-opted into this production? What mechanisms draw schools into this process? What is their reward? How can the cycle be broken?

Finally, though peripheral to the study as designed, diversity and the interaction of diverse groups surfaced with curious insistence. I was surprised how often Qaracters

opted for diversity education more than LGBTQ education and how they saw diverse others' benefit integral to their own. In Chapter 1, I wrote about assimilation and how Queer seeks to interrupt this process that has had questionable benefit in civil rights and liberation movements. I worried aloud that it might be a terrible irony if the assimilationist goal of equal distribution of benefits may instigate a mutation of discrimination into a more resistant strain including divisiveness. More importantly, when school and their diversities interact dialogically, school becomes increasingly diversity-receptive. In the assimilation model, women strive for equal rights in school and People of Color fight to gain equal power. In neither case do they actually or, I have a hunch, ever gain equality. In the diversify model, the school is feminized. School is Colored and the People are educated. It is a mutual empowerment, creating more benefit for all rather than distributing what exists less unequally. A matter for theory and research, I ask if Queers are better not included in school and whether they need rather to diversify it, to impress it with Queerness . . . and Femininity and Color and the maximum Diversity.

*ReSallying Qids'* Qaracters embodied questions. How far might society and schools be prompted and progress from coldly shoving away toward warmly embracing Q-bodies? Queering future research is premised on increasing tolerance for the questions raised by female bodies and Queer bodies and Colored bodies and, yes, by male bodies. Queering the norms of power centers and heterocenters involves both questioning them and corrupting them with diversity.

I would hope that such future research would avoid reducing itself to being normative. There is a need to interview many more Qids in school because there are many, many more youths in school and they each have new knowledge first to inform us, and then to help us create new knowledge for liberation, compassion and joy for all of us. I sincerely advocate not norming Queers but Queering norms, decentering, destabilizing

heteronorms not by attacking them but by helping us see the closets and straight jackets which we impose and in which we live.

### **Meaning**

What does this research mean?

If schools are to become communities more likely to foster resilience in Qids than to squelch it, schools need to do many times what they are currently doing to accommodate these youths. If schools are to desist from their function as agents and accomplices to society in replicating the system which perpetuates this discrimination, they need to reinvent themselves.

From entry to exit, schools are regularly failing Qids. Q-stress is a serious problem for Qids and schools are more often complicit culprits than a helpful resource. When they do help it is often too little terribly late. Schools have several tasks to engage in order to assure Qids they are basically welcome and safe: 1) to Q-educate their faculty, 2) to Q-educate their students, 3) to set expectations for and model Q-welcoming, and 4) to protect and support their Qids. This is not a high school issue and a middle school issue but a big elementary and early childhood education issue. Schools need to stop making the situation worse by ignoring, condoning, or contributing to the antagonism Qids experience.

Schools need to break the code of silence. In simple human terms, schools can allow their youngest children to see gender and affection varieties including Q-varieties. Beginning at the beginning, schools can include Q-families in their depictions of families and make their own Q-parents and Q-teachers feel welcome to talk about their lives and their loved ones as Straight parents and teachers talk about their lives and loved ones.

Schools can create a curriculum diversified by their diverse members, in other words, a curriculum not simply about their diversity, but invented by and in the words of

their diversity, a curriculum process involving people in the invention of their own image. It is the process, not the content, which is of first concern. The incremental steps of such a continuous process might prove much more beneficial than the imposition of a revolutionary curriculum. Qids, for example, expressed much enthusiasm over the founding of Gay Straight Alliances in their schools. These organizations were started by them, led by them, and sometimes gave them opportunities to educate their peers and to give teachers training.

The curriculum of diversity is needed in elementary and pre-school because it is already a daily venue that children are dealing with when they first come to school. Children arrive at school with well-established prejudice about Q-people (e.g., the “candy man”), and with a socially conferred entitlement to uphold gender stereotypes. It is not unusual for Qids to come to school with some sense of their Q-ness, to be mocked and marked for it early on, and to recoil into the closet by second or third grade

Qids are inaudible and invisible. They have neither words nor images to reflect themselves. They suffer in a vacuum of aloneness. They hear and see themselves nowhere. Any echo or reflection of who they are is carefully absented. Not even their moms and dads are like them. Qaracters expressed the idea that no one in the world was like them. Convoluting messages and images they received about their Q-selves were bad. Worse, they were internalized. Schools can stop deleting and start inserting the auditory and visual signs of self-identity and empowerment.

Heterocentrism corrupted diversity within and between the people in Qaracters’ lives. Rejection and harassment were normal. Acceptance, though laudatory, was regarded with surprise. Heterocentrism’s selection process excluded Qids. It limited the possibilities for all students regarding their self-expression; participation in sports, music, and theatre; their dress, appearance, and mannerisms; the way males and females relate among themselves and between each other; same and different gender friendships. It

incubated intolerance sometimes demonstrably creating within the same person oppressor and oppressed.

Schools collaborated with society in the reproduction of heteronorms and centers. Gender and sex norming and policing were common functions not only of students but of a number of teachers. The majority of educators made their intolerance apparent by their passive-aggressive unwillingness to step forward or take a stand for Qaracters when they were mocked or under duress, sometimes even voicing their disapproval of a student's Q-ID.

From my perspective, the most surprising image from this research is the systemic reproduction of heterocentrism in the early elementary grades. When Qaracters first came to school it was common that they have some idea about their Q-ness and/or that their classmates were attuned to their Q-ness. Primary grade students knew the heteronorms and played the role of enforcing gender conformity. Under their scrutiny, any number of differences was liable to be held suspect. Apparently non-Q differences were matters raising suspicion about Qaracters' gender and sex orthodoxy. All sorts of intolerance to difference surrounded these Q-youths. Yet their elementary school teachers and staff were amazingly deaf and blind to all of this.

Key to Qids succeeding are the three-dimensional images of Q-people with whom they can identify. By writing Q-people out of the school's curriculum and life and by silencing Q-teachers, Q-staff, and Q-students, schools isolate Qids and obstruct their human development. Qaracters at times seemed on a mission to discover others like themselves. Public libraries to some extent and more so the internet helped validate their Q-existence. But nothing was more valuable than people with whom they could talk and interact. Through friends, bars, community Q-groups, GSAs, LGBTQ events, all Qaracters eventually came to find communities of belonging. The quandary was that discovery of this community followed coming out and was unavailable, even unknown, before coming out.

In the end, we want to know not only what accounts for the resilience of queer youth in school but also why schools are so hostile to them. Queerness represents a valued threat to the heterosexist center of power, the forbidden hinterlands defining the confines of heterosexual acceptability. Schools not only reap support from adhering to society's heteronorms but also play a central role in their reproduction. Institutions for the formation of society's young, they are fecund spawning grounds for the proliferation of gender and sex norms. While schools sponsor heterosexism through policies, procedures, curriculum, and practice, they allow students latitude and authority to police one another and punish deviants. This nearly unchecked power may well be the greatest faculty schools give to students and students may well be the preeminent heterosexualizers of one another.

Schools also, however, may suffer for adherence to society's heteronorms. Hetero-ness fails more than Qids and Q-people. It fails the Q-ness in each person, limiting the freedom of gender and sex expression and socially associated self-expression, human interests, friendship, and love. Individuals in school may protest in their own self-interest, or may succumb to pressure to change, or may empathize with others and collaborate in diversity and Q-diversity. Hence, there *are* tendencies built into school communities and their membership to question and non-conform. Even as the interests and needs of Qids may move them out of the closet, so the perceived interests and needs of schools and the communities that form them can move them to resist being functionaries of heterosexism. What Qaracters described as the more positive aspects of their schools was hardly anything so radical. Schools' accommodations to Q-ness were not resistance to their hetero reproducing role so much as creating some modest allotment of coexisting alternative space for Qids. Some schools were establishing GSAs and intervening when Q-harassment was reported, but no schools were yet reworking their curricula and hetero life styles.



Why were Qaracters sometimes succeeding in accepting themselves, sharing themselves and liking themselves? What accounted for taking resilient action in school? Need. In my opinion, models of resilience offer insufficient theories and formulas to explain the act of coming out of the closet. Perhaps the need for acceptance or the need to live would meet the broad standards of the definition of protective factor as a process that interacts with a risk in reducing the probability of a negative outcome (Zimmerman 1994). But need is unlike any other example of a protective factor: assertiveness, self-esteem, intelligence, supportive home environment, positive school environment. In fact, Qaracters positively lacked – needed – many of these fairly standard examples of protective factors. Need, whether for acceptance or food or clothing, is a stress, more a risk factor than a protective one. Applying the challenge model of resilience, one might argue that a moderate level of stress provoked coming out. However, coming out seemed provoked by a high level of stress. Moderate and low levels of stress which might seem opportune occasions for steeling were often described as occasions for new lows of self-deprecation and depression. In other words, events which the challenge model would predict were occasions for steeling Qaracters generally were not and stress which the challenge model would predict might render the individual helpless did not necessarily do so.

Qaracters made the bold step of coming out of the closet because they felt they had to. However, as the limitations of this study note, these ten Qaracters were notable exceptions, winners, if you will, of a risky lottery. How many other Qids took the gamble of coming out and lost? How many more remain unwilling to take the gamble at all and may never win true friendship, love, and pride? Schools need to know they can support Qids in taking the chance to come out and improve Qids' chances of winning. Schools need to believe that they need their Qids to win. They need to believe that each Qids' victory is a victory for all kids. The opening of joys and possibilities for each Qid

mean the opening of new joys and possibilities for all of us in their schools and in their society.

## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**

**Promotional Materials**

**Re-Sallying Qids**  
**a study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and**  
**transgender teens in school**

**Dear Parent/Guardian,**

**“Re-Sallying Qids” is a study about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth and their experiences in school. What obstacles do they face? What helps them or hinders them in overcoming obstacles?**

**Participants will be LGBT youth who have not yet graduated from high school. They will have three or four face-to-face audio-taped interviews about 60 minutes apiece. During the second or third interview, they will complete a paper-and-pencil survey. They will receive \$15 per interview.**

**My name is Glenn Klipp. I am an educator, a dad, a gay man, and a doctoral student at the University of Michigan, School of Education. “Re-Sallying Qids” is my doctoral dissertation. I believe this issue is very important for the well-being and happiness of our children. If you think your child qualifies and might be interested in participating, please contact me:**

**Phone: (734) 930-0357**

**Email: [tobealive@aol.com](mailto:tobealive@aol.com)**

**I know how important this matter is to you and appreciate your thoughtful consideration.**

**Glenn Klipp**

**Re-Sallying Qids**  
**a study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and**  
**transgender teens in school**

**Dear LGBT Youth,**

**“Re-Sallying Qids” is a study about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth and their experiences in school. What obstacles do they face? What helps them or hinders them in overcoming obstacles?**

**Participants in the study will have three or four face-to-face audio-taped interviews. Each interview will be about 60 minutes long. During the second or third interview, they will complete a paper-and-pencil survey. They will receive \$15 for each interview.**

**My name is Glenn Klipp. I am an educator, a dad, a gay man, and a doctoral student at the University of Michigan, School of Education. “Re-Sallying Qids” is my dissertation research. This issue is important for all of us. Would you like to take part? If you have not yet graduated from high school and (if you are under 18) your parents would consent, contact me at:**

**Phone: (734) 930-0357**

**Email: [tobealive@aol.com](mailto:tobealive@aol.com)**

**Thanks for considering this important opportunity.**

**Glenn Klipp**

**APPENDIX B**

**Participant Agreement Forms**

## Re-Sallying Qids

### PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **BIRTH DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **AGE:** \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, want to volunteer to participate in the study, "Re-Sallying Qids," a study about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth and what hinders or helps them bounce back in the face of obstacles they face in their lives and in school. I understand that I will be asked to complete a survey and to interview several times with the researcher, Glenn Klipp. The process will include three or four interview, about an hour and fifteen minutes each. I will receive \$15 per interview and an additional \$5 if the interview exceeds 75 minutes.

I am welcome to ask questions about the study before I agree to it and while I'm involved with it. I can change my mind and drop out before the study begins or discontinue at any time. I am free to answer or not answer any question on the survey or in the interviews. Regardless, I will be paid for each interview I complete.

My privacy will be protected. My survey and my interviews are forever confidential. The audio tapes of my interviews will be transcribed, that is, typed out in written form. After this study is completed and final, Glenn Klipp will destroy these audio tapes. My survey and my interview transcripts are for his eyes only. To keep my identity anonymous, my name -- as well as other identifying information such as names of family and friends, the name of a school, my address -- will be deleted and replaced with anonymous names for permanent files and public use.

I understand I will receive a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

If under 18,

**Parent's/Guardian's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

To set up survey and interview appointments, contact Participant at:

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



## Re-Sallying Qids

### FUTURE RESEARCH CONTACT AGREEMENT (Optional)

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **BIRTH DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **AGE:** \_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that, perhaps, Glenn Klipp will do future research and may be interested in contacting me for a follow up study. I may be interested in participating and permit him to save my name and contact information for that purpose for five years from the date of my signature below.

This does not mean that I will participate; it only means that I am willing to be contacted by him. I am free at that time to decide whatever I choose--to participate or not to participate.

I understand that my name and information for this purpose will be kept in the confidence of Glenn Klipp and used solely for the purpose of contacting me for his--and no one else's--research.

I understand I will receive a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

If under 18,

**Parent's/Guardian's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

To set up survey and interview appointments, contact Participant at:

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX C**  
**Interview Protocol**

## Qids Interview

### FIRST INTERVIEW

Opening: As you know, I asked you if you'd be interested in volunteering in "Re-Sallying Qids," a study about queer youth -- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-hetero -- and what hinders or helps them bounce back in the face of obstacles they face in their lives and in school. To do this, we'll interview together, probably three or four times.

I myself am gay. I have four children; two are straight, one is lesbian and one is gay. I've taught and worked in schools for years. The pains and stresses that young people feel are important to me.

Today we'll begin our research together. Before we do, I want to remind you that your participation is completely voluntary. You are welcome to ask questions about the study whenever you want. You are free to answer or not answer any question or drop out of the study at any time. Okay? Do you have any question right now? . . . .

So let's talk about trouble.

Let's talk about pain;

pain in your life

-- rejection, loss, conflict, stress. Pain --

things that hurt.

We can start anywhere.

It doesn't matter.

What comes to your mind when you think about

something that really hurt,

something in your life? . . . .

## SUBSEQUENT INTERVIEWS

Today we'll continue our research together. Remember that your participation is completely voluntary. You are welcome to ask questions about the study whenever you want. You are free to answer or not answer any question or drop out of the study at any time. Okay? Do you have any question right now?

The process is iterative. If this script is used for field notes, be sure to have multiple copies of the interview.

1. General Discussion of Stressful\* Event: You mentioned that you can recall (describe event:)
- 

Can you describe this event?

What happened?

Where and when did it take place?

Who was involved? and how?

Why do you think this happened?

Was there anything that stands out as particularly memorable in this event?

What was that?

Why?

Was there any person who stands out as particularly memorable in this event?

Who was that?

Why?

Was there anything that strikes you about what you thought or did that is particularly memorable to you?

(If yes) What was that?

Let's look at this event in more depth.

2. SELF RESILIENCY: Looking at yourself in this event . . .

How do you feel in general about how you thought and behaved in this situation?

Were there things you thought or did that hurt you?

What? How? What motivated you?

Where did this come from or how did you learn this?

Were there things you thought or did that were good for you?

What? How?

What motivated you?

Where did this come from or how did you learn this?

How would you assess what you thought or did to help or hinder yourself?

What do you like about yourself in this situation?

What things would you like to change or develop?

3. SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT: What about school?  
Looking at this event. . .

What do you think in general about how the school and people in the school behaved in this event? Why?

Were there people or things that happened that hurt you in this event?

Can you describe this?  
Who was involved? How? When? Where?

Were there people or things that happened that helped you in this event?

Can you describe this?  
Who was involved? How? When? Where?

How would you assess the school environment in terms of helping or hindering you?

What people or things or events did you like about school in this situation?  
What do you see might be changed or improved about school?

4. OTHER FACTORS: What about other people, other factors besides you and school? Looking at this event . . .

Were there other people or things that happened outside of school that hurt you in this event?

Can you describe this?  
Who was involved? How? When? Where?

Were there other people or things that happened outside of school that helped you in this event?

Can you describe this?  
Who was involved? How? When? Where?

In terms of these other factors, do you have any suggestions for change?

5. REPEAT: Repeat steps 1 through 4 for other stressful events as recollected by the Participant.

List other Stressful\* Events to discuss in this (or subsequent) interview:

---

---

---

---

---

6. CONCLUSION: What do you see in all that we've been talking about?

In difficult, stressful situations, what helped you bounce back?  
Was it things inside yourself? outside yourself?  
Please explain.

What blocked you from bouncing back?  
Things inside yourself? outside yourself? Please explain.

Are there any strengths you wished you had? anything you'd like to work on in yourself?

What are some of your qualities or strengths that helped you out?

How about school? What changes in schools would be important to you?

This concludes our interview. Is there anything you'd like to add or change in this interview?

As you were promised, your interview(s) will be treated with privacy and care. Thank You very much for sharing your time, your story, your wisdom! Now that you've completed this process, what did you think of it? (Discuss)

Might you be interested in participating if I do another study in the future? (Provide future Contact Agreement.)

Again, Thank You!

**APPENDIX D**  
**Qids Survey Form**

## Qids Survey

Read "Q" as "Lesbian," "Gay," "Bisexual," "Transgender," "Non-Hetero," "Queer." You choose.

"Qids" are Q-kids.

**I. General Information** Today's Date: Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_

**My Name:** First: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_

(To keep your identity anonymous, your name -- as well as other identifying information such as names of family and friends, the name of a school, your address -- will be deleted and replaced with anonymous names for permanent files and public use.)

**Birth Date:** Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_

**My Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ (years old)

**Street Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_

**My Gender: (Check one):** Male: \_\_\_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**My Race: (Check all that apply):** Black: \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic: \_\_\_\_\_ Asian: \_\_\_\_\_

White: \_\_\_\_\_ Native American: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**My Sexual Orientation: I describe myself as (Check one unless more than one describes you better.):**

Heterosexual: \_\_\_\_\_ Lesbian: \_\_\_\_\_ Gay: \_\_\_\_\_ Bisexual: \_\_\_\_\_

Transgender: \_\_\_\_\_ Uncertain: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_



**2. CRITICAL LIFE EVENTS:** Describe major events in your life. Include events that are important to you.

	<b>What happened?</b> <small>(for example: death, birth, divorce, marriage, illness, accident, moving, hard times, happy times, etc.)</small>	<b>Who was involved?</b> <small>(for example: dad, mom, friend, grandpa, grandma, sister, baby brother, neighbor, cousin, me, etc.)</small>	<b>Why was this important to you?</b>	<b>How old were you at the time?</b> <small>(for example: "7," "9 or 10," "about 15," "under 6," "very young," "don't remember," etc.)</small>
<b>a</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>b</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>c</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>d</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>e</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____

**3. Q-IDENTITY EVENTS:** Regarding your sexual orientation, describe important sexual identity events in your life.

<b>a</b>	<b>Did you ever come out to others? Yes: _____</b>	<b>No: _____</b>		
	<b>What happened?</b>	<b>Who was involved?</b>	<b>Why was this important to you?</b>	<b>How old were you?</b>
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>b</b>	<b>Were you ever outed by someone? Yes: _____</b>	<b>No: _____</b>		
	<b>What happened?</b>	<b>Who was involved?</b>	<b>Why was this important to you?</b>	<b>How old were you?</b>
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>c</b>	<b>Were you every threatened or hurt because of your sexual orientation? Yes: _____</b>	<b>No: _____</b>		
	<b>What happened?</b>	<b>Who was involved?</b>	<b>Why was this important to you?</b>	<b>How old were you?</b>
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>d</b>	<b>If you ran out of lines above or there are other important sexual identity events in your life, describe them in the space below.</b>			
	<b>What happened?</b>	<b>Who was involved?</b>	<b>Why was this important to you?</b>	<b>How old were you?</b>
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____

**4. Q-IDENTITY FACTORS:** Thinking about myself . . .

**First, Check** ✓ A through Z which apply to you.

**Second, Write COMMENTS** if you wish.

**I remember . . .**

- a** being made fun of for being different.
- b** feeling kind of out of place, a misfit with the other kids of my same sex.
- c** not being aware Q-identity was even an issue for me.
- d** having a first vague sense, a question about my possibly being Q.
- e** trying to ignore the question about my being Q.
- f** being curious about my Q-identity.
- g** feeling "different" from others.
- h** suspecting my sexual orientation was "different" but wanting to change it.
- i** suspecting my Q-identity was "different" and wanting to find out.
- j** coming out to myself as Q.
- k** wanting to meet other Q-people like me.
- l** venturing out, having a bad experience among Qs, and retreating.

**COMMENTS**

__ <b>a</b>	_____
	_____
__ <b>b</b>	_____
	_____
__ <b>c</b>	_____
	_____
__ <b>d</b>	_____
	_____
__ <b>e</b>	_____
	_____
__ <b>f</b>	_____
	_____
__ <b>g</b>	_____
	_____
__ <b>h</b>	_____
	_____
__ <b>i</b>	_____
	_____
__ <b>j</b>	_____
	_____
__ <b>k</b>	_____
	_____
__ <b>l</b>	_____
	_____

- m** forming a special relationship with someone Q.
- n** deciding my Q-identity was okay; accepting it.
- o** coming out to other Q-people.
- p** having a private network of Q-friends.
- q** passing as straight while trying to live out my Q-orientation.
- r** being comfortable with coming out, happy to have one life.
- s** coming out to special or close straights and/or family and/or friends.
- t** being an activist for Q-rights, taking a public stand.
- u** feeling that taking a public stand for my Q-rights was not worth it.
- v** believing that equality for Qs was worth my fighting for it.
- w** coming out completely -- to friends, family, and school.
- x** enjoying positive relationships with both Q-friends and straight friends.
- y** regretting being completely out, particularly to straights.
- z** being completely out and at ease with my Q-identity as part of my life.

\_\_\_ **m** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ **n** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ **o** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ **p** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ **q** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ **r** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_ **s** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_ **v** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ **w** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ **x** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ **y** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ **z** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. MY Q-CLOSET:** Do you remember . . .

**THE CLOSET . . .** Do you remember being in the closet about being Q?  
Do you see yourself now as in or out of the closet or somewhere in between?  
Please try to describe your *In-the-Closet* experience in the space below:  
Your thoughts? Your feelings? your actions?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
In \_\_\_ Between \_\_\_ Out \_\_\_

**BEFORE THE CLOSET . . .** Do you remember a time "before the closet"?  
If yes, did you have a sense you were "different" before you went into the closet?  
Before you went into the closet, were you aware of any same-sex attraction?  
If yes to any of these "Before the Closet" questions, please try to describe your *Before the Closet* experience:  
What was it like? What did you feel? What did you do?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**ENTERING THE CLOSET . . .** Do you remember going into the closet?  
If yes, please try to describe it below.

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**LEAVING THE CLOSET . . .** Do you remember leaving the closet?  
If yes, please try to describe it below.  
What was it like? What did you feel? What did you do?  
Do you remember your first steps out of the closet?  
Please try to describe that step or steps:

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**APPENDIX E**

**Responses to  
Qids Survey, Section 4, Q-Identity Factors**

## Qaracters' Responses Regarding Queer Identity Formation Experiences

With Several Items Indicating ID-Formation and One Item Indicating ID-Foreclosre Per Stage  
As Reported on the "Qlds' Survey," Section 4, Q-Identity Factors, Items A-Z

Item	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
Stage	1. Confusion					2. Comparison				3. Tolerance				4. Acceptance				5. Pride				6. Synthesis				
Formation	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Foreclosure					X			X				X				X					X				X	
<b>INTERVIEWEE</b>																										
<b>Andy</b>	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+
<b>Bruce</b>	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+
<b>Craig</b>	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<b>David</b>	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<b>Emile</b>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	-	+
<b>Faye</b>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
<b>Geena</b>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-
<b>Hannah</b>	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+
<b>lian</b>	+	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+
<b>Jean</b>	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	+
<b>+</b>	10	8	9	7	6	8	9	2	9	10	10	0	9	10	9	7	7	10	9	9	3	9	7	10	3	9
<b>-</b>	0	2	1	3	4	2	1	8	1	0	0	10	1	0	1	3	3	0	1	1	7	1	3	0	7	1

+ indicates the Qaracter recalled memory of the identiy formation or foreclosre experience  
 - indicates the Qaracter did not recall memory of the identity formation or foreclosre experience

"Stages" refers to the six stages of Cass' queer identity formation model  
 "Formation" refers to advancing Q-identity  
 "Foreclosre" refers to withdrawal from Q-identity

**APPENDIX F**

**General Resources for Youth Pamphlet**



## GENERAL RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

### ANYWHERE

#### HELP

**Police, Fire, Medical 911**  
**\*Common Ground**  
 (734) 971-8400

**United Way Community Service**

### METRO DETROIT

**Police, Fire, Medical 911**  
**Emergency (24 hr.)**  
 (800) 231-1127

**United Way Community Service**  
**\*Common Ground**  
 (800) 552-1183

#### ABUSE

**National Child Abuse Hotline**  
**Family Violence Hotline 24 hr.**  
**Domestic Violence Hotline**  
 483-7273

**Rape Abuse Network**

**Child Protective Hotline**  
**Domestic Violence Shelter**  
**My Sister's Place Shelter**  
 (800) 799-7233

**Rape Counseling Center**

#### ALCOHOL/DRUG ABUSE

**Alateen/Al-Anon**  
**Substance Abuse Hotline**

(800) 813-3105  
 (800) DRUG-HELP

**\*Alcoholics Anonymous**  
**Boniface Human Services**  
**\*Narcotics Anonymous**  
**Vantage Point**  
**Downriver Guidance Center**  
**\*Alanon/ACOA**  
**\*Alcohol/Drug Treatment Info**

**Police, Fire, Medical 911**  
 (313) 224-7000

**United Way Referral InfoLine**  
 (313) 262 9888  
 (248) 543-2900

**Children's Protective Services**  
**Safe House**  
**Assault Crisis Center**  
 (313) 396-0300  
 (313) 861-5300  
 (313) 371-3900  
 (313) 833-1660

### WASHTENAW COUNTY

**911**  
**Washtenaw County Sheriff**

**United Way Referral InfoLine** (734) 971-9191

**Children's Protective Services** (734) 481- 9110  
**Safe House** (734) 995-5444  
**Assault Crisis Center** (734)

#### COUNSELING

**Children's Aid Society**  
**Children's Center**

(313) 961-8100  
 (313) 831-5535

**\*Ozone House** (734) 662-2222

#### HEALTH CARE (Most services are anonymous. Ask to make sure.)

**\*AIDS Hotline**  
**\*State AIDS Hotline, 9am-9pm**  
**\*AIDS Teen Link, 4pm-7pm**  
**\*HIV/STD Hotline, M-Th 4-6:30pm**  
**Poison Control**  
**Eating Disorders, UM Hospital**

(800) 872-2437  
 (800) 872-AIDS  
 (800) 750-8336  
 (800) 750-TEEN  
 (800) POISON-1  
 (800) 525-5188  
**Teen Stop Clinic**  
**Sexually Transmitted Disease**  
**Pre and Post-Natal Care**  
**\*AIDS Partnership**  
**Poison Control, 24 hr.**  
**\*Midwest AIDS Prevention Project**  
**\*Taylor Teen Health Center**

(313) 876-4660  
 (313) 876-4170  
 (313) 961-BABY  
 (313) 446-9800  
 (313) 745-5711  
 (248) 545-1435  
 (734) 942-2273

**\*The Corner Health Center** (734) 484-3600  
**AIDS Testing** (734) 484-6760  
**Health Connection** (734) 484-7200  
**Center for Eating Disorders** (734) 668-8585  
**Planned Parenthood** (734) 973-0710  
**Father Pat's (for pregnant teens)** (734) 761- 1440

**SUICIDE PREVENTION (24 hr.)**

\*Lifeline (800) 638-8099 \*Suicide Prevention Center (313) 224-7000 S.O.S. Crisis Center (734) 485-3222  
Community Mental Health (734) 996-4747

**RUNAWAY SERVICES/SHELTER (24 hr.)**

Runaway RAP Line (800) 292-4517 Off The Streets (313) 873-0678 \*Ozone House (734) 662-2222  
Runaway Switchboard (800) 621-4000 Counterpoint (313) 563-5005  
Runaway Assistance Program (800) 292-4518 \*Alternatives for Girls (313) 496-0938  
Shelter Referral (800) A-SHELTER Common Ground Sanctuary (248) 547-2260

## RESOURCES FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER YOUTH

**ANYWHERE**

**METRO DETROIT**

**WASHTENAW COUNTY**

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**

\*Gay Youth Hotline (800)96-YOUTH \*New Generations c/o Men of Color (313) 964-4601 \*LGBT Office, U of M (734) 763-4186  
\*Affirmations of Ferndale (800) 398-GAYS \*Affirmations (248) 398-7105 \*Gay Straight Alliances (734) 930-0357  
\*Gay and Lesbian Youth Hotline (800) 347-8336 \*Triangle Foundation (313) 537-3323 \*Walk & Squawk Performance Proj. (734) 668-0407  
\*Kids Like Us (313) 983-6580 \*Ann Arbor Advocates Hotline (734) 763-4186

**PFLAG, Parents, Families and Friends of Gays**

\*PFLAG Detroit (248) 656-2875 \*PFLAG Ann Arbor (734) 662-3042  
\*PFLAF Downriver (734) 783-2950

**GLSEN, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network**

\*GLSEN, Student Pride USA (212) 727-0135 ext. 134 \*GLSEN Detroit (810) 414-9371 \*GLSEN Ann Arbor & Ypsilanti (734) 930-0357  
cuntle@glsen.org

**RELIGIOUS & SPIRITUAL**

\*Dignity Detroit (313) 961-4818 \*Tree of Life MCC (734) 485-3922  
\*Metropolitan Community Church (248) 399-7741 \*American Friends (Quaker) (734) 761-8283  
\*Full Truth Fellowship Unity (313) 896-0233

**APPENDIX G**

**ReSallying Qids  
Nodes and Definitions**

**RESALLYING QIDS  
Nodes and Definitions**

```

*****
(1)                /Life Stressor
Issue or event named by RQ respondent as significant stressor in her
life
*****
(2)                /Q-Stressor
Stressor depicted as Q-event or condition by RQ respondent or including
Q-sex or gender references
*****
(3)                /Stress Event
(Code abbreviated 3.1-3.6 texts here.) A specific Life or Q-Stressor
incident or event
(3 1)              /Stress Event/Physical Threat, Abuse
Incidence of being beat up or physically violated
(3 2)              /Stress Event/Verbal Abuse
Incidence of being verbally attacked, barraged or violated
(3 3)              /Stress Event/Death
Incidence of death of person RQ reports as stressful life event
(3 4)              /Stress Event/Family or Home Change
Incidence of moving, divorce, coming out, etc.
(3 5)              /Stress Event/Loss
Loss of friend, pet, valued relationship
(3 6)              /Stress Event/Coming Out Event
Incident related to revelation or perception of non-hetero sex or
gender desire, presentation, orientation
(3 30)             /Stress Event/Other Event
A stress event other than 3.1-3.29
*****
(4)                /Stress Condition
(Code abbreviated 4.1-4.6 text here.) Routine, ongoing, Life or Q-
Stressor situation
(4 1)              /Stress Condition/Bullying
Ongoing physical threat or hurting
(4 2)              /Stress Condition/Harassment
Ongoing name calling, insult, degradation, humiliation, unwanted
solicitation or touching
(4 3)              /Stress Condition/Rejection
Unpopularity, atmosphere of non-acceptance, dislike, hatred,
intolerance applicable to RQ
(4 4)              /Stress Condition/Heterosexism or Homophobia
Actions and practices enforcing heterosexism; disregard, disdain, fear
or hatred of non-heterosexual gender or sex
(4 5)              /Stress Condition/Family Problem
Ongoing difficulty such as financial or emotional distress or
dysfunction such as addiction or abuse bearing stressfully on RQ
(4 6)              /Stress Condition/Sex, Gender Emergence
Stressful condition related to the emergence of RQ's sex, gender self
(4 30)             /Stress Condition/Other Condition
A stress condition other than 4.1-4.29

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\*\*\*\*\*

(5) **/Margins**  
 Making or breaking points  
 (5 1) **/Margins/Threshold**  
 Danger point, level or type of stress which RQ seems to have trouble managing  
 (5 2) **/Margins/Turning Point**  
 Moment, event when RQ perceived she changed or evidenced change  
 (5 3) **/Margins/Outcome**  
 Solution, resolution, last status or end of story of stressor  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(6) **/Family**  
 (Code abbreviated 6.1-6.6 texts here.) Reference to family. Also code general references to family here.  
 (6 1) **/Family/Parent, Caregiver**  
 Person(s) responsible for the primary care of RQ, someone RQ describes or values as comparable to a primary care giver  
 (6 2) **/Family/Sibling**  
 Sibling(s) or step-sibling(s) of RQ  
 (6 3) **/Family/Grandparent**  
 One(s) whom RQ references as grandparent(s); biological, step, in-law or otherwise  
 (6 4) **/Family/Aunt, Uncle, Counterpart**  
 One(s) whom RQ references as aunt, uncle, comparable relative; biological, step, in-law or otherwise  
 (6 5) **/Family/Cousin, Counterpart**  
 One(s) whom RQ references as cousin, counterpart; biological, step, in-law or otherwise  
 (6 6) **/Family/Niece, Nephew**  
 One(s) whom RQ references as niece, nephew, counterpart; biological, step, in-law or otherwise  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7) **/Friend**  
 (Code abbreviated 7.1-7.4 texts here.) Reference to friend. Also code general references to friends here.  
 (7 1) **/Friend/Q-friend**  
 Friend(s) RQ refers to as L,G,B,T or Q or allies  
 (7 2) **/Friend/Straight Friend**  
 Friend(s) RQ refers to as straight or does not identify regarding sex or gender orientation  
 (7 3) **/Friend/Romance**  
 Friend whom RQ refers to as a significant romantic interest  
 (7 4) **/Friend/Q-group**  
 Q-group such as GSA, Affirmations, PFLAG, or a formal or informal group providing a Q-social or support function  
 (7 5) **/Friend/Opposite Gender**  
 Best friends or playmates opposite the gender RQ attributes to self

- \*\*\*\*\*
- (8) /School**  
 (Code abbreviated 8.1-8.5 texts here.) Reference to school. Also code general references to school here.
- (8 1) /School/**Student**  
 Reference to student(s)
- (8 2) /School/**Teacher**  
 Reference to teacher(s)
- (8 3) /School/**Administrator or Counselor**  
 Reference to administrator(s) or counselor(s)
- (8 4) /School/**Other School Staff**  
 Reference to other school staff
- (8 5) /School/**Q-Staff**  
 Reference to teachers who are out or are thought to be L, G, B, T, Q
- (8 6) /School/**Elementary & PreSchool**  
 Reference to elementary school or preschool, elementary or preschool age (approximately up to age 11)
- (8 7) /School/**Middle School**  
 Reference to middle school, middle school age (approximately 11-14)
- (8 8) /School/**High School**  
 Reference to high school, high school age (approximately 14-18)
- (8 9) /School/**Classroom**  
 Reference to the classroom or class site as a +/- site for RQ
- (8 10) /School/**Office, Board Meeting**  
 Reference to administrative or school board space as a +/- site for RQ
- (8 11) /School/**Cafeteria**  
 Reference to the school cafeteria as a +/- site for RQ
- (8 12) /School/**Playground**  
 Reference to the school playground or play area as a +/- site for RQ
- (8 13) /School/**Social Context**  
 Reference to socializing or other school space or event as a +/- site for RQ
- (8 14) /School/**School Culture**  
 Expressions of or references to the values, practices, norms of school or the RQ's school community
- (8 15) /School/**School Helpful, Relevant**  
 References to ways in which school was helpful, important, pertinent for RQ, often prompted by direct question
- (8 16) /School/**School Not Helpful, Irrelevant**  
 References to ways in which school was unimportant, hurtful, not helpful to RQ, often prompted by direct question
- \*\*\*\*\*
- (9) /Other People**  
 (Code abbreviated 9.1-9.5 texts here.) Reference to people other than family, friends, school
- (9 1) /Other People/**Neighborhood**
- (9 2) /Other People/**Community**
- (9 3) /Other People/**Religionists, Church**  
 RQ's reference to church or religion or person's religious presentation
- (9 4) /Other People/**Therapist**
- (9 5) /Other People/**Other Others**
- A codeworthy person(s) not codable 6.1-9.4

\*\*\*\*\*

**(10) /Early Self**

(Code abbreviated 10.1-10.2 texts here.) Reference to a time before RQ's awareness of sex or gender orientation or RQ's first such awareness

(10 1) /Early Self/**Unaware**

Reference to a time or situation before RQ was aware of her sex or gender orientation

(10 2) /Early Self/**OK**

Reference to a time when RQ was aware of or expressing sex or gender orientation before it was problematized

(10 3) /Early Self/**Entering Closet**

In response to problematized sex or gender, RQ's cessation or restriction of expression

\*\*\*\*\*

**(11) /Closeted Self**

(Code abbreviated 11.1-11.8 texts here.) Text describing RQ's closet experience or pre-coming out

(11 1) /Closeted Self/**Hiding**

RQ describes concealing her sex or gender orientation

(11 2) /Closeted Self/**Passing**

RQ describes strategy and behavior of faking being heterosexual

(11 3) /Closeted Self/**Denying**

RQ describes denying, ignoring, deceiving others or self about her sex or gender orientation

(11 4) /Closeted Self/**Fitting In**

RQ describes efforts to fit in, to conform

(11 5) /Closeted Self/**Questioning, Confused**

RQ describes incident or period of questioning or confusion regarding her gender or sex identity (See 13.16, 15.4)

(11 6) /Closeted Self/**Others Knew**

RQ describes period or incident when others seemed to know her identity while she didn't know or was uncertain

(11 7) /Closeted Self/**Struggling, Bad Times**

RQ talks about struggling, problems with grades or relationships, "not doing well", bad times

(11 8) /Closeted Self/**Avoidance**

RQ describes moving away, ways to move away from the pain, the fear

(11 9) /Closeted Self/**Isolating, Withdrawing**

RQ describes withdrawing socially, secluding self

(11 10) /Closeted Self/**Passive, Do Nothing**

RQ expresses no strategy, powerlessness, immobility regarding sex, gender quandary

(11 12) /Closeted Self/**Wishing and Praying**

RQ responds to knowledge of Q-ID by wishing, praying to be changed, to "make me normal"

(11 30) /Closeted Self/**Other Closet**

RQ describes Closet phenomena other than 11 1-11 29

- \*\*\*\*\*
- (12) /Coming Out Self**  
 (Code abbreviated 12.1-12.10 texts here.) Text describing RQ's coming out to another or to oneself
- (12 1) /Coming Out Self/**to Parent, Caregiver**  
 (See 6.1)
- (12 2) /Coming Out Self/**to Sibling**  
 (See 6.2)
- (12 3) /Coming Out Self/**to Grandparent**  
 (See 6.3)
- (12 4) /Coming Out Self/**to Aunt, Uncle, Counterpart**  
 (See 6.4)
- (12 5) /Coming Out Self/**to Cousin, Counterpart**  
 (See 6.5)
- (12 6) /Coming Out Self/**to Friend**  
 (See 7)
- (12 7) /Coming Out Self/**to School Student(s)**  
 (See 8.1)
- (12 8) /Coming Out Self/**to School Staff**  
 (See 8.3, 8.4, 8.5)
- (12 9) /Coming Out Self/**to Other Person**  
 (See 9)
- (12 10) /Coming Out Self/**to Self**  
 \*\*\*\*\*
- (13) /Coming Out & Q-ID Strategy**  
 (Code abbreviated 13.1-13.30 texts here.) Text describing RQ's strategy in coming out
- (13 1) /Coming Out Strategy/**Process**  
 RQ describes coming out as processual, developmental, sequential
- (13 2) /Coming Out Strategy/**Plan**  
 RQ describes how she planned to come out, whether or not that is what actually transpired
- (13 3) /Coming Out Strategy/**Hint**  
 RQ describes leaving a trail of more or less obvious evidence for another to discover as to her sex or gender identity
- (13 4) /Coming Out Strategy/**Assert**  
 RQ describes a proactive, forthright announcement type of coming out to another
- (13 5) /Coming Out Strategy/**Ignore**  
 RQ relates ignoring another whom she believed was intolerant to her because of her sex or gender orientation
- (13 6) /Coming Out Strategy/**Reject Reject Rejection**  
 RQ describes turning the tables on a rejecting other, sloughing off their rejection
- (13 7) /Coming Out Strategy/**Attitude**  
 RQ expresses having "attitude" in the face of real or potential rejection toward her sex or gender orientation
- (13 8) /Coming Out Strategy/**Read**  
 RQ references reading to find information about and understand Q-ID
- (13 9) /Coming Out Strategy/**Write**  
 RQ references writing to find information about and understand Q-ID  
 (See 19.3.3)
- (13 10) /Coming Out Strategy/**Learn**  
 RQ references learning through people and other sources to find information about and understand Q-ID (See 15.22, 16.3, 19.3.2)



- (13 11) /Coming Out Strategy/**Name "It"**  
RQ explains that labeling "who I am" gave her more understanding, confidence or power
- (13 12) /Coming Out Strategy/**Encircle with Friends**  
RQ describes being encircled with friends or drawing a circle of friends about herself (See 7)
- (13 13) /Coming Out Strategy/**Fighting**  
RQ describes fighting, rebelling, means of protecting or defending herself against others who might reject or assault her
- (13 14) /Coming Out Strategy/**Happenstance**  
RQ references fortunate circumstances that facilitated her coming out
- (13 15) /Coming Out Strategy/**Set Back**  
RQ describes set back(s) experienced in her efforts to come out
- (13 16) /Coming Out Strategy/**Questioning Sex ID**  
RQ describes period or episode of questioning her sex or gender identity (See 11.5, 15.4)
- (13 17) /Coming Out Strategy/**Tell**  
RQ describes explaining or stating to another "I'm Gay."
- (13 18) /Coming Out Strategy/**Outed**  
A third party tells someone you're Gay before you do, before you want to
- (13 19) /Coming Out Strategy/**Fresh Start**  
RQ describes new circumstances as opportunity for new approach to her coming out
- (13 20) /Coming Out Strategy/**Meet, Talk with LGBTQ's**  
RQ describes LGBTQ contacts relating to her coming out
- (13 21) /Coming Out Strategy/**Internet**  
RQ describes internet as source of information and contacts relating to her coming out
- (13 22) /Coming Out Strategy/**You Ask, I Tell**  
RQ describes coming out strategy of responding to question of others about her Q-ID
- (13 30) /Coming Out Strategy/**Other CO Strategy**  
RQ describes strategy other than 13.1-13.29  
\*\*\*\*\*
- (14) /Coming Out Response  
(Code abbreviated 14.1-14.30 here.) Reference to response(s) to RQ's coming out or gender or sex orientation
- (14 1) /Coming Out Response/**Rejecting**  
Respondent is rejecting or unaccepting
- (14 2) /Coming Out Response/**Qualified, Lackluster**  
Respondent is uncomfortable, tentative, lackluster, harbors doubt
- (14 3) /Coming Out Response/**Accepting**  
Respondent is kind, accepting
- (14 4) /Coming Out Response/**With Me!**  
Respondent expresses strong support, encourages, defends RQ, advocates for her, loves her more
- (14 30) /Coming Out Response/**Other Response**  
Response expression other than 14.1 - 14.29

- \*\*\*\*\*
- (15) /Self-Perception**  
 (Code abbreviated 15.1-15.30 here.) RQ's expression of how she sees herself; quality or characteristic she refers to herself OR sees missing
- (15 1) /Self-Descriptor/**Empathic, Caring**  
 RQ describes ideal or ways in which she has shown concern for another, cared for another (See 16.2)
- (15 2) /Self-Descriptor/**Leading**  
 RQ describes how she is a leader for LGBTQ or human benefits and rights
- (15 3) /Self-Descriptor/**Altruistic**  
 RQ describes herself as one intending to make her world a better place for others (See 16.2)
- (15 4) /Self-Descriptor/**Questioning**  
 RQ describes self as, exemplifies comfort or willingness to question how things are (See 11.5, 13.16)
- (15 5) /Self-Descriptor/**Proactive**  
 RQ relates being proactive, taking the initiative in a situation vs. being passive or reactive
- (15 6) /Self-Descriptor/**Assertive**  
 RQ states her opinion or belief; she confronts
- (15 7) /Self-Descriptor/**Championing, Active**  
 RQ describes standing up for another or oneself, advancing a cause, taking a political position
- (15 8) /Self-Descriptor/**Optimistic**  
 RQ expresses hope, sees the good in something, thinks positively
- (15 9) /Self-Descriptor/**Futuring**  
 RQ has plan or idea of desired/preferred future
- (15 10) /Self-Descriptor/**Self-Protecting**  
 RQ avoids harm, repels negativity and rejection, enlists protection, protects self (See 19.3.6)
- (15 11) /Self-Descriptor/**Courageous**  
 RQ moves through her fear to do what she believes
- (15 12) /Self-Descriptor/**Patient, Persevering**  
 RQ is not devastated by short term set backs and believes that ultimately she will achieve what she wants
- (15 13) /Self-Descriptor/**Shy, Withdrawn**  
 RQ describes herself as shy, withdrawing, introverted, seeking private space
- (15 14) /Self-Descriptor/**Pleasing**  
 RQ describes herself or exemplifies acting from the motivation of pleasing another
- (15 15) /Self-Descriptor/**Intelligent**  
 RQ describes herself as smart, capable, or exemplifies this characteristic
- (15 16) /Self-Descriptor/**Responsible**  
 RQ describes or exemplifies maturity in assuming or meeting responsibilities
- (15 17) /Self-Descriptor/**Tolerant**  
 RQ describes or exemplifies self as tolerant, open-minded (See 16.1)
- (15 18) /Self-Descriptor/**Own Drummer**  
 RQ describes or exemplifies self as unique, individual, non-conforming, marching to her own drummer
- (15 19) /Self-Descriptor/**Homophobic**  
 RQ describes self or indicates some level of discomfort or non-acceptance of Q-other(s) or Q-self
- (15 20) /Self-Descriptor/**Relaxed**

At ease, not taking things too seriously, flexible (See 17.5.7)  
 (15 21) /Self-Descriptor/**Mature, Maturing**  
 (15 22) /Self-Descriptor/**Open, Learning**  
 RQ describes self as interested, observant, open, talking to others or  
 reading to learn (See 13.8, 13.10, 16.3, 19.3.2)  
 (15 23) /Self-Descriptor/**Involved**  
 RQ is involved and interested in project, event, hobby, organization  
 (15 24) /Self-Descriptor/**Ambivalent**  
 Wavering, having doubts, second thoughts  
 (15 25) /Self-Descriptor/**Struggling**  
 RQ describes dis-integration, feeling torn, having difficulty  
 reconciling feeling & experience & belief  
 (15 26) /Self-Descriptor/**Loved**  
 RQ refers to self as loved, lovable  
 (15 27) /Self-Descriptor/**Resolute**  
 RQ describes self or exemplifies being single-minded, determined  
 (15 30) /Self-Descriptor/**Other Descriptor**  
 RQ describes another quality or characteristic or lack thereof not  
 included in 15.1-15.29  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 (16) /Belief or Value  
 (Code abbreviated 16.1-16.30 here.) Expression of belief or value  
 attributed to RQ respondent  
 (16 1) /Belief or Value/**Tolerant**  
 RQ believes in or practices tolerance, open-mindedness (See 15 17)  
 (16 2) /Belief or Value/**Others**  
 The good of others matters to RQ (See 15 1, 15 3)  
 (16 3) /Belief or Value/**Learning**  
 RQ values education and is interested in learning (See 13.8, 13.9,  
 13.10, 15.22, 19.3.2)  
 (16 4) /Belief or Value/**Achieving**  
 RQ sets and works to achieve goals  
 (16 5) /Belief or Value/**Personal Development**  
 RQ is self-critical and values self-improvement  
 (16 6) /Belief or Value/**Honesty**  
 RQ believes it is important to be honest, truthful  
 (16 7) /Belief or Value/**Justice and Equality**  
 RQ values justice and equality or justice for all  
 (16 8) /Belief or Value/**Non-Violence**  
 RQ believes in and practices non-violence  
 (16 9) /Belief or Value/**Acceptance**  
 RQ values being popular, cool; values being affirmed by friends,  
 family, significant person(s)  
 (16 10) /Belief or Value/**Communication**  
 (16 11) /Belief or Value/**Priorities**  
 RQ refers to priorities of what she values  
 (16 12) /Belief or Value/**Friends**  
 (16 13) /Belief or Value/**Trust**  
 (16 30) /Belief or Value/**Other Belief**  
 RQ expresses belief or value not included in 16.1-16.29



(18 5 11)                    /- Negative/-Feeling/**Depressed, Suicidal**  
(18 5 12)                    /- Negative/-Feeling/**Angry**  
(18 5 13)                    /- Negative/-Feeling/**Uncomfortable**  
(18 5 30)                    /- Negative/-Feeling/**Other -Feeling**  
RQ expresses negative feeling not included in 18.5.1-18.5.29  
(18 6)                        /- Negative/ **-Experience**  
A negative experience for RQ  
\*\*\*\*\*  
**(19)                        /Resilience**  
(Code abbreviated 18.1-18.6 texts here.) Reference to or insight about  
resilience, the ability to spring back in the face of difficulty  
(19 1)                        /Resilience/**Concept**  
\*\*\* Definition:  
RQ's description or definition of resilience  
(19 2)                        /Resilience/**Insight**  
RQ's insight into resilience  
(19 3)                        /Resilience/**Strategy**  
RQ's strategy(ies) for resilience  
(19 3 1)                     /Resilience/Strategy/**Thinking**  
Thinking, using cognition to handle stress or conflict  
(19 3 2)                     /Resilience/Strategy/**Learning**  
Seeking out information and insight in order to deal with stress or  
difficulty (See 13.10, 15.22, 16.3)  
(19 3 3)                     /Resilience/Strategy/**Writing**  
Using writing to record or reflect on stress or difficulty (See 13.9)  
(19 3 4)                     /Resilience/Strategy/**Creating**  
Applying creativity as a solution for or outlet from stress  
(19 3 5)                     /Resilience/Strategy/**Arts**  
Using the arts as a break from or positive channeling for stress or  
strain  
(19 3 6)                     /Resilience/Strategy/**Self-Defense**  
Standing up, fighting for oneself when the odds are unfavorable (See  
15.10)  
(19 3 7)                     /Resilience/Strategy/**Joking, Humor**  
Using humor as a way to relieve pain or gain perspective  
(19 3 8)                     /Resilience/Strategy/**Doing What You Know**  
Using whatever tools one has to deal with a problem, however inadequate  
these tools may seem  
(19 3 9)                     /Resilience/Strategy/**Self-Talk**  
Giving oneself positive messages in the face of adversity  
(19 3 10)                    /Resilience/Strategy/**Action**  
Getting involved, taking some action as a means to gain pride in  
oneself  
(19 3 11)                    /Resilience/Strategy/**Aggression**  
Perhaps at first blush "inappropriate", acting out for empowerment,  
friendship, self worth  
(19 3 12)                    /Resilience/Strategy/**Talking**  
Talking about a problem with another person  
(19 3 13)                    /Resilience/Strategy/**Support**  
Another person to support, understand, encourage; having another to  
"walk with"  
(19 3 14)                    /Resilience/Strategy/**Ignore Neg**  
(19 3 15)                    /Resilience/Strategy/**Accent Pos**  
(19 3 30)                    /Resilience/Strategy/**Other Resilience Strategy**  
A resilience strategy not included in 19.3.1-19.3.29  
(19 4)                        /Resilience/**Salience**

RQ's reference to or incident of moving forward or acting in her own self-interest when there is no apparent obstacle

(19 5) /Resilience/**Self Helpful**

Reference to way(s) in which one was helpful to oneself, often prompted by direct question

(19 6) /Resilience/**Self Hurtful**

Reference to way(s) in which one was not helpful to oneself, often prompted by direct question

\*\*\*\*\*  
(20) /**Gender**

Demographic of RQ's stated gender (on Qid's Questionnaire)

(20 1) /Gender/**Transgender**

(20 2) /Gender/**Female**

(20 3) /Gender/**Male**

(20 4) /Gender/**Other**

\*\*\*\*\*  
(21) /**Sexual Orientation**

Demographic of RQ's stated sexual orientation (on Qid's Questionnaire)

(21 1) /Sexual Orientation/**Trans Orientation**

(21 2) /Sexual Orientation/**Bisexual**

(21 3) /Sexual Orientation/**Lesbian**

(21 4) /Sexual Orientation/**Gay**

(21 5) /Sexual Orientation/**Queer**

Fluid, not wishing a sexual orientation label for oneself

(21 6) /Sexual Orientation/**Other**

(21 7) /Sexual Orientation/**Dynamic**

Interview references to RQ's sex or gender orientation different from or nuancing orientation stated on Qid's Questionnaire

(21 8) /Sexual Orientation/**Heterosexual**

\*\*\*\*\*  
(22) /**Age**

Demographic of RQ's age (on Qid's Questionnaire)

(22 1) /Age/**<14**

RQ is 13 years of age or younger

(22 2) /Age/**14 to 16**

RQ is 14 to 16 years of age

(22 3) /Age/**>16**

RQ is 16 years of age or older

\*\*\*\*\*  
(23) /**Quote**

Statement of RQ that captures an important, relevant, or interesting idea or makes a point

\*\*\*\*\*  
**(24) /Story**  
 (Code abbreviated 24.1. \_\_ 24.10. \_\_ texts at this site) Node address  
 (24 child) for compiling each story of RQ, including stress events and  
 conditions

(24 1)	/Story/Andy
(24 1 1)	/Story/Andy/Short & Clown
(24 1 2)	/Story/Andy/Flagpole
(24 1 3)	/Story/Andy/Duke U, NC
(24 1 4)	/Story/Andy/Homosex Essay
(24 1 5)	/Story/Andy/CO to Girlfriends
(24 2)	/Story/Bruce
(24 2 1)	/Story/Bruce/Spectra
(24 2 2)	/Story/Bruce/CO to Ryan etc.
(24 2 3)	/Story/Bruce/Worried, Wait to College
(24 2 4)	/Story/Bruce/CO Marvel
(24 2 5)	/Story/Bruce/Didn't Belong in World
(24 2 6)	/Story/Bruce/Choosing Parent
(24 2 7)	/Story/Bruce/Step-F Dies, Kids Parent
(24 2 8)	/Story/Bruce/Friend Murdered
(24 2 9)	/Story/Bruce/Wedding Happy Day
(24 3)	/Story/Craig
(24 3 1)	/Story/Craig/Swiss Skool Hurt
(24 3 2)	/Story/Craig/Grandma Died
(24 3 3)	/Story/Craig/CO to Parents
(24 3 4)	/Story/Craig/Suicide? No.
(24 3 5)	/Story/Craig/Lamb
(24 4)	/Story/David
(24 4 1)	/Story/David/Theatre
(24 4 2)	/Story/David/At- or De- tach?
(24 4 3)	/Story/David/CO to Parents
(24 4 4)	/Story/David/Lost Best's Trust
(24 4 4 1)	/Story/David/Lost Best's Trust/Lost Trust Parallel
(24 4 5)	/Story/David/Isolate to Friend
(24 4 6)	/Story/David/Dad to AA
(24 4 7)	/Story/David/Double Life
(24 4 8)	/Story/David/Marcy
(24 4 9)	/Story/David/CO to Self
(24 4 10)	/Story/David/Brother's Birth
(24 4 11)	/Story/David/A Final "Yes"
(24 5)	/Story/Emile
(24 5 1)	/Story/Emile/Questioning All My Life
(24 5 2)	/Story/Emile/Rejection in MidSch
(24 5 3)	/Story/Emile/Lost Friends, Suicide
(24 5 4)	/Story/Emile/Fear at Work
(24 5 5)	/Story/Emile/High School
(24 5 6)	/Story/Emile/CO to Parents
(24 5 7)	/Story/Emile/Religion
(24 5 8)	/Story/Emile/Kissed the Boy
(24 5 9)	/Story/Emile/Move from New Eng.
(24 5 10)	/Story/Emile/Dog Died
(24 6)	/Story/Faye
(24 6 1)	/Story/Faye/Alcoholic Family
(24 6 2)	/Story/Faye/G'father Dies
(24 6 3)	/Story/Faye/I ? My Sexuality
(24 6 4)	/Story/Faye/My G'ma Dies
(24 6 5)	/Story/Faye/Mom Apologizes

(24 6 6) /Story/Faye/Q-Activist  
 (24 6 7) /Story/Faye/Assault  
 (24 6 8) /Story/Faye/Smiley Face  
 (24 6 9) /Story/Faye/Cigarette  
 (24 6 10) /Story/Faye/Stigma & Harassment  
 (24 7) /Story/Geena  
 (24 7 1) /Story/Geena/Holding Hands @ Dad's  
 (24 7 2) /Story/Geena/"Is It A Choice?"  
 (24 7 3) /Story/Geena/Rainbow Pants Fight  
 (24 7 4) /Story/Geena/"Aimee & Jaguar"  
 (24 7 5) /Story/Geena/Ryan & Curtis Kiss  
 (24 7 6) /Story/Geena/Molested @ 11-12  
 (24 7 7) /Story/Geena/Molested @ 3-4  
 (24 7 8) /Story/Geena/CO to Mom  
 (24 7 9) /Story/Geena/Meeting Gay Neighbors  
 (24 7 10) /Story/Geena/Moves, Death, SO  
 (24 7 11) /Story/Geena/Priscilla Lost  
 (24 7 12) /Story/Geena/Teacher: "Kids will be Kids"  
 (24 7 14) /Story/Geena/Falwell and School  
 (24 7 15) /Story/Geena/1 Hr. School Outing  
 (24 7 16) /Story/Geena/Faith  
 (24 8) /Story/Hanna  
 (24 8 1) /Story/Hanna/Barn Family  
 (24 8 2) /Story/Hanna/Grandparents  
 (24 8 3) /Story/Hanna/Hanna the Lesbian  
 (24 8 4) /Story/Hanna/Friends' Pain  
 (24 8 5) /Story/Hanna/Philosophy Class  
 (24 8 6) /Story/Hanna/CO to Self: Perfection Lost  
 (24 8 7) /Story/Hanna/Your Future  
 (24 8 8) /Story/Hanna/CO to Parents  
 (24 8 9) /Story/Hanna/Graduation, Tough Decisions  
 (24 8 10) /Story/Hanna/CO to Barn Mom  
 (24 8 11) /Story/Hanna/?Elementary & Middle Skools?  
 (24 9) /Story/Iian  
 (24 9 1) /Story/Iian/Dylan Gets in Trouble  
 (24 9 2) /Story/Iian/Bad Dog  
 (24 9 3) /Story/Iian/Sister Rivalry  
 (24 9 4) /Story/Iian/Boring Music  
 (24 9 5) /Story/Iian/Christmas! Halloween!  
 (24 9 6) /Story/Iian/Ben's Car Crash  
 (24 9 7) /Story/Iian/My Friends  
 (24 9 8) /Story/Iian/"Gay Is Cool!" @ Skool  
 (24 10) /Story/Jewel  
 (24 10 1) /Story/Jewel/Not What I Appear  
 (24 10 1 1) /Story/Jewel/Not What I Appear/Ritalin @ Skool  
 (24 10 1 2) /Story/Jewel/Not What I Appear/If Renee Can, I Can!  
 (24 10 2) /Story/Jewel/Heather & Melissa Move  
 (24 10 3) /Story/Jewel/Body Betrayed Me  
 (24 10 3 1) /Story/Jewel/Body Betrayed Me/Jenny  
 (24 10 4) /Story/Jewel/Transitioning & Integrating  
 (24 10 5) /Story/Jewel/CO to Mum  
 (24 10 6) /Story/Jewel/CO to Dad  
 (24 10 8) /Story/Jewel/Grandmother's Funeral  
 (24 10 9) /Story/Jewel/Family Events



```

*****
(25)                               /Theme
Text that captures a thematic quality or characteristic of a particular
RQ
*****
(F)                                 //Free Nodes
(F 1)                               //Free Nodes/Sexual Experience
(F 2)                               //Free Nodes/Sex Orientation Texts
(F 3)                               //Free Nodes/Name Calling
(F 4)                               //Free Nodes/Gender Texts
(F 5)                               //Free Nodes/Devaluing Students

```

**APPENDIX H**  
**Demographic Information**

## Qaracters' Demographic Information

As Reported on the "Qids Survey," Section 1, General Information

INTERVIEWEE	GENDER		SEXUAL ORIENTATION			AGE	GRADE	RACE	RESIDENCE
	Male	Female	Lesbian Gay	Bisexual Heterosexual	Other				
<b>Andy</b>	Male				Fluid	16	11	W	Midwest
<b>Bruce</b>	Male			Gay		17	10	W	Midwest
<b>Craig</b>	Male			Gay		17	12	W	Switzerland
<b>David</b>	Male			Gay		16	10	W	Midwest
<b>Emile</b>	Male			Bisexual		16	11	W	Midwest
<b>Faye</b>		Female		Bisexual		18	12	W	Midwest
<b>Geena</b>		Female	Lesbian			13	8	W (NatAm)	Midwest
<b>Hannah</b>		Female	Lesbian			17	12	W	Midwest
<b>lian</b>	Male			Gay		8	2	W	Midwest
<b>Jean</b>		Female			Male to Female	32	NA	W	Canada

**APPENDIX I**

**Stressors**

**1. Original Tally Sheet**

## CHARACTERS' STRESSORS #1

Original Tally Sheet of  
Life Stressors, Q-ID Stressors, and Ambiguous Stressors

	LIFE STRESSORS						Q-ID STRESSORS					AMBIGUOUS STRESSORS	TOTAL	
	Family Crisis		Abuse		TOTAL		Anguish		Activism		TOTAL			
	Death	Loss	Move	Misc.	Harassment	Coming Out	Misc.							
<b>Andy</b>				1			2	2	4		8	4	13	
<b>Bruce</b>	2	2		1			2		3		5		10	
<b>Craig</b>		1						1	2		1	2	7	
<b>David</b>	2								5		5	5	12	
<b>Emile</b>		1		1	1		2	2	5		9	2	14	
<b>Faye</b>	3	3		1			1	4	3	3	11	1	19	
<b>Geena</b>	2	1		2	1			1	10	4	15		21	
<b>Hannah</b>	1	1	3						6	2	8	1	14	
<b>Ilian</b>	3	1		1		3		1			1		9	
<b>Jewel</b>			1				5	1			6		7	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>126</b>

**APPENDIX J**

**Stressors**

**2. Originally Classified in Three Stress Categories:  
Life, Q-ID, and Ambiguous**

### CHARACTERS' STRESSORS #2

Originally Classified  
In Three Stressor Categories:  
Life, Q-ID, and Ambiguous Stressors

UPPER CASE = condition  
= condition including multiple events  
lower case = event

	LIFE STRESSORS					Q-ID STRESSORS				AMBIGUOUS STRESSORS	TOT			
	Family	Death	Loss	Abuse	Move	Anguish	Harassed	Activism	Miscellany			TOT	TOT	
ANDY					school	1	mob threat "queer"	girl friends parents	q-essay gsa q-confnc q-art club	3	RIDICULE BEAT UP OUTCAST rejected	1	5	
BRUCE	Divorce HELP SIBS < stepdad	Frd murdered			missouri	4	ANOMIE FEAR C.O.	parents family friends		2		0	6	
CRAIG		grandma				1	IN HI SCH	<in hi sch parents	come to u.s.a.	3	"LAMB" RIDICULE	1	5	
DAVID	ALCOHOL SIB PROB					2		self parents in school friend best friend		3	'3RD GR. FR'NDSHP D'BLE LIFE break up TRUST	3	8	
EMILE		dog			new eng had sex	3	QUESTNG H'PHOBIC	AT WORK HI SCH	MOM SCHOOL SELF kiss'd boy ch'ch sex ed	6	MID SCH lost friends	2	11	
FAYE	ALCOHOL RELATNS hidden feelings	grandpa grandma		psychological		5	QUESTNG	HECKLIED STAFF sch board COMMUNITY	brother MOM friends	s.s. class diversity wk starting gsa	5	ISOLATING	1	11





**APPENDIX K**

**Stressors**

**3. Reclassified in Two Stress Categories:  
Life and Q-ID**

### CHARACTERS' STRESSORS #3

Re-Classified  
In Two Stressor Categories:  
Life and Q-ID Stressors

UPPER CASE	= condition
[ ]	= condition including multiple events
lower case	= event

	LIFE STRESSORS					TOT	Q-ID STRESSORS				TOT	
	Family	Death	Abuse	Move	Miscellany		Anguish	Harassed	Activism	Miscellany		
		Loss					Coming Out					
ANDY				school		1		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">mob threat "queer"</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">RIDICULE</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">BEAT UP</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">OUTCAST</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">rejected</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">girl frnds</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">parents</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">q-essay</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">gsa</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">q-confnc</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">q-art club</div>	4	5
BRUCE	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Divorce</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">HELP SIBS &lt; stepdad</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Frnd murdered</div>		missouri		4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">ANOMIE</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">FEAR C.O.</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">parents</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">family</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">friends</div>		2	6	
CRAIG		grandma				1	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">IN HI SCH</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">"LAMB"</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">RIDICULE</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">&lt;in hi sch</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">parents</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">come to u.s.a.</div>	4	5	
DAVID	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">ALCOHOL</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">SIB PROB</div>					2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">3RD GR.</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">FRNDSHP</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">DBLE LIFE</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">break up</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">TRUST</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">self</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">parents</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">in school</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">friend</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">best friend</div>		6	8	
EMILE		dog		new eng	had sex	3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">QUESTNG</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">HYPHOBIC</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">lost friends</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">AT WORK</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">HI SCH</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">MID SCH</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">MOM</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">SCHOOL</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">SELF</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">klas'd boy</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">chrch sex ed</div>	8	11	

FAYE	ALCOHOL RELAT'NS hidden feelings	grandpa grandma		psychological			6	QUEST'NG ISOLATING	HECKLIED STAFF sch board COMMUNITY	brother MOM friends	s.a. class diversity wk starting gas	6	11	
GEENA	TENSION divorce	brother		molested raped	MULTIPLE		6		ENVIRON	DAD MOM book outed rain'w pants p.e. class neighbors girl friend lost friend sch rumor girlfriends	spathetic tchr hall kiss q-group popularity	6	11	
HANNAH	barn fam	horse		g'parents aging at graduation sold horse			5		EL & MID SC	self DAD MOM trainer friends IF ASKED	SCH'S Q philo class	5	10	
IAN	SIB PROB holidays divorce	grandma	accident	BULLIED		music class fright	8		"GAY WAD"			1	9	
JEAN			friend				1	BE WOMAN BETRAYED CAN'T TELL SEX CHANGE BODY VS MIND	PICKED ON			6	7	
events	5	8	5	3	3	3	27	1	0	4	0	1	6	33
COND'S	7	0	0	1	1	0	9	13	13	11	4	0	41	50
TOTAL	12	8	5	4	4	3	36	14	13	15	4	1	47	83
	Family	Death	Loss	Abuse	Move	Misc.		Anguish	Harrass	ComOut	Activist	Misc.		

**APPENDIX L**

**Stressors**

**4. Numeric Summary**

## CHARACTERS' STRESSORS #4

Numeric Summary of  
Life Stressors and Q-ID Stressors  
by Crisis Events and Chronic Conditions

	LIFE STRESSORS			Q-ID STRESSORS			Total All Stressors
	Crisis Events	Chronic Conditions	Total Life Stressors	Crisis Events	Chronic Conditions	Total Q-Stressors	
<b>ANDY</b>	1	0	1	0	4	4	<b>5</b>
<b>BRUCE</b>	3	1	4	0	2	2	<b>6</b>
<b>CRAIG</b>	1	0	1	2	2	4	<b>5</b>
<b>DAVID</b>	0	2	2	2	4	6	<b>8</b>
<b>EMILE</b>	3	0	3	1	7	8	<b>11</b>
<b>FAYE</b>	3	2	5	0	6	6	<b>11</b>
<b>GEENA</b>	4	2	6	0	5	5	<b>11</b>
<b>HANNAH</b>	5	0	5	1	4	5	<b>10</b>
<b>MIAN</b>	6	2	8	0	1	1	<b>9</b>
<b>JEWEL</b>	1	0	1	0	6	6	<b>7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>83</b>

**APPENDIX M**  
**LGBTQ Youth Websites**

## **LGBTQ Youth Websites:**

### **Teachers and Youth Workers**

GLSEN National: The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network  
<http://www.glsen.org>  
 The P.E.R.S.O.N. Project Home Page is full of lots of interesting information for teachers and activists  
<http://www.youth.org/loco/PERSONProject/>  
 PFLAG: Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays:  
<http://www.pflag.org>  
 Tips for Professionals Who Work with Gay Youth (from PFLAG):  
<http://www.pflag.org/store/resource/tips.html>  
 Association for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues in Counseling:  
<http://www.aglbic.org>  
 National Middle Schools Association Curriculum, "Opening the Door to Diversity":  
[http://www.courttv.com/diversity/content\\_page.html](http://www.courttv.com/diversity/content_page.html)

### **Bisexual**

Bi Visibility Project - info about bisexuality and bi civil rights:  
[http://www.glaad.org/glaad/bi\\_visibility/index.html](http://www.glaad.org/glaad/bi_visibility/index.html)

### **Transgender**

Resources on transgender identity:  
<http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Park/6484/general.html>

### **General Qid Resources**

Queer Resources Directory ([www.qrd.org](http://www.qrd.org)):  
<http://www.qrd.org/QRD/www>  
 GLSEN Student Pride:  
<http://www.glsen.org/pates/sections/involved/studentpride/>  
 Youth Resources:  
<http://www.youth.org/>  
<http://www.youthresources.org/>  
 COLAGE: Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere:  
<http://www.colage.org>

### **Safety**

Safe Schools Coalition of the State of Washington:  
<http://www.safeschools-wa.org/>  
 Committee for Children promoting youth's safety and social development:  
<http://www.cfchildren.org/>

### **Media**

Rethinking Schools addresses our media/advertising/consumer culture:  
<http://www.rethinkingschools.org/>

### **Deaf**

Deaf Queer Resource Center:  
<http://www.deafqueer.org/411/map.html>

### **Youth of Color**

Resources for LGBT Youth of Color - African-American, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latino/Latina, and Native American:  
<http://www.youthresource.com/feat/poc/>  
<http://www.blackstripe.com/blacklist/>

**APPENDIX N**

**What One Teacher Can Do**



## WHAT ONE TEACHER CAN DO: CHECKLIST

Adapted from *Understanding Homosexuality, Changing Schools*

By Arthur Lipkin

### 1. Inform yourself about Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer people and about homophobia.

#### Low Risk

- Learn about LGBTQ history, culture, and current concerns by reading books, journals, and periodicals.

#### Some Risk

- Attend LGBTQ film series or lectures.
- Attend a meeting of an LGBTQ organization.
- Attend an “allies” meeting (for example, P-FLAG).
- Have conversations with openly LGBTQ people.

#### Greater Risk

- Engage heterosexual people, including your family and friends, in discussions of homosexuality/homophobia.

### 2. Create a safe and equitable classroom.

#### Low Risk

- Create a cooperative classroom which fosters interdependence, empathy and tolerance (See Appendix O).
- Change your assumption that everyone is heterosexual unless they tell you otherwise.
- Use inclusive language that implicitly allows for LGBTQ possibilities (e.g. “parent” rather than “mother/father”; “spouse” rather than “wife/husband”; “date” rather than “boyfriend/girlfriend”).

#### Some Risk

- Challenge homophobic language and name-calling.
- Put up LGBTQ-friendly posters, pictures, or signs.
- If you are heterosexual, don’t be quick to inform others of your heterosexuality. Ask what they might think if you told them you were Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender.

#### Greater Risk

- Be clear about your willingness to support Qids.
- Use language that explicitly allows for LGBTQ possibilities (e.g., “Emily Dickenson and her boy- girl-friend”).
- Invite LGBTQ speakers to your classroom.

### 3. **Create a safe and equitable school.**

#### **Low Risk**

- Be a role model of acceptance

#### **Some Risk**

- Challenge name-calling and harassment.
- Work to establish policies protecting Qids from harassment, violence, and discrimination.
- Call for the inclusion of Qids in diversity presentations.
- Work to form Gay/Straight Alliance and/or support groups for Qids in your school.
- Call for faculty and staff training in LGBTQ youth issues (including crisis intervention and violence prevention).
- Call for counseling services for Qids and their parents.

#### **Greater Risk**

- Invite LGBTQ speakers to your school.
- Regularly participate in and/or advise a Gay/Straight Alliance.
- Call for and develop an LGBTQ awareness event such as an awareness day or LGBTQ month (nationally celebrated in October).
- Work with the PTA and other community-based support groups regarding the education and health needs of Qids.
- Solicit the cooperation of LGBTQ alumni/ae in motivating the school to meet the needs of Qids who succeed them.
- Call for faculty training in LGBTQ studies.
- Encourage colleagues to develop and use LGBTQ curriculum.
- If you are Lesbian/Bay/Bisexual/Transgender, come out to the school community.

**APPENDIX O**

**Establishing Ground Rules Lesson Plan**

## ESTABLISHING GROUND RULES

### Lesson 2 from “Opening the Door to Diversity” published by the National Middle School Association<sup>xix</sup>

**Rationale:** To learn how to respect differences in society at large, young adolescents first must become more tolerant of their peers. As students work collaboratively to establish ground rules for class discussions, they will examine their group values, discover how to minimize conflicts, and create a safe climate for considering different points of view.

**Materials:** Chart paper, markers, and colored adhesive dots

**Procedure:**

- Explain to students that establishing ground rules will help them create a safe and respectful environment for discussing sensitive or controversial topics. Talk about the different ways that ground rules might help the class, such as keeping discussion on track, encouraging fairness, and preventing fights.
- Divide the students into small groups. Using chart paper and markers, each group should write two ground rules the students consider important. Students should begin each ground rule with the following statement: We agree t... because (Example: We agree to speak one person at a time because it is important that each of us has an opportunity to share.”
- After all the groups have had time to develop two ground rules, ask them to take turns sharing their suggestions with the rest of the class. Compile a class list. Clarify the meanings of the ground rules. Provide examples if necessary. It is very important that everyone understands each ground rule.
- Pass out four colored dots to each student. Ask the students to silently walk around the room, read all the ground rules again, and place a dot beside the four ground rules they consider most important.
- Total the scores. Ask the students to reflect on the list and determine if the four top ground rules will be sufficient to create a safe climate for class discussions. If not, what should they add or subtract?
- Ask some or all of the following questions: How can we ensure that all members of the class agree to the ground rules? How often, or under what circumstances, should we review and/or modify the rules? What should happen if someone does not abide by the ground rules?
- Post a list of the ground rules so it can be referred to when needed.

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<sup>xix</sup> National Middle School Association, 4151 Executive Parkway, Suite 300, Westerville, OH 43081; 800-333-7649; <http://www.courttv.com>.

**Extension Activity:**

- Several weeks after establishing the ground rules, ask the students to consider whether the rules are working or should be updated. Reflect on ways the class can ensure that the rules continue to be vital to discussions and not simply a list posted for appearances.

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