

CAN I BE OUT HERE?

HETERONORMATIVE DISCOURSE AND SAFETY IN LEISURE SETTINGS

by

TERRI L. PHOENIX

(Under the Direction of Diane M. Samdahl)

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the discourses encountered regarding sexual orientation in leisure settings and the subsequent influence of those discourses on both leisure experience and identity. Participants were female-identified, aged 18-23 years, and reported sexual attraction and/or sexual encounters with other female-identified persons. Data were collected via three semi-structured interviews per participant across six to ten weeks. Participants were asked to keep notes regarding details of their leisure experiences between interviews and these notes were used to prompt memory and elicit detail during interviews. Results indicated that participants read seven broad categories of cues in leisure settings to ascertain the likelihood of safety and the degree to which they could be out regarding sexual orientation in those contexts. Additionally, results indicated heteronormative discourse diminished the enjoyment of leisure experiences and the degree of identity expression related to identity as a sexual minority youth.

Recommendations are given for future research and for creating more welcoming environments for sexual minority youth.

INDEX WORDS: leisure, identity, gay, lesbian, youth

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DEDICATION

To those souls (here and beyond the veil) who believed in and supported me throughout this journey.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In January 2003, National Recreation and Park Association President Jonathan Korfhage stated, “We need to emphasize efforts to create positive opportunities to develop the potential of all our youth. ... Our programs should help youth develop the values, skills, competencies and self-confidence necessary to be successful adults” (Korfhage, 2003, p. 2). I could not agree more. However, in contrast to efforts to include youth of different races, religions, socioeconomic class, or ability/disability in leisure programs or agencies there is little evidence that leisure service professionals are putting similar effort toward including or creating inclusive leisure spaces (i.e., welcoming and safe from physical or psychological harassment) for ‘sexual minority youth.’¹ Additionally, most literature on youth development in leisure contexts still assumes all youth are heterosexual. This is despite research and literature that has documented and encouraged awareness of the needs of sexual minority youth (Kivel, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2000; Grossman, 1992).

Sexual Minority Youth

Whether they realize it or not leisure service professionals currently *do* serve sexual minority youth in their programs and agencies. Statistics indicate “a substantial minority of young people are not unequivocally heterosexual” (Hillier & Rosenthal, 2001, p. 1). Although it

¹ Modeled after Russell, Seif, & Trong (2001) and Savin-Williams (2001), I am using the term ‘sexual minority youth’ to refer to youth who: (a) self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or (b) feel sexually attracted to or engage in sexual interactions with members of the same sex, or (c) are questioning whether their sexual orientation is other than heterosexual. I use the term parenthetically to denote a troubling of the concept of a sexual minority evident in literature referred to as queer and poststructural literature. Throughout the paper I may use different terms to represent this ‘group’ because as I report results from various studies, I prefer to use the terminology that was used in the study I am discussing.

is difficult to quantify the number of sexual minority youth because of a variety of factors (e.g., youth resistance of labeling practices, fear of self-identifying as such), estimates of youth in the United States who report sexual attraction to or sexual contact with members of their same sex range from 5 per cent in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Russell, Seif, & Truong, 2001) to 11 per cent of secondary students in Minnesota (Remafedi, Resnick, Blum, & Harris, 1992).

While sexual minority youth do not comprise a monolithic population and to some extent “an adolescent is an adolescent is an adolescent” (Savin-Williams, 2001, p. 6), they can be loosely conceptualized as a group that shares some similar issues and needs regarding leisure services. One primary concern is the fear of physical and/or verbal harassment from peers and adults based on actual or assumed sexual orientation.

Many leisure service professionals ignore or downplay the need to create leisure contexts and spaces wherein sexual minority youth are safe from threats of physical, emotional, or sexual verbal or physical violence and harassment based upon known or presumed sexual orientation, behavior, or identity. For example, in the May 2003 periodical, *Parks & Recreation*,² Chris Caldwell asked “Why are ‘safe places for sexual minorities’ needed?” He was clear in his criticism of “preferences for special groups or minorities” and stated “separate activities for homosexuals are not only unnecessary, but create the very division they’re attempting to eliminate” and that “creating ‘safe places,’ is even more wrong” (2003, p. 8). It appears to me that Caldwell conflated a call for ‘safe places’ with a call for ‘segregated places’ and ‘preferences for special groups.’ However, the term ‘safe’ referred to in Johnson’s research update (March 2003), to which Caldwell was responding, is a call for leisure contexts and spaces

² *Parks and Recreation* is the official publication of the National Recreation and Park Association, the professional organization for recreation and leisure professionals.

that are safe from threat of physical, emotional, or sexual verbal or physical violence and harassment based upon known or presumed sexual orientation, behavior, or identity. Certainly segregated places are *one*, but not the *only*, approach being used to ensure ‘safe’ leisure contexts for sexual minority youth. Despite Caldwell’s assertion that “we’re all created equal,” research documents that in many contexts sexual minority youth are not treated equally. Rather, violence and harassment is a very real and serious threat.

Research suggests that sexual minority youth are harassed based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity in school and leisure contexts. What is perhaps most disturbing about the verbal and physical harassment of sexual minority youth by their peers is that it is often tacitly (by virtue of ignoring it) or overtly approved of by adults who are supposed to be creating a safe environment for all participants (GLSEN, 2003; Hunter & Schaecher, 1987).

In a study of 377 ninth graders in Welsh and English cities Thurlow (2001) documented the use of homosexually themed pejorative terms in five high schools. He asked participants to write down words people used in their schools to “slag someone off” (i.e., to offend or insult them) and to indicate those they deemed as “the worst ones” (worst characterized as being “really bad” or “most offensive”). Homophobic items accounted for 10 per cent (590 of 5956) of all the items reported. Sexist items were mentioned more frequently and racial items were mentioned less frequently.

The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) conducts a bi-annual national survey, the National School Climate Survey, to document the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students in America’s high schools. In 2007, 6,209 lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender youth from 50 states and the District of Columbia completed the

GLSEN survey (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008). The list below highlights some of the disturbing statistics about verbal harassment of LGBT students in schools:

- 86.2 % of LGBT students report being verbally harassed (name calling, threats, etc.) because of their sexual orientation.
- 90.2 % of LGBT students report hearing homophobic remarks, such as “faggot,” “dyke” or the expression “that’s so gay” frequently or often.
- 48.2% of LGBT youth of color report being verbally harassed because of both their sexual orientation and race/ethnicity.
- 63.0% of LGBT youth reported hearing homophobic remarks from school staff or teachers
- 38.6% of LGBT youth reported that school staff never intervened when homophobic remarks about sexual orientation were made in their presence; 42.6% of LGBT youth reported that school staff never intervened when harassment on the basis of gender expression occurred.

The results with respect to physical harassment are also disturbing:

- 44.1% of LGBT students report being physically harassed (being shoved, pushed, etc.) and 22.1% reported being physically assaulted (being punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon) because of their sexual orientation.
- 66.5% of youth report being physically harassed and 14.2% reported being physically assaulted because of their gender expression
- 54.8% of LGBT students reported having property stolen or deliberately damaged at school

These data from GLSEN indicate that bias and harassment of LGBT students continues to occur in school contexts. In fact, “compared to previous years, the frequency of physical harassment and assault based on gender expression was slightly higher in 2007” (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008, p. 34).

While the above studies documented verbal and physical harassment in school contexts, a few researchers have examined the experiences of sexual minority youth in leisure contexts. Research demonstrates that leisure experiences of sexual minority youth are more negative than their non-gay peers (Caldwell, Kivel, Smith, & Hayes, 1998) and are mitigated by the extent to which they must conceal their sexual minority status (Kivel, 1994, 1996, 1997; Kivel & Kleiber, 2000).

Identity

Psychological Influences

In chapter two, I will review in depth the literature which shapes my understanding of identity. In brief though, the largest influence on my understanding of identity is the psychological and psychosocial literature on identity, specifically that of Erik Erikson and those who expanded his theoretical explanation of identity throughout the life cycle. Erikson’s work is attractive because it encompasses an understanding and acknowledgement that while individuals make selections about their identity choices, “the historical era in which he [*sic*] lives offers only a limited number of socially meaningful models for workable combinations of identification fragments” (Erikson, 1959/1980, p. 25). Erikson recognized that social influences (e.g., historical context; social norms and values; and opportunities afforded on the basis of socioeconomic status, gender, geographic location, or ethnicity) played an influential role in the development of what he called “ego identity.”

Poststructural Influences

Another influence on my conceptualization of identity is poststructural literature. Poststructural literature illuminates the fact that discursive practices constitute some identities or subjects as intelligible and others as unintelligible. The identities that subjects perform do not arise from a foundational or internal essence but rather are scripts that have been discursively constructed and that are regulated by relations of power. Poststructural literature emphasizes the fluidity and contextual specificity of identity and posits that there is no internal or essential identity. Rather, subjects are constituted by “material practices and institutional arrangements, those matrices of power and discourse” (Butler, 1992, p. 9).

The majority of psychological identity development literature has been conducted with an assumption that adolescents in such studies are or should be heterosexual. This heteronormative bias has resulted in limited knowledge about the identity development of sexual minority youth. In contrast, the literature that has specifically focused on identity development for lesbian and gay youth has focused narrowly on identity only as it pertains to sexual orientation excluding other facets of participants’ identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, religion/spirituality, career). This myopic focus has resulted in limited knowledge about the ways multiple identities or facets of self are developed or expressed. Additionally, there is little research specifically on female-identified sexual minority youth experiences of leisure or on identity development or expression.

Contexts for Identity Development

Erikson believed that identity was grounded in the soil of relationships, historical time period, and geographic era (1959/1980). Identity theorists have used the word ‘context’ to refer to settings in which identity work occurs as well as the web of relationships and discourses present (Silbereisen & Todt, 1994). Research has examined the role of contexts such as work,

school, and family (Kroger, 1993). Additionally, leisure experiences, activities, and settings have been examined as a context for identity development because it is theorized to be less restrictive as compared to other contexts (Kelly, 1996).

Leisure

Adolescents report spending large amounts of time interacting with friends “because it is fun, but this activity is also a context for the important American developmental task of self-discovery and self-validation” (Larson & Seepersad, 2003, p. 56). Research suggests that leisure facilitates identity work when it provides a combination of intrinsic motivation and concentration (e.g., Larson, 2000), opportunities for creative self-expression (e.g., Waterman & Archer, 1979; Waterman, 1990), situations in which to affirm desired identity images (e.g., Haggard & Williams, 1992; Schlenker, 1984), opportunities for challenge and skill development (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999; Kleiber, 1999; Shaw, Kleiber, & Caldwell, 1995), and opportunities for social relatedness (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999; Larson, 1994).

Defining Leisure

Studies that have examined leisure as a context for identity development have most often used objective definitions of leisure. For example, researchers have examined the relationship between identity and: sports (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Haggard & Williams, 1992; Petipas, 1981; Shaw, Kleiber, & Caldwell, 1995), performing or creative arts (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Waterman & Archer, 1979), academic clubs (Eccles & Barber, 1999), youth organizations (Larson, 1994), and social activities (Shaw, Kleiber, & Caldwell, 1995).

Defining leisure solely in terms of specific activities or discretionary time overlooks a critically important component of what makes the subjective experience of something leisure. Kelly (1972) emphasized in his model of leisure the importance of participation without

constraints. Neulinger (1974) stated that the essential characteristic of leisure is perceived freedom. Iso-Ahola (1979) found support for Kelly and Neulinger's models and stated "Perceived freedom is the critical regulator of subjective definitions of leisure" (1980, p. 28). Samdahl (1988) reported that role constraint and self-expression "accounted for 43 percent of the variance in the connotative measure of leisure" meaning that those two factors (lack of role constraint and opportunity for self-expression) were critical in determining leisure. Given these findings, leisure and identity researchers need to be attentive to participant definitions of leisure.

Heterosexism and Leisure Contexts

A related issue of importance in examining leisure as a context for identity development is the research that has documented the ways dominant discourses shape leisure spaces and influence leisure experiences. Two factors that inhibit sexual minority youths' access to and enjoyment of leisure are the cultural discourses of heterosexism and gender polarization.

Bem (1993) defined heterosexism as the "privileging of exclusive heterosexuality." Other terms that have been used to denote the cultural and institutional privileging of heterosexuality are compulsory heterosexuality (Butler, 1999), heterocentrism (Hill, 1995) or heteronormativity (Berlant & Warner, 1998; Sullivan, 2003). The discourse of heterosexism or compulsory heterosexuality is encoded in "the language, thoughts, assumptions, and symbols of the dominant society" (Hill, 1995, p. 146). Examples of how heterosexism functions in society include the assumption that "normal" adolescent sexual development is heterosexual and that other sexual orientations are "deviant" and should remain invisible; the visibility and normalization of heterosexual relationships and the omission or distortion of lesbian, gay, or bisexual relationships in public life and media; teaching abstinence before marriage when non-heterosexual individuals do not have legal access to this institution; the barring of gay males and lesbians from military

service; and the refusal of many religious organizations to accept openly gay or lesbian people into their communities.

Another cultural discourse that functions in combination with heterosexism is “gender polarization” which Bem (1993) defined as “the ubiquitous organization of social life around the distinction between male and female” (p. 80). Gender polarization functions first by “defining mutually exclusive scripts for being male and female” and then defining “any person or behavior that deviates from these scripts as problematic—as unnatural or immoral from a religious perspective or as biologically anomalous or psychologically pathological from a scientific perspective” (Bem, 1993, 80-81). Butler (1999) similarly pointed out that what has been previously referred to as an “internal essence of gender” is in reality a performance; that is to say that gender is “a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body” (p. xv). Furthermore, these repeated sets of acts occur within “a highly rigid regulatory frame” (Butler, 1999, p. 43). Thus, society has proscribed a set of appropriate gender signs, mannerisms, and signals that must be adhered to or “performed” repeatedly and deviation from these gender scripts is regulated, policed, and frequently punished.

Heterocentrism and gender polarization work together to stimulate and subtly legitimize verbal abuse of those who identify as sexual minority youth or who are suspected to be sexual minority youth due to deviations from proscribed gender roles (Bem, 1993). Butler (1999) stated that “policing gender is sometimes used as a way of securing heterosexuality” (p. xii). One example of how this occurs is the use of homophobic language to police portrayals of gender that deviate from proscribed norms. Thurlow (2001) documented that “homophobic pejoratives, many of them vitriolic, constitute one of the most predominant categories of abusive language among young adolescents” (p. 32).

Cultural geographers and feminist researchers have demonstrated that cultural discourses such as heterosexism and gender polarization influence the construction, access, and use of social and leisure contexts (Aitchison, 1999; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000; Pritchard, Morgan, & Sedgley, 2002; Stokowski, 2002; Valentine, 1996). Thus, while leisure contexts may be places of ‘maximal freedom’ (Kelly, 1987, 1996), they too are subject to “the political agendas and orientations of participants, managers, and legislating bodies” (Stokowski, 2002).

Aitchison (1999) discussed the gendered nature of the construction and regulation of leisure contexts as well as the ways in which leisure contexts have normative discourses around sexuality or sexual identities. Similarly Stokowski (2002) emphasized:

Places are more than simply geographic sites—they are also fluid, changeable, dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory, and they ‘contain’ overt and covert social practices that embed in place-making behaviors notions of ideology, power, control, conflict, dominance, and distribution of social and physical resources (p. 368).

Public spaces are replete with advertisements, window displays, music about heterosexual coupling, and heteronormative conversations “which congeal over time to give the appearance of a ‘proper’ or ‘normal’ reproduction of space” (Valentine, 1996). This heteronormative construction of public space allows people the freedom to perform heterosexual behaviors (e.g., holding hands with a person of the ‘opposite’³ sex, kissing a person of the ‘opposite’ sex) in public spaces without fear of harassment, whereas sexual minority partners who express affection in public spaces do so under scrutiny and with the potential for harassment (e.g., stares, whispers, homophobic pejoratives, physical violence).

Similarly, the cultural construction of gender through the discourses of gender polarization inform the public of what ‘real men’ and ‘real women’ are expected to look like, act

³ The word opposite is used in quotes in reference to biological sex is because even the notion that there are only two biological sexes is a culturally produced phenomenon. Approximately 1 in 2000 babies are born intersex, that is they are born with features that are not able to be categorized as completely male or completely female.

like, and talk like or, as Butler (1993, 1999) has said, the appropriate ways gender is to be performed. Where someone's words, acts, bodily movement, style of dress, or other material representation of the body is not in keeping with the normative or appropriate performance of gender, this person comes under public scrutiny and becomes a potential target for harassment.

Thus, public spaces are not asexual or neutral. In very real, material ways, public space is shaped by the discourses of gender polarization and heterosexism. The shaping of public space includes the simplest example of the separation of public bathrooms and the ways gender is therein policed (e.g., people being challenged for using the 'wrong' bathroom based on their non-normative or transgressive performance of gender) to the regulatory practices that define and limit expressions of affection between or among people, and the symbols, advertisements, music, or conversations considered appropriate for public space. Since public spaces are frequently the sites in which leisure and recreation take place, it is important to recognize that leisure and recreation contexts are similarly gendered and heterocentric.

Participants in Kivel's (1994, 1996, 2000) studies indicated that previous experiences of harassment (based on actual or presumed sexual orientation) in leisure contexts and/or fear of future harassment were a factor in leisure choices. Concerns about personal safety influenced where and with whom they participated in leisure activities. In an effort to avoid harassment and to maximize enjoyment, participants often hid their sexual minority status or pursued leisure in contexts that were specifically organized for individuals who self identified as belonging to a sexual minority (e.g., gay bars, gay athletic teams, predominately gay or gay-friendly areas of a city).

Similarly, Caldwell, Kivel, Smith, and Hayes (1998) found that “gay⁴ and questioning adolescents experienced leisure differently and more negatively than their non-gay peers” (p. 347). Gay participants spent roughly the same amount of time in leisure related clubs, organizations, or non-school related sports teams as non-gay peers; however, gay youth felt under more pressure and stress and were more sad and depressed. The experience of leisure appeared to be mediated by gender in that gay males were less likely to “go out for fun and recreation in the evening and were less likely to engage in aerobic activity than their non-gay male peers” (p. 353). This result was not found to hold true for lesbians and bisexuals although Caldwell et al suggested this finding may be due to the larger number of gay males as compared with female participants in their study.

Society at large does not provide leisure opportunities that nurture or assist sexual minority youth in their development in the same ways it does for heterosexual youth. For example, while high schools encourage male/female coupling through such activities as homecoming courts and prom dances, same sex coupling does not receive equal recognition or encouragement. Although in recent years, some sexual minority adolescents have been willing to risk transgressing social norms (at risk to personal safety) and attend dances or proms with same sex dates, they often receive harassment from peers and adult administrators alike.

Problem Statement

Given the diminished freedom (i.e., “freedom to” be open about their sexuality and “freedom from” physical violence or psychological harassment) in most leisure contexts, sexual minority youth’s ability to access leisure contexts for identity development or expression are more limited than for heterosexual youth. To the extent that the discourse of heterocentrism

⁴ The researchers in the study reported here used the term “gay” to refer to lesbians, gay males, and bisexual individuals.

renders sexual minority youth “aberrant,” “sinful,” or invisible then leisure serves as less of a context for identity work.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is two-fold. First, I wanted to document the discourses regarding sexual orientation that were present in a variety of leisure and recreation settings as reported by female-identified sexual minority youth. Second, in light of these discourses, I wanted to examine the ways in which leisure contexts constrain and facilitate identity construction for female-identified sexual minority youth. Three research questions guided this study:

1. What discourses and norms related to sexual orientation do female-identified sexual minority youth encounter in leisure contexts?
2. How do contextual norms and discourses about sexual orientation influence leisure experiences of female-identified sexual minority youth?
3. How do the contextual norms and discourses present in leisure contexts influence identity work?

Subjectivity of Researcher

“We are always present in our texts, no matter how we try to suppress ourselves” (Richardson, 1997, p. 2). This presence occurs because every person is writing from some place, from a specific history that has contributed to who that person is and how they see the world (Richardson, 1990). Similarly Riessman (1993) stated, "The construction of any work always bears the mark of the person who created it" (p. v). Increasingly researchers and authors are encouraged to engage in self-reflexivity (Lather, 1991) and to position themselves with respect to their work. In this section of the chapter I will briefly describe myself and the influences that

shape my relationships to this research. I will define the ways in which I use various terms central to this work.

I believe that individuals are shaped by a combination of biological, social, historical, familial, and experiential factors. I think they are also shaped by individual choices made in various contexts across one's lifetime. I believe all these factors are dialectically simultaneously shaped by and shaping individuals. Thus, I am a product of this type of dialectical relationship with biological, social, historical, familial, experiential, and chance factors which in turn influence what questions are of interest to me, what texts I choose to read, what research I wish to pursue, how I construct and perform my identities/selves, how I will approach and interact with my participants, and the ways in which I will collect, analyze, and represent data.

I offer the following description of myself and my epistemology not to engage in the type of reflexivity that seeks to "release," "absolve," or somehow "transcend" my own subjectivity or cultural context (Pillow, 2003). Rather, I offer this information in the hope that it succinctly communicates something of who I am and the politics and experiences that pervade this research project. I hope that it will tell readers a bit about the filters through which I am designing and carrying out this study. Briefly, I self-identify as a European American female who is a queer lesbian living with non-visible disabilities (i.e., cardiomyopathy and atrial septal defect) and who has childhood and adult experiences of poverty, homelessness, and violence. In the same breath that I offer it, this self-description is woefully inadequate, temporally limited, partial (for a great deal else of "me" remains unsaid and thus invisible), and belies tensions among aspects of my identity/self. However, these experiences of being on the 'outside' or 'less-than' side of power binaries (e.g., straight/gay, able/disabled, male/female, rich/poor) have engendered awareness to structural power issues and an associated desire to expose and to challenge them.

Most of the self-description above is self-explanatory; however I want to say a bit about what I mean by “queer lesbian.” I am a woman who is physically, romantically, sexually, emotionally, and spiritually attracted to other women. I self-identify as a lesbian regarding sexual orientation and my perception is that I was born this way. However, after reading queer and poststructural literature, I understand the ways that sexuality has been constructed historically and discursively. Because ‘queer’ is a signifier of disrupting or challenging accepted taken for granted conceptualizations of sexual orientation and gender, I have adopted that signifier to my self-identification as lesbian. I am a person who was born with a ‘female’ body, who mostly identifies as female or genderqueer (to indicate that I don’t want to be labeled as either gender binary). I have never felt that ‘woman’ as a category accurately summarizes or represents all of who I am with respect to my gender. As such, lesbian (since it connotes a female-identity) is somewhat problematized by my identity as genderqueer and my gender expression. My gender expression is what many in this culture would interpret as ‘male’ or ‘masculine.’ When folks see my gender presentation, they often assume that I am trying to ‘perform’ masculinity; however, that is not my intent. I would prefer another way of or no need to identify myself in terms of gender. I live at the intersection of what people define as female (I have a female body) and male (my gender expression is interpreted as masculine) and while living in that tension feels authentic to me, it troubles many and disrupts taken for granted meanings of male and female.

Furthermore, my personal and professional experiences are particularly relevant to the study at hand as I will inevitably draw on what St. Pierre has referred to as sensual data (St. Pierre, 1997). I refer here to my own experiences as (a) a lesbian growing up in a southeastern area where I had no “out” peers (i.e., peers who openly identified as a sexual minority) among my adolescent cohort; (b) a mental health specialist who has worked with adolescents struggling

with their own sexual orientation; (c) a volunteer for sexual minority youth serving organizations; and (d) a member of various sexual minority communities. These experiences have impressed upon me that being a youth without community, familial, institutional, and peer support for dealing with the wonderful and confusing awareness of adolescent sexual desire and relationships can be a lonely and difficult time. I want to bring awareness to the fact that sexual minority youth are present in community leisure programs. I want to, in fact, foreground these voices in my research.

Epistemological and Theoretical Position Statement

My current beliefs about the complexity of the construction and representation of knowledge, my own epistemological frameworks, the roles of research, and the nature of identity and self-construction and expression are reflected in the following quote: “The only way to an accurate view and confident knowledge of the world is through a sophisticated epistemology that takes full account of intractable contradiction, paradox, irony, and uncertainty in the explanation of human activities” (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p. 15).

My academic career began in 1984 as an undergraduate student in a psychology department that was steeped in positivism and quantitative methodology. Yet this paradigm was never made visible and never critiqued. I was taught to look for the one “correct” explanation or “truth” about reality through the use of a scientific method that required me as the researcher to remain aloof and objective. I thought I was simply learning the correct (and only) way to conduct research. I learned about operationalization of concepts, the construction of reliable and valid research instruments, and methods of descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Theoretical frameworks were discussed in terms of mid-level theories (e.g., Erikson, Piaget) but the assumption was that all research would take place within the positivistic paradigm.

In my master's program I worked as a research assistant for a woman who utilized feminism as her theoretical perspective and was introduced to feminist thought in research and writing projects. I also took a course called *Feminist Research Methods* which began with a history and overview of feminist perspectives. My experiences in class discussions were often frustrating because the focus only on the impact of gender and race. All the students and the professor were white and while I applauded the attention to race, I chafed at the frequent use of the phrase "we white women" as if by virtue of being white and female we all shared equivalent privileges (unmediated or at best only slightly influenced by class, sexual orientation, etc.). My frustration took me to the library and there I found more in depth discussions of aspects of feminism with which I resonated.

I found resonance with the work of Patricia Hill Collins (1991) who wrote about the limitations of myopic foci on single identities or on additive models of oppression, favoring instead what she called the *matrix of domination*. Collins used this phrase to emphasize the importance of being attentive to the ways that interlocking systems of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and religion affect individuals simultaneously and while one may experience privilege in one aspect of identity (e.g., race/ethnicity), they may also be marginalized by other identities (e.g., class, sexual orientation, gender). Similarly, I found resonance with authors such as bell hooks (1995), Deborah King (1988), and others who emphasized the need to attend to multiple subjectivities in research and also in political organizing.

Another key concept from feminist literature that I latched onto is represented by the following quote from Kathleen Weiler who said, "For feminists, the ultimate test of knowledge is not whether it is 'true' according to an abstract criterion, but whether or not it leads to progressive change" (1988, p. 63). This call to engage in 'research as praxis' (Lather, 1986) has

greatly influenced the kinds of research questions I want to ask as well as the methods used, representations, and application of research in which I engage.

My doctoral program has been a fertile context for my growing awareness and understanding of the epistemological and theoretical perspectives that I embrace. I came to realize that my undergraduate education had privileged objectivism and that alternative epistemologies were never even presented. “Objectivist epistemology holds that meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists as such apart from the operation of any consciousness” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). In other words, reality is “out there” and independent of human construction or recognition. I believed that if I designed my research studies well enough I could uncover the Truth about relationships between or among specified variables. This view had been problematized in my masters program but I still retained much of that understanding of research.

In my first year of the doctoral program, I encountered literature about constructionism which posits that “truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). I like constructionism because it posits that there are objects and concepts present in the world and they are part of people’s constructions of meaning about them. Additionally, I like the focus on assessing research not on the validity of the “Truth” of interpretations made but on the utility of the interpretations. This epistemology (constructionism) fits well for me in light of the feminist concepts of multiple subjectivities, multiple and interlocking systems of oppression, and the importance of research as praxis—of doing something to advance equality with research.

Regarding macro level theoretical perspectives, at this point I am somewhat of a theoretical mutt. By that I mean that there are several theories to which I am attracted and in which I find degrees of “matches” between what they purport and how I see the world. In some

cases, such as feminist and critical theory, I had the beliefs prior to having the words to express the beliefs in terms of theory. When I learned about the theory, it was an “a-ha” type of recognition. Other theories have “grown” on me because they have exposed things I did not previously recognize. I’m thinking here of queer and poststructural theoretical perspectives. As hinted at by the term “theoretical mutt,” I do not embrace all of these theoretical positions wholly or in unproblematic ways. I embrace concepts and influences from various theoretical positions because they (a) put words to and explain my experiences (past and present) in the world and (b) provide guidance or direction to how I can affect the world in ways that leave it better (hopefully) than what it was when I got here. In this next section I will briefly identify how I define or conceptualize three of the main concepts central to this research study (i.e., sexual minority youth, leisure, and identity).

Definition of Terms

Sexual Minority Youth

Psychological literature posits that sexuality and sexual desire is something that resides within an individual. Therefore, one is heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual because of the objects to which one feels attracted from an internal, subjective, and relatively static experience. One is open to partnering with people of the same sex only, opposite sex only, or of any sex/gender. The origin of desire is not known but is presumed to be a result of some combination of hormonal, genetic, and physiological influences.

Foucault (1978) pointed out the “polymorphous techniques of power” that put sex into discourse and resulted in the policing, cataloguing, and regulating of sexual interactions. He noted that “The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (Foucault, 1978, p. 43). Foucault rejected the notion of an internal ‘sexual orientation’ and

posited instead that what is referred to as sexual orientation is a result of discursive practices that “has ensured through a network of interconnecting mechanisms, the proliferation of specific pleasure and the multiplication of disparate sexualities” (1978, p. 49).

My thinking about sexual desire and contemporary definitions or categorizations of sexual minority youth is influenced by both the psychological and poststructural literature. I realize that this is problematic given their contrary assumptions about reality. I will say more about this tension toward the end of this chapter. I do believe there is something internal that influences to whom one is open to experiencing sexual, romantic, and physical attraction. I do not know how that comes to being, but I do believe there is something internal and essential about sexual desire and attraction. I think that the way in which that subjective experience of sexual desire and attraction is conceptualized and given meaning has *everything* to do with how, through discursive practices, society defines, regulates, polices, or does or does not permit expression of sexual feelings and desire. I also think that contemporary sexual minority youth are actively deconstructing and problematizing definitions and categorizations of sexual behavior as reflected by queer theoretical frameworks. To define queer theory Spargo (1999) said:

Queer can function as a noun, an adjective, or a verb, but in each case is defined against the ‘normal’ or normalizing. Queer theory is not a singular or systematic conceptual or methodological framework, but a collection of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and sexual desire. (p. 9)

Regardless of the origins or ways of labeling sexual orientation, sexual desire, or sexual behavior, those who express sexual desire for or who engage in sexual behaviors with people of the same gender as themselves experience a great deal of harassment in contemporary society. Research will be presented in the next chapter that documents the degree to which those who identify as or who are presumed to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual experience verbal and physical

harassment in education, leisure, and recreational contexts. It is the consistent marginalization of sexual minority youth that prompts me to center their experiences in this research.

Leisure

Given the importance of perceived freedom and opportunity for self-expression for something to meet the subjective experience of leisure, for this study, I defined leisure to participants as “anything that they chose to do of their own volition and from which they expected enjoyment or some intrinsically meaningful benefit.” In this way, I hoped that participants would feel relative freedom to define for themselves if and to what extent they considered something to be ‘leisure.’

Identity

After many rewrites to introduce and define the term ‘identity’ I have elected to borrow a phrase from author Mike Michael who said, “I should forewarn the reader that nowhere in the text will they find a simple, overarching definition of ‘identity’” (Michael, 1996, p. 7). His reasons for this were that it was very difficult to find “any consensual definition of identity” and that it seemed important “to interrogate the discursive practices...through which this thing ‘identity’ emerges. My reasons are similar in that I can find no single definition of identity (or self) that I think completely and accurately encompasses this complex construct called identity with which I have been fascinated throughout my academic career. Rather, there are aspects of various intellectual traditions that I attempt to weave together as I try to investigate and understand how it is that people come to say “I am this” or “This is me” or “This is not me.” To me identity is something that is multi-faceted, like a diamond. It is worked and reworked over the course of one’s lifetime but is a product of multiple influences and factors.

When I talk about identity, I am interested in the myriad and complex processes of its construction, discovery, expression, performance, and the factors related that influence these processes. I will use the term ‘identity work’ to refer broadly to all of those processes by which identity comes into being as well as to the ways in which identity is (or is not) deployed by individuals in various contexts. Identity work is a term I have coined as my attempt to consolidate my interest in how people engage in the processes of exploration and commitment in the construction of identity, how identity may sometimes be discovered, how identity is expressed to others, or how identity is performed.

Theoretical Tensions

I have difficulty identifying one theoretical tradition in which to base this study. I recognize the incompatibility between theoretical frameworks that assume an internal structure called identity or sexual orientation (e.g., psychology) and those that deny such a structure as an internal, essential subject (e.g., poststructuralism). Yet, I find much from both frameworks useful and relevant to how I see and understand the world. If the ‘post’ subject only selects from among available discourses and with regard to the material practices that constitute or govern the subject, then what explains those who act in ways that the dominant discourses render unintelligible and transgressive. What, if not some internal sense of what is authentic and true for the person, would prompt one to take up transgressive iterations or citations of norms in the face of the negative sanctions that come from doing so? I agree that the ways in which one identifies and is identified by others in some sense ‘constitutes’ and makes intelligible one as subject or person. And I agree that there are “regulatory norms” and “conditions of possibility” (Butler 1990) that constitute alternate positions one could take up, perform normatively, or transgress. But I believe there is something internal that makes some discourses and positions more ‘true,’

‘authentic,’ or ‘resonate’ for a person that others. Thus, I remain standing in the uncomfortable tension of seeing validity and usefulness in both psychological and poststructural literature but feeling that neither of these frameworks alone is adequate for how I perceive and make sense of the world.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will review the literature on which I have drawn regarding identity, leisure, and sexual minority youth. I will lay out the rationale for investigating the discourses about sexual orientation that female-identified sexual minority youth encounter in leisure contexts, how these discourses influence their experiences of leisure, and how these discourses influence leisure as a context for identity work. Following the review of each of the three areas (identity, leisure, and sexual minority youth) I will identify the gaps in the literature that this study addressed.

Conceptualizing Identity

In this section I will explain the portions of the literature on identity that I have used as trail markers along my journey; literature that has guided my thinking and my decisions about what questions to ask and how I feel it is best to try to answer them. I recognize that some of the literature that informs my thought differs in terms of underlying epistemological assumptions (e.g., that there is a universal linear trajectory for construction of one's identity; that there is an internal, authentic something that forms the basis of this thing called identity which one discovers or embraces versus that there is no agent that expresses an identity rather that identity is performatively constituted). Part of what I hope to do throughout my research career is to find ways to weave these seemingly disparate and oppositional threads of understanding together. This dissertation is one step along that lifelong journey.

Psychological Influences

As stated in Chapter 1, my conceptualization of identity is grounded largely in psychology, specifically in Erikson's work and the related body of literature. Erikson defined ego identity as "a defined ego within a social reality." Furthermore he said:

The conscious feeling of having a *personal identity* [italics original] is based on two simultaneous observations: the immediate perception of one's selfsameness and continuity in time; and the simultaneous perception of the fact that others recognize one's sameness and continuity. What I propose to call ego identity concerns more than the mere fact of existence, as conveyed by personal identity; it is the ego quality of this existence. (Erikson, 1959/1980, p. 22)

This definition of ego identity resonates with me because it denotes a subjective experience of a person as well as the ways in which that person is perceived by others. It recognizes both the agentic possibilities of the person but does so within the constraints, limitations, and possibilities of the given social reality in which that person lives. Moreover, while Erikson identified adolescence as a life period where questions of identity were particularly salient and wherein individuals had the cognitive capacity and opportunity to discern their own personally held beliefs (as distinct from those taught to them by family or society), he emphasized that identity development was an endeavor that spanned one's entire life.

James Marcia's expansion of Erikson's work has also been greatly influential in my understanding of how people construct identity. Marcia posited that identity, which he defined as "a self-structure—an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history" (1980, p. 161), was the product of the processes of exploration and commitment. Marcia described the process of exploration or 'crisis' as an "adolescent's period of engagement in choosing among meaningful alternatives" (1966, p. 551) and 'commitment' as "the degree of personal investment" (1966, p. 551). When initially discussed, these processes of exploration and commitment were examined only in terms of occupational

choice, religion, and political ideology but in later years have broadened to include other aspects of people's lives (e.g., sexual orientation, personal values, and interpersonal relationships).

Marcia proposed that people could be classified into one of four identity statuses based upon the presence or absence of the processes of exploration and commitment. For a thorough review of the extensive body of literature regarding studies related to Marcia's identity statuses and correlations between identity statuses and other variables, please see Marcia (1993). The relevance of this body of work to me is that I find the discussion of the processes of exploration and commitment to be useful in how I conceptualize identity and its construction.

Grotevant (1987) presented a process model of identity formation that was "developmental, contextual, and life-span in scope" (p. 203). The model consisted of four major components. The major components were individual characteristics (cognitive ability and personality attributes), contexts of development (culture, society, family, peers, school, work), domain specific identity processes (exploration, evaluation, commitment, consolidation), and interdependencies among different domains (e.g., career, ideology, sex role, religious identity). This model of identity formation is useful because takes into account the influence of factors related to cognitive development, personal temperament, influences from the environment, possibilities that exist in the environment, and the processes of exploration and commitment as a part of identity development. This model is also useful in that it theorizes processes of identity development and expression within given domains (what I would call facets of identity) as well as the interdependencies among domains (facets). In Grotevant's model cognitive evaluation is assumed to be the primary influence on exploration and commitment processes with affective outcomes relevant secondary to cognitive outcomes. I do not see reflected in Grotevant's model an accounting of the influence of affective or internal resonance with possible identities as a

factor in someone exploring some possibilities but not others or consolidating some identities but not others. I will say more about this when I talk about Waterman's (1990, 1993) concept of the importance of the 'daimon' in identity. Since that conceptualization is not based in Erikson's theoretical framework, I will discuss it later in the chapter after I present critiques to Erikson's work.

Critiques of Erikson's theoretical framework. Erikson's work as well as the research based on that theoretical framework has been criticized for inadequately representing the reality of women's identity development. For example, Gilligan (1993) criticized conceptualizations of identity that gave primacy to the task of individuation or separation from rather than connection to important others. The following quote summarizes her main critique of then-existing developmental models (including Erikson's):

Attachment and separation anchor the cycle of human life... This reiterative counterpoint in human experience, however, when molded into a developmental ordering, tends to disappear in the course of its linear reduction into the equation of development with separation. This disappearance can be traced in part to the focus on child and adolescent development, where progress can readily be charted by measuring the distance between mother and child. The limitation of this rendition is most apparent in the absence of women from accounts of adult development (Gilligan, 1993, 151).

Several researchers have addressed this critique by conducting research to examine whether there are indeed gender based differences. For example, Archer (1989) examined whether there were gender based differences in the "use of the identity process, and the domain and timing by which identity becomes salient" (p. 126). She found that the developmental processes used to define self were comparable for the males and females in her study. The timing of developmental processes in the domains of occupational choice, religious beliefs, and sex role orientations were similar for males and females. However, there were some differences found between males and females in the domain of family roles where females were more likely to

anticipate conflict between family roles and career than males and were more likely than males to consider this conflict to be something they would have to negotiate. Thus, Archer's findings did not cast doubt upon the utility of Erikson or Marcia's theoretical framework with respect to the construct of identity, the salience of domains typically examined, or the timing and processes of identity. Marcia (1993) addressed the lack of attention to relational issues in identity development by pointing out that each stage in Erikson's theoretical framework is relationally based. Archer (2002) and others (c.f., Kroger, 1993, 2000; Sneed, Whitbourne, & Culang, 2006) have continued to articulate the utility of Erikson's theoretical framework for its discussion of processes and role of identity and the necessity of "testing the goodness of fit of its stages with different exemplars" (Archer, 2002, p. 269) such as people of color, women, people from low incomes.

A second broad critique leveled at work extending from Erikson's theoretical framework is that his work and that of those who expanded on his theory failed to sufficiently attend to broader socio-cultural factors affecting identity (e.g., Cote & Levine, 1988). As noted in the preceding paragraph, previous authors have emphasized the attention to contextual factors (e.g., Adams & Marshall, 1996; Grotevant, 1987; Kroger, 1993). In my own reading of Erikson's original writings (particularly Erikson, 1959/1980, 1968), I see a clear recognition of broader socio-cultural factors and of the need to consider them as well as examining "psychoanalytic ego" factors. One example comes from his opening remarks in *Identity and the Life Cycle* (1959/1980) where he says:

Men [*sic*] who share an ethnic area, a historical era, or an economic pursuit are guided by common images of good and evil. Infinitely varied, these images reflect the elusive nature of historical change; yet in the form of contemporary social models, of compelling prototypes of good and evil, they assume decisive concreteness in every individual's ego development... Only psychoanalysis and social science together can eventually chart the life cycle interwoven throughout with the history of community. (p. 18)

Similarly, when Erikson introduced ‘ego identity’ he emphasized that this subjective experience was the “developing [of] a defined ego within a social reality” (p. 22). I see in this quote and in other places in his writings an attentiveness to socio-cultural factors, contextual factors, and even issues of power and discourse (such as in the notion of social models of compelling prototypes of good and evil).

A third broad critique leveled at work extending from Erikson’s theoretical framework comes from people who claim that in a postmodern society that is characterized by rapid cultural and technological change, multiple roles, and multiple discourses, there is no such thing as a self or identity that is stable or unified. Examples from this genre of critique are represented by the authors such as Gergen (1992) who posed that in the late 20th century there was no organizing pattern or identity and that:

Under postmodern conditions, persons exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction; it is a world where anything goes that can be negotiated. Each reality of self gives way to a reflexive questioning, irony, and ultimately the playful probing of yet another reality. The center fails to hold. (p. 71)

It is true that “modernity” or “postmodernity” is a context that is rapidly changing, contextually specific, and replete with multiple possibilities of who one can be or parts one can play. However, the rapidity of current cultural pace or the ways in which some identities, roles, or parts one plays in contextually specific contexts does not negate the possibility or the utility of a sense of coherence or loose synthesis among aspects of identity or self.

McAdams (1997) posited that perhaps there are “two senses in which unity may be conferred upon the self, even amid the multiplicity of (post)modern social life” (p. 56). He drew on William James’s (1892) conceptualization of selfhood as consisting of subjective and objective aspects. He proposed that the self functions to arrange experiences and that it engages

in a process of “selfing” or synthesis of experience to make it one’s own. McAdams writings have some relationship to narrative conceptualizations of identity or self which I will talk about momentarily but will not do so here because they do not rely upon Erikson’s theoretical framework.

Schachter (2005) responded to a postmodern critique of Erikson’s theoretical framework by distinguishing between ‘postmodernism as context’ and ‘postmodernism as theory.’ Postmodernism as context refers to the rapid, fluid, ever changing nature of postmodern cultural and societal contexts. Postmodernism as theory refers to the social construction of reality through discourse and discursive elements (i.e., language, concepts, theories). Postmodernism as context challenges the concept of identity as a unified, cohesive, relatively stable, internal element. Postmodernism as theory challenges the utility of concepts such as identity, self, and theoretical frameworks that provide generalizable explanations. Schachter proposed that some of the critiques leveled at Erikson have come from people who have relied on representations of Erikson rather than studying his original writings. He pointed out that Erikson did not propose a single, unitary, or static construct of identity; rather Erikson recognized variability based on contextual factors and cultural factors. Erikson used the term ‘configuration’ to denote the psychological structure that the individual creates to hold together or synthesize multiple identifications. Similarly, other authors whose work is based in or relies upon Erikson’s theoretical framework, acknowledge that there are multiple facets, domains, or aspects of identity as well as a global or overall identity wherein these “soloists” (i.e., domain specific or facets of identities) are brought “into the choir” (i.e., global or synthesized identity; e.g., Grotevant, 1987, 1993; Kleiber, 1999, Kroger, 1993).

Identity Formation for Gay and Lesbian Youth

The majority of the psychological literature on identity has been done with the assumption that all research participants are heterosexual. Studies that have addressed identity formation in sexual minority youth have focused on identity only as it related to sexual orientation. There are several models of the process of recognizing and embracing one's identity as a sexual minority; a process that is often referred to as 'coming out.' Most of these models map out a series of stages that, while not exclusively linear, do tend to occur in a commonly occurring order (Cass, 1979; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Sophie, 1986; Trioden, 1989).

According to existing models of coming out, the process of identifying as a sexual minority proceeds through a series of stages that while labeled differently in various models have some similarities. In these models the process begins with a person's growing awareness of erotic or sexual attraction to members of one's same biological sex. This awareness phase is followed by a period of time (or stage) wherein these feelings are alternately repressed, ignored, and actively explored. People seek out information through media, books, or others who are 'out' about their identity or behavior as a sexual minority.

Through the process of exploration individuals embrace or commit to their identity as a sexual minority (third stage). During this time period, that identity as lesbian or gay is frequently the most salient aspect of the person's identity and one may choose to affiliate most often with others who hold similar identities. Alternately (as when youth embrace of queer as an identity of non-identity) they may refuse to label themselves in any specific way yet become comfortable with and accepting of their desire for sexually intimate contact with people regardless of their biological sex.

The final phase in the coming out models consists of an incorporation of identity as a sexual minority with other aspects of identity and the willingness or comfort with sharing this aspect of one's identity with others. Figure 1 provides a representation of several well-known coming out models color coded to indicate phases with similar characteristics and which I think can be summarized in general terms as awareness, exploration, commitment, and integration.

Cass (1979)	Sophie (1986)	Troiden (1989)	McCarn & Fassinger (1996)
Identity Confusion	Awareness	Sensitization	Awareness
Identity Comparison	Testing & Exploration	Identity Confusion	Exploration
Identity Tolerance	Identity Acceptance	Identity Assumption	Commitment
Identity Acceptance			
Identity Pride	Identity Integration	Commitment	Internalization
Identity Synthesis			

Color Key: Dark background=Awareness; Medium background=Exploration; Light background=Commitment; No background shading=Integration

Figure 1.

Comparison of coming out models

McCarn and Fassinger (1996) differ from most other coming out models in that they asserted that coming out to self and coming out to others are two distinctly separate processes that are not necessarily linked.

While the process of 'coming out' as a sexual minority youth is important to study, such a single focus ignores the construction and expression of other aspects of identity in sexual minority youth. Most research indicates that, similar to identity work in all individuals, there are tensions and incompatibility among aspects of identity that must be negotiated. Aspects of self

that are related to identities as a family member, a person of color, a member of a religious community, or vocational/occupational paths may also complexify identity work as a sexual minority. For example, mainstream religion is frequently used to condemn those adolescents who self identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBQ). This creates a crisis of identity and faith for adolescents for whom religion is an integral part of their identity but who then identify as LGBQ (Sears, 1991). Similarly, identities as a person of color or as a person with a disability may result in people feeling torn between communities with no real chance for acceptance in either community unless sexual identity is concealed.

A critical but still under researched area regarding sexual minority youth is the interactive influence of race, class, gender, disability, nationality, and socioeconomic status on identity work. Heinz, Gu, Inuzuka, and Zender (2002) analyzed constructions of gay identities (their term) on World Wide Web sites and asserted that while cyberspace provides a realm for coming out, it is “also a realm in which cultural imperialism and commodification of ‘other’ experiences reign” (p. 107). They detailed ‘strong differences’ among the themes, identities, and expressions of sexual minority members of various national backgrounds.

Savin-William (2001) noted that most research has been conducted with gay male participants rather than female youths, yet the findings have been generalized to females. Research suggests however that there are differences between female and male sexual minority youth. For example, young women more often desire romantic relationships wherein sexual behavior further deepens or is an expression of the emotional connection between partners. Young men though are more “genitally oriented” and less romantically oriented (Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2000). Similarly, differences in sexual behavior, importance of romantic relationships, disclosure of sexuality, process of coming out, and conflicts among aspects of

identity have been documented among youth of different ethnic backgrounds (Dubé & Savin-Williams, 1999). Gutierrez (2004) interviewed “transgender youth of color” who attended an alternative school comprised of sexual minority youth. Youth in Gutierrez’s study talked about the tensions among aspects of their identity internally and in interpersonal interactions. These youth emphasized the importance of incorporating and being respected for all aspects of their identities.

Savin-Williams (2001) reviewed and critiqued existing literature on sexual minority youth. Among other issues, he stated that existing research is problematic because of the tendency to focus on problematic concerns, making comparisons to ‘heterosexual’ youth on various measures, a reliance on retrospective accounts, inclusion of only youth who self identify as sexual minority, and representation of sexual minority youth as a homogenous, unified group.

Two other bodies of literature have influenced my conceptualization of identity and have given words to explain some of the factors I think are relevant in identity work. I want to foreground concepts from these two bodies of literature that are relevant to my work. I will then conclude this discussion of identity by addressing the theoretical tensions that exist from drawing on multiple literatures.

Philosophical Eudaimonism

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to present a complete discussion of philosophical eudaimonism. However, I include a brief discussion of it here because the concept of the daimon is the closest thing I find in literature that explains why some people are drawn to some identities, pursuits, or ways of being over other identities, pursuits, or ways of being. The daimon was originally thought of by the Greeks as a “guiding spirit” present internally at birth

(May, 1969). The daimon represented the greatest potential for a person was thought to give meaning and direction toward which one should strive.

Waterman (1990, 1993) emphasized the importance of personal expressiveness and the relevance of the notion of the daimon to identity. He stated,

The content of a person's identity elements, the substance of identity commitments, should be constituted of material that is experienced as personally expressive. Understood this way, a sense of identity is not so much something to do, as it is someone to be. (1990, p. 64)

He drew on the philosophical tradition of eudaimonism, which emphasizes the importance of people living in accordance with their daimon or true self. Waterman posited that when people are undertaking actions or "being" in ways that are consistent with their daimon, they will experience greater satisfaction and self-expression than when they are pursuing activities or ways of being that are inconsistent with their daimon.

Poststructural Influences

Butler's (1990/1993, 1992, 1993) discussions of the poststructuralist critique of the subject has been important in how I think about identity work. Butler's work in combination with Foucault's (1978) discussion of relations of power and of discursive practices that "put into operation an entire machinery for producing true discourses concerning [sex]" (p. 69) highlighted the ways in which the categories of 'woman' or 'homosexual' have been produced through discursive practices.

Foucault (1978) demonstrated the ways in which sex (particularly for children and adolescents) has been "an important area of contention around which innumerable institutional devices and discursive strategies have been deployed" (p. 30). He demonstrated the ways in which through discursive means the "nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage...the sodomite has been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (p. 43).

Butler (1990/1993) posited the following questions:

To what extent do regulatory practices of gender formation and division constitute identity, the internal coherence of the subject, indeed, the self-identical status of the person? To what extent is “identity” a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience? And how do the regulatory practices that govern gender also govern culturally intelligible notions of identity?

Butler (1990) illustrated that the category of woman had been constituted through discursive practices. Similar to Bem (1993) and Lorber (1994) she (Butler) troubled the belief that ‘woman’ was an internal, essentialist category by demonstrating ways gender is socially constituted. Butler said that gender was not a noun but a ‘doing,’ an effect of acts gestures, enactments, “corporeal signs and other discursive means” (p. 173). Certain forms of doing may be a reproduction and consolidation of the law (the performative ideal) while others might be transgressive or subversive.

In 1993, Butler clarified that “the reduction of performativity to performance would be a mistake (p. 235). Performativity is “a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition” So performativity is not the same as what some people refer to as gender expression (the way in which one expresses themselves in terms of gender). She also said that “gender’s undecidability is to be traced as the play *between* [italics original] psyche and appearance” (Butler, 1993, 234). These two points are important to me because many take Butler’s works to reduce everything to appearance and/or to deny an internal subjective experience of individuals when neither of those two reductions is accurate.

What Foucault, Butler, St Pierre and others emphasized is not that appearance is all there is or that individuals have no internal subjective experience. Rather, they encourage people to examine the conditions of possibility for some subjects (and I would say identities) to exist while

rendering others unintelligible, invisible, or silenced. Butler and Foucault made me aware of the ways that bodies and subjects (I would also say possible identities) are constructed, regulated, permitted, performed, and policed. It led me to see that the options for identity claims and/or ways of being that are possible are constructed prior to a person's experience and limit the options by which one labels his or her experience.

The poststructural subject is not a mere puppet however. Butler (1992) wrote: "Critique of the subject is not a negation or repudiation of the subject, but, rather, a way of interrogating its construction as a pre-given or foundationalist premise" (p. 9) and she emphasized that "to claim the subject is constituted is not to claim that it is determined" (p. 12). Within the political field of every subject, possibilities exist given prevailing discursive practices. Far from being mere puppets, subjects can reiterate, transgress, or redeploy discourses in myriad ways.

Summary of My Conceptualization of Identity

My conceptualization of identity and the processes by which one creates, discovers, or constructs identity or self has been influenced by multiple authors, most of them from psychological and psychosocial frameworks but also from philosophical and poststructural frameworks.

I conceptualize identity as a product of the interplay of cognitive, physiological, environmental, discursive, relational, contextual (at macro and micro levels), and internal influences. To talk about all of the processes by which one creates, discovers, constructs, expresses, or performs identities I have coined the phrase identity work. By identity work, I am referring to all of these processes by which people come to assert "this is me," "this is not me," "this is who I am," or "this is not who I am" as well as how and when facets of identity are (or are not) expressed or performed. I conceptualize identity as a multi-faceted structure where

multiple identities are held simultaneously in what might be referred to as a federation or (as Erikson called it) a configuration. Some of one's identities will be more salient in some contexts than others and will thus be foregrounded in those contexts while others that aren't as salient will not be, yet the fact that facets of identity aren't salient in every context does not negate their existence or salience to the person's self concept across time. I think the discursive practices in given contexts influence the salience of facets of identity as well as the extent to which those identities are expressed or performed.

I think that for some people the development of identity (or identities) is intentional, by that I mean they intentionally and actively engage in the processes of exploration and commitment as described by Marcia (1966, 1980). I think that for others this process is less conscious and more intuitive but occurs nonetheless through the things they reject and the things they pursue. I think that identities to which people commit are those that resonate with something that is internal or that feels like their "true self" such as the daimon described by Waterman (1993). The poststructural influence on my conceptualizing of identity is also visible in that I think the possible identities one can explore or to which commit are a result of discursive practices that render some identities possible, sanctioned, or intelligible while others are rendered unintelligible, regulated, or transgressive.

I live in the tensions produced by psychological literature on identity, the philosophical concept of the daimon, and poststructural discussions of the subject but do not wholly embrace either. I realize this is problematic because psychological literature on identity and the philosophical concept of the daimon assumes an internal, foundational structure while poststructural literature denies such a structure exists. I cannot pick one tradition because I feel none fully encompass my how I conceptualize identity.

Drawing from psychology, I do think there is an internal, subjective experience of identity that consists of multiple facets. For example one might have identities with respect to career (e.g., doctor, teacher), family relationships (e.g., sibling, parent, aunt), socioeconomic status (e.g., middle class, poor), race/ethnicity (e.g., Latina, Black), or leisure (e.g., kayaker, painter, musician). Some of these facets of identity may be more salient in some contexts and less salient in others but they are always present to some extent.

Drawing from poststructuralism, I believe that a number of factors influence this experience of identity (e.g., cognitive, physiological, matters of soul or spirit, environment, family, peers, experiences) and I believe that the identities that people see as possible in a given time frame, culture, and locality are discursively constructed. Power permeates all interactions and there are always present discursive practices that regulate, govern, enable, and make intelligible (or not) various identities available for construction.

I think there is something internal and subjectively experienced that leads people to find some discursively created subject positions resonate but not others. Otherwise, why would people take up subversive or transgressive appropriations of discourse or performances of identities in the face of resulting stigma, lack of access to cultural institutions, or harassment? Thus, while it is problematic, I find all of this literature and conceptualizing about identity/the subject useful.

Contexts for Identity Work

As noted earlier, Erikson believed that identity was grounded in the soil of relationships, historical time period, and geographic era (1959/1980). Theorists have used the word 'context' to refer to settings in which identity work occurs as well as the web of relationships and discourses present (Silbereisen & Todt, 1994). Silbereisen and Todt (1994) defined context as the wide

range of settings “where the developing individual acts, to distal structures” (p. 9). Thus, a context includes the other actors, activity, physical setting, policies, and discursive practices immediately present as well as the larger socio-historical time period and dominant discourses of the culture or cultures.

Grotovant’s (1987) process model of identity development included culture/society, family, peers, and school/work as the ‘contexts of development.’ He noted that it is within those four contexts that people’s beliefs and expectations regarding “norms that govern appropriate behavior” (p. 215) are shaped and in which people receive “reflected images” from others regarding aspects of identity. Much research has examined the specific relationships between identity and contexts (c.f., Kroger, 1993; Santrock, 1996).

Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1993) proposed a sociocultural view of development that consisted of five interrelated levels of systems in which development takes place. The most micro or immediate level is the microsystem and that includes the contexts in which most direct interactions take place everyday (e.g., family, school, neighborhood, church, peers). The mesosystem refers to the connections among the contexts that comprise the microsystem (e.g., interfaces between or among family/school, family/neighborhood, church/family/peers). The exosystem refers to settings or institutions where people do not have an active role but that do influence their experiences (e.g., extended family, friends of family, school boards, city government). The macrosystem involves the culture (in broad terms) in which people live. Culture in Bronfenbrenner’s use meant the processes and purveyors by which expected and accepted behaviors, patterns, and beliefs that are passed from generation to generation. The chronosystem involves the sociohistorical period in which people live and the pattern of events across the lifespan. Bronfenbrenner’s conceptualization of the contexts of development informs

my thinking regarding the contexts in which identity work occurs. I believe it is important to attend not only to the immediate aspects, characteristics, or interactions that take place in a context but also to attend to the broader systems that are at work to influence that context.

Discourse and Contexts

One way I have found useful to make the link between the broader systems (mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem) and individual identity work is through the poststructuralist writings regarding ‘discourse.’ Bove (1990) pointed out that to attempt to provide a concise and essentialist definition of what discourse is would be to “contradict the logic of the structure of thought in which the term ‘discourse’ now has a newly powerful critical function” (p. 53). St. Pierre (2000) stated that discourse refers to the myriad ways in which power functions to control, regulate, and constitute populations. Scott (1988) said, “discourse is not a language or a text but a historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs” (p. 35).

Foucault (1978) illuminated the ways that linguistic practices and the subjugation of language, bodies, and spaces are deployments of power to control and regulate. This is not a regulation solely in terms of laws but the ways in which some things are censored and others permitted through relations of power within human relationship (Foucault, 1997).

Relationships between Leisure and Identity Work

The relevance of leisure for identity work for sexual minority youth is predicated on two main factors. First, research suggests that a significant portion of youth’s time is spent in leisure. Second, research suggests that leisure is a context for what I am calling identity work (i.e., the processes by which identity comes into being as well as to the ways in which identity is or is not deployed by individuals in various contexts) because it is a space of maximal freedom from role

constraints and freedom for self-expression. Indeed, opportunity self-expression is one of the key components in something being defined as an engaging leisure experience (e.g., Samdahl, 1988). As discussed by Waterman (1990, 1993), personal expressiveness and acting in accord with one's daimon is an important component in identity. Leisure contexts offer opportunities for self-expressiveness. Thus, leisure is a potential context in which "new elements of selfhood are presented, new roles tested, and new identities are accepted" (Kelly, 1996, p. 52).

Based on a review of existing literature in the field of leisure studies, researchers have asserted that leisure is relevant to identity in several distinct, often contradictory, and certainly contested ways. I offer five assertions about the nature of the relationship between leisure and identity. I argue that leisure is: (a) a context for complementary processes of exploration and commitment introduced by Marcia (1966); (b) a way to discover one's 'daimon' or true self; (c) a way of forming connections with others and constructing aspects of one's social identity; d) a context in which to enact aspects of social and personal identity; and e) a negative or limiting influence on identity formation in cases of marginalization, 'deviance', other-directedness; or over-investment.

Leisure as a Context for Exploration and Commitment

Exploration of aspects of identity or potential aspects of identity is a crucial process in identity construction (Berman, Schwartz, Kurtines, & Berman, 2001; Grotevant, 1987; Marcia, 1966, 1980, 1994). Leisure contexts often offer fertile ground for the process of exploration (Silbereisen & Todt, 1994; Kleiber, 1999). Leisure is posited as a context for generating possible selves and trying out identities because of the greater relative freedom (both in action and reflection) that characterizes leisure. Leisure is a context for generating possible selves and

trying out identities because of the potentially greater relative freedom for self expression that characterizes leisure (Samdahl, 1988).

Although no leisure contexts provide absolute freedom and there are aspects of social control inherent in leisure, youths' leisure is typically offers greater freedom as compared to other contexts (e.g., work, school, family). Youth leisure contexts are subject to a lesser degree of adult constraints and “allow adolescents to exert more self-induced control than is characteristic of school and other normative, adult-supervised contexts” (Sibereisen & Todt, 1994, p. 4). Samdahl (1992) stated “informal social interaction may be important to leisure because it offers relative freedom from negative judgments, allowing an individual to relax from the necessity of matching behaviors to the confining expectations of others” (p. 30). Kelly (1996) stated, “in leisure new elements of selfhood are presented, new roles tested, and new identities are accepted” (p. 52). Within leisure contexts youth can temporarily adopt different roles (e.g., daring kayaker, reflective poet, rebel, the smart one) across different points in time. In essence leisure contexts offer youth opportunities to “try on” different roles and express existing or potential aspects of one's personality or interests (Hendry, 1983; Kelly, 1983; 1987; Kleiber, 1999) and receive feedback from others (Grotevant, 1987; Kerpelman, Pittman, & Lamke, 1997).

In addition to using leisure contexts as places to experiment with aspects of self, youth use leisure contexts, time, or activities to gather information about or to find role models pertinent to different aspects of self. This can occur through consumption of written, visual, and audio media (e.g., Kivel & Kleiber, 2000) or through observation and interactions with peers (e.g., Sibereisen, Noack, & Eyferth, 1986; Donnelly & Young, 1988). Youth also use leisure contexts as ways to explore self through the creation of music, art, or expressive writing (e.g., Waterman & Archer, 1979).

Commitment is a complementary process to exploration in the work of identity construction. Many experiences, activities, beliefs, or aspects of self, may be explored but only those that resonate with a person's sense of "this is me" (Marcia, 1993) or are embraced for whatever reason relevant to the individual will be followed up with commitment and further pursuit or expression. Leisure contexts provide opportunities for individuals to continue to refine and develop aspects of self to which they have committed. This may be commitment to specific leisure identities through participation and skill development in traditionally defined leisure activities (e.g., sports, expressive arts). Alternately leisure can serve as a context in which commitments to other (non leisure specific) aspects of self can be developed (e.g., religious pursuits, volunteerism).

Leisure as a Context for Discovery of One's Daimon

Second, leisure is a way to discover one's 'daimon' or 'true self' (Waterman, 1993). In contrast to identity as something that is actively constructed, Waterman (1993) applied the ethical theory of eudemonism to identity construction. In Waterman's application, the task of identity formation is "to discover, or recognize, the character of the daimon, that is, one's own intrinsic character" (p. 151). Thus, individuals strive to discover their innate aptitudes and talents and then direct those aptitudes and talents toward purposes that will give life a sense of meaning and worth. Waterman posits that 'feelings of personal expressiveness' accompany living 'in truth to one's daimon' (Waterman, 1990). The characteristics of personal expressiveness are very similar to that of the Csikzentmihalyi's subjective state of flow. Similar to discussions of flow, feelings of personal expressiveness often occur in leisure activities and leisure pursuits. Whether particular roles or aspects of self are committed to and thus maintained will be influenced by social feedback, perception of authenticity, and competence (Grotevant, 1987; Kerpelman,

Pittman, & Lamke, 1997). That is to say that a person will retain or commit to aspects of self that are deemed authentic, relevant, and which have received some personally meaningful degree of authentication or support from the environment.

Leisure as a Context for Social Connection and Social Identity

Third, leisure interests are a way of forming connections with others and constructing aspects of one's social identity. "Seeing oneself as a part of other groups contributes to a sense of place and belonging" (Kleiber, 1999, p. 93). Leisure affords myriad opportunities for people to experience themselves as belonging to a larger group. When people commit to particular a leisure interest, they meet others who share similar interests and thus may become involved with sport specific subcultures (Donnelly & Young, 1988). Thus, leisure contributes to social identity because as Eccles and Barber put it "One's coparticipants become one's peer crowd, and such peer crowds often develop an activity-based culture" (1999, p. 29). Additionally, leisure interests or activities may serve as a foundation upon which friendships are deepened as might occur through casual participation in a variety of leisure pursuits with a given group of friends or acquaintances (Larson, 1994; Silbereisen, Noack, & Eyferth, 1986).

Leisure as a Context for Performing or Expressing Identity

A fourth relationship between leisure and identity is leisure as a context in which to perform or express aspects of social and personal identity. As demonstrated by Haggard and Williams (1992), leisure activities are associated with or "symbolize certain desirable character traits, or identity images" (p. 3). For example, in their study kayaking was associated with being adventurous, fun loving, outdoorsy whereas chess was associated with being analytical, cerebral, and quiet. Thus, if individuals' wish to enact or express aspects of social and/or personal identity, they might engage in leisure pursuits that are associated with those aspects of self. So if being

daring is valued as an aspect of one's personal identity, then leisure activities that are seen as adventurous may be deemed more attractive or self expressive by an individual. Thus participation in an adventurous leisure pursuit (e.g., kayaking) is an enactment of the personal identity as a daring individual (Haggard & Williams, 1992).

Leisure as a Context that Inhibits or Limits Identity

Kleiber (1999) asserted that leisure has the potential to inhibit as well as contribute to identity formation. Leisure can 'derail' identity formation in the cases where there is (a) marginalization; (b) a personal investment in deviant leisure identity or behaviors (e.g., drug use, juvenile delinquency), (c) an over investment (too much commitment/focus to exclusion of other aspects of identity or life), or (d) other directedness (pursuit of social-status associated with socially valued images or activities; pursuit of activities/identities that aren't personally meaningful based on pleasing others).

Kleiber (1999) argued that to the extent that leisure pursuits are deemed deviant by societal norms or result in negative consequences for youth, leisure contexts can be developmentally detrimental. Leisure pursuits that involve drug use, violence, destruction of property, gang membership, or non-normative sexual behaviors are typically considered deviant leisure (Kleiber, 1999; Rojek, 1999). Many of the leisure pursuits that are defined as deviant indeed have negative consequences and limit aspects of identity construction and personal development. However, Rojek (1999) questioned the categorization of leisure pursuits as 'deviant' in absence of examination of the social contexts and power hierarchies that accompany such definition. I concur with Rojek's questioning and would like to see additional research address the relationships between 'deviant leisure' and identity work with a concomitant

examination of the situated experiences of those who are participating in deviant leisure activities or contexts.

Though commitment is thought of as a necessary process of identity work, Kleiber (1999) pointed out that it is possible to become too committed or ‘overinvested’ to leisure identities or pursuits. For example “being an athlete, and little else, may foreclose identity formation when there is little time for or interest in other domains” (Kleiber, 1999, p. 112). To the extent that leisure experiences and contexts are embraced solely or largely because of accorded social status or validation rather than personally meaningful criteria, leisure may inhibit development of aspects of identity. Waterman (1993) stated that some interviewees in his studies evidenced a level of commitment to aspects of identity but that there was no intensity, depth, or inherent satisfaction that resulted from their commitments. Pursuit of or commitment to leisure experiences or contexts that are not personally meaningful can inhibit the development or expression of aspects of self that could be more rewarding and life enhancing.

The extent to which aspects of internalized or social identities are marginalized can limit identity work for individuals. This is true because regardless of whether one thinks of identity as an active construction or as a process of discovery, the degree to which aspects of self are committed to and expressed will be influenced by social feedback (Grotevant, 1987; Kerpelman, Pittman, & Lamke, 1997). Individuals are more likely to commit to or express aspects of self that are deemed authentic, relevant, and which receive a personally defined meaningful degree of support from the environment.

While the above discussion has been organized by positing specific relationships between leisure and identity, by no means are these relationships intended to be seen as clearly defined, indicating causality, and mutually exclusive. Leisure is often many things at once; it can be a

context for expression of an aspect of identity that simultaneously might inhibit or limit identity work (e.g., expression of an identity that is considered deviant or that is marginalized).

Moreover, both leisure and identity work are complex and multi-faceted concepts. Thus when theorizing about the nature of relationships between these concepts one must keep in mind the dialectical ‘messiness’ of the work of identity within contexts of leisure.

Leisure and Adolescents

Adolescents in the United States spend 40-50% of their waking hours in discretionary leisure activities (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1992; Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Larson & Seepersad, 2003; Larson & Verma, 1999). Younger adolescents (e.g., 7-9th grade) tend to have higher percentages of discretionary time (Larson & Richards, 1989), as do urban African American adolescents (Larson & Verma, 1999). There is no significant difference in amount of leisure time according to gender. “For adolescents leisure is associated with relaxation, free choice/free time and enjoyment. In addition...situations are also likely to be experienced as leisure when respondents are intrinsically motivated and reported to be happy” (Kleiber, Caldwell, & Shaw, 1993, p. 100)

Social activities with peers account for much of adolescents’ leisure (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Kleiber, Caldwell, & Shaw, 1993; Larson & Verma, 1999). Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) found that socializing (i.e., talking with others in person or on the telephone) accounted for 16% of the total time spent in leisure. Other leisure pursuits in which adolescents engage at high frequencies include partying (Caldwell & Darling, 1999), media consumption (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Kleiber et al, 1993; Larson & Seepersad, 2003; Larson & Verma, 1999), and sports or athletics (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Eccles & Barber, 1999; U. S. Department of Education, 2003).

Peers are adolescents' main source of companionship and feedback. Csikzentmihalyi and Larson (1984) found that twenty-nine percent of all time by adolescents was spent with friends. This comprised the highest percentage of time followed by time alone (27%), time with classmates (23%), and time with family (19%). More recent studies lend additional support to the amount of time spent with peers (c.f., Kleiber, Caldwell, & Shaw, 1993; Larson & Verma, 1999). In addition to socializing accounting for *how* adolescents' spend a large portion of their time, it is also identified as being most important to them as compared to other activities (Kleiber, Caldwell, & Shaw, 1993).

Leisure and Sexual Minority Youth

Research has indicated that the quality of sexual minority youths' leisure experiences often does not live up to the oft-stated ideal of leisure as a place of freedom of expression and intrinsic enjoyment or as a forum for connection with others. Kivel and Kleiber (2000) noted that "Many of the unstructured and structured leisure contexts that are available to young people are either explicitly or implicitly heterosexual" (p. 219). Due to explicit and implicit heterocentrism in leisure contexts sexual minority youth "are often unwelcome in youth groups or recreational activities" (Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration, 1989, p. 1-50). Indeed some research has reported that leisure experiences of sexual minority youth are more negative than non-sexual minority youth (Caldwell, Kivel, Smith, & Hayes, 1998). Sexual minority youth report that quality of their leisure experiences is limited by having to conceal aspects of their identity for fear of rejection or harassment (Kivel & Kleiber, 2000). These findings make sense in light of documentation of the impacts that freedom from role constraint and high self-expression make on leisure experiences (Samdahl, 1988). If the opportunity for self-expression is limited for sexual minority youth in leisure and recreation settings because they feel it necessary

to filter aspects of self or behavior (secondary to heterocentric norms), they are less likely to have a fulfilling leisure experience.

In current practice, there are two approaches frequently taken to provide safer, more welcoming leisure contexts for sexual minority youth: (a) the provision of separate leisure programs and spaces and (b) the provision of leisure programs and spaces to heterosexual and sexual minority youth in contexts where heteronormativity is disrupted. These latter contexts can be described as non-heteronormative. For purposes of definition let us say that queered contexts are those contexts that are facilitated (by youth or adults) such that sexual minority persons can be open about their same-sex attractions, interests, or practices without fear of ridicule, harassment or exclusion by heterosexual persons present. Contexts are often referred to as queered even if they include people who identify as ‘straight’ (i.e., heterosexual). The extent to which heteronormative discourse and social practices have been challenged or disrupted is what determines whether a context is perceived as queered or not. Examples of queered leisure and social contexts include Gay Straight Alliances and designation of particular time slots at leisure contexts where ‘sexual minority youth’ are specifically invited and assured a safe and welcoming atmosphere.

Youth in colleges and high schools are creating Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) so that persons of all sexual orientations (heterosexual and sexual minority) can engage in leisure/social activities and work together to make schools and communities safer for all persons, regardless of sexual orientation. GSAs are youth directed and the focus of local GSAs may differ slightly based on the needs and goals of the specific group. All GSAs have access to resources from the Gay Straight Alliance Network, which are available via Internet, mail, and telephone. The Gay Straight Alliance Network was founded in 1998 “to empower youth activists to start Gay-

Straight Alliance clubs and fight homophobia in schools” and to connect school-based GSAs to each other and community resources (Gay Straight Alliance Network, 2004).

Organizations, businesses, or agencies that do not specifically exist to serve sexual minority youth or adults can provide ‘safe’ leisure and social contexts when they market themselves as overtly welcoming of ‘sexual minorities’ in general or during designated time slots. In larger urban areas such as Atlanta, GA, restaurants, cafés, inns, and other businesses can advertise as being “gay friendly” via community publications (e.g., The Gayellow Pages, 2008). These institutions serve the general public but are committed to providing safe leisure and social experiences regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Another approach to providing safe leisure and social contexts is when a business or organization sponsors a designated time during which sexual minority youth are explicitly encouraged to attend and are assured a welcoming environment. One example of this occurs in Raleigh, NC where a local coffee shop sponsors “Coffee House Hang-OUTs.” On the fourth Thursday of each month sexual minority youth aged 13-23 years of age are invited to “hang out in a non-threatening space” at a local coffee shop.

Increasingly, separate leisure and social contexts are available through non-profit organizations specifically designed to serve sexual minority youth. The missions of these agencies vary; however, most have in common the goals of providing social support, recreation and leisure opportunities, and resources relevant to sexual minority youth. Many of these organizations are easily located via a search of the Internet

Although separate leisure and social contexts serve vital purposes as points of connection among and safe leisure context for sexual minority youth, they are typically only available to youth in urban or metropolitan areas. Thus, sexual minority youth in rural or small town areas

are often without leisure contexts in which they can be open about their sexual minority attitudes, behaviors, or identity.

In addition to lack of availability, provision of separate leisure and social contexts for sexual minority youth is problematic because separate programming contributes to continued isolation of sexual minority youth from their peers. Additionally such segregated programming is not in keeping with calls for recreation programming to include all participants in activities of their choosing (Bullock & Mahon, 1997; Dattilo, 2002). Finally, the lack of available recreation programming that is inclusive of sexual minority youth or in which they are free from physical or psychological harassment is problematic because leisure has been purported to be one of the contexts in which people construct and enact their identities or individuality (c.f., Haggard & Williams, 1992; Kelly, 1983; Kivel, 1996, Kleiber, 1999, Muuss, 1996; Samdahl, 1988).

Leisure as a Context for Identity Work for Sexual Minority Youth

Despite the limitations that sexual minority youth report regarding their leisure experiences, research suggests that these youth do use leisure contexts for identity work to some extent. Because of sexual minority youths' fear of harassment or rejection, however, much of the identity work is focused on development of personal rather than social identities (Kivel, 1996; Kivel & Kleiber, 2000). For example, sexual minority youth reported using leisure contexts "to help them understand themselves, their relationships with others and the world" (Kivel, 1996, p. 186). Kivel and Kleiber (2000) reported that sexual minority youth used leisure activities such as reading, television, movies, and sports to engage in identity work. Sexual minority youth used reading to gather information about lesbian and gay issues, to find characters with whom they identified, and to engage in self-reflection (Kivel & Kleiber, 2000, p. 222).

Television and movies were also a source of self-understanding and identification with other sexual minority characters. Movies such as *Fried Green Tomatoes* and *Torch Song Trilogy* present positive images of same-sex couples at the same time as they show how sexual minority characters deal with homophobic reactions of society. For some sexual minority females, sports served as “a venue for developing friendships and potential [romantic] relationships” (Kivel & Kleiber, 2000, p. 224).

Critique of Existing Literature

The extensive literature on leisure, identity, and sexual minority youth has several gaps and limitations that I intend to address through the proposed research project. First, much of the existing research has been conducted with the assumption that all youth are or should be heterosexual. Second, where issues of identity have been addressed in sexual minority youth, the focus has been exclusively on identity as it relates to sexual orientation (to the exclusion of other aspects of identity). Third, much of the research on sexual minority youth has been limited to retrospective accounts obtained through interviews.

Kivel (1996) and Kivel and Kleiber (2000) stated that the majority of existing literature on leisure, adolescents, and identity has been conducted and interpreted through the lens of heterocentrism. Some specific examples include the facts that: (a) Erikson’s model of human development asserts heterosexuality as ‘mature sexual identity’ and has referred to homosexuals in the same categories as his discussion of “deviants;” (b) researchers rarely inquire about or at least do not report findings related to sexual orientation (unless that is the specific focus of the study); (c) often used identity assessment instruments do not inquire about sexual orientation and assume heterosexuality (e.g., Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989); and (d) discussions of leisure in the life span assume that heterosexual coupling and marriage will occur.

Another way that heterocentrism is visible in the literature on leisure as a context for identity development is the assertion that freedom offers a space of maximal freedom to engage in exploration of identity. While this is true in many respects, it is less true for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning their sexual orientation (LGBQ). Society at large does not provide recreation opportunities that nurture or assist them in their development in the ways it does for heterosexual youth. For example, while some adolescents are willing to risk transgressing social norms (at risk to personal safety) and attend dances or proms with same sex dates, they still receive harassment from peers and adult administrators alike. Moreover, heterocentrism and gender polarization work together to stimulate and subtly legitimize verbal abuse of those who identify as LGBQ or who are suspected to be LGBQ because of divergence from proscribed gender roles (Bem, 1993). Thurlow (2001) documented that “homophobic pejoratives, many of them vitriolic, constitute one of the most predominant categories of abusive language among young adolescents” (p. 32).

Theoretical Relevance of the Proposed Study

The proposed study seeks to address some of the gaps and limitations of existing research on leisure as a context for identity work in sexual minority youth. Specifically, it addresses the recommendation of Kivel & Kleiber (2000) to examine ways “prejudice based on social identity manifests itself in different leisure settings and how it may limit young people’s access to leisure contexts and developmentally useful leisure experiences” (p. 230). I am also interested in the ways in which sexual minority youth structure or take advantage of alternative leisure contexts to engage in identity work. I followed Savin-William’s (2001) recommendation to include youth who experience attraction to individuals of the same sex and youth who engage in sexual behavior with individuals of the same sex irrespective of whether or not they self identify as a

sexual minority. Data were collected through multiple qualitative interviews and data dealt with recently occurring experiences (participants were encouraged to keep written notes about leisure experiences to prompt their recall of leisure experiences). These methods of data collection addressed the limitation of reliance upon retrospective accounts. In my analyses, I remained attentive to multiple aspects of identity. This stands in contrast to a myopic focus on development of identity as it pertains to sexual attraction, behavior, and identity that characterizes much of the existing literature on sexual minority youth. Finally, I presented the diversity of youth experiences and theoretical relationships between leisure and identity work based on the data collected.

Limited research documents the leisure experiences of sexual minority youth and the extent to which leisure is a context for identity work for sexual minority youth. However, additional research is called for regarding both of these topics (c.f., Caldwell et al., 1998; Dempsey, Hillier, & Harrison, 2001; Johnson, 2003; Kivel, 1994; Kivel & Kleiber, 2000). There are several specific gaps that I wish to address by the current study.

First, as compared to the plethora of research that documents the experiences of sexual minority youth in school settings there is still a dearth of literature that addresses experiences of sexual minority youth in leisure settings. Research of sexual minority youth experiences in school settings has provided a foundation for education, programming, and advocacy regarding sexual minority youth in schools across the country. Additional documentation of sexual minority youth leisure experiences could provide a similar foundation for education, programming, and advocacy in leisure contexts.

Second, much of the existing research on leisure experiences of sexual minority youth is retrospective in nature. While this does not necessarily negate the usefulness of this research,

retrospective accounts can be challenged in that they do not give a picture of current events and youth experiences. For example, in recent years there has been an increased visibility of sexual minority individuals through media representation and political controversy over civil rights (e.g., marriage, adoption, inheritance). Savin-Williams (2001) discussed the presence of cohort effects regarding engagement in and labeling of same-sex behaviors. Thus, it is important to conduct research that uses contemporary data (as compared to retrospective) to ascertain the current experiences sexual minority youth are having in leisure contexts.

Third, Jacobson and Samdahl (1998) recommended exploring the ways people use everyday contexts of leisure to reinforce *and* resist heterocentric discourses. The proposed study gathered data from everyday leisure settings of sexual minority youth in order to examine the influences of heterocentric discourses as well as the counter discourses that have been produced by gay liberation and queer perspectives.

Fourth, most research that has examined leisure as a context for identity development has assumed heterosexuality of research participants. Kivel and Kleiber (2000) called for future research to examine the extent to which “prejudice based on sexual identity manifest[s] itself in different leisure settings and how [it may] limit young people’s access to leisure contexts and developmentally useful leisure experiences” (p. 230). When research has addressed issues of identity for sexual minority individuals the focus has most often been restricted narrowly to sexual identity rather than to identity broadly defined (c.f., Cass, 1979; Hetrick & Martin, 1987; Zera, 1992). Thus, there are models for how sexual minority individuals “progress” through stages as they recognize their attraction to members of the same sex, engage in same sex encounters, integrate their same sex behaviors or attractions into a personal identity, and then publicly acknowledge their identity as a sexual minority to some greater or lesser extent. What

has been less explored is how recognition of same sex attractions or self-identification as a sexual minority facilitates or complicates identity work in other aspects of one's life.

Sears (1991) documented that identity work in the domain or area of sexuality often also affects identity work in the domains of racial identification, religion, gender, family, and occupation. For example, one of Sears' participants talked about how his religious upbringing taught him that 'homosexuality' was 'considered the most awful sin that anyone could commit aside from outright worship of Satan' (p. 52) so he kept himself busy with religious pursuits and academic endeavors. He felt that religion was what connected him to his local African American community but in order to remain connected to his religion and his African American community he had to repress his same sex attractions and work to make his gender expression more masculine. His multiple identities with respect to his religion, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation were in constant conflict. Anzaldua (1987) and Moraga (1983) are two authors who have emphasized the dangers of 'silencing' any aspects of one's identity yet people are often expected to identify with or find community in contexts where that is expected, requested, or demanded.

Finally, some scholars have suggested that existing research on sexual minority youth tells us more about males than females. Savin-Williams (2001) stated, "the vast majority of research has been conducted with gay male rather than female youths" (p. 8). Thus, research is needed that specifically looks at the experiences of females. Dempsey, Hillier, and Harrison (2001) reported that in contrast to young men, "young women had fewer anonymous outlets to explore lesbian sexuality with others in an active embodied way" (p. 76). Additionally, there is less of a "public face for lesbian identity" (p. 78). What is the impact of the relative invisibility of lesbianism in public media? How readily does leisure serve as a context for sexual minority

females to identify their own same sex attractions, to gather information about same sex behaviors, or to connect with other females who engage in same sex sexual practices?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine female-identified sexual minority youth experiences in leisure contexts and to examine ways in which heteronormative and/or queered discourses influence leisure experiences and what I am referring to as identity ‘work’ (i.e., the creation, discovery, construction, and expression of one’s identity). Three research questions guided were guided this study:

1. What discourses and norms related to sexual orientation do female-identified sexual minority youth encounter in leisure contexts?
2. How do contextual norms and discourses about sexual orientation influence leisure experiences of female-identified sexual minority youth?
3. How do the contextual norms and discourses present in leisure contexts influence identity work?

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine female-identified sexual minority youth experiences in leisure contexts and to examine ways in which discourses related to sexual orientation influence leisure experiences and what I am referring to as identity ‘work’ (i.e., the creation, discovery, construction, and expression of one’s identity). Three research questions guided this study:

1. What discourses and norms related to sexual orientation do female-identified sexual minority youth encounter in leisure contexts?
2. How do contextual norms and discourses about sexual orientation influence leisure experiences of female-identified sexual minority youth?
3. How do the contextual norms and discourses present in leisure contexts influence identity work?

Location of Study

Participants were recruited from a contiguous three county area in a state located in the southeast United States. According to the 2000 Census Bureau, this three county area has a combined population of 969,387 people. According to US Census data, the median household income is \$46,899 with 11% of households earning less than \$15,000. Over 80% of people 25 years and older in each county have a high school degree and over 40% of people 25 years and older in each county have a bachelor's degree or higher educational status. Whites or European Americans comprise the largest racial group (65.5%) followed by Black or African American (23.3%), and Hispanic or Latino (5.8%). For more details about the demographics of this area

please see Appendix A. The three county area from which participants were recruited has a mix of industrial and farming occupations along with three public universities and one private university. Compared to the rest of the state, this three county area is considered to be more liberal or progressive by many who live there.

The progressive nature of this area was one of the main reasons I selected it as the location for this study. Additionally, I was pursuing employment in this area because of its progressive nature and because many of my friends and family live there. In contrast to surrounding counties, there is an active and visible lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) community. For example, numerous gay pride celebrations for the state have been held in this region. Also, one county hosts an annual gay and lesbian film festival. At the beginning of the study there was one nonprofit organization whose mission was to serve LGBQ, questioning, and transgender youth through drop-in hours at a physical location, programming, housing assistance, and leadership development.⁵ Additionally other organizations also advocate for this same community (e.g., Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays, and the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Alliance). Anecdotal evidence suggests that many people who identify as LGBQ move to this three county region from surrounding counties for purposes of finding others who are “like themselves” with respect to sexuality. I believed the visibility and vibrancy of the LGBQ community would facilitate the recruitment of participants.

Participants

My goal was to recruit six to ten participants for this study. I chose this target number to generate sufficient data to achieve data saturation (Kvale, 1996). Data saturation refers to the point at which additional interviews “yield little new knowledge” (Kvale, 1996, p. 102) because additional data can be coded using existing themes, codes, and categories.

⁵ Unfortunately this organization no longer exists due to funding difficulties

Participants were included in this study if they: (a) self-identified as female; (b) self-identified as aged 18-23 years (inclusively); (c) self-identified as having experienced feelings of sexual attraction to or sexual activity with other females, or self-identified as lesbian, bisexual, queer, or questioning; and (d) agreed to participate as evidenced by written informed consent (see Appendix C).

Participants for this study were recruited through multiple approaches described in detail below. There was an initial participant recruitment period of two weeks. In this initial two-week recruitment period, I attempted to reach participants through two means. First, I contacted people from local non profit organizations, Gay Straight Alliances, and student organizations at universities that served sexual minority youth, told them about the study, and asked permission to publicize the study to their members/constituencies.

The second strategy employed was to post recruitment flyers in the community news' section of a local independent bookstore. This bookstore (and its downstairs café) is known in the counties selected for this study as having publications and community event announcements of interest to people whom self-identify as members of the sexual minority community⁶. Recruitment flyers described the study and gave the PI's contact information (see Appendix B). The flyer had the large print heading of "Women and Leisure, Recreation, Social Experiences" rather than "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer or Questioning Women and Leisure, Recreation, Social Experiences" for three reasons. First, since the flyers were posted in a public venue, the former heading will make them less likely to be vandalized than the latter. Second, because of the variety of ways females who would be appropriate for the study may self-identify, the former

⁶ I wish to remind readers here that there is no one, monolithic community; rather there is great diversity among people who may self identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or questioning. Yet, despite such diversity and tensions among these communities, there still is a degree of commonality in identifying as a marginalized 'community.'

heading would potentially solicit more participants as well as allow for diversity with respect to ways of self-identification. Third, the former heading is less unwieldy than the latter one.

If more than ten people had agreed to participate in the study during this initial recruitment period, I would have used purposive sampling based on race and age characteristics to select participants for the study. Since my goal would be to have a sample of maximum diversity (rather than to reflect the larger population of the region) I would have chosen to have a roughly equivalent number of participants in the racial categories of those who have volunteered and to have diversity in age within the age range delimited for the study.

I continued the recruitment procedures described above and used the following additional recruitment strategies. I employed network sampling by asking individuals who agreed to participate to tell others about the study and to have them contact me with questions or to participate. I also attended social functions that were advertised as events for sexual minority individuals and publicized the study through conversations and flyers. For example, on the fourth Thursday of each month, a local café sponsored a drop in time for people who identify as “sexual minority youth aged 13-23 years of age” to “hang out in a non-threatening space.” Other events included a gay pride celebration and a local LGBTQ resource fair. As a lesbian (thus an in-group member) and as one who was volunteering with a local organization that served sexual minority youth, my attendance at these functions did not seem out of place. While at these events, I asked folks whom I knew if I could display the recruitment flyers at their organization’s tables.

When an individual contacted me via email and expressed interest in participating in the study, I emailed her and explained the general purpose and procedures to be used. I verified that she met the criteria for participation by sending another email in which I asked her if she: (a) self-identified as female; (b) self-identified as aged 18-23 years (inclusively); (c) self-identified

as having experienced feelings of sexual attraction to or sexual activity with other females, or self-identified as lesbian, bisexual, queer, or questioning; and (d) would agree to sign a written informed consent form. If she answered affirmatively to each of those criteria (via a responding email), I gave her a contact number (my home telephone) and requested that she call me to gather some initial information.

During the initial telephone conversations, I recorded some personal and demographic information using a pre-defined set of questions (see appendix D) and recorded responses on a personal and demographic information form (see appendix E). The personal and demographic information regarding age and race was to be used in the event that I had more than ten respondents during the initial recruitment period and needed to employ the purposive sampling technique earlier described. I thanked the participant for her interest and told her that I would call her back to schedule an initial meeting pending the number of people who volunteered to participate.

Because only two people volunteered during the initial two-week recruitment period, I began data collection with those two individuals and continued recruitment strategies as discussed earlier. When successive participants contacted me I followed these same procedures with the exception that during the telephone call we scheduled the time and location of the first interview. A total of eight people volunteered to participate in the study but only five (5) of them completed all three interviews.

Data Collection Methods

All participants experienced the same research procedures. Each person participated in three in-depth interviews. After the first and second interviews participants were also asked to keep notes about 2-4 leisure experiences per week in a medium of their own choosing. These

leisure notes or journals were to be used to prompt participant memories when they returned for successive interviews. I planned to have two weeks between the first and second interview so that any difficulties participants had with the journal entries or journal entry formats that may yield insufficient data to address research questions could be caught early. I planned a three week period between the second and third interviews to allow enough time for participants to record a greater amount of data about their leisure experiences yet still have the leisure experiences remain fresh in their mind so as to discuss them with me. Additionally, I wished to collect data without the data collection procedures becoming a burden to participants.

Each semi-structured interview was audiotaped and subsequently transcribed. Each interview had a set of guiding questions or prompts to focus the interview on relevant research questions but there was also “openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subjects” (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). Following the conclusion of each interview, I jotted notes of my impressions about the interview. These notes were filed with the interview transcript for that participant to be referred to when I analyzed the interview data.

Data Collection Procedures

The interview locations were negotiated on an individual basis with the requirement that the location was physically and psychologically safe for both participant and researcher and that the environment was amenable to conducting an audiotaped interview. Concerns about the researcher’s physical and psychological safety were assessed by personal perceptions and intuition. Though these are difficult to quantify, they included such things as: (a) the researcher’s sense of the legitimacy of the woman’s interest in the study versus the likelihood that the woman was trying to ‘set up’ the researcher to be battered; (b) knowledge of which areas of town were

more prone to personal crimes (e.g., rape, battery, robbery); or (c) the accessibility to help in the event that the researcher or participant became endangered during the meeting due to illness or assault from others. All interviews took place in one of the following locations: (a) private meeting room in a public library, (b) private office on a university campus, or (c) the participant or researcher's home.

First Interview

At the initial meeting, I reviewed the informed consent statement and obtained the participant's signature on this document. Participants and researcher signed two copies of this same document. I kept one copy and the participant kept the second copy. Next, I conducted an initial interview with the participant. The initial interview addressed participant conceptualizations of leisure and the different types of leisure activities, leisure experiences, and leisure contexts in which she participated (see Appendix F for interview guide). The interview was audiotaped and subsequently transcribed for purposes of analysis. The only guidance about what counted as leisure was that it was "anything that you choose to do of your own volition and from which you expected enjoyment or some intrinsically meaningful benefit."

Following completion of the initial interview, I offered the participant her choice of a floppy disk, three ring notebook, or blank audiotape in which she could record her leisure journal entries. There were no researcher-arranged leisure activities or contexts specific to the study. Instead, each participant was directed to continue her usual leisure participation but to record two (2) to four (4) leisure journal entries per week using prompts from the researcher-designed journal entry guide (see Appendix G). Participants were encouraged to include at least two leisure experiences that occurred in places outside their home or that of a peer. Participants were also encouraged to include a diversity of more satisfactory and less satisfactory leisure

experiences based on their subjective perceptions. The guiding prompts ask participants to record and describe the following:

- Tell me about the place the leisure experience occurred. What did you see, smell, and hear?
- Who was present in the leisure context?
- How did you feel?
- What was it like for you to be in that place?

Apart from being guided by the journal entry guidelines, participants were encouraged to use any and all forms of expression they desired (e.g., written word, drawing, making collages, pasting in or collecting documents, song lyrics, embedded audio files). Participants did not elect to take any researcher-offered tool in which to keep their leisure journal entries. I had hoped to collect enough data through participant journal entries to engage in document analysis. Only two participants sent their journal notes to me via email or shared them with me during interviews, thus there was not enough written data to engage in document analysis. The notes that were kept were useful to prompt participant memory of details so they were still useful though not in the way originally intended.

Following the review of the journal entry procedure, I attempted to schedule a second interview for a date two weeks later. Due to participant schedules, only one participant was able to schedule for a second interview in exactly two weeks. The second interviews for other participants took place at 3 weeks later (n=3) and 4 weeks later (n=4). Participants were instructed and reminded by email to make notes about leisure experiences that happened in the two weeks immediately preceding their second interview. Participants were also reminded to

bring in their leisure journal entries and any other documents or artifacts they believed would help communicate their experiences of leisure.

Second Interview

At the beginning of the second interview, I asked the participant if she had any questions about keeping the journal entries. Most participants reported that they had not kept formal entries per se though several of them had jotted down notes. I then asked them to discuss a particular leisure experience that had occurred in the three (3) weeks immediately preceding the interview (see appendix H for guiding questions and prompts). I elicited as much detail about the specific experiences as possible and inquired whether the participant believed her gender or sexual orientation was relevant in the context. I repeated this process for three (3) to four (4) leisure experiences. After talking about several leisure experiences, I also asked participants to compare and contrast experiences in different physical contexts and to talk about how they determined whether or not it was okay to be “out” in particular spaces.

Before leaving the second interview, I attempted to schedule a third interview for a time three weeks later. Due to participant schedules, only one participant was able to schedule for a second interview in exactly three (3) weeks. The second interviews for other participants took place at 2 weeks later (n=1), 4 weeks later (n=2), and 6 weeks later (n=1). Participants were instructed and reminded by email to make notes about leisure experiences that happened in the three weeks immediately preceding their third interview. Participants were also reminded to bring in their leisure journal entries and any other documents or artifacts they believed would help communicate their experiences of leisure.

Third Interview

At the third interview, I asked participants to discuss a couple of leisure experiences they had in the weeks prior to the interview. I used questions and prompts to elicit descriptive detail (see Appendix I). I also asked questions about how participants felt and how they believed others perceived them in various leisure contexts they had discussed in either the second or third interviews. Participants were also asked if there was a time in which they had felt harassed, unsafe, or unwelcome in any leisure context during the course of the study. If so, they were asked to describe what had happened and to talk about feelings that arose and decisions about subsequent visits to that leisure context as a result of that experience. Also at the third interview, I checked with participants about interpretations I had drawn from previous data interviews and I inquired as to the degree to which they were willing to participate in additional checks of interpretations. All participants reported a desire to give additional feedback throughout data analysis and write-up.

Data Management

Throughout the study I employed several data management strategies. First, I created an Excel document that recorded participant demographic and contact information. Second, I created for each participant a digital folder in which I kept copies of digital journal entries, interview transcripts, data displays, and analysis notes. Each of these folders was labeled only with participants' pseudonyms. To assure confidentiality, I kept all of the above-mentioned data documents in a folder that was labeled only with participant pseudonyms. No identifying information was kept in the data document files. Third, I used a multi-pocketed storage case in which I stored hard copy documents related to each participant. In these files I kept signed informed consent forms, interview transcripts, relevant notes, and other documents that pertained

to participants. Signed informed consent documents were kept together in one file and separate from pseudonym-identified data. The storage case was kept in a secured location in the researcher's home. As I received data from participants or created documentation of my own, I filed it as appropriate within the above described system.

Only one participant kept detailed notes about her leisure experiences and that participant emailed these notes to me prior to the second and third interviews. Another participant kept handwritten notes in her personal journal but did not want to share copies of those with me. Other participants reported that they didn't make notes or that they had just jotted down a few things to remind themselves about what they wished to discuss. Although no data analysis of journals was possible in the current study I believe that the encouragement to make written notes and the ability of participants to refer to those notes in the interview prompted more contextually rich descriptions of events, feelings, and contexts participants discussed.

Data Analysis

Contrary to notions that data analysis comes after data collection, many researchers recognize that "analysis is not only planned for before data collection begins, the analysis itself has already begun" (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002, p. 165). As an example, analysis of data regarding available leisure contexts for sexual minority youth and young adults informed my decision to conduct this study in one location rather than another. Additionally, as I reflected on interviews, reviewed interview transcripts, or thought about the study on daily walks with my dog⁷ and later walks without her, I engaged in informal data analysis. Thus, in addition to the formal and systematic data analysis procedures described below in the next section, the 'head notes' (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Ottenberg, 1990;) I made along the way were also a part of my data analysis procedures.

⁷ My beloved Hikari died on November 17, 2005 of lung cancer so later walks were done solo.

The first thing I did after every interview was to duplicate the audio taped interview in its entirety. The duplicate tape was then sent to a person I hired to transcribe the interviews. Instructions for transcription are included as Appendix J. A print and electronic copy of the interview were set aside to serve as a backup. Once I picked up the transcribed interviews, I read the transcript while listening to the audiotape in order to confirm accuracy of the transcription. I made any corrections as needed (e.g., the transcriber did not recognize abbreviations such as LGBTQ and frequently typed LGBDQ).

I used two separate methods to analyze the data. First, a data source grid and second, a process of open and focused coding using guidelines set out by Charmaz (2002), Strauss and Corbin (1990), and Dey (1999). The following section describes these procedures in detail.

Research Questions and Data Source Grid

I read transcripts for participant responses to specific interview questions. For this task I utilized a chart that two members of my committee and I had created during the planning of the study. The chart identified each research question and the interview questions that I expected would generate data relevant to the research questions (see Appendix K for the Data Source Grid). Where interview data pertained to a research question, I recorded participant responses using her exact words and phrases if they succinctly captured the main idea of what the participant was saying. Where participant responses were very long (as happened when they were telling stories of events), I created a summary using excerpts of participant responses. I created a document that represented participant responses related to each of the three research questions. I repeated this process for each interview of each participant. I then looked across all of the interviews (15 total) of all participants to begin to answer the research questions.

Open Coding

I also used an open coding process to reexamine the data for the purposes of: “(a) noticing relevant phenomenon, (b) collecting examples of those phenomena, and (c) analyzing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures” (Seidel & Kelle, 1995, p. 55-56). First I reread each interview transcript multiple times in close line-by-line manner while jotting notes and initial observations that occurred to me. During the initial time I read each interview transcript I did so while listening to the audiotape interview. I made notes of reoccurring words, phrases, or ideas as well as thoughts about where I could have probed for additional detail or clarity. Then I went back through the transcript and constructed succinct terms or phrases that I thought might be useful in order to “build up and elaborating analytically interesting themes” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 162). I constructed 11 initial themes that I thought would be useful during focused coding and assigned sections of text a theme that I felt best captured an event, object, action/interaction, or concept included in the section of the transcript. I used ‘in vivo’ phrases or words to begin construction of my initial codes where possible. Otherwise I used researcher generated words or phrases that were drawn from concepts in relevant literature or that were relevant to the research questions.

Guided by Ryan and Bernard’s (2000) recommendations for codebooks, I created a codebook that included a definition or description of each code with exemplars of real text (drawn from transcripts) for each code (see Appendix L). Codes were created based on the research questions for this study and concepts, phrases, or terms that repeatedly occurred in the data. I then went back through the transcripts and assigned codes to sections of text (typically one or more sentences that comprised a story or a description of an event, feeling, or perception). In some cases more than one code was assigned if the section included more than one concept.

For example, when a participant used the phrase ‘safe space’ and talked about the emotional impact of discourses present in leisure contexts this phrase was coded as: a) ‘in vivo’ code of safe space and b) research question number two (i.e., How do contextual norms and discourses about sexual orientation influence leisure experiences of female-identified sexual minority?). I followed this set of procedures for each interview with each participant (see Appendix L for a summary of this process).

One example of an ‘in vivo’ code that I used was the term “safe.” During the interviews I had noticed that “safe” was a descriptor frequently used by participants. In the interviews I asked them to explain what they meant by this term. Using data from interviews, I elaborated on safe as a cultural domain. Cultural domains are categories of meaning that identify a given cultural cover term, including terms that constitute types of the cover term, and the semantic relationship that links them (Spradley 1980). Using this process, I began to understand how participants read contextual clues to understand the dominant discourses of a context and then determine for themselves whether they considered the space “safe” or not. The specifics of the types of categories and/or terms to be represented in this manner were driven by the data collected. The intent of using cultural domains and taxonomies is to understand and represent terms or concepts used by a given culture (in this case sexual minority youth participants). Appendix M provides an example of the taxonomy for safe leisure contexts as identified by participants.

Next, I looked across all of the data (total of 15 interviews) to look for codes or themes that seemed to be duplicates as they were used in the transcript or that seemed to be related concepts. I then combined them based on similarity or relationship as discussed by participants. The existing codes were collapsed into logically related categories or identified as discrepant cases using this process. For example, participants talked about “reading” or “feeling out” spaces

or people for the degree to which they perceived a context as “safe.” This led to the illumination of seven strategies that participants used to assess safety of leisure contexts.

As I analyzed data I also recorded thoughts about the data gathered (e.g., where clarification was needed, ideas for follow up interviews, ironies, thoughts about analysis) in the form of analytic memos. This allowed me to capture moments of insight and guided future analysis, data collection, or member checking. One example of this is an analytic memo dated March 22, 2008:

Ask Britt about the “length of hair” comment re a space being safe as contrasted with the length of hair in My Aunt’s House in [name of city] (long).

I noticed while doing this data display how prevalent the talk was regarding gender and how gender (specifically the presence of female-identified or transmen—and the absence of cismen⁸) seemed to be a crucial piece of how comfortable a space was for this participant.

In this memo I made a reminder to myself about a follow up question I wanted to ask during member checking with Britt. Additionally, I recorded my recognition that for this participant the degree of safety in a space seemed to be influenced by gender in terms of gender expression &/or gender identity of participants in the context.

As stated earlier, I completed the above procedures for each interview of each participant individually (each participant had three interviews). Next I looked across all data from all of the participants (a total of 15 interviews). Data were analyzed for areas of similarity, dissonance, and complementarity. I used multiple visual strategies to organize interpretations and concepts gleaned from data analysis procedures (e.g., highlighting in different colors for different codes,

⁸ The term ‘cis-men’ refers to people who were born with XY chromosome, anatomy that was defined as male, and who were assigned the gender ‘male’ at birth. This is the preferred way to distinguish this group of folks from transmen (people who were born with an XX chromosomal makeup, anatomy that was defined as female at birth, and who were assigned the gender ‘female’ at birth but whose gender identity is male and who live as male regardless of the extent to which they have employed hormone therapy or surgery to alter their bodies to reflect their gender identity. The same prefix (‘cis’) can be used in the same way when referring to females/women.

printing transcripts on different colored paper for each of the participants, notes in the margins, charts, and taxonomies).

Trustworthiness of Study

I was not interested in ‘proving’ or ‘disproving’ hypotheses with this study. However, I did have some expectations about what I may find based upon (a) my own experiences of leisure, (b) my knowledge of research about sexual minority youth experiences of leisure, and (c) anecdotal evidence from working with sexual minority youth. I anticipated that I would find evidence to suggest that heterocentrism, heterosexism, and homophobia would negatively impact the leisure experiences of young women who self-identify as gay, lesbian, queer, or who experience physical/emotional/sexual attraction to other females. I expected that to the extent that participants’ experiences of leisure were limited so would be the possibility that leisure served as a context in which identity work (i.e., construction, expression, exploration) occurred. I anticipated that some participants would be less affected or inhibited by heterocentric attitudes than others because of the degree to which they feel comfortable about their own sexuality. I anticipated that the leisure experiences of participants who are more comfortable with their sexuality would be more satisfactory and that for them leisure contexts would more likely be a context for identity work. As a researcher, I utilized member checks and input from others to lessen the likelihood that I would find only what I looked for or only that which I expected to see in the data.

Similar to Riessman (1993), I believe that narratives (whether participant’s or researcher’s) are not ‘exact records or a mirror of a world out there’ (p. 65). Rather, narratives represent views from particular, embodied locations. Thus, rather than assessing the ‘truth’ of knowledge claims resulting from this study, I was more interested in assessing the

‘trustworthiness’ of interpretations or knowledge claims. To increase the trustworthiness of this study and to minimize the degree to which I saw only what I looked for, I employed four specific strategies: (a) sound research design, (b) supervision, (c) member checks, and (d) feedback from peer researchers. First, I designed a research study that was structurally sound and realistic in scope. I drew from existing literature to determine procedures that would best address the research questions of this study. I felt competent in the procedures and techniques employed. Additionally, this study was designed with the assistance and supervision of my advisor and doctoral committee members, all of whom are accomplished researchers in the social sciences.

Second, my advisor gave feedback on data collection, data analysis, and data representation throughout the completion of the study. I utilized her as a resource where I had questions or needed guidance and to provide quality assurance checks on study procedures and interpretations of data. This minimized the degree to which my interpretations or knowledge claims represent only those which I expected to find.

Third, I relied heavily on member checks with participants to increase the trustworthiness of this study. While I was aware that *all* participants would likely not agree 100 percent with *all* of my interpretations, I was committed to feedback from participants that I had “gotten it right.” By “getting it right” I mean that my data-based interpretations, knowledge claims, and representations “ring true” for women who participated in the study (Wolcott, 1994). In addition to informal member checks throughout each of the three interviews, I also invited all participants to provide member checks at periodic intervals from the end of formal data collection (i.e., the third interview) throughout the completion of the study and its written representation. I did this by sharing written texts (e.g., participant descriptions, cultural domains, taxonomies, descriptions of themes) with participants either in person or via email and inviting them to give me feedback

on the content. Their feedback consisted mostly of validation of what I'd written. Occasionally there were minor clarifications, suggestions, or questions. I enjoyed this ongoing engagement with these women and while I am the primary author of this text and thus have more 'power' regarding representation, I believe that they 'signed off' as it were on the representation I have proffered.

Finally, I solicited feedback from peer researchers and/or colleagues. Throughout the planning stages of the study I was a member of a four person writing group. Members of this writing group were pursuing doctoral degrees in a variety of fields. Our writing group met on a monthly basis to review and critique documents. This group of people agreed to serve as consultants to provide feedback on data analysis, interpretations, and representation. This group disbanded about three months after two of the members moved away from Athens, GA (including myself in the summer 2004). We tried to continue by using email but found that this was not as effective as in-person meetings had been.

I replaced the void left by the writing group by three university staff/faculty members and one community member in the area in which I completed data collection. These people were knowledgeable about the diverse experiences of females who are aged 18-23 years and who self-identify as gay, lesbian, queer, or as having physical/emotional/sexual attraction to other females. Similar to the process used with member checking, I shared written texts (e.g., participant descriptions, cultural domains, taxonomies, descriptions of themes) either in person or via email and invited them to give me feedback on the content. Their feedback consisted mostly of validation of what I'd written. Occasionally there were minor clarifications, suggestions, or questions. All documents were written to protect participant confidentiality whenever they were

shared with this group as they live, work, and are connected in various ways to the community from which study participants were recruited.

Representation of Data

“We choose how we write; those choices have poetic, rhetorical, ethical, and political implications” (Richardson, 1990, p. 64). I sometimes struggled with how to represent the data collected, the interpretations I made, and the people who participated in this study.

Poststructural, feminist, and queer literature have forever complicated my use of language, categorical representation, and knowledge claims. As I wrote about this study there were several principles that I tried to incorporate.

First, I wanted readers to have enough primary data and thick description to comprehend study procedures and to make their own evaluation of the trustworthiness of data and interpretations. To this end I aimed for a concept of Gilbert Ryle’s that was made famous by Geertz (1973) called “thick description.” I tried to accomplish this by using the following strategies: (a) the use of quotes from semi-structured interviews, (b) display of cultural domains and taxonomies, and (c) participant portraits. I wanted the written representation of my study to be a ‘page turner’ and therefore have attempted to use a writing style that engages readers. To this end I have attempted to model techniques used in landmark texts that have been presented to me as and that I regard as models of good research representation (e.g., Howell, 1972, Spradley, 1970).

In many previous studies, sexual minority youth have been painted as a homogenous group and with an emphasis on negative or ‘victim’ descriptions (Savin-Williams, 2001). I want to represent the diverse experiences of participants in this study. Therefore I sought to include conflicting accounts or interpretations as well as those that are harmonious. Additionally, I have

attempted to represent the strength, creativity, adaptability, and other positive attributes of youth in this study alongside descriptions of negative experiences associated with belonging to a member of a socially stigmatized group.

Too often researchers speak ‘for’ or ‘about’ those they research without offering participants opportunities to speak for themselves. It was important to me to provide opportunities for participants to represent themselves. To this end, I invited participants to write their own participant portrait for possible inclusion in representations of this study. I also invited participants to give feedback on sections of this document (e.g., the representation of themes and concepts that arose from the data). It felt important to me that they have the opportunity to represent themselves to the extent that was feasible and to benefit from writing projects associated with the data to the extent that they were interested. As recommended by my advisor, I did not promise to include any participant writing in an unedited fashion. My intent, however, was to actively seek ways to make space for participants’ voices as I represented this study to others.

My hope is that this study will begin to address existing gaps in the literature on leisure as a context for identity work for sexual minority youth. I will deem this study successful to the extent that it: (a) provides a complex analysis that is insightful and enjoyable for readers, (b) respectfully represents the lives of those who participated in the study, and (c) makes a useful contribution to research and activist communities concerned with improving lives of sexual minority youth.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In the previous chapter I outlined the research methods utilized in this research as well as the methods used for analysis. As a reminder, the research questions that guided this study were:

1. What discourses and norms related to sexual orientation do female-identified sexual minority youth encounter in leisure contexts?
2. How do contextual norms and discourses about sexual orientation influence leisure experiences of female-identified sexual minority youth?
3. How do the contextual norms and discourses present in leisure contexts influence identity work?

In this chapter I will introduce the participants via a brief participant sketch that summarizes their self-identification regarding sexual orientation, information about relationship status during the study (if they stated this), and common leisure activities or pursuits. Next I will discuss the term “safe” as it was used by participants as they described leisure contexts. After that I will discuss how participants assessed safety within leisure contexts and how their assessment of a space as safe or not influenced their leisure experiences and expression of aspects of identity related to sexual orientation. This chapter will provide thick, rich description of the data from the current study. In the following chapter I will address how the data relates to, answers, or does not sufficiently answer the three research questions that guided this study.

As discussed in the first chapter of this text, I view these data through the lens of someone who identifies as a European American female who is a queer lesbian living with non-visible disabilities (i.e., cardiomyopathy and atrial septal defect) and who has childhood and

adult experiences of poverty, homelessness, and violence. These identities and experiences have sensitized me to issues of power and hegemonic discourse.

Participant Sketches

There were a total of five participants who completed all three of the interviews for this study, thus the data comes from a total of fifteen interviews. All of the research participants self-identified as females who had experienced feelings of sexual attraction to or sexual activity with other females, or self-identified as lesbian, bisexual, queer, or questioning. Participants were between the ages of 18-21 and resided in one of the three counties described in the previous chapter.

Maria is a European American community member who holds a bachelors degree and is employed part-time. She identified herself “from a demographic perspective as straight” and was “partnered” with a man throughout the duration of the study. However, she also stated that she had frequent “short-term sexual encounters” with women. She said, “I don’t identify as 100% straight” and that “from a strictly behavioral perspective I’m bisexual, but I don’t identify as that.” Her father calls her “squiggly” and she agreed that other than “not 100% straight” that was a pretty good descriptor. She considered herself “a gay rights activist or GBLT activist” though not employed as such. Her leisure experiences consisted mostly of “hanging out” with neighbors at their houses or at her and her partner’s house, going out to several area clubs that were explicitly marketed to sexual minority communities or that had Goth nights, and going out to eat with friends.

Madison is a Greek American full-time undergraduate student who also works part-time. She identified herself variously as “bisexual” or “queer” and as very “out.” She said “you know what, I’m not going to hide in the closet for anybody, they can deal with it and this is me and

who I am.” She had a “boyfriend” (quotes indicate that this was her word) at the time of the interviews. Her leisure experiences consisted largely of going out to restaurants with friends, “hanging out” in people’s rooms, involvement with the undergraduate student group at her University, and spending time with family members.

Anne is a European American full-time undergraduate student who also works part-time. She never used a label to refer to her sexual orientation though she talked about “coming out” as bisexual in high school. She was “in a relationship with a man” when the interviews were conducted. Her leisure experiences consisted of going to a local organic, cooperative “fabulous little market” and playing Scrabble, going out to bars and restaurants with friends, going out to or renting movies, and going to coffee shops.

Faye is an undergraduate student from Great Britain studying in the United States. She identified herself as “liking girls,” “queer,” and was “interested in” a woman at the time of the interviews. Her leisure experiences consisted of Appalachian folk dancing or contra dancing in local community venues, participating in an undergraduate group of women who watched the L-Word (a Showtime series with storylines mostly about lesbian women), going out to bars that were marketed specifically to or that were open to sexual minority communities, going to the student recreation center at her University, going to a local coffee shop to study or hang out with friends, and going out to restaurants with friends.

Brinn is a European American full-time undergraduate student. Brinn identified as “queer,” as a “geek” and was dating women at the time of the interview. She said, “I try to be very visually out as well as interpersonally so most people that meet me definitely know that I experience same sex attraction.” Her leisure experiences were numerous and included going to the gym to workout, fencing, participating in a Japanese Animation club and a Unitarian

Universalist campus ministry, going contra and Appalachian folk dancing, going “clubbing” with friends at bars that were explicitly marketed to or that were welcoming to sexual minority communities, “practicing drag,” and going to “a social get together group for women who identify as loving women and also allies and we get together once a week and watch the L-Word.”

Madison, Faye, and Brinn all attended the same university and were involved in varying degrees with an undergraduate student organization on campus for sexual minority youth and their allies. Brinn and Faye also attended the social group for women-loving-women and their allies. I did not discuss with any of these participants the fact that others they knew were also participating in this study. I do not know whether or not they talked about it among themselves.

Participants’ Leisure Contexts

In the first interview with each participant I asked them to tell me about what they most frequently did for leisure. I told them that what I meant by leisure was anything that they chose to do of their own volition and from which they expected enjoyment or some intrinsically meaningful benefit. For the second and third interviews I asked them to talk about leisure experiences that they had (with a focus on public venues or spaces) in the time since we had last met. Again, I asked them to use the same criteria to determine for themselves what constituted leisure.

Participants were all from the same three-county geographic region and thus there was overlap in terms of the specific places that they described. This was helpful in that it allowed for multiple viewpoints of these spaces from people with slightly different perspectives. There were also unique spaces mentioned by participants based on their own particular interests. Here I will

present a brief summary of the types of leisure venues or contexts that participants mentioned⁹. Later in the chapter I will discuss in depth the discourses participants perceived in these various leisure contexts and how that influenced their experiences of leisure.

All participants talked about several area bars and dance clubs that were marketed specifically toward sexual minority communities either on certain nights or on a continuous basis. Two of these clubs (CCs and Legos) were specifically marketed to gay, lesbian, and bisexual people and were described by participants as having a predominately gay male audience. One of the clubs (Views) was specifically marketed to lesbian or women-loving-women communities and was described by participants as being in a ‘sketchy’ part of town with very few male people in attendance. Participants also noted that at Views there was generally a mix of people in terms of race/ethnicity, gender expression, and socioeconomic status (they based assumptions about socioeconomic status on style of dress and knowledge of people’s employment). Two other bars (Rings and Undercover) were identified by participants as places which did not specifically market themselves to sexual minority communities but were very welcoming of same sex couples and varied gender expressions. Finally, there was a bar called Wetplains that publicized one night a week as being specifically for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities. These bars and dance clubs were contrasted with the predominately heterosexual clubs in the area as qualitatively different experiences for the participants. Additionally, there were some differences in participants’ experiences in each of these places. I will say more about this later in the chapter as I describe how I made thematic sense of the data regarding these places and the participants’ experiences within them.

Participants talked about going to various restaurants for meals, coffee, or other informal, social gatherings. Again, because participants were from within the same geographic area, many

⁹ All names of businesses are pseudonyms.

of the same places were mentioned (e.g., chain restaurants, independently owned coffee houses, independently owned restaurants). There were some differences in the level of enjoyment at various restaurants based on where people felt comfortable. These differences resulted from the degree to which participants felt safe or welcome in the space.

Participants talked about attending events and making use of leisure spaces within the local university and community settings. For example, Brinn talked about her experiences at the university student recreation center, a community center where she went for contra and folk dancing, and various university locations where student organization meetings or events were held.

Although participants were directed to make notes about leisure experiences that occurred in public contexts, many of them talked about the importance of their own residences or those of friends. The desire for control over the environment, access to affordable refreshments, and participation of only those known to them was an important factor of residential leisure contexts. Additionally, because of the age of the participants (18-23 years), many of their leisure experiences took place with family members in the home. While these were not public leisure venues, the discourses that were present within private residences differed from across participants as well as from many public venues and thus were included for purposes of analysis.

Safety within Leisure Contexts

During the first interview when I asked participants to “tell me about your typical leisure pursuits” (or some slight variation on that theme), they gave a list of places and things that they went to and/or did for their leisure. After they told me a list of several things, I then went back and asked them to give me more description about each place by asking “what draws you there?” or “what are some of the things about that place that you really enjoy?” This elicited greater

detail about the locations, organizations, or activities they had mentioned. One of the major themes present throughout all participants' interviews was their use of the term 'safe' to describe those places that they enjoyed most and went to most frequently. This came up in every interview with every participant and it arose from their elaboration about leisure contexts they enjoyed. At no time prior to participant introduction of this term did I use it to elicit description of leisure contexts. For example, in my first interview with Madison she mentioned a local restaurant that she really enjoyed. I asked her to tell me some of the things about that place that she really enjoyed. She said that she really liked Mexican food but while there were several places to get Mexican food in the area she particularly liked this place because:

I feel really safe there. I feel like I see like things up on the board, like there's like a drag show or there's something you know queer related going on. They would be the kind of people to put them up or students would be putting them up under certain fliers or over certain fliers and like it's okay, everybody's very—when people are there they don't feel afraid to like show their rainbow, to identify and stuff like it's very open. It's not something everybody talks about but it's just a very accepted thing and there are people who don't like randomly point at you and stuff. (Madison, lines 62-68)

In the first interviews, after I heard a participants use the word "safe" to describe leisure contexts, I asked them to explain what they meant when they used that term. They all said that safe included the freedom to be visibly "out" or open about their attractions to women or their affiliation with LGBTQ communities without fear of harassment by others in the space. For example, Madison said:

Safe to me means, is to be able to feel like I can live my life, I can speak without being made fun of, without being hurt, without someone saying something behind my back, something to my face or making me feel like I'm not welcome in that area. That's definitely important before I go somewhere like a restaurant or a school or somewhere. (Madison lines 93-97)

Another important aspect of a leisure context being safe to participants was the extent to which varied gender expressions outside of culturally proscribed norms were permissible. By

this they meant whether or not male-identified people had to conform to cultural norms about dress, mannerisms, hair length, or other aspects of being male. Similarly, whether or not female-identified people had to conform to cultural norms about dress, mannerisms, hair length, or other aspects of being female. Brinn identified this aspect most succinctly by saying; “A safe space is somewhere that you can not just be oddly gendered but be very obviously and publicly out” (lines 255-256).

Leisure contexts that were categorized as safe by participants were more often sought out and resulted in more enjoyable leisure experiences. Conversely, leisure contexts that were perceived as unsafe were avoided or were attended only if there were other reasons to be there. An example of this that was mentioned by all participants was spending time with family members who did not know they identified as a sexual minority youth or who knew but who were not fully supportive. Additionally, even in cases where they were visiting with a family member with whom they could be out and authentic, there were concerns about being in rural locations that did not feel safe and thus were not as enjoyable.

Participant Awareness of Assessing Safety

Several participants used the term “reading” as they talked about how they look for the “clues” in an environment to assess safety in various leisure contexts. Brinn’s comments captured the ways participants talked about reading the environment:

A lot of being queer and going out is reading people around you and saying, you know, what percentage queer is this space? You know, how comfortable? Is the person I’m looking at queer? Is this somebody I could, you know, in theory if I wanted to go up and talk to? It’s sort of like if you’re just out walking on the street and people walking by pay attention to who you are and what you look like or not based on some of those early clues like gender so if you’re queer and looking for other queer people you have to constantly be reading the crowd to figure out whether or not it’s queer. (lines 1423-1430)

She later stated, “If you’re queer you have to learn how to read these things to find people who will not be aggressive to you, on another level that will want to talk to you, that might want to befriend you” (Brinn 1526-1528). So the strategy of reading seemed to be important in order to keep oneself safe from harassment *and* to identify potential allies.

Alternatively assessing safety was something participants talked about doing on almost an automatic, subconscious level. Anne had this to say regarding her realization about how her assessment of safety happened below her level of awareness:

It’s kind of interesting because I hadn’t really realized why I would go to certain places. You know, I just never really thought about it like why I would go certain places and not others. I mean, just think oh, I like this place better or oh, it’s a nicer place but it’s just kind of, it really is interesting to see how different you act or that I can act at different places. And that I do tend, I will kind of act like very like heterosexual couple-y sometimes. And I didn’t quite, you know I kind of knew I was doing it but I don’t think I really realized that sometimes it’s kind of like a protection. (Anne lines 1501-1508)

Labeling Leisure Contexts in Terms of Safety

Participants described three main descriptors they used to label contexts in terms of safety. Leisure contexts described by participants as safe were contexts where participants felt free to talk openly about their same sex attractions, engage in physical contact with same sex persons, or bend cultural expectations about gender norms without fear of verbal or physical harassment or intimidation from others. This kind of context was also referred to by participants as ‘queer’ or ‘queered.’

Neutral or “middle ground” contexts that were those leisure contexts that were not inherently or typically safe but neither were they places known to be or experienced as hostile. Neutral leisure contexts were places where the perceived safety was significantly influenced by who participants saw in those spaces at a given time. Some restaurants and chain or franchise

coffee shops were examples of this type of context. If participants saw people they identified as sexual minority youth they felt the space was safe but in absence of that cue they were unsure.

The third descriptor participants used to label leisure contexts was as being not safe or overtly hostile. When leisure contexts were labeled by participants as not safe or hostile, participants avoided those contexts. If they had to go (e.g., visiting family or friends in a rural area) or they realized a space was not safe once there, participants employed various strategies to negotiate the contexts. Examples of this type of context included rural areas, bars that were targeted to heterosexual-identified youth, or restaurants where fraternity or sorority groups often frequented.

Anne commented on the distinction between a neutral leisure context and a potentially unsafe context by saying:

Taco Bell was hostile. Cold Stone wasn't hostile or isn't hostile it's just kind of not, you know, not like a comfortable zone. It's kind of maybe on the downside of neutral. You know, where like I don't actively feel like anybody hates me or is trying to insult me but, you know, it's just not a place where I really like the atmosphere and stuff. Whereas like at Taco Bell I was genuinely like a little worried. I felt like insulted and, you know, and felt that the people were hostile towards us. (Anne lines 1375-1380)

As I worked with the data and tried to understand how participants made these assessments, I made a chart with the headings "safe," "not queer but not overtly hostile," and "not safe" and put participant quotes under these headings. I identified seven general categories of things that participants looked for in a leisure context in order to assess safety and thus the degree to which they could be out regarding their identity as a sexual minority. Note that participants did not at any time say "there are seven things I look for" rather they gave multiple examples of what they used to determine safety in response to my asking them "how do you decide if a space is safe or not?" Participants discussed several types of cues to assess safety when deciding to go to a leisure context or upon entering. I grouped quotes into seven categories

based on similarities that I perceived (e.g., visual cue, verbal cue, cue related to gender) in order to make it easier to summarize and describe this data to readers. Appendix N provides a visual representation of participant descriptions of these three levels of safety and the contextual cues participants used to make a determination about the likelihood of safety. I will now discuss these seven broad categories of cues used by participants to assess safety within leisure contexts.

Cues Regarding Safety within Leisure Contexts

I asked participants how they decided if a space was safe or not. They identified several strategies that they used to make this determination. During analysis of the data, I used domain analysis to examine when they used safe to describe a leisure context and to understand what signified a safe leisure context.

Information from other Sexual Minority Individuals

One strategy that all participants said they utilized was information from other LGBTQ-identified people about what places were good to go for specific purposes (e.g., bars, coffee shops, restaurants, movie theatres). Additionally, participants talked about asking other LGBTQ-identified people about the safety or atmosphere of a specific place if they had never been there before and had not heard anyone talk about it. Anne put it this way

My friends and I are pretty careful about where we go and so like we tend to go to places that we've been before and we know are friendly and we know we'll have a good time...you know, it's so important to have like previous feedback from people who have gone there before. (lines 1402-1404 & 1474-1475)

Similarly Faye said:

It would depend a lot on what I've heard about the other people that go, the age group of the people who are there because younger people tend to be more tolerant...How well I know the people who go there if I do know anyone who is there. (lines 1159-1165)

Finally, Madison said:

Well usually we have a saying like ‘Oh is that queer friendly?’ or ‘Are they cool with gay kids?’ or something like that. And we’ll say stuff like that to each other. Or we’ll have similar instances where, some of my friends are like ‘Don’t go there because I remember my friend and his partner were going there and they got these horrible stares by the manager.’

Participants utilized information from other sexual minority or straight ally individuals to ask ahead of time about leisure contexts. This information sharing among sexual minority youth was a crucial part of assessing safety of leisure contexts.

Presence of Other Sexual Minority Individuals

The second thing that participants identified as an indicator of safety was the presence of other sexual minority individuals. Participants talked about entering leisure contexts and “looking around” to see who was present. If there was a visible presence of other sexual minority individuals in the space (other patrons, peers, or employees) they felt more comfortable and safe. People were especially comforted by the presence of employees who were known or assumed to be members of sexual minority communities. They stated that if the owner(s) hired these employees that they (the owners) were not going to be judgmental or exclude sexual minority individuals. They talked about making these assessments regarding others’ identity based on knowing the people in the space or making educated guesses based on the style of dress, hair cut or length, or mannerisms.

I think one of the ways I would say it is I know it’s going to be supportive of me. Like I know that it’s like a gay/lesbian affirming environment. A lot of the employees are gay, you know, so obviously the owners don’t have a problem with it. They like, they hired the gay people. (Anne lines 794-797)

Additionally, the presence of sexual minority employees helped participants feel like they had support in the event that someone did harass them in the space. Anne put it this way:

So you know like it's really like, it [the coffee bar] goes out of their way to be like we support gay people. So it's like very obvious that they're wanting, they're setting it up to be a safe environment. So like even in the event that somebody was a jackass and like said something, you know, like the owners and the people working there would be on my side not theirs, you know. (lines 807-811)

When participants did not see people who were identifiable as sexual minority or as allies they read the space as potentially or definitely not as safe. For example:

Well you have definitely a lot of people who are more conservative out in Townville. So I feel like you've got a population that's a little bit more representative of what [state name] is really like than you would like if you were in Belfry. So it's definitely like a more conservative crowd. You know, I don't really know any of the servers. As far as I know, none are queer. You know, if there's no like marker of them being supportive or allies of gays and lesbians... Definitely you don't get the feeling of letting, just letting your guard down like Views for example those are different experiences. (Anne lines 465-470; 476-477)

Provision or Support of Sexual Minority Community Events and Resources

The third thing I identified based on data analysis that was an indicator of safety was provision or support of sexual minority community events and resources. Provision of events refers to marketing leisure contexts explicitly to sexual minority communities and hosting weekly or monthly events targeted toward sexual minority communities. Support of sexual minority community events refers to sponsorship of sexual minority community events and/or advertisements about such events as well as visible advertisements or brochures relevant to sexual minority communities.

Leisure contexts that explicitly welcomed sexual minority community members were perceived as safe (or more likely to be safe). In some cases this took the form of intentional marketing to sexual minority communities as the reason for the existence of the leisure context. These businesses or organizations were designed specifically to serve sexual minority communities and their allies. In these contexts it was not just that sexual minority individuals were welcome but that they were the majority and the purpose for the context. Heterosexual

individuals might be present in the space but they would be in the minority and were more likely to be allies to sexual minority communities. One participant described a club mentioned by all participants as specifically marketed to sexual minority folks in this way:

They have a sign, a very explicit sign, right beside where you pay the doorman, this is a private club for members of the GBLT community and you are not welcome here if you are not cool with that. And you get on the membership cards...there's not a straight, check here if you're straight, it's gay-friendly; you're gay-friendly or you're not welcome here. (Maria lines 331-335)

Businesses or organizations that provided leisure contexts for sexual minority communities only on certain nights of the week or month were also viewed as supportive. One local club would host an "LGBTQ Dance Party" or other event marketed to sexual minority community members on certain nights of the month. The fact that the owners of the venue made a leisure context available that specifically welcomed sexual minority community members was very much appreciated and was perceived as safe on that night and potentially on other nights as well. One participant described this club on this night in the following way:

From what I gather, Bloom is just one night a month. I think it's the first Friday night of the month and it's an LBGT club event. So that when you go the bouncers say oh are you here for this event, do you know what this event is before they let you in because I guess they don't want... because I think during the rest of the week it's a normal club and it can be hired out for private parties and I don't think they want people who are going to cause problems for them to be in there. So they always make sure that when you go in they ask you the reason you're there which is good. I like that. (Faye lines 465-471)

Support for sexual minority community events was determined by the presence of flyers advertising sexual minority community events or businesses or the knowledge that the business or organization sponsored sexual minority community events. To the extent that the businesses or organizations advertised or sponsored events (e.g., NC Pride, NCGL Film Festival), participants felt like the leisure context was more likely to be safe. This was true regardless of whether or not the business or organization itself was specifically marketed to sexual minority community members. So even if the leisure context was a restaurant that was not marketed to

sexual minority community members, it was more likely to be perceived as a safe leisure context if there were visible indicators (e.g., flyers, newspaper ads) that the business or organization advertised or sponsored sexual minority community events. For example:

Or like there are a lot of places in town, you know, like that will sponsor stuff for like the Gay Pride Parade or do nights, like Saki's has like a gay night or something. You know, so like a lot of times if I've like seen the name of the place like in the program for that, you know, they list all the sponsors, a lot of times that goes towards making it feel like a safe space because they've put, you know, if they've put their money where their mouth is then like they're obviously going out of their way. (Anne lines 871-876)

In the examples and discussion above, it was the direct provision or monetary sponsorship of sexual minority community events that indicated safety. But businesses or organizations were also viewed as being supportive if they posted flyers or provided informational brochures about sexual minority resources or organizations. Thus, a restaurant or coffee shop that did not target members of sexual minority communities as their primary clientele was seen as safer if it allowed flyers or other information about sexual minority communities to be visible in their place of business. Participants believed that if the owners of a leisure context allowed flyers or brochures relevant to sexual minority communities to be visible in the space, it indicated that owners would be accepting of the presence of members of sexual minority communities in the space. Maria talked about the importance of this visibility at the bar called Rings:

I would just say it's a deliberately welcoming environment...If you look at the pamphlets that are laid out, they have the *Q Notes*, they have other kinds of I guess sexually progressive things. They got coupons to Adam and Eve, they've got bands, they've got advertisements for events in the more definitely GBLT community, so it's definitely gay-friendly to a much larger extent than just a regular club where gay people won't get beaten up. But it's not a club where straight people would be out of the ordinary or be seen as visitors or something like that. (Maria 299-307)

Visual Cues Regarding Safety

The fourth category I identified from the data as an indicator of safety entailed the types of political or religious bumper stickers, signs, or cartoons present in a leisure context.

Participants in this study talked about how they made an association between conservative religious or political beliefs and the likelihood of a space being either uncomfortable or potentially unsafe. For example Anne commented:

But I think one way that I judge things is like bumper stickers. You know, you're like going into a restaurant and you're like, you read all the bumper stickers in the parking lot. And then like at Plaza Market they're all like, like I'm all like laughing at them because I think they're really funny and very true. But, you know, like going to the parking lot there [a place identified as a less safe/welcoming restaurant], you'll have like the occasional W sticker or stuff like that...it's more representative of the community in general. (Anne 343-348)

Similarly Maria stated:

I'm sure there's Christians who are also republicans who are not gay bashers, but when I see Republican next to prominently displayed Jesus apparel, it kind of makes me suspicious that they're religious right people, who focus on the family, but they're only talking about their family and not mine, so when I see those two things together it just kind of raises my eyebrow. (Maria lines 544-548)

As Anne and Maria exemplify, Republican or politically conservative bumper stickers as well as religious signifiers were indicators that the leisure context was less likely to be safe.

In contrast, participants talked about looking for the presence of certain contemporary symbols associated with sexual minority communities or that were signifiers of liberal or progressive political views. Leisure contexts where these symbols were seen were assumed to be safer. For example Madison said:

I do look for visibility signs, like rainbows or something like on their backpack or something. I look, I listen to things that they say...Or it's someone that does have visibility on their backpack or their purse, their bag or whatever. You just feel like okay, that's a person I can be out to. That's a person that is not going to discriminate against me. (Madison lines 1226-1227 & 1246-1249)

Auditory Cues Regarding Safety

The fifth category I identified as an indicator of safety based on data analysis was what participants' heard in the space. This included things that others said (either to them or to others regarding sexual minority communities) as well as the types of music that were present. When participants were interacting with people they did not know, they reported "putting feelers out" or listening to conversations or comments as a way of assessing the safety of a context.

Sometimes this was done in interaction with others but sometimes it was done in a more observational way without others awareness. For example Maria said:

You never know when somebody's going to say something derogatory, even just use the word gay to mean stupid, in a context that has nothing to do with sexuality. So I usually make it a point to feel out where people are on those issues. 'Cause it's not a big deal to me whether somebody's republican or democrat or I don't know, thinks the deficit's bad, or thinks gas prices are bad or good, or wants to save a tree, or wants to clear-cut a forest; but when I know a person is really homophobic or really holds derogatory beliefs, I just really don't want to hang out with them at all. I'd just be extraordinarily uncomfortable just being in their presence. So I generally kind of let people know, not in an awkward way, I mean I don't meet them and say, "Hi, I'm Maria. How do you feel about gay marriage?" but I definitely put feelers out there. (Maria lines 552-561)

Madison talked about sitting in the common room of her residence hall and watching television with friends. She said that she pays attention to comments of folks when television shows or movies that are related to sexual orientation come up in conversation. Madison talked about a discussion that occurred among several people regarding the movie *Brokeback Mountain*. She overheard one peer say something to another about how she refused to go see *Brokeback Mountain*. Madison said to her:

"That's actually a real good movie, you should see it, it's great!" She was like, "I didn't want to see Heath Ledger like that. I was like, "What do you mean you didn't want to see Heath Ledger like that?" She was like, "Well that whole gay sex thing; and I just didn't want to see like, you know, two women okay, but I don't know what it is about two burley men kissing and it's so ... ugh." (lines 1109-1113)

Madison said that the negative comments resulted in feeling less safe and less free to be expressive regarding her sexual identity. In contrast, if people made supportive comments or reacted as if sexual minority individuals were equally accepted as people who identified as heterosexual, then people felt safer and free to be more expressive or open about their sexual identity or related topics.

The type of music that was audible in a leisure context was used as an indicator for safety as well. If participants heard music by performers who they knew to be identified as sexual minority persons (such as the Indigo Girls or Melissa Ethridge) or by performers who they coded as “women’s music” (such as Sara McLaughlin or Tori Amos) they assumed that the leisure context was more likely to be safe. In contrast, if they heard music that had “gay-bashing lyrics,” rap music, or country music in a place, that place was (in absence of cues to the contrary) coded as potentially or definitely unsafe. For example Brinn said:

So then when I walk in I listen, you know, sometimes you can listen to the music. For example there is, I tried once going to a new R&B club that I’d heard about on Rose [Street] and I walked up to the parking lot and I’m listening to the music and I’m thinking, you know, this could be a friendly space but probably not necessarily. So like for example if you hear any gay bashing music when you’re coming up then there’s some artist that, like there are for example some reggae artists who regularly sing homophobic lyrics. If I hear that artist I’m like never mind. This is clearly not my space. Or if I hear songs from a group that I know are queer friendly or if I hear songs that I know are favored by people in that sort of, not necessarily LBGTQ but alternative, like activists or like drug culture or something like that, some kind of alternative music I know that this is a place for people who don’t fit the norm. (Brinn lines 1027-1038)

Rural Versus Urban Leisure Contexts

The sixth thing that I identified as an indicator of safety in leisure contexts was whether they were in a rural or an urban location. Participants in this study believed that urban locations were more likely to be safe whereas rural locations were more likely to be unsafe for them. Participants perceived that people in urban locations would generally have more progressive or

liberal views and thus to be more likely to accept their identities as sexual minority or gender nonconforming individuals. In contrast, participants perceived that people in leisure contexts in rural locations would generally have conservative values and thus be less likely to accept their identities as sexual minority or gender nonconforming individuals. Because of that, leisure contexts in urban locations were perceived as more likely to be safe or welcoming whereas more rural areas were perceived as more likely to be unsafe or at least potentially unsafe. For example, a Taco Bell in a more urban location was automatically assumed to be more likely to be safe than was a Taco Bell in a rural town in eastern North Carolina. One of the leisure experiences that Anne recorded and talked about in an interview was an experience that her partner and her had stopped in a rural town in the eastern part of the state. A server at a restaurant asked her and her partner (who identifies as male) “what would you ladies like to order?” Anne said that in that rural context:

I wasn't quite sure what to say or like how to take it cause I was like either he just like has very poor eyesight and just looked really quick or he was like being an asshole about the fact that my boyfriend has long hair. (lines 548-550)

She contrasted this experience with an experience in another restaurant in the town in which she lives where a server mistakenly assumed her partner was female. She said that while on the face of it the experiences were exactly the same they felt different partially because of the geographic location in which they occurred:

It was like a safe, it's a safe environment because like it's a very, like the atmosphere is very different for like one thing it's a totally different location like it's in [name of more urban town], much more liberal, you know a lot of the people that go there I feel like tend to be a more liberal crowd. And so you know it's not the kind of place where you would feel threatened by that sort of thing, you know, where anybody would ever try to be like you don't look thin enough or you don't look masculine enough. You know, like there was no threat or malice behind that mistake or like in the environment, you know, it's a very safe, comfortable environment to me. And so like, you know, you could tell that there was like no ulterior motive behind it. (Anne lines 660-668)

Gender and Gender Expression in Leisure Contexts

The seventh thing I identified as a cue regarding safety in a leisure context was related to the assumptions made about the gender identity of the people within the leisure context and the variability in gender expression that was present in the context. Gender identity is a term used to refer to a person's internal sense of themselves as a gendered individual (e.g., male, female, transgender, genderqueer). Gender expression refers to how someone expresses themselves in appearance, behavior, speech, or other mannerisms. A person's gender expression may or may not be analogous to their gender identity. Butler (1993) used the term gender performance in ways analogous to how gender expression is sometimes used by sexual minority youth.

The known or presumed gender identity of those in the leisure context influenced the degree to which participants felt safe and comfortable. The number of female-identified persons in a leisure context influenced the amount of physical/emotional space available to participants and the degree of safety participants perceived in the leisure context. In general, the more a leisure context was populated with people who were known or presumed to have a female gender identity, particularly those who were members of sexual minority communities or who were known to be allies, the greater the perception of safety and comfort. For example Brinn talked about going to a dance club in a large, urban city. She said that as she walked up to the place she saw "a sea of people identifiable as, you know, basically identifiable as female, an entire club full of women, I was like—YES!" (lines 1301-1302)

The greater the number of people who were known or presumed to be male, regardless of sexual orientation, the less safe these participants perceived a leisure context to be. In the case of heterosexual males, participants worried about unwanted sexual advances. For example Anne stated:

Well Legos, I guess, is a gay bar or club in Ellabell and not, I've only been there a couple of times. I don't really go too much. But there's mostly guys there, some women, no really clear gay women. But some straight guys who think they can mack on the women who are there. So that made me feel kind of uncomfortable. So it just, I don't know. Sometimes it's fun; sometimes it's really not. (lines 181-185)

Similarly, Maria said:

I've accidentally ended up in straight bars. When I first got to college I accidentally ended up in someplace on Hill Street where just like it was full of stereotypical looking sorority girls and fraternity boys who were all drunk, and all these guys trying to shove a beer in my hand and grind on me on the dance floor, and it was just a nightmare. (lines 384-389)

Participants said that even if men were okay with two women being physically affectionate with each other it was still not necessarily a safe environment. Participants said that in some environments, they felt like they could be out but that if they did so they would be objectified by men in the space. For example, Madison stated:

If you identify as female and you're read as female by your gender identity it becomes this, "Oh wow! That's hot! Can I watch?" Like, you know, I know my friends and I we get stuff like that all of the time like, "Oh you're bi can I watch?" or like, "Why don't you hook up with her, I bet that'd be hot! Can I watch or can I tape it?" (lines 238-241)

Participants stated that even gay males could be problematic for them in leisure contexts. Several participants talked about how they felt like they could be ignored in spaces where they were in the minority as compared to gay-identified men. Anne's comment exemplified this feeling:

You know, but I feel like it's, this is kind of a generalization, but I feel like sometimes gay men can really put women down because it's like oh, we don't need them for relationships or sex. They don't matter that much. So I feel like that's something that kind of happens at Lego's. You get ignored a little and you kind of feel not as important because you're not of any sexual interest to them. (lines 267-273)

One participant made a distinction between people who identified as males but who were transgender-identified males or transmen rather than cismen. Male-identified transgender people were not seen as an indicator of a less safe leisure context. In fact, they were seen as indicators

that a leisure context would more likely be safe. The presence of transgender people in a leisure context was something that indicated to participants that a space was “queered” and thus more likely to be safe for them. Brinn stated:

There were I’d say six or seven transmen in the crowd that I could identify as transmen and I don’t think I saw any transwomen. But because it’s . . . sort of half selecting for gender and half selecting for queerness—so you know everyone in there is queer regardless of gender. (lines 1387-1391)

A second aspect of gender that people looked to as a cue for the degree to which a leisure context would be safe was the gender expression or gender performance of those in the space. In general, the less rigidly a gender binary was enforced through looks, negative comments, or threats toward people whose gender expressions did not fit the culturally defined norms for performance of ‘male’ or ‘female’ identities, the safer participants felt in a context. Participants used the term gender policing to refer to the degree to which they felt the context demanded or expected a culturally normative gender expression that was consistent with the concept of the gender binary. Theorists have used various terms to refer to this notion of the ubiquitous organization of culturally expected behaviors, appearances, and characteristics around male and female categories. Sandra Bem (1993) used the term gender polarization to refer to the dichotomous organization of life around an exclusive male-female system wherein there are mutually exclusive scripts for each. Judith Butler (1990) talked about the culturally constructed binary that is “compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence” (p. 33).

Participants were cognizant of the degree to which a context demanded adherence to a particular performance¹⁰ of gender. First participants assessed the attire of those present in a leisure context as a cue to the dominant discourses. Anne said: “So I feel like a lot of my cues come from like people’s dress” (lines 399-400). Clothing that was very culturally gender

¹⁰ I use the term ‘performance’ here both to mean intentional portrayal and to refer to Judith Butler’s use of the term to mean “the regulation of attributes along culturally established lines of coherence” (1990, pp. 32-33)

normative (particularly if it was clothing associated with upper socioeconomic class or fraternity/sorority member styles) was a cue that participants read as indicative of the likelihood of a more heteronormative discourse and thus likely a less safe context. Whereas less conventional, mismatched, off-brand, or second-hand clothing was interpreted as a less heteronormative environment and thus more likely a safer context. Maria and Anne explained this as follows:

I think if you just walk in and look at the clientele ... you can only judge by looks so much but if you look around and you see everybody's in business casual uniform, boys have short hair, girls have longish hair, like at a place near a bunch of corporate offices who go there for lunch. Whereas if you go to Lilly's you'll see a lot of girls with short hair, short spiky hair; boys with ponytails, things that would make you think that the people are more hip or more liberal, or whatever. So that would be a place that would be more comfortable. (Maria lines 1192-1199)

A lot of times I'll judge it on the type of people that I see and if they tend to look like preppy or like the, you know, the girls with like their boat shoes and their pearls and you know, like the guys have like their oxfords and little khaki shorts and more boat shoes. You know like I tend to assume that it's a more conservative environment. Or like if it's like, I don't want to say rednecky but I am. (Anne lines 845-849)

Participants felt like the presence of people whose gender expression was in compliance with the normative gender binary (in Butler's terms, a rearticulation or a normative citation) was an indicator that they would be less safe. In contrast, places where gender norms were more flexible as assessed by the visibility of people doing gender transgressively (Butler, 1993) participants felt more safe.

One particularly blatant example of the enforcement of culturally proscribed gender norms influencing a leisure experience was discussed by Brinn during our second interview. She told a story in which she experienced what she called being "gender-slapped." She explained that she and some other friends (who also identify as sexual minority youth) went contra dancing at a small church and that she was relatively new to contra dancing. She said that there were specific

patterns of dances and that they were organized by “male steps” and “female steps” and that rules dictated that “in any formation...ladies on the right.” However, people in this leisure context do not typically care about the gender expression or gender identity of the person who stands in a given position. Rather, it is the position (standing on the left or the right) that determines which part one dances. Brinn explained that she was “wearing baggy pants and a shirt and all male clothes and probably most people would identify me as masculine from across the room and I’m dancing with one of my friends who is wearing a dress” (733-736). Because her friend knew the dance better than Brinn did (and it is easier to follow than to lead), Brinn took the “ladies position” for the dance. This resulted in a painful and unpleasant experience for Brinn:

So...I’m on the right. She’s on the left. We’re facing this couple and the lady of the couple who’s female is sort of looking at us and she’s a little bit older than some of the people and she has sort of this aggravated look on her face and she’s looking at us and the caller starts calling the numbers and we start going through it and the woman knows that the lady is supposed to be on the right and she knows the dance really well...but she’s not paying attention to that and she’s treating me as the gentleman because of the way I’m dressed. Because I was standing on the right this means that our part of the dance gets all snarled up and she gets furious at us because we’ve messed up her experience...she’s confused and she sort of snaps at me, “Which of you is the lady and which is the gentleman? We have to know!” So I say this okay because obviously we got confused and it’s obvious that she’s confused and irritated and so I’m just like “oh, I’m the lady, she’s the gentleman.” She says, “Really because you know I thought that if you were the lady you wore a dress and if you were a gentleman you wore pants!” (751-767)

Brinn said that what was particularly painful about this was that she was having a good time in a place where people were “being really friendly and then suddenly I get gender slapped” (782-783). This is a very obvious case in which a participant’s appearance did not match the culturally proscribed norms regarding gender expression or performance. As a consequence, Brinn received feedback that she was “doing it wrong” by someone in the leisure context and this negatively affected her leisure experience.

In summary of the preceding section regarding safety within leisure contexts, participants perceived a space as safe based on feedback from others affiliated with sexual minority communities as well as through examining leisure contexts for seven broad types of cues.

Influence of Safety on Leisure Experiences and Identity Work

As introduced earlier in this chapter, participants talked about assessing safety within leisure contexts. They talked about leisure contexts as being either safe, not completely safe but not overtly hostile, and unsafe or potentially hostile. The way that participants labeled the safety of leisure contexts influenced both their leisure experiences and the extent to which they engaged in the expression or performance aspects of identity work. In safe environments, participants felt free to relax, enjoy, and express themselves without editing their behavior, appearance, or ‘covering’ aspects of their identity. Those spaces that were determined to be safe were sought out by participants in this study whereas those that were ‘sketchy’ or ‘not safe’ were avoided or only attended with other strategies employed (e.g., going in a group or covering identity as a sexual minority).

In this section of the chapter, I will describe how participants’ assessment of safety within leisure contexts influenced their leisure experiences. I will simultaneously discuss how their assessment of safety influenced the degree to which they felt free to express aspects of their identities related to sexual orientation and gender. I am discussing these two things together because the degree to which participants felt safe was predicated on the degree to which they felt they could express aspects of their identity regarding sexual orientation and gender which in turn influenced the quality of their leisure experiences.

Identity Work in Safe Leisure Contexts

Participants unanimously felt that they had the most positive leisure experiences when they were in leisure contexts where they felt safe, meaning feeling free to fully express and be open about their attraction to women and having flexibility regarding their gender expression or gender performance. When participants talked about the bar called Views, they expressed a feeling of relaxation and an ability to let down their guard because they were in a place where people were female identified and who were attracted to women. For example, Anne said:

It's kind of, it's just really nice to be in a crowd of people like you. I think it's not even something that I realize I'm missing I think until I'm there. When I'm there I just kind of like relax a little bit (lines 207-209).

Another example comes from Brinn's experience in a particular club that had a mostly female presence. She said that this space felt to her "like a more queered space" and was thus more enjoyable because of "her gender matching the gender of the club" and "because the norm is there is an entire sea of women dancing together" (excerpts from Brinn lines 1407-1418).

People talked about the importance of feeling like they could be fully out and expressive of their identity regarding sexual attraction to women. This was a critical element of what made a leisure context maximally enjoyable. Faye put it this way when she talked of one of what she identified as her favorite leisure activities—going to a meeting for undergraduate queer-identified women:

It's kind of, I think it's one of the safest things I go to where I can be myself. Because its LGBT people and I know that everyone is LGBT people and everyone knows that part of me. And that feels good to me. (lines 354-356)

Similarly, Madison talked about the importance of being able to fully express and "be herself" regarding her attraction to women when she said:

So I feel like I can just be myself and if I'm having a conversation and I'm like 'Oh my God I saw this really hot girl yesterday,' you know. I don't have to be like [said in a

whisper] ‘Oh my God I saw this really hot girl yesterday and I don’t want anybody in line to hear me.’ I can just speak like I’m talking about everything else in my life and I don’t have to hide it. That means a lot to me. (lines 83-88)

Interestingly, the importance of feeling safe to be out about attractions to women was true for participants even when they were currently partnered with a male. One participant commented that she had not really been aware of how perceptions of safety influenced her current leisure choices and leisure enjoyment until she participated in this study. She said:

Because I’m not with a woman right now, I hadn’t thought that support and lack thereof for gays and lesbians or queers would affect so much the places that I go but it’s still very, very important to me and to how comfortable I feel in a space... I don’t think I quite realized the degree to which it stayed with me, the degree to which it like really, really mattered to me even though on the outside it looks like I’m totally heterosexual. (Anne lines 940-947)

Identity Work in Neutral but not Overtly Hostile Leisure Contexts

The second way participants referred to the assessment of safety in leisure contexts was contexts that were not safe but not overtly hostile. These types of leisure contexts seemed to be places where people knew about participants’ identities as sexual minority individuals but where participants did not feel like it was okay for them to talk about aspects of their lives related to sexual orientation or attractions to women or places where the majority of people in the leisure context were known or assumed to be heterosexual and relatively gender conforming in terms of their gender expression. Faye described this type of leisure context when talking about a weekend trip with a friend to visit her friend’s family. She said:

They [the friend’s parents] might not be a hundred percent ‘oh yeah, my daughter’s gay, la de da’; but they’re not against it. They kind of accept the fact that she has, that she’s seeing Carol and I mean for all they know they might think it’s a phase but at least they’re not condescending. (lines 821-824)

In these types of leisure contexts, participants said that they did not feel as free or safe and thus did not have as unfettered and enjoyable experiences compared to leisure contexts in

which they did feel free to be more openly expressive of their sexual attractions to women. They talked about trying to minimize their involvement in these leisure contexts, preferring to spend their time in leisure contexts that felt safe or explicitly open to sexual minority communities. Brinn emphasized this when she talked about how she usually “choose[s] to live in a queer bubble” (line 1604).

An example of participants’ experiences in this category of leisure contexts comes from Madison. She talked about a going out to eat with a guy who she feels is one of her best friends but to whom she has come out to as bisexual only recently. She said that during dinner she started talking about her decision to major in women studies and pursue a minor in sexuality studies and “he laughed at me.” She said “this was the situation where it was one of my best friends. It really, in this instance it really hurt me.” He told her he was only joking around but she realized that she “sort of closed off” and “ended up not talking about things in my queer related community as much anymore” (Madison, lines 554-598).

Similarly, Maria talked about experiencing some anxiety at a friend’s party where the majority of people present were African immigrants. She said:

The black community on average is less accepting of gay people—on average. Certainly no one at that party made any rude comments, they all seemed friendly...but I was keenly aware of, “Wow, this illusion of all these nice friendly people could be shattered at any moment.” (Maria lines 1461-1467)

Participants talked about strategies they used to avoid harassment when in these types of spaces. Sometimes participants avoided talking about aspects of their lives related to their sexual identity or their affiliation with sexual minority communities. Other times, participants made adjustments in their behavior in order to cover or hide things that might give away their identities as sexual minority individuals. Brinn talked about a café in her home town as an example of this type of leisure context. She described going to the café with her father and making a choice to

wear pants rather than shorts because “the woman who owns it [the café] has never failed to comment about how short my hair is ever. [chuckling]... There’s no need to give Claire one more thing to worry about you know walking in” (lines 1610-1613). Brinn felt that if she wore shorts, Claire would see that she has unshaven legs and would have a negative judgment about that, thus she wore pants. Similarly, Anne talked about changing how she dresses or how she interacts with her boyfriend in these types of spaces:

So I guess a lot of times I kind of want to blend in and have people think that I’m straight and try to act extra straight [laughter] so that nobody will possible think that I’m queer...if I’m out with my boyfriend be like extra touchy-feely. (lines 583-589)

Another strategy that participants talked about to deal with these types of spaces was to go with a group of people. By going with a group of people, participants said that they could then be out within their small group of friends and have an enjoyable leisure experiences even though they had to conceal or hide their affiliation with sexual minority communities to some degree. Participants talked about using this strategy often when going out to restaurants. For example, Madison said:

So we sort of have places that we know are not queer friendly and we have places that we’re not really sure but we sometimes go in as a group. Sometimes it’s good to go in as a group as opposed to feeling alone or feeling alone with your partner. (Madison lines 1224-1231)

In these spaces that were not safe but were not overtly hostile, participants sometimes choose to go ahead and be visibly out or talk about things related to their affiliation with sexual minority communities. When this was done however there was still a cost in terms of their internal experience and their ability to enjoy the leisure context. Madison talked the internal costs of choosing to be out in these contexts by saying:

You get a little paranoid sometimes and even though like you may choose not to take it [pride buttons] off or to speak about your life...you’re still aware. Like you’re still feeling that you can put on this great face like ‘I’m not going to let you do this’ and then

you can be just as scared as the person who is not going. Yeah, it's definitely a struggle. (lines 226-230)

Identity Work in Unsafe and Potentially Hostile Leisure Contexts

Spaces that participants described as not safe or potentially hostile had the least room for them to express their sexual identity or their affiliation with sexual minority communities. Participants said that in these spaces they felt unable to be themselves, unable to talk about things that mattered to them, and unable to be truly emotionally close with people (including family or friends). Madison said "You feel like you're being half of yourself. You feel like you're not being really yourself at all sometimes" (lines 886-887).

These spaces were studiously avoided. Madison talked about how she noticed that since she has been more out in some spaces and had negative experiences there she has become "reluctant to go there now" (line 208). If participants discovered that they were in a leisure context that was overtly hostile they tried to quickly remove themselves from the space or situation as quickly as possible. They also said that those types of experiences resulted in a decision not to return to those particular leisure contexts. Anne described one such experience at a restaurant in a rural town. When I asked her if she would be willing to return to the same place, she said she would not. She said "I would be worried they're gonna take me out to the track and like beat me" (line 695).

Similar to the previous category, participants were conscious of choices they made in behavior or style of dress when they were going to be a place that felt not safe or potentially hostile. For example, Brinn said:

I own a lot of shirts that are sort of offensive to conservative straight people. I'm not going to wear my outlawing orgasm shirt from the unity conference out in this little town cause I'll get beaten with something or yelled at. So it's, there's such fiddly clues but they can be a matter of personal safety. (lines 1615-1618)

Madison talked about changing how she wore her hair (wearing it down and curled rather than in a ponytail), wearing make up (when usually she does not), and wearing a bra and tighter fitting clothing (when usually she wears loose clothing and no bra). Madison's behavior is typical of other participants in that they typically talked about dressing and behaving in ways that were less genderqueer or more conforming to cultural norms about feminine gender performance when they felt the need to cover their identities as people who are attracted to women. So in not safe or potentially hostile leisure contexts people covered by altering not only things that might directly make visible their attraction to women (e.g., physical expression with a female-identified person, rainbow or pride symbols) but also covered things that might be perceived as less feminine or less appropriate in terms of their gender expression as female-identified people.

Summary of Results

In this chapter I have provided thick, rich description so readers can assess for themselves the trustworthiness of my conclusions. In summary participants "read" leisure contexts for safety based on the degree to which heteronormative discourses or norms were present in the space. The more heteronormative a space, the less safe it felt because participants did not feel free to express aspects of their sexual identity or their affiliation with sexual minority communities. There seemed to be three broad labels participants used to describe expectations about their safety within leisure contexts and participants utilized a number of strategies to determine relative safety of leisure contexts. Participants' choices about leisure contexts and their experiences in leisure contexts were influenced by their perceptions of safety or the degree to which they felt they could be fully out or authentic regarding sexual attraction to women. In the next chapter I will revisit the research questions and make some interpretations based on the data.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine female-identified sexual minority youth experiences in leisure contexts and to examine ways in which discourses related to sexual orientation influence leisure experiences and what I am referring to as identity ‘work’ (i.e., the creation, discovery, construction, and expression of one’s identity). Three research questions guided this study:

1. What discourses and norms related to sexual orientation do female-identified sexual minority youth encounter in leisure contexts?
2. How do contextual norms and discourses about sexual orientation influence leisure experiences of female-identified sexual minority youth?
3. How do the contextual norms and discourses present in leisure contexts influence identity work?

Discourses Encountered in Leisure Contexts

The first research question examined the discourses and norms related to sexual orientation that female-identified sexual minority youth encountered in leisure contexts. Participants talked about paying attention to or reading contextual cues to ascertain the dominant discourses related to sexuality in leisure contexts. I was most interested in looking at the discourses specifically related to sexual orientation, sexual behavior, or sexual identity. I expected to find that participants would encounter heteronormative discourses in leisure contexts on numerous occasions unless they intentionally sought contexts that were targeted for or marketed to sexual minority communities. Results demonstrated that these participants did in

fact encounter heteronormative discourses in the majority of contexts that were not targeted for or marketed to sexual minority communities. These findings are comparable to those found by other researchers (e.g., Caldwell, Kivel, & Hayes, 1998; Kivel, 1994; Jacobson & Samdahl, 1998; Kivel, 1994) who examined leisure experiences of sexual minority individuals in that they highlight the predominance of heteronormative discourse in leisure spaces and the corresponding negative influence on the leisure experiences of sexual minority individuals.

One contribution that this study makes is that it illuminated specific environmental cues that participants use to assess the discursive practices and norms that are dominant in given leisure contexts. Participants in this study talked about very specific visual, auditory, or behavioral cues they used to assess the likelihood of their they were to be emotional and/or physical safety within given contexts. This finding is consistent with research in the area of new cultural geography which “emphasises the socio-cultural construction of space and place...through which power, identity, meaning and behaviour are constructed, negotiated and renegotiated according to socio-cultural dynamics” (Aitchison & Reeves, 1998, p. 51). Similar to findings from Adkins (2000) and Taylor (2007), this study illuminated specific environmental cues used to ‘read’ or identify dominant discourses in leisure contexts.

What I was not looking for in this study but found in the data was the degree to which discourse related to sexual orientation is inextricably linked to discourses of gender as well. In this study discourses of gender and sexuality were in many places inextricably linked and participants’ assessments of safety had as much to do with the gendered discourses as those around sexual orientation.

Participants read others and made assessments of safety based on presumed or actual biological sex, gender identity, and gender expression of others present in leisure contexts. They

made attributions of safety based on the presence or expectation of sexist or misogynistic language, music, behaviors, or comments. Participants talked about the ways in which they avoided 'straight' clubs because they did not want to deal with the harassing behaviors of or interactions with heterosexual, male-identified individuals. Similarly participants expressed frustration about the ways in which heterosexual, male-identified individuals would be present at bars marketed to sexual minority communities because of the behaviors study participants experienced as harassing (e.g., grabbing their butts, rubbing against them, pressuring them to dance or to interact with them). These findings are consistent with literature in recreation and leisure studies as well as cultural geography regarding the ways in which leisure contexts, spaces, or containers are gendered (e.g., Bell & Valentine, 1995; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1999).

Participants in this study noted that a predominance of male-centered experiences, values, and norms in leisure contexts existed even within spaces that are marketed to and created specifically for sexual minority individuals. This is similar to findings of other researchers who found that even within sexual minority designated spaces women are marginalized (Johnson & Samdahl, 1998; Taylor, 2007). Taylor (2007) noted that it is not only "numerical dominance" that defines a space as male "rather, it was a more substantive issue of gendered resources and entitlements" (p. 173). Participants in the current study echoed this when talking about male presence in a leisure space where women-identified sexual minority individuals were the primary clientele. The presence of males was experienced as disruptive and/or uncomfortable. One participant said:

I feel like if we're at Views, or for lesbians, men are still, they still have the dominate position in society so they can't be ignored I feel like the way women can. You know? Like at Views nobody is just going to leave. Like, you know, they couldn't put men down in a, gosh I don't even know how to explain it that well. I just feel like you can't

ignore men in a women's club like you could a women in like a club for men. Like I feel like they would still be present and they would still like be important because they are men even though it's supposed to be a mostly safe space for women. (Anne 284-290)

Several participants made a distinction between their experiences of having transgender male-identified persons in the contexts and having what one participant (Brinn) referred to as "cismen." The term cismen was used by Brinn to refer to people who were born with particular genitalia (i.e., an identifiable penis and testes) that resulted in them being labeled by doctors as male and who self-identify as male as compared to transmen who were born with particular genitalia (i.e., a vagina) that resulted in them being labeled by doctors as female but who self-identify as male. Participants who made this distinction between transmen and cismen indicated that the presence of transmen in a space was not experienced as a negative indicator of safety. Rather it was seen as an indicator of the likelihood of greater safety and as one marker that a space was queered in the sense of room for varied gender performances, gender expressions, and gender identities.

Participants in the current study also reported being aware of attributions made by or behaviors of others based on their (participants') biological sex, gender identity, and gender expression. They talked about the ways in which they fully expressed, muted, or altered their own gender expression within leisure and social contexts based on their reading of cues and assessment of dominant discourses regarding acceptable gender expression in contexts. These findings are consistent with literature that asserts the performative and learned nature of gender and sex as well as the ways in which people/subjects are constituted and regulated (formally or informally) by societal norms, values, and discourse (e.g., Butler, 1990; Bem, 1993; de Beauvoir, 1952; Foucault, 1978; Lorber, 1994).

In light of my experiences throughout this study with the ways that participants' identities regarding gender and sexual orientation influenced their experiences, I am even more attuned to how critical it is to remember that individuals have different experiences of and indeed access to leisure and social contexts based on identities that are visible to others and/or salient to them. There are always multiple discourses and multiple systems of privilege and marginalization operating in every leisure and social context (e.g., regarding race/ethnicity, gender, ability/disability, age, etc.). Some discourses may be more overt or salient to people in the context than to others based on the visibility or saliency of aspects of identity. For example, with respect to sexual minority individuals, heteronormative discourse is likely recognized equally by people who identify as LGBTQ. However male-identified individuals are less likely to recognize the gendered discourses present whereas female-identified individuals would likely recognize androcentric or misogynistic discourses and practices. Similarly, people for whom race/ethnicity is a primary aspect of their identity or for whom their identity as a person with a disability is primary will be more cognizant of discourse regarding race/ethnicity or disability (c.f., Taylor, 1999; Taylor & Meherali, 1991). I imagine that if participants in this study had been more diverse in terms of race/ethnicity, ability/disability, or age, the results would have made evident the additional discourses that shaped, influenced, and regulated leisure and social contexts.

Discourses and Leisure Experiences

The second research question addressed in this study was how contextual norms and discourses about sexuality influence leisure experiences of female-identified sexual minority youth. Based on existing literature and professional experiences with sexual minority youth I anticipated that the extent to which heteronormative discourses were dominant in a context, female-identified sexual minority youth would experience their leisure as less enjoyable or

rewarding or comfortable. I also anticipated that this would be especially true for people who were less confident in their sexual orientation or less comfortable being out or visible as a sexual minority. Participants did report more enjoyment of those leisure contexts where they felt safe (participants' word) and able to be visible or vocal about being members of the sexual minority communities. In contrast they reported less enjoyment in leisure contexts where they felt they needed to conceal or cover (Goffman, 1963; Yoshino, 2006) their identities as sexual minority persons. Additionally, participants' recreation, leisure, and social choices were influenced in terms of which contexts they avoided and which they sought out. This is similar to existing literature that has theorized about or examined the leisure and social experiences of sexual minority individuals (e.g., Caldwell, Kivel, Smith, & Hayes, 2006; Grossman, 1998; Jacobson & Samdahl, 1998; Kivel, 1994; Kivel & Kleiber, 2000).

Existing models of identity development for lesbian and gay youth assume that as individuals affirm or synthesize their identity as lesbian or gay they become less negatively influenced by societal stigma. Thus, I expected that the oppressive influence of heteronormative discourses would be less for participants who were very 'out' and very confident in their sexual orientation as compared to participants who were not very out or comfortable with their sexual orientation. That is to say, I expected that a person who was very comfortable with their same-sex attraction would somehow be less negatively influenced by heteronormative discourse present in leisure contexts. Because participants in my study all reported similar levels of comfort with their same-sex attractions and were all comparable in the degree to which they were 'out' to others, no direct comparisons could be made. However, even though all of these participants reported being very comfortable with their same-sex attractions and were similarly 'out' to others, they all felt impinged upon by contexts they read as heteronormative or rigidly

gendered or male-dominated. There is an assumption that a 'positive' or integrated identity as a sexual minority-identified individual offers a 'protective factor' against discrimination and prejudice (Troiden, 1989). Data from this study appear to challenge that assumption by making visible the negative internal impact even when there is no visible harassment, discrimination, or exclusion.

Even when participants refused to hide or cover their identities as a sexual minority they still experienced an internal sense of discomfort in heteronormative and male-centered contexts. This finding is similar to some of the research on leisure constraints, particularly with respect to intrapersonal constraints. For example, Frederick and Shaw (1995) concluded that even though women's participation in a leisure context was not prevented or reduced, the enjoyment of the experience was negatively affected. Jacobson and Samdahl (1998) found that leisure experiences of 'old lesbians' was negatively affected by the youth-centered discourse within sexual minority leisure contexts as well as the presence of men.

Another interesting finding to me was that it wasn't only heteronormative or male-centered discourses that participants experienced as negatively influencing the experience of leisure contexts. Maria, who claimed "squiggly" as a self-identifier, explained that she did not identify as lesbian or bisexual because she did not envision herself as someone who would ever be in a long-term relationship with a female-identified person, even though she does enjoy occasional sexual interactions with other women. She went to a club that is marketed to female-identified sexual minority individuals but had a very different experience of that particular leisure context than did the other participants in the study. The leisure context in question was a bar/dance club that is one of the two "lesbian" clubs in the area. Maria stated that the predominant expectation by the majority of people who frequent this club is that woman who go

there are open to serious romantic or partnering relationships with other women and that this norm influenced her experience of the leisure context. She said:

I felt a little uncomfortable there, I guess 'cause I kind of felt like my presence there might have misled people to think I was gay. There was one incident in particular just kind of made me feel bad. I was dressed in goth clothes, nothing extremely provocative, but just goth-looking clothes, and I noticed a girl who was just kind of checking me out, and she sent her friend over, she's like, "My friend thinks you're cute, she really likes goth girls, but you're straight, aren't you?" She made some comment like I look straight. I was just kind of like, "Yeah. I'm sorry." I just felt kind of bad, that maybe just my presence there had given her the impression that I was gay, and that it was a letdown for her, that she saw a goth girl, which apparently she has a thing for, but was straight. (Maria, lines 463-472)

So multiple discourses are present in leisure contexts and those discourses have different influences on leisure experiences based on participants' identities. While the dominant cultural discourses cannot be made completely irrelevant in any space, particular leisure contexts can be imbued with micro-level discourses and space-specific norms that are transgressive to those of the discourses of the dominant culture. Yet, even within these leisure contexts, there may be other discourses functioning regarding specific assumptions or behavioral expectations that negatively influence access to full participation in the space. In the example just given, the heteronormative discourse was subverted to make space for sexual minority individuals; however only certain sexual minority individuals (i.e., those open to long-term partnerships with female-identified persons) were deemed to be appropriate in the space. Thus, the designation of a space as being marketed to 'lesbian-identified' people had additional discourses functioning within the space regarding the types of behaviors or relationships to be engaged in between women. This stood in contrast to a different leisure context that was not marketed to any specific community and populated mostly by heterosexual couples but that had a predominate discourse of inclusion regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual behaviors.

Participants in this study employed various strategies in order to maximize their enjoyment of leisure contexts. These strategies included: seeking out safe leisure contexts by drawing on localized cultural knowledge regarding the places that would be emotionally and physically safe; avoiding or minimizing exposure to leisure contexts that (again based on localized cultural knowledge) were deemed not safe; going with a group of people if a leisure context was considered potentially unsafe or if there was little information about the leisure context; and finally, covering or editing aspects of self and/or identity as a sexual minority if the space was deemed emotionally or physically unsafe (I will talk at greater length about this strategy when I discuss the third research question). These strategies have been identified in previous literature examining leisure of individuals who identify as members of the sexual minority communities (e.g., Jacobson & Samdahl, 1998; Kivel, 1994; Kivel & Kleiber, 2000; Taylor, 2007). For example, Jacobson and Samdahl (1998) stated that participants in their study hid their identities as old lesbians, avoided contexts where discrimination might occur, and created private spaces for social interaction.

Additionally, strategies used by participants in the current study have been identified in research that examined leisure experiences of other members of minority or marginalized communities. For example, Gobster (2002) examined social patterns of use in a Chicago park and found that the average group size for Blacks, Latino/Latina, and Asians (racial/ethnic minority groups) was larger than that of Whites (racial/ethnic majority group). Participants who were members of racial/ethnic minority groups reported knowing “popular areas in the park where members of their racial or ethnic group went” (p. 151).

Discourse and Identity Work

The third research question addressed in this study was: How do the contextual norms and discourses present in leisure contexts influence identity work? By identity work, I mean the myriad and complex processes by which sexual minority youth explore, discover, create, perform, or express aspects of self or identity related to sexuality. The facets of identity work that were most visible in this study were those of identity expression and performance.

I anticipated that participants would experience less freedom to explore, claim, or perform aspects of self or identity related to sexuality in contexts where heteronormative discourse dominated. This was indeed what participants reported in this study. Again, this is similar to other research that has examined leisure experiences of sexual minority youth. For example, sexual minority youth reported using leisure contexts “to help them understand themselves, their relationships with others and the world” (Kivel, 1996, p. 186). However, much of this occurred in private leisure contexts rather than public ones where they felt compelled to conceal questioning of or known sexual identity.

When participants were in leisure contexts where heteronormative discourse was dominant they (participants) engaged in what Goffman (1963) and Yoshino (2006) referred to as ‘passing’ or ‘covering.’ Passing refers to attempts to render invisible the marker of the spoiled or stigmatized identity (e.g., scar, deformity, religious or ethnic identity) and to ‘pass’ as a ‘normal’ within that context. Covering refers to the ways in which people with stigmatized or “spoiled” identities attempt to make a particular marker of a stigmatized identity less obtrusive or noticeable. In this study, participants reported altering their behaviors, appearance, language, and/or conversation topics in order to pass (that is to be perceived as heterosexual) or to cover (to behave in ways that were more closely aligned with heteronormative expectations even when in

the presence of people who knew of their identification with a sexual minority community). When participants were in safe spaces¹¹ they felt free to allow full expression of identity as sexual minority youth (e.g., have conversations about LGBTQ related topics, flirt with people of the same gender, wear clothing with identifiable LGBTQ signifiers printed on them).

The fact that participants reported being very out and comfortable with their identities as sexual minority youth *and* yet still engaging in covering practices stands in contrast to what would be predicated by existing models of gay/lesbian identity development. As discussed in chapter two, existing models of gay/lesbian development assume that passing or covering is an indication of less developed identity, meaning that a person who passes or covers has yet to reach “identity synthesis” (Cass, 1979), “identity integration” (Sophie, 1986), or “commitment” (Troiden, 1988). Similarly, many people who identify as sexual minority individuals feel pressured by their community to be out and visible in order to advance the cause of gay equality. Coming out or being visible as a sexual minority may indeed be powerful at times and may evidence a ‘successful’ identity integration or identity formation. But given the real dangers of harassment, disenfranchisement, discrimination or assault, passing or covering may be at times a necessary and life-enhancing strategy.

One existing model acknowledges that sexual identity has an intrapersonal and a social component. McCarn & Fassinger (1998) recognized the difference between internal identity synthesis and public or interpersonal disclosure. Commenting on existing identity development models for gay and lesbian identity, they critiqued the assumption that “coming out” to others is always positive while covering is always a negative or an indicator of lack of synthesis of sexual

¹¹ Goffman (1963) used the term ‘stigmaphile space’ to refer to contexts where one finds commonality with similarly stigmatized people. The notion of safe space in more recent literature and in data from this study is similar to Goffman’s concept of ‘stigmaphile space.’ Similarly, one could map Goffman’s term ‘stigmaphobe space’ onto contexts where heteronormative discourse predominates.

identity. Perhaps the ability to successfully negotiate when to disclose sexual identity and when not to would be an important addition to future identity development models for gay and lesbian youth.

As just described, many identity models have an implicit assumption that being out is better and that ‘better’ identity development makes one less emotionally affected by heteronormative discourses or the regulating behaviors of others (i.e., stares, glares, verbal harassment, threat of violence). The participants in this study all reported being very comfortable with their identities as sexual minority-identified individuals yet their experiences were negatively impacted even when (in some cases especially when) they refused to cover or pass. This finding highlights an additional limitation of stage theories which posit that when a sexual minority identity is incorporated, integrated, or synthesized it “becomes internally integrated and is viewed as a positive aspect of self” (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005) and ceases to be a source of conflict or discomfort when negotiating social contexts.

The fact that participants employed passing or covering strategies (versus freely expressing or exploring their identities with respect to their status as sexual minority individuals) when they were in leisure contexts that felt less safe (i.e., more heteronormative), lends additional support to critiques of leisure as a context of inherent freedom or as a fertile site for identity work (Grossman, 1998; Henderson, 1994; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1996; Jacobson & Samdahl, 1998; Kivel, 1996; Kleiber, 1999).

The notion of ‘personality-environment congruency’ (see Mannell & Kleiber, 1997, pp. 178-181, 347) should be examined for its relevance leisure contexts serving as a site for identity work. Personality-environment congruency is a term that refers to the degree to which personality and social situations are congruent. The greater the degree of personality-

environment congruency, the more positive a leisure experience will be for a participant. Perhaps leisure contexts can be opportunities for identity work only to the extent that there is congruency between salient aspects of a peoples' identities (e.g., as female-identified and experiencing same-sex attraction or desires) and the discourses that are predominant in a given leisure context (e.g., predominantly female, queered). Conversely, to the extent that there is a mismatch (as in the case of this study when female identified sexual minority individuals were in heteronormative or male-centered spaces) the lack of personality-environment congruency prevents or impedes the leisure context as being a place in which people can engage in identity work.

While the data from this study illuminated the ways discourse in leisure settings influenced the extent of identity expression and performance, it did not inform me about other aspects of identity work. Specifically, this study did not illuminate ways in which participants constructed, developed, or discovered their currently held identities as sexual minority individuals. Perhaps the overarching concept of identity work as I envision it is too large to examine in totality within the context of a single study unless the data collection methods are structured to specifically inquire about how people engaged in identity construction, development, or discovery.

In this final section of the dissertation, I will discuss what I believe are the major 'take-away' lessons from this research study in terms of what I have learned as a researcher as well as practical and research implications I would offer to other leisure researchers and practitioners.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Future Research

In the previous section, I discussed the results as they addressed the research questions that guided this study. In this section I will talk more broadly about the lessons I have learned or

realizations I had as a result of completing this research. Additionally, I offer recommendations for future research.

Intersecting Identities and Visibility of Discourses

Perhaps the lesson that has been most impressed upon me is that when conducting research, it is impossible to analyze separately the multiple discourses that are present in leisure or social contexts. It is also not realistic to examine aspects of identity in isolation from each other. To be more specific, I began this research with the intent to examine the discourses present regarding sexual orientation in leisure contexts. I did not wish to examine discourses related to gender though I knew intellectually that they would likely be present to some extent. I realized as I began to examine the data that the discourses around gender, gender identity, and gender expression could not be neatly separated from heteronormative discourses. I think that my assumption was that androcentricity, misogyny, and regulation of the gender binary would be mitigated within contexts where heteronormative discourses were disrupted. I was wrong in this assumption. Gendered discourses were omnipresent in both heteronormative and queered leisure/social contexts and had real, lived influence on the experiences of the participants in this study.

This recognition of the impossibility of isolating and examining disparate discourses of sexual orientation and gender impressed upon me again how multiple discourses (e.g., regarding race/ethnicity, disability, religion, and class) are always present in every context. Some discourses and some identities may be more salient than others to various people within a given context, but multiple discourses are always present within leisure contexts.

That gendered discourses are omnipresent and embedded within leisure and social contexts is not a new finding by any means. Nor is it a new finding that it is imperative to

examine the influence of multiple identities or discourses within leisure contexts (c.f., Aitchison, 1999; Collins, 1991; Henderson, 1994; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1996; Jacobson & Samdahl, 1998; Johnson & Samdahl, 2005; Samdahl, Jacobson, & Hutchinson, 2001; Skeggs, 1999; Stowkowski, 2002, Taylor, 2007). Leisure contexts are shaped by ideological, cultural, and hegemonic discourses that, while often are contested, create a set of norms that determine who has access to a given context, what behaviors are legitimate or allowed (by individuals, couples, or groups), and what individual representations are appropriate in terms of clothing, hair style, tattoos, or other aspects of appearance (Aitchison, 1999; Skeggs, 1999; Stowkowski, 2002).

Attempting to conduct research that isolates and examines separate hegemonic discourses is not possible. Nor is it particularly helpful to consider discourses regarding gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity as additive (Collins, 1991). Collins (1991) suggested that we examine race, class, and gender through an intersectional framework that she called the *matrix of domination* (p. 225). This conceptualization “posits multiple, interlocking levels of domination that stem for the societal configuration of race, class, and gender relations. This structural pattern affects individual consciousness, group interaction, and group access to institutional power and privileges” (Andersen & Collins, 2007, p. 5). This approach to examining lived experiences of leisure participants can also make visible other systems of oppression (e.g., regarding age, sexual orientation, disability).

Collins (1991) recommended investigating particular situated experiences to learn about discourses of power, domination, and resistance (as well as any specific area of interest). Looking at individual biographies or situated experiences collectively can inform researchers about cultural contexts and broader social institutions from particular subjugated stances (or

positionalities). Looking at cultural contexts and social institutions from across various subjugated stances can also inform researchers about the discourses at work in those contexts and institutions. Examining leisure contexts and experiences from particular, situated, and subjugated stances is different from historical positivist ontological and epistemological approaches predominant in North American leisure research (Samdahl, 1999). If leisure researchers are to understand experiences of diverse leisure participants, however, it seems necessary to conduct that research in ways that allow the experiences of participants whose voices are often invisible or marginalized to be at the center of analysis.

The participants in this study, by virtue of their position as female-identified sexual minority individuals, were able to see discourses of gender because of their particular, situated location within those heteronormative and/or gendered discourses. Had I been able to include voices of participants of more diverse racial/ethnic identities, I would likely have discovered more about the discourses relevant to race and ethnicity that existed within leisure contexts. This is because people's concrete and lived experiences result in particular standpoints or perspectives that result in situated knowledge not available to other groups (Collins, 1991).

Critique of Sexual Minority Youth as an Umbrella Label

Similar to the point made above about the dangers of examining people in broad, undefined categories without attention to the specifics of intersecting identities, I also am now critical of employing the label 'sexual minority youth' to lump together people who identify variously as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, same-gender-loving, or queer. Although youth (indeed people of any age) who identify as having a sexual orientation other than heterosexual share some similarities with each other in terms of facing a society that devalues their relationships and accords them second-class citizenship in terms of federal and state recognition

of legal relationship status, federal and state taxation status, and parental rights, this group of people do not comprise a monolithic population. For example, research has documented that sexual minority youth differ along the lines of sex/gender differences (Dempsey, Hillier, & Harrison, 2001; Diamond and Savin-Williams, 2000), racial/ethnic identity (Dube' and Savin-Williams, 1999), and by access to supportive people and/or services (Morrison & Heureux, 2001). Savin-Williams (2001) also addressed the limitations of including only those people who claim an identity as lesbian, gay, or bisexual in research examining same-sex attraction. He advocated that researchers "eschew sexual labels altogether and rely on descriptions of behaviors, desires, or attractions" (p. 11). I took this Savin-Williams recommendation to heart as I developed this current research study. Based on some of the experiences of my participants I now question the utility of such a broad approach when investigating questions of leisure experiences, discourses present in leisure contexts, and identity work.

Previous leisure research has examined the leisure experiences of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth as a collective group (e.g., Kivel, 1997; Caldwell, Kivel, Smith, & Hayes, 1998). Developmental models have also assumed that the experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are similar (e.g., Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1989). In light of data from this study I find it problematic to assume that the experiences of even lesbian-identified white women, bisexual-identified white women, and white women who have sexual encounters with other women can be easily categorized together.

The women in the current study comprised of lesbian-identified white women (n=2), bisexual-identified white women (n=2), and one white woman who enjoys sexual encounters with other women but who doesn't see herself partnering with a female for a long-term relationship. Their experiences of leisure contexts were different in ways that I believe are

important to delineate. The two women who identified as bisexual remained aware of heteronormative discourses although they were partnered with a male-identified person throughout the length of the research. As a result of this, they felt more comfortable going to leisure contexts where the target audience was LGBTQ-identified people and their allies. Anne recognized this as a result of her participation in this study:

I guess, it's kind of made me notice that I hadn't really thought a lot before that my safety was really relevant or my comfort level was that relevant at places I chose to go, you know, because I'm not with a woman right now, I hadn't thought that support and lack there of gays and lesbians or queers would affect so much the places that I go but it's still very, very important to me and to how comfortable I feel in a space. You know? Cause I still don't feel heterosexual and so if I'm in a place where I don't feel comfortable, I'm always worried if they'll like somehow notice or see. So like, you know, something that I always, I don't think I quite realized the degree to which it like stayed with me, the degree to which it like really, really mattered to me even though on the outside it looks like I'm totally heterosexual. (Anne lines 938-947)

Yet, she also talked about feeling a bit out of place sometimes in those same spaces because of the fact that she was currently with a male partner. She talked about recognizing that “yeah, it looks kind of weird like a girl and her boyfriend dancing at Legos or Views” but that that was where she was comfortable. Future research should examine the leisure experiences of individuals who identify as bisexual specifically as it seems that their perceptions of access to or inclusion in either heteronormative or sexual minority spaces would be influenced by the gender identity and gender expression of their partner at a given time.

Similarly, researchers should examine leisure experiences of people who enjoy same sex sexual experiences but who are not seeking to partner long-term with someone of the same sex as a distinct group of people who engage in or desire same sex sexual interactions. These folks' identities result in different experiences of leisure contexts. In this study, Maria's desire to connect sexually with other female-identified people was problematic in the context of a club marketed specifically toward sexual minority female-identified communities because of existing

norms about the form that sexual connections were to take (i.e., be a prelude to or in the context of the possibility of a longer term partnering). This experience demonstrates the problem with categorizing any kind of desire for same sex sexual contact as analogous to same sex desire that is accompanied by a distinct identity or a desire for relationships exclusively with female-identified people.

Additionally, this research suggests that trans-identified persons should not be assumed to have the same leisure experiences as LGB-identified persons. The fact participants labeled the presence of transmen in a space as an indicator of greater safety while cismen were seen as an indicator of less safety suggests that there is something about the ways that material bodies temper gender identity and even gender performance. Although transmen are male-identified and people did not see chromosomes or genitalia, something about the way transmen occupied space was experienced as different than the ways cismen occupied space and were experienced.

Thus, future research should investigate the leisure experiences of specifically defined individuals and/or communities. Specifically, additional research is needed to examine the experiences of women who seek sexual connections with other women in absence of defined relationships; women who partner exclusively with other women; women who partner with people who are either men or women; and women who partner with people regardless of their gender identity (e.g., ciswomen, cismen, transmen, transwomen).

Critique of Queer as an Umbrella Label

People often use the word queer as a synonym for references to people with preferences for sexual connections or relationships with people of the same gender. Although many people use the word queer in that way, participants in this study used it at times in the spirit that Michael Warner (1999) used it. He used the term queer to mean people who challenge normative

proscriptions regarding sexual behavior and gender expression. In that usage, queered spaces are those spaces where norms that would limit authentic or uninhibited expression are called into question or transgressed. Queered spaces are not the same as spaces targeted to people of certain identities with respect to sexual orientation (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual). Rather they are spaces that foster and/or are contexts that support “a frank challenge to the damaging hierarchies of respectability” (p. 74).

In the current study, only two leisure contexts were identified unanimously as spaces in which all the participants felt safe and free to express multiple aspects of their identities. These leisure contexts were bars/dance clubs where people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions were welcome. Additionally, these clubs were perceived as being more sexually progressive in terms of welcoming Goth communities, polyamorous communities, and communities who valued BDSM activities. A participant described one of these clubs as follows:

They're on the front page of the entertainment or some other section of the *N&O*, the headline was, ‘Gay ? Straight? Let's Dance!’ So it was just kind of like, “We don’t care.” If you look at the pamphlets that are laid out, they have the *Q Notes* laid out, they have other kinds of I guess sexually progressive things. (Maria, lines 307-311)

Neither of these two sites was specifically targeted to gay, lesbian, bisexual, or same-gender-loving communities and yet participants felt that the discourses present in these spaces allowed them freedom to express their identities. Sites that were specifically targeted to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and same-gender-loving communities still had normative discourses in terms of the types of identities, behaviors, and sexual contacts that were acceptable whereas these two sites did not. Maria described the freedom she found in these spaces in this way:

Whereas in like a fetish night, nobody really cares. Nobody, you could be a guy making out with a guy and then the guy might say do you want to have sex? No, I don’t really have sex with guys. Well you’re making out with a guy. Who cares? Or you could be a girl and you could be doing, making out with a girl but you don’t want to date a girl. Nobody would care cause everybody’s just kind of doing whatever they feel comfortable

with. Whereas in another setting it'd be more like we're here because we're women who want to meet and date women and I feel I'd be misrepresenting myself if I came across as fluid in my sexuality there. So I guess that would be the sharpest contrast that I could pick out would be the fetish night versus Views. (lines 2019-2028)

She went on to say:

Everyone is there kind of exploring their kinky side be it through BDSM activities or through, you know, exploring their sexuality in terms of gender, you know, dating people, well not dating but messing around with people of a gender they wouldn't normal do that. So it's very erotic. It's very risqué. Everyone's kind of drinking and getting turned on. Whereas, and that's the context. The context is we're here to drink and get turned on and flirt and mess around and have a good time and go home with our partners. Whereas Views is for women who are gay. It's not, I mean, it's not a fetish night. It's not for people to go and fool around and explore their sexualities. There's not a rule at the door that says you have to be gay to come in here but that's why most people are there is because they're gay and women. (2077-2086)

I posit that these two leisure contexts were queered in the sense that there were no discourses present that restricted expression or exploration of identity in terms of sexual behaviors or gender expression and thus were more accessible to participants as leisure contexts that allowed for identity work. I believe that the use of terms queer and queered should be deployed not as synonyms to the words 'lesbian,' 'gay,' or 'bisexual' but rather as terms that connote a challenging and disruption of hierarchical, restrictive, and normative discourses. As such, lumping 'queer' under the umbrella term 'sexual minority youth' would only be appropriate if one is speaking specifically about communities or people who challenge and disrupt normative hierarchies related to sexual orientation, sexual behavior, gender identity, or gender expression.

Investigating and Theorizing Identity

One of my hopes for the current research study was that I would better understand how discourses regarding sexual orientation influenced the accessibility of leisure as a site for identity work. While I did not learn a great deal about the ways participants used leisure as a context in

which to construct or discover their identities, I did learn about the ways in which leisure contexts do and do not allow expression of identities with respect to gender identity, gender expression, and sexual desire or identity. As discussed in the previous chapters, participants felt that spaces were less safe for them to the extent that those spaces were dominated by heteronormative and androcentric discourses. In such spaces they did not feel free to fully express aspects of their identities as female identified, genderqueer, or as women who were open to or desirous of sexual connections with other women. Often in these situations participants covered these identities but even when they did not, they still reported a negative influence on their internal experience of both the leisure experience and perceived safety. Thus, to the extent that heteronormative and androcentric discourses were present, some aspects of identity work were limited and not accessible to these participants (expression of identities). This finding lends support to previous critiques of leisure as a site that inherently allows exploration or expression of identity (c.f., Caldwell, Kivel, Smith, & Hayes, 1998; Jacobson & Samdahl, 1998; Kivel & Kleiber, 2000; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997; Samdahl, 1988).

I still believe that leisure contexts have the *potential* to be sites of identity work, however I am more cognizant of the ways that leisure contexts and spaces

are more than simply geographic sites—they are also fluid, changeable, dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory and they ‘contain’ overt and covert social practices that embed in place-making behaviors notions of ideology, power, control, conflict, dominance, and distribution of social and physical resources.” (Stokowski, 2002, p. 368)

Results from this current study suggest that leisure can function as a site of identity work only to the extent that discourses present in leisure contexts support aspects of identity that are most salient to individuals in those contexts or aspects of identity that they wish to explore, express, or try on. Mannell and Kleiber (1997) stated that “high quality leisure experiences are more likely to occur when personality-environment congruency is created” (p. 347). Perhaps identity work is

most possible only to the extent that there is congruency between salient aspects of a person's identity and the discourses that define and structure a given leisure or social context. Thus, for female-identified people who identify as lesbian to explore aspects of their identity as women or as lesbian in leisure contexts, those leisure contexts would need to be largely free from androcentric, misogynistic, and heteronormative discourses. Otherwise, those discourses would present a demand to cover those aspects of their identity related to being female or lesbian. Future research could assess this hypothetical relationship.

When developing leisure contexts for youth, particularly if one is interested in providing a leisure context that is perceived as safe and that lends itself to identity work, leisure providers would need to be attentive to aspects of salient youth identities as well as the discourses communicated to youth in that space. For maximal leisure enjoyment and for the leisure context to be fertile for identity work, the discourses present in that space would need to be supportive of those identities most salient to the youth accessing that space.

Conducting this research opened my eyes to the extent to which I as well as gay and lesbian identity development models have privileged the notion that people who are secure in their identity regarding their gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation, are less influenced by heteronormative discourses. The most often cited gay/lesbian identity development models assume that as people move from a place of recognizing and struggling with their identity as gay or lesbian to a place where they have synthesized or incorporated that identity they become less susceptible to societal stigma and regulation of behavior (e.g., Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1989). Disclosure of 'homosexual identity' is heralded as an indicator of identity commitment while covering or blending is seen as lesser stigma management strategies. For example, Troiden (1989) stated, "Identity disclosure enables the homosexual [*sic*] identity to be

more fully realized, that is, brought into concrete existence, in a wider range of contexts” (p. 67). Owens (1998) stated, “More energy is spent in living an open life and less on trying to hide it...The battle with homophobia and heterosexism and with their own internalized ‘demons’ can leave the winners proud to proclaim ‘I am who I am!’” (p. 37). These assertions are made however without a nuanced discussion of how covering and/or blending may be contextually necessary or beneficial rather than a lack of commitment to a gay or lesbian identity. While McCarn and Fassinger (1996) did take into account that internal identity and social or public disclosure of that identity are separate processes, that model still does not address the ongoing covering demands and their negotiation adequately.

What the participants in this study have impressed upon me is that even when an identity as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer is held without internal question, doubt or insecurity, societal prejudice still has power to influence leisure experiences and to demand covering behavior. Existing models for gay/lesbian identity development need to be revised to better account for the societal stigma present in gay and lesbian peoples lives beyond the synthesis of their identity as a gay or lesbian person. Future theorizing needs to incorporate the ways in which identity synthesis includes various behavioral strategies for negotiation of contexts and discourses present across contexts in which people live, work, and play.

Additionally, models theorizing gay and lesbian identity development have not adequately taken into account the ways that intersecting identities must be negotiated throughout the process of integrating identity. Previous researchers have written about the need to address multidimensional identities in theorizing identity (c.f., Grotevant, 1987; Grotevant, 1993; Kumashiro, 2001; Sears, 1991). For gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer youth this means attention to intersections and synthesis of identities related to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender

expression, cultural and ethnic identities, religious/spiritual/faith identities, and socioeconomic/class identities as well as other aspects of identity that may be salient (e.g., disability, political affiliation).

I leave this research with a more visceral understanding and awareness of the necessity to attend to issues of structure and discourse in the examination of identity. This does not lessen my belief in the power of individuals to construct, create, discover, or express their own sense of who they are as individuals. Nor does it lessen my belief in the power of individuals to challenge, change, resist, and disrupt normative discourses. Butler (1993) stated: “To claim that the subject is itself produced in and as a gendered matrix of relations is not to do away with the subject, but only to ask after the conditions of its emergence and operation” (p. 7). I think I will be more attentive (and I argue that all identity theorists should be similarly attentive) to questions such as:

What possibilities of mobilization are produced on the basis of existing configurations of discourse and power? Where are the possibilities of reworking that very matrix of power by which we are constituted, of reconstituting the legacy of that constitution, and of working against each other those processes of regulation that can destabilize existing power regimes? (Butler, 1992, p. 13)

I don't believe postmodernist critique of self and identity makes these questions irrelevant. Similar to McAdams (1997), I believe:

There is indeed a great deal of truth in the notion that selves are multiple, fluid, ever changing, and constantly on the move, especially when those selves are constructed and negotiated in modern or indeed ‘postmodern,’ societal contexts. But one should not dismiss the possibility that selves nonetheless retain a certain degree of unity and coherence. (p. 48)

One's sense of identity or self is still meaningful in that human beings are communal in nature. People seek out opportunities to be with others ‘like themselves’ and their sense of who is ‘like them’ is dependent on their own sense of who they are (i.e., their self or identity). That there are

multiple, fluid, and contextually dependent aspects of ‘me’ and ‘not me’ does not negate the existence of identity or self. And while the postmodern identity or self may be less a unified, singular entity than a “loose confederacy of multiple self-conceptions” (McAdams, 1997, p. 51) even the loose confederacy must have some commonalities or coherence of meaning.

Perhaps William James’s (1892) discussion of the subjective (the I) and objective (the me) aspects of self have much to offer future discussions of identity work as do conceptualizations of identity and self as narrative propositions (c.f., Bruner, 1986; Mishler, 1999). I find myself also returning to Grotevant’s (1987) discussion of the process of identity formation as a multiphase process influenced by multiple internal and external factors. Lastly, I still find Marcia’s (1966) proposal of identity as a process of exploration and commitment useful in thinking about how people go about identity work. I picture Willam James’s (1892) ‘I’ sorting through and exploring the bin of the experiences of the ‘me’s’ and selecting those ‘me’s’ to which a commitment is made to bring into the narrative of the ‘I.’ And perhaps this selection is made based on all of the factors of one’s daimon, personality traits, intelligence, cognitive ability, as well as the cultural discourses and interpersonal relationships present across all the ecological systems and levels in which the ‘I’ and ‘me’s’ exist. I am not sure at this point how one might research this framework but it is how I find myself thinking about identity and self at the end of this research.

Recommendations for Leisure Service Providers

My professional life is about providing social and leisure spaces for people who identify in all types of ways but for whom sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression are incredibly salient. My goal is to provide spaces wherein they do not encounter discourses that limit their ability to explore their identities or to express their identities as lesbian, gay, bisexual,

transgender, queer, same-gender-loving, women-loving-women, genderqueer, heterosexual allies or the myriad other ways they identify in terms of their sexual orientation, sexual behaviors, gender identity, and gender expression.

The results of this research emphasize to me the importance of being attentive to any normalizing or hierarchical discourses that might privilege some at the expense of others. Thus, the mission of the LGBTQ Center that has been entrusted to me has the mission not of serving any specific communities but rather ‘to foster a safe and welcoming environment for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.’ I advocate that those leisure service providers who wish to create spaces that feel accessible to ‘sexual minority’ youth be attentive to communicating via symbols, stickers, posters, sponsorship of events, and programs an intentional welcoming of people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. True, this means deploying symbols recognized by LGBTQ communities specifically (e.g., rainbow flags, pink or black triangles, Lambdas) but it also means communicating that the space is not exclusively for people who seek long-term relationships with other same-gender-loving (or gay or lesbian) people. For example, there are many symbols that transgender and genderqueer-identified people look for to assess their safety and the degree to which they are welcome. One major symbol is the presence of a gender non-specific restroom, shower, or changing facility. If you have two single-use stalls as bathroom facilities but they are labeled ‘male’ and ‘female’ consider removing the gender labels and instead label them ‘restroom.’ This is a simple strategy that signifies intentional welcoming and inclusion of transgender and genderqueer individuals. Similarly, other groups of individuals (e.g., bisexual, those with fluid sexual identities, polyamorous) have cultural signs and symbols for which they look in leisure contexts. Learning more about what cultural signifiers are seen as welcoming or

inviting would allow leisure providers to be intentional about including more diverse communities.

Another important recommendation is for leisure service professionals to be attentive to the discourses related to other aspects of identity (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, body image, class, ability/disability) that are present within leisure contexts. To the extent that these discourses are present in ways that privilege some and marginalize others there will be people who feel unsafe and unwelcome or uncomfortable in the space. Realize also that one's own positionality influences the discourses that are visible. Thus, an advisory council or group can be incredibly useful if it is comprised of people from diverse positionalities along multiple demographic aspects.

Lastly, I offer some policy recommendations for leisure professionals. Many of these have been offered previously but I reiterate them here because they still have not become standard practice in the field. People create family in many ways. Some of these are recognized by the legal statutes in the United States (US) whereas others are not or are recognized only in some places. As of October, 2008 only three states in the US recognize and accord equal standing to two individuals of the same sex who join their lives as married partners (California, Connecticut, and Massachusetts). When family discounts or family memberships are provided in leisure and recreation contexts the assumption is often that family equals people related by blood or marriage. While some organizations now offer some recognition of domestic partnerships, there is still much disparity for families who do not fit the cultural norm in the US. Here I do not only mean partnerships of two people of the same sex, but also the myriad ways that people form families.

One recommendation I offer regarding family memberships or pricing policies is to consider offering *household* discounts or memberships that would include all people who reside in the same household. This benefits not only two people of the same sex who consider each other family and who live together but might also benefit: (a) people who live with extended relatives, (b) people who are families of choice and who may live together for reasons of sharing expenses or in order to be caregiver(s) to another in the household, or (c) people who are polyamorous and whose families include more than two adults. The ways in which family has historically been defined are not done so out of neutrality but are a direct result of the discourses that shape perceptions of what forms represent ‘appropriate’ or ‘natural’ families. These forms of families have been privileged and others marginalized by the policies which govern or at least influence access to recreation and leisure spaces.

Another recommendation in terms of policy is to examine where assumptions regarding gender identity or gender expression may become problematic. Last spring a local public recreation center advertised the beginning of a “women’s only night.” While the intent was to create a space where women would feel less inhibited by male presence and thus encourage them to attend this policy was not without complications. There were some people who were biologically female, who identified variously as genderqueer and female, but whose gender expression was such that they were ‘read’ as male when they attempted to enter the facility. The staff at the facility made assumptions based on appearance regarding biological sex and gender identity based on appearance rather than allowing people to self define whether or not they fit within the space. This is but one example that highlights the need to thoughtfully consider policies that are constructed around a gender binary (i.e., that people are either male OR female) and the associated assumptions about associated gender expressions.

Leisure service providers who deploy gender based types of policies should ask themselves the following questions: Who gets to define what constitutes male or female? Is it decided by participant report? By staff appraisal? By government issued identification? And if it is by government issued identification then what about a transgender or genderqueer person who identifies as genderqueer or male but whose government issued identification says female? Does that person attend the 'women-only' night based on their government issued identification? Do they even if they appear masculine in terms of facial hair, lean body mass, and they identify as male?¹² What about the transwoman who appears feminine, has visible breasts, who has not had her penis or testicles removed, but who has managed to get her gender marker changed on her government issued identification? To which 'gender-only' night does she go? Similarly, think about the structure of athletic teams at the club sport or intramural league for example. Where do genderqueer or trans-identified people fit? Gender-guided policies are probably necessary sometimes but they should be used judiciously and with provisions made for including or accounting for people who do not fit neatly into the gender binary.

Another recommendation is in terms of the construction of physical spaces for leisure and recreation programs and services. I mentioned earlier in this chapter the importance of providing gender non-specific showers, bathrooms, and changing facilities. This benefits transgender and genderqueer-identified people but is also benefits many more groups of people. It benefits the males who are deemed effeminate in appearance and subject to harassment or violence (regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity). It benefits females who are deemed masculine in appearance and subject to harassment or violence (regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity). Gender non-specific bathrooms, showers, and changing facilities

¹² This could be the reality if a transman had been on hormone therapy for a long period of time but had not yet been able to obtain surgery that would justify medical documentation needed to change government issued identification.

also benefit families with children of different gender(s) than the person taking them to the leisure facility. These spaces benefit people who have personal care attendants who are of a different gender than they are (e.g., an elderly person and their caregiver or a person with a disability and their personal care attendant). Just as disability advocates argued that accessibility in terms of ramps and elevators benefit more than just people with disabilities, being attentive to providing gender non-specific spaces also benefits multiple users of a space.

A final recommendation in terms of the physical construction of space is to be cognizant of the other ways that physical spaces are imbued with signifiers of who is welcome in the space. Here again, I echo calls of disability advocates to think about the location of accessible ramps (are they in the front or in back of the building), the formats in which application or registration forms are available (e.g., large print, Braille, digital voice formats), and how publicity is conducted. I also encourage people to think about the other ways that a space can be made more or less accessible by virtue of the symbols, fliers, advertisements, or posters that are present in the space. Think about the dress codes that are put in place and what assumptions (implicit or not) are being made about gender expression, socioeconomic resources, or cultural identifications. Think about facility use policies and who has a right to what kinds of free speech, when, and where? Street preachers, some religious groups, and Boy Scouts of America have overt policies that exclude 'homosexual' people and are often very vocal in their criticism of sexual minority youth. If these groups are visible and vocal in the use or construction of space then the space will likely be perceived as 'not safe' for them even if the owners of that space themselves are welcoming.

These are not easy questions and in some cases there are not clear cut, easy answers. What I encourage leisure service providers to do though is to begin asking themselves these

questions because these are the very things that result in a space being perceived as safe or not safe, welcoming or not welcoming, and comfortable or uncomfortable by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, same-gender-loving youth and their heterosexual allies. I think also that people should think about what discourses are present in leisure contexts in terms of other systems of oppression, regarding other aspects of the matrix of domination (Collins, 1991).

People rely on comparisons between salient aspects of self or identity and the discourses they perceive in leisure contexts to determine whether or not those leisure contexts are spaces that are safe for or welcoming to them. I want to close with a thought from one of the participants in this study. Maria said:

I think the big thing that's critically important is that gay people be first of all safe from harassment and violence which I think it is becoming less and less socially acceptable to harass gay people. I don't think that means that gay people are being embraced with open arms by society at large. I think heterocentrism is a word that people on the right would probably scoff at as a ridiculous idea but I think it's something that if you really think about it and you really walk around, I think if straight people walked around all day with the notion that they were gay then it would become apparent to them how heterocentric society is. That obviously needs to change. I think my vision for the very far future, maybe two, three generations from now is that nobody feels the need to label themselves with an acronym or part of an acronym and that people just, that people could move from being in a relationship with a woman to being in a relationship with a man if that's what they wanted. So, that's my big happy vision. And that every place would be a place like Rings where it's open to gay people and it's open to straight people and that neither group would feel out of place. I think that would be a great place to be for everyone. [lines 2454-2474]

I share Maria's 'big happy vision' of a world where everyone feels safe and welcome in leisure contexts. I would like to see recreation and leisure service providers (particularly those who are stewards of public spaces) work to create leisure contexts where people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, relationship preferences, ethnic/cultural backgrounds, bodily/sensory abilities, monetary resources, family structures, and religious/spiritual affiliations are welcomed and included. Yes, this is a tall order and one not

easily accomplished. Yes, it is difficult to create a place that welcomes and affirms multiple and often conflicting viewpoints, experiences, and values. It requires the building of coalitions and continuous effort to help stakeholders find places of commonality rather than dissension. Yes, I realize that this vision of mine and Maria's will not become reality overnight or perhaps even in my lifetime. Yet I remain convinced of the necessity of the effort and of the possibility of the vision becoming reality.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Regional Demographic Information

Race	County A (Durham)	County B (Wake)	County C (Orange)	Combined
Hispanic or Latino	17,039 (7.6%)	33,985 (5.4%)	5,273 (4.5%)	56,297 (5.8%)
White (not Latino)	107,371 (48.1%)	439,160 (69.9%)	89,656 (75.8%)	636,187 (65.6%)
Black or African American	87,516 (39.2%)	122,648 (19.5%)	16,175 (13.7%)	226,339 (23.3%)
American Indian & Alaskan Native	531 (0.2%)	1,821 (0.3%)	388 (0.3%)	2,740 (0.3%)
Asian	7,311 (3.3%)	21,183 (3.4%)	4,840 (4.1%)	33,334 (3.4%)
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	65 (0.0%)	178 (0.0%)	20 (0.0%)	263 (0.0%)
Some other race	436 (0.2%)	842 (0.1%)	169 (0.1%)	1,447 (0.1%)
Two or more races	3,045 (1.4%)	8,029 (1.3%)	1,706 (1.4%)	12,780 (1.3%)
Total	223,314	627,846	118,227	969,387

County	Population	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Females	15-19 (years)	20-24 (years)	Median age (years)
County A (Durham)	223,314	23,156	43,337	115,525	14,568	21,106	32.3
County B (Wake)	627,846	27,004	54,988	317,288	40,368	49,344	32.9
County C (Orange)	118,227	28,873	42,372	62,347	11,986	16,759	30.5
Summary Info	969,387	Not Available	46,899	495,312	66,918	87,205	31.9

Summary Table

County	Population	Per Capita Income (dollars)	Median Household Income (dollars)	Females	15-19 (years)	20-24 (years)	Median age (years)
Counties A, B, & C	969,387	Not Available	46,899	495,312 (51.1% of total pop)	66,918 (6.9% of total pop))	87,205 (8.9% of total pop)	31.9

Educational Attainment of population 25 years and over

	<9 th grade	9 th -12 th grade (no diploma)	HS grad or equivalent	Some college; no degree	Associate degree	Bachelors	Graduate or Professional Degree
County A (Durham)	9,365	15,142	27,605	25,558	8,406	32,700	25,028
County B (Wake)	15,158	27,928	71,648	80,950	30,768	119,389	57,640
County C (Orange)							

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

I _____ agree to take part in a research study titled “Leisure Contexts, Identity, and Females Aged 18-23 Years”, which is being conducted by Terri Phoenix of the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at The University of Georgia (919-401-8029) under the direction of Dr. Diane Samdahl of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at The University of Georgia (706-542-4333). My participation is voluntary; I can choose not to take part in or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of the study is to understand how contextual discourses about sexual orientation influence leisure experiences and identity work for young women.

I will not benefit directly from this research. There are no monetary benefits, gifts, or other tangible incentives to participate in this study.

No deception will be used as a part of this study. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

1. Participate in three interviews with the researcher each lasting about 1.5 hours over the course of 5 weeks. Each interview will be audio-taped.
 - a) The first interview will help the researcher understand the different types of leisure activities, leisure experiences, and leisure contexts in which you participate. Two weeks after the first interview we will meet again for a second interview.
 - b) At the second interview I will discuss several of the leisure experiences I have had since the first interview. Three weeks after the second interview, we'll meet again for a third interview.
 - c) At the third interview I will again discuss several of my leisure experiences. The researcher will also ask me about other things such as: the influence of other people's attitudes about sexuality on my leisure experiences; and how I think my leisure experiences make it easier or harder to construct, discover, or express my sense of who am (i.e., your identity). Also at the third interview, the researcher will ask my opinion about interpretations she has drawn from previous data (journal entries, interviews, participant observations). Finally she will find out if I am willing to be contacted by her to get my opinion of additional interpretations she makes of the data.
 - d) If I choose not to continue participation in any way beyond the third interview, the researcher will thank me for my participation and encourage me to contact her with any questions or concerns. If I agree to further involvement, she will schedule a time to meet with me approximately one month following the third interview. At that meeting she will share in a general way the findings and interpretations based on data analysis and ask for my opinion and feedback.
 - e) I will be asked to continue my usual leisure participation but to make written, pictorial, or other types of notes to help me remember in detail two (2) to four (4) leisure experiences I had in each week during the five weeks in which I participate in the study. I will make notes about leisure experiences that took place in public locations. I will be asked to include a range of leisure experiences. I can use any and all forms of expression I desire to remember details about my leisure experiences (e.g., written word, drawings, collages, documents, song lyrics, audio files). I will be given a guideline which I will use to make notes about my leisure experiences. I can choose whether or not I allow the researcher to make copies of notes about my leisure experiences.

There is a rare risk that because of keeping a leisure journal during the course of the study I will be more likely to notice experiences of verbal and/or physical harrasment as a part of my ongoing leisure experiences. In event this occurs I may experience uncomfortable emotions such as anger or sadness. Terri Phoenix has given me a list of contact information for resources and agencies who can help me if I find I am experiencing emotional distress due to verbal or physical harrasment I've noticed as part of my participation in this study and need to talk with a

professional about it. Also, on that list is the contact information for local agencies and authorities to whom I can report incidents of harassment based on known or perceived identity as a sexual minority. Aside from the possible stress or emotional discomfort just described, no risks are expected.

All individually identifying information will be kept confidential except if necessary to protect my rights or welfare (for example, if I am injured and need emergency care); or if required by law. If information about me is published, my identity will be disguised by a fake name in all final research products, unless otherwise required by law. I also understand that audio recordings or photographs will be kept until January 1, 2016 by the researcher for research, presentation and educational purposes. There is a possibility that audio recordings and photographs with my voice and/or image could be used in either teaching or conference presentations. If this occurs faces in photographs will be modified to protect the identities of persons in them. If audiotape clips are played the researcher will ensure that there is no information in the clip that could be used to identify me or anyone else. This is subject to my permission below.

Audio recordings and photographs with my modified image and voice may be played at meetings of researchers.

Yes _____ No _____
[Please Initial]

Audio recordings and photographs with my modified image and voice may be played in classrooms to students.

Yes _____ No _____
[Please Initial]

I may elect to email the primary researcher during the course of this study with questions or comments. Additionally, I may choose to email her or send her digital files. I am aware that Internet communications are insecure and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. However once the materials are received by the primary researcher, standard confidentiality procedures will be employed. This means that any electronic documents will be kept in a password secured file and that said file will not have any information that could identify me. All printed documents and audio-tapes will be labeled by pseudonym only and be kept in an office to which the researcher is the only person that has access.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at: 919-401-8029.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Telephone: 919-401-8029

Email: LeisureStudy2006@hotmail.com

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu

Appendix D

Personal and Demographic Interview

1. What is your name?
2. (a) Please tell me what telephone number or numbers I should use to contact you.
(b) Which of these numbers should I use first?
(c) Is it okay if I leave a message in the event I get your voice mail or answering machine?
3. Let me verify the email address you'd like me to use to contact you.
4. In what city do you live?
5. How old are you?
6. How do you identify yourself regarding race?
7. How do you identify yourself regarding sexual orientation?

Appendix E

Personal and Demographic Information Form

Name: _____

Telephone number(s) (indicate preferred order): _____

Okay to leave messages? _____

Email Address: _____

City of Residence: _____

Age: _____

Racial Identification: _____

Self-identification with respect to sexuality: _____

Appendix F

First Interview Guide

1. I'd like you to tell me about some of the places you go for leisure or for fun.
2. You said you like to go to [name of a location participant mentioned], tell me more about that place. What are some things about [name of a location participant mentioned] that you really enjoy? Is there anything about [name of a location participant mentioned] that you don't enjoy?

[Question 2 will be asked multiple times about several of the places each participant mentions in response to question #1; Probes such as "tell me more about that", "what is it like being there?" and "can you give me an example of what you mean by the statement [...] will be used to elicit thick descriptions of each location mentioned]

3. So, do you think that being female is important or relevant when you are at [name of a location participant mentioned]? Tell me about that.
4. So, do you think that being heterosexual or not is important or relevant when you are at [name of a location participant mentioned]? Tell me about that.
5. Are there other contexts/places that you seek out in your leisure? You said you like going to [...] because you feel [...], what is it about [...] that you feel [...] when you're there?
6. Are there contexts/places that you avoid in your leisure? Tell me about those places and what it is about them that makes you avoid them. You said you avoid going to [...] because you feel [...], what is it about [...] that you feel [...] when you're there?
7. Is your experience at [...] different from your experience at [...]? Tell me how it differs for you.

Appendix G

Leisure Journal Prompts

I would like for you to continue your usual leisure participation and I want you to give me a sense of what some of those leisure experiences are like. Each week I'd like you to make some notes about two (2) to four (4) leisure experiences that took place in a public place. Write down enough notes so that you can describe them to me when we meet again. The purpose of jotting down notes about these leisure experiences is to help you remember a lot of details about what the experience was like for you. If you would like to use art, pictures, or music to describe your experience, please feel free to do so. I would like you to include a range of experiences. Think about some of the following questions as you make notes, pictures, collages, or other representations to remind you of specific leisure experiences:

- Tell me about the place the leisure experience occurred. What did you see, smell, and hear?
- Who was present in the leisure context?
- How did you feel?
- What was it like for you to be in that place?

Appendix H

Second Interview Guide

1. I hope you've had a good couple of weeks. Do you have any questions about the process making notes about your leisure experiences?
2. So how about we begin by you telling me about one of your leisure experiences. Feel free to refer to any notes you made about the experience and/or to show me any pictures or artwork you created to help you remember it.
3. Tell me more about what that experience was like for you [Additional prompts based upon participant responses will be used to get participant to give a rich, thick description of the location and her experience therein. Examples of probes are listed below.].
 - a. You said you felt [...], tell me more about that.
 - b. You said you heard/saw/witnessed [...], what was that like for you?
 - c. Was this experience you just described similar to other times you were at [...?]
 - d. Will you go back there? Why do you think that is true for you?
4. Were you or others there talking about relationships? Tell me about that. What was that like for you?
5. Did you notice people being physically affectionate with each other while you were there? Tell me about what you noticed. What was that like for you?
6. Was this a space where you would have felt comfortable being 'out' (i.e., open about your sexual orientation)? Tell me more about that.
7. Is there another place where you would/would not feel comfortable being 'out' (i.e., open about your sexual orientation)? Tell me about that place and about how it is different.

8. Is there a similar type of [...] that you would expect to have a different experience in? If so, what is it about that environment that is different?
9. When you go to a new place, how do you know or figure out whether or not it's okay to be 'out' (i.e., open about your sexual orientation)?
10. Would you like to talk about any feelings or thoughts that are coming up for you as you've been making notes about your leisure experiences?

Appendix I

Third Interview Guide

1. I hope you've had a good couple of weeks. Let's begin by talking about one of your leisure experiences. Feel free to refer to any notes you made about the experience and/or to show me any pictures or artwork you created to help you remember it.
2. Tell me more about what that experience was like for you [Additional prompts based upon participant responses will be used to get participant to give a rich, thick description of the location and her experience therein. Examples of probes are listed below].
 - a. You said you felt [...], tell me more about that.
 - b. You said you heard/saw/witnessed [...], what was that like for you?
 - c. Was this experience you just described similar to other times you were at [...?]
 - d. Will you go back there? Why do you think that is true for you?
3. As individuals we interact with many different people in many different contexts. Some people feel and interact with others pretty much the same way across different contexts; some people feel and interact with others a little differently in some contexts or are different with some people than with others. Think about how you are when you are in [some location participant has talked about], Think about how you are when you are in [some location participant has talked about], who are you in that context? Do you think others in that space see you in that way? What is that like for you? Does being in [...] influence how you feel? How you present yourself?
4. Let's think about a different location such as [some location participant has talked about], who are you there? Do you think others in that space see you in that way? What is that like for you? Does being in [...] influence how you feel? How you present yourself?

5. You've mentioned that you rarely/never go to [...]. When you are in [...], who are you in that place? Do you think others in that space see you in that way? Tell me about how you think they might see you. What is that like for you?
6. [This question will only be asked if the participant has never mentioned feeling harassed, unsafe, or unwelcome in any leisure context] As we've talked about your leisure experiences, you've never talked about feeling harassed, unsafe, or unwelcome in any leisure context. Has this type of thing ever happened to you?
 - a) Tell me about that experience.
 - b) What was that like for you?
 - c) How did you feel about that?
 - d) How did you see yourself in that context? How do you think others saw you?
 - e) Did this [whatever happened] effect what you went there for?
 - f) Did you or do you still go back to [location where this occurred]?
 - g) Suppose you had this experience at [someplace they have reported as a place they feel safe/welcomed/accepted], would you return there?
7. Here are some things I'm thinking about as I have been looking at people's journals, observing leisure spaces, and reflecting on the interviews. (Talk briefly about my interpretations of data). Does any of that ring true to your experience? Does any of that seem different from your experience?
8. Would you be willing to meet with me again in about a month to give me more feedback on what conclusions I'm coming to as I look at what I've heard, read, and observed?

Appendix J

Transcription Instructions

Terri Phoenix
[Mailing address]
[Telephone Numbers]
[Email address]

Description of study:

The purpose of the study is to examine self-identified lesbian, bisexual, queer, or questioning females' experiences in leisure contexts and to examine ways in which negative attitudes about homosexuality help and or hinder the creation, discovery, construction, and expression of one's identity. Participants are interviewed three (3) times over the course of 5 weeks.

Instructions re Transcription:

I have included the guiding questions for each of the three (3) interviews in which people participate. The tapes are labeled with the participant's name, date of interview, and whether it was interview number 1, 2, or 3. Some tapes have interviews (or parts of an interview) on both sides; I have indicated this by placing a label on both sides of the tape itself.

When transcribing, you do not need to record the length of pauses or include all the false starts or filler words. Please do insert line numbers and double space the document.

Please feel free to contact me via telephone, email, or snail mail with any questions.
Thank you!

Appendix K

Data Source Grid

Research Question	Data Source	Specific Prompt or Question
1. What discourses and norms related to sexuality do sexual minority youth encounter in leisure contexts?	1 st Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What things in those contexts/places make you feel comfortable? • Are there any things in these contexts that make you feel uncomfortable? • Are there contexts/places that you avoid in your leisure because you don't feel comfortable? • What is it about those contexts/places that make you feel uncomfortable?
	Interview question at 2 nd & 3 rd interview (based on leisure journal or photo elicitation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you perceive sexual orientation to be relevant in the leisure context? In what way(s)? [p. 52]
	3 rd interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about whether you think conversations or comments about sexual orientation influenced your experiences of leisure (re entry in diary or photo)
	Interview question at 2 nd & 3 rd interview (based on leisure journal or photo elicitation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe comments or discussions related to sexual feelings, behaviors, or identity by self or others during the leisure activity, experience, or context. (p. 54)

Research Question	Data Source	Specific Prompt or Question
2. How do contextual norms and discourses about sexual orientation influence leisure experiences of sexual minority youth?	1 st Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What things in those contexts/places make you feel comfortable? • Are there any things in these contexts that make you feel uncomfortable? • Are there contexts/places that you avoid in your leisure because you don't feel comfortable? • What is it about those contexts/places that make you feel uncomfortable?
	2 nd & 3 rd interviews (based on leisure journal or photo elicitation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me whether you think conversations or comments about sexual orientation influenced your experiences of leisure. • Was anything said during the leisure experience that made you feel particularly comfortable/uncomfortable? Tell me about that. • Was there anything that occurred during the leisure experience that made you feel particularly comfortable/uncomfortable? Tell me about that. • Do you think conversations or comments about sexual orientation influenced your experiences of leisure? If so, how? If not, why?

Research Question	Data Source	Specific Prompt or Question
3. How do the contextual norms and discourses present in leisure contexts facilitate and/or constrain identity construction?	2 nd & 3 rd Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What aspects of yourself did you feel were accepted in this leisure context? Tell me what led you to believe/feel that was true? • What aspects of yourself did you feel were not accepted in this leisure context? Tell me what led you to believe that was true? • Do you think conversations or comments about sexual orientation influenced your experiences of leisure? If so, how? If not, why?

Appendix L

Open Coding Process and Codes

- A. After cleaning up the data transcription and completing the coding described above, I read through transcripts while listening to taped interviews. I did this for each of the three interviews for each participant.
- B. I reread transcripts for each participants' three interviews and made notes in the margins about things I thought I was seeing. Some of these were related to the research questions but some were not things I'd thought I'd find. I began to use colored highlighters to identify things that seemed related to broad concepts I thought relevant to the research questions or that seemed to arise repeatedly as I read the transcripts over multiple times. I highlighted words or phrases and then gave them either an in vivo code (as was the case with "safe" which arose in each interview) or with a researcher generated code (e.g., gender roles, contextual cues, leisure). I made notes in the margins to begin making sense of what general I was hearing/seeing in the data.
- C. The chart below shows phrases that I grouped together as concepts or patterns I saw when analyzing each transcript. The colors indicated the color highlighter or marker I used to code sentences as I read each transcript.

Leisure context—a place where a person engages in some activity or interaction by their own choice with the expectation of enjoyment, pleasure, or intrinsically meaningful benefit.

Specific places mentioned where leisure or social interactions took place or were pursued

Specific activities participants identified as leisure or social

Safe (see taxonomy)

...safe space/person/place

...safety

Queer/queered space

Friendly environment

Not coded as safe (see taxonomy)

- “It’s not a space that hangs off one identification. It’s queer when there are queer people there and at least queer friendly even when it’s not a queer party” (Britt, lines 361-363)
- LGBTQ friendly but not part of the community
- “I took one look at the dance floor and turned around and left”
- “mostly straight”
- “it’s not a vibe I like”
- Heteronormative
-

Reading Spaces—the process of paying attention to &/or actively looking for cues to figure out what the dominant discourses were or what was/wasn’t permissible, allowed or supported in a context

Assessing
“Feeling out”

Sexual Orientation—one’s sense of the gender(s) with whom they are most likely to form romantic, affectionate, or sexual relationships with over short or long durations or the gender(s) with whom they would engage in sexual behaviors

References to partners of same or different gender
Identifying self or others as LGBTQ, heterosexual, straight, not straight
Coming out

Hiding Self or Covering—concealing an aspect of self or an identity out of fear one will be marginalized or rejected if seen, known, or expressed

Conceal
Cover
Keep secret
Don’t tell
Kept quiet

Coming out—the process of recognizing aspects of one’s own identity (typically thought of with respect to sexual orientation but not limited to that) &/or the process of telling others about an aspect of one’s identity

Coming out
Telling others/my friends/people
Recognizing for myself
Accepting myself/my sexuality

Identity Work—the processes (exploration, reflection, commitment) or occurrences of expressing, discovering, performing, recognizing, or committing to a sense of who one is.

...who I am
 I am...
 They see me as...
 I see myself as...
 ...part of me...
 People like me
 Identities
 coming out

Gender Identity—the psychological sense of oneself in terms of gender; for this code I also included people’s attributions to or classification of others

Male
 Female
 Cismale
 Transman
 Transwoman
 Transgender

Gender Expression—the ways one expresses themselves in terms of attire, hair style, mannerisms, vocal intonation and speech, movement, or behavior

References to those things listed in the definition given for this term

Gender Roles or Expectations—culturally, historically, and geographically driven expectation or proscriptions about what men or women are ‘supposed’ to do in terms of appearance or ‘performance’ of gender.

“gender roles”
 Expectations regarding gender
 Gender policing
 Gender slapped

- D. I noticed that some terms (e.g., “safe”) seemed to be descriptors frequently used by participants. In the interviews I had asked them to explain what they meant by these words. Thus, I created taxonomies for terms or concepts that seemed to arise frequently or that I thought relevant to the research questions.
- E. I did steps A through D for each interview of each participant. When this process was complete, I had 15 separate interviews that I had read and coded. I then began to look

across all 15 interviews to see which (if any) of the codes or thematic categories could be combined and if there were discrepancies or conflicting categories.

- F. Since some of the initial categories seemed related based on the content of what the participants were talking about, I grouped the initial 9 categories together into the following three themes that I believe best represent what the participants were saying based on the data collected:
 - i. Covering or Expressing Identity (combined identity & hiding or covering)
 - ii. Reading Spaces for Safety (combined reading spaces; safe; unsafe)
 - iii. Relevance of Gender (combined gender identity, gender expression, gender roles)

- G. After Diane read the first draft of chapter four, she suggested I revise it to talk about the data using the following outline:
 - i. Participant perceptions of safety in leisure contexts
 - ii. Labels of leisure contexts in terms of safety
 - iii. Cues used to assess safety

- H. Participant actions/feelings by degree of safety in leisure contexts

Appendix M

Taxonomy of Safe Leisure Contexts

Safe Leisure Contexts														
Targeted to LGBTQ Clientele as purpose of leisure context					Monthly or weekly LGBTQ targeted events but neutral to iffy at other times		Not Targeted specifically to LGBTQ folks but welcoming at all times							
							LGBTQ Owned		Not LGBTQ owned but monetary sponsor of LGBTQ events (may also have flyers for events & resource info)			Visible Flyers & Resources (no monetary sponsorship of events)		
Views	CCs	Lego	H ighway 7	Rabbit's Hat	Wetplains	Coffee Joe	Doghhouse	Frankie's	Dria's Cafe	Plaza Market	Good Covers	Rings	Cones	Joe & Jams

Appendix N

Cues Used to Assess Safety in Leisure Contexts

	Safe/Queered	Not safe but not overtly hostile	Potentially/Probably Greater Risk or Less Safe
Info from Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe • Queered • Transgressive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heteronormative but sometimes has friendly or accepting people present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heteronormative • Others say don't to there b/c they had bad experience • Participant had bad experience
Who is in Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesbian • Women • Transmen • LGBTQ employees • LGBTQ patrons • Known allies • People with multiple piercings or tattoos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on who is in space LGBTQ staff in space? • LGBTQ people present? • Allies present? • Participant there with lots of friends "in a troop" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burly white men • Places where the average age of the people is significantly older than me • Fraternity guys • Sorority women • Heterosexually charged environment • Men in military uniforms
Provision or Support for LGBTQ Community Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides LGBTQ events • Monetary sponsor of LGBTQ events • Flyers about LGBTQ Events • Q-notes • Independent • Info re LGBTQ affiliated organizations or services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No overt evidence of support or negative judgment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protests Events • No Support • No Advertisement

	Safe/Queered	Not safe but not overtly hostile	Potentially/Probably Greater Risk or Less Safe
Visual Cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity includes LGBTQ mention • Publicity includes gay or lesbian images • Baggy, unmatched, vintage clothing • Really short hair cuts on women • Spiky hair styles • Hair dyed funky colors • T-shirts with liberal or LGBTQ or feminist signifiers • Rainbow buttons or flags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast food chains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trucks with confederate flags on the front • Obvious symbols that the area is very conservative like pro-Bush stickers • Religious Symbols
Auditory Cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melissa Ethridge • Sarah McClaughlin • Ani DiFranco • Women's Music • People talk freely about LGBTQ topics or relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing said about LGBTQ related topics • Pop radio station music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music with homophobic or gay-bashing lyrics • Religious music • People say negative things about LGBTQ related topics or people to participant • Participant overhears conversation where negative comments are made re LGBTQ related topics or people

	Safe/Queered	Not safe but not overtly hostile	Potentially/Probably Greater Risk or Less Safe
Rural vs. Urban Geographic Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban area that has known safe leisure contexts nearby • University towns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In urban area but not near a part of town where known safe places are nearby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural or smaller towns • Eastern North Carolina • “Blue cup” places • Military towns
Gender Identity & Variability in Gender Expression or Gender Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of women • Strongly gendered clothing worn “against the grain” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normative gender expressions in space • Not much diversity in gender expressions in space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any place where I can expect to be discriminated on the basis of being female • all male places • Gender normed dress • “Preppy or fraternity clothing”