SELF-COMPASSION IN LGBTQIA+ INDIVIDUALS

BY
CONSTANTINE DHONAU

A Thesis

Submitted to the Division of Social Sciences
New College of Florida
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Bachelor of Arts   (Single space all of this)
Under the sponsorship of Dr. Steven Graham

Sarasota, Florida
May, 2015

Acknowledgments

This thesis is dedicated to the women who raised me

Bonnie "mom" Dhonau & Patti "aunt" Gentry

and the culmination of efforts it took from me, new friends, old friends, family, faculty, administration, the LGBTQIA+ community, and forces beyond.

A special thanks to

Kat, for your love.

Bobby - Qake - Jackson - Andrew - Dad

Dr. Graham - Dr. Cottrell - Dr. Barton

for your faith.

These any many other people, and the great many ideas that came with them, by them, or through them, are all beams of light which will warm my cold days.

...thank you all for enriching my Experience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SELF-COMPASSION IN LGBTQIA+ INDIVIDUALS

Constantine Dhonau

New College of Florida, 2015

ABSTRACT

Self-compassion is a growing area of study which has yet to be applied to LGBTQIA+ individuals. The current study seeks to fill this gap in knowledge by examining the relationships between LGBTQIA+ individuals' levels of self-compassion, how they write about negative experiences based on their sexual and/or gender identity, and their level of involvement in supportive communities. Participants wrote narrative responses about their first and most recent negative experiences disclosing their LGBTQIA+ identities to others, followed by the Self-Compassion Scale, which is centered on being kind to oneself in instances of failure, perceiving one's experiences as part of the larger human experience, and holding painful feelings in mindful awareness. Researchers expected a global, overall increase in self-compassion words from first to most recent experience, and that level of involvement in a supportive community would be positively correlated with self-compassion scores. In addition to qualitative coding, responses were analyzed using the Language Inventory and Word Count (LIWC), which automatically reads and categorizes text using up to 60 preprogrammed categories. Researchers also created a custom LIWC dictionary based on language used in the self-compassion scale.

Dr. Steven Graham
Division of Social Sciences

Self-Compassion in LGBTQIA+ Individuals

All young people, regardless of sexual orientation or identity, deserve a

safe and supportive environment in which to achieve their full potential.

Harvey Milk

A good story tells more than a simple narrative; it is embedded with important

lessons and contemporary commentary. A good story can captivate an audience and make

them feel as if they lived the story themselves. It offers insight and perspective in a way

that numbers and singular responses cannot. Without a doubt, there is an abundance of

hardship written into the history of LGBTQIA+ individuals. As a result, the most

dominant narrative about them is that they lead difficult lives filled with social stigma

and prejudice. This narrative is changing, however, with increasing cultural acceptance of

these individuals and their identities. As the cultural script changes, so may individual

stories change from that of concealing or rejecting one's identity just to survive, to

accepting oneself and living openly, without fear of negative consequences.

In 2003, psychologist Kristin Neff published her theory of self-compassion, which

focuses on recognizing one's hardships, suffering, and shortcomings, and accepting them

as part of one's identity and the common human experience. As Harvey Milk—the first

openly gay man elected to San Francisco Board of Supervisors—pointed out, however, it

is in a safe and supportive environment that people may achieve their full potential. To

this end, the current research is focused on narrative analysis of self-compassion in

LGBTQIA+ individuals and how involvement in a supportive community may influence levels of self-compassion.

By collecting individual stories, the current research is able to relay the perspective of its participants, allowing the participants to speak for themselves, instead of letting numbers speak for them. It's a way to publicize what is really happening and why this research is important, why tolerance is important, and why it is important to encourage acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals. Researching personal experiences through open-ended response also enables participants to give greater context to their self-compassion scores. Contextual coding of narrative responses enables researchers to compile common themes in a subjective way, while computer-based narrative coding offers objectivity and some level of verification for what researchers were able to interpret.

It is important to apply these ideas to this group of people because historically, they have experienced a great deal of adversity, which is covered in more detail in the following section. This report begins with a history section to offer a very broad understanding of past occurrences to describe the relevance of these constructs to this community, followed by an overview of research related to self-compassion, a conceptual description of narrative analysis and some relevant findings, and an outline of the hypotheses, procedure, results, and discussion of the current research.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LGBTQIA+ EVENTS

LGBTQIA+ stems from the original **LGB** acronym, which stands for *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual*. In the 1990's, the initialism grew to include *Transgender/Transsexual* individuals as **LGBT***,* and soon began to replace the term *gay*. **Q** can mean **Q**uestioning [one's sexuality or gender] or **Q**ueer, both of which are umbrella terms for anyone who identifies outside of cisheternormative sexuality or gender paradigms. For those not fluent in gender-studies terminology, cisgender has its origin in the Latin-derived prefix *cis-*, meaning "on this side of", which is an antonym for the Latin-derived prefix *trans-,* meaning "across from" or "on the other side of". As such, *cisgender* means the same gender assigned at birth, and *transgender* means a change in gender identity from the one assigned at birth. **I** stands for **I**ntersex, someone whose anatomy is not exclusively male or female (Steinmetz, 2014), and **A** stands for **A**sexual, characterized by the absence of sexual attraction, or **A**lly (a friend of the cause). Altogether, the contemporary **LGBTQIA** encompasses a much broader and more diverse population, though still represents a minority population (Schulman, 2013). As the spectrum continues to grow, a plus sign (+) has been added, LGBTQIA+, to accommodate greater inclusiveness.

It is not certain exactly how many people in the world are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. Census data provides only an idea of the numbers in these populations, generalized from accessible samples, and we have little evidence of how many people do not experience sexual attraction at all or experience their gender as a fluid construct. Today, awareness of the myriad sexual and gender identities is on the rise in the United

States and other parts of the world. History, however, is only beginning to show more complex anecdotal evidence instead of simple, static numbers.

In terms of antiquity, LGBTQIA+ history is most well-documented in terms of homosexuality, since most other gender and sexual queer identities developed within the past few centuries. A substantial amount of the information included in this section is compiled from existing timelines (American Experience, n.d.; Levy, 2013; Morris, n.d.; Traher, 2014) and draws on them as sources unless otherwise stated. As such, this history section is mostly landmarked by developments related to homosexuality from before the common era, through international developments, the Gay Rights Movement of the United States, to contemporary twentieth century LGBTQIA+ topics today. However, this information is limited to mostly gay and lesbian history, as it is the most well-documented aspect of LGBTQIA+ history.

The Williams Institute Review is a survey which provides demographic information about the distribution of the LGBT population in America; even so, these numbers are limited by the numbers of participants and willingness of participants to disclose their LGBTQIA+ identity. The 2011 edition (Gates, 2011) estimated that approximately 3.8 % of American adults identify as being in the LGBT community; 1.7% identify as lesbian or gay, 1.8% as bisexual, and 0.3% as transgender, which collectively corresponds to approximately 9 million adult Americans as of the 2010 Census (Gates, 2010), a number equivalent to the entire population of the state of New Jersey (Gates, 2011). Undoubtedly, these statistics still represent a minority population, but their

numbers are likely ill-reported due to the long-standing stigma against those who identify

outside of heteronorms, or gender binaries.

Homosexuality, in particular, has been under scrutiny since ancient times.

Although pederasty—sexual activity between a man and a boy, typically in the context of

a mentor/student relationship—was quietly tolerated in ancient Greece. Sappho, the

lesbian Greek lyric poet, was exiled for the renowned poetry she wrote about her love for

women. Originally from the island of Lesbos—consequently, a Lesbian—her place in

history came to define the term *lesbian* as it is known today (Mastin, 2009). However,

homosexuality—particularly in men—was not so vehemently stigmatized until late into

the fourth century BCE, after the death of Alexander the Great. The Alexandrians did not

condemn homosexual relationships as the ancient Greeks and so many other cultures did.

In fact, the ruler of the Alexandrians, Alexander the Great, travelled everywhere with his

childhood friend and supposed lover, Hephaestion (Polari Magazine, 2009). This created

the largest culture which was somewhat tolerant of homosexuality in ancient history, and

for millenia to come (Bryant, 2012).

Common Era. After the end of the Hellenistic era and a few centuries into the

common era, a new kind of law would change LGBTQIA+ history forever. In the year

342 CE, emperors Constantius II and Constans—sons of Constantine the Great—decreed

from that "marriage based on unnatural sex should be punished meticulously," both in the

Theodosian Code and the *Code of Justinian*. (Frakes, 2006). Since then, governments

began involving themselves in matters of homosexuality, making laws against various

acts, relationships, and communions with punishments ranging from public shaming to death.

The British Empire is one such government. The Buggery Act of 1533 made anal intercourse punishable by death throughout England until the punishment was amended to 10 years to life in 1861 (Levy, 2013). This law persisted through the twentieth century, affecting even one of the greatest of England's heroes, Alan Turing (June 23, 1912 - June 7 1954). Known for *The Turing Machine,* which laid the foundation for all modern computing (Hodges, n.d.) among many other great innovations, he was recruited to decipher Nazi codes that may well have turned the tide of the entire war. Despite his noble contributions, The British Empire forced him to choose either two years in prison or two years of a libido-reducing hormone treatment because he was gay. He chose the hormone treatment, and after 18 months, Turing committed suicide a week before his 42nd birthday by eating an apple laced with cyanide. It would be over 50 years before the British Empire issued a formal apology in December of 2013 (BBC News, 2013). Soon after Turing's passing, several other stately men including Lord Montague, Michael Pitt-Rivers, and Peter Wildeblood, were also convicted of homosexual offenses in an effort to cleanse the kingdom and illustrate its attitude towards homosexuality (Mail Online, 2007).

Germany's major contributions to LGBTQIA+ history are something of a mixed bag of both good and bad. The terms *bisexual* and *heterosexual*, where *bisexual* was originally intended to mean "two sexes" the way the term *intersex* is used today, and *heterosexual* meant "one sex" rather than using them to describe preference in sexuality.

Bisexual and *heterosexual* first appeared as psychiatric terms in an English translation of Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (Sexual Psychopathy) in 1892 (Traher, 2014). While these terms are still used today, they were born as a result of pathologizing bisexuality and terminologically segregating different sexualities. In Berlin in 1931, Dora R, born as Rudolph R, became the first known transgender woman to undergo vaginoplasty (Zagria, 2008); however, it was singer and film actress Christine Jorgensen (1926–1989), born George William Jorgensen, Jr. in the Bronx, New York, New York, who was the first widely publicized person to have undergone sex reassignment surgery, creating a world-wide sensation (Biography, 2015).

United States. LGBTQIA+ history in the United States is also spotted with both tragedy and a more recent uptick in acceptance. The first known conviction of lesbians in the U.S. occurred as early as March of 1649, when two women were charged with "Lewd behaviour with each other upon a bed" in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Almost one hundred years later, in 1814, the criminal code of the United States characterized homosexuality as a "crime against nature" (Borris, 2004).

After another century, the tide seemed to be turning in America thanks to science. Biologist Alfred Kinsey began to criticize scientists' tendency to represent homosexuals and heterosexuals as "inherently different types of individuals." To support his criticisms, Kinsey developed what became known as the Kinsey Scale, ranging from 0 "exclusively heterosexual" to 6 "exclusively homosexual", which classified sexual behavior or fantasy. Data showed that 37% of males and 13% of females had at least some overt homosexual experience to the point of orgasm. While 10% of males and 8% of females reported being

more or less exclusively homosexual for at least three years between the ages of 16 and

55. This is where the frequently quoted "10%" figure comes from. 2-6% of women

reported more or less exclusively homosexual experience or response. A more modest 4%

of males and 1-3% of females had been exclusively homosexual after the onset of

adolescence until the time of the interview.

With these findings, Kinsey asserted that, "Males do not represent two discrete

populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and

goats. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories...

The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects." (Kinsey et al.,

1948). This study and the later Sexual Behavior in the Human Female (Kinsey et al.,

1953) became known as the Kinsey Reports, and their findings appeared in mainstream

magazines such as *Time*, *Life*, *Look*, and *McCall's*, making him a celebrity and

dramatically changing the cultural climate about sexuality (Rosario, n.d.).

However helpful these findings were in reconsidering sexuality, James H. Jones,

author of *Alfred C. Kinsey: A Public/Private Life* (Jones, 1997), wrote that Kinsey's

sexual activity influenced his work, that he over-represented prisoners and prostitutes,

classified some single people as "married", and that he included a disproportionate

number of homosexual men, which may have distorted his studies. He also encouraged

his staff to engage in a wide range of sexual activity, to the extent that they felt

comfortable, in order to better understand the participants' responses. Kinsey also filmed

sexual acts which included co-workers in the attic of his home as part of his research.

Despite the inherent flaws in Kinsey's research, his was one of many such flawed

research programs which laid the foundations for many important topical areas in

psychology today by simply starting the discussion. Though Kinsey's findings

encouraged the academic community to reconsider their stance on the matter, five years

of opportunity for scholarly debate yielded to the American Psychiatric Association

listing homosexuality as a sociopathic personality disturbance in April, 1952.

Another five years after this listing and a decade after Kinsey's initial research,

psychologist Evelyn Hooker administered Rorschach tests on gay and straight males to

investigate the psychological differences between them. Her findings showed there were

no significant differences between heterosexual and homosexual men, therefore implying

that homosexuality is not a mental disturbance (Hooker, 1957). Although Hooker's

findings were equally as important as Kinsey's research, her methods were similarly

problematic. During the 1940s and 1950s, the Rorschach Test was synonymous with

clinical psychology. Despite its widespread use, the Rorschach Test is difficult to

systematically analyze due to the subjective nature of both responses and interpretation of

responses, further exacerbated by multiple kinds of scoring systems.

The Rorschach Inkblot Test is a projective psychological test consisting of 10

inkblots printed on cards (five in black and white, five in color) created in 1921 with the

publication of *Psychodiagnostik* by Hermann Rorschach. His scoring method focused on

classifying responses by defining characteristics, including talking about the whole

inkblot, size of detail described, if the response included color, etc. Rorschach died in

1922 at the age of 37, having only worked on his inkblot test for four years.

Complications with copying and printing the tests ultimately spawned five separate scoring systems. In 1969, John E. Exner, Jr. compared these five systems and concluded that they differed too significantly. He sought to consolidate the five systems into one unified system of 10 inkblots in 1973: *The Rorschach: A Comprehensive System*, which became the standard contemporary method. The Rorschach Inkblot test was originally intended to produce a profile of people with schizophrenia (or other mental disorders) based upon score frequencies, and Rorschach, himself, was skeptical of his test being used as a projective measure (Framingham, 2013). At the time of Hooker's study, however, these were perfectly acceptable methods for psychoanalysis, so her findings pushed the standard view of sexuality even further.

Kinsey and Hooker argued that homosexuality is not a pathological disturbance, but their research contributed to what continued to be an overwhelmingly small body of knowledge. All the while, homosexuality remained a felony in every state, punished by a lengthy term of imprisonment and/or hard labor throughout the country until 1961, when the state of Illinois became the first to repeal its sodomy law via a comprehensive criminal code revision, though it remained a crime to commit a "lewd fondling or caress of the body of another person of the same sex" in a public place (Painter, 2004).

In the late sixties, it was not uncommon for police to participate in gay bar raids and harass the patrons, oftentimes becoming physical. One such raid in San Francisco erupted at The Stonewall Inn at approximately 1:00 am, resulting in *The Stonewall Riots* of June 28, 1969. The Inn's patrons resisted the onslaught in a bout which bled out into the streets, leading to a riot which grew over the course of three days. Although news

coverage never exceeded the local circuit, *The Stonewall Riots* are widely considered to

be the start of the Gay Rights Movement in the United States. In the wake of the riots,

intense discussions about civil rights were held among New York's LGBT people, which

led to the formation of various advocacy groups such as the short-lived Gay Liberation

Front. On the first anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, the first gay pride parades in U.S.

history took place in Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, and near the Stonewall Inn in

New York (The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, 2009).

San Francisco later saw Harvey Milk's successful election to the San Francisco Board of

Supervisors as the first openly gay official on November 8, 1977. Milk is responsible for

promoting a gay rights ordinance which protected gays and lesbians from being fired

from their jobs, and successfully campaigned against *Proposition 6*, an initiative

forbidding homosexual teachers. One year after his election, Milk was assassinated. His

assassin was convicted of voluntary manslaughter, but sentenced to only seven years in

prison on May 21, 1979—the day before what would have been Milk's 49th birthday.

This soft sentence spurred more than 5,000 protesters to gather in front of San Francisco

City Hall demanding justice. One week later, these numbers doubled to 10,000 as people

gathered for a peaceful demonstration to commemorate Milk's birthday

(Milkfoundation.org, n.d.). Between the Stonewall Riots and Harvey Milk's election, on

December 15, 1973, the American Psychiatric Association voted to remove

homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses after 21 years; however, on July 3, 1981,

homosexuality became associated with another illness.

The New York Times printed the first story of a rare pneumonia and skin cancer found in 41 gay men in New York and California May 11, 1982. The Center for Disease Control initially referred to the disease as GRID, Gay Related Immune Deficiency Disorder. When the symptoms were found outside the gay community, Bruce Voeller, biologist and founder of the National Gay Task Force, successfully lobbied to change the name of the disease from GRID to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, or AIDS. These events furnished the strong associations and stigmatization of AIDS as unique to LGBT individuals. To this end, several landmarks in AIDS history intersect LGBTQIA+ history.

Twenty-first Century. In the twenty-first century, the United States is beginning to reconsider the mistakes of its past. Homosexuality was officially decriminalized on June 26th of 2003 in the Lawrence v. Texas ruling that sodomy laws are unconstitutional (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d.). President Obama signed the Matthew Shepard Act on October 28, 2009. This measure expanded the 1969 U.S. Federal Hate Crime Law to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. The act is named after Matthew Shepard, who was tortured and murdered near Laramie, Wyoming on October 7, 1998 because of his sexual orientation. On December 18, 2010, the U.S. Senate voted to repeal the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy in the military from 1993. This effectively allowed gays and lesbians to serve openly in the U.S. Military.

On September 21, 1996, President Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) into law, defining marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman,

and that no state is required to recognize a same-sex marriage from out of state. In the year 2000, Vermont legalized civil unions and registered partnerships between same-sex couples on April 26 and Massachusetts was the first to legalize full-fledged same-sex marriage on May 18, 2004. The small step from "civil union" to "marriage" represents a giant leap forward for the Gay Rights Movement because instead of reducing legal partnership between same sex couples to "civil unions," it affords them equal marriage rights to straight couples. Not all LGBTQIA+ individuals are behind same-sex marriage, however, or even feel that civil unions were an important step. In fact, these opponents of same-sex marriage date back to gay rights activists in the 1970s who rejected marriage as "heterosexist" and saw it as an outdated institution (Andryszewski, 2008). On February 23, 2011, President Obama openly stated his administration will no longer defend DOMA passed by Clinton's administration in 1996.

Since June 26, 2013, portions of the Defense of Marriage Act were overturned in Windsor v. U.S., the U.S. Supreme Court's decision and cleared the way for same-sex married couples to receive federal benefits. In *Windsor,* the Supreme Court struck down the section of DOMA that limited marriage to a union between a man and a woman. As a result, legally married same-sex couples became—for the most part—eligible for federal benefits regardless of where they lived. However, the rules for eligibility do vary among federal agencies. Some federal agencies, such as the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the U.S. Office of Personnel & Management, honor the original location of where the marriage was performed to determine whether same-sex married couples are eligible for benefits. In August of 2013, the U.S. Department of Treasury clarified their

approach when they ruled that all same-sex couples legally married in any U.S. state, the

District of Columbia, a U.S. territory or a foreign country will be recognized as married

under all federal tax provisions where marriage is a factor. Even so, such agreements

were not unanimous among federal agencies, including the Social Security

Administration, who only recognized marriages that are valid in the state where the

couple lived at the time of the ceremony. This rule also applied to Medicaid and

Supplemental Security Income, Medicare, Bankruptcy filings, and benefits under the

Family Medical Leave Act (nolo.com, n.d.).

Since DOMA was repealed, state court decisions have granted same-sex couples

the freedom to marry in 37 states as of March 4, 2015. In 2012, Obama was the first

major party candidate in history to publicly support same-sex couples' right to marry and

be elected president. Exit polling from that election revealed 49% of voters supported

legal marriage for same-sex couples in their states, compared with 46% opposed

(Freedomtomarry.org). These numbers are growing as younger generations become old

enough to voice their opinions on the matter.

Some of the most influential pop culture networks, which target younger

audiences, like MTV and VH1, turned their attention to LGBTQIA+ issues with shows

like the *True Life* (Mtv.com, 1998) documentary series, *The "T" Word*, followed by an

one-hour "Trans Forum" hosted by actress Laverne Cox discussing transgender topics

with a live audience (Grow, 2014), and an eight-episode documentary series,

TransAmerica which chronicles the stories of five women—who were either in the

process of, or have already completed their transition—beginning lives in Chicago

(Goldberg, 2014). Individual writers and editors of these networks are sharing their stories to increase visibility as well, such as Emily Quinn, who identifies as intersex (Quinn, 2014). In addition, major motion pictures like *Milk* (Black, & Van Sant, 2008) and *The Imitation Game* (Tyldum, Moore, & Hodges, 2014) brought the story of Harvey Milk and Alan Turing into public awareness.

Today, the Gay Rights Movement has since evolved into a social movement which includes more individuals who identify outside of the cisheteronormative paradigm. This movement is gaining momentum in the United States thanks to the growing body of knowledge and increased media coverage that gives a voice to LGBTQIA+ experiences.

In light of the adversity which permeates LGBTQIA+ history, it is clear that negative experiences such as stigmatization and marginalization have been a major part the lives of LGBTQIA+ individuals for a very long time. To that end, it is important to investigate the potential effects of these negative experiences on individual's self-compassion. Moreover, these individuals may counteract the possible outcomes of these negative experiences by practicing mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness, which are intrinsic to self-compassion. Recently, there has been a drastic change in public opinion which is more accepting of LGBTQIA+ individuals. At this pivotal point in history, while the voice of the LGBTQIA+ community is being amplified through increasing media coverage, empirical research may help furnish these debates with anecdotal evidence of individual experiences and help these conversations catalyze social reform and highlight potential needs of the community, such as advocacy organizations.

Self-Compassion in LGBTQIA+ Individuals

Modern media outlets are a primary source of information about social justice

issues, but audiences only learn about empirical research on a superficial level; however,

this perfunctory access serves as an invitation for individuals to look up relevant research

themselves. Moreover, the internet provides quicker and easier access to these findings

than ever before. For these reasons, researchers are able to publish their research outside

of strictly academic contexts and reach a wider audience than what was possible in the

past. Consequently, community psychologist, Isaac Prilleltensky (1997), argues that the

praxis—values, assumptions, and practices—of psychology must be married with theory;

that scholars must take action beyond discourse. Praxis suggests that researchers have a

responsibility to use these outlets to put their data into action.

The needs, norms, and values of marginalized groups are not always given

context to optimize efforts to benefit them. Praxis-literacy requires familiarity with the

cycle and integration of reflection, research, and social action. Consequently,

psychologists must not only research and publish results, but actively reflect on these

findings, and ally with marginalized groups, like LGBTQIA+ individuals, to promote

their needs.

Asking people within the LGBTQIA+ community what they need ensures that

one does not impose inappropriate values on them; when proposing a set of values, it is

crucial to appreciate the "dynamic complexity and diversity of specific situations, and the

particular needs, desires, intellectual and emotional habits of the persons participating in

them" (Bowden, 1997, p. 3). Prilleltensky also feels that a contextual assessment is

necessary to understand the subjective experience of residents of a particular community.

By measuring values that are conducive to a good life and a good society, schemas begin

to arise which prioritize the relevance and necessity of these values in real-life contexts.

To quote Prilleltensky directly:

> "...without appreciation for diverse social identities one's unique
>
> aspirations cannot flourish...Human diversity should complement self-
>
> determination. Just like the value of health cannot be fulfilled without access to
>
> preventive and medical resources, self-determination cannot be promoted without
>
> justice and access to social resources (1997, p.752)."

Bearing these in mind, the current study seeks to give greater context to

LGBTQIA+ experiences by collecting personal anecdotes. It is expected that these

anecdotes will provide a more humanized way for psychologists to research LGBTQIA+

individuals than in years past, and that their individual stories will inspire a sense of

respect and appreciation which may overcome discriminatory thoughts and actions,

giving way for social harmony. Ironically, Prilleltensky added that we cannot avoid

conflict altogether; rather, in some instances conflict may be the only way to bring about

social justice. For instance, The Stonewall Riots from 1969 initiated the evolution of

sexuality from a polarized binary to a spectrum, and today gender has followed suit.

Though the LGBTQIA+ movement is still in its infancy, the spectrum continues to grow.

Although non-binary identities are gaining widespread attention, the effects of

self-regulation on gendered identities remain worthwhile areas of study. Two studies

examined the role of self-regulation of gendered behavior in everyday life and found that

the more one recognizes and identifies with gender standards, the more their self-esteem

is tied to adhering to those roles. Study 1 utilized a sample of 3,174 responses from the

National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Udry, 2003) on measures of trait self-

esteem, gendered personal standards, gendered behavior. For Study 2, participants

attended an introductory meeting for a study entitled "Sex Roles," and completed pre-test

questionnaires of trait self-esteem, and questionnaires of gendered personality, romance,

and physical appearance. Then, participants received standardized diary forms to record

each interaction lasting at least 10 minutes they had for the next week, rated their self-

esteem for each interaction, how good/bad the interaction made them feel, and responded

to two behavior items: "to what extent did you act in a dominant, powerful, or assertive

manner?" and "to what extent did you act in a caring, warm, or sensitive manner?"

The results showed that individuals with strongly polarized conceptions of a

gender binary were found to have self-esteem susceptible to their conformity to those

gender roles, and those without overt conceptualizations of a gender binary did not suffer

variations in their self-esteem levels based on their conformity to gender stereotypes.

However, gendered self standards were domain specific and were not well-captured by a

single, overall construct that reflects feminine or masculine identity. In addition, the

highest levels of self-esteem were expressed by gender-typed people who engaged in

gender-appropriate behavior. Finally, for participants who did not show strongly

polarized gender-typing, gendered personal standards were not found to be tied to their

self-esteem (Guerrero, Witt & Wood, 2010). While these findings imply that adhering to

gender norms may temporarily increase self-esteem and eventually influence trait self-

esteem, they also suggest that de-polarizing gender-typing may dissolve the ties between gender norm adherence and trait self-esteem.

For those whose self-esteem is threatened by abstaining from gender roles, the motivation to adhere to a gender binary may run deeper and possibly be connected to pride and disentangled through compassion. Compassion and pride serve contrasting social functions: Compassion motivates care-taking behavior, whereas pride enables the signaling and negotiation of rank within social hierarchies. To this extent, compassion would play a vital role in motivating those who feel threatened by de-polarizing gender roles to identify with the LGBTQIA+ community's struggle for equality. Across three studies, compassion was associated with increased perceived self-other similarity, particularly to weak or vulnerable others. In contrast, pride was associated with an enhanced sense of similarity to strong others, and a decreased sense of similarity to weak others. These findings were obtained using trait measures (Study 1) and experimentally inducing (Studies 2 and 3) compassion and pride, examining the sense of similarity to strong or weak groups (Studies 1 and 2) and unfamiliar individuals (Study 3). From these studies, researchers found that the influences of compassion and pride on perceived self-other similarity could not be accounted for by positive mood, nor was this effect constrained by the ingroup status of the target group or individual (Oveis, Horberg, & Keltner, 2010).

These findings illustrate how pride enables the signaling and negotiation of rank within social hierarchies. One example of this is "Gay pride," which reflects collectivism and empowers the community to negotiate its rank within the social hierarchy of the

United States and demand social reform, as well as compassion to motivate care-taking

behavior, such as acceptance and support. Through this inclusiveness and compassion,

individuals may experience an increase in levels of self-compassion.

        Self-Compassion. Self-compassion is a theory which is growing in popularity as

an alternative to self-esteem (Neff, 2011). Since its inception in 2003, it has become a key

construct of the positive psychology movement which focuses on understanding the

individual attitudes that help people thrive and how they contribute to optimal well-being

(Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In Kristin Neff's TEDx Presentation on *The Space*

Between Self-Esteem & Self-Compassion (Neff, 2013)*,* she explains that, although harsh

self-criticism is intrinsic to motivation, self-criticism functions more as a threatening

behavior which produces demotivating effects*.* By contrast, self-compassion theory states

that positive reinforcement is more effective than punishment because it produces coping

behaviors and increases overall well-being. Self-compassion is organized into three major

pillars: (1) *self-kindness*, or being kind to oneself in instances of failure, (2) *common*

humanity, or perceiving one's experiences as part of the larger human experience, and (3)

mindfulness, or holding painful feelings in mindful awareness (Neff, 2003b; 2013). The

keystone of self-compassion is believing that the self and others are worthy of

understanding and compassion (Neff, 2003b).

        Self-Compassion Theory is still new to the field of psychology at just twelve

years old, but the literature is growing rapidly. As of May, 2015, selfcompassion.org lists

over 250 studies which are free and available to the public (selfcompassion.org), and

PsycINFO (EBSCO) Databases returned 421 total articles retrieved under the keyword

self compassion, of which 296 were peer-reviewed. However, there are many unexplored

applications in the booming literature. Between Psychinfo and selfcompassion.org, there

are no studies which specifically set out to research non-normative gender and sexuality.

Moreover, *The Journal of Homosexuality* returned zero results under *self compassion,*

zero results under *LIWC* (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count, narrative analysis program

used in the current research)*,* and 332 results under *narrative analysis.* Of these few

studies, only a narrow band of research is concerned with gender and sexuality.

Most studies do not emphasize gender or sexuality outside of the heteronormative

binary, typically investigating cishetero males and females, or strictly gay populations.

This gap in the literature and systematic oppression of the LGBTQIA+ community

around the world and throughout history call for self-compassion to be studied in these

populations to better understand how the adverse treatment of society affects them and

inform strategies for easing the tension between those who discriminate against

LGBTQIA+ and those who identify as such.

One study drew upon several elements from previous research, such as the five

facets of mindfulness as predictors of well-being (Cash & Whittingham, 2010), the

impact of mindfulness and self-compassion as predictors of depression, anxiety, worry,

and life satisfaction (Van Dam et al., 2011), the utility of mindfulness and self-

compassion as predictors of well-being (Baer et al., 2012; Hollis-Walker & Colosimo,

2011), and extended this work by conglomerating facets of mindfulness, self-compassion,

self-efficacy, and gender, to test their combined ability to predict depression, anxiety,

stress, and well-being in undergraduates. Their protocol consisted of six self-report

questionnaires for each variable.

The results showed that the four facets of mindfulness (describing, awareness, non-judging, and non-reactivity) and three dimensions of negative self-compassion (self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification) did not vary by gender. However, men reported higher levels of self-efficacy than women. Further, there were significant differences between men and women in levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, the greatest of which was stress, with women reporting more stress than men. Finally, men reported better overall well-being than women (Soysa & Wilcomb, 2013).

Although there have been many studies which support the benefits of self-compassion, one study investigated the potential for self-compassion to demotivate individuals to change their maladaptive behaviors. In 2011, Baker and McNulty conducted four studies followed by a meta-analysis on the moderating roles of conscientiousness and gender on self-compassion and relationship maintenance. The researchers set out to test the theory that, based on blind forgiveness of oneself, self-compassion demotivates individuals to change their detrimental behaviors; more specifically, whether intimate couples should respond to their interpersonal mistakes with self-criticism or with self-compassion. The researchers felt that there was equal opportunity for self-compassion to either benefit relationships by promoting self-esteem, or hinder relationships by removing intimates' motivations to change their behaviors. All four studies assessed participants' self-reported levels of self-compassion and conscientiousness, but each of them focused on other variables.

Study 1 focused on conscientiousness and the motivation to correct interpersonal

mistakes in a sample of dating individuals. Study 2 focused on observations of these newlyweds' attempts to resolve their marital problems. Study 3 focused on experimentally manipulating self-compassion to examine its causal effects on individuals' motivation to engage in accommodation behaviors. Study 4 focused on the relationship outcomes of self-compassion and conscientiousness over the first several years of marriage. The results of these studies showed that there were systemic differences between men and women. Men differed from women in their motivations to correct interpersonal mistakes such that self-compassion increased accommodation, constructive problem solving, and marital satisfaction in men with high conscientiousness but decreased them in men with low conscientiousness. In contrast, self-compassion increased womens' motivation to correct mistakes, regardless of conscientiousness levels. With the exception of the interaction between conscientiousness and motivation in men, and women showing higher constructive problem-solving behavior, findings were only marginally significant across studies; however, there were indications that high conscientiousness, in combination with high self-compassion, were positively correlated with high motivation to improve.

Based on these results, the researchers concluded that future research must take into account other sources of motivation to correct interpersonal mistakes when investigating self-compassion (Baker & McNulty, 2011). These findings are consistent with the idea that self-compassion requires reasonable judgement towards oneself, rather than blind forgiveness, but sometimes judgement from others falls short of reason, and loved ones become those who are most judgmental.

Sometimes social stigma is reinforced by family structures. As such, some LGBTQIA+ individuals face rejection when they disclose their identity to their own parents. It is difficult for anyone to process rejection based on one's identity rather than something under one's volition, such as behaviors, much less rejection from one's primary caregivers. Such rejection can sometimes translate into a tendency to be critical of oneself, wishing to be different for the sake of being accepted. One study examined the relationship between parental criticism, self-criticism, and self-compassion using self-report measures. This study investigated how parents punish their children based on two models from previous studies.

The first study examined punishment based on poor performance, setting overly high standards, and not understanding or accepting mistakes which constitute parental criticism (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990). The second included examples of being insulted, sworn at, threatened with physical harm, or being told that one is worthless and useless as examples of parental criticism (Sachs-Ericsson, Verona, Joiner, & Preacher, 2006). Researchers combined positive items from the self-compassion scale to form a self-warmth factor, and negative items to form a self-coldness factor, and tested levels of self-criticism—a sub-scale from the self-compassion scale—as well as social anxiety. Using Pearson product-moment correlations, researchers examined parental criticism, self-warmth, and self-coldness as the independent variables and social anxiety as the dependent variable. The results showed a strong, positive correlation between parental criticism and self-criticism, and that self-compassion played a moderating role in their relationship. This finding implies that, through self-distancing—emotionally

distancing oneself from experiences—and self-compassion, individuals may become less critical of themselves and more functional in everyday life (Potter, Yap, Francis, & Schuster, 2014). These studies provide examples for conceptualizing the types of rejection and criticism LGBTQIA+ individuals can face.

Experiences of rejection based on gender and/or sexual identity, especially from one's parents, can cause undue stress which may manifest in being ashamed of oneself or feeling guilty about being different from the gender and sexual norms in one's society. Internalized shame, or trait shame, is often experienced as a debilitating inner-experience which leads to a global sense of the self as defective, lacking, and unworthy of kindness (Lewis, 1992; Tilghman-Osborne, Cole, & Felton, 2010). In 2014, Reilly created a study in response to the increasing evidence suggesting male gender conformity is a significant factor in predicting psychological well-being (Mahalik et al., 2003) and contributed to increasing awareness of gender and sexuality within psychological research. More specifically, they examined the relationship between masculine norm adherence and shame in men because the experience of shame may become both a vehicle of gender socialization and an internalized product of it, as male gender role socialization promotes a "shame phobic" male experience (Wright, 1987).

To this end, Reilly sampled exclusively heterosexual males in their study to explore the correlation between participants' levels of shame, self-compassion, and the cultural pressures to adhere to heteronormative male gender roles. The study included three scales: the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory 22-Item Short Form (CMNI-22; Hamilton & Mahalik, 2009), the Internalized Shame Scale (ISS; Cook,

1987)—which investigates global negative evaluations of the self and rates the frequency

with which respondents experience particular thoughts or feelings related to shame— and

a third, the Self-Compassion Scale Short Form (SCS-SF; Raes, Pommier, Neff & Van

Gucht, 2011), summarized directly from the full 26-item Self- Compassion Survey

utilizing the items that best mirrored the scope of the original content. Results suggest

that conformity to masculine norms was negatively correlated with self-compassion,

which aligns with previous research suggesting that men adhering to traditional

masculine norms tend to avoid or inhibit vulnerable feelings and intimacy with others

(O'Neil, 2008; Pollack & Levant, 1998). However, researchers also found that, at

extremely high levels, severe trait shame may prove to be a stronger moderator of men's

self-compassion levels than masculine role adherence.

At a glance, one may presume the pressure of masculine norms adherance is

detrimental to the goals and functions of self-compassion, but multiple studies on self-

compassion found that men tend to have consistently higher levels of self-compassion

than women (Neff, 2003a; Neff, Hsieh, & Dejitterat, 2005). However, researchers have

drawn attention to the fact that gender-difference findings may be overgeneralized,

masking differences between men that could offer a more informed perspective of

psychological outcomes (Kilmartin, 2010; Wong & Rochlen, 2005). Unlike self-

compassion, however, self-esteem is a self-concept more intimately linked to aligning

one's behaviors with cultural values (Fulmer et al., 2010). Some research even goes so far

as to suggest that cisgender norm conformity might actually increase self-esteem. For

example, one study found that self-esteem increased in individuals struggling with life

difficulties by randomly assigning them to a socially desired activity (Guerrero Witt &

Wood, 2010). The current research seeks to expand on this research by examining

potential influences cisgender norm conformity may have on self-compassion levels in

the non-heteronormative population.

    While one may learn to be less critical of oneself in the present, the mistakes and

regrets of the past remain as reminders of failure or rejection. Similarly, being rejected for

the first time coming out as LGBTQIA+ can be a particularly traumatic experience. To

test ideas like these, Johnson & O'Brien (2013) conducted two studies to see if self-

compassion can sooth symptoms of the savage ego-threat system like negative affect,

shame, rumination, and depressive symptoms. In the first study, self-report measures of

shame, guilt, and ruminative thinking examined whether possible differences in self-

compassion among young adults are associated with lower levels of depression and, if so,

if ego-threat symptoms like shame possibly mediated these effects. They found that low

levels of self-compassion were significantly correlated with depressive symptoms.

    In the second study, a randomized experimental design with two phases compared

one group which used self-compassion techniques toward shame-eliciting memories to a

control group. Their methods in this study echoed previous research using narrative

techniques of *self-compassion writing* by Leary and colleagues (2007, p. 899) and the

expressive writing model used by Pennebaker, Colder, & Sharp (1990) which asked

participants to take fifteen minutes to write about their deepest feelings associated with

the experience of shame they described, and how it relates to their past, present, and

future relationships with loved ones, and their identity.

During phase one, those in the self-compassion condition described a shame-eliciting memory, then responded to each of three instructions which correspond to the three pillars of self-compassion. Participants wrote a paragraph "expressing understanding, kindness, and concern to yourself the way you might express concern to a friend who had undergone the experience" for self-kindness, listed "as many ways as you can think of in which other people also experience similar events to the one you just described" for common humanity, and described their feelings about the experience "in an objective and unemotional fashion" for mindfulness. Two weeks after completing phase one, participants received a link to complete phase two, which included all of the baseline measures from Study 1, presented in randomized order. The goal was to determine whether shame-prone individuals exhibit higher benefits immediately, and at a later two-week follow-up, than the control condition.

They found that practicing self-compassion substantially reduced shame-proneness both immediately and two weeks later. In addition, self-compassion participants showed a significant decrease in depressive symptoms and a trend toward a decrease in rumination from baseline to follow-up. These trends indicate long-term changes in personal affect, as opposed to short-term changes in mood. Most importantly, their findings suggest that self-compassion, relative to expressive writing, allows an otherwise painful process of re-examining shame episodes to be soothing (Johnson & O'Brien, 2013).

Thus far, it is shown that shame-eliciting experiences are threatening to the ego, and that these effects translate into shame, which can transmute into depression and

intensify through rumination. The suppression of the negative emotions from these experiences due to adherence to cultural norms also have significantly negative effects on one's capacity to be self-compassionate. All of these variables often combine and compound together through holistic cultural rejection, and an individual lack of acceptance, empathy, and understanding of LGBTQIA+ individuals. This results in the destruction of LGBTQIA+ individuals' identity on multiple levels; from global, to national, to cultural, to interpersonal, to personal. However, self-compassion has been found to remedy many of the painful experiences and emotions to an increased level of psychological well-being by equipping those who suffer from shame and depression with tools to approach their suppressed memories by treating themselves with forgiveness.

Narrative Analysis. Several studies show that the words people use are predictive of their mental and physical health (Gottschalk & Glaser, 1969; Rosenberg & Tucker, 1978; Stiles, 1992) and that writing or talking about deeply emotional experiences may improve mental and physical health (Pennebaker, 1997; Smyth, 1997), especially when using more positive emotion words, a moderate number of negative emotion words, and an increasing number of cognitive or thinking words from the first to last days of writing sessions (e.g., Pennebaker & Francis, 1996; Pennebaker, Mayne, & Francis, 1997).

To make studies like these possible, a group of researchers set out to streamline the process of textual analysis and make it a more accessible method for collecting and analyzing data. Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count, or LIWC, is a text analysis program which is revolutionizing empirical study by making open-ended response analyses in a matter of seconds. The first practical application of LIWC was in a study on language and

disclosure (Francis, 1993; Pennebaker, 1993), capable of instantaneously analyzing large

and multiple volumes of text to automatically categorize words.

The basic framework of LIWC uses a default set of word categories and

dictionaries that defines how words should be categorized in text that is being analyzed.

For instance, *negative emotion words* would be used to describe things like *sad, upset,* or

angry. LIWC can analyze a single file, or folder full of files, and analyzes each

sequentially, then creates a single output file with the data from one or all the text files it

analyzed. For a single text file, LIWC reads each word, categorizes it using the various

dictionaries, summarizes more general elements of text like word count and punctuation,

and automatically organizes all these data in a single output in less than a second. The

output displays the name of the text file, and a single line of word counts and percentages

per category. The default categories include *general descriptors* (e.g., word count, words

per sentence), *standard linguistics* (e.g., pronouns, articles, etc.), *psychological constructs*

(e.g., affect, cognition), *personal concern* (e.g., work, home, leisure activities),

paralinguistics (e.g., nonfluencies such as *um, uh, like*), and *punctuation*.

The dictionaries, categories, and word stems used in LIWC were developed

through four major phases over several years with the intention of identifying words that

are essentially representative of basic emotional and cognitive dimensions often studied

in psychology. The first phase involved collecting words to form categories. In the second

phase, judges rated categories based on both the inclusion and exclusion of words, and

added words they felt should be present—final percentages of judges' agreement ranged

from 93% to 100%. A significant LIWC revision occurred in the third phase, in which

developers omitted original LIWC categories that were used less than 0.3 percent of the

time, had poor reliability, or poor validity. Then, developers added several new categories

and omitted any words that were not used at least 0.005 percent of the time. Finally, the

fourth phase of LIWC's development included updates and expansions of the dictionaries

and dictionary structure. LIWC developers analyzed several hundred thousand text files

amounting to several hundred million words from both written and spoken language

samples, of which developers identified the 2,000 most frequently used words. These

major updates reflect the most recent product, LIWC2007 (Liwc.net, n.d.).

Armed with this powerful program, Umanath & Bernstein (2011) tackled an issue

which arose as a result of such technological advances. The prevalence of computers and

internet connectivity is enabling different cultures and subcultures to exchange

information and influences at an accelerating rate. Researchers presented the need for

empirical research into what they aptly name 'the cultural script,' a collective body of

knowledge which embodies the social norms and commonalities of life experience in a

given culture. The internet is giving voice to the individual, and their life stories are not

always consistent with the cultural script in which they live. To this end, researchers

focused their study on discovering why some life story events are common in the cultural

life script whereas other events are not. To investigate these differences, they examined

what distinguishes individual events that do and do not overlap with participants' cultural

scripts, then conducted a secondary data analysis on the Rubin, Berntsen, and Hutson's

(2009) life story data used to explain the American life story: categories of events,

previously collected ratings, and unused demographic information.

Their results showed that while individual experiences showed a high level of

agreement with the cultural life script, many events that they deemed as important to their

individual life stories were not part of the life script. Further, many of these unique life

story events were common across individuals. These findings imply that individual life

stories have more in common than what the life script prescribes, contradicting the

perceived prevalence of social norms. Their results promote the exploration of the role of

subcultures within highly diverse societies like the United States to form a more informed

view of individual life stories, cultural life scripts, and the use of autobiographical

analysis to discover how subculture deviates from a culture at large. Understanding the

differences between subcultural scripts like the LGBTQIA+ community may help

identify social conflicts and ease the process of integration.

Another study emphasized the benefits offered in mental and physical health by

writing about important personal experiences in an emotional way. In their study, people

wrote for three to five days, 15–30 minutes per day. Then, using LIWC, the researchers

categorized word usage from the narratives into four primary categories. Two of the

categories were emotion dimensions and the other two were cognitive. Emotion

categories included negative emotion words (e.g., sad, angry) and positive emotion words

(e.g., happy, laugh). The two cognitive categories, causal and insight words, were

intended to capture the degree to which participants were thinking actively in their

writing. Causal words (e.g., because, reason) were included because they implied people

were attempting to put together causes and reasons for the events and emotions that they

were describing. Insight words (e.g., understand, realize) reflected the degree to which

individuals were referring specifically to cognitive processes associated with thinking.

Results showed that those who benefit the most from writing tend to use a high number of positive-emotion words, a moderate amount of negative-emotion words, and increase their use of cognitive words over the three days of writing. Changes in insight and causal words throughout the three days of writing exhibited a strong, positive correlation to improved health, higher grades, and finding jobs. Furthermore, building a narrative appears to play an important role in understanding one's experiences. However, participants who started the study writing about their experiences as a coherent story did not experience the same benefits from writing (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999). These findings suggest that forming a narrative is an indicator of good mental and physical health because doing so organizes complex emotional experiences to clearly frame maladaptive behaviors. Then, people may alter their behavior to be more adaptive. Applied to the current study, writing about negative experiences based on rejection of their gender and/or sexual identity may enable participants to identify complex emotions entangled with these experiences, organize them, and frame these experiences in a way that enables self-compassion.

Two studies used a method similar to the current study by comparing LIWC codings of emotion and life content with self-reported results. Researchers collected open-ended diary responses from 206 participants daily for 3 weeks (Study 1) and from 139 participants twice a week for 8 weeks (Study 2). Results showed that LIWC detected negative emotion consistently with self-reported negative emotion in Studies 1 and 2, but only reliably detected positive emotion correlated with self-reported positive emotion in

Study 1, and no correlations observed with global life satisfaction. These results

suggested that emotion word counts are more consistently related to self-reported

emotional well-being (especially negative emotion) than broad cognitive well-being (i.e.,

life satisfaction), and diary entries are more likely to reflect momentary feelings, as

opposed to global feelings and attitudes, unless there is a dense enough body of text (Tov,

Leong Ng, Lin, & Qiu, 2013). The current study uses this same co-occurrence

methodology and, by prompting participants to reflect on life events with the potential to

shape global attitudes, challenges the assertion that global feelings and attitudes cannot

be reflected in short passages.

A more extensive article which included five studies and a meta-analysis

examined the language people use to refer to the self during introspection and the

potential influence it has on their thoughts, feelings, and behavior under social stress,

with a particular focus on socially anxious people who are vulnerable to such stress.

Studies 1a and 1b demonstrated that using non-first-person pronouns and one's own name

(rather than first-person pronouns) during introspection enhances self-distancing. Studies

2 and 3 examined the implications of these different types of self-talk for regulating stress

surrounding making good first impressions (Study 2) and public speaking (Study 3).

Compared with the first-person group, the non-first-person group performed better

according to objective raters in both studies. They also displayed less distress (Studies 2

and 3) and engaged in less maladaptive postevent processing (Study 3). Studies 4 and 5

examined how these different forms of self-talk influence the way people appraise events

that provoke social anxiety.

These findings suggest that using non-first-person pronouns and one's own name (rather than first-person pronouns) during introspection promotes self-distancing (Studies 1a and 1b); enhances people's ability to regulate their thoughts, feelings, and behavior under social stress (Studies 2 and 3); and leads them to appraise social-anxiety-provoking events in more challenging and less threatening terms (Studies 4 and 5). They also demonstrate that the self-regulatory effects of this process extend to people regardless of their dispositional vulnerability to social anxiety (Study 6). In summary, non-first-person language use (compared with first-person language use) leads people to appraise future stressors in more challenging and less threatening terms. Finally, a meta-analysis (Study 6) indicated that none of these findings were moderated by trait social anxiety, highlighting their translational potential. To this end, there is strong evidence that small shifts in the language people use to refer to the self during introspection consequentially influences their ability to regulate their thoughts, feelings, and behavior under social stress (Kross et al., 2014).

Returning to Prilleltensky's (1997) call for fulfillment of the cycle of praxis in psychology, he stated that compassion at the interpersonal level is both wonderful and insufficient. There is a definite need to expand the implementation of values from group and neighborhood contexts to political contexts. Efforts should always be directed toward the long-term goal of making society more humane for everyone. Building on the four values of praxis, there are also four major criteria Prilleltensky describes for unifying and balancing theory and action: (1) balance between philosophical and grounded input; (2) balance between understanding and action; (3) balance between processes and outcomes;

(4) balance between differing and unequal voices. Maintaining a balance between values implies that they are in direct proportion to one another; that is, the moment one value gains more attention, the others lose some. In the United States, this means that collectivist values such as solidarity, sharing, cooperation, and social justice shrink in reverse proportion to increased individualism (Saul, 1995). Additionally, this sort of praxis philosophy must be grounded in the lived input and experience of community members (Kane, 1998; Montero, 1998). Listening to community members' voices is crucial to applying praxis and; consequently, to identifying the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community. These needs outline resources which are missing and required to achieve psychological well-being. Through these simple considerations, change becomes feasible.

With the questions answered of what is, what is missing, or what should be, the main question becomes, "what could be done?" Prilleltensky asks, "are we doing too much research on needs and not enough on processes of change? Are we describing in detail the culture of local communities but only superficially social and political norms?" (Prilleltensky, 1997, p.767).

Today, the gender and sexuality spectrum is growing, and thanks to advances in technology and connectivity, voices are being heard on an individualized, personal level which was not possible in instances cited throughout history. Consequently, The Stonewall Riots sparked an era in the sixties from which we only began to listen to the voices of the LGBTQIA+ population. Since then, LGBTQIA+ individuals have been coming out in increasing numbers, offering alternatives to the polarized gender and unidimensional sexuality paradigms which dominate recorded history. So the question

arises, after such a long history of persecution, is this not the time for LGBTQIA+ to finally be considered equal? To help expedite its resolution, the researcher gathered the personal accounts of the types of adversity LGBTQIA+ individuals faced in their past and in their everyday lives, analyzing their stories through narrative analysis to compile common themes which are counterproductive to social harmony.

Narrative analysis offers a deeper insight into experiences than other methods of research like self-reporting because participants can respond to open-ended questions. By applying narrative analysis to personal anecdotes collected through an online interface—to preserve anonymity—coupled with self-compassion measures, the current study seeks to create an optimal method for researching how marginalizing experiences may be related to self-compassion levels. This method has the added bonus of representing each individual's voice, instead of representing them by sheer numbers.

The Current Study. In the current study, participants completed a survey where they indicated their level of involvement in LGBTQIA+ communities, wrote about the first, and the most recent time they came out and were rejected, and completed the 26-item Self-Compassion Scale (SCS). It was hypothesized that participants involved in LGBTQIA+ communities would have overall higher levels of self-compassion than participants who were not involved. Regarding the narratives, researchers expected that, from first to most recent rejection, participants would show an overall increase in self-acceptance themes, and that those involved in LGBTQIA+ supportive communities would show greater increases of self-acceptance themes from first to most recent rejection.

Method

Participants. Participants were undergraduate students from a liberal arts college in the Southeast recruited from the online forum hosted on the school's gmail service, as well as a sample of participants recruited from one website dedicated specifically to the LGBT community, and several LGBTQIA+ groups hosted on another website dedicated to anonymously giving advice and venting about individual problems.

Of the original 143 people who initially viewed the survey and agreed to participate, 96 indicated their sexual identity. Of those 96 respondents, 10 identified as lesbian, 22 identified as gay, 34 identified as bisexual, 5 identified as asexual, 18 identified as pansexual, 6 used more than one descriptor in their sexual identity; i.e., "Asexual Panromantic" or "Bisexual/Demisexual," 6 used alternative kinds of descriptors; i.e, "no fixed orientation" or "homosexual." These numbers illustrate an overrepresentation of gay and bisexual individuals.

95 participants indicated their gender identity. Of those 95 respondents, 38 identified as female, 25 identified as male, 12 identified as genderfluid, 8 identified as transgendered, 6 used alternative kinds of descriptors; i.e., "agender" or "masculine of centre." These responses show that over two-thirds of participants identified within the gender binary of male and female. 93 participants indicated which of their gender and/or sexual identities they considered to be LGBTQIA+. Of those 93 respondents, 0 indicated their gender identity, 63 indicated their sexual identity, 28 indicated both their gender and sexual identity.

Of the average 93 respondents who responded to the demographic questions, half (53) indicated being enrolled in a college or university. Of the 53 in college, 35 were liberal arts students from the Southeast, 11 were students from within the United States, 5 were international students, and 45 did not indicate being enrolled in any college or university. These numbers show an overrepresentation of undergraduate liberal arts students.

92 participants indicated their age, race, and ethnicity. Of those 92 respondents, 73 were between 18-24, 6 were between 25-30, 3 were between 31-40, 4 were between 41-50, 6 were 51 or older. These responses show that just over 20% of respondents were over the age of 24. Of those 92 respondents, 50 were white, 6 were hispanic or latin, 7 reported mixed race, 2 reported other racial or ethnic identities; i.e., "Scandinavian."

Procedure. Participants were recruited using a standardized email posted to three primary online forums. One forum was hosted by the gmail service of a liberal arts college in the Southeast. To reach a wider range of participants, a second online forum was chosen—emptyclosets.com (n.d.)—which is dedicated specifically to the LGBT community. The third online resource was blahtherapy.com (n.d.), a website dedicated to anonymously giving advice and venting about individual problems. On blahtherapy, there are several LGBTQIA+ groups for both general and specific demographics of the LGBTQIA+ community under titles like *Lesbian Talk, Help & Advice, It's OK to be Gay, Asexuality, and Sexuality, Gender, & Mental Health*. The standardized email can be found in Appendix A.

Survey. Respondents then followed a link to the survey, hosted on

surveymonkey.com (n.d.). The first page of the survey was an informed consent form,

after which they either agreed or disagreed to continue with the study. The following page

collected demographic information using questions generated by the researcher to ensure

political correctness, generalizabilty, and inclusivity.

Demographics. The demographics page began with a preface of the importance

of demographic information in this study, a disclaimer for the different interpretations

individuals have of the myriad identities on the LGBTQIA+ spectrum, and two

operational definitions. Most demographic questions were open-ended to maximize

inclusivity and individuality for respondents. Demographic questions about sexual and

gender identity included examples of responses so respondents would have an idea of

how best to respond in the text boxes,"What is your sexual identity? (For Example:

Bisexual, Asexual, Pansexual, etc.)," and "What Is Your Gender Identity? (For Example:

Transmale, Intersex, Genderfluid, etc.)" Of these two identities, researchers asked

which—or both—participants consider to be LGBTQIA+, followed by an open-ended

response option. Then, researchers asked how long respondents knew they were

LGBTQIA+ before they told someone else. Pre-determined responses ranged from less

that one year, one to two years, three to five years, six to ten years, eleven or more years,

or an option "I have never told anyone." Subsequently, researchers asked "How much

time have you spent, IN PERSON, in an LGBTQIA+ Community?", underscored by the

operational definition of "LGBTQIA+ Community" from the top of the page, as a

reminder to respondents. Responses for this question were standardized and included "I

live in a supportive community,' 'I visit a few times per week,' 'I visit a few times per

month,' 'I visit a few times per year,' 'I do not visit with any regularity,' or ' I have never

been part of an LGBTQIA+ supportive community." Finally, the last three questions of

the demographics section pertained to current school—if attending—with an open-ended

response, age demographics ranging from 18-24, 25-30, 31-40, 41-50, or 51+, and an

open-ended response question about race/ethnicity.

Writing prompts. The third and fourth pages of the survey were two writing

prompts asking participants to write about the first and most recent times they disclosed

their LGBTQIA+ identities to others and were rejected. On the third page of the survey,

entitled "First Negative Experience Coming Out," was the first writing prompt,"Please

write about your first time telling someone about your LGBTQIA+ identity who did not

approve." Directly underneath the prompt were instructions to click and drag the bottom

right corner of the text box if they needed more room, followed by a large, expandable

text box. Subsequently, the fourth page of the survey and second writing prompt "Please

write about your most recent experience telling someone about your LGBTQIA+ identity

who did not approve," was formatted in the same style as the previous page, except the

title "Most Recent Experience Coming Out/Being Open." Due to a number of short

responses in the early stages of collecting data, both of these prompts were later modified

to include "Try to write more than a few sentences. The more you write, the more helpful

it will be."

Self-compassion scale. On the fourth page of the survey, entitled "Self-

Compassion Survey," researchers used the 26-item Self-Compassion Scale created and

validated by Kristin Neff (2003a) to measure participants' levels of self-compassion.

Participants responded to statements on a scale of 1 = Almost Never, to 5 = Almost

Always. The 26 items of the scale are divided into five subscales: (1) Self-Kindness

Items: 5, 12, 19, 23, 26, for example: "I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling

emotional pain"; (2) Self-Judgment Items: 1, 8, 11, 16, 21, such as, "I'm disapproving

and judgmental towards myself about my own flaws and inadequacies"; (3) Common

Humanity Items: 3, 7, 10, 15, like, "When things are going badly for me, I see the

difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through"; (4) Isolation Items: 4, 13, 18, 25,

including, "When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate

and cut off from the rest of the world"; (5) Mindfulness Items: 9, 14, 17, 22, for example:

"When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance," and finally; (6) Over-

identified Items: 2, 6, 20, 24, such as, "When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate

on everything that's wrong." The three negative subscale items—self-judgment, isolation,

and over-identification—are reverse scored (i.e., 1 = 5, 2 = 4, 3 = 3. 4 = 2, 5 = 1). While a

mean score may be computed for each of these subscales before averaging them into an

overall mean score, the researcher decided to only compute the latter, for simplicity's

sake. Cronbach's alpha in the present sample was (α = .929). The full Self-Compassion

Scale can be found in Appendix B.

Thanks, confidentiality, purpose, and questions/comments. On the sixth page

of the survey, researchers thanked participants for their time, effort, patience, and bravery.

Additionally, participants were reassured of the confidentiality of their records and their

contribution to empirical research which promotes positive change for LGBTQIA+

individuals. Then, researchers restated the purpose of the study and how the study may contribute to the field if published. Finally, contact information was attached at the end of the page, followed by a link—for participants wishing to take extra precaution to preserve their anonymity—which led to a wikihow page explaining several methods for sending emails anonymously.

External resources. Finally, the seventh and last page of the survey offered participants external resources for LGBTQIA+ individuals. Seven external links led to the (1) SelfCompassion.org (n.d.) homepage, where participants could learn more about self-compassion, its history, applications, and goals; (2) The PBS history series, "Milestones in the American Gay Rights Movement" (n.d.) to learn about LGBT history; (3) Same-sex marriage (Freedomtomarry.org, n.d.); (4) a list of the top 50 LGBT-friendly colleges and universities in the nation (Campus Pride, 2014); (5) a website which locates local supportive communities and services by zip code (Glbtnearme.org, n.d.); and (6) two websites—asktrevor.org (n.d.) and belongto.org (n.d.)—geared towards helping individuals who are beginning or continuing to question their sexual and/or gender identities to navigate these issues and find out exactly where they fall on the LGBTQIA+ spectrum.

Narrative Analyses. Researchers collected each participants' written responses to the two writing prompts (first and most recent experience) by pasting each individual response into separate word documents which were coded by participant number and first time/most recent time coming out response. For example, researchers used "p001f" and "p001r" to represent participant 1 (p001...), *first* time coming out (...f), and most *recent*

time coming out/being open (...r). Each story was filed into one of two folders: labeled

"First" or "Most Recent." Researchers then read through each narrative response while

correcting standard clerical errors and making necessary alterations so LIWC could most

accurately analyze and categorize the content of the responses; for example, changing

"it's" to "its," or "&" to "and," as well as acronyms, filler words, and nonfluencies like

"uuuuhhh" to "um" or "uh-huh" to "yes." Additionally, because LIWC converts all text

files to lower case before processing them, it was not necessary for researchers to correct

for grammar, capitalization, or sentence structure.

LIWC self-compassion dictionary. Researchers developed a new LIWC self-

compassion dictionary by using words from the Self-Compassion Scale itself. The

dictionary categorized self-compassionate themes into either high self-compassion words

or low self-compassion words. For the high self-compassion category, root words such as

"forgiveness" and "mindfulness" were used to find synonyms that might indicate high

self-compassion. For the low self-compassion category, root words like "judgement" and

"inadequate" were used to find synonyms for other words that might indicate low self-

compassion.

Context coding. In addition to the LIWC narrative analyses, the researcher and

two research assistants read through each narrative while compiling a list of recurring

themes, for a total of three lists of common themes. Then, from those three lists, the

researcher compiled a single master list of the 35 most common and relevant themes.

Finally, the researcher reread all the narratives while dummy-coding for the presence or

absence of each theme using the master list of 35 themes.

Results

While only 57 participants gave full and complete data, there were varying levels

of participation between the four survey sections. However, because each section

provides valuable descriptive information, full response data from each section of the

four major parts of the survey are included: demographics information, first negative

experience disclosing one's LGBTQIA+ identity, most recent negative experience being

open with one's LGBTQIA+ identity, and the 26-item Self-Compassion survey. In this

section we will begin by describing responses by survey sections, analyses concerning

the original hypotheses, and the results of the LIWC narrative analyses, as well as the

contextual thematic coding.

Demographics. In addition to questions about their gender and sexual identity,

participants also indicated how long they were aware that they were LGBTQIA+ before

telling someone else and how much time they have spent in supportive communities.

93 respondents indicated how long they were aware of their LGBTQIA+ identity

before they told someone. Of those 93 respondents, 26 indicated less than one year, 25

indicated one to two years, 22 indicated three to five years, 9 indicated six to ten years, 7

indicated eleven or more years, 4 never disclosed their LGBTQIA+ identity to anyone.

92 participants indicated their level of involvement in LGBTQIA+ communities

where they engage in face to face interactions in an organized community which supports

LGBTQIA+ individuals; i.e., club meetings, gay bars, diversity centers, school support,

etc. Of those 92 participants, 21 currently living in a supportive community, 4 visiting a

few times per week, 11 visiting a few times per month, 8 visiting a few times per year, 25

visiting without any regularity, 23 indicated never being a part of an LGBTQIA+

supportive community.

     First & Most Recent Negative Experiences. 67 participants responded to the

first narrative prompt about their first negative experience disclosing their LGBTQIA+

identity. Of those 67 participants, 56 went on to respond to the second narrative prompt

about their most recent negative experience disclosing or being open about their

LGBTQIA+ identity. In addition to the drop-off from first to most recent experience,

those who did wrote much shorter narratives for their most recent experiences. These are

likely attributable to burn-out from extensive emotional writing regarding first

experiences, having less to say about more recent experiences, and several participants

indicating that their first experience and most recent experience were one in the same.

     Self-compassion. 57 participants responded to the Self-Compassion Scale at the

end of the survey. Self-compassion scores ranged from 1.35 to 4.04 *(M = 2.62, SD =*

0.66). Researchers also compared mean differences in self-compassion scores between

LGBTQIA+ identity categories; *Lesbian* (*M = 2.68, SD = .71*), *Gay* (*M = 2.73, SD = .*

59), *Bisexual* (*M = 2.30, SD = .53*), *Asexual* (*M = 2.78, SD = .70*), *Pansexual* (*M = 2.85,*

SD = .85), *and other* (+) (*M = 2.65, SD = .27*). These results show that the overall mean

score of self-compassion, as well as the self-compassion mean for each identity category,

is below the midpoint of the self-compassion scale. Full distributions of self-compassion

scores, time spent in supportive communities, and time before disclosing gender and/or

sexual identity categorized by LGBTQIA+ identity can be found in Table 1.

  Hypotheses. Several outcomes were expected in the current research, including relationships between self-compassion, time spent in supportive communities, and self-compassionate words detected by LIWC. In addition, it was expected that participants would write more self-compassionately from first to most recent experience, and that involvement in supportive communities would exaggerate this increase. While there were trends in the expected directions, these findings are ultimately not statistically significant, and do not support these claims.

  First, it was expected that self-compassion scores would share a strong, positive relationship with time spent in supportive communities. A point-biserial correlation examined the association between self-compassion scores and supportive community involvement failed to demonstrate significance, $r(54) = .05; p = .65$. The relationship between self-compassion scores and time spent in supportive communities is further illustrated in Figure 2.

  Second, the researchers also expected that self-compassion scores and self-compassion themes detected by LIWC would share a strong, positive relationship; however, there was not a significant correlation between self-compassion scores and the overall differences in self-compassion words from participants' first to most recent negative experiences in either high self-compassion words, $r(50) = -.06; p = .65$, or low self-compassion words, $r(50) = .09; p = .53$. These relationships are further illustrated between self-compassion scores and LIWC high self-compassion words in Figure 3, and LIWC low self-compassion words in Figure 4.

Third, an overall increase was expected in self-compassionate writing from first to most recent experience, regardless of involvement in supportive communities. To investigate this relationship, the mean high and low self-compassion word LIWC output percentages were compared between first and most recent negative experience. For instance, if a participant used 2% high self-compassion words in their first narrative, and 7% high self-compassion words in their most recent narrative. In participants' first negative experiences, high self-compassion words ranged from 0 to 9.09% (M = 1.46, SD = 2.19), and low self-compassion words ranged from 0 to 50% (M = 1.77, SD = 6.68). In participants' most recent negative experiences, high self-compassion words ranged from 0 to 16.7% (M = 2.00, SD = 3.14) and low self-compassion words ranged from 0 to 100% (M = 3.67, SD = 15.32). These means show a slight increase of M = .56 in high self-compassion words from first to most recent experience, as well as an increase of M = 1.9 in low self-compassion words. In addition, the overall score of low self-compassion words between first and most recent experience ranged from -3.6% to 93.3% (M = 1.89, SD = 13.08) and high self-compassion differences ranged from -7.7% to 10% (M = .61, SD = 2.93). Distributions for average LIWC high and low self-compassion word percentages are further illustrated in Figure 1.

Finally, it was also expected that more time spent in supportive communities would correlate with greater increases in self-compassionate writing. To investigate this relationship, researchers ran point-biserial correlations between the overall mean differences of high and low self-compassionate words and participants' time spent in supportive communities. There was not a signifiant relationship between the amount of

time participants spent in supportive communities and high self-compassion words, $r(50)$ = -.18; p = .20, or low self-compassion words, $r(50)$ = -.15; p = .30. As these preliminary analyses failed to reach significance, researchers conducted further exploratory analyses including ANOVAs, multiple-comparison tests, and T-tests, most of which also failed to reach significance. A list of correlations between self-compassion scores, time spent in supportive communities, time before disclosing LGBTQIA+ identity, age, and LIWC self-compassion dictionary categories can be found in Table 2.

Narrative Analyses. The LIWC self-compassion dictionary developed by researchers for the current research categorized self-compassionate words into either high self-compassion words or low self-compassion words. Further, because each participant gave two narrative responses, researchers analyzed high and low self-compassion word output in three constructs: (1) participants' first experiences, (2) most recent experiences, and (3) the difference between first and most recent experiences. As a result, researchers conducted six correlational analyses to analyze these relationships between self-compassion words and self-compassion scores. Of the six correlational analyses, there were no significant results.

Many participants said they have never had a negative experience disclosing or being open with their LGBTQIA+ identity. However, many of these same participants mentioned being cautious about who they choose to disclose to, making absolutely certain their audience would accept them before they come out.

"I don't generally discuss my LGBTQIA identity with people who wouldn't approve of it. In fact I try to avoid interaction with these types of people as much as I can" (r007).

"Mostly, the people I've told since then are also LGBTQIA+, because I know that everyone else I know is extremely transphobic and homophobic, and I'm likely to lose everyone as soon as I come out" (r036).

One common tactic participants used as a preemptive measure was starting conversations about LGBTQIA+ topics to see how their prospective audiences would react. Although, despite participants' certainty, some audiences were still surprisingly not accepting of them.

"Two out of the three [friends] said they would be fully accepting and would treat a transgender person how they would treat any other person...the other friend said that transgender people were disgusting...I told him that he thought I was disgusting, at which point I was crying because this guy was my best friend" (f048).

In many cases, rejection is based on religious beliefs or being heavily set in a cishetero gender and sexual binary.

"[My dad] stood outside the door telling me to "face him like a man", and when I eventually did come out we ended up in the kitchen having an argument about it. He felt that gay people were judged in the same way as pedophiles, and that it was wrong and unnatural to be gay." (f025).

Many rejections consisted of audiences giving some retort, in some cases, even

unprompted, or refusing to believe they are truly LGBTQIA+.

> *"[A guy I'd just met] asked if I had ever been with a man, why I hadn't,*
>
> *and how I knew I was a lesbian without having had sex with a man...He told me I*
>
> *should sleep with him, that he'd make me straight. I left the conversation at that*
>
> *point"* (f141).

Most participants were between the ages of 18 and 24; however, even older participants

mostly wrote about their first negative experiences coming out in adolescent years.

Consequently, many stories included high school or college years as major chronological

markers, sometimes the school environment was a source of rejection as well; although in

other cases, a school setting was the first and only place they felt comfortable expressing

their LGBTQIA+ identity.

> *"From the time I was ten years old or so I experienced gender dysphoria,*
>
> *although that was before the age of the internet so I did not harbor the vocabulary*
>
> *to express what I was feeling - I did not hear the term "transgendered" until I was*
>
> *in college"* (f103).

When familial, friend, intimate, and academic settings did not provide the support

participants desired to express their identities to someone, they sought out online vehicles

of acceptance, but sometimes even online settings only proved to be additional sources of

grief.

> *"Most recently, I've been on OkCupid.com, where I had written about*
>
> *being pansexual on my profile. There were many ensuing messages mocking me,*

asking if I was sexually attracted to pans and the like. They would try to be funny

and say, oh, I'll keep my cookware away from you. It was really upsetting seeing

that and infuriated me…" (r012).

Some cases of rejection were severe enough to motivate participants to conceal their

identity as a consequence. In more extreme cases, participants even lost faith in

themselves to the point of questioning their identity all over again.

> *"I spent the next five years or so ignoring my feelings and telling myself I*
>
> *was straight...and it took me weeks after I ended up in a relationship with a girl*
>
> *before I really believed that I was queer, and even longer before I was*
>
> *comfortable calling myself bisexual"* (f004).

Many participants said their family members, significant others, or close friends were not

accepting of them, even when participants' families had been loving and supportive up

until the point of disclosing their identity. As a consequence, many participants'

relationships with their parents, family members, or friends were irreparably damaged to

the point of completely losing contact. In other cases, participants were not accepting of

themselves.

> *"My mom said "at least it's not cancer" and that she wished I were not this*
>
> *way. She said it made her stomach turn and it was disgusting. Then she told me*
>
> *she was not homophobic"* (f044).

Several participants were married, and even had children.

"When I was young, in my twenties I was only out to about 3 people. After

a while I got married and went back into the closet. I then came out again when I

was in my mid 50's. This time around I had no negative reactions" (r030).

A large portion of bisexual participants felt that there is an added stigma against

bisexuality, and trans participants felt especially stigmatized as well. Many participants

disclosed with their sexual identity first, and their gender identity later, or never disclosed

their gender identity at all. Perhaps most shockingly, several participants faced rejection

from their LGBTQIA+ peers. One participant even explained how their therapist, who

identified as LGBTQIA+, was not immediately accepting.

"[It's] not exactly that my therapist did not approve, but she did not

believe me when I first told her I was bisexual. Since I am a survivor of

relationship violence by a man...It is instead believed that [bisexual women] are

scared or sick of men and are trying to force attraction to women. I had to tell my

therapist that I have gone on dates and had sexual experiences with women for

her to believe me. This was particularly frustrating for me because she is a

lesbian and has told me she is a lesbian. I thought as another member of the

LGBTQIA+ community she would be more open and understanding immediately

about my orientation. Being met with skepticism from her was hurtful" (r003).

Some participants rejected those who rejected them; however, despite the range of

severity in rejection, some still had compassion for those who rejected them and

ultimately gained a stronger sense of self through these negative experiences and

ultimately gained a stronger sense of self through these negative experiences.

"...it also showed me that I'm a stronger person than I ever imagined. And I've sort of built of this sense of knowing who I am, that no other person's insecurities can break into. And I like to think that this makes me better suited to deal with my issues and be understanding of others" (r131).

Some old psychological conceptions of gender and sexuality ideas still survive

"...[my dad] then said that it was probably a phase, and that homosexuality is due to conditioning, and is something which is learned. I felt that my feelings were completely undermined, and doubted them" (f045).

Many participants who were rejected in the past had greater success in more recent experiences, and some shared stories of those that were initially not accepting have since changed their views.

"More recently, [my university friend] has admitted that her views on these issues have changed, and that it is something that has become more personal to her due to our friendship. Whilst she once opposed these particular legal rights, she claimed that it was no longer an emotionless, philosophical conversation for her, but had become an issue that directly affected somebody she cares about" (r025).

To reiterate, despite the diversity of negative experiences represented in these anecdotes, nearly half of the entire sample reported that they did not have any negative experiences as a result of their LGBTQIA+ identity and many other participants reported that their first negative experience was also their most recent experience. Moreover, after running the analyses on both the LIWC and context codes, there were no significant

correlations found in relation to self-compassion or time spent in a supportive

community. A list of relevant LIWC word categories can be found in Table 3. A complete

list of context codes can be found in Table 4. The coding key and operational definitions

used for the context codes can be found in Appendix C. A listing of each participants'

individual first narratives can be found in Appendix D, and most recent narratives in

Appendix E.

      Validity of Coding. To measure the validity for context-based thematic codes,

researchers randomly selected a subset of 14 narratives—7 first, 7 most recent—from the

original 123. Between five coders, all context categories demonstrated acceptable levels

of reliability, most of which were above $\alpha = .08$, with the exception of the codes for

"environment" and "never had a bad experience," which showed the greatest deviation

between coders under $\alpha = .05$. Researchers also compared similar LIWC word categories

and contextual themes coded by hand. To investigate their relationships, researchers

conducted point-biserial correlational analyses. Within the set of first negative

experiences, researchers compared LIWC family words and mom context codes, $r(64) = .$

$59, p < .001$, LIWC friend words and significant other context codes, $r(64) = .27, p = .$

031, LIWC friend words and lose friend(s) and/or family member(s) context codes, r

$(64) = .39, p = .001$, and LIWC inhibitory words and refusal to believe context codes, r

$(64) = .27, p = .027$.

      Within the set of most recent negative experiences, researchers compared LIWC

family words and mom context codes, $r(64) = .64, p < .001$, LIWC family words and dad

context codes, $r(64) = .29, p = .017$, LIWC family words and significant other context

codes, $r(64) = .35, p = .002,$ LIWC social words and friend context codes, $r(64) = .$
$26, p = .034,$ LIWC family words and lose friend(s) and/or family member(s) context
codes, $r(64) = .27, p = .031,$ and LIWC friend words and lose friend(s) and/or family
member(s) context codes, $r(64) = .30, p = .022.$

Exploratory Analyses. Although none of the main hypotheses received support
from the results, there were some interesting peripheral findings. Self-compassion scores
and age were positively correlated, such that older participants had higher self-
compassion scores on average, $r(54) = .27, p = .042.$ In a T-test comparison between self-
compassion scores and people who do and do not identify as bisexual, it was found that
bisexual individuals had significantly lower self-compassion scores than all other
comparable LGBTQIA+ identity categories on average; $t(54) = 2.59, p = .01.$ An
additional T-test between age and individuals who do and do not identify as gay revealed
that older participants more often identified as gay on average then younger participants, t
$(64) = -3.23, p < .001.$ Finally, age and the amount of time before disclosing one's
LGBTQIA+ identity were positively correlated such that older participant waited longer
to disclose their LGBTQIA+ identities, $r(64) = .27, p = .032.$

Discussion

Distribution of Self-Compassion Scores. The overall distribution of self-
compassion scores was marginally below the median of the self-compassion scale, as was
the mean for each LGBTQIA+ identity, individually. This is a significant finding in
comparison to previous research which found average self-compassion scores above the
midpoint of the self-compassion scale (Baker & Mcnulty, 2013; Potter et al 2014; Soysa

& Wilcomb, 2013; Rielly, Rochlin & Awad, 2013). This phenomenon is likely due to the stigma against LGBTQIA+ individuals that—however shrinking—still exists in the United States today. While conclusions cannot be drawn between levels of self-compassion between cis-gendered, heterosexual populations and LGBTQIA+ populations due to the lack of detail in sexuality in the previous research, future research may more accurately examine these differences.

Hypotheses. The results were not strong enough to support the hypotheses; however, there were trends in the expected directions. The researchers expected to find that self-compassion scores would correlate positively with the amount of time participants spent in supportive communities; that self-compassion scores and self-compassionate themes in writing would positively correlate; that self-compassion scores would increase from first to most recent experience for all participants; but that participants who spent more time in supportive communities would show greater increases in self-compassionate themes.

First, the researchers expected that self-compassion scores would share a positive relationship with time spent in supportive communities; however, the results failed to show this. To begin, over a third of the current sample consisted of students from a liberal arts college in the Southeast. Throughout the development of the current study's methodology and collecting data, many students of the LGBTQIA+ community at this college expressed concerns about the study, discussed later in this section, which may have created poor rapport with participants, influencing them to respond differently than they would have without the controversy surrounding the study, and ultimately skewing

the results. To expand, the Southeastern liberal arts college is considered by many

campus reviews—top 10 in the Princeton Review (LGBTQNation.com, n.d.)—and

current students to be a very LGBTQIA+ accepting environment. Significantly, despite

the fact that over one third of the sample was Southeastern liberal arts students, only one

quarter of participants reported living in an LGBTQIA+ supportive community. One

possible explanation for this is because some LGBTQIA+ students may feel unwelcome

in the community for a variety of reasons, many of which may stem from the intense

debates surrounding LGBTQIA+ issues, even within the LGBTQIA+ community itself.

Further, there may be qualitative differences between different types of supportive

communities. While the current study was not specific enough in expressing what is, or is

not a qualitative difference, and online communities were explicitly excluded from the

definition of a supportive community, it is plausible that online communities may have a

significant connection to one's self-compassion.

Second, the researchers also expected that self-compassion scores and self-

compassion themes detected by LIWC would share a strong, positive relationship;

however, this too failed to reach significance. Intuitively, one would think that higher

self-compassion scores would correlate with participants writing more about forgiveness

and those with lower self-compassion scores writing more about judgement; however, the

absence of a significant correlation may be due to the novelty of the self-compassion

dictionary the researchers created for LIWC, and need for further development, which is

discussed later. Another potential explanation for this is that stories of singular

experiences may not reflect the trait-level attitudes built into self-compassion. For

instance, participants may have moved on from these experiences and there may have

since been greater influences on their level of self-compassion, independent of these

negative experiences of disclosing their LGBTQIA+ identities.

   Third, researchers expected that self-compassionate themes in writing would

increase from first to most recent experience, regardless of participation in supportive

communities. This was difficult to investigate contextually because there was such a wide

range of experiences reported, and there were often multiple audiences and instances

contained within a single story. In light of these aspects, there would have been a high

level of variability across which to report one story's level of self-compassionate themes

within a binary of either high or low self-compassion—as the LIWC dictionary was

designed—or average these varied instances into a point on a Likert scale continuum.

Moreover, the researchers did not feel comfortable making such singularly subjective

judgements about participants' stories, especially given the nature of the controversy

which already surrounded the current study; a controversy which is covered later in this

section. Further still, the LIWC self-compassion dictionary created for the current study

detected very low levels of high self-compassion words and failed to detect measurable

levels of self-compassion words in any of the stories but two. Nearly half of respondents

also reported not having any negative experiences as a result of their LGBTQIA+

identity, and others reported that their first experience was also their most recent

experience. If participants did not provide stories of their experiences and simply wrote

they do not have any negative experiences, it is not possible to assess the level of self-

compassion a participant has. Ironically, because the current study is interested in how

LGBTQIA+ participants cope with marginalizing experiences tied to their LGBTQIA+ identities, a participant must have a negative experience tied to their LGBTQIA+ identity in order to assess how they coped with that experience, indicating their level of self-compassion in their writing. In addition, without dyadic data to compare, there is no way to assess a difference between self-compassionate themes.

Finally, the researchers expected that self-compassionate themes in writing would not only increase from first to most recent experience, overall, but that individuals who spent more time in supportive communities would show greater increases in self-compassionate themes. For many of the same reasons stated above, including poor rapport with participants and skewed data, novelty of the LIWC self-compassion dictionary, and incomplete data in regards to negative experiences and two separate stories to compare, this hypothesis was not supported, as well. However, the strong representation of LGBTQIA+ youth also represents a shorter life, and consequently, fewer experiences overall, especially experiences related to being open about one's LGBTQIA+ identity. Moreover, younger participants grew up in a more accepting environment than older participants and may simply encounter fewer instances of negativity in relation to being LGBQTIA+.

Exploratory Analyses. Once all the data were collected and researchers ran preliminary analyses related to their hypotheses, they discovered some interesting and unexpected findings as well, including correlations between the following variables: age and the use of the term "gay," age and time before disclosure of their identity, and bisexuality and self-compassion.

First, older participants were more likely to identify as gay while younger participants were more likely to use a more diverse range of identities. This is likely due to the fact that there were fewer descriptors of gender and sexual identity available for older generations to utilize, and that more recently, younger generations are diversifying the gender and sexual identity spectrum.

Second, older participants waited longer before disclosing their LGBTQIA+ identities. Both of these findings are likely attributable to a generational difference between the environment older and younger participants grew up in, such that LGBTQIA + youth are disclosing their identities sooner than older generations. As younger generations discuss their identities at a younger age, they contribute to an environment conducive to the creation and acknowledgement of different, more diverse identities.

Third, the results showed that bisexual participants had significantly lower self-compassion scores than any of their LGBTQIA+ counterparts. This finding corresponds to stories from bisexual individuals which mention an added level of stigma that bisexuality holds both within and without LGBTQIA+ communities. Bisexual respondents often explained that their peers told them they identified as bisexual because they could not make up their minds or just wanted attention: "I asked my mom what she thought of bisexuals, she said, 'You are either gay or you are straight, there is no in-between and you can't be both. Bisexuals just don't know what they want or they are trying to get attention'...I think it is easier to come out of the closet as gay than as bisexual, because there is a stigma on bisexuality that is very much alive within the global gay and lesbian community" (f052).

LIWC. While the LIWC program offers objectivity in analyzing open-ended responses, a way to quickly process large amounts of such data, and a way to verify the content of subjective interpretations by researchers, it is limited by its inability to detect the context of responses. This is especially difficult to overcome in creating a self-compassion-based dictionary because self-compassion, as a theory and measure, is heavily reliant on the negation of negative words. As such, research lost some of the expediency in the LIWC analyses because a great deal of time must be invested in preparing bodies of text for clerical errors, and finding ways to overcome its inability to detect negations.

Gender as a Standalone LGBTQIA+ Identity. When asked which or both of their gender or sexual identities they considered to be LGBTQIA+, not a single participant said only their gender identity was LGBTQIA+, meaning that every gender queer individual also had a sexually queer identity. One possible explanation for this is that being heterosexual intrinsically requires that one is attracted to someone who is of the opposite sex; i.e., adheres to the gender binary. To this end, individuals who identify outside of the gender binary and are attracted to others outside of the gender binary, they would identify as being both gender and sexual queer.

Being Selective as a Form of Self-Compassion. Nearly half of respondents' stories indicated that they have never had a bad experience related to their LGBTQIA+ identity, while simultaneously many of these respondents also mentioned being selective about who they disclosed their identities to so they could avoid negative experiences. Being selective about who one disclosed their identity to could be viewed as form of self-

compassion, such that individuals do not feel compelled to push themselves into situations which would be emotionally—or even physically—damaging. However, there was no correlation between people being selective, the absence of bad experiences, and self-compassion scores. This is an interesting finding in itself, because one would expect a measurable difference between those who have faced rejection based on something so central to their identity, and those who have not.

Limitations

Categorical Data Collection. There are a number of limitations to the design and results from the current research, including the sample age and geographical distribution, variability between the time participants' experiences occurred and reporting them in the current study, generalizing these recalled instances to participants' levels of self-compassion, and collecting data categorically.

First, the generalizability of the current research is constrained by the narrow range of ages in addition to limited representation outside of a liberal arts undergraduate population. Given that this liberal arts environment is a more LGBTQIA+ accepting climate than most places in the United States, it is difficult to discern what opinions and perspectives exist outside of a liberal arts honors college in the southwest of Florida.

Second, participants were asked to recall two instances and attempt to make applicable assessments of their overall self-compassion based on these two isolated incidents. To better investigate this relationship, future research should consider a longitudinal design to better infer outcomes of negative experiences across multiple samplings of involvement in supportive communities at multiple instances, providing

more reliable results and capturing truer indications of self-compassion changes rather than inferring changes from one sampling.

Third, the relationship between the amount of time spent in supportive communities and self-compassion may have been more accurately represented as an outcome of marginalizing experiences related to their LGBTQIA+ identities if participants were specifically prompted to respond to the self-compassion scale in the context of their LGBTQIA+ experiences.

Finally, another drawback of the current survey design was that the researcher collected data from several questions using ordinal scales, rather than asking for nominal responses, including age, time spent in supportive communities, and time elapsed between knowing for certain that one is LGBTQIA+ and disclosing their identity to another person. While the categorical approach to these questions may have made responding simpler for participants, it also decreased the precision of the results.

Narrative Analysis. Although LIWC automatically sorts and analyzes data to find themes in passages of text, enabling large quantities of data to be processed instantly, researchers are still responsible for making certain adjustments by hand. For instance, pasting individual responses into separate documents, correcting standard clerical errors, and optimizing the text for LIWC analysis by making adjustments such as changing "it's" to "its" or removing periods in acronyms. However, because LIWC converts all text files to lower case before processing them, it was not necessary for researchers to correct for grammar, capitalization, or sentence structure.

Finding the Right Words. To find the most inclusive term possible, the researchers turned to the community and asked them what they would like to see in the survey, initially using the term *non-heteronormative*; *"*Non-heteronormative - (Working definition) refers to someone who does not identify with their gender assigned at birth, or is sexually attracted to same-gendered individuals." However, this term proved problematic for most because it does not include gender in its description, secures heterosexuality as the normative baseline, and consequently, carries the connotation that those who are not heteronormative are intrinsically out of place. The community on campus was full of other suggestions, as well. People advised "not using 'queer' as an umbrella term because it is a reclaimed slur [for those] who may not choose to reclaim that term for themselves," and including *aromantic* in whichever acronym that may be chosen.

Others offered alternative acronyms, including: GSM - Gender and/or Sexuality Minority, GSRM - Gender, Sexual and Romantic minorities, MORGA - Marginalized Orientation/Romantic and Gender Alignment, MOGAI - Marginalized Orientations, Gender Identities & Intersex, or MOGII - Marginalized Orientations, Gender Alignments & Intersex. While these are all popular and more inclusive alternatives to the simplistic LGBT acronym, they carried with them the same complications of the initial *non-heteronormative* term because they still placed too much emphasis on the minority and marginalized nature of the community.

Finally, one of the community members suggested "LBGTQPIA+ don't forget the P or a + so as to not exclude those who are not included in the acronym." This initialism

seemed to be neutral enough to solve the problem of potentially undesirable priming effects, and was equally as inclusive as other problematic suggestions. From LGBTQPIA +, researchers decided to align with the more popular LGBTQIA mentioned in the New York Times (Schulman, 2013), and simply add the + (encumbering the P for pansexual).

Admittedly, the writing prompts in the survey explicitly asked participants to write about negative experiences disclosing their identities. However, the researchers felt there was a crucial difference between using an acronym that emphasized minority marginalization, and asking participants to write about their own negative experiences. Researchers felt the difference between these two was their potential for priming participants to think of their negative experiences as a result of individual circumstances (writing prompts), instead of a result of being part of a marginalized minority (minority/ marginalized-based acronym).

Community Discussion. Once researchers opened the survey for data collection and posted the survey to the school's online forum, the LGBTQIA+ community on campus expressed their concerns in regards to the study, offering some constructive criticisms, and some not so constructive. These concerns may have resulted in poor rapport with participants, influenced the way they responded to the survey, and ultimately skewed the results as nearly half of the stories came from students affiliated with the southeastern liberal arts college. Nevertheless, most of the concerns were centered around the cultural script paralleling queerness with adversity, which portrays being LGBTQIA+ as a burden, as opposed to a blessing. Methodologically, there were concerns that the survey excluded participants who did not have any negative experiences to write about.

To this end, it is recommended that researchers allow for maximum inclusivity by including research oriented towards positive experiences.

To give greater context to some of the criticisms of the study, a number of responses from an online public forum have been included. Many community members supported one post: "I'm really put off by this survey. Why is your assumption that everybody's queerness is automatically full of misery? Why do you feel like it's your place to observe and report any of those stories that aren't pleasant?...this survey scripts a specific kind of response that falls in line with more dominant narratives. I'm saying that is an incomplete portrait of queer experience...The most dominant narrative *is* that 'queer life is miserable.' It's terrible. It's absolutely positively *wrong* and should be combated because it's a terrible, false perception." These comments raised valid concerns that instead of perpetuating the stereotype that being LGBTQIA+ is intrinsically entangled with being misunderstood, stigmatized, and miserable, there needs to be greater emphasis on the more positive aspects, especially as the cultural tide is turning today.

A sort of irony of self-compassion is that it is not preemptive of negative experiences; rather, it is an adaptation thereof. As a result, it is necessary to specifically inquire about negative experiences in order to create context for one's level of adaptability to them. Not only that, it is without question the LGBTQIA+ community has seen its share of oppression throughout history. With that in mind, the current study sought to give credit to negative experiences of the past, while emphasizing positive outcomes for the present, and light a path of social harmony for the future.

With these considerations, self-compassion is an extremely important construct to document in the LGBTQIA+ community, especially at this pivotal time in history, and the current findings do point towards the idea that the younger generations are seeing considerably more acceptance than did the children of the 70's and 80's. However, even today there is divisiveness within the community itself. One post read, "Finding out about my queerness made me HAPPIER because I found a community that accepted me. I don't feel rejected, I feel liberated," another abstained from the study altogether because they "...don't believe [they] should have to mold [their] experience to the master narratives of a heterosexual discursive regime in order to be represented in academia," and many others were simply saddened by disagreements like these, "Its very upsetting that you are isolating the queer community into a war against who is and isn't queer as it has usually been an all-inclusive movement especially as it is such a personal thing that is subject to change...It's not you against the world. It's all of us against a very constrained and limited rote of thought."

Disagreements aside, there were still many constructive words of advice from the online discussions, such as offering the chance to discuss positive experiences instead of just negative ones, writing 'i did not experience any negative reactions when I came out' instead of abstaining from the study, and even explaining the history and development of the self-compassion scale, "By analyzing the language used in relation to themselves when examining these negative past experiences, she and others were able to create a tentative scale by which they could measure self-compassion in human beings through

speech and written narratives, as well as a questionnaire, which was utilized in this study."

As Isaac Prileltensky said, we can not avoid conflict altogether; rather, "In some instances conflict may be the only way to bring about social justice" (Prileltensky, 1997, p.755). During the time of this conflict online, there was a boom of curiosity about the current study; nearly 60 people opened the survey in a single day to form their own opinion. In terms of achieving equal representation—and ultimately social justice—for LGBTQIA+ individuals, there are a great many contributors and processes at play, but as Aldous Huxley once said, "The subject of freedom and its enemies is enormous, and what I have written is certainly too short to do it justice, but at least I have touched on many aspects of the problem" (Huxley, 1958, p.4).

Q-llage@TC While presenting findings from the current research at a conference Q-llage@TC (Q-llage@TC, 2015), the researchers heard Daniel Dromm, an openly gay city council member and Education Chair of New York City, speak on the moral responsibility LGBTQIA+ teachers have to be open with their identities because they must function as role models for students struggling with their own identities. Dromm also underlined the necessity for teachers to find supportive communities when disclosing their LGBTQIA+ identities. By joining supportive communities, teachers can draw strength from them, and gain a group of people to speak out on the teacher's behalf, should they encounter hardships.

At the same conference, Ivan Coyote, an openly transgender author of six award-winning collections of short stories, one novel, three CD's, four short films and touring

spoken word performer, spoke about their transition which included the process of getting top surgery (removal of their breasts). To get the Canadian healthcare system to pay for the operation, Ivan had to endure a gauntlet of tests from medical doctors, psychologists, and psychiatrists, the most burdensome of which was 42 pages of psychoanalytical metrics, including items such as "do you find it difficult to pretend to be a man" and "do you sometimes not feel woman enough." These sorts of psychometrics are evidence of the work yet to be done in creating psychological methods which are more accessible and less offensive to LGBTQIA+ individuals and understanding of them. In terms of improving these methods, future research may survey the LGBTQIA+ community for what, specifically, they like and dislike about current methodology, psychological constructs of LGBTQIA+ individuals, and what they expect for the future.

Future Research

Although there was not a correlation between self-compassion and time spent in supportive communities, this study opens the door to a greater understanding of how marginalizing experiences interact with self-compassion in minority communities, specifically LGBTQIA+ populations. Due to the rich data and multifaceted methodology of the present study, there are many unexplored avenues which point to various opportunities for future research. Specifically, prospective studies could further diversify the existing body of knowledge on individual LGBTQIA+ identities, develop and refine the self-compassion LIWC dictionary, and improve empirical methods for collecting data from LGBTQIA+ individuals and other minority groups.

Future research should also work to tease apart the individual identities of LGBTQIA+, primarily to dissolve the "other" category and support equal representation. Rather than lumping them all into a category where they are viewed as the queer "other" alternative to heteronormativity, empirical research must respect the diversity of these individual identities which comprise the LGBTQIA+ acronym to promote greater strides towards cultural acceptance.

The LIWC Self-Compassion dictionary also needs extensive development and validation in future research such that it will better target self-compassion themes in writing and function better as a check system for subjective interpretive analyses. However, because LIWC does not check for context, future development of the self-compassion dictionary should focus on a solution to overcome LIWC's inability to detect negation. Taking into account the inability of the LIWC program to detect context, and abundance of peripheral categories included in the program which were not relevant to the current research, it may have simplified the study to exclude LIWC altogether. However, LIWC did provide an objective, automated way to verify some of the subjective context codes such as presence of mom, dad, losing a friend or family member.

Conclusion. Gender and sexual identity are obviously deeply rooted in one's self-concept, so it is reasonable to imagine that being rejected on a cultural and global scale may be discouraging. The current research explored self-compassion in LGBTQIA+ individuals because, as a marginalized minority, several facets of self-compassion are applicable to their experiences. For example, isolation and over-identification are indicative of low self-compassion and represent some of the maladaptive psychological

outcomes of marginalizing experiences. Self-compassion involves acknowledging negative experiences and offers constructive ways for dealing with these experiences to produce positive outcomes. However, the best environment for developing self-compassion is something which requires further research to maximize its effectiveness for producing positive outcomes. To this end, the current study investigated self-compassion in LGBTQIA+ individuals to see if there were differences between those who are involved in supportive communities and those who are not.

Through supportive collectivism, one is empowered to foster greater self-compassion and compassion for others. Individuals may accomplish not only increased visibility and solidarity though supportive communities, but also gain access to the growing spectrum of terminology to express what they are feeling and how they identify. For those without access to supportive others, there must be increased visibility of other LGBTQIA+ role models through accessible media outlets.

The researchers expected that, regardless of involvement in supportive communities, participants would have developed more self-compassionate themes in writing from first to most recent story, but that those with more time in supportive communities would have had more time in accepting environments, and therefore would have developed higher self-compassion. As the study developed, so did the researchers' understanding of these individuals' emotional worlds. Historically speaking, the discipline of psychology started off on the wrong foot with the LGBTQIA+ community by pathologizing their identities, who they are at their core. This insight revealed that if there is to be future psychological research on LGBTQIA+ individuals, the best way to

create an ideal structure for collecting data is to first collect the voices of the community and add them to the conversation.

The current study exemplified this by working through narrative analyses, but failed to include people's positive experiences as well as their negative experiences. The researchers found that the voice of the LGBTQIA+ community desires to have the hardships of the past acknowledged, without creating future expectations of the same difficulties; further, to acknowledge strides towards an ideal scenario, without over idealizing the present and future, thereby downplaying the issues at hand.

While the LGBTQIA+ movement is progressing towards cultural acceptance in the United States, there is still much work to be done. Looking at LGBTQIA+ history around the world, the past may be grim, but the future is bright. Those creating history today must be mindful of the present to identify the steps which must be taken to increase acceptance in the future, such as acknowledging the fact that LGBTQIA+ individuals deserve the same compassion as everyone else, fostering kindness and forgiveness towards oneself and others, and raising awareness. Ultimately, a shift from "finding the cure" to "finding cohesion" would be the most desirable scenario.

> Not queer like gay. Queer like, escaping definition. Queer like some sort of fluidity and limitlessness at once. Queer like a freedom too strange to be conquered. Queer like the fearlessness to imagine what love can look like…and pursue it.
>
> Brandon Wint

References

American Civil Liberties Union. (n.d.). *History of Sodomy Laws and the Strategy that Led Up to Today's Decision*. Retrieved from https://www.aclu.org/lgbt-rights_hiv-aids/history-sodomy-laws-and-strategy-led-todays-decision

American Experience. (n.d.). *WGBH American Experience: Stonewall Uprising. PBS*. Retrieved from http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/timeline/stonewall/

Andryszewski, T. (2008). *Same-sex marriage*. Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books.

Asktrevor.org. (n.d.). *Am I LGBT? - Ask Trevor*. Retrieved from http://www.asktrevor.org/knowledgebase-category/am-i/

Baer, R. A., Lykins, E. B., & Peters, J. R. (2012). Mindfulness and self-compassion as predictors of psychological wellbeing in long-term meditators and matched nonmeditators. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, *7*, 230-238. doi: 10.1080/17439760.2012.674548

Baker, L. R., & McNulty, J. K. (2011). Self-compassion and relationship maintenance: The moderating roles of conscientiousness and gender. *Journal Of Personality And Social Psychology*, *100*(5), 853-873. doi:10.1037/a0021884

BBC News. (2013). *Royal pardon for codebreaker Alan Turing - BBC News*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-25495315

Belongto.org. (n.d.). *Am I Gay ? - BeLonGTo.org*. Retrieved from http://www.belongto.org/resource.aspx?contentid=2244

Biography (2015). *Christine Jorgensen Biography*. *Biography.com*. Retrieved from http://
www.biography.com/people/christine-jorgensen-262758

Black, D., & Van Sant, G. (2008). *Milk (2008)*. *IMDb*. Retrieved from http://
www.imdb.com/title/tt1013753/

Borris, K. (2004). *Same-sex desire in the English Renaissance.* (pp. 1470–1650). New
York: Routledge.

Bryant, C. (2012). *A Queer History - Turning Against Homosexuality - Part 2 -
polarimagazine.com*. *Polari Magazine*. Retrieved from http://
www.polarimagazine.com/features/queer-history-turning-homosexuality/

Campus Pride. (2014). *Campus Pride releases 2014 Top 50 List of LGBT-friendly
Colleges & Universities*. Retrieved from http://www.campuspride.org/campus-
pride-releases-2014-top-50-lgbt-friendly-list-highlighting-the-best-of-the-best-
colleges-universities/

Cash, M., & Whittingham, K. (2010). What facets of mindfulness contribute to
psychological well-being and depressive, anxious, and stress-related
symptomatology? *Mindfulness*, *1*, 177-182. doi:10.1007/s12671-010-0023-4

Cook, D. R. (1987). Measuring shame: The internalized shame scale. *Alcoholism
Treatment Quarterly, 4,* 197-215. doi:10.1300/ J020v04n02_12

Frakes, R. (2006). *Why the Romans Are Important in the Debate About Gay Marriage*.
Historynewsnetwork.org. Retrieved from http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/
21319

Framingham, J. (2013). *Rorschach Inkblot Test*. *PsychCentral.com*. Retrieved from http://

    psychcentral.com/lib/rorschach-inkblot-test/0006018

Freedomtomarry.org. (2015). *Marriage Rulings in the Courts. FreedomtoMarry.com*

    Retrieved from http://www.freedomtomarry.org/pages/marriage-rulings-in-the-

    courts

Frost R. O., Marten P., Lahart C., & Rosenblate R. (1990). The dimensions of

    perfectionism. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 14*, 449-468. doi:10.1007/

    bf01172967

Fulmer, C. A., Gelfand, M. J., Kruglanski, A. W., Kim-Prieto, C., Diener, E., Pierro, A., &

    Higgins, E. T. (2010). On "feeling right" in cultural contexts: How person-culture

    match affects self-esteem and subjective well-being. *Psychological Science, 21,*

    1563-1569. doi:10.1177/ 0956797610384742

Gates, G. (2011). *How Many People are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender?*.

    Williams Institute. Retrieved from http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/

    census-lgbt-demographics-studies/how-many-people-are-lesbian-gay-bisexual-

    and-transgender/

Glbtnearme.org. *www.glbtnearme.org*. Retrieved from http://www.glbtnearme.org/

Goldberg, L. (2014). *Tyra Banks to Produce Transgender Docuseries for VH1*

    (Exclusive). *The Hollywood Reporter*. Retrieved from http://

    www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/tyra-banks-produce-transgender-

    docuseries-703539

Grow, K. (2014). *Laverne Cox to Host and Produce MTV Doc on Transgender Youth*.

      Rolling Stone. Retrieved from http://www.rollingstone.com/tv/news/laverne-cox-

      mtv-doc-transgender-youth-20140918#ixzz3GN7LxnF1

Guerrero Witt, M., & Wood, W. (2010). Self-regulation of gendered behavior in everyday

      life. *Sex Roles, 62,* 635-646. doi:10.1007/s11199- 010-9761-y

Hamilton, C. J., & Mahalik, J. R. (2009). Minority stress, masculinity, and social norms

      predicting gay men's health risk behaviors. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 56,*

      132-141. doi:10.1037/a0014440

Hiskey, D. (2010). *How 'Gay' Came to Mean 'Homosexual'. Today I Found Out*.

      Retrieved from http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2010/02/how-gay-

      came-to-mean-homosexual/

Hodges, A. (n.d.). *Alan Turing: the enigma. Turing.org.uk*. Retrieved from http://

      www.turing.org.uk/

Hollis-Walker, L., & Colosimo, K. (2011). Mindfulness, self-compassion, and happiness

      in non-meditators: A theoretical and empirical exam- ination. Personality and

      Individual Differences, *50*, 222-227. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2010.09.033.

Hooker, E. (1957). The adjustment of the male overt homosexual. *Journal of projective*

      techniques, *21*(1), 18-31.

Huxley, A. (1958). *Brave new world revisited*. (pp. 4). New York: Harper & Brothers.

Johnson, E. A., & O'Brien, K. A. (2013). Self-compassion soothes the savage ego-threat

      system: Effects on negative affect, shame, rumination, and depressive symptoms.

      Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 32(9), 939-963.

Jones, J. (1997). *Alfred Kinsey: A public/private life*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Kilmartin, C. (2010). *The masculine self*. Cornwall-on-Hudson, NY: Sloan Pub.

Kinsey, A., Pomeroy, W., & Martin, C. (1948). Sexual Behavior in the Human Male.
    American Sociological Review, *13*(2), 224. doi:10.2307/2087036

Kinsey, A. C. (Ed.). (1953). *Sexual behavior in the human female*. Indiana University
    Press.

Kross, E., Bruehlman-Senecal, E., Park, J., Burson, A., Dougherty, A., & Shablack, H. et
    al. (2014). Self-talk as a regulatory mechanism: How you do it matters. *Journal
    Of Personality And Social Psychology*, *106*(2), 304-324. doi:10.1037/a0035173

Levy, M. (2013). Gay rights movement: political and social movement. *Encyclopedia
    Britannica*. Retrieved from https://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/766382/
    gay-rights-movement#ref1077994

Lewis, M. (1992). *Shame: The exposed self*. New York, NY: Free Press.

LGBTQ Nation. (2014). *Princeton Review updates list of 20 most LGBT friendly,
    unfriendly colleges*. Retrieved from http://www.lgbtqnation.com/2014/08/
    princeton-review-updates-list-of-20-most-lgbt-friendly-unfriendly-colleges/

Liwc.net. (n.d.). *LIWC: Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count*. Retrieved from http://
    www.liwc.net/

Mahalik, J. R., Locke, B., Ludlow, L., Diemer, M., Scott, R. P. J., Gottfried, M., &
    Freitas, G. (2003). Development of the Conformity to Masculine Norms
    Inventory. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 4,* 3-25. doi:
    10.1037/1524-9220.4.1.3

Mail Online. (2007). *Lord Montagu on the court case which ended the legal persecution of homosexuals*. Retrieved from http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-468385/ Lord-Montagu-court-case-ended-legal-persecution-homosexuals.html

Mastin, L. (2009). *Sappho - Ancient Greece - Classical Literature. Ancient-literature.com*. Retrieved from http://www.ancient-literature.com/ greece_sappho.html

Milkfoundation.org. (n.d.). *Milk Foundation.org: The Official Harvey Milk Biography*. Retrieved from http://milkfoundation.org/about/harvey-milk-biography/

Morris, B. (n.d.). *History of Lesbian, Gay, & Bisexual Social Movements. http:// www.apa.org*. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/history.aspx

Mtv.com. (1998). *True Life (TV Series). MTV*. Retrieved from http://www.mtv.com/ shows/truelife/

Neff, K. D. (2003a). The development and validation of a scale to measure self compassion. *Self and Identity*, *2*, 223- 250.

Neff, K. D. (2003b). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity, 2,* 85-101. doi: 10.1080/15298860309032

Neff, K. D. (2013). *The Space Between Self-Esteem and Self Compassion: Kristin Neff at TEDxCentennialParkWomen. Ted Talks*. Retrieved from *https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvtZBUSplr4*

Neff, K. D., Hsieh, Y. P., & Dejitterat, K. (2005). Self-compassion, achievement goals, and coping with academic failure. *Self and Identity, 4,* 263-287. doi:

10.1080/13576500444000317

Nolo.com. (n.d.). *Does the federal government recognize same-sex marriage?. Nolo.com*.

　　　　Retrieved from http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/issues-affecting-same-

　　　　sex-couples-faq-32292-2.html

O'Neil, J. M. (2008). Summarizing 25 years of research on men's gender role conflict

　　　　using the gender role conflict scale new research paradigms and clinical

　　　　implications. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *36*(3), 358-445.

Painter, G. (2004). *The History of Sodomy Laws in the United States - Illinois*. *Glapn.org*.

　　　　Retrieved from http://www.glapn.org/sodomylaws/sensibilities/illinois.htm

Polari Magazine,. (2009). *The Historical Influence of Alexander the Great*. Retrieved

　　　　from http://www.polarimagazine.com/features/historical-influence-alexander-

　　　　great/

Pollack, W., & Levant, R. (1998). *New psychotherapy for men*. New York: J. Wiley.

Potter, R., Yap, K., Francis, A., & Schuster, S. (2014). Self-compassion mediates the

　　　　relationship between parentalcriticism and social anxiety.*International Journal of

　　　　Psychology and Psychological Therapy*, *14*(1), 33-43.

Prilleltensky, I. (1997). Values, assumptions, and practices: Assessing the moral

　　　　implications of psychological discourse and action. *American Psychologist, 52*(5),

　　　　517-535.

Q-llage@TC. (2015, April) Jacks Cheng (Director). *Q-llage@TC*. Symposium conducted

　　　　at the Teacher's College Columbia University. New York, NY. Available at https://

　　　　sites.google.com/a/tc.columbia.edu/qllagetc/

Milk, Harvey. (n.d.). *A Quote by Harvey Milk (1930-1978)*. *QOTD.org*. Retrieved from

    http://www.qotd.org/search/single.html?qid=83906

Quinn, E. (2014). *I'm Emily Quinn, And I'm Intersex*. *Act*. Retrieved from http://

    act.mtv.com/posts/faking-it-intersex-letter/

Reilly, E D. (2014). Men's self-compassion and self-esteem: The moderating roles of

    shame and masculine norm adherence. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 15(1),

    22-28.

Rosario, V. (n.d.) *LGBT Mental Health Syllabus*. *Aglp.org*. Retrieved from http://

    www.aglp.org/gap/1_history/

Sachs-Ericsson N, Verona E, Joiner T, & Preacher KJ (2006). Parental verbal abuse and

    the mediating role of self-criticism in adult internalizing disorders. *Journal of

    Affective Disorders, 93*, 71-78. doi: 10.1037/1040-3590.4.1.26

SaricaoÄlu, H. (2013). An investigation into psychological well-being levels of higher

    education students with respect to personality traits and self-compassion. *Kuram

    ve Uygulamada Egitim Bilimleri*, 13(4), 2097-2104.

Schulman, M. (2013). *Generation LGBTQIA*. *Nytimes.com*. Retrieved from http://

    www.nytimes.com/2013/01/10/fashion/generation-lgbtqia.html

Selfcompassion.org. *Self-Compassion.org*. Retrieved from http://self-compassion.org/

Seligman, M. E., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction.

    American Psychologist, 55, 5-14. doi:10.1037/0003-066X .55.1.5

Soysa, C. K., & Wilcomb, C. J. (2013). Mindfulness, Self-compassion, Self-efficacy, and

    Gender as Predictors of Depression, Anxiety, Stress, and Well-being. *Mindfulness*,

1-10.

Steinmetz, K. (2014). *This is What Intersex Means*. *TIME.com*. Retrieved from http://
time.com/3599950/intersex-meaning/

Surveymonkey.com. *SurveyMonkey*. Retrieved from https://www.surveymonkey.com/
home/

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. (2009). *Stonewall Riots: The
Beginning of the LGBT Movement*. Retrieved from http://www.civilrights.org/
archives/2009/06/449-stonewall.html

Tilghman-Osborne, C., Cole, D. A., & Felton, J. W. (2010). Definition and measurement
of guilt: Implications for clinical research and practice. *Clinical Psychology
Review, 30,* 536-546. doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2010.03 .007

Traher, A. (2014). *Why LGBT History Matters*. *Historynewsnetwork.org*. Retrieved from
http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/157224

Tyldum, M., Moore, G., & Hodges, A. (2014). *The Imitation Game (2014)*. *IMDb*.
Retrieved from http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2084970/?ref_=nv_sr_1

United States Census Bureau. (2011). *Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010 -
2010 Census Briefs* (p. 20).

Ushmm.org. (2014). *Persecution of Homosexuals in the Third Reich*. Retrieved from
http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005261

Van Dam, N. T., Sheppard, S. C., Forsyth, J. P., & Earleywine, M. (2011). Self-
compassion is a better predictor than mindfulness of symptom severity and
quality of life in mixed anxiety and depression. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, *25*

(1), 123-130. doi:10.1016/j.janxdis.2010.08.011

Wint, B. (2013). *Queering The World – Brandon Wint*. *Brandonwint.ca*. Retrieved from

http://www.brandonwint.ca/?p=143

Wright, F. (1987). Men, shame and antisocial behavior: A psychodynamic perspective.

Group, *11*(4), 238-246.

Zagria. (2008). Dörchen Richter (1891 - 1933) Waiter, Cook, Maid. *A Gender Variance

Who's Who*. Retrieved from http://zagria.blogspot.com/2008/07/drchen-

richter-1891-1933-waiter-cook.html

Table 1

Self-Compassion Scores, Time Spent in Supportive Communities, and Time Before

Disclosing Identity Categorized by LGBTQIA+ Identity

LGBTQIA+ Identity	N	Self-Compassion Score	Time in Community	Time Before Disclosure
		M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Lesbian	9	2.68 (.71)	3.33 (2.12)	1.89 (.93)
Gay	14	2.76 (.55)	2.81 (1.11)	3.25 (1.39)
Bisexual	18	2.45 (.55)	3.52 (2.11)	2.43 (1.27)
Pansexual	14	2.86 (.82)	4.00 (2.00)	1.73 (.80)
Asexual	3	2.84 (.58)	3.00 (2.00)	1.50 (.58)
Other (+)	4	2.71 (.65)	4.6 (1.67)	1.60 (.89)
Overall	57	2.71 (.64)	3.54 (1.84)	2.07 (.98)

Time in Community Scale
    1 = I have never been part of an LGBTQIA+ supportive community
    2 = I do not visit with any regularity
    3 = I visit a few times per year
    4 = I visit a few times per month
    5 = I visit a few times per week
    6 = I live in a supportive community

Time Before Disclosure Scale
    1 = I have never told anyone
    2 = 11+ years
    3 = 6-10 years
    4 = 3-5 years
    5 = 1-2 years
    6 = Less than 1 year

Table 2

Correlation Matrix of Self-Compassion Scores, Time in Community, Time before Disclosure, Age, High Self-Compassion Word Differences, and Low Self-Compassion Word Differences

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Self-Compassion Scores	2.71	0.64						
2 Time in Community	3.54	1.84	0.06					
3 Time Before Disclose	62.4	7.4	-0.16	-0.22				
4 Age	31.2	9.3	0.27*	-0.14	0.27*			
5 High SC LIWC	30.6	10.4	-0.06	-0.18	-0.01	0.07		
6 Low SC LIWC	38.7	11.3	0.09	-0.15	0.29*	0.42*	-0.04	

**.Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3

Distribution of Relevant LIWC Category Percentages Per Story Between First and Most

Recent Experiences

LIWC Word Categories	First Experience				Most Recent Experience			
	Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD
Affect	0	50	5.75	6.47	0	33	3.70	5.52
Positive Emotion	0	50	3.60	6.23	0	17	2.06	3.47
Negative Emotion	0	6.67	2.10	1.74	0	17	1.62	2.94
Cognitive Mechanisms	0	40	20.68	6.33	0	50	15.20	10.83
Insight	0	13.64	3.45	2.54	0	9	2.07	2.50
Inclusive	0	20	5.40	3.65	0	14	3.76	4.09
Exclusive	0	16.67	3.77	2.90	0	13	2.01	2.71
Religion	0	2	0.23	0.56	0	3	0.17	0.61
Quotes	0	16	1.14	2.56	0	8	0.63	1.69

Table 4

Frequency Distributions of Context Codes Between First and Most Recent Experiences

Context Codes	First Experience		Most Recent Experience	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Age or Time	19	28.8	12	21.4
Teen	11	16.7	3	5.3
Mom	16	24.2	5	8.9
Dad	7	10.6	3	5.3
Significant Other	12	18.2	2	3.4
Friend	17	25.7	8	14.3
Online	5	7.6	5	8.9
Environment	8	12.1	5	8.9
Religion	10	15.2	4	7.1
Lose Friend or Family	16	24.2	6	10.7
You Are Wrong	18	27.3	8	14.3
Refuse to Believe	19	28.8	8	14.3
Retort	28	42.4	20	35.7
Question Identity	13	19.7	1	1.8
Conceal Identity	11	16.7	4	7.1
Never Had a Bad Experience	20	30.3	13	23.2
Selective	20	30.3	8	14.3
LGBTQIA+ Conversation	8	12.1	5	8.9
Thought They Would Accept	10	15.2	3	5.3
Hetero Relationship	7	10.6	2	3.4
School	13	19.7	2	3.4
Conformity	11	16.7	7	12.5
Other Person Confused	8	12.1	2	3.4
Other Person Changed Views	3	4.5	2	3.4
First Experience is Most Recent Experience	-	-	9	16.1

N = Number of participants whose stories showed the given code
Percent = Percentage of overall occurrence of given code in first or most recent narratives

Figure 1

Average Percentages of all LIWC High and Low Self-Compassion Words in First

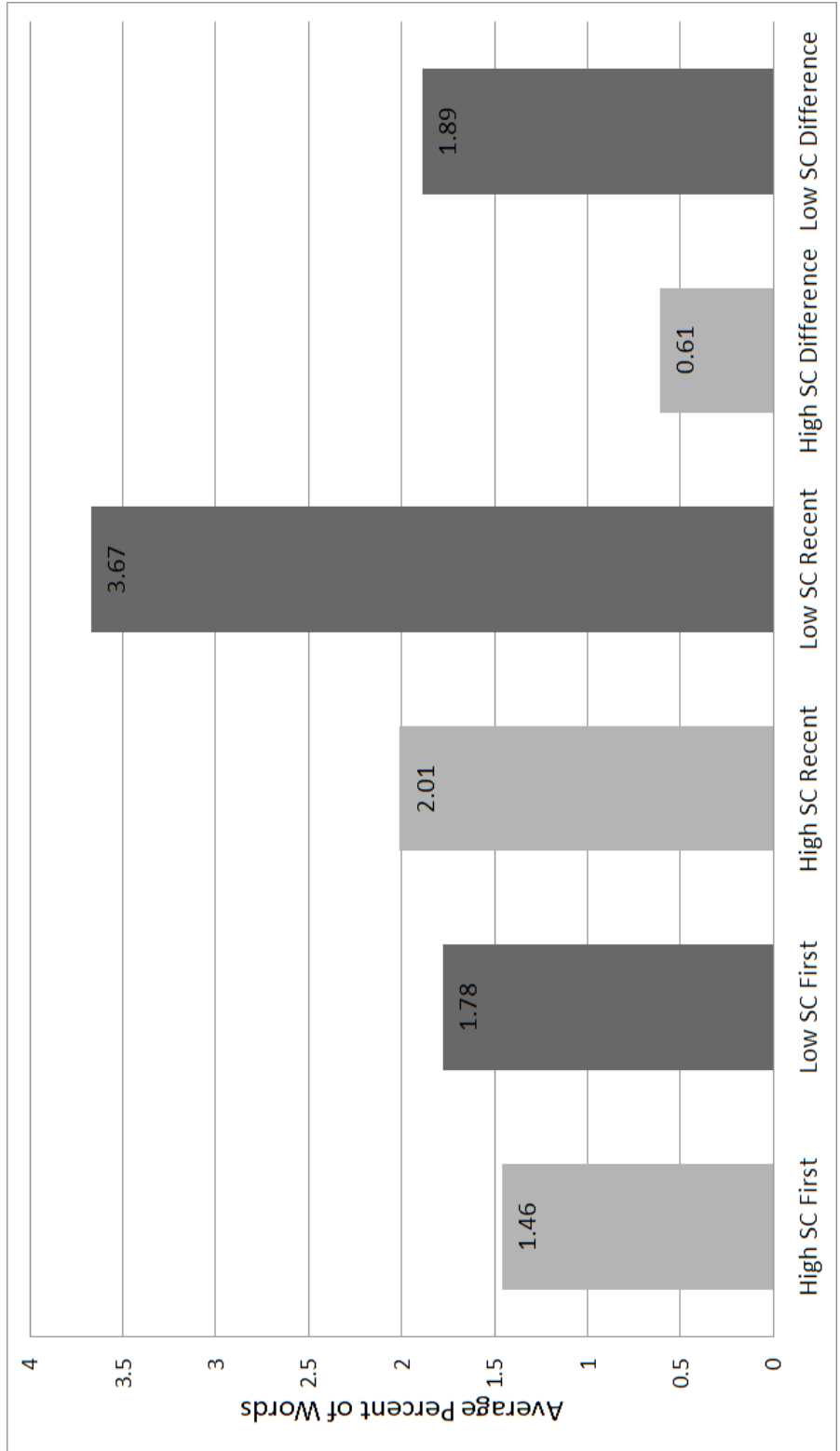*Narratives, Most Recent Narratives, and Overall*

Figure 2

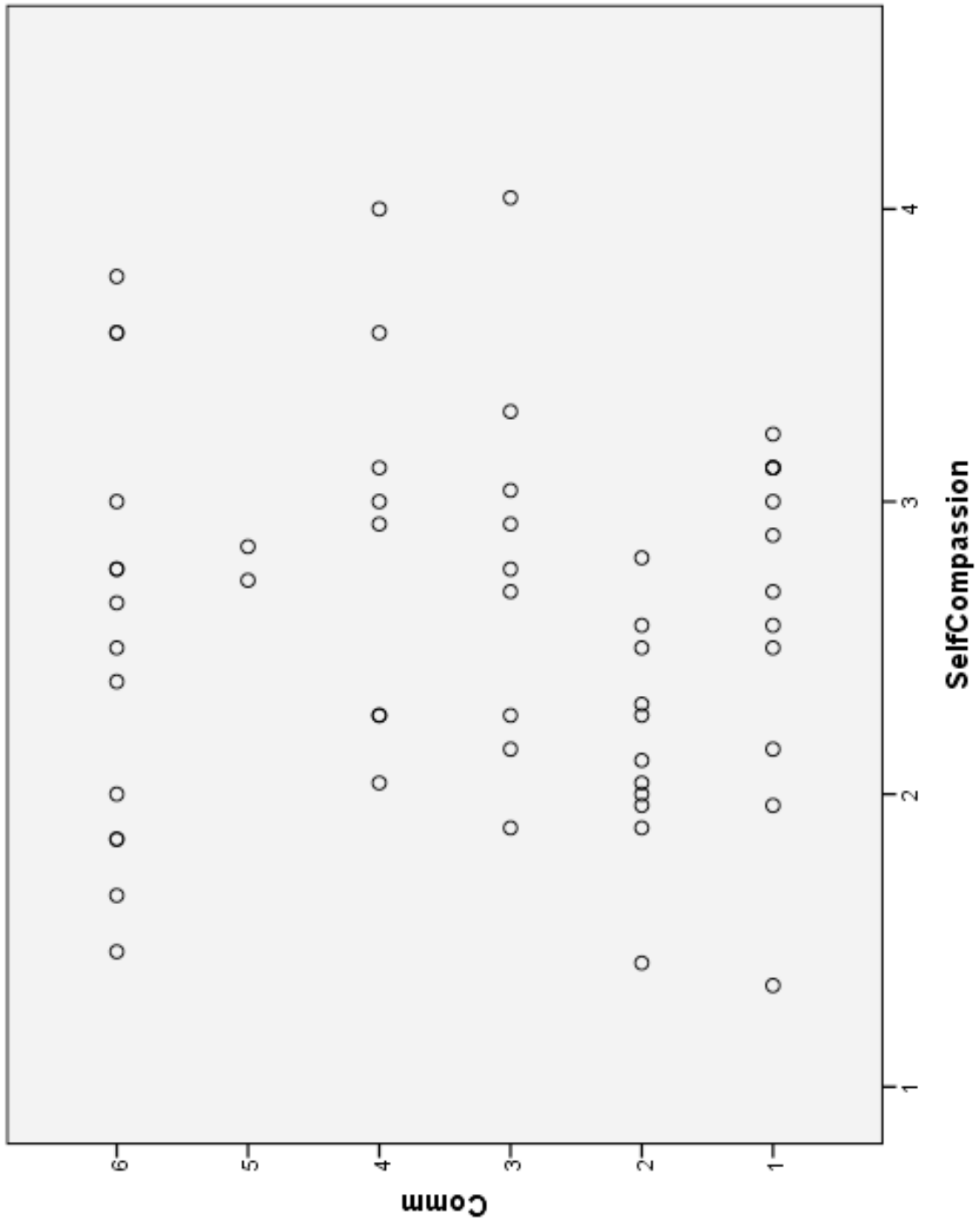*Correlation between Self-Compassion Scores and Time Spent in Supportive Communities*

Figure 3

Correlation between Overall LIWC High Self-Compassion Words and Self-Compassion
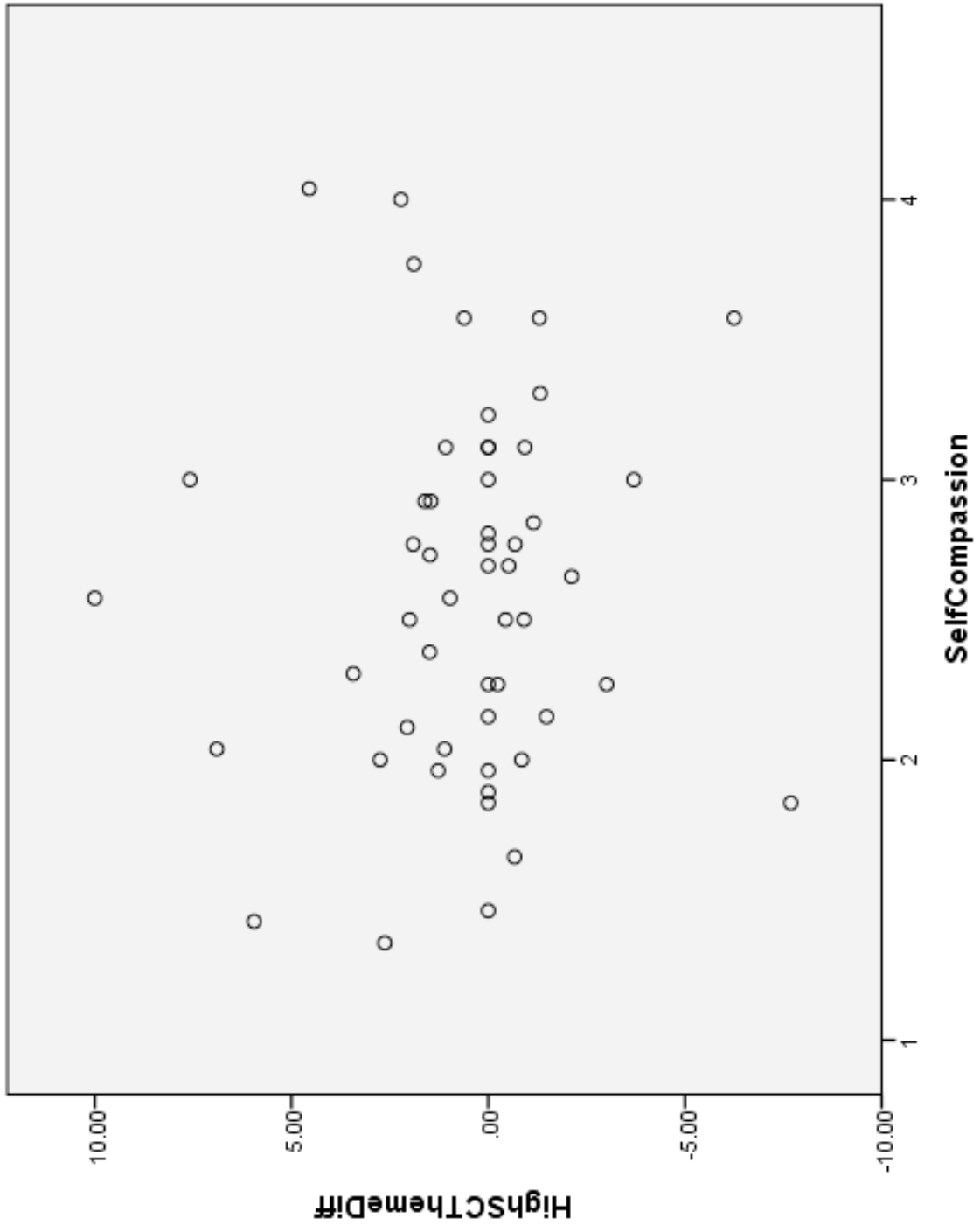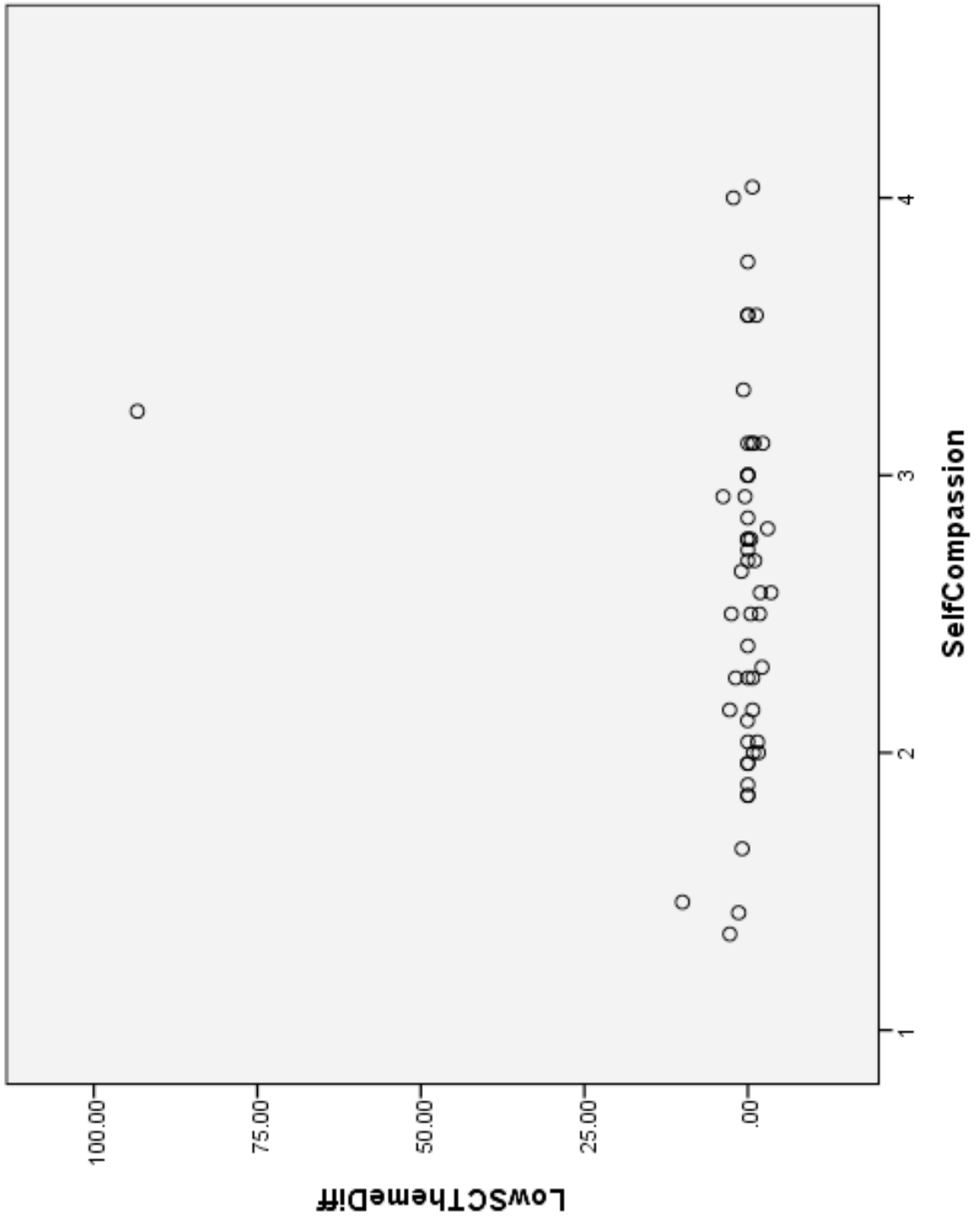
Scores

Figure 4

Correlation between Overall LIWC Low Self-Compassion Words and Self-Compassion

Scores

Appendix A

Standardized Recruitment E-mail

Hello!

We are looking for volunteers to write a little about themselves and their experiences with their LGBTQIA+ identities, and take a brief online survey.

The purpose of this study is to examine how LGBTQIA+ individuals relate to themselves over time, especially when faced with difficulties, and how their attitudes differ between participation in supportive communities.

The survey is online, quick, and completely anonymous.

There are three parts to the survey:

(1) Write about your first time being rejected for your LGBTQIA+ identity

(2) Write about your most recent time being rejected for your LGBTQIA+ identity

(3) On a scale of 1-5, respond to statements about how you treat yourself in difficult times.

Your participation should take approximately 15-30 minutes. While this study is specifically interested in LGBTQIA+ individuals, anyone is welcome to participate.

Thank you so much for your time,

Please click the link below if you are interested in being a part of this study:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LGBTQIA

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact

Constantine Dhonau at constantine.dhonau13@ncf.edu or Steven Graham at sgraham@ncf.edu

Appendix B

HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS MYSELF IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

Almost never				Almost always
1	2	3	4	5

_____ 1. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.

_____ 2. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.

_____ 3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.

_____ 4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.

_____ 5. I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.

_____ 6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.

_____ 7. When I'm down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.

_____ 8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.

_____ 9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.

_____ 10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.

_____ 11. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

_____ 12. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.

_____ 13. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.

_____ 14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.

_____ 15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.

_____ 16. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.

_____ 17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.

_____ 18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.

_____ 19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.

_____ 20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.

_____ 21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering.

_____ 22. When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.

_____ 23. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.

_____ 24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.

_____ 25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.

_____ 26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

Appendix C

Coding Key & Operational Definitions

AGE/TIME - any mention of age or time frame (high/middle school, younger, 15 etc.)
TEEN - any mention of being a teenager (midddle/high school, 17, etc.)

AUDIENCE (mdsofx) - Mom, Dad, S/O (significant other), Friend, Other
MOM (+/-) - outcome of mother's reaction
DAD (+/-) - outcome of father's reaction
S/O (+/-) - outcome of significant other's reaction
FRIEND (+/-) - outcome of friend's reaction
ONLINE (+/-) - outcome of online interactions
ENVIRO (+/-) - outcome of environmental influences on acceptance/identity
CHANGE VIEWS - any mention of the audience changing their views

UR WRONG - audience tells participant they are wrong
REFUSE BLV - audience does not believe participant
RETORT - audience retorts to participant (anything short of accepting language)
OTHER CONFUSED - any mention of the audience being confused at the disclosure of identity
THOUGHT THEY WOULD ACCEPT - any mention that participant believed the audience would accept them

RELIGION - any mention of religion
LOSE F/F - specifically mention losing contact with a friend or family member

Q? ID - any mention of participant questioning their identity
CONCEAL   - any mention of participant concealing their identity as an outcome of audience reaction
SELECTIVE - any mention of participant being selective about disclosing their identity
LGBT CONVO - using an LGBT conversation as an opportunity to disclose their identity
HETERO REL - any mention of being in a heterosexual relationship
SCHOOL - any mention of school as a descriptor of participant's response
CONFORM   - any mention of conformity as a descriptor of participant's response

Appendix D

First Narratives

Part #	First Negative Experience
2	I was told that I was just really some whore who wanted to make out with girls at parties for male attention
3	When I was in early high school, I told my long-term boyfriend at the time that I thought that I was attracted to women as well as men. I was incredibly nervous, especially because I thought maybe he wouldn't believe me since I was dating him and had never dated any women or indicated any attraction to him. The first thing he asked me was if I was attracted to Rachel Maddow (which is kind of funny in retrospect, but was strange at the time--- it is a lesbian stereotype to be attracted to Rachel Maddow). He then told me he was disappointed because now he was worried I'd leave him not just for men but for anyone. This same boyfriend ended up sexually assaulting me and abusing me for years--- an unfortunately common experience for bisexual women. Many men with abusive tendencies are threatened by bisexual/queer women.
4	I don't know if this qualifies, because I wasn't exactly out - I was mostly just really confused - but the summer before sixth grade, I was at a sleepover at my best friend's house. We were really close in the creepy way that lonely eleven-year-old girls can be, and she had told me the day before that one of her friends was gay. We were sharing the bed at her house, which we did pretty routinely, and it was probably two in the morning when the conversation turned around to that again. I told her that I wasn't sure if I was gay, that maybe I liked both genders, and though we had a friend at the time who was out as bisexual with whom we hung out all the time, she said that I was probably making it up, or that my feelings weren't real. I don't remember her exact words anymore, but it was something along the lines of "you should be sure by now, you should already know before you say something like that," and she just generally didn't believe me and sounded really angry about it. I didn't bring it up after that at all. I spent the next five years or so ignoring my feelings and telling myself I was straight, though I developed what probably seemed like a weird level of investment in any shows or books with bi or gay characters, and it took me weeks after I ended up in a relationship with a girl before I really believed that I was queer, and even longer before I was comfortable calling myself bisexual.
6	The third person I specifically came out to as bisexual was my father. When I first told him, he was silent for about twenty seconds, before he finally responded by saying that he didn't believe me. He thought that I must be doing a project for school or something. It was completely outside of his realm of understanding that I, his "son," could ever be anything but straight (or a man, but he still doesn't know about that). He told me that he didn't "agree" with it, as though my sexuality were an opinion, and that he would try his hardest to make sure that I married a woman. He also told me not to tell my mother--then proceeded to tell my mother a couple weeks from then, while I was gone, without letting me tell my own story. I'm still not over this.
7	I have not had this experience. I don't generally discuss my LGBTQIA+ identity with people who wouldn't approve of it. In fact I try to avoid interaction with these types of people as much as I can.
9	When I came out to my grandfather he was very disappointed. He didn't listen to me when I tried to explain what exactly queer meant. He immediately said "oh you're going through a phase". When I told him I wasn't, he started freaking out. He asked me why i choose to be gay (even though I repeatedly told him that I am not gay, I identify as queer). I told him it isn't a choice and this is just who I am. He said "now I will never have grandchildren!". That was ridiculous for a few reasons but first of all, if I have a partner later in life they could be a person who could have biological children with me. That isn't out of the question. On top of that, I am adopted. He knows about adoption. I could adopt kids if I wanted to. I told him all of this and he still said he didn't understand why I was doing this to him. I explained that I'm not doing it to anyone. This is who I am. I've accepted that he will never really understand and that he probably will never approve. But I can't change.
11	None. Nice
12	The first person I had told was my boyfriend of two years. He was shocked and thought that this was just an excuse for me to leave him, or that he was not enough for me, or that I did not want to be with him anymore. None of those things were true, and it put a severe strain on the both of us and our relationship. He became suspicious of me thinking of female-bodied humans attractive and would be extremely snarky, then self-conscious and it really did not make it any easier for me. I felt like I should have just kept it to myself, I felt like he thought I was a greedy pervert, it was just awful.
13	Most friends I have are supportive of my sexual identity as well as my relationship with my partner. However, my partner and I don't even have the ability to tell our parents about our identities/relationship for fear of their hurtful, shocked, and oppressive reactions. My partner would literally be at risk to be cut off financially from her parents, therefore not allowing her to continue her education or potentially not even having a place to live. We have already experienced disapproval without even vocalizing our identities. But, as a white, cis-gender woman, I would like to fully acknowledge that I am incredibly privileged in more ways than most.

14	I have never had a direct confrontation with someone who did not approve of my LGBTQIA+ identity. Thankfully in my life I have been surrounded by loving and supporting people. The only instance I can think of in which I felt like something happened directly because of my identity happened a couple years ago (high school). I had a very close friend who happened to be very religious (although I am an atheist, we got along really well). I had never formally "come out" but would talk to my friends about girls I had crushes on. Once I started dating my current partner, my friend and I began to drift apart. One day I saw that she had commented in support of a very hateful, anti-gay, religious post. After that I let all communication drop. It was sad. We were really good friends. She recently got married and I wasn't invited or anything (I mean, not that I expected to be). Just sad.
16	My mother, when I was 18. She told me I was mentally ill, among other things. Got physical over the next few weeks. Refused to let me dress in male clothing and still, two years later, hasn't come around to me being trans.
18	It was over thirty five years ago, and I don't remember all that much. I was starting college and I told a female friend I'd known in high school. We had been fairly close and spent a lot of time together. I spent the night at her house fairly often and her parents liked me. When I told her I was gay, it was like a switch was flipped. She said something about it being sick (I don't remember exactly) and we didn't stay in touch much after that. I remember being surprised because I had assumed a friend would be similar to me in thinking. I also concluded that she must not be a real friend and I moved on with my life, making other friends. It was sad, especially since nothing else had changed and I had enjoyed her company up until then.
22	The first person I ended up telling I was pan sexual was my boyfriend of 2 years. I sat him down and told him that I had known for awhile but I was in denial and too scared to tell anyone. He was very supportive at first and we went on our separate ways. For the next few days I didn't hear from him or see him. Finally he came back to school, but he was avoiding me. When I finally got him to talk to me he said that he couldn't be friends with let alone date someone who would willingly turn their back on god and live such a sinful life. It was frustrating because I didn't feel like I was turning my back in god and I thought that the kid had loved me.
25	I had wrote a letter to my parents at the age of 17, and I knew they would read it at a time when I was out of the house. The idea was that it would give them a few hours to process what I had told them, think about any questions they have for me, and to generally give them the time and space to grasp the situation. There's no doubt it was also useful for me to psych myself up, even if those few hours were the longest of my life. My dad immediately didn't wish to talk about it, and went into denial about it all. Apparently, he sounded depressed to my mum and didn't engage with me at all. After about 2 weeks, he finally sat me down and asked about the letter, and it became clear after a few questions that he was trying to ask why I wasn't normal. At that moment, my 'flight' response must have kicked in, as I just left the room and locked myself in my bedroom. He stood outside the door telling me to "face him like a man", and when I eventually did come out we ended up in the kitchen having an argument about it. He felt that gay people were judged in the same way as paedophiles, and that it was wrong and unnatural to be gay. My mum, who had a much more tolerant reaction than him, was stuck in the middle trying to defuse the situation. Eventually, it became clear that we had reached a stalemate, so we ended the conversation, and I stayed in my room all night crying. After that, it took him about 3 months before he would speak to me again, despite living in the same house. He even blanked me on my 18th birthday, which occurred two weeks after this coming out incident. He didn't, however, kick me out of the house, which I guess is the only positive thing I can take from it. It still didn't stop me feeling more trapped than ever, though.
26	My mother was the first who did not approve. It was a very challenging time as I was having a major depressive episode during my preparations for my qualifying exam for PhD candidacy. I was planning on taking a leave of absence and going home, but when I said I didn't want to live with my parents, my mom couldn't understand why. I told her I was gay on the phone and she later told me it was as if she was dying. She has very strong emotions sometimes, and it seems she honestly didn't consider the possibility I was gay. She knew I might have been sexually mature (only masturbation), but she assumed it was heterosexual, which is not surprising considering my first year of puberty I thought I was heterosexual and was caught by my parents viewing a website called "bikini.com". Even when I tried telling her my best friend from elementary school was also gay, she just started rationalizing this as bad influences, especially since I had recently started drinking with my labmates.
28	The second person I came out to is one of my closest friends. She comes from a conservative background and, although is genuinely OK with being around gay people (we are still close friends), believes it to be a choice. I have never confronted her about this, as I was (and am still) having a fairly huge amount of internalised homophobia. When I eventually told her why I was extraordinarily anxious and depressed, she said that it was OK, and that my choice won't affect our friendship. Although confusing at the time, her belief that it is a choice is one of the main reasons why I am still not out to most of my friends and family.
30	I mostly suffered from internal homophobia. I was the one that looked for a therapy to "change my sexual orientation". In my 20's the first person I told just thought it was a phase I was going through ".... after all gays are just dirty old men in their 50's that want to interfere with boys" We still remained friends as he thought I couldn't be gay.

31	I have chosen who to tell wisely enough that I have yet to run into to someone who explicitly "did not approve." My childhood friends, however did express that they considered it "wrong," "immoral," and that I was "going to Hell," but that they would still associate with me and treat me with kindness if I didn't care. Which I didn't, never having though much of Christianity. They mostly just didn't bring it up in my presence, but their constant anti-LGBT presence on social media sites eventually wore on me to the point that I simply began avoiding them. As such, we have slowly fallen out, and I for the most part now only associate myself with individuals that are either accepting or do not care who I might enjoy sleeping with.
32	I have never told someone that I am gay and had a negative initial reaction. I did, however, tell one of my roommates that I am gay, and while he had a positive initial reaction, he later told me that he believes that homosexuality is a mental disorder. He also insists that LGBTQIA+ issues are no different from the struggles each individual person will experience in their life and that homophobia is natural. Because of his extremely positive initial reaction and because he was the first person I told other than my therapist, psychiatrist, and doctor, it felt amazing to tell someone and have them be so supportive and accepting of me with regards to something that caused me to feel so much shame and disgust with myself for so many years. And every time I felt sad, depressed, or stressed about something, I could think about my roommate's reaction to me telling him, and I would immediately feel better. But now that he has started showing his true colors, I can no longer look back and reflect on coming out to him and feel better about myself or my situation.
34	Just before freshman orientation, I got a letter from one of the fraternities asking me to stop by their table during orientation. At first I was interested, but then I thought about how that would be a problem being in a frat and being gay. This was a small-ish university in a small-ish city in the bible belt. They had preachers on street corners frequently, occasionally even on campus. The local abortion clinic had been attacked. Not exactly the hotbed of tolerance, peace and love despite having a church on practically every street corner. My parents said I should at least check it out before deciding, so at orientation I walked by where all the frats and sororities had their booths set up. They all looked so hot, comfortable in their own skin and with each other. I knew right there I wouldn't be able to fit in and just kept walking. Later, someone called since I didn't stop by and I just said I appreciated the offer but didn't think I would be a good fit. As the semester got underway, my first friend I met was a guy in the first class I had. I talked to him some those first few days and he offered to work with me on our assignments. That was a relief! With the project assignments all set, after class I had a few minutes before I had to get to my next class so we swapped phone numbers to meet up later. Over the next few weeks as we worked together we got to know each other well. His mom had died earlier and was an only child and lived with his dad who was a contractor. As time went on, I noticed he would sometimes look at me differently, sit next to me when he could have sat across from me or whatever. I got the impression he was attracted to me and it made me nervous. He was a really nice person but was not someone I found attractive like I would have expected. He was a really overweight guy, but I thought that there has to be more that appearances for a real relationship so I decided to just let that go and see what happened. Finally one day in October we're at his house studying after lunch and need to take a break so he puts a video tape on--gay porn! He comes over to sit by me, we kissed and touched, then he asked how old I was, told him I would be 18 on Halloween. After that we studied a little more, but then it was time for me to head back home for dinner. I was up in the clouds and scared at the same time. On my birthday when I showed up for class he gave me a present. It was the first time someone did that for me. Sadly, I do not know now what the gift was. He said we can celebrate later… and I had a pretty good idea of what that meant. Birthdays in my family were usually low key events with a few presents, a favorite meal for dinner and mom would bake and decorate a cake. As we moved through the holidays, my boyfriend had the idea we should go to the symphony. We got box seats and rented tuxes and made that our Christmas present to each other. For my parents' sake, we just said we wanted to go, and since he had gotten box seats it was expected to wear a tux so they were ok with me renting one and it wasn't very expensive (then again, I wasn't really paying the credit card bill). Of course we were a little over the top, but we didn't care; we were certainly the only two in tails. It was ridiculously fun being the youngest guys in the box seats and people checking out our clothes, probably wondering if we were a couple or related or whatever. It had to be scandalous, and was hard to keep a straight face the whole evening, but the music was enjoyable. A few months later we were shopping at the mall and he found a print that he really liked, so I decided to have it framed for him for his birthday that was coming up. I couldn't believe I was spending that much money, but was really falling for this guy and didn't care. He said it was too much and should be a gift for us both but we could call it a birthday present too. I said he would have to keep it at his place in his bedroom so we could both enjoy looking at it when we got together. It was a painting of a sailing ship on the stormy ocean… little did I know that would be a prophetic image of the coming months. Once the bill for that painting came in the mail, I got a lot of grief from my parents about spending that much money on a friend for his birthday. They were paying all my expenses, and I really should have asked if it was ok but I also knew that if I did they would want to know why I felt I needed to buy that kind of present for a friend's birthday. I played it off as wanting to do something nice since he had lost his mom so they let it go with that. They didn't say anything to him, because they liked him and felt bad that he had lost his mom to cancer.

34 cont.

It's almost the end of the second semester in early May. I'm getting worried because I had a 4.0 GPA my first semester and made the Presidents' List, but there was no way I would have a repeat performance. Against my advisor's wishes I had signed up for a class with my boyfriend that we were both interested in but weren't really ready for, it was a junior level course we took as an elective. I ended up with a C+ for the course but managed to keep a GPA over 3.0 for the semester with my other courses. My parents were ok with that as long as they knew I was putting in my best effort.   The first summer semester was an unmitigated disaster. We were getting way too involved with each other and not focusing enough time on our studies. I was really struggling with some of my courses. He was starting to pressure our relationship, wanting to go to the next level of intimacy, but that really scared me since we had no resources on what to do safely. Finally he talked me into taking a road trip out of town for the day. Our ruse for our parents was a Shakespeare festival, but the real plan was to shack up in a motel. I waited in the car while he checked us into a room. This was back in Alabama in '91 so sodomy laws were still on the books and we had to keep everything on the down-low or get busted and put in jail. We spent the day and evening holed up in the motel room, just went out for a bite of food. We really had no idea what we were doing; this was before the internet and didn't have anyone to ask questions about anything.   After that, we continued getting together at his place. Since his dad was never around during the day we had the place to ourselves, until of course, one day his dad showed up with someone to get some supplied stored on their property to use at the job they were working on. We had been in his bedroom and never heard them. I got up to use the bathroom and happened to catch voices and sounds outside while I was in there and peeked out the curtain and saw his dad and someone else right outside. I could have sworn we made eye contact and I freaked out. I went back to the bedroom and told him we had to get out of there, got dressed immediately, then we heard the back door slam. This was not going to end well, I just knew it. I kept thinking 'Someone is going to get hurt, the only question is who and if it would be physical on top of emotional.'   As we came down the hallway from his bedroom, his dad stepped out of the kitchen and told me to get out and never come back to his house again. I apologized and said I meant no disrespect and got out the front and in my car as fast as I could. My boyfriend was arguing with his dad and came running after me. I just rolled down the window and said I had better get out of there and we would talk later. I was so upset and scared I didn't even remember driving home. As I pulled into the driveway at home, I panicked again, wondering what I would walk into. Would his dad have called my parents already? I forced myself to pull it together before I walked in, got just a quick question from mom about how did the studying go, and I said I had a few things still to work on and would be in my room. After a while the phone rang and I nearly vomited on myself, I was so nervous that it would be his dad telling my parents what he saw and heard. Turned out it was my boyfriend calling to talk to me. He was filling me in on what happened after I left, his dad was pissed that we would do that in his house and disrespect his mother's memory that way. His dad had forbidden him for having contact with me again, so he had to sneak a phone to his bedroom to call me. When he told him we had classes together he said if we couldn't keep it to just being classmates he better drop the classes for the semester. Next my boyfriend was telling me we should stop hiding everything and get our own place. Neither of us had a job, so how would keep a full course load at school and work enough to pay for housing? He just wanted us to be together. I understood emotionally how he felt, but knew it was totally irresponsible, besides the fact I was terrified of coming out to my parents.   Now, granted my parents never talked about sex or anything like that growing up. But they also always made a point of telling both me and my sister that they always loved us no matter what happened and that we could always come to them with any questions or if there were anything we needed help with and they would support us the best they could. Not specifically about sex, just the general parental unconditional love speech we take for granted.   So, after him pressuring me to come out, I told him what my parents always told us growing up and he managed to convince me that they wouldn't treat me the same as his dad treated him. So, I decided to take the plunge and came out. Memories are blocked in my mind now, so I can't remember if he was there with me or not. I don't think so, maybe I was wishing he had been so much that my mind wired that in somehow. Anyway, I told my parents I always had been different, how my friend from church had introduced me to sex and that I loved my boyfriend. Mom was in tears and didn't believe what I was saying. Dad was angry that I would bring someone under his roof like that and lie to them and probably do those evil things under his roof. Both were furious that I would bring our church friends into this discussion; they were good people, and it was just a phase we went through when that stuff happened. I locked myself in my room for hours and cried and ached like I never have before or since. Later that evening, they told me they love me but for my own good they had to forbid me having contact with my boyfriend. They said if I couldn't abide their rules then I would have to support myself, they would not tolerate that kind of behavior under their roof. My whole world crashed in on me at that point. I was really being forced to choose between being honest with myself -- which meant I would have to find a way to take care of myself and put myself through school -- or I could deny who I really was and continue living under their roof, eating their food, and having their money pay for college. I was an 18 year old who had never worked (my parents discouraged us from working to instead focus on our studies) and always wanted to have a college degree to be able to make a decent life away from home, and who had hidden his true feelings as best he could for over 6 years already and just wanted to find happiness in life outside of school, it was an impossible decision to make.

34 cont.	So I asked them if I could have time to think about things, they said OK take a couple days and figure out what I wanted to do. I called my boyfriend, fortunately his dad was not home and I got through. He kept trying to get me to go with him. I was so scared of leaving my family, being cut off, not having a home, not being able to continue college, what would happen to us being openly together (remember this was '91 not '14 and a lot has changed thankfully in 23 years). I told him I needed time to think. My sister came home from work and talked to me after she learned what happened. She said she didn't really care if I was gay, she didn't understand it, but that it was killing mom and dad; she said I knew dad was in bad health and this could really be bad for him, and if something happened to him it would be my fault. Again, I was floored; she's telling me to my face that if dad can't deal with his son being gay and has a heart attack or something then it's my fault, and implied that it's unforgivable. The next day I couldn't cope with any of it anymore. For a short time I may have even contemplated suicide. Being religious I couldn't bring myself to seriously think like that, but I really did want everything to just be over already. Finally, by early afternoon I couldn't handle it anymore, told my mom they won and I'd break up with my boyfriend. I went to my room and called him to tell him my decision. He was upset and hurt, and then was angry with my parents for doing this. He begged me to not break up and that we could figure out someplace to live so we could be together. I hope I told him I loved him, but I had to end the call because I was hurting so badly. Something in him snapped and apparently he lost it as I hung up the phone. We got off the phone and I felt the worst pain I have ever felt in my life. (A few years ago I had an inguinal hernia operation; that was less painful than how I felt in the days after I came out to my parents and faced their scorn.) I went and told my parents it was over and they said I made the right decision and were sorry I was hurting. Maybe they were, but I knew they were particularly pleased that they had won and saved me from damnation. In less than an hour the doorbell was ringing and someone was beating on the door yelling. It was my now ex-boyfriend! He was adamant that I come out to talk to him, my parents refused to open the door or let me near it. I yelled for him to just leave it alone and go home but he kept begging me to be with him. While this was going on, dad called 911 and told them he had permits and a gun closet with rifles and handguns that he could use. They told him the sheriff's deputies were on the way and keep the guns locked away unless we were in immediate danger. About that time my boyfriend stopped pounding on the door and got in his car. I thought he was leaving, but instead he backed out to the road and then rammed his car into the front door several times. He heard sirens approaching and took off down the street. The deputies stopped and arrested him at the end of the street, then came to the house for our statements. I was nearly a basket case at the thought of telling a deputy what happened. I tried answering in vague terms about who he was which was, of course, a red flag and the deputy figured out immediately he was my boyfriend and that went straight into the police report. I didn't realize until later that the police report would come back to haunt me sooner than I ever expected. By that point I had missed several days of classes and was completely drained emotionally, mentally and physically. There was no way I could go back and face questions from professors, friends and classmates so I dropped my classes for the summer to take a break and pull myself together. I did not realize at the time, what I was really doing was crawling back into my closet. This time I sealed the door shut with concrete, built a window so I could see out, and cut a hole in the floor as a trap door in case I would ever escape the hell I had chosen to live. I spent most of the summer locked away in my room. I barely talked to anyone, had trouble eating meals with the family, and would pig out on junk food other times. I was stress eating, gaining weight, and didn't care -- why should I care what I look like when I can't be me and be with a man I had fallen in love with. When I started back in the fall, I tried to keep to myself and avoid anyone I already knew, I was afraid someone had figured out that I had a boyfriend and would ask what happened to him and why I had dropped my summer classes.
35	The first time I told a non-approving person was around a year and a half ago. The school we went to was run by the same administration and had the same name but the buildings were on opposite sides of the road, and I got to know him through a play that our schools were jointly putting up. He's a fairly devout Christian and thinks that homosexuality is unnatural, but he didn't say too much about it. The reason for coming out to him was that his best friend also happened to be a very close friend of mine and he wanted to know if we were a couple. He didn't really say anything much, but his attitude seemed to say that he thought I was just making excuses and avoiding his questions about his best friend (I was out to the friend already) When we were in school we used to have a busking group and just go onto the street and play music. The group comprised me, this guy, the best friend, my younger brother, and two other friends. Since some of us moved out of the state for college, we've just had one "reunion" thing and I've noticed then that he doesn't really mind talking to me if he has to, though in all the months we hadn't seen each other, the only time he spoke to me was when he was asking about some violence that took place in my university that was on national news. Basically he talks to me if the situation requires it, and we've never spoken about my orientation since then, but he doesn't approve of homosexuality, I know this for sure because I've seen him saying homophobic things on social media. But in front of me he doesn't say anything really, and actually it seems like he's maturely agreed to disagree and just doesn't talk about it because he knows we will never see eye to eye.

36	I had a friend once who had supported me when I got depressed. We were fairly close. This was before I knew that I was pansexual and transgender. Eventually, I started to question things. Other events happened, and we lost touch for a while. During the time that we weren't talking, I questioned more and more until I came to the conclusion that I am definitely transgender and bisexual at the very least. We started talking again after I'd known this for a few months. I was up front with him about it, telling him how I felt and what I was, and laying out all the things that I'd discovered about myself, and told him that it was up to him to decide whether we tried to recommence a friendship. He was very religious and had opinions about LGBTQIA+, which I knew he felt strongly about, but he'd seemed to be changing to become more understanding as he interacted with more people in that group, finally starting to understand that it might not be a choice after all. I knew that establishing a friendship would be difficult, which is why I left it up to him to decide. He agreed to continue the friendship, so we talked for a while, and everything was as normal. However, every time the subject of my gender issues specifically came up, it got awkward. I kept those conversations to a minimum, but there was one time when he made a comment about how even though he knew I was a man, I was thinking like a woman, and he pressed that point. I told him that I am a man and tried to explain that being told that I'm like a woman is hard on me. He agreed that he shouldn't have said it, and things seemed to be okay, until a few days later, he randomly told me that he thought it would be better for us to not be friends anymore and to not talk. So... yeah, that was the end of that.
37	The first negative reaction I encountered was in telling my ex partner. He is the father of my children and has always been one to make homophones jokes and is particularly nasty when making reference to gay men. I felt I had to tell him as my entire family including my children knew about my new relationship and it wasn't fair to ask them to keep it a secret. I choose to tell him by phone as I think I just wanted the safety of distance. I told him in a straight forward manner. He responded by telling me that my partner who he had previously believed to be my friend looked like a man and that if I wanted someone who looked like that I should just be with a man. He then told me that I was ruining the lives of our children and that he was disgusted by me. He then hung up the phone. Honestly it was not that upsetting because I knew this would likely be his reaction. I left it be and made no attempt to speak to him. A few days later he called back to discuss the children and sounded very strange. Over time things have settled down almost back to normal. He has never apologized and I guess his reaction will always put a wedge between us.
40	The first time I ever "came out" was at 14, I had started dating another girl (happily) and came out to my mother, she automatically rejected me, laughing in my face saying I was just "going through a phase" she would take me to a handful of LGBT meetings/support groups that I had heard about through my high school but Only cooperated for malicious purposes so she could mock me even more, to this day she brings it up whenever she see's me "remember when you thought you liked girls?! That was so stupid" her automatic hateful reaction towards me caused me to essentially go "back in" to the closet with a quick "never mind I only like boys lets not talk about my "phase" " I had no idea my own mother would hate me so much for how I identify....
41	I have never had a person immediately disapprove of me being gay once they found out. Typically, it's after the fact. I remember that I started to come out to my friend's in 8th grade. No one freaked at the moment, but it started to change a few things. There was one girl who, within a few months of finding out, said that she didn't like who I was becoming. I remember being outside in the garden thinking "How could she say that? I am not any different." I thought it was really crappy of her. Honestly, I would have rather she just told me the minute she found out. That false hope for retaining those friends was not appreciated.
43	I lived in a state of denial about both my gender and sexual identity (sexual coming first, with gender only being accepted a few years ago). When I realised my sexual orientation, I was shy for the most part about telling people, mainly my family. While I told my mother and she at times is supportive, other times I experience hearing heteronormative statements made about me, that essentially invalidates my identity as a queer person. My gender identity was totally shot down by her when I made a very quick remark about not being a cis-female while I was in a state of hysteria (I was having a panic attack). Most other times I can recall, people--including close friends--have 'forgotten' my queer orientations and passively invalidated them.
44	Over this past winter break (December 2014) my girlfriend came home with me to spend the night. My parents had met her before as my close friend and did not know we were dating. My mom saw her and I kiss through a window and kept quiet about it for a day or two, then confronted me about it. She came into my room crying and telling me how uncomfortable she was that I was dating a girl. She said she didn't believe in bisexuality and that I shouldn't be wasting my time, or hers. My mom said "at least it's not cancer" and that she wished I were not this way. She said it made her stomach turn and it was disgusting. Then she told me she was not homophobic. It's been about a month since then and she has yet to verbally acknowledge that my girlfriend and I are anything more than friends.
45	When I told my dad aged about 20 years old. I told him I was very very confused about what I was feeling, and wanted his advice because of the distress I was feeling as a result. All I could say was that I was not straight, but not sure if bi or gay. He then asked me questions about who I masturbate to, what dreams I have. After that he then said that it was probably a phase, and that homosexuality is due to conditioning, and is something which is learnt. I felt that my feelings were completely undermined, and doubted them.

46	I told the person I was dating that I thought I was asexual. I'd been thinking about it for a long time, months, maybe longer. I thought of everything to try to prove to myself that I wasn't asexual. But finally I accepted it, and it was a huge relief. After worrying about it for so long, it felt good to admit it to myself. And I wanted to tell my significant other, because we'd had problems in out relationship due to me not being interested in physical intimacy. He said, "Are you sure? It didn't seem like it when we first started dating." I'd been forcing myself to try to be a sexual person. I told him so. "Maybe it's your hormones. Didn't you recently switch birth controls?" I'd been feeling this way my entire life. "Well I don't think you're asexual." And just like that, all the confidence I had from finally figuring out my sexuality and starting to accept myself and finally admit that there was nothing wrong with me, all of it was gone. And I spent another few months hating myself all over again.
48	I was sitting at the table with my friends and they were discussing their acceptance of transgender people. Two out of the three said they would be fully accepting and would treat a transgender person how they would treat any other person, using the correct pronouns etc. however the other friend said that transgender people were disgusting, obviously i was offended as i am questioning my gender and know for certain i am not cis gender, so I sort of blanked him for a while, and when he asked me 'what's up?' I told him that he thought i was disgusting, at which point i was crying because this guy was my best friend. At the time he apologised and sounded really guilty and said that he did not mean the words he said, however after a while, we started to become more distant until eventually we went our separate ways. He did not do anything horrible such as out me to everyone, and even now he seems friendly towards me, but i could not stay friends with someone who finds transgender people disgusting.
49	I don't quite remember the first time that I told someone that I was queer and received a negative reaction. I grew up in the south and the environment towards my natural disposition is not a welcoming; I hid in reaction. I did not feel comfortable in my sexual identity until I came here to school.
51	My gender identity is the one that comes to mind. The biggest problem was the other person was stuck heavily in binary-centric labels. "No, you have to be a guy or a girl." "What do you mean you're not either that's not possible!" And other phrases came up a lot. This actually set the trend for negative coming outs in the future.
52	When I was 12 or 13 and first considering the possibility that I may be attracted to women as well as men, I asked my parents what they thought of bisexuality. They have both always been incredibly supportive of my siblings and I, and have made it clear that they will accept us lovingly, regardless of our sexual orientation. Much to my surprise, when I asked my mom what she thought of bisexuals, she said, "You are either gay or you are straight, there is no in-between and you can't be both. Bisexuals just don't know what they want or they are trying to get attention." This, of course, made me shy away from coming out for a long time. More than that, it made me think that I just didn't know what I wanted and needed to figure it out before I told anyone. The most supportive and accepting person I had ever known, my incredible mother, wouldn't accept me as bisexual. I think, at that point, I thought of her statement less as discriminatory and more as fact. Her advice played, and still plays, such an important role in my development that I took her word as gospel and tried to label myself one way or another for a long time. I tried to learn from her words, rather than rebel against them. Even now, several years later and being comfortably out of the closet, I question myself occasionally because of that statement. My mom has since come around and is extraordinarily accepting of me, but I won't ever be able to forget that. In a lot of ways, I think it is easier to come out of the closet as gay than as bisexual, because there is a stigma on bisexuality that is very much alive within the global gay and lesbian community.
53	This survey and its expectations are extremely uncomfortable. I do not tell people who I don't already know will approve, so this does not apply to me.
57	my mom did not approve when she found out and called it unnatural and manipulative
60	Nobody has openly not approved when I told them (but this is selective, because I only tell people who matter to me and who I am confident can handle the information)
61	I have not told anyone about my identities who did not approve
63	I was still in the closet in 9th grade. I had been exploring the LGBT community more and more through friends, websites, etc when I asked my closest friend what they thought about gay people. Her first response was that it was icky and that she didn't get it. I kept asking questions for her to justify herself, but a lot of it came down to she thought it was gross. No religion involved, just the idea didn't sit right with her. As I kept asking questions I got more and more agitated and defensive, until she asked why I cared so much. I didn't answer, until she asked me if I was gay and I shook my head yes. After that point we barely talked again. She did, however, promise not to tell our mutual friends, which promptly put me back into the closet. I moved away a year later.
64	I have never had a time where coming out was a negative experience.
67	I haven't had any really bad coming out experiences, yet (hope it stays this way). When I told my Mom she cried and wasn't happy about it but she came around since
69	I've never had this experience and it's a false assumption that every queer person has.

74	I was outed in my class (junior year) when someone found my tumblr. It was horrible, but when I told my parents, they were very supportive and had already figured it out.
77	fuck u
80	I have never had this experience, except for an ex-boyfriend who told me he was concerned about multiple exes of his coming out as bisexual, and that was more about his own insecurities than about me. Typical.
90	I haven't told anyone who wouldn't approve yet.
98	This has never happened to me.
99	I have never had a bad experience coming out. I am out in my daily life, but people I don't know don't care. To those I am close to, it doesn't matter.
101	This has never happened in my experience.
102	Actually, everyone I've told has been pretty accepting once I explained what "demisexual" means. I don't have a sob story for you.
103	I grew up in a very conservative town with very conservative parents. From the time I was ten-years-old or so I experienced gender dysphoria, although that was before the age of the internet so I did not harbor the vocabulary to express what I was feeling -- I did not hear the term "transgendered" until I was in college. Still, when I was twelve I tried to tell my mother I wasn't a girl (my birth gender). She only took this as though I was a tomboy (which was how I presented myself at the time), though. A few years later I tried again, but to no avail. I don't blame my mom; I question whether or not she had ever met an "out" transgendered individual given where we live(d).
104	When I have told people about my identity, no one has necessarily disapproved. I have never experienced someone refusing to be my friend or have any contact with me because of my queer identity. However, in spring of 2014 I had to deal with one of my childhood friends telling me how she was sad that I was living a "gay lifestyle" and I was on a path of destruction. We talked for a while, and had to conclude that we disagree about the topic. We are still friends and everything between us is good. It was hard for a while, but now she just accepts that I live my life how I want, and I don't feel uncomfortable telling her about it anymore.
107	That's never really happened aside from a couple people on the internet being dicks. Don't be so presumptuous.
109	I've only had one negative reaction, but I didn't come out to this person. My friend did for me. She said some gross stuff like, "What's the point of a vagina without a dick?" She just kept going on about how she couldn't believe anyone could be gay. It was just very uncomfortable.
122	I mean, most people are totally cool with it. My main thing is that ask an Asexual, hearing "Okay, but you might change your mind," from my mom from time to time isn't a lot of fun.... I mean, she was only doing it because she wanted me to be safe when I went off to college, but I really don't need to research places to get condoms on campus if I would NEVER CONSIDER HAVING SEX.
125	Originally, I didn't identify as asexual, because I didn't have the words for that yet, so I thought I was bisexual. I had to speak to someone about it so I chose my best friend. I was 14 at the time, and she identified as a lesbian so I thought she'd agree or you know be supportive. She wasn't. She told me I had to chose and that bisexual girls just wanted attention and didn't actually like both, that you couldn't like both. She continued to tell me that I would never find someone if I identified this way for long. I was devastated and thought I must be broken somehow.
128	Well, I first came out to my mother when I was 19. It's not that she wasn't disapproving but she didn't know what to think about it. I'm not sure if that counts. The first real time I came out to someone who really didn't approve was when I came out to my father. He is a religious man, which is funny considering he never goes to church, and he told me he loved me but disapproved of my "sin". It was the hardest thing to do in my life because I had the greatest friendship with my dad. I had taken his side for the longest time and considered my identity sinful and a cross to bear in life. I look back at it and I find it disgusting that I pretended to be someone else. Honestly, not much has changed about me other than the fact I have dropped religion and accepted my sexual identity. Anyway, my father still is disapproving and it will take his lifetime to make any progress most likely.
129	I've actually never had anyone disapprove. I've had people be very confused, or not quite understand what pansexuality is, but I've never had a negative reaction.

131	My mother, for my sexuality. So this was back about 8 months ago now, when I hadn't yet realized my gender identity. At the time I was still unsure of my feelings and where I fit in the LGBT+ community, but I knew I liked girls. And I was hesitantly calling myself a lesbian, or bisexual, depending on the day. I had already come out to my best friend, a few weeks prior, and he was amazingly accepting, and being at home for the summer, it was really stressing me out living in the closet, so I decided that for my mental health I needed to come out to my mom. And I came out on the 5th of June 2014. Just after I finished my sophomore year of college. I told my mother separately from my father, because I had hoped this would bring us closer. She frequently lamented over the fact that I was closer to my dad, so I figured this would be a nice gesture. Showing her how I value her opinion and that want to make amends. I also had assumed that she not only new, but would be completely accepting, as over the course of my life she frequently made statements such as, "we'll love you no matter what," directed at my brother and myself whenever an LGBT+ topic was raised. But when I came out, not only did I learn that she hadn't anticipated it, but also that she wasn't completely okay with it. I told her like girls, and guys to a certain extent as well, and her first reaction was shock, and then she began crying about the future judgements her friends would have. But once I knew that she didn't know, I was more patient and forgiving of her slip ups. She asked many inappropriate questions, claimed I couldn't be "a lesbian" because I didn't fit the stereotype. The day after I came out she then told me it was just a phase, all the while she told me she was accepting and she loved me. She was obviously not okay with it, and this unspoken disapproval really hurt, and my doubts over my identity intensified as a result. Making me more hesitant to tell my father. I was patient all summer long and basically relived the same conversation on repeat. I often comforted her about her woes of judgements of others, and tried to steer her towards resources but she was very reluctant. I tried to brush off her statements claiming my attraction to women was what all girls feel (which was incredibly difficult has I was trying to sort through my own doubts). I talked with her a lot about it, she was trying. About a month later I told my dad because I knew she needed someone else to talk to, and it went really well, but my mother continued to ask inappropriate questions and say problematic things. I would stop her and correct her to the best of my ability. But sometimes I'd be so exhausted, I'd just let the comments slip by and not even notice my frustration building beneath the surface. Once in awhile I'd snap at my mom when she said something completely unrelated to LGBT+ things because of this pent up frustration, and then get lectured by my dad about respecting my mother, but he had no idea the things she was saying when he wasn't around. The last thing she said in late August before she finally began to apologize and make an effort was, "What would people think if both of our kids were gay?" That statement I couldn't even respond to because it was so horrific for me. I thought she was finally accepting and then those words showed me that she still felt so much shame about my identity. I was exhausted from trying to help her understand for the duration of the summer, and I was done trying to make an effort. Even after I received her apology letter via email once I returned to University I couldn't quite forgive her. And it wasn't until I came out of a period of 2 month situational depression when I learned that she had gone to therapy and told her friends I'm "a lesbian" that I was able to forgive her.
132	Well, I suppose that would be telling my husband that I am gay. He was the third person I ever told. First was my therapist and second was a very close friend who has been an important part of my life since I was five years old. My therapist and my friend were (and continue to be) amazingly supportive. Understandably, it was much more difficult for my husband to hear that news.I don't know if "did not approve" is the best overall description. He mostly refuses to acknowledge that I'm gay or refuses to acknowledge that me being gay means anything important for our marriage. Since I told him he has pretty consistently treated me quite poorly in new and awful way (it has included sexual intimidation and physical intimidation--which were not at all a part of our marriage before I came out to him). He also quite frequently yells terrible things at me, he did a little of this before I came out, but it feels like it has been fully unleashed since I came out to him. We have two very young children (ages 1 and 4) and are in the middle of getting divorced. The divorce is happening at my insistence because of my sexual orientation, but honestly our marriage was pretty miserable before I figured out that I'm gay. Much of his bad behavior toward me probably is more deeply rooted in the fact that I want a divorce, but my sexual orientation is for sure part of the mix too. Regarding my husband's reaction specifically to my sexual orientation--lately he mostly ignores it and tells me that I should have been more directive with him about the bad behavior he was engaging in as our marriage was becoming rocky (before I knew I was gay) and says I should have told him to improve or I would leave and then we should have worked hard together to save our marriage. When I point out that we are getting divorced because I'm gay, not because of his bad behavior, he either point-blank tells me he doesn't care that I'm gay, or kind of condescendingly tells me that he's not mad at me for being gay. Both feel awful. He very much wants us to stay married and regularly tells me that I'm doing terrible things to our family. For me, I am soooooo convinced that I am incapable of being emotionally healthy married to him. Divorce is awful, for our kids too of course, but I believe divorce is the best chance I have at being able to offer my kids an emotionally health mother.So I'm doing it. \
134	I am still in the coming out process, and as I am only out to around 15 people, I have been lucky enough not to come across anyone who wasn't accepting.

135	Came out at 15 to two friends while camping in boy scouts. One was talking about some same sex experience he had and the other was my crush. I thought it was safe. Neither one reacted however one eventually outed me in boy scouts (which I quit shortly after) and then by junior year I was outed in high school. I was severely abused (verbally and physically) those last two years. I had a boyfriend but he was so worried about being outed he did not really help me. At one point in senior year a football player found out and would assault me at the beginning of history class in front of the teacher who did nothing.
136	I was trying to broach the subject with my mother. She is very much in the Christianity that focuses of hating everyone different sect. I was talking about marriage equality and she was very combative; I think she saw the path I was on. The conversation got just to the point where I could have come out, like I was planning on, but I don't need her hate directed toward me. She made her choice then and there that she didn't want to know me. She lost the privilege of knowing her daughter.
138	I am very sure before I tell the person that they will not be critical
139	he was my best friend. I got confused and thought he could be gay, and i told him. he reacted by giving me the cold shoulder, never again answering my calls or texts.
141	One of my classmates last year was not accepting of who I was. I was very lucky to be surrounded by supportive people for most of my childhood, so I'd never really experienced this problem before. We were in the same cohort of scholarship receivers, so we saw each other a lot. We were talking one day, and the topic of gay marriage came up. He told me he did not approve of it. He then asked me of my opinion, so I told him I was for it, but probably I'm biased because I'm a lesbian. He told me logically he was okay with that, but that according to his religion it was a sin. After that, he refused to talk any more on the topic, and has not talked to me since.
142	I guess it was my mother when i was a teenager. I was around 14 and mentioned that I had same sex attractions, in particular noticing the male underwear models on men's underwear packaging. She didn't exactly "not approve" but white washed my statements with "it is normal to have these feelings as a teenager"-- apparently she had her own crushes on girls when she was a teenager. I felt relieved that I "was not gay" (after all I was not like those guys waltzing down Castro St. in drag)--I grew up near San Francisco. This was around 1974 and society was still seeing being gay as a mental illness. I therefore hid my feelings and dated girls in a sort of clumsy, ineffectual way. I didn't really come out to myself again until was around 30, and even then I just said to myself, no this cannot be, it is unacceptable to be gay--also the AIDS crisis was at its peak and there was no cure. I got married and now 22 year later have come out to my wife--she is not very accepting either for obvious reasons. There was no hate, but a lot of missconceptions--the hate was my own directed inwards.
143	While i have not yet told anyone literally that I'm gay, I once was dating a boy. On purpose I did not hide it from my mom, or family, as I wanted to see her reaction. Thanks to this, I discovered my mom is completely against homosexuality, and has since shown homofobic behaviour. It also served as a way of preparing her for when I decide to tell her. Recently, indirectly i have received signs from other relatives, family members (cousins, aunts) that they are O.K. With it. Mom doesn't seem to have changed her position, she seems to have refuge in religion.
	67 Total First Narratives

Appendix E

Most Recent Narratives

Part #	Most Recent Story
3	This is not exactly that my therapist did not approve, but she did not believe me when I first told her I was bisexual. Since I am a survivor of relationship violence by a man... it is a stereotype that women who survive relationship violence and claim to be bisexual aren't actually. It is instead believed that they are scared or sick of men and are trying to force attraction to women. I had to tell my therapist that I have gone on dates and had sexual experiences with woman for her to believe me. This was particularly frustrating for me because she is a lesbian and has told me she is a lesbian. I thought as another member of the LGBTQIA+ community she would be more open and understanding immediately about my orientation. Being met with skepticism from her was hurtful.
4	The people I know generally approach my identity with a sort of salutary neglect - I don't discuss it often, and they assume that they don't have any input of note. The last time someone said something hurtful or exclusionary to me directly that I recall was right around when I came out to my father as something other than straight (I still haven't discussed my gender identity with him). About two weeks after I came out to my mother, I came out to my dad, who was living about two hours away at the time. I called him at around nine at night, and said something like "Dad, I'm kinda gay," because I didn't want to go into the confused details of my relationship or identity at the time; he told me that I would probably grow out of it, and that I furthermore shouldn't "reject" men, and that I didn't need to be different for the sake of being different. The next time he came to visit us, he took me aside and said "it's okay to be gay, but don't be *stridently* gay," and when I asked him what he meant he provided the definition of "strident." I felt like he was ashamed of me, or refused to understand or respect my identity, but I was simultaneously pretty disinterested in his opinion. All the people I knew who lived near me where much more supportive, including all my classmates and teachers.
7	I have not had this experience. I don't generally discuss my LGBTQIA+ identity with people who wouldn't approve of it. In fact I try to avoid interaction with these types of people as much as I can.
9	I recently came out on my tumblr. My followers were generally extremely supportive and wonderful throughout the process. But I did get a few anonymous messages that were hateful and negative. I received one that said "you are going to burn in hell for being a d*ke". I responded and publicly posted my response which was "I don't think you understand what queer means nor do I think you understand empathy, kindness, and compassion." The second message I received was from someone who clearly had been reading my blog for a while. This person knew my religion and used religious slurs in their message as well as the usual "you're choosing a disgusting lifestyle", "you're unnatural", etc. Just angrily spewing hate. The other anonymous messages were along those lines as well. It makes me sad that such hateful people are out there. It scares me.
11	Still none :-)
12	Most recently, I've been on OkCupid, where I had written about being pansexual on my profile. There were many ensuing messages mocking me, asking if I was sexually attracted to pans and the like. They would try to be funny and say, oh, I'll keep my cookware away from you. It was really upsetting seeing that and infuriated me, because I don't exist in my queer communities and then some cisgendered heterosexual male is making fun of me. I do not take kindly to that.
13	I have had people ask me if being pansexual is "actually a thing". (Lol is dat like, when you're attracted to pans or something?.......just no) People have told me the old, "oh it's just a phase that you're going through", and that I'll end up 100% straight eventually (again.....no). After bringing up sexuality in a casual conversation with my parents they expressed their discomfort with me being in a relationship with any person other than a cis-man (they didn't actually say cis because they don't know what that means) and the fact that it would probably take them a longgg time, if ever, to get used to the idea.
14	See response to previous question. That's the only instance I can think of in which it has affected me. I have a great family and great friends and a friendly school so I never really interact with people who wouldn't approve.
16	I inquired at the local YMCA about being able to use male or gender neutral facilities. I was told I had to have had medial treatment (aka, bottom surgery) before I could even consider it. This was in June, in Salem, Oregon, where city policy prevents transgender discrimination.

18	Now that I'm living with someone of the opposite sex, it's been a very long time since that happened directly. I don't remember specifically. These days, it's usually hearing comments made in my presence by people who don't know about me. It bothers me because I feel increasingly separated from the LGBTQIA+ "community", but I know I made a choice to move to a semi-rural area and associate with those sorts of people. My partner is supportive and tries to help me avoid going to events where there will be more people like that. Sometimes, we can't avoid them. I try to focus on the fact that I made certain choices and that I can't expect things to be perfect. I have a partner and friends who understand and support me.
22	The most recent person I came out to was my aunt. She is very religious and I was a little afraid to tell her that I was pansexual. I went to visit her in August and I told her that u had something very important to tell her. I told her that it didn't change who I was or my relationship with god. I told her that i had come to terms with it a long time ago and I hopped that she could learn to accept it. When I explained to her what pan sexual and gender fluid meant she got quite. She didn't say anything for a long time. Finally she said that I was crazy if I thought that god could love me even though I was lgbt. She said she couldn't condo me living this life of sin and that I could come back to her house when I had repented and stopped living this life of sin.
25	Thankfully, the only major negative reaction I have had has come from my dad at the age of 17. I guess the most recent non-positive reaction, if you could call it that, was from a university friend who is quite religious. She's a conservative Catholic who grew up in Poland, so we have completely different backgrounds, values etc. She knew I was gay and had no problem with it, but she admitted that she struggled with the concept of same-sex couples marrying and adopting, because of her spiritual beliefs. Those are two rights I am particularly passionate about supporting, so we engaged in a lot of constructive dialogue and discussion. At no point did I feel any personal oppression or stigma from her about her views. She has always been respectful and friendly towards me, and we both have the type of relationship in which we can discuss those issues whilst actually listening to each other. We don't just engage in an argument, like many people do. More recently, she has admitted that her views on these issues have changed, and that it is something that has become more personal to her due to our friendship. Whilst she once opposed these particular legal rights, she claimed that it was no longer an emotionless, philosophical conversation for her, but had become an issue that directly affected somebody she cares about.
26	My mom recently rejected me going to visit my elementary school best friend, who is also gay and teaches yoga part time. Now that I don't have a car, she is wary of giving it to me in the fear I may meet a gay person.
28	I am not out because of the environment that I am in. The last person I accidentally mentioned to that I liked a girl was whilst drunk. Fortunately it wasn't explicit. He looked shocked, and said "you ARE a heterosexual, RIGHT?" To which I responded 'yes, of course, I meant guy...' Fortunately, he was too hungover the next day to remember. Great times.
30	When I was young, in my twenties I was only out to about 3 people. After a while I got married and went back into the closet. I then came out again when I was in my mid 50's. This time around I had no negative reactions.
31	The incident mentioned in the prior question was the most recent experience.
32	My most recent experience coming out to someone who did not approve is also the first time I have ever come out to someone who did not approve. Copied and pasted from my previous answer, the experience was as follows: I have never told someone that I am gay and had a negative initial reaction. I did, however, tell one of my roommates that I am gay, and while he had a positive initial reaction, he later told me that he believes that homosexuality is a mental disorder. He also insists that LGBTQIA+ issues are no different from the struggles each individual person will experience in their life and that homophobia is natural. Because of his extremely positive initial reaction and because he was the first person I told other than my therapist, psychiatrist, and doctor, it felt amazing to tell someone and have them be so supportive and accepting of me with regards to something that caused me to feel so much shame and disgust with myself for so many years. And every time I felt sad, depressed, or stressed about something, I could think about my roommate's reaction to me telling him, and I would immediately feel better. But now that he has started showing his true colors, I can no longer look back and reflect on coming out to him and feel better about myself or my situation.
35	My most recent experience was actually just a few days ago. Last week. I told a friend of mine from my rowing club. His reaction was completely different from the reaction of the christian guy I wrote about before. The christian guy never said anything homophobic or hurtful to me outright. This guy from my rowing club thinks I have a mental problem, that homosexual people are physically different from others and have been born with disabilities in their reproductive organs, which they hide behind the mask of being gay, and he absolutely believes it is something you choose to do. He then said he'd try to help me out of it by setting me up with his friend, and making me change the way I dress. He asked if I was out to any other friends, and I am out to a few so I told him that, and he said that my supportive friends are bad company and not a good influence on me, and he told me to never tell anyone else about it. He didn't believe me when I told him it's been scientifically proven that sexual orientation is congenital and inherent, he thinks I'm not mentally stable because I'm kind of an introvert as well and he says that isn't normal.

36	Honest answer? The first experience was also the most recent. Mostly, the people I've told since then are also LGBTQIA+, because I know that everyone else I know is extremely transphobic and homophobic, and I'm likely to lose everyone as soon as I come out.
37	The most recent negative reaction was from a long time but casual friend who is a lesbian. She had always seen me as heterosexual. She told me that I was a not a lesbian and that I should not experiment and hurt the woman I am seeing in the process. I wanted to tell her the full story about myself and explain I have never thought of myself as a lesbian but I knew there was no point because she was angry. I find it amazing that someone who has had to justify her sexuality would attack me for mine.
40	I was about to start work and I was speaking to a male coworker about relationships, I mentioned "well one of my ex-girlfriends-" and stopped because he froze up and said "you like girls?!" and looked really disgusted I responded with "yes, so what?" he backpedaled trying to say "it doesn't matter" but the damage had been done, his reaction caused me to feel humiliated and regret mentioning it because It quickly "spread" to my other coworkers, my male coworkers would give me weird looks and my female coworkers started staring and acting weird, I eventually quit that Job due to feeling uncomfortable.
41	Because I live in a small town and don't have but 3 male friends, I try to go online and connect with others. That's where I've found the most disapproval. When I use apps with more anonymity, I typically will start talking with guys. It'll be a ton of fun - we could really enjoy the conversation, but the minute they find out I'm a gay guy, it's like I just told them their favorite cat just died. It's so disheartening.
43	A lot of my more recent experiences has to do with my gender identity of genderfluid. I've had people separate me from other trans identities as though it is something different, strange, and unheard of. Most of the time this is done out of ignorance and misunderstanding, but having fights with 'gender abolitionists' always brings discomfort and an air of disapproval.
44	previous experience was my most recent and only negative interaction
46	I tried to talk about being non-binary. I've still only told a handful of people. One of them told me I was faking. I wanted attention. They refused to use my preferred name, even though it was a nickname they'd called me in the past. They said they'd always see me as my assigned gender. That I was my assigned gender. That there wasn't such a thing as someone who wasn't a boy or a girl. That there's something wrong with that.
48	The most recent person was also my first for people who did NOT approve.
49	Just this last week, I officially came out to my mother as bisexual. It did not go perfectly, she does not believe that I am a queer individual, but she did not shut me down immediately. She approves of other queer people, but she does not consider me one of them.
51	This is a negative experience being open since I haven't had a negative coming out experience in a while. A peer who knew my identity disagreed with me about something, stood up, screamed at me calling me a "white man" and stormed out of the building. They then proceeded to purposefully mention my gender assigned at birth five times in a following tumblr rant about the incident.
52	It has actually been a long time since I faced rejection from anyone because of my identity. I think the last time was when I came out to my dad and his girlfriend. My dad's reaction was more relaxed than I thought it would be, but not exactly positive. He told me I was too young to label myself like that, and that I shouldn't try to put myself in a box. I find this funny, now, actually, considering the label "bisexual" is probably the least exclusive label I could have used. Anyways, his girlfriend, whom I have known since I was 4 or 5, chose to announce that she thought she might be bisexual, as well. She said she finds women attractive, but she didn't think she could ever have sex with a woman without a man there. My dad thought that was hot, and we haven't discussed it since then. This was quite a bummer, but such is life. Male bigots tend to find lesbians attractive if they get to watch, but not when they are excluded. I have not spoken to my father or his girlfriend in months, now, and I am happier and more comfortable with my sexuality than ever!
53	Again, I don't tell anyone I don't absolutely know will approve.
61	I have not told anyone about my identites who didnot approve
63	Its hard to find a most recent experience most because of the new college bubble. In fact the only recent experience occurred in a movie theater when I was ever-so slightly holding my partners knee cab. The man sitting behind us simply said "faggots" in a calm and loud voice, which caused most of the theater to look over at us. Nobody did anything and neither did we (he was a pretty big guy)
64	As I said previously, I have never had a negative experience coming out.
69	Again, this isn't something I've ever experienced and I disagree with the assumption that queerness inherently coincides with an unhappy life.
74	Since starting NCF, I have not had many bad experiences in this respect. I faced slurs in high school from many people because I started the GSA though.
77	fuck u
80	Ok I don't actually have one???

98	Same as last response, this hasn't happened to me.
99	Again, never happened.
101	This has never happened.
102	Fuck off, everyone is pretty chill.
103	Last week a friend of mine asked me if I'm sure I'm not gay (as opposed to bisexual). I had to reaffirm my identity with him and explain that an individual can prefer one sex over another and still identify as bisexual (attraction does not need to be 50/50).
104	As previously mentioned, I have never been rejected or cut off because of my identity. However, in December 2014 I experienced an uncomfortable conversation with my mom and step-dad. They were trying to get me to say that I respect their opinion that homosexuality is a sin. That we should agree to disagree on the matter, knowing they still love me anyway, but they don't think it's right. However, I could not say that I respected their opinion because I think it is harmful and stupid. It was very awkward and I ended up crying because it took them three years after I came out to them for them to express this to me.
107	It hasn't happened?
109	Same as the first. I haven't told that many people.
122	I mean, same as last time. It wasn't that long ago.
125	It's been over a decade so my identify has changed and settled. I now identify as asexual overall and biromatic (guess some parts don't change). Anyways, I reconnected with an old close friend of mine and we got to talk, and he had struggled with his sexuality during school so I didn't think he'd reject. He did, absolutely. He doesn't think asexuality is a thing and that I'm lying to myself or need to find someone to "fix" me.
128	See previous post
129	I've never had anyone react negatively to me telling them that I identify as pansexual, so I guess none.
131	This depends. My most recent ones have been about gender. Sexuality, I'm pretty much completely out, but gender the only person who knows in real life is my best guy friend. Online: On an online chat I mentioned to someone that I'm FtM (for simplicities sake) in an attempt to show them that they aren't the only ones who've struggled. But then it turned into me answering inappropriate questions about my genitals, so I asked them politely to please stop. And I then tried to patiently explain what it means to be trans, I know that trans issues and gender are not that well known, so I wanted to make it clear. But this particular individual was very depressed, so I was very patient with them because I knew a lot of what they were saying was the depression talking. And I simply took a deep breath and ignored it when he called me a woman. I know he was just trying to bring me down, but I wasn't going to let him. I just ignored it and continued to try my best to help him work through his depression. In real life: I told my best friend I was agender in December, he was fine with it, but when I mentioned that I'd be curious to see how male descriptors felt he got a bit uncomfortable, laughed, mumbled no, and left. But I knew it was going to be okay, I was secure enough in my identity now that it didn't bother me. I knew who I was, and I wasn't going to let other's insecurities about themselves cause me to feel bad about who I was. But then he made a comment via text when I was venting to him about social dysphoria when shopping with my mom over break, and he responded by telling me "but you are a girl." I was frustrated yes, but coming out as something as complex and nuanced as a non binary gender takes time and patience on the behalf of the LGBT+ individual, so I took a deep breath, reminded myself that he has a lot of his own stuff going on his life, and then wrote him a letter (basically coming out.2) which he didn't respond to for about a month. During those past 4 weeks, I felt extremely alone. Studying abroad and waiting for my friend to respond or to even acknowledge that he'd received my message was painful. But I didn't say anything for a few weeks in case he needed time to process, and then I asked him if he'd had a chance to read it. As it turns out he had forgotten about it (understandable it was a pdf sent on FB messenger and he was busy with class work), but once he read it he told me he was accepting and didn't care what my gender was. So while I know this isn't exactly a negative response, the lack of response for 4 weeks worried me. But it also showed me that I'm a stronger person than I ever imagined. And I've sort of built of this sense of knowing who I am, that no other person's insecurities can break into. And I like to think that this makes me better suited to deal with my issues and be understanding of others. They have lives of their own, struggles of their own, and when something like my sexuality gender gets thrown in the mix its their reaction is a reflection on themselves, not me. And if they are uncomfortable with it they often have their own things that they need to wrk through on their own first, and that I should try and be understanding of the struggles that they went through to cause those insecurities. I've learned that you just have to be patient and kind, they'll come around eventually. (at least thats what I tell myself)
132	My most recent experience is also my last experience.

135	After college due to many reasons including those last two years of high school, I shunned my past and went back into the closet where I have spent the past two + decades. I married (a women) and have kids. Due to psychological issues (I simply could not stand being closeted any more) I came out to my wife (who has been very supportive) and last fall came out to my family. All except one have been supported. My mother will not speak with me and not sure if she ever will. She has shown some homophobic tendencies toward a younger gay cousin I have.
138	None
139	my ex best friend, being ignored forever by him crushed me emotionally and i got stuck in the closet even more than before.
141	I was talking to a guy I'd just met, and mentioned my girlfriend. He asked if I had ever been with a man, why I hadn't, and how I knew I was a lesbian without having had sex with a man. I asked him how he knew he was straight if he'd never had sex with a man, and he didn't know how to answer. Instead, he told me he just knew, and that I was wrong, I'd just never had 'good dick'. He told me I should sleep with him, that he'd make me straight. I left the conversation at that point.
143	Only my mom seems not to approve it. She once quit me my phone, and banned me from seeing "a friend". Told me to not talk to him again and made me go to her church.
	56 Total Most Recent Narratives