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An exploratory study of experiences of gifted/sexual minority students

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF EXPERIENCES OF GIFTED/SEXUAL MINORITY STUDENTS

A Master’s Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education, Gifted

by
Rebecca M. Walter
June 2008
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF EXPERIENCES OF GIFTED/SEXUAL MINORITY STUDENTS

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An Exploratory Study of Experiences of Gifted/Sexual Minority Students

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Abstract

This study explored the experiences of gifted/sexual minority students. Participants reported, on average, a significant age gap between the times they discovered they were gifted and the times they discovered they were a sexual minority. A dual gifted/sexual minority identity was reported as providing both advantages and disadvantages, although some issues were exacerbated by the presence of both identities. Subjects reported gifted services being provided throughout their K-12 experiences and tapering off in college; support services for sexual minority students showed the opposite pattern, being nearly nonexistent throughout K-12 schooling and appearing at the collegiate level. There was no consistent pattern when asked which identity subjects identified with more strongly.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction of the Topic

Gifted children deal with a wide range of unique social and emotional issues stemming from common characteristics of giftedness. Dabrowski’s notion of overexcitabilities in gifted individuals can cause anxiety, nervousness, or guilt as children with emotional overexcitabilities are presented with situations and problems that cause an over-emotional response (Silverman, 1993). Feelings of “differentness” and a dislike of the “gifted” label often plague gifted adolescents (Davis & Rimm, 2004; Rimm, 2002), as they reach a stage in life in which fitting in seems crucial to social survival. Perfectionism is another characteristic associated with giftedness that can, if not developed appropriately, cause feelings of frustration and inadequacy for the gifted child as they work to reach impossible standards (Davis & Rimm; Parker & Mills, 1996).

Another group of youth that deal with a unique set of social and emotional issues are those that identify as a sexual minority (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, questioning, or queer, also called GLBTQ). They, too, confront feelings of differentness, which may be heightened in the face of the prospect of “coming out” and the social stigma that often accompanies this bold move. Beyond social stigma is the specter of hostile or violent retaliation against them, and fear of the school environment (Garofalo, Wolf, Kessel, Palfre, and Durant, 1998). Evidence has shown that GLB students are more likely than all other students to abuse drugs, smoke, engage in risky sex, and run away from home (Kosciw, Byard, Fischer, & Joslin, 2007).

It is clear that being either gifted or identifying as a sexual minority creates a set of social and emotional issues that the general population of children and adolescents do
Experiences of Gifted/Sexual Minority Students

not generally confront. But when one is both gifted and GLBTQ, these issues come together in combination, creating a new set of experiences that incorporates needs and problems facing both groups. The sense of differentness that comes with being gifted or GLBTQ “likely intensifies” when both occur together, and finding a romantic partner becomes twice as difficult when looking for an intellectual equal who is also GLBTQ (Peterson & Rischar, 2000; Tolan, 1992). Those with both exceptionalities probably make up a very small percentage of the population as a whole (Cohn, 2002), but their unique social and affective needs require further study and interventions for support in the school environment.

Statement of Problem

While a few studies have been done to explore the experiences of gifted/GLBTQ students (Cohn, 2002; Peterson & Rischar, 2000), there is little information regarding gifted/GLBTQ individuals’ own perceptions of the interactions between their two identities, namely their perception of themselves as a gifted and GLBTQ individual. This study aims to investigate this interaction more fully, to uncover the ways in which gifted/GLBTQ students perceive themselves and their experiences growing up as persons with unique combinations of characteristics, and to explore the pertinent issues facing this population. The overarching question to be explored is: How do gifted/GLBTQ individuals perceive their own experiences growing up with two exceptionalities? More specific research questions are: At what age did the individual become aware of their giftedness and sexual orientation, and how does this affect their experiences? Do gifted/GLBTQ individuals see their exceptionalities as assets or as problem-inducing?
How do these exceptionalities play into their concept of identity? What services were available to them in school as gifted students and as GLBTQ students, and how useful did they find these services?

Brief Review of the Relevant Literature

For gifted populations, research regarding social and emotional difficulties yields mixed results. Some studies claim relatively high levels of social and emotional difficulties for gifted (especially highly gifted) students, such as Gross’s longitudinal study of 60 highly gifted Australian students. Over time, she found that many of the students with 160+ IQs who were in an inclusion classroom or skipped a grade reported that they had few friends or no friends at all (Gross, 1993, 1998 as cited in Gross, 2002). Terman and Hollingworth’s early research on gifted children suggest that those with exceptionally high IQs tend to have more difficulties than those possessing moderate giftedness (Gross, 2002). Other research argues that although there is a general notion of high rates of depression and suicide among gifted children, this claim is not sufficiently supported by empirical studies (Neihart, 2002). On the other hand, the research regarding the social and emotional characteristics of GLBTQ students paints a more definitively bleak picture of violence, fear, depression, and suicide (Cohn, 2002; Garafalo, et al., 1998). As a result of the more conclusive research, it is hypothesized that in this study, students who are gifted/GLBTQ will reflect on their experiences in school through the lens of sexual identity more strongly than through the lens of giftedness, finding problems associated with sexual minority identification more pressing. It is also hypothesized that the combination of giftedness and sexual minority identification will be
perceived as leading to unique difficulties that are not faced, or not faced as often, by those students who identify as gifted or GLBTQ, but not both.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the acronym GLBTQ is used to mean “gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, questioning, or queer” although the research is inconsistent in the use of this acronym; variations include GLB, LGB, and GLBT. The students in this study who are referred to as GLBTQ and gifted are self-identified for both conditions; no formal identification procedure was used to determine IQ, GPA, or other traditional measures of giftedness. It is assumed that by college, students will be able to appropriately self-identify in these two categories. The term “gifted/GLBTQ” refers to students who have self-identified with both groups.

Procedure for Conducting Study

To gather data, an online, partially open-ended survey was utilized, similar to the one used by Peterson and Rischar (2000) in their study Gifted and gay: A study of the adolescence experience. Participants were recruited by contacting GLBT support groups from U.S. colleges and universities around the country, and were eligible as long as they self-identified as gifted and a sexual minority and were at least 18 years old. The survey was completed online, and responses were coded to identify major themes.
Application of Study to Gifted Education

A 2004 poll conducted by The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and Widmeyer research reported that 5% of secondary students identified as lesbian or gay. Other estimates of the number of sexual minority people in the general population range from 3%-10% (Cohn, 2002). It would logically follow, therefore, that 3%-10% of the students in the gifted population identify or will identify as a sexual minority. Tolan (1992) points out that the intellectual capacities of highly gifted children often develop asynchronously with their emotional capacities and physical maturity, which can lead to confusion. It may also result in the formation of intense bonds with people of various ages, who may be the same “intellectual age” as the child, although a very different chronological age. Although Tolan points out that such a strong bond may cause premature identification with a homosexual label if the object of affection happens to be a member of the same sex, she also notes that adolescents who are gifted and homosexual have few role models, and may become “even more isolated than he or she has been through childhood” due to the difficulty in finding partners who are compatible both intellectually and sexually.

Understanding the personal meaning that gifted/GLBTQ individuals ascribe to their dual exceptional identities (gifted/GLBTQ) is essential to formulating strategies for teaching them and creating positive learning environments in which they can feel both intellectually stimulated and physically safe. Because the overlap in exceptional identities may give rise to experiences and needs that are unique to this “twice-exceptional” population, simply applying in tandem the strategies used with gifted students and those used with GLBTQ students may not be sufficient to address their distinctive social,
emotional, and intellectual needs. Understanding the students’ personal perceptions of their dual minority identities can help to more clearly define the weaknesses that currently exist in serving this population. The results of this study will add to the body of knowledge about this unique population, and can help in the development of educational strategies for them. Additionally, by identifying the major themes and issues arising from identifying as gifted/GLBTQ, further research, especially studies more empirical in nature, can be developed and completed regarding the most pertinent issues.

Limitations of Study

There are several limitations to the current study. First, because participants self-selected to participate, the sample is not truly random. Second, because participants are those who self-identified as both gifted and GLBTQ, individuals who are not “out” or who are questioning their sexual identity may be less likely to participate. The experiences of closeted individuals may be far different from those who freely identify with a sexual minority label and are open about their identity. It is possible that individuals who are not “out” have had more highly negative experiences with prejudice or stigma, which has, in turn, caused them to hide their sexual identity. Finally, the small sample size means that results from this study are not necessarily generalizable to the wider population of gifted/GLBTQ students.

Delimitations of Study

All subjects were over the age of 18, and were asked to report retrospectively on their experiences as gifted/GLBTQ students throughout their past schooling.
Participation was limited to those individuals who self-identified as gifted and GLTBQ. Additionally, only colleges/universities with GLBTQ support/programming were contacted when recruiting participants.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The field of research regarding gifted and sexual minority (GLBTQ) students is limited. Although a few studies and articles exist, in order to obtain a comprehensive idea of the issues surrounding this population, it is often necessary to study them from two different perspectives, one of which sees these students as GLBTQ, and the other which views them as gifted. This approach has its limitations, however, for it ignores the unique issues that occur in the cross-section of these two populations, or those issues that become compounded when both exceptionalities are present in the same person. This review of the literature looks at the populations separately, exploring the concept of identity formation for each population, as well as the major social issues – such as social isolation and depression – that occur within the populations. Recognizing the limitations of this separatist approach, however, the review concludes with an exploration of the literature that does address the gifted/GLTBQ population, in order to provide a glimpse of the unique issues this dually-exceptional population faces.

Identity Formation in GLBTQ Individuals

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, several models of homosexual identity development were posited in the literature, among them those of Cass (1979) and Troiden (1989). Most of these models were developmental in nature, with homosexual individuals progressing through a series of stages on the path to realizing their homosexual identity and integrating it into a larger concept of self-identity.
Cass's (1979) model asserts that an individual has an "intrapersonal matrix," in which a person's (P) perception of a characteristic attributed to the self (S) interacts with P's behavior (B) and other people's perceptions of P (O). When these three elements (S, B, and O) are incongruent, P is pushed to consider their situation and possibly change one or more of the elements in order to strive for congruence. The homosexual person, in making these changes, goes through a possible six stages toward developing a homosexual identity. It is important to note that in the process of homosexual identity development, P may reach identity foreclosure at any of the stages, and end the process by reaching a personally acceptable level of congruity in their intrapersonal matrix through cognitive or affective means, and accepting a heterosexual identity.

Stage 1, Identity Confusion, occurs when P looks at his/her behavior and can say, "My behavior may be called homosexual." If P does not reach identity foreclosure in stage 1, they accept that their identity may be homosexual, and proceed to stage 2, Identity Comparison. In this stage, P deals with social alienation that arises when the self (S) and behaviors (B) become more congruent, or more homosexual, thus making others perceptions (O) of P as heterosexual less congruent. The homosexual individual will likely attempt to "pass" as heterosexual for the time being while identity development continues, or else inhibit behavior or explain it in terms of heterosexuality (i.e. "I am in prison, I wouldn't have sex with men if women were available") and thus reach identity foreclosure, halting the homosexual identity development. Stage 3, Identity Tolerance, marks increased commitment to a homosexual identity. The individual tolerates (rather than accepts) a homosexual identity, and makes increased contact with homosexual groups. The quality of this contact will help to determine whether the individual
experiences foreclosure or proceeds onto stage 4, Identity Acceptance. Now, the individual accepts a homosexual self-image, continues to socialize with homosexual people and make homosexual friends, and must decide whether or not to disclose their homosexual identity to others, or to remain socially “heterosexual.” Choosing to continue to “pass” as heterosexual heightens feelings of incongruence, leading individuals to stage 5, Identity Pride. Now, individuals take pride in their homosexual identity, and may commit so strongly to a homosexual group that they shun heterosexual ideals. They expect rejection of themselves by heterosexual society, and if they find otherwise, that heterosexuals accept their new identity, they again experience incongruence, which leads them to stage 6, Identity Synthesis. At this highest level of homosexual identity development, individuals no longer draw a clear “them and us” (p. 234) distinction between homosexual and heterosexual groups. Instead, they see homosexuality as one aspect of a larger self.

Troiden’s (1989) model is also a stage model, albeit containing four stages instead of six. In his model, homosexual identity formation begins before puberty in a stage called Sensitization, when a child perceives him/herself as different from same-sex peers. However, no sexual significance is ascribed to this difference at the time of its perception. Rather, the importance lies in the meaning the adolescent self will later assign to the feelings; namely, that they may have been homosexual in nature. In the next stage, Identity Confusion, adolescents experience emotional turmoil and uncertainty about their sexual status. At this point, their notion of being “different” in childhood crystallizes into a notion of being “sexually different.” Sexual experiences may cause some of this
confusion, as could the possession of inaccurate knowledge about homosexuals and homosexual lifestyles.

The next stage, Identity Assumption, happens during or after late adolescence. At this time, the homosexual identity becomes a self-identity, and is presented to others – if not to everyone, than to homosexual others. Individuals begin to belong to a group, and feelings of social isolation or stigma are lessened. This stage marks the beginning of the “coming out” process. In the final stage, Commitment, homosexual individuals accept their homosexual identity, and adopt homosexuality as a way of life. They begin to feel comfortable with homosexuality. Same-sex love relationships may be entered into as an outward sign of commitment to a homosexual lifestyle, and individuals are likely to disclose their homosexual identities to people outside the homosexual community.

A comparison of Cass’ and Troiden’s model can be found in Table 1.
Table 1  

*Cass and Troiden’s Stage Models of Homosexual Identity Formation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sensitization</strong></td>
<td>A child perceives him/herself as different from same-sex peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td>Person (P) recognizes behavior may be called homosexual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confusion</strong></td>
<td>In adolescence, notion of “different” becomes “sexually different.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td>P begins to see self (S) as becoming more aligned with homosexual behavior (B). P feels alienation because others still perceive him/her as heterosexual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comparison</strong></td>
<td>During or after late adolescence, homosexual identity becomes self-identity, and is presented to limited others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td>P tolerates homosexual identity, and seeks out homosexual groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tolerance</strong></td>
<td>Assumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td>P accepts homosexual identity and must decide whether to present homosexual identity to others. May continue to pass as heterosexual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptance</strong></td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td>P takes pride in homosexual identity, and may go so far as to shun heterosexual ideals and people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pride</strong></td>
<td>Individual accepts homosexual identity, and makes a commitment to a homosexual lifestyle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td>P no longer sees a “them and us” distinction between heterosexuals and homosexuals. P accepts homosexuality as an aspect of a larger, more complex, self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synthesis</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although their stages are not exactly parallel, there are similarities between the two. Both authors caution that not all individuals will experience these stages exactly as described, and point out that there is a range of homosexual experience. Horowitz and Newcomb (2001) recognize the same point, and assert that, as a result of this range of experiences, stage models are “overly simplistic” (p. 5) They point out the “essentialist” inferences of stage models, which suggest that the only valid positive outcome of a stage model of homosexual identity formation is to realize and accept a homosexual identity that is assumed already to exist within the person. Anyone who stops at an earlier stage and forms a self-identity there is “in some way denying an ‘essential’ homosexual identity” (p. 5). Horowitz and Newcomb suggest approaching homosexual identity formation from a social constructivist perspective, in which the individual makes meaning from his/her personal and social experience, and may arrive at a range of sexual identities falling along the spectrum of homosexual to heterosexual. With such an approach, the individual has a choice about his/her sexual identity and its expression, and is not restricted to two choices: homosexual or heterosexual.

Although he does not label it as such, Savin-Williams (2005), author of The New Gay Teenager, similarly supports a social constructivist view of sexual identity formation. In his book, which explores various aspects of the lives of modern gay teenagers, Savin-Williams describes a generation of teens to whom sexual identity labeling is unimportant. While research shows that many teens still have same-sex attractions and experiences, Savin-Williams posits that the drive to name these as “gay” has diminished among adolescents. Throughout his book, he describes teens that refuse labels, have a hard time picking a word to define their sexual identity, and see
classifications like “gay,” “lesbian,” or “homosexual” unimportant; their identities do not rely on fitting into a sexual category. Savin-Williams suggests that they may form the beginning of the “postgay era, in which same-sex-attracted individuals can pursue diverse personal and political goals, whether they desire to blend into mainstream society or fight to radically restructure modern discourse about sexuality” (p. 222).

Identity Formation in Gifted Individuals

Although the field of gifted education has not explored identity development as fully as the field of gay/lesbian studies, some research exists, and interesting ties to GLBTQ identity development have been made. Gifted students, like GLBTQ individuals, may hesitate to embrace their minority gifted identity, especially in social contexts, where they are perceived, and perceive themselves, as different. Gross (1989 as cited in Gross, 1998) describes a forced-choice dilemma for the gifted child, in which s/he must decide whether the desire to excel is worth pursuing in the face of social rejection. If social acceptance or intimacy is a priority for the gifted child, s/he may “retreat behind a mask of social conformity” (Gross, 1998, p. 168). It is possible that such a fear of intellectual rejection may be alleviated by surrounding the gifted child with intellectual peers, but as this is not always provided as an opportunity, many gifted individuals are faced with an identity dilemma: to be themselves and risk loneliness, or put on a mask and be accepted by their peers.

Based on Erikson’s work on the “identity vs. identity confusion” developmental crisis, Marcia (1966, 1980 as cited in Frank & McBee, 2003) devised a classification system for the possible stages of identity development in which the individual may
The classifications are: identity achievement, in which the individual has made a commitment to his/her unique identity; identity moratorium, in which the individual is in the process of trying a variety of identities, but is not yet ready to make a commitment to one; identity foreclosure, in which the individual has made a commitment to an identity expected by others, without proper exploration of the possibilities; and identity diffusion, in which the individual has not engaged in exploration and has not made a commitment. Using Marcia’s classifications, Zuo and Tao’s (2001) study of a number of Terman’s gifted subjects showed that those who were classified as being in identity foreclosure were highest in the trait of conformity. Furthermore, Zuo and Cramond (2001) found that Terman’s most successful subjects were most likely to be classified as having reached identity achievement. It seems likely, therefore, that helping gifted students to develop and accept their identity as gifted individuals will lead to higher achievement throughout their lifetime, and lessen the likelihood of choosing social conformity when faced with the forced-choice dilemma.

Mahoney (1998) proposes a model of gifted identity formation to be used in counseling, which includes the use of four constructs – validation, affirmation, affiliation, and affinity – considered within twelve systems that impact the identity formation of the gifted individual. These systems are: the self system, the family system (immediate family), the family of origin system (past generation of the extended family), the cultural system, the vocational system, the environmental system, the social system, the psychological system, the political system, the organic-physiological system, and the developmental system. This framework for working with gifted individuals on an exploration of identity asks them to discuss the constructs, with giftedness as an
Experiences of Gifted/Sexual Minority Students

influencing variable, as they have appeared for that individual within the systems, determining whether they have been positive, negative, or somewhere in between. Such an exercise allows the gifted individual to consider his/her own manifestations of giftedness in a variety of contexts and evaluate the meaning and worth of giftedness in these contexts. The framework’s intent is “to assess and introduce the variability of giftedness in many contexts to support and develop a gifted identity as a part of the whole self” (Mahoney, para. 12). Such a framework may be useful in helping children to integrate giftedness as a part of their total identity, and, hopefully, reach a level of identity achievement.

Interestingly, Armenta (1999) suggests that gifted education begin to approach giftedness and the formation of gifted identity the way the field of gay and lesbian studies address gay or lesbian identities. Although some approaches to gay and lesbian identity formation have a strong biological background, Williams (1995 as cited in Armenta, 1999) explains that the adoption of a sexual identity by the individual involves both “consciously recognizing something,” but “requires also that being gay or straight should not just be a matter of genetic or developmental determinism. There must be a space for both nature and will” (Williams, p. 10). In other words, it is not simply being gay or lesbian that is important, but the fact that the individual is adopting the identity and making it a part of who s/he is and giving it meaning. Adopting this same approach to giftedness would allow gifted students to take control of and give meaning to a label that is often assigned to them without their consent. Giving responsibility of the “gifted identity” to the student rather than to the identifiers would shift the balance of power to the gifted themselves, moving it away from the parents and teachers who recognize the
student's giftedness. Such a shift would involve a greater emphasis on self-determination for the gifted student, allowing them to decide what it means to them to be gifted, and may also result in more self-acceptance. In paralleling Troiden’s (1989) framework for gay and lesbian identity formation, gifted individuals could be encouraged to work toward commitment to a gifted identity; that is, to “see themselves as [gifted] and live according to their identity” (Armenta, p. 394). On the other hand, giving the power of creating gifted identities to the gifted themselves must leave room for nontraditional definitions and behaviors, such as gifted students who recognize their giftedness, but choose not to achieve at high levels or focus their energy on intellectual pursuits. If a self-constructed gifted identity becomes valid, then the field must be “willing to admit many valid ways of being gifted” (p. 395).

Social Issues for GLBTQ Students

Beyond the issue of identity itself, GLBTQ students face a variety of salient issues in school and in their social lives. Discovering oneself to be a sexual minority is often trying for students, especially as they become more aware of and must come to terms with their sexual orientation in adolescence. Bullying, verbal and physical abuse, and risk-taking behavior are more prevalent for this population than for other students. Perhaps not surprisingly, depression and suicide rates are higher as well. While society has, over time, become more accepting of sexual-minority culture and lifestyles, the research shows that these students confront a variety of social problems in school, both from other students and, directly and indirectly, from teachers and administrators as well. Teacher inaction against teasing is an often-cited issue, and the culture of silence
Feeling Unsafe

Biased language and verbal abuse appear as major issues for sexual minority students. The Gay and Lesbian Straight Education Network’s (GLSEN’s) 2005 National School Climate Survey (Kosciw & Diaz, 2006) reports that homophobic remarks were the most common type of biased language heard in schools, ranking above racist and sexist remarks. In many cases, anti-gay remarks such as “You’re so gay!” have been shown to appear in elementary school, before children even acquire an understanding of sexuality (Kosciw, Byard, Fischar, & Joslin, 2007). In earlier grades, the expressions were found to be associated with the expression of characteristics that are not traditionally masculine or feminine (such as a male being unathletic), with the link to homosexuality emerging in middle school (Plummer, 2003, cited in Kosciw et al., 2007). Data collected from one Midwestern high school revealed that students there heard an antigay remark every seven minutes (Carter, 1997, as cited in Cohn, 2003). An additional problem, added to the problem of biased language, is the lack of response by teachers. Carter’s study reported that teachers intervened just 3% of the time, while GLSEN’s more recent survey found that 16% of students reported teachers intervening “most of the time” or “all of the time” when homophobic or anti-gay language was used. Teachers in Carter’s study were much more likely to intervene when racist or sexist language was used.
Attacks against sexual minority teens, however, do not stop at verbal abuse. GLSEN’s survey reveals that almost two-thirds of survey participants (all of whom identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered) felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation (Kosciw & Diaz, 2006). Considering their reported experiences, it is easy to see why they felt this way: nearly 38% reported some form of physical harassment because of their sexual orientation, 17% reported physical assault due to their sexual orientation, and 51% reported that their property had been deliberately damaged or stolen in the past year. Students who reported verbal and physical abuse also reported missing school more often, perhaps due to fear for their psychological and physical safety.

A Culture of Silence

Much of the literature about homosexuality in schools alludes to a “culture of silence” that surrounds the topic. Anderson (1994) notes, “A conspiracy of silence shrouds sexual orientation” (para. 1). Vare and Norton (2004) emphasize that this silence sends a message of alienation and devaluation to homosexual students. There are several reasons why this silence about homosexuality and sexual minority culture ensues, among them prejudice, ignorance, heteronormativity (the general assumption of heterosexuality as the norm) and the desire to avoid controversy.

One reason for silence about homosexuality at school is prejudice emanating from teachers themselves. Maney and Cain’s 1997 study (cited in Page & Liston, 2002), which focused on preservice elementary teachers, found that nearly 50% of respondents believed that male homosexuality was a “lifestyle that should be condemned” (Page & Liston, p. 74). With such statistics, it is perhaps preferable to hope for silence about
homosexuality rather than speaking out against it in the classroom, but neither approach goes very far in creating inclusive school environments.

Another issue that reinforces silence about sexual minorities is sheer ignorance of and unawareness that homosexual students exist in one’s immediate proximity. While studies estimate that between 3-10% of the population is gay or some other type of sexual minority (Cohn, 2002), teachers, counselors, and administrators are still known to give some form of the assertion, “We don’t have any gay students in our school” (Page & Liston, 2002, p. 72). Using even the most conservative estimates, a typical school with 500 students would include 15 sexual minority students. Teachers often assume that students (or parents) are heterosexual, assumptions that can lead sexual minority youth to feel as if they have no role models, no examples to follow, and that they are different or abnormal. This assumption and catering to heterosexual culture as the norm is referred to as heteronormativity. In the classroom, heteronormativity may manifest itself in a teacher’s reference to students’ “Mom and Dad,” in only using heterosexual pairings in story problems, or in failing to include homosexual authors’ works in the English curriculum. Heteronormativity is not necessarily the result of prejudice against sexual minorities; indeed, most people assume this norm unconsciously (Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002). But the absence of homosexual or sexual minority content in the school curriculum, be it in math, English, social studies, or health class, will have the likely effect of exacerbating feelings of “differentness” in sexual minority youth.

A final reason the silence about homosexuality exists is the desire to avoid controversy. Mention or inclusion of homosexuality or homosexual lifestyles in the classroom is likely to elicit a response that the teacher is “promoting homosexuality” or
the “homosexual agenda” (Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002, p. 33). Bedford (2002) admits that “Breaking the silence is therefore a challenge of breaking with the orthodox faith of heteronormativity. It is the challenge of becoming and being a heretic” (p.136). Although it is generally agreed to be difficult, and it is likely teachers and administrators will face opposition, research about homosexual students often promotes the inclusion of homosexuality or homosexual themes in the curriculum as step toward inclusiveness (Kosciw et al., 2007; Lipkin, 1995; Page & Liston, 2002; Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002).

Silence regarding homosexuality is a major obstacle to be overcome, especially in school settings. Sexual minority students and sexual minority lifestyles, however, deserve acknowledgement to overcome the power of silence. Without such acknowledgement, these students face the specter of social isolation, which may lead to acting-out behaviors, as described below.

**GLBTQ Youth and Risk-Taking Behaviors**

GLBTQ youth are more likely than other youth to take part in risk-taking behavior. Garafalo, Wolf, Kessel, Palfrey, and Durant (1998) analyzed data from a 1995 Massachusetts survey of high school youth, and found that self-identified GLB youth were more likely to have carried a weapon to school in the past 30 days, and to have participated in a physical fight in the past 12 months. There was an increased lifetime frequency of drug usage among GLB students, and they were more likely to have reported having three or more sexual partners in the past three months. Overall, students who had reported being engaged in “four separate health risk or problem behaviors were 4.96 times more likely to report being GLB than students who had not engaged in any health risk behaviors” (p. 899). Davis and Rimm (2004) similarly note that “GLB
students are more likely than all other students to engage in self-destructive behaviors, namely drug abuse, smoking, risky sex, or running away from home” (p. 438).

**GLBTQ Youth and Depression/Suicide**

It is clear due to the verbal and physical abuse and violence that GLBTQ youth face that school has the potential to be a scary place, and social life has the potential to be very difficult. Identifying as GLBTQ can lead to social isolation and feelings of “differentness,” as students are teased, bullied, or shunned by other students. Taking these factors into consideration, it is not difficult to see why sexual-minority students are more likely to experience feelings of depression and to exhibit suicidal behavior than other students.

Williams, Connolly, Pepler and Craig (2005) found that sexual minority youth reported significantly more symptoms of depression than heterosexual youth, hypothesizing that this may be due to these teens’ awareness of societal heterosexism. Similarly, Bos, Sandfort, de Bruyn, and Hakvoort (2008) found a significant correlation between same-sex attraction and levels of depression in teens from a variety of countries. The researchers in this study hypothesized that this may be because they worry about whether they will ever find a romantic partner (Diamond & Lucas, 2004, cited in Bos et al., 2008), or because they have doubts about having a normal family of their own or expect to always feel different from their peers. Anderson (1995) notes that adolescence is a time of frustration for homosexual teens, who have limited social outlets and are likely to experience a dearth of homosexual role models. These factors, too, may contribute to feelings of isolation and differentness, and may lead to depression.
Regardless of the reasons for increased levels of depression, these heightened levels are likely to be connected to the increase in suicidality found among GLBTQ adolescents. Garofalo et al.’s (1998) analysis of the Massachusetts data found that of the GLB self-identified students, 35% reported a suicide attempt in the past 12 months, compared to only 10% of the non-GLB students. Russell (2003) notes that although studies throughout the past quarter century about LBG youth and suicidality present several limitations – namely convenience sampling with no comparison groups, inaccurate and inconsistent measurement of sexual minority status, and inconsistent measurement of suicide risk – overall, a range of studies using different methods and designs have consistently demonstrated that sexual minority youth are among those most likely to report suicidal thoughts, plans, and attempts. It is clear that sexual minority youth deal with a host of social problems affecting their psychological state, driving them to depression and suicidal thoughts and behavior, although it is important to remember that not all GLBTQ individuals are unhappy or suicidal. In fact, as Garofalo et al. state, “the majority of GLB youth cope with a variety of stressors to become healthy and productive adults” (p. 901).

Support for GLBTQ Youth

Because identifying as a sexual minority can be difficult socially and psychologically, the literature emphasizes the importance of support for GLBTQ students. In school situations, this tends to take two forms: The development of inclusive curriculum and the formation of Gay-Straight Alliances, or GSAs. Both of these steps toward supporting GLBTQ students address the aforementioned “culture of silence” that often surrounds sexual minority lifestyles.
Although including homosexuality in the school curriculum may be met with resistance, Lipkin (1995) asserts that it can be justified in several ways. First, schools have both intellectual as well as social objectives. Addressing homosexuality is one way to attend to the social arena, and an especially important aspect to discuss for the sake of homosexual students and heterosexual students alike. It may help the homosexual student to see a gay presence in the world and to understand that homosexuality is not always problematic, and inclusive curriculum can help the heterosexual students to confront prejudice and bias against sexual minority populations. Another simple reason sexuality is an appropriate topic is that students, especially those in high school, find it engaging. Sexuality is constantly portrayed in the media that these student experience, and is a part of their day to day lives. Addressing it in the curriculum is a way of acknowledging its existence and importance, while also “putting it in perspective” (Lipkin, p. 32).

Inclusive curriculum can be developed and addressed in a variety of ways. It can be addressed in sex education, but should not be limited to discussions about AIDS (Anderson 1994; Lipkin, 1995). Information about sexual minorities has a place in social studies, in which the gay rights movement can be taught in a way paralleling the civil rights movement. Public high schools in Cambridge, MA included a unit entitled “The Stonewall Riots and the History of Gays and Lesbians in the U.S.” in their high school curriculum, to which students responded positively (Lipkin). But even without teaching full units on homosexual or sexual minority issues or individuals, the topic can be included in English classes by discussing the sexuality of authors such as Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde, or Virginia Woolf, and the way their sexuality may impact their work or illuminate students’ understanding thereof (Lipkin). Middle school English classes could
include novels with gay themes or gay characters. Straut and Sapon-Shevin (2002) note that a “purposeful selection of literature can provide a space for the discussion of sexual orientation” (p. 38). In the arts, artists such as Keith Haring, Derek Jarman, and Andy Warhol could be discussed through the lens of sexual orientation, as well as musicians such as Tchaikovsky, Benjamin Britten, and Cole Porter (Anderson, 1994). If not included as a major topic of discussion, the mere acknowledgement of the sexuality of famous people who appear in the curriculum can allow GLBTQ students to see that homosexual people have lived and thrived in the past as well as today. Cowan’s (1988) *Gay Men and Women Who Enriched the World* provides a host of short biographies of gay and lesbian philosophers, artists, writers, and musicians throughout history, and could be easily employed in a variety of classes and settings.

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) are another tool praised for their importance in addressing the social and emotional needs of GLBTQ students. Gay-Straight Alliances are composed of both gay and straight students (as well as those falling under other labels, such as queer, bisexual, questioning, etc.), and serve the purposes of offering support for GLBTQ students, creating a community at the school, participating in social action for GLBTQ rights, or some combination of the above (Blumenfeld, 1995; Friedman-Nimz et al., 2006). Meetings may center on a particular topic of discussion, may include the viewing of a pertinent movie, or may involve participation in aforementioned social action projects, such as creating posters promoting inclusion to hang around the school. Participation in a supportive community often gives GLBTQ students the strength and support they need to fight the bias and harassment they may face in school settings, as well as combat the depression that may arise in dealing with a
sexual minority identity. One girl, a student at a private school in a wealthy suburb of Boston, attributes the support received by way of her school’s GSA to her survival in a time of suicidality. She says, “Each time [I wanted to kill myself], I was able to call someone from the Concord Academy Gay/Straight Alliance, or someone who I’d come out to through the strength and support I’d received there...If not for the support that I found...at a homo-affirmative high school, I would be dead today” (Blumenfeld, p. 218).

Social Issues for Gifted Students

The research on social issues and psychological health in gifted populations is far more mixed than that for GLBTQ students. While popular wisdom says that gifted students are strange, weird, socially isolated, and have no friends, the research does not always show this to be the case. Neihart (2002) notes that no empirical data support this common wisdom about gifted students in general, although some research lends evidence that creatively and artistically gifted children may be more prone to psychological issues (Neihart & Olenchak, 2002). However, despite the fact that gifted children in general do not appear to be more vulnerable to depression, there are several characteristics of giftedness, such as asynchronous development, social isolation, and perfectionism, which may serve as risk factors for depression or social problems.

Asynchronous Development

Asynchronous development refers to a gifted child’s tendency to develop different skills at different rates, such as a five year-old possessing age-appropriate emotional and motor skills, but having the intellectual capacity of an eight year-old. Such asynchrony can cause problems and frustration in a variety of settings, for the child him/herself and
his/her parents and teachers. Silverman gives the example of a child who sees a horse with eight year-old eyes, but cannot recreate it in clay with her five year-old fingers and thus screams in frustration (1993). Parents may become frustrated when their intellectually capable child nonetheless throws tantrums over minor issues. Demanding that she “Act her age!” the parent may forget that her actual age is five. Teachers, too, have trouble coping with a child whose intellectual capacity is above and beyond her classmates’, although her body and emotions are on target. Intellectually, as well, gifted children may show asynchrony, favoring one subject over another. A child who demonstrates great ability in math may nonetheless perform on a very average level in reading.

Terrassier (1985, as cited in Silverman, 2002) uses the term dyssynchrony to explain the psychological and social effects this uneven development has upon gifted children. Dyssynchrony is divided into two aspects: internal and social. Internal dyssynchrony is the uneven development of intellectual, psychomotor, and affective characteristics within the individual, while social dyssynchrony refers to the feeling of being out of place within a child’s social context. Both aspects have the capacity to create frustrations or social problems for the gifted student.

Social Isolation

Gifted children may feel a sense of differentness from other students, sometimes as a result of their asynchronous development. Although many gifted children are well-adjusted, Hollingworth was among the first to study their social and emotional needs in the 1930s. She found that the higher a child’s IQ, the more problems they encounter, as their asynchrony tends to be greater (Hollingworth, 1930a, 1930b, 1931, as cited in
Silverman 2002). Thus, exceptionally gifted children have a tendency to experience more social difficulties than those who are mildly or moderately gifted. Gross’s more recent work with Australian children has supported Hollingworth’s assertions (Gross, 2002). It is interesting to note that the social difficulties that highly gifted individuals experience have been shown to be alleviated through the process of acceleration or radical acceleration (that is, a series of grade-skips or early entrances that allows a student to graduate high school more than three years ahead of schedule). Gross’s studies of gifted Australian students found that those who had been radically accelerated experienced improved social well-being and the formation of friendships with their new older peers, while those highly gifted students who had been retained in their own grades reported difficulties in forming friendships and maintaining them (Gross, 2003, as cited in Gross and van Vliet, 2005). Placing gifted children with their intellectual peers, even though it may sometimes mean scaffolding for them in other areas, such as motor coordination, has been shown to alleviate social difficulty by removing some amount of the social dyssynchrony these students feel with age-mates who are not intellectually similar.

Perfectionism

Gifted adolescents may develop perfectionistic tendencies for a number of reasons: they may set standards in line with their intellectual abilities, but unaligned with their other abilities (i.e. motor skills); gifted students may set goals according to those of older friends who are intellectual peers; or, because of unchallenging school work, gifted students may strive for perfect performance rather than mastery of content, when rewards such as grades become their only fulfillment for easy tasks (Schuler, 2002). Perfectionism is often viewed as a trait that can be channeled for good or for bad. Some
have characterized the dichotomy as “healthy v. neurotic” or “enabling v. disabling” (Schuler, p. 72). In the positive sense, perfectionism can drive individuals to achieve at high levels and produce quality products. In the negative sense, it can be characterized by obsessive tendencies to get things “just right,” with perfectionists being unable to ever reach a level of achievement to their satisfaction, always believing they could have somehow made their work better. Such constant feelings of dissatisfaction can cause stress and self-criticism. Rice, Leever, Christopher, and Porter (2006) found maladaptive self-critical perfectionism to “adversely affect nearly every aspect of psychological functioning” that was assessed in their study (p. 532). The maladaptive perfectionism found in college honors students in this study were found to be associated with higher levels of stress as well as social disconnectedness – another possible source of social isolation that gifted students may feel. Similarly, Parker (1997) surveyed a group of academically talented sixth graders using a variety of scales assessing perfectionism and other traits, and found the students fell into three cluster groups indicating a nonperfectionistic type (33%), a healthy perfectionistic type (42%), and a dysfunctional perfectionistic type (25%). Although a minority of students displayed dysfunctional perfectionism, for these students, their perfectionism is a risk factor for social and emotional problems.

**Support and Interventions for Gifted Students**

Providing support for gifted children generally focuses upon meeting their academic needs and finding intellectual peers. Academically, acceleration is an option, especially for highly gifted students (Gross & van Vliet, 2005), but even without an actual class change, gifted students can be provided with differentiated work within the
regular classroom, which is a positive step toward meeting their intellectual needs (Betts, 2004; Rogers, 2007). Curriculum compacting and independent study can enhance motivation, and give students a chance to explore their interests through enrichment options (Reis, 2004, Reis & Renzulli, 1992). Rimm (2002) suggests that “the best way to support gifted and talented students, particularly adolescents, is to help assemble a gifted cohort group” (p. 17). This may include students from within the school with whom the gifted children take classes, or students from community-based activities who convene for some academic or extra-curricular activity.

Gifted students who have more serious social and emotional difficulties may be supported through individual or group counseling. Group counseling is a way to, once again, give gifted students a chance to interact with their intellectual peers in a structured environment where they may help one another process feelings and discuss what it means to be gifted (Silverman, 1993). Individual counseling, on the other hand, may be a way for counselors and the gifted student to deal more intensely with behavioral and emotional problems, although Silverman advocates using individual counseling as a preventative technique to ensure that gifted students do not develop psychological or emotional problems in the first place. Key issues and concerns that often arise for gifted children in counseling are feeling different, confusion about what it means to be gifted, lack of understanding from others, fear of failure, perfectionism, and existential depression (Silverman).

Gifted students, like sexual minority students, face a variety of social issues that come along with their minority identities. When the two identities are combined, however, they create a “double minority” status, which often compounds or magnifies
issues. The intersection of the gifted and GLBTQ identities is discussed in the following section.

The Intersection of Giftedness and a GLBTQ Identity

Although the study of GLTBQ students and gifted students provides some insight into the salient issues facing these populations, the gifted/GLBTQ population, who possess dual minority identities, face some unique and/or compounded challenges. Depending on the broadness of definition used, being gifted places one in approximately the top 3% of students. Using varying estimates, being a sexual minority places one in a minority of 3-10% of students. Hence, the chances of being both gifted and a sexual minority are 1-3 in 1000 (Cohn, 2002). Despite these statistical probabilities, however, Friedrichs (1997 as cited in Cohn, 2002) found in a study of 53 GLB youth in metropolitan-area support groups that more than a third had been in specialized gifted programs at their schools. Although this is a small sample, the unexpected high percentage of overlap between giftedness and sexual minority status makes it clear that gifted/GLBTQ students deserve attention in research to address their unique needs, issues, and possible solutions for helping them to cope with their dual exceptionalities. Not only is the gifted/GLBTQ student likely to feel socially isolated due to his/her rare and unique combination of characteristics (NAGC, 2001), but the chances of finding an intellectually appropriate romantic partner who is also sexually compatible are extremely slim as well (Cohn, 2002; Tolan, 1992). One student in Peterson and Rischar’s 2000 study of 18 gay/gifted youth referred to her “retarded romantic and sexual development” (p. 238).
Some of the literature refers to these students and their issues using “double” or exponential terminology, implying that being both gifted and GLBTQ leads to a unique and sometimes magnified set of circumstances for such students. The National Association for Gifted Children’s (2001) position paper on *Appropriate Education for Gifted GLBT Students* notes that the students may be placed in “social-emotional double jeopardy” due to their two exceptionalities. Peterson and Rischar note that feelings of differentness “likely intensify” when a student is both gifted and a sexual minority. Cohn (2002) similarly states that facing the reality of being both gifted and gay can lead to intensified feels of being marginalized, both externally and internally.

Giftedness and sexuality can interact in a variety of ways. Giftedness often carries with it a predisposition to emotional and intellectual overexcitabilities (Silverman, 1993). These overexcitabilities may present as asynchrony, in which gifted students develop more rapidly in one area than another. This can complicate romantic relationships when, for example, a ten year-old girl is intellectually compatible with a teenager, but emotionally unready to enter into a romantic partnership with a much older partner. The gifted child may feel an “explosion of feeling,” and if the object of desire is of the same sex as the gifted child, s/he may prematurely assume a homosexual identity without further consideration (Tolan, 1992). A heightened intellectual capacity may allow gifted children to become aware of their sexuality, or of sexuality in general, at an age much younger than other children, which can lead to social complications when the child has no appropriate outlet for such curiosity (Sheely, 2000). From another aspect, emotional overexcitabilities can affect gifted and sexual minority students negatively when they hear stories about homophobic crimes, such as the Mathew Shepherd murder, and
emotionally take on the burden of the situation, perceiving such stories as personal threats (Cohn, 2002).

Androgyny may also occur when a gifted student refuses to conform to gender-role stereotypes (Sheely, 2000), especially those surrounding academic pursuits, such as females who are highly gifted in math or engineering. On the one hand, such androgyny is positive in that the gifted individual is pursuing his or her passions without worrying about gender stereotypes. On the other hand, when androgyny is exhibited in adolescence, a time in which gender roles take on increased importance, such behavior can lead to harassment (Sheely). Cohn (2002) points out that gender stereotyping becomes a problem for gifted students especially when their talent is in an area that is not traditionally associated with his/her gender, such as females in math or boys in English. In order to avoid wasting potential, or scaring gifted students away from their areas of talent, it is necessary to find interventions that encourage the pursuit of strengths regardless of gender stereotypes.

It is clear that gifted and GLBTQ students experience a set of unique issues that vary from or may be intensified in comparison to either gifted or GLBTQ populations, yet little research has been done about the intersection between these two exceptional populations. How do they see themselves? Do they identify more clearly with being gifted, being a sexual minority, both or neither? What meaning do they give to their dual minority classifications? What are the salient issues in their lives? These are the questions this study addresses, in the hope of adding to the paucity of literature about the dually gifted/GLBTQ population.
CHAPTER 3: PROCEDURE

Introduction

This phenomenological survey-research study aims to explore the broad research question: How do gifted/GLBTQ individuals perceive their experience growing up with two exceptionalities? This broad question was approached from a variety of angles related to growing up gifted/GLBTQ, including: At what age did the individual become aware of their giftedness and sexual orientation, and how did this affect their experiences? Do gifted/GLBTQ individuals see their exceptionalities as assets or as problem-inducing? How do these exceptionalities play into their concept of identity? What services were available to them as gifted students and as GLBTQ students, and which additional services would have been useful? The information necessary to address these questions was obtained through the procedures described in this section.

Subjects

The sample for this study consists of adults, primarily college-age students, who self-identify as both gifted and a sexual minority (gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, questioning, or other, or “GLBTQ”). The sample is a convenience sample in which students chose to participate in the study. Potential participants were recruited by e-mailing college-level GLBTQ support organizations and GLBTQ studies departments from a variety of college campuses across the United States, as well as GLTBQ listservs that reached a primarily collegiate crowd. Participants were all over the age of 18, and were mostly college students, although a few older adults who worked in collegiate settings or subscribed to the listservs also participated. In all, 29 participants completed
the survey, and an additional 9 began the survey but did not complete it. Five of these incomplete responses included completion of less than 25% of the survey. Data from these five responses were discarded. The remaining four incomplete responses were coded and analyzed when looking for common themes, and are included in the demographics and the results for quantitative items where possible (e.g. where the respondent completed the item in question). As a result of incomplete surveys, different n’s are reported for some demographic and quantitative questions.

Two respondents to the survey were acquaintances of the researcher. These respondents were not specially recruited, but found out about the study through the procedure described above. Both of these respondents were notified by e-mail of the identity of the researcher, and asked about their comfort level in completing the survey, knowing an acquaintance would be analyzing their responses. Both chose to participate, stating they felt confident they could answer fully and truthfully.

The researcher advertised for students who “self-identify as gifted, whether or not they were ever ‘formally’ identified in school, and self-identify as a sexual minority.” Because definitions of giftedness vary within the field of education, and because there is no set agreed-upon method for identifying gifted individuals, it was decided that by the time students reached college, they would be able to self-identify as gifted. Of the respondents, only 10% (n=31) were never formally identified in school. All respondents, including those never formally identified, were involved with some form of advanced academic programming, ranging from participating in before/after school programs or summer programs, academic competitions, ability grouping within a grade or class, or
attending a separate school for the gifted. These data lend credibility to the assumption that the adult sample was able to accurately self-identify as gifted.

Additionally, it was decided that self-identification of sexual minority status would be the most efficient way to identify participants with relevant gifted/GLBTQ experiences. Although this does potentially leave out individuals who are not “out,” or who are intimidated by labels such as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, without the means to survey a large sample of college students for sexual histories, sexual behavior, or sexual preference, the self-identified sampling procedure was deemed appropriate for the exploratory nature of this study.

Participants reported attending or having attended college or graduate school in 15 states from the Northeast, Midwest, and Southern regions of the U.S. 70% of the participants were undergraduates, 15% were graduate students, and 15% were “other,” which included alumni/ae, and campus staff members. Sexual orientations are presented in Table 2.
Table 2

*Participant Self-Reported Sexual Orientation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgendered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Those who chose "other" identified their orientations as "pansexual" (2) and "not identifying with labels" (2).*

Review of Instrument

The instrument used in the study was a 57-question online survey created by the researcher (see Appendix B for a print version). The survey covered a variety of topics related to the experiences of students growing up gifted and GLBTQ, including questions about when they first knew they were GLBTQ and gifted, what it was like in school being both gifted and GLBTQ, the services offered for GLBTQ students in school, what gifted programming they participated in, whether they perceived giftedness and a GLBTQ identity as an asset or detriment, and whether they identify more strongly with the gifted label or the GLBTQ label. The survey was largely open-ended in nature, with many questions followed by a free-response text box for participants to explain their
responses. The advantage to conducting the survey electronically was the elimination of interviewer bias.

Some ideas for the survey questions were taken from Peterson & Rischar’s 2000 survey of gifted/GLB youth. The goal of this study in furthering gifted/GLBTQ research was to look more specifically at the interaction of gifted/GLBTQ identities and what this means to the students who identify with both labels.

Procedures

To recruit participants, the researcher e-mailed GLBTQ support groups, GLBTQ or gender studies departments, and GLBTQ listserv administrators based at a variety of college campuses across the country. Administrators or leaders of these support groups, departments, or listservs were asked to forward the information to groups of students who might be eligible and interested in participating in a survey about the experiences of gifted/GLBTQ students. Interested participants were asked to e-mail the researcher to obtain a link to the online survey.

Upon making contact with the researcher, participants were e-mailed a consent form with the request to electronically sign and return it via e-mail. Upon receipt of consent, they were sent a link to the online survey, which they could then follow to complete the survey online. The survey had a save and return feature, so participants could complete it over a course of days or weeks. Responses were stored in an online database connected with the survey tool, to which the researcher had sole access. After the window for completing the survey closed, data were downloaded by the researcher and saved in password protected files to ensure confidentiality of responses. Data were
analyzed for common themes, and results were sent to all participants who expressed interest in one of the final survey items.

Data Collection

Data were collected via Opinio, an online survey tool available for researchers based at the College of William and Mary. Participants were sent an access link to the survey via e-mail, and all responses were collected online. Responses were stored in Opinio’s database until all surveys were completed, then downloaded into a password-protected Excel file and Word file for data coding and analysis.

Data Analysis

Survey responses were organized by research question in a word processing program, then coded and analyzed for common themes. Some qualitative items, including demographic items, were analyzed using descriptive statistics. For free-response items, codes were developed for each group of items using “Definition of the Situation Codes” as described by Bogdan and Biklen (2003).

Ethical Concerns and Researcher’s Position

This study was approved by the Internal Review Board at the College of William and Mary. All participants signed a detailed consent form prior to participation in the study. Results from the study were distributed to those participants who expressed interest in receiving them on the survey. Reliance on participant honesty, as well as incomplete survey responses, may both serve as threats to the validity of the study.
Interviewer bias was eliminated through the use of a computer-based survey tool. The researcher’s biases in the study include the assumption that gifted/GLBTQ individuals face experiences that are qualitatively different from those of either gifted or GLBTQ individuals, as well as the assumption that the needs of gifted/GLBTQ students have not traditionally been met in school environments, and that their experiences of school are likely to be difficult.
CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data Collection

The subject sample consisted of 33 adult respondents, who were primarily college students. All respondents self-identified as being both gifted and a sexual minority. Data were collected using Opinio, an online survey research tool. The 57-question, largely open-ended survey instrument was accessible online, and responses were stored in Opinio’s online database until the survey period ended. Responses were then downloaded into Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel, and saved as password protected files to maintain the confidentiality of the respondents.

Data Analysis

Quantitative and demographic items were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while open-ended responses were analyzed qualitatively, looking for common themes. Qualitative coding and analysis was performed based upon the suggestions of Bogdan and Biken (2003) as described in “The Mechanics of Working with Data” (p. 181). In the initial organization of responses, narrative data were divided into categories by research question. After several reviews of the data, a variety of codes were developed under each group of responses as common themes emerged. Responses under each research question were coded using “Definition of the Situation” codes, which are appropriate when exploring how the subjects define the situation or topic (Bogdan & Biken, 2003), in this case how they perceive their experiences of being both gifted and GLBTQ.
Results

Age of Awareness of Giftedness and GLBTQ Identity

The first research question asked at what age participants became aware of their giftedness and their status as a sexual minority. In order to get a clearer view of participants’ experiences in school, it was important to know the ages at which they began to identify as gifted and GLBTQ; this is because their experiences may have been influenced by their own self-identity as gifted or GLBTQ or both throughout their schooling. To address this first research question, data collected from the online survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine mean ages and median grades at which participants became aware of each of their minority identities.

Participants reported becoming aware of their giftedness at an average age of seven. The median grade in which they reported being aware of their giftedness was 1st grade. The median grade for being formally identified was 2nd grade.

The average age for thinking they might be GLBTQ was 13 years old, and the median grade was 7th. The average age for feeling certain that they were GLBTQ was 16 years old, and the median grade was 11th.

It is clear from the descriptive statistics that there is a discrepancy between the age that students became aware of their giftedness and the age that they became aware of their minority sexual orientation. It seems plausible, therefore, that students would deal with issues of being gifted earlier in life (particularly throughout elementary school), while issues associated with being GLBTQ would not arise until later for many students. This difference in age of realization came to light when participants were asked about their experiences in school as gifted/GLBTQ students. Several participants discussed the
fact that the two identities did not always overlap chronologically: Alan\(^1\) said, “Generally - and very generally - in the years of school when it was hardest to be gifted (grade school) I did not struggle so much with being gay and vice versa.” Ellen noted, “The identities did not overlap much, as I was unaware of my sexual orientation in K-12 and the gifted label did not matter in college.” The majority of the participants, however, were able to articulate their experiences in identifying as both gifted and GLBTQ; the dual identity was meaningful for most of the respondents at some point in their lives.

_Gifted and GLBTQ Identities as Assets or Detriments_

The second research question explored the participants view of their gifted and GLBTQ identities as providing advantages or disadvantages, especially in school. Subjects responded to questions about the advantages and disadvantages of each identity separately, and then were asked several questions about being both gifted and GLBTQ, and how this was different than being either one or the other. To address this research question, responses from the survey were coded and analyzed qualitatively to identity common themes.

_Giftedness_

Participants were asked about the difficulties and advantages that they associated with being gifted. Major themes for difficulties included social isolation and difficulty relating to peers, bullying/teasing, and boredom/frustration in school. Commonly cited advantages were the ease of school, academic opportunities, a strong peer group, and good relationships with teachers.

\(^1\)Names of subjects have been changed.
Difficulties of Being Gifted

Social isolation and difficulty relating to peers. Many students commented on being left out of activities or having a stigma attached to them because of their giftedness. Some referred to this generally, while others specifically linked their social isolation to different aspects of their experience. A few commented on gifted students being in separate classes or participating in pull-out programs, which led to a feeling of exclusion or differentness. George said, “G/T and TAG students were often separated from the student body and perceived as different.” Ellen described her pull-out program experience:

The problem in middle school... was that the gifted 6th graders were in a pull-out class for all but two periods of the day, making us seem like oddballs in the same room all day while the other kids switched classes.

In other instances, it was not the physical separation that caused feelings of isolation, but asynchrony manifested in different interests or intellectual levels. Abe explained that his vocabulary level was far above his classmates’: “I inadvertently used language unfamiliar to my classmates.” Furthermore, his interests did not match with theirs. He said: “My interests (reading a broad range of subjects, informal research/writing projects, etc.) were not complementary to TV viewing or other traditional elementary/junior/high school activities.” Rodney had similar experiences. He explained, “I had a different maturity level than the other children, and my interests were not always very similar to their interests.” Edie thought of her interests as “adult interests,” and cited them as a reason for not being able to relate to her peers.
Teasing and labels. Several students noted that teasing was a problem in school as a result of their giftedness. This often took the form of comments made about strong academic performance. Sharon told of her experiences with other students:

Being labeled as the 'smart kid' was never fun...If my classmates saw my test scores when they were handed out to us they'd make comments like 'Of course you got a hundred' or 'Look! She missed points....someone call the papers!' depending on my score. Either way, I hated the attention.

Linda also linked the idea of labels to teasing from classmates. “In elementary school I was seen as 'the smart kid' which made me a target for teasing, bullying, etc.,” she said. Many other participants mentioned labels as well, often using quotation marks to denote what their peers called them. They often related these labels to their interactions with peers. Melinda said, “I couldn't wait to go to a big college and be anonymous in my classes. I was forever known as 'the smart kid.' It affected how people treated me. My actual personality didn't really matter.” A few respondents perceived the teasing and labeling from other students as expressions of jealousy or resentment. “Other students look upon gifted students with occasional jealousy and resentment. I was labeled, along with my classmates, as 'nerdy' or sometimes 'stuck-up,” said John. Bill, who reported that his giftedness did not cause any real problems in school, nonetheless noted that “There were isolated incidents where people would demean me for being 'the smart one', but those were rare and I realized that it was likely out of jealousy that such comments were made.”

Boredom/frustration in school. Many students reported boredom or frustration with school as a major disadvantage to being gifted. A few reported not being able to
move ahead at their own pace, or feeling “held back” by their school experiences. Two students reported being expected to teach their peers. Said Miriam, “On several occasions, my teachers would leave me to teach the Algebra III or the AP Calculus class.” Lacey said, “Often times teachers would have me teach others when they didn’t understand.” Bart mentioned his frustration with group work, explaining, “During mandatory group work…I would get frustrated with my group members for the work they produced that didn’t meet my expectations.”

Advantages of Being Gifted

Ease of school. Many of the respondents stated that school was easy, and that this was an advantage. “Classes were a breeze!” declared Carla. Abe stated that he got through college with “minimal effort.” As a consequence of the relative ease with which they completed school, many participants cited a decrease in academic stress, and more time to focus on other interests such as sports or club activities.

Academic opportunities. The most often mentioned advantage to being gifted was the plethora of academic opportunities that were provided to the students. These opportunities ranged widely. Some students discussed being able to take advanced classes including classes that offered advanced credit: “I was able to go to different grades and get into AP classes that were much more interesting,” said Grace. Jennifer noted, “Taking advanced history classes in high school allowed me to completely skip my history requirements in college.” Some respondents explained that being gifted allowed them to participate in more fun or engaging classroom activities, such as building with Legos, making boats out of clay, learning a foreign language early, or writing “Choose-your-own-adventure” stories. Along with these more fun activities, several participants
Experiences of Gifted/Sexual Minority Students

mentioned having more freedom to pursue independent projects than their classmates had. Sharon had several such opportunities throughout her school years:

Starting in kindergarten, I had more options for reading books in the library since I had a much higher reading comprehension. I tested out of some sections during grade school so I could do independent research projects instead. I got to skip a year of junior high science so I was ahead one year in science. I took algebra independent study during the summer one year so I ended up ahead two years ahead in math, I think.

Advantages to being gifted were not confined to K-12 years, however, and many students reported being awarded college scholarships as a result of their giftedness. Said Abe, “[I] secured $20,000 in outside merit-based scholarship/grant funding to minimize my college debt load.” Jill was grateful that she lightened the burden of paying for college for the sake of her parents: “Being gifted got me into college at a price my parents can afford to pay!”

Strong peer group. Many participants described their connection to other gifted students, and the positive experiences they had in gifted classes with like-ability peers. In describing the grouping in her high school, Elise explained

In high school I built a lot of lasting friendships after enduring four years of intense study with them. The nature of our course scheduling made it easy to have most classes with the same people, and once they become your close friends, all your classes are filled with your friends.

Other subjects reported similarly positive experiences with gifted peers. “The friendships formed in some of my advanced classes are some of the strongest I have today” said
Jennifer. Robert declared, “I got to go to a school for gifted children where I made a really close friend who is now my college roommate.” Being with similarly intelligent students appears to have had a positive effect on these gifted/GLBTQ students.

*Relationships with teachers.* One final advantage reported by subjects was the unique relationships they were able to form with their teachers as a result of their being gifted. This is probably due, at least in part, to their adult interests and maturity levels. Elise stated,

> I really enjoyed learning, and I think most of my teachers could tell. It wasn't just academic gifts, but my personality on a whole maybe that led me to form lasting connections with a number of my teachers. I felt I gained their respect in the classroom, and pursued friendships with them by chatting with them outside of class.

Special classes for gifted or advanced students allowed one respondent to get more personal attention and to get to know her teachers. “I think that helped when I needed to start looking at colleges,” said Grace. Other students may not have formed personal bonds with teachers, but did report that teachers were more lenient with them than with regular students. “Adults tended to believe us more than 'normal' kids (e.g. if we somehow did not have a hall pass, it was not our fault)” explained Ellen. Melinda found a similar kind of leniency:

> Teachers tend to favor those who do well in their class, which worked out for me, because I tended to be pretty vocal about things I thought were unfair or pointless. I got away with a lot more than a lot of my classmates could have.
Being GLBTQ

Participants were also asked about the difficulties and advantages they associated with being GLBTQ. Difficulties included teasing/bullying, fear of harassment and fear of coming out, and isolation. Advantages included developing a sense of empathy, personal growth and personal strength, leadership opportunities, and a sense of community.

Difficulties of Being GLBTQ

Teasing/bullying. Teasing and bullying about their sexual orientation was described by almost half of the participants. This teasing and bullying most often took verbal form. Several subjects described fellow students using the word “gay” as an insult, without actually referring to the participants’ sexual orientation. Said George, “In middle school, calling someone ‘gay’ was the insult of choice.” Keith described similar problems: “Even when I wasn't yet 'out' to anyone (including myself), the usual childhood taunts of 'queer' and 'fag' were really bothersome.” For other participants, the language was aimed at them specifically. “In college, someone wrote 'fag' on the marker board on my dorm room door,” recalls Rodney. Bart explained, “During elementary, middle and high school I was verbally harassed by other students who called me gay, queer, faggot, fag, etc.” Only one respondent, Bill, reported direct physical abuse. He notes,

I experienced harassment about [being gay] during one of my chemistry classes where I was finally forced to talk with the teacher about how students were poking me in the back with their feet through the desk I was sitting in.
Fear of harassment and fear of coming out. While it is heartening that only one student reported physical abuse, several others made a note of being afraid of the consequences of being gay or of coming out. Rodney said, “I wasn't out to many people in high school, so I didn't receive a lot of harassment. I was always afraid that if I were to come out, I might get beaten up.” As a result of the conservative nature of her college, Grace said, “There were extremely vocal opinions voiced regarding gays and lesbians at times in class and it was really horrible to sit and listen to, but I didn't feel safe defending myself and my people.” Robert noted, “I didn't tell anyone and kept my mouth shut because I didn't want [my sexual orientation] to [lead to difficulties].”

Social isolation. Many subjects reported social isolation resulting from their sexual minority status. Because she was not out, Grace said, “It isolated me socially and intellectually from my peers and was very stifling.” Lacey described her experience having her first girlfriend:

When I had my first girlfriend, we weren't out, but our friends could tell something was going on, which led to fights and I lost a few connections with some of my friends. This was tough since I felt pretty alone.

Jill described isolation from both peers and teachers, stating, “There were people (students and teachers alike) who wouldn't talk to me because they didn't want to associate with someone gay.” Isolation was reported both by subjects who were out, and those who were not public about their orientation.

Advantages of Being GLBTQ

Empathy. Despite the isolation and teasing many experienced, subjects reported unique advantages to identifying as GLBTQ as well. Several subjects mentioned that by
being GLBTQ, they developed a sense of empathy that they would not have otherwise obtained. Carla explained, “I think being queer helped me experience discrimination - which can be a very good thing to help create an empathetic spirit -- which I hope I have.” Keith had similar feelings, saying, “By being an outsider myself, I learned to accept things, hoping that I could offer to other outsiders compassion and respect which no one else would provide.”

*Personal growth and personal strength.* Many participants developed a sense of personal strength, or experienced personal growth through their experiences as GLBTQ individuals. Keith said, “It gave me a tremendous new perspective on life and opened my eyes and feelings to the sensitivities and differences in the world.” Although he reported that he would not intentionally choose to be gay, Bill admitted that “Going through tough times can be a great means to growth.” George reported a sense of strength that came along with accepting his sexual orientation: “If anything, it has helped me become a stronger person by having to overcome complex obstacles with little or no support.” Elise remembered developing a sense of pride in her identity, saying, “As I've overcome the self-confidence problems related to my sexual orientation, I feel as though I'm not only confident, but proud of my non-traditional life, and this has positively impacted my relationships.”

*Leadership opportunities.* Becoming active in GLBTQ advocacy and GLBTQ groups provided leadership opportunities for many of the respondents. Alan reported that his college “fostered a community of school leaders through its student organizations that for whatever reason tended to have lots of gay students.” Bart took on a leadership role, as well: “I became president of my college’s GSA my freshmen year which helped build
up my resume and give me several very applicable real-world experiences.” Rodney, too, got more involved, saying, “I felt the need to advocate for myself and other LGBT people.”

Community. While social isolation was a problem due to being GLBTQ, many subjects also reported that identifying as GLBTQ helped them to find a supportive community. Ellen pointed out the dichotomy, asserting “After K-12 and undergrad where my sexual orientation was not an advantage, it did help me find a community at [graduate school] fairly quickly.” In the broader sense, Karl mused, “I think it can offer a social network for those who don't always fit into other social scenes.” Crystal seemed to feel privileged to have made the friends she did: “I got to make friends with amazing people that the 'normal' students wouldn't talk to. I had some wonderful experiences with the GSA and other groups throughout the years broadening my views and enhancing my knowledge.”

Unique Difficulties and Advantages to Being Both Gifted and GLBTQ

Participants were asked whether they felt that being gifted/GLBTQ offered unique difficulties and unique advantages. Quantitative responses are shown in Table 3.
Table 3

Do you think that being both gifted and GLBTQ led to unique difficulties and advantages in school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unique difficulties</th>
<th>Unique advantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n=29.*

**Unique Difficulties**

Students who answered no to this item most often gave the reason that the two minority identities did not overlap. Jill, who went to an academically challenging school from K-12 noted that being gifted at her school was a good thing, so the combination did not present unique problems. Bart had a different perspective: “I think everyone has difficulties in one way or another in school: this was just how mine were manifested.”

Most of the difficulties cited were similar to those that appeared under difficulties of being gifted or being GLBTQ, such as social isolation and teasing/bullying. However, as a result of having two minority identities, participants emphasized that these difficulties were magnified, referring to themselves as “doubly” different or “more” different. In addition, the tendency to overthink and overachieve as a result of being gifted/GLBTQ was described as a unique difficulty for gifted/GLBTQ people.

**Double differentness, social isolation and teasing/bullying.** Nine of the participants used language describing themselves as “doubly” or more different than other students as a result of having more than one minority identity. Keith mentioned that being a part of the general crowd was not possible: “[I’m] not saying that this was a bad
thing, but being gifted put one into a separate class, and being gay separated one even further.” Alan referred to himself as “not normal in both ways.”

Many subjects linked this double differentness to their perceived social isolation, which was an oft-cited difficulty. Jennifer explained, “The more differences you have, the harder sometimes it is to connect with people.” Others pointed to the difficulties fitting in with either the gifted or GLBTQ social group because of the additional exceptionality. Rodney, a college alumnus, said that he had expected to fit in with a group of GLBTQ students when he moved to a larger city. “To my surprise, I had some trouble adjusting to life in the LGBT community because of being gifted.” Miriam, also a college graduate, described a similar experience: “Even when I was at a school for the gifted, I only knew of one other gay student (though many more have come out since graduation). I felt doubly isolated. When I found a GLBTQ community, I was considered different.” Abe explained that because of his dual identity, he felt “cut off” socially, and did not have “particularly powerful ties to one group, individual, or organization.”

Crystal had trouble with the other gifted students at her school: “The advanced kids had their own hierarchy and their own bullying tactics.”

A few students noted that bullying or teasing was a problem as a result of their dual exceptionalities. Crystal explained “It did give more ammo to bully me. I was bullied both for being gifted and for being GLBT.” Lacey said, “Both had people picking on me a little.” These participants seemed to interpret their dual minority identity as magnifying the probability of being teased or bullied.

*Overthinking and overachievement.* Two participants mentioned the intersection of giftedness and GLTBQ as leading to overthinking and/or overachievement. Crystal felt
her intelligence led to high levels of stressful self-consciousness. She explained, “I overthought the entire issue of being gay way too much due to my intelligence.” Ellen saw herself as an overachiever, and said, “I think my lesbianism contributed more to my being an overachiever to cover up my sexual orientation, than did my giftedness. The latter helped make my overachieving easier, though.” For Ellen, her intelligence provided a way for her to shift attention away from her sexual orientation instead of her having to address it head on.

**Unique Advantages**

Participants were asked about the unique advantages that arose from being gifted/GLBTQ. Sixty-six percent of participants felt that having the dual minority identity did offer unique advantages. Those who did not feel that being gifted/GLBTQ had unique advantages offered little in the way of explication. Among the advantages identified were: developing a unique perspective, a strong sense of self, and giftedness helping them to deal with being GLBTQ.

*A unique perspective.* Several participants mentioned that being both gifted and GLBTQ allowed them to gain a unique perspective in the world, one that is not afforded to everyone. George explained, “I think it offered a more nuanced world view and two lenses through which to view the world, lenses not accessible to a majority of the population.” Rodney expressed similar thoughts: “I feel that being queer and gifted has helped me to develop a really unique perspective on life.” A couple of respondents related their perspective on life to their ability to help others. Robert noted, “I saw things that most other people didn't. I was different so I empathized with other people around me in school who were different. I saw their viewpoints much easier and did not judge
them because they were different.” Crystal said that her unique perspective “made me more relatable to other students who needed help but were afraid to ask some of the other advanced students.”

Sense of self. Abe asserted, “My extraordinary situation prevented me from sliding into the crowd and surrendering my individuality. Since I defined myself exclusively as an individual, I built up self-reliance, self-control, and composure under pressure.” Other students mentioned a distinct sense of individuality as well. Lacey explained, “It made me a unique individual so I didn't blend in and I knew who I was.” Elise found a sense of strength in accepting her dual identity:

Throughout college I feel that when I had self confidence problems based on my sexual orientation, I found self-pride in my strong academic work, as I had in high school. When I learned to be proud of my sexual orientation, it was like I felt doubly strong. For seven and a half years I've built up my identity as 'good student' and now I feel like I identify as 'good student, plus, uniquely bisexual.

Giftedness helped to deal with GLBTQ identity. Several participants stated that being gifted helped them deal with being a sexual minority, although the manifestations of this varied. Melinda said that her thinking skills helped her to deal with her GLBTQ status:

I tend to be very practical and logical, and I think that being a gifted student equipped me with the tools I needed to be a sexual minority with no nearby support and be okay with it. In hindsight, I also think that being seen as gifted and having established the pattern of me doing my own thing, no matter what everyone else was doing, made the coming out process easier.
Keith mentioned, “It seemed to be the case that in the gifted community, people were more open-minded and accepting toward gay people.” In this way, he found being gifted in addition to being GLBTQ an advantage. Karl saw both groups as being tolerant: “Since being gifted and being GLBT are both minority groups, we both seem to be more tolerant of other minorities.”

_Dual Identities: More or Fewer Difficulties Than a Gifted or GLBTQ Identity Alone?_

Subjects were asked whether they felt that students who were gifted/GLBTQ had more or fewer difficulties than students who identified with one or the other. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Do Gifted/GLBTQ Students Have More Or Fewer Difficulties Than Other Gifted Students? Than Other GLBTQ Students?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>More</th>
<th>Fewer</th>
<th>The Same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compared to other gifted</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared to other GLBTQ</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n=29.*

Most participants felt that gifted/GLBTQ students had more difficulties than other gifted students. Those who answered “more” tended to explain their answer in one of two ways. One group pointed to the problem of two minority identities compounding difficulties. Susan said, “Because they are both considered minorities, I would think that
this would lead to a higher probability of being teased.” Grace similarly noted, “Anyone who comes out in school is going to face more compounded discrimination than someone with just one differentiating factor.”

The other cited reason for gifted/GLBTQ students having more difficulties than other gifted students was that a GLBTQ identity is generally more problematic or less supported than a gifted identity. Karl said, “Gifted students get picked on, but it’s still acceptable. In many places in the US, being gay is still a taboo.” Carla explained, “Being [GLBTQ] is still not accepted most places; causes a great deal of difficulty for the students - -life is much more difficult. Being gifted is considered geeky but 'they' have a great future ahead of them -- so there's a respect awarded the gifted that [GLBTQ] students don't receive.” Lacey felt similarly: “Coming to terms with your sexuality is difficult and the judgments of other make it difficult to know if you should come out, or hide yourself. Other gifted students don't have to worry about that and are not part of a discriminated minority.”

Students who answered that gifted/GLBTQ students have the same number of difficulties as other gifted students generally gave the following explanation—that all students have problems, and being gifted and GLBTQ is just one combination of problems, like any other. Robert’s answer is representative of this group: “Every student who is gifted has something about them that makes them different from another person and that is going to hinder them in some way or another while allowing them to excel in another. So, for some it is the GLBTQ issue added on, but that has no more real importance than any other issue they have to deal with. It's just another part of their person.”
When asked whether gifted/GLBTQ students have more or fewer difficulties than other GLBTQ students, the responses were far less polarized. Those who felt gifted/GLBTQ students had more difficulties than other GLBTQ students gave explanations including the magnification of social obstacles, the problem of giftedness causing one to read more into a situation, the added pressure of needing to achieve on top of dealing with a GLBTQ identity, compounded isolation, posing a greater threat to straight students, and a greater likelihood of experiences emotional anxiety as a result of the joint pressures.

Those who felt that gifted/GLBTQ students faced fewer difficulties than other GLBTQ students gave reasons including that fact that gifted groups are more accepting, teachers tend to treat gifted kids better, giftedness can help in dealing with GLBTQ difficulties through reasoning and verbal facility to defend oneself, and gifted/GLBTQ students can gather strength through books or philosophical ideas. Generally, respondents seemed to perceive giftedness as an aid to help in dealing with the difficulties of being GLBTQ.

Those who said that gifted/GLBTQ students have the same number of difficulties as other GLBTQ students gave fewer explanations. Ellen said that heterocentrism is hard for all GLBTQ people to deal with, whether gifted or not—if they did not use academic overachievement to cover up their sexual orientations, they would turn to another outlet, such as drugs, sports, etc. George said that both identities offered difficulties, but that they were separate and distinct. Alan asserted that giftedness and a sexual minority identity tend to “balance out” in terms of advantages and disadvantages.
The Role of Gifted and GLBTQ Identification in Subjects’ Concept of Identity

The third research question asked about the role of the gifted identity and GLBTQ identity in subject’s larger self-concept. Subjects were asked which statement they identified with most: I am gifted; I am [sexual orientation]; or Other. Results appear in Table 5. If participants chose “Other,” they were asked to specify. Subjects were asked to explain their answer, and these open-ended responses were coded and analyzed for common themes.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which Statement Do You Identify With Most?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am gifted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n=29.

Participants who identified most strongly as being gifted supplied a variety of reasons for their response. Abe explained that he adheres to the Aristotelian model of the soul, and therefore ranks giftedness above sexuality. George explained that he felt that giftedness represented a greater totality of his person that did sexual orientation. John, who is transgendered, explained that he cannot change being transgendered, whereas being gifted requires work; therefore, he identifies more strongly as gifted. Miriam noted that she identified as gifted earlier in her life; thus giftedness has impacted her life more greatly. She also mentioned her colleagues and patients (she is a doctor): “I don't think that many of my patients or my colleagues think of me first (if at all) as a lesbian. They
do see me, however, as someone who excels in my field.” Crystal also mentioned identifying herself as gifted at an earlier age; for her, this led to a stronger gifted identification. “I am gifted, and I just happen to be Pansexual as well. Gifted is my verb.”

Those who identified more strongly with the statement about sexual orientation gave some of the same reasons as the gifted-identified group. One mentioned that he identified as GLBTQ earlier. Several noted that being GLBTQ had more relevance to their lives, and so they more strongly identified with it. Bill noted, “[Being GLBTQ] has heavily influenced all aspects of my life: my emotional development, my spiritual life, my education, my solidarity with minorities, etc...” Alan explained,

Being gay is an incredibly all-encompassing thing that I think about often and influences many of my relationships and behaviors. I am not sure if this is a product of society or what, but I identify with it much more readily. I would not read a 'gifted' magazine, but I would read a 'gay' one.

Ellen also discussed the relevance being GLBTQ has to her life.

My sexual orientation has more day-to-day relevance in my life, especially because I work at a campus LGBT Center. Plus, being gifted is a privilege and being queer is a disadvantage for the most part so I tend to work for LGBTQ rights and be a queer role model.

Several subjects who identified more strongly with being GLBTQ explained that they felt a distancing from the “gifted” label after K-12 school, leading to a stronger identification with being GLBTQ. Brent said, “I feel I have lost touch with my identity as someone who is gifted because my school did not continue services to students past grade 6 for gifted students.” Grace noted, “I think I am older and farther removed from the
'gifted' terminology. Being gay is a more relevant part of my life.” Jennifer agreed: “Outside of high school, there isn't really a strong definition of 'gifted.'... However, my identity as a lesbian continues to have a stronger impact on how I identify myself and the way others identify me.”

Those who chose “Other” provided several recurring answers, shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*Fill-in Responses for Subjects Who Chose “I Identify With Other (please specify)”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am...</th>
<th>Number of responses^a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Name]</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An intelligent, caring, diverse person with widespanning interests and a good mind for business, who can talk to pretty much anyone.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^a out of 11 respondents who chose “other.”

Respondents who filled in “both” gave very similar reasons for their choice; they replied that it was not possible for them to separate parts of themselves, and that they were not more of one thing than another. Robert summed it up well: “I think all parts of
the mind, body and soul identify who I am.” Melinda, who chose “neither,” explained, “I don’t really identify with labels, so it’s kind a pointless question for me.” She was very consistent in this choice; at the beginning of the survey, when asked which sexual orientation she identified with, she chose Other and gave the same reason. Sharon, who also chose “Other” as a sexual orientation and filled in “I am Sharon” for this identification question, stated,

I feel picking one or the other emphasizes that statement as my entire identity. I choose not to use labels for my sexual orientation because I feel that having a label overpowers my identity as a whole person. This idea carries over into this question.

The other two subjects who filled in “I am [name],” as well as the one who wrote a description, all explained that their personalities were more complex than a single word or classification. Bart said, “My description of myself has dozens of facets to it, to try to make it a sentence-long statement seems a little odd.” The others appeared similarly put off by trying to confine themselves to a single word.

Gifted and GLBTQ Services in Various Levels of Schooling

The final research question explored the availability of gifted services and GLBTQ support services throughout participants’ schooling from K-12 through college. Subjects were asked to identify the gifted services available and the ones in which they participated, and they were asked to describe any GLBTQ support services that were available, and recommend additional services or improvements. Data about service
availability was analyzed using descriptive statistics, while commentary about services was coded and analyzed for common themes.

**Gifted Services**

Students were asked whether their schools provided gifted services at the elementary, middle, high school, and college level, and in what types of gifted programs they participated. Results are shown in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7

*Availability of Gifted Services*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Available</th>
<th>Unavailable</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School(a)</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School(a)</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School(a)</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College(b)</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(a\)\(n=28\). \(b\)\(n=26\).
Table 8

Percentage of Respondents Who Took Part in Various Forms of Gifted Programming in Elementary, Middle, High School, and College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before/after school gifted program</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability grouping by subject</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole grade skipping</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial grade skipping</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster grouping</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum compacting</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced placement</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate school for the gifted</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pull-out program</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer program for the gifted</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic team</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, gifted programming was highly available at the elementary, middle, and high school level, but less available at the collegiate level. Additionally, more participants were unclear about the availability of gifted serviced at the college level. All participants, regardless of whether they were ever formally identified as gifted, participated in gifted programming at some level of schooling.
Experiences of Gifted/Sexual Minority Students

GLBTQ services

Participants were also asked whether GLBTQ support services were available in elementary, middle, high school, and college. The results are shown on Table 9.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Available</th>
<th>Unavailable</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elementary school GLBTQ services. Although no subjects reported that support services were available in elementary school, many had suggestions on services or support that might be helpful to elementary students in dealing with GLBTQ issues.

The most-often cited suggestion for serving GLBTQ students at the elementary level was simple acknowledgement of GLBTQ people and GLBTQ lifestyles. Alan said, 

In grade school I can remember really struggling with my attraction to my male friends and I had no idea what it was…it would have been incredibly helpful just to be educated about same-sex attraction in a very general way - that it exists and is normal.
Others responded similarly. Bill said, “I look forward to the day when kids...can learn without fear from their teachers that not all boys will grow up to marry women.” Lacey explained, “It would have been helpful for GLBTQ people to have been mentioned or talked about in a positive way.” Mere acknowledgement, many felt, would have been sufficient at the elementary level to allow GLBTQ students to feel safe and included.

Some suggested that this acknowledgement be included in the curriculum in simple ways. “One of the best resources at the elementary level could have been books that included all families,” said Brent. Elise recalled, “During Civil Rights month I remember learning about racial diversity, even though there was very little racial diversity in [my state], and it would have probably been incredibly beneficial for me to learn about diverse sexual orientations/identities.” Jill, who had lesbian parents, described their interactions with her teachers:

I know my moms talked each year to my teacher so that my unique family could feel like we were not being excluded (for instance being allowed to make two Mother's Day cards and replacing 'Mother's Signature' and 'Father's Signature' on release forms with 'Parent's Signature'). I think even very small things like this are important to acknowledge that there are non-straight relationships.

Several participants also mentioned the importance of having teachers or other adults who would call out inappropriate use of language referring to sexual minorities, such as “That’s so gay!” General tolerance and diversity lessons were recommended for elementary students, as well, while a few respondents suggested including very basic knowledge about homosexuality in upper-elementary sex education or health classes.
Middle school GLBTQ services. Only one student reported her middle school having any form of GLBTQ support—Elise remembered a counselor at her school discussing the idea of a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) with a small group of students. Although it never got off the ground during her time in middle school, Elise said, “I remember feeling that the support was out there- the guidance counselors were both open about issues related to sexuality.”

Some suggestions for middle school services mirrored those suggested for elementary school, including acknowledgement and exposure to GLBTQ people in the curriculum and having counseling available. In addition, more students suggested including GLBTQ issues in health and sex education. Susan said, “I think that including talk about LGBTQ people would be best included with the sex ed discussions, which I believe started in 5th or 6th grade for our schools...I think that children should be told that it's ok to be LGBTQ, and also should be taught safe sex practices when having homosexual sex.” Ellen similarly suggested that middle schools should address sexual minorities “explicit[ly]...in health classes when we talked about sex and relationships.”

At the middle school level, many subjects suggested that Gay-Straight Alliances, or other forms of support groups/clubs would be helpful in dealing with GLBTQ issues. Bill stated that a GSA would have been “helpful, a great symbolic support for students.” Casey agreed: “An active GLBTQ student organization / group would be helpful, where GLBTQ, questioning and allied students can talk as a group with one another.” The support network that a GSA or other group would offer was mentioned as important over and over in the responses. John thought that in addition to a club or group, event planning for GLBTQ students would be another helpful tool for support and outreach.
A few students suggested panel presentations, speakers, or “safe space” discussions would have been helpful for them in middle school. Nick explained, “General exposure to alternate sexualities through the media, or other school-sanctioned means, would be helpful so that middle-schoolers didn't feel such a sense of isolation but rather understood that people of alternate sexualities exist throughout society and are often well-respected.” Sharon had a comprehensive idea for this type of school event:

A panel could have been a good way to learn. At this age, I did not know any GLBTQ people and I think meeting or hearing from some would have been good. Maybe providing a 'safe space' discussion would have been nice, where students could ask real questions. Although, I probably would have been too nervous to attend something like this if it was voluntary, or to ask a question in front of my classmates. It would have had to be anonymous questions or mandatory attendance (like during a scheduled class) or both.

At the middle school level, students became more concerned with name-calling and insensitive language. Many expressed the importance of having teachers who would “call out” students who used language referring to sexual minorities inappropriately. Lacey explained, “It…would have been helpful if students would not have been allowed to treat non heteronormative sexualities as a joke.” Jill agreed: “It would have been helpful if teachers had actually taken a stand against kids saying 'that's so gay' etc. because that hurts more than most people can realized.” Aside from simply being aware of the language, however, Edgar thought teachers needed a greater awareness of GLBTQ issues in general: “I think that teachers and other staff should be trained in teaching tolerance, and recognizing the signs that a youth may be struggling with sexual identity.”
Many participants continued to recommend tolerance and sensitivity training into middle school. Edgar explained the advantages of a positive school-wide atmosphere of tolerance, saying, “The best thing that I think could be done is to make sure that environment in the school is tolerant and positive, instead of trying to support individual students.”

**High school GLBTQ services.** Seven students reported having support available to them in their high schools. Of those seven students, only two found the services to be definitively helpful. Both of these subjects found it heartening to be around people who felt the same way they did and were supportive. For those who did not find the services helpful, or were unsure, one reported that she was not out at that stage, one explained that her high school’s GSA was “mostly ineffective,” and two reported that they depended on their friends and family, who provided sufficient support.

At the high school level, many of the same suggestions carried over from the middle school level. The presence of GSAs continued to be strongly recommended, with more emphasis on school-wide advocacy at this level. Participants also continued to recommend acknowledgement of sexual minority people and lifestyles in the school and curriculum, including in sex education and health classes. Diversity and tolerance, along with sensitivity training, was suggested at this level, as well.

The need for accessible counseling was emphasized more strongly at the high school level. Several subjects highlighted the necessity of making it clear that counselors were GLBTQ friendly so that students would feel comfortable approaching them. Robert said, “I would have loved to see... open minded counselors to talk to, however they never
stressed that they were open about it so I never figured out if I could talk to them about it or not.” Grace similarly recommended “Any sort of counseling that was clearly a safe place to go.” In the same vein, a couple of subjects mentioned the importance of having teachers at the high school level who were clear allies. Jill said, “I would have loved to have teachers who were allowed to stand up for LGBT people without fearing for their jobs.”

One final interesting suggestion for the high school level was made by Rodney, who recommended that high schools provide “Information about LGBT-friendly colleges and universities, [and] assistance in finding LGBT scholarships.”

**College GLBTQ services.** 94% of subjects reported the availability of GLBTQ services at the collegiate level. Of these, 79% said that the services were useful, 14% reported that they were not useful, and 7% were not sure. Most of the students who said that services were not useful or they were unsure had not used any of the available services. Two subjects, Nick and Alan, who both attended public universities, said that the GLBTQ club or group that existed on their campus did not provide the type of welcoming and support they needed. Nick explained, ‘[The GLBTQ support group] often serves as more of a meat market than an actual club, and very little information about gay life was available.” Alan felt intimidation toward his campus’s group: “I have never really aligned myself with any sort of gay groups or culture, and I think the culture that I’ve seen develop around things like the GLBT organizations (at least at [my school]) was incredibly monolithic and almost intimidating to me.”

Most of the students who had GLBTQ services or support available to them at college found them to be useful. Many students expressed gratefulness at simply having
them available: Linda asserted, “Although the support in college is not ideal, it is worlds above what I had experienced before college.” Jennifer expressed a similar sentiment: “Although it is a small presence on campus, it is a presence nonetheless.” Those who spoke specifically about GSAs and other GLBTQ support groups mentioned time and again the benefits of finding people who were similar to themselves, and being able to make like-minded friends. “I was looking for companionship and support when I began attending meetings, and I definitely found it,” said Elise. Keith said, “Nothing makes you feel more comfortable than being around others just like you.” Miriam agreed, “Although the membership of [our college group] was small, it was nice to find other people who were interested in making the campus more GLBTQ-friendly.” Several participants also mentioned that participation in GLBTQ support groups aided them in their identity development, helping them to grow both as GLBTQ individuals, and as whole people.

Edgar addressed the importance of this support from both the GLBTQ aspect and the more gifted/academic aspect of his identity. He explained,

I found the vast social network of gay and sympathetic/accepting students instrumental in developing my identity as both a person and a queer individual.

The social pressures of being gay were virtually non-existent, which allowed me to focus my time and energy on academic and extracurricular pursuits.

Robert also had a positive experience in regards to developing his identity through participation in the GLBTQ support at his college. He reflected,

I have been able to interact openly with homosexual and heterosexual students. It has helped me develop my identity as not just solely gay but someone who has multiple aspects about him while retaining an identity as a homosexual male. It
has also helped me realize the sheer complexity of the entire issues of gender, sexual identity, sexual orientation and things like that.

Several students mentioned the personal importance of counseling in which they have participated at the college level. Casey mentioned the GLBTQ-friendliness of these counselors, and the importance that had for him. He said,

I have...used the counseling center and been relieved to find that there were GLBTQ-specific programs in existence, even though they weren't the right thing for me at the time...It was good to be able to go in for an intake interview at the counseling center and see that the intake counselor was really comfortable when I talked about my same-sex partner.

Elise, who attends a Catholic university, had a similarly positive experience in counseling there, but addressed the problems with recognition of GLBTQ issues that some religious schools face. She said,

I've been in counseling at the University Counseling Center on and off over the course of my time at [my school], (mostly for mild depression,) and I've found a lot of acceptance and support from all the counselors there. I believe they have some un-written agreement to accept and support students of all sexual orientations, but it's hard for them to really publicize that at a place like [my school].

A few subjects mentioned academic opportunities that were available to them on campus in relation to their GLBTQ identification or participation in GLBTQ activities. Miriam said, “The most rewarding experience for me was participating in panel discussions with sociology and counseling classes.” Melinda, who is working towards a
minor in LBGTQ Studies, reported, “My classes in my minor have been some of the most interesting I have taken in my time at [my school].” She went on to say, “In getting involved in our student organization, I have had the opportunity to work closely with faculty members who I highly respect.” These experiences seemed to be an important way for students to address their cognitive needs and interests while also giving credit to their GLBTQ identities.

Despite the general agreement that college GLBTQ support services were helpful, participants, nonetheless, had several suggestions for improvements. One concern expressed by several subjects was that the GLBTQ support groups that appeared on their campuses were often narrow in the types of people and personalities they attracted. Alan said, “I think gay groups that are developed on campus need to be charged with creating a truly welcoming culture...not one that is narrowly inward-focused.” Sharon reported:

I am involved with QSA and I wish it was filled with more personality types. It is a perfect group for outgoing people who want to socialize. That is the crowd it caters most of its events to and the new members that will return tend to be like that. Since my personality is very very different than everyone else’s, and my interests are different, I have not really found a home in QSA.

Linda, who also felt that the scope of GLBTQ support group was narrow, reported:

Most GLBTQ support groups are very one-dimensional. When I am at those meetings I feel like I am expected to be 'a lesbian and nothing else.' Being a lesbian is just a fraction of who I am, and I don't feel that the GLBTQ community acknowledges that. Also, I am a Christian and it is difficult to find religious support in the GLBTQ community.
Some students addressed a desire for broader populations to be involved in GLBTQ programming. Lacey noted, “The GSA is mostly gay males, so the movies, books, and other resources they have are aimed towards gay men. It would be nice to have more things for lesbian, bi, and transsexuals to have them feel more welcome.” Casey similarly said, “We particularly lack programming on issues specific to transgendered and transsexual experience. This campus needs to expand its resources for transgendered and transsexual students.” Susan, a graduate student, said, “To be honest, much of the LGBTQ groups and programming targets those beginning their undergraduate education, and while there have been attempts made at having groups like OUTGrads for graduate students, nothing has really engaged this group.” Robert reflected, “The only thing I wish is that more straight people would enter and realize that it is a gay-straight alliance and that they are a welcome member of the community we are trying to create.”

Many students expressed a desire for better advertisement and visibility of their campus’s services, so that they had a clearer idea of services available, and also so that more students would become involved. Rodney said, “I noticed that many others who were not as involved seemed less likely to be aware of services or feel confident enough to access them.” Ellen suggested, “They could have been more visible and just part of college life instead of being closet-like.” Miriam similarly declared, “The student group could have been more visible. Most people heard about the group through word of mouth from other members.”

Another issue that arose was the lack of official university recognition, which was especially an issue at religious colleges. Bill, who attends a Catholic University declared with great passion,
WE NEED AN OFFICE FOR LGBTQ STUDENT CONCERNS. WE NEED A RECOGNIZED LGBTQ STUDENT GROUP. WE NEED THE UNIVERSITY TO MAKE A CLEAR STATEMENT ABOUT WHERE IT STANDS WITH RESPECT TO ITS LGBTQ STUDENTS AND CATHOLICISM.

Elise, another student at the same university, said,

Like in high school, I don't expect too much from a Catholic institution as long as the Church maintains its current doctrines on homosexuality. That said, a university-recognized GSA would have been very useful in college. I've found that in general...students are accepting of GLBTQ individuals, but there's no outlet for the average...student to express their support.

Although this specific issue is not generalizable to all institutions, students from this particular school mentioned it multiple times throughout their survey, indicating a strong desire for official university recognition for their GLBTQ support club. Miriam, who attended a different university, expressed a related sentiment when she said, “There was no strong faculty support that other student organizations enjoyed.” Groups that lacked support clearly saw it as desirable.

In general, college services were offered more often and were far broader than those reported in high school, but participants nonetheless were able to offer suggestions for improvement, including raising awareness on campus of available services, working to broaden the scope of programming, and obtaining official university recognition and more support from campus faculty members.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS

Summary of Results

This study aimed to explore the broad topic of how gifted/GLBTQ students perceive their experiences growing up in school with dual exceptionalities. Four research questions explored this topic through different facets: At what age did the individual become aware of their giftedness and sexual orientation, and how does this affect their experiences? Do gifted/GLBTQ individuals see their exceptionalities as assets or as problem-inducing? How do these exceptionalities play into their concept of identity? What services were available to them in school as gifted students and as GLBTQ students, and how useful did they find these services?

Age of awareness of giftedness and GLBTQ identity

Regarding the first research question, students became aware of their giftedness on average at age seven in grade one. They began to question their sexual orientation on average at age 13 (median 7th grade), and were certain of their sexual orientation by age 16 (median 11th grade). For a few subjects, this age discrepancy appears to have led to a lack of overlap in their self-identification as “gifted” and their self-identification as a sexual minority; i.e. when giftedness was important, they did not identify as GLBTQ, and when their sexual orientation was important, giftedness had become less important. The majority of subjects, however, experienced enough overlap in the two identities to articulate their experiences as gifted/GLBTQ students.

Gifted and GLBTQ Identities as Assets or Detriments

The second research question was whether participants saw their dual identities as assets or disadvantages. For both gifted and GLBTQ identities, participants identified
advantages and disadvantages. Advantages to being gifted included the ease of schoolwork, having more academic opportunities, forming a strong gifted peer group, and forming strong relationships with teachers. These last two advantages, particularly, are consistent with the literature about gifted students. Rimm (2002) emphasized the importance of developing a gifted cohort of students, while the nature of asynchronous development makes it likely to gifted students will reach out to older persons to form relationships (Silverman, 1993; Tolan, 1992). Disadvantages to being gifted included social isolation and difficulties relating to peers, teasing as a result of the “gifted” label, and boredom or frustration with school. All of these disadvantages can be related back to the literature on asynchrony and the social problems caused by being unable to relate to peers (Gross, 2002; Silverman, 1993; Terrassier, 1985, as cited in Silverman, 2002).

Advantages to being GLBTQ included developing a sense of empathy for others, leadership opportunities arising from involvement with GLBTQ groups, personal growth and personal strength, and finding a sense of community. The last two advantages support stages of homosexual identity development presented in Cass (1979) and Troiden’s (1989) models: both include steps in which homosexual individuals form a bond with the homosexual community, and ultimately develop an integrated sense of self that includes pride in their homosexual identity. Disadvantages to being GLBTQ were consistent with those cited in the literature: teasing/bullying (Carter, 1997, as cited in Cohn, 2003; Kosciw, Byard, Fischar, & Joslin, 2007; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006), fear of harassment and fear of coming out (Kosciw & Diaz, 2006), and social isolation (Anderson, 1995).
Social isolation and teasing/bullying were disadvantages that participants perceived as arising from both being gifted and being GLBTQ. When asked about the intersection of these identities—namely being gifted *and* GLBTQ—participants spoke about the magnification of these two disadvantages as a result of possessing two exceptionalities. This conception of being gifted/GLBTQ is found in the literature as well; Cohn (2002) and the National Associate of Gifted Children (2001) both use “double” terminology in speaking about the gifted/GLBTQ population. Interestingly, some participants found their giftedness to be a detriment in dealing with their GLBTQ identity, as it led them to “overthink” their situation or overachieve as a means to try and cover up their sexual orientation. Others found their intellect to aid them in dealing with the problems they associated with being GLBTQ; they said that their intelligence and reasoning ability helped them to defend themselves to others, and to deal logically with the problems they faced. Additionally, possessing two unique identities led many participants to possess a strong sense of self, and to feel pride in the unique perspective they had developed as a result of their experiences. While being gifted/GLBTQ leads to some problems, most subjects in this study were able to appreciate their unusual circumstances.

Finally, when asked whether gifted/GLBTQ student had more or fewer difficulties than other gifted students and other GLBTQ students, 86% of participants felt that being gifted/GLBTQ led to more difficulties than those faced by gifted-only students. Only 38% thought that gifted/GLBTQ students had more difficulties than other GLBTQ students. In general, participants suggested that the GLBTQ side of a dual gifted/GLBTQ identity led to more problems than the gifted side, often citing lack of
support, or the “taboo” nature of being GLBTQ as an explanation. Gifted students, they said, had support available to them, and although they may be teased by peers, they were looked upon highly by adults; the same could not necessarily be said of being GLBTQ.

*The Role of Gifted and GLBTQ Identification in Subjects’ Concept of Identity*

The third research question explored the role of gifted and GLBTQ identification as it related to subjects’ concept of identity. Twenty one percent of respondents identified more strongly with the statement “I am gifted.” Forty one percent identified more strongly with the statement “I am [sexual orientation].” Forty eight percent of respondents chose “Other.” Of the 11 who chose “Other,” 6 filled in “I am both,” 1 filled in “I am neither,” 3 filled in “I am [name],” and 1 gave a list of characteristics describing himself. Overall, it appears that gifted/GLBTQ individuals relate to these two characteristics in different ways, with some seeing one or the other as more pertinent, and others choosing to incorporate both, as well as other facets of their personality, into their larger concept of self.

*Gifted and GLBTQ Services in Various Levels of Schooling*

The final research question asked about the availability of gifted and GLBTQ-support services available to participants at different levels of schooling. All participants, regardless of formal identification, participated in some form of gifted programming throughout their years in school. Gifted programming was highly available in K-12 schooling, with a peak in middle school years, and then tapered off significantly in college, being available for only 58% of the subjects. GLBTQ services showed a nearly opposite pattern, being essentially unavailable in elementary and middle school, appearing 21% of the time in high school, and booming in college with 94% availability.
Students felt that varying GLBTQ services were appropriate at all levels of schooling, and gave suggestions of the types of support that might be appropriate.

In elementary school, participants recommended increasing the level of acknowledgement of sexual minority people and lifestyles, possibly through inclusive curriculum that includes different types of families and people. Tolerance/sensitivity lessons were recommended at the elementary level, and along with that, teachers who would call out students for using inappropriate language such as "That’s so gay!” and punish them appropriately.

At the middle school level, subjects suggested including general GLBTQ knowledge into health and sex education classes. In addition, Gay-Straight Alliances, other support groups, were deemed appropriate at the middle school level for support of sexual minority students. Additionally, several subjects recommended having panels or speakers come in to expose students to sexual minority individuals. "Safe zones” were thought to be especially important at this age, as well; it as important that students would know who to go to if they needed to discuss issues about their sexuality. Finally, emphasis on appropriate language and tolerance—a carry-over from elementary suggestions—were made again at the middle school level, when participants thought that other students had a tendency to be particularly cruel.

At the high school level, GSAs and other support groups were again recommended, with an added emphasis on school-wide advocacy.

When support was available, namely at the college level, participants generally found it to be useful, but still had recommendations for improvement. Acknowledgement of sexual minority people in the core curriculum and in sex education continued to be
suggested, as did sensitivity and diversity training. The need for GLBTQ-friendly counseling was emphasized strongly at this level, and participants highlighted the need for clarity in regards to counselors and other teachers being “GLBTQ-friendly.”

Overall, students hit upon the two major recommendations for GLBTQ support that appear in the literature regarding K-12 education: GSAs have been recommended time and again as an appropriate way for sexual minority students and their allies to support one another and advocate for themselves within their school communities (Blumenfeld, 1995; Friedman-Nimz et al., 2006). The second recommendation that has strong support from the literature is a move toward inclusive curriculum (Anderson, 1994; Lipkin, 1995; Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002). This might include a range of approaches, from teaching about gay/lesbian history explicitly to including picture books in the elementary curriculum that have families headed by gay or lesbian parents. Including such material in the curriculum provides what these students expressed as a desire for curriculum; that it acknowledge sexual minority lifestyles and expose students to the fact that they exist.

At the college level, many more services were available to the participants. Most subjects reported that these services were useful, expressing their happiness at finding people who were similar to them, and having a built-in social network. For several participants, college-level support, especially attending GSA or other support groups, helped them to further develop their identities, both as sexual minorities and as multi-faceted people. Counseling was cited as an important resource again at the university level.
Despite general satisfaction with collegiate GLBTQ support services, there were, nonetheless, a couple of suggestions for improvement. A few students, who hailed from religiously-affiliated schools, cited a lack of official recognition from their university, or a lack of faculty support. More generally, students desired more visibility for their groups in order to widen participation. Broadening the scope of the group programming would allow more people to feel welcome and get involved, which would strengthen the groups’ effectiveness.

Conclusion

This study shows that the social and emotional needs of gifted/GLBTQ students are not being met in today’s schools. Many gifted/GLBTQ students feel doubly isolated and doubly different, with little support for their GLBTQ identity being offered in K-12 schooling. The field of gifted education aims to support each student and help him/her to reach their highest level of potential, but unless students’ basic social and emotional needs are met, maximum academic potential may be impeded. For the gifted/GLBTQ population, it is necessary to provide support for their sexual orientation questioning before the collegiate level, and it is necessary to work for school environments that are safe for all students, free from harassment and discrimination. The field of gifted education must turn its eyes toward this group of students, which is largely ignored in the literature, in an attempt to better understand their experiences and improve their education, making them both academically and emotionally more fruitful. Without support to address their unique, sometimes compounded needs, these students will surely struggle to reach personal and academic fulfillment.
Implications for the Field

Gifted education generally does a fine job of researching and developing interventions for minority populations within the field, including racially diverse students, students from poverty, and English-language learners. Gifted/GLBTQ students, however, are largely ignored in the research on minority populations. The results of this study demonstrate that the interaction between giftedness and a minority sexual identity can be complex, and can lead to unique difficulties for gifted/GLBTQ students, who often feel that the problems of either population are magnified for them. In addition, although gifted services were widely accessible for participants, GLBTQ services are rarely available before the collegiate level, and participants reported that their social and emotional needs were not addressed, especially when they were going through the process of questioning and coming to terms with their sexual orientation. If gifted education hopes to serve gifted students and help them reach their fullest potential, then their social and emotional needs must be addressed as well—for gifted/GLBTQ students, this does not appear to be happening.

Gifted/GLBTQ students—as well as all students—deserve to experience education in safe environments without the fear of harassment or bullying, which many of the subjects experienced. If support is not provided for these students, or for faculty allies, then these students will continue to live in fear and isolation, often unable to publicly acknowledge a very important aspect of their identities.

Finally, the field of gifted education recognizes giftedness as a precursor to adult eminence. Surely some the most eminent people in the struggle for GLBTQ rights will arise from the ranks of the gifted/GLBTQ population. If the GLBTQ facet of their lives is
not supported and allowed to be acknowledged, then how can such individuals hope to make positive change for their peers? The field of gifted education has a responsibility to allow gifted/GLBTQ students to develop into well-rounded, talented individuals who can freely acknowledge their GLBTQ identity.

Recommendations for Practitioners

In order for gifted/GLBTQ students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally, programs must be put into place that allow them to explore and appreciate their sexual identity in a school environment free from fear. Table 10 describes recommendations for practitioners in schools to address the needs of gifted/GLBTQ students.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create inclusive classrooms and implement inclusive school practices</td>
<td>Use “Parent/Guardian” instead of “Mother/Father” in school correspondence. Celebrate Family Day instead of Mother’s or Father’s Day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include sexual-minority issues in curriculum as appropriate for age of students.</td>
<td>Elementary School: Read The Family Book by Tom Parr, or other books that show homosexual-parent families. Middle School: Present a story problem in which characters perform activities that are stereotypically performed by the opposite gender (i.e. Tom makes cookies). High school: Discuss the ways in which Walt Whitman’s homosexuality may have influenced his poetry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide school-wide tolerance and diversity training</td>
<td>Create small groups in which students can discuss issues of diversity. Teach lessons about inappropriate language and its power to hurt other, even unintentionally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt anti-discrimination policies that explicitly include sexual minority students.</td>
<td>Include sexual minority students as a protected group in district-wide handbooks and regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide support for GSAs and other support groups.</td>
<td>Each year, ask for faculty volunteers to sponsor such groups. Provide space in the school for clubs to meet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the elementary level, students should be made aware that sexual minority individuals exist through a curriculum that is diverse and inclusive. Schools must take into account the fact that children might be raised by homosexual parents, and make changes to avoid heteronormative assumptions about students' families' or about students themselves. Simple changes, such as using inclusive phrasing in school communications (e.g. “parents” as opposed to “mother and father”) can make a large difference in avoiding feelings of differentness or isolation in sexual minority students.

In the middle school and high school level, sexual education curriculum should include discussions of sexual minority lifestyles and issues. The core curriculum should begin to address, more explicitly, the role of homosexual people throughout history and the positive contributions they have made to their fields. For examples, English classes should address the lens of homosexuality as it affected great writers and history should address changing views of homosexuality throughout history and the recent social struggle for gay rights. All of these changes, and others, can be made without major overhaul to the general curriculum.

Tolerance and diversity training should begin at an earlier age. Subjects in this study cited the positive effects this approach had at the collegiate level, and many recommended it for younger students, as well. Teaching students to appreciate differences will help not only those students who identify as a sexual minority, but those who are minorities in other ways, as well.

Because harassment and bullying are a major issue for GLBTQ students, schools must adopt explicit anti-discrimination policies that include protection for sexual
minority students. Including sexual minority students in the list of those who may not be discriminated against sends a strong message that diversity and tolerance are valued.

GSAs should be formed at every school or within communities. GLBTQ students, gifted or not, need a place to be with like others, to feel a part of an accepting community. Such organizations help to address the affective needs of students, and gifted/GLBTQ students might be especially effective in providing leadership for such clubs, or enjoy the opportunity to become active in club advocacy at the school or community level. Such involvement is especially appropriate for gifted/GLBTQ students, who will want to emotional support, but may desire to provide leadership or training to others as well.

Because gifted services appear to be widely available throughout K-12 schooling, the changes that will likely be most positive for gifted/GLBTQ students focus on the problems associated with identifying as a sexual minority. If the social isolation and fear stemming from being GLBTQ can be lessened or eliminated, then gifted/GLBTQ students will be more able to focus on their academic work and talent areas, becoming well-rounded gifted individuals who have a strong sense of self and are comfortable with their GLBTQ identity. If schools continue to tacitly allow teasing and harassment of GLBTQ students, and continue to operate on heteronormative assumptions, then GLBTQ students will continue to perceive themselves as outsiders and be forced to deal with the repercussions, perhaps at the expense of fully developing their talent areas.
Recommendations for Further Research

In order to explore more deeply the relationship between gifted/GLBTQ individuals, research involving larger samples is necessary, as the results of this descriptive study are not widely generalizable. It would also be useful to conduct research on students who are in elementary, middle, and high school, as the retrospective nature of this study may have had an effect on participants’ memories of previous schooling.

Because this study aimed to uncover the major issues perceived to be pertinent by individuals who self-identify as gifted/GLBTQ, further research on the topic may be narrower in scope, focusing on a single facet of the research revealed by this broader study. Suggestions for topics might include adaptive vs. maladaptive overachievement in gifted/GLBTQ individuals, studies of eminence in the field of GLBTQ studies, the effectiveness of GLBTQ support services for gifted/GLBTQ students at the secondary level, or the effect of inclusive elementary school curriculum on student use of inappropriate language.
References


http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=2&hid=22&sid=d0e3bbe4-4e4a-4add-983f-d213b2dce302%40sessionmgr9


Vare, J. W., & Norton, T. L. (2004). Bibliotherapy for gay and lesbian youth:

Overcoming the structure of silence. The Clearing House, May/June, 190-194.


Appendix A

Recruitment E-mail and Consent Forms

[E-mail text]

To whom it may concern,

My name is Rebecca Walter, and I am a graduate student from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, VA. I am pursuing my Master’s Degree in Gifted Education, and am currently working on my Master’s thesis.

For my thesis, I am exploring the experiences of individuals who are both gifted and identify as sexual minorities (i.e., gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning, etc). I am interested in their experiences growing up with both of these minority identities, and the way in which being both gifted and GLBTQ affected them, especially in regards to their school experience. I am also interested in the school climates they faced, and what types of services and support were offered to them.

I am looking for individuals over the age of 18 to participate in a largely open-ended survey online. The only requirements are that the individual self-identify as gifted (whether or not they were ever “formally” identified in school), and self-identify as a sexual minority.

Would you be willing to pass along this request to the members of your group? I am looking for as many participants as possible, and would be most grateful if you could spread the word.

Interested participants need only to contact me, and I will send out a link to the survey.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions at rmwalt@wm.edu.

Thank you for your help,

Rebecca Walter
College of William and Mary ‘08
Master’s in Gifted Education
rmwalt@wm.edu
Experiences of Gifted/Sexual Minority Students

Consent Form

Experience of Gifted/GLBTQ Students

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study:
You are invited to participate in a research study about the experiences of growing up gifted and GLBTQ. The purpose of this study is to uncover the major themes and issues that are a part of the experience of being both gifted and GLBTQ in the context of school, and explore what the interaction of these two exceptionalities means to students who identify with both labels. The results from this study may be used for further research about this “twice-exceptional” population, identifying the most pertinent issues that face students who are both gifted and GLBTQ.

Participation:
In order to participate in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older, self identify as “gifted,” and identify as a sexual minority, being either gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual or transgendered, or questioning (GLBTQ).

Description of Procedures:
Participation in this study involves completing one questionnaire and answering possible follow-up questions that may arise. After you consent to participate in the study, the questionnaire will be e-mailed to you. You will fill it out at your convenience, and return it to the researcher via e-mail. The survey should take between 1-3 hours to complete and consists of approximately 30 largely open-ended questions about your experience as a gifted and GLBTQ individual throughout your school years.

Risks and Inconveniences:
There are no anticipated risks to your participation. The only inconvenience is the time that it will take to complete the questionnaire.

Benefits:
The primary benefit of participation is the opportunity to contribute to research about the experience of gifted/GLBTQ students, an infrequently researched population.

Confidentiality:
Returned questionnaires will be kept confidential, meaning that only the researcher will have access to the electronic files. All electronic files, including questionnaire files downloaded from the e-mail server will be saved on the researcher’s College of William and Mary H:/ drive in a password protected folder. Any printed copies of questionnaires (for the researcher’s private use only) will have all identifying information blacked out.

Voluntary Participation:
Participants do not have to participate in the study, and may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind of participants decide that they do not want to participate. Even after you submit the questionnaire, you may contact the researcher and request that it not be used in the study.
Questions:
Please contact the principal investigator, Rebecca Walter if you have any questions about participation in the study, at rmwalt@wm.edu or 614-551-1102.

Authorization:
I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the *Experiences of Gifted/GLBTQ Students* research study. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement and possible hazards and inconveniences have been explained to my satisfaction. My signature also indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form, and that I am over 18 years of age.

__________________________________________  Date

Signature
Appendix B

Survey Instrument

For the purposes of this survey, the acronym GLBTQ (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning) is used to refer to sexual identification. In the questions where the acronym appear, please replace it with whichever word is most appropriate for you.

1. Name
2. Name of college(s) or university(ies) attended
3. Current year in school
4. Age
5. Which best describes your sexual orientation? If other, please specify: gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, questioning, or other (please specify)?
6. At what age did you first think you might be GLBTQ? (please estimate if you don’t remember exactly)
7. In what grade did you first think you might be GLBTQ (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)
8. At what age did you first feel certain you were GLBTQ (please estimate if you don't remember exactly, and leave blank if you are not certain you are GLBTQ)
9. In what grade did you first feel certain you were $\{\text{Orientation 1}\}$? (please estimate if you don’t remember exactly)
10. When did you first come out to another person as GLBTQ?
11. Who was the person to whom you first came out?
12. Why did you decide to come out to that person?
13. Was that person supportive?
14. Elaborate on this coming-out experience.
15. Did your elementary school offer any support or services for GLBTQ or questioning students?
16. Did your middle school offer any support or services for GLBTQ or questioning students?
17. Did your high school offer any support or services for GLBTQ or questioning students?

18. Did your college offer any support or services for GLBTQ or questioning students?

19. What types of support or services were offered for GLBTQ students at the elementary level?

20. Did you find the support or services for GLBTQ students useful in elementary school?
   a. Please explain

21. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in elementary school have been more useful?

22. If services were not offered at the elementary level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?

23. What types of support or services were offered for GLBTQ students at the middle school level?

24. Did you find the support or services for GLBTQ students useful in middle school?
   a. Please explain

25. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in middle school have been more useful?

26. If services were not offered at the middle school level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?

27. What types of support or services were offered for GLBTQ students at the high school level?

28. Did you find the support or services for GLBTQ students useful in high school?
   a. Please explain

29. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in high school have been more useful?

30. If services were not offered at the high school level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?

31. What types of support or services were offered for GLBTQ students at the college level?
32. Did you find the support or services for GLBTQ students useful in college?
   a. Please explain

33. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in college have been more useful?

34. If services were offered at the college level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?

35. At what age did you first know you were gifted? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)

36. In what grade did you first know you were gifted? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)

37. In what grade, if ever, were you formally identified as gifted?

38. Did your (elementary, middle, high) school offer any gifted programming or services?

39. What types of gifted programming did you participate in, if any?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>College</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before/after school gifted programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability grouping by subject (i.e. ability-level math groups or math classes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whole grade skipping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partial grade skipping (i.e. a 4th grader with a high reading level goes to 5th grade for reading)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cluster grouping (i.e. a &quot;cluster&quot; of about 3-10 of the highest students are placed in the same class within a grade)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and &quot;testing out&quot; of the unit in order to pursue an independent project)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A separate school for the gifted</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) □ □ □ □
Summer programs for the gifted □ □ □ □
Mentoring programs, either within-school or with community members □ □ □ □
Academic Teams, such as Quiz Bowl or Odyssey of the Mind □ □ □ □
Other (please specify) □ □ □ □

40. Did being gifted ever cause difficulties at school?
   a. Please explain.
41. Did being gifted ever offer advantages at school?
   a. Please explain.
42. Did being GLBTQ ever cause difficulties at school?
   a. Please explain.
43. Did being GLBTQ ever offer advantages at school?
   a. Please explain.
44. Do you think that being both gifted and GLBTQ led to unique difficulties in school?
   a. Please explain.
45. Do you think that being both gifted and GLBTQ offered unique advantages in school?
   a. Please explain.
46. Do you think that gifted and GLBTQ students have more or less difficulties than other gifted students at school?
   a. Please explain.
47. Do you think that gifted and GLBTQ students have more or less difficulties than other GLBTQ students at school?
a. Please explain.

48. Who understood you better in school, your “gifted” friends or your GLBTQ friends?
   a. Please explain.

49. With which statement do you identify most: “I am GLBTQ.” “I am gifted.” Other (please specify)

50. What was it like in school being gifted and GLBTQ?

51. As a gifted and GLBTQ individual, do you feel you have appropriate role models (either personal or impersonal e.g. in the media).

52. If so, who did/do you consider to be your role models? Please explain.

53. If not, why do you think you did not have any appropriate role models?

54. Are there any questions about your experience being gifted and GLBTQ that we should have asked, but didn’t? Please elaborate.

55. Would you be willing to answer follow-up questions if the need arises?

56. Would you like to receive a copy of the results of this study?

57. Please add any comments or questions.
Appendix C

Select Survey Responses

The following are a set of sample responses to the survey. These particular responses were chosen to represent the range of subjects. While names have been changed or eliminated, the rest of the responses appear as they were submitted by the participants. Blank answers are those that were unanswered by the participant, or filtered out by the survey program due to previous responses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Name</td>
<td>Edie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. College/University</td>
<td>University of _________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Current Year in School</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b. Other fill in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Age</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5b. Sexual Orientation Other fill in</td>
<td>Pansexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. At what age did you first think you might be [orientation]? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. In what grade did you first think you might be [orientation]? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)</td>
<td>Before Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. At what age did you first feel certain you were [orientation] (please estimate if you don't remember exactly, and leave blank if you are not certain you are [orientation])</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. In what grade did you first feel certain you were [orientation]? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)</td>
<td>Before Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. When did you first come out to another person as [orientation]?</td>
<td>My family was fairly open, so I didn't originally KNOW that being attracted to women was different. But when I was 3 my father told me that if I married my best friend it would make me a lesbian, and so I guess that was when I first 'came out'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Who was the person to whom you first came out?</td>
<td>My Daddy. :-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Why did you decide to come out to that person?</td>
<td>We were in an argument, and I wanted him to understand how much I thought my friend Dolly was, so I explained that we loved each other so much that we were going to get married.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. What this person supportive?</td>
<td>Yes, very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Please elaborate on this coming out experience.</td>
<td>Because I was so young, it wasn't a very typical experience. My father told me that marrying Dolly would make me a lesbian and then he said 'That's cool' and we continued to argue about what we were arguing about before. My first boyfriend was when I was 6, so that's when I sort of 'came out' as pansexual, and not a lesbian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Did your elementary school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. Did your middle school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?  
No

17. Did your high school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?  
Yes

18. Does your college offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?  
Yes

19. What types of support or services were offered for GLBTQ students at the elementary level?  

20. Did you find the support or services for GLBTQ students useful in elementary school?  

20b. Please explain.

21. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in elementary school have been more useful?  
If GLBTQ issues were discussed in class, or at least treated with more care. I got into a fight with my 3rd grade teacher over whether or not Dolly and I could get married. The schools should also make an effort to care for gender variant children. Trans issues are much more relevant to an elementary school student. Teachers should take care not to force children into forced gender roles, but encourage everyone to just be themselves.

22. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the elementary level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?  
A QSA (Queer-Straight Alliance) would have been a nice thing to have. An LGBTQ support group would have helped as well.

23. What types of support or services were offered for GLBTQ students at the middle school level?  

24. Did you find the support or services for GLBTQ students useful in middle school?  

24b. Please explain

25. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in middle school have been more useful?  

26. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the middle school level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?  
In high school you were allowed to talk to the counselors one on one. There was also a gay-straight alliance.

27. What types of support or services were offered at the high school level?  

28. Did you find the support or services useful in high school?  
Not Sure
28b. Please explain.

Our GSA was mostly ineffective except when it came to organizing a day of silence. I wish we had done more advocacy work or at least watched some LGBTQ movies.

29. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in high school have been more useful?

If the group had met more than once every other month it would've been more fun. We should've done more as a group, seen movies, wrote letters to congress, even just talking would've been better than nothing.

30. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the high school level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?

We have a lot of LGBTQ resources here. We have an LGBT studies office, and LGBT Equity office, and the Pride Alliances sub-groups have something for various groups.

31. What types of support or services are/were offered at the college level?

Yes

32. Do/Did you find the support or services useful in college?

It was a good way to make friends. I wish the GSA meetings in high school had been modeled like the QSA meetings here.

32b. Please explain.

More social events.

33. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in college have been more useful?

34. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the college level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?

35. At what age did you first know you were gifted? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)

1

36. In what grade did you first know you were gifted? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)

Before Kindergarten

37. In what grade, if ever, were you formally identified as gifted?

2nd

38a. Did your elementary school offer gifted programming or services?

yes

38b. Did your middle school offer gifted programming or services?

yes

38c. Did your high school offer gifted programming or services?

yes

38d. Did your college offer gifted programming or services?

not sure
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in elementary school?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in middle school?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in high school?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in college?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in ability grouping by subject (i.e. ability-level math groups or math classes) in elementary school?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in ability grouping by subject (i.e. ability-level math groups or math classes) in middle school?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in ability grouping by subject (i.e. ability-level math groups or math classes) in high school?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in ability grouping by subject (i.e. ability-level math groups or math classes) in college?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in whole grade skipping in elementary school?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in whole grade skipping in middle school?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in whole grade skipping in high school?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in whole grade skipping in college?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in Partial grade skipping (i.e. a 4th grader with a high reading level goes to 5th grade for reading) in elementary school?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in Partial grade skipping (i.e. a 4th grader with a high reading level goes to 5th grade for reading) in middle school?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in Partial grade skipping (i.e. a 4th grader with a high reading level goes to 5th grade for reading) in high school?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
39. Did you participate in Partial grade skipping (i.e. a 4th grader with a high reading level goes to 5th grade for reading) in college? no

39. Did you participate in cluster grouping (i.e. a "cluster" of about 3-10 of the highest students are placed in the same class within a grade) in elementary school? yes

39. Did you participate in cluster grouping (i.e. a "cluster" of about 3-10 of the highest students are placed in the same class within a grade) in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in cluster grouping (i.e. a "cluster" of about 3-10 of the highest students are placed in the same class within a grade) in high school? no

39. Did you participate in cluster grouping (i.e. a "cluster" of about 3-10 of the highest students are placed in the same class within a grade) in college? no

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in elementary school? yes

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in middle school? yes

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in high school? yes

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in college? no

39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in elementary school? no
39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in middle school?  no  
39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in high school?  yes  
39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in college?  no  
39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in elementary school?  no  
39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in middle school?  no  
39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in high school?  no  
39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in college?  no  
39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in elementary school?  no  
39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in middle school?  no  
39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in high school?  no  
39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in college?  no  
39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in elementary school?  no  
39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in middle school?  no
39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in high school? no

39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in college? no

39. Did you participate in mentoring programs, either within-school or with community members, in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in mentoring programs, either within-school or with community members, in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in mentoring programs, either within-school or with community members, in high school? no

39. Did you participate in mentoring programs, either within-school or with community members, in college? no

39. Did you participate in academic teams, such as Quiz Bowl or Odyssey of the Mind, in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in academic teams, such as Quiz Bowl or Odyssey of the Mind, in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in academic teams, such as Quiz Bowl or Odyssey of the Mind, in high school? no

39. Did you participate in academic teams, such as Quiz Bowl or Odyssey of the Mind, in college? no

39. Did you participate in other (1) in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in other (1) in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in other (1) in high school? no

39. Did you participate in other (1) in college? no

39. Did you participate in other (2) in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in other (2) in middle school? no
39. Did you participate in other (2) in high school? no

39. Did you participate in other (2) in college? no

39. Did you participate in other (3) in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in other (3) in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in other (3) in high school? no

39. Did you participate in other (3) in college? no

39. Other (1) fill-ins

39. Other (2) fill-ins

39. Other (3) fill-ins

40. Did being gifted ever cause difficulties at school? Yes

40b. Please explain I was always more interested in 'adult' things than my peers. Being 'gifted' made it more difficult to relate to the people my own age.

41. Did being gifted ever offer advantages at school? Yes

41b. Please explain There were many classes, especially in high school that students who weren't designated as gifted or in upper level classes couldn't take. It was often surprising how students who hadn't been designated as 'college material' early on were not alerted of various opportunities the school had.

42. Did being [orientation] ever cause difficulties at school? Yes

42b. Please explain It was another case of feeling isolated. It was harder to make friends and relate to people.

43. Did being [orientation] ever offer advantages at school? No

43b. Please explain There weren't any special privileges for being 'other' at school, no minority scholarships or anything.

44. Do you think that being both gifted and [orientation] led to unique difficulties in school? Yes

44b. Please explain The combination made me 'more different' than other students.
45. Do you think that being both gifted and [orientation] offered unique advantages in school?  

No

45b. Please explain

46. Do you think that students who are gifted and GLBTQ have more or less difficulties than other gifted students at school?  

More

46b. Please explain

It makes it more difficult to relate to other LGBTQ students, and also difficult to relate to gifted kids.

47. Do you think that students who are gifted and GLBTQ have more or less difficulties than other GLBTQ students at school?  

Less

47b. Please explain

LGBTQ students who are gifted are at least offered opportunities through the gifted program, whereas LGBTQ students who aren't gifted aren't often offered any opportunities.

48. Who understood you better in school, your “gifted” friends or your GLBTQ friends?  

My GLBTQ friends

48b. Please explain.

49. Choose the statement you identify with most: "I am gifted." "I am [gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning, or (your identification)]", "Other."  

Other (please specify)

49b. Other fill in

both

49c. Please explain

I don't identify more as any parts of myself. I'm equally a gifted person, a pansexual person, an atheist, a vegan. They are all part of me and I feel that I can't separate them.

50. What was it like at school being both gifted and [orientation]?  

It made it more difficult to identify with my classmates that it would've been had I been only other or gifted.

51. As a gifted and GLBTQ individual, do you feel you had appropriate role models growing up (either personal or impersonal e.g.in the media).  

No

52. If yes, who did/do you consider to be your role models? Please explain.

My parents were always there for me, and they were great role models. But most LGBTQ people who are famous are actors or athletes, and I never really admired those people. Not only are there not a lot of out, gifted people, there aren't a lot of people admired for their intellect who aren't white, straight and male.
54. Are there any questions about your experience being gifted and GLBTQ that we should have asked, but didn’t? Please elaborate.

Perhaps what kind of role models i would like to see?

55. Would you be willing to answer follow-up questions if the need arises?

Yes

56. Would you like to receive a copy of the results of this study?

Yes

57. Please add any comments or questions.

Thanks for letting me participate. :-)

Experiences of Gifted/Sexual Minority Students
1. Name
   Nick

2. College/University
   College of ______________

3. Current Year in School
   Senior

3b. Other fill in

4. Age
   21

5. Sexual Orientation
   Gay

5b. Sexual Orientation Other fill in

6. At what age did you first think you might be [orientation]? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)
   12

7. In what grade did you first think you might be [orientation]? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)
   7th

8. At what age did you first feel certain you were [orientation] (please estimate if you don't remember exactly, and leave blank if you are not certain you are [orientation])
   14

9. In what grade did you first feel certain you were [orientation]? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)
   9th

10. When did you first come out to another person as [orientation]?
    March of my sophomore year of high school

11. Who was the person to whom you first came out?
    My best friend at the time, Mike

12. Why did you decide to come out to that person?
    I had known him the longest of anyone, which had some added significance (see below)

13. What this person supportive?
    Extremely
14. Please elaborate on this coming out experience.

Mike had been my closest form of support, and after my first sexual experience with another male I felt I needed to address the issue, and couldn't do so alone. I've suffered from lifelong depression, so my rationale at the time was largely influenced by it, but I came out to my friend Mike because I had known him for longer than anyone, and I was having a large amount of inner turmoil about the subject. A lot of self-doubt and some self-hatred existed at that point, so I came out to him thinking that 'if he can't accept me, no one can' and had been having suicidal ideations at the time. Rather than giving any sort of reactive statement, he simply asked me 'well, what do you make of all of this? You're still the same person you've always been to me, but if you have issues with it then we need to talk about it.' Mike is straight and Catholic, so I didn't quite expect this kind of reaction, and began crying (we had been having the conversation online). Having found such a strong source of support from the outset made a significant impact in the development of my person from that point on. I should also add that a large amount of the depression and similar emotions were influenced by the fact that I had just moved back to the states after living abroad for 3 years and was starting a new high school in a country and culture I had become alienated from. I had been bullied and picked on a fair amount in Singapore (where I had lived prior) by other students for my small size and lack of masculine traits, so I was quite anxious about my experiences at the new school. Also, moving every 3 years made it very hard to keep in touch with anyone, but I had known Mike since elementary school and he had kept in touch, so aside from my family he was the only person I knew well enough to trust.

15. Did your elementary school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?  
No

16. Did your middle school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?  
No

17. Did your high school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?  
Yes

18. Does your college offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?  
Yes

19. What types of support or services were offered for GLBTQ students at the elementary level?  

20. Did you find the support or services for GLBTQ students useful in elementary school?  

20b. Please explain.

21. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in elementary school have been more useful?
22. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the elementary level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful? I'm not entirely sure if there would have been any appropriate or truly helpful services that could have been offered at such a young age. I feel that any student that came forward as questioning would likely be mocked by their peers, or the school might have contacted their parents, which in many cases would cause more problems than it would solve. I don't think students would understand issues of sexuality so young without any sort of introduction, which few, if any, schools address at such a young age.

23. What types of support or services were offered for GLBTQ students at the middle school level? I think confidential counseling would be extremely beneficial to middle school students questioning their sexuality, particularly ones equipped with information regarding family, coping with religion, and dealing with their peers, particularly with regard to bullying since gay teens have a significantly higher rate of suicide. Also I think general exposure to alternate sexualities through the media, or other school-sanctioned means, would be helpful so that middle-schoolers didn't feel such a sense of isolation but rather understood that people of alternate sexualities exist throughout society and are often well-respected.

24. Did you find the support or services for GLBTQ students useful in middle school? Our high school established a Gay Straight Alliance club my senior year, other than that there were no services that I was aware of.

24b. Please explain. No

25. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in middle school have been more useful? If the GSA had been more inclusive or focused in its goals I think it would have been much better. Many felt alienated, and it came across as very us vs. them. I think confidential counseling would have also been a great asset, as well as information about local GLBT youth groups in the area (should any exist).

26. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the middle school level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful? Lambda alliance and some confidential meeting groups existed where people could discuss sexuality and the like.

27. What types of support or services were offered at the high school level? No

28. Did you find the support or services useful in high school? I chose not to attend the GSA at our high school because I felt the one other openly gay male did not represent a positive image of gay males. I felt marginalized and found more support from my friends (by the end of high school I was out to the whole school, or at least those that knew me) than any services or clubs that existed.

28b. Please explain. If the GSA had been more inclusive or focused in its goals I think it would have been much better. Many felt alienated, and it came across as very us vs. them. I think confidential counseling would have also been a great asset, as well as information about local GLBT youth groups in the area (should any exist).

29. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in high school have been more useful? No

30. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the high school level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful? Lambda alliance and some confidential meeting groups existed where people could discuss sexuality and the like.

31. What types of support or services are/were offered at the college level? No

32. Do/Did you find the support or services useful in college?
32b. Please explain. While not really needing much support, as I have since become secure in my sexuality and identity, I still feel that the services offered in college aren't very beneficial to those in the coming out process. Lambda alliance often serves as more of a meat market than an actual club, and very little information about gay life was available. This is not to say it was repressed in any way, as the school was extremely open-minded, I just feel it was lacking in support.

33. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in college have been more useful? I think mentoring programs or connections with GLBTQ alumni would be useful, or advertised counseling for students who are questioning their sexuality.

34. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the college level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful? I think mentoring programs or connections with GLBTQ alumni would be useful, or advertised counseling for students who are questioning their sexuality.

35. At what age did you first know you were gifted? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly) 8

36. In what grade did you first know you were gifted? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly) 2nd

37. In what grade, if ever, were you formally identified as gifted? 2nd

38a. Did your elementary school offer gifted programming or services? yes

38b. Did your middle school offer gifted programming or services? yes

38c. Did your high school offer gifted programming or services? yes

38d. Did your college offer gifted programming or services? no

39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in high school? no

39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in college? no

39. Did you participate in ability grouping by subject (i.e. ability-level math groups or math classes) in elementary school? yes

39. Did you participate in ability grouping by subject (i.e. ability-level math groups or math classes) in middle school? yes
39. Did you participate in ability grouping by subject (i.e. ability-level math groups or math classes) in high school? **yes**

39. Did you participate in ability grouping by subject (i.e. ability-level math groups or math classes) in college? **yes**

39. Did you participate in whole grade skipping in elementary school? **no**
39. Did you participate in whole grade skipping in middle school? **no**
39. Did you participate in whole grade skipping in high school? **no**
39. Did you participate in whole grade skipping in college? **no**

39. Did you participate in Partial grade skipping (i.e. a 4th grader with a high reading level goes to 5th grade for reading) in elementary school? **no**
39. Did you participate in Partial grade skipping (i.e. a 4th grader with a high reading level goes to 5th grade for reading) in middle school? **no**
39. Did you participate in Partial grade skipping (i.e. a 4th grader with a high reading level goes to 5th grade for reading) in high school? **no**
39. Did you participate in Partial grade skipping (i.e. a 4th grader with a high reading level goes to 5th grade for reading) in college? **no**

39. Did you participate in cluster grouping (i.e. a "cluster" of about 3-10 of the highest students are placed in the same class within a grade) in elementary school? **no**
39. Did you participate in cluster grouping (i.e. a "cluster" of about 3-10 of the highest students are placed in the same class within a grade) in middle school? **no**
39. Did you participate in cluster grouping (i.e. a "cluster" of about 3-10 of the highest students are placed in the same class within a grade) in high school? **no**
39. Did you participate in cluster grouping (i.e. a "cluster" of about 3-10 of the highest students are placed in the same class within a grade) in college? **no**
39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in high school? no

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in college? no

39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in high school? yes

39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in college? no

39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in elementary school? yes

39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in high school? no

39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in college? no
39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in elementary school? yes

39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in high school? no

39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in college? no

39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in high school? no

39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in college? no

39. Did you participate in mentoring programs, either within-school or with community members, in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in mentoring programs, either within-school or with community members, in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in mentoring programs, either within-school or with community members, in high school? no

39. Did you participate in mentoring programs, either within-school or with community members, in college? no

39. Did you participate in academic teams, such as Quiz Bowl or Odyssey of the Mind, in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in academic teams, such as Quiz Bowl or Odyssey of the Mind, in middle school? yes

39. Did you participate in academic teams, such as Quiz Bowl or Odyssey of the Mind, in high school? no
39. Did you participate in academic teams, such as Quiz Bowl or Odyssey of the Mind, in college? no
39. Did you participate in other (1) in elementary school? no
39. Did you participate in other (1) in middle school? no
39. Did you participate in other (1) in high school? no
39. Did you participate in other (1) in college? no
39. Did you participate in other (2) in elementary school? no
39. Did you participate in other (2) in middle school? no
39. Did you participate in other (2) in high school? no
39. Did you participate in other (2) in college? no
39. Did you participate in other (3) in elementary school? no
39. Did you participate in other (3) in middle school? no
39. Did you participate in other (3) in high school? no
39. Did you participate in other (3) in college? no
39. Other (1) fill-ins
39. Other (2) fill-ins
39. Other (3) fill-ins
40. Did being gifted ever cause difficulties at school? Yes
40b. Please explain Until the 3rd grade when I switched to a gifted school I was frequently left out of class activities since I would usually finish them within 5-10 minutes, while it would take the rest of the class up to an hour. I was sent to the library to get books to read on my own.
41. Did being gifted ever offer advantages at school? Yes
41b. Please explain Allowed me to take the courses that were appropriate for my intelligence level, and had many extra activities specially designed for gifted students that encouraged and enriched us.
42. Did being [orientation] ever cause difficulties at school? No
42b. Please explain Unlike many I have been extremely lucky and have never experienced direct discrimination as a result of my sexuality.
43. Did being [orientation] ever offer advantages at school? No
43b. Please explain

My sexuality was not an issue throughout my schooling. It was not ignored, however it had no impact positively or negatively on my schooling.

44. Do you think that being both gifted and [orientation] led to unique difficulties in school?

No

44b. Please explain

While I realize my situation was unique, being gay never caused me any difficulties in school (other than in my dating life), and being gifted never caused any problems either.

45. Do you think that being both gifted and [orientation] offered unique advantages in school?

No

45b. Please explain

I did not feel that being both gifted and gay had any bearing on my schooling, and cannot think of any incidents where both of those factors came into play.

46. Do you think that students who are gifted and GLBTQ have more or less difficulties than other gifted students at school?

More

46b. Please explain

I feel that anyone dealing with alternate sexualities have a greater difficulty in school as well as in their personal life, as the effects of such conflicts can have a significant impacted.

47. Do you think that students who are gifted and GLBTQ have more or less difficulties than other GLBTQ students at school?

Less

47b. Please explain

Generally the crowd that was enrolled in various gifted programs tended to be much more accepting of diversity, whereas those not enrolled in gifted programs might have met more hostility from their peers.

48. Who understood you better in school, your “gifted” friends or your GLBTQ friends?

My gifted friends

48b. Please explain.

I did not feel a strong connection to the GLBTQ community and thus had few friends, as our only shared interest was our sexuality. Consequently I got along much better with the other kids who were of a similar caliber of intelligence, since we had much more in common.

49. Choose the statement you identify with most: "I am gifted." "I am [gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning, or (your identification)]", "Other."

I am [gay lesbian bisexual transgendered queer questioning or (your identification)]

49b. Other fill in

In our society labels associated with intelligence, particularly self-given, can often be misconstrued as arrogant. Furthermore, the majority of activities in which I partake are not influenced by my intelligence, but far more frequently by my sexuality (such as going out to clubs or bars, political causes and organizations, etc.)
50. What was it like at school being both gifted and [orientation]?

For the most part neither had a serious impact on my schooling. Being gay affected me most in that I was single for all of high school, and many of my closer friends tended to be female, but it was not an issue among the other students or teachers. Being gifted dictated which classes I took, but otherwise earned me no discrimination nor favoritism from the other students and teachers.

51. As a gifted and GLBTQ individual, do you feel you had appropriate role models growing up (either personal or impersonal e.g. in the media).

No

52. If yes, who did/do you consider to be your role models? Please explain.

The only depictions of gays in the media tended to be very polarized. Either they exhibited the negative stereotypical characteristics, such as promiscuity, drug use, and excessive femininity, or they were so politically oriented that those not desiring a life of activism found it hard to identify with them. I felt that any gay 'role models' had achieved their position in the media as a sort of spectacle rather than for any positive influence they might have on the youth.

53. If no, why do you think you did not have any appropriate role models?

Whether or not we felt that there were any biological links between the two, or whether we felt our intelligence influenced our sexuality (and vice versa). Since many middle and high schoolers lack same sex sexual encounters they are often marginalized as gay as a result of their actions, which in my own experience (as well as that of friends) was usually a result of being perceived too smart or intellectually/academically driven.

54. Are there any questions about your experience being gifted and GLBTQ that we should have asked, but didn't? Please elaborate.

Yes

55. Would you be willing to answer follow-up questions if the need arises?

Yes

56. Would you like to receive a copy of the results of this study?

Yes

57. Please add any comments or questions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Name</td>
<td>Jill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. College/University</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Current Year in School</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b. Other fill in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Age</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Queer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5b. Sexual Orientation Other fill in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. At what age did you first think you might be [orientation]?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(please estimate if you don't remember exactly)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. In what grade did you first think you might be [orientation]?</td>
<td>Before Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(please estimate if you don't remember exactly)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. At what age did you first feel certain you were [orientation]?</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(please estimate if you don't remember exactly, and leave blank if</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you are not certain you are [orientation])</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. In what grade did you first feel certain you were [orientation]?</td>
<td>11th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(please estimate if you don't remember exactly)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. When did you first come out to another person as [orientation]?</td>
<td>I first started using the term queer to define myself in late high school. Maybe junior year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Who was the person to whom you first came out?</td>
<td>I believe it was my best friend at the time, Kathy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Why did you decide to come out to that person?</td>
<td>She was the person who knew me the best in the world and she had always been there for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. What this person supportive?</td>
<td>She was supportive, though like I said, she and I both already knew that I liked boys majorly but I also liked some girls so I was really moreso 'coming out' by saying, 'this is the term I'm choosing to use to identify this part of my personality'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Please elaborate on this coming out experience.</td>
<td>Because my parents are queer, sexuality and sexual orientation was always an open topic of conversation in my house so I don't consider my process any sort of 'coming out' it was much more finding a term (I use 'queer') which I felt accurately described how I feel. I was one of the very lucky ones in this respect because I knew that for the most part everyone would be supportive of my sexual orientation because they were supportive of my parents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. Did your elementary school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?  
No

16. Did your middle school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?  
No

17. Did your high school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?  
No

18. Does your college offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?  
Yes

19. What types of support or services were offered for GLBTQ students at the elementary level?  

20. Did you find the support or services for GLBTQ students useful in elementary school?  
20b. Please explain.

21. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in elementary school have been more useful?

22. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the elementary level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?  
I know my moms talked each year to my teacher so that my unique family could feel like we were not being excluded (for instance being allowed to make two Mother's Day cards and replacing 'Mother's Signature' and 'Father's Signature' on release forms with 'Parent's Signature'). I think even very small things like this are important to acknowledge that there are non-Straight relationships. I might have liked more one-on-one contact with my teachers so if someone was having a problem there would be an opening to talk to the teacher about it instead of forcing a kid to make first contact and ask for help which is very hard, especially when they don't know that help will be given.

23. What types of support or services were offered for GLBTQ students at the middle school level?  

24. Did you find the support or services for GLBTQ students useful in middle school?  
24b. Please explain

25. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in middle school have been more useful?
26. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the middle school level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?

Again, more one-on-one contact with the teachers would have been helpful and this is coming from a person who went to private school all her life so I'm sure it's even worse in public school where there's a far higher student to teacher ratio. Also it would have been helpful if teachers had actually taken a stand against kids saying 'that's so gay' etc. because that hurts more than most people can realized. When you hear that everyday you start to internalize that we as the queer community are bad and are second class citizens which is not true but it's hard to accept that when your peers are telling you you're bad for what you're born as and those who you most respect (your teachers) aren't standing up for you to say, 'no, that's not an ok thing to say because gay people are just as good as you and I and they are everywhere and your words hurt them because they are trying to bring them down.'

27. What types of support or services were offered at the high school level?

28. Did you find the support or services useful in high school?

28b. Please explain.

29. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in high school have been more useful?

I would have loved to have a GSA (even if it's by a different name as some GSA's are) at my high school. I tried to start one but because I went to a private school they were allowed to deny my petition even though I followed everything that I was supposed to do, which they did. Also, even more importantly I would have loved to have teachers who were allowed to stand up for LGBT people without fearing for their jobs. I had many teachers (I can think of seven off the top of my head) who were gay (as the token lesbian/queer rights activist of my school they came out to me) but were in the closet for the very real fear of losing their jobs. Not because the students or other faculty were incredibly homophobic but my school survived from the donations of very rich, very conservative parents who would have (and had in the past) demanded the firing of any gay teachers. I don't understand this desire to keep their kids away from anyone who doesn't self-identify as 100% straight at any age, but especially in high school. By the time a kid is in high school she shouldn't be that sheltered or her life is just going to crash in around her when that safe bubble is finally burst.

30. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the high school level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?

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31. What types of support or services are/were offered at the college level?

Many professors have outside their door a Pink Triangle with the words 'Safe Zone' on it, meaning that that professor is a safe person to talk to about GLBTQ issues etc. And we have a GSA! Though it is only sparsely attended, it still makes me feel better that we have it.

32. Do/Did you find the support or services useful in college?

Yes

32b. Please explain.

I really appreciate the services my college does offer. It's so much more than I had at my high school.
Always more can be done, for instance, I'd rather that all of the professors at my college were people to whom I could talk about GLBT issues.

33. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in college have been more useful?

34. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the college level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?

35. At what age did you first know you were gifted? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)

36. In what grade did you first know you were gifted? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)

37. In what grade, if ever, were you formally identified as gifted?

38a. Did your elementary school offer gifted programming or services?

38b. Did your middle school offer gifted programming or services?

38c. Did your high school offer gifted programming or services?

38d. Did your college offer gifted programming or services?

39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in elementary school?

39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in middle school?

39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in high school?

39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in college?

39. Did you participate in ability grouping by subject (i.e. ability-level math groups or math classes) in elementary school?

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39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in elementary school? no

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39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in high school? yes

39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in college? no

39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in middle school? no
39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in high school?

no

39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in college?

no

39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in elementary school?

yes

39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in middle school?

yes

39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in high school?

no

39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in college?

no

39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in elementary school?

no

39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in middle school?

yes

39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in high school?

no

39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in college?

no

39. Did you participate in mentoring programs, either within-school or with community members, in elementary school?

no

39. Did you participate in mentoring programs, either within-school or with community members, in middle school?

no

39. Did you participate in mentoring programs, either within-school or with community members, in high school?

no
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<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in other (1) in elementary school?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in other (1) in middle school?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in other (1) in high school?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in other (1) in college?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in other (2) in elementary school?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in other (2) in middle school?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in other (2) in high school?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in other (2) in college?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in other (3) in elementary school?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in other (3) in middle school?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in other (3) in high school?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Did you participate in other (3) in college?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Other (1) fill-ins</td>
<td>Math, English and Science Contests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
39. Other (2) fill-ins
Chess Club

39. Other (3) fill-ins
Tutoring Younger Gifted Students

40. Did being gifted ever cause difficulties at school? No

40b. Please explain
I went to a college prep school since kindergarten so I was happy being a nerd and very few people ever got picked on for being smart.

41. Did being gifted ever offer advantages at school? Yes

41b. Please explain
Being gifted got me into college at a price my parents can afford to pay! Yay!

42. Did being [orientation] ever cause difficulties at school? No

42b. Please explain
Actually being queer didn't but being a queer rights activist definitely did. I became the token lesbian of my school (even though I'm not a lesbian) and so I became the brunt of a lot of jokes and also there were people (students and teachers alike) who wouldn't talk to me because they didn't want to associate with someone gay. That really hurt but was very glad that I had such a tight group of friends who really supported my choice to be outspoken and an activist.

43. Did being [orientation] ever offer advantages at school? No

43b. Please explain
The only advantage that it offered was that people who were in the closet often came to talk to me when they had problems and that had both a positive and a negative side, for instance, I loved being the person that people practiced coming out to but it made me feel uncomfortable (and rightly so) when my gay teachers were telling me about how they were suicidal.

44. Do you think that being both gifted and [orientation] led to unique difficulties in school? No

44b. Please explain
I don't think so since being gifted was a good quality at my school.

45. Do you think that being both gifted and [orientation] offered unique advantages in school? Yes

45b. Please explain
There are some unique college scholarships available, for instance, the Point Foundation.

46. Do you think that students who are gifted and GLBTQ have more or less difficulties than other gifted students at school? More
46b. Please explain

I think queer kids have more difficulties at a school where learning is potentially not valued as much as it is at a college prep school.

47. Do you think that students who are gifted and GLBTQ have more or less difficulties than other GLBTQ students at school?

Less

47b. Please explain

I think maybe they have less because if they're eloquent they can more easily defend themselves against verbal attacks.

48. Who understood you better in school, your "gifted" friends or your GLBTQ friends?

My gifted friends

48b. Please explain.

Sadly, I had very few queer friends in high school, just because my high school was so small (I graduated with a class of 73 people) but I feel like my friends (most of whom were nerds) understood me very well.

49. Choose the statement you identify with most: "I am gifted." "I am [gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning, or (your identification)]", "Other."

Other (please specify)

49b. Other fill in

I am Jill.

49c. Please explain

I really can't define myself as one kind of person; I'm a queer, 2nd gen, beautiful, young woman in love. I am a nerd, a thespian, an activist, and a comic all at once. So please don't stereotype me. I'd hate to have to take the trouble of proving you wrong. Inspired by my friend, Nate.

50. What was it like at school being both gifted and [orientation]?

Like I said earlier, being at my school and being gifted were one in the same for over half the students. Maybe even three quarters. For most of my friends in high school, a B was considered a failing grade. Being queer in high school wasn't too big of a deal for me because I was the token lesbian of my high school so 'just' being queer was easier to deal with than it would have been if I really was a lesbian because often throughout my years in school I was dating boys. I never really had a girlfriend during high school, even though I did kiss a couple girls in high school. I think it would have been far harder if I didn't have that normalizing aspect in my life. I don't think I was ostracized anymore for being both gifted and queer instead of one or the other.

51. As a gifted and GLBTQ individual, do you feel you had appropriate role models growing up (either personal or impersonal e.g. in the media).

Yes

52. If yes, who did/do you consider to be your role models? Please explain.

My parents, especially my moms, are definitely my role models in being gifted and gay because they're both gifted and gay so I was in an amazing situation because I had great role models.
53. If no, why do you think you did not have any appropriate role models?

54. Are there any questions about your experience being gifted and GLBTQ that we should have asked, but didn’t? Please elaborate.

I'm not sure because I'm don't know what you're studying but I think it was an interesting survey and would be excited to see the results you compile.

55. Would you be willing to answer follow-up questions if the need arises?  Yes

56. Would you like to receive a copy of the results of this study?  Yes

57. Please add any comments or questions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Keith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>University of ____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Year in School</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At what age did you first think you might be [orientation]? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what grade did you first think you might be [orientation]? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At what age did you first feel certain you were [orientation]? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly, and leave blank if you are not certain you are [orientation])</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what grade did you first feel certain you were [orientation]? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly)</td>
<td>12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When did you first come out to another person as [orientation]?</td>
<td>Junior year of High School, age 17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was the person to whom you first came out?</td>
<td>Best friend, a girl who really liked me, became my fag hag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did you decide to come out to that person?</td>
<td>I heard she really liked me and wanted to date me, so I had to be forward with her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What this person supportive?</td>
<td>Reluctantly of course, but after a few days she was very supportive and remained my best friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please elaborate on this coming out experience.</td>
<td>My best friend and I had a mutual friend who was gay. One late 'guys night' he came over to my room, and eventually everyone else left except for him. Long story short, we did things, and my best friend heard about it. So, a separate mutual friend said that I should have a talk with her, so I did, and it became my coming out experience.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Did your elementary school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
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<td>Did your middle school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer/Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>17. Did your high school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>18. Does your college offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>19. What types of support or services were offered for GLBTQ students at the elementary level?</td>
<td>Education: I was not aware that 'homosexuality' even existed in elementary school, because everyone only talked about opposite-sex girl- or boy-friends. Teachers never mentioned it, so I thought there was something wrong with me for being attracted to the same sex.</td>
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<td>20. Did you find the support or services for GLBTQ students useful in elementary school?</td>
<td>20b. Please explain.</td>
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<td>21. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in elementary school have been more useful?</td>
<td>Education: I was not aware that 'homosexuality' even existed in elementary school, because everyone only talked about opposite-sex girl- or boy-friends. Teachers never mentioned it, so I thought there was something wrong with me for being attracted to the same sex.</td>
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<td>23. What types of support or services were offered for GLBTQ students at the middle school level?</td>
<td>Education of the general student body that homosexuality is a natural occurrence and homophobia is a response of ignorance. The worst thing about middle school was the 'outsider' stigma of homosexuality and the witch-hunt-like derogatory taunts and arguments between people calling others 'gay' or 'fags'.</td>
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<td>24. Did you find the support or services for GLBTQ students useful in middle school?</td>
<td>24b. Please explain</td>
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<td>26. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the middle school level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?</td>
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<td>27. What types of support or services were offered at the high school level?</td>
<td>In high school, there was a group of bi/homosexual students who supported one another. Also, the teachers were more open and talked freely about the topic. But I did not go to the average Mississippi high school; I attended the ______________________, a selective school for my state's top 5% of highschool achievers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Did you find the support or services useful in high school?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28b. Please explain.</td>
<td>More than anything, just being around other people who felt the same way I did was very comforting. It was also comforting to be in an environment where 'gay' was an adjective and not an insult, and where everyone treated homosexuals equally with heterosexuals.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
29. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in high school have been more useful? Could have been more active in spreading the word to other high schools

30. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the high school level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful? Gay Straight Alliance and a vibrant, close-knit gay community

31. What types of support or services are/were offered at the college level? Yes

32. Do/Did you find the support or services useful in college? Nothing makes you feel more comfortable than being around others just like you.

32b. Please explain. no ideas; it was very useful

33. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in college have been more useful? Gay Straight Alliance and a vibrant, close-knit gay community

34. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the college level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful? Gay Straight Alliance and a vibrant, close-knit gay community

35. At what age did you first know you were gifted? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly) 6

36. In what grade did you first know you were gifted? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly) 1st

37. In what grade, if ever, were you formally identified as gifted? 1st

38a. Did your elementary school offer gifted programming or services? yes

38b. Did your middle school offer gifted programming or services? yes

38c. Did your high school offer gifted programming or services? no

38d. Did your college offer gifted programming or services? not sure

39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in elementary school? yes

39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in middle school? yes
39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in high school? no

39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in college? no

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39. Did you participate in cluster grouping (i.e. a "cluster" of about 3-10 of the highest students are placed in the same class within a grade) in elementary school?  

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no

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in elementary school?  

no

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in middle school?  

no

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in high school?  

yes

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in college?  

yes

39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in elementary school?  

no

39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in middle school?  

yes
39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in high school? yes

39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in college? no

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39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in high school? yes

39. Did you participate in a separate school for the gifted in college? no

39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in elementary school? yes

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39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in high school? yes

39. Did you participate in pull-out programs for the gifted (i.e. all the gifted kids gather once a week with a gifted teacher for class time together) in college? no

39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in high school? no

39. Did you participate in summer programs for the gifted in college? no
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39. Did you participate in mentoring programs, either within-school or with community members, in high school? no

39. Did you participate in mentoring programs, either within-school or with community members, in college? no

39. Did you participate in academic teams, such as Quiz Bowl or Odyssey of the Mind, in elementary school? no

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39. Did you participate in academic teams, such as Quiz Bowl or Odyssey of the Mind, in high school? yes

39. Did you participate in academic teams, such as Quiz Bowl or Odyssey of the Mind, in college? no

39. Did you participate in other (1) in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in other (1) in middle school? yes

39. Did you participate in other (1) in high school? yes

39. Did you participate in other (1) in college? no

39. Did you participate in other (2) in elementary school? yes

39. Did you participate in other (2) in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in other (2) in high school? no

39. Did you participate in other (2) in college? no

39. Did you participate in other (3) in college? no
elementary school?

39. Did you participate in other (3) in middle school? no

39. Did you participate in other (3) in high school? no

39. Did you participate in other (3) in college? no

39. Other (1) fill-ins Technology Student Association

39. Other (2) fill-ins JASON Project

39. Other (3) fill-ins

40. Did being gifted ever cause difficulties at school? Yes

40b. Please explain lack of concentration (issues seemed boring and repetitive)

41. Did being gifted ever offer advantages at school? Yes

41b. Please explain Well obviously it was easy to make straight As, but there was no challenge (except for in my gifted courses)

42. Did being [orientation] ever cause difficulties at school? Yes

42b. Please explain Not fitting in: even when I wasn't yet 'out' to anyone (including myself), the usual childhood taunts of 'queer' and 'fag' were really bothersome, and I could never bring myself to call the name to someone else in response

43. Did being [orientation] ever offer advantages at school? Yes

43b. Please explain It gave me a tremendous new perspective on life and opened my eyes and feelings to the sensetivities and differences in the world. I learned that not everything is right or wrong, save through someone's perspective. Everything is relative to how one views it, and by being an outsider myself, I learned to accept things, hoping that I could offer to other outsiders compassion and respect which no one else would provide.

44. Do you think that being both gifted and [orientation] led to unique difficulties in school? Yes

44b. Please explain Being part of the general crowd was not possible. Not saying that this was a bad thing, but being gifted put one into a separate class, and being gay separated one even further.
45. Do you think that being both gifted and [orientation] offered unique advantages in school?  

Yes

45b. Please explain  

It seemed to be the case that in the gifted community, people were more openminded and accepting toward gay people. It must be even harder for gay people who are not gifted and do not have the opportunity to go through gifted schools (such as I did) and are stuck with the less-accepting 'normal' bunch of peers.

46. Do you think that students who are gifted and GLBTQ have more or less difficulties than other gifted students at school?  

More

46b. Please explain  

Gay gifted students have difficulties which hetero gifted students will never have to endure, but being gifted helps the gay students cope with the difficulties by giving them perspective.

47. Do you think that students who are gifted and GLBTQ have more or less difficulties than other GLBTQ students at school?  

Less

47b. Please explain  

Of course everyone has his own trials in life, but I think being gifted and gay gives one more opportunities to see the greater scheme of reality (more knowledge about homosexuality, more likely to meet others who identify as gay, introduced to an intellectual level of society which exchanges hate for reason and is less likely to be militant based on cult-like religious lies about homosexuality, etc.)

48. Who understood you better in school, your "gifted" friends or your GLBTQ friends?  

They understood me equally well

48b. Please explain.  

I never had many GLBTQ friends, but the ones I did have understood me equally as well as my gifted friends. Of course, there were a few outlying gifted students who couldn't relate to me, but there were gay men who equally had no clue about how I think. It always was easier to talk to GLBTQ friends, but as far as acceptance, both were equally supportive.

49. Choose the statement you identify with most: "I am gifted." "I am [gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning, or (your identification)]", "Other."  

I am [gay lesbian bisexual transgendered queer questioning or (your identification)]

49b. Other fill in

49c. Please explain  

In the time we live right now, I think the most important thing I can tell people is 'I am gay.' Our society must become aware that gays exist and are normal people in order for the stigma and endless rage to end.

50. What was it like at school being both gifted and [orientation]?

It was challenging; not only was I marginalized from understanding the rest of my classmates based on intellect but even further—and more extremely so—because of my highly unusual/discouraged sexuality.
51. As a gifted and GLBTQ individual, do you feel you had appropriate role models growing up (either personal or impersonal e.g. in the media).
   No

52. If yes, who did/do you consider to be your role models? Please explain.

53. If no, why do you think you did not have any appropriate role models?
   Because there were no examples of successful, real-life homosexual men in my life or that I was exposed to; only stereotypes and communicated lies regarding how homosexuals are drug abusers, they all have AIDS, they are sexually immoral fornicators, etc.

54. Are there any questions about your experience being gifted and GLBTQ that we should have asked, but didn't? Please elaborate.
   no

55. Would you be willing to answer follow-up questions if the need arises?
   Yes

56. Would you like to receive a copy of the results of this study?
   Yes

57. Please add any comments or questions.
   wonderful study! I look forward to seeing the results.
1. Name: George
2. College/University: University of Notre Dame  University of Tuebingen (Germany)
3. Current Year in School: Senior
3b. Other: fill in
4. Age: 22
5. Sexual Orientation: Gay
5b. Sexual Orientation: Other: fill in
6. At what age did you first think you might be [orientation]? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly): 14
7. In what grade did you first think you might be [orientation]? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly): 7th
8. At what age did you first feel certain you were [orientation]? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly, and leave blank if you are not certain you are [orientation]): 16
9. In what grade did you first feel certain you were [orientation]? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly): 10th
10. When did you first come out to another person as [orientation]?: November 2005 - my sophomore year in college
11. Who was the person to whom you first came out?: My dorm rector
12. Why did you decide to come out to that person?: I felt that this was a safe place to speak with someone and that I would be respected and taken care of. It was private and I could trust his confidentiality.
13. What this person supportive?: Yes. His first and only words that night were 'It's okay. You don't have to do this alone anymore'. That's all I needed to hear.
14. Please elaborate on this coming out experience.: It was very hard. I sat on the couch for a good 10 minutes before I could bring myself to come out. In fact, it was the first time I had said the word 'gay' aloud and ascribed it to myself. More than anything I felt alone and afraid, something I was quite tired of. It was another two months before I came out to anyone else, and another four before I was out to my friends and family.
15. Did your elementary school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students?: No
16. Did your middle school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students? No

17. Did your high school offer any support or services for GLBTQ students? No

18. Does your college offer any support or services for GLBTQ students? Yes

19. What types of support or services were offered for GLBTQ students at the elementary level?

20. Did you find the support or services for GLBTQ students useful in elementary school? 20b. Please explain.

21. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in elementary school have been more useful?

22. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the elementary level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?

23. What types of support or services were offered for GLBTQ students at the middle school level?

24. Did you find the support or services for GLBTQ students useful in middle school? 24b. Please explain.

25. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in middle school have been more useful?

26. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the middle school level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?

27. What types of support or services were offered at the high school level?

28. Did you find the support or services useful in high school? 28b. Please explain.

29. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in high school have been more useful?

A safe place to talk with someone about questions or fears, especially during a time of such great developmental change. Also, a section on GLBTQ issues during sex-ed would have been excellent.

The acknowledgement that GLBT people exist and that it is not shameful to be GLBT.
30. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the high school level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful? Some sort of Gay-Straight Alliance along with curricular inclusions of GLBTQ issues.

31. What types of support or services are/were offered at the college level? Unrecognized clubs, an advisory board to the Vice President for Student Affairs, mandatory educational programming first semester freshman year, Resident Assistant training, various programming events (Coming Out Day, StaND Against Hate Week)

32. Do/Did you find the support or services useful in college? Yes

32b. Please explain. While many of the resources are useful, they are constrained by the Catholic character of the institution as well as an unwillingness on the part of the administration to publicly confront issues involving the GLBTQ student population.

33. How could the support or services for GLBTQ students in college have been more useful? A greater emphasis on fostering a supportive community would have been outstanding, coupled with public administrative support. The formation of a recognize Gay-Straight Alliance and a full-time programming body would also have been more useful.

34. Although you are not aware of any services offered at the college level for GLBTQ students, what services would have been useful?

35. At what age did you first know you were gifted? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly) 8

36. In what grade did you first know you were gifted? (please estimate if you don't remember exactly) 2nd

37. In what grade, if ever, were you formally identified as gifted? Kindergarten

38a. Did your elementary school offer gifted programming or services? yes

38b. Did your middle school offer gifted programming or services? yes

38c. Did your high school offer gifted programming or services? yes

38d. Did your college offer gifted programming or services? yes

39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in elementary school? no

39. Did you participate in before/after school gifted programs in middle school? no
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Did you participate in Partial grade skipping (i.e. a 4th grader with a high reading level goes to 5th grade for reading) in elementary school?</td>
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39. Did you participate in cluster grouping (i.e. a "cluster" of about 3-10 of the highest students are placed in the same class within a grade) in elementary school?  

yes

39. Did you participate in cluster grouping (i.e. a "cluster" of about 3-10 of the highest students are placed in the same class within a grade) in middle school?  

no

39. Did you participate in cluster grouping (i.e. a "cluster" of about 3-10 of the highest students are placed in the same class within a grade) in high school?  

no

39. Did you participate in cluster grouping (i.e. a "cluster" of about 3-10 of the highest students are placed in the same class within a grade) in college?  

no

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in elementary school?  

no

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in middle school?  

no

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in high school?  

no

39. Did you participate in Curriculum compacting (i.e. taking a pretest to determine knowledge of a subject, and "testing out" of the unit in order to pursue an independent project) in college?  

no

39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in elementary school?  

no

39. Did you participate in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework in middle school?  

yes
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39. Did you participate in other (3) in high school? no
39. Did you participate in other (3) in college? no
39. Other (1) fill-ins
39. Other (2) fill-ins
39. Other (3) fill-ins
40. Did being gifted ever cause difficulties at school? Yes
40b. Please explain G/T and TAG students were often separated from the student body and perceived as different. Combined with being gay, one stuck out even more as an outsider and, especially in middle school, was subject to verbal and physical bullying. On an administrative level, due to course scheduling electives were oftentimes hard to schedule.
41. Did being gifted ever offer advantages at school? Yes
41b. Please explain It offered a chance to be with students of like ability and to engage in a challenging curriculum catered to the needs of the gifted students. We also had different content modules and more freedom to pursue creative projects.
42. Did being [orientation] ever cause difficulties at school? Yes
42b. Please explain In middle school, calling someone 'gay' was the insult of choice. Whether the students knew someone was gay or not, they were often perceived as different and picked on because of it. Without much support, it was also hard to integrate this aspect of my sexuality into my life, placing strains on social relationships and self-security.
43. Did being [orientation] ever offer advantages at school? Yes
43b. Please explain If anything, it has helped me become a stronger person by having to overcome complex obstacles with little or no support. Once confirmed, it also offered a strong self-indentity and taught me the willingness to stand up for who I am and what I believe in.
44. Do you think that being both gifted and [orientation] led to unique difficulties in school? Yes
44b. Please explain

As mentioned earlier, both categories set one apart as 'different'. Trying to integrate both the intellectual and sexual identity into the broader social atmosphere was often difficult, especially since in the early years I had little knowledge of what was actually going on and no one to offer advice and support.

45. Do you think that being both gifted and [orientation] offered unique advantages in school?

Yes

45b. Please explain

I think it offered a more nuanced world view and two lenses through which to view the world, lenses not accessible to a majority of the population.

46. Do you think that students who are gifted and GLBTQ have more or less difficulties than other gifted students at school?

The same

46b. Please explain

While in school, I was not out and felt like I could relate to my gifted peers and their problems at the same level. While I had the added chore of integrating and discovering my sexuality, I don't think it played a huge role in difficulties at school. As more students start to come out earlier, however, I could see this as a problem - and potentially an aid - in allowing students to better form self identities and differentiate themselves from the community as a whole.

47. Do you think that students who are gifted and GLBTQ have more or less difficulties than other GLBTQ students at school?

The same

47b. Please explain

Once again, I think the spheres of gifted and GLBTQ offer their own difficulties independent of one another. Regardless of whether or not one is gifted, there are a host of issues one must deal with as GLBTQ. A gifted student might have the advantage of being around other students who are more socially aware and accepting, but that would depend a great deal on the school, region, and types of activities the student is involved in.

48. Who understood you better in school, your "gifted" friends or your GLBTQ friends?

My gifted friends

48b. Please explain.

I did not have any GLBTQ friends in high school and most of my friends were in the gifted program. In college, I have very few GLBTQ friends and the closest of my friends are all straight and, presumably, gifted.

49. Choose the statement you identify with most: "I am gifted." "I am [gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning, or (your identification)]", "Other."

I am gifted

49b. Other fill in
49c. Please explain

I think gifted represents a greater totality of person than GLBTQ. Being gay is just one aspect of my personality, whereas gifted influences the way I conduct myself socially, physically, emotionally, sexually, and so forth. I would rather be known as a gifted person who just happens to be gay.

50. What was it like at school being both gifted and [orientation]?

In my younger years, I think that being both gay and gifted required integrating two 'exceptional' identity characteristics. While I was cognizant early on that I was gay, I didn't really know what the implications for this were. A lot of time was spent ignoring my orientation to focus on other aspects of character development. It was until college, when I was surrounded by other intelligent people and really started to explore my identity and what I wanted to contribute to the world in the next phase of my life that I really started to focus on my sexual identity and its implications. Seeing other GLBT students suffer played a large role in my development as a gay person once I was out. I think that being consciously gay, socially aware, and gifted requires a lot of critical reflection on the part of the person and forces the integration of many aspects of one's life. Now that I can finally embrace both gifted intelligence and my sexual identity, these facets of my person - neither of which independently define my being - provide a strong foundation of self-acceptance and offer a springboard upon which to jumpstart how I wish to impact the community at large. While I think being both gay and gifted lengthens the development process, I have had to confront a lot of issues many people won't encounter until much later in life, if at all. By having explored and come to know myself better, I feel better able to discern what I wish to make of my life and how I want to make an impact.

51. As a gifted and GLBTQ individual, do you feel you had appropriate role models growing up (either personal or impersonal e.g.in the media).

No

52. If yes, who did/do you consider to be your role models? Please explain.

The older generation has yet to fully embrace GLBT role models, something I don't think will be accomplished until our generation assumes societal leadership roles. While I think I probably had role models who happened to be gay, none of them were public about their sexual orientation. Many would argue that it should be irrelevant whether or not someone is hetero- or homosexual -- and in an ideal world, that would be the case -- but to have a model of someone who has been successful, is a worthy role model, and has integrated his or her sexuality into their lives is very powerful for a GLBT person coming of age. To more directly answer the question, societal conventions that, especially for men, establish a cult of masculinity, heteronormativity, and homophobia contribute to the lack of GLBT role models. Thankfully, the tide is turning.
54. Are there any questions about your experience being gifted and GLBTQ that we should have asked, but didn’t? Please elaborate.

How did you relate to other GLBT and gifted students? Did you feel pressure to conform to their lifestyle choices? - Many GLBT students lament that society pressures them to conform to stereotypes of GLBT students. If you are out to your parents, did the fact that you are gifted cause your parents to raise more questions? - My parents were dismayed that I would 'choose' to be gay given how intelligent I was. Didn't I know better than that? When coming out or integrating your sexuality into your life, do you feel that, as a gifted student, you were more strongly plagued by other concerns, such as how to best approach your family, educate them, bring your experiences into the learning community, etc.? Did you focus less on your own needs as a result? - I feel like many gifted GLBT students place a high emphasis on others - how they will react, how to best help them, etc. - that they forget to worry about themselves and their own well-being during an emotionally traumatic time.

55. Would you be willing to answer follow-up questions if the need arises? Yes

56. Would you like to receive a copy of the results of this study? Yes

57. Please add any comments or questions.