

Growing Up Gay in a “Tolerant” Society

John Frank

Spring Semester, 2008

The Netherlands: International Perspectives on Sexuality and Gender

Advisor: Andre Krouwel

Academic Director: Kevin Connors

University of Richmond

Psychology & Leadership Studies

Copyright Permission

The author hereby does grant the School for International Training the permission to electronically reproduce and transmit this document to the students, alumni, staff, and faculty of the World Learning Community.

The author hereby does grant the School for International Training the permission to electronically reproduce and transmit this document to the public via the World Wide Web or other electronic means.

The author hereby does grant the School for International Training the permission to reproduce this document to the public in print format.

Student: John Frank

Signature:

Date: 5/10/08

Table of Contents

Title Page.....1

Copyright Permission.....2

Acknowledgements.....4

Abstract.....5

Introduction.....6

Literature Review.....8

Method.....11

 Participants.....11

 Procedure.....11

 Assumptions.....13

Results.....15

 “The Realization”.....15

 The Reactions of Parents.....18

 The Reactions of Parents Explained.....21

 The Reactions of Friends and Peers.....22

 The Role of the Internet.....25

Conclusion.....28

References.....33

Appendix A (Interview Guide).....35

Appendix B (Consent Forms).....38

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who helped me with this project. Particularly, I want to thank Kevin Connors, Hanne van Herk, Yvette Kopijn, and Paul Marlisa. They have all been instrumental in making my stay in the Netherlands an extraordinary experience. I have learned so much from the time I spent in Amsterdam and this is in large part due to the work of these people. I would also like to thank my advisor, Andre Krouwel. He selflessly gave up time to help me with this project and my interviewing skills. I also want to thank Eduard Verbree for helping me to understand the Dutch language. Geert-Jan Edelenbosch has been a great resource for finding interviewees and I thank him for this. I would also like to thank Gert Hekma and all of the other people that I interviewed. The project would be nothing without them. Last of all, I would like to thank my host and all the students in the SIT Netherlands program for making Amsterdam feel like a second home. I have grown close to you all and I value the time we spent together. Working on this project has been easier with your support.

Abstract

This study attempts to understand the lives of young homosexuals living in the Netherlands. Eight homosexual adolescents were interviewed and their responses were analyzed to find out more about growing up in a society known for its tolerant and progressive legislation. The research found that although it is better than most countries, there are still some problems for gays in the Netherlands. It is not uncommon for gay Dutch adolescents to face discrimination and harassment. These young people were quite nervous about coming out and their experiences doing so were not always positive. Parents in the Netherlands were not always supportive of their children and bullying is unfortunately common in Dutch schools. The effect of the internet on these young people was also explored. While the internet can provide helpful information about coming out, using the internet as a way to talk to other homosexuals can be quite risky. Many people take advantage of these adolescents' openness online.

Key Words: gay, identity, male, parenting/families, sexuality, youth

Introduction

The Netherlands is known for its progressive legislation regarding homosexual rights. It was the first country to legalize same sex marriage and has comprehensive laws against discrimination based on sexual orientation. However, while the laws do exist, discrimination still occurs in the Netherlands. While the Dutch may not speak out against homosexuality, this may simply be because it is taboo to do so. Prejudices against homosexuals exist among many of the citizens of the Netherlands. While a large majority of the Dutch feel that homosexuality should not be illegal, a recent study shows that a growing population feels that the right to marry should be taken away from homosexual couples (Keuzenkamp and Bos, 2007). The same study found that the right to adopt for homosexual couples in the Netherlands is also highly contested. In addition, many Dutch citizens feel that the idea of sex between two men is repugnant (Keuzenkamp and Bos, 2007). It seems that while homosexuality is “tolerated” in the Netherlands, it is not necessarily supported or embraced.

While the Netherlands may be a better place to live for homosexuals than other countries, it still has a long way to come from being ideal. In order to understand Dutch culture and how it affects its citizens, I plan to answer the question: “What are the experiences of gay adolescents in a society where homosexuality is tolerated and supported by the law?” By looking at the experiences of gay adolescents who have grown up in the atmosphere of Dutch “tolerance” I hope to gain a better understanding of the effects of Dutch culture on young people and examine where progressive legislation and “tolerance” fall short for gay youth. By analyzing the situation of gay adolescents in the Netherlands, I hope to illuminate what needs to be done to better the lives of homosexuals not only in the Netherlands but also in the rest of the world. While an argument could be made that it would be more useful to study other cultures where homophobia and homonegativity are more apparent, I feel that the

Netherlands serves as an example to the rest of the world in terms of its legal policies toward homosexuals and for this reason needs to be examined. Because the Netherlands has this position as a world-wide role model, it should strive to be as accepting and supportive of homosexuals as possible. Any problems that exist in this progressive society should be fixed to show the world that it is possible to achieve a truly tolerant society that embraces its homosexual citizens.

I hope that educators and administrators in schools will look at this study to gain a better understanding of what the issues are facing homosexual students. With this knowledge they can better help these students and work to make their schools more supportive. I also hope that this research will be read by students, both gay and straight, so that they can better understand the lives and stories of their peers. While everyone's lives are different, perhaps the interviews in this study will uncover some universal themes the readers can identify with. Hopefully in writing about the acceptance of people with different sexual orientations, this research will promote the acceptance of anybody who is excluded or different.

Literature Review

In most societies the experiences of homosexual adolescents are markedly different from those of heterosexual adolescents. This occurs in the Netherlands as well. A lot of attention has been given to the differences between the experiences of homosexual and heterosexual adolescents in recent research in the Netherlands and other countries. One study, *Out in the Netherlands*, went to great lengths to study homosexuality in the Netherlands. In this study, Keuzenkamp and Bos (2007) found that about two thirds of homosexuals had experienced at least one negative reaction to their sexual orientation. While these negative reactions occur in all sectors of society, it is more wide-spread among young people (Keuzenkamp and Bos, 2007). When surveyed, 38% young people between the age of 11 and 24 thought that the idea of sex between two men was disgusting (Keuzenkamp and Bos, 2007). The “Sex Under 25” study by the Rutgers-Nisso Groep and SOA-AIDS (2007) found that half of the boys under 25 they surveyed found sex between two boys dirty. They also found that 12% of boys would stop being friends with someone if they found out he was gay (Rutgers-Nisso Groep and SOA-AIDS, 2005). While not all people who think that homosexual sex is disgusting will act out against homosexuals, this statistic does suggest that the environment that gay adolescents come out in is not entirely welcoming.

One study conducted in the Netherlands examined the relationship between being attracted to people of the same sex and one’s relationships with peers and parents. Bos et al. (2008) found that young people between the age of 13 and 15 who were attracted to people of the same sex had a hard time building relationships with their peers and parents. These young people were asked a series of questions about their sexual orientations, how they got along with their friends, and how open they were with their parents. It was found that students who did not experience same-sex attraction were accepted more by their classmates and talked

more with their fathers (Bos et al., 2008). The authors gave two possible explanations for these differences. One is that the students with same-sex attraction may feel that they are different and avoid making connections because of this feeling. The other possible explanation is that the people they are trying to connect with respond negatively to the adolescent's homosexuality. Another study performed in the United States found that young sexual-minority students had smaller peer groups and were more worried about losing friends than heterosexuals (Diamond and Lucas, 2004). The findings of both of these studies are problematic because good peer and parent relationships have been shown to lead to positive development and suicide resiliency (Fenaughty and Harre, 2003).

The effects of coming out in a hostile environment are varied and at times severe. As seen in a study by Pearson et al. (2007), homosexual students have more difficulties at school. Their academic outcomes are worse than those of heterosexual students. The explanation that Pearson et al. (2007) give for this disparity is that homosexual students do not connect with their schools as well as straight students. They feel more isolated from the rest of the student body and will skip class more often than heterosexual students (Pearson et al., 2007). There is also evidence that homosexuals have more experience with stress than their straight peers. Cochran (2001) found that homosexuals are at a greater risk for stress-sensitive disorders. In the Netherlands, Sandfort et al. (2003) found that homosexuals have lower levels of quality of life and lower self-esteem than heterosexuals. In America, Russell and Joyner (2001) found that sexual orientation was correlated with suicide risk. Homosexual adolescents will contemplate and attempt suicide more often than heterosexual adolescents (Russell and Joyner, 2001). This is true for the Netherlands as well. De Graaf et al. (2006) show that the suicide rate for Dutch homosexuals is higher than that of Dutch heterosexuals.

With the possibility of these negative outcomes, it is imperative that attempts are made to reduce homophobia and the effects it has on young people. To do this requires a better

understanding of how homophobia operates. As previously mentioned, homophobia seems to be seen largely among young people (Keuzenkamp and Bos, 2007). Additionally, the study by Bos et al. (2008) found that the lower academic outcomes, lower self-esteems, and increased stress of adolescents with same-sex attraction are linked to poor peer and parental relationships (Bos et al., 2008). Therefore, attention needs to be focused on determining how these peer and parental relationships are different and why homosexual students struggle with them. The findings from both the “Sex Under 25” (2005) study and the Keuzenkamp and Bos (2007) suggest that a great deal of the difficulty for homosexual students is the negative attitudes of their peers. However, not all of the participants in the Bos et al. (2008) study who had same-sex attraction were open about their sexual orientation. Therefore, for some people with same-sex attraction, the lower quality of their peer relationships was not due to the reactions of their peers when they came out, but rather to how they expected their peers to react and other internal factors. The lives of homosexual students cannot be understood or predicted through surveys alone. Interviews must be conducted to understand the intricacies of the relationships that this group of adolescents has with their friends, family, and peers. While other studies have been able to diagnose the problems for homosexual students, I will attempt to explore these problems in greater detail so that steps can be taken toward an effective intervention.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study include eight self-identified homosexuals who range in age from 14 through 19. These participants are all male and all live in the Netherlands. However, they all live in different parts of the Netherlands. Some come from small farming towns and others come from larger cities. Five of the participants were still in secondary school at the time of the interview and three had already started university. Six of the participants have parents who were born in the Netherlands. One of the participants had a father who was from Pakistan. Also, one of the participants had been adopted from the Philippines. Three of the young men interviewed had parents who were divorced. For the purpose of confidentiality, the participants' names will not be used. When referring to specific participants, pseudonyms will be employed.

Dr. Gert Hekma was also interviewed for this study. Dr. Hekma is a professor in the department of Sociology at the University of Amsterdam. He is an expert on homosexual and lesbian studies and has published numerous studies on the topic.

Procedure

In order to answer this research question, I have conducted interviews with an expert on homosexual adolescents, Gert Hekma, as well as with homosexual adolescents themselves. The interview with Dr. Hekma provided a background and guide for the interviews with the adolescents. Combined with the data from secondary sources, this interview helped illuminate what the general problems are for homosexual students. However, while valuable, this information fails to provide a detailed, illustrative picture of what life is like for gay students. By interviewing the adolescents and hearing how they describe their situation in their own words, I was able to gain an in-depth understanding of what it means to be gay in Dutch society. Rather than use a survey to find out that gay students feel they fit in less

compared to straight students, I heard about specific experiences of not fitting in and what the gay student had to say about why or how this has affected him.

The first step in conducting this research was selecting participants for the study and contacting them. Dr. Hekma was selected based on his research on homosexual adolescents and his previous work with the School for International Training. I contacted Dr. Hekma and scheduled a time and place to meet. Prior to the interview, I prepared questions to ask (see Appendix A). Upon meeting with Dr. Hekma, I started the interview by introducing myself and asking the prepared questions. I also asked some follow-up questions. When the interview was finished, I thanked him for his time and left.

To find homosexual adolescents to interview, I went to a meeting of Jong & Out. Jong & Out is an organization of young men and women under the age of 18 who are openly homosexual. I chose this group because I was already working with it in my role as volunteer for the COC. Prior to one of their events, I sent an email to the group explaining that I am looking for people to interview about homosexuality in Dutch schools. Specifically, the announcement stated: "My name is John Frank, and I am currently visiting the Netherlands from the United States and am studying sexuality and gender with the School for International Training. As part of my studies I am conducting research on homosexuality in the Netherlands, specifically in Dutch schools. In order to study this topic, I was hoping to interview Dutch homosexual students. I am looking for volunteers from your organization to participate in an interview." I also included the consent forms in this email so that they would be completed prior to the event. For additional subjects to interview, I also had one of the Jong & Out organizers forward my contact information to other gay adolescents who did not attend Jong & Out events. Prior to the interviews, I found out if the interviewee was less than 18 years old. If underage, I had his parents complete a consent form that gives their child permission to participate in the study (see Appendix B). All interviewees signed consent

forms as well (see Appendix B). These consent forms have been kept completely separate from the interviewee's responses. After making contact with the interviewees and having them complete the appropriate consent forms, I began interviewing them. The interviews took place in the participants' homes, the COC, the SIT office, or an agreed upon meeting place. Again, I used prepared questions to interview them (see Appendix A).

After the interviews were conducted, I listened to the recordings of each interview and found common themes throughout the interviews. I transcribed the interview into text when I thought that something was said that was especially insightful. Afterwards, the information gained from the adolescent interviewees was placed in the context of the past research and is presented below.

Assumptions

When conducting the interviews it was important that my personal experiences and beliefs did not shape or bias how I questioned the young people. I identify as a gay, white, middle class male. I study psychology in a conservative Liberal Arts university. While these things are part of my identity, I acknowledge that I am not an expert on any of them. For that reason I was able to come into the interviews with an open mind. While I am young, white, and gay, I knew that my interviewees' experiences would be quite different from my own. I have used my experience to create questions to ask, but I did not try to predict any answers.

Another aspect of my identity that played a role in my interviews was my age. I am relatively close in age to my interviewees. This had some possible effects. The first is that the adolescents were comfortable talking with me and were more willing to participate than if I had been older. Because I am young and gay, the interviewees were able to relate with me and felt at ease talking with me. However, one possible problem is that because we are close in age, they worried about my perceptions of them and could have tailored their responses to seem more satisfactory. This problem was avoided by stating at the beginning of the

interview that I wanted them to be as open as possible and that being honest would really help with the outcome of the study. I also instructed the interviewees to let me know if they were uncomfortable answering any questions. This ensured their safety and let me know when they might not have been willing to answer honestly.

When coming into these interviews I also kept in mind that I am an American and speak English. I conducted the interviews in English and this was a bit of a problem for some of the participants. While all of the interviewees were able to speak English fluently, some had trouble coming up with some words. When this happened, I instructed the interviewee to use Dutch and I was able to translate what he/she said later.

Results

“The Realization”

This section reviews the responses of the interviewees that discuss what it was like for them to discover their sexual orientations. By analyzing what was said about this time in their lives, I hope to have a better understanding of how this self-discovery affected the adolescents. Information on any new fears or worries about the future, how people would react, and thoughts on where they would go to for help is invaluable when trying to explain what being a homosexual is like in the Netherlands. It is this period in their lives, when they are alone with the knowledge of their sexual orientation, that allows the researcher to fully explore what is missing from their upbringing, how this makes coming out difficult, and what needs to be changed to make this process easier.

The process of discovering one’s sexual orientation and coming out to oneself as a homosexual was different for all of the adolescents interviewed. The age at which the interviewees realized they were gay ranged from 8 to 14. For some, the realization came suddenly and they were quite surprised to consider themselves as something other than heterosexual. Others had more or less expected they were gay since they were young and the process of coming to terms with their sexualities was more drawn out. Regardless of how natural being gay seemed to them and how much they had thought about it in the past, the realization of their homosexuality was difficult for all of the interviewees. The adolescents experienced a range of emotions upon identifying as homosexuals, but these emotions were almost always negative. Many expressed a sense of depression upon finding out. More than one of the adolescents told me that they had cried when they began to think that they might be gay. Some of the adolescents also noted that they felt angered by the realization. This is seen in one of the interviewees who mentioned an annoyed disbelief of why it was happening to

him. When Robert began to realize he was gay, he thought, “This can’t be happening to me, why me? Of all those people, why me?” (Robert, personal communication, April 28, 2008)

While some of the adolescents were glad to uncover what it was that set them apart from their peers and find an explanation for the feelings that they were experiencing around members of the same sex, coming out to oneself was never easy and in all cases it was associated with anxiety about the future.

When asked to explain the feelings that they had when they realized they were gay, many of the interviewees mentioned their fears of the future and the difficulties that are associated with living as a homosexual. In one interview Tim lamented on the prospect of his lost future, “It was very hard for me...I was laying in bed realizing it, seeing my future, and thinking... the woman, children, nice dog, seeing that disappear... it was hard” (Tim, personal communication, May 6, 2008). Even though homosexuals have the right to marry in the Netherlands, this did not appear to be a viable option for Tim or the other adolescents. For them, the gay married life was not the same as how they imagined having a wife and kids would be. This lack of hope in a “normal” future was due in large part to the image they had of homosexuals. They thought that all homosexuals were flamboyant and feminine. Not only did they think that people like this could not live a “normal” life, but when the adolescents pictured their futures, they thought that being gay meant that acting feminine was inevitable. For them, being gay meant that being “normal” was impossible. Because most of the interviewees just wanted to fit in and have friends, not being normal meant that they would have to give up on both the future and their present goal of being popular in school. As Rick commented, “Well, at first I didn’t want it myself...I actually prayed I wasn’t gay...I was afraid of the consequences...and I wasn’t normal. In junior high, everybody wants to be as normal as it gets...At the time you only have the stereotyped view” (Rick, personal communication, May 3, 2008). The idea that they would become such a flamboyant person

made it hard for them to be proud of their sexual orientation and brought them a fair amount of shame. Consistent with the findings from these interviews (Bos et al., 2008) found that homosexual adolescents have lower self esteems.

These ideas of normalcy that played such a large role in the adolescent's coming out and self-identification appear to have multiple roots. Their parents, peers, and Dutch culture all promote the idea that being normal is desirable and standing out is not. They hear jokes from their parents and on TV about homosexuals. Being gay appears to be something that ostracizes a person and that you can laugh at. Many of the young people described how a homosexual character would come on the television and their fathers would make a joke about him/her. However, this laughter was not limited to homosexuals. Anyone that was different was mocked. This is seen in the schoolyard as well. The adolescents that I interviewed discussed how prevalent gossip was in their schools and how anyone who stood out was talked about it. When all you want is to fit in, anything about yourself that might set you apart from everyone is anxiety producing. For the adolescents I talked to, coming out as a homosexual and marking oneself as different was seen as social suicide.

Not only did these young people fear exclusion in general, but they also feared how specific people would react when they came out as homosexuals. Regardless of how tolerant people claim the Netherlands is or how accepting these adolescents thought their parents and friends were, the thought of coming out was always terrifying. When these young people grow up, there is a mass of negativity surrounding homosexuality. In primary school, bullies use the term "gay" as an insult and the word is never heard in a positive light. The only news stories they remember about homosexuality are about "gay bashings" or a new outbreak of AIDS. As Robert (personal communication, April 28, 2008) puts it, there is a "black cloud" surrounding homosexuals in the media. This is in addition to the jokes their parents make about homosexuals that I mentioned before. When they base their knowledge of the world off

what they hear from others close to them, they really have no positive image of homosexuals to look up to or find hope in.

The negative baggage that surrounds homosexuality for these adolescents shapes how they expect the people around them to react. Every person that I interviewed said they were nervous when they first started to tell people. Interviewees that had gay uncles or aunts who were accepted by the rest of the family were still nervous about coming out to that family. There were even two different adolescents who worried about coming out to their parents after the parents had stated explicitly that they would not mind if their child was gay. One person even hesitated telling his lesbian mother. All the negativity associated with homosexuality for these children prevents them from trusting their parents' acceptance. As multiple respondents described, there is something in the back of their heads that says they should be scared. After explaining that he knew his parents would react well to his homosexuality, Tom gives this reason to explain why he was still nervous about telling them, "There is something in my head, some little voice...It scares you" (Tom, personal communication, April 17, 2008).

The Reactions of Parents

Learning about what this group of adolescents expected to happen when they came out permits the researcher to view Dutch society through the perspective of someone who is young and gay. This perspective, however, is quite biased. A person growing up with such a secret notices different things about the world and his expectations are not always accurate. Therefore, it is important to explore how people actually responded when these adolescents came out. By studying this, even more insight will be gained into the lives of the young and gay in Dutch society.

In a way, the young interviewees' fears were justified. While Keuzenkamp and Bos (2007) found that most heterosexuals in the Netherlands accept the idea of homosexuality and

think homosexuals should be free to live their lives without government interference, the researchers also found that this acceptance declines the closer homosexuality comes to the heterosexuals' homes. The study found that the Dutch are less willing to accept homosexuality when it is present in gay neighbors or a gay relative (Keuzenkamp and Bos, 2007). Some parents who supported the legalization of gay marriage are uncomfortable with the thought of having a gay child. Indeed, from the interviews it appears that not all adults living in the Netherlands were immediately willing to support their children's homosexuality. But again, like the adolescent's own reactions to discovering their sexuality, the reactions of their parents were quite varied. To illustrate these reactions I will use four examples that represent the range of responses.

The first example is the most negative response that I encountered. The adolescent, Billy, was thirteen when he told his parents that he was gay. He had wanted to participate in Amsterdam's Gay Pride on the C.O.C.'s float for people under 16, but needed his parent's permission. Consequently, Billy had to tell his parents that he was gay to have any chance of going on the boat. Before he told his parents, he had some expectations about how his father would react. His father is from Pakistan and had openly negative views toward homosexuality. His mother is a native Dutch citizen, but he could not really predict how she would act. When he ended up telling his parents, his father grabbed a knife, held it in the air, and then said to him, "When you are homosexual, I break your legs". His mother started to cry and said, "Oh my God, you are not gay, really" (Billy, personal communication, April 19, 2008). Eventually his mother began to accept Billy's homosexuality and now gives him money to take the train to Jong & Out meetings. His father still struggles with the idea and every time the topic comes up at dinner it escalates into an argument. It is the initial reaction, though, that is really quite troubling. As studies have shown, homosexual adolescents need support from their parents in order to be resilient against other negative aspects of

homosexual life (Fenaughty and Harre, 2003). It does not help for Billy's father to threaten him with a knife.

Another, more typical response from parents is conditional acceptance. Through my interviews, I encountered two types of conditional acceptance. In both types, the parents would act positively during the initial coming out. They told their children that they loved them no matter what and said that they would support any choice they made. However, for conditional acceptance this initial reaction is the extent of their support. After the first conversation, homosexuality is never spoken of again. The parents do not ask their child about their romantic relationships or talk to them about sex. In this type of arrangement, the parents are supportive of their child's lifestyle, as long as it is not talked about. While the adolescents I talked to that had these types of parents are under the impression that their parents accept their homosexuality, the actual support they receive is limited. Because homosexuality is not discussed, they feel uncomfortable going to their parents for advice on dating and sex. Also, the silence of their parents reinforces the notion that homosexuality is something taboo. Rather than working to remove the shame and stigma associated with homosexuality, these "accepting" parents increase their child's sense of isolation and shame.

The other type of conditional acceptance that occurs is when parents are supportive of their child's sexual orientation as long as he acts "normally". Robert told me that his father said, "I don't mind you being gay, but please don't wind up one of those feminine, a-ha people with the flappy hands and the Prada bags and that kind of stuff... Like those fashion designers from *America's Next Top Model*" (Robert, personal communication, April 28, 2008). While this person had no intention of acting femininely, his father's conditional acceptance is still detrimental. Again, as before, the sense of shame is reinforced. While acting in a feminine manner is not synonymous with being gay, the father here is referencing common gay stereotypes and letting his son know that he has a problem with people who act

like this. Because many members of the gay community do act stereotypically, this child, who has been turned against acting in such a way, may have difficulty identifying with the community and finding support in it. In essence, the father is degrading what is a source of pride for many gay people.

It should be noted that conditional acceptance does have some benefits to the development of the gay adolescent. As seen in the example of Billy, reactions could be a lot worse. Even though it is conditional, by accepting their child's sexual orientation these parents affirm their child's sexual identity and the child knows that he/she still belongs in the family. They are not guided or advised in any way, but these children are more or less free to explore gay life and start relationships with people of the same-sex. For most of the people I interviewed, they had no desire to act flamboyantly. They only wanted to know that their parents would still love them if they had a partner who was the same sex as they were.

There were parents who went further than letting their children know that they would *still* love them after finding out they were gay. These parents responded enthusiastically upon finding out that their child was a homosexual. They congratulated their child on coming out, said they were proud of him, and expressed joy at the prospect of being able to go shopping with him. They were more than willing to let the extended family know, inquired about boyfriends, and gave them advice on sexual health. These parents were also the same parents that told their children early on that being gay was a satisfactory option for them to pursue. The environment created by these parents is caring and provides ample aid for any challenges that occur outside of the home.

The Reactions of Parents Explained

In an effort to understand the differences between the varied parental reactions, I examined any information the adolescents gave me about their parents and family lives. The most negative reactions can be explained by their parents' religion and culture. When Billy's

father threatened to break Billy's legs, he cited religious beliefs and a fear that his son's homosexuality would bring shame to the family. The child was instructed not to tell his extended Pakistani family. While there may be other reasons for the father's reaction, it is clear that his Muslim background had a large effect on how he treated his son.

The other reactions that can be explained are the most positive reactions. It seems that the parents who fully supported their child's homosexuality and went beyond conditional acceptance had previous experience with homosexuality. They either had a gay friend, brother, or sister, and had witnessed this person struggle with his/her own homosexuality. Also, one of interviewees had a mother that was a lesbian herself. All of the parents in this group had learned from their pasts in order to help their children's futures. They had seen the negative reactions that people had to their homosexual friends and relatives and made a conscious decision to go out of their way to support their gay children. One of the interviewees, Phil, recalled an event that occurred when he was eight years old. His mom had been listening to Queen's "Who wants to live forever?" when she told Phil that it would be fine if he was gay (Phil, personal communication, April 26, 2008). He found out later that she had told him this because she had remembered a friend who had died of AIDS as well as someone who had a very difficult coming out experience. This decision and the other choices made by parents who wanted to reach out to their gay children have had tremendous impacts on their children's development. The children of these parents were more confident and comfortable talking about their sexual orientation.

The Reactions of Friends and Peers

Obviously, these adolescents did not just tell their parents that they were gay. They also told their friends and people at their schools. The reactions of their close friends were pretty much universally positive. There are two notable exceptions. Phil explained to me that after telling a close male friend that he was gay, the friend avoided Phil because he thought

that Phil was attracted to him. Eventually they were able to talk to each other again, but an indescribable tension remained throughout their friendship (Phil, personal communication, April 26, 2008). The other negative reaction occurred with Billy. Billy's friend had been transferred to a school that was predominately Muslim. When this friend heard of Billy's homosexuality, he ended contact with Billy because people at the school had told him that it was not good to be friends with a homosexual (Billy, personal communication, April 19, 2008). This was troubling for Billy who had already had a negative experience with his Pakistani father. However, all of the other adolescents that I interviewed reported that their close friends were all very supportive when they came out.

There are two possible explanations for the supportiveness of the close friends. The first is that they are close friends. As Billy explains, "When you are friends you be strong (sic)" and "go for the person 100%" (Billy, personal communication, April 19, 2008). Friends should be able to accept their friends when they come out as homosexuals and for the most part these Dutch adolescents had friends that would. Apart from being good friends, there is another reason why these close friends willingly accepted their friends' homosexuality. The friendships started because the two parties had common interests and beliefs. The young people I interviewed wanted friends who were open-minded and didn't talk about sports or girls all day. If they had close male friends, it was because they were confident that these friends would be supportive. For the most part, however, the gay male adolescents I interviewed had female friends. As (Keuzenkamp and Bos, 2007) found, girls tend to be more accepting of homosexuality than males. Also, perhaps not so surprisingly, quite a few of the interviewees said that their close friends turned out to be gay as well. While the "Sex Under 25" (2005) study revealed that 12% of straight males would end their friendships with someone who turned out to be gay, for the most part the people I interviewed were able to avoid starting friendships with these people.

The reactions of the rest of the school were usually less predictable for the interviewees. As I mentioned earlier, there was a lot of fear surrounding what would be said about them. Gossip seemed to be the biggest obstacle that these young people faced. A lot of the adolescents told me that even before they came out, people had already started rumors about their sexual orientations. John said that he knew everyone was asking his friends if he was gay and was frustrated that they did not ask him (John, personal communication, May 6, 2008). When the gossip is done behind a person's back like this, he/she has no idea what exactly is being said and is afraid that a lot of it is negative. Even though there is usually no malicious intent behind gossip, in cases like this, it makes coming out more difficult because it shaped the expectations of the people I interviewed. They thought that the people talking about them did not want to bring up the issue in person because they disapproved of homosexuality.

When the people I interviewed ended up coming out, the majority of their classmates responded either positively or neutrally. The classmates would either congratulate them for coming out and ask them questions about what being gay was like or they would say "Okay" and move on. There was only one case where the overwhelming reaction was not so positive. This occurred in a large school in North Holland. Here, the person I talked with, Joe, was called "gay" and bullied on a daily basis (Joe, personal communication, April 19, 2008). Because of the anti-gay climate of Joe's school, the majority of the students were afraid to come out and support him. Joe suggested that the size of his school was responsible for its negative reaction. He thought that large schools where the students were not all close with each other bred bullies. However, I disagree with this because John, someone who also attended a large school, had a positive coming out experience. The difference between these schools appears to be their curriculums, specifically how they handled homosexuality. At Joe's school homosexuality was only mentioned briefly during sexual education. John's

school spent one week a year educating its students about homosexuality. They showed movies that focused on homosexuality and held discussions afterwards. This school went out of its way to promote equality and the effect is quite clear. Its students were more open-minded and tolerant.

Even when most of the people in a gay student's school respond positively or neutrally to his/her coming out, this process can still be difficult. There is usually a small pocket of students who create trouble for their gay classmates. In many of the interviews of people who attended a school with a positive environment I heard about either one person or a small group of about five people who would harass the gay students. These "bullies" would follow the gay students and call them names. They would ask inappropriate questions about homosexual sex and try to embarrass their homosexual peers. In one case, one of the adolescents I interviewed, Rick, was attacked by a group of his peers who threw rocks at him (Rick, personal communication, May 3, 2008). Rick was 14 at the time and had already come out to his school. Fortunately, he was not seriously injured. However, the experience was still traumatic and affected the adolescent's trust in the world. While most of the interviewees did not express any fear of being physically injured for being openly gay in public, this adolescent was quite concerned.

The Role of the Internet

Another medium that bullies in the Netherlands use to harass their peers is the internet. Through my interviews I encountered two examples of virtual harassment. The first involved Phil, an adolescent who had trouble figuring out that he was gay. He had always questioned his sexual orientation, but never knew where to go to find any answers. When Phil was fifteen, he thought that he found the support he needed online. Someone posing as an adult gay male sent him a message over the internet and asked if he would like to talk. Phil opened up to this stranger and confessed his secrets to him. He thought that an experienced gay male

would be able to help him with his self-discovery. However, things started to turn bad for Phil when his online “friend” started asking inappropriate questions and became aggressive with his advances. The “friend” went so far as to use a program to change his voice and called Phil’s house. When Phil’s mother answered the phone and talked to the “friend”, she became worried and began to ask Phil questions. When she realized the extent of their online relationship, she called the police. After investigating, the police discovered that the “person” that Phil had been talking to was actually a group of his classmates (Phil, personal communication, April 26, 2008). Although Phil says that he is glad the experience happened because he was able to act out his homosexual feelings online for the first time, this event represents the dangerous potential that the internet has for bullying.

Young people today have a unique opportunity to connect with people their age over the internet. Social networking websites are growing in popularity and give people the chance to talk to people with similar interests. These sites have given homosexuals a way to meet other homosexuals that is simple and fairly anonymous. Because many young homosexuals are reluctant to come out to their peers, they often come out online first. Most of the people I talked with have created profiles on website like myspace.com, hives.nl, or gay.nl. Because they are not fully aware of the risks involved in outing oneself online, these adolescents freely list their sexual orientation on their online profiles. Because these profiles are public they can be seen by anyone including people whom they might not want to know that they are gay. Robert told me how his uncle came up to him at a family party and congratulated him on being gay. The uncle had found Robert’s hives.nl profile and saw that his nephew listed his sexual orientation as homosexual (Robert, personal communication, April 28). While this happened to be a harmless incident because Robert was already planning on coming out to his extended family after the party, the potential for unwanted people to find this information

online is quite dangerous. As seen with Phil, school bullies are using the internet as a tool to harass their peers.

The internet also provides sexual predators the opportunity to take advantage of the gay adolescents' online openness. Before they come out, this group of adolescents looks online for support and guidance. To young people who are looking for advice, adults claiming that they can offer help seem attractive. This is seen in the example of Phil. He was more than willing to talk to someone he thought could help him. Had his online acquaintance been a real middle-aged man, this man could have easily convinced Phil to meet him somewhere and potentially have raped him. The interviewees also look toward online friends their own age for help. However, because anyone could make a profile and lie about their age, sexual predators can take advantage of this as well. One of the people I interviewed told me how he had been approached online by a middle-aged man posing to be a fifteen year old. He uncovered the man's real age when the man requested to have online sex using a webcam.

Young people struggling to figure themselves out are at a vulnerable time in their lives. They have questions about what they are feeling and they are not sure where to go for help. Because they are uncomfortable or afraid to talk to their parents or teachers, the internet seems like a suitable option where they can go for help confidentially. However, because they are so vulnerable, many people can take advantage of them. Also, not all sites with information about homosexuality are positive. Rick told me how he tried used the internet to learn more about homosexuality and ended finding a site called godhatesfags.com (Rick, personal communication, May 3, 2008). This site promotes anti-homosexual ideas and can be quite detrimental for the development of a gay adolescent. The last thing someone who is struggling with his sexual feelings needs is to read online that he will be going to hell.

Conclusion

The Netherlands is far from being the perfect place to grow up for homosexual adolescents. They face discrimination from their peers and family and have difficulty connecting with other homosexuals. However, while these negative sides of the Netherlands exist, the country is a much better place to live than other countries around the world. Schools are free to teach about homosexuality and some take the opportunity to educate their students about diversity and equality. As seen above, these programs have had a positive effect on the students at these schools. Also, while the reactions of some parents were negative, there are much worse examples of negative reactions in other parts of the world. In the United States, for instance, children are often kicked out of their houses for being gay. As Kruks (1991) found, homosexuals in the United States have a greater risk for becoming homeless than heterosexuals.

Another positive aspect of the Netherlands is that there is a lot to look up to when you are a young gay person. When they first came out, many of the people I interviewed did not think gay marriage was a serious option for them, but as they grew up they realized that it is comforting to have that option. Some said they would probably consider it. The more they learned about homosexuality as they grew up, the more they realized that because they live in the Netherlands life does not have to be so different for them. When they thought that they might be gay, these adolescents started to read more in the news and paid closer attention when watching the television for any mention of homosexuals. When they weren't looking for it, all they heard about were the negative stories. This was probably due to the filters on how they received their news (e.g. parents, peers, teachers). As they searched on their own, however, they began to find positive role models and inspiring stories about successful gay people. Most of the interviewees were able to give me a list of famous openly gay people living in the Netherlands. Because the Netherlands is ahead of the times with promoting gay

rights, there has been an opportunity for older homosexuals to take advantage of these rights, start families, and build careers all while being open about their homosexuality. These gay public figures in the Netherlands give young people hope for the future. I feel that this is one of the biggest differences between the Netherlands and the United States. In the Netherlands, it is easy to imagine a livable future as an open homosexual.

While these young people have the possibility to live great adult lives, their adolescence should be enjoyable as well. Hope for the future is good, but youth should not be wasted and work should be done so that these young homosexuals can have as much fun as their heterosexual peers. For this to happen, people in the Netherlands need to be proactive in helping out homosexuals. Schools need to follow the example set by Jim's school. Teachers need to take time educating their students about diversity and remove the idea that homosexuality is something taboo. If discussing homosexuality is avoided by schools, the students will hold onto the notion that it is something to be gossiped about. The only conversations about homosexuality that many of the interviewees witnessed at their school were negative. A positive dialogue about homosexuality should be encouraged. Additionally, when the people I interviewed spoke of their teachers, many of the stories were not quite commendable. These students do not feel comfortable talking with their mentors about being gay. When Billy told his teacher that he was gay, the teacher ended up outing Billy to his school. Billy was fooling around with a girl during class and the teacher said, "It's okay children, Billy is gay" (Billy, personal communication, April 19, 2008). For teachers not to talk to their children about homosexuality is one thing, but to pose as a helpful confidant and then break the student's trust is quite contemptible. School administrators need to instruct their teachers to be more sensitive to their homosexual students.

Parents also need to take more initiative when raising their children. The typical Dutch response to their child's coming out is to say, "Okay, I'll love you no matter what."

While this is nice and better than the average response in other countries, the Dutch could do more to support their children. When growing up these young people should be informed that being gay is an acceptable option. If parents talk to their children about heterosexual love and heterosexual couples they know, they should also make an effort to bring up homosexuality in conversations with the family. When talking to their children about practicing safe sex, they should include safe homosexual sex in these lectures. These children need to be taught that homosexuality is not something abnormal that should not be discussed. By making the effort to bring this topic up regularly, their children will not feel so isolated and different when they realize their own homosexuality. Parents shouldn't wait for their children to come to them. When a child has no idea how his parents will react, coming out to them can be extraordinarily stressful. As Robert explains, he was "freaked out about telling his parents. That's very close to home. If your friends react bad, you can say... 'get out of my life'. But you can't tell that to your parents" (Robert, personal communication, April 28, 2008) The parents are the most important people in the lives of many of these interviewees. They need to appreciate this and should work to make coming out easier for their children.

Additionally, steps need to be taken toward providing these young people with more resources they can use when coming out. Unlike their straight peers, homosexual adolescents are expected to find out about sex on their own. They are expected to take the initiative to find out how to be safe in a homosexual relationship. It is too much to expect these young people to worry about this when they already have so much on their minds with having to come out and dealing with being different. While information can be found on the internet, some of the young people told me that they were afraid their parents would look at their computers and see that they were looking for information about being gay. Also, as mentioned before, there are a lot of harmful sites and people on the internet.

One positive step that has been made by the Netherlands has been the creation of Jong & Out by the COC, the oldest gay organization in the Netherlands. Jong & Out has an online forum and holds monthly meetings where homosexuals under the age of 18 can come together, socialize, and talk about the issues affecting their lives. While under a year old, this organization has already made great strides in meeting the needs of young gay people in the Netherlands. When asked what they'd like to change about their lives, most of the people I interviewed simply said that they would like to know more gay people. Attending a Jong & Out meeting gives these adolescents the opportunity to meet gay people their own age in a safe environment. The online forum is also a great place for these young people to exchange advice about living as a homosexual and coming out. One of the only problems with this organization is that most of the members have difficulty traveling to where the meetings are held. Children need to get money from their parents to ride the train and have to come up with an excuse about where they will be spending their time. While problems do exist, many of the interviewees commented how much they have been helped by Jong & Out. I feel that knowing that going to a Jong & Out meeting is a possibility gives many people in the closet hope for when they do come out.

In the future I think research should be done to develop programs that educate parents and teachers on their roles in a gay child's life. Many parents do not seem to be aware of how what they say or are silent about affects their children. Most parents do not treat the possibility that their child might be a homosexual seriously enough when the child is young. Parents do not usually start to act supportively until the child actually comes out to them. In order to really help their child's development, parents need to promote positive ideas about homosexuality before puberty and the onset of homosexual thoughts. Without this support, when these thoughts do occur, the children are afraid and anxious. Researchers need to find out why parents are reluctant to educate their children about homosexuality and then work to

counter whatever thoughts or ideas are holding them back. If parents seem to have homonegative attitudes, intervention strategies should be developed to reduce these attitudes. Also, research should be done to find out what kind of programs work for making schools more welcoming for homosexual students. Interventions should be designed and tested empirically to see which is the most effective. This information should then be given to government officials, school administrators, and other people with the authority to affect children's lives.

References

Articles

- Bos, H. M. W., Sandfort, T. G. M., de Bruyn, E. H., & Hakvoort, E. M. (2008). Same-sex attraction, social relationships, psychosocial functioning, and school performance in early adolescence. *Developmental Psychology, 44*(1), 59-68.
- Cochran, S. D. (2001). Emerging issues in research on lesbians' and gay men's mental Health: Does sexual orientation really matter? .; *American Psychologist, Vol 56*(11), Nov 2001. pp. 931-947
- de Graaf, R., Sandfort, T. G. M.; ten Have, M. (2006). Suicidality and sexual orientation: Differences between men and women in a general population-based sample from the Netherlands. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 35*(3), 253-262.
- Diamond, L. M. & Lucas, S. (2004). Sexual-minority and heterosexual youths' peer relationships: Experiences, Expectations, and Implications for well-being. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 14*(3), 313-340.
- Fenaughty, J. & Harré, N. (2003). Life on the Seesaw: A Qualitative Study of Suicide Resiliency Factors for Young Gay Men. *Journal of Homosexuality, 45*(1), 1-22.
- Keuzenkamp, S. & Bos, D. (2007). Out in the Netherlands: Acceptance of Homosexuality in the Netherlands. *The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 1-84*.
- Kruks, G. (1991). Gay and lesbian homeless/street youth: Special issues and concerns. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 12*(7), 515-518.
- Pearson, J., Muller, C., & Wilkinson, L. (2007). Adolescent same-sex attraction and academic outcomes: The role of school attachment and engagement. *Social Problems, 55*(4), 523-542.
- Russell, S. T., & Joyner, K. (2001). Adolescent sexual orientation and suicide risk: Evidence from a natural study. *American Journal of Public Health, 91*, 1276–1281.

Rutgets-NISSO Groep and SOA-AIDS. (2005) . *Sex under 25*. Utrecht and Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Sandfort, T. G. M., de Graaf, R., & Bijl, R. V. (2003). Same-sex sexuality and quality of life: Findings from the Netherlands Mental Health survey and incidence study. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 32(1), 15-22.

Interviews

Billy (2008, April 19). In-person interview with homosexual adolescent (Netherlands).

Hekma, G. (2008, April 17). In-person interview with professor of Sociology at the University of Amsterdam (Amsterdam, Netherlands).

Joe (2008, April 19). In-person interview with homosexual adolescent (Netherlands).

John (2008, May 5). In-person interview with homosexual adolescent (Netherlands).

Phil (2008, April 26). In-person interview with homosexual adolescent (Netherlands).

Rick (2008, May 3). Online interview with homosexual adolescent (Netherlands).

Robert (2008, April 28). In-person interview with homosexual adolescent (Netherlands).

Tim (2008, May 5). In-person interview with homosexual adolescent (Netherlands).

Tom (2008, April 18). Online interview with homosexual adolescent (Netherlands).

Appendix A

Interview Guide

For experts

How would you describe the situation of homosexual students in schools?

What do you feel are the major problems facing this group?

What do you think needs to change in Dutch society/in schools/at homes/etc. to make the lives of homosexuals better in the Netherlands?

Do you think that the situation in the Netherlands has been getting better or worse for homosexuals? Why?

How do you think the Netherlands compares to other Western countries?

What makes it better or worse?

For adolescents

Topics to cover:

Daily Life, Self-Realization (Role models, first feelings, what did you expect), Coming Out (How, who, when, expectations, results), Reactions (peers, friends, parents, relatives, sports teams)

Possible Questions to ask:

How old are you?

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Where do you live?

How old were you when you realized you might be gay?

Can you describe how you felt at this time?

Why do you think you felt this way?

Do you still have some of these feelings?

Have you come out?

If not, why not?

Were you reluctant to come out? Why?

To whom was it easiest to tell? Why?

To whom was it hardest? Why?

What did you expect would happen after you came out?

Did this happen?

How have your relationships with friends changed since you came out?

Is there any one you still haven't told? Why?

How do you think your school is for gay students?

Are there a lot of gay students?

Is there anything you would like to change about your school or your classmates?

Are you a member of a sports team? Does the team know? How do they feel about homosexuality?

Do you talk to your friends/parents about being gay often? Why/why not?

Do you feel that being gay might have changed your relationships in any way?

In other words, do you feel that because you are gay, you are treated differently by anyone?

Can you remember any events or incidents that happened as a result of people finding out about your sexual orientation?

Do you ever worry because of your sexual orientation?

Are there people or places that you avoid?

Are that people or places that seem more welcoming?

If you could change something to make life easier as a homosexual, what would it be?

Why?

What do you think will happen when you leave high school? Do you think it will get better or worse?

When you picture your future, what do you see?

Have you heard of anyone running into difficulties as the result of having a sexual orientation that is different or knowing someone with a different sexual orientation?

From your experience and from talking to other people, what do you think are the problems facing gay students?

From what you have heard of about other countries, what do you think the Netherlands does well for gays?

Do you feel gay students have it better in the Netherlands? Why/why not?

Do you know many gay adults? Do you talk to them?

Who do you go to when you have questions about your sexual orientation or about sexual health?

Who do you talk to about your relationships with people of the same sex?

Do you feel that your straight friends are pretty understanding of what it is like to be gay?

Do they seem interested in talking about it?

Do you feel your sexuality has come in the way of building relationships with anyone?

Appendix B

RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

TITLE: The Experiences of Dutch Gay Youth in the Netherlands School System

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of what it means to be gay in the Netherlands. This study also hopes to examine what the issues facing homosexual youth are today in the Netherlands.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT

If you decide to be in this research study, you will be asked a series of questions about your experiences as a homosexual in Dutch schools. You may be asked to recall any negative experiences you have had related to your sexuality.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

The principal investigator for this study is John Frank.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

This project will take about 30-40 minutes of your time to complete as you listen to the questions and provide answers. If at any time you feel upset or uncomfortable, then you should stop answering the survey. You are free to discontinue participation at any time. By disclosing information about your sexual orientation you may be at risk for any discrimination that typically occurs against homosexuals. By asking for consent from your parents, you may be revealing your sexual orientation to your parents.

COUNSELING OPTIONS

If you experience any negative emotions or psychological distress as a result of participating in this interview you can attend a Jong & Out meeting for emotional support or you can contact Kinder Telefoon free of charge at 0800-0432 for counseling and advice.

BENEFITS

You may not get any direct benefit from this study, but the information we learn from our research may help us understand the state of homosexual students in the Netherlands.

COSTS

You will be asked questions about public opinions pertaining to homosexuality and your reactions. If you are not an expert or in a position of public authority on the subject, your identity will never be disclosed, but if you are underage your parents must consent to your participation. We will be asking about your experiences with homonegativity, and this may bring up painful memories.

ALTERNATIVES

This is not a treatment study, so there is no need to seek alternative treatments.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will not tell anyone the answers you give us. Your responses will not be associated with you by name, at any time, and the data you provide will be kept secure. What we find from

this study may be presented at meetings or published in papers, but your name will not ever be used in these presentations or papers. .

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You do not have to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you may stop at any time without any penalty. You may also choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study.

QUESTIONS

In the future, you may have questions about your participation in this study. If you have any questions, contact:

John Frank – john.frank@richmond.edu

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact Dr. R. Kirk Jonas, the Chair of the University of Richmond’s Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Research Participants, at 001-804-484-1565 or at rjonas@richmond.edu.

CONSENT

The study has been described to me and I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation in the project at any time without penalty.

I have read and understand the above information and I consent to participate in this study by signing below.

Signature and Date

Witness (experimenter)

RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

TITLE: The Experiences of Dutch Gay Youth in the Netherlands School System

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of what it means to be gay in the Netherlands. This study also hopes to examine what the issues facing homosexual youth are today in the Netherlands.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT

If your child decides to be in this research study, he or she will be asked a series of questions about his or her experiences as a homosexual in Dutch schools. Your child may be asked to recall any negative experiences he or she has had related to his or her sexuality.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

The principal investigator for this study is John Frank.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

This project will take about 30-40 minutes of your child's time to complete as your child listens to the questions and provide answers. If at any time your child feels upset or uncomfortable, then your child should stop answering the survey. Your child is free to discontinue participation at any time. By disclosing information about your child's sexual orientation he/she may be at risk for any discrimination that typically occurs against homosexuals.

COUNSELING OPTIONS

If your child experiences any negative emotions or psychological distress as a result of participating in this interview he/she can attend a Jong & Out meeting for emotional support or he/she can contact Kinder Telefoon free of charge at 0800-0432 for counseling and advice.

BENEFITS

Your child may not get any direct benefit from this study, but the information we learn from our research may help us understand the state of homosexual students in the Netherlands.

COSTS

Your child will be asked questions about public opinions pertaining to homosexuality and his or her reactions. If your child is not an expert or in a position of public authority on the subject, his or her identity will never be disclosed. Because your child is under the age of 18, we need your consent for his or her participation. We will be asking about your experiences with homonegativity, and this may bring up painful memories.

ALTERNATIVES

This is not a treatment study, so there is no need to seek alternative treatments.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will not tell anyone the answers your child gives us. His or her responses will not be associated with him or her by name, at any time, and the data he or she provides will be kept

secure. What we find from this study may be presented at meetings or published in papers, but your child's name will not ever be used in these presentations or papers. The interview will be recorded but no information that can be used to identify you will be attached to the recording www.gay.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your child does not have to participate in this study. If he or she chooses to participate, he or she may stop at any time without any penalty. He or she may also choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study.

QUESTIONS

In the future, you may have questions about your participation in this study. If you have any questions, contact:

John Frank – john.frank@richmond.edu

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact Dr. R. Kirk Jonas, the Chair of the University of Richmond's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Research Participants, at 001-804-484-1565 or at rjonas@richmond.edu.

CONSENT

The study has been described to me and I understand that my son or daughter's participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my child's participation in the project at any time without penalty.

I have read and understand the above information and I consent to let my child participate in this study by signing below.

Signature of Parent and Date

Witness (experimenter)