

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

Initial Contact Letter

My name is Priscilla Wilson. I am an African American graduate student at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. I am conducting a research study on African American men **WHO ARE OR HAVE BEEN IN THE PAST** on the DL, or African American men who sleep with men (MSM). The purposes of the study are:

1. To gain first-hand knowledge and information about the down low from the point-of-view of African American men.
2. To give African American men on the down low an opportunity to discuss and clarify the many factors (truth and fictitious) that surround the DL community.
3. To determine the positive and negative impact being on the Down Low has on African American men.
4. To examine African American men and women's attitudes about same-gender relationships and determine how these beliefs contribute to men being on the down low.

This study will give African American men a voice to discuss the everyday struggles they experience in an environment where your privacy will be safeguarded. Participants will be interviewed by phone on audiotape and will be asked to give a pseudonym to protect your privacy. There are limited avenues where men can talk about what they are going through. This study at a major university will discuss African American DL and MSM and how society, religion, family, and the pressures African American men encounter pertaining to their sexual identity to may contribute to living a double life.

If you are interested in the study, please click the link below where you will find a permission/informed consent form, which explains the study in further detail and gives you an opportunity to confirm or refuse to participate, along with other instructions. Participation in this study is voluntary. Thank you for your time.

Priscilla Wilson

Student, University of Alabama

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=gggcAIdYldC_2b084KZjBEQw_3d_3d

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B
Informed Consent Form

Title of Research Project: The Secret Life: African American Men Discuss Life on the Down-Low

Principal Investigator: Priscilla Wilson, doctoral student, Counselor Education, University of Alabama

Second Investigator: Dr. Karla Carmichael, Professor, Counselor Education, University of Alabama

Third Investigator, Dr. Heather Pleasants, Assistant Professor, Education Research, University of Alabama

I am conducting a dissertation research study about African American men (19 years of age or older) who have been in the past or are presently on the Down-Low (DL) or in a discreet same-gender relationship with another man. Since you are or have been a member of a "DL-related" group, you have been invited to participate in this study. The purpose of the study is:

1. To gain first-hand knowledge and information about the down low and MSM from the point-of-view of African American men.
2. To give African American men who are or have been on the down low a chance to discuss and CLARIFY the many factors (truth and fictitious) that surround the DL community.
3. To determine the positive and negative impact being on the Down Low has on African American men.
4. To examine African American men and women's attitudes about same-gender relationships and determine how the African American contributes to African American men being on the down low.

Participation in the study will involve three 90 minute, audiotaped telephone interviews. You must give your consent to participate in the research study. Upon your consent, you will:

1. Be contacted via phone to set up an interview time. To protect your privacy, please select a pseudonym by which you would like to be referred. Real-names will not be used in the study to protect your privacy.
2. Before each interview, you will be e-mailed a series of questions that will be used during the interviewing process. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions during the interview.

After each interview, you will be emailed an interview summary. In each follow-up phone conversation, you will have the opportunity to confirm the accuracy of the interview summary and schedule the next interview. The interview audiotape will be destroyed one year after the completion of the study. You may withdraw from the study at any time.

There are minimal risks in participating in this study. One risk is a breach of confidentiality. Your confidentiality is a priority during this study. For this reason, pseudonyms will be used and there will be no face-to-face contact between us. There may also be some discomfort in answering some of the questions, especially if you are struggling with being on the DL. You have the right to refuse to answer a question during the interview or to stop the interview.

The benefits of participating in this study include:

1. Providing insight about the down low topic that may help to dispel rumors about DL men.

2. Forging understanding and insight within the African American community about the DL phenomenon.
3. Having an impartial opportunity to talk about your concerns and opinions in a safe environment.

Contacts and Questions:

The researchers conducting this study are: Priscilla Wilson, a doctoral student in counselor education at the University of Alabama; Dr. Karla Carmichael, a counselor education professor at the University of Alabama; and Dr. Heather Pleasants, an assistant professor of education research at the University of Alabama.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me: Priscilla Wilson, Principal Investigator, at 205-348-7402 or by e-mailing me at scilla32@netzero.net. You may also contact Dr. Karla Carmichael, Second Investigator, at 205-348-7580, kcarmich@bamaed.ua.edu; or Dr. Heather Pleasants, Third Investigator, at 205-348-3282, hpleasan@bamaed.ua.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Ms. Tanta Myles, Research Compliance Office, at the University of Alabama at 205-348-5152 or by e-mailing her at cmyles@fa.ua.edu.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C
Interview Questions

First Interview- Focused Life History Questions (90 minutes)

Background Questions

Q.1. I would like for you to tell me about your background and childhood. Please describe your family composition (parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.) during your childhood and adolescence. Describe how your family interacted with each other.

Q.2. Tell me about these individuals' attitudes towards same-gender relationships when you were growing up:

- a. your parent(s) or guardians
- b. your siblings (if any)
- c. your grandparents (if any)
- d. your friends

Q.3. How did your family and friend's attitudes towards same-gender relationships influence your attitudes towards this group?

Q.4. At that time, did you share similar beliefs and attitudes? Tell me about your beliefs at that time.

High School/ Activities

Q.5. What groups and activities were you involved in growing up? This includes sports, civic, church, and gang activities.

Q.6. How did individuals in these groups view same-gender relationships?

Q.7. When you were in high school, was violence ever used as a way to bully and intimidate gay and lesbian students?

Q.8. How did the teachers and the administration (principal, guidance counselors, etc.) at your school assist gay and lesbian students?

Q.9. How did your experiences in school shape your attitudes towards same-gender relationships?

Q.10. What kind of intimate relationships have you maintained over the years? Girlfriends? Marriage partners? Presently married?

Church Experiences

Q.11. Pertaining to the church (if you attended), was the topic of same-gender relationships discussed?

Q.12. Tell me how the topic of same-gender relationships was addressed during sermons.

Q.13. Did sermons warn of retribution for being gay or lesbian? Tell me how the church shaped your belief system towards gays and lesbians.

Q.14. Do you believe that there is an ultimate penalty for being gay? Explain your answer.

Q.15. Did you know or have knowledge of anyone who was gay, lesbian, or bisexual in the church? What can you tell me about the way they were treated by other church members?

APPENDIX D

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Details Interview

Second Interview- Details Interview (90 minutes)

Down Low Concept and Experiences

Q.1. “Let’s begin with your definition of the term down low. What is your definition of the down low?”

Q.2. Are you presently or have you been on the down low? Tell me about your down low experiences.

Q.3. How did you come to know about the down low?

Q. 4. Are you currently living on the down low?

Q. 5. How long have you (or did you) lived on the down low?

Q.6. Do you know of other men on the down low? How have you been able to connect with other down low men?

Q.7. When did you first realize that you were attracted to men? What were your feelings about this attraction?

Q.8. What are your personal beliefs (secular or religious) about same-gender relationships?

The Psychological Toll on African American Men Who Are On the Down Low

Q.9. Have you ever had a struggled with your personal beliefs and your same-sex attraction? Discuss your answer.

Q.10. Have you experienced any emotional or psychological problems as a result of keeping this part of your life private (e.g., depression, stress, anxiety)?

Q.11. At any time in your life, were you able to discuss your feelings with a confidant (e.g., friend, relative, teacher, or counselor)?

Q.12. How have you been able to cope with your feelings about same-sex attraction?

The Option of Disclosure for Men on the Down Low

Q.13. Would there ever be a time when you would disclose your sexual identity with a close friend or member of your family?

Q. 14. If yes, whom would you disclose to? If no, what barriers make it difficult to disclose your sexual identity?

Q.15.How would it be different if you disclosed?

Q.16. Do you know of any down low men who disclosed their sexual identity to their friends or loved ones?

Q. 17. If yes, what positive and negative outcome(s) did they receive from family and friends?

Q.18. Does this disclosure encourage you to disclose (if they did- if not, skip question)? Explain.

APPENDIX E

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Reflection on the Meaning Interview

Third Interview- Reflection on the Meaning Interview (90 minutes)

Masculinity and African American men

Q.1. Tell me what it means to be an African American man in our society.

Q.2. What are the role(s) that African American men play in the home and community (i.e., define the roles that African American men play)?

Q.3. What does the term masculinity mean to you?

Q. 4. Tell me about the importance of masculinity to African American men and why is it important.

Q.5. Does being a gay, African American man make that person less masculine? Can a gay, African American man ever be masculine? Explain your answer.

The Down Low Identity Versus the Gay and Bisexual Identity

Q.6. What does it mean to be gay? What does it mean to be bisexual?

Q.7. What images come to mind when you think about the terms gay and bisexual?

Q.8. Tell me about the advantages or disadvantages of an African American man who identifies as being gay.

Q.9. How do you define your sexual identity?

Q.10. Is being on the down low the same as being gay or bisexual? Explain your answer.

The Role of Homophobia in the African American Community

Q.11. What is your response to the opinion that the African American community is more homophobic than the White community?

Q.12. What do you think is the greatest contributor to homophobia in the African American community?

HIV/AIDS and Down Low Men

Q.13. Discuss if HIV/AIDS was ever talked about in your home, school, or church? What was told to you about HIV/AIDS (and who talked to you about it)?

Q.14. Tell me how HIV/AIDS discussed in terms of preventative measures? Where did these discussions take place (at home, in church, among friends)?

Q.15. Do you use protection when you are intimate with another man? Tell me about your answer.

Q.16. There are articles from different magazines and reports from the CDC reporting that DL men are not protecting themselves from HIV/AIDS by using condoms; therefore putting other people at risk of infection. If you have read similar articles or reports, is there any credibility in their content?

Q. 17. How do these articles portray men on the down low?

Q. 18. I have asked you a lot of questions, but there maybe something that you would like for me and others to know that I have not asked you. Please take a moment and tell me anything that you feel that I need to include in my research to better educate others in working with men on the down low.

(Closing) I would like to thank you for taking part in this interview. The information you provided will assist me in conducting my research tremendously. Do you have any questions or concerns at this point? Please remember that you will be e-mailed a transcript summary of this interview for your review to make sure that the information you provided in this interview is an accurate representation of your experiences. You may contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Thanks again for your assistance.

APPENDIX F

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Institutional Review Board Approval for Pilot Study

Office for Research
Office of the Associate
Vice President for Research

June 21, 2006



Priscilla Gann Wilson
Counselor Education
College of Education

Re: IRB # 06-OR-142 "The Secret Life of Men on the Down Low (Pilot Study)"

Dear Ms. Wilson:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your protocol has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the assigned IRB application number. Please use reproductions of the IRB approved informed consent form to obtain consent from your participants.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



Carpantato T. Myles, MSM
Research Compliance Officer
The University of Alabama

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APPENDIX G

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Summary of Themes from Ace's Interview

Ace's Background

The pilot interview was conducted over the phone with an African American man who was on the DL between 6-7 years. "Ace" is 31 years of age and lives in a large Northeastern city in the United States. The purpose of the pilot study interview was for me to examine the real-life experience of an African American man who lived on the DL and the factors that led him to live a double life from a first-person point of view. Ace was asked open-ended questions to help facilitate descriptive answers and exploration into his experiences living a double life. Ace was first asked a series of questions pertaining to his definition of the DL and his description of the DL lifestyle. The questions shifted to his childhood experiences with family, friends, and the church, and how these experiences led him to living life on the DL. Ace was then asked a series of questions and gave commentary about (a) the importance of masculinity among African American men, (b) homophobia in the African American community, (c), how he believed living on the DL emotionally affected him, (d) how he felt about the gay and bisexual labels and why DL men shun these labels, (e) if he ever thought about disclosing his sexuality and had he witnessed other men disclosing their sexuality to their family and friends (and the results of such a disclosure), (f) HIV/AIDS in the African American community and his feelings about the allegations that DL men are a bridge to the increase of AIDS among African American women, (g) if he (or any of his friends) ever considered seeking counseling services, and (h) the current state of African American DL men.

Thematic Concepts

My analysis of Ace's interview by hand and with QSR NVIVO software generated codes with many of these codes overlapping. Several themes developed from the data analysis. These

emerging themes were (a) societal factors that encouraged African American men to live a DL lifestyle, (b) mental health problems of African American men on the DL, (c) the issue of disclosure among DL men, and (d) sexual identity construction of DL men.

The theme “Societal Factors that Encouraged African American Men to Live a DL lifestyle” included the categories (a) the importance of masculinity among African American men, (b) the media’s depictions of gay, African American men, (c) the role of the African American church on men living on the DL, and (d) the role of the African American family and community. In this excerpt, Ace explained the importance of the church in his community:

We were not a religious family, but everybody that I knew and everybody that I dealt with was of a religious background, so if everybody you know is Baptist, you might as well be one, too, even though we didn’t go to church that didn’t make a difference...but because of the way Black society is, we feel that we are pressured to be seen with women.

A second emerging theme of the pilot study was, “Mental health problems of African American men on the DL.” Categories in this theme included (a) depression, (b) anxiety/hypervigilance, (c) substance abuse, (d) hypersexual behavior, and (f) the DL man’s fear of rejection and yearning for acceptance among his family and community. In this excerpt, Ace described how he struggled with his feelings and experienced depression and suicidal ideation:

Oh yes. I had a struggle to the point where [pause] just like I was trying to find my faith in college...I contemplated suicide- well that pretty much says it all. I mean it’s like it was to the point that I would had days- I would have my really, bad days where I didn’t want to get out of bed, I had no appetite, I would give up all hope, lost interest in my hobbies.

A third theme that was produced from the coding analysis was, “The issue of disclosure” with categories including, (a) fear of disclosing sexuality, (b) rejection from family and friends, and (c) counseling as an option for DL men. In this excerpt, Ace discussed described being

cautious about disclosing to other people and how African American men handled their emotions:

But you have to deal with all the- and people want to be careful what they say around you and how they act around you. They want to act a certain way around you and that's very- it's like being put in a glass and being fed. Nobody wants that... A man should take care of his own. He shouldn't have to run to nobody for nothing if you're a man- that's what we're told.

A final theme of the pilot study was, "Sexual identity construction of DL men," which included the themes (a) the DL man's perceptions about the gay and bisexual label, (b) the perception about masculinity among African American men, (c) the role of the African American church on men living on the DL, (d) the role of the African American family and community, and (e) the DL man's rejection of the gay or bisexual label. In this excerpt, Ace gave his perceptions of what being gay meant to him.

I: As far as the terminology, what images come to your mind when you think of gay?
Ace: Gay in the general sense is a man who gets his eyebrows done, the manicure, the pedicure, Louis Vuitton messenger bag, which I don't understand why men are into that. The Louis Vuitton bag which looks like a pocketbook, you got those skintight jeans. You're overmatching. That's too much for me.

Summary

The results of this pilot study show that several factors in Ace's life helped to shape his belief system and his conceptualizations about (a) the roles of African American men in society and how masculinity is considered an asset in these roles, (b) the role the church has played in shaping his and his family's views about same-gender relationships, (c) the role the church played in influencing his concealment of his sexual identity, and (d) the toll of partaking in mutually exclusive relationships had on Ace's mental health. From an analysis of the transcript through NVIVO, I found that Ace's concepts of same-sex relationships stemmed from his father belief system, the church (mainly, sermons that condemned gays and lesbians), and from his

social network of other men who were on the DL. The data collection process, the analysis of the data, and the thematic construction of the data will assist me in revising my methodology for the main study.

The use of NVIVO helped me with the pilot study by allowing me to input data into a manageable, structured, and visual format. NVIVO allowed me to bracket passages of text from the transcript into nodes, which in turn were converted to relationships and models. While NVIVO facilitated me in analyzing the data, it is still my personal responsibility of to effectively examine and synthesize the data gathered in order to generate resulting outcomes from interviews, observations, notes, and other modes of collection.

APPENDIX H

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Pilot Study Profile

This [African American men on the DL] is an important issue that needs to be discussed- that's how I feel about it. The DL is exactly what it is, a double life because when you have men on the DL, you have guys who are in relationships with women and on the side, they have relationships with men because they are gay, but because of the way Black society is, we feel that we are pressured to be seen with women. Let a Black man go to college, get a degree, buy a home, have a career, and come home and tell the community he's gay. He's ostracized. It makes no sense, and we know that the worst thing for a Black man to be is to be gay because it seems that we are valued strictly on our masculinity or the identification of masculinity. So the worst thing you could be in the Black community is gay. I'm no longer on the DL- I've come to embrace my sexuality. I'm comfortable with it. I'm only out to my family- I'm not out at work.

[Family background and childhood] I have an older brother, and I have both my mother and my father. My father, he was a transit worker. He's a very distant...emotionally, he was very distant once I got older, but as a child when I was very young, on weekends, our parents would take turns with us and one weekend I would go shopping with my mother. The next weekend I was with my father. We would go to the museums. He would take me to the movies, and he liked to read a lot and I learned to read at a young age and we would always go to the library together. I had a really close- knit [family], nothing dramatic, but I didn't have an absentee father or anything like that, but it was just the immediate family

My father is- he's never been comfortable with that [the GLBT community]. He's very much, you know, a man is suppose to be with a woman. When I was young and what I think he fostered my being in the closet was during the outbreak of AIDS. I was a teenager at the time of the AIDS [received media attention], when AIDS came out, my father was one of the first people who said, "You know what, that's what them faggots get." That sticks in your head. My mother was always like, "You know what? You make yourself happy. You can't live for other people," and she's the type of person, she'll accept anything because my mother made a statement one time when we were watching a special on TV once, and a woman put her child out because he was gay and my mother was like, "I could never put my children out for nothing like that." She said regardless of what the Bible says, "You're still my child;" and my mother was like- any book that would tell you to throw your children in the street is not a book you should follow. So my mother, she doesn't let other people create opinions for her, whereas my father being the macho, military, man's man type of person, the last thing that he ever wanted was a sissy for a son. Dad's pretty much molded- as a young child, I hated sports. I loved dancing and things like that, and he couldn't talk about me being in the little-league and stuff like that. I kept basically to myself, and it created a way of covering so many things, and being on the DL is another form of it.

When you're dealing with men...men are really cruel. Women, you think you're shady towards each other- no. You ought to see how men are with other men, and it's a discomfoting thing that when you're with a group of friends who know you, and they suspect or know that you have intimate feelings towards men- the discomfort that they feel around you. Nothing is the same, and guys don't want to lose that [masculinity].

I remember one time, because I'm short for my size and when I was younger, I was really pretty- that totally disappeared when I got older when I could use it; but anyway, I was really pretty and I use to be the one, you know, "Make sure you don't grow up to be no faggot because you're kind of pretty." I have long lashes and things like that and I had really big eyes as a little kid, and in some of my pictures, I could pass for a little girl or whatever, and they said to my father, "You know, you need to get him in sports because you don't want him to grow up being no faggot," and I would hear that- you're saying that right in front of me and I would hear that, so what would that do to the psyche of a person? And when I did have these feelings, I was like, "Oh God, that's not what I want to be," and personally for me, when I did the DL, I had a girlfriend because it was expected of me; and I had the girlfriend so I could parade her in front of my mom and dad; and I had the girlfriend in front of my friends and I made the derogatory remarks about women. I even went so far as to when I moved out, I had *Playboy* sitting on my coffee table. Never read it. If my friends didn't come over and sift through it, it would be stuck to the table. Never touched it, but it was all- because people don't understand that the DL is a mental thing, but at the same time it's all about acceptance

[High school and college incidents of harassment and gay bashing] We had a kid [in high school]- he was so out there. He was so out there that he campaigned for "Switch Day" which was a day when guys dressed like girls and the girls dressed like guys, and the principle agreed to it, but halfway through the day, it was suspended because he came to school in 4-inch heels [and] a mink coat. He had on a gown- he really went there, and they beat the hell out of him on the senior trip. We had a field trip at a park, and that's where they beat him up and it was pulled for the fact that supposedly he had got caught with somebody at school and somebody saw something or whatever, and they beat him unmercilessly...that scared the hell out of me, too; and also you have to take into account that I went to a Black college. I don't think I have to spell out that type of environment. I witnessed incidences in dormitories where the students lived in the dorm- I lived in a dorm for 1 year-who were suspected of being gay. They would come and they would put like dog feces on the door. They would wait until you get into the shower and they would turn the lights out. One time, they went on the shower and the guy was in the shower, they turned the lights out and beat him with a stick, and the school really didn't do anything because the school was like, "Well you know, we don't know what happened." Looking back at it, I see how I felt like, "You know what, I had nowhere to turn." So the best thing for me to do was keep the façade going and just keep your mouth closed- that's the best you could do.

That was a big controversy [openly gay counselor in high school], but if there was ever an issue, you were always referred to him, but for the most part, it didn't help the students who were gay because there were a lot of students who were not gay. We had some guys- they were just effeminate men. They were not gay, though. They had effeminate ways and they would be harassed and beat up in the halls and they would go to and tell the principle. "You know, okay. We'll look into it." Nothing ever came of that. You had female students who were kind of butch and they were harassed and, "We'll look into it." Nothing was ever done, and I always saw that. It was like, you know is it really worth...is being honest really worth all that heartache? And at one point I think no, it's not; and then after a while, you realize that it is, but then that's a different day with different people.

[Going to church] Okay, this is the way my mother raised us. My mother was not a religious person. My mother had issues with religion because she had a hard time with losing her mother at a really young age. So her whole thing and my father, he... I don't even know how to explain this, but anyway, we had to go to Sunday school until we were about 16. Once my mother felt that we knew enough about the Bible, you know, she asked us, "Do you want to go to church or not?" I said, "No." She said, "Fine," but she made sure I went to Sunday school from kindergarten through 8th grade. Once I graduated 8th going to high school, if I didn't want to church, I didn't go to church. My brother, he went to church. He pursued that, but we never went to church as a family and I only went to church by way of Sunday school. I never went to service. I'd go to Sunday school and when the service started, I'd come home. My mother made sure that we had a firm understanding and from there, she wanted us to make our own decisions.

Once [in Sunday school], some student asked a question about that [being gay], and the Sunday school teacher- I remember this word for word- she asked the teacher...the girl was like, "What is it to be gay?" So the teacher stopped the class, he left the class and came back with the minister. The minister sat down with us and he was like, "Well, there are people... God created Adam and Eve, but some people prefer to share a special relationship with a man or a woman." They were trying to sugarcoat it because we were young. So the girl asked, "Is that why we have AIDS?" and I lie to you not, his exact words to a *group of kids* was, "AIDS is God's way of dealing with those who do not listen to his word." I have to had been no more than 9 or 10 at the time, and that stuck with me. That didn't really bother me because I didn't know I was; but believe me, once I hit 15, all of that came back to me and I went through a time when I was really, really depressed and my parents didn't know what was wrong with me, and I didn't feel I could tell anybody. So I just dealt with it myself. How I dealt with it is that I got a girlfriend and I had made friends because I would always go to the [omit] all the time and I had male friends who had girlfriends and we would do our thing on the side. It was understood.

I'm not comfortable in church. I don't like these gay churches. I don't feel I should have to go to a gay church. Why can I just go to church? Because I have to go to gay church, I will not go to church. It's not so much the sermon, but it's the minister. The people in the [Black] church aren't like that. They'll sit there nodding their heads and act like they're [agreeing], but they're not. It's not like I go to church holding my man's hand and I walk around with a rainbow flag on my back, that's not the point. Knowing that I'm not wanted, I'm not going to go there. That's one thing I noticed about this lifestyle. All the homophobia and everything- it comes from the church. It's a fertile environment for a man to be on the DL. Because where do Black people turn? We turn to the church, but because of the church and society, you're told if you're gay, then you're not a man, so there's nothing you can contribute. All you can be is comic relief.

[The current DL community] is a very close-knit, really quiet community; and what happened was I had become good friends with an older gentleman. He was maybe 17 and I was 15, and we became sexually involved, and he was always the one that's saying, he was always would be like, "Don't do like you see on TV. That's not how what you are. We're not gay. This is just sex. What we do, we can't do with girls, yada, yada, yada." So through that I said okay. So that was

phase one. Phase two was when I started hanging out where gay people hang out, and I found that men on the DL, these were the guys who only came to the clubs late at night. They didn't really associated with the effeminate [men], and they were never considered gay, they were only, "This is my friend," and you would meet that way and you would talk and you would give off a vibe and you pretty much knew where he was coming from. It's a very small, quiet, close-knit community and now with the Internet, it's totally different. There were certain bars that you would go to- that type of thing. I only associated with a certain group of people. When you go into gay bars and stuff, you will see men hanging together, and when you hang with that group, it's assumed that you're living a straight lifestyle, which a lot of people who are gay do live straight lifestyles either it be at work or it's at home through a relationship. So you end up becoming friends with a lot of married men, then when your friend's a married man, it's a code. Your girlfriends know each other, and you set up the atmosphere, "Oh, it's just the guys, we're all going away, we're going fishing," or, "We're just going bowling," or, "It's just a guy's night out. We're just going to the club." The girls don't know where we're going.

[Emotional struggle] I contemplated suicide- well that pretty much says it all. I mean it's like it was to the point that I would have days- I would have my really bad days where I didn't want to get out of bed, I had no appetite, I would give up all hope, lost interest in my hobbies. That is an extreme part because you have to think of all the things that compile. Some days I had to think about the AIDS that was on my mind. I had to think about even if my mother didn't mind it, my father [would] be ashamed. So okay, me coming out with this is going to tear the family apart. And there would be all of this grief because of me. God knows if my father would let me stay in the house. So you have all of that and it's like I'm miserable.

[Coping mechanisms-drug use] Well let's see, how did I cope because I didn't get into it really full-swing until college. I smoked weed, I built up a tolerance for alcohol, because when I graduated high school, I couldn't stand that taste of any type of alcohol. By the time I got through my junior year [of college], I could drink a man into the ground. It was days like that, and avoidance behavior I guess it's called because I had my friends and we would go out. I would just go out and stay all night, just hang out and getting involved in trouble and things like that. Yes, I coped using alcohol and smoking weed and things like that. I never did coke or heroin, nothing like that. Nothing that harsh.

[Coping mechanism- hypersexuality] Yes of course I used women as covers, because I use to use those covers several different ways. I was able to use that [physical appearance] because girls were always drawn to me. Even if I didn't have a girlfriend, I always kept a lot of women around me and it always was, "Okay, there goes A, he's a Mack." I was always around girls. I made sure I knew all the girls, and I built up this false image of me because a lot of girls who knew me and they got this "male, chauvinistic pig." I use to always make passes at girls, squeeze them here, touch them there. I was known [as], "Stay away from him 'cause he's going to touch you. He's a freak- all he wants to do is get his hands all over a women," which wasn't necessarily the case. I created that [image] in high school, too. Because like some people in high school, if they were to see me now, they wouldn't believe it. You couldn't tell them that I was in a male relationship- they wouldn't believe it because I made a point of running around...I got in trouble for pinching

girls all the time. That's what I was known for. When I graduated high school, they were glad to get rid of me. I was voted in my year book, "Most Likely to Cheat on My Wife." That's how much of an act I put on to hide what I was doing on the side. That's how bad it got because it got so bad that even my family knew of my reputation. My father pulled me aside and he was like, "I know you love the ladies and everything, but you need to respect the ladies. You don't see me doing that to your mother," and I was thinking, "Lord, if you only knew."

[About counseling] That's something else that's wrong with this lifestyle, is you don't want to show weakness because that makes you look like, for lack of a better word, a faggot. So nobody could see...how are you going to explain you're going to see a counselor? What the hell are you going to see a counselor for? Because if you have a girlfriend and she knows you're going to see a counselor, then she's going to want to see the counselor with you, and you can't do that because it's not that about *you*, it's about me, and what it's about I don't want to share with you. That's the reason you're going to the counselor. And you also have to take into account that it's only been until recent times now that they've come up with this tag for that type of a lifestyle, and psychology didn't take any studies into the effects and behaviors of men who live that lifestyle, so going to see a counselor, they're just going to tell, "You know, you're going to have to come to terms," and you're going to have to do this and that. Now you just can't, "Okay, I'm going to go home and tell my girlfriend, 'you know what? I don't want to be with you anymore,' or, 'I'm pissed.'" Sometimes, the guys are married and have families who really dug a deep hole. Even if you're not married, you're always in a deep hole because I had a girlfriend. I was close to her family [and] her family was close to my family. How do I destroy that? So you know what? This is all a lie. It's not that simple. So, seeing a counselor never really crossed my mind, and the group of friends who I dealt with, and it's funny because we were all in relationships. Some were married. Some were just had girlfriends, and whatever we discussed, we really never discussed being upset with each other. Everybody had their one person they could confide in, but we never discussed going to see a counselor or anything like that.

A man is suppose to be strong. If you run into somebody, crying on their shoulder, that's shows lack of manhood. You're not a man. A man should be able to handle that. A man should take care of his own. He shouldn't have to run to nobody for nothing if you're a man- that's what we're told. Now as far as women are concerned, Black women- you're told you have a network of friends and cousins and women you work with and women's groups and stuff like that. Counseling is basically seen as a White thing. We don't have-like in White families, you have histories of counselors. Some families have a family counselor who knows everything about their family. You don't have that in the Black community. You know who the family counselor in the Black community is? The minister. That's not always a good thing. Just because you're a minister doesn't mean you can counsel anybody. And in the Black community, the Black churches are the begin all and end all. We don't do counseling and counseling is never considered an option.

[What does 'gay' mean to you] This is why even though I'm in a relationship with a man, I do consider myself to be gay, but gay in the general sense is a man who gets his eyebrows done, the manicure, the pedicure, Louis Vuitton messenger bag, which I don't understand why men are into that. The Louis Vuitton bag which looks like a pocketbook, you got those skintight jeans. You're overmatching. That's too much for me. Sunglasses at night and all that craziness. And

you know their hair's got to be this way and dyed and highlighted. That's what I see when you think-because usually the men that I deal with, they may be gay, but you would never know it, so we don't never use that term. We don't really have a name, so we just deal with guys.

I disagree with that [the notion of gay being White] because I know that crap is coming from bull shit- the reason why I believe that those terms are always associated with White people is when you ever seen anything on TV that's gay, it's always White, with the exception of that TV series *Noah's Ark*, which came on last year that nobody saw. And when you look at gay films, they're always White. The one gay series that everybody know is *Queer As Folk*- they all are White. So whenever you hear the terms gay, queer, bisexual, all you ever see is White. That's why Black people don't use the term, but I disagree. I don't think the term has anything to do with race.

[How important is masculinity to African American men] Well the importance of masculinity in African American men is very important. A man is valued- we are not valued on our accomplishments, we're valued on what you can see. We're valued on the fact that you have money, the fact that can buy certain types of clothes, a certain car. Masculinity is a big part because the first thing that comes out of somebody's mouth if a guy shows any type of softness, it's automatically assumed he's weak, he's a faggot, he's a this, he's that. Men don't want to be seen as weak and also, you have to also understand that within the Black- within the world of Black men, we have so many issues. You got the issue of *size* and the issue of wealth and this and that. The last thing you want to be seen as is weak because you're totally discounted as a man within your own brotherhood if you don't have those masculine attributes. Now very few effeminate men are respected- that's only because they beat the hell out of somebody.

Like we had a student in college. One time, and two football players tried to get on him, he beat the hell out of both of them, and he was as feminine as they come and nobody had a damn thing to say to him after that. First of all, he was 6' something and beat them boys unmercilessly, but see everybody can't do that, and guys are so threatened by that, they will put you to that test. So you rather cover rather than have to fight it out. Even [Black] women, when you notice a guy, "Oh he buys stuff from the Body Shop. What's up with that? He's always smelling like peaches." Yes, that's reason to be suspect for at least a minute, but masculinity is the one thing that though they are punks because they're living off their mother and they're damn near 50 years old, but because they don't swish around, they use the hip-hop lingo, and they got that swagger when they walk- oh, they're masculine, so they're still called men.

If a [openly] gay Black man is masculine, nobody's going to identify him as gay- he's going to be called everything but. He'll be called a freak or whatever, but he will not be considered gay. To be gay, you have to act like RuPaul. Okay, men who are gay who don't act gay are never called gay. If you can name one [well-known, masculine, openly gay Black man] I'll find one, but there's none out there. You have Billy Porter, you have RuPaul and people like that- they're obvious. I don't know no one who is in the public eye who is gay. It's not that I'm saying it's a bad thing, but it's not like he's- let's just say if L.L. Cool J. or someone like that was gay, that would be something different.

[Homophobia in the African American community] The Black community is more homophobic than the White community because if you go to the super-churches down in the South in Alabama and Mississippi, every other Sunday- yall got those ministers up in there, and the first thing they're saying [is] faggot this and faggot that, when half the choir have sex with each other, and I'm not talking about the female members. It's like one thing with Black folks I've notice, you'll put somebody out of the house, the whole church- you can be a member of the church for however many years and your parents can be members for however many years- the church will turn its back on you. Black people seem to be so uncomfortable with [gay] Black men, and I think that comes from the fact that with all the absentee fathers and all that other stuff. The Black community, yes, it's way more homophobic because, you'll beat up people- they'll beat up gays in neighborhoods and nobody will say anything . It's like we-I don't know. I strongly believe the Black community is way more homophobic that the White community.

I still think that the homophobia towards gay, Black men is as strong as ever, and plus you to take into account the Black church, especially the mega-churches of the South, they've been attacking gays something terrible lately. You had a guy in D.C. not too long ago in the middle of his sermon, he told all real men to come to the alter and not the gays in the church. He said, "None of the faggots in the church need to come to the alter." Now what is that?

[Discussions about HIV/AIDS] I came during a time when you couldn't talk about that [HIV/AIDS] in school, my dad never talked about it. Not to me anyway. I found out about it through other friends. Black people with AIDS weren't visible in the media- that didn't mean that they didn't exist, but there was a belief, because I remember I use to get with guys and I would get a condom, "What's the condom for, you can't get pregnant," and I'm like, "No, you can't get pregnant, but if that's the case then we can't do nothing." That's the reason why I'm able to sit here and talk to you about it. Because AIDS scared the hell out of me and I always use condoms- you see, condoms in the DL community is this. In the DL community, women are for love, men are for sex. Men don't like to get involved with gay men because gay men want boyfriends, whereas on the DL, you just want somebody to get off with because a lot of DL men are casual friends. "You'll call me when you girlfriend's not here. Can you get away from your girl tonight? Yo, I ain't had none of that in a while." So, you don't buy condoms because for you to buy condoms would be like you're preparing to go out and do this. The whole conception of the DL is, "It just happens." Even though it's planned, even though you know you and him are going to meet at this certain time to do such and such, you never really say, "I'm going to go have sex. Let me get some condoms." That's why HIV is so prevalent in the lifestyle because [for] these guys to buy a condom would be admitting that you're about the pursue the act, when they like to act as if it's just something that just happens.

Media reports about DL men vilify the Black man because they make it seem like DL Black men are running around purposely having sex with unprotected men and prowling on women and are looking for women to infect- that's not the case. Now, I'm not going to justify what men on the DL are doing, but men on the DL do not make a conscious effort to go out and buy condoms. That's not an excuse, I'm just saying that's what it is.

I think things have gotten better with women now because of [African American authors] E. Lynn Harris, J.L. King, and Keith Boykins- I think women now are like, “Okay you know what? I’m not even married to you.” If you’re not married, there’s no reason for you *not* to use a condom. Or if you suspect that your man is doing something, women are now calling their men on it. And women are getting better at, “Okay let’s look at his response. Why are you responding that way? What’s that all about? Apparently you’re hiding something.” I think women...and also women are starting to see the signs. Because I’ve seen many a married woman walking all up and down the gay community looking for their boyfriends. And it’s not that easy for them [DL men] to meet guys now.

[How would life be different if he disclosed his sexual identity] Well, first I would have to keep repeating it over and over because my friends who do know, they had a hard time with it because I’m not your typical Black gay man. I don’t drink wine. I don’t drink mixed drinks. I only drink beer. I like football. I don’t watch *Steel Magnolias* and *Waiting to Exhale*. I watch *manly* movies, and they can’t adapt to that. If you tell somebody you’re gay, the first thing they think you’d do is burst out in (the) *Mahogany* song and put a poster of Diana Ross- I love Diana Ross. I grew up with that, but no, that’s not me. Guys I found are very uncomfortable with gay men who are too much like them. They need an identifier. They need to see something on me that’s going to let them know that, “Okay, we know he’s gay because of this,” and I don’t have one. I don’t have a switch. I only refer to girls as girls, not guys. I don’t have effeminate friends. I don’t engage in a lot of a lot of stereotypical homosexual activity. I don’t do gay pride. I don’t have rainbow flags all over the place. I don’t make a point of professing it all of the time. And with the guys, I’m just myself. I drink beer. I don’t do gay clubs-I cannot stand gay clubs and gay bars- I’ve outgrown that a while ago. I hang out in straight bars. I meet more guys in straight bars than I do anywhere else, but that’s another question. People need an identifier and that’s annoying, and people always want to ask you these stupid, asinine questions and then you have guys are uncomfortable around you. You have to deal with all the- and people want to be careful what they say around you and how they act around you. They want to act a certain way around you and that’s very- it’s like being put in a glass- nobody wants that.

[Friends who have disclosed and the consequences] I have one friend, very religious background. He came out, lived with his grandmother, complete total mayhem. His church gave him grief. He wasn’t aloud to come to church. He had to go to counseling sessions with his minister. When that wasn’t going nowhere, they sent him to Exodus, I’m quite sure you heard of them [reparative/conversion therapy], and that fell horribly. He became totally depressed, [and] ended up coming out. He really got into the lifestyle after that, and it was so bad because at one point, he was *passing*, and when I say passing, I mean it in the same sense as you know how light-skinned Black people could pass back in the day. Passing is what I do because I can walk up and down the street and you would never assume I’m gay. So that’s passing. He was passing prior to all that drama, and he hit it so badly when he came out, he developed feminine qualities- I don’t even know where that came from. That even made me uncomfortable. That was one situation.

I had another situation when I live in [at college] and I made friends with some kids who were freshmen. I had an off-campus apartment. One of the students came out to his mother during the school year and when the school year was over, he called his mother to let her know what day class was over so she could come pick him up, and she said, “I have no reason to pick you up

because you don't live in my house anymore." So he had to move in with me. That didn't work out because I wasn't looking to be a parent. I couldn't take care of him and he had too many issues with his mother rejecting him and everything. He ended up dropping out of school, and to this day, I hear from him off and on because his mother was a minister and he has nothing to do with his mother. He never finished school. Last time I heard, he was working at a gay bar somewhere. I had another situation where a friend of mine came out to his parents- these are all Black [people] mind you, and his father beat him so bad. My mother called me [at college] and she's like, "When are you going to go see your friend?" I'm like, "What are you talking about?" She said, "He's in the hospital. He's not that far from you." I went to the hospital- my friend was in a coma. His father was arrested because his father tried to kill him, and his father was a deacon. That's why my faith in the church is so...because I have found that the most brutal behavior, the most homophobic behavior comes from people in the church. That's why you have so many men in the lifestyle. We don't go to church.

You may not want to disclose, but it's your responsibility to be protective. I think both with the men and the women you should use condoms. Because honestly, this whole DL thing is nothing new. White men have been doing it for years. The only thing is that White men have money and can afford to do it and not get caught, whereas Black folks ain't got no money, and brothers are getting caught and brothers are being sloppy about it. Because one thing I noticed about Black men- when you see these PSA's, "Gay men need to use protection," we don't think that's directed towards us. We think that's for gay, White men. And that's not the case. Yes, I do think there's a responsibility. I do think that if you are engaging in unprotected behavior, you need to let her [your partner] know what's going on because it's unfair to her. But you have to take into account that the DL lifestyle is also a product of selfishness. A guy who is going to do it- he's selfish. He doesn't care about no one but himself. They're usually men who are living off of the girlfriend, and they run around screwing men. So responsibility is not one of the top things in their character. I look at it that way.

Now, after years on the down low, I consider myself to be...I'm gay, but I'm not open, meaning that very few people know. It's on a need-to-know basis. There's not too many people I feel need to know. So in other words I'm covert. I'm not overt, but I don't date women anymore, I date men exclusively. I don't participate in gay pride events or anything like that. So it's like being a non-practicing Catholic or something. You do the do, but you don't do the ceremonies that go with it. I don't go to gay pride or nothing like that. That doesn't really interest me.

APPENDIX I

APPENDIX I

Introduction Script

(Introduction)

“Hello. My name is Priscilla Wilson. I would like to thank you for consenting to take part in this research study. I will be interviewing you about issues pertaining to men on the down low. You have been sent the questions that I will ask during the interview and you have been given the opportunity to mark out questions you prefer not to answer. I would like to remind you that you may refuse to answer any questions. You may stop the interview at any time without penalty. I would also like to remind you that you are being audiotaped and a transcription summary of the interview will be sent to you for your review. Do you have any questions or concerns before we start the interview?”

APPENDIX J

APPENDIX J

Termination Letter

Hello. My name is Priscilla Wilson. I would like to thank you for consenting to take part in this research study. I have attempted to contact you by phone and by email. Because I have not been successful at contacting you, I will select other participants to be in the study. I thank you for your interest and for your time.

APPENDIX K

APPENDIX K

Theoretical Frameworks of Phenomenology and Critical Race Theory

| Theoretical Framework | Source of Data | Orientation of Data | Role of Researcher | Underlying Philosophy |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Phenomenology | Narrative through interviews | The essence of the individual's experience; the worldview of the individual being researched. | Receiver of new knowledge; conveying the stories of others to the reader. | Objectivist- the researcher is oriented to the object and wants to show, describe, and interpret the object while remaining true to it. |
| | | | | Subjectivist- One needs to be open, insightful, and discerning to describe the object in its full richness and greatest depth. |
| Critical Race Theory | Narratives through interviews | Stories and counterstories; researcher responsible for conveying the subjective experience of the participants. | Receiver of new knowledge; conveying the stories of others to the reader; advocating the voice of color through counter-storytelling. | Objectivist- the researcher is aware that racism is endemic in American life and culture; CRT is more subjectivist than objectivist in scope. |
| | | | | Subjectivist- through the telling of counterstories, researchers have the opportunity to enter in and portray the lives of people whose stories are not part of the main discourse. |

APPENDIX L

APPENDIX L

Timeframe for Interviews and Data Collection- January 2008

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| | | 1 | 2 First Interview | 3 Begin transcriptio n of interview | 4 Participant receives summary | 5 Phone call from me to see if summary is accurate |
| 6 | 7 Second interview | 8 Begin transcriptio n of interview | 9 Participant receives summary | 10 Phone call from me to see if summary is accurate | 11 | 12 Third interview |
| 13 Begin transcriptio n of interview | 14 Participant receives summary | 15 Phone call from me to see if summary is accurate. Evaluate the 1 st round of interviews | 16 | 17 First Interview | 18 Begin transcriptio n of interview | 19 Participan t receives summary |
| 20 Phone call from me to see if summary is accurate | 21 | 22 Second interview | 23 Begin transcriptio n of interview | 24 Participant receives summary | 25 Phone call from me to see if summary is accurate | 26 |
| 27 Third Interview | 28 Begin transcriptio n of interview | 29 Participant receives summary | 30 Phone call from me to see if summary is accurate. Evaluate the 2 nd round of interviews | 31 | | |

APPENDIX M

APPENDIX M

Timeframe for Interviews and Data Collection- February 2008

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|---|--|--|---|--|--|
| | | | | | 1 First Interview | 2 Begin transcription of interview |
| 3 Participant receives summary | 4 Phone call from me to see if summary is accurate | 5 | 6 Second Interview | 7 Begin transcription of interview | 8 Participant receives summary | 9 Phone call from me to see if summary is accurate |
| 10 Begin transcription of interview | 11 Third Interview | 12 Begin transcription of interview | 13 Participant receives summary | 14 Phone call from me to see if summary is accurate | 15 First Interview | 16 Begin transcription of interview |
| 17 Phone call from me to see if summary is accurate | 18 | 19 | 20 Second interview | 21 Begin transcription of interview | 22 Participant receives summary | 23 Phone call from me to see if summary is accurate |
| 24 | 25 Third Interview | 26 Begin transcription of interview | 26 Participant receives summary | 27 Phone call from me to see if summary is accurate. | 28 | |

APPENDIX N

APPENDIX N

Nodes and Subnodes Used in the Study

| Nodes | Subnodes | References | Created | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|--|
| Coming out or Disclosure | Coming out of disclosure | 1 | 2008-2-14 10:57 AM | |
| | How life could be different | 5 | 2008-2-26 2:27 PM | |
| | How life is different | 2 | 2008-2-26 2:25 PM | |
| | Out to self | 5 | 2008-2-14 10:59 AM | |
| | Other people coming out | 1 | 2008-2-14 12:29 PM | |
| | How it influenced participants | 5 | | |
| | Negative Experiences | 4 | | |
| | Positive Experiences | 4 | | |
| | Out to others | 3 | 2008-2-14 10:59 AM | |
| | Coming out to family | 9 | | |
| | Friends | 4 | | |
| | Professional | 2 | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Family and friends Influence | Family and friends influence | 10 | 2008-2-14 11:11 AM | |
| | | | | |
| | Father's Influence | 1 | 2008-2-18 2:40 PM | |
| | Mother's influence | 1 | 2008-2-28 10:40 AM | |
| | Negative Experiences | 9 | 2008-2-14 3:09 PM | |
| | Tolerance | 1 | 2008-2-28 10:58 AM | |
| | Family Belief System | 11 | 2008-2-14 11:29 AM | |
| | Family Composition | 9 | 2008-2-6 11:40 AM | |
| | family discussions | 4 | 2008-2-6 11:32 AM | |
| | No discussions | 3 | 2008-2-6 11:33 AM | |
| | Family interaction | 8 | 2008-2-14 11:29 AM | |
| Masculinity | Masculinity | 14 | 2008-2-14 12:41 PM | |
| | Definition of an African American Man | 4 | 2008-2-14 12:38 PM | |
| | History | 9 | 2008-2-14 12:43 PM | |
| | Importance | 5 | 2008-2-14 12:42 PM | |
| | Being less than or | 3 | | |

APPENDIX O

APPENDIX O Profile of Daniel

Focused Life History

[Family background] I grew up in a two-parent household. I have two sisters. I'm in the middle. Both parents were in the household. Both parents worked. I was really close to my mom. I don't know why. Could be for about the first 6 or 7 years, she was a stay-at home mom. We were just always close. I wasn't very close to my dad. They actually say that when I was a baby, I scratched him on his nose. A lot (laughed). Even then, it wasn't until I got older that I realized how much impact he had on my life, in terms of being my own and standing up for something and standing for something. He had a lot to do with that. My sense of family. That's my dad. I have a lot of friends who didn't grow up with their fathers, and I can see the difference between me and them. The way- I prefer things around house and my sense of order- I think a lot of that comes from having a father in the house. And my friends who didn't have fathers in their house, they're not- you can tell that's missing. You can definitely tell.

[Other family members involved in Daniel's early life] Probably more so than anybody was my Aunt L, my mom's sister. She and her children, they were- I think she was a second mother to me. When my mother wasn't able to discipline me, my Aunt L did. I can remember falling down and my Aunt L took care of me. Made sure that my knees were bandaged up and things. She was hands-on with all of us. She was really close to my mom and she was a stay at home mom as well. And for that reason, they were always together so it was like we were a big family. They were always at the house and her kids were always with us.

[Family activities] We ate dinner together. That was about it. My parents weren't active in the church or any social activities. They came home and they took care of the kids.

[Family beliefs about same-sex relationships] I don't ever remember that being discussed. I don't remember anybody ever talking about that.

[First time hearing about gays and lesbians] It wasn't very positive. It was like going to school and everybody was being call- dudes who were a little soft, they called them sissies or fags- it wasn't anything clearly defined as being this is wrong or anything like that. It was in school and playing in the neighborhood.

[Activities with friends] The normal stuff. We rode bikes and played in the woods and played football, even though I didn't like to, I did with them (laughs). We would do a lot of running and hide and go seek and things like that.

[Activities in school] When I was in high school I was in the band and I was in student government and things like.

[Experiences in school] Actually, a lot of times depending on who it was and which day of the week it was, they were coming after me. I can remember 5th or 6th grade, that was the cool thing was to call Daniel "gay" (laughs) and I guess I don't know if I was a little mature for my age, or a little more aware because I remember saying, "Do you really think I want to have sex with

another man?" (Laughs) Why did you say that? I didn't understand why. I think they thought I was a little feminine. That I was a little soft. I didn't want to play any football and I wasn't like an organized sports kid at all. I was a geek. I was nice (laugh). A lot of my friends were girls. I remember hearing about someone in the 7th grade being pushed around, and I think this kid was actually out. I remember the rumor was that they had pushed him down the hall and up against the lockers and roughed him up some. I didn't understand it. It definitely wasn't good for my self esteem because I remember in the 8th grade walking with my head down. It definitely wasn't good for my self-esteem. I remember at one point I was thinking about committing suicide, but I think more than anything else I was always sexually puzzled because one day when they were talking about me, they would say I liked this particular girl. We were really close friends and they were saying I liked her, and then maybe 2 days later it would be Daniel is gay. I could never understand. I was like, "Okay make up your mind." I didn't understand that, and actually for a long time, and I think even now I don't like the word gay because it just sound like- it sound kind of soft to me. It sounds like a euphemism. It sound like you really want to call me faggot, but you really don't want me to get upset.

[Suicidal thoughts and attempt] I guess it was a failed or weak attempt to commit suicide because it like the last day of 7th grade and I reached under the sink and got some cleaner and I was going to drink it. Well actually I did drink it and I don't know if I thought I was going to die or not because it was just like-it wasn't ammonia or bleach. It was like an all-purpose cleaner. And I remember drinking a big glass of it and going to school. I don't think I thought about what was going to happen to me. I don't think I clearly thought I was going to die. I think more than anything else that (laughs). I think I was being dramatic. Even though nobody knew. I don't think I was really serious about it, especially since I don't like pain, and I don't like to throw up and there was no way I was going to slit my wrist because I just don't like to hurt that much. So I think I was being dramatic.

[How Daniel got through these experiences] I think my mom had a lot to do with that. Yes, they

[Daniel's parents] knew. My mom and my dad knew that I was teased. I don't think they knew exactly what the kids were saying about me, but I know they knew I was being- my dad knew very much because I remember the first day at school 7th grade, he was hoping I had a good day at school because he was planning on- the kids were talking about me. If I had come and I said I didn't have a good day he said he was going to go find them. He was tired of them picking on me and I wasn't a fighter for some reason. I was- it takes a lot for me to get angry enough to fight, and I never fought those kids. [I asked Daniel did teachers and school administrators intervene] Oh no. I don't even think they knew that I was picked on.

[Intimate relationships over the years] I had 3 relationships. I had 2 girlfriends and I had a boyfriend and we have been together for 6 and a half years so far.

[Church attendance and denomination] Yes. We [my family] were A and E Methodist [African and Episcopal Methodist].

[The topic of same sex relationships in sermons] I don't think that was ever brought up in the church. Although I do remember going to church with my Aunt L when I was older. It was like

20-21 years old and I was going back to school that evening and she wanted the pastor and some of the church members to pray over me. So after church and we're at the altar they're praying and speaking in tongues and aunt L blurted out, "Please take these homosexual feeling away from Daniel," and I was like what? Oh my gosh. How do you know, and why don't I know because at that time I didn't know. I wasn't thinking about that and she evidently knew something, and always knew something because she would drop little hints and ask little questions and I always thought I needed to defend myself. But I guess she knew before I did. I remember being shocked. I wasn't angry with her (laughs). I was just shocked like- I remember praying and I was sitting up like "what are you talking about? What a second." I didn't talk to her about that afterwards.

[Daniel's personal belief system about gays and lesbians when he was growing up] I never remembered thinking about gays and lesbians. I didn't want to be- when I got older, I didn't like the word gay, but I don't remember thinking one way or the other. I wasn't really exposed to that.

Details Interview

[Daniel's definition of the DL] Well I know what the media says, and I think I came up with something different because I don't agree with that. I tend to think of anybody not being honest about what they're doing and with whom they're doing it. Anybody who's having sex with multiple partners and their partners don't know. I know that the working definition is straight identified Black men who are usually married or have girlfriends who sleep with other men. [Origins of his definition] I was one of those men who had sex with other men while they were involved with a woman. It was before people were calling those men, were saying those men were on the DL. Back then, and this was like late 90s and early 2000, we were saying, "I kept it on the DL or I keep it on the DL." It was a verb, it wasn't an adjective; it wasn't something I was. It was something I did. Even in songs and stuff, it was always, "Keep in on the DL." I have [been on the DL] in the past [for 2 years], but I'm not now.

The first time I heard of anybody being on the DL was...maybe 2001. It may have been 2001. I think the first time I heard it was in a *Vibe* magazine article. They were talking about men having sex with other men and don't define themselves as gay or bisexual. I think another one they used was homothugs. Just about everybody I had relations with was on the DL. [Daniel connected with other men] on the Internet and I met one at work, [and] on a train coming home from work one night. I met someone on the train. One time I was just walking down the street (laughs), and this man just struck up a conversation with me and he said that he was and asked in I was on the DL. [Signs and cues one looks for] Um...I think it's eye contact. I think more than anything you have to watch a person's eyes and watch what they're looking at, especially if they're looking at you. You have to watch their eyes and watch where their eyes move.

[When Daniel first realized he was attracted to men] I think it was a progression. I think I was always fascinated with men. I wasn't around a lot of them. My dad was active in my life and he lived with us, but he was the only one I really saw. [My] Aunts were always at the house and I have a lot of first cousins that are women. I never had any male friends so I never- they were always kind of strange (laughs) to me. So I think moreso than anything else, I was fascinated with men. I think I was on college when I realized that I might be attracted to them. I must have

been about 21 or 22. [Daniel's reaction to this attraction to men] I didn't accept it, and I thought it was a fad, a faze. I didn't put any stock into it or anything. I thought it was me being open-minded or fleeting. I thought I would grow out of it and I would go on and marry my wife and we would have our 8 kids and everything would be fine. I think even my first experience with a man came out of me saying, I was 25, and I knew I wanted to get married and I had to see what it was like because if I got married before I got a chance to see what it was like, then I wouldn't be able to do anything about it.

[Daniel's personal beliefs about same-sex relationships then and now] Well I didn't really have any about same-sex relationships [then] because I honestly think it was because I hadn't seen any. So the thought of me being romantic with a guy was (laughs) that just never entered my mind. I couldn't see it. I couldn't see myself with a man telling him that I love him, and he's got a beard and I got a beard and two, big burly men talking about I love you. I just didn't- I honestly did not see it at all. Now I probably...I probably don't know what I'd do without my partner. Now I only say that if we ever, God forbid, if something ever happened to us or we'd split, I would probably date women (laughs). I don't think I would want to bothered with a man because men are...I don't know how women do it (laughs). I don't know how women do it.

[Daniel's struggle between his personal beliefs and his attraction to men] Oh yeh. Big time. I use to pray that God would take it [these feelings] away from me, and it wasn't so much because I thought it was wrong, but it was because I just having sex with these men, and I have never been one to just have sex with people. I was always emotionally attached to people. Before I started having sex with men, I only had sex with two people [women], and I was really, really proud of that, and that was really important to me. When I started having sex with men it wasn't- I would pray that God would stop me from having sex with men because I knew it was wrong for me to be having sex with people I didn't really have any regard for. Yeh, I felt like the casual sex part of it was just- if anything was wrong with it, that's what was wrong because I would so casually had sex with these men. I always, especially back then, I was very close to God so it was natural for me to pray about something I had a problem with.

[How Daniel worked through his struggles] I just accepted that this is who God made me. This is how God made me. I'm attracted to men and I'm attracted to women and I just had to accept it. What I had to do was work on my discretion in terms of being more discriminating and more disciplined with regard to how many people I was having sex with. [Where the discipline comes from] Well I had a lot of self control (laughs) and at that point, I had never really had casual sex with anybody, so it was just an- I just had to realize that the part of me that was having sex with random men- that's not who I am. I had to kind of- it was almost like I had two people. I was literally living a double life. There was a side of me that was a very straight-arrowed kind of man, and then there was a side of me that was the opposite of that; and I had to realize that both of these people living in me and I have to find some sort of balance. That took a while. That took some doing. I had to constantly think about what it was I was doing and who I wanted to be and who I wanted people to know me as.

[Back then, did you have anyone you could confide in?] No, no because I didn't have any friends who were gay or bisexual, or at least I didn't know that I had any at that time. Nobody that I was really close to- nobody knew what I was doing.

[Whom have you disclosed to now?] Let's see. Maybe 10 or 15. Both of my parents know. My sisters know. My best friends know, and two of my first cousins know. [I came out/disclosed] Two and a half years ago. The first person I told was a cousin back in 2001. She is a lesbian, my first cousin, and she was the first person I told. And then I didn't tell anybody-no-the next person I told after that was maybe 2002 or- it was 2003. [The general response from your family] It was pretty positive. Especially my immediate family because they're the ones who really, really know. They were pretty positive. I had some ambivalence about- well apprehension about telling them. I really did, and they were very- my mom has been really supportive, and my dad is...he's been silent about it. He doesn't really talk about it. I know that he's okay with it because he will ask me about my partner and my young sister has been great. She has been great. I just recently told my older sister. She was okay. Now I have to say that my immediate family, they knew. I just hadn't told them (laughs). They could sense it. They were very much aware because I never had any close male friends. All of a sudden, all I talked about was this one particular guy. So my mom knew, especially when we were, when I had moved into a new apartment and this guy was coming with me and I started cooking and stuff. They knew, yeh they knew. They just hadn't said anything. They hadn't asked me and I hadn't said anything.

So my dad came to visit one time and he said, "Yeh I'm coming. I'm coming to [see you]." And I didn't believe he was coming, and he just called me one day when I was at work and said, "We're on our way." (laughs) I was a mess the whole day, but he got here and my partner and I- we had a two-bedroom apartment. One of those bedrooms was an office. The other bedroom was a bedroom. And my dad came in and he asked me, "Where do you sleep?" And I said, "I sleep in the bedroom," and he said, "Okay, where does he sleep?" And I said, "He sleeps in the bedroom, too." And that was the end of it. He wasn't shocked and my mom recently told me that when he got up the next morning [He was still with Daniel], he called her and he asked her, "Why come you didn't tell me?" He just knew that she knew because my mom and I were really close, and I hadn't told her either. But he was okay. We went out to breakfast and he and my partner talked about cars and careers and stuff. So he's okay with it. My partner and I are in the process of buying a house and I told my dad who's retiring in a couple of months. And I told him when we buy the house, you got to come down and he said, "I'm coming and stay with you all for a couple of days." So he's okay. It's not what he wants, but he's okay.

I told my dad because I didn't have any choice. And when he went back home he told my mother and my mother talked with my sisters. So I didn't really have to tell them. I talked about it with my younger sister because the following summer, she came to visit and I had never said anything to her. She came to visit and she came into the apartment and my partner was with us and everything and she just asked me and I told her. She had told me what my mother had said and things so she kind of knew. Then I had a conversation with my mom over Thanksgiving and she mentioned something about my partner and she said that she knew and then we started talking about the visit with my dad and then I think a few days later, my older sister came to the house and I told her. The reason why I had those conversations with my mom and my older is because my aunt had passed who prayed over me and I really regretted her not having met my partner or me not having told her before she passed because she was such a big part of my life and I think my partner is one of the most beautiful people I ever met, and I just think it's a shame that she didn't get a chance to meet him and vice-versa because I think she's another beautiful person. So

that's why I had to tell my mom and I had to talk with my older sister because I didn't want something to happen to either one of them and they didn't know the whole truth.

[How was life before disclosure] Well for one, I always had to choose whom I was going to see for the holidays. When Christmas came, there was usually a choice. If I decided to stay with my partner then I can't go home, or if I decided I wanted to spend Christmas with my partner, he can't go home.

[How Daniel's life has been different since disclosing his sexual identity] It's been so much better because I can talk about my partner, and I don't have to wonder if they're going to catch on. I don't feel like I'm lying anymore and I don't feel like- I don't feel ashamed anymore because you know when you lie about things. That's- to me that just feels like you're ashamed of something, if you can't be honest about certain things; and I felt like I couldn't tell the whole truth and I didn't like that. I feel more complete than- I feel like having them know about my partner validates it.

[I asked Daniel if he knew of other men who disclosed and their outcomes] I didn't know of any. No one had ever disclosed that much of themselves. I didn't give them a chance to. I didn't really care about any of that.

Reflection on the Meaning

[What it means to be an African American man in today's society] I saw that question. What exactly does that question mean? [I gave Daniel an explanation of that question] I don't really know how to answer that question. [I told Daniel we can skip this question or come back to it later] Come back to that question.

[The roles Daniel plays in the home, community, and work] In the home, my partner would say I'm the nurturer and I would tend to agree. I'm the nurturer, but I'm also the protector. I kind of things those go hand in hand. Well, I'm not really involved in any community activities or any activism with the church or anything. I'm just a regular Black man, and I hope that people see as strong and as dependable and God-fearing. I'm the dependable one at work. I'm the calm in the storm at work. I'm the peaceful, peace-making one at work, and the encouraging one at work. Yeh, and I'm the sensitive one. I'm a bit of a hothead at work sometimes. Like um, yeh (laughs). I usually become a hothead when somebody pushes me too much or when things become too serious or too complex and it really shouldn't be. That makes me upset. The fact that all these people are upset about something that's so minor.

[The meaning of masculinity] Masculinity to me means strength and character and honor and discipline. [The definition comes from] my dad and my grandfather. Yeh, they're aggressive men, and they're assertive and they're dignified and proud, and...they can admit that they made a mistake...that's mine. That comes from me. Yeh, they can apologize. I see a lot of those qualities in myself, thankfully. I have to work on the discipline some more. I see a lot of those qualities in myself. That's why I say that one comes from me because my dad has done some things. He's done some things that have affected our whole family, and he hasn't apologized for them, and I think if he apologizes for them, I think we would all be happier people. I think

[masculinity] very, very, very, very important to Black men. Very important because for so many years historically, we haven't been able to really be men in our homes and in our communities for whatever reason. Whether we didn't want to take the role or if we didn't know how to take the role or if the role was taken from us, it's always- our masculinity has always been denied. So it's very, very, very important to Black men.

[Is an African American man who is gay less masculine?] No. I don't think it makes him less masculine. Well...having an extra set of bags to carry makes him a lot stronger. So I'm not going to say that I'm stronger than my straight, male counterparts, but I know that I have more to deal with than my straight, male counterparts.

[Daniel's sexual identity] Um, it varies. Sometimes I'm bisexual, sometimes I'm SGL. My gays friends don't like me to say bisexual because they think that I'm holding on to something. They think I'm trying to make myself appear more normal. [I asked Daniel does he identify as gay] No because that's not the truth.

[Daniel's definition of gay and bisexual] Well when I think of gay men because I think gay is a construct. I don't think it's a function. I think it's everything else about a homosexual person. I think straight people can be gay. When I think of gay people I think of *Will and Grace*. I don't really think of Black men when I think of a gay man. I think of things that would someone something- I think of like *Will and Grace* and men who love Beyoncé. That's gay (laughs). The difference is homosexuality is the act. The fact that a man has sex with a man makes him homosexual, but the fact that he's a man having sex with a man doesn't necessarily make him gay. If he's a man who has sex with men and he loves Cher, that makes him gay (laughs). All the horrible, horrible stereotypes. Like the fact that my partner and I love *America's Next Top Model*, that makes us gay. But if we didn't watch *America's Next Top Model*, I don't think we would be gay. A lot of people would say the fact I like *Food Network* and I make recipes from *Food Network* would make me gay, but I was doing that before I even touched a man so I was still gay, I just was having sex with women.

[I asked Daniel to describe gay stereotypes] I usually think White men, professionals. They could be creative professionals or lawyers or doctors, but they're professional and they're well dressed and they're well read and they could be effeminate or not, but there's a sense of affluence to them. Usually they have a little bit of money, sometimes they're tragic- they can't find a partner. [And why White?] Probably because there are not a lot of images of Black gay men and, even like during the beginning of the AIDS epidemic when talked about it being a gay man's disease, they always showed a White man. It was always a gay, White man.

[Images of gay, African American men in the media] There have been some that are stereotypical, but I think that the best example of Black gay or homosexual or SGL men would be the television show *Noah's Arc* because they were just men who had sex with men and it was a broad spectrum of shapes and sizes and colors and likes and dislikes. They had some men who were drag queens and some guys who were like rough and thugs. They had the whole spectrum of Black men.

[The advantages for an out, gay, African American man] Other than personal ones, I really don't see any. You'll be able to live openly and honestly, but I kind of think people are intimidated by that, especially if you are not what they think a Black gay man is. If you don't fit the stereotype or if you're not what they expect you to be. I think they're really intimidated by that. Yeh, he looks straight and he's straight-acting. I think people are intimidated by that. They're afraid of that. [Does that depend on gender, or is the fear across the board] I think it's the same across the board. I think with Black people I think it's, oh my gosh, I think that just blows their mind just because we haven't seen a lot of images of Black gay men, but the ones that we have seen have been like, for the most part they have been hairdressers and *Men on Film* and Flip Wilson. If L.L. Cool J had came out and said that he was gay, that would just- oh my God (laughs). People wouldn't know how to deal with that. "How could he be gay? He doesn't look gay. He doesn't act gay."

[The opinion that the African American community is more homophobic than the White community] I tend to agree with that. I think we're more homophobic, and I think it goes back to the way our men have been emasculated and the fact that people would have you believe that there's such a shortage of Black men and all of these horrible things are happening to Black men- we're being killed and we're going to jail- the plight of Black men in American is very serious and desperate and when people see Black gay men, they go that's just something else for them to be- that's something else that's taking away viable Black men. I don't think a lot of Black people are happy with that. [Define emasculated] Just the act of our masculinity being taken away from us. The act of not allowing us or not teaching us to be the men we're suppose to be in our homes or in our family and in our community. [The greatest contributor to homophobia in the African American community] I haven't experienced it personally, but I think the church has a lot to do with it. I really, really do. Because I think a lot of times we can be closed-minded. Actually, I think that's the biggest contributor. We're closed-minded. I think because we tend to rely on our traditions a lot and traditionally there haven't been, or they would have us believe or we would like to believe that there haven't been a lot of Black, gay or Black, bisexual men in our families. And I think that's something of a lie. I think that those of us who are gay and bisexual haven't had a chance or haven't had an opportunity or haven't felt like our families are open enough to receive us. I don't think that Black people know that many writers and artists over the Harlem Renaissance, they were gay, bisexual, and lesbian. I don't think most people know that. And I also don't think that a lot of us know that when we go to church there are a lot of Black gay men and women in the church. I don't know if we don't know it, or we don't want to accept it or if it's foreign to us that we don't know how to deal with it. And we don't want to talk about it.

[Discussions about HIV/AIDS when Daniel was growing up] Well it wasn't really talked about at home and we only talked about it a little bit at school when we had sex education [year 1987], and in that case we were talking about prevention. I remember in that class, one of my classmates saying that only gay people get it. It just kind of fell along the wayside. My other classmates kind of snickered and giggled, but they never addressed it. I just remember thinking, "You're stupid." Straight people get it, too. [Condom usage] Not currently. [In the past] Not always.

[Daniel's comments on reports about men on the DL not protecting themselves and putting other African Americans at risk] Well, I think there's some truth to what they are saying, but I didn't like that those articles tended to demonize Black men and I also didn't like that they victimized Black women and further created that distance that Black men and Black women have. It made us seem like Black men were the reason why AIDS was on the rise in the African American community, as if Black men were running around stabbing people in their butts with syringe full of it. I didn't like that it made-it just seem like those articles made Black women paranoid, and they didn't empower them. They didn't say Black women, you have to be careful. This is your body and you have to make these men- you have the right to tell these men to wear condoms. It didn't empower them. It didn't- I use to read some of those articles and just felt like, "Oh my gosh." I always felt like Black women were looking at me kind of side-eyed and it just- those articles, they weren't really helpful at all. I think they created a lot of fear and paranoia and it wasn't making it a very empowering or welcoming atmosphere.

[Daniel had no closing remarks and couldn't answer the first question at the end of this interview. He told me he would think about his answer and email me a response. I emailed him the summary to the final interview. He hasn't given a response to the first question]

APPENDIX P

APPENDIX P

Profile of Jack

Focused Life History

[Family background] I was an only child, and within that structure, I had two immediately close cousins, then years later I learned of other cousins and got to know them as well. [I was] primarily raised by my mother up until around 14 and she remarried and there was a stepfather and they were married from when I was about 14 up until probably 35.

[Other family members involved in Jack's early life] my maternal grandparents as well as paternal grandparents. I got to know the paternal grandparents a little more recently, but they were always available. She [my mother] remarried twice. The first, I didn't really know. The second marriage, I didn't really have visibility into that side or the children. The third marriage he was significantly older and had grown children, much older than me.

[Family activities] There were- I recall there was church. There was getting together as a family. There were general get-togethers that we did as a family. I think every Sunday, we would make a trek at least once a week, if not several times a week, to my grandmother's house, and we would spend time there and we would socialize with the other cousins in the family. That was pretty much what I remember.

[School and civic activities] Probably standard, overachiever. I remember Boy Scouts of American and was active in the church, leadership conferences and represented the state and represented the conference at different state events. Overall those are the main things and also being in performing arts school. I was in the theater department and so I think at least when I got to high school, things became a little clearer although I still wasn't fully clear or embracing of being gay or DL or really knowing what it was. It was something that people talked about- whatever they were talking about seemed to be more acceptable at the school I attended than at other places.

[The attitudes of family members about gays and lesbians] I would say probably overall my mother was probably, I guess the best word to describe it was homophobic, and then being in the South, there was always a presumption about- they would use terms like being funny or sissy or punk or what have you. So I think it was more about the environment that they were in. It just wasn't my mother. My mother was kind of the primary person in the household, but being in the south, there was a community that was kind of focused on not validating gays and lesbians and it permeated from the church to kind of the different behavior you saw exhibited at school. So it was more of a social context of a person They had not seen gays and lesbians in a positive light and if they did run across gays or lesbians, they were typically stereotyped and/or relegated to some non-validating perspective. [What were the stereotypes] Being effeminate, being less than masculine. Lesbians were viewed as being kind of hard and/or non-feminine. Again, it was basically about the stereotypes.

I remember in elementary school, the first time I heard the term "bulldagger" and there was- I remember I was probably in the 5th grade and there was allegedly going to be some big fight

between kids at school and we were all getting work up because allegedly the bulldagger was coming to the school. We didn't really know what that was, but ideally whatever was coming wasn't good.

[Friends and their belief systems] It was interesting back then growing up [Jack was around 10 or 11 at this time]. There were- I remember there were some close friends who kind of repeated the same type of- gay this, gay that, punk/sissy type words. I think because of what they heard as oppose to what they framed for themselves. Also I recalled and I don't know how this came about, there were certain guys in the neighborhood that would always try to approach me or try to come on to me. So you would know to not pay attention to them. I think the friends were kind of going along with what they thought they knew. But then there were definitely some older guys in the neighborhood who were looking for the sweet boy if you will.

High school was interesting. I went to a performing arts high school, so it was in the city I lived. In the suburbs of [withheld], and I probably traveled 30 to 40 minutes into the city from the northern suburbs. The high school had more open and tolerant environment so it was my first exposure to a more accepting climate around gays and lesbians although I was still not clear about what all of that meant. Also, the performing arts school was located within the heart of the gay community. So you were more or less mindful of being in a more tolerant and accepting part of the city.

[Witnessing violence or harassment of gay and lesbian students] I remember [in junior high school] seeing a young guy who was being called punk and sissy and he was being pushed around and picked on and people were laughing at him that was happening and again, it just kind of reinforced for me not wanting to be whatever that was. [Did teachers or school administrators help?] No. There was no support system or structure. One example when this guy was picking on me and I was known as a good kid- I never really got in trouble or acted up or did anything. So when he picked on me and wanted to fight, I fought him. At that point I was kind of the mindset that I don't want to do this because I knew something in me would kind of snap, and I'm going to make sure that this doesn't happen again. So I remember having- at that time we had metal lunchboxes and I just kind of whammed on him. So if anything, it was a minimum of, "Yeh he may be gay, but he will fight back." Once you got kind of in someone sights, they would try to get their friends to pick on you, but it became clear that I was not going to stand there and take it, but would actually fight back. The teachers were willing to pay attention and put folks on notice that they shouldn't be bothering me. But that was also more about the fact that I established that I wasn't going to be the person that they could pick on. I defended myself. I was clear that whatever reason the person was picking on me, it wasn't right, but I hadn't associated the fact that it was because I was being single-out or harassed for being gay or funny or anything.

[The impact of family, friends, the community's belief system about gays and lesbians on Jack] It definitely made me mindful of not wanting to be whatever it was that they were talking about and didn't like. But it did not, per se, keep me- it wasn't necessarily something that kind of made me overly concerned. My mother would say- I remember I was taking off gloves and she would say, "Why do you act like a sissy?" or "Don't act like a sissy" or something like that, without necessarily fully understanding what that was, nor at the same time being able to feel comfortable about having a conversation about what that was or why she was saying what she

was saying. So in that sense there were- there was a conflict of understanding why she would say that versus what was really important. I wasn't processing it at that level.

[When Jack fully understood the meaning of being gay] There was a neighbor of mine who approached me and he was a teenager so I must have been around probably 12-ish and he would reference, "Give me some of that, come over here, suck me," or whatever- and it was more of a curiosity than anything else. So the first time I went, he was trying to penetrate me, and I didn't know what it was- I knew what it was, but I didn't know that's what gay meant. So I kind of thought it was this secret thing that was happening. That continued for a while. Then as it continued, I began to kind of put things together. Then I actually began to enjoy it because of the secrecy of it. Then over time as I became aware of that's what that was, I think it was at the same time I was becoming more sexually aware. So it became a matter of like any normal teenager, you began to pursue, experiment, look around and see what's going on; and as that began to happen I think it just kind of continued thereafter.

[Intimate relationships Jack had over the years] In college, I actually dated a number of women, and after I graduated and was in grad school I actually was engaged for a period of time. It was at that point that I began to fully understand what was happening and what gay meant and just seeing how people were viewed that I really began to put it together. In fact I had a couple of incidences where there was- I was a member of an organization in [withheld] and actually when I lived there, I didn't realized that city was one of the Black gay capitals of the country. Ironically people were, "How did you not know what?" and I was like well I didn't wasn't clued in. I didn't realize that there was Pride when I was an undergrad. I found all of that out after I graduated and really began to meet other Black gay men there. Ironically I was on some level being singled out for being gay in college by gays themselves who wanted to pick on me. So it was a lot going on that really was not clear, but I did have girlfriends and was engaged in college.

[Church attendance] United Methodist.[The topic of gays and lesbians addressed during church or during sermons] Typically in a standard, cliché way. It was, "You're an abomination. It's not natural. It's man-woman, Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. A lot of the old, tired clichés. It wasn't until years later when I joined a congregation in [withheld] that I began to actually understand more of the hypocrisy that existed in churches relative to the churches and what was being promoted from the pulpit as a means of control.

[How the sermons affected Jack's belief system about being gay] If anything, it made me more mindful of hypocrisy because I remember being in high school and one Sunday the minister was talking about gays and lesbians and all that stuff and I remember thinking about hypocrisy around how many times we're taking up an offering plate to keep him in a new car. I was really beginning to identify the disconnect between what was being said and what was being practiced by the ministers. [Did you believe in an ultimate penalty for being gay?] No, because there were too many disconnects in the overall message. I was able to understand if I took one part of the Bible literally, I had to take the other part of the Bible literally. So I wasn't suppose to be gay, then there weren't suppose to be women in the pulpit. There wasn't suppose to be mixed fabrics. There weren't suppose to be all these other things that were happening. So I was smart enough to know that there were several disconnects in what was being said versus what was being accepted. I also could see that there were certain classes of people who were being more

accepted than other people in church as well. So it wasn't- I wasn't blindly following what was being espoused in church. I had a sense for some [church] folks who may have been closeted, but I never went to them and had an actual conversation with them. Again, there was some stereotypes of choir members, older single women, older single men; but being a kid, I never pursued any conversations about the adults.

The Details Interview

[Jack's definition of the DL] I've always considered it to be- personally I've considered it to be just a matter of discretion. I define it in terms of not wanting everyone to know my business. Certainly because the MSM community would have to have some level of enclosure or awareness in order to find partners, but in terms of heterosexual relationships, it was just a matter of not wanting anyone to know about your business.

[I'm] more MSM- I feel a bit more comfortable disclosing to closer friends and/or work colleagues. Certainly when I was younger I would say the DL was much more appropriate. I dated women throughout college. I was engaged at one point, and even through all those times, there were occasionally men involved; and so that was much more DL. But when I got older, it would be much more MSM. Still maintaining a level of discretion as oppose to absolute secrecy. I don't date women at this point; however, I still subscribe to a level of discretion.

[How Jack came to know about the DL terminology and culture] I think it was probably after it was label. I certainly was being discreet and dating women at the same time of dating particular men, but I don't think I had the terminology up until probably in my mid to late 20s when I came to learn that when I was in college. Then as I heard it- as I spent more time in the black gay community, I began hearing it a bit more; and also on the Internet where people were describing their likes and dislikes, the term DL was sort of a code that people could use to describe themselves. Then overtime I think the term shifted from being DL or even a level of discretion to being a label that men could choose somewhat to assert their level of masculinity, because they did not want to be labeled as sissy, fag, or punk, and didn't want to be called gay. So it became a matter of if you were on the DL, that means straight acting, straight appearance. So the term changed over time, but I would say in the late 20s and then sort of being exposed to it on the Internet, kind of popular culture- that's how I came to understand the term.

[Years on the DL] I would say it there was always been some level of development, confusion, evolution earlier. I would say in terms of consciously understanding what DL meant, I would say it was probably from my mid 20s probably around- probably for about 10 years and then right around 35 I just got- maybe 33 I got very comfortable about being discreet as oppose to being DL. [Jack talks more about the DL being a progression for him] It was more of a- because you don't know what- you know what a certain food tastes like before you know the term salty. So I was experiencing a life of discretion and secrecy not knowing that there was some popularized, urbanized term and what was interesting was that as I became more aware of the word, it actually took on much more of a *racial* overtone as opposed to being any other type of description because technically you would say that a person who was on the DL, which was originally associated with identifying with the heterosexual community and even dating women, would be called bisexual or bi in the White community. Because Black culture has eschewed from being labeled as gay or bi because of racial or gay political reasons, the terminology [used] became

Black DL. So the DL term came to be viewed as a much more thuggish or a much more straight acting man- you're not bi because that's White, you're not gay because that's White. Those are political terms, MSM, DL, are terms that are more acceptable to Black men.

[How Jack was able to connect with other DL men] Yes (chuckled). What was interesting was that I had attended a certain Black college, and I didn't know that [this city] was one of the meccas of Black gay culture. That's what I didn't know and I was there for years. I didn't know about the Memorial Day weekend celebration. As I became more aware in graduate school, I joined a large African American association, and I came across the entire spectrum of highly educated, highly professional, highly motivated, and highly-DL men. What actually happened was I became intimate with several of them as well and it was at the point that I realized that they were actually living a dual life. Many of them were married or had high-profile women who they dated. At some point, many of the women who were in some of these relationships were public arrangements of convenience. It was just something that was known to certain people at that time. As I got more comfortable- as I got to know more of the men in kind of a larger context, I began befriending some that were DL or discreet or MSM. You learn where you can meet like-minded people- what publications to look at, learn which websites were available to learn, what bars or clubs to go, learn about Black organizations. You learned about- you were kind of just introduced.

I would say probably towards my mid 20s, after being in college and trying to blend into the straight like, looking to pledge a fraternity and having a fraternity brother say, "Am I going to pledge you because I think you're gay," and realizing that you would see them at the same gay events you would go to- it was a lot of confusion. In my mid 20s- particularly at the point when I broke off my engagement, that's when I made the conscious choice. I now know that this is my attraction. I am mindful of saying the conscious choice because there were opportunities all the way through.

At the point of the conscious choice, it was a situation where I was engaged to an absolutely beautiful woman, and I was confronted with the images of my friends at the time who were DL, and they were married to equally beautiful and successful women and they were living this lie. At that point, I made a decision that, because my mother had been divorced a couple of times and she was at that point in her 3rd marriage and we were together for a very long time. As a result of looking at her journey in marriage, I think I developed a different view on what a lasting, meaningful relationship should be to me. I consciously chose to end the relationship with my fiancé because I didn't want to go into a relationship in a lie. I'm very mindful that to say those words, death do us part in the face of God and witness, means something. So I think I- and I believe I can still say those to a man that I find at some point- but I was mindful not to want to enter into a commitment as a liar. So I consciously chose at that point to accept who I was becoming and say I need to figure out how to do this and be authentic to myself. I think it was that conscious choice of looking at my fiancé at the time and loving her enough not to be selfish.

[Jack's personal beliefs about being gay] I don't know- again going back to what you were introduced to as oppose to what beliefs you framed. I think the general context of the culture I grew up was very stereotypical, very gay is this gays are joked at, gays are less than, gays are- whatever gay was, by the way that people spoke about it, I knew I didn't want to be that. And so

that framed the earliest memories. As I moved into my mid 20s, which was a very pivotal time of having many changes, I came across different images of gay men, and I became mindful that there is no such thing as an archetype of a gay man. There were clearly the flamboyant men who basically had I think some sexual identity confusion- wanting to be women, to the more very masculine men who wanted to be in the company of other men. So I think as I became consciously aware of choosing to embrace who I am, and again I'm not saying that being gay or MSM is a choice you make. I think it is a reality that you choose to accept as oppose to sitting there and drinking and drugging and- there are tons of people I knew and heard about who were flamboyantly gay who were living this tortured life in the straight world and they would have to drink themselves or drug themselves into submission in order to have sex or some serial monogamy situation- whatever. So I was very mindful not doing that. So I think as I gained additional perspective and saw different images of gay men, I became comfortable framing my own opinions of what gay men- what it would be for me to be a gay man or MSM in that sense. So I think, again, the mid 20s were very pivotal in terms of making conscious choices and different examples of what that could be.

[Any internal struggle or mental health problems] Of course there are struggles. I didn't have any mental health issues or emotional crisis or breakdowns or any need for medication or supervision or therapy. What did happen though was you have to- I think any time you make conscious choices. At that point when you decide, "Okay, I'm going to live an authentic life when I figure out what that is," you do spend some time mourning the loss of the ideal of wow, now I'm going to be Black, male, and gay- a triple threat. Wow I probably will never have children. Wow, I'm going to have to deal with this stigma. At some point, I think I will have to publicly come out to my friends or wow my family may know. So you go through this whole process of coming to these next set of things and so you kind of mourn the life of the picket fence and everything that you were taught that you were suppose to aspire to that never felt right to you. Then you go- kind of like the five steps of Kübler-Ross where you go through a kind of fear. Wow, I'm afraid to tell people. Wow, they're going to judge me. You go through all that stuff and then you finally get to a point where you say you know what, this is who I am and this is how I have to approach this. Once I dealt with the break-up from my fiancé and once I began making more conscious choices, I could see and began to seek out more conscious and healthy examples because I was no longer forced to think about the choice I was making as a choice to live in the stereotype because the people that I saw who were not were people who I emulated- people who I looked up to. They were mentors. Many of them were friends. So it was a matter of understanding how to reclaim my power as oppose to feeling disempowered by an attraction that I didn't have really any control over. If there was something I could have done or- I could play football enough to not become gay.

[Disclosure] Coming out is the same thing as leaving home and the same thing as really- I almost say coming out is the ultimate test of standing up to your family and the life that you were told you were suppose to lead. One of the things that I found that helps me was that I always felt vulnerable because I was afraid of the rejection, and the rejection is based on the fact of lack of security, lack of stability. And so what actually worked for me was getting to a place where I could sustain myself financially because to me that meant freedom that I didn't have to hope that mom and dad would be able to take care of me, or being put out of my mom's house. I had my own at the point I did that. I say that because sometimes as I talk to people and they say, "Well

so and so should come on out.” Well it’s about security at some point. You have to be mentally secure, emotionally secure, professionally secure, and financially secure to withstand all of the potential consequences- I’m not saying that they all will come-but you have to be extremely integrated in order to do this. What worked for me was going through the process of constantly choosing to be integrated as oppose to being forced out by someone, and allowing myself to be grounded in knowing and that saying, “You know what? There’s nothing you can do to me that’s going to detract me from what I’m doing. That’s a very different state of being as oppose to just trying to come out and struggle, because you have to feel safe in order to do it. Then once you’re able to be safe, you can begin to think about acting in terms of positive steps, and for me that was really the basis of the power I claimed in order to accept the works.

[Disclosing to family members] There were a series of events. One, it was- I think they suspected and we had never had the conversation, so there was an increasing series of conversations with them. I think my cousin was the first person that I disclosed to because she came to visit me. My best friend and I were housemates at that time. They took a train ride somewhere and of course my best friend knows me like the back of his hand, so my cousin knows me like the back of her hand and so they were talking and at one point when she came back from the trip, she said to me, “When are you going to tell me that you’re gay?” And I kind of sat there and I said, “Why do I have to tell you?” What was interesting, because that was the basis of the conversation. In part it was- it was me asking a reflective question of if you see me with my friends or a man or what have you, and I’ve seen you with your boyfriend or what have you, you never came to me and said, “I’m a straight woman.” So why do I need to tell you that I’m an MSM gay man? It was kind of this added burden, but I recognized it was something that I would ultimately need to do. I haven’t disclosed to my [biological] father who lives in a small, southern town because we’ve just become a bit closer the past 5-6 years. At some point I probably will. Other family members, I haven’t felt the need to. I don’t need them to walk up to me and say, “I’m a straight woman or I’m a straight man,” so I don’t feel the need to go and tell someone I’m an MSM. It goes back to my whole ideal of expression and being able to me being a person. The flipside of that is as I work my way to hopefully finding an ongoing permanent partner- I will definitely- it will be disclosed and it will be something that will be celebrated and it will be something- and we will be a part of that family because I think that it is important at that point to mutually celebrate each other’s life. I’ve watched these siblings- my cousins for example. My closest cousins have each been divorced, and I never married. I think part of that was it goes back to my whole belief in the importance of the relationship. I think that-I guess I would say that all of the women-both my aunts and my mom and cousins, most of the closest ones are females and there are two males, one’s married and the other is divorced- of those only one is still married. So I don’t think there’s any moral highground any of them could tell me about relationships (laughs).

[How life is different after disclosure] One, I think it’s about becoming even more authentic as a person. You can’t say that you care about something or you love someone yet you are ashamed to let people know you are. I would say that’s the ultimate deception if that makes sense. So I think you have to. I think that is because I really think that love at that level is a declaration and is not something that you keep and you feel is something less than worthy of being celebrated. So I wouldn’t do that to the person that I cared about.

[Jack talks about a friend who disclosed to his mother] I was so fortunate to have my best friend who came out at a very early age to his mother and family- seven children. Three were gay- three or four were gay men. He's been a fantastic example to me of how to be fully authentic as a man, as a gay man, as a spiritual man, as a Black man. That's been wonderful and what's also been is the relationship that he has with his mother and how accepting she is and how she has embraced who he is as a person. So that's been an example. Also there's another example of how I met my best friend. We've known each other for almost 15 years now- at a church, a Unity Fellowship Church. So it was a mostly gay and lesbian affirmative congregation, and there are a number of churches around the country. So I became an active member of Inner Life Community Worship Church. I've been an active member. I was given the opportunity to meet a congregation of people who were affirming and who, if I faced rejection, were welcoming. So the concepts of the whole spiritual adoption became clear and one of the last words of Christ where Christ says, "Mother behold you son, son behold your mother," that whole concepts is saying you know what, if we ever got to a point where you and I are no longer what we need to be, I can commit you to the world and love you, but I will go on to find what I need. I realized it was not an abomination to love. So my best friend actually was an example for me, and still is, and his relationship with his mother stands out as a true pillar me in that sense.

Reflection on the Meaning Interview

[The meaning of being an African American man in our society] I'd like to say that it is akin to being a person in our society, and I guess in society under the American context. I would think it means being a person, but foremost accepting your role as a member of society, but you also have an enormous amount of historical context that you have to deal with. I think depending on how you'd be able to synthesize the historical context and at the same time create your own identity, African American men have an immense opportunity in the shared burden at the same time because more than any other member of society you are required to demonstrate a level of reflective memory while at the same time being required to transcend the historical context. So I think there's definitely a duality that African American men have. If anything, being an African American male means being ever mindful of the duality of the reflective and the transcending states.

[The historical context of African American men] What I know about the context, well I mean it's the origins of our arrival in this country. Everything from the way that we arrived to the way that we were subjugated to the way that traditional, male roles were purposely and systematically destroyed to destabilize the family, to the way that the psyche of the Black male was permanently, in many ways, destroyed. The reason I say permanently is that it's not as if there are Black men in this country who can recall, or even Blacks in general, can recall what it meant to be African and the cultural context. I think what we have is based on conjecture or some historical document. So I think from a historical context it's been an inconsistent evolution toward establishing the meaning that I mentioned in the first question, which was being completely mindful and reflective of the historical context while we continue to transcend the present context. So I don't think we can forget not being able to, accept for children, not being able to protect your children, not being able to pray, not being able to provide for your families. Again, at some point, not even recognizing the children that you were siring, not even to the

point of fathering or parenting. Not even recognizing that responsibility for that and to that. So I think there's a huge historical context that I am mindful and ever mindful of in that sense.

[The roles that Jack plays in the home, at work, and in the community] One thing I pride myself on being is integrated to the extent that I'm consistent, so I don't necessarily seek to play different roles in and out of work or society. I am a person- I am a thoughtful person. I am a considerate person. I am a consistent. I bring those to each and every situation. I am able to, at many levels, be very analytical and critical, not to the point of abrasive, but critical in terms of asking what is the meaning or what is the context. That's a role that I play pretty much consistently. So whether I'm a son to my mother, whether I am a boss to employees, whether I am a manager, whether I'm an expert to my clients, whether I'm a student at school, whether I am a consultant in my professional consultant company- I think those become titles based on the situation, but the roles that I play is really- because I described as being consistently integrated person throughout.

[Jack's definition of masculinity] That's an interesting question because at some level it's almost like an adjective and a descriptor- some type of observed feature or characteristic or trait. I think that's what it means to me. I think that there are very different ways of looking at it. I think that masculinity is a descriptor of how you carry yourself or how you adopt to play a role. At some level masculinity is almost akin to a stereotype descriptor of what it means to be a man in this society as oppose to defining what a man is. I think masculinity is more of a stereotypical term than anything else.

[Are masculinity and femininity seen as stereotypes?] Exactly, exactly. That's what I said being very- trying to be precise, masculinity is a strength- it's not any of those words because they're all descriptors of a term that is a stereotype. So the idea that a man can't show emotion would almost fly in the face of correctness if you accept it. In terms of strength, strong, fearless and all those things- a lot of people use these to describe masculinity. On the flip side, the idea of having a strong, competitive, fearless woman would defy the term of people would most likely think of being feminine. I think people have, in many respects, driven themselves crazy and/or to some level to an addiction, trying to live up to a stereotype as oppose to really understanding who they are as an authentic person, and then letting who they are become a further definition of masculinity or femininity.

[The importance of masculinity to African American men] The question that you asked earlier about what was my perspective on the historical context is related to that. I think that the idea of masculinity and being a man is definitely related because for many, and I actually read about this in an article that I mentioned to you. The idea of to me of being a man was rooted in the archetypical compass of maleness, which in that sense I think is more rooted in the aspects of procreation. The idea of being a man is about having children. I think one of the things that has happened in this society is that the Black man has a more difficult time because part of the context that we live in demands that to be a man, you have to have a child. That became the bar that a lot of men subscribed to. Then when you leave that bar you get to you have to have a wife. Then it becomes you have to have the right job and the house and you have to do all of those things. So what ultimately happens is in terms of DL men, DL men are those who have bought fully into the stereotype and at some real level generally want those things that they associate with the heterosexual world.

What I remember when I met two friends, I said to myself, “You know what? You’re really fortunate,” because I looked at them and they were great guys and great friends, but are living a lie; and they are also on some levels living in fear of being outed. One friend has children and loves his children immensely, and that’s what he chose to do and that’s why he’s DL. The other friend doesn’t have children, but is staying in the relationship more out of obligation. Some would say, “Oh, I’m not in turmoil,” or “I’m not unresolved,” and I’m like well, each day you make these statements you kind of are.

I think part of the reason that these two individuals are my friends is that I understand where they are. I like them. I respect them; and I also know that were it not for our friendship, they would not have a voice. They would not have someone who could reflect to them. They would not have someone who accepts them. I think part of the reason that they do this dual life is that they feel if that they were themselves, they would be rejected. So I can’t very well be a person who went through struggle, understands what they’re going through, who’s made a different choice. I can’t turn them away. So that’s why they’re friends, but I’m also mindful of making sure that they don’t lose respect of me either.

[The meaning of gay and bisexual] I think that- that’s kind of something that evolved. I think gay is much more of a charged and political term moreso than anything else. I think that’s one of the reasons why you have more Black men striving to terms that are probably seemingly more masculine or more acceptable like DL and/or MSM. Because if you really wanted to be really clinical about it, it’s all homosexuality. There’s no mindset. There’s no partial homosexual. There’s no homosexual-like. There’s no...it’s more of a descriptor of an act. And I think that it’s a descriptor of an act that you chose to- more for a sexual partner. I think the difference is that gay has now become associated with an identity as opposed to a sexual act. I think gay has evolved to a pointed political statement. So much like the civil rights movement is associated with African Americans, women’s group was with women, gay rights is synonymous with a political movement. I think bisexual is more of splinter of White DL. You don’t have Black men saying that they’re bisexual who are DL, even though that’s is the more technical definition of what they do and who they are, but I think it’s much more gay. It goes back to that question of what’s more socially acceptable. What’s more tolerable. Being gay means White; DL is probably the term that’s much more culturally acceptable than being bisexual. So I think that of those terms conjures images of White.

[Gay being associate with White] Well again, I think that is what most people think. It’s not that gay and bisexual mean White, it’s that the people who have been visibly at the forefront of the gay right’s movement have been White. So the idea that the term is White is a reflection of who’s been involved in the movement. That’s why it’s almost interesting when you talk to people about the civil right’s movement that you have to remember that the civil rights movement just wasn’t a Black movement. There were a lot of White, there were a lot of Jews, there were a lot of non-Black people who went through that agenda; however most definitely when you say civil rights, the first image you have is of Black people. So I think it’s more about- I think the reason you would actually put that answer is really more about has been at the forefront of those movements, and in those movements, particularly in the gay, they are associated with Whiteness.

[Stereotypes] It goes back to the point when you- the whole idea of stereotypes. When we think of gay or homosexuality, the images we have are effeminate, swishy, and the stereotypes that we use. The acceptable gays in our community are your choir director or members of your choir. It may be one of those long-standing silent deacons. It may be your hair stylist. It could be your some other service provider. It could be a clothing designer. We created these very distinct stereotypes for these acceptable roles, and they are kind of long-suffering and silent roles that we have become comfortable with. I think what has kind of unnerved people is the fact that not only do those roles exist in the stereotypes, but there are a lot of other roles- a lot of other people who we see on daily basis.

[Advantages of being an out, gay African American man] I think the advantages would be of claiming and restoring the basis of power. Once you determine how you will find yourself, you are no longer subjected to someone else's definition of who you are. I think being out allows you to contradict and/or clarify who are what you are and where you stand. I think that is definitely a chief advantage of being out and that it allows you to influence and show a presence. I think that an advantage is also what we talked about is in order to do that, you have to be willing to be strong. You have to be willing to stand up for yourself. You find that you are in a situation that is not validating you or is not honoring you, then you have to move. I think that many people who find themselves on the DL are people who are chosen to stay in some respect, and that doesn't necessarily mean that they are wrong per se, but it does mean that they have chose to, at some point, be less than who they could really be.

I think that there's a difference between being out, being closeted, and being private. It goes back to what I said. I don't have my straight friends telling me that, "You know, I'm straight." That's not the conversation that we have in a larger context. So I had to come to a realization that the reason that you come out, if you will, is that you are making sure that you are really present in the conversation because if people see you as a man or woman, they then use that stereotype of masculinity, femininity to create their perception of who you are. But at the same time, I think that's why being private is even more important, because you don't have to be closeted. You don't have to be out to be private. There's a wonderful quote that I learned in college which was kind of the Fisk rules of behavior, and it was said students, particularly young ladies that went to Fisk that dorm knew that the rules were "Be sweet. Be discreet." That has nothing to do with being secretive. There's nothing that is mysterious, not deceptive, but that draws a person to another person in a way that, "Hey, I think I want to get to know that person."

[Discussions about HIV/AIDS when Jack was growing up] I think of at time that there was an emphasis on using condoms for pretty much everything, even the prevention of AIDS and HIV. There was also a discussion about likely means of transmitting, so you know the blood supply as well as body fluids. I think there was also a lot of confusion about transmissions- could you kiss, could you have oral sex, could you have vaginal, anal. A lot of questions were being raised. I think as more and more people became aware, affected and infected, I think the calls for greater attention to prevention became much more present.

[Jack's response to past reports or articles that linked the spread of HIV in the Black community, particularly to Black women, to DL or MSM] I think that there is- I think it's probably associated with men as oppose to whether you consider yourself to be DL or MSM. I think that even the

question [should be] were all these men gay or DL or MSM? I ask that question because what you were finding, particularly in the inner cities where you have high rates of incarceration for men, you are seeing spikes in the infection rates of woman. So that was basically through men in the prison system. The reality is that those men probably would not have considered themselves to be gay. Probably all these people wouldn't considered themselves to be DL, even though at different points they were MSM, but outside the prison they probably wouldn't have been. So I think that while the dynamic changed things, I think you would be able to draw a correlation between the incarceration rates and the spikes. I think you would see a very significant correlation there. Again, not wanting to label those men as gay or DL, because that might not be what they are, I think you can see a correlation which is why I go back to the whole idea that the clarity about who you are authentically would allow both partners to make different and informed choices. Because you don't have that level of choice or clarity, I think you are seeing that causal link between infection rates and the DL and MSM population. Again, not fully knowing it's male to female or whether it's person to person per se, I think you could have a situation where you have a guy who's seeing multiple women and that woman is seeing multiple men, then you wind up sleeping with everybody, and if you sleep with everybody then you're going to get something.

[How Jack believes the articles portray DL men] I think the DL and MSM men are portrayed as liars, deceptors, cunning sociopaths. They have been some very loudly and broadly publicized cases. The one that strikes me is the whole Terry McMillan/Jonathan Plummer divorce where she accused him of being gay and then... I think those types of things actually are really destructive in terms of the larger conversation. That these men are somehow predators, that these men are somehow willfully and openly doing this to destroy. I think those are some of the stereotypes which I think are just absolutely wrong because the whole idea- some would say that these men are murdered. It's like, wait a minute. I think that these are folks who- the numbers of women who are being affected are not necessarily correlating to the number of forced assaults that are happening. So the idea that these men are willfully doing something to endanger other people is to say that the other half of that relationship had absolutely nothing to do or no role in protecting herself. I think that it is about making sure that there's enough upfront disclosure, there's upfront conversation, but that there's also mutual responsibility and accountability. I think in our society it's easier to call a man who- it's easier to vilify a man who is DL or MSM rather to victimize the woman who finds herself HIV positive even though they both are engaged in the same act. So the idea that one is a villain and the other is a victim is somewhat a strange dichotomy.

[Jack's closing thoughts] I think this that is a great work that you are doing. I'm glad to be able to participate in it. I think the one thing that I would like to make sure that comes through is that there is no right or wrong about sexual orientation. I think it's something that we fully have yet to understand. I think that there have been many, many people who have tried to write about it and clarify it. With that said, I think that we- my hope is that what comes through the research is a greater appreciation for the truly complex nature of sexual orientation [and] sexual identity- particularly as it relates to coming to terms with what could be perceived as a loss of a contrived dream. I think what men in particular, or anyone for that fact, who has to confront going against the grain- the realization that everything that society has said you need to aspire to is the very thing you will choose to reject. I think that's a very daunting act of anyone. My hope is that

your research and work helps people get to that place a bit faster and a bit more clearly, because I think it's absolutely important.

APPENDIX Q

APPENDIX Q

Profile of Jahmall

Focused Life History

[Family background] I was raised by my grandparents. My mother was around. My father lived in another state, but my grandmother, I was closest to her. I had various other relatives around me at different times. For holidays, sometimes family would come by weekends, but mostly, it was, under one roof, me, my grandmother, and my grandfather.

[Family beliefs about gays and lesbians] Well I knew it wasn't something that was vocalized. I knew because my grandmother was active in the church, actually Pentecostal church. So I never heard it from her mouth that homosexuality was a sin, but when I went to church on Sundays I heard the sermons, so I knew it was something negative and something bad. So I wasn't- I didn't have too many people in my family who used derogatory language like, "Faggot," or something like that were around me all the time. Now, my father's side of the family, when I would go and visit them during the summers sometimes, they used negative language like "sissy, faggot," and they were also strict in the church as well. So I got more of a reason to be fearful from that side of the family.

I felt that, from an early age I figured out that I was different. I was probably around eight or nine, and an early age I decided that when I grew up I would have to go away from my family in order to be true to myself. So yeh, I did feel- I felt condemned. It was almost like my feelings were ambiguous. I felt on one hand, that I was normal because this was how I felt. I didn't feel that the way I felt was wrong, but on the other hand I felt that I was condemned to hell and that perhaps I would go to hell. I did share, yes. I was depressed during my teen years, I suffered from depression because I wasn't being true to who I was.

[School activities] I didn't play sports because my family was so strict with church, and that's where I spent most of my time, at church. My grandfather was older and it was hard for him to get outdoors and throw a ball or anything, so I really didn't play. We had a community softball team, which was really organized by the neighborhood kids. I took part in that. I wasn't that experienced. [Classmates who were suspected of being gay] Yes I did. I knew of one and he actually was in school with my since elementary, so I kind of watched him evolved and yeh, he was really flamboyant. I don't remember him being ashamed. Everybody knew he was gay. The town I grew up in was very small and it was kind of conservative in the Black community- people [gays] got treat negatively. I remember that one particular person being bullied, called a faggot. So I don't remember anybody who was just out.

I: Did any teachers or administration try to help or intervene if students were being harassed?

[How these experiences shaped Jahmall's belief system about gays and lesbians] It was more my relatives and just culturally. In order for my to actually fit into this group of people that grew up in my neighborhood and became my friends in the high school, it was necessary for me to be like them. So I learned to be cool. I was in high school in the early 90s, late 80s in CA. There was a

strong gang culture so being cool- when I was in high school it was something that- being as tough as you can be, and showing no signs of weakness, no signs of femininity. That's kind of what I adopted and it was kind of like a survival strategy. You had to be cool, you had to be tough or else you get picked on and a lot of it did correspond with the way religious upbringing influenced me.

[Negative experience] I remember being with my father's family one summer and it was a mother of the church. We went to her house right after I got off the plane, and I was around 10. I had a jherri curl. I had longer hair. So I guess to them, being a very strict Christian, a man having long hair was a sign of homosexuality. So she called me a sissy in front of adults and children. I remembered almost wanting to sink into the floor. I was humiliated because there were about 10 people around. I was so embarrassed. After that incident and other minor incidents, things being said by adults to me, I started to feel like that I have to change myself to make them happy, whereas it wasn't really a problem to my other family. I felt like I had to change the outward appearance at least- being a little tougher.

[Relationships with women Jahmall had over the years] I wasn't married, but I had girlfriends, but the relationships didn't last that long. I was engaged shortly in my 20s, but that didn't work out. So I haven't had- I been kind of able to get away with being fully committed to a woman up until my 30s. When the questions started, "When are you going to get married? When are you going to have kids?" So I been sort of seen as a player. I'm just having too much fun to settle down. So I really didn't have long term commitments with any women, only because I felt I would be hypocritical. I couldn't do it. I felt like it was unfair since I know who I am and what I want, so I felt like it would be unfair. So I just didn't do it.

[Church experiences] There were many sermons and one that sticks in my mind actually was given by my grandmother. Everybody in my family, on both sides, are ministers or evangelist or missionaries, so sermons came from the family. I remember one particular incident- this lady happened to walk into the church and she was a known lesbian in the community and my grandmother and others in the church proceeded to cast the demons out of her. Her homosexuality was seen as the work of the devil and it wasn't her who was in control of her sexuality. It was a supernatural entity and they proceeded to cast the demon out. I guess at the end, she was still the same person. After the sermon, she was kind of calling them out, and she left the church and I remember my grandmother saying something along the lines of her dying if she walks out the door. It was something really far-fetched to me. At the time I was scared. I was terrified. So is this what I have to look forward to? I don't remember anything else like that. That really sticks with me. It really affected me. I remember feeling- I felt that I knew I was like her, so it made me feel like maybe I have demons in me. It caused me to seek God in order to be changed.

The Details Interview

[Jahmall's definition of the DL] I think it's a phenomenon where a supposed straight man participates in homosexual activity, whether it's in a relationships or just having sex with another man. Mostly people who are in committed relationships with women, but also I think that people- I think I fall into this category who are widely known to their family and friends to be

gay. That would be considered the DL in my opinion. Right now I'm so busy with other activities that I haven't had a significant relationship with a man, but I had encounters with men. [How Jahmall came to know about the DL] I lived it. I believe from the time that I knew that I had to conceal my true identity. That was like in my adolescent years. It was just something that happened that occurred- walked around presenting an image that was expected of me and on the inside I understood that I had these feelings for men. So I would say that long before the phrase was coined, DL, it was just something that was a part of me- a part of my life and who I am. I think when the term made an impression of me was- there was a gentleman who released a book on the DL and he was on Oprah and that was the first time I noticed it being articulated. I actually could identify with some of the things that he was talking about, so that was it. I think that was like three or four years ago.

[How Jahmall met other men on the DL] In book stores, adult bookstores. I would go out to clubs. You can't really tell when you go to a club who is straight or who is gay. So I would go to clubs every now and then and meet other men. I was always attracted to men like me as oppose to the more openly gay men.

I: You told me this before, but when did you first realize that you were attracted to men?

[Jahmall's personal beliefs about same-sex relationships past and present] I don't know because my personal opinions have fluctuated so much. Then, there was a time when I felt the community as being disgraceful or exploitive, unnecessary, damned, doomed. I really didn't want to associate with the lifestyle. But then there came a time when I wanted to embrace it. Most recently I felt like I guess I grown some inner strength within myself to just stand up and accept who I am and I just feel that I don't have to hide behind society- even though this is still a challenging journey for me. So I'm changing my thought process. I don't know if I necessarily agree with the DL culture. I think that it's dangerous on so many different levels and I made a decision not to participate in any type of relationships sexually in nature with a woman because I have to place them in the place of my mother or my sister. I think that it's dangerous emotionally and also physically.

[I ask Jahmall how he developed his inner strength] Actually finding peace within myself, and I don't want to say redefining who God is to me, but I think I understand God's purpose a little bit better because I actually- I kind of cut my ties with the church and I didn't stop believing in prayer and in understanding the scriptures. I just actually stepped away from the institution of religion and I've actually found that within myself, I'm just more peaceful and I don't know if that has to do with that and the combined fact that I've made conscious decision and choices not to participate in activities that may be a danger to myself and others. I feel comfortable within my skin, but at the same time it's still a struggle because I'm so use to the Black community rejecting homosexuality and I desire respect from straight, Black men.

[I asked Jahmall would his male friends treat him differently if they knew] I think that I'm afraid of rejection. I'm not sure. I think I'm a coward in the sense that I'm afraid to take the first step. I'm pretty sure that if I was just drug out of the closet, then after the dust settles I would know who my true friends were. I would be fine. I think that I sabotage relationships that I could build

with straight men because I don't know. But what I found is that when I first meet, that most Black men- they're drawn towards me. In my age group, they want to hang out with me. They're cool, but I always put up these barriers because I'm always walking with this fear that one day I'll be discovered and then what? So I've been conditioned to feel like I have to walk around with this barrier up. It's still an ongoing process for me, and I haven't come to a point where I could just step out on faith and say it is what it is.

[Personal struggles] I've struggled. I think I'm still struggling to a certain point. Actually I had a conversation yesterday with a really close friend and he kind of grew some circumstances that I did with the religious background and I was telling him about my experiences with women now- how I'm getting a lot of offers from young ladies and I've asked him what am I to make of this, how do I deal with it, I don't know, should I just be honest completely with everybody, can I trust everybody? I still feel like I'm lonely though because that's not what I want. I do want to be in a relationship with a man. I believe that I was born this way and this is my life. This is my belief. And it took me a long time to get to this that I am what God intended for me to be, and the reason why what confirms that for me is the peace that I have. So I'm dealing with the social constructs now, but the peace that I feel a night when I go to bed makes me feel alright and sure that I'm doing what is right.

[Mental health problems Jahmall experienced] I tried to commit suicide when I was 16. I call it trying to commit suicide. I took some pills and I don't know if I was really trying to kill myself or I was just reaching out for somebody to acknowledge that I have this pain on the inside. I was very depressed on I did drugs. I mean hard drugs. I suffered from a lot of depression and I did meth, you know crystal meth. I started doing it and I realized- it made me feel strong. It made me feel like it didn't matter. So I participated in that, and then the drug use for a while. I always felt disconnected from my family, from my community, and so it depressed me. I felt guilt for being what I thought at the time dishonest and sneaky. I felt depression because I felt cowardly and I felt ashamed that I just accept who I am. I suffered from a lot of depression. I felt like I was not chosen by God. I honestly spent many, many, many nights just wailing. I grew up in a Holiness church so I'm just crying and asking for forgiveness. I had nobody to talk to.

[Did family members noticed his depression] No because I masked the sadness with- I smoked weed, I got drunk, I participated in hip-hop culture full force. I was just an angry, Black man. It was no way to even understand that my anger or my participation with marijuana and booze and sex was a way to mask the pain that I had on the inside.

[Jahmall's disclosure to a friend and to his mother] It wasn't until my senior year in high school that a young lady actually moved to my town and we had an attraction for each other and I had started going around her house having conversations with her, and she had actually been trying to seduce me. I remember one day that she invited me to her house one evening- her parents were out of town. When I went in her living room, there were candle lit and my first reaction was, "Why doesn't she turn some lights on?" Because I had gotten so comfortable with her because we had such open conversations and it didn't all revolve around having sex with each other or just that courting game- you know the heterosexuals seem to play. We respected each other and we loved each other's ideals. The little that I did revealed to her, she embraced and I embraced her ideals because I thought she was- especially because she was from out of town and

she had a different perspective on life and I could see it. She ended up being an outsider when she came to my town because she was different and I felt in some ways that I was an outside, so we connected. So when I walked in her living room and saw the candles, I made this comment, "Well turn on some lights," and shortly after, I just revealed to her my secret and she said, "Well when you made the comments about the candles, I pretty much figured that was what it was." And she was really attempting to have sex with me or take it to another level, and even after I revealed to her my true feelings, she was fine with it and we did have sex; she turned out to be bisexual. We had an eventful relationship, and (laugh) I fell in love with this girl. I wanted to marry her. She wanted to marry me, but I couldn't get past my stronger desires to be with a man, and she understood that, and to this day we're still friends.

She was the first person that I could really communicate to and because of her, I was able to eventually talk to my mother about it. It's strange because out of all the people in my family who know, my mother is like, she was the first person that I told and she didn't have an ideal. She was clueless because I just wondered did she assumed because I always hear people say that your mother always knows, but she didn't raise me, though. So maybe that's why, but she didn't know. I guess I played the game so well and she was completely oblivious to her. I always had girls coming to my house, and so she just thought I was doing my thing. She was fine with me- as long you're happy and you're not hurting anybody and you're taking care of yourself, then I love you and that's who you are- and she was very comfortable with me, but that still didn't make it easy for me. I thought that it would, but it didn't. I think all of the years of conditioning from the church experiences just stuck. It's hard for me to let that be opportunity for me to get on with my life.

[Other family members Jahmall disclosed to] I told a cousin that I was close to at the time- again a female cousin because her mother had breast cancer and she struggled with it for a couple of years she eventually passed away. We were teenagers at the time and we got really, really close and she would open up to me and tell me how her mother's sickness had affected her and she was scared and we bonded. So I felt immediately I cannot make this emotional connection with her unless she knew everything about me. I felt like I was being dishonest and untruthful telling her she could confide in me and that she could trust me. She didn't know me and so I took that chance and I felt like this is somebody who could guard my secret. And I told her and it made us closer, but I sabotaged that relationship because I always had this paranoia that she was always thinking negative things. Even though I confided this, in her mind I'm still a faggot. In her mind, I'm going to hell, because she was raised the same way I was, and I don't think that was ever the case. She always wanted me to invite her to go out so she could see how I lived. She felt like I put a barrier up after I told her, which I did, but I see I confided in her. So there's just been spurts in my life where I felt comfortable to share mainly with women.

I told my male best friend after I had graduated from high school and...he was fine with it, but he wanted to have- he wanted to experiment himself and (laughs) he came to my house with a porno tape. He put in a porno tape. I was grooming myself for something- I think I was going to a party later on that night. I was shaving in the bathroom. I came back in my room, and he was masturbating, and I'm like, "What is he doing?" He wanted me to participate and so we did, but after that- that was it. Our relationship just ended and I think a lot of it had to do with me because I told him I didn't feel comfortable afterwards. I couldn't do that anymore because I always felt

like he was a brother, and I felt like okay now is this what my life is going to turn into? The guy who turns out every straight man he comes in contact with? So that kind of turned me off. I thought I was doing it with my brother, and I don't know if I thought that it made him uncomfortable that I made him uncomfortable. I haven't spoken to him in over 10 years.

[How disclosure would make Jahmall's life different] I think that I would really be able to gauge how people, what people really feel about me better. I would know who my friends were. I wouldn't, hopefully I wouldn't make enemies. I wouldn't even label those who didn't accept me and understand me as an enemy. They just don't understand me, and I would keep moving on. The most important part is that I could actually have a conversation with somebody about truth. When I'm asked what's wrong, I don't have to make up some irrelevant excuse. When I'm feeling some kind of anxiety or sadness over my dilemma (laughs), I wouldn't have to make up an excuse with everyone.

[Jahmall talked about other men who disclosed and the outcomes of their disclosure] I have a good friend who was exposed and he was talked about bad by his family. Rumors were started that he was dying of AIDS. He had been punished for his evil ways. That he had turned out other young men in his family. He was used as a scapegoat by other young men in his family. So I have a little anxiety, but I'm working past that. I don't think at this point that my family is the biggest issue. It's the rest of the world. Because my mother knows. I did tell my father as well because he wanted to take an active role in my life, and he's the type of person who wants to control things and show up uninvited. So I had to let him know because he just might walk in on the wrong thing. He might walk in on something he doesn't want to see. He was surprisingly- he was okay with the- I thought he would condemn me to hell. I really didn't care about him though, about his reaction because I had so much anger built up towards him. He was fine with me- said the same things that my mother said, but still something in me that keeps me- okay, so now the two people who created me know who I really am. Why is it hard for me to let go of my secret and just let it go?

You know most of my friends were pulled out. It worked out so much better for them in the end because they had the attitude like, "Damn them all." I'm sure you're defensive if somebody outs you. At some point you just don't care. I'm the one who told my parents. I guess I had the courage to. So I'm the example. I don't know anybody else who actually went and said, "This is who I am," except for myself, but my own problem is that I still live this DL life because I'm not completely honest with everybody around me, not everybody. I feel like I'm dishonest, a dishonest person because I built this, created this façade. Even my female friends, they were pulled out if not by a messy family member then by a jealous or angry lover. I wished I could be outed and I could be done with it. So when people came to me with the question I wouldn't deny it if that was the case, but I'm not going to be the one who volunteers that information to certain people, and certain people includes a lot of people. That's my problem. So those who do know, they're outnumbered by those who don't.

The Reflection on the Meaning Interview

[What it means to be an African American man in today's society] This is a tough question. I looked at it earlier and I thought about it, but it's still hard to articulate exactly. It's just hard on

so many different levels. Being a Black man means that you want to fit into the American tradition where you have to go above and beyond the standards to fit. I'm trying to figure it out. It's just hard to talk to you for me to talk to you like that. It's hard. I know for my experience I'm always misunderstood. I'm either seen as a threat to most people or a joke or either labeled as an athlete or I just hate to say it, but even being able to understand street life- just knowing what's going on in that manner. Looking at other people's experience, I think there's always an expectation required of the Black man and whether it's coming from a Black woman or from his community, and sometimes I think that the bar and standards are placed too high. The expectations are too great. I'm not saying that as a Black man that we cannot do the greatest things, but I think that sometimes Black men are expected to do the right thing without encouragement or a push. To be a Black man it means to always have to struggle to be better than what's expected of the average man. In order for me to survive in corporate America, there's certain airs that I have to put up. I have to appear to be non-threatening to the average White guy. That means changing my walk, my talk, even the way I think, the way I perceive things around me. In the Black community if I bring that attitude back with me or that character back with me, then I'm perceived as trying to be White. So it's like a lose-lose situation. Being Black in America is actually being- being a Black man in America is being dominant and aggressive, but at the same time, in certain areas you have to be docile. It's an ambiguous feat for me.

[Roles Jahmall plays in the home, at work, and in the community] At home, I try to tell my younger cousins- try to let them know a little bit about Black history. I try to encourage them to have pride in themselves as individuals first and foremost, but to also understand where it is that their people have come from. I try to explain to them that knowledge of that will increase the strength in themselves. At work, I'm always walking a tightrope because if I appear to have too much pride in my culture, then I'm taken as being a racist, inapproachable, misunderstood, as being aggressive, and full of hate- just because I understand where I come from. At school I feel like I have more freedom to express who I am, except for the fact that my sexual preference is something that is concealed, but as a Black man I have more freedom.

[Jahmall's definition of masculinity] Somebody who is strong and- strong mentally, strong emotionally. Physical strength is like third on the list. I think someone who is masculine possess the qualities to admit when they're wrong, and somebody who is able to express how they feel. Strength in character as a man. I think the definition of a man to me is like the things that I just listed. It's just a human quality.

[The importance of masculinity to African American men] I think that it's important because it gives us some type of identity- something to hold on to. I think that- just given our history in America with slavery- I think that African American men's masculinity has been redefined and I think that it's important to Black men. I understand why the macho characterization of a man is so prominent in the Black community because it's like holding on to a fragment of something that once was. Those are like superficial qualities, but it's a way to tell America that I am still a man. The way it's expressed, it's just the best way to earn respect. If I'm hard and tough, then I'll be respected. I can't be punked around. A lot of that may have to do with conditioning during slavery. I don't know. Maybe Black men were bred to be angry or it may be the circumstances of the whole experience. I had a conversation with my father and he was like the baddest man on

the block when he was in his 20s. But now I understand him to be a different person and I think as he's grown older, he can understand that he doesn't always have to put up that façade. So I think with him being able to put down those barriers with me is masculinity in it's finest because he's able to show me that it's more than to being a man that just being the most aggressive and tough person in the room.

[Does being a gay, African American man make him less masculine?] In society's eye yes. To me, no because I don't think that- again the definition of masculinity goes beyond physical toughest and roughness- I actually know more gay men who are masculine in my opinion as far as men who are able to take care of their responsibilities and really understand who they are and understand other people in their lives. I know men who have children who have chosen to live a different lifestyle who still take care of their children. I believe that being gay doesn't mean that you're not masculine.

[The meaning of gay and bisexual] Being gay I think is- I think that I'm gay. At this point I believe that I'm gay- that I accept being gay because I just attracted to men. I understand now that attraction is stronger. My attraction is stronger towards men than women. Being bisexual to me is a person who is attracted to both sexes, but at the same time is able to admit it. Well, I can't say that because I can't admit it completely to the world who I am.

[Gay as White] Sometimes I do [think of gay as a White concept]. It was something that was passed on to us through slavery. I think that some people do, but above all things I think that most people look at it like it's the work of the devil. That's why people think you can change, that we can be something different if we just try hard enough. I don't believe that anymore. I don't think that being gay in Black society, where I am, is supportive. That's why people continue to live on the DL because there's nothing that says yes, you can be the star basketball player, yes you can be a role model and still be gay in our community. There's no space for a gay, Black man, but I think there's a need because there's obviously a lot of issues.

[Disadvantages of being an out, gay African American man] There's disadvantages because the community- because of the stigma that's attached to homosexuality in the Black community. Even if you're accepted, and I don't know if this is true in the White community, but in the Black community I think even if you're accepted, you're always going to be labeled as gay Jahmall. "He's a Black man you know, he's cool but he's gay." And with straight men, "You know he's gay, stay away from him." You really have to work hard to convince Black straight men that you're not trying to sleep with them. I just want to be accepted as an individual and as a man. So I think it makes it more difficult because we don't associate masculinity with homosexuality. I think that's why a lot of maybe DL brothers tend to be the most over-the-top masculine type figures. I practiced many years on the way I talk and my walk- I made it harder just because I felt like that was my protection. If I act tough, then they won't know.

[I asked Jahmall to talk about the stigma that's attached to same-sex relationships in the African American community] I think the stigma- I don't know where it comes from. I want to do research and see where, in Africa, what was the perception of homosexuality. How were homosexuals perceived prior to the Atlantic slave trade? I don't know. I think the stigma, in African American culture, comes from church- Sodom and Gomorrah. I don't know, but from

my experience it comes from church, and from everybody I know when we speak of homosexuality among each other there's always the revelation that you're going to hell. I had a friend tell me at a dinner table one time that, "I love you because I grew up with, but you know it's a sin, and you're living with sin." Without her even finishing the sentence I understood that she was condemning me to hell. And I never... I don't know if White people experience this, this type of homophobia on that level. I have to think about how White people experience it, because I know Black folks don't deal with it well. Especially men. With women, it's different. With men, it's hard for us to fit into anything. Even for me as a conscious Black man, it's hard for me to fit into those circles.

[Advantages for a Black man who is out and gay] Yes I guess. Yes, there's advantages for other Black men. I think there's an initial sacrifice. I'm just speaking from my experience because I'm sure some gay Black men out there in the community who have probably never had a problem. I'm sure they all at least once had to fight somebody for calling them a faggot. I think it benefits the greater population. There's other young gay, Black men out there right now who are struggling with their identity and their sexuality and they probably don't have anyone to model their lives on. The images that they're given of gay Black men in the media are all negative and derogatory. It's bad enough that the images that are given to Black men- most of the images are negative and derogatory. So I think there is a benefit. It will benefit many individuals to come out and maybe go through the rejection and be able to plant his feet in the soil and find direction in the community. I think that things can be changed with conversation (and) communication. The stigmas can be broken down if there was more communication and more acceptance. The only way there will be acceptance is if more Black men just said this is who I am. I'm still a part of the community, accept me and just be truthful.

I: How do you define your sexual identity now?

[Jahmall's response to the opinion that the African American community is more homophobic than the White community] I don't know. That's hard to say because I look at how many Americans are against same-sex marriages. I think there's the same level of homophobia, but I think that it's expressed differently. I was having a conversation with one of my friends the other day and it's weird because when you hear about gay-bashing in the media, the assailants are always White males. I haven't seen too many, or heard of too many stories where gay-bashers were African American. I would have to say the stigma is there, but maybe there is some acceptance or tolerance; but I think it's like don't ask, don't tell type of philosophy. So you're gay boo, you don't have walk around with that banner on.

[What Jahmall thinks is the greatest contributor to homophobia in the Black community] The church, from my experience. The church. Just the image- the masculine image. The oversexed image and like I said, where does that come from? Was that produced in slavery by the slave owners and slave masters? The big, Black buck. His function in America, in the world now, is to reproduce and that's it and to get as many women as possible. He's suppose to be the player, the smooth talker. So I think that has a lot to do with- those two things. Just the fact that above and foremost it's a sin and usually presented as the greatest sin even though the Bible says that no sin is greater than the other. They're all the same. In the pulpit it's presented to the congregation as the most abominable sin. It's the opposite of masculinity in the straight, Black man's opinion.

Homosexuality is the opposite. So that's why a lot of DL men are probably the first to say that they don't consider themselves as gay or bisexual. I just like having sex with men.

[Jahmall discussed conversations about HIV/AIDS when he was growing up] HIV was associated with homosexuality and is a sin and a punishment. I had a cousin, an older cousin, who died and it was obviously assumed that he died of AIDS. It was never told to me directly but I heard conversations from my family, especially on my father's side- just people sitting around talking, and it comes out, "Well you know, the Bible says..." You kind of put two and two together when people make references to the Bible scripture and then they relate it to what's going on, to AIDS. I just drew the conclusion that they're saying so and so is suffering from this disease because he's a sinner. So it's the whole Sodom and Gomorrah interpretation of why things are happening. So it was never really said that if you had sex with a man, you're going to die of AIDS, but that's what I thought. That's what my mind was telling me, so I was doomed from the start.

[Knowledge about HIV/AIDS prevention] In the short time that I went out clubbing, I was exposed to the AIDS awareness center- centers and programs that would go out and take an active role in the community by informing us about the dangers of HIV. I met people that were in the community one week, and the next week they were gone. And then you hear the gossip, "Oh he's sick." And then that was my first experience of just actually knowing someone who died of AIDS. I heard the rumors so I knew to stay away from that person. So I started learning that this is a gamble. Nobody is going to be honest, so I need to be protecting myself. Then later on in life, I did meet a friend who let me know, "Yeh I'm HIV positive," so that's where I learned a lot about the disease and through him I understood that it's not just gay people who are getting it, and I started doing research on my own once I became interested in school again. But everything that I know I had to learn on my own.

[Jahmall's response to reports that link the DL to the increase of HIV in the Black community] Again, that's a negative stigma that attached to gay, Black men in America, and the reason I say that is because the DL- what is it? Is it a phenomenon now that someone has attached a label to it? It took a gay Black man who's living this lifestyle to write a tell-all book- to bring it to attention of America. Now I'm not really sure if I agree with his motives for writing a book. Just judging by his appearances on television and what he said and how he said it, I think his motives were to make money and I feel like he kind of lumped me into a group to be persecuted; and I don't think that's the reason why there's a widespread amount of HIV in Black America. I think the reason why the AIDS rate is increasing on such a profound level is because there is no communication in the church, which happens to still be the cornerstone of our community. There needs to be communication. So the message of abstinence was not getting out to the congregation, but in the meanwhile in the Black community AIDS is rampant. So when are we going to take the blinders off and really deal with the issues? Don't blame the gay man. I don't think you can blame anyone. I think you can blame it on irresponsibility. It's bred from silence or from the stigma attached to homosexuality- well I'm not gay, so it's not my problem. It portrays Black men who are struggling with their sexuality into freaks. We need to understand why these Black men are not able to come out and say, "Hey I'm bisexual or hey I'm gay" with ease in their community. It's the fault of the church.

[How do these reports portray African American DL men] From what I've seen- I don't read too many articles because I don't want to buy into the hype because I'm living this lifestyle and I understand that there are more men out there like me. I see the DL man as being sex-hungry, irresponsible, suicidal villains. There are a lot of women who will still date men [who have sex with men]. I have met several women- when I went out to the clubs and I told a young lady that I'm here to meet a man, she said, "Oh that's alright, you're still cute." So you can't really say that this is because of the DL man that AIDS is so rampant in the Black community. It's because of miseducation, and it's because we want to bury our heads in the sand and say that God will take care of sinners. We don't have to worry about it, but while you're doing this and you're preaching homosexuality is wrong, you probably have five or six members in your congregation that are infected with HIV and don't even have an ideal.

[Jahmall's final comments] I think I said a lot. I ramble on. The last question just infuriated me, though. [About HIV/AIDS]

APPENDIX R

APPENDIX R Profile of Lenard

Focused Life History

[Family background] I would say, if I started off with my parents, they were both present in the home and are still married till this day. Been married for at least 44 years or 43 years- something like that. But they truly made sure that we had the necessities met. We didn't have a lot of extra going on, but they were very supportive of whatever it was that we needed, more my mother than my father, I would say. Siblings, have two- a brother and a sister. We grew up getting along fine, but I can't say that we're necessarily close or were ever really close. It seemed as like my mother is the center of it all in a good way, like we don't have to communicate with each other because she communicates from one person to another. Like she's the wheel and we're the spokes kind of thing. I don't necessary have to have tight relationship with my dad because she'll tell him what's going on with me and she'll tell me what's going on with him, and that's kind of how it works. I think that kind of comes into play with how we are and how we're not necessarily the best of friends and all that kind of stuff because we operate through her. I would say that I could probably understand and respect my brother and my father more as I got older and kind of grew into my own manhood and said, "Okay, this is why they do what they do." We didn't have a lot going on as far as extended families and grandparents and all that kind of stuff. Grandparents were definitely present in our lives, but yet- and they lived locally for the most part. But they just weren't instrumental in my upbringing.

[Family and friends discussions about same-sex relationships] I thought about each of those sectors very thoroughly and they never had any homophobic behavior whether it's friends, grandparents, siblings, or the parents. I never heard anything really bad other than derogatory terms people may be called as far as slang or terms used in the hood, but they were never any of "those people who are mad," or "stay away from those people," or "I don't ever want to see any of my kids grow up that way." None of that kind of stuff. And I really had to think about that because I had tons of friends in different capacities and I can't say that they did. I would say that it [discussions or the lack of discussions about same-sex relationships] didn't influence me, and it wouldn't have influenced me because- and the reason why I answered that question that way is because I had to think about the other things and beliefs and values that they had and how they influenced me, and I really am such an independent thinker. I can honestly say that even if they did have attitudes towards that, I would have said, "Sorry you feel that way," and I would have my own beliefs because I knew that my parents didn't have the same exposures that I had as far as the different types of people. I know that my parents didn't have the same sort of education that I had. So I felt that they're speaking from their own experiences and my experiences was different.

I never really had any positive thoughts about relationships in general. Therefore whether it was same-sex or [heterosexual], I think my parents would highly encourage us to get married and have kids, but they never pressured us. So I don't think that- I think their beliefs would have been a little different that mines because I grew up in a situation where I didn't see much value in any of that (laughs)- getting married and all those things. I figure whatever makes you happy, just go for it, and I don't think that that's the same attitude that my parents really have.

[Activities Lenard was involved in growing up] I didn't do the sports. I didn't do the church. I didn't do the gangs. What I tended to do was focus one day being a doctor. I always liked the educational opportunity programs like Upward Bound. I did In Rows, I did H Cops. I did that kind of stuff. So I was always around all sorts of other kids who were doing things that I was doing and had interests in what I had interests in. Summer programs or tutoring/mentoring programs. [Any discussions about same-sex relationships among these individuals] I would say no, and I had a thing about why that was the case, and it might be because of all the different sorts of exposure that these training programs provided us. They took us on trips and they had us going to clinical settings where people were HIV positive and I guess in the public health field, you don't have as much of that going on as you may have in other career areas or other types of activities or program.

[Relationships Lenard maintained over the years] I didn't start involving myself with guys until I was 26. So it was always girlfriends and long-term girlfriends and casual relationships. And then when I started doing all these activities with men, I would say I had 3 relationships with guys, and one was 4 and a half years, one was 3 months, and the other was 10 months. Now, I focus on my career and casual acquaintances.

[Church experiences growing up] When I was a kid, I stopped going to church at age 12. At that point, I didn't know what they were talking about. I kind of went to Sunday school and sang in the choir and did whatever I needed to do till 12 and then after that, I pretty much stopped. That was a personal choice. It had nothing to do with- I just felt like it wasn't adding much value to my life at that point. Since my parents didn't make me go, I didn't. It was a Lutheran church. It was the closest church to my house, and it was a Lutheran church, so that's where we went. My parents didn't go to church. We went to church. It started out because my brother was- we were in the Cub Scouts there. Then the people who were over the Cub Scouts were church members and they said, "You need to come Vacation Bible School," and then, "You need to Sunday School," and we just kind of did it because everyone else in the Cub Scouts who were friends with were going to church, too, so it was more time to hang out with our friends, and that's how we got associated. [The subject of same-sex relationships mentioned in church] Not when I was a child, no. When I was out here in different places as an adult, I tend to watch quite a bit of church on TV and record them, and that's how I tend to get my church time in. I don't really feel compelled to do the whole organized religion and go to church and do all the, what I call the "Simon Says" of church. I just like to get the message, apply it to my life, and move on. But definitely by the things that I watch on TV as far as church services, they do mention homosexuality and I don't think that anyone, for whatever reasons, they don't really say anything negative about it, but they do- a couple of people that I watch on TV have said that it's something you'll struggle with like drug addiction or premarital sex and everything else. It's a sin that you need to be delivered from. But I don't think it's anything that kind of shocked me or that I felt was wrong, or they shouldn't say this or that. I figured they are entitled to their opinions. I don't feel condemned or like I'm going to hell or anything like that because of what I choose to do.

[The impact of negative sermons on Lenard's belief system about people who were gay] It never did [have an impact]. And I think a lot of that is because there are too many people in the church who I know who have greater problems than that. I think they're greater issues that the church

should address. I really don't believe that an ultimate penalty is the case. For some strange reason, I just don't.

The Details Interview

[Lenard's definition of the DL] I define DL as definitely being discreet about your sexual orientation and who your sexual partners are. I think the term DL can be used in heterosexual contact as well, but I think for gay men, the term suggests hiding what your preferences are, and that's pretty much it for me. I based it basically on the fact that I think the term is a bunch of bullshit- I'll say it that way, but if I had to say why the term has come to be so popular is because of the fact that someone would be DL whether it's heterosexual or homosexual simply because they have something to lose by disclosing. I don't think that the term is anything new. I think that men have always done whatever they wanted to do, and it has always kept under wraps. We can go back to many years. I think our grandparents and all those people had folks who knew about somebody's dad or grandfather who had a woman around the corner, around the neighborhood or had some other kids- everybody just kept it under wraps and didn't talk about it. I think that we've always had that gay relative in our family, whether it's way back. It's a term that we have things that we're not going to talk about. I think the term became popular because of R. Kelly's song, *Down Low*, which is about heterosexual relationships. I'd say, the entire time I've been with men is since 2000, January 2000. So I guess it's been 8 years [Lenard is presently on the DL]

[How Lenard learned about the DL] I didn't hear about that until after the fact. I think the R. Kelly song came out after that. I would say, I ended up having an opportunity to experiment sexually with a male and I think I struggled initially with the outcome at first- many things went through my head about what does this mean. And I think that I had internalized that moment to say, "Okay, I am who I am. I don't think that I going to die. I don't think that it's going to condemn me to hell. I don't think it's going to change my life. I think that it's totally natural." Once I came to the conclusion and realized that it's totally natural to be attracted to someone of the same gender, I was cool. I can choose how much I operate. I figured that it would be in my best interest to operate- for that to be secret.

[Being able to connect with other men] Do I know other men on the DL? Yes, yes, yes. I know tons of men who are on the DL for whatever the DL means to them. My mode [of contact] has always been the Internet. I think a couple of instances I may have encountered guys at conferences or something like that where you kind of think something is going on and you're not sure why the guy is being friendly and networking or if it's a flirtatious situation. You might need to probe a little further. For the most part, I would say it would be through Internet and I would also say the network through other people. You know somebody who knows somebody who knows somebody and it kind of goes that way and become an inner circle, wherever that inner circle is. We'll all get together to play cards or watch the game.

[Personal beliefs about gay men then and now] My personal beliefs were that it was okay to feel that way, but it was never okay to act on it. I could never act on this. I just got to go ahead and keep totally under wraps. It was always this ongoing curiosity of I wonder what it's like to do

such and such, but I know it's not good for me. I know it's bad for me. I know all these horrible things, kind of like crack- this is something you should never do, but you wonder why people like it. As for now, at this point in my life, or even at the point that I decided to explore and experiment- I think that as an adult, I took total control of my life and what my choices were as well as the consequences. I'm totally independent of my parents and what they think, what they feel. I'm totally independent of people needing to know my business. I didn't feel like I need to share my business with others. So it wasn't a problem.

[Personal struggle with feelings towards men] I would say that my struggle came when I was involved in a very long-term [relationship]. It was a 4 and a half year relationship, and me and the guy were really cool, and my general belief has always been "I don't owe anybody favors, I'm just going to do what I'm going to do, and that's how the game is going to be played in my life," but when it comes down to the situation, I feel like the benefits will not outweigh the cost in a situation of being independent and doing what I wanted to. I was an independent person and never had a roommate who just lived so low and does his thing. And all of the sudden I'm living with a grown man and I'm grown man and we're going to have this house and we going to this and that.

[Mental health problems] No. I think that I kept it private so that I wouldn't have any personal or psychological problems (Laughs). I think that is probably- I think I've been cool. I think it's been the best decision, but I'm coming from the pattern of behavior where- even in heterosexual relationships, before I started keeping my relationships separate from my friends, from my family. There have always been a friend or two that I would discuss relationship issues with, but for the most part, I keep those things because I don't need any of my friends knowing me and my girls having problems, or my mother to know that my girl pissed me off. So I just kept tended to keep things separate anyway, so that was never a problem with me.

[Lenard's disclosure to family] My mother. Yeh, my mom does. She's the only family member that knows. I was able to talk her about it. I didn't really see any harm from my mother. We had a lot of secrets on her part and I knew that I could trust her with every little thing. It was never an issue for me. I didn't just do it because I didn't want to have to deal with all the repercussions from her.

I don't think that there is ever any non-gay friends that knew everything. I share things because it adds value to share. So I do have a couple of friends that I been so close through relationships as far as- we talk about relationships. That's why I felt that I would be cheating them if I didn't share this and I felt that they'd love me unconditionally enough to accept it, and it was fine. And so yes, I have a couple of them, maybe about four or five. And then I have some other friends that know that I have explored and experimented and I was cool with it, but not know the extension of whatever is going on. I figured I needed to share *some* things with them just in case.

[Disclosing to other family members] I think I could tell my family any time. I don't feel a fear or anything about telling them. I just think that I don't see any benefits. The reason why I told my mom was because she would- we were doing the whole family will and testament and power of attorneys, plus the guy I was in a relationship with was the beneficiary of some of my things as well; and I didn't want my mother to go the attorneys office if something happened to me and

be like, “Who is this guy?” (Laughs) I don’t see any fear or harm in disclosing at all. I would be cool with telling in my immediate family- my brother and my sister and my parents. I would be totally fine with telling them without a problem.

[Other men on the DL who told and the outcomes of their disclosure] I know of- I don’t know exactly if I can say that they disclosed other than that they were found out (laughs), but I have heard horror stories of people who were found out, and it has been an ongoing struggle as far as their family relationships. I know of people that parents were like private eyes, take some seriousness to the issue to find out what’s been going on. I think that I know of positive situations as well where individuals have shared things with their parents and everything has been- it goes across the continuum. You have the good ones, where parents totally support and allow the kids to dress in drag, and you have parents who totally have- I have a close friend who- he was like a teenager and his brother came out to his parents when he was a teenager and his parents totally like kicked him out of the house, got new family pictures without him in it, didn’t tell his young sister that she ever had a brother. [Influence on Lenard] I think hearing their experiences definitely made me think of how my parents or my family and friends might react. And I think that I have mixed feelings about it. I think that I have no problem- their experiences didn’t keep me telling my parents. I mean won’t keep me from telling my parents if I choose to do it. Because I know my parents wouldn’t do me like that, and I think my parents have too much respect for me in order to even dream that such an outcome would take place. But I also think as far as my friends, I do have some concerns and I don’t think that- I think that I would not tell a lot of friends about this. Not that I can’t trust them individually, but I can’t trust their spouses. I can’t trust that it wouldn’t get to other places.

Reflection on the Meaning Interview

[What it means to be an African American man in America today] I would say to be an African American man in society means that we need to be tolerant first of all because we have so many pressures and structures on us, and if we don’t tolerate those things, we’ll probably die from the stress (chuckle), but I think that’s one of the things that’s a part of being a man in the African American community in America and also the fact that you have to deal with preconceived notions that others have of you. So understanding that and not taking things personal, I think that’s a part of the job; and I think we’re seen as potential threats to others for whatever reasons. I think that I’ll leave that alone. It can be those sexual myths or whatnot; you may be seen as threatened by White men who run our country. I think that all plays a part to our existence as African American men.

[I asked Lenard to describe the preconceived notions about African American men] That you’re aggressive, that you may be violent in some sort of way. I think that’s often misconceptions. I think also that you are uneducated, that you’re not intellectual. If you are coming across as being intellectual, it may be seen as a fraud, that it can’t be true. If you are [an intellectual], you are not really Black. You’re not like the rest of them because we tend to be grouped and seen as monolithic.

[Roles Lenard plays at home, work, and in the community] I would say at home, I was the one who was the rational one. I was the one who carefully thought out everything and always told about the pros and cons and analyzed situations and calculated people, their choices and decisions. I was always that kind of person. I really was a student of human behavior and even in the community. That was kind of me. I wanted to be a psychiatrist at one point, so I was always trying to get in everybody's head. In the community, I would say that I tended to be one who liked to motivate and inspire others to be true to themselves, be individuals, pursue their dreams, be ambitious, be driven, and to share lessons I've learned over the years so that other people don't have to learn them the hard way. I like to be a motivational sort of person. I have tons of mentees, official and unofficial mentees from different programs that I participated in where I was a counselor. Whether that was a summer counselor at a program during college days and a lot of those young men and women I still keep in contact with to this day. I've been in numerous weddings (laughs) and I keep in contact with their families and their families have adopted me. So those, they're numerous.

[The definition of masculinity] I would say that...that's very subjective of course, but I would say it means portraying the stereotypes, the stereotypical male demeanor or the male role in our society or whatever society you're living in. That would mean having a strong demeanor, a strong personality, not perceived to be weak in any way, and to do what men tend to do- walk like men tend to walk, talk like men tend to talk- and not be mistaken for doing anything that's similar to what women's stereotypes are.

[The importance of masculinity to African American men] I really thought about this question. I did spend some time on it. I had to try to understand why it is important because I know that it is, and I know that it is a big issue because boys around American get taunted on the playground all the time I'm sure. But I'm thinking that if I had to analyze it, Black men tend to be- I think it's because we tend to focus on the reality that we can't control much that happens with us. We can't control the job market oftentimes. We can control how people think of us. We can't control how much money we make. We tend to be low on the totem pole with a lot of things. So one of the things that we can control would be ourselves and our possessions and be dominant over our own kingdom so to speak. I think that's why it exists. That's why those stigmas exist. That's why we have that fear of being weak and inferior and that's why we have that problem of feeling wrong if someone disrespects us, and why we have to go overboard because we're so disrespected and that's associated with masculinity and being dominant and not being perceived as weak.

[Masculinity and being an out, gay African American] I don't think [being a gay African American] makes them weak. I actually think in some respects it makes them stronger in a sense of being bold enough to actually- you kind of added something to that. You said being open. I don't think that- if they're open, I definitely think that that's not a sign a weakness. I think that's a sign of strength that they can do that. If it's just in fact that they're gay and they're male then no, I don't think that that makes them weak. I know tons, I know tons on both sides of the- all throughout the spectrum. I think there's definitely a continuum of masculinity, and I know many guys who go from one extreme to the other, but that's an interesting question.

[The meaning of gay and bisexual] I would say gay means you're attracted to someone of the same sex. I think that's simply what gay means. If that's your attraction, your preference, then I think that's a gay feeling (laughs) or you know what not. I think bisexual- I don't think that bisexuals are gay. I think that bisexual just mean who you have sex with. If you have sex with both men and women then I think you're bisexual. Even if you don't then- I think homosexual and bisexual are gay (laugh).

[Images that come to mind with the gay and bisexual terms] I think that what comes to mind is the stereotype of- if I heard the term gay, I would think of someone who is feminine. I think of someone who's slim, petite (laughs), and it's so ignorant for me to say that, but it's true. That's what comes to mind when I see that word. I think of the stereotypical, feminine male, flamboyant, soft in mannerism, non-aggressive, kind of loud obnoxious types. I think that comes to mind when I hear gay. Bisexual I tend to think of more masculine gay men and individuals who are just- I would think that's more masculine if someone tells me they're bisexual.

[Advantages and disadvantages of a being an out, African American man] I would say the disadvantages- I think that you already have it hard as a Black male in America, and to be gay and a Black male adds more weight to the burden that's placed upon you. I think depending on your occupation, it may be advantageous for you, but generally speaking I think that adds more reasons for people to hate on you, more reasons for people to discriminate against you, and I think that would be the biggest disadvantage.

I would say the only way I could see it being advantageous is again just occupation- if you're focused on HIV, gay issues, or something like that that appear to be gay-centered involvement. I think that would be fine. It would add credibility to you. I think if you were doing certain things like hair and makeup and all those things, you have a high female clientele, I think that can help you because they tend to [suspect] that you don't have a hidden agenda or ulterior motive dealing with them. So I think there could be some advantages depending on your day-to-day activities.

[Lenard's response to the opinion that the African American community is more homophobic than the White community] I would say that's an accurate statement. If I had to say why, it's very interesting. I had an example in a training today. A diversity training. We were talking about if there was an older teacher and an 18-year-old high school student dating or having sex would you tell or not? Then they switched it up on us and said what if there was a same-sex situation, and one of the Black females in the group raised her hand and said, "Then I'm telling." She wasn't going to tell if it wasn't a same-sex thing. She said, "I don't know why. Maybe it's just the way I am, but I'm going to tell." And so it was a clear example like Black people tend for the most part to be more homophobic for whatever reason. I think that's just-it comes down to. I think it goes back to what I said about Black men being inferior as far as how society portrays them and if Black people already have burdens placed on them, they definitely don't want to have additional burdens placed on them unnecessarily. So we want to have this perception and lack of acceptance around the issue because we want to discourage people from bringing their dirty laundry out.

[The greatest contributor to homophobia in the African American community] Oppression. It goes back to what I was saying about if we're oppressed people, then we're going to do

everything we can to uplift one another and not add additional burdens to our race, our culture, our situation, our family, etcetera.

[Discussions about HIV/AIDS when Lenard was growing up] I would say it was talked about in my home. I had a cousin, my father had a first cousin who died of AIDS. He was living with us at the time and this was in the mid-80s when it was first coming out. They were saying it was some disease that came from pigeon droppings, and then they said it was some other thing. All I remember thinking about was the chocolate laxative called Aids [Ex-lax]. That's all I thought about it. I didn't know anything about this, but I know he was always sick and he was always in the hospital, and my family was saying, "That's what gay men get." But we really didn't talk about it. I just sort of concluded that he was gay and that's why he got this and it's a disease like an STD or something that you get if you're gay. That's all I thought about it. My parents never really talked about his lifestyle or anything like that, and that's what we were told. And if I had to think about school and I didn't go to church at that older age, but we never talked about it in school really, not even in high school. It [his cousin having HIV/AIDS] didn't come off as though it was punishment at all. It just came off as, "You know, when you have sex it it's unprotected sex, you can catch VD," or one of those types of things. I remember knowing about STDs from [the television show] "Good Times" when J.J. got VD. I didn't know about all the different ones, so I just classified AIDS as this is one of those diseases you get when you have sex without a rubber.

[Lenard's response to articles and reports that men on the DL are not protecting themselves and putting other people at risk, or that they are the bridge to infection to African American men and women] I think it's a bunch of bullshit. I think it's all about personal responsibility and I was having a conversation about that over the weekend. I think that's it's a personal responsibility that you have to protect yourself and if in fact I was to contract HIV, I totally won't blame anybody else. I would totally blame myself for me making those choices and me taking those risks. I think that women- if women were more concerned about- hell, getting pregnant and/or other STDs we wouldn't have this problem. I think that men are not the problem. I think that in fact if a woman contracted it, it's because she took the risk and not because he was out and about. Men cheat, period (chuckles). So I don't think it has anything to do with DL men versus straight men and if he's out there putting himself doing what he does then who are you really responsible for? You're really responsible for yourself, and he's responsible for himself more or less than he's responsible for anybody else. I think that's just personal responsibility. [I asked Lenard what about for a woman who was married and found out] Again, that's how I am. I was like if I got married I would be using condoms. But I think that when it comes down to it, that's the risk that you take as a married couple, period. Because she could easily give something to him, too. I don't think it's about the man being the problem. I think that you kind of accepted the risk when you were having unprotected sex in your marriage because you don't know if you can trust your spouse or not. So I think that is an issue about marriage and trust than I it is a DL thing.

[How these articles portray African American DL men] I think that they portray DL brothers as evil, conniving, deceitful, I could go on and on. I think they portray them as the culprits and I think that the anger is misdirected. I think we need to talk about stigma. I think we need to talk about society. I think we need to talk about why it is that African American communities are

more homophobic than the White one. I think we need to go down to the root cause of the problem, and the root cause is not that these brothers are on the DL. I think that if women or society could accept the truth and embrace the truth as what it is. I think that's really the problem. Men have been cheating and sneaking around for years and I think that grandma and everybody else was like, "As long as they take care of home, it's okay." So we're going to sweep that under the rug. Then all of the sudden when things start to morph and get out of control and start to change the game a little bit. Now all of the sudden there starts to be an uproar and say, "Well he should tell." Well, what have we done to condone this behavior all along? We haven't been speaking up.

[Lenard's closing remarks] I think another part to that would be your occupation and your work situation because I know when I lived up North and they had the domestic partnership and so often I was like, "That would be so cool if I could go ahead and put my boy on my benefits." What backlash would that have? I always wanted to know that if I didn't get a promotion or if I didn't get an opportunity at work, it was strictly because of some other factor than a sexual orientation issue. And I don't think that that comfort level would have been there if I would have let that out. And I think that even if people are comfortable with disclosing things to their families and their friends, I think that might be one area where it couldn't happen. Also, I think you might not want to disclose to your family and friends because you don't want your job to know. So it could still keep you from telling folks because word gets out. I think that's another- would be another interesting dimension, because I know I had to struggle with that.

APPENDIX S

APPENDIX S Profile of Ooma

Focused Life History

[Family background] There was my mother, father, older sister, and my grandmother. That was it. Basically, we had a lot of laughter in the house. That's one of the things I always think about. My father worked several jobs. He didn't believe that my mother should work. Her place was there in the home, although there were times when she would go out and get a gig, but basically as a family, we were very small and very close.

[Family members belief system about gays and lesbians] Basically, I remember between my sister and my grandmother, there were never any comments made. My father was- one of the many things he did for a living- he was a musician; and I remember him talking about one of the guys- one of his fellow musicians. A rumor had it that he was gay, and with his it was just kind of- it was kind of a joke. It wasn't anything that- he didn't seem to be upset by the fact that someone would be gay. My mother, on the other hand, I always remember her sharing a story with me that basically resulted in her saying if any child of hers ever was caught doing what she had described in her story, she would disown them, you know. And those were the early years. Her attitude did a complete opposite many years later.

[Friends and their belief system] Friends- that's an awkward one because when I think of my friends, my male friends, I was having sex with 2 of my friends growing up, and there were other friends that I had in school who if anything was ever said, it wasn't really- a lot of attention wasn't given to it. Once in the while, there would be guys who weren't friends of mine, but who obviously saw something in me that I didn't see in myself, and they would make references to my being queer or something of that sort. But that was it.

That's about as far as it went. When I was in my teens, I had joined a band. I was about 14 or 15 when I joined the band and we became really popular in this area. Even with- there was only 1 guy in the band who would make a snide remark every now and then towards people who- someone who may have been attending the dance and appeared to be gay. A snide remark may have been made, and yet I never got any flack from anyone, and truthfully when I look at some of the photos that were taken then- I look at some of the photos of myself and I say to myself, "My God, how in the heck could anyone not know I was gay?" No one said anything about it.

[The impact family and friends belief system had on shaping Ooma's views] With reference to my mother threatening to disown a child of hers that was gays that probably contributed to me staying in the closet as long as I did. Once I came out to myself, it was some years before I came out to my mother. So that was one thing, and I think the fact that my father, although he didn't seem to have a hostile attitude towards gays, it was kind of a thing where he kind of laughed at them, and so that was another reason that I will say contributed to me not coming. And somewhere among the line- I know one other thing in the back of my mind was that I didn't want to bring any shame upon the family. Even though none of them ever said anything about me making them ashamed if a child of theirs was gay because of the projection that the media put out there in television or whatever. There was a degree of shame associated with being gay that I didn't want to put my family through in the beginning.

The only beliefs that I may have shared at the time was that there was some degree of shame and that there was something about it that wasn't right. That's a difficult one to answer because when I think of guys that I would see coming to the dances on occasion- some would come to the dance who were obviously gay, and my own attitude was, even though I hadn't come out to myself at the time but I had sex with guys- number one, I didn't identify with them because of the fact that they were very effeminate. Number two, I did find myself kind of laughing at them because of the fact that this is a man who's acting like a girl, and I think now that I heard myself say that, I think it wasn't so much the fact that it was someone who was gay as much as it was acting like a girl. Yeh.

[Intimate relationships that Ooma had over the years with women] I've been married twice, with my first wife- that was actually the longest relationship ever from the time we started dating up until we got a divorce, we were together about 6 years, and we have 2 children. And then I got married a second time, and that was the year from hell. I'm not going to say it was marriage from hell, it was the year from hell. I got married in May and within a month realized that this was not what I wanted to do, and I came out several months after getting married and we separated and got a divorce about a year later- a year after we got married and there were no children with that marriage.

[Ooma told me that although he went to church when he was young, there were no discussions about gays or lesbians or same-sex relationships] As an adult, the views that I heard the fact that it was wrong, pure and simple. It was an abomination. The whole nine yards. And that was it. And I guess I bought that for a very, very short period of time. And somehow it just didn't feel right. The whole thing was that it felt very natural, just very natural. So my thing is that it couldn't be wrong and it couldn't be sinful, and that was it. The God of my understanding today is love in its purest form and it's impossible for this love to hate or to be disappointed.

I had distanced myself from church when I was in junior high school, primarily because of the fact that I couldn't accept the Bible as it was written. That had nothing to do with my sexual orientation- well, I didn't even know then, but it wasn't until I was an adult before- this is another point. It wasn't until I was an adult before I started hearing about God's view on- or some church's views on homosexuality. I definitely believe that God loves.

The Details Interview

[Ooma's definition of DL] DL for me defines a gay/bisexual man who either totally in the closet or partially. [I formulated this definition] as a result of the kind of work that I use to do. Even though I identify as a gay man myself- I use to do HIV/AIDS prevention- knowledge and education and counseling- and it was through that and reflecting on my own stages of coming out of the closet that I came up with that definition. As an example, there was a time when in the very beginning that I called myself being out, but I was only out to the people who were going to the gay bars- gay friends- those were the only people who I was out to. I wasn't out to family members or co-workers or anything of that sort. So it was like. That's where I came up with "partially." I was partially out. I was out to myself, and partially in the closet. There was a point

when I had accepted the fact that I was gay, but I was petrified in the beginning of going to a gay bar. I remember one time there was a gay celebration- there was a gay pride celebration. I remember going to- I went, but I watched it from across the street- a safe distance. It was like even though I had admitted to myself that I was gay, I hadn't reached that point where I could even go to the bars or anything.

In my day, DL was defined as being in the closet. Coming out of me was a process. I was in the closet and didn't even know it. I wasn't aware of who I really was. Eventually, I began to go to gay bars and making friends, but it wasn't public knowledge. This was an extremely difficult time for me resulting in a lot of deception on my part towards my family members, friends, and coworkers. The first time I heard anything about the down low or being on the DL, it was in an article that I had read in the *New York Times*. [Years on the DL or closeted] I'd say it was probably about 13 years. I've met numerous men throughout the years in the gay bars, bathhouses, gay bookstores, and gay websites.

[Learning he was attracted to men] I was in my early 20's. It's funny because of the fact that I had sex with guys- I started having sex with guys when I was around 12, 13, somewhere in there. We were friends, and they were just friends of mine and this was just something that we did. It was in my very early 20's when I realized that I was attracted to guys and it frightened me because I was married at the time. It freaked me out in the beginning because it was a sort of demon that haunted me from my junior high and high school days. Some guys had made remarks alluding to the fact that I was gay, and I thought that now that I was married, I had not only proven to them that they were wrong, I had also proven to myself that I wasn't a queer or a fag. And those were the terms that we used back then, being queer or a fag or a sissy. This was, well when I talk about my junior high school days, I guess we're looking at the 1950s, and I went through that. Here it is now in the 1960s and I find myself being attracted to guys and it was- I was coming face-to-face with my own reality and it was frightening.

[Personal beliefs about gay men at this time] Again, it goes back to the stereotypical images that I had gotten. I was of the thinking that all gay men were effeminate. They liked to wear women's clothes and that they hated women. That was it. I can't say- I can't recall ever disliking gay men. I think if anything I may have laughed at them, but didn't dislike them.

[Mental health problems] I would say the- few things come to mind. One of them was doing a lot of drinking. I was definitely doing a lot of drinking. And I remember my son telling me one time how I would come home sometimes and I would be quiet. Sometimes I would just come home and immediately go to the piano and sit down and start playing piano- something of that sort. But it's like people knew there was something wrong, but I wasn't talking about it. It was mostly just being very sad.

[Being able to talk to someone about his feelings] No, I don't remember there being anyone I could confide in [in] the beginning. If I talked with anyone, it would have been someone that I had met in the bar.

[Ooma talks about how he coped with his feelings] Basically in the beginning, I spent more time at the gay bars than with my friends. I had started making friends there at the bars, so it was like- I was spending more time at the bars and having out with my new friends who were all gay.

[Ooma talks about alcoholism and how he started recover] Let's say a combination of the two. There was an intervention where the supervisor on my job wanted me to go and talk with someone in the employee assistance program, and the counselor there told me that if I ever thought I had a problem I could come back and see him. And then it was like a week or so later that I was having a typical day or the crap hitting the fan, and I was going to do my typical thing- go to the bar and just get bombed out of my mind. And it was like having that first drink calmed me down to the point where all the problems that I could identify having that day, I could link them to my drinking. I had known even before then that I was drinking too much, but I wasn't really aware of the fact that it was causing me the problems. I couldn't make that association and on this particular night, I was able to make the connection between my drinking and the problems I was having. And then it was like that next day, I went to the employee assistance program and I think the day after that I was in treatment. Just a little side note- I've been clean and sober going into my 26th year.

[How Ooma was finally able disclosed to his son and his mother] Actually what happened was that at one point I had- it had gotten to the point where- my son and I- after the divorce, my oldest son and I were living together and he and I from day one had always had a very open and honest relationship with each other, and it had really bothered me that I hadn't been honest and open with him. So I came out to him like when he was around 15. Around that same time, as a matter of fact it was the day after that I came out to my mother; and it was like after I had talked with the two of them that lightened to load considerably. (Chuckle) Without going into any details, both of them knew. My son had suspected that I was gay, and he told me his reasons why. My mother also knew that I was gay because she had been, being nosy and everything, she came across a letter that I had gotten from a lover of mine, and I had left it out.

Throughout that year, there were family members that I told, and then to this day there are still family members that I haven't said anything to, but now actually that I'm sitting up here thinking about it, the only family member that I really never came out to was my father. I'm still trying to figure out what that was all about. I think a part of it has to do with the fact that he and I weren't really close, but even when I say that I always have to tell people that it doesn't mean that we were at each other's throat either, not by any means. We just weren't that close and then on the other hand, sometimes I feel as though I was sort of a disappointment to him, but that's only sometimes. But there were other times when I know good and well [that] he loves me, and my sister and I have talked about it. Actually, the closest I came to telling him- let me take that back- the closest I came to telling him was early one Monday morning, he just asked me if I was dating women anymore, and I just told him no, and he never went any further. Yeh.

[Ooma talks about friends who disclosed and the outcomes of the disclosures] I knew of guys who were married years ago and came out to their wives and families. It [the outcomes] was mixed. I think about this one friend of mine. I think in the beginning, his wife really had a problem with it, but now they're really good friends. They get along fine. And then I can think of another guy where it wasn't the same. As a matter of fact, I can think of two guys where it wasn't the same. Their wives took it personally and were never able to come to grips with the fact that they couldn't accept their ex-mates as they were. And some of it I can understand because unfortunately there are a lot of times where, especially in the beginning, there's a lot of deception. In some cases, one in particular, it was just a think where she could never accept her

husband. She could never forgive him for his deception and she really had a really rough time with it. [I ask Ooma more about deception in his experience] For instance, there are times where they may tell their wives that they're going one place or they're going to be in one place and they're somewhere else. Same kind of deception that straight men do when there's another woman or other women. It's that same kind of thing, but the fact that this carries a double whammy of not only am I- I've been seeing someone else, and it's a guy. I can understand where that could really do a number on someone.

With my second spouse- I've been married twice- and it was during the second marriage that I came out. I remember I would tell her that I was going to the bar, or something of that sort. Or that I was going on a business trip. And that was it. And at the time when we finally separated, I don't think- I didn't come out to her totally. I kinda like hinted around, but I never really came out and told her point blank that I was gay. My reason for that was that it was back in a time when- we're talking about 1970- when basically, aside from murder, there weren't any laws out there protecting gay people. So with that said, the thing that I had to keep in mind was that I had custody of my son. I had custody of a minor child. To come out to her would have been- I viewed it as being risky. It could have been risky because she could have- if she wanted to be really vicious- she could have gone to court and said I was unfit and that would have been all she needed. And at the time when she and I separated, I wasn't out to anyone. I was still in the closet with the exception of when I was going to the bars. Between that time and the time when we actually separated, I wasn't with anyone else. Let me take that back, I had been with other people while we were together.

Reflection on the Meaning Interview

[What it means to be an African American man in society today] Regardless of education or one's status, African American men are still looked upon as being "less than"- little man on the totem pole. That's regardless of- I sense there's a lot of phoniness with White people towards African American men, African Americans period. I would say every day there is something. Some of it may be my imagination, you know. I think most recently it appears to me that today with reference to the presidential race. It appears to me as though, and in very subtle ways Hillary Clinton gets a little bit more attention than Barack Obama. And that's my perception, my perspective.

[Roles in the home, work, and community] I wore a number of different hats. I've been a responsible father-still a responsible grandfather, I guess. And by that I mean I've always been self-sufficient. I've always worked. The whole bit. I guess to some degree, I have been somewhat of a role model because I started playing in the band back in the 1950s- in an interracial group which was practically unheard of, but we were fairly popular. Years and years later, after coming out as a gay man, eventually because of the line of work that I was doing with reference to HIV prevention and education, I was labeled a leader in the Black, gay community. Nowadays, I'm just kind of doing my own thing. I've been father, husband, leader (chuckled). I guess somewhat of an icon if you will.

[The meaning of masculinity] I looked upon the term masculinity as being the opposite of feminine. A masculine man does not act like a woman or exhibit feminine characteristics. I look

upon feminine as delicate. I think that would be a word. I almost said soft, but that's not really my definition of femininity. So I'm tempted to say delicate, and delicate doesn't necessarily mean fragile. I'm just trying to think...I look at my grandmother. Now my grandmother wasn't one who was fragile. She was feminine, but at the same time she was a very strong, independent woman. So I guess I think in terms of clothes, the way women dress, that kind of thing. That's really a difficult one because the truth is I don't like men who are effeminate, men who act like women, but by the same token I do like guys who are soft in nature, soft spoken, whatever. The term jocks- jocks and these mechanic-type guys. Super butch guys, they really turn me off.

[The importance of masculinity to African American men] whereas masculinity is important to most men regardless of race, for African American men who I feel are still looked upon as being less than, masculinity is another of proving to others as well as ourselves that we are in fact as good as any other men- that we are not weak or worthless. Something which many slave masters tried to instill in us and others. So yes, I can see where masculinity is very important.

[Ooma's opinion on gay African American men being masculine] I feel that masculinity doesn't have anything to do with being gay. If a man likes to get penetrated by another man, it doesn't have anything to do with his masculinity. I know men who are effeminate, but don't get penetrated. And there are some men who are effeminate will only penetrate. I know men who are effeminate, but they're *tops*.

[Ooma's definition of gay and bisexual] Being gay is more of an emotional attraction rather than a physical act. A person who is bisexual is emotionally and sexually attracted to males and females. When I think of straight people who are in their 90s and they're not having sex anymore- well we assume they're not having sex, who knows- it isn't like just because they're not having sex they're no longer straight. It's the same thing I see with older, gay men and women. Just because they're not having sex, that doesn't mean they're no longer gay. It goes back to that thing I was talking about earlier, the emotional thing.

[Advantages and disadvantages of being an out, gay African American man] I put down here, "To thine own self be true." To me, that's the bottom line is to thine own self be true. I can understand disadvantages where, even though there are certain laws in place protecting one's employment and that kind of stuff. I don't think in an across the board law. It's pretty much up to the states. But certainly even without the laws when I think in terms of someone who may live in rural areas where you've got small populations and everything, and those populations may not be as understanding or educated about homosexuality. For one's own safety it would probably be to his or her advantage not to come out. There's advantages and disadvantages on both sides. That's like a topic of discussion on its own, and I guess maybe that's why I put down here to thine own self be true. We could spend a half an hour talking about that alone. There are two things that come to mind when I think of being true. One of them is that the truth hurts, but the thing I tell people is the fact that the truth will also set you free.

[Ooma's response to the opinion that the African American community is more homophobic than the White community] My thing on that is that I don't think the African American community is any more or less homophobic than the White community. [I based that on] two things, the church and ignorance. The church- even though many churches are changing, [I say]

the church because of the various quotes from the Bible that the church continues to use; and then with reference with to ignorance, the fact that- I was just telling someone the other day that I think most people today when you tell them you're gay, they still think in terms of just the sexual act. We were saying that a lot of straight people seem to think they all we do is have sex sunup and sundown. Needless to say, that's not the case. There are those people that have no idea- the church preaches one thing, and then there are those people who are just ignorant [about] what being gay is all about.

[First heard about HIV/AIDS] When I first started hearing about it, I was in a relationship, and I remember basically talking about seeing it in the news. We were kind of like taken aback by why would there be a virus, how would there be a virus that only affects gay people. It didn't really make any sense, and that was it. It was just- that's about the best I can say. That was about the only thing going on with that. How in the heck do you have a cancer, because that's what they referred to it in the beginning, as the gay cancer. And it was just something that just didn't make sense and that was it.

[Ooma's response to reports that men on the DL were putting other people at risk because they weren't protecting themselves] I haven't read any articles recently about men on the DL using protection, but it's been my experience that regardless of how one identifies, with all the information that's out there today, guys are doing what they want to do. I'm almost tempted to say people are doing what they want to do. I look upon it in the same way as I do with cigarette smoking. With all the information out there about cigarette smoking, you still have people who smoke, and you have new smokers who are popping up every day. I guess my underlying thing is the old thing of it's not who you are, it's what you do. I don't think it's just men on the DL who are putting others at risk as well as themselves. But you got gay men putting themselves and others at risk. You got IV drug users who are out there. I think IV drug users are probably protecting themselves more now. I assume that there is still a needle exchange program going on. My feeling there that it isn't so much as who the person- what group that individual falls into, it's what they do.

[How these reports portrayed African American DL men] The men on the DL are the new underdogs. Whereas the gay and straight community may be more empathetic towards gay men living in the closet, men on the DL are viewed in a negative light. The reason I say that is because of the fact that gay men who live their lives in the closet, a lot of them have different reasons. They have different concerns and everything, but they're gay men. They're gay men who are concerned about their jobs. They are concerned about their family finding out, so forth and so on. Guys who are on the DL, and this gets really confusing, but I tend to think of guys who are on the DL as guys who have girlfriends or wives, whatever, and they want to have their cake and eat it, too. And that's okay. Men on the DL, they've been around since air. The other thing I put down is that whereas gays and drug addicts were blamed for the spread of HIV, the shift is now more on men who id as DL, and the truth is it's not who you are, it's what you do.

[Ooma's closing remarks] This is something I've been talking about lately and that's the fact that I really see it as there are basically two kinds of sex: good sex and bad sex. There's a sex that feels good and a sex that feels bad. Whether one's partner is the same sex or not is a totally different story. If a man is blindfolded and the recipient of oral sex, the only question he's

capable of answering honestly is whether or not he enjoyed it. If a man enjoys the sensation of anal stimulation, including penetration, it doesn't mean that he's gay or bisexual. It means that he enjoys anal stimulation, which can be induced by a woman inserting in a dildo. We have grandparents who are in their 80s and 90s who stopped having sex years, but this doesn't mean that they're no longer straight. They are still emotionally attracted to the opposite sex.

APPENDIX T

APPENDIX T

Profile of Shawn

Focused Life History

[Family background] I have a father and step-mother and they've been together since I was basically born. My mother married my stepfather. My step-father had some kids, and my stepmother brought some kids into the marriage.

[Family activities] One of the main things that we did together is-probably the one we always get together was- we always went to church together [non-denominational]. My father, he's a pastor. That's one of the main reasons that we did. Church covered everything we did, so we were surrounded by the church.

[Family member's views of gays and lesbians] There were- both sides- my dad's side and my mother's side were completely against it. I don't think we had anybody in the family that was known to be homosexual, and going by my father being a pastor, he always talked about how wrong it was. How the gays are going to hell and all that kind of stuff. Then he'll read some scripture- I forgot the scripture, but it's like when a male lays down with another man. And he use to always shout that none of kids will be homosexual (laughs). He believed that if you raised up your son like a man, meaning doing yard work, working on cars, kind of stuff and I guess hanging around him, that there was a small chance that one of his kids would grow up to be gay. I felt like the ultimate penalty was that nothing was going to work out as far as life. I was probably going to catch a disease and go to hell.

[How these beliefs shaped Shawn's beliefs about gays and lesbians] No. I just kind of let them- I just kind of kept quiet. I remember one time when I might have chimed in like, "Oh yeh, that's gross," or something like that. So I guess.

[Friends Shawn grew up with and their beliefs] The activities that we did was, I played basketball, football and they kind of believed the same thing- that it was wrong. They use to make fun of anybody who had feminine traits or something like that.

[High school activities and classmate comments about gays and lesbians] In high school, I was involved in track and I was also involved in band. Of course it was when they saw somebody who they suspected of being gay or whatever. They would make commented about it- it was gross, nasty. When there were some gays around.

[Witnessing any harassment of gay students] I didn't- not really. I feel like kids would go by and like, "Oh yeh he's so gay," or whatever. I guess that is harassment. I don't think it was too constant or that constant, or what you consider harassment. I assumed that everybody who was gay was very feminine, didn't like to play, and wore red.

[Relationships maintained over the years] I did have girlfriends. I was not married.

Details Interview

[Shawn's definition of the DL] I feel like the definition has changed especially over the years. When I first heard the term about- I guess it was back in 2001, it was commonly used as a guy who had sexual relations with another guy and didn't want anybody else to know about his sex life at all. So he exudes very masculine traits, didn't let too many people- obviously very secret about what's going on, didn't not hang around other guys who were feminine or who would spread his business or anything like that. Back then it was another term. It was *trade*, and trade was a guy who was on the DL, but was involved with females at the same time. So they say trade because you trade off between men and women. You trade like you have a girlfriend, but you trade to guys at times. That was the earlier term, then after the whole J.L. King- he came out with that book on the DL-it completely changed the meaning of the DL, and I think now it's referred to as a guy who's married or something like that or has a girlfriend, but sleeps with guys on the side. Originally, that was what we called trade- trade guys, trade men. My definition originated from when I first started, the person I was involved with was kind of like guiding me and giving me advice and tips and all that kind of stuff. That's where I got my definition and then I started seeing it in other guys. That's how I developed it. I decided to explore this avenue about 7 years now.

What happened was when I first started and the only avenue that I had was to talk to other guys online, or course creating an anonymous name- something nobody knew about and talking with different people online. That's how I got my definitions and know a little bit about the lifestyle and all that kind of stuff. I have met guys at the gym. I have met guys at the airport. It was done in a very DL fashion. It's all with eye contact that lasts a little bit longer than it should. There are types of signals, head nods or when people greet each other with a handshake. I received a couple of those and just little things that give it away. I remember when I was at the airport, I saw a guy who had an E. Lynn Harris' book and he was reading an E. Lynn Harris book. And I guess unless you really know who E. Lynn Harris is, you wouldn't really know that person- you know what I mean? So that was at the airport. Little stuff like that.

I first realized that I was attracted to men back in high school, when I first started high school. Just hearing about it. My father use to always speak out that was wrong and nasty you're going to hell and it was an abomination and my brothers were very into women and always talking about girls and all that kind of stuff. I felt that it was wrong, must keep it a secret, must not tell anyone, didn't want anyone treating me differently because I did see that the ones who did admit that they were attracted to men, they were treated differently- I mean, name-calling, don't want to hang around them, my son is not going to hang around your son and all this kind of stuff, like it was a contagious disease- stuff like that. I didn't want that. I still wanted to be seen as I guess you can say a young man. I just kept it to myself. [I asked him if people thought being gay was contagious] Yes, that's the kind of thing- I don't know if it's just the African American community, but like if a child is gay, then another parent wouldn't want their kids to hang around that child because they'd be scared that the gay child would introduce the child to something. That's goes for teachers as well. I've noticed that, too. Since my family was very religious- see my dad was sort of a player (laughs). He had all kinds of females even when he was married. There was the secretary or somebody in the choir or somebody from a different church, and I remember him telling me this scripture about a curse. Like sometimes a curse

happens and it might not happen to you, but it might happen to your sons or your sons' sons- a generational curse. I kind of felt that for a while growing up because of his sins and his adultery that I was being cursed by having an attraction for what my dad clearly didn't have an attraction- you know what I mean?

[Shawn's personal beliefs about same-sex relationships then and now] Basically when I was younger, same-sex relationships- I really didn't hear about lesbians until after I went to college. [Gay] was a guy who likes to have sex with other guys, and the whole relationship aspect was not even there. It was like these men have crazy ideas and just want to mess with other guys and all that kind of stuff. The fact that gay men could actually be on love with another man or develop a life together- back then that wasn't something I knew about. I only knew about the whole gay sex. So back then I was homophobic myself. I didn't really want to hang around people who I knew were gay because I was scared that someone would suspect I was guilty by association. That's still that was today (laughs) for the most part. I was very homophobic back then. Now I'm not scared- I don't know if that's the correct word to say, but I'm not scared of other gay men. I am actually happy for those that are able to come out and say who they are and all that stuff. I give them respect, but as far as my association with the out community, I still would rather not be there.

[Shawn's personal struggle with his attraction to men] Because I grew up in the Christian home and we was in church like seven or six days out of the week because there was always some type of board meeting or choir or rehearsal, and at one point I got tired of hearing the same message over and over about my feelings and especially today. I have developed my own personal relationship with my Father, God, instead of going to church because a lot of ministers- I don't even go to my dad's church anymore. I remember going to a church service. I loved the church. It was nice praise and worship. I really did love the church and I was going often; and then the first lady of the church got up one day- it was during the last presidential election- and she said, "I'm not telling you who to vote for, but if you don't vote for Bush, don't come and complain to me when gays are getting married," and I thought that was ridiculous to say in front of the whole congregation. Just taking out the fact that of education and poverty, and all the other facts she didn't address. That was a moral campaign. And the one thing that she tell-it was a big congregation. It was almost close to like a megachurch. And she got up there and said it in front of everybody. So I thought that there were other points like education, poverty, housing that she could address, but she chose to use the whole if you don't vote for Bush, don't come complaining to me when gays are getting married. That kind of turned me off. So right now my beliefs are you go to the church because that's the place you get to fellowship with other people, but it's hard for my to find that place because it's so much retribution about the gay lifestyle.

[Mental health problems] I was very depressed growing up. I didn't like to do any of- it got to the point where-like my father. He was working on cars and doing yard work, and I was completely different. I was big on computers and reading a good back and then with me by having to do those things with my father and working on cars and the yard work, it really got me down because I felt I had to do this life or fit into this mold and I couldn't be myself. And it got me depressed a lot. When I got to college, I actually went to see a psychiatrist and I was put on different medications for depression and anxiety. I kind of withdrew myself from the world. I wouldn't go to social events. I was tired of being fake. I was tired of having to putting on this

front. I just withdrew myself from the world. My family today thinks I'm a very quiet person, and the only reason why they think so is because I've never been myself around them. I can't be myself around them, so they think I'm quiet. They always say, "You're so quiet. You never talk back. You never do this. You never do that. You've always been that way."

[Shawn's decision not to disclose to family and friends] I'm in my 20s and this is something that I'm dealing with now, and I'm still able to blow off questions about if I'm seeing someone and stuff like that because my family thinks that- you know I'm a college boy and I have a couple of girls around campus. I've never said anything like, but I just let them think what they want to think and that's what they've been thinking. I just have a couple of girls.

[Shawn's decision to talk with a psychiatrist] It's funny because they had to be a particular psychiatrist. Like I couldn't talk to a Black psychiatrist, like Black females or Black males. I could never talk about my struggles with even a White female. It had to be a White male. I guess the White part because it wasn't someone from my own community. You know how the African American community feels about homosexuality, and then the male because I thought there was some type of understanding. Again, didn't know too much about females and lesbians. A White male could probably identify or picture what I'm going through better than anyone else. [I asked him about talking with me, an African American female] It's because I can't see you. Once we hang up, that's it. You're in a different state completely. Different time zone. That's fine. You have my alias, so it's okay.

I do have a close friend of mine who I have told about my feelings. And she's actually a Black female. It's kind of funny how it happened. We took classes together and she thought I was attractive. She tried to get with me, and she was very persistent. I tried to tell her I'm working on school or I'm not interested and all that kind of stuff. She wouldn't let that go. So we got into a nice friendship and she still tried. So I was able to realize that I could trust her completely. I kind of, "Look, this is the reason why we can't be together." And we have been friends ever since. At first it was like, "Are you telling me this just to throw me off?" I guess it was disbelief. It took a while for her to see that it was real and I wasn't just playing or trying to throw her off. We're actually really close to this day.

[How Shawn worked through his struggles] I guess the female friend I referred to was very instrumental in that. Just having some type of outlet that I can go to and talk about it. The psychiatrist really helped and I guess the prescriptions really helped, too. I got to a place where I felt like all these emotions, all my ideals and my thoughts were bottled up inside of me and I didn't know what to do with them. I had to find an outlet to go and talk to about it.

[How would like be different if Shawn could disclose to his family] I think it would be very different. I think that I would be able to- for example- I think I would be able to run for some type of office, whether it was for school or in the community or something like that. Now, I wouldn't be able to do that because I would be so afraid that someone that I met on the DL in my past would say, "That's so and so." Everybody has different- like people on the DL, when I first started, may not be on the DL now. They might have reached the point where they were able to freely expressed themselves or whatever and if I'm running for some type of office would- I

wouldn't want them to bring up, "Well, he's gay," and all that kind of stuff. So I think that I would be running for different office.

I definitely would be more- I think my family would know me at least. Know more of my personality. Know what I'm not really quiet at all. I think there would be a lot of family changes and social changes and that kind of stuff. Being well-known in the community. Maybe not even running for office, but being well-known in the community and giving back to the community. I'm scared to-I always wanted to help out like the Boy's Club- like helping out a kind who doesn't have or was not as fortunate as I was growing up, but I don't want my good deeds to be spoken of, I guess you can say. There's a lot of things that I stay away from that I wouldn't have if I was free and out.

[Shawn talks about other people he knows who came out and the outcome] The outcomes- one of my friends who disclosed to their parents, the father just stopped talking to him altogether and the mother, she was just disappointed. She was really disappointed, but she still said that she loved him and everything, but she was really disappointed and every time he went home or goes home he still gets that disappointment from his mother and his father is still not speaking to him. That really depressed him, but he felt like I got it out. [Any positive outcomes] I've heard of stories, but I don't know of any personally. I saw stories- there's actually a TV show about coming out stories- where some people were very accepting. Like you're my son and I love you regardless. That type of stuff. I don't know of any positive situations personally.

Reflection on the Meaning Interview

[Shawn's talks about what it means to be an African American man in society] It means to like strong, masculine, a community figure. Someone who supports their family- that type of thing. Like my father being a pastor- very active in the community, and I was privileged enough to see an African American man who was very active in the community and stuff like that. We have so much history as far as community stuff.

[Roles] I don't really play too many roles because of the fear of being exposed or someone finding out. It's kind of fear that I have; but the roles that I do play in the community I know my last community project was to research grants- something that's low-keyed and you probably might not get any recognition for it (chuckle). Stuff like that. [At home] Just the role of a friend. I have a roommate, so.

[Shawn's definition of masculinity] When I think about masculinity, I think about a smell. I don't know if I can describe the type of smell I'm talking about, but I think about a smell. I also think about an over-exaggerated, take-charge, protector, and confident qualities when I think about masculinity. I think it is important [to African American men]. I think it's important for families and our communities to have a masculine man because a lot of times masculinity is seen as strength. I think our families and our communities need to see strength in a man. When I say strength I'm talking about standing up for what a person believes in, the take-charge, confident, the foundation- that's what I'm talking about.

[Is an out, gay African American man less masculine?] In my opinion is no, I do not feel it makes them less masculine, but I feel if they come out and make it public, then other people and maybe even myself would think they're not as masculine for coming out and telling everybody they're gay. [I asked him why felt that way] I don't know. It's kind of mad, but a lot of times you'll find in the gay community that DL brothers have the same homophobia and they believe the same stereotypes that other people believe. I guess that's what my beliefs, my background, the fact that there's not too many well-known, gay African American men- I guess that plays into it, too.

[Meaning of gay and bisexual] Gay is an individual who is attracted to the same sex, and I think bisexual is like a subtype of gay so it falls under the gay umbrella and when you have an equal attraction to male and female. Images that come to my mind. Unfortunately when I think about gay I see a White, feminine guy and when I think about the bisexual image, I'm seeing somebody who's very confused with his sexuality. I guess there're more examples of White gay men out there. I see them everyday. One thing, it may not be, the feminine qualities, I see it a lot in White guys. So that's the first thing that comes to mind when I hear gay. I think a person can truly be attracted to both sexes, but I don't know if it's a stereotype that shapes this image in my head or what, but it just seems that when I think of the word bisexual, I just think of somebody who's confused that hasn't had the chance to explore.

[Advantages and disadvantages of being an out, gay African American man] When you said a gay African American man- some of the advantages that I see is that person does not have to hide his feelings. He doesn't have to hide who he is attracted to. He doesn't have to have lies and tell secrets. He can pretty much be open. That's the only advantage I can think of- well besides that advantage, I also think of an African American gay male who is out can fight some of the stereotypes about gay, Black men. But the disadvantages I see is rejection from community. The Black community is kind of homophobic. That's another thing he's going to have to deal with when he's fighting oppression of being a Black male who's also gay. I feel like it's a whole lot. And then just dealing with the homophobic society that we live in.

[Shawn's comments about the African American community being more homophobic than the White community] My response is that is very true. Again, I have to go back to examples. I think that there's more out White people than there are Black people. So the argument is that we don't have the information. We don't have the resources. We just don't. We're kind of ignorant to the whole thing so I think that's where a lot of our homophobia stems from. There are a lot of gay Black males who are homophobic themselves.[The greatest contributor to homophobia in the Black community] I think it's examples in the media. I think it's the church. We have a strong standing in the church in the African American community. I think that has a lot to do with it. And education- there's not that many resources out there to educate someone on the lifestyle.

[Shawn discusses how HIV/AIDS was discussed when he was growing up] When I was growing up, it was talked about as a White, gay man's disease. And then in high school and in church, it was talked about as a gay man's disease. If you want to sleep with other guys, you're going to catch AIDS and you're going to burn in fire (chuckles). So that was how it was taught. It wasn't talked about at home at all. [It was talked about] in the Black community as I was growing up. It was talked about as a White man's disease. We didn't even acknowledge it- that it could happen

to us. But about the time I got out of high school, I did hear a couple of messages in church, but at that point they were saying that it's punishment for sleeping with guys. I took a sex-ed course in school, and they talked about all STD's; but as far as church, as far as the house and the community, no. Prevention was never talked about.

[Shawn's response to articles and reports in the past that implied that there's a link between DL men and the rise of HIV in the Black community] I'm glad the reports are coming out so people can understand the seriousness of HIV, but I hate the way it's making the African American community turn on people who are secretive about their lives. It's almost becoming like a witch-hunt. I know I was sitting down with a group of ladies I went to school with and we normally go out every month and they brought the J.L. King book *On the Down Low*, and they were just talking about they wonder if their boyfriends or their family members were on the DL. It was more about people catching people on the DL and they was sitting up there gossiping and it turned into like a witch-hunt. It was like they were trying to do thing to find out their boyfriends or whatever were on the DL. Other than that, I do not like it.

[The reports portray African American DL men] as very promiscuous, sexually deviant men- no morals, no self-esteem, just all about sex and that's not true. It's all negative (chuckles). And I feel like that has also increased into the African American community and homophobia.

[Shawn's final comments] I think, I don't know if you have heard to the TV series called the *DL Chronicles*. The *DL Chronicles* is actually a pretty good series. You get to see the lives of different DL men. I think one of the biggest misconceptions is that all DL men are married with females and sleeping around with guys at the same time. That's a big misconception. I think that TV series kinds of opens up the mind and explores some of the stereotypes. And I also think churches- the African American churches could play a better role in HIV outreach. It seems like churches completely ignore people who are gay. I don't know if the churches- I don't know why. And especially with people with AIDS, even if it's from needles or drugs or whatever, I have noticed, because I've been on a church tour for the last couple of months. I've been going around to different churches I which one I fit in, and I have noticed that no church has a- they talk about AIDS is killing all our people, but there's no outreach and no support for the ones that are struggling with the disease. Churches can do a better role with that. And the mental stability of people who are on the DL- I know I had a hard time growing up with these feelings- not knowing what to do with them. Not having anyone to talk to. Trying to sort them out, repressed stuff like that. I think if there was more open communication or if there was some type of counseling that some of these people can go to, especially the younger ones that maybe that would help. [I asked him if maybe a community mental health counselor could help] Right. I think the mental health community should do more. [I asked Shawn what could they do? How would he educate them?] They got to first be more open to the idea that it's out there, that their loved ones could possibly be that way. And to change their mindset that it's not as disgusting or people are going to burn in hell, or not my child and all that kind of stuff. First you have to be open to the idea and then the resources and education should follow that. But I really think it's going to have to take somebody who's in a very high position. I don't know if it's from the music industry or some type of pastor or something. Somebody high up is going to have to start the movement.

IRB

Office for Research
Office of the Chair,
Institutional Review Board for the
Protection of Human Subjects

November 27, 2007



Priscilla Gann Wilson
Counselor Education
College of Education

Re: IRB # 06-OR-142-R1 "The Secret Life of Men on the Down Low"

Dear Ms. Wilson:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted your renewal application approval.

Your renewal application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the assigned IRB application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carpentato T. Myles".

Carpentato T. Myles, MSM
Research Compliance Officer
The University of Alabama



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Figure 1. Critical Race Theory's Family Tree

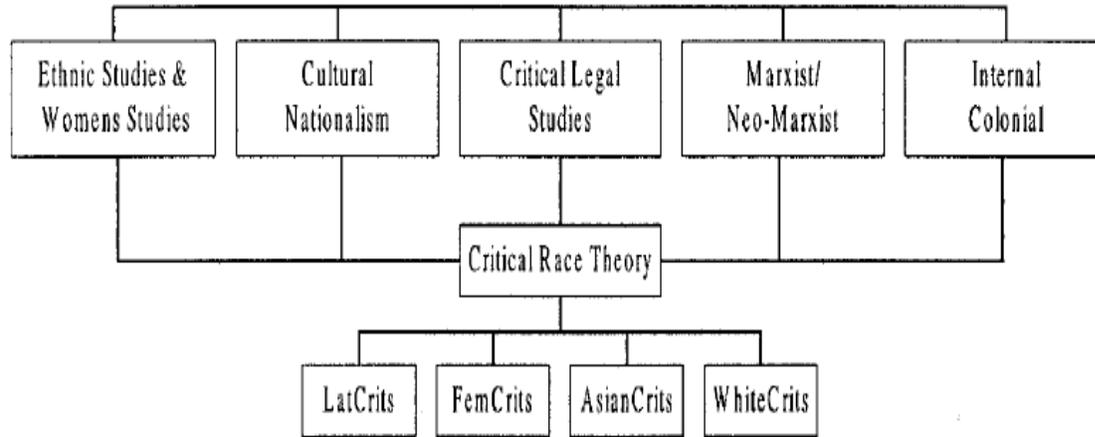


Figure 1. Critical Race Theory's Family Tree. The splinter groups that developed from this theoretical framework, including Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrits), Feminist Critical Race Theory (Fem Crits), Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrits), and White Critical Race Theory (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).