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Abstract

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer (LGBTQ) persons who wish to come out to (Samuels 2003), embark on the self-revealing and actualizing dialogue wherein she or he discloses sexual identity, to another person or persons. However, coming out to others is not one conversational discourse but many. An LGBTQ person faces a daily, lifelong choice-series to speak or remain silent (237). In American culture, LGBTQ persons must cope with entrenched social constructs which specify that any but the hetero is a deviant being (Rimmerman 2008). Thus, the ability of LGBTQ persons to speak freely is greatly constricted—acceptance of the revealed identity is uncertain. The disclosure discourse effectively and permanently shifts the LGBTQ person's identity, and thus the person him- or herself, to the hetero-other, who may reject this 'new' person. Here the LGBTQ person evinces Maslow's theory of human motivation (1943), demonstrating the needs for safety, love and esteem. Maslow emphasizes that the "...normal adult..." (378) in American society generally need not fear lack of safety [italics added]. The disclosure dialogue is actually a pre-negotiation. When the dialogue involves a core personal and social identity, such as that facing an LGBTQ person when considering whether to come out to another person or continue to pass, risks are high, unless the LGBTQ party can determine how the other party will react and respond appropriately before disclosing.

Introduction

Coming out to is the unique term ascribed to the self-revealing and actualizing event in which an LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgendered, Queer) person chooses to self-identify sexual identity, *to* another person or persons (Samuels, 2003). However, *coming out to* others is a conversation that does not necessarily happen only once but is a choice an LGBTQ person faces continually. Moreover, once the person is out, for instance to family and friends, these people face the question of whether to share or remain silent, to others, about the revealed sexual identity ("Coming out" n.d.). *Coming out to*, therefore, is a process of disclosure, as well as a specific dialogue.

Rimmerman (2008: 15) writes that the entrenched view of gays and lesbians is that these persons are "…perverts, psychopaths, deviates […] a flawed individual." Mohr (2005) adds that although an enormous social paradigmatic repositioning is underway in contemporary America, many heterosexuals still feel compelled to respond to a person identified as LGBTQ as being morally corrupted. Such a stereotypical reaction arises from standardized sexual identity norms even while the hetero-individual may in fact be perfectly accepting of LGBTQ persons individually. Whether to *come out to* or *pass*, therefore, must be carefully considered, with each person and in each context, of the LGBTQ person's life. As the disclosure discourse is expanded to additional family and friends, the process is repeated.

Due to socially-constructed gender role norms, an LGBTQ person faces enormous consequences should she or he err in judgment in how receptive the other person is to hearing and accepting the disclosure. Lewicki, Barry and Saunders (2007) emphasize that when a person faces certain grief by negotiating, the process should be avoided. Thus, the task facing the LGBTQ person who wishes to *come out to* is to determine whether or not this is indeed the case, through *pre-negotiations*. Within the context of the pre-negotiations *coming out to* discourse, the LGBTQ person has a *Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement* (BATNA) (Ury, 1993), and a *Resistance Point*, reached when the person determines that the negotiation must be terminated because her or his goal[s] cannot be achieved (Lewicki, Barry and Saunders).

I begin with a discussion of the social construct of gender, showing that the dual-gender norm in American society is a stable context which is disrupted by the LGBTQ identity disclosure. However, the drive for self-actualization, illustrated by Maslow's

hierarchy of needs, which stipulates that individuals need love and acceptance, coupled with the consequences of *passing*: internal distress, a feeling of deep misrepresentation of self (Samuels, 2003), may impel LGBTQ persons to engage in a *coming out to* disclosure with important people in their lives, such as friends and family.

The impact of the discourse is to change the relationship, destabilizing both it and the gender-role context, moving the person toward possible rejection. Indeed, Kurtzberg and Medvec (1999) found that for friends to negotiate is in itself a deeply problematic event, as emotions and issues of trust, along with considerations for the relationship's future, are involved. I will discuss the stages of pre-negotiations through an empirical analysis of accounts of and advice to, those deciding whether to *come out to* or *pass*, published popularly on the Internet, from the perspective that persons seeking to disclose may turn to such advice as an easily-accessed source for guidance.

Saunders (1985) urges that additional attention be paid to the pre-negotiations phase of the negotiations process, arguing that insufficient devotion is accorded to the barriers which prevent individuals from coming to the table. The *coming out to* process is not necessarily immediate, but may occur over time (Niolon n.d.); careful analysis of the pre-negotiations process is clearly instrumental in recognizing and understanding obstacles to any negotiation and will add an additional dimension to negotiations theory.

2. State of the Art

My intent in this paper is to examine pre-negotiations as it applies to LGBTQ *coming out to* or *pass* conversations, as a component in building a model of how such individuals handle disclosure of their sexual identity, leading to an eventual theoretical understanding of sexual identity disclosure. From thirteen accounts of advice for those *coming out to* others, published on the Internet, I collected similarities and differences in recommended courses of action. The internet is seen as a source of information that is readily available to many people who may be seeking to learn about how to *come out to* others, safely. Appendix A contains the internet source list, while the original notes from which the coding was done form Appendix B. As I move toward developing a praxis model which deconstructs the *coming out to* discourse dialogue, these currently-available internet sources reveal their limitations and point the way for additional research.

2.1 *Literature Review*

Social construction of sexual identity, gender norms, and social changes

Gender/sexual identity norms are a social construct. What people deem 'normal' frames and informs the believed abnormal, as well as creates what is 'right'. Derrida (cited in Wilchins, 2004) writes that gender is actually a language, wherein structures, meanings, and symbols operate channeling perceptions of who is to be privileged and who must be marginalized.

Wilchins (2004) states that gender construction and sexual delineation first appeared during the eighteenth century, when ovaries and testes, which were formerly called "gonads" and non-differentiated, were reframed as different from one another; in addition, the penis and the vagina were now reconceptualized as being different, and the latter was given a separate name. Differences between men and women were thus accentuated and in consequence, understanding of men and women as similar, dwindled. Beginning in the nineteenth century, the person interested in male same-sex relationships was branded a "homosexual" and considered aberrant (Kirsch, 2000: 66-67). A key result of the reworked understanding of men and women was that sexual identity and behavior became a focal point for normality or aberrance, shifting sexual identity to a core internalized self-conceptual construct.

Butler (2006) emphasizes that the framework of gender has sufficient space for only two—the female and the male. Wilchins (2004) adds that political realities inhere within these identity constructs. Power emerges from the meta-discourse about what the body should and must be. Those in social authority are enabled to hold control over which bodies are privileged and which must disappear.

Human beings do not always cope well with change; indeed, changes and social conflict are inextricably linked (Docherty, 2005). When the issue of change to be negotiated is one of core personal and social identity, such as that facing an LGBTQ person when considering whether to *come out to* another person or continue to *pass* as being heterosexual, risks of conflict are high. For the LGBTQ person, determining accurately how the heterosexual party will react, and respond appropriately before committing to the admission of being LGBTQ, is of primary importance.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Trust and Friendship

Maslow (1943) urges that any individual must be understood as motivated to achieve a state of internal peace and self-acceptance, adding that the context of the person's actions must be perceived as inseparable from the individual. The need for security and what is known outweighs that of love; thus, when the LGBTQ person perceives that her or his interlocutor is intolerant, the drive for safety and the known—here described as the sexual identity of the passing person, *known* by the heterosexual to correlate with the person's gender appearance, overrides that of the need and acceptance as a person who *came out to*. And, Maslow reminds, when social structures are perceived as being threatened, the drive to secure them and thus the create safety for the self, increases.

When the needs for love and acceptance are not met, says Maslow, the person suffers emotionally and psychologically, sometimes to an extent requiring professional intervention. Critical to the need for love and acceptance is its bi-directionality: all persons are driven to express love, as well as need to feel it from others. Akin to the need for love and acceptance is the desire for esteem. Maslow indicates that persons need to feel confident about themselves and their relationships with others; when a person is deprived of this, emotions of devaluation, self-hatred, and hopelessness may result. At the pinnacle of the human needs hierarchy is self-actualization, wherein a person feels fulfillment in being and behaving as who he or she truly is. For the LGBTQ person, self-actualization satisfaction means to be known to others, and be accepted by them, as being a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or queer/questioning. Achieving these needs is the purpose of the *coming out to* discourse.

Clearly, however, the LGBTQ person's desire for love and acceptance *per se* would also lead her or him to withdraw prematurely from the disclosure, thus finding safety and love/acceptance by remaining within the *passing* status quo. Active here is the ability of the LGBTQ person to sense or recognize that the heterosexual person's needs for safety, embodied here in the known, stable, relationship between the individuals, is such that disclosure would or might end the relationship.

For friends to negotiate can be highly problematic, write Kurtzberg and Medvec (1999), adding that the importance of the visualized future of the relationship, particularly if the friendship is strong, has an enormous impact on whether or not a person is at ease in negotiating with a friend because of the importance of the future relationship to the negotiating party. In addition, as Ross and LaCroix (1996) stipulate, in a negotiation, trust is a crucial factor, and is determined to have different meanings from person to person. When

an individual imparts information to another which puts him or her in a position where she or he could be taken advantage of, only if trust is present can the person negotiating continue.

Rothbart and Korostelina (cited in Rothbart and Korostelina, 2006) observe that differences between groups are sustained and embedded through threat narratives, which mould the perceptions and thus the actions, of one group toward another, by creating a flow-channel through which to shift from the truth about individuals and their behavior, to normative statements about their characters. Up to three themes can usually be found within the threat narrative: a normative composition; concerns of "predictability" or threat to the in-group in the future, at the hands of the out-group; and finally, "global positioning" wherein the overall standing of the groups, are revealed (Rothbart and Korostelina, 2006: 32-33). Indeed, those persons who believe they are aligned to the wish of god, carrying out actions against the other that support divine justice, feel both "absolution and adornment" (Rothbart and Korostelina, 2006: 33).

Korostelina (cited in Rothbart and Korostelina, 2006) emphasizes that when the overriding component that brings a group its self-identity is strong, this singular vision of self-understanding and similarity/difference between groups can concretize, and preclude other possible identity-similarities. Thus, the individuals are locked into viewing themselves and others, in-group and out-group through a single, defining characteristic, exclusive of all other social and personal identity-schemas. Moreover, in-group values are strongly entrenched, and in the case of LGBTQ issues, are often infused with religious norms, as I mentioned above.

Rimmerman (2008) writes that a direct relationship exists between being a teen GBLT and suicide. The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network presented a 1997 Youth Risk study which found that forty-six percent of these teens attempted suicide, as opposed to nine percent of heterosexual students, in Massachusetts. In 1993, a Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth in Massachusetts reported that ninety-seven percent of students said that homophobic comments arose consistently in student communications. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveys in Massachusetts and Vermont found that students who are gay are three times more apt to be threatened with a weapon than hetero students (Rimmerman, 2008).

That the social reality conditions in America under which LGBTQ adolescents live and from within which they begin to understand what faces them when choosing whether to *come out to* others or to *pass* is a daunting and dangerous one, is made clear from the 2007 study conducted by The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). The

GLSEN reports that in a nationwide survey of 6,209 LGBT high school students, the *2007 National School Climate Survey* found that because of sexual identity:

- 86.2 percent of students said they were verbally assailed.

- 44.1 percent of students indicated they were physically assailed.

- 22.1 percent of students stated they were physically attacked.

- 73.6 percent must listen to frequent or oft-repeated defamatory remarks such as "faggot" or "dyke".

- 60.8 percent of students indicated feeling insecure while in their school, due to sexual identification.

- 38.4 percent were fearful at school because of their gender expression.

- 31.7 percent skipped a class in month previous to the survey, because of safety fears.

- 32.7 percent stayed away from school for a day in the month before the survey due to fear.

By contrast, among heterosexual students in a national sampling, a mere 5.5 and 4.5 percent of students missed either a class or a day of school because of safety concerns. Grade Point Averages (GPA) for students challenged and assailed frequently by other students because of the former's sexual identity and gender expression were 2.4. Those students for whom school did not pose daily security and safety issues earned an average of 2.8 ("Gay" 2008).

The pre-negotiations discourse; the BATNA; the Resistance Point

Foucault (1990) deems discourse the embodiment of power, specifying the real and the acceptable. How the LGBTQ person chooses to frame the issue, such as from a macro-perspective of approaching the other person with cautious dialogue to learn how that person feels about LGBTQ in general, leading to disclosure if the hetero-other is accepting of LGBTQ in general. A purpose of the pre-negotiations discourse is to fathom the party's relationship, a core component of stability for the parties (Docherty, 2005).

A critical point to understand is that the negotiations contextual environment in which an LGBTQ person must decide to *come out to* another [disclose sexual identity to someone else], will immediately become unstable. The LGBTQ individual must first negotiate how to negotiate (Docherty, 2005) which person to approach, how to start the dialogue, how to proceed within it, and read the signals given by the other person as to whether he or she is amenable to the disclosure at this time. Here I begin from the position that the LGBTQ person who is passing is friends with or family of, the hetero-person. As the relationship is about to undergo a core identity shift, should disclosure be achieved, the context of the negotiations is, or will be, destabilized.

The Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA) is the point at which one person's needs are best met without having the other party agree to what would be optimal (Ury, 1993). I suggest that the BATNA of the LGBTQ person is to withdraw from the pre-negotiations process when it becomes evident that the other person is intolerant and persisting in disclosure would lead to relationship-disintegration. The BATNA, therefore, is continuing to pass. Here of course the second party is playing a role in pre-negotiation without knowledge of that fact, as the LGBTQ's presumed BATNA is to walk away without self-identifying, if she or he concludes from the other party that the admission will not be welcomed or tolerated. This negotiation context differs from a stable environment, where the LGBTQ person is already out, and is negotiating with the friend another aspect of their relationship, as other friends negotiate aspects of theirs—what movie to see, for instance.

The *resistance point* is defined as the moment when the party determines that the negotiation must be terminated because her or his goal[s] cannot be achieved (Lewicki, Barry and Saunders, 2007). Precisely how the LGBTQ person arrives at this decision is individual, depending on a complex array of factors such as personal history of disclosure, context of the disclosure, perceived reaction of the other person, identity of the other person, and the LGBTQ person's drive to disclose. The resistance point is a critical component of the pre-negotiations process. If the LGBTQ person should conclude that her or his needs are endangered he or she may decide to exercise the BATNA and continue to *pass*. Developing a robust understanding of how such decisions are made and examining their parameters may provide a foundation for eventual generalization of sexual identity disclosure research findings, based on a sexual identity disclosure communications model.

Come out to **or** ***pass*****: toward a communications model of sexual identity disclosure discourse**

I located thirteen articles containing advice to LGBTQ and stories written by those who came out to others, published on the internet, through running Keyword searches on March 6 and March 7, 2010: *coming out as bisexual*; *lesbian and bisexual coming out stories*; *coming out as bi*; *lesbian, and bisexual: coming out*; *how to tell someone you're bisexual* (March 6, 2010); and, *coming out to as LGBT*; *coming out as LGBT*; *coming out as bisexual*; *how to tell someone you are lesbian*; *how to tell someone you are gay* (March 7, 2010). The keywords and specific articles located are found in Appendices A and B. I examined each empirically for evidence of pre-negotiations contextual concerns, a BATNA, and a resistance point. Clear from these published accounts is the need for additional research, as the advice provided assumes the LGBTQ individual is able to find someone he or she "trusts" without specifying how this is to be done, and what obstacles may cause the person to continue to *pass*.

Awareness of relationship context and destabilizing impact of *coming out to* disclosure

Key concepts:

- socially constructed abnormality of LGBTQ
- pre-determine a person with whom to disclose, such as a doctor, someone one believes one can trust
- be "thoughtful" about to whom to speak
- avoid those who have legal and economic control over one
- be comfortable with oneself before sharing to others
- one must be out to oneself first
- one is not obligated to disclose to anyone else, ever
- even when one knows or believes a person will be accepting, LGBTQ persons may still be terrified to disclose
- process challenging and frightening
- prepare what one will say
- process is empowering, as one is able to avoid the depression and fear of passing
- prepare to educate parents
- prepare for rejection/harsh treatment from parents
- prepare to be understanding of parents
- find other LGBTQ persons who have disclosed and get their advice
- write a letter to parents
- provide telephone number of LGBTQ group so parents can call

- awareness that should the conversation be successful, one's relationship with one's parents will be extremely strong and emerge from openness and honesty
- patience, courage, timing, bravery, persistence
- prior to the disclosure one is probably seen as being hetero, like everyone else—post disclosure, who one is will change permanently for one's family and friends
- once one has disclosed, one's entire identity as far as others are concerned will likely be subsumed into being LGBTQ
- being LGBTQ is not one's fault, nor the fault of one's parents and one's parents likely had other conceptions of one than that one is LGBTQ—disappointment from family is one strong possible consequence of disclosure
- find and go to an LGBTQ support group, to provide one with a stable, welcoming structure
- two-gender norm challenges bisexuals in particular
- transgendered situations are very difficult and complex, involving a number of stages, different for all transgendered persons

Gaps:

- no specific disclosure dialogue sentences provided
- no specific letters or examples of *coming out to* dialogue to follow
- no advice on how to approach others, or what happens if there is no one in one's life whom one thinks one can trust to *come out to*

BATNA

Key concepts:
- BATNA is implied as the person's choice to continue passing
- person can also end the disclosure discourse when the other becomes hostile
- caution is urged as is the importance of disclosing to "trusted" persons, such as close friends, siblings, counselors, therapists, others whom one knows already are LGBTQ
- tell only one parent rather than both
- awareness urged that the disclosure discourse may need more than one attempted dialogue session to get through with certain persons
- patience required
- make sure one has a strong support network first
- be prepared to refute arguments from religious parents of immorality by having biblical quotations ready
- until and unless one's parents ask one if one is LGBTQ, continue passing as presumably they are not ready for the information
- situation of transgendered persons deemed most complex, as they may wish to undergo surgery
- LGBTQ person, alone, is deemed the expert on when or whether to *come out to* others

Gaps:

- no information given specifying specifically how to improve chances of success with family members, or how to monitor the other person's reactions to the disclosure, particularly the non-verbal indicators of acceptance/rejection
- no information given on how the discourse-going-badly might be salvaged or how rejection might be handled
- while LGBTQ person apprised that the ability to choose to *come out to* or to *pass* may be foreclosed through someone else's speaking to one's parents, for instance, no advice is given on how the situation might be addressed
- no advice or alternative tactics offered if any of the guidance methods do not work, except to be patient and revisit the conversation later
- no advice offered on how to create an atmosphere or environment for safe disclosure or to increase safety of disclosure

Resistance Point

Key terms:

- self-trust
- implied that one may well need to hint disclosure, and ensure that one can withdraw and continue to *pass*, without *coming out to*, successfully
- abandon the disclosure and/or the relationship, if needed, defined as a threat to one's physical and emotional safety

Gaps:

- assumes that the LGBTQ person will choose the appropriate persons without giving advice or recommendations on what type of body language and other indicators of acceptance, which might offer reassurance or an awareness of impending rejection
- does not provide any sort of actual conversation to show the confused, questing LGBTQ person just what a *coming out to* discourse conversation actually looks like

3. Lorem ipsum

My intent in this paper is a preliminary examination of how LGBTQ persons *come out to* or *pass* as I move toward developing a praxis model of the *coming out to* or *pass* disclosure discourse. *Coming out to* is the process of sharing sexual identity with others, for LGBTQs. As silence on sexual identity results in the assumption that the person is a heterosexual, the *coming out to* conversational process does not occur only once, but is a continuous social negotiation. LGBTQ individuals are subjected to invective and physical insecurity when disclosing, emerging from the social ascription of a heterosexual norm and therefore may prefer to *pass*.

However, passing also carries associated costs, as I showed by examining gender roles and constructs in American society, before turning to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, need for acceptance, self-esteem, love, each of which is seen as important in the *coming out to* or *pass* dialogue. As a human being, an LGBTQ person may be impelled to disclose in order to achieve self-actualization and validation as who he or she is, while also being aware of how the disclosure will alter the relationship context, and threaten the person's safety, and security needs.

The discourse disclosure is seen as a pre-negotiation, which includes an awareness of the changing context of the relationship, a *BATNA* and a *Resistance Point*. The LGBTQ person is seen as having a BATNA of continuing to *pass*, rather than complete the disclosure. In addition, each individual will have a Resistance Point, at which the BATNA is exercised and the *coming out to* discourse abandoned. However, the BATNA and Resistance Points are fluid, and the disclosure dialogue may take place over an undetermined period of time, sometimes extending for years, during which the LGBTQ individual engages in pre-negotiations efforts with family and or friends—should the LGBTQ person feel that he or she will be rejected, the BATNA and Resistance Point may be exercised and the person will continue to *pass*, rather than continue with the *coming out to* conversation.

Thirteen accounts and advice to LGBTQ for handling the *coming out to* conversation were examined empirically and coded, in investigating the *coming out to* or *pass* process for LGBTQ. Given the human tendency to seek differences and develop individuality in American society, a model for *coming out to* discourse disclosure must deconstruct recommendations for each gender category, searching for similarities and differences between the recommended courses of action. I reviewed the advice for each category: relationship contextual awareness; BATNA; and Resistance Point, and provided key terms for each area.

I conclude that specific research is needed in the *coming out to* disclosure discourse, to understand how LGBTQ persons go through the process and that similarities and differences will be revealed. Creating a *coming out to* disclosure discourse model requires specific qualitative research with LGBTQ persons, in order to uncover how the person chooses which people to *come out to*, particularly early on in *coming out to* others, and whether to exercise the BATNA and Resistance Points and continue to *pass* for heterosexual, or to move ahead with self actualization and empowerment, and *come out to*.

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Appendix A

Search history:

March 6, 2010

Google Search, KW: coming out as bisexual
     Lesbian and bisexual coming out stories
     Coming out as bi
     Lesbian, and bisexual: coming out
     How to tell someone you're bisexual

March 7, 2010

Google Search, KW: coming out to as LGBTQ
     Coming out as LGBTQ
     Coming out as bisexual
     How to tell someone you are lesbian
     How to tell someone you are gay

http://www.teengrowth.com/index.cfm?action=info_advice&ID_Advice=2163

http://www.ehow.com/how_2188662_tell-someone-youre-bisexual.html

http://www.ehow.com/how_5785614_tell-parents-bisexual.html

http://www.ehow.com/how_17146_come-parents.html

http://www.ehow.com/how_2101540_come-out-fundamentalist-parents.html

http://www.collegian.psu.edu/archive/2005/04/04-15-05tdc/04-15-05dops-column-01.asp

http://www.ehow.com/how_17209_know-ready-come.html

http://au.reachout.com/find/articles/telling-people-youre-gay-lesbian-or-bi

http://en.allexperts.com/q/Lesbian-Life-2011/TELL-FRIENDS-FAMILY.htm

http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/lesbian.pdf

http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/bisexual.pdf

http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/transitions1404.pdf

http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/transgender.pdf

http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=726&Ite

mid=336

Appendix B

Notes for Coding:

("Q&A", 2007)

Reminder that homosexuality is deemed abnormal by some people ("Q&A", 2007)
Pre-identify someone to trust [no advice on how to choose, only a recommendation that if one's relationship is "trusting" such as with a doctor, this is presented as a good starting point. However, the article suggests the person remind the doctor of doctor/patient confidentiality. For a few, a parent is seen as an appropriate person to approach. Other choices are a gay friend[s], gay/lesbian resource community centers. Also suggested are internet sites, and bookstores, although how a person is supposed to come out to a bookstore is not clarified; rather, the person is recommended to find information on locating a trusted person from a bookstore collection, presumably from LGBTQ sources. Handling being seen by others is not discussed.

("How to tell someone", 2010)

--Advice to bisexuals
Prepare "thoughtfully" to achieve conversational success in coming out to
Begin with someone "likely to be supportive"
Counselor rather than parents—parents have "considerable economic and legal power" over the child; alertness to threat from either gender to whom one discloses, as the other person may feel threatened by assumed sexual attraction
Disclose only when one is comfortable with oneself

("How to tell parents", 2010)

Bisexual disclosure to parents
Uncertainty and fear make this challenging and frightening
Create and practice an opening statement
Review parental past behavior of treatment when situation stressful to arrive at educated understanding of how the parent[s] will possibly behave to guide preparation
Select and speak with the more amenable parent, singly

Approach the conversation with individual awareness for family circumstances

Prepare for questions; prepare for emotional reaction that ranges from "shock, sadness or anger"; be prepared to assist parents in deciding how and whether to tell other family, friends and neighbors

Awareness that parents must address their own challenges but also social gender norms stereotyping

Remind parents that one is the same person still and that one's feelings for them have not changed

("How to come out to your parents", 2010)

--Gays

Opening the discussion seen as challenging; successful conversation means a stronger relationship with parents

Rests on assumption that one has gay/lesbian friends who are out to provide "ongoing emotional support and feedback" for the planning stages of coming out to parents; contemplate their advice on how to handle the conversation and what to avoid doing

Coming out to personal process, one must be cognizant of one's unique circumstances, being clear about who one is, sexually

Alertness to parental ontology and epistemology: myths, misconceptions of gays/lesbians; religious views; guilt over self-blame; worries about what others will think

Recommend developing and practicing an opening statement, to set tone comfortably; gives an example

Prepare to assist parents through initial emotions and change in their understanding of their child; for instance, loss of their child, of themselves as grandparents, or their accustomed family identity

Dialogue is about oneself and one's relationship with one's parents, in an honest, open, identified environment

("How to come out to your fundamentalist parents", 2010)

Keys the LGBTQ person will need:
Bravery
Courage
Timing
Patience

Recognize the situation as destabilizing to the extent that the disclosure will cause a major contextual challenge to ontology and epistemology; be alert to the possibility of entire and absolute rejection of one for being LGBTQ

Realize that parents may not wish to change their thinking about LGBTQ and it may not be possible to have them accept their child with this information

Be secure in who one is, and accepting, which means self-rejection of all the normative structural violence against LGBTQ

(Winberry, 2005)

Unless one specifies one is gay, one is presumed hetero; this includes how one's parents and close friends perceive one

"I once heard a saying that went something like this: "It is much easier to be black than to be gay because when you're black you don't have to tell your mother." As outlandish as this statement is, it's entirely true."

Understanding of persons in US society revolves around sexual identity; one loses personhood and becomes solely equated with being "gay"

Norms of dating discussions mean that who one is seeing are inevitable in casual conversations

One is then forced to either tell the truth or to lie

("How to know if you're ready to…", 2010)

States that "being gay" is unlikely to be something that parents want for their children, implying its equation with the opposite of "success, happiness and grandchildren" which are seen as what parents envision for their children

Neither one's nor one's parent's fault, that one is gay; it is presented as "no better or worse than being straight" and simply a part of who one is, naturally

Support network or possible disclosure first to a "gay-friendly" therapist—these are described as critical, as they provide one with security for the difficult and threatening disclosure process, and a safe place to which to return should disclosure process

Purchase a couple of books about parenting gay children, so that one can know parental concerns about the change in relationship and what it means to be the parent of a gay child, so one is prepared to assist the parent

Awareness of changing relationship context: write parents a letter; give them phone number of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) so they can call on their own, if they choose

Write a letter to your parents instead of telling them face-to-face. A letter can be edited until it says exactly what you want it to say. Once you give it to them, it also gives your parents a chance to read everything you want to tell them without interruption. They can read it in private and alone. Encourage them to talk to you once they are done.

Attend a Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) meeting. You will experience how many different parents have accepted their sons and daughters. Then, when you are ready, give your parents the phone number. They may not use it right away, but at least they have it.

(Lesbian life, 2007)

Deep-seated fear of coming out to, even when knowing her mom and friends are accepting, means that this girl continues to pass—prior family rejection of a cousin who came out created strong awareness of the changes that can occur in the relationships between family and friends of the LGBTQ person who comes out to

(Advocates for Youth, n.d.b. [lesbian])

According to "experts" in this brochure, approximately one in every ten persons in the general population is a lesbian or is gay.

Urges the normality of falling in love with either men or women, regardless of one's own gender and that feelings of confusion and fear are also to be expected

Defines and explains homophobia and recognizes gay/lesbian support groups and their work for LGBTQ persons and their rights

Recommends finding persons who are accepting and welcoming with whom to share; gay/lesbian chat rooms are noted as helpful; self-recognition that one's sexuality is just a component of one's entire personhood and humanity

Empowerment and self-esteem emphasized as the devastating impact of having to pass and hide, which includes drug addictions, other forms of self-damage, including suicide, isolation, fear and depression quite usual and to be expected

Begin by speaking about one's sexual identity with others like oneself, to have confidence that one will be accepted as a full, valued, human being

(*"Advocates for Youth", n.d.a. [bisexual]*)

Defines and describes what bisexuality means, and urges that the person is not alone; "many" people are bisexual

Recognizes and reassures those who are bi that confusion and distress are usual because society permits of only two genders, each of which is confined to a narrow Ascriptive role in terms of who is acceptable to love and desire

Choices open to the individual, therefore, are not confined to "hetero" or "homo" sexual, which adds additional stress and pressure to the person attracted to both men and women; indeed correlating oneself as "bisexual" in terms of labeling and categorization is not necessary, even if one finds one likes both genders; in addition, it is not necessary that one like both genders or individuals of both genders, with equal intensity

Bisexuals subjected to discrimination and dislike/intolerance from both straight and gays/lesbians, making this sexual identity/orientation extremely difficult for those who are bi

Reassures that one's sexual preferences do not confine one as a person nor encompass the entirety of one's identity as a human being

Bisexuality is stressed as being extremely difficult in this society because of the dual-gender proscription and that one is not alone; self-abuse including drug addiction, suicide, depression, fear, confusion, emphasized along with support groups to whom one can reach out for acceptance from others; self-acceptance and self-esteem seen as vital for the individual to develop

(Gilliam, 2002)

Notes Massachusetts Department of Education. *Massachusetts High School Students and Sexual Orientation, Results of the 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey*. Boston,MA: The Dept, 1999. [http://
www.state.ma.us/gcgly/yrbsfl99.html], study saying 5.5 percent of high school students surveyed self-identified as "…gay, lesbian, or bisexual and/or reported same-gender sexual contact." And warns that this percentage is likely on the low side due and may exclude transgendered youth and those who are uncertain, due to fear on the part of respondents to the survey (f.n., p. 1)

Suggests that six to ten percent of all youth are LGBTQ and strongly recommends that this be recognized by including programs that validate reality, lest those affected continue to feel fearful and remain hidden or marginalized and at risk

Overt hostility of persons and society to LGBTQ youth is highly troubling and causes deep challenges to LGBTQ persons whose human rights are being violated

Earls, M., 2002, (article in J. Gilliam)

Observes that the average age in which LGBTQ persons come out to others is declining, as society shifts toward recognition and legitimization through providing programs/resources and an atmosphere of acceptance; this is particularly true in urban areas in the US (p. 3)

("Advocates for Youth", 2008 [gay])

Explains what being 'gay' means and reassures of its normality in occurrence across the general population; about one person of every ten, globally, is either gay or lesbian
Notes that gays may not be comfortable in coming out to others
Gay men may be attracted to women but find they are more attracted to men
Notes that actual gay men tend to notice their attraction to men strengthening as they move through puberty; confusion and concern over what is occurring are common
Only the individual himself knows how he feels and no one needs to rush to or indeed need to, categorize himself as gay or as anything
Recommends beginning by reading and emphasizes that librarians are obliged to protect the privacy of their patrons, ethically; cautions that not all books will be accepting or supporting
Recommends investigating websites for LGBTQ
Observes that many people experience discomfort when around those who are LGBTQ and that many gays therefore pass rather than come out to others
Coming out to the self is considered also quite difficult to achieve, as are the consequences of repression
The first step in "coming out to" is to do this to oneself and accept oneself as gay

("Advocates for Youth", n.d.c. [transgender])

Defines and explains transgender; female but feel male; male but feel female
Transgender also includes people who are "genderqueer", "gender neutral" and "gender-free", and those who do not identify with any gender
Crossdressers wear the clothing of the other gender but do not identify themselves as being the other or another gender
Transsexual persons are transgendered persons who undergo surgery to shift their bodies to match their internal gender identification
One does not have to be in a rush to identify oneself as anything
Body discomfort of various levels is normal
Transgender is not "typical" but is "normal" for people to be
That many people are discriminatory and rejective is made explicitly clear
No need to come out to anyone until and unless one wishes to do so
If one plans on trans surgery, coming out to others is felt more important as then one will also be and appear to others as being actually different than one is 'known' to be

BATNA

("Q&A", 2007)

BATNA to avoid disclosure to anyone or to anyone not "trusted"

("How to tell someone", 2010)

Bisexuals: use humor when disclosing, "The good thing about being bisexual is that it doubles your chance [sic] of a date on a Saturday night"
Educate, noting that being attracted to persons without regard to their gender does not equate with acting on sexual impulse continuously
Take care to whom one discloses.

("How to tell parents", 2010)

Bisexual disclosure to parents
Review parental past behavior of treatment when situation stressful to arrive at educated understanding of how the parent[s] will possibly behave
Tell only one parent
Rest implied

("How to come out to your parents", 2010)

--Gays
Unspecified "any number of situations" that can arise which would cause the person to not disclose at that time, exercising BATNA

("How to come out to your fundamentalist parents", 2010)

Patience urged; person warned that the process may take years to get through the pre-negotiation so that parents can hear what one says and at least be willing to listen
Individual must be clear on her or his own sexual identity and comfortable; if BATNA exercised, person needs to be able to continue with her or his life
Alertness to fragility of the situation in case one needs to pull back
Prepare for rejection; be ready to have the process take literal decades
Reconsider disclosure if one's parents hold financial control over one, as this may be withdrawn, as may emotional and other necessary supports to be a happy, accepted, child
Have ready biblical texts that evince support for one's position, such as do not judge; be ready to give them evidence from their preferred reading material—the bible—to support one's identity

(Winberry, 2005)

Lie in conversations unless one wants to be channeled into being only 'gay' as the primary and only visible component of one's identity
Understanding how society views being gay means avoiding the discourse and passing, lest one become only a "queer" to people, who instantly forget one's individuality and personhood
Spare oneself and the other person the awkward situation, and pass

("How to know if you're ready to…", 2010)

May lose BATNA option due to someone else informing parents or parents finding out on their own
Support network or possible disclosure first to a "gay-friendly" therapist—these are described as critical, as they provide one with security for the difficult and threatening disclosure process, and a safe place to which to return should disclosure process

Once parents know, the information does not have to be presented again, which is thought to be a relief for the disclosing individual, regardless of outcome

Adhere to the "gay adage: if your parents ask, they are ready for the answer"—caveat is that if they do not ask, they are presumably not ready to hear and one needs to consider passing

Write a letter, seen as advantageous because one is able to rework the words until one is fully satisfied and then one's parents can read it when they choose, alone; one can also attend a PFLAG meeting and then give one's parents the phone number: both of these remove the discourse from the person coming out to, and if parents choose to disengage, the actual dialogue does not take place

(Lesbian life, 2007)

Even knowing that her friends are approving and accepting of LGBTQ in general has not made her feel able to engage in the *coming out to* discourse; she is seeking advice on how to do so and continues to pass

(Advocates for Youth, n.d.b. [lesbian])

Recognizes, describes and provides advice to alleviate, fears of passing, by encouraging use of chat rooms, LGBTQ organizations, as a first step to come out to others

When and to whom, to disclose, is stressed as being entirely up to the person herself

("Advocates for Youth", n.d.a. [bisexual])

Caution urged and emphasized

Coming out to seen as particularly problematic and not to be done until one is ready, choosing the persons to whom one will come out to, carefully

Choosing a person whom one knows will be accepting is emphasized: "friend, sibling, parent, guidance counselor or other trusted adult…internet or at youth groups" (p. 6)

(Jahr, B., 2002, article included in J. Gilliam, brochure)

Jahr (2002) writes that he personally was "screamed at, kicked, punched, threatened, and spit upon" (p. 4) as a daily occurrence in high school, and that the school's administration blamed him for causing the problem; as an activist, he is targeted for abuse and vilification, including threats to personal safety

Under these extremely unsafe conditions, LGBTQ youth experience deep duress and fear, and those who pass successfully will strive to continue doing so and experience various challenges associated with repression of self and un-validation; one-third of all gay youth commit suicide

Gilliam states that sources estimate that LGBTQ youth comprise roughly twenty-five to forty percent of all homeless young people, because of being ejected from their homes due to their sexual identity being evident and/or attempted disclosure; survival needs force many of these young people to engage in unsafe sex and many others are brutalized; disease is rampant (p. 4)

("Advocates for Youth", 2008 [gay])

Caution is urged in to whom one confides

One should disclose only to those whom one trusts entirely and while no advice is given on how to go about finding someone, the person is cautioned to take his time about the process, and to begin with a close friend one's own age, a parent, another trusted adult

("Advocates for Youth", n.d.c. [transgender])

Come out to those whom one trusts fully, such as a teacher, friend, sibling, counselor, parent, or member of the LGBTQ community; that the person must be understanding as well as accepting is important
While no advice is provided for assessing the BATNA, one would not come out to anyone whom one did not trust, particularly early on in the process
Should one determine to undergo gender-adjustment surgery, one will need to come out to others in one's life and secure support is highly recommended, such as from a therapist, an LGBTQ group, friends, family, for instance

Resistance Point

("Q&A", 2007)

Not mentioned per se, as presumably if one comes out to the 'right', i.e., trusted person, there is no need to abandon the disclosure
Self-trust is recommended, as well as taking one's time to disclose and to learn about one's sexuality

("How to tell someone", 2010)

Bisexual disclosure, "need to know" basis for some friends/family

("How to tell parents", 2010)

--Bisexual disclosure
Not stated; implied that if parents cannot handle opening statement, the content of which is not specified and so could hint, suggesting one can withdraw, exercising the BATNA of non-disclosure

("How to come out to your parents", 2010)

--Gays
If the disclosure becomes a situation of threat, of if any of the parties becomes emotionally overwrought, or express criticism, end the conversation for the time being
Urge patience and note that there are "any number of situations" that may result in one having to withdraw from the conversation; recommends treating oneself with calm value and legitimacy, recognizing that the conversation can be revisited later

("How to come out to your fundamentalist parents", 2010)

Recommend a family of kinship, where one's sexual identity is not an issue, as one's own family may ostracize one entirely; even should that not happen, the need for companionship

and understanding may make having a close "family of choice" optimal; implied that if one's family is clearly going to reject one, the disclosure must end

Clarity and confidence in who one is, as LGBTQ, means one can be more understanding of parent's ontology/epistemology and withdraw when it becomes evident that they cannot accept what they are learning about their child; one may need to revisit the dialogue numerous times over a lengthy period of time

By living one's life as a happy person who is stable, one can demonstrate that being LGBTQ is not abnormal, nor immoral, thus providing a visual representation of what it means to be LGBTQ for parents to ponder

(Winberry, 2005)

Being gay means being a second-class citizen and thus continuing to pass, rather than engaging in the dialogue of coming out, is the implied resistance point, so far in advance that the disclosure discourse never even begins

("How to know if you're ready to…", 2010)

May lose resistance point option if someone else tells one's parents or if one's parents find out somehow

Adhere to the "gay adage: if your parents ask, they are ready for the answer"—caveat is that if they do not ask, they are presumably not ready to hear and one needs to consider passing, never engaging in the disclosure discourse

Write a letter, seen as advantageous because one is able to rework the words until one is fully satisfied and then one's parents can read it when they choose, alone; one can also attend a PFLAG meeting and then give one's parents the phone number: both of these remove the discourse from the person coming out to, and if parents choose to disengage, the actual dialogue does not take place

(Lesbian life, 2007)

Knowledge of family of this particular blogger, whose cousin came out to family and was treated poorly and with great change by the family, and fear of what her mother would say and feel, regardless of the fact that the girl's mother accepted the cousin's sexual identity and has a long-time best friend who is gay.

(Advocates for Youth, n.d.b. [lesbian])

Even going to LGBTQ groups can be traumatic for the first visit[s], when one learns that there are others like one

Exercise extreme care to whom one comes out, and do so only with those whom one trusts; how to determine when to pull out of the disclosure discourse and continue to pass, with certain individuals, is not described, however

("Advocates for Youth", n.d.a. [bisexual])

Not mentioned specifically when one is speaking with someone who turns out to be intolerant or homophobic; it appears to be assumed that one will come out to only those who will be accepting

Youth groups, internet, and "trusted" persons are urged as those to whom to come out to, particularly in the beginning stages of being open

(Gilliam, 2002)

Implied; do not disclose to anyone whom one does not trust and be prepared to abandon relationships where one feels threatened

("Advocates for Youth", 2008 [gay])

Not specified; implied that the gay individual will simply not disclose and will, when coming out to, choose the 'right' i.e., trustworthy, person

("Advocates for Youth", n.d.c. [transgender])

The transgendered person is urged to find a support network of understanding individuals, as she or he moves through the transition process and comes out to the public, in order to be as secure and safe as possible; while no advice is given on how to cope with or mitigate, rejection and intolerance, the potential for violence against the transgendered person is made explicit

One must be sure one is ready and needs to come out to the public, before doing so as the person may likely experience adverse reactions and without the support group will have no safe place to which to go

Whether and how the person transitions is entirely an individual decision and will affect one's ability to pass; some people absolutely must have their identities and their bodies match, while others do not

Implied is that the resistance point is known only to the individual

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