

## Contents

Preface	ix
1 Why the <i>New Gay Teenager</i> ?	1
2 Who's Gay?	23
3 In the Beginning . . . Was Gay Youth	49
4 Models or Trajectories?	70
5 Feeling Different	93
6 Same-Sex Attractions	113
7 First Sex	133
8 Identity	156
9 Resilience and Diversity	178
10 Refusing and Resisting Sexual Identity Labels	194
Notes	225
References	241
Index	267

## Preface

When I began my first survey research with same-sex-attracted adolescents and young adults in 1983 and taught my first “gay-related” college course in 1984, now titled “Gender and Sexual Minorities,” my actions grew out of needs both personal and professional. The personal needs I gradually resolved—I named my sexual/romantic attractions, involved myself as an active member of various gay communities, became a part-time therapist specializing in gay issues, and gained a partner who enriched my life.

The professional development has evolved more slowly, but now at last I can hope that contemporary teenagers are bringing the sexual identity era to a close. Gay people have historically too readily accepted the inevitability and desirability of divisions based on sexual categories. It’s not that same-sex attractions are disappearing—indeed, they appear to be on the upswing as young people more freely share with each other their same-sex feelings. They’re not embarrassed by gayness, don’t consider it deviant, and see it all around them—on television, in movies, in songs, in cultural icons, among their friends.

I celebrate this development, because my lifetime professional

dream—that homosexuality will be eliminated as a defining characteristic of adolescents, a way of cutting and isolating, of separating and discriminating—is within reach. Yet there’s a gap between what is being achieved in the real world of contemporary teenagers and what is acknowledged by researchers and scholars, mental and physical health professionals, educators, religious leaders, policy makers, service providers, and parents.

I cannot, therefore, rejoice unreservedly, feeling satisfied or vindicated, as I write about these changes. Professionals are not my only audience. I write also for young people who are influenced by these professionals. I write for “pregay” young people, in the hope that they will never have to “act gay” or mold themselves into a stereotype or feel that their personal integrity must be sacrificed. If they can be convinced to relegate the idea of gayness to the dustbin, its previous existence forgotten except by those who will ask “What was *that* all about?”, then the lives of millions of teenagers will be enhanced.

This book puts forth my argument and the supportive evidence, presenting a capsule summary of what we know and don’t know about the lives of gay young people, from their first awareness of feeling different, to their first same-sex attractions and sexual experiences, to the point where they decide whether to put a label on their sexuality. Some of this evidence may be true despite the fact that our perspective is severely limited by the way in which this information has been obtained. Research has focused almost exclusively on the lives of those we might say are most gay—those most likely to feel compelled, for whatever personal or social reasons, to categorize their sexuality. Perhaps this has been unavoidable: those studying gay youth have naturally turned to those who are most visible and who are most willing to say, “Here, come interview me!” The result is that many other young people who are attracted to members of their own sex and who are not so flamboyant, who have been freed from the mandate to categorize themselves, have been invisible. No more.

My gratitude is greatest to the young people who have talked to

me over the years, sharing their lives, trying their best to educate me. They’ve challenged my questions and my assumptions, they’ve forced me to better understand the limitations of my knowledge, and they’ve helped me realize the magic of their lives—how resilient they are, and yet how ordinary.

I am also grateful to my intellectual and professional home for the past thirty years—my university (Cornell University), my college (College of Human Ecology), and my department (Human Development)—for allowing me the freedom to pursue my scholarly interests. The gracious and patient staff of the Harvard University Press has been a dream to work with, especially Elizabeth Knoll, my senior editor, and Donna Bouvier, senior production editor. Finally, as he has for the past fifteen years, my life partner, Kenneth M. Cohen, continues to provide me with what I need to survive in good spirits.



Gay, straight, bisexual: how much does sexual orientation matter to a teenager's mental health or sense of identity? In this down-to-earth book, filled with the voices of young people speaking for themselves, Ritch Savin-Williams argues that the standard image of gay youth presented by mental health researchers—as depressed, isolated, drug-dependent, even suicidal—may have been exaggerated even twenty years ago, and is far from accurate today.

“By carefully listening to the experiences of the teenagers, [Savin-Williams] confirms what many other observers have noted: the generation coming of age now has increasingly open ideas about sexuality that will likely create huge cultural shifts in the coming decades.”

—DAVID S. AZZOLINA, *Library Journal*

“Savin-Williams reveals that the words gay teenagers use to describe their sexual preferences have changed radically over the past 30 years, and so have their attitudes towards same-sex relationships. In fact, many of them are reluctant to define their sexuality at all.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“Being young and homosexual is not the identity crisis we might expect . . . With a conversational style, personal history, and intimate interviews with teens, Savin-Williams transforms research into a great read.”

—MEREDITH SMALL, Cornell University

RITCH C. SAVIN-WILLIAMS is Professor of Clinical and Developmental Psychology at Cornell University and author of *“Mom, Dad, I’m Gay”: How Families Negotiate Coming Out.*

Adolescent Lives 5

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# Gender Differences in Correlates of Homophobia and Transphobia

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Stephanie Brzuzy · Craig T. Nagoshi

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**Abstract** A scale of prejudice against transgender individuals was developed, validated, and contrasted with a homophobia measure in 153 female and 157 male US college undergraduates. For both sexes, transphobia and homophobia were highly correlated with each other and with right-wing authoritarianism, religious fundamentalism, and hostile sexism, but aggression proneness was predictive of transphobia and homophobia only in men. Benevolent sexism and rape myth acceptance were more predictive of transphobia and homophobia in women than men. With homophobia partialled out, authoritarianism, fundamentalism, and aggression proneness no longer predicted transphobia for men, but authoritarianism, fundamentalism, benevolent sexism, and rape myth acceptance continued to predict transphobia in women. Discussion focused on gender differences in issues that drive prejudice against transgender and homosexual individuals.

**Keywords** Homophobia · Transphobia · Sexism · Gender differences

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## Introduction

The present paper reports on the validation of a new short measure of transphobia in a heteronormative college student sample, with scale validation being based on known, theoretically relevant correlates of a well-established scale of homophobia (Wright et al. 1999). These correlates included right-wing authoritarianism, religious fundamentalism, masculinity and femininity, hostile and benevolent sexism, rape myth acceptance, and aggression proneness. Scale validation then considered differences between the correlates of homophobia and transphobia, as well as gender differences in these correlates.

## Defining Transphobia

Hill (2002) defines transphobia in terms of “emotional disgust toward individuals who do not conform to society’s gender expectations” (Hill and Willoughby 2005, p. 533), a definition that is consistent with Weinberg’s (1972) definition of homophobia as the irrational fear, hatred, and intolerance of being in close quarters with homosexual men and women. Hill (2002) then goes on to conceptualize prejudicial and discriminatory behavior towards transgenders in terms of genderism and gender bashing. Such discriminatory behavior can also be considered as part of transphobia, hence, Sugano et al.’s (2006) definition in terms of “societal discrimination and stigma of individuals who do not conform to traditional norms of sex and gender” (p. 217). Transphobia contrasts with homophobia in not only being about revulsion and irrational fears of transgenders and transsexuals, but also cross-dressers, feminine men, and masculine women (Weinberg 1972), i.e., in being about larger issues of gender roles and gender identity and not just sexual orientation.



SB/C. 2 & 3  
C/C. 1, 2a, 2c

## Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth

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*This article examines why the Stonewall riots became central to gay collective memory while other events did not. It does so through a comparative-historical analysis of Stonewall and four events similar to it that occurred in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York in the 1960s. The Stonewall riots were remembered because they were the first to meet two conditions: activists considered the event commemorable and had the mnemonic capacity to create a commemorative vehicle. That this conjuncture occurred in New York in 1969, and not earlier or elsewhere, was a result of complex political developments that converged in this time and place. The success of the national commemorative ritual planned by New York activists depended on its resonance, not only in New York but also in other U.S. cities. Gay community members found Stonewall commemorable and the proposed parade an appealing form for commemoration. The parade was amenable to institutionalization, leading it to survive over time and spread around the world. The Stonewall story is thus an achievement of gay liberation rather than an account of its origins.*

On the evening of June 27, 1969, New York police raided the Stonewall Inn, a homo-

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sexual bar in Greenwich Village. This was not unusual: police raids of homosexual bars were common in New York and other American cities in the 1960s. This time, however, bar patrons fought back instead of passively enduring humiliating treatment. Their response initiated a riot that lasted into the night. The Stonewall riots are typically viewed as the spark of the gay liberation movement and a turning point in the history of gay life in the United States (Duberman 1993; Teal [1971]1995; Carter 2004), and they are commemorated in gay pride parades around the globe (D'Emilio 2002). Writing about homosexual activism, historian Marc Stein (2000:290) quoted an activist who claimed, "No event in history, with perhaps the exception of the French Revolution, deserves more [than the Stonewall riots] to be considered a watershed." President Clinton made the Stonewall Inn a national historic landmark (Dunlap 1999). It is common to divide gay history into two epochs—"before Stonewall" and "after Stonewall" (D'Emilio 1992a).

Claims about the historical importance of Stonewall continue, even though historians of sexuality have challenged the novelty of the events at the Stonewall Inn. The Stonewall riots

# Constructing the 'gay gene' in the news: optimism and skepticism in the US and British press

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**ABSTRACT** In the 1990s the discovery of a 'gay gene' was widely reported in the news media, often as front-page stories. Focusing on the print media presentation of Dean Hamer's 1993 and 1995 scientific papers reporting finding a genetic marker for homosexuality, we examine how these studies were framed in a selected sample of US and British newspapers and news magazines. We found disparate constructions of the 'gay gene' in each press culture. The US press reported Hamer's study as good science and treated it with 'cautious optimism' while the British press reported the research as 'the perils of the gay gene.' We discuss how these studies received such widespread attention and the sources and implications of the variant images of the 'gay gene' in the news.

**KEYWORDS** *gay gene; homosexuality; public understanding of genetics; science reporting; US and British press*

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## Introduction

For at least a century, scientists and physicians have offered theories about the hereditary predisposition or congenital nature of homosexuality. Scholars and activists in the latter 19th- and early 20th-centuries, including K.M. Benkart, Magnus Hirschfeld, Richard von Krafft-Ebbing, and Henry Havelock Ellis, proposed hereditary or congenital theories of

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## **COMING OUT AND CROSSING OVER** *Identity Formation and Proclamation in a Transgender Community*

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*Drawing on data from interviews with 65 masculine-to-feminine transgenderists, the authors examine the coming-out experiences of transgendered individuals. Drawing on the literature that shows gender to be an inherent component of the social infrastructure that at an individual level is accomplished in interaction with others, they demonstrate that interactional challenges to gender are insufficient to challenge the system of gender. Whereas many transgenderists believe that their actions and identities are radical challenges to the binary system of gender, in fact, the majority of such individuals reinforce and reify the system they hope to change.*

**C**oming out is a term generally used to refer to the processes whereby gay men, lesbians, or bisexuals inform others of their sexual identity. Despite this popularized notion, the social scientific literature has shown coming out to be a broader and more complex process whereby people recognize and accept their sexual preference, adopt a sexual identity, inform others of their sexual orientation, and become involved in relationships with others of similar sexual identity (Cass 1979, 1984; Coleman 1981-82; Isay 1990; Troiden and Goode 1980; Weinberg 1978). Research on the discovery of sexual preference, the development of sexual identity, and public disclosure has focused primarily on lesbians and gay men, with an emergent literature concerning bisexuals (Garber 1995; Weinberg, Williams, and Pryor 1994; however, see Mason-Schrock 1996). While this work is an important component in our understanding of the dynamic nature of the formation, acceptance, and public

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## Gay Aging

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*The oldest of the baby boomers (boomers) were age 63 in 2009 and on the verge of retirement. This cohort has had a history of making societal changes throughout its life cycle, and it is unlikely that retirement, as we know it, will remain unscathed. This article highlights two events—the Stonewall Inn riots and two prominent professional associations removing homosexuality from their list of personality disorders—and how they occurred early enough in the gay boomers life cycle to change their attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles. This article introduces the reader to a broad array of facts, research findings, and issues that inform the topic of gay aging. A summary of the discrimination and legal concerns affecting the gay community are also highlighted. Two influential community programs are identified: Services and Advocacy for Gay Elders (SAGE) and the American Society on Aging’s LGBT Aging Issues Network (LAIN). Gerontological educators need to be sensitive to the needs, desires, and resources of the coming cohort of gay boomers, who are more likely to advocate for responsive services, organizations, and policies than the current cohort of gay older adults.*

**KEYWORDS** *gay, LGBT, baby boomers, advocacy*

Reviewing gerontology textbooks and research journals over the past decade revealed a scarcity of published knowledge about the topic of gay aging. Some textbooks were without a single reference to gay aging whereas it was common to scan multiple years of a specific gerontology journal without a single research article on the topic.

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# REDEFINING THE AMERICAN QUILT: DEFINITIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF COMMUNITY AMONG ETHNICALLY DIVERSE LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL WOMEN

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*Lesbian and bisexual women from diverse backgrounds possess unique viewpoints regarding the meanings and functions of "community." Despite this, few studies have explored sexual minority women's understanding of and relationship to their communities. The present study employed qualitative research methods to investigate the meanings and functions of community among a sample of ethnically diverse lesbian and bisexual women (N = 49). From the participants' responses in semistructured focus groups and key informant interviews, three core constructs emerged: community concepts (relevance, meaning), community-based strain (racism, homophobia, biphobia, classism), and community-based action (fluidity, exclusivity). Implications of these findings for future research and practice with this population of women will be discussed. © 2009 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.*

Community. Somewhere there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power ... A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free. (Starhawk, 1982, p. 92)

Definitions of "community" are far-ranging. Some have construed it as a social web, distinct from one-to-one interactions, which carries a set of shared moral and social values, (Sergiovanni, 1994), while others describe it as a sense of psychological

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## Editorial

The origins of male homosexuality

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This special issue of *Psychology, Evolution & Gender* explores the origins of male homosexuality. This is perhaps the most controversial area of sexuality research and one fraught with religious, cultural, personal, legal and methodological taboos; and differences of opinion as to what is perceived as rigorous research across the theoretical divide that our journal addresses. Both normal sexuality, and perceived deviations from the norm, have become a lot less certain over the last few decades as our understanding grows about the sheer diversity of sexual expression contained within the label 'heterosexual'. Perceived deviations now seem more like way points along a continuum of sexual experience that encloses our species' sexual repertoire. That many men having homosexual experiences as part of their development was deeply disturbing to the mid-twentieth century, does not disguise that similar studies report similar findings at the end of the millennium. Kinsey (Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin 1948) may have lifted the lid on the realities of human sexual experience but a half-century of further research merely confirms how plastic our sexuality really is. Understanding why we behave as we do in this most intimate quadrant of the human experience is perhaps one of the quickest routes to understanding ourselves. If nothing else, such investigations will weaken established sexual prejudices.

Why study male homosexuality though? If you accept that human sexual orientation is diverse and variable and above all plastic, then there is a certain sympathy for Murphy's view:

It is hard to see that there is any . . . reason to study the origins of