

## **The Leisure Context of Adolescents who are Lesbian, Gay Male, Bisexual and Questioning their Sexual Identities: An Exploratory Study**

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This paper explored the leisure experiences and behaviors of adolescents who are lesbian, gay male, bisexual, or questioning their sexual identities. In addition, health related variables were also examined. Data for this study came from a self-administered questionnaire collected in the spring of 1994 from 2,756 ninth through twelfth graders from four high schools in a county located in the southeastern United States. Altogether there were 111 students (4%) who were identified as lesbian, gay male, bisexual, or questioning their sexual identities. Results from this exploratory study suggest that free time and leisure experiences are not always positive or healthy for gay males in particular. Males were more bored in their leisure, used free time to rebel, and some felt their parents had too much control over what they did in their free time. Both lesbians and gay males engaged in higher levels of binge drinking when compared to their peers.

**KEYWORDS:** *Lesbian and gay adolescents, leisure, health*

### **Introduction**

The problems of at-risk youth seem to increasingly challenge various academic and professional communities. Consequently, researchers from a number of disciplines are trying to understand the complexities of the issues and develop interventions to mitigate or eliminate problem behaviors. The definition of at risk is elusive and largely dependent upon who is asked. This term is commonly defined as behavior that potentially limits psychological, physical or economic well being during adolescence or adulthood. Included

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are those youth who are at risk of encountering problems in school, at home, or in communities, resulting in diminished chances of maturing into responsible adults. Many at-risk behaviors center around compromising health behaviors such as alcohol abuse, suicidal ideation and other self-destructive behaviors.

While all adolescents may be considered at risk of participation in health compromising behaviors, certain groups are more at-risk than others. For example, a major issue facing health care reform deals with "special populations" of adolescents whose health care needs are greater than those of the general population. According to Irwin et al., special populations include adolescents who are poor, living apart from their families (e.g., foster care), homeless or runaway, pregnant or parenting, gay male or lesbian, or dealing with chronic illness and disability.

### Research on Gay Youth

The focus of this exploratory study was on the leisure behaviors and experiences of a virtually ignored group of youth in our literature who might be considered at special risk—youth identified as lesbian, gay male, bisexual, or questioning their sexual identities<sup>1</sup>. Although the research about lesbian, gay male, bisexual and/or questioning youth has increased in other disciplines such as psychology, social work, counseling psychology and sociology, our field has been slow to focus attention on this segment of at risk youth (Grossman, 1992; Kivel, 1994). Boxer, Cohler, Herdt, and Irvin (1993) suggested that adolescent sexual identity is not frequently examined because it is

...one of the most sensitive social problems of our time...It is much more difficult for family and school to accept the possibility of a group of adolescents who early recognize their homosexual orientation and who seek a consistent lifestyle in the same manner as their heterosexual counterparts. (p. 255)

The bulk of research about gay youth has largely focused on: "coming out" issues (Hetrick & Martin, 1987; Martin & Hetrick, 1988; Zera, 1992); pathological behaviors associated with being gay<sup>2</sup>, such as drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, truancy, unsafe sex (D'Augelli, 1994, 1996; Gibson, 1989; Remafedi, Farrow & Deisher, 1991) and identity formation (Cass, 1979; Savin-Williams, 1995; Sophie, 1985; Trolden, 1989).

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<sup>1</sup>The operationalization of lesbian, gay males, bisexual, and questioning is provided in the methods section. Briefly for this discussion, those identified as lesbians, gay males, or bisexuals in this study have indicated that they are sexually attracted to individuals of the same gender and/or both genders. Another group of young people have been identified as questioning their sexual identities vis-à-vis their attraction to members of the same gender, both genders, and/or the opposite gender.

<sup>2</sup>The terms "gay" or "gay youth" are used broadly to designate those who are lesbians, gay males, and bisexual. If we specifically refer to males, the term "gay male" is used.

Sadly, lesbian, gay male, bisexual and/or questioning youth are more likely than their non-gay peers to engage in risky behaviors (drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, truancy, and unsafe sex (Gibson, 1989; Remadfed, et al., 1991)). Additional research suggests that the isolation and stigmatization (and concomitant homophobia) that gay youth experience in the dominant, heterosexual culture contributes to these risky behaviors (e.g., D'Augelli, 1994; Grossman, 1992; Hetrick & Martin, 1987). Because the link between leisure and health has been supported (e.g., Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993; Iso-Ahola & Park, 1996), particularly the link between leisure and problem health behaviors of adolescents (e.g., Caldwell & Smith, 1995), our paper explores the leisure context of gay youth.

### *Leisure as a Developmental Context*

Although leisure as a context for identity formation among youth has gained increased attention (e.g., Larson, 1994; Shaw, Kleiber, & Caldwell, 1995; Silbereisen, Noack, & Eyferth, 1986), the importance of the leisure context for gay youth has been virtually ignored. Boxer et al. (1993) suggested that "research is needed to determine ... how gay and lesbian adolescents negotiate their life-course around school, family and peer relations" (p. 217) and by extension, leisure. Our study derives from ecological systems theory (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1992, 1995). This theory provides a model of human development focused on understanding the processes underlying development and the interrelationship between multiple contexts in which the developing person interacts—schools, family, peers, work and leisure.

Developmentally, leisure is an important context for adolescents (e.g., Hendry, 1983; Larson, 1994; Shaw, et al., 1995). Issues such as the development of autonomy from parents, identity development, experimentation with social and sexual roles, and achievement orientation are often associated with leisure behavior and experience (e.g., Kleiber & Kirshnit, 1991; Larson, 1994; Shaw, et al., 1995). Harter (1990), for example, has suggested that feedback received during participation in leisure activities provides one basis for identity development. It is unknown, however, if lesbian, gay male, bisexual and/or questioning youth have the same leisure experiences or opportunities as non-gay youth.

From a developmental perspective, gay youth are confronted with typical issues of adolescence such as establishing autonomy, identity formation, sexuality, and peer relations. At the same time, their concerns are magnified because they experience emotions, feelings, and attractions that run contrary to the dominant messages and norms of a heterosexual society (Kivel, 1996). They must also contend with isolation and homophobic reactions, which are the single most damaging influence on gay youth (Gibson, 1989; Hunter & Schaefer, 1987; Remadfed, et al., 1991).

Thus, the context of leisure is a critical one to examine specific to gay youth since leisure affords many possibilities for healthy development. This

largely unexplored area for adolescents who are gay suggests that a closer examination of how lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and questioning adolescents experience their leisure is timely.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of our paper is to explore how lesbian, gay male, bisexual and/or questioning youth experience and participate in leisure from an ecological systems theoretical perspective. Although leisure serves as context for developing healthy lifestyles, it is also one in which risky behaviors may occur (Caldwell & Smith, 1995; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992). Thus, while this study focused on the leisure behavior and experience of adolescents who were identified as lesbian, gay male, bisexual, or questioning their sexual identities, additional variables were included as part of the ecological systems model. These additional variables included a measure of parental control over the adolescent's leisure, multiple measure of health and/or health compromising behaviors, a measure of loneliness, and a measure of fear of going to school.

## Methods

### *Sample and Procedure*

Data for this study came from a self-administered questionnaire collected in the spring of 1994 from all students in four high schools (grades nine through twelve) in a county located in the southeastern United States. The third author of the study coordinated the survey and the teachers in each school administered the questionnaires. The intent of the study was to examine the health behaviors (including sexual behaviors) and leisure experiences and behaviors of adolescents. The school district in which the study took place was interested in determining how many students could be identified as being lesbian, gay male, and bisexual to assist in planning potential health services. Questions that explicitly asked students if they were lesbian, gay male, or bisexual were too controversial and threatened parental consent. Therefore, sexual attraction was used as a surrogate for asking directly about sexual identity. This measure is further described in the measures section.

Parents were notified prior to the survey and were given the option of refusing their child's participation. On the day of the survey administration, all students were given the same option. One hundred and fifty-nine students (12 parent-based and 147 students) refused to participate in the study. Of the remaining 2,862 participants, 106 questionnaires were omitted because the participants indicated the use of a bogus drug, thus calling into question the veracity of their answers. The remaining 2,756 questionnaires represented 91.2% of the students present on the day of administration. Of those students, 54% were female and 14% were minority. The students were evenly distributed across grades.

### Measures

As previously mentioned, *sexual identity* was measured by asking about sexual attraction. The participants did not explicitly self-identify as being lesbian, gay male, bisexual, or questioning their sexual identities. We felt that sexual attraction was an acceptable proxy for sexual identity, recognizing it is not an exact measure. Our rationale was that sexual identity is largely based on to whom one is sexually attracted. For the purposes of this paper, we defined the terms lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and questioning as follows: lesbian refers to females who had sexual feelings toward other females; gay males refers to males who had sexual feelings toward other males; bisexual refers to individuals who had sexual feelings toward both males and females; and questioning refers to individuals who indicated they were not sure of their sexual feelings.

Specifically, students were asked to select one of the following statements that best described how they felt: (a) I do not have sexual feelings about either males or females; (b) I only have sexual feelings about males; (c) I only have sexual feelings about females; (d) I have sexual feelings about both males and females; and (e) I'm not sure about my sexual feelings. We grouped those students who indicated that they had only heterosexual feelings only toward people of the same sex (6 females, 22 males), toward people of both sexes (16 females, 10 males), or felt unsure about their sexual feelings (32 females, 22 males) were grouped into another category. Altogether, 111 (4.2%) students were identified as lesbian, gay male, bisexual or questioning their sexual identities; 55 were male (2.1%) and 56 were female (2.1%). Forty-eight students (1.8%) indicated that they had no sexual feelings toward either males or females (28 were female); these respondents were excluded from the analysis.

The questioning category was used because we felt it important to include youth who were confused or unsure about their sexual feelings. Being unsure of one's sexuality may be due to several reasons. First, it is possible that the confusion over sexuality may have been due to the young age of some of the participants in the study; the possibility exists that they were just not yet sexually aware. Differences in numbers of those identified as lesbian, gay male, bisexual, or questioning, however, did not exist across age groups, thus calling this conjecture into question. Another reason might have been that these youth were just in the process of recognizing sexual attraction to members of the same gender and were still unsure of their sexuality. This is, unfortunately, an empirical question that cannot be tested in this data set and at best would be difficult to ascertain in a quantitative study. Therefore, our strategy in the analysis was to run the analyses two times, once including and once excluding the questioning youth.

The dependent variables of interest were grouped into three categories: leisure experience, leisure behavior, and health behavior. Each of the *leisure experience* variables were chosen because they have been useful previously in

understanding the leisure experiences of youth at risk, as well as the developmental potential of leisure. All leisure experience variables were measured using a Likert type response format and included the following constructs:

1. Using free time as a context for rebellion was measured with 3 items ( $\alpha = .69$ ) and included, for example, the item "I do things in my free time to get back at my parents."

2. Leisure identity (2 item measure,  $\alpha = .67$ ) included the item "Compared to all the other things I do during the day, I feel most like the true me during my free time".

3. Boredom in free time (4 item measure,  $\alpha = .72$ ) was measured using an index from the Leisure Experience Battery for Adolescence (Caldwell, Smith, & Weissinger, 1992) and included items such as "For me, free time just drags on and on".

4. The amount of control parents had over leisure was measured with two items ( $\alpha = .66$ ) and included, for example, the item "My parents have too much control over what I do in my free time."

5. Because leisure is often viewed as a social time, especially for teens, we included a measure of loneliness (Benson, 1990) within the leisure experience category (4 item measure,  $\alpha = .74$ ). This index included items such as "I am a lonely person".

For each of the leisure behavior measures, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients were somewhat low but were considered acceptable to continue this exploratory analysis. Variables with the lowest reliability scores not surprisingly also contained the least number of items (2 or 3).

To assess *leisure behavior* we used a number of indicators. Two one-item measures were used to assess healthy leisure participation. The first, "I try to do things in my free time that are healthy for me" was measured using a 5 point Likert scale. The second, which asked on how many days during the past seven the student had participated in aerobic activity hard enough to sweat and breathe hard, was measured on a quasi-interval scale. We also measured how many hours during an average week the student spent in non-sports clubs and organizations, on how many non-school related sports teams one participated, and how many nights per week one went out for fun and recreation. These three variables were also measured on a quasi-interval scale. Except for the item "try to do healthy things," the remaining variables were recoded and treated as categorical variables for analysis.

The *health-related variables* included: binge drinking (number of times one drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row during the last two weeks); attempts at suicide; degree of strain, stress, or pressure; and degree of feeling sad or depressed. These standardized items were taken from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Youth Risk Behavior Survey" (Kolbe, Kahn, & Collins, 1993). Binge drinking was analyzed separately and the other three indices were used to measure overall psychological health.

Finally, we included a measure that indicated the degree to which the student was "afraid of going to school because some student(s) was threat-

ening you". Gender differences were assessed for all variables because past research has demonstrated significant differences in the meanings and experiences of adolescent males and females on the variables of interest (e.g., Shaw, et al., 1995).

## Results

Data analysis involved contingency table analysis, multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA), and difference of means tests (t-tests), all of which compared lesbian, gay male, bisexual and questioning youth with their non-gay peers. All of the analyses in this paper were run two ways: (1) including adolescents who were questioning their sexual identities and (2) excluding them. The rationale for this decision was the speculation that youth who had indicated sexual attraction to members of the other gender (or same and other genders) may be different from youth who were still unsure. Although the patterns of the relationships were largely the same between the two groups, we have described instances where a difference was found. Small numbers of lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and questioning youth prevented further disaggregation of data.

Finally, taking counsel from Carver, Cohen (1994), and Lachman (1993), we discussed those findings where the probability of the results occurring by chance was sufficiently low and reasonable for the purpose of this exploratory study. Therefore, we did not specify an exact "cut-off point" for reporting and interpreting significant results. We've included the *p* values for the results we determined important, for the reader's judgment.

### *Leisure Experience and Behavior*

Multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to provide an overall test of significance for the leisure experience variables (excluding loneliness because that measure was not leisure specific). Table 1 breaks down the analysis by gender and sexual identity. The middle column in Table 1 (non L/G/B/Q) is the comparative column for the columns on the left and right. The column on the left represents the analysis including those adolescents who were questioning their sexual identities. The column on the right excludes those individuals. Thus, the section of the table including both males and females ("all adolescents") displays the results for two MANOVAs and related univariate analyses: (a) lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and questioning adolescents compared with their non-gay peers and (b) lesbian, gay male, and bisexual adolescents compared with their non-gay peers. The *N*s changed slightly for each univariate analysis but for simplicity's sake the maximum *N* for each group is displayed. Note that the *N*s for the right hand columns are quite small, indicating a lack of power in statistical testing.

Overall, gay and questioning adolescents experienced leisure differently and more negatively than their non-gay peers (comparing columns one and two, Pillais Exact  $F = 6.65, p < .000$ ). Furthermore, when youth who were

**TABLE 1**  
*MANOVA Results for Leisure Related Variables*

All Adolescents					
Leisure Related Variables	L/G/B/Q n = 111		non L/G/B/Q n = 2530		L/G/B n = 57
	M	Univ. F p <	M	M	Univ. F p <
Parental Control <sup>a</sup>	3.05	.064	3.24	2.86	.017
Boredom <sup>b</sup>	3.70	.000	4.04	3.66	.000
Rebellion <sup>c</sup>	3.50	.069	3.26	2.95	.031
Identity <sup>d</sup>	2.21	ns	2.19	2.29	ns
Pillais Exact F	6.65	.000		5.01	.001
Females					
Leisure Related Variables	L/B/Q n = 56		non L/B/Q n = 1252		L/B n = 24
	M	Univ. F p <	M	M	Univ. F p <
Parental Control	2.98	ns	3.24	2.95	ns
Boredom	3.86	.006	4.09	3.84	ns
Rebellion	3.22	ns	3.26	3.15	ns
Identity	2.28	ns	2.24	2.67	ns
Pillais Exact F	2.21	.066		1.56	.182
Males					
Leisure Related Variables	G/B/Q n = 55		non G/B/Q n = 1022		G/B n = 33
	M	Univ. F p <	M	M	Univ. F p <
Parental Control	3.12	ns	3.27	2.81	.020
Boredom	3.57	.000	4.00	3.55	.002
Rebellion	2.86	.062	3.07	2.84	ns
Identity	2.14	ns	2.14	2.08	ns
Pillais Exact F	4.63	.001		3.41	.009

<sup>a</sup>1 = strongly agree parents have too much control; 5 = strongly disagree

<sup>b</sup>1 = strongly agree more bored; 5 = strongly disagree

<sup>c</sup>1 = strongly agree use free time to rebel; 5 = strongly disagree

<sup>d</sup>1 = strongly agree most like me in free time; 5 = strongly disagree



questioning their sexual identities were excluded from the analysis, this relationship still held true (comparing columns two and three, Pillais Exact  $F = 5.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

After splitting the analysis by gender, we found the pattern to be different for males and females; therefore, only the results split by gender are discussed. Overall, gay males reported experiencing leisure more negatively than their non-gay peers (Pillais Exact  $F = 4.63$ ,  $p < .001$  including males who were questioning their sexual identity;  $3.41$ ,  $p < .009$  excluding males who were questioning their sexual identity). The results of the MANOVA suggested that examining the univariate relationships for females was not advisable (Pillais Exact  $F$  for lesbian, bisexual, and questioning adolescents =  $2.21$ ,  $p < .066$ ; excluding questioning,  $F = 1.56$ ,  $p < .182$ ). Given these data, although not statistically tested (as this was not the purpose of this paper), we might conclude that gay males experienced leisure more negatively than lesbian and questioning females.

For gay males, whether including or excluding males who were questioning their sexual identities, leisure was experienced as more boring than their non-gay peers. There was also the suggestion that gay, bisexual, and questioning males used free time to rebel ( $p < .062$ ). In addition to being more bored, gay and bisexual males reported that their parents had too much control over what they did in their leisure compared with their non-gay peers.

Loneliness was tested separately using t-test analysis. This analysis indicated that gay, bisexual, and/or questioning males were more lonely than their non-gay male peers ( $t = -4.06$ ,  $p < .000$ ,  $df = 1016$ ), but lesbian, bisexual and questioning females reported being no lonelier than their non-gay female peers.

In addition to how these adolescents experienced leisure, we wanted to understand if differences existed in their leisure behavior patterns vis-a-vis their non-gay peers. T-test analysis indicated that lesbian, gay male, bisexual and/or questioning youth were less likely to report doing things in free time that were healthy ( $t = -2.69$ ,  $p < .008$ ,  $df = 2566$ ). No reported gender differences on this measure were found. Using contingency table analysis, we discovered that gay, bisexual and/or questioning males were less likely to go out for fun and recreation in the evening than their non-gay male peers (40% vs. 24% went out 0 times/week,  $X^2 = 6.40$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .011$ ) and were also less likely to engage in aerobic activity (26% vs. 11% engaged in no aerobic activity,  $X^2 = 11.13$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ). There were no differences in terms of number of hours spent in clubs and organizations or number of non-school related sports teams in which lesbian, gay male, bisexual and/or questioning youth participated compared to their peers.

### *Health Related Variables*

A comparison of health related behaviors indicated lesbian, gay male, bisexual and/or questioning youth were more likely to engage in binge

drinking (30% vs. 22%,  $X^2 = 3.77$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .052$ ). Furthermore, as shown in Table 2 (read the same as Table 1), MANOVA indicated overall differences in the psychological health variables between lesbian, gay male, bisexual and/or questioning youth and their non-gay peers (comparing columns one and two, Pillais Exact  $F = 6.47$ ,  $p < .000$ ). To further understand this relationship the univariate  $F$  comparisons were examined. Table 2 shows that lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and questioning youth were more likely to report feeling sad and depressed, to feel under pressure and stress, and to have attempted suicide. This relationship also held true when the questioning youth were excluded from analysis.

As in Table 1, patterns for females and males differed. Moreover, there were differences depending on whether the "questioning" group was included or excluded from analysis. Overall, lesbian, gay male, bisexual and/or questioning youth reported feeling more sad and depressed than their non-gay peers. In addition, strain and stress levels were reportedly higher in the gay adolescents than their peers (except for females when the questioning group was excluded, although this may be due to lack of statistical power).

Gay, bisexual, and/or questioning males reported more attempts at suicide than their non-gay male peers. It is worth noting that gay, bisexual, and/or questioning males differed from their non-gay peers on *all* measures: they reported feeling sad and depressed, under pressure and stress, and having attempted suicide at higher levels than their non-gay male peers.

Finally, we analyzed the extent to which gay youth experienced fear in an important ecological context, school. All lesbian, gay male, bisexual and/or questioning youth were more afraid than their non-gay peers of going to school because of threats by other students (30% vs. 11%,  $p < .000$ ).

## Discussion

Using ecological systems theory as a framework for this exploratory study, results suggest that free time and leisure experiences were not always positive or healthy for some lesbian, gay male, bisexual and/or questioning adolescents. These young people were less likely than their non-gay peers to participate in physically healthy recreational activities and more likely to participate in a health compromising behavior, binge drinking. In addition, they experienced greater levels of psychological distress than their non-gay peers did. Gay males were more bored when compared to their non-gay peers, used leisure as a context for rebellion, and felt their parents had too much control over their free time. These findings raise concern because while leisure is an important social and developmental context, it may be problematic for some gay and/or questioning youth, particularly for gay males.

Before continuing the discussion, a few caveats are extended. Low numbers of lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and questioning youth probably created lack of statistical power as well as possible instability of findings (e.g., the inconsistency of findings pertaining to gay males when including and ex-

TABLE 2  
Differences in Mean Scores for Health Related Variables

All Adolescents					
Health Related Variables	L/G/B/Q n = 111		non L/G/B/Q n = 2530		L/G/B n = 57
	M	Univ. F p <	M	M	Univ. F p <
Sad & Depressed <sup>a</sup>	3.21	.000	3.45	3.13	.000
Strain & Stress <sup>b</sup>	2.66	.011	2.66	2.45	.017
Attempt Suicide <sup>c</sup>	1.33	.116	1.15	1.30	.022
Pillais Exact F	6.47	.000		8.73	.000
Females					
Health Related Variables	L/B/Q n = 56		non L/B/Q n = 1252		L/B n = 24
	M	Univ. F p <	M	M	Univ. F p <
Sad & Depressed <sup>a</sup>	3.00	.027	3.26	2.95	.021
Strain & Stress <sup>b</sup>	2.63	.047	2.66	2.27	ns
Attempt Suicide <sup>c</sup>	1.30	ns	1.14	1.41	ns
Pillais Exact F	2.66	.047		2.19	.087
Males					
Health Related Variables	G/B/Q n = 55		non G/B/Q n = 1022		G/B n = 33
	M	Univ. F p <	M	M	Univ. F p <
Sad & Depressed <sup>a</sup>	3.42	.000	3.71	3.24	.000
Strain & Stress <sup>b</sup>	2.69	.027	3.11	2.56	.006
Attempt Suicide <sup>c</sup>	1.36	.017	1.10	1.52	.019
Pillais Exact F	6.14	.000		8.68	.000

<sup>a</sup>1 = all of the time

<sup>b</sup>1 = more than I can take

<sup>c</sup>1 = 0 times

cluding the questioning category). As well, leisure was measured in a somewhat limited way, focusing on active participation (which took place in or out of school) and not on the relaxation and relational element contained in much adolescent leisure (e.g., Kleiber, Caldwell, & Shaw, 1993). Finally, including the questioning group in the analyses may be "questionable," yet the breakdown of the tables mitigates this concern. Despite these concerns, this exploratory study provides some insight and direction for future research into the role of leisure and gay youth from an ecological systems framework.

Given these caveats, the following discussion is proffered. The findings were more consistent for gay males than lesbians, and indicated that gay males, in general, appeared to be more at risk and have less positive leisure experiences. This finding may be due to the larger number of males who were predominantly identified as gay or bisexual as compared with females, who were primarily identified as bisexual or unsure. Perhaps because these young males seemed more certain of their sexual feelings than the females, they were also more aware of their "differentness" from the dominant culture.

As suggested earlier in the paper, the ecological systems model encourages a broader perspective of adolescent development. Using the leisure context as a focus, we also examined the role of parents (i.e., control over leisure activities), peers (i.e., loneliness), school (i.e., fear) and health (i.e., binge drinking, aerobic activity, and psychological health). Although related research is sparse, studies exist which may provide insight into these findings.

Hunter and Schaecher (1987) suggested that non-gay youth may sever ties with lesbian/gay peers out of fear of association with someone who is lesbian or gay. In addition, parents may not be supportive and might respond to their lesbian/gay children with verbal harassment and physical violence (Hunter & Schaecher, 1987). Therefore, to find that gay, bisexual and questioning males in this study reported feeling more alone and lonely was no surprise.

Teachers and school administrators sometimes tacitly accept harassment of these marginalized students by not responding to anti-gay slurs and/or violence (Hunter & Schaecher, 1987). This fact might help explain the finding that lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and/or questioning adolescents were more fearful of going to school. As an extension of this thought, one might speculate that if these youth were fearful of a compulsory obligation like school, they might also be fearful during their free time. Thus fear may prevent leisure participation, mask the positive benefits typically accrued through leisure experiences, or provide the context for acts of "rebellion" or risk taking (such as binge drinking). This possible constraint to leisure is only suggested; future research may provide empirical evidence.

Although the relationship was not overwhelmingly strong ( $p < .062$ ), gay, bisexual, and questioning males reported higher levels of using leisure as a context for rebellion than their non-gay peers. Potential reasons for rebellious behavior during their free time may include (a) they do not have other activities in which to participate (or feel comfortable in), so they be-

come bored and try to find excitement or (b) in leisure they feel some control over life and use the time to act out against a less than welcoming society.

We found mixed evidence to support O'Connor's (1994) assertion that gay youth might refrain from participation in certain activities. The gay and non-gay youth in our study reported similar levels of participation in clubs, organizations, and non-school related sports teams. On the other hand, gay, bisexual, and questioning males were less likely to go out for fun and recreation in the evening and were less likely to engage in aerobic activity than their non-gay male peers. Thus, the role of leisure experience and leisure participation for gay youth needs further examination.

The adolescents in this study constituted a non-representative sample that might be considered at risk (e.g., Irwin, et al., 1994), thus presenting a unique challenge to leisure service providers. If gay adolescents do not feel safe (physically or psychologically) or welcome in leisure programs, clubs, organizations, or environments, they will be constrained in their opportunities to experience leisure and its concomitant developmental and health benefits. Leisure service providers need to ask, generally, what the role of leisure is in the lives of lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and questioning adolescents, and specifically, what they can do to facilitate safe and developmentally productive leisure environments for gay youth. For example, if gay males were bored because of a lack of appropriate or interesting activities, leisure service providers should solicit their input as to suitable activities. This strategy assumes that service providers understand that their programs have current or potential interest to gay youth and are concerned about meeting their needs.

If leisure is, indeed, the fourth developmental context, then the experiences and opportunities missed in this context might be significantly problematic to lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and questioning adolescents—particularly males. The interaction of developmental contexts (e.g., schools, family, peers, work, and leisure) is more important than their independent effects (Silbereisen & Todt, 1994). This study provides some evidence of such an interaction, but further study is warranted to identify how the leisure context, in conjunction with other contexts, can be structured to facilitate the positive, healthy developmental opportunities experiences needed by lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and questioning adolescents.

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