University of Alberta

Informing Queer Identities: Media and Youth

by

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Abstract

This multifaceted, arts-informed study explores the dialogical experiences of sexual minority youth from Edmonton, Alberta, as they interact with queer niche-market magazines. Previous literature has interrogated the influence of mass media discourses on personal identity and body image development in North American youth. This research project, however, addresses how sexual minority youth interact with community-focused, queer media; and through a Bakhtinian lens, examines the relationship between author, texts, and readers with particular attention to poststructuralist and queer theories and methodologies. Of central importance to this study was the perspective of the sexual minority youth participants, and their personal, active experiences and meaning-making processes as the 'subjects' spoken of and spoken to in these cultural artefacts imbued with particular representations of sexuality, race, gender, ability, and class. Ultimately, the necessity of giving agency, authority, and voice to sexual minority youth and their living realities is affirmed.

Acknowledgement

"I give myself verbal shape from another's point of view, ultimately from the point of view of the community to which I belong. A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee. A word is territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his interlocutor."

Vološinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language

Many people have contributed to this project, though not cited in the bibliography or footnotes. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor Dr. Amy Kaler, as well as my committee members Dr. André Grace and Dr. Sharon Rosenberg. Acknowledgements must also go to my many, eager research participants; Kristopher Wells for his guidance in working with youth and creating opportunities for me to do just that; and, of course, special recognition must be sent to Sarah Manduca.

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Overview of Research Problem

The objective of this study was to open a space for critical reflection on the role that queer print media plays in the formation of personal identities of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirited, Intersex, and Queer (LGBTTIQ) young adults, with specific attention to localized perspectives and practices of youth residing in the Edmonton, Alberta, and the rural surrounding areas.

During early adulthood, self-conception and patterning of individual identities are undergoing drastic transformation, constantly informed and reformed by way of dialogue with society, language, people, and the environment. Media is one such tool used in during this 'dialogical' learning period (Ragusa, 2005; Ballantine & Olge, 2005; Featherstone, 2006, 1982/1991; Fejes, 2000; Shilling, 1993). Through images and text, media is a forum for cultural learning, personal development, and an environment for individuals to understand their feelings, sense of self, and search for role models. It is also a meaning making institution where economically driven definitions can be simultaneously contested, validated, and resisted. With an eye towards this important developmental age, this project set out to a) understand how sexual minority youth interpret ideological messages presented in gay niche-market magazines that seek to reiterate and reify LGBTTIQ representations along an ideal consumerist model, and b) explore the ways in which youth set themselves in relation to these queer[1] representations and other, possible selves.

[1] For simplicity, the term "queer" is used in this paper as a generic term that refers to all sexual minority individuals, unless otherwise noted. For the sake of variety, "Gay", "LGBTTIQ", "Sexual Minority", and "Queer" are used interchangeably. Please note, however, that in keeping with feminist, poststructuralist,

This study focused on young adults, LGBTTIQ youth between the ages of 18-24, who are within the period referred to as 'emerging adulthood' (Arnett, 2000). First identified by Bios, in 1962, where he described, "the transition from adolescence to adulthood is marked by an intervening phase, postadolescence, which can be claimed rightfully by both, and can be viewed from either of these two stages" (148). The intermediate years of 18 through 24 have been isolated as a critical time point where individualistic challenges become the main contributors to personal growth. Obstacles such as separation from parents' supervision, introduction of educational and career commitments, and fiscal independence have all been cited as key factors in this process of postadolescence identity formation (Arnett, 2000; Brown, 2006; Phinney, 2006; Tanner 2006).

Jean Phinney has written extensively on the period of young adulthood, during which a "sense of membership in an ethnic, racial, or cultural group is an underlying issue that pervades and influences progress toward adulthood" (118). A belief that was further explored by anthropologist Sarah Thornton, in her studies of 'ravers' and the subculture that developed around youth underground/alternative music scenes. She suggested that to precisely grasp youth subculture, a "systematic investigation of their media consumption" is essential (Thornton, 1995, 14). Taken together with the research on postadolescence identity formation, these realizations provide significant impetus to explore the implications that group membership, as well as interactive processes, encounters, and utilizations of LGBTTIQ media, have on the period of emerging adulthood in sexual minority youth.

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and queer theories, that set out to destabilize the notion of binary and discreet categorizations, these terms are intended to encompass the fluidity of gender expression and identification.

Statement of Purpose

LGBTTIQ media, including lifestyle and entertainment magazines, have only gained significant economic momentum and a strong circulation base in the past decade. As a result, research published in this area has been largely theoretical and distinctly based on the lack of voice, authorship, and authenticity. Katherine Sender was the first academic to produce thorough work in the area of representation of sexual minorities in queer-niche media, publishing a series of articles in the late 1990's onwards. Through extensive ethnographic research within advertising agencies, Sender used the producers of queer advertising, including account executives and creative personnel, with customers focused to both mainstream and niche-market publications, as a window into production and commercialization of acceptable sexual minority identities (1999, 2003, 2004).

This research project takes the opposite strategy of Sender's, however. Instead of looking at the messages as 'Truth' statements that are taken-up without interrogation, this study emphasizes the dialogical relationship between queer media and queer audiences; and the complex interactions with the texts, images, and messages that occur. Of particular interest is queer representation as seen by sexual minority youth.

An American survey of 8 to 18-year-olds conducted and published in 2005, indicated that an average youth engages with various forms of media between 6 and 7 hours each day (Rideout, Roberts, & Foehr, 2005). During these periods, Internet, television, radio, and print are often accessed simultaneously, for complementary *and* contradictory purposes. In search of self-concept and identity, "adolescents are more prone than are adults to 'look outside' of themselves (e.g., to media imagery or texts) to discover who they are" (Garner, in Ballentine, 2005, 282). Print media, such as

magazines, are a part of this referential material; and popular glossies - available online, at the local bookshop, and as hand-me-downs from friends - are shared and used in ways that set them up as a meaningful, cultural resources (Katz & Liebes, 1984; Kehily, 1999). It is vital, then, that media and audience studies are undertaken, with special focus to subcultural productions, to determine how LGBTTIQ youth incorporate and resist representations of sexuality, race, gender, ability, and class - heavily loaded with normative messages - into their everyday lives and equally meaning-saturated social worlds.

This research project works within the current literature around commodity signs, employing Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital; a Bakhtinian approach to dialogical learning and social reiteration; as well as, self-concept and identity formation through a queer-poststructuralist lens. It starts from the notion that how a young adult feels they fit with their greater community will influence the media they seek out; how they make sense of the messages contained within that media; and the ways in which they access knowledge gained from the media in other contexts of their lives, including incorporation and resistance (Brown, 2000, 2006; Steele, 1999). Participants were expected to come to the study with their own cache of prior knowledges, understandings, and needs that would make up their repertoire of prior lived experiences and affect how LGBTTIQ media is read, identified with, and incorporated. Considering remarks that, "emerging adulthood seems to represent a unique turning point in human development when the exploratory nature of emerging adulthood gives way to commitments to adult roles" (Tanner, 2006, 25), the findings of this project will hopefully expand the current

understanding of young adulthood and the influences of media choices on this critical period of life adjustment.

Research Questions

At points throughout this project, I found it valuable to check in with several guiding questions established during the preliminary stages of inquiry. These included:

- What particular factors did youth identified as influential in their selection of media?
- How, when, and where did youth consume queer niche-market media?
- How did youth utilize the media messages in the queer magazines in their social interactions with peers versus family, in queer spaces compared to public spaces?
- Were the representations in the magazines believable to the youth?
- In what ways were images, texts, and messages incorporated? Resisted?
- How did these reactions to the media influence their referential engagement with the images, texts, and messages?

All of these points are central to understanding the embodied identities of sexual minority youth. It was the aim of the research project to engage with the above questions by recording and reviewing the personal narratives of LQBTTIQ youth, as well as through exploring collages created from queer print media.

Theoretical Concerns

A belief that media influences the self-concept and identity of sexual minority youth was the basis for this research and the epistemological framework that guided this

project. In line with Bakhtinian thinking, this study explored the notion of 'ideological becoming' through dialogue with queer niche-market magazines, where interaction, iteration, and resistance to the texts, images, and messages serves as a pedagogical tool during post-adolescent explorations of non-heteronormative sexual orientation and gender identification. So that as each individual decides, consciously and unconsciously, on which messages to incorporate and which to resist, they are also making important, identity-forming choices.

Many social theorists have already explored the concomitant relationship between consumption and visibility of sexual minorities, with leanings towards a positive correlation between consumer desirability and an increasing trend to favourable popular discourses (Weeks, 1995). Yet, studies into the formation of subjectivity in dialogue with non-mass media social ideologies, such as the discourses on LGBTTIQ culture and identities provide by queer niche-market magazines, remain scarce. This area is deserving of academic attention, for as remarked by Bronski, "[since Stonewall] gay men *and* lesbians have consciously created a culture that is based upon their own analyses, experiences, and perceptions... this work has *not* depended significantly upon reacting to mainstream culture or pressures" (emphasis in original) (1984, 13). To focus attention on queer discourses articulated in media designed for a sexual minority community, might reveal common positions and boundaries available for formation of an individual's consciousness and sense of identity within that particular social group; not necessarily as causative agents, but as reflections of values, ideals, and normalized spaces (Ragusa, 2005).

The Gay Niche: LGBTTIQ Magazines

The 1967 debut of *The Los Angeles Advocate* marked the first foray into large-scale, mainstream advertisement solicitation by a queer magazine.[2] Within ten years, the

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[2] The history of queer publications is marred by censorship, legal injustice, and discrimination, propagated by the Comstock Act [ch. 258, § 2, 17 Stat. 598, (current version at 18 U.S.C. § 1461 (1994))], legislation that came into effect in the United States in 1873. This U.S. federal statute, supplemented by various jurisprudence barring import of materials from abroad, including the Tarrif Act of 1930 [ch. 497, § 305(a), 46 Stat. 590, 688] and a plethora of regulatory boards at the state level, together sought to control the dispersal of materials deemed 'offensive' by elected representatives and quasi-officials in the United States Postal service, Customs Service Agency, and network media conglomerates (Kilpatrick, 1962; Paul & Schwartz, 1962; Sender, 2004).

Judicial reinforcement of the Comstock and Tarrif Acts came from a 1942 ruling in which their Supreme Court set out that "certain classes of speech" deemed "lewd and obscene" did not have protection under the first amendment:

> "There are certain well-defined and narrowly limited classes of speech, the prevention and punishment of which has never been thought to raise any Constitutional problem. These include the lewd and obscene, the profane... [s]uch utterances are no essential part of any exposition of ideas, and are of such slight social value as a step to truth that any benefit may be derived from them is clearly outweighed by the social interest in order and morality" (footnotes removed) [Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire, 315 U.S. 568, (1957), 571-722]

With this legal precedent, and it's continued endorsement through the late 1940's and 1950's, the Comstock Act was invoked to confiscate and destroy a wide-range of published materials that engaged any sort of LGBTTIQ theme, whether this be magazines, non-fictional narratives, or 'pulp' novels of the era, including Vin Packer's Spring Fire (1952); Fay Adams' Appointment in Paris (1952); and Allen Ginsberg's Howl and Other Poems (1956) (Eskridge, 1997). The Act was also used as a means to arrest editors, publishers, bookshop owners, store clerks, and even everyday possessors of the materials. In total, over 4000 individuals where indicted and imprisoned on the grounds of 'trafficking in obscenity' under this legislation; and an even greater number of publications were confiscated and destroyed (Eskridge, 1997).

Resistance to rampant censorship reached a crux in 1954, when Los Angeles Postmaster Otto Oleson barred the distribution of the October issue of the monthly magazine ONE, a gay publication based out of Los Angles, California. Frustrated by unrelenting, systemic intolerance, the magazines' publishers challenged the legality of the confiscation in court. Both the initial judgement and appeal fell in favour of the Postmaster General. In the case of the later ruling, the presiding judge, Justice Ross, determined that the content of the magazine was, "nothing more than cheap pornography calculated to promote lesbianism," "dirty, vulgar and offensive to the moral senses," and "morally depraving and debasing" [One, Inc. v. Olesen, 241 F.2d 772 (9th Cir. 1957), pp .777-78].

Persistence was rewarded on January 13, 1958, when the United States Supreme Court returned a unanimous decisions overturning both earlier rulings and concluding that gay publications did not inherently fit within the criteria of "obscene, lascivious and filthy" [One, Inc. v. Olesen, 355 U.S. 371, 371 (1958) (per curiam)]. In a show of celebration, the seized October 1954 issue was reissued that spring. After this legal victory, interference with the production and distribution of queer magazines essentially ceased. The legal success of ONE magazine has been remarked as being the key sociolegal victory for the LGBTTIQ community during the 1950's, McCarthy-era movements (D'Emilio, 1983). A significance that was further underlined by Streitmatter, in a 1995 article, where he explained, "[t]he journalistic triumvirate created an arena in which gay men and lesbians could, for the first time in American history, speak above a whisper about issues that were fundamental to their lives" (437).

Post Olesen-decision, the direct mail market for LGBTTIQ magazines began to flourish, and an increasing numbers of publications began to compete for the support of limited private dollars to finance their production and distribution costs (Sender, 2004). Monthly periodicals opened their back pages to for-

publisher had made unprecedented advances into commercial marketing, confirming Absolut Vodka as the first national-scale corporation to establish a contractual relationship with an LGBTTIQ publication (Sender, 2004). For Absolut, who risked public backlash of late 1970's conservatism, it was a speculative investment that has since paid off many times over. "When Absolut took the risk of placing ads in gay magazines, no gay man would serve anything but Absolut. Those ads took Absolut from fifth place to the number-one selling premium vodka in the U.S." (Streitmatter, in Sender, 2001, 33).

Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2007, *The Advocate* is now published by PlanetOut Inc., an entertainment company that specializes in queer market media. Besides the digital media brands gay.com, 365gay.com, and HIVplusmag.com, the e-commerce transactional site buygay.com, the travel marketer RSVP Vacations, and the paperback publishing division Alyson Publications, PlanetOut Inc. also distributes the highest-selling lesbian and gay-oriented glossy magazines on the North American market: *Curve* and *OUT*. In 2006, monthly circulation for *Curve* was 68,200, with a

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pay personal classifieds, and reached out to community and allied businesses for advertising commitments. The largest response came from the pornographic industry, and was welcomed immediately and gratefully.

It is important to note that, in Canada, censorship of LGBTTIQ materials via import restrictions and confiscations occurred well into the year 2000. Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium pursued the systematic censorship into the courts. As a result, a Supreme Judgment was issued on December 15, 2000 that stated, [Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium v. Canada (Minister of Justice), 2000 SCC 69, [2000] 2 S.C.R. 1120]:

> "Code 9956(*a*) of Schedule VII of the *Customs Tariff* prohibits the importation of "[b]ooks, printed paper, drawings, paintings, prints, photographs or representations of any kind that . . . are deemed to be obscene under subsection 163(8) of the *Criminal Code*". At the entry level, Customs inspectors determine the appropriate tariff classification, pursuant to s. 58 of the *Customs Act*."

The Court found that Customs had violated Little Sisters' consitutional rights and ordered that Code 9956(*a*) of the *Customs Tariff* be struck down, stating,

> "Systemic problems call for systemic solutions. Customs' history of improper censorship, coupled with its inadequate response to the declarations of the courts below, confirms that only striking down the legislation will guarantee vindication of the appellants' constitutional rights."

median readership income of $85,372.[3] According to the Audit Bureau of Circulations publisher's statement accessible through the advertising section of the out.com website, circulation of *OUT* in 2006 was 158,702, with readership estimates greater then 275,000 per issue.[4] A marketing study commissioned by *OUT,* to profile readers of the same year, revealed that the average household income of their subscribers was $110,200, and that 85.1% agreed with the statement: "I am *very* likely to purchase products advertised in *OUT*" (emphasis added).[5]

As of 2007, national sponsors in LGBTTIQ publications have grown to include corporations such as Subaru, Tanqueray, Budweiser, and American Express. In hand with this influx of big name businesses, has come rapid queer visibility through recognition of purchasing power. The website of the National Gay Newspaper Guild reports that a profit of over $212 million in advertising sales was recorded in gay print publications for the 2005 fiscal year; as well, projected 2007 buying power was calculated at over $690 billion dollars.[6] It is obvious from these figures that the LGBTTIQ community has experienced a significant boom in their desirability as consumers and has subsequently fallen into the spotlight of commercial gaze, a double-bind inherent in visibility that has been met with both anticipation and trepidation (Sender, 1999, 2003, 2004; Campbell, 2005).

To an image-starved group, the messages provided in queer magazines, both editorial and commercially based, provide representations to explore, emulate, and

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[3] <http://www.curvemag.com/Detailed/128.html> Accessed June 06, 2007
[4] <http://www.out.com/pubmediakit/out/pdf/out_abc.pdf> Accessed June 06, 2007
[5] "Out 2005 MRI Custom Study (Index: Spring 2005 U.S. Adults)" CMB & PNO Publishing 2006 <http://www.out.com/pubmediakit> Accessed June 06, 2007
[6] <http://72.14.253.104/search?q=cache:dHhQ0fNA9SQJ:www.ngng.org/about.php+2005+%24212+million+gay+consumers&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=10> Accessed June 02, 2007

critique. Media mindsets have ushered their specific consumer taget-groups towards goods and services that help define and demarcate the appropriate social embodiment of 'gay', in ways that hint at how markets are moulded not found (Ohmann, 1996; Sender, 1999). As explained by Sender, "whatever these marketing efforts may portend for the lives of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, media representatives have been careful to circumscribe these developments within a discursive framework of sound business practices" (2004, 1/2). With economical motivation to reel in the sexual minority community, niche-market media arrives with little responsibility towards creating liberatory discourses, disrupting normative representations, or inciting political transformation (Campbell, 2005); but rather with a desire to reposition and fix the social identity of gays and lesbians and community firmly within the marketplace.

Some scholars suggest that this tie to the consumer market allowed the shaping of a gay identity outside of the previous sex-focused connotations, highlighted by the predominance of pornographic advertising in monthly publications preceding *The Advocate* (D'Emilio, 1996; Sender, 2004). Others, such as Durham & Kellner, sit firmly in the pessimistic camp. As they explain, "there are no innocent texts, all artefacts of the established culture and society are laden with meaning, values, biases, and messages" (2001, 5); or even more striking is Foucault's assertion: "visibility is a trap," (1977, 200). These quotations point to the tensions surrounding the very act of identifying, isolating, and targeting the 'gays', raising questions around whether 'community' can exist; or if the commercialized aspect of magazines are merely another tool to create static boundaries to preclude dynamic identity possibilities and reinscribe essentialist positioning.

Judith Butler has produced integral work in the area of allowable social representations. In *Precarious Life,* she explains, "[t]he public sphere is constituted in part by what cannot be said and what cannot be shown. The limits of the sayable, the limits of what can appear, circumscribe the domain in which political speech operates and certain kinds of subjects appear as viable actors" (2004, xvii). To extend this quote to discussions around niche-market magazines, such as *The Advocate, OUT*, and *Instinct* - albeit none of which overtly set out to demarcate singular definitions of sexual minority - we come to realize that the publications are imbued with ideas and representations of LGBTTIQ subjectivity that mirror conventional, popular discourses of idealized categories; as well as curtailing sexual and challenging - political/ ideological/ theological - representations of the sexual minority community, in order to maintain advertiser loyalty.

Peñaloza explores this line of thought in a 1996 article where she problematizes the ways in which the pervasiveness of white, upper-middle class images in LGBTTIQ publications, "often appear at the expense of those more distanced from and threatening to the mainstream, such as the poor, ethnic/racial/sexual minorities, drag queens and butch lesbians" (34). The struggle of queer niche-market magazines to balance the needs of advertising dollars, against a desire to reflect, speak to, and in some ways speak for the LGBTTIQ community is very apparent. Commentaries like those of Butler and Peñaloza, raise questions of who is allowed to define the membership list to the 'gay market' and whether their constructions ever truly challenge binary identity categories or merely reiterate their importance.

Review of Related Research

Identity Research

The universal subject, unique yet inherently human, is fixed in humanist thought. The central tenet of which upholds a notion of a common human experience, an inherent humanness to all individuals beyond refute (Zipes, 1999). Within this essentialist ideology, no space existed for pluralistic notions of a self, socially constructed through the cultural spaces made available to personal articulation. In 1979, Giddens remarked that humanism, "takes subjectivity for granted, as an inherent characteristic of human beings...not open to any kind of social analysis" (120).

Recognizing this shortcoming in humanism, many theories and frameworks were brought forth in an attempt to explain identity formation with a nod to the role of the social world (Hecht, 1993; Marcia, 1993; Harter, 1999; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Warner, 1994). Specifically, in response to the gap of work around a 'thinking subject', one who's subjectivity is a result of action and meaning-making rather than a product of action and meaning-making, Symbolic Interactionism Theory emerged (Cooley,1902; Mead, 1934). It has subsequently served as a foundation for many theories exploring the social process and social relations.

Specific to symbolic interationist-based theorizations on identity is the notion of a self-characterization reliant on reflective evaluation from the perspective of the 'other'; our perceived self from response to intersubjective exchanges with other members of society, reasoning that one has no single, fixed identity (Yurchisin, 2005; Harter, 1999). Rather, individuals continually construct their identities through engagement with the social world. Along this line, the social nature of the self and the importance of social

interaction for self-formation, maintenance, and change is emphasized. In 1991, Burke proposed expansion of symbolic interactionist theory through the incorporation of identity, self-concept, and self-reflection into an overarching 'Identity Theory'. This umbrella term was developed to highlight the influence of others' perceptions of the self, as central to self-conception. Where, as an individual senses a miss-match between self-concept (or 'identity standard'), and how they believe others' perceive them (the 'element reflected appraisal'), s/he will modify her behaviour in accordance to ensure that her internal view is aligned with the environmental view (Kaufman & Johnson, 2004).

For sexual minorities, or as Goffman situates, 'the stigmatized' (1986), behaviour modification is a lifetime commitment to managing the stigma by learning to mediate self-conceptions that arise from social situations and relationships. In the same text, Goffman further discusses the integral role of 'sympathetic others'. Wherein, by sharing the experiences of stigma, individuals learn means to cope, manage, and even resist the normalized discourses they were confronting. Snow and Anderson (1987), in their work on homelessness, term this negotiation through group participation 'identity work' and 'identity talk'. Positive identity talk involves reflected appraisal from individuals of similar stigmatization, which in turn allows for positive personal identity standards in the face of widespread societal marginalization.

Recent writings have further explored these identity concepts in terms of strategies employed by LGBTTIQ persons to feign normalized behaviours in an attempt to 'pass' (Herdt, 1989; Ingram & Hutchinson, 1999; Troiden, 1993). Though these studies often suggest that the 'passing' strategy is a failure to adopt ones identity, and merely a stop along the linear road to full self-acceptance. In the case of the LGBTTIQ

'stigma', however, delineation of the coming-out event as the ultimate marker of adequate adjustment seems to be limiting, oversimplified, and problematic. Not only does it fail to take into account the fluidity of identity formation and maintenance, but also situates the LGBTTIQ identity as the only, or essential, identity claim, in what is actually only one of a myriad of components by which a person is negotiating or may feel marginalized (e.g. class, race, gender, age, ability). Rather, a positive self-concept could be used as a preferential goal.

Symbolic Interactionism and Identity Theory provide useful strategies for approaching discussions and studies on the ways in which youth take up media to inform their LGBTTIQ identity. "In the same way that a consumer's use of products influences others' perceptions, the same product can help determine his or her own self-concept and social identity" (Solomon, Bamossy, & Askegaard, 1999, 181). Consequently, just as the perception of stigma will vary across individuals, so will their interpretation of media images, strategies employed to constructing and maintaining self-concept, as well as their need for positive self-views. However, employment of media will inevitably offer some form of identity awareness, in the life long process of identity management and negotiation. While social realities can be shared, *individual* identity conceptions are paramount to social constructionist thought.

The communication theory of identity branches from this point, embracing the introduction of self-conception as something that is fluid and always in flux; and further expanding it to account for time, context, and previous knowledges that result in each individual person reacting to similar social forces and messages in a myriad of differing ways (Gergen, 1973; Hecht, 1993). In this framework, identity is a product of perpetual

negotiation between self-awareness and self-verbalization, intersubjective cues, and communal perspectives shared with those in each group the individual feels apart of. Introduced here is an opportunity to address incorporation of media images and the role of construction/ transmission of possible selves for audiences.

Poststructuralism and Queer Theory

Sexuality, along with gender, class, and other often binary differentiators, as socially constructed phenomena is a relatively recent framework (Foucault, 1986; Sedgwick, 1990; Seidman, 1997; Butler, 1999). As social theory, in particular feminism and post-structuralism, has developed since the 1960's, the making of subjects through the organization of society by *gendered* identities, bodies, legislation, and social institutions, have come into contestation. Specifically, the idea of an 'autonomous individual' is being recognized as, "not prior to politics, but precisely constituted in and through socio-political relations" (Namaste, 1996, 195). In this respect, it is acknowledged that normative binaries and ideals act to define/ reinforce many legitimates, including: legitimate states of being, legitimate access to resources, legitimate participation in society and legitimate authority to act as an agent. However, just as Giddens critiqued humanism, he also critiqued those who would swing to the other extreme, warning that untempered poststructuralism would lead to disempowered subjects, incapable of accessing personal agency. In this case, creating individuals that would be unable to resist dominant ideological discourses, or as he states, "reduc[ing] subjectivity to the determined outcome of social forces" (Giddens, 1979, 120).

In spite of controversy over personal agency, poststructuralism and queer social theory have become a solid critique of the identity-focused social theories discussed above, challenging their reliance on subject positioning and use of definitive categories, which lead to constraints on legitimate ways of being and enacted identity categories. These new frameworks instead champion a social theory that had no interest in consolidating individuals to overarching identity categories; and has adopted theories that place the recognition of limitations and potential reifying effects of binary nomenclature at the forefront of its practice (Warner, 1994; Nicholson & Seidman, 1995; Seidman, 1995).

In an attempt to expose the fundamental and foundational inequalities that circulated in dominant culture, queer theory began to ask questions such as: What political operations allow for the emergence and naturalization of limited subjectivities? Who is permitted to make such designations and who is allowed to contest them? And when such contestation occurs, what sort of marginalization is exposed and what purpose did exclusion serve? (Butler & Scott, 1992). As explained by Jagose, "Queer theory and pedagogy place at stake the desire to deconstruct binaries central to Western modes of meaning-making, learning, teaching and doing politics. Both desire to subvert the processes of normalization... Queer tries to interrupt these modes of making selves and making sense by refusing stable identities and by producing new identifications that lie outside binary models of gender and sexuality" (1998, 150-1).

If we are to interrogate socially constructed notions of stable identities, challenging representations of LGBTTIQ individuals in media is of integral importance. As Foucault contends, "any discourse, and regime of intelligibility, constitutes us *at a*

cost. Our capacity to reflect upon ourselves, to tell the truth about ourselves, is correspondingly limited by what the discourse, the regime, cannot allow into speakability" (Foucault, in Butler, 2005, 121). This provides academics the impetus to study how sexual minorities are engaging with discourses that attempt to speak to and for their identities; the methods employed to resist socially constructed norms that are at a discord with their personal understandings; and ways in which the notions of community play into these identity negotiations.

Within this study, poststructualism was embraced both conceptually and methodologically. Within this frame, the validity of blurring fact/fiction, subject/object, and true/imaginary was reinforced, but along with came a challenge to, "ask questions that produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently" (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, 1). The introduction of collages as a strategy for knowledge generation was in answer to a desire to confront and subvert hegemonic discourses of traditional research practices that dictate what is allowed to count as 'truth'; as well as to simultaneously open a space for these different kinds of knowledge to emerge and be reclaimed by those who often find themselves being spoken into existence under particular circumstances and in specific, defined embodiements.

Working with youth inherently requires an acknowledgment that the self-narratives produced are transitional, relational, and continually under revision. Though a site of discomfort for traditional researchers, poststructuralist methodology allows a space for this disruption. Theories, approaches, and reading practices that embrace a poststructuralist standpoint require acceptance of the, "inevitable tensions of knowledge as partial, as interested, and as performative of relations of power" (Britzman, 2000, 37).

When considered along side the social, cultural, and political history of LGBTTIQ representations discussed in this paper, disjunction can be reclaimed as introducing a site for agential action, a place for sexual minority youth to live differently, to question, and to move beyond mythical and literal representations.

Queer studies, reminds Cohen, "does not focus on integration into dominant structures but instead seeks to transform the basic fabric and hierarchies that allow systems of oppression to persist and operate efficiently" (2001, 540). By scavenging methodologies from across disciplines queer studies makes visible individuals and identities that have previously been silenced (Holiday, 2000). Taken with poststructuralist research principles, queer theory pushes for research that is critical and deconstructs not only hegemonic cultural productions circulating in dominant discourses, but also makes visible the silences in messages alive within our own subcultural work that restrict who becomes visible, speakable and therein intelligible (de Laurentis, 1991; Fuss, 1991).

Theories of Literature

Louise Rosenblatt first began publishing on reader-response theory in the late 1930's. However, her work did not come into focus until the 1960's, when a paradigm shift from formalist beliefs about reading as a process of one-way, unmitigated information transfer to the consumer, evolved towards reader-text relationships (Davis & Womack, 2002; Hoyt, 2006). Her writings began to recognize the importance of social, historical positioning and prior experiences in the uptake and interpretation of meanings. During this period of reconsideration, Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Literature became a foundational piece, with significant influence on later scholarship, including

Gates' *Signifyin(g)*, Bhabha's *Third Space*, and Bakhtin's concept of *Utterance,* as the ongoing interrelation between author and reader.

Rosenblatt's theory was the first to delve into the active role of the reader, and how prior knowledges, sociocultural viewpoints, and other individual positionings influence engagement, understanding, and subsequent reflection and uptake of textual messages (Hoyt, 2006). In her repositioning, the reader becomes an active participant in the meaning making of the authors text, opening a space for resistance, agency and multifaceted readings (Rosenblatt, 1938/1965/1991, 1978, 1995). "The relation between reader and signs on the page proceeds in a to-and-fro spiral in which each is continually being affected by what the other has contributed" (Rosenblatt, in Hoyt, 2006, 29). Rosenblatt developed the author and reader as equals in knowledge production from the text, treating the exchange and negotiation of messages as a life event, a means of forming ideas about the self in relation to the other that can be referenced at future time points and can serve as a medium for mediating the social world.

Gates' theorizations further this notion of a collaborative relationship by incorporating a possibility for multiplicity in meaning making, which he terms *Signifyin(g)* (1998). His work stems from his own polyphonous readings of mass discourse response to African-American literature. While mainstream, dominant audiences were able to consume the material and understand the themes, those readers that were members of the particular subcultural community (such as himself), were able to reinterpret the hegemonic messages, picking up further literal and figurative intertextual references. In such situations of textual rereading/ revision, the author is signifying implicitly to a target audience, the individuals who share further insider

knowledge of a subject (or subjectivity), who are heightened to specific subcultural codes and cues and thereby able to actively engage with the alternate messages (Hoyt, 2006). As he states, "Signifyin(g), then, is a metaphor for textual revision" (Gates, 1998, 88). It allows for subcultural readers to negotiate multiple, possibly conflicting messages and rearticulate the stigmatized subject.

Homi Bhabha explores the crossroad where textual references meet cultural references, where one reading can broaden into multiple layers, further in his concept of the *Third Space*. Working from the foundation of discursive plurality, he problematizes the notion that an original meaning truly exists. In *The Location of Culture*, he explains, "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (1994/2004, 55). Bhabha posits that it is the moments of exchange where intersubjective discussion creates and recreates meanings - the *inbetween* spaces where the real work of message translation takes place.

Through the Bakhtinian Lens

> *I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another. The most important acts constituting self-consciousness are determined by a relationship toward another consciousness, (towards a thou). Separation, dissociation, and enclosure within the self as the main reason for the loss of one's self. Not that which takes place within, but that which takes place*

on the boundary between one's own and someone else's consciousness, on the threshold. (Bakhtin, 1984, 287)

In his seminal text, Speech Genres, written in the early nineteen-fifties, but not published until 1979 and not translated into English until 1981, Bakhtin explores the formation of subjectivity through the language of 'dialogical learning'. In his framework, an individual's sense of identity is formed in dialogue with others and the discourses of the individual's culture. Bakhtin utilizes a pedagogical approach where narratives, ideologies, and languages - all of which are historically situated - represent and shape subjectivity. This is similar to a Lacanian notion of recognition of the other and the difference between the self and the other as integral to subject positioning, Bakhtin explores how multiple modes of interaction with the other, rather than causing a disjoint ontological split, acts via recognition of similarity/ difference and the appropriation of those languages to complete self-knowledge and self-expression (Zipes, 1999). For Bakhtin, there is no way to articulate ones position or personal identity without assimilation of the Other's discourses.

Reading and writing are integral components to Bakhtinian theorization. As such, his theories of subjectivity, language, and narrative have a significant contribution to make in the study of queer niche-market magazines. From a Bakhtinian perspective, this media can be looked at in terms of interactive ideological constructs, as authoritative guides in the development of queer identities, while still accounting for individual experiences, social contexts, and historical positioning (Bakhtin, 1986; Ballentine & Ogle, 2005; Zipes, 1999). His theorization also opens a space for resistance. Since the

discord between self and other is social in nature, not an internal gap as in Lacanian thought, there is a space for negotiation or healthy conflict. So, though the magazines are stringently controlled at production for linguistic and ideological messages, mostly due to constraints advertising cooperations place on content and language, readers can overcome restrictive subject positionings and engage in active involvement in production of meanings without experiencing alienation.

Readership and Identity/Community Building

Several studies since the early 1990's have taken up Bhabha's, Rosenblatt's, Gates' and Bakthin's theorizations around literature and applied them to qualitative research on readership and identity. Starting from a foundational belief that to understand a particular social group or subculture, researchers must undertake, "a systematic investigation of their media consumption... a network crucial to the definition and distribution of cultural knowledge" (Thornton, 1996, 14). This quotation highlights the ways in which subcultures, whether marginalized groups, fans, 'interpretive communities', etc, are approached as not outside of media. But rather, that media reflects constructions already circulating within the textual and visual vocabulary of the subculture, with contentious levels of agency granted to the audience (McRobbie, 1991; Anderson and DiDomenico, 1992; Currie, 1994; Bacon-Smith, 2000; Wheaton and Beal, 2003).

Janice Radway's 1984 study, *Reading the Romance,* explored women romance readership in community building terms. It was a pivotal ethnographic engagement that established several guiding tenets for the newly emerging feminist-ethnographic research

genre. Amongst her several key assumptions were that reading occurs as an event; is a meaning making process; is a form of representational pedagogy; and is set within particular social practices. Overall, reading was hypothesized to be key in the process of developing self-concept, identity, and subcultural affiliations; an impression that had already been well-supported theoretically by Rosenblatt, Bhabha, and Bakhtin. In her investigations, Radway was able to support these claims. She was also able to interrogate the concept of agency as it is related to audience freedom in interpreting and resisting the cultural ideals embedded in the novels.

Giroux (2002) came to similar conclusions through research studies on photographs as visual discourse and public pedagogy. In this text, he developed the notion that photographs and film, "represent a new form of pedagogical text - not simply reflecting culture but actually constructing it" (8). He goes on to further call for academic perspectives and theorization that interrogate this perspective of cultural literacy and the "relationship between film [and photographic] texts and society" (8). Directing the inquiry to youth development, he stresses the necessity to acknowledge and challenge identity-shaping discourses that shape public behaviour, attitudes, culture, and politics.

Within his study, Giroux also called for an examination of the possibilities for agency. For if consumer-based constructions of normative representations shape youth knowledges, then allowing youth to deconstruct/reconstruct these images, texts, and messages, should open a space for struggle and negotiation of the discourses. This enables sexual minority youth to think critically about how the media representations are limiting, and at the same time enables and supports them in their attempts to understand the messages and make the producers accountable for the cultural boundaries they create.

As Giroux importantly suggests, "[visual narratives] constitute a powerful force for shaping public memory, hope, popular consciousness, and social agency, and as such invites people into a broader public conversation" (2002, 15).

At this point, it becomes important to acknowledge the tensions that exist when using a poststructuralist approach to identity based cultural engagements. In many ways, these two bodies of work are in opposition, and so to take up one through the other needs a nod of justification. The concept of a queer identity category and gay community necessitates being able to define and delineate what membership to these labels entails. For this sort of articulation, the Other which society uses as a set point for difference, is imbued with homophobic discourses. A poststructuralist argument would question how one could describe sexual minority subjectivity, when the language to articulate the position is inherently heterosexist, and wherein the results would be merely a duplication of these hegemonic strategies of oppression (Alcoff, 1988). However, to make statements political, cultural, or personal, requires one to speak of lived queer experiences. In this regard, I employed a blend of multiple theories and methodologies in an attempt to broaden the data collection, than had one single theoretical standpoint been utilized. It was my goal to draw on a notion of queer subjectivity brought forth through self-articulations of lived experiences, of those embodying the sexual minority label. Hopefully, this framework allowed for a fluid, umbrella term that encompasses an entire constellation of possible identity positions, of which both poststructualists and cultural theorists would approve.

Social & Cultural Capital

Theorist Pierre Bourdieu contends that focusing on the unequal stratification of resources by economic means and solidification of class distinctions, does not do full justice to the myriad of forces which act to order society members. Bourdieu's work explores a parallel system operating at the social level via cultural capital. In this system, much like fiscal wealth, culture is invested and accumulated, to produce divisions and maintain hierarchies based on social privilege. As Sarah Thornton explains, "cultural capital is the linchpin of a system of distinction in which cultural hierarchies correspond to social ones and people's tastes are predominantly a marker of class" (1996, 10). Not only affecting the hegemonic discourses, but also circulating within subcultures, stigmatized groups, and interpretive communities, cultural capital acts to create social hierarchies and reinforce dominant notions of authenticity, where dividends are reaped as acceptance and legitimacy within the subcultural sphere.

Literacy as a fundamental tool to gaining cultural capital has been well explored, with feminist ethnographic reading studies revealing specific instances of subcultural knowledge transferring into 'official' economic capital (Bacon-Smith, 2000; Bourdieu, 1984; Fiske, 1992; Frykholm, 2004; Hoyt, 2006; Kuipers, 2006; Radway, 1984/1991; Walsh, 2006; Wheaton & Beal, 2003). In these studies, readers were able to shift their earned subcultural experiences, aesthetics, and taste into economic capital as writers, publishers, and artists. Additionally, the act of reading, created tight knit communities, in which affinity to fictional worlds was used to create a space of commonality in the physical world; and language of the texts was used to open up lines of communication outside of fiction (Davis, 2002). Radway explored this feeling of fellowship in her study

of women romance readers, "What the book gradually became, then, was less an account of the way romances as texts were interpreted, than of the way romance reading as a form of behaviour operated as a complex intervention in the ongoing social life of actual social subjects" (1984/1991, 7). She found that the women readers, employing reading strategies that required well-developed cultural competencies, were able to move 'up' within the hierarchy of the subculture; and as a corollary, increased their return within the dominant social matrix.

Bourdieu emphasizes inter-community pedagogy as primary transfer sites of cultural capital, where compilation of intricate subcultural nuances is paramount to an individual's ability to produce future, value-laden reiterations of legitimate selves (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). This recognition of the importance of knowledge transfer, supports studies looking into LGBTTIQ niche-market media along pedagogical terms, as a tool for information and cultivation of queer knowledge and crucial to the distribution of subcultural ideologies. As Wheaton and Beal described in their study on the role of wind-sailing magazines in the creation and maintenance of alternative-sport communities, "Media played an important role in providing cultural knowledges... in these subcultural contexts, literacy itself becomes a form of subcultural capital and identity" (2003, 172). Information gained from niche-media is drawn on like cash in a subcultural social economy, and though not necessarily convertible into dominant economic capital, it does create a hierarchy of social success within the group.

Within the LGBTTIQ community, even simple knowledges, such as which celebrities are gay, can distinguish a versed community member who possesses specialized knowledge, from a non-member who does not hold such information, and as a

result, has less access to authenticity, privilege, and power in the subordinate culture. Respectively, "camp, kitsch, dress and grooming, awareness of gay-relevant current affairs, and star gossip all function as gay-specific subcultural capital, producing consumer tastes that collectively form a gay habitus" (Sender, in Padva, 2002, 284). Illuminated nicely through this quote is the close relation between capitalism and social capital, where proper norms adherence can be bought and sold, a universal property cultivated and reinforced through monetary exchanges. That is not to say that gender identity, race, ability, and other forms of marginalization are not at play, but that cultural capital (or access to it) is an additional othering device in the matrix of identifications individuals find themselves weaved into.

Overall, queer magazines "help to establish and communicate sociocultural categories such as social status, gender, age, as well as subcultural values such as the marking of authenticity" (McCracken, in Wheaton, 2003, 157). The consumption of texts and images within these productions and the reiteration of their messages through purchasing and display, then serve symbolically as membership markers to subcultural values and don social credibility to its employers (Thornton, 1995). As a result, LGBTTIQ magazines, a specialist media that carries different cultural connotations than mass-media, perform a defining role in the development and validation of queer subcultural knowledge. Therefore, while acknowledging that there are material and contextual boundaries, cultural/social capital acts as both a resource and benefit, but also requires a cost of personal investment.

Methodology

> *"Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun and I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical" (Geertz, 1973, 5).*

This research project attempted to embody Bhabha's notion of the Third Space, where an intersection of qualitative and quantitative methods are employed to enable exploration of media influences of the inbetween spaces. In researching media influences, I wanted to avoid assumptions about 'passive' audience/ consumers, vulnerable to manipulation, versus 'empowered' audience/ consumers, critical of every and all message. Instead, I hoped to bring to light negotiative processes and resistive competencies available to LGBTTIQ youth. In this respect, I wanted to tap into the creative ways that audience/consumers create meaning from media constructions; and how they experienced and interrogated cultural productions, representations, and common sense meanings. As Pink reminds us, "[visual media] may become a reference point through which an informant can represent aspects of his or her reality to an ethnographer " (2001, 69). I set out to open a space where the youth would feel inspired and supported to create their own version of the story being told.

Inherited from anthropology, ethnographic research "entails a learning role in which the observer is attempting to understand a world by encountering it first-hand" (Walsh, 1999, 25). Though initially focused on strategies "to gain access to 'naturalized

domains'" (Morley, 1992, 186), in media and cultural studies contexts, social researchers engage in ethnography via the 'spirit' of the practice. Geertz's celebrated 'thick descriptions' of the opening quotation become enacted through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation (Barker, 2000). Just as Ien Ang stated, "Ethnographically oriented research is arguably the most suitable to unravel the minutiae of difference and variation as they manifest themselves in concrete, everyday instances of media consumption... The understanding emerging from this kind of inquiry favours interpretive particularization over explanatory generalization, historical and local concreteness rather than formal abstraction..." (1996, 70).

Participant Recruitment & Data Collection

For this project, successful recruitment was dependent on being able to access the investigational field and establish a good rapport with the youth in it. "Gatekeepers are the sponsors, officials and significant others who have the power to grant or block access to and within a setting" (Walsh, 1999, 221). Thankfully, the 'gatekeeper' in this case was a program director to three key city LGBTTIQ youth groups (OutIsIn, Youth Understanding Youth, and Camp fYrefly), and with whom I had a long-standing work/volunteer relationship. As an academic himself, he was keen to allow the youth an opportunity to speak to their experiences and individual stories in their own voice.

After the recruitment announcement went out over the listservs [see Appendix B], I was immediately contacted by several interested youth. I was quickly able to coordinate two focus group sessions for Saturday evenings, at the Pride Centre of Edmonton. As the Pride Centre currently hosts a daily youth drop-in space, as well as the weekly Youth

Understanding Youth (Edmonton LGBTQ youth group) meeting, the location was safe, comfortable, and well-known to all the participants. To ensure the emotional well-being of each participant, during the sessions a registered social worker, two trained youth group leaders, and a centre staff member remained onsite and available, should any problems arise that I didn't feel capable of managing on my own. With a background that includes Crisis Intervention and Suicide Awareness/Intervention training from The Support Network, Edmonton's Crisis and 211 Centre, I was able to effectively manage the conversation and minimal concerns of the participants.

Questionnaire

Each participant was asked to complete a short demographic and media use questionnaire [see Appendix D, and Table 1 & 2]. The survey included space for self-identifying information, such as name, age, residence, and a likart-like rating of 'outness'. As well, prompts were provided to estimate the average time per week each youth spent engaged with several different categories of media (TV, Internet and print publications) and details on their favorite programs. This part of the survey was designed to provide benchmark characteristics of the group, pertaining to their general media use, access and interest in gay-identified media, and relation of consumption of gay-themed media to mass-media, heteronormative productions. Information such as this is important to collate, as Jane Brown reminds:

> "[M]edia also can be seen as permeating all the other contexts of an emerging adult's life: what was seen on television last night becomes the topic of conversation at work or school; going to the movies, listening to music, and communicating via instant

messaging or in chat rooms are major forms of social activity; these other factors and contexts as lived experience... human development as a continual and interactive process that occurs within everyday life" (2000, 281).

In the second portion of the questionnaire, placed on the reverse side of the sheet to reinforce the thematic division, the youth were asked several short answer questions specifically pertaining to their personal history with queer print media. Questions spoke to the social role of the magazine (use beyond personal reading), reading in public versus private spaces, as well as meaning making and importance of portions of the magazine and the media in its entirety. This portion of the questionnaire was used to provide information on the ways in which the youth relate to the queer magazines and what aspects of the magazine are most salient to them.

Focus Groups

Focus groups, as discussed by Lunt and Livingstone, provide a window into "the way that active audiences contribute to the construction and negotiation of meanings" (1996, 84). Whether passive or active, "preferred" (Hall, 1993) or "polysemic" (Morley, 1992), "resistive" (Fiske, 1988) or "'counterhegemonic" (Hall, 1997), the process utilized in this research project set out to explore the activity of meaning making employed by the audience as research participants. In the practical sense, the methodology allowed for a maximization of data collection while minimizing time, as the respondents were in an environment to share and play off of subjective experiences, feelings, and commonalities in perspectives they shared with others in the group (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003; Thomas-Jones, 2006).

At the beginning of the focus groups, after signing the informed consent documents and the Group Confidentiality Agreement [see Appendix A & C], participants were encouraged to sort through the available copies of queer niche-market magazines, and select one or two that caught their attention.[7] They were then asked to take several minutes to review the periodicals, after which point a set of questions was followed to guide the discussion around their impressions and interpretations of the content, both texts and images [see Appendix E for focus group discussion questions]. As researcher/ observer, I put forward the guiding questions. The structure of the conversation remained flexible, however, allowing for spontaneous discussion.

Methodology should involve "a broadened framework within which one considers the *place* of the media, media use, and of media research, emphasizing an exploration of the role of 'media culture' in contemporary everyday life" (Alasuutari, in Wheaton, 2003, 160). In this project, blending of multiple methodologies was employed to optimize the data collected. The focus group portion of the study not only allowed for exploration of the collage; but also provide an opportunity to clarify *how*, *where, when,* and to what *effect* participants engaged queer media and magazines. To get at these issues, the questionnaire and discussion involved a series of questions on *why* the participants read the magazines (or why not); *what* images and text they liked, and which they did not; and finally, whether they could see themselves in the magazines representations or not. Within this scope, the discussions still maintained reflexivity, allowing topics to branch into consumption, aesthetics, taste, preference and personal experiences.

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[7] Magazines supplied included the October 2007 issues of: OUT (six copies), Attitude (two copies), Instinct (two copies) Genre (two copies), Metro (two copies), AXM (two copies), Curve (two copies), Diva (two copies), Mate (one copy), and Clik (one copy). This eclectic mix represented the entire body of queer magazines available for purchase on October 07, 2007, in the greater Edmonton area, at the 16 Chapter/ Indigo/ Coles retailers (all affiliates of Trilogy Retail Enterprises L.P.).

Arts Project

The appropriation of voice and story of research participants is a concern in all social research endeavours. Even postmodern, narrative forms have been questioned for obscuring power structures and poorly engaging in self-reflexivity (Davis, 1999). Increasingly, as an additional strategy, arts-based research initiatives are being incorporated into projects as a counter to the Western positivist paradigm (Davis & Butler-Kisbler, 1999; Eisner, 1997, 1997b; Rose, 2002). Where, "artful analytic methods are increasingly used as a means for the research to approach the data in more holistic ways to get at the core of meaning within a particular context" (Butler-Kisber, et. al., 2003, 127).

Collage is from the French term for glued-work. Attributed to the Cubists Picasso and Braque, in pieces created in 1911 and 1912 respectively, the technique was first to incorporate fabrics into still-life representations, in an effort to confront the emerging "mass-produced reproductions of the new industrial age" (Davis & Butler-Kisbler, 1999, 4). Based on juxtaposition, pieces are taken out of context and placed together, forming new meanings, highlighting commonalities and differences, and creating a space for resonance and dissonance. To the later Surrealist movement, the freedom that collage allowed for manipulation and arrangement made it a much relied upon form of visual practice. Even in contemporary utilizations, collages are recognized in academic circles as "configurations of extreme semiotic density" (Holmes, 1989, 193).

Recognizing the ability of collage to disrupt commonsense displays of normative images and text, researchers have increasingly engaged its use as a tool to broaden the

repertoire of methodologies (Holmes, 1989; Hoffman, 1989; Bogden & Biklen, 2003). "Collage is a composition that is assembled gradually and additively; as each new part is included, the intuitive relationships among the various parts are ordered and re-ordered until a convincing overall pattern or schema is achieved" (Davis & Butler-Kisbler, 1999, 4). It is a highly flexible, easily accessible medium, whose initial outcome may seem random, but on closer investigation reveals relationships and patterns not easily articulated or understood.

Theoretically, collage can be conceptualized as a form of deconstruction, a Derrida-like 'under-erasure', where familiar language is destabilized. "The device of collage permits the cooption or quotation of materials that are not only samples but are samples of signs, most often the signs of ordinary language or ordinary schema which take on ironic connotations in the collage milieu" (Holmes, 1989, 210). In this sense, the terms, texts, and images are not erased, but rather the meaning of the concepts, and equally the distinct silences, are illuminated. The representations have been shown to be constructs of images that join particular meanings to the body and the self. Deconstructing the text and images allows a window into how ideologies become constituent ingredients in the articulation of identity representation (Goldman, 1992).

Collage allows for a complex interplay of illusion and reality (Hoffman, 1989). For this study, participants were asked to create a collage from the queer magazines provided. If they asked for guidance, I suggested that they consider contrasting images they felt were 'good' against those that were 'bad', or 'like' vs. 'dislike'. As with any binary, this left a lot of grey area, but at least provided them a jumping off point. I hoped that in the followup discussions, the creative divisions or metaphorical binaries they

settled on exploring would be revealed and a space opened to explore and reveal the reasons for these distinctions; also that the imaginative role they were assuming in the meaning making from the media images would be more readily accessible for articulation and comment.

The collage portion of the research project took place for one hour following the focus group discussion. During this time, spaces were opened for the youth to joke, comment, and critique the messages in a free-form, no-pressure manner. This portion of the study was audio-recorded with their ongoing consent, and allowed me to capture moments of spontaneous debate and negotiation. There was no pressure put on the youth to complete the collage within the alloted time. The Pride Centre staff made a mailbox available to me for the two weeks following the activity, where the youth could store and retrieve the collage for ongoing work.

Data Analysis

Research for this project made use of a wide range of ethnographic methods informed by a queer, feminist lens, in which I drew upon a blend of methods, such as the quantitative-based questionnaire, alongside qualitative focus groups, then turning to an arts-informed exercise, to explore the ways in which sexual minority youth read queer magazines. Janesick (2000) refers to this multifaceted qualitative research design as a *crystallization* process. A system he describes as more open than conventional triangulation, and hence, more align with postmodern methodologies. "Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know" (Richardson, in Janesick, 393).

Employment of multiple methods was undertaken in an attempt to avoid "totalizing accounts of 'the audience'" (Ang, 1991, x). It was my hope that the qualitative research design would open a space of inquiry into how youth incorporate, negotiate, and resist the value-laden images and texts.

Coding and analysis of transcripts was based on feminist notions of Grounded Theory, a process that allows the theory to emerge through recurrent themes in participant responses (Glaser, 1992; Maxwell, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In this interpretation, narrative data and coding was used to uncover major categories, concepts, and themes, the properties of these categories and their interrelationships. As stated by Janesick, "Qualitative research design is an act of interpretation from beginning to end" (2000, 395). It was important to me that this project emphasized the breaking down of commonsense meanings, so that the participants could tell their stories and impressions. My role became one of trusting in the departure from the certainty of categorizations and allowing for multiple, contradictory levels of interpretation (Koro-Ljungberg, 2001).

Textual analysis remains a contentious issue in media studies research for a variety of reasons, including placing the investigator/ observer as an 'expert' in decoding the multiple meanings; requiring assumption of the ways in which the ads are taken up by the audience; and demarcation of the intended audience, often as a homogeneous ideal (Sender, 1999). In an attempt to circumscribe these faults, once transcription and data analysis had occurred, conclusions were brought back to the participants in the spirit of 'respondent validation' (Walsh, 1999). Agreement of the participants was not necessarily

the ultimate goal of this final step; rather, as differences in opinion between observer and participant emerged, space was opened for increased interpretation and theorizing.[8]

[8] This portion of the project was not included in the conclusions of the study, as the group which attended the youth meeting was comprised of both study and non-study members. For ethical reasons, it was necessary to *not* audio record the discussion. I used this time as a point of reflection and exchange between myself and the youth.

Study Findings

Meet the Participants

In total, thirteen youth participants consented to be involved in the research project. Parental consent was not required for any youth, as all were between the ages of 18-24. The mean/medium/mode of the group was equal at age 21. Overall, the youth demographics represented a diverse community in terms of sexual orientation and gender identification. Six of the participants self-identified as gay males, three as lesbian females, and one as a bisexual female; as well, two participants were trans-identified (one FTM, one MTF) and one youth self-identified as two-spirited. They all considered themselves to come from urban environments.

In an attempt to gauge the home and peer environment of the youth, and through that how much support they were receiving in their journey to a resilient and confident self-identification and how heavily they would be relying on external sources for representation and role-modeling, one of the initial questions on the individual, participant questionnaire asked to rate their "outness" on a likart-type scale, where 1 = in the closet and 4 = completely out. Eleven participants gave a rating of 3 or 4 on the four-point scale. Generally, this translated to open relationships with their close friends and family, but silence in public arenas such as the workplace and school environments. Interestingly, some of these youth were closeted to their immediate family, yet out to their friends, school and workplace. In this situation, faith-based concerns, were the most often cited reason for secrecy in the home.

Two youth rated their outness as "1". One of these youth was living in a group home and the other had recently moved from the streets to the Youth Emergency Shelter.

Both youth had left home due to circumstances arising from disclosure of their sexual orientation. The two youth had decided to revert to silence around their sexual orientation and gender identity to the staff, court appointed guardians, and peers in their new home environments. Neither of the youth had employment; and both had left the school system. Overall, their involvement in the weekly youth group meeting at the Pride Centre was the only source of support they had concerning sexual minority issues and the only space for exploring questions around their sexual orientation. Neither youth kept in contact with the other youth from the Pride Centre group outside of the regular meeting times, for fear of 'outing' via association. In further questioning about the basis of their silence, various personal safety issues were cited as the reason for their ongoing secrecy. Though I felt that their specific situations presented interesting compounding variables, with heightened invisibility and almost total dependence on the youth group and Pride Centre resources for identity work and support, I also recognized that the discussion was out of the realm of the current research project.

Of the total number of youth recruited to participate in the focus group discussions, eleven returned completed questionnaires and collages. The two youth who did not return questionnaires were contacted, but completed forms were not received in time for consideration. One of the youth who did not turn in a questionnaire, also did not complete a collage. He cited time commitment as the barrier, but reconfirmed his consent to use his focus group participation in the study.

The only other participant to not turn in a collage is visually impaired. It was a lesson to me to learn that not one LGBTQ glossy publication is distributed in large print, Braille, cassette, or disc format, as well none of the websites have been designed for

compatibility with adaptive equipment for the visually impaired. Though she was unable to access the media on her own, she had participated in discussions about the magazine with friends. She was very keen on participating in the study, and relished the opportunity to have her voice heard. Admittedly, I had not anticipated this situation and came ill-prepared. Thankfully, having spent the previous 8.5 years working in clinical research for the Department of Ophthalmology, University of Alberta, I immediately switched to their method of consenting research participants. I recruited one of the Pride Centre staff to sit as a witness. After I read the information sheet and consent to her, she was able to mark her initials on the informed consent. The witness then cosigned her agreement to attest that the study had been fully explained and she had been given an opportunity to ask any questions. I felt foolish that I had not anticipated special needs such as this when designing the questionnaire, especially given my employment history. As Kusmashiro stated, "Ironically, our efforts to challenge one form of oppression often unintentionally contribute to other forms of oppression, and our efforts to embrace one form of difference often exclude and silence others" (2001, 1). I used this experience as a lesson to not be presumptive on the abilities of the LGBTTIQ youth community and research participants more generally.

Concerning questions on general media engagement, all the youth participants reported spending an average of 10-15 hours per week watching television. In general, their three favourite programs coincided with the top rated shows for their age range such as CSI, Heroes, Supernatural and Smallville. Half of the youth also listed at least one show that featured a main character that was openly a member of the LGBTTIQ community, such as Ugly Betty, Weeds, and Torchwood (a BBC/Channel 4 production

which in addition to a lead sexual minority character, also has an openly gay actor filling that role). Additionally, every youth said they averaged over 15 hours per week on the internet, with facebook.com as the most often visited website of each youth. Both of the trans-identified youth listed networking, support, and informational websites specific to the trans-community, as rounding out their top choices. As the other eleven youth listed a variety of mainstream and LGBTTIQ sites as filling out their favourites, including 365gay.com, nexopia.com, and limewire.com. A noticeable common theme running through all of these sites is the opportunity and space for communicating with friends and building virtual networks and communities.

Reading Practices

In the questionnaire, the youth were given nine types of magazines and asked to rate their frequency of engagement with each on a likart-type scale from 1 to 4, where 1 = seldom read and 4 = always read. The categories of News (e.g. *Time, Newsweek, MacLeans*), Music/Entertainment (e.g. *Rolling Stone, Spin, People*) and LGBTQ 'glossy' magazines (e.g. *OUT, AXM, Attitude*), were the top three reported readership types, with an average rating of 2.0-2.2. Women's (e.g. *Elle, Cosmo*), Adolescent (e.g. *Seventeen, Teen People*), Sports (e.g. *Men's Health, Runners*), House & Home (e.g. *Martha Stewart, Real Simple*), Diverse (e.g. *Essence, Windspeaker*), and queer 'news' magazines (e.g. *Advocate, Gay & Lesbian Review*), all rated at 1.7 or below (medium and mode aligned with all mean calculations). Overall, queer glossy magazines received the highest rating, corresponding to the most consistently read periodical in this group of youth. The average length of readership by the participants ranged from <1 year to > 5 years. The two

participants with the longest readership interval remarked that they had started their engagement with teen-oriented LGBTTIQ glossies, like *XY,* and had progressed, or grown into, more adult-oriented magazines such as *OUT*, *Metro*, *Attitude*, and *Genre*, which were the focus of this study. Differences in the youth's reading practices between queer glossy magazines and House & Home, or any other genre that had low readership rating, reinforces that queer publications are more likely to be engage with as a resource for cultural and community learning among the youth.

When discussing initial introduction to the magazines, only two of the youth found the media through friends and/or family. Another two participants where able to pinpoint the Chapters, on Whyte Avenue, in Edmonton, as the exact location they first saw, read, and purchased an queer niche-market magazine. Aside from the participant with a visual impairment, whose only plane of access into these magazines is through others' articulations of the contents, the remaining six participants remarked that they had been introduced to the magazines through the Pride Centre of Edmonton, when they had first started attending the youth space and Youth Understanding Youth (YUY) meetings. To its credit, the Pride Centre recognizes the role it plays in providing LGBTTIQ resources and has amassed an extensive collection of literature, videos, and magazines; as well as carrying a variety of local maga/zines. All of their materials are available for reading while sitting in their 'coffee shop' or for borrowing through an honour-based, lending library.

During the time preceding the formal discussion, and for the first fifteen minutes after the consent forms were signed and the introduction given, the youth flipped through the provided queer magazines on their own. Many of the youth immediately began using

the language of critical reading skills, interrogating the messages and not taking them at face value. They displayed an overt scepticism with the magazines, questioning how any of the material could hold any real value or have any actual influence over what they thought and felt about their personal self-image. Most vocal about his mistrust was Jordan G, who said immediately after picking up one issue, "*I hate them all...*" Then after a few page turns he quipped, "*but this one has a great ass.*" Jennifer laughed as she flipped through the "Naked Issue" of *AXM*[9], adding "*These magazines seem to make all gay people look promiscuous.*"

I encouraged the youth to think back on previous issues and conversations they had had with friends, or what their initial impressions of the magazine were when they first started reading the queer periodicals. Interestingly, in the large group, several of the youth claimed initially (during introductions and early discussions) to have never read the magazines before, even though a review of their questionnaires and later discussions revealed the opposite. It was as though they were a 'guilty pleasure' (like soap operas or an extra helping of ice cream). There was a definite, initial embarrassment to admitting to enjoying reading the magazines, even more so to purchasing or being a subscriber. They employed sincere disavowal that, if they did in fact read them, the magazines could not possibly provide useful information and they certainly held no pedagogical value. This narrative contradiction was most obvious in Joc (pronounced '*Josie*') who stated 26 minutes into the group that this was the first time she'd seen/read the magazine. However, just over an hour later, while partially distracted by the collage portion of the project, she stated:

[9] All magazines were suitable for the audience. Despite the issue title of AXM, there was no 'inappropriate' nudity.

Joc: *"I come down here to read them mostly [Pride Centre of Edmonton]. I guess, when I read one here I really like, I go buy it."* [10]

During these introductory minutes, I was under the impression that the participants were tying to assert to me their unmediated membership to the LGBTTIQ community. However, once I told personal stories of reading the magazine as a youth, they relaxed into the conversations and a new 'confessional' space was opened. My admission created an environment of trust, alleviating preliminary misconceptions that perhaps I was going to grill them on the evils of the media, or condemn them for enjoying magazine images that could be constructed as 'bad' or 'wrong'. As McIntyre and Cole explain, "risk-taking and trust are integral to both self-study and artful research"(2001, 21). It became apparent how a research relationship centring on reciprocity, trust, and collaboration set the foundation to successful completion of the project, with resultant data that was extensive, reliable, and authentic.

For many of the youth, their first desire for interactions with the magazines were fuelled by a need to understand a part of themselves they weren't getting reliable or accurate information they could identify with from other sources in their home, school, or peer environments. As stated by one participant:

Jordan G: *"You know looking at the title you think it's going to tell you everything you need to know about the gay community. I mean, it's called OUT isn't it?"*

[10] Within Study Findings, slight alterations to the direct quotation from the youths' discussions have been made. That is, excessively used words, colloquialisms, and repetitive phrases such as "like", "um", "you know", and "I mean", were removed to allow for ease in reading.

Irrespective, then, of initial voiced refusals to a pedagogical role for these magazines in the self-conception of curious and questioning individuals, subsequent remarks demonstrated how the media acts in just that function.

Arts Project

Arts-based research techniques create an intimate trust relationship between researcher-researched, where metaphors for the participants own experiences and history become intimately entwined in the final, reflective product (Koro-Ljungberg, 2001). These non-standard forms of representation become a method of autobiography; where analysis becomes an active engagement with the Other (McIntyre & Cole, 2001). Asking the youth to create collages challenged them to depart from the certainty of the images and texts, and portray their responses: fear, desires, and fantasies. The participants, therefore, were charged to consider whether the concrete representations the magazines were claiming was something they felt accurately reflected themselves or could be made sense of in relation to their concept of their peer group, community, relationships, and own self-identification. It is often difficult to verbalize these personal, textual experiences. The arts-based, qualitative activity allowed another avenue for exploring dissonance, resonance, and partial understandings.

During the initial individual reading session, many of the youth dog-eared similar images, texts, and articles, though the ways that they subsequently engaged with these messages were often contradictory. As one youth read an image subversively, another took it up in a literal, dominant fashion. In fact, none of the youth read the media in the same way. As a result, the interpretations and decodings amongst them were sometimes

complementary, sometimes contradictory in nature. As an example, five of the youth [Brendan, Chris, Helen, Joc, and Justice] all used a version of the Travelocity rainbow image [see Figure 12] in their collage, ranging from its full form to a manipulated section, from a feature placement to a small corner accent. Embraced in 1978, in the wake of the Harvey Milk murder, and officially recognized in 1989 by the Fédération Internationale des Associations Vexillologiques (FIAV), the rainbow flag has come to be an instant visible cue associated with pride in and support of the queer community. Though many of the questioned whether just sticking a rainbow on a product was an easy way to appeal to the gay community without having to put any other effort in. Nonetheless, they were drawn to its historical and political significance.

Brendan: *"Everyone's got the rainbow ad. I like that."*

Bryan: *"I don't like that they use the rainbow to make it look gay friendly. Like I'm just gonna buy anything that does..."*

Bryan had a high regard for the meaning behind the rainbow flag and pink triangle. He repeatedly vocalized his concerns that companies were co-opting the symbols for marketing purposes. When I prompted him to suggest strategies for companies to take in order to demonstrate their allegiance beyond the advertising space purchased in queer magazines, he suggested:

Bryan: *"Using a logo that showed that they helped the community. Maybe we [the 'Gays'] should make a logo that showed they supported the community somehow."*

Bryan was an avid consumer of LGBTTIQ books, magazines, and music. He liked the idea of being able to support queer-friendly companies, but wanted to be sure that their practices actually aligned with their marketing statements.

Many of the youth also used pictures from a feature story on Margaret Cho, cover of the *Curve* magazines. Well-known for her support of the LGBTTIQ community, the youth talked about her as a positive role model for other queer-identified allies.

Brendan: *"I've got [counts] 5 women, 3 men, 2 drag queens and Margaret Cho. Margaret Cho gets her own category"*

Joc: *[When asked how she thought her use of Margaret Cho was different than Brendan's] "I think I had a bit more of a female focus. There weren't too many images that I could find to identify with... This picture struck me [the identical Margaret Cho picture], if you look at her eyes, it's like a total gender dichotomy. Like looking at her one eye [OS] she could totally be a guy, but this side [OD] is all feminine. It's really interesting."*

Readings of the article and the pictures of Margaret Cho involved more than just unmediated seeing of the images. The youth's uptake was influenced by their prior familiarity with Cho's work, their own self-identification, previous articles/photos, and understanding of her roles with and contribution to the queer community. For Brendan, who knows Cho through a mutual friend that has a film featured on her lastest DVD, Cho was a 'real' person with a name and identity that placed her beyond distortion. She was not available for him to box into a category or dissect for his collage, in the same way that he freely distorted other models and images.

Joc, however, saw in the pictures of Cho an ambiguity that reflects her own embodied experiences. The images were an abstract creation, reflecting a postmodern conceptualization of gender fluidity that Joc was searching for in sexual minority representations. For Joc, Cho became an inert mass, detached from an active, embodied individual. It is apparent from the contradictory readings employed by Brendan and Joc, how the 'referent systems', or repository of understandings each reader employs when they approach media images, is nuanced by prior experiences and needs (Goffman, 1976).

Some of the youth, such as Bryan and Brendan, were quick to admit that their attention was immediately grabbed by the classic strategy: Sex.

Brendan: *"I dunno, I guess I was attracted to the bright colours... the homoerotic images..."*

Bryan: *"The, um, 'pretty' men... not that I'm complaining about pretty men, but..."*

Turning a bright shade of red, Bryan quickly offered up other strategies used by the magazine and advertisers that had caught his eye:

Bryan: *"There was one article that had FREEDOM across the front that caught my attention... there's using like logos and celebrities that I know are gay [Doogie Howser, M.D., original TV promotional picture], money, drag, pride events.."*

Joc: *"It's like my first impressions of when I was first flipping through the magazine [OUT]. The things that really struck me, like the naked chests. There was lots of that."*

These excerpts draw attention to the reality that interpretation of collages is not as simple as discussing the materiality of the pictures and words. In Brendan and Bryan's pieces, the naked men carry with them significantly different meanings than those selected and employed in Joc's artwork. For Joc, processing the objectification of the male form was very difficult. Viewed through her eyes, as someone who embodies the historical, spatial, and cultural lived experiences of crossing the gender binaries, the hypersexualization of the well-built male body elicited a contradictory view from the objectified, voyeuristic appreciation elicited in Bryan and Brendan.

In Joc's collage, the only image that was not vertically placed was the series of five voyeuristic snapshots of the male form running horizontally through the middle of the page. It was also the only sexualized image in an otherwise selection of gender-queer pictures (Boy George, Androgenized Margaret Cho, butched female model, etc) and serves as an evocative figuration that prompts more questions and challenges singular interpretations. The multiple approaches to something as generic as bared chests proved that overarching metaphorical, symbolic or figurative analysis in this study would have to be approached carefully, in fear of being grossly inaccurate.

For Brendan, the images he chose for his final collage revolved around the title of an article he found in one of the magazines '*Lies of the Life*'. As he explained,

Brendan: *"I tried to get at a few different stereotypes. They came from all the magazines. I really like the heading on this one ['Lies of the Life']... Because it's not all true. We're not all naked drag queens who drink martinis or fit in the butch-lesbian stereotype"*

The artefact selection involved in Brendan's piece followed a process of exclusion. "Lies of the Life" became a slogan for the constructions and representations circulating in media that Brendan does not identify with; and which he feels are merely a standard means of addressing an archetypal gay audience. Overall, though similar themes are represented across the three collages, the dichotomy in reaction to the images [between Bryan/ Brendan and Joc's pastiche] reinforces Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Literature and the notions therein of how viewers can produce different meanings from identical content and form.

Interaction: Personal, Queer & Community Identity

Extensive Canadian statistics attest to the risk inherent in identifying as a member of the LGBTTIQ community, particularly for those under 24 years of age and residing in Alberta (American Association of University Women, 2001; Bagley & Tremblay, 2000; Craig & Pepler, 2003; McCreary Centre Society, 1999; Ryan & Futterman,1998). Violence perpetrated against members of the queer community plays out in the form of physical, verbal, and emotional abuse, both at home, in school, and on the streets. This systemic homophobia is often perpetuated internally and results in silence, invisibility, and fear associated with claiming a marginalized identity. Many of the youth in this study related how the magazines opened up access to a place where they could safely explore and connect with a part of their identity that they were frequently forced to patrol. In effect, the magazine served as a *Third Space,* enacting Bhabha's concept of a place where hegemonic discourses mingle with the youth readers' sense of self-awareness, allowing the meaning making process to occur not entirely in the personal or social worlds (1994).

This space provides a safe environment, away from public scrutiny, for representations to be processed, negotiated, and moulded to suit individual desires and needs.

Unsurprisingly, when the youth described what caught their eye in the magazines, they were often pointing to absences. Jennifer describes her first flip through the *OUT* magazine in the following way,

> *Jennifer:* *"I picked out all the naked boys I could find in like five minutes, which was, like, lots. And then found this guy, who is lost in them. He's, like, the only real one...He looks so normal. He looks like my friends."*

When Jennifer was confronted with all the pictures of half-naked men, the understanding she took from the images didn't align with her awareness of what it meant to be a lesbian, or a gay man for that matter. She did find the 'lost boy' though, a fully clothed, "geeky" sort; someone she could see fitting in with her peer group. Her active reading practice was guided by larger social relationships, which informed her knowledge of images that were realistic to this framework. Her 'lost boy' was unique amongst the other males, but was still found and claimed by her as a positive reflection of her beliefs in identity possibilities in the community.

Jennifer and Joc's reaction to the bared chests, illustrates the ways that even images engaged with in a critical manner serve as points of entry for further analysis of associated beliefs, norms, and values. For instance, Jaime initially remarked that all the queer market magazines supplied were "*like any [mainstream] magazine, and advertising kinda runs the magazine.*" This unfavourable observation, however, did not lead him to dismiss the images and messages. Just a few minutes later he remarked:

Jaime: *"There were a lot of houses I'd like to jump in. They were huge. They were decorated really nice."*

Jaime's remarks were not totalising in acceptance, but did demonstrate how images were taken up by the youth with from a place of eagerness and desire (Strucken & Cartwright, 2001). This is not to say that Jaime's (Jordan's, Joc's, etc.) original negative remarks were not authentic, but rather highlights the ways in which media plays into our constructions of place, space, and identity are as fluid as identity itself. There can be no Truth statements, when, as Bakhtin explains, multiple realities and truths are designed and redesigned by the reader with each subsequent gaze (1984).

Kusmashiro asks, "What if our question was not, *who has yet to be included,* but rather, *why are certain voices silenced in the first place?*" (emphasis in original) (2001, 11). During our discussions, the youth were able to easily name members of the queer community whose lived experiences were not included in the magazine. The following is an exact conversation around marginalized queer representations:

Patti: *"If somebody... tried to learn about our culture from these magazines, they would think that everybody had good bodies; that were obsessed with fashion, interior decorating, and travel; that there were no families; that there were no children; and no obese people, no old people; that we're all living this high roller lifestyle."*

Helen: *"You'd think we were all Caucasian. There are only a few people who are not, in the pictures"*

Franki: *"And able-bodied"*

Patti: *Yeah. And in that magazine [Clik, "America's #1 Black Gay Lifestyle, Entertainment, Fashion Magazine"[11]] all it focussed on was hip-hop, as though that was what made them different."*

For the youth participating in this study - representing a diverse group in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientations, gender identities, social economic status, home status, and ability, amongst the myriad of matrices that produced their social positioning - there was a comfort and empowerment in being able to challenge the queer representations in the gay magazines. Through conversation, they challenged each other to identify and acknowledge these silences, providing a safe space to then occupy and claim these other, possible subjectivities. This exchange also illustrates the social nature of the magazines. Even outside this activity, youth commented on how they would engage in conversations around what they had seen and read in the magazines,

Bryan: *"If I saw that it [OUT] gave good reviews to a book or movie I'd go check it out... I'd probably pass it along to a friend. Sure, my friends and I sit and talk about what we've read [in queer magazines]... Most of them [copies] come from my friends"*

Bryan's quote shows that not only were the youth using the magazines with their friends in 'identity talk' (Snow & Anderson, 1995); but that they were also circulating the magazines amongst themselves, as a sort of community building based on common knowledges of referential material.

[11] Description from Front Cover. Clik. October 2007.

Application

In their 1995 article exploring the use of media by youth in decorating their bedrooms, Steele & Brown identify five ways youth intentionally seek and incorporate media messages: (A) to cope with emotions; (B) to understand cultural mores; (C) to claim identity positions; (D) to try on different ways of being and acting; and, (E) to project themselves into other possible futures. They gathered these various modes of incorporation under the term *application*: "Application is the concrete ways in which adolescents use media - how they make it active - in their everyday lives" (Steele & Brown, 1995, 559). The information and stories collected in this research study also provided examples of these forms of application of media by youth engaged in identity work. Below I explore the youth's responses and discussions in relation to Steele & Brown's framework on application, through the categories: Coping Strategies, Cultural Norms, Emulating & Rejecting Identity Positions, and Future Hopes & Desires.

Coping Strategy

Jaime was a very shy participant. He rarely spoke up during the discussions, and sat disjoint from the group during the art activity. He did not participate in the spontaneous dialogues with the other youth, focussing instead on his selected images and the collage. For Jaime, the art activity was crucial, enabling him to express his way of seeing, his thoughts, and his reflections on the the queer media. When I first approached Jaime, his collage struck me as sparse. However, when I spoke to him, I was moved by the reflexivity that was built into his collage, a deeply personal production. For him, the art activity became a way in which the he could claim a queer identity, irrespective of

limiting hegemonic paradigms the magazine may have provided, or that were a dominating presence in his day-to-day life. In his piece, Jaime cut the head off of a model featured in an HIV/AIDS medication advertisement. In the ad, a young man looks at his reflection in a rear-view, car mirror. The phrase "Don't You Think You Deserve More" frames the bottom of the picture panel. Jaime removed the phrase, but with it in mind, drew a mask over the man's eyes. He then surrounded the image with words and phrases cut from the magazines that have to do with coming out [see Figure 6]. When I asked him to describe what was going on in his collage, he explained,

Jaime: *"It's about, you know, my mom and coming out to her - or not. Like living half and half. It's about the mask you put on. And even in the mirror, he's looking; he can tell. Like trying to figure out the truth and all that. Not even figuring it out. It's more about admitting it to yourself than anything else. And surrounding all that stuff is the words. Like this one, with "Coming Out". The article was kind of good. Some of it was good advice about coming out."*

The articles, texts, and images allowed Jaime to explore his own social, political and historical knowledges, in relation to the dominant 'Truth' claims surrounding him. He was able to produce a fragmented, complex artwork of the possibilities for his life. It also provided him a way to convey these emotions and conflicts outside of verbal strictures. The media became a tool to open expression and dialogue. In this sense, Jaime, as a research participant, moved into a role as a participatory member of the study; or as Collier & Collier explain, he shifted into the position of a 'co-researcher':

"The research participant is no longer the direct subject of an interview, instead they serve as the "expert guide" leading the researcher through the stories, memories and experiences contained within the photographs" (1987, 106).

Cultural Norms

"Bourdieu defines cultural capital as a form of knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artefacts" (Johnson, in Bourdieu, 1993, 7). Further, displaying cultural capital in the form of creative interaction or "creative understanding" of the text is recognized as a significant sign of advanced community membership (Hoyt, 2006).

Bryan: *"People who read them [queer magazines], you know, or talk about them, come out knowing who's, you know, gay and that. You know, who's in the club. And, like, what movies they're in that are coming out. What they should go see."*

In this comment, we see how the magazines become a pedagogical site for the exchange of cultural knowledge, which in turn becomes a commodity of social capital. With increase amounts of knowledge, an individual has access to more tools for revealing cultural codes on which to capitalize, affording legitimacy to their subcultural group membership. This is akin to Gates' Signifyin(g), which explains the creative relationship and interaction of those that read both the dominant position and that of the marginalized group, and emphasizes the need for specific minority knowledges and experiences to gain access to these alternative readings.

Emulating & Rejecting Identity Positions

Many of the youth articulated their early desire to integrate themselves fully into either into the mainstream culture, denying same-gender attractions or gender-queering, or into the LGBTTIQ community. There was a strong desire to be recognized as a "true" member by one of those respective communities. Chris provided a powerful personal example,

> *Chris:* *"Like when I went into [new high school] I had to hide who I was because I knew I could get hurt again. And when I did tell them that I was like gay or bi or whatever, they didn't accept me."*

Even though he attempted to incorporate all the correct cues of fitting into the dominant (and vice versa with the subcultural group), he was not always successful and felt as though he could never attain full reception in either community. For Chris, this led to movement between a number of different schools and friend groups, before leaving the educational system altogether. The emulation strategy that Chris was utilizing, an active erasure through disguise, is what Bhabha discusses in the term *mimicry,* borrowing from Lacan:

> "Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage.... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled - exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare" (Lacan, in Bhabha, 1994/2004, 122).

Negotiation and selective uptake of messages was also identified in Radway's work on woman romance readers who extricate and evolve particular themes for incorporation into their self-concept of gender identity and sexuality, while leaving other messages that aren't congruent to their personal experiences. For Radway, this ability to discriminate, to select or ignore cultural constructs and discourses, was a powerful tool in their journey to self-awareness and empowerment, and ultimately to successful acceptance into their larger reading community, which ultimately provided them social support, belonging, and resiliency (1996).

Engaging these perspectives alongside Bakhtinian theories reveals that irrespective of whether the reader refuses the subject positioning created by the magazines, the simple act of critically engaging with the media leads to an authentic and legitimate interpretation of the messages. Every response is an equally valid component of the reading act. Indeed, in Bakhtinian articulations of readership theory, queer market media can be seen as a "genre which typically incorporates a diversity of discourses and voices implies that texts can potentially construct a range of implied reader subject positions in dialogic relation to these discourses and voices" (Zipes, 1999, 16). Taken up with this research study, this quote gives legitimacy to all readings, whether ascribing to the dominant voice, or in resistance to it. It also posits that seeing only a dominant response to media as a 'true' response, limits the subject positionings and closes off discussions of alternative voices, narratives, and meanings. For Bakhtin, discord between dominant subject positioning and the self is an integral part of identity formation:
"I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another. The most important acts constituting self-

consciousness are determined by a relationship toward another consciousness, (towards a thou). Separation, dissociation, and enclosure within the self as the main reason for the loss of one's self. Not that which takes place within, but that which takes place on the boundary between one's own and someone else's consciousness, on the threshold" (Bakhtin, 1984, 287).

Future Hopes and Desires

Many of the youths' collages revealed people, places, situations, and times of emotional closure that they had experienced. In this way, their art project became a way for them to delve into past and current confusions and discords they were experiencing, as well as giving them a means to express these feelings outside of word-based knowledges. Fictitious storytelling was another common format that appeared through the collages. It seemed to be a manageable way for the youth to explore their past, alongside possible futures, while not risking their individual identity.

Chris: *"Well it's supposed to be like, say there's a gay person, but he's pretending to be straight, based on peer pressure and society and school and everything. He's pretending to be who he isn't, which is that he's actually not gay, but he is. There's this fine line here, between hurt, war, hate, death, loss, sadness, religion, and isolation, for just being who you are. And he doesn't want that to happen to him. So basically, he's pretending to be who he isn't. He's masking his true nature. This is like the wall of society that prevents you from being who you are. Like the peer pressure and everything that means*

he can't be who he is. He's blocking everybody else out that he relates to. Being who you are no matter what anybody says to you, being out, he doesn't hate these people. He just feels more accepted being straight, so that's why he masks himself, so other people will think good of him. That's why he's hiding his true nature. Even though he's missing a piece of him, he doesn't want to get hurt. Doesn't want people to disown him or be sad just for who he is. He'd rather be more accepted than be different... Well, I think that when friends and people who are out tell him no matter what other people say he should be himself and don't care how other people call him."

Chris' collage, and lengthy description, is a prime example of this protective exploration of his own experiences through storytelling. His artwork and accompanying narrative delves into experiences of being in the closet and the conflicting emotions associated with this silence. His scenario weaves in a sense of hope, after the confusion and pain. Where, friends, family, and other allies, reach out and reassure his character that it is okay to be a sexual minority. In a sense, by producing this story and having the peers and adults in the group validate the fiction, he is receiving a legitimization of his own real-life experiences and queer identity.

For other youth participants such as Bob and Helen, hope for the future (and future identity possibilities) of was the main focus of their collage.

Helen: *"I tired to pick out abnormal themes. So like older couples, any different races, things that kinda break the typical stereotype. It*

provided some well-rounded images. Even this baby one. The only magazine that I found one in. It's itty-bitty, but it's there."

Bob: *"I like the images were it's old ladies or old men holding hands, or this one here with a baby, you know, more families and family related stuff"*

Irrespective of the messages that the magazines and/or advertisers want to send to readers about "normal" LGBTTIQ embodiment, these two excerpts show how active interpretation engaged in by the audience can alter the editors/advertisers 'preferred' readings. As was previously discussed, every individual approaches media with different knowledges and frameworks. Therefore, signs will be altered to suit the hopes, desires, and needs of the particular reader (Goldman, 1992). Albright & Walsh (2003) refer to this process as "Culture Jamming". Whereby, drawing on their lived experiences in relation to the discourses in the media, the youth were able to "jam" and disrupt the dominant messages they felt excluded or marginalized identities and futures within the queer community.

Identity

Jordan G's collage is an example of how the body has assumed a malleability, transformed through a reconstruction of different body parts, types, dress, gender and abilities, just as the magazine ads isolate and commodify specific body parts - male chest, female legs - which then come to be defined by specific commodities, and associated with an imaginary type of person [see Figure 9] (Ewen, 1976; Goldman, 1992). Using collages to explore representation of sexual minorities opens an arena for exploration of

the deeply personal, political, and pedagogical relational engagement by youth with these constructions. Their decomposition, negotiation, and rebuilding of the magazines allows a window into how the youth confront and interact with messages that are laden with commodity and sign value, as well as promises of individuality within bounded community ideals.

Bob had yet to come out to his parents, even though he had been raised in a same-gender parented family. This lived experience was reflected in his search for images that not only spoke to his identity, but that also called to his embodied knowledge as being part of a LGBTTIQ family.

Bob: *[reading his collage text] "It's okay to be gay. But some people don't think so. It's like a shiny happy picture, with cute old ladies... Most of them [images] are from Curve actually."*

Bob's comments evidenced how he was searching for alternative representations that aligned both with his concepts of what it meant to be trans, and also what it meant to be a part of a family, to be queer and older, and to be queer and a parent. Once finding these representations (though there were few), he processed and incorporated the messages to support what he wanted to be, how he wanted to construct his community, and how he felt he fit into the discourses available.

These quotations reflect the personal stories that were often evoked in response to the content of the media and the reflexive process at play in their collage constructions, which helped the youth to place their embodied web of personal experiences within the socially, historically, culturally and politically situated messages. In this instance, the line between who is the subject and who is the object become blurred, creating a

poststructuralist opening, where roles can be contested and are available for playful reconsideration (St. Pierre, 1997).

Discussion

> *"What is essential about [the social] self is not found primarily in its differences from others but in its freedom to pursue a story line, a life plot, a drama carved out of all possibilities every society provides: the amount of overlap with other story lines matters not a whit. The carving is done, both consciously and unconsciously, by a self that is social at birth and increasingly socialised, colonised in response to penetration by other selves. Our true authenticity, in this view, is not what we find when we try to peel away influences in search of a monolithic, distinctive identity. Rather it is the one we find when we celebrate addition of self to self, in an act of self-fashioning that culminates not in an individual at all but in... a kind of society; a field of forces; a colony; a chorus of not necessarily harmonious voices; a manifold project... that is as much in us as in the world outside us" (Booth, 1992, 89).*

This study stemmed from questions on how LGBTTIQ audiences approached queer niche market magazines, and whether they played as pedagogical tools towards gaining subcultural intelligibility and capital. Reviewing their responses to the media use questionnaire, discussion transcripts of the focus groups, and artistic practices of the collage, supports that this is clearly the case. Using Bakhtinian theories of subjectivity, this study gave us insight into the why's and how's of LGBTTIQ youth engagement with queer niche-market magazines. Notions of social cultural capital, community building, and identity play were explored in the study finding chapters above. Overall, the sexual

minority youth that participated in this study provided rich data regarding the role of queer texts, images, and messages in their lives.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are a part of the classic, qualitative methodological double-bind. Though the method employed did produce rich, descriptive data, in detailed "thick descriptions" (Frykholm, 2004), the quantity of data, and from such a small number of participants, does not allow for generalizability outside this group of particularly situated LGBTTIQ youth, nor does it speak to all the ways that these LGBTTIQ youth interaction with media more generally. Even so, I have attempted to bring forth and make sense of specific information and personal stories on how these emerging adults interact with their social worlds to make meaning from the queer media. As Ang reminds, "[c]ultures do not hold still for their portraits. Attempts to make them do so always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a self-other relationship, and the imposition or negotiation of a power relationship" (Clifford, in Ang, 1996, 79). In this light, it can be appreciated that though my research results may not be comprehensive, they do shed light on the lives of LGBTTIQ youth living in Edmonton, Alberta.

Future Research

Development of innovative media practices will require continued development of new critical reading skills in LGBTTIQ youth. With this awareness, researchers, academics, teachers, and allied supporters must take up the challenge to use their power

and privilege not only to give voice to LGBTTIQ youth, but also to "speak nearby". This poststructural approach emphasizes a relationship that, "does not objectify, does not point to an object as it is distant from the speaking subject or absent from the speaking place. The speaking reflects on itself and comes very close to a subject without, however, seizing or claiming it" (Chen & Trinh, in Holiday, 2000, 519). In this respect, developing youth resiliency and leadership, through fostering youth literacy skills - so that they are able to negotiate representations and shape healthy, safe, and empowered images of their identities - is of central importance.

Reaching out to youth through art, provides opportunity for them to become engaged, involved and invested in the successful completion of research. Outside of academic investigation, it also opens a place for metaphorical story telling, in which their experiences are conveyed in a non-threatening, multivocal interpretation. For example, both Jaime and Chris, used metaphorical artistic creations as a way to translate their thoughts, feelings, emotions and struggles through the ones available in the queer media, and establish a bridge to my own lived knowledges. For both of these youth, their understandings of lived experiences were difficult to put into words. As Kehily stated, "Popular culture [can form] a resource and framework to facilitate discussion, thought, and action" (Kehily, in Ballentine & Ogle, 2005, 284). This study was able to demonstrate a successful approach for engaging with media as tool for helping youth to make sense and interpret representations of themselves and their community, as well as provide a language for communicating these difficult ideas.

LGBTTIQ Identities

Interpreting the messages and representations in queer niche market magazines in isolation from audience reception would insinuate that media is taken up at face value. This study demonstrated, rather, that the 'truths' of media discourses will always be partial and incomplete, always in translation as an experience of the reader. The desire to resist or accept messages presented in the queer magazines was tied to the location in the matrices of social oppressions in which the youth identified their particular location. Each reader came to the materials from particular socio-cultural places and, therefore, took up the messages with slight different perspectives, histories, needs, desires and motivations. The articulation and rearticulations of cultural messages that resulted reflected these variations and multitude of cultural lenses; what they were seeking to know and feel; and their ability to critically engage with media content.

In dialogue with the messages from the magazines, the queer youth in this study set out to grow and negotiate their knowledge of the LGBTTIQ community, its partners and allies, as well as its norms and acceptable boundaries. They then stored up this reserve of knowledge for later use in social-cultural exchanges, as a currency of familiarity. In fact, the act of buying the magazine itself became a political statement and self-empowerment; a performance of their desire for social connection and belonging. Whether or not this was accompanied by involvement with the queer youth groups or sexual minority friend networks, the personal act of reading was seen as a social and political activity, in movement towards and allegiance with a greater, imagined LGBTTIQ community.

As explored by Frykholm in her work around the Evangelical Christian, novel series *Left Behind*, "Readers do not pick up *Left Behind* in isolation. They engage with the novels as participation in a social network. Readers are often part of two kinds of "families" of readers— a biological family and a church family" (2004, 40). With an eye to her research, we begin to understand how queer magazines provide an opportunity for social inclusion, friendship, and self-affirmation. In this way, new members to the LGBTTIQ community read and engage with the media out of a desire to consume the common, 'insider' knowledges gained through the discourses in the magazines. Passed through friends at the youth group, they shared the information to build and maintain their subcultural membership.

This study also was able to demonstrate that irrespective of how limiting representations appeared to be in the gay media, the youth were still able to use them to tell a story attesting to their own understanding of what it means to identify as a sexual minority. In this light, opportunity for agential subjectivity exists, no matter how negotiated or fought over. As Warner develops:

> "Every person who comes to a queer self-understanding knows in one way or another that her stigmatization is connected with gender, the family, notions of individual freedom, the state, public speech, consumption and desire, nature and culture, maturation, reproductive politics, radical and national fantasy, class identity, truth and trust, censorship, intimate life and social display, terror and violence, health care, and deep cultural norms about the bearing of the body. Being queer means fighting about these issue all the time, locally and piecemeal, but always with consequences." (Warner, 1994, xiii)

It is apparent from the group discussions, and the multiple overlapping conversations that comprised the collage making sessions, that the images, texts, and discourses with queer magazines are taken up in a highly social frame. Whether or not their interpretation of the representations aligned, each youth was able to find a piece of themselves or of useful information somewhere in the magazines. For instance, Justice asked to keep the copy of *Genre,* which had an article on body building forms he wanted to try out at the gym; and Bryan took a section from the *OUT* magazine that included a review of a band he wanted to search for on limewire.com. As Baughman & Briggs explained, "Even when audience members say or do practically nothing at the time of the performance, their role becomes active when they serve as speakers in subsequent entextualizations of the topic at hand" (1990, 70). It is obvious from these examples, and the excerpts presented in the sections above, that they are applying meanings developed and informed from their readings of the queer niche-market media.

Each portion of the study increased our understanding of the social relationships between queer magazines and queer youth. From the questionnaire, understandings were gained of the extensive engagement that this peer group of youth have with media in general (TV, Internet and magazines); and how media plays an integral part of their social lives. By examining what media they chose to interact with, gave an idea of what is important to them, what they search for messages on, and what they are using to inform their identity. The focus groups gave a glimpse into this identity talk and social consumption of the magazines images, texts, and messages. Finally, the arts project opened a window into the ways in which youth push the discourses presented to them past simple acceptance/rejection dichotomy. Instead, there is a highly dialogical process

involved in the selection, interrogation, and negotiation of messages to suit their individual goals. All of the collages that were produced were artistically shaped, complex, authentic pieces.

This study has focused on LGBTTIQ youth's engagements with queer magazines, including an exploration into the dialogical construction of subjectivity through social interactions and cultural representation; and inquiry into the subcultural pedagogy and role of social capital accumulation. However, of integral importance was that each youth's sense of lived experience was recognized, validated, able to influence the process, and accounted for in the data collection. I believe that by providing space for peer discussions, as well as by fostering and supporting critical literacy skills, sexual minority youth become empowered to learn more about themselves, both who they are now and who they have the potential to become, in a means that is positive and productive; one that moves beyond passive representations to active, healthy, embodied experiences.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

[University Letterhead]

Project Title: Informing Queer Identities: Media and Youth
Investigator: Sarah Flynn, MA Student

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of youth in regards to magazine images. I hope to better understand how youth use magazines, targeted at a gay/lesbian audience, to inform their ideas of gender and sexuality. This is an important step in making sure that the voices and opinions of youth are heard.

This project is a part of a Masters of Arts degree, within Department of Sociology. The Arts, Sciences, and Law Research Ethics Board, University of Alberta, has approved the study.

If you join this study, you will be asked to participate in a questionnaire, focus group discussion, and an arts project. You will also be asked to answer a few questions on paper about yourself, such as your name, age, and whether you live in the city or country, as well as your use of media. The group discussion will take about 2 hours, including time for the collage.

After about 2 months, I will meet with the groups again to share things that I have learned from listening to your opinions. This second session should last about 1 hour. It is not mandatory for you to attend this session.

Joining this group is completely voluntary. You may leave the group or choose not to answer questions at anytime, without any consequences. You can request to take a break or stop participation in the group at any time. You do not have to reveal things about yourself to the group. The opinions you give will *not* be shared with the adults in your life.

No real names will be disclosed. In the research report, if I quote directly from the interviews, all identities will be kept anonymous. All of the audio tapes and transcripts will be kept in a locked file cabinet. You have a right to look at and read the study, if you wish. Though all participants will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement, I cannot guarantee that participants will maintain their secrecy.

If necessary, after the group discussion is over, we will spend as much time as needed to talk about any discomfort you feel. Additionally, in accordance with academic ethics standards, support resources and referrals to professional counselors will be available if needed.

Finally, if you tell me something that leads me to believe that you have been physically or sexually abused, or tell me about another person your age that has been physically or sexually abused, I am required by law to inform the police within 24 hours. If this happens, I will tell you in advance that I am going to contact the police.

I, _____, have read and understand the information above explaining what this study is about and what my rights are if I choose to join the group. I understand Ms. Flynn's roles and responsibilities in this study.

Participant's Name: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: Information/ Recruitment letter

[University Letterhead]
Project Title: Informing Queer Identities: Media and Youth
Investigator: Sarah Flynn, MA Student

Like Talking? Like Art?
If you are 18-24 and read queer magazines, I want to hear your story!

The details:

Who? Sarah Flynn is a Masters of Arts student in Sociology. This project is supported by the Department of Sociology, University of Alberta.

What? FUN group and arts activities! I will be holding two focus groups, six youth in each. Overall, participation will involve a short questionnaire, group discussion, arts & crafts collage making, and a short one-on-one interview.

Where? University campus. I can provide bus tickets, if needed.

When? The first group will meet in November, the second in December. Just tell me which you'd like, and I'll sign you up! [I'll email the exact dates]

Why? I want to understand how LGBTTIQ youth in Edmonton and surrounding area's use queer magazines to get info on the queer community and LGBTTIQ identity.

If you would like to participate, *please* contact me:

Sarah Flynn
sjflynn@ualberta.ca

Thank you!

The fine print:
1. All personal information including your name, age, and contact, as well as tapes of the discussions, will be kept strictly confidential.
2. I'll need <u>both</u> you and your parent/guardian to sign a consent.

Have concerns? - Here's the rest of my team: Dr. Amy Kaler (492-7579), Dr. Sharon Rosenberg (492-9839), and Dr. Andre Grace (492-0767)

Appendix C: Group Confidentiality Agreement

[University Letterhead]

Project Title: Informing Queer Identities: Media and Youth
Investigator: Sarah Flynn, MA Student

This form is intended to protect the confidentiality of what members of this discussion group say during the course of this study about queer identity and media.

Please read the following statement and sign your name indicating that you agree to comply.

I promise that I will not talk about details from the group meetings, or identify other participants, with anyone outside my fellow group members and the facilitator. After our discussion is over, I will not talk about what other group participants said, except with Ms Flynn or Dr Grace if necessary.

Participant's Name: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Investigator's Signature: _____

Appendix D: Questionnaire

[University Letterhead]

Project Title: Informing Queer Identities: Media and Youth
Investigator: Sarah Flynn, MA Student

Name: _____ Study Name: _____
Age: _____ Birth Date: _____
How would you like to be contacted:_____
Do you live in the city or a rural area: _____
How 'out' would you consider yourself: _____
[On a scale where 1 = not out, and 5 = completely out]

The following questions will ask about your contact with media.

How many hours of TV do you watch during a typical week?

a) 20 hours+ b) 10hrs to 20hrs c) 5hr to 10hrs d) Never to 5hr

What is your favorite show(s)?

How many hours do you spend on the internet in a typical week?

a) 20 hours+ b) 10hrs to 20hrs c) 5hr to 10hrs d) Never to 5hr

What is your favorite website(s)?

Do you read any of these types of magazines? If so, how often?

Magazines	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
News (e.g. MacLean's, Time, Newsweek)				
Women's (e.g. Cosmo, Vogue, ELLE)				
Men's (e.g. Maxim, FHM, GQ)				
Teen (e.g. YM, Teen People)				
Sports/ Fitness (e.g. Men's Health, Runners)				
Music/ Entertainment (e.g. Rolling Stone, Spin)				
House and Home (e.g. Real Simple, Living)				
Special Interest (e.g. Essence, Jade, Windspeaker)				
Queer (e.g. OUT, XY, POS)				

From the above list, what *type* of magazine is your favorite?

What magazine is your favorite? Why?

[Page Break in original]

The following questions relate to queer magazines:

How long have you been a reader of queer magazines?

How were you introduced to them? [e.g. family, friends, youth groups ...]

Do your friends read queer magazines?

How important is it to you to read these magazines?
[On a scale where 1 = not important, and 5 = very important]

Do you purchase your magazines? If not, how do you access them?

Where do you read them? [e.g. home, school, library, pride centre...]

How much of each queer magazine do you typically read?

What is your favorite part of the magazine? [e.g. articles, pictures, clothing, advice...]

What do you do with your old copies?

Do you talk about the things you read in the magazines with others, such as your friends and family? If so, what kinds of things do you talk about?

Thank you.

Appendix E: Focus Group Guiding Questions

1. What do you think of the current issue of the magazine(s)?
   a. Likes?
   b. Dislikes?
   c. Favorite image?
   d. Favorite article?
   e. Is there a column/feature that you always read?

2. What do you like about the magazine in general?

3. What do you dislike about the magazine in general?

4. How is this magazine different from non-queer magazines?

5. How many of you keep, or read, older copies of the magazine?

6. Do you remember any articles that you read in other issues of this magazine? If so, do you know why that particular article stuck in your mind?

7. What does this magazine say queer people are like? Should be like?

8. Does this magazine help you feel good about yourself? How? Which part?

9. Do you read other queer magazines? Which ones? How do you feel when you read them?

10. What does the magazine need more of? Less of?

11. Do you think it is an important magazine for queer people? If so, why?

12. Do you read books or watch movies TV/ Movies the magazine suggests? Do you trust their suggestions?

13. Imagine you could jump into any image in this magazine. Which one would you choose? Why?

14. If a person from Mars was given a copy of *OUT*, what would they think it meant to be a sexual minority? How does this fit with your understanding?

15. Why did you pick these images/ text for your collage? Which images do you like? Which images do you dislike?

16. Compared to the other collages that were made in your focus group, do you think yours was similar or different? Why?

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Study ID	Age	Self-Identification
Bryan	21	Gay Male
Helen	21	Bisexual Female
Brendan	22	Gay Male
Patti	24	Lesbian Female
Jordan G	20	Gay Male
Jordan K	21	Gay Male
Bob	18	Trans-identified
Jennifer	20	Lesbian Female
Joc	22	Trans-identified
Jaime	20	Gay Male
Chris	18	Gay Male
Justice	22	Two-spirited
Franki	18	Lesbian Female

Table 2. Questionnaire Responses

Participant Information			Readership - Magazine Types (1 = seldom read, 4= always read)									Study Components Completed			
Study ID	Age	Self-Identification	Out	Women's	Teen	Sports	Music	Sports	Diverse	LGBT news	LGBT glossy	ICF	Forms	Focus Group	Art
Bryan	21	Gay Male	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	4	4	Y	Y	Y	Y
Helen	21	Bisexual Female	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	Y	Y	Y	Y
Brendan	22	Gay Male	4	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	Y	Y	Y	Y
Patti	24	Lesbian Female	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jordan G	20	Gay Male	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jordan K	21	Gay Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	N	Y	N
Bob	18	Trans-FTM	3	2	2	3	2	1	1	2	2	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jennifer	20	Lesbian Female	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	Y	Y	Y	Y
Joc	22	Trans-MTF	3	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jaime	20	Gay Male	1	1	1	4	4	2	1	1	2	Y	Y	Y	Y
Chris	18	Gay Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	N	Y	Y
Justice	22	Two-spirited	4	1	1	3	4	2	1	1	3	Y	Y	Y	Y
Franki	18	Lesbian Female	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Y	Y	Y	N
Total	**13**	**Average**	**2.5**	**1.3**	**1.1**	**1.7**	**2.0**	**1.3**	**1.2**	**1.5**	**2.2**	**13**	**11**	**13**	**11**

Figure 1: Bob

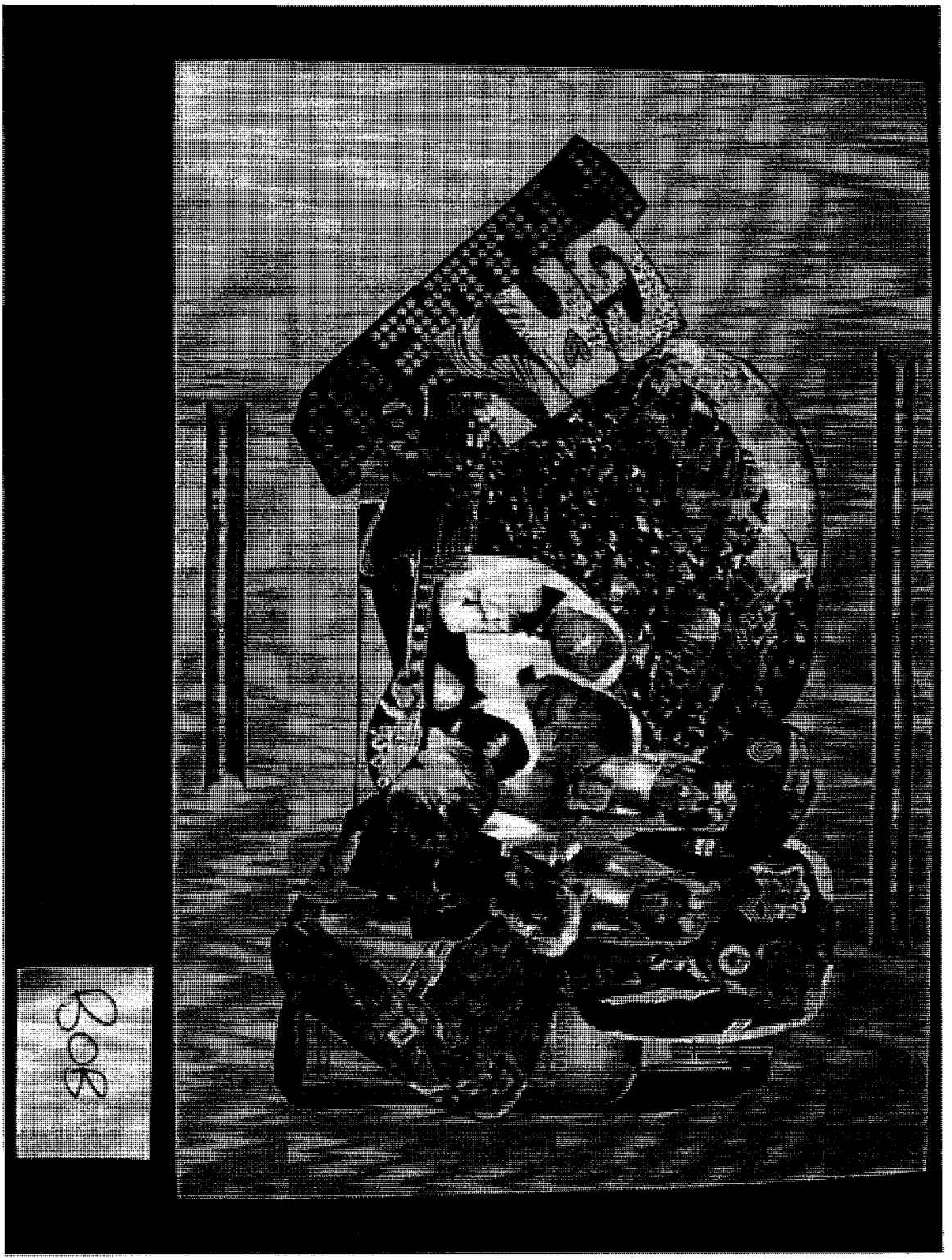


Figure 2: Brendan

Figure 3: Bryan

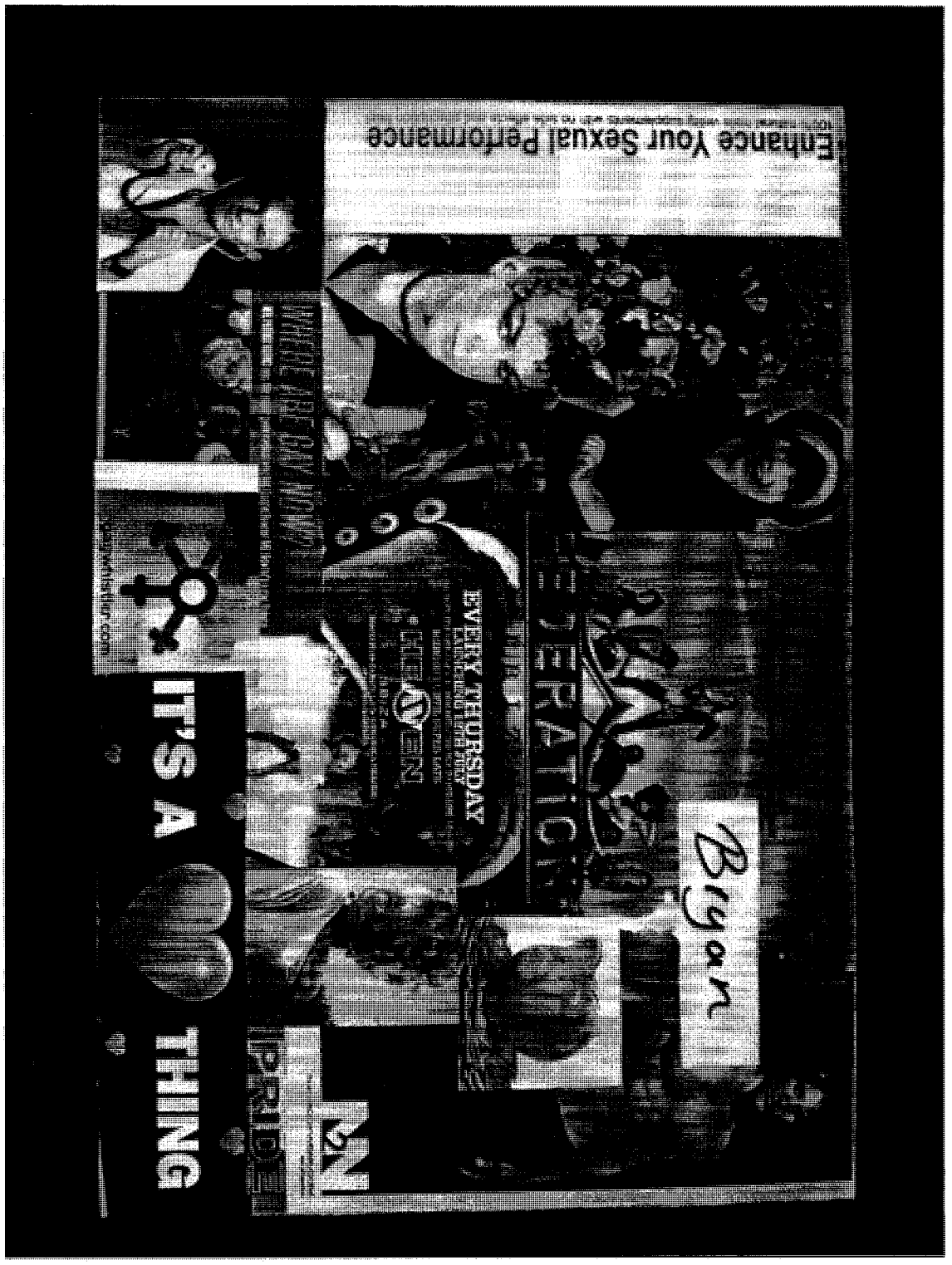


Figure 4: Chris

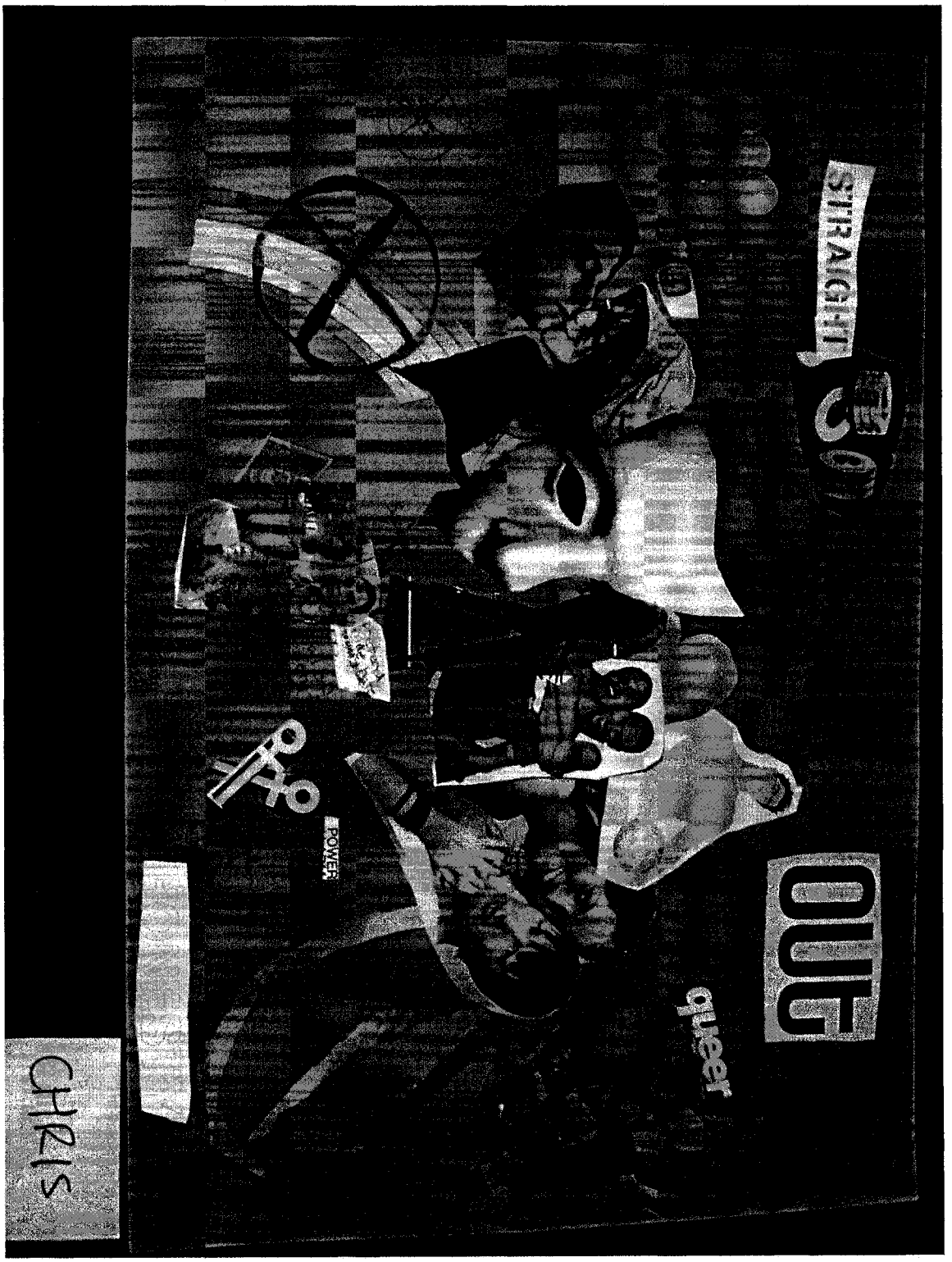


Figure 5: Helen

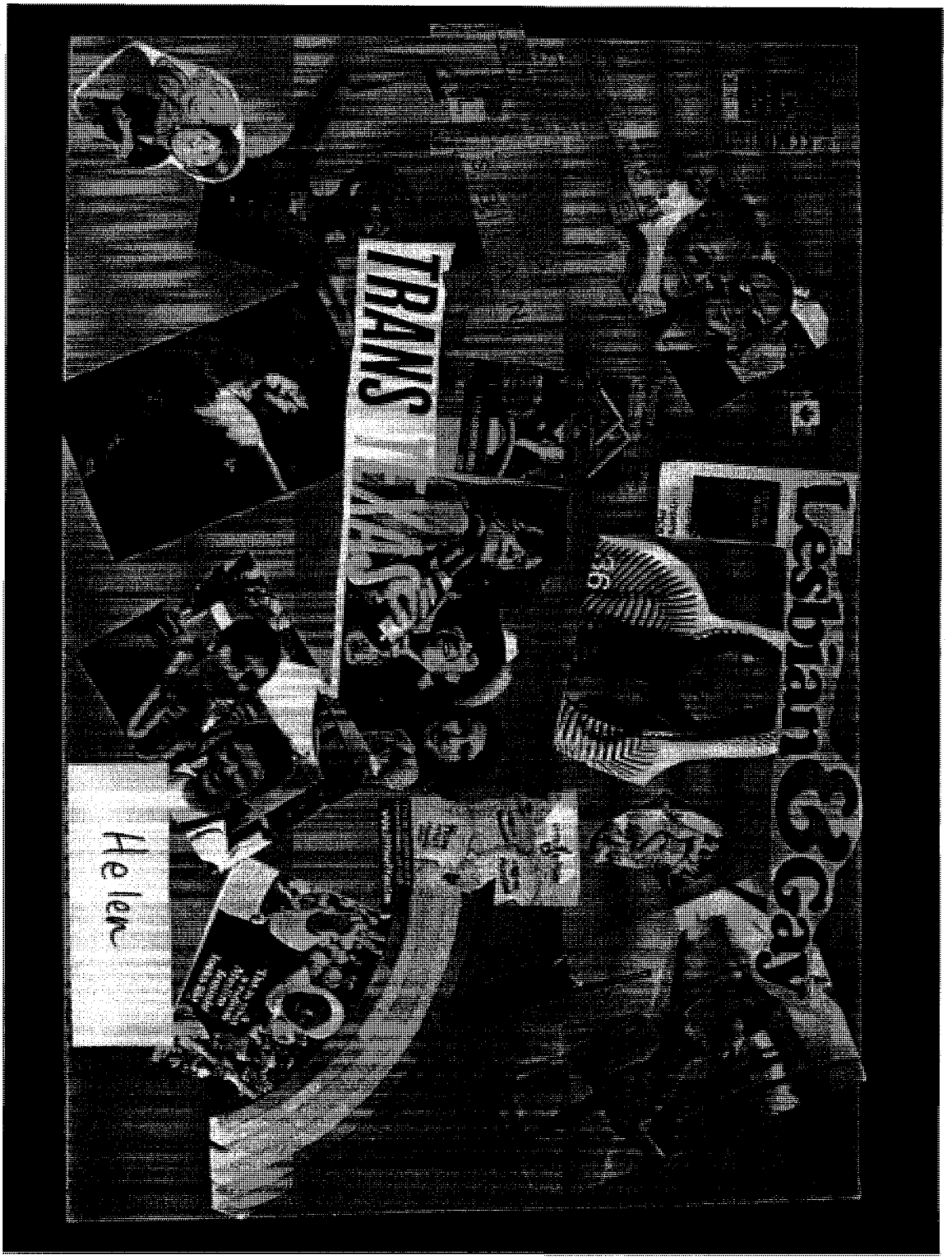


Figure 6: Jaime

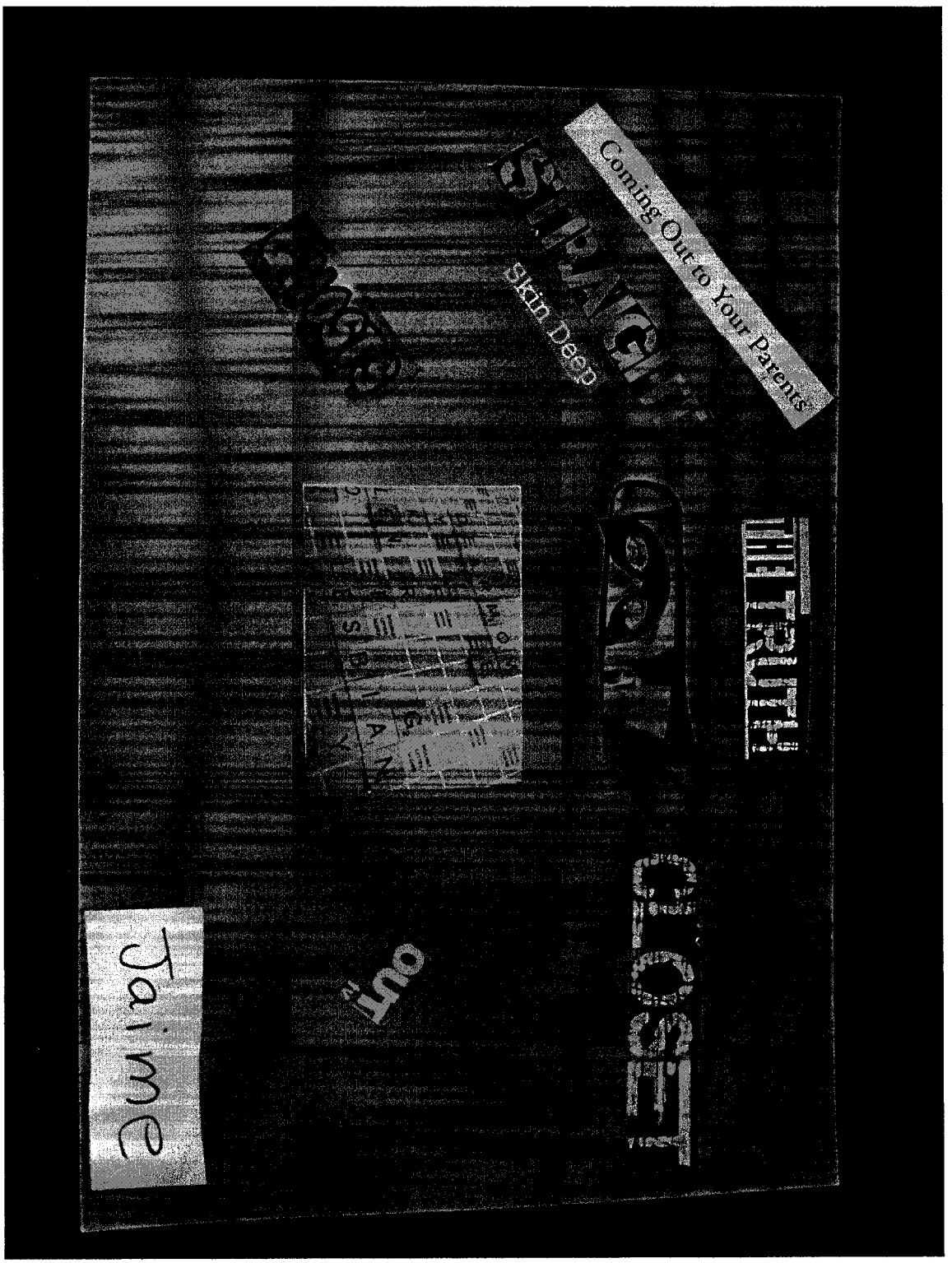


Figure 7: Jennifer

Figure 8: Joc

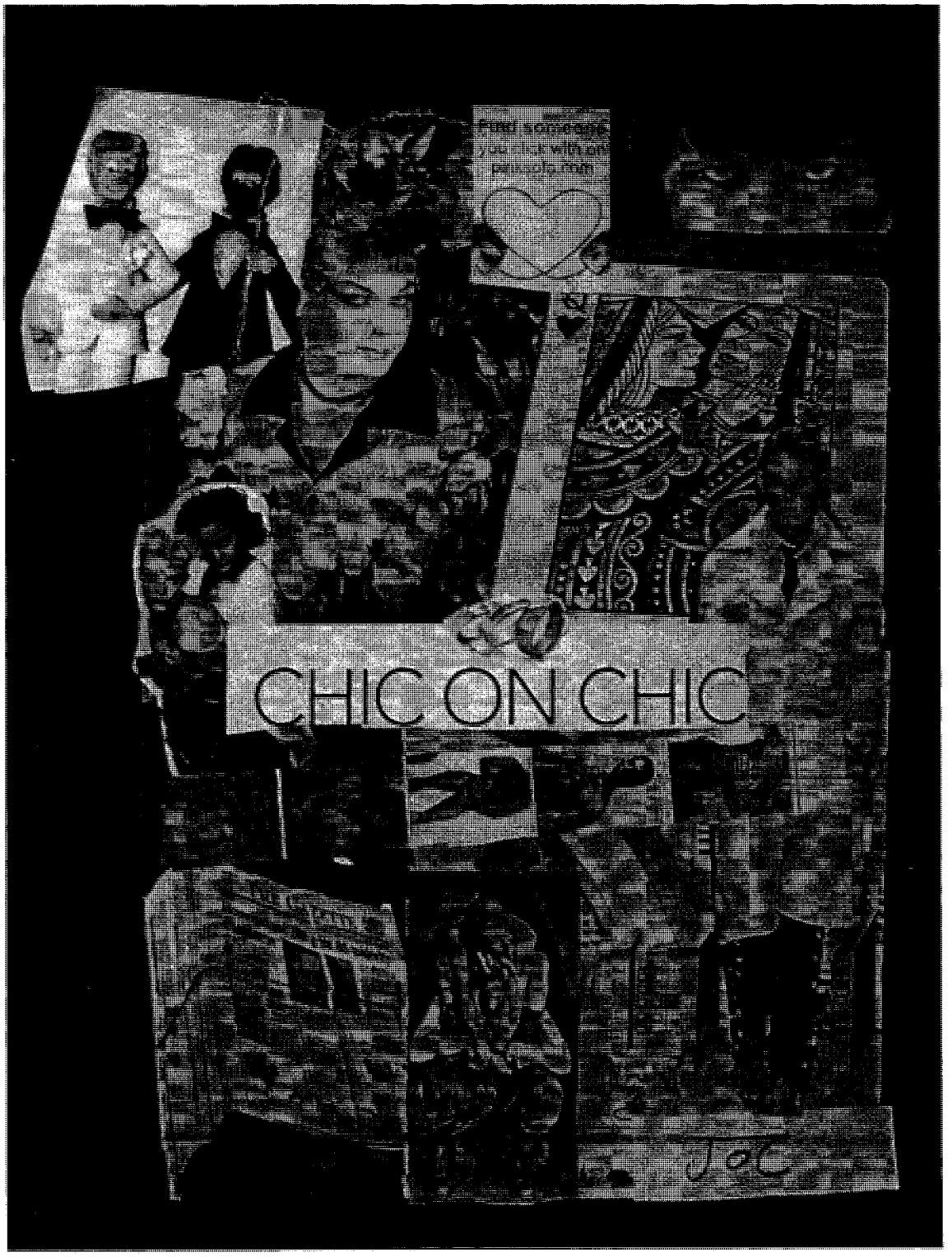


Figure 9: Jordan G

Figure 10: Justice

Figure 11: Patti

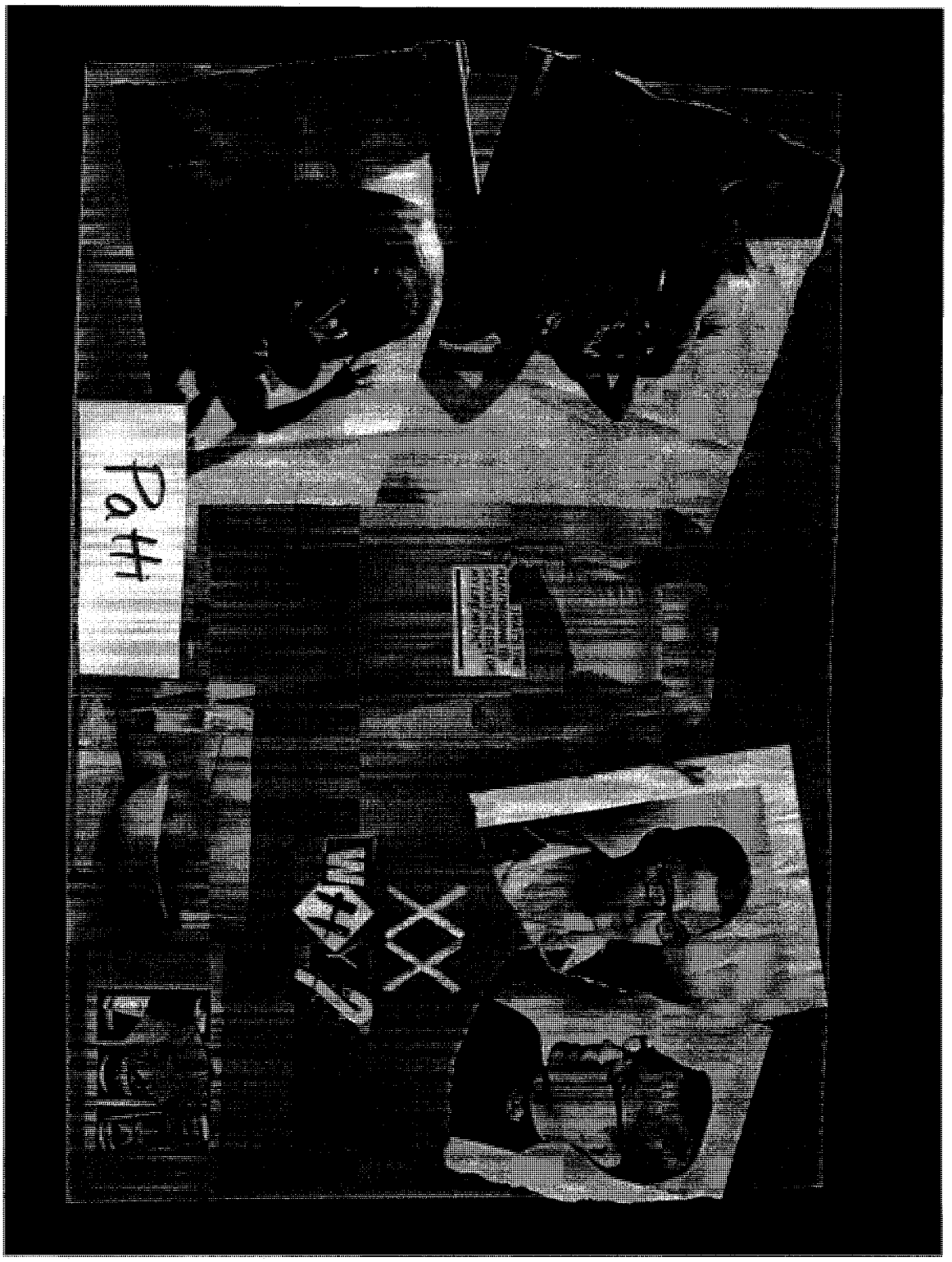
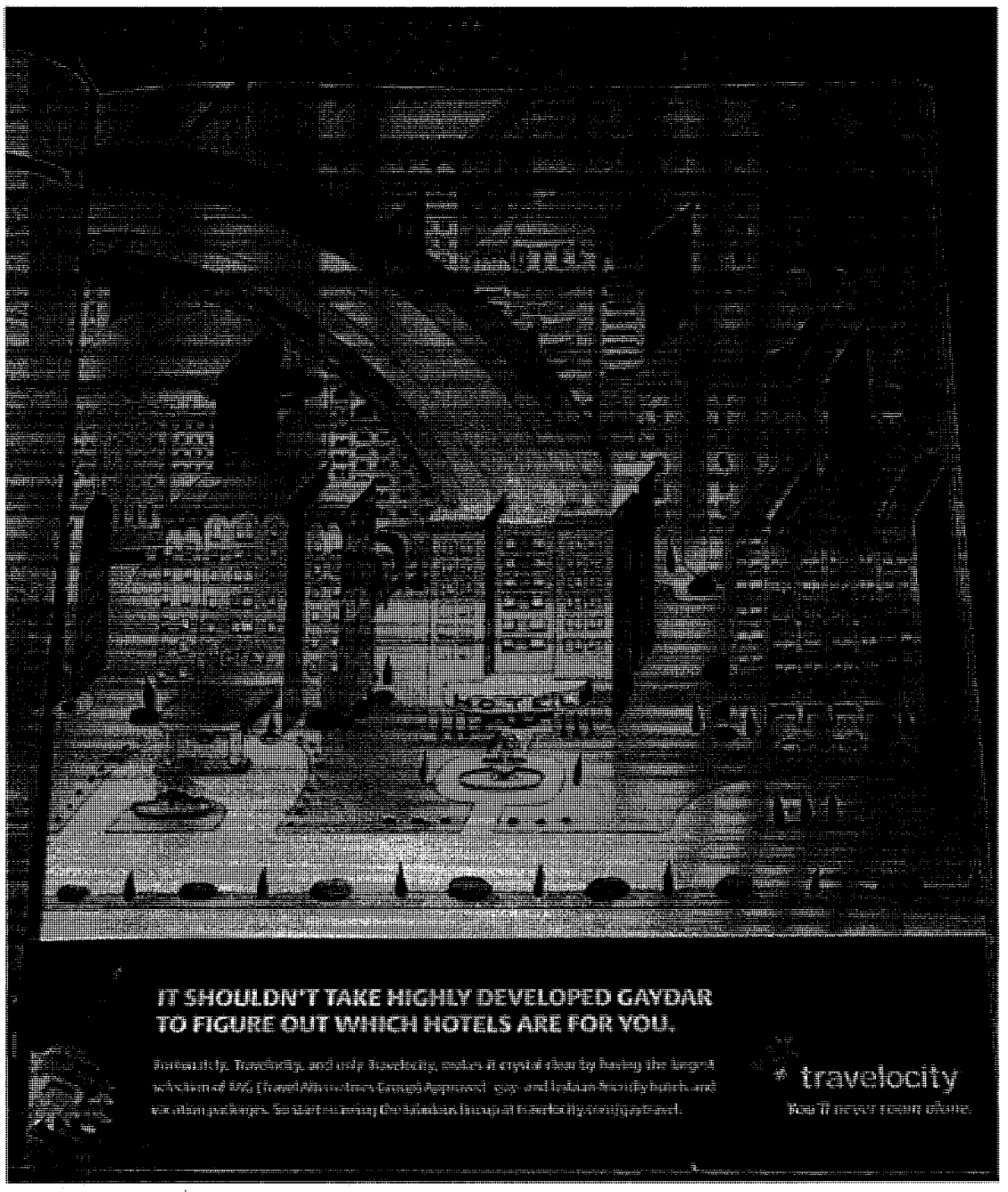


Figure 12. Travelocity Advertisement



Source: Travelocity Advertisement. *OUT.* October 2007.