

Part Two: A Professor and Class Examine Ethnicity and Identity

Understanding American Muslims

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Abstract

In this paper, I study various aspects about American Muslims in the United States.

The paper is divided into three parts. In the first part, I choose social perception as my theoretical framework, describe it and relate it to American Muslims to this framework. I argue that there are many negative social perceptions about American Muslims. Then I compare social perception with social identity theory and organization identity. After discussing these theories, I study American Muslims at macro-level, mezzo-level and micro-level.

In the second part, I engage in a deep theme-based study about the family values of American Muslims. Specifically, I discuss their gender values, marriages and generational differences. I also discuss some implications from my theme-based research for both American Muslims as a group and for the American society at large.

The last part includes my self-reflection and self-discovery. In self-reflection, I summarize my findings and impression about American Muslims. In self-discovery, I interviewed an American Muslim woman about her experience and values about being an American Muslim.

Part I. Conceptual framework

I have selected ‘social perception’ as the conceptual framework for this identity paper. Social perception refers to “the broad tendency of perceivers to note and interpret the appearance, behavior, and intentions of others” (Johnson 2010). It is also labeled as ‘person perception’, meaning perception of other people as opposed to perception of non-human objects (Bruner and

Tagiuri 1954). Some perceptual psychologists define social perception as perception motivated by social factors (Sills 1968). Different fields of scholars have different focus on studying social perception. Vision and cognitive scholars focus on perception of particular cues that result in accurate or inaccurate social judgments while social psychologists focus on perception with categorization and its consequences. For this paper, I adopt the social psychologists' approach and define social perception as the tendency of people to infer the traits and disposition of other people from those people's behavior.

Social perception describes how a person (the perceiver) interprets information about another person (the targeted person or the perceived). Therefore, social perception is influenced by the characteristics of three factors: 1) the perceiver, 2) the situation and, 3) the targeted person (Jones 1990; Darity 2008, p206). But because the perceiver is the one who finally makes the judgment, it is reasonable to mainly focus on the perceiver's characteristics. Research on perceiver's characteristics has shown that perceivers are not objective observers of their social world and their cognitive and motivational biases color their interpretation of others. Cognitive structures, such as schemas or stereotypes, may help perceivers form judgments efficiently. However, they may also lead perceivers to form incorrect judgments due to lack of information or ignorance of information which disconfirms their expectations (Snyder and Swann 1978; Darity 2008, p206). The fact that perceivers do not search thoroughly for information when judging others (Gilbert 1998; Darity 2008, p206) may suggest that perceivers often over-rely on their cognitive structures. Perceivers may also be motivated to form judgments of the perceived so as to confirm their initial expectation of the perceived and protect their own sense of self-worth (Klein and Kunda 1993; Darity 2008, p206).

A certain behavior may have both dispositional causes and situational causes. In interpreting the actions of others, perceivers tend to underestimate the situational causes when the action is a failure and overestimate the dispositional causes when the action is a success. This is known as the fundamental attribution error (Ross 1977; Darity 2008, p206). For example, when a perceiver sees that a perceived fails a very easy test, he is more likely to think that the perceived is stupid rather than that the perceived has missed the test due to illness. However, when he sees that the perceived obtains full mark in an extremely difficult exam, he is more likely to think that the perceived is a genius than that the perceived has cheated on the exam.

Certain traits of the perceived may have more impact than other traits on the perceiver's impression. The more impressive traits include the central traits of *warm* and *cold*. The less impressive traits include the peripheral traits of *polite* and *blunt* (Asch 1946; Darity 2008, p206). Negative information about the perceived tends to be more heavily weighted by the perceiver than positive information due to information diagnosticity (Skowronski and Carlston 1989; Darity 2008, p206).

Group perception is a particular form of social perception. The two dominant approaches to group perception are reference group approach and social categorization approach (Markovsky 2001). A reference group refers to a set of individuals whose standing or perspective is taken into account by a perceiver in making a judgment about a specific issue (Farmer 1992). While social categorization is considered a fundamental process to survival, it can have serious side effects. One of the major side effects is that people tend to overestimate the differences between groups and underestimate the differences among group members (Quattrone 1986).

Muslims in the United States are as ordinary citizens as non-Muslims, but they are perceived wrongly or quite negatively by the non-Islamic perceivers. For example, if one sees that another person wears headscarves and has beards, then one will tend to think that he is a Muslim. This is a social perception based on another person's appearance; it is an interpretation based on a stereotypical image of Muslims. The same perception applies to a group of people possessing the same stereotypical image. Another example of negative (but wrong) perception about Muslims is that American Muslims and even Muslims in general do not condemn terrorist atrocities committed in the name of Islam (O'Brien 2010), which has partly led some Americans to blame the 9/11 attack on the entire Islamic world. A third example of wrong perception is that American Muslims are all the same. Many non-Muslim Americans do not know that there is a cultural, ethnic and theological diversity among American Muslim communities (Curtis 2009; O'Brien 2010), a side effect of social categorization that the differences among group members are underestimated.

Social identity theory is a social identity approach in studying self-concept, group membership, group behavior and intergroup relations. According to Tajfel (1978) who developed the concept of social identity, a person has a personal identity and multiple social identities, together forming the self-concept. They defined social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his membership of a social group (or groups), together with the value and emotional significance attached to this". It is different from personal identity as the latter is derived from one's personal attributes and personal relationships ((Tajfel 1978). Social identity theory asserts that individuals tend to favour their own group over another relevant group with the purpose of enhancing their social identities (Tajfel and Turner 1979).

Social perception is similar to social identity theory in the sense that both of them involve categorization of groups. Group perception is formed based on perceivers' impression on a categorized set of individuals. According to social identity theory, an individual categorizes other people into either in-group (if they belong to the same group) or out-group (if they do not belong to the same group). However, the two theories offer different explanation for intergroup conflicts. When individuals in one group hates or discriminate against other individuals from the other group, it is often because there are biases in the perceivers' categorization and judgment process. But according to social identity theory, the same phenomenon may exist simply because there is clear evidence of an 'us' and a 'them'.

Organizational identity refers to elements which the members regard as central, distinctive and enduring about an organization (Albert & Whetten 1985). Multiple organizational identities can exist as members have different views about those three features of an organization. (Pratt and Foreman 2000). Brickson (2005)'s organizational identity orientation theory investigates how organization's relations are reflected in organizational identity and how organizational identity shape organization's relations.

Social perception is similar to organizational identity about changeability. Perception of a group is based on the perceivers' interpretation about the group's characteristics and can be affected by situational factors such as the media. Organizational identity can also change when the organization changes its central values and strategic policies and advertises them (Fiol 2002) and because it is socially constructed and negotiated with internal and external stakeholders (Scott and Lane 2000). However, social perception has a wider range of category bases for forming

perception while organizational identity has only three category bases: centrality, distinctiveness and persistence.

Macro-level

According to the ARDA's database about the general profile of the United States, Islam is the third largest religion in the United States (excluding Agnostics), with 1.6% of the population being Muslims. Christians remains the largest religious population in the US (82.3%), followed by Jewish (1.8%). (ARDA 2001). The exact size of American Muslims is difficult to measure, as the U.S. Census does not cover religious affiliations. The estimated population ranges widely from 2 Million (survey from Pew Research Center in 2007, cited in Ghosh 2010) to 8 Million (figure from the Muslim Public Affairs Council, cited in O'Brien 2010) .

Being the third largest religious group in the United States, American Muslims possess many assets. The first asset is the Islamic holy book The Qur'an (Koran), which provides Muslims with wisdom in leading a meaningful life. The second asset is the mosques, a place for regular worship, social gathering and Koran teaching. There are now 1900 mosques in the U.S. and the largest one was built in 2005 in Dearborn, Michigan. (U.S. Bureau of International Information Programs (2008). A strong community is the third asset of American Muslims, supported many non-profit organizations such as Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), American Muslim Council (AMC) and Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC). Another intangible asset of American Muslims is their rich knowledge in fields such as astronomy, mathematics and medicine (Headden 2008). Islam once ruled a great Empire from North Africa to Indonesia and to Spain and many American Muslims are migrants from these areas. The fifth asset is their rich religious and cultural practices.

However, there are also many deficits of American Muslims. Some of the deficits are their assets at the same time. For example, the strong community leads to lack of cooperation between American Muslims and the U.S. law enforcement agencies. Gender inequality is particular serious, with the Koran explicitly stating that women are inferior to men. The Islamic law is considered barbarian by many who cannot accept cutting off the hands of thieves and stoning people who commit adultery to death as suitable criminal penalties (Ghosh 2010). The fourth deficit is the Koran proposition of Jihad (the holy war), which although serves the purpose of defending Islam from consecration, encourages suicidal attacks. The fifth deficit is the terrorist-associated image, which imposes on the entire Muslim world because of a small number of Islamic extremists who carried out worldwide terrorist attacks in the name of their faith.

Being a minority group in the U.S., American Muslims have both obtained benefits and suffered from the U.S. government policies. The government provides many resources and privileges to immigrants Muslims to adapt into the broad U.S. society. However, the U.S. immigration policies after the 9/11 attack has affected American Muslims adversely. For example, in August 2002, the U.S. government announced that it would cease approving visa applications in the U.S. Embassies in various Arab and Muslim countries and all such applications would be approved in Washington D.C. without time limit imposed on the response. The outcome was "from across the Arab and Muslim World, thousands of students were unable to continue studies in the U.S., professors could not return to teach, jobs and fellowships were lost, and medical treatment and chemotherapy in the U.S. were discontinued. (Cainkar 2004)

Mezzo-level

Many non-profit organizations have worked hard on behalf of American Muslims to shape and influence public policy. Their work has seen some success at some point, though largely the effect is limited. Three examples will be given for illustration.

The Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) is a Muslim policy advocacy organization which endeavors to shape public policy by serving as a trusted resource to decision makers in government and policy institutions. It believes that many public issues such as “counter-terrorism, radicalization, civil liberties and privacy, foreign policy, immigration, health-care and the economy are written about, debated and decided without direct Muslim American voices sitting at the table”. To bring American Muslim voices to the policy makers, it holds regular forums and writes policy papers to members of the Administration, staffers on Capitol Hill and experts who advice policy makers. Their work has led to the publication of a government report (“American Jihadist Terrorism: Combating a Complex Threat”) on homegrown terrorism in the U.S., which discusses the radicalization process and forces that drives violent extremist activities and outlines actions underway to build trust and partnership between community groups and government agencies (U.S. Congressional Research Services 2010). The report highlights the positive contributions of MPAC and other two Muslim organizations to prevent violent extremism in the U.S. However, the Department of Homeland Security seems not very proactive in encountering homegrown terrorism. A newly-released authoritative report criticized the U.S. government for being slow to take actions to address the homegrown radicalism (Bergen & Hoffman (2010)), though the Assistant Secretary for Policy Development Arif Alikhan denied it in a recent interview with the BBC (Bolderso 2010).

The American Muslim non-profit organizations have also been fighting against the negative perceptions about American Muslims. With the emergence of critical issues such as the proposed Koran burning in Florida, the planned mosque near Ground Zero and the arson attack on the mosque in Tennessee, building a positive image group for American Muslims has become the priority of many Muslim organizations. For example, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) has been working hard on promoting religious understanding through interfaith dialogues. Successes have been seen in the “Children of Abraham”, a program co-developed by ISNA and the Union for Reform Judaism (URF) to provide guides to interfaith discussions between Jews and Muslims. The programme enables many Jews and Muslims to discuss hard issues and learn about each other’s tradition (Curtis 2009). Various factors account for the existence of the gap, including a lack of unified voice and strong leadership due to diversities within the Muslim community itself, limited resources of the non-profit organizations, the biased media and the isolationist character of many Muslims in the community. (O’Brien 2010)

A third example is about policy of orphan adoption. Many children had been put into Christian foster homes prior to 1990s because the relevant government authority did not put list of Muslim foster parents on social service rosters. A case in Texa in the 1990s triggered the An Islamic Family Outreach Organization (NISWA), a southern California Muslim Women’s organization which is dedicated in providing Muslim family and children services, to launch a Muslim Foster Parents Programme and work with government agencies to avoid such outcomes. Now Muslim foster parents are listed on the government’s social service roasters, providing many orphans

from different Islamic regions in the world (including Afghanistan) a Muslim family (Leonard 2003).

Micro-level

American Muslims, as other Muslims in the world, have to observe certain practices in accordance with their religious principles and values. One should be aware of these practices and adapt themselves accordingly when working or getting along with them.

First, American Muslims are required to perform five prayers daily (*salah*). Prayers must be spoken. This is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, which are necessary rules and conditions for one to be a Muslim (Ali M. Amir). Therefore, when one is having a lengthy project discussion or working busily with American Muslims, one should allow reasonable times of breaks so that they can fulfill their daily duty without embarrassment.

Second, American Muslims are required to fast in the entire month of Ramadan (the ninth month of Islamic lunar calendar), which is the other pillar of Islam (*sawn*). They must fast from dawn to dusk, without eating, drinking, smoking or sex. After sunset, all lawful food, drink and sex are allowed (Ali M. Amir). Keeping this in mind, one should avoid having vigorous activities, inviting American Muslims to eat, drink, smoke or have sex during the daytime of Ramadan. (Of course, one should check out which month in modern calendar is Ramadan if they have American Muslim friends).

Third, American Muslims are forbidden certain food and drink by their religion. These include pork, flesh of swine, flesh of dead animals, birds of prey, intoxicant alcoholic liquor and drugs of abuse and anything poisonous to humans (Ali M. Amir). Therefore, one should avoid pork and other Islamic forbidden food and drink in the recipe when they invite their American Muslim friends for lunch or dinner.

Fourth, female American Muslims are required by Koran to cover their heads and bodies (*hijab*). There is a strong rationale other than an explicit requirement of Koran to practice *hijab*. Female Muslims are required to be modest. Covering their heads and bodies can allow other people to evaluate them from their intelligence and skills rather than outlooks and sexuality (Ali Mary). Therefore, when hanging out with female American Muslims, one should not blame for their tight dressing or feel odd when they wear headscarves.

Fifth, American Muslims have many events marked by religious rituals and displays. These include funerals, weddings, celebration of a child's *bismillah* (his or her start of education in Arab) and celebration of one's *ameen* (his or her first completion of reading the Koran). When one is invited to these events in Muslim space, one should adapt oneself to their conventions, perhaps removing shoes, covering the head (women) and observing gendered seating arrangements (Leonard 2003)

Part II—Theme research

Given the importance of family in shaping one's characters and behavior, I focus my theme research on the family values of American Muslims. Specifically, I investigate issues of gender, marriages and generational differences.

Gender

Many immigrant Muslims and some African American “new Muslims” uphold patriarchy (or male authority) and gender complementarity (differing male and female roles) in family, (Leonard 2003). They regard the dominant American values of gender equality and freedom of sexual expression as serious threats to both a Muslim’s way of life and all ordered social life. The maintenance of patriarchy and gender complementarity is due to the fear of “American individualism”, which they regard as amoral egoism and a sign of family and societal breakdown rather than a moral ideal (Taylor 1999, Leonard 2003, p.61). Homosexuality is strictly forbidden and arouses great alarm among many Muslims.

The gender and sexuality values are consistent with the findings of an exploratory research about the universal and mental health values of Muslims in the United States (Kelly & Aridi 1996). The study involved a survey on 43 women and 78 men from the Washington, DC and Chicago areas, ranging in ages from 12 to 62 years, who were generally well educated. Despite its limitations such as moderate size and non-random selection of the sample, the study showed that two of the highest universal values are Benevolence (‘a concern for the welfare of close others with whom one is in frequent personal contact in everyday interaction’) and Conformity (‘a self-restraint on inclinations and actions that are likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations and norms’) and the two of the lowest health values are Sexual Acceptance and Materialistic Self-Advancement. It also showed that the respondents were quite religious, with almost half favoring strict Islamic observance and another third moderate observance. Therefore, religious teachings play a major role in shaping American Muslims’ gender and sexuality values.

Marriages

There is a wide range of marriage practices among American Muslims and they differ from community to community. The selection of marriage partners is an interesting phenomenon. Contemporary marriage arrangement services reveal that many American Muslims prefer endogamous marriages (i.e. marriage by national origin, language group, sect or caste). In cases of arranged marriages involving partners of South Asian origin, the bride and groom may not have met. If the arranged marriage is transnational, secure letters must be obtained from religious or academic authorities. (Leonard 2003). Further, also Muslim men can marry non-Muslim women but Muslim women cannot marry non-Muslim men, though mixed marriages are not encouraged by the first generation American Muslims. (Elkholy 1966; Leonard 2003)

Polygamy is practiced in American Muslim community. Under Islamic law, a Muslim man is allowed to have at maximum four wives, though he is required to treat all wives equally. But polygamy is illegal under American law. The resolution of the conflict in laws is that Islamic marriages are allowed but these ‘couples’ cannot enjoy the benefit of civil or legal marriages (Leonard 2003).

Marriage practices in the American Muslim community also include ‘youth weddings’, at which the bride is a teenager. One reason for youth weddings is that parents fear that their daughters would marry outside the parental sectarian or ethnic group (Dannin 2002a). Another reason is that early marriage can be a solution to control adolescent sexuality, as in an African American Muslim community studied by Dannin (2002a).

Divorce is another important issue for American Muslims. Although divorce rates in the Muslim World are “difficult to ascertain” (Smith 1984; Leonard 2003), an exploratory study (Ba-Yunus 1999; Leonard 2003) showed that divorce rate is as high as 33 percent among Muslims in North America. Muslim men are also much easier to divorce Muslim women than non-Muslims do. While American law requires court sanction, Muslim men under Islamic law can divorce their wives simply by pronouncing “I divorce you” three times (the triple *talag*). Although Muslim women can inherit half the property inherited by men after divorce, it is fathers who gain custody of the children (Leonard 2003).

Generational differences

Language plays a key role in generational differences among immigrant American Muslims. Many parents have difficulties in transmitting religion and culture to their children who do not know their languages. Many Muslim youth are not willing to participate in adult gatherings and in mosques because they do not command the languages spoken by immigrant or first-generation adults and preachers. English could be used to address this problem, but the older people were reluctant to give up their language and some preachers are not fluent in English (Sachedina 1994, Leonard 2003).

While systematic research on generational differences among immigrants Muslims has been rare (Leonard 2003), one study showed an interesting relationship between the degree of parent’s control over their children and the effect of their children’s assimilation into the American society. Abdo Elkholy (1966) compared immigrants in Detroit and Toledo and found that, as happened in Detroit, the more the first generation “struggled to maintain domination”, the more the second generation was alienated from the family and the society. In contrast, the Toledo Muslims parents exerted less domination to their children and the second generation had closer relationship with their parents and the society.

Research focusing on the second generation showed that the second generation had identity conflicts about gender and generation. For example, Charlene Joyce Eisenlohr (1996) interviewed Arab girls in high school in Dearborn and found that parental constraints contributed to children’s stress in their lives. A typical stress-causing dilemma was that the school girls could talk to boys but could not date them because of objection from their parents who, however, trusted their daughters and backed their educational efforts (Leonard 2003).

Implications

The family values of American Muslims have wide implications for the American Muslim community itself and the American society at large. There are at least three implications for the group itself. First, the existence of gender inequality and system of patriarchy may suggest that there may be tolerated domestic abuses. However, the same value and structure may mean that the community enjoys a relatively stable and loyal environment for political, economic and social developments. Second, the practice that fathers obtain custody of the children upon divorce may also suggest that the men-dominated value and family structure will continue indefinitely. Third, the differences in languages and the impact of modern society on the families of Muslim immigrants may continue to create more conflicts between parents and children in this group.

There are also three implications for the American society. The first one is that the society is difficult to understand the culture of American Muslims and has limited channel of direct and deep culture exchange with them because their marriages are largely not open to the non-Muslim world. In the era of Islamphobia, a correct understanding of American Muslims has never been much important and mixed marriages, if practical, can become a very effective solution to the problem. The second implication for the society is that feminists have to put more effort in advocating gender equality and respect of women's rights due to the highly valued conformity among American Muslims, especially among the well-educated group like those surveyed in Kelly & Aridi (1996)'s research. Lastly but importantly, the society needs to invest more resources in analyzing the situation of women in polygamous marriages to make sure both that those women get suitable from the society as a result of the failure of such marriages and that there is no abuse of state resources by them. Given the difficulty of researching into the divorce rate and polygamy rate among American Muslims, the allocation of state welfares into women associated with Islamic divorce and polygamy would be a critical issue.

Part III

Self-reflection

American Muslims are an important minority and religious group in the United States. They have such special cultural and religious practices that Non-Muslims who do not have deep understanding about them will easily develop biased perception towards the group and that those who have good understanding about them may still question if the group is a part of the modern world. While many of American Muslim leaders may claim that Islam is a peaceful religion, the Koran itself is susceptible to misinterpretation into encouraging violent extremism. However, one should note that there are many other social, political and historical factors that turn a small part of this group into extremists. A higher likelihood of turning into extremists does not mean that they are a dangerous group or Islam is a religion of terror.

I have learned a number of new things throughout my research on American Muslims. The most important thing is that Islam is not a terrorist religion but a peaceful religion. It has the same God as Christianity and Judaism and they just differ in the belief of the role of Jesus. As Susan Headden in her article Understanding Muslim says, 'the word *Islam* itself, meaning "submission," is a derivative of a Syriac word for "making peace." It is a faith that calls for charity, humility, and service.' The second valuable piece of knowledge about American Muslims is that they have strong community with diversities in culture, race, language and theologies. Their identities may be plural among their own community and one should not form hasty judgments about them without proper understanding about their differences within the group. Lastly, I have understood better about certain of their religious teachings and cultural practices, such as the Five Pillars, the wearing of headscarves and the practice of polygamy. Although I find some of these strange and not acceptable, I respect their way of life and will respect them in full when working with them.

Self-discovery

If I could ask an American Muslim in Greensboro five questions, I would ask 1) Have you ever experienced discrimination or bad treatment due to your identity as a Muslim?; 2) Does wearing headscarves affect your social life? If so, how? (for a woman); 3) Do you accept polygamy? (for

a woman); 4)If you knew someone from your group who turn to violent extremism, what would you do to him?; 5)Do you want to practice polygamy? (for a man). The first question is important because I want to know how the nationwide Islamphobia wave affects an ordinary Muslim in a small city like Greensboro. The second question reflects my curiosity about the true feeling of Muslim women who wear headscarves. I want to know if American Muslims are happy about polygamy from asking the third question. The fourth question is a hypothetic question with the purpose of knowing how Muslims can affect their peers as a part of contribution to reducing and preventing violent extremism among the group. The last question is for understanding male American Muslims' personal attitudes toward sexuality, gender and marriage.

Luckily I had the chance to interview an American Muslim student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) and asked her the first three questions mentioned above. Her name is Javeria Akbar. She is a 20 year-old undergraduate student at UNCG majoring in Nursing. Like her parents, she is a Muslim immigrant. She belongs to the *Sunni* branch of Muslim and wears a headscarf.

During the 10-minute interview in a campus cafeteria, I was frequently surprised with her answers. She said that she had not experienced any great discrimination or bad treatment from non-Muslims, except having a minor feeling of discomfort immediately after the 9/11 attack. This made me feel that I might have over-estimated the impact of the anti-Islamic wave in the United States. As to the second question, she said that wearing the headscarf did not affect her social life. I asked her if she was prevented by the headscarf from going to beach and parties. She said that she wore the headscarf at the beach and she had never attended night parties (and nobody had ever invited her). She said that she wore the headscarf all the time whenever she went out from home. This again surprised me because she had a different type of social life and she seemed to enjoy that type of social life. Her answer to my last question confused me to some extent. She said that polygamy was accepted in the Muslim community due to the legitimate religious teaching, but she personally did not accept polygamy because she did not want to feel jealousy when sharing a husband with other women. I did not ask whether she would practice polygamy or not when she married in the future. But I hope that the new generation of American Muslim women (especially those who have received university education) are braver than their parents in expressing their own views and living out freely their own comfortable way of life.

Although Javeria's answers just represent her own opinion, they reinforce my discovery that American Muslims is actually a complex identity group and merely writing a research paper about them is not sufficient to fully understand them.

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Jewish Identity in American Society

Iris Nguyen

The religion of Judaism has transformed over the years. It is not just a religion that is practiced by followers, but it has transpired into an identity and culture to millions of followers throughout the world. Since the early years of the religion, there has been a significant influence on culture, tradition and faith within Judaism for its followers. Judaism has made a profound influence on the ethnic identity of people. For many people, it is a lifestyle, a way of life that they experience, not just a religious belief and practice. Judaism surpasses the traditional aspects that many people would associate into the category of traditional religions because it delves deeper into a certain culture. It is a culture and identity that is more of a lifestyle that determines a way of life for every day followers.

Part 1:

[Theoretical/ Conceptual Framework]

1. Ethnic Identity

2. Ethnic identity describes, "the relationship that exists between an individual and group with whom the individual believes he or she has common ancestry based on shared individual characteristics, shared sociocultural experiences, or both" (Driedger, 2010). The relationship between people and their common surroundings is what make an ethnic identity interesting. Some people share the same characteristics and thrive off one another to become apart of an identity. Ethnic identity is the thing that brings people together that share common values, interests and beliefs. When you start piecing together the ethnic values of a society and grouping them together in a category, will you start to see ethnic identity. It is with these surroundings, that people thrive off one another and begin to assimilate.

3. Judaism relates to the concept of ethnic identity because there is so much that relates to the religion and ethnic identity. For most Jewish people living in the world, they are not just apart of a growing religion, but they are also apart of an identity that makes up their culture and lifestyle. An example of this relationship is the understanding of Judaism as a religion and also a culture. Judaism is a religion that is not just focused toward to religious aspects to it, but also the importance of its tradition and culture. Many Jewish people take pride within their religion and faith. Over the years, Judaism has transformed into an ethnic identity because there is more that makes up the religion and its followers. It is a faith that is practiced by millions of followers, yet it has the framework to the traditions that make up the culture and identity that followers associate with. Being Jewish represents more than just a religion because there are many traditions and cultures that make up the identity of Jews. For most Jews around the world, they are followers of a religion and identity themselves with Judaism as an ethnic identity. Another aspect to Judaism representing an ethnic identity is keeping kosher. Keeping kosher is something that is represented through their faith and identity. Comparing Judaism from other religions, there is significance with Judaism because the aspect of keeping kosher is so important and unique. Kosher is an important aspect of Judaism because it represents a sense of unity and faith

within the community. It is something that is done exclusively within the religion, and that in turns makes it significant within the concept of ethnic identity.

[Macro-level]

5. According to a 2005 survey from World Christian Databases, there are 5,302,245 Jewish people living in the United States. There is a large Jewish population within the United States. Certain states have a larger Jewish population than others. Those states include, New York which has 1,653,870; New Jersey with 468,000; and Massachusetts with 275,000 Jewish people (Association of Religion Data Archives). Those three states round up the top of the list for the largest Jewish population in the United States.

There are many assets that are associated with Judaism and Jewish identity. There are assets within the community that strengthens the faith and identity of Jewish people. Jews fulfill the need to belong by representing their faith and reaching out to those who are within their identity. Judaism is a close-knit faith that focuses on unity as a whole within the religion. Another asset is establishing personal identity within their faith. For millions of followers around the world, establishing a personal identity is an important aspect of being a Jew. Many Jewish people feel a sense of pride when associating with Judaism as an identity because it is something that is important to their faith and culture. One asset that is important to followers and those that practice the faith is the role of socialization and development of values. Judaism used the Torah to provide for its framework and values within their faith and religion. It is with the teachings of the Torah that provides Jewish people with the values that they live by in their every day life. It sets the moral codes to their life and provides values that assist them with their identity. Judaism is also seen as an outlet to the community and resources because it opens up opportunity within the community. There are many outlets in the community that provide resources to the public regarding Judaism. An example would be Hillel, which is an organization on college campuses around the country that provides the mission to "enrich the lives of Jewish undergraduate and graduate students so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world" (About Hillel, 2005). This is a good example for providing outlets to the community and resources because that is the main mission of Hillel. Lastly, an asset that plays an important role in which shapes the identity of Jewish people is the history that enables Jews to have good understanding of oppressed groups. This is an important aspect within the Jewish identity because it provides a sense of understanding and pride within their identity group. Through history, Jewish people have been oppressed and looking back on the historic events that have occurred, there is pride amongst Jewish people. Through years of oppression, Jewish people find themselves to be survivors and have pride with their religion and identity because of it.

Along with assets to the identity group, there are also deficits as well. When speaking in terms of deficits, these are not meant to sound anti-Semitic, but to be in contrast with the assets. One deficit dealing with the Jewish identity is the social isolation from the majority. This is something that is common within different regions in the United States that do not have a large

Jewish population. Many Jews living in the Southern regions of the United States have a harder time practicing their faith because there are not as many Jews living in the South like there are up North. Some Jewish people will find it harder to practice their faith openly because they are surrounded by other religions that are not too informed with Judaism. Another deficit that the Jewish identity faces is stereotypes. This has been an issue within the Jewish identity for a long time. These stereotypes stem from ignorance and misguided information that outsiders have regarding Judaism and Jewish people.

6. A government policy that benefited Jewish people was the Displaced Persons Act in 1948. This policy was presented and placed in after World War II when President Truman favored efforts to relax United States immigration restrictions for Jewish displaced people. With the passage of the Act, United States authorities granted approximately 400,000 visas to immigrants above the quota system. Jewish displaced persons received 80,000 of these visas (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2010). A government policy that has negatively impacted the Jews was the Admissions of Immigrants during the World War II period. This is very controversial because it involved the admission of immigrants from Nazi Germany to the United States influenced by the "economic hardships of the Depression, which exacerbated popular anti-Semitism, isolationism and xenophobia" (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2010). During this period, the refugee policy of the United States made it difficult to apply for the application of the 1924 Immigration Law which made it difficult for the refugees "to obtain entry visas, despite the ongoing persecution of the Jews in Germany" (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2010).

[Mezzo-level]

7. Non-profits play an important role in advocating for the needs of the Jewish identity group. These organizations play an important role in reaching out to the community and helping others in their faith. Non-profit organizations within the Jewish community play an important role in politics around the country and the world as well. Three non-profit organizations that have impacted the community positively are the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, National Jewish Democratic Council, and the Jewish Federations of North America. These organizations deal with certain aspects for the Jewish community but the one thing they have in common is that they also deal with public policy or have influenced it in one way or another. The Jewish Council for Public Affairs serves as a representative voice to the Jewish community with three main goals that include, "To safeguard the rights of Jews here and around the world, To dedicate ourselves to the safety and security of the state of Israel, and To protect, preserve and promote a just American society, one that is democratic and pluralistic, one that furthers harmonious interreligious, inter ethnic interracial and other inter-group relations" (Jewish Council for Public Affairs). This organization deals with public policy issues that affect or influence the Jewish community. These issues range from public health, education, social security, women's rights, and many more (Jewish Council for public Affairs). The National Jewish Democratic Council has become a political voice for the Jewish Democratic community of the United States. While the National Jewish Democratic Council has become a voice for the Jewish community

within the years, there is also more that entails with this organization. Their mission is to "Educate voters about the very differences between their Democratic and Republican candidates for elected office, inform candidates for public office about the need to address and support issues of concern to the Jewish community, advocate on behalf of Jewish and Democratic ideals on Capitol Hill and in Jewish national media, and to fight the radical right agenda at every turn through research and reports" (National Jewish Democratic Council). While the other two organizations deal specifically with certain aspects to help and benefit the Jewish community, the Jewish Federation of North America "represents 157 Jewish Federations and 400 Network communities, which raise and distribute more than \$3 billion annually for social welfare, social services and educational needs" (The Jewish Federation of North America). When looking deeper into the Jewish Federations, it serves more as a social network that bounds the Jewish community together through many different aspects of speciality.

These organizations play an important role in the Jewish community and have made an impact on the politics and domestic issues around the nation. By specializing in certain arenas of interest for the Jewish American citizen, the organizations draw in the attention and service that is needed to spread the message of their mission. There have been many positive aspects to the organizations. In 2008, the National Jewish Democratic Council "executed the most extensive national outreach program in its history...78% of American Jews voted for Barack Obama." This can be viewed as a success to the organization because it was successful in spreading its main principle by spreading the message and informing the Jewish community on the Democratic party.

[Micro-level]

8. When trying to understand Judaism, you have to become more aware of the culturally and identity-competent practices that you should employ when working with the identity group. There are many practices that Jewish people follow that many people would not understand and grasp. When dealing with Jewish people and their faith, there are some aspects that you have to learn to respect. One aspect that is important to active practicing Jews is Shabbat services. Shabbat begins at "sundown Friday night until Saturday, and is devoted to prayer, study, the family and rest" (Kling, 1987). Shabbat is an important aspect because it is devoted for such a long period. It begins at sundown on Friday and does not end until Saturday evening. This is something that people should be aware of because you would not want to plan a party or meeting during these times if someone that would be invited is a practicing Jew that observes Shabbat. Keeping kosher is another aspect that people should be aware about because it is a specific practice amongst certain Jews. It would be advised not to have a dinner party and serve regular food while some guests that are attending keep kosher. Because keeping kosher is specific in its preparation of food and in the intake on certain foods, it is better to set aside both regular food and food that is kosher to please everyone. Hanukkah is an important part of Judaism that many Jews participate in the month of December. This is something that people should be aware of because even though Hanukkah is celebrated around the same time as Christmas, there are

millions of people around the United States that celebrate Hanukkah. This is something that stores should be aware of because during the Christmas season when all the decorations and gifts are in stock, you also have to be aware of Hanukkah. It would be discriminating if you had Christmas stuff in stock but not stuff for Hanukkah. Another important aspect that you have to be aware of is Shivah, which is the aftermath of when someone dies and the mourners go home and observe a period of seven days to mourn (Kling, 1987). It is during this period when the mourners do not leave the house and the only time they do is to attend Shabbat services. When handling this situation, it would be the best not to have someone attend an event or go to work out of their respect. Passover is also a special and important time for Jewish people. It is during this time that Jews participate in Sedar, which is a special dinner that friends and family participate in to celebrate the spring and freedom. During Sedar, Jewish families eat certain food during the meal. Grocery stores during this period should have these certain foods stocked for families in need of them. An important food that is needed is matzah and bitter herbs.

Part 2:

[Theme-based Research]

1. Sociology is an important aspect to the Jewish identity because there are many aspects that relate to the social issues that Judaism faces. Judaism relates to an identity so when you are trying to understand Judaism, you are also dealing with an identity, culture and religion. There are many aspects to the sociology of the Jewish identity. Two important sociological aspects that deal with the identity are stereotypes and social norms.

Stereotypes play apart in the sociology side of the Jewish identity because it is something that Jewish people go through with in their identity. As bad as it is, it does exist and has existed for many yeas now. Stereotypes derive from the ignorance that people have of the Jewish faith and identity. Over the years, there have been many stereotypes that have defined the Jewish identity. Unfortunately, anti-Semitism has been a part of the identity of Jewish people. Some people stereotype Jews being only rich, when in case that is not accurate. There are many successful Jewish people out there in the United States but that does not mean that every single one of them makes the same amount of money and hold a high title in their career. Many people also believe only Jewish people are Democrats, when in fact there are many Jewish Republicans out there. There is a greater number of Jewish Democrats living in the United States but that does not mean that the entire population is completely Democrat.

There are many social norms within the Jewish faith and identity. One social norm that people would have in this society is the difference between Sweet Sixteens and Bar Mitzvahs and Bat Mitzvahs. For many teenagers in the United States, Sweet Sixteens are something common within society. It is a coming of age party when a teenager turns sixteen-years old. A Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah is something different from a Sweet Sixteen because it is a religious experience. Boys at the age of thirteen have a Bar Mitzvah and girls at the age of twelve have

Bat Mitzvah. A Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah refer to the boy and girl "who are obligated to fulfill religious duties (mitzvot) now that they have attained their religious majority" (Kling, 1987). This is a very important part of a Jewish teenager's life and is something that they will remember for the rest of their life because it binds them to their religious faith. Another social norm can also include food because many Jews keep kosher and this is something that is not familiar to many Americans living in the United States. Keeping kosher is an important part to many Jewish people because it is a way of the preparation of food, what is eaten, and what is not eaten. Everything that is kosher has to be blessed by the Rabbi before it is purchased or distributed. This is something that is foreign to some people because they are not used to living this way. Many people do not have limitation on what they can eat and how it is prepared. Keeping kosher is a religious experience and it is something that is done to benefit their faith.

[Implications for Society]

2. Based on what I have discovered, there are many implications within American society that is influenced by all races, religions and cultures. However, each sub-group of society because of their diversity has unique effects on the population at large, as well as the social institutions that make up the structure of the country. Because of unique values of Judaism and the sheer number of Jewish people in this country, American society will be affected on all levels. From broad social institutions to government policies, Jewish values will always find a way into the major decisions of the society at large. Likewise, American Jews will always be conscious of the influence on their environment. Modern, industrial society places a high value on progress and conformity, which may conflict with the Jewish emphasis on history and tradition. A constant pull-and-tug between the majority and those on the outskirts of conformity creates many tensions and will always result in positive and negative implications for both groups in all situations.

Part 3:

[Self-Reflection]

1. My impressions of Jewish people and the Jewish community are that they remain in a tight-knit community. Coming from a Catholic background, it was interesting learning about Judaism as a faith yet as an identity as well. There is more of which makes up a person and their background. For many Jewish people in America, their identity derives from their faith. It is a lifestyle and way of life that makes Judaism so unique to other religions. It was very interesting learning about how their traditions were closely tied to their religious beliefs.

I first was introduced to Judaism when I was in high school when I dated a boy that was Jewish. I was introduced to his culture, tradition and the lifestyle of his family. I found it to be interesting because it was something completely different from what I had experienced being a Catholic my entire life. All I knew from a religious perspective was going to church, praying and observing my faith for certain religious holidays. I was so intrigued by the culture that surrounded the Jewish faith. It all started with the food that was introduced as "Jew food".

and bagels, pastrami sandwiches, kugel, herring and many other dishes. It was strange how they categorized their food to their identity because when I thought of food and identity, I thought of ethnicities. But then I realized the meaning of all of this. To the millions of Jewish people in the world, they are followers of a religion and a part of a identity group that has transformed into a culture and lifestyle.

Something new that I learned from this assignment is that Jews are very active in the political arena. There were many non-profit organizations dedicated to domestic issues within the United States and politics, especially concerning the Democratic population. It shows that Jewish people are very active within their own community to help one another while engaging the public in their culture and identity as a whole.

[Self-Discovery]

2. If I could ask someone that is Jewish five question regarding their identity, I would ask:

1. What are the importances of keeping kosher? What are the positive and negative aspects to it?
2. How do you handle stereotypes from other people who are not informed with your religion and identity?
3. How would you identify yourself with being Jewish? Identity, religion or both?
4. What are your thoughts on Palestine from your perception?
5. Is there anything in Judaism that you doubt or are unsure of? Teachings, holidays, etc?

There were many questions that I could have asked but I found these to be the most engaging and interesting. The first question is something that always intrigued me because keeping kosher is something that has always been foreign to me. Being Catholic, I do not abstain from any types of food and I find it interesting for certain Jews to abstain from certain foods and from preparing food a certain way. I want to know what are some negatives and positive aspects to this. The second and third questions can tie together in certain ways. I want to know how Jews handle certain stereotypes that people have on their identity, religion or both. Coming from my perspective on being a Catholic, I only consider it as being a religion and not an identity. I would like to know how Jews consider between their religion and identity. The fourth question is something that I am politically curious about because this is a tough subject to tackle. I want to understand this topic coming from the perspective of an American Jew. I want to hear what they think about this situation and what they think can be done to solve this issue. The last question is something I am familiar with in my faith because there are some aspects to what Catholics believe in that I do not. I want to know if I share some of the same views with someone of Jewish faith.

For my interview, I chose to interview my boyfriend's roommate named Adam Wassell. He is a twenty-two year old Jewish male from Greensboro, North Carolina. I know Adam from my boyfriend because they live together and are in the same fraternity as well. I have known Adam for about a year now. I first met him in an introduction nutrition class at the school and was introduced to him by my boyfriend. During the interview, I chose to ask him three particular questions that I was the most interested in. I chose the first three questions on my list because I was the most interested in these questions and they were the ones that tied in directly with my paper. His response to the question on the importances of keeping kosher was that it was a way to make him feel proud as a Jew, considering many Jews do not keep kosher. Living in the South makes it harder to maintain a Jewish lifestyle. It would be different living up North because there are more Jews and it is easier to share a common faith with a large population. Living in the South makes it harder to maintain because there are not as many Jews living down here than up North. It is also harder to share an identity and live a Jewish lifestyle when mostly everyone around is a Christian. Keeping kosher is a way that he personally feels fully represents his Jewish identity. The second that I asked was dealing with stereotypes from people who are not informed with Judaism. His response to this question was that stereotypes are things that he tries to not pay attention to and tries to now think about. He noticed that when he was younger, it did not bother him that much. It was because he was not informed with stereotypes and his culture and religion itself. As he grew older and his religion became more apart of his life and every day lifestyle, he began to see changes. Stereotypes began to bother him and it still does. These stereotypes stem from the ignorance of uneducated people or media propaganda that need to be forgotten. Even though this still exists today, the only thing you can do is try to ignore it all because it will only bring you down. The third question was the most interesting to me because it was something that I have always been curious about. I asked him about how he identifies himself and if he considers it as just an identity, religion or both. He responded by saying that he does not believe you can separate Judaism from his identity, and that they are one in the same. For Adam, every he does represents him being Jewish. He then brought up the Torah and how it teaches to live life like there is no tomorrow and that by being a good person you will be able to prosper.

During the interview, I was not surprised by his responses because he gave me answers that I expected to get. I am fairly familiar with the Jewish culture so I could assume what most Jewish people would say to my questions. The only question that I did not know much about was my first question on keeping kosher. That was an aspect that I was unfamiliar with because I have never met a Jewish person to keep kosher. It was interesting listening to his response to that question because there was a sense of pride. Keeping kosher was something he is very proud of and that feeling is sometimes foreign to young adults because they are not in touch with their religion.

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Part One

Janet Prieto

[Ethnic Identity]

I will be discussing ethnic identity among Chinese Americans. However, it is important to understand what ethnic identity theory is in general before applying it to a specific ethnic group, so I will begin by touching base on ethnic identity theory. “Ethnic identity can be described as an awareness of being a member of a cultural, ethnic or national category (Kennedy and Cummins, 2007, pg. 107).” The desire for social identity is a universal human characteristic that can be defines as “those aspects of an individual’s self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging (Kennedy and Cummins, 2007, pg. 107). Within personal identity research three main themes emerged: “The representation of the self as a distinct individual, the process of understanding the self as a social entity, and membership of a sense of affiliation with a particular social group (Kennedy and Cummins, 2007, pg. 107).” The latter two play an important role in an individual’s conception of ethnic identity (Kennedy and Cummins, 2007, pg. 107). The significance of ethnic identity in a multi-cultural society can blur cultural distinctions through generations of assimilation and adaptation; this creates a complication when it comes to measuring ethnic identity (Kennedy and Cummins, 2007, pg. 108). This creates a situation in which an individual can possess dual cultural identities and therefore can engage in cultural frame-switching in which the individual moves between

different cultural meaning systems, adopting the most appropriate form of ethnic identity to suit the situation at hand (Kennedy and Cummins, 2007, pg.108).

Ethnic identity is important because it brings individuals some form of psychological meaning and it is also important to note that this meaning is developmental (Kennedy and Cummins, 2007, pg. 108). In order to understand this process of developmental ethnic identity the four stages of social identity development have been adapted to form the three stage model of ethnic identity as, *diffusion*, *moratorium*, and *achieved ethnic identity* (Kennedy and Cummins, 2007, pg. 108). The *intuitive diffusion* stage, the individual will hold either positive or negative attitudes toward their ethnic background. These views are derived from the individual's parents or society; they are not obtained independently (Kennedy and Cummins, 2007, pg. 108). The *moratorium* stage is usually activated by a problem such as ethnic conflict, discrimination, or by experiences where the individual's cultural values come into conflict with others around them. This can prompt the individual to embark on a process of ethnic identity exploration as a way of resolving the conflict and potentially affirming their ethnic identity in the process (Kennedy and Cummins, 2007, pg. 108). The *ethnic identity achieved stage* can be defined as a secure commitment to one's group based on the knowledge and understanding obtained through an active exploration of one's cultural background. It is important to note that at this stage ethnicity may become the most important identity of the individual. Once the individual has reached the *achieved level of ethnic identity* development tends to remain consistent over the long term of the individual's life (Kennedy and Cummins, 2007, pg. 108).

When applying ethnic identity theory to Chinese Americans there is specific research that elaborates on the construction of Chinese American ethnic identity in the United States. Anthropologist Frankling Ng states that identity choices depend on the situation, the community, and the individual involved (Lien, 2008, pg. 1384). Anthropologist Melissa Brown on the other hand, states that identity is really a matter of politics and formation is based on common social, cultural, economic and political experiences, which can be passed down from one generation to the next (Lien, 2008, pg. 1384). Negative events in particular have a deep impact on the ethnic identity of the individual. An example of one of these events would be the violent crackdown of the Taiwanese by the Chinese Nationalists after the Second World War. This event proved to be a very important factor in the shaping of Taiwanese ethnic identity. Although all Taiwanese can trace their ancestry to the Chinese mainland, this event has formed an ethnic divide for the Taiwanese. These events have led many Taiwanese to longer identify themselves as Chinese and to form a separate identity from that of the mainlanders. The Taiwanese square violence led to the moratorium stage among Chinese from Taiwan, which led to an achieved level of ethnic identity as "Taiwanese" and ethnic identity that is now separate from that of Chinese. This achieved level of ethnic identity has led to many US based organizations to form a separate Taiwanese ethnic identity on paper (Lien, 2008, pg. 1385).

Ethnic identity for Chinese Americans is formulated by many different things. The Chinese people are a diverse people who come from different homelands and speak different languages and dialects. Chinese Americans ancestral homelands range from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan and other places in Asia, like Vietnam (Lien, 2008, pg. 1381). The homeland origin and political tensions that Chinese immigrants bring with them are part of the Chinese ethnic identity formula (Liem, 2008, pg. 1381). The differences in immigration history, population share, place of settlement, admission classification and occupation status

create a socio-demographic divide among Chinese Americans (Liem, 2008, pg. 1383). Nonetheless these groups still get lumped together under one ethnic label in the United States (Liem, 2008, pg. 1383). These issues of diversity complicate what one might label the “Chinese American” Identity (Liem, 2008, pg. 1383).

United States policy also plays a role in the formation of the Chinese American identity. Issues on US domestic racial and social conditions, US immigration, citizenship and racial categorization policies, and transnational, homeland-related cultural identities, practices and politics (Lien, 2008, pg. 1384) play a role in the formation of Chinese American identity. Due to American policy, discrimination, and racial lumping in the United States Yen Espiritu argues that due to these circumstances peoples of Asian descent in the United States are capable of showing situational solidarity in order to fight against group-based discrimination and for political representation and empowerment (Lien, 2008 pg. 1385). Issues of discrimination in the United States are not the only factors contributing to this solidarity among this diverse group. There are also trans-national concerns over the impact of post-colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism in the Asian homelands (Lien, 2008, pg. 1385). These issues form a common ground and create ethnic panethnicity among Chinese Americans. Panethnicity is the concept that people of diverse ethnic origins can come together and consider each other as belonging to a common community (Lien, 2008, pg. 1385). The formation of Pan-Chineseness is not just Asian solidarity but government policy as well. The “one China” policy is officially supported by the United States and Chinese government (Lien, 2008, pg. 1386). The pan-Chineseness identity formed is a dual identity that Chinese Americans have come to be identified with. Chinese Americans that come from different lands and speak different languages have come together and engaged in cultural frame-switching in order to suit the situation at hand.

The second objective of this paper will be to apply Chinese American ethnic identity to Social identity theory. It is argued that social identification is a perception of oneness with a group of persons. Social identification stems from the categorization of individuals, the distinctiveness and prestige of the group, the salience of out groups, and the factors that traditionally are associated with group formation. Social identification leads to activities that are congruent with the identity, support for institutions that embody the identity, stereotypical perceptions of self and others, and outcomes that traditionally are associated with group formation, and it reinforces the antecedents of identification (Ashforth and Mael, 1989, pg. 20). “Social identification is the perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate (Ashforth and Mael, 1989, pg. 21).” This is important because social identification provides a partial answer to the individual’s identity question of him or herself (Ashforth and Mael, pg. 21). Socialization is necessary when it comes to one’s identity of the self because the definition of the other and the self are largely relational and comparative. One would define oneself in relation to individuals in other categories (Ashforth and Mael, 1989, pg. 21). For example the category of Asian is only meaningful if it is in relation to another racial category like Latino, and the category of Chinese American is only meaningful if it is in relation to another Asian ethnic group like Japanese. Socialization has proved to be important for Chinese Americans in the United States. Despite the differences of land and origin Chinese American have had no problem in finding solidarity under the panethnicity of Chinese America and when it comes to relating to other races in the United States many have no problem with identifying themselves as Asian Americans. This socialization helps the individual create out-groups in order to reach a further sense of self. An example of this would be the different categories in

which Chinese American label themselves under. In a survey conducted in Southern California, 47 percent labeled themselves as Chinese American, 17 percent as America Chinese, 9 percent as Taiwanese American, 7 percent as Hong Kong American, 4 percent as American, 7 percent as Chinese, 5 percent as other, and 5 percent as not sure (Lien 2008, pg. 1390). Socialization with the same group leads to the creation of out-groups within the same group and further categories. However Chinese American are a minority in the United States and this creates another out group, therefore the Chinese American label is still widely preferred over the homeland origin labels (Lien 2008, pg. 1390).

Organizational Identity Orientation theory argues that traits meant to individuate the self are still socially derived because they are based on comparisons with others (Brickson, 2005, pg.1). Identity also makes interactions and relations with others possible. Our sense of self guides whom we interact with and determines the messages that we send others (Brickson, 2005, pg.1). Individuals view themselves from three different dimensions when it comes to relating to others. The first one is as separate and distinct from others. The second is as dyadically connected to specific others and the third is as connected to others through a more impersonal relationship with a larger collective (Brickson, 2005, pg.1). These three identity orientations shape an individual's social motivations by focusing the individual on himself, their relationship partners, and their social groups (Brickson, 2005, pg.1). All of this ultimately shapes the way an individual behaves towards others and forms the individual's relationship patterns (Brickson, 2005, pg.1). This connection of one's individuality with the external shapes the individual's views on the organization that he or she is a part of. Members begin to view the organization as an inter-entity partner and characterize it as having traits that connect it dyadically to certain stakeholders (Brickson, 2005, pg.2). This creates an emphasis to maximize the organization's own welfare since the individual creates a direct link between himself and the organization (Brickson, 2005, pg.2). This organization forms a collective identity orientation and members will view the organization as part of the larger collective with traits that connect it to the larger whole (Brickson, 2005, pg.2).

An example of organizational identity by Chinese Americans would be the students' organizations that were formed during the 1980's and early 1990's. In 1989 the Tainanmen Square massacre took place. It was a pro-democracy demonstration that was taking place and that was violently eliminated by the Chinese government. The number of those who died is still unknown to this day (Gao, 2006). After this event there was extensive lobbying that took place to protect the Chinese students from being forced to return to China (Gao, 2006, pg. 295). This extensive lobbying offering protection rights to Chinese students also took place in Australia. This was no easy effort since there was much disagreement between the international organizations. However the goals of the group were put before the individual and the lobbying proved successful. In 1990 President Bush issued an executive order that protected Chinese in the U.S. on or after June 5, 1989 from deportation and affirmed their right to be employed in the U.S. (Gao, 2006, pg. 295).

Organizational Identity Orientation relates to Social identity theory when it comes to the social level and the individual level. Both theories take a focus on the individuals' self-concept of identity in relevance to social and organizational activities. The social identity perspective is applied to three domains of organizational behavior: socialization, role conflict, and inter group relations. According to social identity theory people tend to classify themselves and others into

various social categories, such as religion, age, and sex (Ashforth and Mael, pg. 20). These social classifications serve two functions. The first function is that it cognitively segments and orders the social environment, providing the person with a systematic means of defining others. The second purpose is that social classifications enable the individual to define himself or herself in the social environment (Ashforth and Mael, pg. 21). These two concepts correlate and achieve the same goal of identity within an individual. The main difference is that with social identity theory the individual's concept of self is formulated by the creation of out-groups from the individual within his/her own environment. In the Organizational level the concept of self is formulated in reference with the organization and the organization's goals. In this situation since the individual's concept of self is formulated in reference to the group's goals, the group comes before the individual.

[Macro-level]

According to the US Census Bureau's report for the year 2000 there are 11.9 million people that reported to identify themselves as Asian, that's 4.2 percent of the US population as a whole (Reeves and Bennett, 2004, pg.1). Out the 11.9 million Asians Chinese was the largest ethnic group reported representing 23.8 percent of the population (Reeves and Bennett, 2004, pg.4). 29.1 percent of Chinese Americans reported to have been in the U.S. 37.5 percent reported to have been naturalized citizens, and 33.3 percent reported to have been foreign born and not a citizen (Reeves and Bennett, 2004, pg. 9). The Census also reported that 35.8 percent of Chinese do not speak English in the home but speak English very well (Reeves and Bennett, 2004, pg.11). The census also reported 49.6 percent of Chinese also speak another language but their English isn't spoken as well (Reeves and Bennett, 2004, pg. 11). This means that 85.4 percent of the Chinese population shares a bilingual trait as well.

Assets that I would associate with this group based on my research would begin with the Chinese population achievement in economic mobility. The 2000 U.S. Census reported that 48.1 percent of Chinese Americans have a Bachelor's degree or more (Reeves and Bennett, 2004, pg. 12). The Census also reported that 52.3 percent of Chinese are in a management or professional occupation (Reeves and Bennett, 2004, pg. 14). In 1999 the Census reported the Median Family income for Chinese to be over \$60,000 a year (Reeves and Bennett, 2004, pg. 16). Home ownership is further proof of this success. 58.4 percent of Chinese reported to be home owners in the 2000 census (Reeves and Bennett, 2004, pg. 18). Chinese Americans have proven themselves successful in economic mobility based on their high education rates, professional employments, suitable incomes, and home ownership status. Another asset that I would associate with Chinese Americans would be their ability to unite and fight for their rights. The Chinese student lobbying that took place after the Tiananmen Square violence is what led to asylum protection rights. Another example of this would be the organizational strategies during the Chinese exclusion era (1882-1943). The Chinese exclusion act put up immense barriers for Chinese that were trying to immigrate into the U.S. However the Chinese battled against these exclusion laws through the courts, petitions from Chinese leaders, and effecting networking between the Chinese (Lee, 2006, pg. 12). Chinese unity and persistence during this time did not stop Chinese immigration on the contrary there was more immigration after the exclusion era. From 1910 to 1924 the average admission rate for Chinese immigrants was 93 percent (Lee, 2006, pg.21). These two events demonstrate the Chinese peoples' ability to unite and succeed in regards to their rights.

Deficits in regards to the Chinese people would be the discrimination that they have faced during the exclusion era. During the exclusion era there was a mass anti-Chinese movement by labor unions of every creed (Kwong and Miscevic, 2005). Aside from the exclusion laws there was mob violence and Chinese people were forced from their homes during this time. There were 34 incidents recorded of this mob violence in California alone and many more followed throughout the years of the exclusion act (Kwong and Miscevic, 2005, pg. 107). Another deficit would be stereotyping that Chinese people face today, which I will discuss in more detail in the second section of this paper.

[Mezzo Level]

Non-profits have played a very important role when it comes to Chinese activism. During the student lobbying of the early 1990's the role of non-profit organizations was crucial in uniting the Chinese people from across the globe in order to seek asylum (Gao, 2006). The two political organizations involved in this movement were the Chinese Alliance for Democracy (CAD) and the Federation for Democratic China (FDC). The Independent Federation of Chinese Students and Scholars was formed during this time through these two political organizations. During this time Chinese nationals at each university were organized onto officially controlled student unions. The second way that these groups got organized was through primary social groups of students, students' became organized and partially networked through these organizations. Another advantage was that the CAD had already established itself in major cities and at each overseas university. All of these organizations united and transformed the Chinese student community into asylum seeker networks (Gao, 2006, pg. 297). This level of organizing proved to be successful once the Chinese Student Protection Act was passed.

[Sociology]

One sociological issue that Chinese face in the United States is the stereotypes surrounding the model minority myth. The term model minority has been used to highlight not just Chinese but all Asians since the mid-1960's (Chou, 2008, pg. 219). This term is used to compare Asian Americans to other minorities in the U.S. and exemplify them as a successful case of assimilation (Chou, 2008, pg. 220). The model minority notion is a new form of contemporary racism. This form of neo-racism serves as an exclusionary system in which Asian Americans that do not fully assimilate are not accepted. The model minority notion is also culturally based is nothing but hidden orientalism because cultural differences are used to differentiate the east from the west. This form of racism is an exclusionist practice that violates American Liberal ideology of universality with no exclusion (Chou, 2008, pg. 221). The concept of model minority creates a racial hierarchy once again. This time it is not based on biology but on cultural difference (Chou, 2008, pg. 227). The Oriental image is now formed by the achievement of economic status according to the white standard. This model image has created certain stereotypes for Asian Americans. The oriental success is measured by their hard work, thrift, family cohesion, and obedience (Sue and Kitano, 1973, pg. 87). The stereotypes associated Chinese and all Asians in general in regards to the model minority notion have been somewhat positive for Asians. There has been a serious shift in stereotypes from negative to positive since the times of the Exclusion Act. During that time Chinese were stereotyped as being "yellow," "slanted eyed," and "pig tailed." The stereotypes used to describe Chinese were also very

negative they were described as having filthy habits and having moral tendencies (Sue and Kitano, 1973, pg. 85). Although the stereotypes have been shifted into a more positive light it is still racism nonetheless.

[Self Reflection]

The most impressionable thing for me about Chinese Americans is the serious shift of American attitudes toward Chinese and Asians in general. When Chinese Americans first started immigrating to this country the stereotypes were terrible and like all minorities in the U.S. they suffered legal discrimination as well. Doing this research has helped me understand why the shift from negative to positive took place. The first wave of Chinese immigration was the labor force and the second wave was the educated and skilled workers. The Model minority stereotype is one of the worst repercussions because it creates a hierarchy among minorities. It basically states that all minorities should aspire to be Asian and if you fail it's because you did not put in hard work, which is completely false. One of the biggest attributes to Chinese American success was the second wave of educated and skilled Chinese; they already have the skills to succeed unlike other immigrants that are usually of much lower income. One of the traits associated with the model minority is "obedient." This is one of the worst modern stereotypes when it comes to Chinese and Asians in general. This labels an entire race of people as subservient and conformist. Although these stereotypes have changed the way Chinese get treated in the U.S. which is for the better, there is nothing positive about being labeled quiet and subservient. These stereotypes like all stereotypes strip away at individuality.

[Self Discovery]

The person that I interviewed was a 24 year old Chinese male. He was a naturalized citizen and a student at UNCG. I asked him three questions pertaining to his perception of his own identity. The first question that I asked him was "Do you identify yourself as more American as opposed to Chinese? He told me that he identifies more with American culture as opposed to Chinese. He has become very Americanized since his migration to the U.S. at the age of 13 and feels disconnected from his relatives in China. There are other issues that cause this drift besides a difference in values, there is also the issue of distance and the expenses with traveling such a long distance. My second question was "do you feel excluded from Chinese or American society and culture? He told me that he felt excluded from both groups and that he cannot fully relate to both. He said that he feels caught in between both cultures and that it sometimes causes issues with his parents since they don't want him to be fully Americanized. The final question that I asked him was "Do you want your future children to speak the native languages that your family speaks?" He answered with not all of them. He will teach his children English and the standard language spoken in China which is Mandarin, he does not want to teach them two other dialects because it will confuse them and he feels that they will not have a strong need for them either." I was not surprised by any of these answers because I think that every first generation minority in the U.S. shares these same sentiments of exclusion and the in-between feeling of both cultures. I found that despite our differences in culture we had a lot in common when it came to immigration experiences. Both our families were farmers in our former countries and immigrated to the U.S. for a better opportunity. We also shared similar sentiments in wanting to pass down our homeland language and customs down to our children along with American customs as well.

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Homosexual |Males **Maggy Sivansay**

Part 1: [Theoretical/Conceptual Framework - Self-Concept]

Self concept is basically defining the person within you, your identity, such as, an individual's characteristics, gender roles, or even sexuality. Homosexual males viewed their self-concept as being able to define their sex role and attitudes towards others. As being defined by Gary J. McDonald and Robert J. Moore, according to their article, "Sex-Role Self-Concepts of Homosexual Men and Their Attitudes Toward Both Women and Male Homosexuality," "This masculine deficiency hypothesis is frequently reflected in the etiological theories of male homosexuality where homosexuality has been defined variously as: "a result of an insufficient proportion of the male sex hormone" (Karlen, 1971, p.344); "a flight from masculinity" (Kardiner, 1963, p.27); "a search for masculinity" (Socarides, 1968, p.46); "a confession of masculine failure" (Ovesey, 1969, p.129); "a primary feminine identification" (Freud, 1905/1953, p.226); and "a secret longing to play the female's less demanding role" (Ruitenbeek, 1963, p.120) (McDonald & Moore, 1973, p. 3). In other words, homosexual males are individuals who through birth were born homosexual; some homosexuals are given more feminine characteristics than masculine characteristics when it comes to their own identity.

In Tajfel & Turner (1979), social identity theory includes social mobility and social competition. Social mobility is basically when an individual is threatened or feels like they don't belong and the outcome of this would be negative (Cottam et. al., 2010, p. 48). For instance, in the article written by Newman et. al., (1993) it is hard for a homosexual to come out, because they don't know what the outcome could be. In order for an out-group to have some sort of positive identity there must be social competition. Social competition is when an in-group member directly competes with the out-group to attain positive distinctiveness (Newman et. al., 1993). For example, in the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy people with higher authority is seeking to find better ways to completely allow homosexuals to become fully known (Somashkehkar, 2010).

[Macro-level]

Over the years and decades our society has been gradually changing and it shows through statistics. In order to show the gradual change a comparison from 2005 and 2009 will show the changes in our society within four years. According to the 2005 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey states, ages from 15 to 19 years that never been married was, 98.4%; ages 20 to 34 years, 56.5%; ages 35 to 44, 18.8%; ages 45 to 54 years, 11.5%; ages 55 to 64 years, 6.3%; and ages 65 and over, 3.8%. On the other hand in 2009 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey states, ages from 15 to 19 years that never been married was, 99.1%; ages 20 to 34 years, 64.4%; ages 35 to 44, 22.8%; ages 45 to 54 years, 15.3%; ages 55 to 64 years, 8.7%; and ages 65 and over, 4.7%. As you can see an overall percentage of 31% of males in 2005 has

never been married, but in 2009, 35.2% males has never been married. Statistics shows us that society shows a gradual increment of males that never been married.

In addition to self-concept there are assets and deficits within homosexual males. Five assets in homosexual males are that they view themselves as more feminine, have a positive attitude towards women, having high strengths in building self-confidence, have some sort of stability within the community, and having some type of support from family and friends.

In the article, "Sex-role Self-concepts of Homosexual Men and Their Attitudes Toward Both Women and Male Homosexuality," the author's states|:

That homosexual males don't see themselves more feminine than a heterosexual women, but view themselves as having some sort of similar characteristics with a heterosexual women and homosexual men with a positive attitude towards their sexual orientation or accepting their identity will have more of a positive attitude towards women.

Homosexual males who have high strengths in building self-confidence and have a higher self-concept towards society (McDonald & Moore, 1978, p. 4).

According to "Operating within the Mainstream: Coping and Adjustment among a Sample of Homosexual Youths," in the article it stated, "They appeared to accept their homosexuality or at least to not regret it. As suggested by Troiden (1988, p. 58), "commitment to the homosexual identity and role is a matter of degree. Homosexuals span a continuum from low to high levels of commitment on both internal and external dimensions" (Edwards, 1996, p. 240). Edwards wants society to know that the homosexual community is growing and whether society likes it or not they're going to have to accept it one day. Homosexual with strong levels of self-confidence are not afraid of what society thinks or how the public can look at another human being who is different and be so stereotypical. According to Edwards, he states, "My best friend, not a sexual partner, identifies him- or herself as homosexual or lesbian." This result indicates that even in adolescence, homosexual persons create some stability in life by establishing a network of friends or a support group (Edwards, 1996, p. 242). When Edward refers to stability, he is stating that when it comes to individuals better identify themselves through having friends, networking with others or finding some sort of support. These stabilities help homosexual males better define their self-concept. Homosexual males sometimes don't receive the best answer when they let their loved ones know they're gay; but, according to "Passing and Social Support Among Gay Men," written by Raymond M. Berger (1992), "When gay clients are isolated from other gays, helping professionals often advise them to develop, enhance, and utilize social support available from the gay community and from gay peers..." (p. 88). What Berger states are the facts that homosexual males who hide themselves often don't get a chance to develop, because they either commit some sort of harm to themselves and by developing it helps them cope better with others.

Five examples of deficiency in homosexual males are having a high level of failure when compared to heterosexuals, having a dislike of personal appearance, being part of a study, hiding

from the public, and having fear within. According to Prytula et. al. (1979), in the article, "Body Self-Image and Homosexuality," "(Moseberg, Snortum, Gillespie, Marshall, and McLaughlin (1969)) found that homosexuals had stronger feelings of physical and social failure than did heterosexuals" (p. 567). Also, in the article it shows in table 1 that homosexual males during their younger years are more dissatisfied with themselves as in looks, how physically developed they were, and ashamed of their body (Prytula et. al., 1979, p. 569). In the article, "Sex-role and self-concepts of Homosexual Men and Their Attitudes Toward Both Women and Male Homosexuality," The Survey of Attitudes toward Deviance have categories on their surveys such as, "homosexuals should have the same civil rights as other people"; "schools should not hire teachers who are homosexual"; "the average homosexual is conceited"; and "homosexual behavior is a crime against nature." (McDonald & Moore, 1978, p. 7). The Survey of Attitudes toward Deviance basically wants to generate data that possibly can show if stereotypes still exist.

According to Helena M. Carson and Joanne Steuer (1985), in the article "Age, Sex Role Categorization, and Psychological Health in American Homosexual and Heterosexual Men and Woman;" "Homosexuals have suffered from negative societal reactions in the past (Haeberle, 1981; Heger, 1980; Weinberg & Williams 1974) and still face rejection today (Cuenot & Fugita, 1982; Gross, Green, Storck, & Vanyur, 1980). Because our society has a repressive and punitive attitude toward homosexuality, most homosexuals are closeted. Disclosure may result in ostracism, family rejection job loss, loss of children and even criminal sanctions (Carlson & Baxter, 1983; Weinberg & Williams, 1974) (p. 204). Basically, Carson and Steuer agrees with homosexuals well some are afraid to come out completely, because they're afraid of what people would think, being or feeling alone or even isolation from close friends and family, which is a sad thing to see; but some people are so insensitive and not willing to understand. According to Willie J. Edwards (1996), author of the article, "Operating within the Mainstream: Coping and Adjustment among a Sample of Homosexual Youths," he states, "The hate and fear of homosexual practices have their immediate effect on the individual's social psychological state. Cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) and the degradation ceremony (Goffman 1963) are caused by the painful experience of being different. (p. 229). According to Edwards, fear has played a role in homosexual males, because they're afraid of what society thinks, scared of the outcome, fear in having a different sexual orientation.

From the old times to recent times the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy," is still either being opposed or supported as a society we see two different views when it comes to homosexual males serving our country. The "Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy," is basically a bill that is trying to pass legislation in order for homosexuals to serve our country. As defined by Wikipedia, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is a policy that restricts the United States military from keeping homosexuals of telling their sexual orientation, whether if they are either gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or closeted gay. The "Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy," has given a positive impact towards homosexuals in our society by letting some public officials who support the bill voice their opinions for homosexuals and by doing so it gives some sort of right for homosexuals to serve our country

and protect the citizens of our society. According to an article published in *The New York Times*, “U.S. Top Ex-officers Criticize ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ Policy, Declaring They Are Gay,” U.S. Army Brigadier General Virgil Richard said, “the policy undermined the military’s honor and integrity as well as recruitment efforts. “There are gays and lesbians who want to serve honorably and with integrity, but have been forced to compromise.” (2004, p. 17). In other words, the article wants to inform our society that everyone who serves our country isn’t heterosexual, but some are homosexual and they have to hide who they are from the world and some of the best people who serve are homosexual.

On the other hand, there has to be some sort of negative effect towards the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Policy,” people who oppose this bill are more likely to be stereotypical or having some sort of judgment towards homosexuals. According to *The New York Times*,

Nearly 10,000 members of the armed forces have been out of the military for their sexual orientation under the policy, which former President Bill Clinton signed into law in 1993, according to a gay rights group that monitors military justice. The goal was to allow homosexual troops to work and fight alongside their straight colleagues without fear of harassment (2004, p. 17).

Also, Lawrence Birken, PhD (1997), “Homosexuality and Totalitarianism,” stated “Gay people are important enough to attract enemies, but not important enough to intimidate them” (p. Birken states this remark, because he thinks that based on statistics and the world around us it is seen that gay people are human beings who stand in our society, but don’t put fear in anyone’s heart but themselves. Basically, this policy has been in and out and so far there are gradual progresses to the bill but the final decision depends on our President. Also, according to Congressman Patrick J. Murphy (2010), in the article, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” clearly isn’t working for our military, and it hinders national security and military readiness at a time when America is fighting in two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. My time in Iraq taught me that our military needs and deserves the best and the brightest who are willing to serve- and that means all Americans, regardless of their orientation. Discharging brave and talented service members from our armed forces is contrary to the values that our military fights for and that our nation holds dear.”. Congressman Patrick J. Murphy are one of those people who oppose the policy, because according to his knowledge he believes that the military deserves good strong people and not anyone there to distract them when they’re at war or even training. (2010, p. 2).

[Mezzo-level]

In addition to the positive and negative outcomes towards the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Policy,” some nonprofit groups actually want to still support this policy by expressing leadership, endorsing the right candidates to represent the homosexual community, and expressing self-identity to the public to pursue ones rights. In order to express leadership some sort of high authority must take the initiative to also promote and support this law. According to

a the article, “Libertarians Courting Gays After 'Don't Ask' Remains,” spokeswoman for the National Stonewall Democrats, Linsey Pecikonis said, that the Obama administration has done more in our time than in the pass history and by doing so it shows progress in the community to allow homosexuals and transgender to have a right to do what's best for our nation (Somashekhar, 2010).

In the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Policy,” without someone taking initiative to still promote and support the policy it wouldn’t exist anymore. For example, according to Michael Mitchell executive director of National Stonewall Democrats said, “Representative Barney Frank is an incredibly strong fighter for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, including being the lead sponsor on a fully-inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which now has a record” (2010). In addition to promoting the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Policy,” expressing an individual’s self-identity is hard, but letting it be known to the public is something else. By letting the world know who you really are is a positive step towards accepting oneself and pursuing happiness. For instance, in the article, “Lgbt Activists Join Progressive Rally Challenging Tea Party,” as stated by Darlene Nipper, deputy executive director of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force announced, “I am not either black or lesbian. I am both and much more,” she said. “And like you, I seek justice for all of us. In America, justice means equal rights for everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, class, sex, gender expression, sexual orientation or ability.” (Chibbaro Jr, 2010). According to Darlene Nipper she is a person who seeks justice and equal rights for individuals who she thinks deserved to be treated equally as human beings.

Even though the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Policy,” is floating around society there still is a possible chance that there’s a good or bad outcome. The outcome towards this policy is the fact that it’s still trying to get put into law, but some chances are that it might not go through. Also, people in the homosexual community and some people with higher authority are trying to get this law in effect. According to the article a statement [made](#) by the Libertarian Party Chairman Mark Hinkle argued, “That Democrats, with their control of the White House and both chambers of Congress, could have fulfilled their promise to promote gay rights but have repeatedly failed to do so” (Chibbaro Jr., 2010). In other words, Chairman Mark Hinkle is trying to prove a point where “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” could have been something put that already came into effect, but hasn’t, because the higher authority is making a promise to people and all that they’re really doing is lying instead of promoting and supporting.

What has been a remedy towards “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” is the fact that some of our congressmen, our armed forces, representatives, or even people in our community won’t let unequal opportunity or freedom occur even if it’s unjustified towards our Constitution. But people like Mitchell think otherwise of this policy, by stating a remark about Representative Barney Frank, “It’s mind-boggling for a gay-identified organization, even if it is conservative, to selectively come out against one of only three out elected Members of Congress, and an elected official who is a warrior for equality at that” (2010).

The gaps that still exist towards the “Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy,” are that this policy can change many lives in the homosexual community or either that it might not pass and things in society are still the same, living in the past rather than seeing what's possible for the future.

According to G. Dean Sinclair, PhD, LCSW (2009), author of “Homosexuality and the Military: A Review of the Literature states:”

Homosexual men and women have been subjected to constant discrimination and stigma while trying to do what most heterosexual individuals take for granted, serving their country. It is somewhat paradoxical that gays and lesbians who are treated as second-class citizens by their own country and government, with limited rights, would want to risk their lives and potentially die for that same country. As the literature illustrates, many homosexual men and women have chosen such a profession in order to justify their existence and demonstrate that they are worthy of the same rights as others. Just as women and African Americans eventually earned their status as equal members of society and proved their worthiness to serve in the military, homosexuals are now trying to achieve the same (p. 701).

In other words, Sinclair is trying to state the facts that homosexual men and women are still being discriminated against even though their individuals who want to help serve and protect our country. This identity group isn't treated the same as anyone who people would see as normal, they are seen as people who are either from a different country or someone who speaks another language and comes up to you and says something you don't understand, which is seen as being strange. In order for homosexuals to have some sort of equal opportunity they must earn the rights from society and as we all know that right isn't so easy to achieve unless there's dedication and time put into it from the community and whomever that wants to help this identity group.

Basically, the gap that still exists in society is the fact that some people don't want homosexuals to serve our country based on their own knowledge or own opinions of these individuals. But, what Dr. Sinclair is trying to state are the facts that homosexual individuals have the tendency to do many abilities and possibly do it better than heterosexuals. The only reason I thought he would state this is the fact that he was part of the U.S. Army and probably did some observations and noticed a few things that he didn't notice before. Another thing that Dr. Sinclair stated that got my attention was:

There is a plethora of documentation that supports the existence of homosexuals in every branch of service. What has been a secret is their sexual orientation. Homosexuals have been involved in the protection of the United States even before it was a nation and before there was a formally organized military (Shilts, 1993). However, they have always had to hide their sexual behavior to protect themselves from discharge and at times from criminal prosecution and imprisonment.”

According to the article by Sinclair (2009) states, “There was a time that homosexuality was not taboo and was actually an acceptable behavior in the military. Historical records propose that Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Frederick the Great, and Napoleon were all either homosexual or bi-sexual (Humphrey, 1990). Although the existence of homosexuals in military service can be traced back to early civilization, this review is focused on homosexuals in the U.S. Military (p. 702). Sinclair says that during history times has changed and that homosexuals were able to serve without having rights to say they are able to and even our popular leaders were either homosexual or bi-sexual; isn't this telling society something. The fact is that in our history we have leaders who lead us through hard times and good times are in fact either homosexual or bi-sexual. It should tell society that it doesn't matter who you are the facts are in and it shows us that no matter who you are you have priorities and those priorities don't infer with who you are, but what you are willing to do for the people of your country.

I believe that this is the gap that's causing the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy,” not to become law; because as you can see Dr. Sinclair said this for a reason and the reason being is that the only gap and concern about the “Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy,” is the fact that the military branches want homosexual individuals to be hidden and keeping their identity as a secret is because certain heterosexuals oppose them of having sexual intercourse while serving our country and if they get caught they are discharged from the military branch. I don't understand why their sex life has anything to do with them defending our country, because we are all human beings and we are going to do what we want to do. I don't understand why that's such a problem. But, if a heterosexual was caught having intercourse it wouldn't be a problem, because it's normal for a man and a woman to have sex; but it isn't right for a homosexual to have intercourse with one another. I don't see how that's different and why people are so judgmental. This is just wrong and I believe a disgrace in my perspective. Homosexual individuals have been defending our country since 1778 till now and I don't see why this policy can't change time and history by just letting them be human beings and being seen as a part of society (Sinclair, 2009, p. 702). Why can't society see them as all equal and not different? I'm positively sure that this is the main gap that still exists in society.

[Micro-level]

When employing or working with this identity group the five culturally or identity-competent practices one should engage in are equal opportunity and discrimination rights, having more positive attitudes versus negative attitudes in the work place, defining one's masculinity, having some sort of acceptability, and having good morale. In order to challenge an individual's company or business one must learn to accept others for whom they are and the aspects of the company will keep growing. As society seems to progress we as a whole seem to gradually see change in certain parts. For instance, in the article, “Working Class Masculinity: Keeping Gay Men and Lesbians out of the Workplace,” written by David G. Embrick, Carol S. Walther and Corrine M. Wickens (2007) stated:

For example, major employers such as Wal-Mart are undergoing radical changes in their anti-discrimination policies in an effort to protect gay and lesbian employees' rights (Kershaw 2003). Indeed it would appear that prejudice, negative attitudes toward, and discrimination against gay men and lesbians, at least in terms of their human and social rights, may be taking a positive, albeit slow, change (p. 758).

Another example stated in the article about discrimination rights are shown in studies that only a certain percentage of gay and lesbians have experienced discrimination in their place of employment. (Embrick, Walther & Wickens, 2007, p. 758) According to Embrick et. al. (2007) in the article stated statistics based on "The Gallup Poll," "suggested that a higher percentage of heterosexuals agreed that equal employment opportunities for gay men and lesbians should occur—from 56% in 1977 to 88% in 2003" (p. 758). In order to work with homosexuals the company must have a more positive outcome versus a bad outcome. For instance, in the article Embrick et. al. (2007) a response stated by Loftus (2001) said, that since the civil rights in the United States positive attitudes toward gay and lesbians having been increasing (p. 758). Also, in the article it stated that only negative attitudes toward homosexuals that are receive from the workplace are prejudice (Embrick et. al., 2007, p. 758).

It may seem that sometimes it's hard for homosexuals to hide their feminine side and become more masculine, because in order to get a job and not be discriminated against, one must pretend to be someone who they aren't. For example in Embrick's et. al. (2007) article states that "in some cases, gay men and lesbians must pass as heterosexuals in order to gain access to the job market (Badgett et al. 1992)" (p. 758), which is very sad, because no human being deserves to act like someone their not, why can't they just be themselves. Embrick et. al. (2007) in the article states that some white men don't see homosexuals as being masculine, but having a boundary between the two (p. 759). In other words, white males in our society think that in order to be known as a "real man" one must be heterosexual" (Embrick et. al., 2007, p. 759).

In order to work with homosexuals the business or company needs to show some sort of acceptability or good morale. Sometimes it seems that homosexuals can't be accepted in public areas or places of employment, because it's hard for heterosexuals sometimes to work with them. Heterosexuals see homosexuals as a distraction or people that aren't qualified enough to work at their business or company. For example, in the article, Don says, "It's a sickness. A goddamn sickness. You know, the Bible says it's a sin. That's all I need to say...a sickness. Those people need help. They need to check their head cause there's a screw loose." (Embrick et. al., 2007, p. 761). Another example of bad acceptability was a response from Larry, he said, "just the vision" of two men kissing is "nasty" and made him very "uncomfortable" (Embrick et. al., 2007, p. 761). In other words these two people, Don and Larry, have a bad acceptability when it comes to homosexuals. But, in the article Larry said if he was to train someone who was homosexual he would just keep his remarks to himself (Embrick et. al., 2007, p.761).

[Theme-based Research]

Through history and ever-changing times it seems that in our society, friends and family seem to be more accepting towards homosexuality. Based on my knowledge society didn't see homosexuals as individuals who existed in our world. But, through changing times we seem to accept and care for these individuals more, because we see them as being a part of our lives and see them as our family members, friends, or colleagues. But, it's still hard for some families to still accept their child as being gay or homosexual at all, because in the traditional family in the American society every family has high expectations for their children to have their own family and as society sees it a male and another male can't make a baby.

The family values of a normal family in our society would be a family who has high belief in their religion, a family who spends a lot of quality time together, a family who keeps their reputation up, and most important of all a family that believes in living their lives traditionally. For instance, in the article, "The Effects of Traditional Family Values on the Coming Out Process of Gay Male Adolescents," stated "Tremble et al. (1989) found that gay youth who attempted to integrate a homosexual identity into preexisting cultural beliefs experienced conflicts within themselves, their family, and their community. These conflicts were strongest when religious beliefs were devout, family members had high expectations for the youth to marry and have children, and gender roles were polarized and stereotypical." (Newman et. al.,1993). This statement would define a family who has traditional values.

A family who is traditional spends a lot of quality time together. For instance, eat dinner together, have family night, play games, go out together and etc. This is what you would call a structured family. Traditional families wouldn't let anything break them apart, but when it comes to one's sexual orientation that can change the families' perspective, because a traditional family cares a lot more about their reputation. Families that have a high reputation don't see the way things are now they're just living on the basis of history and tradition. Which leads us to the American society, where traditional families take an important role?

It seems from history to recent times things haven't changed and families still seem to see things the same way, because it's still hard to come out completely as homosexual. Traditional roles or values play an important role in the American society. For instance, in the article, by Newman et. al. (1993) reported that the American family sees their children with the opposite sex, having children, getting married, and having high respect for themselves and their religion. Even though it may seem that times have changed, things haven't really, because family traditions play a very important role in the American society. The traditional family sees themselves and their children of having high expectations in the community and society (Newman et. al., 1993). When it comes to high expectations a traditional family would play an important role, because some parents are willing to disown their child if they're gay. Which is painful for the child, because they would feel alone and just have fear within them? Some families would disown an individual and tell them to come back when they are straight, which is just unbelievable that a parent would actually do that to their child (Newman et. al.,1993). I don't see how someone can do that to someone who they supposedly love or call their child, that's just pure tough love, tough

enough to let go one of your family members. As stated in the article by Newman et. al. (1993), when homosexuals actually notice that they are gay or either lesbian it makes things harder for them, because they are encouraged to be heterosexual when growing up and by being homosexual it's wrong. Adolescents would say that this is committing a sin and you are doing wrong for society if you're not straight, which I think is wrong for someone to be so mean and naive and tell their children that while growing up. This just causes the child while growing up to become confused or lost in society, because the individual can't seem to figure out who they are exactly. What happen to I'll accept you for who you are? I guess in this matter it doesn't exist.

[Implications for Society]

As stated in the article by Newman et. al., (1993) the implications for homosexuals are the fact that traditional family values are hard to overcome and some families will be able to accept the fact that their child are gay and some families can't and will just disown the individual. This makes the coming out process hard for these individuals. The American society is very hard to please when it comes to being homosexual, because in our society we see homosexuals as committing a sin and it goes against the American religion. That just makes this identity group hard to come out completely, because the fact of fear and ostracism. The coming out process is "The process of developing a lesbian or gay identity is frequently called "coming out" and has been widely studied among adults since the 1970s" (Newman et. al., 1993).

An example of implication for homosexuals is stated in the article by Newman et. al. (1993), he says, "The major social institutions in the United States and elsewhere teach that homosexuality is incompatible with traditional roles." In the United States of America, Americans see homosexuals as not being able to come together to portray traditional values, because it isn't seen as being lawful. On the other hand, homosexuals have a fear of coming out of the closet when it comes to the American society, because some homosexuals are afraid of being ostracized from their friends and family; while other homosexuals just don't care about what others think, because they are perfectly fine with whom they are. For instance, the article states, "gay male adults retrospectively reported a sense of alienation, gender inadequacy, and less opposite-sex interest as children than did other males" (Newman et. al., 1993). In other words, gay male adults feel ostracized and when it comes to finding themselves it's harder for them. Even though everyone in the American society has their own perspective of homosexuals, everyone should see that the world around is different and everyone in it can't be what society wants to call a "perfect" society, because there are always imperfections. We as a society aren't perfect human beings and it shouldn't matter what kind of sexual orientation we have, because every human being should be treated equally and not discriminated against.

When it comes to implications in the American society everyone doesn't seem to see eye to eye, because if we did our society would be "perfect." In other words, just because an individual is gay doesn't mean that they aren't human, it just means that they are different and they have something to offer to the world, also. This is what makes an individual in this identity

group somewhat hard to find themselves, because everyone wants to be part of society, but society sometimes can't accept them for who they are and by doing so it puts fear in the individual. For instance, in the article written by Newman et. al. (1993) states, that during their youth years these individuals need support and are scared because society, their families, peers and might not see them the same way anymore, which makes it harder for these individuals to actually come out and tell their loved ones.

[Self-Reflection]

The impressions and thoughts I had about this group was very stereotypical, because I know it was very childish of me to call someone “gay,” or look at the person and say, “Oh my gosh did you see that,” or even think to myself “wow, how can someone actually turn out to be homosexual.” The only reason I think I felt the way I did was because of my family. My family brought onto me that being homosexual is very different and if I was ever to be homosexual my mother actually said she would disown me. I thought that was very surprising to me, because out of everyone in my family I thought my mom would be the one who would accept me the way I am; but as I see it now being identified as a homosexual human being in my family doesn't exist or can't exist. I think if I was to be homosexual I wouldn't tell my mom, because I wouldn't want to lose the relationship I have with her. I think she would take it pretty hard and not speak to me.

I'm not going to even lie at one point while growing up I was more of a kid who didn't actually know what being homosexual meant, because my family were more traditional about things. I was even scared to the point that I couldn't date and to connect my experiences with this identity group it would be similar. For instance, when I just started going to high school my mother says, “Maggy you can't have a boyfriend till you're finished with school or else I'll kill you.” Well, I was young and I went against my mother's words and got a boyfriend, but she didn't know. Basically, what I'm trying to state is the fact that coming out for a homosexual is similar to my situation where it was hard for me to tell my mom I had a boyfriend and I'm pretty sure a homosexual individual felt the same way I did, but more intense about it. It's hard to hear from someone you truly love, like one's mother, to see them let you go because you went against their word or they can't seem to accept you for who you are. I would say that it hurts and for an individual's parents not to accept them for who they are it makes the individual feel that the rest of the world can't accept them either and that when it comes to them they are basically alone.

Like I said before as time changes my family did to, but my mom still has some tradition in her where she wouldn't accept her own children if they were to be gay. When it comes to homosexuality I feel like I know much more about it through research and with the one's that I love. At one point I and my cousin Billy just sat down and he came out and told me that he was gay. I didn't know how to accept this, because my mom taught me that homosexuality doesn't exist. So, as Billy and I were talking he opened up to me and told me how he's scared to fully let everyone know who he actually was. I've learned that while typing this paper the coming out process isn't easy to do, because it actually took him awhile to tell me, but I've always knew that

something was fishy about him and till this day I still love him , care for him, and support everything that he does, because he is a part of me.

I just can't believe I was so judgmental about being homosexuality. I feel that I didn't know these individual's enough to understand them until now, because I actually have friends and family members who are gay and scared to come out. But, when it comes to this identity group I feel that if you don't have enough information about they don't judge anyone. I believe that when a homosexual walks the streets or are seen in public they are always judged, because a person actually give them these crazy looks or just stares at them like they're not human beings. The American society can be a very harsh place to live if you don't know how to make everyone happy, well that's my perspective.

I don't think the thoughts or impression I had among homosexual individuals still exist within me, because as I've grown up I tend to care and understand where different individuals are coming from. I mean now I see myself as a mature human being and judging or analyzing someone isn't something mature it's just ignorant to think the way I did. Also, I have cousins and friends who are homosexual and if they knew I felt the way I used to they would probably be upset with me for the time being, but then just forgive me and letting it go and starting over. The things I've learned about this identity group through research and typing this paper is the fact that even though as a society we categorize people in different categories and by doing so we tend to judge them by their groups and makes them more judgmental about these individuals. Some people seem to understand where they're coming from; but others don't have any interest on helping them out, because it's not their place or they just don't care about this identity group, which is sad to me. I think every individual should be seen as a whole and has some part to do with society not being seen as being gay, a lesbian or transgender.

[Self-Discovery]

As I was learning more about this identity group, the thing that caught my eye the most was my interview with Misel Niebrit or Mike is a senior at Southern Guilford High School Student. Misel Niebrit is eighteen years old and is a cheerleader at Southern Guilford High. Also, he's Montagnard to be specific Dega who believes in God and he's a good friend. The questions that I asked him are: "How is it like to be identified as homosexual in public places?" According to Mike, he said, "It doesn't feel any different actually. I mean there isn't a label attached to me saying that I am gay, even though I know I am. Society has no place to judge me or anyone else. I have realized that I will always be judged by others rather it is because of the way I look, dress, talk, act, etc; people will have their opinions no matter what. I've just learned to gain confidence in myself and know that no matter what everyone else has to say about me I know who I am and have nothing to prove to anyone else." "How has being homosexual affected your relationship with your friends and family?" Mike responded with, "Nothing has changed as far as my friends and family are concerned, except that we've been able to become closer. It feels amazing to have so much support from those you know truly love you. I no longer have to worry about

who's going to find out or be careful with whom I'm hanging out with because I no longer have anything to hide. I have no fear in being who I am and those who may not understand me or dislike me because I am gay have no place in my life. They are the ones who do not matter. I was unsure of how my friends and family would react. I would have to say my biggest fear was to lose the bond that I had with my mother. The possibility of being disowned by the women who birth me broke my heart, but I realized that I couldn't hide who I was from her. As my mother she deserved to know who her son was and so I told her. Her reaction surprised me because she was accepting; she told me not to worry about it and she still loved me." "When you first found out you were attracted to the same sex how did it make you feel?" He said, "When I first realized I was attracted to men I was definitely scared and it caused me to question just about every aspect of myself; morals, identity, faith, and religion. I always grew up being more familiar with females rather than males. I found comfort and trust in females that seemed to lack from males. I felt uncomfortable and out of place when I was around other males. As time progressed I learned to accept who I was and what I represented. There are still times when I am unsure of myself but at the end of the day when you're true to yourself everything else will fall into place."

During my interview with Misel he said some things to me that he didn't tell others before, because at first he was unsure of his self when he was in middle school. |But as time progressed he learned that he didn't like girls, but liked guys. When he told me that he wanted to actually come out and tell everyone it was hard to spit it out, because he didn't know how the public or his loved ones would take it. But, the only thing that held him back was fear and feeling alone. Because when Misel actually came out he first told his mom and she took it pretty well. Misel comes from a traditional family and his family is the part of the lower percentage of traditional families to have this acceptability. Then from that point on he felt comfortable enough to tell his close friends and whoever asked if he was gay. Basically, I thought Misel made a great achievement and accomplishment when it came to letting everyone know, because it shows that he's not alone and he will always have someone to be there for him and most important of all he didn't lose the heart of the woman he loves the most.

At the end of the day I didn't feel anything different towards who he was or anyone who is homosexual, because I didn't find anything surprising about the things I said and how he responded. I mean some people might feel some changes towards this identity group but I didn't. I have learned that in our society we are all different whether it's your race, gender, ethnicity or personality but at the end of the day we are all diverse, think of things the opposite way or maybe the same; but really we are all equal and should be able to achieve the best possible outcomes. I wouldn't say my initial thoughts were challenged, because Misel actually was brave enough to have this interview and like he said "he doesn't care about what other thinks and what matters is at the end of the day his loved ones are still here for him." This interview and paper has really touched me in so many ways. I mean I never thought I would learn so much and have a real emotional affect towards me. When I was typing up this paper and conducting my research I couldn't believe that my eyes actually got watery and I felt that this identity group made me have

a sense of how each homosexual individual feels. It's sad how some of our society don't show any concerns towards homosexuals, because to me they are still human beings and each human beings deserves to live their life the way they should not living it the way society sees them or causing them to hide who they are. I've learned so much from this identity group that it makes me happy where I'm glad I did my research on this group, but then sad because of the way some individuals in this group is treated. Also, I came to an outcome where I think the American society and any other society in the world is hard to please when it comes to one's self-identity, because every society has a different perspective. But, at some point of time I believe society will progress and as a whole each individual will achieve their best accomplishment that makes them proud and just like one's homosexuality society will learn to understand these individuals and accept them for who they are.

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Homosexuality in American Society

Joyce Booth

America was founded on the principals of all Americans having the basic human rights of life, liberty, and happiness. The thought of every citizen being equal and treated fairly was a great idea until America began changing in a more progressive way. Americans started to change and become more open with their lifestyles. Being homosexual has become a way of life for millions of Americans. These topics have been out and open for public discussion for decades now and it is still a sensitive issue. Even though gay is all over the media and it is widely accepted it still has a long way to go

Webster defines social perception as the process of acquiring, interpreting, selecting and organizing sensory information. We as humans study a group and gather and interpret visual information. Psychologists David Krech and Richard Crutch divide the determinants of perception in to two categories; structural and functional. Structural factors are those that affect the nature of the physical stimuli. The functional factors derive primarily from the needs, moods, past experience, and memory of an individual. Neither of these factors act alone, they each affect the other. In society, people use both structural and functional to perceive the identity of groups different from your own. In perceiving others one form of communication is nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication is used to encode or express emotion, convey attitudes, communicate personality traits, and facilitate and regulate verbal speech. Many studies show that people can accurately decipher subtle nonverbal cues. For example, the six major facial expressions of emotion are understood throughout the world. There's also the 'Why' question. According to attribution theory, we try to determine why people do what they do in order to uncover the feelings and traits that are behind their actions. People will focus on behaviors from the past and present and try to piece together why certain groups act the way they do.

Below ten percent of men between the ages of 18-59 in the major metropolitan cities identify themselves as homosexual. In other areas of the country ten percent claim the homosexual lifestyle. There's an estimated 6-14 million children in the U.S. live in a gay or lesbian headed household. 3-10% of teens in America are gay or lesbian.

Being a part of a group that is different from the norm has its advantages as well as disadvantages. But for the homosexual group there aren't any real advantages being gay. Each person makes their own choice for personal reasons and usually without the concept of being a certain way because of the perks.

To every advantage there are disadvantages and for outcasts groups such as homosexuals the disadvantages may outweigh the bad. For examples there are anti homosexual groups whose sole purpose is to eradicate anything that may have a homosexual influence.

The word homosexual is a Greek and Latin hybrid with the first element derived from Greek homos, which mean same, also included are when persons of the same sex have sexual relations together, including lesbianism.^[21] Gay generally refers to male homosexuality, but may be used in a broader sense to refer to all LGBT people. In the context of sexuality, lesbian refers only to female homosexuality. The word "lesbian" is derived from the name of the Greek island Lesbos, where the poet Sappho wrote largely about her emotional relationships with young women.

The word homosexual describes behavior, relationships, people, and orientation. The American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the National Association of Social Workers state:

“Sexual preference refers to an continuing pattern of or want to experience sexual or have romantic attractions primarily to men, to women, or to both sexes. It also refers to an individual’s sense of social identity based on those attractions, behaviors expressing them, and membership in a community of others who share them. Although sexual orientation ranges along a continuum from exclusively heterosexual to exclusively homosexual, it is usually discussed in terms of three categories: heterosexual (having sexual and romantic attraction primarily or exclusively to members of the other sex), homosexual (having sexual and romantic attraction primarily or exclusively to members of one’s own sex), and bisexual (having a significant degree of sexual and romantic attraction to both men and women). Sexual orientation is distinct from other components of sex and sexuality, including biological sex (the anatomical, physiological, and genetic characteristics associated with being male or female), gender identity (the psychological sense of being male or female), and social gender role (adherence to cultural norms defining feminine and masculine behavior).

Sexual orientation is commonly discussed as a characteristic of the individual, like biological sex, gender identity, or age. This perspective is incomplete because sexual orientation is always defined in relational terms and necessarily involves relationships with other individuals. Sexual acts and romantic attractions are categorized as homosexual or heterosexual according to the biological sex of the individuals involved in them, relative to each other. Indeed, it is by acting—or desiring to act—with another person that individuals express their heterosexuality, homosexuality, or bisexuality. This includes actions as simple as holding hands with or kissing another person. Thus, sexual orientation is integrally linked to the intimate personal relationships that human beings form with others to meet their deeply felt needs for love, attachment, and intimacy. In addition to sexual behavior, these bonds encompass nonsexual physical affection between partners, shared goals and values, mutual

support, and ongoing commitment.

Consequently, sexual orientation is not merely a personal characteristic that can be defined in isolation. Rather, one's sexual orientation defines the universe of persons with whom one is likely to find the satisfying and fulfilling relationships that, for many individuals, comprise an essential component of personal identity.¹²

Social perception of Gays in American has come a long way. From the beginning, tales of homosexuality has been in America's history. Prior to the 20th century gays had no rights. Religion played a large part in the stigmatized thinking toward homosexuality. Sexual acts were criminalized with severe penalties, including death. Hundreds of years later Homosexuality was given a voice, the Scientific-humanitarian Committee in Berlin was founded. The Committee led the way for other centers of such to be founded. Yet despite these groups being formed, homosexuals didn't see much political activity until after World War II. In the US the 1970's and 80's were a time of growth for gay rights. Groups such as the Human Rights Campaign, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and ACT emerged.

In the United States, gay activists gained support from the Democratic Party in 1980, thanks to the party including in its platform a nondiscrimination clause a , including sexual orientation. The main support came from many men and women coming out of the closet. Gays were finally given a support like they never seen before. Not to say that like other civil rights battles , it didn't come with a price. Harvey Milk , an American gay rights activist, was elected to San Francisco Board of Supervisors, and assassinated a year later. In 1983 Gerry Studds, a sitting representative from Massachusetts, became the first member of the United States Congress to announce his homosexuality. Barney Frank, also a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Massachusetts, also came out while serving in Congress in the 1980s; Frank was a powerful member of that body and within the Democratic Party into the 21st century. In 1998 Tammy Baldwin, from Wisconsin, became the first openly gay politician to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

The fight for gay rights has increased dramatically since the 70's and 80's. They have placed themselves on the front line of the battle field for justice and change. Homosexuals, once hesitant about declaring their sexual orientation and fighting discrimination, are now demanding equal treatment. Overturning the military's ban on gay and lesbian personnel is their most immediate aim, but far from the only one. They also seek passage of a federal civil rights law giving them the same sort of protection enjoyed by racial and ethnic minorities. Homosexuality deserves such protection, they say, because it is biologically determined and immutable. Conservatives, on the other hand, insist that homosexuality is a freely chosen behavior that can be modified. Thus, they say, gays and lesbians are demanding "special rights." The special-rights

argument helped win approval of an anti-gay-rights law in Colorado last fall, and it is expected to surface again during the debate on the military ban.

There are pros and cons to every group that people take part in. The deficits may outweigh the assets when the group is considered a minority or unpopular among society norms. Since America is going thru a tidal wave of progressive changes, now is the best time to be part of an out group. Homosexuality is one of the top trending lifestyles in today's society.

Major policy changes have been discussed regarding homosexuality in the military. The 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' created in 1994 permitted homosexuals to stay in the armed forces as long as they did not discuss sexual. Groups want the policy repealed more due to the death of Army Pfc. Barry Winchell at Fort Campbell, Ky. Winchell, who was beaten to death allegedly because he was gay. The government wants all harassment to stop. New recruits must go under harassment training to gain the understanding that any harassment to any service person is unacceptable. A statement from the president of the United States, Barack Obama

"I have long advocated that we repeal 'Don't Ask Don't Tell', and I am pleased that both the House of Representatives and the Senate Armed Services Committee took important bipartisan steps toward repeal tonight. Key to successful repeal will be the ongoing Defense Department review, and as such I am grateful that the amendments offered by Representative Patrick Murphy and Senators Joseph Lieberman and Carl Levin that passed today will ensure that the Department of Defense can complete that comprehensive review that will allow our military and their families the opportunity to inform and shape the implementation process. Our military is made up of the best and bravest men and women in our nation, and my greatest honor is leading them as Commander-in-Chief. This legislation will help make our Armed Forces even stronger and more inclusive by allowing gay and lesbian soldiers to serve honestly and with integrity."

This statement clarifies that the highest authority feels as if it is time for a change in policy when it comes to homosexuality in government. The need to support gay rights goes beyond the white house, nonprofit group are doing their part in the fight for equal treatment. A nationally recognized organization is The Matthew Shepard Foundation. It was founded by Dennis and Judy Shepard in memory of their 21-year old son, Matthew, who was murdered in an anti-gay hate crime in Wyoming in October 1998. Created to honor their son, the foundation is trying to replace hate with understanding, compassion, and acceptance. They continue to tell his story.

I have my own impressions of the homosexual group which goes for and against the norms. I feel that we were all created to be treated fairly by all people and no one culture or group can decided to fate of others. America is slowing progressing to becoming more accustomed to the fact that all people aren't the same or going to fit the status quo. We don't have to accept the lifestyle of people just respect the fact that they are human and deserve to be treated as such. These feelings developed more as timed pasted and I have lived on my own around many

different people. I had very progressive minded influences in my life and know what it feels like to be in an out group.

The future of this group is near, there are progressive changes happening every day. In the upcoming years the homosexuality out group will be something of the past.