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The Dramaturgical Process as a Mechanism for Identity Development of LGBTQ Youth and Its Relationship to Detypification

Erica Rosenfeld Halverson[1]

Abstract

This article describes the dramaturgical process—the telling, adapting, and performing of personal stories—as a method for accessing how youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) construct and present complex identities. Using data collected during an extended case study with the About Face Youth Theatre, an organization that works with LGBTQ youth on the dramaturgical process, this article focuses on the ways in which youth engage with complex issues of identity by telling their personal stories in community contexts and adapting others' stories for performance. Through a narrative analysis of the stories as they were originally told, and a conversational discourse analysis of an adaptation session among a small group of youth, supplemented with reflections from participating youth, this article highlights the ways these practices can support identity development. The author finds that the evolving relationship between master and individual narratives provides great leverage for understanding how LGBTQ youth construct identities. This narrative process demonstrates that *detypification* is the mechanism by which LGBTQ youth work toward building

[1]University of Wisconsin–Madison

Corresponding Author:
Erica Rosenfeld Halverson, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1086 Educational Sciences, 1025 W. Johnson St. Madison, WI 53706
Email: erhalverson@education.wisc.edu

a viable social identity. This study concludes by reflecting on the similarities between detypification and the developmental processes of other groups of marginalized youth.

Keywords

identity development, narrative, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning youth

> I let out this big smile and who would have ever thought that, that day would be the day that God opened his doors and said, "Maria[1] I'm introcing [*sic*] you to person you don't know nor know who or what she believes in." That day was the day that I was open to a lesbian girl who would teach me about the LGBTQA community. That day I had changed and became who I am now. It's not the entire me, but it's part of me and I like that.
>
> PS: This is the day I became happy.
>
> (About Face Youth Theatre storytelling session, March 2003)

Adolescents and emerging adults who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) have received significant attention from developmental psychologists in recent years (e.g., Cohler & Hammack, 2007; D'Augelli, 2002; Floyd & Stein, 2002; Hammack, 2005; Hammack & Cohler, 2009; Lefkowitz & Gillen, 2006; Savin-Williams, 2001). Drawing from Erikson's (1968) seminal work on adolescence as the primary phase of life in which issues of identity are taken up and more recent work that extends identity formation into a period of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2004), researchers interested in the LGBTQ adolescent and emerging adult populations focus primarily on issues of identity (Cohler & Hammack, 2007; Hammack, 2008; Hammack & Cohler, 2009). However, the specific issues that LGBTQ youth[2] face as they explore how they see themselves, how others see them, and how they fit into the communities to which they belong are not universally agreed upon. Identifying the mechanism by which LGBTQ youth build a viable social identity (Côté & Levine, 2002) should help researchers determine whether LGBTQ youth experience unique (e.g., D'Augelli, 2002) or normative (e.g., Savin-Williams, 2005) developmental issues. Understanding the developmental mechanism for LGBTQ identity exploration is a necessary precursor to the design of environments that facilitate positive developmental paths toward healthy adulthood.

In this article, I describe the dramaturgical process—the telling, adapting, and performing of personal stories—as a mechanism for youth who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ)[3] to engage in positive identity development. Using data collected during an extended case study with the About Face Youth Theatre (AFYT), a Chicago-based organization that works with LGBTQ youth on personal storytelling, scripted adaptation, and performance, I demonstrate the ways in which the dramaturgical process reveals the construction and presentation of complex identities in action. Through telling stories to one another in the AFYT context, participating youth construct common themes around which they build an understanding of LGBTQ youth identity and how they as individuals fit into that category. Through adapting others' stories into scripts for public performance, participants construct LGBTQ youth characters that represent both common features across the AFYT community and the specific elements of an individual character that make that person a unique member of this community. This process is consistent with Hammack's (2008) understanding of identity development through *narrative* as the negotiation between master, cultural narratives, and individual narrative experiences. Following an analysis of the dramaturgical process in action, I describe *detypification*, "the process of redefining and subsequently reassessing the social category 'lesbian' such that it acquires increasingly concrete and precise meanings, positive connotations, and personal applicability" (Jenness, 1992, p. 66), as the mechanism by which participating youth work toward building a viable social identity. In discussing Jenness' model as a mechanism for identity development, I draw parallels between detypification in the dramaturgical process and other models of identity development for marginalized groups (Cross, 1994; Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991) in order to discuss how engagement in the dramaturgical process may have implications for youth beyond the LGBTQ population.

The Importance of Narrative in Identity Development

Narrative has been described as the key mechanism by which we understand our life-course development (e.g., Bamberg, 2004; Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988). Adolescence and emerging adulthood are crucial times in the life course when individuals consider the relationship between the past, present, and future and how their life narratives make sense across these time periods (Cohler, 1982; Cohler & Hammack, 2007; Hammack, 2008). In fact, Cohler and Hammack (2007) assert that "the most normative feature of human development, particularly during adolescence, is its connection to discourses

of identity through the formation of narratives that anchor the life course and provide meaning to conceptions of self-development" (p. 47).

While the narrative of storm and stress dominated the adolescent development literature throughout the 20th century, Arnett (1999) has questioned its universality and proposed instead a more heterogeneous set of developmental narratives. In a recent article, Cohler and Hammack (2007) concur with Arnett and take a life-course development perspective as a means to explain the existence of multiple master narratives (Plummer, 1995) specifically for LGBTQ youth development. Hammack (2008) theorizes that identity development is fundamentally a process of understanding the master, cultural narratives to which an individual subscribes and then developing a personal narrative in response to these. This process occurs irrespective of the specific master narrative. For example, one narrative that became popular in an initial wave of research on gay teens in the 1980s and early 1990s (e.g., Herdt, 1989; Hetrick & Martin, 1987) describes the LGBTQ adolescent developmental process as triumph over the struggle of stigmatization, both external and internal. A second narrative, which has emerged in this post-Stonewall, post-AIDS epidemic era in Western culture, describes gay youth identity development as a narrative of emancipation, a freeing from the traditional *gay youth* label, where identity is more than a sexual preference (Cohler & Hammack, 2007; Savin-Williams, 2001, 2005). Cohler and Hammack (2007) assert that these master narratives of gay youth identity development can best be understood as emerging from specific sociohistorical moments that highlight "the connection between identity development and narrative which provides insight into shifting conceptions of normal adolescence for youth with same-sex desire" (p. 48). Here narrative refers to a cultural story that individuals use to make sense of their personal experiences, a springboard for them to construct their developmental paths. Engaging with a cultural narrative is the mechanism by which adolescents construct a personal narrative of identity. Positive identity is constructed in the reconciliation of the cultural narrative and the personal narrative (Cohler & Hammack, 2007, 2009; Hammack, 2008).

There is a sizeable body of research on the reciprocal relationship between narrative and identity more generally (see, for example, Bamberg, 2004; Bruner, 1990; McAdams, 2001; McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2006; Polkinghorne, 1988). Keller-Cohen and Dyer (1997) note the importance of the reciprocal relationship of narrative and identity in social science research: "In contemporary scholarship it has become commonplace to observe that speakers use the site of narratives to construct particular identities . . . [where] each telling of a story [offers] the narrator a fresh opportunity to create a

particular representation of herself" (p. 150). Moreover, it is in the interaction between personal narratives and master, cultural narratives where individuals engage in identity development (Hammack, 2008). While the inextricable relationship between life stories and identity claims allows researchers to understand the way people make sense of their lives through narrative, the question remains: How do personal narratives facilitate youths' transition to adulthood? Specifically, how do LGBTQ youth engage in this process?

The answers to these questions lie in the ability of researchers to make authentic stories of LGBTQ youth identity development visible for analysis. Documenting and describing such processes is vitally important for LGBTQ youth given Cohler and Hammack's (2007) claim about the importance of personal narrative in the construction of identity:

> If it is during adolescence that the personal narrative that constructs the identity of an individual obtains its ideological setting, then it is during adolescence that the individual comes to internalize the discourse of identity available in a particular cultural context. (pp. 50-51)

In the sections that follow, I describe the dramaturgical process as a mechanism that facilitates the alignment of personal and social identities for LGBTQ youth along the path to positive development.

The dramaturgical process is a specific method for narrativizing personal experiences. An artistic practice that involves the telling, adapting, and performing of stories of personal experiences, the dramaturgical process serves as a window into how marginalized youth explore complex issues of identity (Halverson, 2005a, 2007, 2008; Wiley & Feiner, 2001; Worthman, 2002). First, participants tell their personal stories to a group of sympathetic participants, then they adapt each other's stories into scripted scenes that represent an amalgam of voices, and finally they perform these scenes for a public audience. Participants are expected to engage in all parts of the process: They tell their stories, tell others stories, and have their stories told all in service of constructing a publicly shared experience that represents the group as a whole. The dramaturgical process, then, serves as a live space for identity exploration and presentation, specifically around issues of identity relevant to the participating community.

Method: Researching the Dramaturgical Process

A crucial question in the study of identity is how to capture the complex, processual nature of development. In a recent review article synthesizing the

relationship between narrative and identity, Hammack (2008) calls for research that further develops this relationship:

> Specific research directions that seem most obvious center on methodologically and theoretically innovative projects that are inherently interdisciplinary but that retain a clear commitment to the individual as a meaningful unit of analysis, consistent with perspectives in personality and social psychology. (p. 240)

Markstrom and Iborra's (2003) study of Native American coming-of-age rituals is a good example of how to realize this call for complex, ethnographic, and idiographic research. They describe the goal of their work as illustrating a connection between psychosocial and anthropological approaches to understanding identity development by seeing anthropological rites of passage as instantiations of idiographic, psychosocial processes. In this study, I use the dramaturgical process to illustrate identity construction and representation in action. I selected the field site and methods described in this section to address this connection.

Field Site: The AFYT

In my study of the dramaturgical process, I was interested in the following research question: What is the relationship between the dramaturgical process and the development of viable social identities in adolescence and emerging adulthood? For this study, I chose to ask specifically how LGBTQ youth engage in this process. I worked with the AFYT, a Chicago-based theatre company that engages LGBTQ youth in the telling, adapting, and performing of the stories of their lives.

At the time of this study (2002-2003), AFYT framed their work in terms of the following mission:

> To foster positive youth development for at-risk youth, to promote civic dialogue about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth issues, and to educate students and teachers about issues facing LGBTQ youth in schools, with an eye to reducing school violence and fostering safer, more nurturing learning environments for all young people (About Face Youth Theatre, n.d.)

At AFYT, the dramaturgical process began with a weekly workshop series; a cohort of approximately 25 youth, aged 14 to 20, met once a week for 14 weeks with a staff comprised of adult artist-mentors. The purpose of these

workshops was to provide a safe space where youth could tell the stories of their lives to other LGBTQ youth and adult mentors. Each workshop had a different theme, chosen by adult and youth leaders. If youth were more comfortable telling their stories anonymously, they were given the opportunity to submit their stories through the AFYT Web site or via email. Throughout the workshop series, youth and adult leaders met regularly to synthesize the story material gathered at the workshops into themes, which eventually became the organizing framework for their public performance. Over a month-long series of group discussions, writers' workshops, and individual work with material, AFYT youth and staff developed scripts based directly on the stories told. The 6 weeks following this script development involved an extensive rehearsal process where the preliminary script was adapted and shaped into a play, as workshop participants took up the stories of their cohorts and became the lives of others for the purposes of sharing these stories with a public audience. The culminating event was a 4-week run of this play with six performances per week.

Data Collection

At the time of this study, I was an active member of the Chicago Theatre community. Therefore, my access to the organization was as a fellow artist, one who engaged in the dramaturgical process as a practitioner. In addition, AFYT encouraged participation by youth who identified as LGBTQA, where A refers to *allies* of the LGBTQ community. Allies were welcome in the space and often served as guest artists when their area of expertise warranted their inclusion. Primarily, my role was that of a silent observer, though occasionally I participated in the following ways: In preworkshop meetings, staff asked for my opinion on their choice of activity, and I participated in workshop sessions that required partner work and there was an odd number of participants, and in whole group activities such as physical warm-ups. I conducted all interviews on-site immediately following the day's workshop.

The data presented in this article reflect the dramaturgical process during the 2003 AFYT season. In order to document this process, I collected four primary forms of data. To answer questions about the storytelling process, I collected both the audiotaped versions of stories that were originally told orally and written versions of stories that were initially printed. I collected all artifacts associated with the process of choosing which personal stories to adapt into scripted pieces. For these stories that were selected, I collected all subsequent written versions focusing on notes for and drafts of the scripted scenes. In addition, I collected audiotaped records of the script-development sessions where youth adapted stories into rough scripted adaptations. This

allowed me to document and outline how the adaptation process works. In order to answer questions about the relationship of youth to their stories over time, I conducted a series of semistructured, individual interviews throughout the AFYT process. Interviews generally focused on the youth's narrative, where the narrative was in the dramaturgical process and how the youth saw their relationship to that narrative at a given point in time. I also asked youth to reflect on their role in working with others' stories, especially during the latter half of the process. Finally, I took field notes at every workshop session (14 total), staff meeting (14 preworkshop meetings and 4 additional planning meetings), script development session (4 total), and rehearsal (7 total) that I attended.[4] These field notes help to paint a fuller picture of the AFYT process writ large as well as to triangulate experiences that youth discuss at length in their interviews about their experiences in AFYT.

Forty different youth participated in the 2003 season of AFYT. The general demographic breakdown of this group is as follows, as self-reported on an initial intake survey on the first day of the season:

- Gender: 18 female, 21 male, and 1 transgender.
- Race/ethnicity: 1 Asian, 7 Black, 8 Latino/Latina, 1 multiracial, and 23 White.
- Age: one 13-year-old, three 14-year-olds, three 15-year-olds, seven 16-year-olds, five 17-year-olds, eight 18-year-olds, thirteen 19-year-olds, and four 20-year-olds.

As should be clear from these demographics, almost two thirds of participants were 18 or over, and while this might indicate that this program was best suited to the needs of emerging adults, given Arnett's (2004) criteria for describing this population, the story is more complicated. While many participants 18 and over were out of high school and were either working or attending an institution of higher education, at least half of these were still living at home. This complicates the location of these youth as either adolescents or emerging adults.

I focused my data-collection efforts on the stories and the youth who were involved across the dramaturgical process from storytelling through to performance. Eight youth stood out for their involvement in their dramaturgical process from initial storytelling to final performance. These eight youth (and their involvement in the dramaturgical process) is the sample presented for analysis here (Table 1). My focus on the experiences of these youth maintains an idiographic perspective on identity development, though not in a traditional way. Rather than following individuals over time through a series of

Table 1. Focal Youth for Analysis Through Dramaturgical Process

	Gender	Race/ ethnicity	Age	Relevant characteristics around adolescence/emerging adulthood
Adele	Female	White	19	Attending college, living independently
Barry	Male	White	19	Working, living at home
Cari	Female	White	13	Attending high school, living at home
Jermaine	Male	African American	16	Attending high school, living at home
Jesus	Male	Latino	20	Attending college, living status unknown
Jordan	Transgender	White	19	Working, living at home
Mary	Female	Multiracial	19	Working, living independently
Sheronda	Female	Black	16	Attending high school, living at home

interviews or surveys, I trace individuals as they tell stories and engage in the adaptation of stories in situ. Where relevant, I refer to observational and interview data of these youth. The goal then is to take an idiographic perspective on the dramaturgical process in order to understand the relationship between individuals and their stories.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between the dramaturgical process and the psychosocial process of identity development. As a result, I focused my analytic efforts primarily on data that illustrated the dramaturgical process in action and youth reflections on their participation. The bulk of data relevant to this study are the youths' narratives of personal experience, the adaptation sessions themselves, and interviews with youth independent of the dramaturgical process. For the original stories, a narrative analysis approach is the appropriate method of analysis. Narrative analysis is a form of discourse analysis designed to understand the content and structure of the stories we tell, using the story itself as the unit of analysis (Schiffrin, 1994). This does not preclude multiple participants from engaging in the telling of this story; in fact, the context within which a story is told plays a prominent role in the way a story is constructed and interpreted (e.g., Mishler 1999; Schiffrin, 1994). I employ Labov's (1997) structural approach to

understanding narrative that defines stories through the relationship between the formal properties of narrative structure and the intention of storytellers. Narrative structural features include the temporal flow of the narrative as well as the teller's evaluation of events and participants through a careful examination of the relationship between the story's narrative clauses.

I also analyzed the construction of scripted adaptations of others' personal narratives during script-development sessions and how this process mirrored identity construction and presentation. With this data, I employed conversational discourse analysis (CA), which facilitates an understanding of the way participants construct meaning and identities through naturally occurring talk (Schiffrin, 1994; Wood & Kroger, 2000). I broke down participants' talk for the three sets of scripting sessions that youth engaged in as they drafted scenes from personal narratives. This is a bottom-up approach to analysis, one that does not presuppose what content or features of talk are most important or interesting. Therefore, I did not hypothesize in advance whether or how issues of identity would emerge in their adaptation work. It is the participants' words that determine the analytic categories. For example, the choice to include sexuality into a nonsexual story (described in detail in the next section) resulted in sexuality as a relevant construct for analysis. The interview data serve as a triangulation mechanism for the primary data—I conducted a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the interviews to understand whether youths' storytelling and adaptation processes were consistent with the way they understood identity development.

Results: Analyzing the Dramaturgical Process

As I described earlier, the concept of identity as situated within personal stories is discussed in both the developmental and the narrative theory literature. However, in neither body of work are there methods for unpacking this relationship and how it may be connected to psychosocial processes of identity development. My contribution to both fields is to describe such a mechanism, the dramaturgical process, as a way to understand how the relationship between narrative and identity functions in development. In the analysis that follows, I decompose the dramaturgical process and demonstrate where issues of identity are instantiated within this practice. Specifically, I have identified two ways in which the dramaturgical process parallels identity construction and exploration: (a) telling stories in group settings and (b) creating complex LGBTQ youth characters through the adaptation of others' stories. I use illustrative examples of each of these aspects of the dramaturgical process, supplemented with interview data and generalizations from across the

sampled youth, to demonstrate how positive, complex understandings of LGBTQ youth identities come to be and how participating youth take up these identities through their participation.

Telling Stories in a Group Setting

Throughout the storytelling workshops, youth were afforded the opportunity to tell their personal stories in myriad ways. While some stories were written, both during the workshop and at home, most stories were originally told orally. Within the oral storytelling genre, there were three different structures for participation in the storytelling process: storytelling in pairs, small group discussions, and whole-group storytelling sessions. Since oral storytelling participant structures always involve multiple storytellers, they afford story chaining (Kalcik, 1975; Tannock, 1998), where a story told by one narrator triggers another, related story told by a different narrator. Since the first story triggers the telling of the next, a thematic thread can emerge that links these stories together. In AFYT, these thematic threads were most often related to issues of LGBTQ youth identity. To demonstrate how story chaining works in action, I provide two examples of story chains that eventually became the scenes Driving in Drag and Closer to Home, both of which were performed in the 2003 production. The storytelling sessions described here were typical of all 13 small and whole-group sessions that took place across the 2003 workshop season. I also present evidence from initial interviews with youth that the emergent themes from these storytelling sessions were likely relevant to the broader 2003 cohort.

Driving in drag. Barry (age 19) first told Driving in Drag during a story circle session among a large group of 25 AFYT youth. Over the course of this story circle session, 11 stories were told by 11 different youth. Barry, the ninth storyteller, told the group about a time that he was driving to a party, dressed as a woman, when he was pulled over by a police officer. The police officer who asked to see Barry's license and registration became confused by the gender represented by Barry and by his license:

> He looks at my driver's license, looks at me. And looks at my driver's license, looks at me . . . So I start crying. Weird, funniest thing came out of my mouth: "[whispered, girlish voice] My mascara's running." And he's like, "Um, do you know why I pulled you over?" "[whispered, girlish voice] No sir, why?" "Um, your lights were off. Um, so ma'am, I mean sir, turn on your lights and, ha-ha, have a good night."

Barry was nervous, never having gone out in public before dressed like a woman. The officer merely wanted to tell Barry that his headlights were off. As he was leaving, the police officer accidentally dropped Barry's license on the side of the road:

> He drops my driver's license on accident. I bend over to pick it up. Ripped the back seam of my dress. And my wig, flops off. And cars honk as they pass by. So that was my wonderful evening.

Barry described the event as humiliating.

Immediately following Driving in Drag, Jordan and Mary (both aged 19) told stories that picked up on this theme of unwitting and uncomfortable identity disclosure. Jordan told a story about a time a coworker overheard her mother call her to discuss cleaning up her "sexual paraphernalia." This story dealt with several issues of identity disclosure. The first is the unwitting public disclosure of her sexuality at work through a phone call from her mother:

> And the phone rings and I'm like, you know, "good afternoon Snippets" and my mom, works at another conservative kind of place and like, she doesn't want me to go in there cuz she is really embarrassed I look too liberal. And, she's like, we need to clean up the house, you need to la, la, la, la, la, and you need to put your sexual paraphernalia away. And I was like, ready to faint. Because I didn't realize we have a head set, you know? That kind of look really professional at the salon? Somebody else had the headset on.

The second involved Jordan's relationship with her mother and what she would and would not reveal about her sexual identity:

> I tried to call her back when I got home, and I was like, mom you don't understand, this is what's going on, I don't have sex in my bedroom; of course, you can think whatever you want, but that's not really what the case is. And, my mom says, don't think I don't know what you've been doing. I know about those harnies you wear and things like that.

Jordan's story demonstrated how her openness about her sexual identity with her mother led her mother to make assumptions about Jordan's sexual practices. After explaining to her mother that she has misidentified some extension cords as sexual paraphernalia in her bedroom, Jordan concluded that she and

her mother have now adopted a close-the-door policy in their house to avoid future embarrassment.

After Jordan's story, Mary related another story about the time that she went over to a woman's house in an effort to start a romantic relationship:

> I was kind of on the prowl? And I was really looking for someone to like, get with. Because I had just come out and I was like, oh I wanna like, like I wanted to make it real, I wanted to make it physical, cuz I'd never even kissed a woman, nevertheless like, been with a woman or anything like that.

This coming-out story explored the physical side of sexual identity; Mary saw herself as officially becoming gay by consummating a relationship with another woman. Just as in preceding stories, Mary described the moment at which she had to face her personal identity disclosure when the woman she was with started talking about her boyfriend:

> And I was like, why don't you come like, sit next to me. And, I was, it was really bad. And she was like, sure. And so she sits down next to me and we're lying down and she's like, and she starts talking about this guy. And, I was just like holy shit and so she starts talking about this guy.

Mary was denied identity disclosure as the woman she wanted to be romantic with talked about her relationship with a man. She was further humiliated when she accidentally hit the girl in the face in her effort to leave the scene quickly.

Barry, Mary, and Jordan's stories demonstrate how youth perceived these challenges as playing out in their lives. Using the narrative analysis techniques to make sense of personal stories described earlier (Labov, 1997), I find that these stories follow a parallel narrative structure that can be broken down into four basic parts: (a) the setup, (b) the problem, (c) the twist, and (d) the resolution. These three stories are linked then through their overall structures as well as their content as tellers use the mechanisms employed by the previous teller, creating a structural and thematic chain between them. For example, all three stories open with an introductory section, an orientation clause (Labov, 1997). Mary's introduction creates the backdrop for her own story in reference to what she thinks the other two stories were about:

> I, I, actually I don't often try to talk about stories about my sexuality,
>
> I try to veer away from it.
>
> But this one was, and this was about a year ago,
>
> which is really, really sad.

This opening stanza serves as evaluation for the two stories that came before hers, indicating that telling stories about sexuality as a method of identity disclosure is uncomfortable for her. Her decision to tell a story revolving around her sexuality, then, likely resulted from the two stories of sexual identity that preceded hers. Couched within the context of a story chain focused around identity disclosure and coming-out, Mary breaks her self-enforced rule of not telling stories about her sexuality.

Identity disclosure as humiliation is a theme that is developed as the story chain passes from Barry to Jordan and then to Mary. Barry's story is not enough to create this theme; another story about dressing in drag could have changed the developmental path of this theme. Instead, Jordan picks up the inappropriateness of having to disclose her sexual identity to a potentially unfriendly authority figure. Mary then furthers this theme by describing what happens when you misjudge with whom you should explore your sexuality. Together, they build a story chain around identity disclosure and coming-out gone wrong.

These three youth do not necessarily share common master narratives—While they were all 19 at the time they told these stories, each was a different gender, and they were at different places in their transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood (see Table 1). In relaying instances of unwitting (and embarrassing) instances of identity disclosure and coming-out, they actively construct a common cultural narrative through the development of a kernel story in this group storytelling process. Preworkshop interviews with the 2003 cohort revealed identity disclosure and coming-out as a consummate challenge in developing a positive sense of self in the world. For example, Jermaine (aged 16), an African American youth, describes the challenge of identity disclosure in his community:

> Yeah, for me, it made it feel sometimes harder. Because of, just the ignorance, that, I'm not gonna say more so prevails? But then it's just different. When it's not open, and it's not something that is, you know, people don't have knowledge about it, it becomes harder for you to actually sit down and tell them, "Well, this is my side of the story."

Other comments about the challenge of identity disclosure included a fear of rejection by family, friends, and peers; having to hide because of a partner's lack of disclosure; an obligation to reveal your sexual identity to everyone, including strangers; and not wanting to be placed in an identity box:

> Sarah (aged 16): And I don't tell my parents because I don't think they'd like—how do you explain to your parents?
> Jermaine: They'd just see gay.
> Sarah: Yeah, they would. Because my parents are like, the bible-banging Christian.
> All: Ohhhhh!

While these comments demonstrate the importance of identity disclosure in general, story chaining is the mechanism by which youth have the opportunity to both represent their individual stories and to build these stories into a cultural narrative.

Closer to Home. The scene Closer to Home was created based on two stories told in a chain during a small group story circle. These two stories chronicle the way in which AIDS has affected the lives of Barry and Sheronda (aged 16) and demonstrates the racial and socioeconomic differences between them as they interact with shared LGBTQ identities. The result is a coconstructed narrative around the broad theme, "AIDS and my community."[5] Within this narrative, the tellers simultaneously bring forth what is different about their experiences by describing their diverse communities and how these communities deal with AIDS.

The way these two individuals fit into their respective communities is a prominent theme in these stories. This is particularly evident in the opening stanza of each story; both Sheronda and Barry introduce their stories by describing the communities in which they live. Sheronda, the first storyteller, begins her story by painting a visual picture of her home:

> 1. Uh, ok. I live in, um, a poverty stri-, you would say a poverty-stricken community.
> 2. Um, predominantly, I live on the West side of Chicago.
> 3. Um, predom-, our community is filled with predominantly Hispanic and African American, and you know, low-poverty Caucasian.
> 4. Um, so sex is, of course, a big issue in our life.

Sheronda defines her neighborhood both by its socioeconomic status (Line 1) and by the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the people who live there (Line 3).

She makes an evaluative statement about her own community as well saying that, "of course," sex is a big issue to them (Line 4).

Barry creates a parallel structure for his story, giving a description of his community in the opening lines:

1. Well, for me, um, I come from a town that's somewhat upper class.
2. And um, it, in, in my community it's not, uh, where I live its, you these talks, talks like the conversation we had today, it is not something that is brought up a lot.
3. It's just not something that is, somewhat accepted.
4. Um, you know, there's the mother, the father, the, you know, the kids, and you know, everybody live a nice, happy life.
5. [Someone else] White picket fence?
6. White picket fence, like, you know there's green grass everywhere . . .
7. It's the same house, but it has a different color in the house.
8. And, I mean, it's very strange.

Barry both parallels the construction of Sheronda's story by beginning with a description of his community (Line 1) and sets up an opposition—focusing on what is upper class about where he comes from (Lines 6-7). Barry identifies both what sets him and Sheronda apart, and identifies the relevance of AIDS to the LGBTQ youth community, regardless of background.

In the second section of their stories, both youth give personal anecdotes related to the same theme. Toward the middle of her story, Sheronda brings herself into the story for the first time:

29. And with me, I'm glad I responded the way I did.
30. Because you know, it's like, this does have a purpose; it does have an effect.
31. This can happen to me,
32. and I just got tested a year ago.
33. And even when I was in his office, I was just like, "Oh my god, this doctor is takin' too long;
34. she's gonna tell me I got something."

Sheronda provides self-evaluation of her actions (Line 29), letting her listeners know both what happened and how she feels she handled the situation.

Barry continues to parallel Sheronda's story structure, relaying a very personal anecdote of how AIDS has impacted his life:

9. And for me personally, being a victim of forced, uh forced sex,
10. um, living in that upper-class community, made me,
11. it made me very uncomfortable for me to, um, voice, voice that, what happened.
12. So, uh, and it also scared me too, is why I never really . . .

Barry takes up a parallel opening clause in introducing his personal experience (Line 9) as Sheronda did (Line 29). He pays homage to her story by picking up structural elements, creating a story of personal experience infused with Sheronda's voice.

Both stories end with a coda, a final evaluation that summarizes their positions on AIDS in their communities. Sheronda adopts a proactive stance, calling for people to empathize with AIDS victims:

54. So, we just have to like, take a positive outlook on a whole bunch of other things.
55. Because then, I think the world would be such a better place
56. if everybody just looked at it from their point of view
57. and thought, "What if this was me, how would I respond; how would the people around me respond also?"

Barry's coda is a lot less hopeful, less proactive. Rather than a call for others to empathize, he seems resigned to this hidden monster that cannot be acknowledged:

33. And you just want to deny it and just, not even think that, "no, you know, you don't have AIDS, nobody has AIDS.
34. That there's no problem,
35. there's no diseases.
36. That sex is sex; it's fine let's just do it and get it over with.

Barry again pays homage to Sheronda's story by using a parallel grammatical structure while presenting an opposing perspective (her Line 54, his Line 33).

In thinking about these stories as tales of the impact of AIDS on the lives of LGBTQ youth, Barry and Sheronda relate similar experiences, despite the obvious differences in their sociocultural contexts. It is perhaps because they tell stories about the same topic, using the same narrative structure that their differences are highlighted. In an interview, Jermaine described the

crucial role his family's move from a poor, African American neighborhood to a more diverse, middle-class neighborhood played in his coming-out:

> Well, my coming-out story was never like an immediate coming-out. We lived in a very, very bad neighborhood, in the projects actually, on the South side of Chicago . . . and my mother had me at a very young age, and we did the whole inner-city urban thing. We moved to the North side when I was 11. And my mom married and [coming-out] basically came from the North side being *way* more, just openly accepting of homosexuals . . . In the projects, there was never being Black and being homo- . . . I'm not gonna say more taboo than other communities, but you're supposed to be like ultra thug, like Black men are considered like, ultra masculine.

Sandy, a Latina ally (aged 16) confirmed that while she had been "criticized and stuff about my race," she saw the intersection of race and sexuality as more challenging: "Manuel is Hispanic and he's gay, so it's even harder for him." Other identity characteristics, such as religion and age, were also described as barriers to adopting a positive LGBTQ identity. Cari (aged 13) discussed her age as a barrier to the development of sexual identity eight different times over the course of her initial interview, and her status as the youngest-ever member of AFYT was the topic of her personal narrative that became the focal story for the 2003 performance (Halverson, 2008).

Stories about LGBTQ youth lives involve much more than just their experiences with sexuality. In fact, Sheronda and Barry's stories demonstrate structural parallelism while highlighting the interaction effects between sexuality and socioeconomic status. Other youth also confirm the importance of identity markers, such as ethnicity, class, and age, in constructing personal narratives. The opportunity to tell individual stories in groups both highlights the interaction effects among identity markers and affirms the similarities across experiences such as the role AIDS plays in impacting youths' relationships with their communities.

The Creation of Cultural Narratives Through Story Chaining

If identities are instantiated in the stories we tell of our lives, then group storytelling in the AFYT context is an opportunity not just for individual identity construction and representation but also for the development of cultural narratives against which youth can understand themselves as individuals. According to Hammack (2008),

> The stories of a culture—stories of national identity, struggle, suffering, and resilience—become the stories of an individual as he or she constructs his or her own personal narrative, fusing elements of daily experience . . . with the experience of a collective to which he or she perceives some affinity. (p. 234)

By telling stories in a group setting, youth engage in story chaining, the linking of their narratives through common thematic and structural threads that results in the construction of cultural narratives for the AFYT youth community. The two story chains described here, Driving in Drag and Closer to Home both represent AFYT cultural narratives. These story chains were also relevant to youth who described these two themes—unwitting disclosure of sexual identity and the role of ethnicity and socioeconomic status on LGBTQ-related issues—as relevant and important to them.

Constructing thematic and structural links between their stories results in the creation of a *kernel,* an emergent structure around which these multiple stories are organized, which adapts as stories build in reference to earlier stories. Kernels as defined by Kalcik (1975) are "a brief reference to the subject, the central action, or an important piece of dialogue from a longer story" (p. 7). Narrative analyses of the two examples above demonstrate that these kernels are developed both in the content and the structure of youth narratives. The development of a kernel story through chaining is one of the key ways in which youth codevelop themes that are important to them, which subsequently leads to the development of a cohort identity that they choose to share with a public audience. Narratively, story chaining serves to create a theme that connects stories together. Developmentally, story chaining serves to highlight issues that are important and relevant to this community of LGBTQ youth, legitimating both the issues and the storytellers, and building a sense of community identity that has emerged from the individual youth narratives. The relationship between one story and another makes explicit the connection between the LGBTQ youth community and individual storytellers, providing a direct link for these youth from individual narrative to social categorical identity and back again.

Adaptation as the Creation of Complex LGBTQ Characters

Following storytelling sessions such as the ones described above, youth worked on adapting stories into scripted scenes that would then be performed by the group for a public audience. The AFYT artistic director described the process as follows: "Fifteen [youth who] showed up [to adaptation sessions]

and dove into specific stories and immediately started working with partners and small groups and composing, and drafting, and editing, and adapting the pieces" (Interview, August 9, 2003). Over the course of three 2-hour sessions, youth were given the opportunity to adapt their peers' stories into short plays. This adaptation process provided further space for creating a more complex representation of LGBTQ youth in general, opening up space for individuals to see themselves within that social identity category. As a way to demonstrate the adaptation process in action, I present the example of one story, eventually titled Roach, and the ways in which the adaptation of this narrative served as an opportunity for individual youth to negotiate and construct a relationship between master and personal narratives (theirs and others). I begin with a description of how this individual story came to serve as a broader cultural narrative. Then, I focus on an in-depth conversational discourse analysis (Schiffrin, 1994; Wood & Kroger, 2000) of a small segment of a 90-minute adaptation session. Finally, I demonstrate through a discourse analysis of interview data why the adaptation of this narrative serves an important role in the development of cultural narratives that serve as the springboard for individual development (Hammack, 2008).

The Selection of a Relevant Cultural Narrative

In creating a script for a story that was eventually titled Roach, adaptors Adele (aged 19), Jesus (aged 19), and Gillian (aged 19) negotiated the construction of LGBTQ youth characters. The original story (actually three different stories told by the same storyteller), described an evolving relationship between Maria (aged 16, who identified as a lesbian and bisexual at different points throughout the workshop series) and a friend (who Maria identified as a lesbian) that did not involve any sexual behaviors. In the first version of her story, Maria describes her evolving relationship with her friend this way:

> And it's like, like, really cheesy moment like, where Romeo and Juliet, like oh, my savior, you took me away, my hero. And it's just like, we just spent the rest of the day, like, you know, picked a place, like talking. It was nonstop talking.

While the allusion to "Romeo and Juliet" implies a romantic connection, Maria described their behaviors as strictly nonsexual. This tension between sexual identity and sexual acts was a point of contention for the adaptors who struggled throughout their working session with how to portray characters

that identify as "lesbian" or "bisexual" without incorporating an explicitly sexual relationship into the story. As Gillian, Adele, and Jesus develop the two characters, they make decisions about what features of their identities to highlight. For instance, though Maria is Mexican American, no mention is made of this during the scripting session. In fact, when the scene was cast, Maria was portrayed by a White male youth. This decision was both practical and artistic. White male youths comprised the majority of the cast, so most roles were needed for this type. When gender and ethnicity were perceived as crucial to an understanding of the character, as in Closer to Home described above, these characters were cast accordingly.

A similar decision was made in the adaptation of Cari's (aged 13) story, a narrative about a preadolescent who came out at age 8 but had to wait 5 years to become a member of AFYT. The only other cast member under the age of 16 was a male youth, and the adaptors felt it was important that the character (called Sidney) look like one of the youngest people on stage; Cari's age was more relevant to the narrative than her gender. In some sense, the adaptation decisions were practical and shaped by who happened to be in the room. However, these decisions also make clear that the adaptation process requires youth to identify the important master cultural narratives (Hammack, 2008)—In Cari's story, it was the interaction between age and gender. In Roach, the master narrative of interest was the same-sex, nonsexual relationship between the two characters, not the characters' ethnicity or gender.

The Importance of Sexual Identity

Throughout their scripting session of Roach, Adele and Jesus had three exchanges around the inclusion of sexual identity. During these exchanges, they struggled with how to portray characters that identify as lesbian or bisexual without incorporating a sexual relationship into the story. This discussion was particularly relevant for Adele who struggled with her own bisexual identity while in a heterosexual relationship, the topic of her narrative that was also adapted into a scripted piece for performance (Halverson, 2007). The conversational exchange below (Box 1) exemplifies how Adele and Jesus negotiated the construction of complex, LGBTQ youth characters that take on a sexual identity without sexual activity.

In this segment of their working session, Jesus and Adele engaged in a discussion about whether and how to include overt references to the girls' sexualities. Jesus advocates for the indirect inclusion of references to sexual identity into the script (Lines 1-3, 9-10, 12-13, 15-16). In trying to figure out how to show that these two women are growing closer, he suggests they

Box 1. Jesus and Adele Discuss the Inclusion of Sexual Identity

1. Jesus: And then there's the thing, I wanted to include something like, that means we could, have them do queer things. You know what I'm saying? They're connected between-
4. Adele: Oh, right. Like, she was gay?
5. Jesus: N-n-no. Not like that!
6. Adele (singing): She was gay!
7. Jesus: Not like that, like-
8. Adele: She's bi, she's gay-
9. Jesus: -and we were both women and that's okay. Or something like that, you know?
10. Like we don't want to, we don't [need to explain it, it just is. But it's like,]
11. Adele: [Isn't that obvious? Or like, but it just]
12. Jesus: I got it. Something like, I wanted some descriptive terms like, understanding or
13. something-
14. Adele: Right. So we spent a lot of time together over the next few weeks and
15. Jesus: And we were women and that's, and that was okay. Cuz remember she was
16. kind of like, she was not sure if she was with her just because she was gay?

should do "queer things" together, somehow conveying their sexual identity in addition to their friendship (Lines 1-3). His desire to include this aspect of their relationship marks the importance of including sexual identity in the play. While this scene is not about a sexual relationship, AFYT as an organization is about sexual identity. Adele engages with Jesus' direct approach, acknowledging the relevance and importance of Maria being gay. Adele offers that the character of Maria could explicitly identify her sexuality in several ways, saying, "She's bi, she's gay" (Line 8).

In their conversation, Jesus resists the idea of naming Maria's sexuality by offering a line of dialogue that could explain their sexual identity without having to give it a direct label: "'And we were both women and that's okay.' Or something like that, you know? Like we don't want to, we don't need to explain it, it just is" (Lines 15-16). Jesus is searching for a more indirect, metaphorical approach to the inclusion of sexuality into this scene. It is important to him to incorporate the issue into the scene, to communicate in some way that these women identify as lesbians, without directly saying so or

engaging in sexual acts within the scene. Adele seems to prefer a more direct approach to the naming of sexual identity. She responds to Jesus' comment with a question, "Isn't that obvious?" (Line 11), implying that they should either make direct reference to their sexuality or not include anything more.

Through their conversation, Jesus comes to the way he wants to include the issue of sexuality: "I got it. Something like, I wanted some descriptive terms, like understanding or something" (Lines 12-13). Rather than name their sexual identity, he seems to want to describe their behavior. He draws on specific evidence from Maria's texts to necessitate the inclusion of sexual identity. Maria explicitly mentions the fact that both she and her friend are gay, and that this was a part of their relationship, though they never were together as a couple (Lines 15-16). This complicates the inclusion of sexual identity into the scene because they are not in a sexual relationship, though both maintain a lesbian sexual identity. In creating a character that is gay but not involved in a sexual relationship, Jesus works toward creating a more nuanced portrayal of gay youth, one with a lesbian sexual identity that does not completely define who she is.

Shaping the Cultural Narrative

Creating these characters gives AFYT as an organization the opportunity to dispel assumptions about homosexuality (and heterosexuality) that many audience members may bring with them to the theatre. Interviews with youth revealed that they were aware of, and struggled with, the tension between identifying as a member of the LGBTQ youth community and being labeled as *just gay*. Jermaine described his sexual identity as irrelevant: "So many people make it about, 'oh, I'm gay' and it's great for some people . . . [for me] it's very insignificant, I think it's not a part of my life" (Interview, February 22, 2003). Youth also actively challenged the stereotypes associated with specific sexual identity labels. Sarah (aged 16) who identified as bisexual shared in a group interview that she was nervous about coming out. This sparked a conversation about societal and personal views of bisexuality (Box 2).

In this brief exchange, youth both identified and employed stereotypes of bisexual identity. Sarah and Cari identify both the way bisexuality is perceived by the lesbian community (not out enough, Lines 4-5) and the straight community (nondiscriminating or "a slut," Lines 6-7). Interestingly, Jermaine confirms this stereotype by telling Sarah that she is probably straight and that her bisexuality is a result of the emotional nature of girls (Lines 10-11). Adele, one of the primary adaptors of Roach, also confirms this tension in her own written narrative about her experience as a bisexual in AFYT currently

Box 2. Sarah, Cari, Sandy, and Jermaine on Bisexuality

1. Cari: Especially with bi, there's a lot of, like, negative connotations.
2. Sarah: Yeah.
3. Cari: Not saying anything, like . . .
4. Sarah: No, no, I'm totally with you . . . lesbians feel like bisexuals just aren't ready to come out
5. of the closet. Straight guys are like, "Oh, she's bi, she likes to do it a lot."
6. Cari: She's a slut, yeah.
7. Sarah: She's either a slut or she'll do it with a girl; she'll make out with a girl in front of me.
8. And it's like, "No, that's gross! Like, what are you talking about?!"
9. Jermaine: You know what? I'm sorry to interrupt you. Like my friend says, "You're probably
10. straight, every girl has a little lesbian in them." Girls are so intimate with each other: "Oh I
11. love you, yeah, you're so pretty."
12. Sarah: That's funny.
13. Sandy: No, no. Well, just girls aren't afraid [to show their emotions].
14. Jermaine: [That's their choice.]
15. Sandy: It's not that they have a little lesbian in them or anything.
16. Jermaine: It's just funny how girls are always kissing girls, girls gone wild, that sort of thing.

dating a man: "I think that's what it's like to be bisexual in the queer community. It's like—oh, that's nice, you have a boyfriend, but we have other—more queer issues to talk about, you don't count." On several occasions, Adele also referred to her personal stories as "not gay enough" for the AFYT show.

It is through the plays themselves that AFYT has the opportunity to convey messages about the lives of LGBTQ youth to those who may be unfamiliar with or unsympathetic to this group. These plays are not simply invented experiences designed to make a point; they are negotiated representations of individual experiences infused with like-minded youths' understanding of those experiences. While youth were critical of each other's adaptation decisions, the critiques were not personal; there was no discussion of not liking an individual's idea. Rather, participants relied on the stories themselves, going to the text of the original narratives to justify adaptation decisions. For example, Gillian proposes to integrate a psychiatrist character into Maria's story. She describes, "that the psychiatrist like, she's pouring her heart out

about how she feels and how, it's like the struggle of, like I'm really attracted to her but I'm bi, and I don't know if I want her as my girlfriend." Adele, in response to Gillian's idea, does not evaluate its quality. Rather, she asks,

> Adele: Was she attracted? Does it say anywhere in here?
> Gillian: It does. Yeah, toward the end it does.
> Adele: Where is it?

In this exchange, the main topic of discussion is whether Maria explicitly describes her attraction to a woman with whom she has no sexual relationship. These conversations were typical of the way youth engaged in adaptation and the importance of understanding the author's intent and representing that intent while capturing core elements of the LGBTQ youth narrative.

As these examples from this script-development session highlight, by working with others' narratives youth have the opportunity to build a community narrative based around the core values of that community that can then be shared with an outside audience (Wiley & Feiner, 2001; Worthman, 2002). Wiley and Feiner (2001) capture how their participants engage in this work: "Youth deliberate and collaborate to arrive at agreed-upon ways of representing their lives and the world around them. As they negotiate their play making, they are also negotiating and renegotiating their community identity and culture" (p. 125). In this case, Adele, Jesus, and Gillian negotiated the way they wanted to represent Roach and, more broadly, the way they wanted to represent LGBTQ youth for their potential audience. Since this play was intended to be a representation of the AFYT community, decisions about how to create the characters that will stand for them are precisely the decisions about community identity and culture that Wiley and Feiner describe.

Unlike storytelling, where youth have the opportunity to negotiate the relationship between LGBTQ as a social category and their lived experiences through the own stories, in the adaptation portion of the process, youth engage in identity construction through others' stories. The act of adaptation itself—rerepresenting a narrative in a novel format—forces youth to carefully consider issues of authorial intent around sexuality and sexual identity. Knowing that the scenes they are scripting will come to tell the story of AFYT youth to an outside audience, adaptors struggle with the construction of an LGBTQ youth identity, as conveyed through characters that still maintained the unique experiences of the original storytellers. The act of adaptation itself seemed to require that adaptors consider what LGBTQ youth identity looks like, how it is instantiated in individual stories, and how they wanted this to be represented and communicated to outsiders.

Discussion: Detypification as a Mechanism for Identity Development

In the above analysis, I have used the dramaturgical process to illustrate instances of identity construction and representation in action. Through storytelling, youth have the opportunity to share their individual experiences and tie those experiences directly to other AFYT members, creating a story chain that results in the development of a common, cultural narrative. These cultural narratives also ring true for the broader AFYT community who shared that these issues were similarly important to them. Unwitting and embarrassing experiences with identity disclosure were individual identity stories for Barry, Jordan, and Mary and a master, cultural narrative for AFYT youth, which became a representative scene in the 2003 production. Through adaptation, youth built nuanced understandings of LGBTQ youth as they made decisions about how to construct public representations of personal narratives that represent AFYT as a community yet maintain the integrity of the original storyteller's narrative. In the 2003 season, 12 youth participated in the adaptation process; in small groups such as the one analyzed here, these youth created scripted adaptations of 8 of the 11 final scenes. The use of characters to create nuanced LGBTQ youth identities that could be publicly presented was widespread.

While I have made it clear throughout that the dramaturgical process is fundamentally about the interplay between cultural and individual narratives, this analysis also demonstrates that detypification (Jenness, 1992) is a robust psychological mechanism for describing identity development. Detypification is the redefining of a social category such that it is no longer based on stereotypical assumptions. Jenness explains how detypification serves as an identity development process:

> I argue that the adoption of a lesbian identity—the difference between "doing" and "being"—fundamentally hinges upon a process that I refer to as detypification. Detypification is the process of redefining and subsequently reassessing the social category "lesbian" such that it acquires increasingly concrete and precise meanings, positive connotations, and personal applicability. (p. 66)

Detypification points to the codevelopment of an individual's increasingly nuanced understanding of a social category (such as lesbian) and that individual's willingness to place themselves within that category. Jenness' argument is rooted in the work of sociologists who posit that individuals make sense of

their social worlds through perceiving and structuring categorical types, called typifications (McKinney, 1969). As a sense-making mechanism, we construct typifications for everything in the world around us, including people (Schutz, 1962). In the development of a viable social identity, an individual's understanding of a self-imposed social category begins to constrain what the individual sees as possible. In order to construct an identity that includes a marginalized social category, detypification suggests that individuals must work toward complicating and destigmatizing the social category at the same time individuals begin to see themselves as a member of that group. Jenness explains how the process of detypification is sparked by a crisis event that forces individuals to rethink their conception of a given social category and their place within it. Mechanisms throughout the dramaturgical process facilitate this crisis event, encouraging participating youth to actively consider LGBTQ as a category, its meaning, and how they as individuals fit their increasingly nuanced understanding of what LGBTQ means.

While Jenness' work focused on female adults who came to define themselves as lesbians later in their lives, detypification as a construct can potentially be used to operationalize the idea of identity development for marginalized populations and specifically for LGBTQ youth. Considering detypification as a key concept to explain identity development requires access to the events that spark detypification, typically in the form of narrative (e.g., Hegna, 2007). In the context of the dramaturgical process, the narrativizing of personal experiences is a primary mechanism by which LGBTQ youth detypify their social identities. In particular, it is in the construction of the relationship between personal and cultural narratives that youth build detypified understandings of the nature of LGBTQ identity and how this identity relates to their understanding of self. I find this analysis consistent with Hammack's (2008) description of positive identity development as the reconciliation of cultural and personal narrative.

> The stories of a culture . . . become stories of an individual as he or she constructs his or her own personal narrative, fusing elements of daily experience . . . with the experience of a collective to which he or she perceives some affinity. (p. 233)

In telling stories, detypification is captured in the emergence of themes based on kernel stories, developed as youth tell their own stories in relation to their peers. These kernel stories then become community narratives as AFYT participants come to identify them as interesting and important. These true-life stories that begin as individuals' experiences are transformed into

community narratives and eventually shape how these individual youth see themselves as members of this broader community. Small and whole-group participant structures for storytelling are particularly live spaces for youth to engage in detypification. Through these participant structures, youth begin to construct more nuanced understandings of LGBTQ identities that relate to the way they see themselves. Jenness' theory of detypification requires a crisis event, a rethinking of a social category. The dramaturgical process provides the space for this type of crisis where youth can see themselves in a social category (i.e., a member of a group that unwittingly and embarrassingly revealed their sexual identity) as the category emerges through the chain of individual narratives.

Adaptation, too, seems to parallel detypification as a process. In creating scripted scenes from true-life stories, youth like Adele, Jesus, and Gillian encounter new representations of LGBTQ youth identities, similar to Jenness' description of "crisis events," where the women in her study used new positive images, such as a well-designed periodical or an old friend with exciting stories, to transform the typified category of lesbian into a personalized identity. The adaptors of Roach literally took the new images of Maria's story and transformed them into a more generic LGBTQ youth character, one that was marked by issues of sexuality that made this character a member of the LGBTQ youth community. The resultant script is a multivoiced account that incorporates both the storyteller's and the adaptors' perspectives. Returning to the established relationship between the stories we tell and the identities we take on, in crafting performance-based narratives that represent the lives of AFYT youth, adaptors are creating detypified LGBTQ youth characters that they can identify with and take on. Engaging in adaptation allows AFYT youth "to understand themselves as an instance of that particular construct" (Jenness, 1992, p. 66), that is, members of an LGBTQ youth community.

In addition to the data presented in this article, I had multiple experiences with individual youth and access to how their participation in the dramaturgical process sparked their own processes of detypification. Simply participating in AFYT was a form of personal identity disclosure; by becoming a member of AFYT, youth were labeling themselves as part of the LGBTQ youth community. For most of these youth, being a part of AFYT meant developing an understanding of this social category and representing this understanding to a public audience. This audience often included friends and family as well as other youth and their families dealing with similar issues. Adele, for example, documented this struggle both in the writing of her own story and in the adaptation of Maria's story of her nonsexual relationship with another woman. Adele had the opportunity to see herself in Maria's story, to see

others in her story, and to be a part of a public performance that presented a nuanced picture of LGBTQ youth.

From a narrative theory perspective, the dramaturgical process shifts individual youths' narratives from highly reportable, unique narratives of personal experience to highly credible community narratives that represent a more generic LGBTQ youth experience, to a final product that balances personal reportability with community credibility (Halverson, 2008). From a developmental perspective, the reciprocal relationship that Jenness describes between personal identity and social categorization is instantiated through the shift from reportability, to credibility, to balance in individual youth narratives. Both this narrative theory description and the developmental process description help to operationalize Cohler and Hammack's (2007) claim that engagement with personal narratives in the context of broader community narratives is what results in positive developmental trajectories for LGBTQ youth. In this way, identity development is about the evolving relationship between individual experiences, how these experiences comprise a cultural representation, and how these cultural representations then shape individual experiences.

Implications for Other Populations of Youth

While the process of detypification has thus far been limited to describing identity development for the LGBTQ population (Hegna, 2007; Jenness, 1992), there are strong connections between this process and research on identity development processes in other marginalized youth populations including African Americans (Cross et al., 1991; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995) and economically disadvantaged adolescents (Phillips & Pittman, 2003). In his work on African American identity development, Cross (1994) compares his Nigrescence process model of "becoming Black" to the LGBTQ coming out process. In Cross' model, a positive sense of Black identity is developed as an individual experiences an event or series of events that "shatter the person's current feeling about himself/herself and his or her interpretation of the condition of blacks in America" (Cross et al., 1991, p. 324). These encounters are similar to the crisis events that Jenness (1992) describes as the mechanisms for detypification and could be similarly experienced and represented through the dramaturgical process. Parlham (1989) states that it is during adolescence that individuals are most likely to experience nigrescence, building a stronger case for the connection between the dramaturgical process and positive identity development for marginalized youth beyond the LGBTQ community.

For marginalized youth, the dramaturgical process has the potential to be an effective pedagogy for empowering these youth to construct and express positive identities in a public forum. Cross (1994) implies that when African Americans encounter a change event in their identity development process, they are primed for engagement in dramaturgical work: "This high energy literally compels the person to seek self-expression, leading to poetry, art, or in more vulgar expressions, fantasies about the defeat and destruction of one's enemy" (p. 122). The use of personal stories allows youth to engage in the change events described as the mechanism for positive identity development (Cross, 1994; Cross et al., 1991; Jenness, 1992). Furthermore, the dramaturgical process engages youth in the formation of a viable social identity, through the work required in this context—telling, adapting, and performing personal stories. Moreover, Hammack (2008) notes that marginalized and/or disempowered groups are more likely to make strong connections between master and personal narratives in order to avoid a loss of collective identity. I would urge readers who work with stigmatized youth to develop positive developmental trajectories to consider the potential of the dramaturgical process in fostering positive identity development.

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1. All names given in the text are pseudonyms.
2. In this article, I use the term *youth* as an umbrella term for describing adolescents and emerging adults. Though there are problems with this term (Arnett, 2004), my interest is in describing the identity-development process for a group of people that spans two developmental phases. In an effort to do so, I have chosen a term that can potentially describe both populations simultaneously.
3. While Abes and Kasch (2007) argue that "the use of the label LGBTQ to represent students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer as one group is an example of consolidating nonheterosexual identities" (p. 621), I choose to employ it in my research for several reasons. First, this is how the organization with which I worked identified the youth in their program. Second, I chose not to refer to this group of youth as *queer* because of the political connotation of this term. As Grace, Hill, Johnson, and Lewis (2004) describe, "Queer is about being

politically, culturally, and socially dissident" (p. 302). This group was purposefully apolitical, allowing youth themselves to choose their own labels through the process of telling, adapting, and performing their stories.

4. With the exception of rehearsals, I was present at all meetings.
5. For more information on how participants came to tell stories about AIDS and their communities, see Halverson (2005b).

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Bio

Erica Rosenfeld Halverson is an assistant professor of learning sciences in the department of Educational Psychology at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Her research focuses on the relationship between identity development and learning for marginalized youth. Specifically, she studies environments where youth tell, adapt, and perform the stories of their lives, including theatre, film, and other digital media spaces. She is a member of the Games, Learning, and Society research group.