

Covert Cultural Sexual Abuse of Gay Male Teenagers Contributing to Etiology of Sexual Addiction

JOE KORT

Royal Oak, Michigan, USA

Gay male teenagers are at high risk for the development of sexual addiction. There exists a regular assault on the sexuality of gay males. This covert cultural sexual abuse suffered by these gay adolescents predisposes them to reenact this trauma through sexual acting out. The trauma model is useful in conceptualizing how to treat this population and address the post traumatic stress disorder suffered from the cultural victimization of homophobia and heterosexism.

In most material written about sexual addiction, it is reported that a high percentage of sex addicts have been sexually abused as children. Various writers have reported different percentages, all of which are high. Patrick Carnes (1991, p. 109) reported in his book, *Don't Call It Love*, that 81 percent of sex addicts have been sexually abused as children. In an article called, *The Link Between Incest Abuse and Sexual Addiction*, authors Margaret Huelshouser, Patricia Crawford, and Darren George found that 19% of the 100 male participants were sexually abused as children. They stated that “a number of clinicians have reported a high incidence of childhood sexual abuse among sex addicts, e.g., Abel, Becker, Mittelman, Cunningham-Raher, Rouleau, Murphy, 1987; Blanchard, 1989; Nakken, 1989; Schaefer, 1987.” Self-reports of sex addicts have revealed that 64% of them regard themselves as victims of child sexual molestation (Blanchard, 1990).

Mark Schwartz and William H. Masters devoted their article, *Integration of Trauma-Based, Cognitive, Behavioral, Systemic and Addiction Approaches for Treatment of Hypersexual Pair-Bonding Disorder*, to the concept that sexual development in childhood is fused with the later development of sexual addiction. They addressed the various ways that childhood sexual abuse can be traumatizing and later promote compulsive sexual behaviors. They stated that “deviant sexual arousal and compulsivity symptoms are the

result of the influence of stigma and trauma to unfolding sexuality.” They talked about the deviant arousal being manifested during adolescence and referred to the sexual acting out as a survival mechanism that developed to cope with the “need to depend on other people whom they fear can injure or destroy them.” The symptoms, they explained, “become functional in dealing with anxiety, depression, loneliness, and myriad other emotions, and thereby become ‘both necessary and distressing.’”

Much of the information about sexual abuse and sexual addiction consists of contact and non-contact sexual abuse. In *Don't Call It Love*, Carnes (1992) talked about non-contact forms of abuse in which there is no sexual touching or touching of any kind. He cited an example of a father talking to his daughter about her developing breasts and getting turned on. The daughter feels violated and tries to change the subject. Even though physical touch is not involved it is still considered an act of sexual abuse. The difference here is overt versus covert sexual abuse. Overt abuse involves actual touching. Examples would be inappropriate holding, kissing, sexual fondling, masturbation, oral sex, and forced sexual activity. Covert sex does not involve physical touch. Examples given by Carnes are flirtations and suggestive language, propositioning, household voyeurism/exhibitionism, sexualizing language, and preoccupation with sexual development. Another type of covert sexual abuse is verbal abuse aimed at a person or group because of their sexuality and/or gender. The gay male community is a covertly sexually abused one. The homosexual or bisexual individual suffers covert sexual abuse and risks developing sexual addiction in a similar way as other sexual abuse victims.

Being an adolescent can be a traumatic time. Being a gay adolescent can be even more traumatic. It is a time where sexuality and concern for others is brought to the forefront of a person and practiced. For gay teenagers, this development of sexual identity is suppressed. Gay teens have to role play heterosexuality and suppress the natural desire to date, kiss, and love a member of their own sex. Brian McNaught (1997), author of *Now That I Am Out What Do I Do*, stated:

“...most gay people have been enormously, if not consciously, traumatized by the social pressure they felt to identify and behave as a heterosexual, even though such pressure is not classified as sexual abuse by experts in the field. Imagine how today's society would respond if heterosexual thirteen-to nineteen-year-olds were forced to date someone of the same sex. What would the reaction be if they were expected to hold the hand of, slow dance with, hug, kiss and say “I love you” to someone to whom they were not and could not be sexually attracted? The public would be outraged! Adult supervisors would be sent to prison. Youthful “perpetrators” would be expelled from school. Years of therapy would be prescribed for the innocent victims of such abuse. Volumes would be written about the long-term effect of such abhorrent socialization (as today we lament the

ill-conceived efforts to turn left-handed people into right-handed ones). Yet, that's part of the everyday life of gay teenagers. And there's no comparable public concern, much less outcry, about the traumatizing effects on *their* sexuality”

Gay males as a whole are especially assaulted and abused as a culture and as individuals for their sexuality. It is my belief that it is the result of the attacks on the gay male culture that contribute to the individual sexual addiction and compulsivity we see in gay men. The assaults gay men experience are daily. Victimization to a culture that demands heterosexuality from males is a sexual assault. In his article, *Healing from Cultural Victimization: Recovery from Shame due to Heterosexism*, Joseph H. Niesen (1993) describes the painful effects of sexual/physical abuse and heterosexism. “Heterosexism is defined as a form of cultural victimization that oppresses gay/lesbian/bisexual persons,” according to Niesen (1993). He further states that heterosexism stymies individual growth and development just as individuals who have been sexually/physically abused. Niesen does not take this far enough. The cultural victimization is covert sexual abuse.

HETEROSEXISM

Heterosexism is defined as the assumption that all people are (or should be) heterosexual. It is the belief in the superiority of heterosexuality and the inferiority of homosexuality. (Kort, 2003). It has been defined as “a world-view, a value-system that prizes heterosexuality, assumes it as the only appropriate manifestation of love and sexuality, and devalues homosexuality and all that is not heterosexual” (Herek, 1986b). Forms of heterosexism are institutional and individual. Institutional heterosexism occurs when rights and privileges are given to heterosexuals and denied to lesbians and gays. Examples of this occurrence of heterosexism are legislation that is being passed to ban gay marriage; lack of protection around housing and employment; the don't ask, don't tell policy of the military; and the Boy Scouts' ban on letting gay males participate in the organization. Individual heterosexism occurs when there is gay bashing, gays and lesbians thrown out of homes by parents after coming out, individuals refusing to rent housing to gays, military discharges or imprisonments for homosexual behavior or mere suspicion. (Niesen, 1993, Herek, 1990). Other examples are assuming someone is heterosexual until proven otherwise such as asking if someone is married and how their opposite gendered spouse is, thus assuming by default that the individual is heterosexual.

A perpetrator of sexual abuse negatively impacts a child's sexuality by disregarding their sexual needs and safety (basically to be left alone by an adult's sexuality of any kind) and making their own sexual needs primary.

Like sexual abusers, the perpetrators of heterosexism make it clear that their sexual needs are more important than those of gays and lesbians (Kort, 2004). This is traumatic for the gay adolescent.

HOMOPHOBIA

In the late 1960's George Weinberg (1972) coined the term "homophobia" and the word first appeared in print in 1969. In his book, *Society and the Healthy Homosexual*, Weinberg wrote about how it affected gays and lesbians. "Homophobia is the feeling(s) of fear, hatred, disgust about attraction or love for members of one's own sex." It is prejudice based on the belief that lesbians and gays are immoral, sick, sinful, or somehow inferior to heterosexuals. It results in fear of associating with lesbians and gays in close proximity—physically, mentally, and/or emotionally—lest one be perceived as lesbian or gay, and fear of venturing beyond "accepted" gender role behavior. This can be true of gay men as well, though straight men are typically more homophobic (Weinberg, 1972; Herek, 2004).

The most commonly/held belief act of homophobia is that being gay is nothing more than a sexual behavior. Most people are not homophobic as much as they are homo-ignorant. Committed acts of homophobia are things like calling someone a "faggot," "cocksucker," "girly boy," "mama's boy," or other anti-gay epithets. Often these acts are more commonplace and violent against males by males. Usually this takes the form of calling another boy a "sissy" or "pansy" on the playground in childhood, a father shaming his son for not being "male" enough in sports or wanting to play with dolls, and many other ways to shame the *type* of male a gay child is. This is not to say that all gay and lesbian children do not behave in typical gender appropriate ways. There is research done by a researcher named Richard Green who reports in his 1980's studies that 75% of the boys who played with female toys and identified with girls grew up to be gay. He confirmed this does not make the boy gay but is more an early indicator that the child might be gay. In essence, those who do not conform to stereotypical gender roles are often shamed and punished for being different, gay and straight alike. This is how homophobia manifests.

INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA

Internalized homophobia is the act of a gay or lesbian person internalizing these homophobic acts into beliefs and attacking oneself. Overt forms of homophobia would be attempts to cure oneself with therapy or living heterosexually and believing one can "change" ones sexual orientation. This

stems from not being able to tolerate one's gayness or lesbianism within oneself. The very thing that has been told is bad and wrong and to be hated is now discovered inside. As a result a gay or lesbian person feels damaged, flawed, and shamed. Shame is a major component in internalized homophobia.

Coming Out

While most of the current discussions in the media around gays and lesbians is political, what is neglected is the psychological impact of these politics, particularly on gay teens. "Homophobia and heterosexism create a climate that permits and even encourages sexual exploitation of boys (gay and straight) and interferes with treatment and recovery" (Cassese, 2000). Cassese talks about how he discovered gay men telling him they felt the parallel between the psychic dangers of coming out and the disclosure of abuse, either when they both exist or are separate for individuals. The psychological effects on gay teens being forced to role play heterosexuality is a chronic assault on their sexual and romantic orientation in many of the same ways that sexual abuse is for those who have been sexually abused as children. Any event or situation creates psychological trauma when it emotionally, cognitively, and physically overwhelms an individual's perceived ability to cope, leaving him with fears of mutilation or annihilation, psychosis or death. The individual feels overwhelmed. Such circumstances commonly include abuse of power, betrayal of trust, entrapment, helplessness, pain, confusion, and/or loss.

Trauma

This definition of trauma is fairly broad, according to Esther Giller, President and Director of The Sidran Foundation. In her article, she stated that trauma "includes responses to powerful one-time incidents like accidents, natural disasters, crimes, surgeries, deaths, and other violent events (Giller, 1999). It also includes responses to chronic or repetitive experiences such as child abuse, neglect, combat, urban violence, concentration camps, battering relationships, and enduring deprivation. This definition intentionally does not allow *us* to determine whether a particular event is traumatic; that is up to each survivor. This definition provides a guideline for our understanding of a survivor's experience of the events and conditions of his/her life."

Growing up gay and lesbian can be very traumatic. Hiding who you are inside on an everyday basis—and hearing society's negativity and hate—is traumatic enough for gay children. So is hiding one's sexuality and core sense of self and fearing that discovery might result in psychological and/or physical harm. And this trauma is chronic; it goes on for a lifetime. School kids use the word "gay" in pejorative ways, no one wants to be near the kid

thought to be a “fag.” Imagine sitting in a church or synagogue, listening to sermons that say you are bad and wrong. As a result, many gay and lesbian children grow up hypervigilant to make sure they’re not detected. Given this, is it any wonder why gay men find it so difficult maintaining community and connections with one another, much less as partners?

As David Price discusses in his article, “A Developmental Perspective of Treatment for Sexually Vulnerable Youth,” gay teens are a sexually vulnerable minority. He addresses the theories of development of a gay identity and then talks about the things that interfere with their development making their sexual development “a more difficult task than heterosexual youth in forming a positive identity.” Gay teens do not have role models, little guidance, and face rejection and harassment as they seek to develop their positive identity (Price, 2003). A chapter in, “10 Smart Things Gay Men Can Do To Improve Their Lives” is dedicated to the need for role models and mentors (Kort, 2003). Without the guidance of elders and adults in their lives, gay teens will seek out guidance from the streets and other gay youth in settings that might lead to drug use and prostitution. These high risk activities can lead to sexual addiction and be reenacting the abuse and neglect from the heterosexist and homophobic assaults on their developing selves. They can be replaying the trauma of the dangerous feelings of hiding ones’ core orientation and when exposed being at risk to attack and rejection.

Hypervigilance and Hyperarousal

Another factor that occurs during trauma is hyperarousal. “After a traumatic experience,” says Herman (1992), “the human system of self-preservation seems to go onto permanent alert, as if the danger might return at any moment. Physiological arousal continues unabated. In this state of hyperarousal, which is the first cardinal symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder, the traumatized person startles easily, reacts irritably to small provocations, and sleeps poorly.”*

Herman (1992) and other trauma experts talk about how “trauma arrests the course of normal development by its repetitive intrusion into the survivor’s life.” Trauma experts go on to say that the most common way to cope with trauma is to forget about it—consciously. So that the person can cope, it becomes encoded in nonverbal, visual ways. Herman writes, “traumatic memories lack verbal narrative and context; rather, they are encoded in the form of vivid sensations and images . . . In their predominance of imagery and bodily sensation, and in their absence of verbal narrative, traumatic

*(Herman, 1992). This is exactly why so many gays and lesbians have trouble coming out. In addition to surmounting homophobia, rejection, and adversarial reactions, each gay and lesbian individual must delve into their own personal post-traumatic stress. Coming out requires constant hypervigilance in determining if it is safe or dangerous to be out and reveal one’s instinctual sexual and romantic feelings.

memories resemble the memories of young children.” Traumatized people relive the “crime” repetitively in their thoughts, behaviors, and dreams. Often sexual addiction is about reenacting early abuse.

The stage is being set for the etiology of a sexual addiction as one can see with heterosexism, homophobia, internalized homophobia, and the sexual trauma of growing up gay. Straights and some gays have wrongly lumped homosexuality and sexual abuse together. This erroneous rationale is the assumption that being gay or lesbian must mean that you were sexually abused in the first place. Once abused, that makes you gay and “homosexual” means you’re a pedophile. This derives from the old psychoanalytic theory that sexual orientation is determined during the first few years of development. This theory explains if one suffered any trauma or negative influences in these first years, then adolescence gives you a second chance at correcting your “heterosexuality gone wrong.” Sexual abuse was assumed to be the primary reasons why a boy becomes confused, turning away from his innate heterosexuality.

Today, too many therapists still consider this true. Even some gay and lesbian therapists see adolescence as a time when homosexual teenagers can be helped to “re-learn” how to be heterosexual. Many insist there must have been some sexual abuse for a client to even be attracted to homosexuality at all. The myth is out there and confusion still exists. Many still feel that they’re gay or lesbian because they must have been sexually abused in the past—even if they have no memory of such a thing happening, with no evidence that that it was a possibility. And those who *were* sexually abused think that explains precisely why they’re gay. Thus the wrong treatment is being provided to gay adolescents only to further the cultural sexual abuse. (Kort, 2004).

Reparative Therapy for Homosexuality

Those who still believe this misguided philosophy call themselves Reparative Therapists and they continue to do harm today. The theory behind reparative therapy is that homosexuality is a result of a person suffering a broken gender identity and a stunted, “stuck” sexual development that’s “gone bad.” Their “repair” work, to help clients regain their heterosexuality, is almost always directed more at males than females. The person—again, usually male—is labeled with “low gender esteem”; the cure-all is to make him “more of a man” and her “more of a woman.”

Reparative therapy never uses the word *gay*, only the term “homosexual.” As psychotherapist Richard Cohen says in his book, *Coming Out Straight*, “There is nothing ‘gay’ about the homosexual lifestyle.” True, for some individuals with a homosexual orientation, there is nothing pleasant or appealing about coming out and living affirmatively as a gay or lesbian.

These individuals cannot reconcile being gay, which is about the inability to be affirmative toward oneself, living in integrity, honoring one's sexual and romantic inner life, and living congruently—as heterosexuals do with *their* sexual and romantic orientation. Some decide they cannot live as a gay or lesbian, so they create and support a life of heterosexuality. They do not change their sexual and romantic orientation, simply their behavior.

Probably the worst, most abusive book toward gays and lesbians is *Preventing Homosexuality* by Joseph Nicolosi (1997). In its veiled way, this book gets around the American Psychological Association's (APA, 1998) warning that if you try to help homosexuals suppress their sexual and romantic desires, they might lead lives of depression. So Nicolosi and his wife wrote a book on "preventing homosexual" orientation.

Nicolosi and others in his camp have gotten wise to the criticism of their approach and so have disguised it. They've softened their terminology, by telling parents to correct children and adolescents but not shame them for playing with opposite-gender toys. If your son plays with a doll, they advise taking it away and saying you are giving it to a little girl who needs it. This is abominable. They want men to be good fathers, but stop them from playing with dolls—which is one way to learn how to parent. Nor will playing with dolls make a boy homosexual or lead to orientation problems. Taking toys away, whether you do it nicely or in a shaming way, will only wound the child's self-esteem.

Preventing Homosexuality tells mothers to "back off" and turn away from their sons, giving the example in the book of a mother who was "disgusted" by her son's asking to use her makeup. The only good thing they advise is for fathers to get more involved. Fathers have abandoned their sons, gay and straight alike, causing much of the anxiety and depression in men today. More involved fathers can help their sons become more mature men, but cannot make them straight or gay.

For teenagers specifically, the traumatic model Nicolosi teaches to parents and teenagers is that their homosexuality is about "low gender esteem" causing the homosexual teenager to seek his self-esteem through "intense emotional intimacy and deep, mutual dependency" with another male that can "never occur" (Nicolosi, 1997).

Nicolosi even cites a study which concurred that "gay and bisexual youth have higher rates of generalized anxiety disorder, major depression, suicidal thoughts and even nicotine dependence." He goes on to say that "effeminate boys suffer from a higher level of psychiatric problems, including a deep sense of inferiority" (Nicolosi, 1997). Nicolosi argues that this is what comes *from* innately being homosexual.

However the truth is that this is the result of the trauma that gays and lesbians face on a daily basis by those such as Nicolosi who attack those with homosexual feelings and desires. This covert sexual abuse is what contributes to a later development of sexual addiction and compulsivity. The constant

assault on one's sexuality in terms of orientation and behavior leads to sexual acting out, particularly in gay males. Girls are allowed to be "tomboys" for at least a period of time in their pre-teens and early adolescence. They are allowed to touch each other and even have loving feelings for one another. None of this is permitted among males and if observed is labeled "queer" immediately. There is no time at all to be a "sissy boy." What about the adolescent male being put in the showers with other boys but knows that he best not look too long or even get an erection seeing his primary sexual objects naked by his side. Imagine the stress and excitement that has to be buried and contained on a regular basis at such a young age.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

The symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder are another result of this covert sexual abuse. The gay adolescent has to keep his feelings and thoughts to himself. He has to be hypervigilant and isolate himself for fear of being discovered. He is anxious and mistrusts his environment worrying that if he is known he will be targeted as someone to be avoided and in his own family may be shunned and put out. Developing a false self to passing as straight to be accepted and loved like everyone else becomes the norm. Becoming the "good son" and an overachiever to block anyone from seeing his homosexuality is the defensive posture to assure no one discovers his "flaw."

Important points are to be made about sexual abuse, the various ways that gay men are sexually abused—both covertly and overtly—and how these do, in fact, shape one's sexuality and sexual behavior, but not one's sexual orientation. Contrary to what many psychotherapists want to believe, there's no evidence that sexual abuse can shape one's sexual orientation, much less create it. The only thing it can do is cloud and confuse someone about what his sexual orientation truly is. And culturally, covert sexual abuse can shape how we behave with one another and the world. It can become a barrier to achieving a sense of belonging with other gay men. It produces a post traumatic stress disorder response that leads to dynamics similar to those who have been sexually abused. The harm can be mitigated with good therapy and individuals will come to know their true sexual and romantic orientation, be it gay or straight.

This article's working definition of sexual abuse comes from Wendy Maltz's book, *The Sexual Healing Journey: A Guide for Survivors of Sexual Abuse*. She writes that sexual abuse occurs whenever one person dominates and exploits another through sexual activity or suggestion. The perpetrator uses sexual feelings and behavior to hurt, misuse, degrade, humiliate, or control another, which is always a violation of a position of trust, power, and protection. Often it's inflicted on a child who lacks emotional and intellectual maturity, but is not limited to children only (Maltz, 1991).

Overt sexual abuse involves direct touching, fondling, and intercourse with another against that person's will. A few examples would include French kissing, fellatio, sodomy, penetration with objects, genitals, and fingers, and masturbation. Sometimes force is used and at other times, psychological or emotional power (such as differences in age, status, or rank, such as employee/employer, adult/child, older boy/younger boy). *Covert sexual abuse* is more subtle and indirect. Examples include sexual hugs, sexual stares, inappropriate comments on one's buttocks or genitals, shaming and punishing someone for the kind of male he is, and homophobic name-calling. Also, one parent's demanding emotional support that the other parent should rightly supply, thus making the child into a surrogate partner. Given these definitions, gay males are repeatedly assaulted and abused individually and as a culture for their sexual and romantic feelings attractions, and behaviors. These verbal, emotional, and/or physical attacks on gay men are covert sexual abuse. The daily assaults are most often focused on what gay men do sexually and on the type of men they are. This is covert cultural sexual abuse.

The idea of imagining a child might be gay can be "insulting" to a parent and alarming to many others. People in heterosexist and homophobic culture equate "gay" with adult sex. Many heterosexist people, hearing that you're gay, automatically imagine some adult gay sex act. This is why they find it difficult to imagine a child being gay: The word conjures up *adult* sexuality, *clearly*. And yet *gay* no more equals *sex* than *heterosexual* does. Our society has no problem with a little boy holding a little girl's hand and kissing her. But if two little boys did the same, many would be outraged. This is covert sexual abuse, inappropriately sexualizing the child—and ignoring the love and romantic emotions that can occur between a little boy and girl, two little boys, or two little girls.

In other words, to be gay is sexual and not seen for being an affectional, relational, spiritual, psychological, and emotional experience as well (Kort, 2003). This is homophobic by way of being homo-ignorant. Straight children are not seen as sexual so why would gay children be seen differently?

Yet another form of covert abuse is telling young boys that homosexuality is wrong, a sin; that if you're gay, you are not "a man." Others referring to you or other gay men as sissies, immature, or deviant—to name a few slurs—is a form of name-calling and gender bashing. Wendy Maltz's *The Sexual Healing Journey* describes some of the consequences of telling about one's original sexual abuse which, I believe, parallel what any gay man goes through when he comes out to others.

For example, sexual abuse survivors and gay men don't want to be seen as victims. People make comments like, "Oh, that's too bad. You're going to have a hard life." Often gays want to be seen as men, not just marginalized. Yet people judge and label them for their sexual behavior alone, as they do the sexual abuse survivor. They'll embrace their own label before they accept the person.

Another parallel of abuse is that both abuse survivors and gay men feel sexually embarrassed and ashamed. People sexualize and pigeonhole gay men into a category, so they carry the same burdens as do sexual abuse survivors. Maltz states that—having been touched in very private places, whether physically and/or emotionally—is an intimate, very personal offense. Imagine the gay teacher who's told that he's no more than a sexual predator; that if his school learned he was gay they would (and sometimes do) terminate his employment, lest he try to entice male students. Thus he is forced into the closet and is unable to be out about who he is to himself and to the gay teen who may need the role model to get through his development of his gay identity.

Like the sexual abuse survivor, a gay man must remember that he's done nothing shameful. The shame lies on the perpetrators who have judged him wrongly, based solely on their false beliefs. Gay Affirmative Psychotherapy, along with sexual abuse counseling, helps clients see that the problem lies in what was—and is—being done *to* them and not *in* them (Chernin & Johnson, 2002).

In addition, the sexual abuse survivor worries that he'll be viewed as less of a man. Many heterosexist and homophobic people claim that gay men are more like women. Even gays discriminate against effeminate men, saying, "If I wanted a woman, I'd have been straight." This all creates the mindset that being gay—or at least, not "macho"—makes you less than a man. Similarly, the survivor of overt sexual abuse also fears what people will think of him because, as Maltz says, "our society gives boys the message that men should be able to stand up for themselves and fight off danger. They're also told that if a man gets hurt, he should go it alone instead of seeking help." Imagine the profound double bind of being gay *and* having been sexually molested! "Because most abuse of males is perpetrated by other males," Maltz writes, "heterosexual male victims may worry that they will be seen as homosexual if others hear the details of what occurred. Gay men may wonder if the abuse made them gay."

Another factor that mirrors the dynamics of sexual abuse is being warned not to tell. Gay men get that message throughout their lives: "Don't talk about it." So when a gay man does come out, he must courageously risk having people threaten to harm him, vandalize his house, kill his pets, fire him, reject him—or all of the above. Normally, of course, when someone comes out, such things do not happen. But the same nightmare holds true for sexual abuse survivors, whose tormentors often threaten to harm them or loved ones if they ever tell. So they don't, giving power over to the perpetrators.

Existing literature on sexual abuse talks about the thoughts and effects of a sexual abuse survivor which parallel what happens to gay male teens who bring this into their adulthood. (Maltz, 1991; Lew, 2004). These thoughts and effects are:

1. Self-perception being hopelessly flawed
2. Pretending that nothing is wrong
3. Keeping sexual secrets
4. Becoming a master of pretense
5. Feeling cut off and disowning parts of one's self
6. Confusion about one's sexuality.

Results of sexual abuse in adulthood are (Maltz, 1991; Lew, 2004)

1. Affection inappropriately sexualized
2. Preoccupation with sex
3. Deaden all feelings to avoid sexual arousal
4. Isolation from others
5. Short lived relationships
6. Settling for very little
7. World feels unsafe
8. Self hate
9. Self-abuse/injury
10. Suicide thoughts/gestures
11. People who care for you may kill you or abandon you
12. You feel responsible and to blame for causing them to abuse you
13. "You are bad" feeling
14. No where is safe!

The experience of abuse results in the core beliefs of sexual addicts that Patrick Carnes popularized (Carnes, 1991). I believe the same core beliefs are held by gay teenagers making them vulnerable to the development of sexual addiction.

1. I am basically a bad and unworthy person.
2. No one would love me if they knew I was Gay.
3. My needs are never going to get met if I have to depend on others.
4. World is dangerous!

Suicide

An article about gay teens cannot be complete without at least addressing suicidality. Repeated research reveals that 30 percent more gay youths attempt suicide than other young people. However, the latest research shows this percentage to be even higher, more like 39–42 percent (Ritter & Terndrup, 2002). The research also concludes that being gay and lesbian is usually not the sole reason for the high suicide rate. The other factors are included in

this article such as isolation, heterosexism, homophobia, alienation, and the name calling and enforced role-play of heterosexuality. However more reasons exist that contribute to suicidality of gay teens including family rejection, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, verbal abuse, chronic depression, school problems, drug and alcohol problems, lower self-worth, and premature self-sufficiency (Halpert, 2002). Sexual addiction can be a way of masking the difficulties of being both gay and difficulty being an adolescent. Sexual acting out can be a way to avoid suicide. It can also be a way of finding “freedom” in that through sex male adolescents can find older men to take care of them and provide them with financial resources that they would not have had otherwise. The problem, of course, is that most of these teens are not practicing safe sex and they are putting themselves at risk for HIV and physical harm and are behaviorally on a mission toward suicide just by virtue of not protecting themselves.

DISCUSSION

A review of the literature shows a lack of addressing the trauma that gay and lesbian adolescents face. Historically the literature on homosexuality was more focused on its etiology as if the end result was pathological, as in heterosexuality gone bad. However, today it is looked at through the lens of the development of homosexuality. Gays and lesbians are seen today from a healthier point of view with a more normative developmental process. While adolescents can handle a developing homosexual romantic and sexual orientation, they cannot handle the heterosexist and homophobic acts directed at them as explained in this article.

It is essential that the trauma model be used and considered in dealing with gay teens, particularly male adolescents who are so vulnerable to hostile attacks by other males regarding their gayness. This trauma bonds with the development and expression of their sexual orientation and can make them vulnerable to sexual addiction. By examining the homophobia as cultural sexual abuse, the trauma model can be used as a means of treatment for these individuals.

REFERENCES

- Abel, G., Becker, J., Mittelman, M., Cunningham-Raher, J., Rouleau, J. L., & Murphy, W. D. (1987). Self-reported sex crimes of nonincarcerated paraphilics. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 1*, 3–25.
- American Psychological Association, Committee on Lesbian and Gay Concerns. (1998). *Appropriate therapeutic responses to sexual orientation*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Blanchard, G. (1989). *Sex offender treatment: A psychoeducational model*. Minneapolis, MN: Golden Valley Institute for Behavioral Medicine.

- Blanchard, G. (1990). Differential diagnosis of sex offenders: Distinguishing characteristics of the sex addict. *American Journal of Preventative Psychiatry & Neurology*, 2(3), 45–47.
- Carnes, P. (1992). *Don't call it love*. New York: Bantam; Reprint edition.
- Cassese, J. (Ed.) (2000). *Gay men and childhood sexual abuse: Integrating the shattered self*. Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press.
- Chernin, J. N., & Johnson, M. R. (2002). *Affirmative psychotherapy and counseling for lesbians and gay men*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.
- Giller, E. (1999). Passages to prevention: Prevention across life's spectrum. <http://www.sidran.org/whatistrauma.html>.
- Green, R. (1987). *The "sissy boy" syndrome and the development of homosexuality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Halpert, S. (2002). Suicidal behavior among gay male youth. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy*, pp. 53–80.
- Herman, J. L. (1992). *Trauma and recovery*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Herek, G. M. (1986b). The social psychology of homophobia: Toward a practical theory. *Review Of Law and Social Change*, 14(9), 923–934.
- Herek, G. M. (1990). The context of anti-gay violence: Notes on cultural and psychological heterosexism. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 5 (3), 316–333.
- Herek, G. M. (2004). Beyond "homophobia": Thinking about sexual stigma and prejudice in the twenty-first century. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 1(2), 6–24.
- Hueppelsheuser, M., Crawford, P., & George, D. (1997). The link between incest abuse and sexual addiction. *The Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity Journal*, 4.
- Kort, J. (2003). *10 smart things gay men can do to improve their lives*. Los Angeles, CA: Alyson Books.
- Kort, J. (2004). Queer eye for the straight therapist. *Psychotherapy Networker*, May/June, pp. 56–61.
- Lew, M. (2004). *Victims no longer: The classic guide for men recovering from sexual child abuse*. New York: Perennial Currents, 2nd ed.
- Maltz, W. (1991). *The sexual healing journey: A guide for survivors of sexual abuse*. New York: HarperCollins.
- McNaught, B. (1993). *Gay issues in the workplace*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- Nakken, C. (1989). *The addictive personality*. Center City, MN: Hazelden Foundations.
- Nicolosi, J. (1997). *Reparative therapy of male homosexuality: A new clinical approach*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Niesen, J. H. (1993). Healing from cultural victimization: Recovery from shame due to heterosexism. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy*, 2, pp. 77–89.
- Price, D. M. (2003). A developmental perspective of treatment for sexually vulnerable youth. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*, 10(4), 225–245.
- Ritter, K. Y., & Terndrup, A. I. (2002). *Handbook of affirmative psychotherapy with lesbians and gay men*. New York: The Guildford Press.
- Schaefer, A. W. (1987). *When society becomes an addict*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Schwartz, M. F., & Masters, W. H. (1994). Integration of trauma-based, cognitive, behavioral, systemic and addiction approaches for treatment of hypersexual pair-bonding disorder. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity Journal*, 1(1).