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## Demographic effects on the length of stay and discharge destination from the gay and lesbian adolescent social services agency's group homes

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DEMOGRAPHIC EFFECTS ON THE LENGTH OF STAY AND  
DISCHARGE DESTINATION FROM THE GAY AND  
LESBIAN ADOLESCENT SOCIAL SERVICES  
AGENCY'S GROUP HOMES

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

---

by  
Lenwood Valentino Patterson

June 2009

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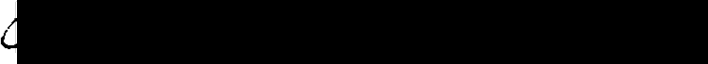
by  
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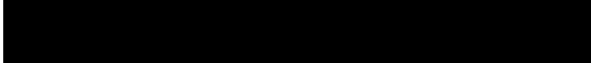
June 2009

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## ABSTRACT

This correlational descriptive research was focused on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth within the foster care system. Specifically it studied how the demographic factors of age, race, sexual identity, and referral source impact their lengths of stay in a group home and discharge destinations. The Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services agency (GLASS) was the site at which this project was executed. An available sample (N = 150) was selected from secondary data and various statistical tests executed utilizing SPSS software to identify possible predictable and outcome variables. Once all parties unanimously agreed that the tests executed developed statistical results, or a lack thereof, the project terminated. The findings were communicated to the research site and the public via this scholarly research report. It is hoped that these findings will assist in further research and lead to greater success in addressing the needs of this most vulnerable population within the scope of social work practice.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my Higher Power, who I call God, for giving me the strength and stamina to continue my growth and most of all for sending me the Angels listed within these Acknowledgements. First and foremost is my mentor, Michael Ralke and his partner who is no longer with us, Frank Boudewyns for pushing me when I did not believe I could be pushed any further. Not only were these two instrumental in my growth process but everyone who I met within their employ (Clinicians, Administrators, and Clients).

I would also like to acknowledge my family, mostly my mother, who without her words of encouragement, this project may not have been. Every sponsor that I have encountered within the 12-step programs of which I belong, who, during those times when I wanted to go back to that damaged little boy I felt that I was; reminded me that I am now a man who has healed through those past scars and can achieve the unbelievable.

I would like to acknowledge the professors who go above and beyond their call of duty of being simply an educator within a system, but also a beacon of light; these include but are not limited to: Professor Dee M.

Lewis, Professor Andrew Anderson, Dr. Nancy Mary, Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Professor Laurel Brown, and Dr. Carolyn McAllister.

I would also like to acknowledge the wonderful organization of the Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Service Agency, along with everyone from their clients and employees alike, who have touched my soul in a very, very special manner.

And last but not least, my husband and my son who has taught me that I can have it all, if I am only willing to do the work necessary to create, obtain and maintain - I love you both and looking forward to a lifetime together.

DEDICATION

One Hundred Years from now

(excerpt from "Within My Power" by Forest Witcraft)

One Hundred Years from now

It will not matter

what kind of car I drove,

What kind of house I lived in,

how much money was in my bank account .

nor what my clothes looked like.

But the world may be a better place because

I was important in the life of a child.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
CHAPTER ONE: ASSESSMENT	
Introduction .....	1
Research Focus and Question .....	1
Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm .....	3
Literature Review .....	4
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth in Foster Care .....	4
Supporting the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth in Foster Care .....	6
Theory Guiding Conceptualization .....	9
Potential Contribution of Study to Micro and Macro Social Work Practice .....	10
Summary .....	11
CHAPTER TWO: PLANNING	
Introduction .....	13
Plan for Engagement .....	13
Research Site and Study Participants .....	13
Engagement Strategies .....	14
Self Preparation .....	15
Diversity Issues .....	16



Ethical Issues .....	16
Political Issues .....	17
Plan for Implementation .....	18
Data Gathering .....	18
Selection of Participants .....	19
Phases of Data Collection .....	19
Data Recording .....	20
Plan for Evaluation .....	20
Data Analysis .....	20
Plan for Termination .....	22
Communicating Findings to Study Site and Study Participants .....	22
Termination of Study .....	22
Plan for Follow Up .....	23
Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants .....	23
Summary .....	23

### CHAPTER THREE: IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction .....	25
Research Site and Study Participants .....	25
Selection of Participants .....	26
Data Gathering .....	27
Phases of Data Collection .....	27
Data Recording .....	28
Summary .....	29

CHAPTER FOUR: EVALUATION

Introduction ..... 31

Data Analysis ..... 31

Data Interpretation ..... 37

Implications of Findings for Micro and Macro  
Practice ..... 39

    Discussion ..... 39

Summary ..... 43

CHAPTER FIVE: TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

Introduction ..... 45

Communicating Findings to Study Site and  
Study Participants ..... 45

Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants ..... 46

Termination of Study ..... 47

Summary ..... 47

APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT ..... 49

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION ..... 51

REFERENCES ..... 53

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Race Frequency Table .....	33
Table 2. Gender Frequency Table .....	34
Table 3. Sexual Orientation Table .....	34
Table 4. Discharge Destination (DD) Frequency Table .....	41

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Means Plots ..... 37

## CHAPTER ONE

### ASSESSMENT

#### Introduction

There is a diversity of youth within the foster care population. Inclusive in this diversity is the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) adolescent. The Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services agency (GLASS) has been a pivotal leader in how to care for this almost invisible population of the foster care system. GLASS' extensive experience is a perfect template for foster care professionals to utilize, particularly the GLASS group homes, in how to meet the challenges associated with the LGBTQ youth within the foster care system. Inclusive in this chapter is the focus of the research, a literature review along with the theory guiding of conceptualization and last, a potential contribution to a future study of micro and macro social work practice.

#### Research Focus and Question

The foster care population is a diverse population and to date the LGBTQ youth within this population have not been extensively studied. The needs of the LGBTQ

youth in foster care have been overlooked by the foster care system in general; this is supported by the definitive amount of literature available. Therefore the focus of this research is to add to that collection of research. The LGBTQ youth and an agency, The Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services agency (GLASS), who's primary focus is to address the varied needs of this most overlooked and vulnerable population within the foster care system, is the primary focus of this research project.

The focus of this research addressed how the demographic factors of age, sex orientation, gender, race, and referral source affected the lengths of stay (LOS) in GLASS' group homes. The agency's group homes were specifically developed to meet the needs of the LGBTQ youth in foster care. In addition to measuring the lengths of stay; discharge destinations (DD) were also a measured variable. Discharge destinations were a relatively difficult variable to measure, since this population was not always stable in their living environments; however, with the pre-collected data available from the agency, all efforts were attempted.

## Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm

Due to the quantitative nature of the focused research, its correlational design, and the use of a large previously collected representative sample (n = 150) from the participating agency, a positivist paradigm was proven to be the best approach. The rationale for using this paradigm was to allow the data to be analyzed utilizing the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). This package is well known, and there is hardly a social scientist who has earned a graduate degree in the past 30 years who has not had some contact with SPSS (Babbie, Halley, & Zaino, 2007, p. 4).

With such a large sample size, SPSS was most effective due to its ease in implementing each case into the SPSS spreadsheet format; allowing stringent statistical tests to be performed. Since this was a descriptive study versus any of the qualitative paradigms, there was no need to further explore the population of interest. Further exploration would have measured the quality of GLASS' programmatic components and this would have required a much more qualitative research. Undertaking this type of research would have required a more thorough approval from the Institutional

Review Board (IRB) along with not honoring GLASS' request of the researcher in regard to the data they had accumulated. GLASS was clear in its request of wanting the researcher to statistically analyze the collected data to assist them with describing the population in which the organization serves (See Appendix B).

Utilizing the SPSS package allowed the generation of descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, modes, and medians) in addition to comparing more than one variable at any given time; which is the optimal purpose of the package. These complex bivariate and multivariate comparisons will allow further research to take place if ever need be; particularly any qualitative research that will enhance the social work field of practice relating to the LGBTQ youth population.

#### Literature Review

##### Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth in Foster Care

The foster care system holds a diverse population and inclusive in this population is the LGBTQ youth. The LGBTQ population, not unlike their heterosexual counterparts, comes with multiple challenges affecting their mental health. However, studies have shown that



LGBTQ youth have a higher record of suicide than youth that are non-LGBTQ. Moreover, Rotheram-Borus, Hunter, and Rosario (1994) report that LGBTQ youth are six times more likely to attempt suicide and this is without the extra variable of being part of the foster care system.

It has been noted that the departments put in charge of the U.S. foster care youth, have not been responsive to the needs of the LGBTQ youth along with being negligent in providing adequate and equitable care (Mallon, 1992). Although, GLASS has been at the forefront at addressing the needs of this marginalized population for the past 25 years, there is yet more to be done.

Some of the recommendations, using GLASS as a model, are to sensitize child care workers to the challenges associated with being a LGBTQ youth within the system. One of these challenges, as reported by the Joint Task Force of New York City's child welfare administration, is being verbally harassed on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity while at their group home (1994). This was experienced by 100% of LGBTQ youth in New York City groups.

With such prevalent experiences, it is by no accident that the major referral sources for GLASS are

the justice system and other child welfare systems. Research shows that these two systems are significantly intertwined (Weithorn, 2005). There are significant experiences which lead LGBTQ youth into either of these systems, none of which are pleasant.

However, once resulting in either, the child welfare system or the judicial system, it would gravely benefit the adults associated not to exacerbate the issues that put the youth there in the first place.

Supporting the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,  
Transgender, and Questioning Youth in Foster Care

As previously mentioned, there is a dearth of literature addressing the care of the LGBTQ youth within our foster care system; however, what is available is by far only a beginning. Furthermore to exemplify the aforementioned, California Department of Social Services published a point in time comparison report describing the characteristics of the foster care population which identifies demographics (June, 2001). These demographics included gender, age, race, and referral source however it's as though these children have no sexual identity or orientation whatsoever, which further denigrates them within the system. To distinguish between sexual

orientation and gender identification, the researcher will be utilizing Wagner (2001) definitions. These definitions are: Gender Identity as a person's self-perception as being male or female and Sexual orientation as a person's romantic/physical attraction to the same or the opposite gender (p. 13). GLASS has been in the forefront of the nation in taking care of this marginalized population.

The traditional definition of group home care services for children as described by the Child Welfare League of America (1982) is a child welfare service that provides 24 hour care for a child in a residential facility designed as a therapeutic environment. Within this setting are integrated medical and psychological services, educational services, and individual plans for each child in a group living environment who cannot be effectively helped in his or her own home, (or) with a substitute family (p. 15).

With the aforementioned definition in mind, it is imperative, that the LGBTQ youth in group homes experience a therapeutic environment, exclusive of pathologizing their sexual or gender orientation. GLASS' group homes have attempted to present the youth with the

highest therapeutic care available, however, there are times that a multiplicity of variables interact and this is not enough or possible.

Some of these variables consist of societal biases regarding sexual minorities which is further exploited by the heterosexist views of many of society's major institutions such as places of academia and worship. It is reported that derogatory remarks by fellow students directed to LGBTQ youth often goes unchallenged by teachers, administrators, or school counselors, whereas similar racist statements would prompt a reprimand (Krivaskda, Savin-Williams, & Slater, 1992; O'Connor, 1994; Pope, 2000).

When these youth do not feel safe in places where they will spend most of their time, healthy psychological and emotional development becomes stifled. Jordan et al. (1997), in a study of 34 LGBTQ adolescents, reported a clear relationship between derogatory language by their peers and adults and self-harmful behavior, such as suicidal ideation, attempted suicide, running away, poor academic performance, and truancy.

The variables are complicated and out of the scope of this research; nonetheless they exist both externally

and internally. The GLASS group homes attempt to address the variations of these external and psychological influences by providing strong peer interaction along with sensitive clinical and support staff to assist this population to mature into responsible, productive, mentally healthy members of society.

### Theory Guiding Conceptualization

There were a multitude of theories that guided the conceptualization of this research, none of which were inappropriate; however, Bowlby's Attachment Theory is the concept chosen for this project. Attachment Theory is a concept developed by John Bowlby (1969) and the concept is premised on the child's need for relationships. It is usually the primary caregiver's responsibility to meet the relationship needs of the child. The quality of this relationship need underscores the child's future relationship attachments throughout their lifespan. The quality of attachment for the LGBTQ youth is little to non-existent, since our society usually frowns on any behaviors from children that are not gender appropriate. Baker (2002, p. 36) posits that parents with fears about their son's masculinity may disapprove if he cries easily or is more fearful or affection-seeking than they

consider normal, this would usually lead fathers to withdraw from their effeminate sons.

When adding the above mentioned variables along with not having any real primary caregivers except the foster care system with inadequately trained workers in regards to meeting the needs of LGBTQ youth, attachment is further underdeveloped.

#### Potential Contribution of Study to Micro and Macro Social Work Practice

The potential of this study in its contribution to micro and macro social work practice are numerous. The data obtained will hopefully assist workers in the social work profession to increase their identification of LGBTQ youth within the foster care population, inclusive of the demographics associated (age, gender, sexual identity, referral source, and race), and hopefully the best practice to alleviate the negative current practices, such as the current omission of them as viable research subjects.

Furthermore, from a micro perspective this research will assist the LGBTQ youth in viewing him or herself as a productive member and a contributing asset to society. Leaning towards a mezzo perspective, LGBTQ youth can

mature into becoming LGBTQ parental figures for families within our society with self-esteem and self worth equivalent to their heterosexual counter parts.

Assistance in normalizing sexual and gender identity as simply another psychological characteristic and not something that is minimized or pathologized is the overall macro attribution of this project.

All components of this research were executed with the scope of the social work profession's ethical principles inclusive of its core values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence.

#### Summary

There is a need to support the LGBTQ youth in foster care, due to their many negative experiences within the system. GLASS has been at the forefront of meeting these needs by developing group homes in communities where GLASS can positively address their therapeutic and social challenges. Faulty attachments are a variable that needs to be considered in meeting this population's challenges, which GLASS addresses through a variety of resources,

such as positive peer involvement and gender identity sensitive staff. Demographic concerns (gender & sexual identity, age, race), along with referral sources will assist the social work profession in how to further assist this population in becoming productive members of society along with adding to the small amount of research currently available. The core values of the social work profession are a primary vehicle in achieving the aforementioned goals.



## CHAPTER TWO

### PLANNING

#### Introduction

GLASS was the research site for this project. The plan of engagement along with a description of the agency's goals and the primary characteristics of the population are covered within this section. Also a discussion of engagement strategies about the preparation techniques of the researcher including how diversity, ethical, and political issues are addressed. The plans for implementation of the data collection and analysis along with the various stages associated including the evaluation stage are also explored. Finally, the plan for termination and follow up concludes this section.

#### Plan for Engagement

##### Research Site and Study Participants

The Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services agency (GLASS) was the research site for this project. GLASS is a private, non-profit, social service agency dedicated to providing a wide range of residential, social services, and health care services to children and youth who are in foster care, on probation, or who are

homeless. Although, the majority of their clientele are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) in their sexuality, GLASS does not discriminate as to which children utilize their services. GLASS is also one of the few agencies that accept adolescent sex offenders, so they also have a small heterosexual population due to that dynamic.

GLASS provides all the aforementioned services in safe, loving, non-judgmental, and supportive living environments, while providing full access to all the vocational and educational opportunities to which these youth are entitled.

Since secondary data was utilized for this research, there was no direct engagement with the clientele that GLASS serves. The only direct engagement was with the Director of Research and Quality of the research site.

#### Engagement Strategies

The strategy for engagement required utilizing social work micro skills of compassion and understanding to introduce the research to the site. Compassion by the researcher for the population that GLASS serves, LGBTQ youth, was the initiative needed to engage the site and understanding that this vulnerable population has not had

much prevalent past research. The aforementioned concerns were communicated to the site gatekeeper along with exploration of what can be done to put GLASS further into the scientific research community. Furthermore, the researcher had been performing an internship at GLASS and wanted, and needed, a macro experience to complete their graduate social work course. Thus the impetus for this research was created and was an asset to all involved, inclusive of GLASS, LGBTQ youth, foster care, probation services, and ultimately, the whole of society.

#### Self Preparation

The performance of individual therapy sessions along with group therapy as a component of the internship, prepared the researcher to be sensitive to the population being studied. Although there was no direct contact with the research participants, all guidelines regarding autonomy and confidentiality were executed. Keeping the aforementioned in the forefront, there was an extensive study of all guidelines given by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) in regard to human subjects' research.

### Diversity Issues

There were no direct diversity issues due to the study utilizing secondary data. However, the analysis of the data reveals diversity concerns regarding the specific demographic independent variables. By analyzing the independent variables of sexual orientation, gender, age, race, referral source and how their relationship to the dependent variables of lengths of stay in the group homes and discharge destinations, exclusively, it is hoped that awareness of these factors will be considered in future investigations and research. Along with this diversity awareness, the outcome of this research will assist with affecting the most positive outcome methods for serving the LGBTQ youth.

### Ethical Issues

Ethical issues are a major concern of this study due to the population and variables being studied. Whenever there are youth involved, particularly regarding sexuality and race, there is a concern for any ethical issues that might develop. To assure the objectivity of this research a number of professionals were involved, a research advisor, GLASS' Director of Quality Assurance along with her assistant, and the Institutional Review

Board (IRB). The Institutional Review Board (IRB), consisting of persons from diverse professions, are experts in ensuring that stringent research guidelines are followed regarding any diversity, ethical, or political issues addressed within research projects.

When deciding what is ethical, all of these values systems come into play (moral, competency, and terminal). Sometimes they lead to answers to ethical problems that contradict each other. We have guidelines for basic research practice, but quite often such guidelines are only a starting point and we are left with difficult decisions to make (Morris, 2006). This research study is offering a preliminary methodology to studying and evaluating current LGBTQ practices within the foster care system but also maintaining the anonymity of the GLASS LGBTQ youth and their data used in this study (See Appendix B).

### Political Issues

There were minimum power relationship struggles with the research gatekeepers, since it was previously agreed this research would benefit both the site and the researcher. However, it was an intrusion on the site merely due to the research dynamic being added. The

researcher assured the research site that with so many disciplines involved, i.e. research advisor and university IRB, there will be minimal time intrusion.

In regard to political issues regarding the population studied, GLASS has been an advocate for over 20 years to ensure that these youth's rights are not overlooked or abused. This research was just an extension of what GLASS already expertly advocates; that all children have a right to grow up in a safe, supportive, and non-threatening living environment.

#### Plan for Implementation

##### Data Gathering

The primary data was acquired through GLASS' intake and discharge process, and later transcribed to an Excel spreadsheet data extraction instrument created by the researcher (See Appendix A). The data extraction instrument was utilized as secondary data. The raw data was translated into SPSS allowing appropriate coding and statistical testing. In order to analyze the gathered data, its level of measurements was noted to allow the most effective bivariate and, if possible, multivariate tests to be executed.

### Selection of Participants

The cases sampled were selected from the available secondary data on the population of interest. This randomization allowed for the 95% chance that the mean for the sample fell within two standard deviations of the population mean which is the usual requirement for statistical analysis. The use of the available random sampling also addressed any associated external validity concerns. All participants (N = 150) were selected from the GLASS' group homes and were closed cases.

### Phases of Data Collection

The Director of Quality Assurance at GLASS along with her assistant made the secondary data available to the researcher. As previously mentioned, the data was collected during the intake process and, whenever possible, the discharge process. Since foster care youth are from a very unstable population, it was not 100% possible to obtain the dependent variable of discharge destinations. This variable, among several others, is addressed on the data extraction instrument (See Appendix A) labeled "absent without leave" and analyzed accordingly with the other associated independent variables.

### Data Recording

The data was recorded into SPSS from the excel spreadsheet, which was the data extraction instrument (See Appendix A). The findings were recorded in a private manual of the researcher, which was later published in this community available scholarly report.

### Plan for Evaluation

### Data Analysis

The data was analyzed utilizing SPSS' statistical features. Once each dependent variable (lengths of stay and discharge destinations) and the independent variables (age, sexual & gender identity, race, and referral source) along with the different levels of both, i.e., probation or Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS), or unknown, relative to the various levels of referral source and the other independent variables respectively are operationalized and put into measureable forms (ordinal, nominal, or scale) the data was analyzed with a series of tests. These tests included, but were not limited to, all initial univariate calculations such as frequencies including the central tendency calculations of mode, median, mean and standard deviation



of each variable. Also, calculating the initial descriptive statistics assisted in correcting any input errors before more stringent and robust tests was executed.

Once the aforementioned procedures were executed, there was a series of bivariate and, when possible, multivariate analyses. Depending on the level of measurement of the dependent variables there were separate multiple regression tests on each of the dependent variables (lengths of stay and discharge destinations) with the specific independent variables, an analysis of variance test (ANOVA), and/or possibly both. The Chi-square was utilized for all nominal data to identify strength of association by comparing expected and outcome frequencies. The chi-square also assisted with ruling out sampling error as the explanation for the variables' association. Since there are multiple levels of each outcome variable, one multivariate procedure that could be utilized, among many, would be a discriminant analysis.

Initially it was difficult for the researcher to identify all of the statistical tests necessary and/or appropriate to thoroughly execute the data for the

research project; however, as the project matured along with the abundant involvement of professionals involved (research advisor, researcher, and GLASS' Director of Quality Assurance along with her assistant) the data was accurately analyzed with the most robust tests possible.

#### Plan for Termination

##### Communicating Findings to Study Site and Study Participants

As is the nature of the positivist paradigm, there was a communication of the findings to the study site through the Director of Quality Assurance for GLASS along with her assistant. The researcher and the director explored if any further communication would be necessary with the site besides the scholarly publication of the researcher. Furthermore, since the data for the research was secondary case data, it was not necessary to include any official communication of the findings to the sample, although it is available for any LGBTQ youth to obtain through the aforementioned scholarly publication that the researcher will so graciously leave with GLASS.

##### Termination of Study

The study was terminated once all parties, both the researcher and GLASS, agreed there were no further need

to study or test the topic of interest. All statistical procedures and findings, along with any recommendations for further research or treatment were communicated to GLASS. It was in the researcher's optimum interest to extend appreciations to GLASS and offer any service in the future to this exceptional and necessary agency.

#### Plan for Follow Up

##### Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants

By the nature of this paradigm, there will be no official follow ups with the site or any ongoing relationship. However, there was written communication left with the researcher's contact information given to the site's gate keeper, the Director of Research and Quality, to utilize if any assistance is ever necessary to execute further research.

#### Summary

A description of the population of interest and the research site along with how engagement strategies were initiated were discussed in this section. It was imperative for the researcher to be educated on the pivotal issues requiring compassion for and understanding of the population of interest, along with addressing

diversity, ethical, and political issues surrounding such a misunderstood population. Secondary data was collected from an excel spreadsheet and transcribed into SPSS software. Level of measurements utilized by SPSS was assigned to allow statistical tests to be executed. The findings from the tests terminated the research, communicated to the research site, along with being recorded in this published scholarly report. There is no official follow up planned; however, it was beneficial to leave contact information of the researcher with the gatekeeper to allow communication for assistance with any further research project development.

## CHAPTER THREE

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### Introduction

This section discusses the research site along with the particulars of the secondary data that included the study participants. Included are the procedures engaged to obtain specific needed data addressing how confidentiality was enforced throughout the collection of the foresaid data. It also includes how specific GLASS employees assisted the researcher in gathering necessary data to allow appropriate input of the data within the statistical software package utilized.

#### Research Site and Study Participants

GLASS is a family services agency started in 1984 to address the mental health needs of the LGBTQ adolescent and their families within the foster care system. Since that time it has broaden its scope to include the general population and has also added a foster family agency (FFA) component.

Although there are a variety of social services offered by GLASS, the group home participants were the targeted population. This population consists of severely

emotionally disturbed youth between the ages of 11 and 19. The youth are referred by three modes of communication with the agency. These three modes of communication referrals are the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS), The Probation Department, and/or community shelters.

### Selection of Participants

Once a formal agreement from GLASS and the researcher was obtained (See Appendix B), participants were selected from available secondary data from the seven (7) group homes that GLASS operates. These random selections were obtained from GLASS' database that included previously obtained admission and discharge data ranging from the dates of July 2006 through April 2008.

Since the research project is only concerned about identifying discharge destinations and length of stay (LOS), there were no other data needed besides geographical data which included the specific data initially identified by the researcher i.e., age, race, sexual orientation, referral source, and gender. With the aforementioned in mind it was not necessary for the researcher to view any charts relating to the specific

participants involved; which also help to address any confidential variables associated with the IRB's requirements.

#### Data Gathering

The data was initially gathered from the GLASS' Director of Quality Assurance, however; as the project continued, other arrangements had to be made. Some of these arrangements consisted of indulging the assistant to the Director due to her increase in employment responsibilities along with her specific time constraints. GLASS had also gone through some staff changes, which made the Director less available for the project; however, she informed her assistant of all the information so the project would not be delayed. The assistant was able to supply missing information that was not given previously specifically concerning age or sexual orientation discrepancies.

#### Phases of Data Collection

The initial data was collected from confidential reports. The foresaid reports however did not contain all of the specific information needed to execute the project. The omitted information entailed sex, age,

sexual identity, and race. The information that was included in the original data contained a portion the dependent and independent variables i.e. LOS and referral source respectively.

It became evident that the independent variables would need to be collected if the project was going to be executed appropriately, thus the second and final phase of data collection was initiated. This further action required sitting down with the assistant and going down the list individually to obtain foresaid missing information. Furthermore, a data extraction instrument was developed (See Appendix A) to ensure that all necessary data would be entered correctly into SPSS.

#### Data Recording

Once all data was collected and appropriate ages were calculated as the original data contained only dates of birth and not specific ages; the data was recorded into the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Implementing the data into SPSS allowed the ease of executing the data in the most accurate process available to date; along with utilizing the most robust necessary statistical tests available. These tests



included T-test, crosstabs, chi-square, multivariate (if possible), bivariate along with the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test. Inclusive of these tests are all central tendency calculations of the data and the frequencies.

#### Summary

GLASS was significantly developed to address the needs of the LGBTQ adolescent and their families within the foster care system. These needs include providing safe housing for the youth within their group homes. The data collected for this project was obtained with the help the Quality Assurance Director of GLASS along with her assistant from these group homes. The assistant was pivotal in obtaining the missing independent variable information necessary to execute the project.

Due to GLASS experiencing staff changes, the assistant became the primary point person within the organization to allow the researcher to continue the project. The assistant gave the dates of birth of the available random selected data which required calculation to obtain the specific ages of each participant of this secondary data. Once the ages were calculated, all data was encoded into SPSS software and tested for accuracy

•  
along with allowing obtainment of any significant  
statistical observances.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EVALUATION

#### Introduction

This chapter will explore the specific analysis of the collected data, along with individual practices utilized within the SPSS software utilized. The coding of each of the variables in accordance with a correlation study of this nature will also be included. The results of the aforesaid executions will be particularly espoused informing the reasoning for the executions. The section will conclude with a discussion regarding how the results of this research could further future studies along with supportive data that could initiate such research. These implications will address both micro as well as macro concerns regarding the population of interest.

#### Data Analysis

The data was analyzed utilizing the most recent version of SPSS (16.0), which lessened any data discrepancies an earlier version could have possibly omitted. The first test analyzed, as with any comparative study, is the central tendencies of the dependent variables (LOS and DD) and independent variables (race,

age, sexual orientation, gender, referral source) which allows for descriptive data (mean, mode, and median) in addition to frequency counts. The data was set at the conventional type I error rate of .05 when running all statistical tests.

The data consisted of  $N = 150$  with a diversity of racial descriptions. These descriptions included, Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic, Native American, Mixed (a combination of two or more), Asian, and other; with each numerically coded 0-6 respectively and entered into SPSS to be appropriately analyzed. In accordance with numerical coding, it was also determined if data was to be measured as nominal, ordinal, or scale; race was nominal data.

Central tendency and frequency analysis performed on race (See Table 1) included Caucasian ( $n = 10$ ), African-American ( $n = 84$ ), Hispanic ( $n = 50$ ), Mixed ( $n = 3$ ), Asian ( $n = 3$ ), and other ( $n = 0$ ); which gives total studied population ( $N = 150$ ); being nominal data, central tendencies were not available.

Table 1. Race Frequency Table

Race				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Caucasian	10	6.7	6.7	6.7
African-American	84	56.0	56.0	62.7
Hispanic	50	33.3	33.3	96.0
Mixed	3	2.0	2.0	98.0
Asian	3	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Based on analysis of age, it ranged from 13 to 20, with a (M = 17). Age being ratio data all central tendencies were appropriate, 18 was the mode along with 17.5 being the calculated median age; which was retrieved from the raw input data.

Continuing with the descriptive data, gender was categorized into four categories; (0 = male, 1 = female, 2 = Male To Female (MTF), 3 = Female To Male (FTM), in addition sexual orientation categorized; (0 = Gay, 1 = Lesbian, 2 = Bisexual, 3 = Questioning, 4 = Straight) respectfully. Once these codes were encoded into SPSS, the totals were with respect to gender: 77 Males, 65 Females, 5 MTFs, and 3 FTMs (See Table 2 Below).

Table 2. Gender Frequency Table

Gender				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid male	77	51.3	51.3	51.3
female	65	43.3	43.3	94.7
MTF	5	3.3	3.3	98.0
FTM	3	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

The totals regarding sexual orientation were: 79 Gay, 55 Lesbians, 10 Bisexuals, 0 Questioning, and 6 Straight or Heterosexual (See Table 3 Below).

Table 3. Sexual Orientation Table

Ornt				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Gay	79	52.7	52.7	52.7
Lesbian	55	36.7	36.7	89.3
Bisexual	10	6.7	6.7	96.0
Straight	6	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Concluding with the geographical data of the research, there were 74 referrals from DCFS and 76 from various countywide Juvenile Probation Departments. This data was coded into SPSS software as thus: 0 = DCFS, 1 = Probation, and 2 = Unknown. This signifies the end of identifying and coding the relevant geographical independent variables to describe the population housed in GLASS' group homes. This research will hopefully and optimally represent the demographics of GLASS' general populations.

Keeping with the nature of this descriptive and correlation research, describing the dependent variables of LOS and DD are the next frequency and central tendency variables illustrated. These variables were much lengthier due to running extensive tests with each multiple level contained in both of the independent variables. LOS contained an overwhelming range. In fact, although, it was a scale variable the minimum and the maximum within the studied population consisted of 1 day to 1,108 days; this skewed the data remarkably with average stays of ( $M = 146$ ). The median number of days was 60, and mode was 4 days.

Discharge Destination (DD) consisted of 10 possible choices (See Appendix A) and each was coded accordingly: 0 = Replacement, 1 = Reunification, 2 = Adoption, 3 = Guardianship, 4 = Higher Level of Care, 5 = Age of Majority, 6 = Transitional Living, 7 = Absence without Leave (AWOL), 8 = County Decision and 9 = Court Decision. After coding the DD's, as with all other data, frequencies and central tendency data was executed. The totals were (2, 24, 0, 2, 27, 2, 6, 85, 2, and 0) respectfully (see table 2).

The data was analyzed utilizing crosstabs for the dependent and independent variables followed by a Chi-square procedure. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was initiated on specific data which resulted in a positive regression means plot of orientation and the mean LOS (See Figure 1). Final analysis included a T-Test of LOS and referral source.



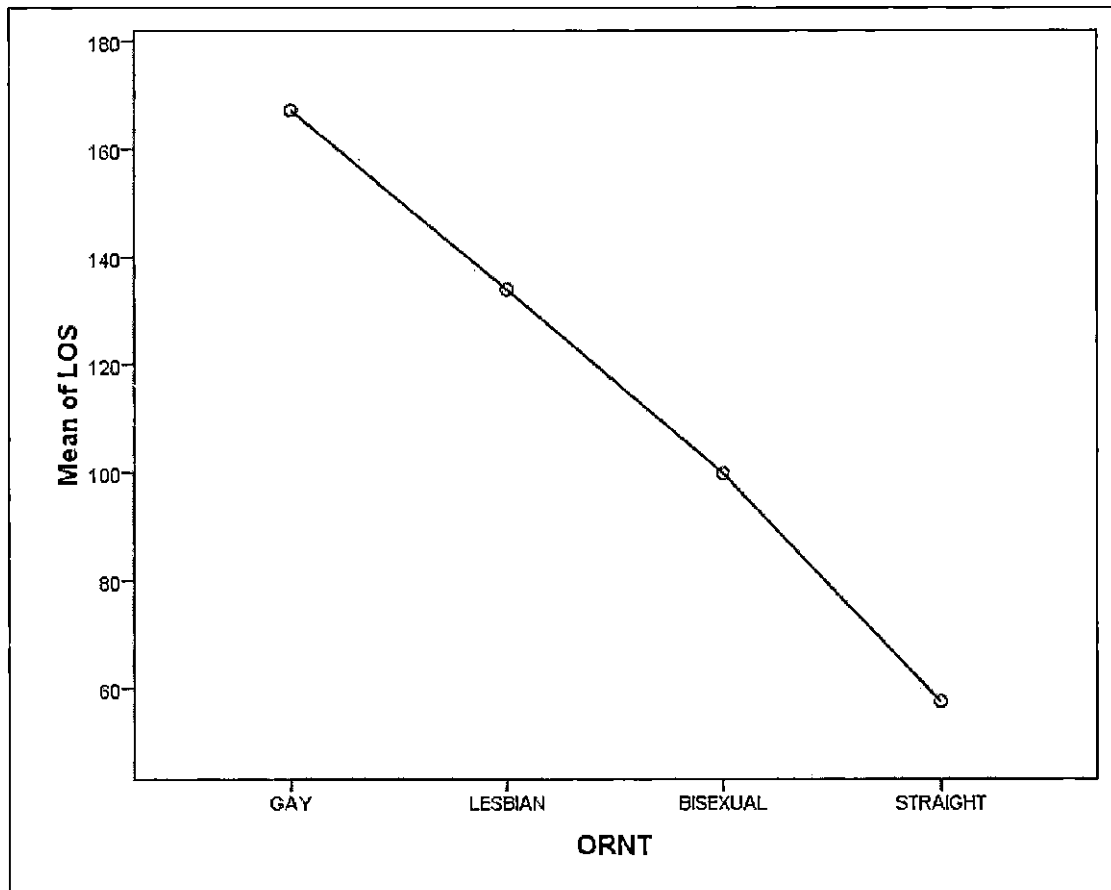


Figure 1. Means Plots

#### Data Interpretation

The data, as is the nature of the positivist paradigm, resulted in various outcomes; however, there were minimum statistical significant differences. This was important since the goal of the research was to simply identify and describe the client base making finding any statistical significance/difference an added bonus. The associated referenced significance was

correlation of LOS and Age ( $P \leq 0.05$ ) with a two tail test.

Furthermore regarding descriptive statistics, it was more likely for probation referrals to go AWOL vs. DCFS referrals (49, 36) respectfully. In addition the probation referrals also were more likely to have a DD of "higher level of care" as opposed to the youth referred by DCFS (18, 9) respectfully. These results were evident through crosstabs test utilizing the chi-square calculation ( $p \leq .008$ ;  $df = 7$ ).

Performing a one-way ANOVA exhibited minimum difference regarding sexual orientation, see means plot (figure 1). The averages LOS for Gays ( $M = 167$ ), Lesbian ( $M = 133$ ), Bisexual ( $M = 100$ ), and Straight ( $M = 57$ ). This is further explained in the implications/discussion section.

There were similar differences regarding ANOVA tests executed regarding race vs. LOS; Caucasian ( $M = 179$ ), African-American ( $M = 158$ ), Hispanic ( $M = 112$ ), Mixed ( $M = 180$ ), and Asian ( $M = 232$ ). Again these differences are significant due to the available population and not to any statistical analysis and possible explanations will be further explored throughout the research.

## Implications of Findings for Micro and Macro Practice

### Discussion

Although the findings of this study did not identify any major breakthroughs besides statistical significance ( $p = .008$ ) when the Chi-square test was performed regarding source and destination; performing the research was ground breaking in and of it self. As mentioned earlier, this has not been a highly researched population and GLASS has done a spectacular job at addressing the needs of this most vulnerable population.

The findings are indicative of what has been known in the foster care system for decades; that older foster youth remain in the foster care system longer than those who are younger. Further research could explore if this correlation is due to attachment needs being less developed as a result of the multiple placements that foster youth experience when permanent placement is not obtained by a certain age?

Regarding the findings that the Gay and Lesbian adolescents had longer average LOS when compared with the other included populations (Questioning, Bisexual, and Straight); this could imply that GLASS' expertise at

addressing their population of interest is effective, and could be modeled by other agencies who care for the LGBTQ Adolescent youth (See figure 1). Or it could be that since the available data included a larger number of Gays and Lesbians, the findings are skewed towards this population having longer stays on the average.

Discussing the findings regarding the average LOS for Mixed (M = 179) and Asian (M = 232) Adolescents appearing longer than other races is a direct reflection of the small sample of these cultures integrated in the study (3, 3) respectively. Further studies will need to include these populations at a more extensive level to deliver significant data in addition to allow generalization of the results to be applicable to the general population of interest.

Finally, it is important to address the high AWOL levels of this study, 85, (See table 4). As previously mentioned throughout this paper these foster youth at times, can find it difficult to attach or obtain positive role models. Although GLASS does an extraordinary job treating and caring for these severely emotionally

Table 4. Discharge Destination (DD) Frequency Table

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Replacement	2	1.3	1.3	1.3
Reunification	24	16.0	16.0	17.3
Adoption	2	1.3	1.3	18.7
Higher Level of Care	27	18.0	18.0	36.7
Age of Majority	2	1.3	1.3	38.0
Transitional Living	6	4.0	4.0	42.0
AWOL	85	56.7	56.7	98.7
County Decision	2	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

disturbed adolescents, there is a multiplicity of associated variables that GLASS, like many other foster agencies, will experience difficulty in addressing; mental health is one of those difficult variables. A study by Whitbeck, Xiaojin Chen, Hoyt, Tyler, and Johnson (2004) posits that lesbian homeless youth are more likely to have post-traumatic stress syndrome, conduct disorders, and alcohol and substance abuse problems than heterosexual homeless young women. In the same study gay homeless young men are reported to be more likely to meet criteria for major depressive episodes. Keeping the aforementioned at the forefront, GLASS could not have

possibly addressed all such odds inclusive of the basic issues associated with youth in foster care.

A future study focusing on mental health concerns as a genesis of high AWOL rates could be an extension of this research. However GLASS maintaining specific DD data for 40% (the percentage that did not go AWOL) of their clientele could still be seen as a positive outcome. A DD of AWOL does not necessarily indicate a negative outcome, specifically due to the challenges that LGBTQ youth in foster care have to address.

Performing a cross tabulation with race and DD, it was noticed that African-Americans and Hispanics were the majority of this 60% AWOL population (47, 28) respectively. One explanation could be that both of these ethnic groups are extremely family oriented. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2004) postulates African-Americans are apt to think of family as a wide network of kin plus longtime friends and other community members (p. 6). When out-of-home care is a group home; the sense of family exemplified in the African-American community is missing and a high AWOL DD could possibly be associated with searching out this missing connection for these youth.

This is similar to Hines, Garcia-Preto, McGoldrick, Almeida, and Waltman (as cited in Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2004, p. 63) stating family loyalty, unity, and honor, as well as family commitment, obligation, and responsibility, characterize most Latino American families, so much so that sacrifices of family are often encouraged, if not expected. It would be a hypothesis that like their African-American counterparts, these Hispanic youth are also search for the missing family connection usually associated in the group home milieu; possibly resulting in the high AWOL DD rate. Whatever the reasons for these high AWOL DD numbers, it would have to be put in the culture context of this studied population of interest; therefore any negative association would have to be further studied.

#### Summary

This section gave the specific coding of each particular level of both the independent and dependent variables associated with this research. It also referenced how these levels made some of the research difficult specifically the LOS range particular the outlier of 1,108 days by one of the participants. DD was

another variable of interest covered at length, particularly the AWOL category. There were references to the tables and figure(s) associated with the study to give a visual of the analyzed research. This section concluded with possible reasoning for the Hispanic and African-American populations having higher levels of AWOL DDs as opposed to the other cultures included in the study. However, there could be no conclusive determination without a more varied range of inclusive cultures.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

#### Introduction

The communication of the findings to the study site and the study participants will be the focus of this section. Particularly, expressing the findings in a scholarly report along with verbal communication to all necessary and associated partners affiliated with the project. It will address the reasoning of not having to communicate the findings to the study participants. The appropriateness regarding what signified the termination of the project will also be discussed. Finally, the researcher will explore the need for an ongoing relationship with GLASS and the conditions necessary for such a relationship will conclude this section.

#### Communicating Findings to Study Site and Study Participants

The findings of the research was presented via this scholarly report along with any output data necessary to exhibit the legitimacy of foresaid research to GLASS. In addition to this written communication, there was also verbal communication with all associated parties

including the Director of Research and Quality, who, although was not available at the time of termination of the research was contacted via e-mail.

Since the data utilized for the research was secondary data, the studied participants were not contacted. Additionally, only numerical identifiers were used to protect the researcher, GLASS, and also address any possible ethical discretion. Although the participants were not identified; any LGBTQ Adolescent may obtain the findings along with a copy of the research from the California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) library. This would allow extended knowledge of this population. Furthermore, it is the hope of the researcher that some future cohort could execute further research from the findings of the data.

#### Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants

Utilization of secondary data, made it unnecessary to create a relationship throughout the research with any of the study participants. Although this was in guidelines with IRB statutes to ensure anonymity and confidentiality; the researcher will continue a relationship with GLASS due to the high interest that the

researcher has regarding this population. The researcher is an advocate for the LGBTQ Adolescent population and will continue to utilize GLASS' expertise in future research or inquiry projects.

#### Termination of Study

Once there were no further possible statistical tests that the researcher and associated parties could execute, the study was terminated. Some of these analysis consisted of splitting and mixing the cells of the data, which all resulted in no significant changes of outcomes.

#### Summary

The scholarly report exhibited within the frameworks of this particular thesis along with the results will be the written communication presented to GLASS. The verbal acknowledgement will be in addition to the thesis expressing the researcher's gratitude for allowing the research project.

Regarding the participants, there will be no specific communication of the findings as was the format presented throughout the project. This allowed for the anonymity and confidentiality necessary to execute the project along with covering any associated ethical

concerns. This is not to establish a rule that any of the populations of interest or any other population will not be able to obtain the findings. The findings will be available at the CSUSB library for anyone to explore, extend, or further the research of LGBTQ Adolescent foster care population. In fact this is the hope of the researcher allowing a fuller scope of what is necessary to ensure that this population's highest interests are met within the foster care system.

Once all necessary and exhaustive statistical tests were executed and performed utilizing the SPSS program, the project was terminated. The termination of the project was not initiated until all associated parties agreed that no further statistical tests were result in any significant outcomes or changes.

APPENDIX A  
DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

DISCHARGE INFORMATION					TRACKING OF STABILITY					
Case Number	Age	Race	Sexual Identity	Referral Source	Reason for Replacement	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	120 Days	150 Days or more
			<input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian <input type="checkbox"/> Gay <input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender <input type="checkbox"/> Questioning <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> DCFS <input type="checkbox"/> Probation <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Replacement <input type="checkbox"/> Reunification <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption <input type="checkbox"/> Guardianship <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Level of Care <input type="checkbox"/> Age of Majority <input type="checkbox"/> Transitional Living <input type="checkbox"/> Absent W/Out Leave <input type="checkbox"/> County Dec. <input type="checkbox"/> Court Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced
			<input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian <input type="checkbox"/> Gay <input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender <input type="checkbox"/> Questioning <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> DCFS <input type="checkbox"/> Probation <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Replacement <input type="checkbox"/> Reunification <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption <input type="checkbox"/> Guardianship <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Level of Care <input type="checkbox"/> Age of Majority <input type="checkbox"/> Transitional Living <input type="checkbox"/> Absent W/Out Leave <input type="checkbox"/> County Dec. <input type="checkbox"/> Court Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced
			<input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian <input type="checkbox"/> Gay <input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender <input type="checkbox"/> Questioning <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> DCFS <input type="checkbox"/> Probation <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Replacement <input type="checkbox"/> Reunification <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption <input type="checkbox"/> Guardianship <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Level of Care <input type="checkbox"/> Age of Majority <input type="checkbox"/> Transitional Living <input type="checkbox"/> Absent W/Out Leave <input type="checkbox"/> County Dec. <input type="checkbox"/> Court Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Replaced
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APPENDIX B  
LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION

Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services, Inc.  
650 N. Robertson Blvd.  
West Hollywood, CA 90069-5022  
Phone (310) 358-8727  
FAX (310) 358-8721  
Email: info@glassla.org  
www.glassla.org

GLASS

February 1, 2008

Dear Members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Lenwood V. Patterson is permitted to perform his research project at the Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Service agency (G.L.A.S.S.) in order to fulfill his graduation requirement. Mr. Patterson and I have developed the working title of the project to be "A Comparative Study of the Demographic Factors on the Length of Stay in and Discharge Destination from G.L.A.S.S. Group Homes." It is understood that access to the agency's records will be needed to execute the research; therefore, Mr. Patterson has agreed to adhere to strict confidentiality and guidelines. It is with great pleasure that G.L.A.S.S. has agreed to assist with this research, for we are proud to support any Social Work effort to enhance the treatment of our population.

Respectfully,



Khush Cooper, MSW  
Director of Research and Quality  
GLASS  
(323) 829-3547  
khushco@glassla.org



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