Spring 2006

Fusion Spring 2006

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a hidden STRUGGLE
LGBT youth battle the silence of depression
spring 2006

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from the editor

I love to learn new things. I look at it as my main purpose in life, actually. I anticipate everything I’m going to learn in my lifetime, and I hold dear to me everything I’ve learned in my past. My four years at Kent State have given me numerous opportunities to learn as much as I possibly can before I move on with my life.

This diverse and brilliant publication became one of those opportunities for me. As a major in broadcast journalism, however, I was hesitant to venture into the unfamiliar realm of print media. I tend to think in terms of minutes instead of word count and in video instead of photographs. Needless to say, the transition from broadcast to print wasn’t an easy one for me, but, luckily, I had an experienced staff and dedicated adviser to help guide me along the way.

Aside from my desire to learn, I decided to take on the role as editor because of the important message this magazine has to offer. The voice of the LGBT population has grown stronger over the past decade or so, and it often relies on publications like Fusion to help make sure that voice is heard. Unfortunately, members of the gay and lesbian community haven’t yet received the acceptance they deserve as members of the human race.

Various television shows and movies in recent years have infused gay culture into mainstream society, but this doesn’t mean gay culture is welcomed and accepted by everyone. I feel as though society has adopted a policy of tolerance: Since homosexuals are a part of the general public and obviously aren’t going to disappear, we might as well just learn to tolerate them. Tolerance can easily be confused with the idea of acceptance when, in all actuality, the two ideas are as different as black and white.

I look forward to a day when this issue doesn’t exist, but until people learn what the problem is and actually take the initiative to resolve it, we will continue to live in a tolerant society. Knowledge is the cure for ignorance, but it is also the key to acceptance.

Jean-Marie Papoi
I was so excited when I found out Fusion was looking for a managing editor. Even though I had no clue what I was getting myself into, I was so pumped to be a part of a magazine that was anything but traditional.

As managing editor, I expected the usual things: editing, making sure people met deadlines, and meetings every now and then. It wasn't until everything started to go wrong that I began to panic. My panic was short-lived because I had to be level-headed enough to calm Jean-Marie down when she started to stress.

I think the both of us have held it together very well through the production of this issue. Through all the drama, I've really come to appreciate this magazine. It truly has come a long way in the past couple of years. And it was amazing to me that a magazine so young was of such high caliber.

The stories in Fusion reflect the voices of a population on this campus that is often overlooked. This issue, in particular, exemplifies this because it deals with depression, a topic that's a reality for many of us — gay or straight.

When someone is dealing with something as severe as depression, it can be a difficult situation because many people feel as if they are suffering alone. This issue is a way to reach out to those people and let them know they aren't alone. I think it's amazing that I could be part of something that speaks to so many people.

Fusion is truly a beautiful thing. This entire experience has been somewhat of a delightful disaster for me. A disaster because of all the obstacles we've had, and delightful because of what we've overcome and accomplished. In the end, I wouldn't trade this experience for anything. So now that this magazine has left its mark on me, it's only fitting that I come back for the next issue.

Sasha Parker

from the managing editor
Students looking for love online find varying results

Autumn Piller was having a rough time last June. Having just come out of a two-year relationship with her abusive ex-girlfriend Linda and a three-month period of feeling lonely and depressed, Piller was in need of something — or someone — to get her out of her rut.

So when her best friend Logan Sommers suggested she give online dating a try through Facebook on that fateful day in June, Piller found herself eager to peruse her prospects. After exhausting her options of women on Kent’s main campus, Piller came across the profile of Amy Werstler, then a freshman exercise, leisure and sport major at Kent’s Stark campus.

“One thing that caught my eye was this big smile,” Piller recalls of Westler’s profile. “I said to Logan, ‘What do you think?’ He said, ‘Oh, she’s cute!’” Piller then sent Werstler an e-mail telling her a little about herself and included a request to answer one question: Who’s your favorite cereal cartoon character?

“It was one of the strangest e-mails I’ve ever gotten,” recalls Werstler, who incidentally prefers the Trix rabbit. “It was all over the place. She was like, ‘Hi, my name’s Autumn. I was just looking around and I saw your picture. I thought, ‘OK, interesting, alright. This could be cool.”

After the initial e-mail, Piller and Werstler began an instant messenger correspondence that carried on for a few weeks. During one conversation, Werstler asked Piller if she’d like to meet her for lunch, and Piller hesitated. “I was like, ‘I don’t know, I have a doctor’s appointment.’ Which was a big lie, I just didn’t want to meet her at that point.”

LEFT: Autumn Piller and Amy Werstler met online through Facebook.com. The two met up and had their first date at Tinseltown in Werstler’s town of Canton and saw a showing of “Mr. And Mrs. Smith.” They have have been together ever since.
Emily Busch and her son Aiden search through profiles online. Busch has had mixed results through her experiences of online dating.

Eventually, the two did meet up and spent their first date watching “Mr. And Mrs. Smith” at Tinseltown in Werstler’s hometown of Canton. The now very-happy couple has been together ever since.

But not all dating scenarios in the LGBT community are as positive as Werstler and Piller’s. Junior justice studies and psychology major Emily Busch recently met up with a prospective girlfriend who looked nothing like the picture on her profile. After their initial awkward encounter, Busch says the girl proceeded to send her an obsessive series of text messages and e-mails that didn’t stop until Busch threatened to file a harassment suit.

Potential stalkers aside, Busch has had profiles on a number of dating sites for the last seven years but hasn’t had a serious girlfriend since 2001. A bisexual, Busch is also the mother of a 19-month-old son, Aidan Patrick, a job that has yet to interfere with her online dating. “He’s my life, so if they can’t handle it, then too bad,” she says unapologetically.

Busch isn’t solely attracted to other mothers but says it helps when she’s previewing profiles. “Sometimes it sucks because I tend to be attracted to younger women and I don’t have that kind of response,” she says. Her bisexuality can also be an issue. “A lot of lesbians won’t talk to me because they have this preconceived notion that I don’t know what I want. They’ll say, ‘bisexuals are sick of guys and just wanna try something new,’ or ‘they’re nymphos.’ It’s hard to find someone who’s a true bisexual and not just some guy.”

But Busch has also found useful relationships through her experiences online. “Online based corporations are easy to use.”

“I think the fact that I am the most visible person this online connect in true dedicated gay lovers.”

Online dating is a process for finding a boyfriend or girlfriend, according to Busch. “It’s not theatre and it’s not in digital connection. It’s just me.”

Online dating has proven to be a success for Busch and Werstler. She says confidence has been a big factor in productivity, saying, “I did a confidence boost over the Internet if this happens.”
I think the most beneficial thing about online dating is the fact that the LGBT community isn't always the most visible.

James David
Media relations representative for PlanetOut Inc.

true bisexual — attracted to both men and women and not just looking for a meaningless hookup.”

But Busch is not alone in her quest to start a successful relationship through meeting online. James David, media relations representative for San Francisco-based corporation PlanetOut Inc. and its subsidiary dating site gay.com, says the appeal of online dating is easy to understand, especially to college students.

“I think the most beneficial thing about online dating is the fact that the LGBT community isn’t always the most visible,” he says. “By going online and finding this online community, it gives people the chance to connect in a college town that doesn’t have a dedicated gay bar or coffeehouses for them to go to.”

Online dating also serves as a handy screening process for its users. Since breaking up with his boyfriend of eight years last summer, sophomore theatre and dance major Ryan Robinson has dabbled in digital dating but tends to prefer personal interaction. “It’s kind of more (of a) networking (tool) for me,” he says. “I don’t go in there with the intention to date anyone. If I was going out to look for someone I would go out to where they would be.”

Nevertheless, a web-sanctioned introduction has proven to be a success for Autumn Piller and Amy Werstler. Since meeting Werstler, Piller says her confidence has improved greatly — not to mention her productivity. “I was really lazy before I met her,” she says. “I didn’t think I could fall in love, especially over the Internet. I think I was very skeptical before this happened.”

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Sponsored by:
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Jared Fitch received an interrogation about his sexuality.

This was the first time he realized he had homosexual concerns for himself.

In a Christian college, even for those who fully worried about their same-sex desire, graduate freedom was hot.

"I would have married a man at Kent State, if I knew I would have."

His pastor warned him to stay focused on attention, after all.

With his mind at ease, he answered the question.
Jared Fitch sat nervously in a room that he called the “Bible office interrogation room.” The room had no heat, tables or chairs.

This was the scene where he would be forced to deny or admit his sexuality to the pastor of his Christian high school.

There had been speculation that the then high school senior was a homosexual and classmates told Fitch’s teachers that they had concerns for the boy.

In a Christian school where Fitch had seen a friend kicked out even for the speculation of a pregnancy, the senior was rightfully worried that by admitting his feelings, all his hard work to graduate from the prestigious high school would go to waste.

“I would have been expelled if I was openly gay,” says Fitch, a Kent State sophomore psychology major. “If the administration knew, I would have been gone.”

His pastor explained the questions that had been brought to his attention, and laid the question on Fitch.

With his mind racing and his future on the brink of change, Fitch answered the best way he knew how. “I just told him I had feelings sometimes,” he says. “It was the scariest moment of my life.”

Being half-way through the last part of his senior year, Fitch decided the diploma was worth the weekly sessions he would have to attend with the pastor to talk about and work on changing those “feelings.”

“They didn’t want anything to burst their perfect little bubble and go outside the cookie cutter image,” he says.

Members of the LGBT community have faced discrimination since homosexual became a word. But with a push in political legislation promoting rights for homosexuals and the constant popularity of gay-themed shows in television and cinema, the question remains as to whether America has reached a level of acceptance or still teeters on a level of tolerance, and where the LGBT community’s place in America and at Kent State is headed.

**Defining an ideology**

“I believe acceptance is two people who work tirelessly to understand, respect and embrace their differences,” says Daniel Nadon, associate professor of sociology and LGBT studies at Kent and Trumbull campuses. “Tolerance, however, is two
Those along their differences and to avoid the inevitable conflicts that arise among people who agree to forge ahead in their relationship in spite of their differences and to avoid the inevitable conflicts that arise along the way.

Those inevitable conflicts include faith paths and political stances where someone lives a lifestyle that is not condoned by that faith or belief. Tolerance, Nadon says, is when “you can live with one another, and stay off the topic.”

For Christopher Hreha, Fitch’s boyfriend, acceptance is more about knowledge than anything else.

“When someone is accepting, they understand the concept of what they are accepting more than if they just tolerate it,” said the 19-year-old theatre major at Lorain County Community College.

The differences between acceptance and tolerance can be misinterpreted.

An Elyria native, Hreha says he encountered discrimination at a Blockbuster he worked at in the small community. While the store thought it was being accepting by keeping Hreha employed, misconstrued ideas of what is acceptance led to discrimination against the flamboyant teenager, he says.

“I am very extroverted, and there was another employee who, no matter how much more I sold than him, he still got more hours,” he says. “I overheard the manager saying that I was over-flamboyant and my hours had been cut because I was too gay.”

Hreha found a new job.

Fitch also recalls times of being given “helpful suggestions” to act more masculine.

The Gallup News Service reported in a 2003 survey that there was a gap between the 60 percent of the public saying that homosexual relations should be legal, and 88 percent saying that homosexuals should have equal rights in the workplace.

The Values and Beliefs survey shows that the acceptance of homosexuality as legal was at the 60 percent level, up from 43 percent when Gallup first began asking about it in 1977.

I think we will see a completely accepting society someday, but not today. Tolerance is a step to acceptance. We used to be a completely intolerant society; we have made huge strides.

Daniel Nadon
Associate professor of sociology
and LGBT studies

The survey also finds that almost 9 out of 10 Americans agree that homosexuals should have equal rights in terms of job opportunities, although opinions on allowing homosexual couples to legally form civil unions, giving them some of the legal rights of married couples, are evenly divided.

The range of large approval of equal rights in the workplace and small approval of matrimonial laws is not necessarily a bad thing, Nadon says, but rather a sign of the changing times.

“I think we will see a completely accepting society someday, but not today,” he says. “Tolerance is a step to acceptance. We used to be a completely intolerant society; we have made huge strides.”

Those strides have been made in several areas, but the biggest and most impacting leaps have been in one in particular.

From “Ellen” to Brokeback

When Ellen Degeneres came out on national television in April 1997, her show Ellen received its highest rating in its four year run. Since then, lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual relationships and individual struggles have increasingly been portrayed on television shows and big screen movies.

“The media is extremely important,” Kent State’s Nadon says.

“Queer Eye for the Straight Guy,” “The L Word,” “Will and Grace,” the Logo Channel – all are examples of popular shows and mediums that have made a difference for homosexuals to feel more comfortable in opening the doors of the closet they had previously felt hidden behind, he says.

The cultural shift media has created has been a dramatic one.

“‘It used to be, ‘I can’t do that out there,’” he says. “When I was a kid, you couldn’t be that old.”

Now, she says, “It’s a lot more acceptable coming out.”

For Fitch, the biggest reason people are accepting, he says, is “It’s a long journey to be seen as people, not just a transgender,” he says. “I used to sleep with a transsexual, and we were together a lot of times.

The 2006 Gallup concluded isn’t rising, that 43 of the media is a love story, or a transgender, and were together forever.

Even with the progress, he says, he doesn’t feel there is outright opinion.

“One film or movement to bring something.”

But that does mean that a cultural change is happening. “The cultural change is clearly visible.”

Is the LGBT movement finished?

African-American and political equality.

On Feb. 2, 2006, the American Bar Association passed a resolution that says any discrimination in the workplace is illegal. This includes discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

The case is currently being heard by the United States Supreme Court, which is expected to rule on the issue in the upcoming term. The case is Doe v. Bolton, which involves a gay couple who were denied a marriage license in the state of Utah.

The couple, Michael Baca and David Winslow, argue that Utah’s ban on same-sex marriage violates their right to equal protection under the Constitution. They allege that the ban is discriminatory and unconstitutional.

The court will hear arguments from both sides on May 12, 2020.
“It used to be a silent issue. The movies, the films weren’t out there,” says Erin O’Brien, an assistant professor of political science. “(Society) is now more cultural in that regard. When I was in college, people came out then, and I’m not that old.”

Now, she says, more homosexuals are feeling more comfortable coming out as early as middle school and high school.

For Fitch, the popularity of LGBT in the media shows that people are at least interested in learning about homosexuals, and it can eventually lead to changing their minds.

“It’s a long process of getting on the right track. It helps us to be seen as people, but not a subcategory of human beings,” he says. “This is about who I am, not about who I like to sleep with.”

The 2006 Golden Globes is evidence that even if acceptance isn’t rising, interest in the subject is. “Brokeback Mountain,” a love story about gay cowboys, and “Transameric,” about a transsexual man, both were nominated for “Best Picture,” and were topic of discussion for months after their release dates.

Even with the awareness the movies generated, Nadon says he doesn’t think they will make a huge difference in swinging opinions from tolerant to acceptant.

“One film doesn’t do a whole lot. It’s a part of a collective movement,” he says. “(The movies) will add to that movement.”

But that doesn’t mean they aren’t helping. History shows that a cultural movement has to be made to start a political movement, says political science professor Gertrude Steueragel. “The changes in the media are making an important cultural change. A cultural change usually precedes a political change and sometimes they happen at the same time.”

Is the LGBT community next?

African-Americans did it. Women did it. Now, the struggle for political equality lies in the lap of the LGBT community.

On Feb. 2, 2005, President Bush said in his State of the Union address, “Because marriage is a sacred institution and the foundation of society, it should not be redefined by activist judges. For the good of families, children and society, I support a constitutional amendment to protect the institution of marriage.”

With the country divided on the issue of gay marriage, the political pendulum is swinging to the right. Each state has had its fair share of battles in the courts about homosexual rights, from one extreme to the other.

Massachusetts became the first state to allow same sex marriage on May 17, 2004. Texas, on the other hand, put a ban on same-sex marriage to the State Constitution under an amendment approved by the Texas House. The state also worked to become the only state to ban homosexuals and bisexuals from becoming foster parents.

“It is our responsibility to make sure that we protect our most vulnerable children and I don’t think we are doing that if we allow a foster parent that is homosexual or bisexual,” said Representative Robert Talton, Republican of Pasadena, the author of the amendment on April 21, 2005.

This blatant attack is not something that is happening without a fight.

“The LGBT community is doing everything possible to change this denial of basic civil rights,” Steueragel says.

Politcal outcomes are all speculative, O’Brien says, but giving up is not an option. “It is all very tentative,” she says. “The expansion of rights is all about moving forth and with gains in court cases, the real outcome is tangible. Some feel their values threatened, and even though public opinion can change, it is not a steady move. It’s like two steps forward, one step back.”

But a step is a step.
Even though the “Land of the Free” has yet to pass any national legislation promoting the acceptance of homosexuals, its neighbors have already reached that point. Spain and Canada both have legalized same-sex marriage and in the past year, the European Union approved a ban on homophobia – something that has many Christian citizens worried.

“Our Supreme Court seems enamored with citing to foreign sources of law,” said Steve Crampton, an attorney in Mississippi, to the Agape Press in early 2006. He fears that “what happens in the European Union today is going to become the law and policy of America tomorrow.”

This, however, is not a legitimate fear according to Nadon, O’Brien and Steueragal.

“It is reason to be hopeful, but I don’t think America looks at them for advice,” Nadon says. “Canada, however, is a huge beacon of light.”

**Kent State: acceptance or tolerance?**

While national political legislation is one issue, local acceptance is another. So how is Kent State doing?

The Kent State policy that deals with unlawful discrimination and harassment was last updated Feb. 10, 2005, and has two parts. The first part explains it as “unwelcome gender bias, sexual advances, request for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.” Part two says, “Verbal and/or physical behavior includes, but is not limited to: sexually explicit jokes, insults, taunts, obscene gestures, embracing, touching, pictorial and written communications, electronic communication including e-mail and unwelcome embracing and touching.”

The most recent report of sexual discrimination was reported in Spring 2005, when Jay Welch reported that he had been fired from Rosie’s Diner on campus because he is transgender.

When a co-worker confronted Welch about his sexual identity, he referred the co-worker to the article “A Couple in Transition” in Fusion magazine’s Fall 2004 issue about his transgender individuality and relationship.

He was fired the next day.

Cindy Nichols, general manager of Rosie’s Diner, told the Daily Kent Stater in March 2005 that Welch was let go because he was using unsanitary procedures on the job. Nichols preferred not to go into detail so students wouldn’t generalize that all employees at Rosie’s Diner use unsanitary procedures.

But Welch, who no longer attends Kent State, says that looking back on the incident, he doesn’t think it had much to do with the fact that he is transgender, but because he is black.

“Kent State accepts anybody, but it is to meet a quota,” Welch says. “Administration hides that well. They are not tolerant of black students at all. The atmosphere is very hostile.”

He recommends more diversity education requirements for students.

The fact that domestic partner benefits have yet to be installed and that there is no LGBT center on campus is something that should be addressed. Being the third largest university in Ohio, it is questionable why Kent State has not kept up with these rights for its students and faculty.

The administration and president have a lot of people to answer to, but Nadon says the atmosphere on Kent’s campus is a tolerant one.

“I feel that for the most part, faculty and students work tirelessly to make this an accepting rather than tolerant campus,” he says. “The question is, why is Kent less likely to move forward to combat intolerance?”

Fitch says he feels comfortable on the campus and it is a lot better than the “Bible office interrogation room.”

“On the surface, Kent State is accepting, but in the core they are only tolerant,” he says. “But I know it’s not going to change any time soon.”

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**Good things:**

The move forward towards answering their questions isn’t fast enough for the students.

The path forward is long and roadblocks ahead will make the development slow.

“When I was a kid, we were taught to expect adegay rights. We’re still waiting. Tolerance is outside the book. It’s not in the texts, the textbooks, it’s in your frame of mind.”

**Even though it isn’t fast enough, there is still hope.**

“When people don’t understand that they have to treat you like they would like to be treated,” Welch says, “It’s definitely helping.”

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Good things are worth waiting for

The move from a tolerant society to an accepting one is not something that can be accomplished in a day.

The path from tolerance to acceptance is one with several roadblocks and hurdles, but Nadon says this generation will make the difference.

“When I was in college, we were fighting for basic civil rights. We made toleration happen,” he says. “Your generation is out more. People feel more comfortable coming out at younger ages, and if you grow up with someone who is homosexual, and you meet someone who is gay later in life, your frame of reference is greater.”

Even though the process of acceptance is well underway, it isn’t fast enough for those suffering under the weight of its burden.

“When people are tolerant, they do things because they think they have to,” Fitch says. “They look at it as your life and my life. Without these stupid ideologies, we can definitely help speed up the process of equality.”

Supporting Women Through Advocacy and Education

Women’s Resource Center
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Fitting in is a large concern for teenagers. Looks, academics, personal interests—all are different criteria of how a person is perceived. Even those who don’t fit into mainstream social norms, they aren’t alone.

But what happens to those who are told by society that their identity is wrong? That they are too different?

Bridgit McCafferty realized she wasn’t like everyone else when she was in middle school. Attending a Catholic school, she learned homosexuality was a sin and the only hope for salvation was chastity. So she came up with a plan.

“I thought, ‘If I’m a lesbian, I’m going to get married to a man and fake it, or become a nun,’” she says. “I didn’t see any other options.”

The slow realization of her sexuality caused a lot of stress for her, she says. She felt alone because she only knew Catholics and she was afraid to say anything, or even accept it herself.

“I cried myself to sleep at night over the possibility that I could be gay,” she says.

It is very common for youths to not want to be gay, says Sue Doerfer, executive director of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Community Center of Greater Cleveland.

“They don’t want to be different,” she says. “They want to fit in. Not being able to change that gets really overwhelming for a kid.”

McCafferty entered the public school system after eighth
grade, attending Lakewood High School. There, she says the atmosphere was a little more accepting, but there were few students who were openly "out."

While there, McCafferty made friends but kept her sexuality and her problems secret. Only three people in her group knew what was going on in her life because they had similar situations themselves, she says. She was afraid to let everyone else know.

"I didn't know how people would react," she says. "I was afraid they'd be uncomfortable around me. I couldn't have a normal relationship with them."

She had a girlfriend while at Lakewood High School, but they had to hide their relationship. She says the girl had a boyfriend, or a "beard."

"I would see them walking down the hall, holding hands," she says.

Because she felt she couldn't open herself up to most others, she says she internalized her problems, analyzing everything about herself. The only reason she could really talk with three of her friends was because they were "sick," too.

Though they probably added to each other's illnesses by secluding themselves, McCafferty says they most likely would not have made it through high school without each other.

"It became a 'nobody else could understand us' kind of thing," she says. "If it weren't for them in high school and a handful of other people, I wouldn't have survived high school."

Doerfer says some of the causes of depression are the same for gay and lesbian people. There are also different causes.

"It can also come from trying to maintain a minority status in our society," she says. "They are aware they might not be accepted."

Doerfer says there are fears about being rejected by friends and family. She says members of the LGBT population feel as though they must be careful to whom they come out. Homosexuality is presented as something not normal.
McCafferty and many suffering from depression cut themselves as a form of relief.
"Very few people grow up getting messages that being gay is as healthy as growing up heterosexual," she said. "We internalize all those messages as little kids. We're expected to be a certain way. They internalize that shame when they are not the same."

Despite her group of friends, McCafferty's depression manifested itself physically. She dealt with anorexia and self-injury during high school. She says she weighed 84 pounds at one point and cut herself up to 10 times a day. She says no one noticed.

"To this day, it blows my mind we were all this sick," she says. "Nobody did anything. Maybe we were really good at hiding it."

Her parents fought at home and divorced when she was a freshman in high school. She says she couldn't come out to her father because he wouldn't have accepted it. She couldn't tell her mother because she says her mother had enough going on with the divorce and later getting remarried. On top of that, she says she and her mother just grew apart.

"She was getting remarried, a new life," she says. "I wasn't sure how I would fit into it."

McCafferty says she and her mother would fight and have screaming matches. She says she was afraid to come out to her mother because she thought she would get thrown out of the house, even though her mother probably would have accepted her sexuality.

"I didn't think she would be upset about it, but I didn't want it to be another thing," she says. "I was afraid she would use it as an excuse to throw me out. I know now she wouldn't do it, but I was afraid it could happen."

Before and during the divorce, McCafferty saw a therapist. She says she had Derealization Depersonalization Disorder through high school and college. She describes it as looking in a mirror and not recognizing the person whom she saw as herself, even though she knew it was.

She says she felt as though she lost control of her mind and body, only able to watch what she did from the inside. She remembers breaking up with a boyfriend in high school, asking herself the whole time why she was doing it.

"In my head, I thought, 'Why are you doing this?'" she says. "I was just watching myself do this, asking 'Why are you doing this?' It was really scary."

Her feelings of being out of control and unable to connect to reality manifested themselves physically in the forms of anorexia and cutting. She says they were attempts to control her settings, a way to bring her back.

"I wanted to feel real and have my life back," she says.

Self-injury differs between men and women, Doerfer says. Women usually damage themselves inwardly, such as cutting themselves or having an eating disorder like anorexia or bulimia. Men get angry and act out, she says, and use drugs or alcohol as self-medication to help them forget about their problems.

Doerfer says eating disorders are commonly about control. If it's one thing people feel they can control in life, it's their body. Those who cut feel numb, she says. The physical pain helps them.

Most of the time, McCafferty says, it was difficult.

The worst time for McCafferty during her high school years was the spring after she didn't feel like she belonged, and kids playing tricks on her. She says she had a falling out with her friend, a boy with no friend who'd been there for her.

During spring break of her junior year, McCafferty says she was referred to a local therapist. "I was just so numb to the idea," she says. "I would kill myself and wouldn't care or I would spend a week in the hospital and they would give me something to make the numbness go away."

Bridget McCafferty

"I was just watching myself do this, asking why am I doing this? I was really scared," she says.

Her feelings of being out of control and unable to connect to reality manifested themselves physically in the forms of anorexia and cutting. She says they were attempts to control her settings, a way to bring her back.

"I wanted to feel real and have my life back," she says.

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Bridget McCafferty
helps them feel something.

Most of the time, the cutting provided relief for her, McCafferty says. When she couldn’t cut, things became more difficult.

The worst time came when she was the student director of her high school production of “The King and I.” She says she didn’t feel it was right to cut when she was working with the kids playing the king’s children. On top of this, she says she had a falling out with a close friend. She had no release and no friend with whom to share her feelings.

During spring break of that year, she says she took 32 pills of ibuprofen. She then called her friend and told her to take her to the hospital. Her friend picked her up and drove her around, bringing McCafferty back to her house. Her friend then made her throw the pills up and took care of her. She says her friend made her promise to go see a different psychologist.

“I was just so out of control of my life,” she says. “I was so numb to everything in my life. I couldn’t feel it. Either I would kill myself and wouldn’t care or I would spend a week in the hospital and they would give me something to make the numbness go away.”

People commit suicide because they don’t see any other way out, Doerfer says. Studies have shown suicide and attempted suicide is more prevalent within the LGBT youth community, she says.

“Adolescents developmentally have a harder time seeing the future,” she says. “For gay and lesbian youth, there aren’t a lot of places for them to turn. If there’s no solution and no place to talk, the feelings are exaggerated.”

Since her attempt, McCafferty says she has not seen a psychologist consistently. She says that accepting herself for who she is and being more open about her sexuality has helped remove a great deal of stress from her life.

She came out to her mother and father while at college. She says her mother took the news well. Her mother told her she knew since McCafferty’s junior year of high school.
“It made me feel better, took a burden off,” she says.

She came out to her father while she was on the PRIDE!Kent executive board. She says he wasn’t upset by it, but he acts like it doesn’t exist.

“It bothers me, but it would have been harder in high school,” she says.

Though McCafferty says she has learned to balance her stresses better, she says she occasionally has relapses and can feel them coming in advance. Her appetite lessens and then she starts cutting again for a couple of days. She says the relapses happen about once a year.

She relies on her friends to help when things “get bad.” She says she lets them know what is going on with her and they take care of her. They will make her go see a psychologist a couple of times until she feels she can take care of it herself. She says she knows she has to take these precautions because she does not want to return to how she was years before.

“I don’t think I could go back to when I was in high school,” she says. “I couldn’t go through that many years of being messed up again. I’m really terrified of going back there.”

Doerfer says anyone dealing with depression should seek therapy.

“It’s essential,” she says. “It could be life threatening not to.”

Therapy helps discover the cause of the depression and helps the patient work through it, she says. The patient learns coping mechanisms so he or she can function every day.

Though McCafferty has learned to deal with her depression on her own, she says she doesn’t advocate trying to battle it alone.

“Anyone who is in the position I was in should go see a psychologist. Don’t put yourself through that. It’s not a good way to live. There’s a way out.”

Bridgit McCafferty
Fusion Magazine:
Winner of Society of Professional Journalists
Mark of Excellence Region 4 Awards:

2004-2005 awards
- **First Place:** Best Student Magazine (published more than once a year)
- **First Place:** Best All-Around Online Student Magazine

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  Published once a year

- **Second Place:** Best Online Magazine
  http://fusion.kent.edu

- **First Place:** Photo Illustration, Scott R Galvin,
  “Silent Shadows” (cover story)

- **Third Place:** Feature Photography, Pat Jarrett,
  “My (Gay) Fraternity Life”

Check out the latest issue of FUSION magazine online:
http://fusion.kent.edu
Dear Nicholas...

If Carrie Bradshaw can have a column on life, love, relationships, and "sex in the city," then why can't I have one for LGBT issues? If Dear Abby and Ann Landers could do it, then so can I!

The purpose of this column was for the general student audience to write in questions they had about the LGBT community, issues involving homosexuality, or problems with relationships. Dr. David Nadon, a Professor of LGBT studies, has worked with me to answer many of these questions.
Dear Nicholas,

I just recently came out this past year and I'm having a particularly difficult time with my mother. She keeps telling me she's afraid I'm going to end up in hell. Along with that, she always thinks that if I'm going out with a male friend, I'm having sex with him. How do I convince her otherwise? How do I get her to understand about my being gay?

Sincerely,

Frustrated Gay Son

Dear Hypothetical Mother,

I'm going to tell you a short story about me to help answer this question. My gay stepbrother asked my mother when I was 11 if she thought I'd turn out gay. Her response: “It doesn't matter. I'll never stop loving him, no matter what.” So to answer your question, would you love a child any less if they were born deaf? Blind? With blue eyes instead of green? With a learning disability? It's the same type of situation and as far as how to react, try to be understanding at first. There are many good books written by parents of gay children that express their initial concerns and fears. Just let the child know that you're there no matter what. Don't put pressure on them to avoid talking about it, except inside the house. Let them be themselves.

Best of luck,

Nicholas

Dear Nicholas,

Do all gay people have pink clothes in their closets?

Sincerely,

Confused Pink Woman

Dear Miss Confusion,

No, I'm afraid we all don't have pink clothes in our closets. Shockingly, this isn't one of the requirements they list in the "How To Be Gay" handbook we each get when we come out. We get a membership card, some great hair product material, and lots of Joan Crawford DVDs, but I'm afraid we don't get any pink clothes. I'll have to ask the same type of question, do all straight people have pink clothes in their closet? I know several who have too many pink shirts. Where's Mr. Blackwell when we need him most!

Sincerely,

Nicholas

Dear Nicholas,

I don't have kids, but I plan on having them in the future. If one of them should end up gay, how should I handle it? I mean I like gay people, but I don't know how I'm supposed to react.

Sincerely,

Hypothetical Mother

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Hope this helps,

Nicholas

Dear Nicholas,

Why do so many people from both communities believe that Bisexuals DON'T EXIST?!

Sincerely,

Bewildered and Bothered
Dear B & B,
I have to admit that I used to be part of those people who didn't believe bisexuals existed, or that it was just a road mark on the way to Gay Town, right next to Ricky Martinville. I think the problem both the straight and lesbian/gay communities have with bisexuality is lack of understanding. Unfortunately, people think in black and white instead of in shades of grey. I'll admit on occasion that I've referred to bisexuals as "wanting everything on the salad bar," but I think it's because my first boyfriend cheated on me with a girl. While many in the straight community believe that gays and lesbians are the stereotypes of gay and lesbian people made flesh (and some of us are), they don't know how to feel about bisexuals because they can't lump bisexuals in one group. Personally, I feel threatened by bisexuals because if I was in a relationship with one, I wouldn't know if they were ever checking out a girl or a guy. And I'm sorry, but I can't compete with boobs. So I guess it just boils down to a lack of understanding and being a victim of generalizing people into categories. I think bisexuals need to talk more with the gay and straight communities and let their story be heard.

Hope to hear your story sometime,

Nicholas

Dear Nicholas,
My brother and I were raised apart and he was brought up by Fundamentalists. Last year when we started getting to know each other (he's 18 now), I introduced him to my girlfriend without specifying her part in my life. He's had a bad life, including a long-time girlfriend's suicide a year ago, so maybe I should've expected that he'd turn my girlfriend's kindness into a huge infatuation. She's even told him she wants him to find someone who isn't her, because it won't happen. So, how do we tell him without hurting him or embarrassing him?

Sincerely,

Worried Sister

Dear Worried Sister,
I'll let him know in a small, quiet environment without anyone else around. He might think you two were playing a joke on him, but tell him that you just didn't know how to break it to him. Confirm to him that you want him to be happy, but your girlfriend's not going to provide that for him. One of my favorite writers, Claudia McCants, said, "Happiness is something that comes within. Nobody can provide it for you." Try to be as gentle as possible when you tell him, and let him know that you weren't trying to hurt him, but you didn't know when or how to tell him. He'll understandably be upset at first, but hopefully he'll come to understand that if he moves on from his infatuation with your girlfriend, he'll be happier. Unrequited love's a bitch, I know. I've had many crushes on straight men that went nowhere, but he has a right to know. Just be gentle and do it in a quiet environment with only the two of you.

Hope this works,

Nicholas

Dear Nicholas,
When people find out that my parents are lesbians, they often assume that I'm gay as well, and I really feel like I'm validating a stereotype when I tell them they're right. Is there a more graceful way to deal with this issue, or am I just overreacting?

Sincerely,

Alyssa Bowen

Dear Alyssa,
No, you're not overreacting at all. If anyone gives you grief when you tell them about your parents or your own sexual orientation, remind them that there have been numerous studies that link sexuality with genetics and biology. The fact that your parents are lesbians does not make any difference. You're part of the rare percentage that turn out to be gay, too, but it doesn't mean that gay parents produce or raise gay children. Tell them you're not validating the stereotype, but that you're damn lucky to have two mothers while the majority of us have only one. Sometimes I wish I had two moms for all the things that go on in my life.

Sincerely,

Nicholas
Dear Nicholas,

Why do I always fall in love with gay men? They are the right sex but the wrong sexual orientation. Every man I have been attracted to has been gay. Nick, Robbie, and Matt, just to name a few, have all come out of the closet after I was already attracted to them. I know this also happens to other girls. Please help.

Sincerely,

A woman, who misses men,
men who like to kiss women.

Dear Miss who misses women kissing men,
Don't worry, you're not the only one out there who has this problem. I've had many crushes over friends who were straight, but unfortunately nothing ever came of it. I think it has to do with the whole notion of being attracted to what we can't have. Women may be attracted to gay men because gay men relate more to women than to other straight men. At least I do! Gay men and straight women have some of the closest bonds of friendship that God ever created. Unfortunately, there is a barrier, and this barrier won't be removed in the immediate future. Even if you didn't know they were gay, don't worry, not all the men in your life will be gay. You will meet a nice man who does like to kiss women, and most definitely will like to kiss you.

Good luck finding your Man!

Nicholas

Thanks to all those who wrote in! And thanks to Dr. Nadon for his help and support with this column.

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Defining the Metrosexual

story | Erica Lynch
photos | Sean Daugherty

Reader beware: the cover no longer tells the story.

Metrosexuals are not a new breed in society. Since trends dating back as far as the 1800s, there have been men seeking an image that their rugged, male counterparts reject as too feminine. More recently, metrosexuals have infiltrated more than just the typical city streets, creating confusion amongst the masses.

The term metrosexual, first coined by Mark Simpson in 1994 in a magazine article, encompasses all the traits of a certain type of male. According to Simpson, men who fit into the metrosexual category are typically those who spend a great deal of time and money on appearance.

“Metros,” as they are often called, also tend to live in or near big cities, close to the hottest nightclubs, designer stores and professional hairdressers. Some might think of them to be more considerate of the female gender or more in touch with their emotions. They’re
also stereotyped as men who reject classic “manly” activities, such as sports.

To many, these habits, atypical to society’s definition of a “manly man,” were previously reserved for gay men only. With metrosexuality having become a familiar term over the past few years, this sect of society is now adjusting to the idea that men can have the desire to look nice while still maintaining their masculinity.

Although the androgyny of metrosexuality may confuse some people, others say they think it has made effeminate males more accepted in society.

Orian Archibald, senior fashion merchandising major, calls metros the “frat boys of society.”

Archibald says that “frat guys” are known for maintaining a nice appearance while also exemplifying the cultural standard for manly behavior. Since they are generally well-accepted, “they said to society, it’s okay to do this,” Archibald says.

Kyle Phillips, fine arts major, says it’s more acceptable for men to look presentable now.

“It’s more of a look than a lifestyle,” Phillips says, adding that he doesn’t mind being labeled a metro. “People that look like this aren’t considered effeminate anymore.”

Phillips also says that the parallels between metrosexuals and homosexuals are stereotypes. He says that contrary to mainstream belief, not all homosexuals display metrosexual habits.

“Just over the past couple of years, it’s become more accepted,” Archibald says, citing the TV show “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy” as one media outlet that has perpetuated the growing acceptance of stylish, trend-conscious men.

“Over the past decade I think society has become much more accepting of gay or straight,” Archibald said. Green, who says that some cities are more accepting because he is primp for social targets.

Green also says that some cities are more accepting. He says that some cities are more accepting because he is primp for social targets.

Adventures in metrosexual market that gay or straight, he says, is now adjusting to the idea that men can have the desire to look nice while still maintaining their masculinity.
metrosexual (n.)
A straight man who embraces the homosexual lifestyle, i.e., refined tastes in clothing, excessive use of designer hygiene products, etc.

accepting of people who lead a homosexual lifestyle. However, I think we still have a long way to go,” says Chris Green, junior media-based studies major at Columbus College of Art and Design.

Green, whose friends often describe him as metrosexual, says that some of the reasons people categorize him this way is because he takes an hour to get ready and nearly two hours to primp for special occasions.

Green also enjoys fashion, even to a point where money is no object. He says he once sacrificed many dates with his girlfriend in order to save money for a $400 leather jacket.

Advertisements for fashion and beauty products show men, gay or straight, styled in ways that are more fashion-conscious than seen in the past. They no longer adhere to a strict standard of targeting solely to a female buyer. Metros seem to be the new target consumer.

“I think more gay people are getting into the fashion industry and perverting men’s view of themselves,” says Chris Barr, sophomore advertising and graphic design major at the Columbus College of Art and Design.

Barr, who is friends with Green, says he doesn’t understand excessive male maintenance practices. “I think it’s more of a fad than a trend,” Barr says. “It’s not a trend because a trend is too much of a cultural movement for men.”

But, Archibald says that metrosexuality is an evolving trend that is becoming more popular, but he doesn’t think “it’s taking anything away from gay culture.”

Green, who has many male homosexual friends, hopes that they have never thought of him as taking away from their culture. “If anything, I have a great deal of respect for them. I think it takes a lot of courage to be open about their sexual preference, especially in a society where homosexuality isn’t the norm.”

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Townhall II is a member of the Mental Health and Recovery Network of Portage County and the Volunteer Administrator's Network.
You may be a metrosexual if...

1. You just can’t walk past a Banana Republic store without making a purchase.

2. You own 20 pairs of shoes, half a dozen pairs of sunglasses, just as many watches and you carry a man-purse.

3. You see a stylist instead of a barber, because barbers don’t do highlights.

4. You can make her lamb shanks and risotto for dinner and Eggs Benedict for breakfast... all from scratch.

5. You only wear Calvin Klein boxer-briefs.

6. You shave more than just your face. You also exfoliate and moisturize.

7. You would never, ever own a pickup truck.

8. You can’t imagine a day without hair styling products.

9. You’d rather drink wine than beer... but you’ll find out what estate and vintage first.

10. Despite being flattered (even proud) that gay guys hit on you, you still find the thought of actually getting intimate with another man truly repulsive.

Source: Urban Dictionary
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Dealing with depression compiled by Bryan Wroten

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Clinical depression can overlap with anxiety, says Tracy Masterson, assistant director of the psychological clinic at Kent State University. A person’s lowered or declining mood is a good indication of depression, she says, but that is not the only symptom. She says those with depression can exhibit a number of behaviors or emotions:

- have less energy than normal
- feeling sad
- seem to care less about things they used to care about
- feeling helpless
- feeling worthless
- have difficulty concentrating
- affected sleep or appetite
- have suicidal thoughts
- have manic-like symptoms