

*Kwansei Gakuin University*  
*Social Sciences Review*  
Vol.20, 2015  
Nishinomiya, Japan

## The Live Act of *Coming Out*: Queer Identity, Social Media, and Conversation Analysis

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### I. Introduction

The act of self-disclosing one's sexuality or gender by those in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered (LGBT) community, or *coming out*, is not a new phenomenon. Societies around the world are becoming more aware and accepting of sexual minorities as evidenced by the increase in legal protections and the number of countries that now allow same-sex marriage, meaning self-disclosure of one's sexuality has become commonplace within a person's immediate sphere of interaction, among friends, relatives, and coworkers. Thanks to social media, however, these spheres of interaction are radically expanding to include much larger virtual community audiences. In fact, just within the last half decade according to Lanning and Huang (2015), it is estimated that there have been more than 36,000 coming-out videos uploaded to YouTube, a popular online video-sharing platform, receiving in total more than 300 million views. In 2014 alone, YouTube reported that there were 9,600 such videos on their website, a 20% increase from 2013 (Lanning & Huang, 2015). Recently, the phenomenon was the topic of a panel discussion at London's 6<sup>th</sup> annual Summer in the City event, an event billed as the place for everyone with an interest in online video, where a selection of YouTube creators shared their experiences of coming out and the reactions they received (Sutton, 2015). Without dispute, the phenomenon and influence of coming out through online video is growing.

More importantly, this phenomenon is evidence of a minority community finding wider support from a much larger virtual community as queer identities are explored and expressed. According to a release by YouTube in 2015, the increasing phenomenon of coming out videos online demonstrates "the growing

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role of YouTube as a platform for advocacy and connection for the LGBT community” (Lanning & Huang, 2015, para 2). An important milestone for the online platform was a video titled “Twins Come Out to Dad” (The Rhodes Bros, 2015). The video showing two brothers coming out to their father achieved over four million views the first day it was uploaded and has had over 20 million views in total at the time of writing. Other online video creators such as Davey Wavey, Gigi Gorgeous, and Princess Joules, have used their coming out stories as vehicles to provide advice and education on LGBT issues. Combined, the three producers have achieved audiences upwards of 400 million channel-views (Temblador, 2015). While less frequent, celebrities and sports personalities have also used online video to announce their sexuality. One of the most noted, Olympic diver Tom Daley, chose YouTube over standard news outlets to come out to the public. His video has received over 12 million views alone.

What is interesting are the myriad spontaneous reactions, unscripted testimonies, and endless data made available, mitigated however by the implied intrusiveness of sharing them with the world. So, why reveal one’s identity online? Perhaps these candid, often emotional expressions of coming out place LGBT issues in the public eye while creating a personal connection between the creators, their audience, and the wider LGBT community. For those sharing their stories, YouTube offers a space where they can freely present their identities and connect with like-minded persons, to both seek and provide support, regardless of where they are (Lanning & Huang, 2015). As a virtual space or community, there may be some benefits to coming out online (Lanning & Huang, 2015; Sutton, 2015; Temblador, 2015), such as providing others who are thinking about coming out with courage and inspiration, modeling how parents can react to a child’s coming out, as well as the ability to leverage a positive reaction from parents (e.g. witnesses and social consequences may temper parents’ reactions)—all examples of how a large anonymous community can allow greater support to a smaller, much more marginalized community. Seeking to more closely understand the accomplishment of coming out in such a live, public setting, it is social media that provides the content and data for this article.

## II. The Data

Specifically, the data presented in this article is taken from an online video (7 min 31 sec) of a phone call between a father and a son where the son reveals that he is gay. Recorded live and unedited, the video was originally uploaded to YouTube on September 19, 2011 by Randy Phillips, a 21 year old military serviceperson stationed in Germany at the time the video was made. I chose the video because it preceded the current phenomenon of coming out online and may

represent the first high-profile video of its kind. Reported by Salon Magazine, the video had garnered nearly five million views by October of 2011, a span of only twelve days from its release (Williams, 2011). It should also be mentioned that this video is part of a series of online videos produced and uploaded by Phillips. Through the series, he anonymously struggles with the idea of coming out, comes out to a friend publically, and also eventually comes out to his mother and father. While the original videos have since been taken offline, several copies of the original videos like the one referenced in this paper are currently still accessible online (Barbee, 2015). The video was transcribed and analyzed using the fundamental conventions of CA such as turn taking and sequence organization. Membership categorization analysis (MCA) was also particularly useful in navigating the relationship between caller and recipient as they orient themselves to the roles of son and father, respectively. While the data primarily focuses on the telephone conversation between the son and the father, excerpts of talk made directly from the son to the video audience prior to and after the phone conversation will be used to orient the phone call within the greater context of the video.

While Kitzinger admits that “lesbian and gay psychology has produced an enormous literature on ‘coming out’ to others as lesbian, gay, bisexual or as having (had) same-sex sexual experiences” (2000, p. 181),” she also acknowledges that the history of qualitative work on coming out has focused primarily on retrospective narratives and storytelling (Kitzinger, 2000). What did not exist in the lesbian and gay psychology literature, however, was any study in which coming out, the live act of disclosure itself, was the primary source of data. In fact, coming out as a live event was not directly studied within the realm of psychology or sociolinguistics until Kitzinger’s own work in the late-1990s (Kitzinger, 2000). That said, her research deals only with the act of coming out in three manifestations: a) as an aside within a larger context such as in repair or error correction, b) as a news announcement in a safe, controlled environment such as in LGBT support groups or counseling sessions where a positive reception of the announcements was prerequisite, and c) as new information revealed with the purpose of being unnoticed (Kitzinger, 2000; Kitzinger, 2005; Land & Kitzinger, 2005). This article advances such research in that it examines the live, intentional act of coming out when treated like a news announcement in a setting where it is difficult to predict how that news will be received. Within the context of heterosexism, it is this unpredictable reception that makes the act of coming out remarkable.

### III. Heterosexism and the Accomplishment of Coming Out

Ingraham (2001) wrote, “like whiteness in a white supremacist society, hetero-sexuality is not only socially produced as dominant but is also taken-for-granted and universalizing” (p. 73). It is this “taken-for granted” nature of heterosexuality, or heterosexism, the privileging of heterosexuality as normal and natural (Kitzinger, 2005), that makes the announcement of one’s homosexuality or one’s status as non-heterosexual or gender non-conforming such a marked if not daunting task. For this reason, one simply cannot escape the fact that normative heterosexuality “constitutes a backdrop against which to analyze the strategies of LGBT people both in concealing their identities and in making them—or allowing them to become—apparent” (Kitzinger, 2005, p. 224). If we lived in a world where sexual minorities were as accepted—were not as stigmatized—as heterosexuals, coming out would not be an issue. However, because of the marked nature of homosexuality, for one to come out under the umbrella of heterosexism, strategies must be implemented if it is to be done as a part of interaction. According to Goffman (1963),

Those who must strategize whether and how to disclose potentially discrediting information in mixed contexts will have to be alive to aspects of the social situation that others treat as uncalculated and unattended.

What are unthinking routines for normals can become management problems for (others).” (p. 88)

LGBT individuals who wish to reveal their sexual identities must surely face this interactional dilemma and as such should be seen as interactional accomplishment. Focusing on the strategies that one LGBT individual employs to navigate such management problems, this article ultimately documents how the act of coming out is performed and managed under the backdrop of heterosexism and within an environment where the reaction to the announcement is unpredictable.

In lieu of the uncertainty of acceptance versus rejection, there is a choice to be made however in deciding whether or not to come out to family, friends, work colleagues, or others (Marlowe, 2002). In making such a choice, LGBT individuals must consider the positive and negative repercussions of revealing their sexuality (Clarke et al., 2010). Marlowe (2002) lists a variety of reasons for not coming out, including; protecting others, lack of necessity to tell particular people, the possibility of negative attitudes and reactions, and an overall sense of feeling afraid. For whatever reasons, fear is, in most cases, why people choose not to come out; fear of rejection, fear of a violent reaction, fear of humiliation, fear of identity loss, fear of losing friends and family, and so on. In coming out, this fear of the unknown, self-assumed, negative response is ever present (Marlowe, 2002). This

fear is first seen in the beginning of the video, the *prelude* as it were, before the son makes the phone call to his father. In Segment 1 (lines p-1 to p-18), we see the son speaking directly to the macro-targeted audience of the video.

*Seg 1. Prelude to the Phone Conversation*

((VIDEO BEGINS))

- p-1 Son: hey it's u:m (1.1) the morning of sep-tember twentieth, (.)  
 p-2 I: could not sleep=it's uh (0.8) two forty-five (1.2) 'n I'm: uh  
 p-3 >prolly 'bout as nervous< as as I can ever remembe:r being .hhh  
 p-4 (0.3) u:m, (.) I'm 'bout to call my da:d (0.5) in Alabama (.)  
 p-5 um (0.4) I thin- >I'm in Germany right now< so I think  
 p-6 we're seven hours ahead (.) so it should be like s::even forty-five  
 p-7 at night ((sips from cup)) um, (1.3) so hopefully I'll be able  
 p-8 to (1.0) get a hold of him (1.0)  
 p-9 um he has no clue (1.2) um nor do >any members of my family< (.)  
 p-10 [um:] (1.6) °I've been kinda panickin' about this like all weekend°  
 p-11 [((beep))]  
 p-12 ((looks to his left)) 'n I said (.) um that I wanna do it (1.2) .hh hh  
 p-13 °I don't know if I'm gonna be able to get a hold of him° .hhh  
 p-14 ((Son dials.))  
 p-15 ((Phone rings twice.))  
 p-16 ((Son hangs up abruptly.))  
 p-17 Son: hhh hh ((grabs at chest)) °my heart is beating like crazy. ° .hh hh  
 p-18 [((Son dials a second time.))]  
 p-19 [((heavy breathing))]

Here, the son makes use of lexical items in lines p-3, p-10, and p-17 (e.g. “'bout as nervous as as I can ever remember,” “I’ve been. . . panicking,” and “heart is beating like crazy”) as well as nonlexical items (e.g. frequent and audible inhaling and exhaling throughout the segment, hanging up abruptly after only two phone rings in line 16, and grabbing at his chest in line 17). The use of such lexical and nonlexical items directly makes public his internal state as one of anxiety, fear, and even panic in making the phone call. While his reason for calling has yet to be presented, the son does admit in line p-9 that someone “has no clue . . . nor do any members of (his) family,” about something the son wants to do, presumably a surprise act that he is afraid to perform. However, while the micro-targeted audience (the call-taker) may be in the dark, because of the title of



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(0.5)

In this sequence the son asks about the dad's current situation, i.e. he "scopes out the scene" by asking, "What are you doin?" (line 7). While this type of adjacency pair has been shown as a pre-sequence to an invitation (Schegloff, 1982), it seems to act here as a check as to whether this is a good time for the dad to take the call. Next, in line 9, the dad's turn is a repair initiator that treats the question, "What are you doin?" (line 7) as a trouble source and serves to delay his answer. The dad's first response in lines 12 and 13 is still orienting to the unexpected nature of the call in that he formulates a response that treats the call itself as newsworthy. Arguably this is a pre-sequence that is hearably absent in the call so far—an unexpected international call from a son he hasn't heard from for a while should deserve more than a "hey bud" before it moves on to the business of the call. Consequently, the son does not treat this as an apposite response. He instead initiates a second version of the question (line 15), and this time gets a more conventional answer, which the son treats as sufficient in that he goes on with the talk. Perhaps the son's answer, "just upstairs," in line 17 indicates to the son that the father is not preoccupied and may be alone. Moreover, when coupled with the son asking, "Who's with you?" in line 18, this sequence of questions is significant in that the son appears to be establishing pre-conditions for having the conversation; in effect, the son has learned that the dad is not preoccupied and who the audience is. Also, given what the macro-audience knows about the nature of the phone call, this sequence may speak to the gravity of the phone call itself much like when people ask, "Are you sitting down?" before breaking important news.

*Seg 4. Pre-announcement Sequence: Establishing Intent*

22	Son:	oh (2.2) ah (0.8) hey can I tell you (.)
23		something?
24		(2.6)/((buzz on phone))
25	Dad:	>do what?< =
26	Son:	=can I <u>t</u> ell you somethin?
27		(0.8)
28	Dad:	yeah.
29		(0.8)

In segment 4, the son establishes the reason for calling: to make a news announcement. The son forecasts an announcement by asking, "Can I tell you

something?” in lines 22-23. As Kitinger (2000) puts it, we can recognize these “pre-announcements” because “they begin with classic phrases like ‘Mum, I’ve got something to tell you,’ or ‘Guess what?’” (pp. 183). In asking, “Can I tell you something?” the son begins a pre-announcement sequence using *forecasting* to prepare the recipient for what will follow (Maynard, 2003). The full sequence includes the dad asking for clarification, the son repeating the original question, and the dad confirming that he is receptive to hearing the news. In reformulating the question in line 26, the son stresses “tell.” This difference in projection from the original seems to suggest that the news has some weight or is serious in nature. Further, while the repetition of the sequence in line 26 due to a request for clarification from the dad may be explained by the interference on the phone in line 24, it may also be an indication of stalling on the part of both parties.

It should be said that the act of coming out is a neutral act, neither “good news” or “bad news,” a matter of fact. However, a person’s perception or preconception of how the announcement will be received by their audience has the potential to cause the person coming out to treat their announcement as bad news. From a CA perspective, the notion of preference comes into play here as bad news is often delivered in a dispreferred way, with mitigations and delays and pre-sequences (Maynard, 2003), just like those seen thus far in the data.

The overwhelming anecdotal evidence showing that a majority of people treats their coming out as bad news suggests that there is a general perception that coming out will most likely be received negatively. The preconception that that one’s coming out will receive a negative reaction is mirrored in this data. By using discrete strategies to both forecast and stall his announcement, which can foreshadow the delivery of bad news (Marlowe, 2002), the son demonstrates his expectation of a negative response from his dad. In the next data set, the son’s perception that the news will be received negatively is directly made a part of the pre-announcement sequence.

*Seg 5. Pre-announcement Sequence: Request for Affirmation*

30	Son:	will you love me? (.) period?
31		(1.0)
32	Dad:	yes.
33		(0.7)
34	Son:	like (.) you- (.) you’ll always love me? (.)
35		as long as I’m (g)onna= [.hhh hhh
36	Dad:	= [always=



Here, by not immediately fulfilling his intent for calling, the son delays by posing and reposing a further question. The question in line 30, “Will you love me period?” seeks absolute affirmation from the dad about their relationship. Notice that this is formulated as a grammatically complete question (“will you love me?”) and an *increment* (“period”) (Ford et al., 2014). After a simple “yes” from the father in line 32, it is clear that the son does not find the response sufficient. This is evidenced by the son repeating the same question again in line 34. Here, it should be noted that the first iteration of the question, like the second, ends with upward intonation. Further, the increment “period” seems to qualify the first question in the same way that “always” adds emphasis and weight to the son’s second version of this question (Ford et al., 2014). This sequence, an almost desperate request for affirmation or assurance on the part of the son, supports the argument that he predicts the father will respond to his announcement, his “potentially discrediting information” (Goffman, 1943), as bad news. The son is, in effect, preparing himself and the father for the weight of the news to come. Viewed together, the previous three sequences (Segments 3, 4, & 5) that make up the greater pre-announcement sequence may indicate this strategy on the part of the son in order to establish pre-conditions for the telling. Just as, “What are you doing?” and, “Who’s there?” help establish how best for the son to formulate the news, a confirmation of the father’s love is also a necessary pre-condition before the telling can take place. With that in mind, the son eventually accepts the father’s second affirmation of their relationship and ends his stalling. This also ends the pre-announcement sequence and leads to the son’s announcement in segment 6.

### *Seg 6. The Announcement*

37	Son:	=.hhhh hhhh (2.4) .hhhh hhhh (1.1)
38		dad I’m gay.
39		(2.5)
40	Dad:	okay,
41		(2.0)
42	Son:	like always have been, .hhh I’ve known
43		since (.) forever
44		(1.3)
45	Son:	and uh: (0.6) I know
46		I haven’t seen you:: in like a year .hhh and
47		uh: .hhh ((*voice creaking))*I:: *I:: don’t
48		know >when’s the next time I’ll be able to
49		see you< and I::: (.) >I: didn’t wanna to do

50                               it over the phone< .hhh I wanted to tell you  
 51                               (0.7) in person but uh .hhh uh:: I di- uh mean  
 52                               >I didn't want you to find out any other way<  
 53                               (2.8)  
 54               Dad:    okay,

After two deep breaths and two substantial pauses indicative of a heavily weighted announcement that has yet to come, the son finally and abruptly reveals what he has wanted to tell his father—the son comes out as gay. In line 40, after the longest pause thus far, the dad responds with the shortest response thus far, “okay.” Repeated in line 54, this response from the father will be discussed further down.

Next, the son makes a long speech in lines 42-50. Within CA, this speech is more commonly referred to as a long, turn constructional unit, or TCU (Schegloff, 1982). In looking at the achievement of the TCU, we can see that it a) provides a historical account of the son's knowledge of his sexuality, b) gives a reason for why the son has chosen this time to come out over the phone, and c) prevents the other speaker from taking a turn. The task of preventing the next turn, evidenced by the absence of long pauses, several deep breaths to fill moments that would otherwise be entrance points for a next turn, and the lengthening of final vowel sounds (Kitzinger, 2000, Schegloff, 1982), seems to be an interactional achievement by the son postponing a predicted negative response from the father (Marlowe, 2002).

After the son has completed his extended turn at talk, we see another long gap of silence (line 53) before the dad responds again with a simple “okay.” While news announcements are normally followed by either an acknowledgement of receipt or an assessment of the news conveyed (Kitzinger, 2000), it is difficult to interpret what is happening here. According to Beach (1995), “Okay is most commonly a freestanding receipt marker and often shows affiliation, alignment, or agreement” (p.165); however, in this case, the two instances of “okay” in lines 40 and 54 do not show agreement. Neither a part of a fuller turn, nor transitional, the father's rather freestanding usage of “okay” seems to be a confirmation of receipt or acknowledgement rather than an affirmation. Moreover, while it may be possible to interpret “okay” as alignment or agreement, the son, in the context of his fuller turn, does not orient to it as such. Rather than interpret the “okay” in lines 40 and 54 as his father's immediate acceptance of his coming out, the son again seeks further affirmation of the status of their relationship from the father.

*Seg 7. Post-Announcement Sequence: Request for Affirmation*

55 (2.7)  
 56 Son: you still love me?  
 57 (0.5)  
 58 Dad: I still love you son  
 59 (4.1)  
 60 Dad: yes I still love you.  
 61 (0.5)  
 62 Son: hhh you okay?  
 63 (.)  
 64 Son: dad?  
 65 (1.8)  
 66 Dad: doesn't cha:nge (.) our relationship  
 67 (4.4)  
 68 Dad: y'hear me?=  
 69 Son: =yeah  
 70 (4.1)  
 71 Dad: doesn't change our relationship.  
 72 (0.7)

Lines 55-56 begin the post-announcement sequence with a request for affirmation. Still uncertain of how the dad has received his coming out, and after an equally long pause (line 55), the son seeks direct affirmation, or is again *fishing* for affirmation, repeating the same question as before the reveal, modified to include “still” as if the son expects the father’s perception of their relationship to have changed with the announcement. However, after a relatively short pause, the father quickly provides strong, positive affirmation using stress and repetition (lines 58 and 60). The speed of the father’s affirmation together with added emphasis and repetition hint at the weight of the father’s reaction. The gap of silence (4.1) in line 59 would have also been a possible place for the son to self-select in order to take a turn, but he does not. After such a strong affirmation from the father in a context where the son predicted an opposite reaction, these gaps of silence absent both lexical and nonlexical *surprise tokens* indicate that the son may not think the father’s response efficient and wants the father to continue with his turn (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006). The “you okay?” in line 62 shows us directly that the son is indeed seeking more from the father. The son is again seeking confirmation that the father has received the announcement well before advancing the interaction.

Interestingly, line 68 shows a reversal in questioning. That is, after the father explicitly acknowledges that the son's coming out will not change their relationship (line 66), instead of the son taking the next turn, we find the longest moment of silence in the entire interaction (line 67). In line 68 then, it is the father who is now requesting receipt of his affirmation as he asks, "You hear me?" Eventually, after the son's brief "yeah" in line 69, this sequence ends with the father repeating with emphasis that the son's coming out has not changed their relationship. However, following the interaction further, we see that the father is not satisfied with the son's "yeah" and seeks a more substantial receipt of his affirmation.

*Seg 8. Post-Announcement Sequence: Request for Receipt of Affirmation*

106	Dad:	I'll still— I love you.
107		(1.8)
108	Dad	okay?= 109 Son: =yeah 110 (1.0)
111	Dad:	and I always will (.) no matter what
112		(2.2)
113	Dad	alright?= 114 Son: =yessir= 115 Dad: =you are my son. 116 (1.5)
117	Dad	an: I::'m very proud of you.
118		(.)
119	Dad	n:kay?= 120 Son: =yessir 121 (2.6)

Segment 8 shows three repeated requests from the father that the son understands a) that the father still loves him (line 106), b) that that love will never stop (line 111), and c) that he is very proud of him (line 117). In each instance, rather than the son immediately responding, we are met with silence and hesitation from the son and further follow-up requests from the father for acknowledgment, "okay?" "alright," and "n'kay (lines 108, 113, and 119). With parallel construction and now with lack of hesitation, the son replies, "yeah," "yessir," and "yessir" (lines 109, 114, and 120). That said, it is not until Segment 9 that we see the son fully accept the father's affirmation.

*Seg 9. Son's Acceptance of the Father's Affirmation*

122 Dad: n: I will always love you.  
 123 (1.4)  
 124 Son: .hhh (.) thanks thanks dad.  
 125 (1.0)  
 126 Son I wasn't sure what you'd say  
 127 (1.4)  
 128 Dad: n Sherry loves you too,=  
 129 Son: [heh heh heh  
 130 Dad: [( )]=  
 131 Son: =.hhh=  
 132 Dad: =[ ( )  
 133 Son: [hhhh alright (1.8) I've been workin myself  
 134 up sittin' here with the phone in my hand  
 135 for bout four hours (2.0) .hhh ((big sigh))  
 136 eh (1.1) alri:ght.

Here, in a sort of *da capo al coda* the son returns to the *prelude*, his earlier sentiments before making the phone call, and directly admits his uncertainty that he wasn't sure what the father would say (line 126). Finally, in lines 133-136, the viewing audience gets the denouement that the phone call has been leading to. The son exhales deeply, sighs, and now after four hours and a phone call later the nerve-racking act of coming out to the father is finished.

**V. Conclusion**

Ironically, when isolated, the act of coming out simply looks like a heavily weighted announcement. And yet, so much more preparation, negotiation, and management go into its construction within the context of heterosexism. It is the social construct of heterosexism that prevents those coming out from predicting how their announcement will be received. This uncertainty presents itself pre-announcement and again later when the son finally accepts the father's affirmation. While the choice certainly exists to present one's coming out as either good news or bad, under the weight of such uncertainty some opt for the latter in preparing for the worst. In the above data, the son presented his announcement as bad news even though no laws had been broken, no punishments incurred, and no infractions made. For reasons that are only speculative, the son projected himself and his sexuality, through a lens of social and cultural judgment, as something to be ashamed of, as "discrediting information" (Goffman, 1963)—the son's coming

out was presented as bad news and the father was expected to receive it as such. Fortunately, this interaction shows a much different reaction from the father than the son predicted. In the last moments of the interaction, we see a final affirmation of the father-son relationship.

*Seg 10. Final Closing Sequence (with final Affirmation)*

174        Son:    =alright well I love you deddy (.)  
 175                    thanks for everything=  
 176        Dad:    =love you too son=  
 178        Son:    =I'll be home before too long  
 179                    (1.1)  
 180        Dad:    o:kay gimme a call tomorrow=  
 181        Son:    =alright I love you  
 182                    (1.0)  
 183        Dad:    =love you too bud=  
 184        Son:    =alright (.) °bye°  
 185                    (1.5)  
 186                    ((Phone call ends.))  
 187        Son:    hhhh ((Son exhales in a whistle.))  
 188                    ((Son runs one hand across his forehead.))  
 189        Son:    Oh my lo:rd.  
                   ((VIDEO ENDS))

Ultimately, what was first feared and caused the son to lose sleep ends with repeated acceptance, affirmation, and in lines 187-188, signaled by an exhale and the son sweeping a hand across his forehead, relief. Although it is impossible to paint all coming out stories with such broad and positive strokes, for those that do choose to come out, perhaps their perception is that the benefits outweigh the costs. In this single-case, not only did the son choose to come out to his father but to thousands of online viewers as well. With the risk of rejection from a small, private audience, surely the risk of rejection is greater if the audience is expanded to include an unlimited public audience. Yet, the phenomenon of coming out online continues to grow and is one example of how the online community is proving to be a supportive outlet for queer minorities. Perhaps this virtual community is changing perceptions and expectations within real communities. Perhaps, the old adage is true; there is strength (and support) in numbers.

## VI. Transcription Conventions

The transcription-notation system employed for data segments is an adaptation of Gail Jefferson's work (see Atkinson & Heritage, 1984):

(0.8)	Silence in tenths of a second
(.)	Brief pause
=	Latching of utterance segments
[ ]	Overlapping talk
.hh	In-breath
hh	Out-breath
(( ))	Perceived action or transcriber comment
-	Cut-off
:	Elongated sound
!	Emphatic tone
.	Falling intonation
,	Continuing intonation
?	Rising intonation
↑	Marked rise of immediately following segment
↓	Marked fall of immediately following segment
<u>Underline</u>	Emphasis
CAPS	Increased volume
◦	Decreased volume
> <	Increased speed
→	Line discussed in text
£	Smile voice
(h)	Bubbling laughter within a word

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