

ABSTRACT

Author: Rory P. Dougall

Title: CLOSETS ARE TOO SMALL FOR WHEELCHAIRS: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF SCHOOLING AND COMING OUT

Thesis Advisor: Jemel Aguilar

Department: Department of Social Work and Honors College

Year: 2018

Contained in the following pages is a story made up of a series of snapshots of the life of a gay man with a disability. Like any story, there is an introduction, a climax, and an ending. Except in this case, the ending is only the beginning. My story starts out with my journey through childhood with doing therapy everyday and the headaches and pains of becoming stronger while also trying to figure out how I relate with my peers. The middle contains information regarding my adolescence and struggling with coping with being disabled while also trying to figure out who I was attracted to and why I was attracted to them. The ending depicts where I am now and where I hope to go in the future.

I am going to take you through my early years of life that was primarily focused on becoming stronger and more independent so that I can be successful in the future. I am going to take you through my adolescence which was riddled with confusion, shame, doubt, hopelessness, frustration, and isolation. I am going to take you through my college years associated with freedom, liberation, anger, and fear. Finally, I am going to tell you where I want to be in the future. I cannot promise a smooth journey but what I can promise you is a new way of viewing the construct of illness and how that relates to sexual identity development. I hope that by reading this, it will make you feel like you have more control over the problems facing society and encourage you to assist in the journey toward creating more free and just communities around the world.