Michele K. Lewis · Isiah Marshall

LGBT Psychology

Research Perspectives and People of African Descent

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This text is dedicated to all sung and unsung same-gender loving, gender transgressive, and gender variant people of African descent, dead or alive across the globe. May 1 day, full and accurate accounts of your lives be known and appreciated by the masses.

Preface

Who would have anticipated that 1 day, Black mainstream media would openly address gender non-conforming young Black biological males at one of the United States' prominent historically Black colleges, Morehouse College? What is not surprising, however, is the internet buzz and conversations that ensued about Black biological male students wearing makeup and openly carrying purses on the campus. Likewise, the international attention paid to same-gender loving issues in the African nations of Uganda and Malawi has been widespread. This text addresses these and other events, behaviors, and attitudes pertaining to same sex attraction and gender variance among people of African descent. The analysis presented here is of same sex attraction and transgender related issues among people of African descent within Black cultural contexts and through the histories of Black people.

LGBT Psychology: Research Perspectives and People of African Descent is the first psychologically based text to focus specifically on people of African descent who are non-heteronormative, and who do not fit binary gender classifications. However, in so doing, I reference interdisciplinary academic sources, popular culture, and news media sources. In the first chapter, I acknowledge that the acronym LGBT is not a universal term, and may not be embraced by people of African descent worldwide. I use it, however, as a means of succinctly referencing same gender attracted behaviors, and gender queer expressions among people of African descent. Also, because psychology has been relatively slow (compared to some other disciplines) to conduct studies of Black identified sexual minorities and Black gender variance issues, I deemed it necessary to review, in addition to psychological research, the research and writings of diverse fields of study such as social work, Black studies, sociology, women's studies, literature, religion, public health, nursing, anthropology, law, and history to guide my usage of psychological theory when addressing the thoughts, behaviors, and emotions contained here. Thus, in the vein of anthropologist, Gloria Wekker (The Politics of Passion) and English professor J. Halberstam (Female Masculinity), I characterize my approach here as scavenger methodology. Therefore, if an interdisciplinary academic, journalist, religious figure, politician or popular culture figure is on record having made statements regarding same-sex attraction, identity, or gender variance in reference to people of African

descent, and I discovered it in my scavenger hunt, then it is referenced here in one or more of the chapters whenever relevant.

In the spirit of the historical ideas of John Dewey regarding the discipline of psychology, I advocate here for the use of qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as the integration of knowledge across multiple disciplines, hence the scavenger methodology. Such is necessary when studying marginalized populations and social problems. No data of written or oral record should be dismissed as insignificant when attempting to conduct indigenous and culturally sensitive analyses of marginalized people. This often necessitates that the data comes directly from the people in their voices.

Though not an exhaustive presentation of approximately 25 years of relevant interdisciplinary work, I have attempted to provide readers with psychological perspectives regarding the complexity of issues, the history, and the interpersonal experiences of people of African descent who are sexual minorities and/or gender variant, using findings and discourse from a variety of sources.

I chose to open the text with a chapter highlighting the need for the study of people of African descent within LGBT Psychology by presenting the gap which currently exists in the literature regarding the population, and the significance of intersectional research in this area. The whole Black person must be considered in doing the research, negating any assumptions that Blackness or sexual identity will be independently prioritized for the individual. I also address in the first chapter, the contentious debate regarding whether same sex sexuality is indigenous to Africans, and thus people of African descent.

Also, of particular cultural significance regarding the text are the topics of gender and religiosity/spirituality (Chaps. 2 and 3 respectively). These chapters examine how traditional gender schemas may impact attitudes about same-sex sexuality among the population, and the degree of acceptance of perceived gender transgressive behaviors. I also examine socio-historical cultural influences, which impact cultural acceptance (including self-acceptance) or rejection of LGBT people of African descent within faith-based communities such as within some more traditional Black churches.

I employ the use of the term "outsider" in this text (i.e., Audre Lorde and Richard Wright). I use this term to refer to contemporary Black college students at HBCUs, who our outside of the mainstream among their peers because they identify as LGB persons. I refer to them as the "New Outsiders" (Chap. 4). The chapter is the result of interviews with eight young LGB men and women who were students at a historically Black university at the time of the interviews. The students spoke candidly in response to interview questions about their personal histories, family experiences, and college experiences.

Chapter 5 is an analysis of E. Patrick Johnson's Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South, with the objective of highlighting psychological implications and future research that may be outgrowths of Johnson's work. I assert that within Johnson's extensive oral history of men across the south, several additional questions emerge that psychologists may wish to explore through qualitative and/or quantitative analysis.

In Chap. 6, I present a discussion of some of the issues relevant to women of African descent who are same sex attracted. I examine Black women's various social positions such as nationality, age, masculine identities versus feminine identities, class, and relationships. I also provide an overview of psychologist Beverly Greene's perspective on the use of psychodynamic approaches with women of African descent in psychotherapy. I also acknowledge in Chap. 6 that relative to research conducted on gay men, research on lesbians, particularly Black lesbians is sparse. However, I am hopeful about the stimulation of new research ideas on diverse Black lesbian populations in conjunction with the Chap. 6 content.

In Chap. 7, I present a psychological theoretical framework of five dangerous ideas that lead groups to conflict. In the chapter, these five ideas are related to issues for LGBT people of African descent. The five dangerous ideas are helplessness, distrust, vulnerability, injustice, and superiority. The ideas relate to domestic violence and dominance in relationships, the under usage of healthcare systems, risky sexual behaviors among some Black men who sleep with men, some heterosexuals' anti-gay marriage attitudes, inequities in research and health services about and for people of African descent, and race-based discrimination and exclusion of LGBT people of African descent from more widespread attention.

In Chap. 8, I explore the concepts of covering, reverse covering, and cultural centrism for LGBT individuals of African descent. I highlight the challenges for LGBT people in nations such as Senegal, Uganda, Jamaica, Kenya, Malawi, and Nigeria. In these nations, homosexuality is outlawed, with severe legal, physical, and sometimes life threatening consequences for same sex expression. A major goal of this chapter is to address the challenges of being granted asylum for LGBT persons of these nations. I present these challenges for LGBT people as relevant to the goals of liberation psychology, but also acknowledge the significance of the cultural beliefs within these contexts. I also discuss the psychology of the emotions of disgust and fear as being relevant to anti-gay attitudes, behaviors, and laws.

It is important to acknowledge that the life experiences of LGBT persons of African descent in rural versus urban areas may be distinct in some regards, while similar in other regards. Thus in Chap. 9, we discuss rural and urban settings for their relevance to the lived experiences of LGBT people of African descent. We explore issues such as establishing community, use of technology for social networking, finding relationships, and coping with social stigma. We utilize impression management theory in the chapter, to discuss the reality that stigmatized groups may attempt to manage others' perception of who they are by engaging in certain behaviors, avoiding certain behaviors and persons, or attempting to project certain images of themselves. Such impression management behavior is discussed as likely to occur in the real world as well as in print advertisements, and online communications.

We close the text with Chap. 10, in which there is a discussion of education, research, and community services. The final chapter is included to promote an increased incorporation of LGBT Psychology Research Perspectives and People of African Descent into curriculums as a type of cultural study in liberation psychology. It is necessary to continuously advance psychology towards being a more

inclusive discipline; this is long overdue. In Chap. 10 we advocate for the use of multiple methods and the use of interdisciplinary studies to advance such knowledge. We also specifically highlight the need for education and research on the subject matter of this text within the curriculums of HBCUs and other institutions committed to diversity.

Another goal of Chap. 10 is to present the insights shared by two service providers, one in Washington, DC and one in Chicago. Information is also presented from interviews with two community leaders in Chicago to learn about their triumphs and challenges in meeting the needs of LGBT people of African descent within their communities. The information that they shared was enlightening. We also provide an overview of community based programs in Winston Salem, NC and Dallas, TX which are currently in operation to meet the needs of same-gender loving people of African descent. In both cities, the population is under-served.

The subject matter of this text is best viewed through the lens of liberation psychology, global and indigenous psychologies. The words people of African descent here is used to refer to people of African descent, irrespective of national identity, but not irrespective of cultural variations and diversity across Black people. The worldwide populations of people of African descent must be examined from within their various cultural perspectives. This includes hearing the individuals' voices and learning the stories of their lives. Due to pervasive heterosexism that has existed within Black studies, and racism within queer studies, the people who are the focus of this text have largely been ignored or misunderstood. Increasingly, however, as we see more of the international same sex attracted population making their presence known, as in the case of the Morehouse students and same-sex attracted persons on the African continent, the need for more texts such as this one, and more research studies is imperative. The aim here is to provide a text which students, researchers, educators, and community programs may refer for discussion, application, and stimulation of new research.

Each chapter also contains a recommended resources list included immediately after each chapter's conclusion. For students and researchers who wish to acquire further knowledge on chapter relevant content, I hope that the recommended resources will be useful. In many instances, I indicate in brackets after the recommendation what my thoughts were regarding including an item as a recommendation. For anyone looking to do more research on these issues, or looking to develop a related course, I highly recommend reviewing the suggested resources. I found them all to be valuable during this project.

Some readers may be curious about why there are no titled chapters addressing two commonly discussed issues that are highly relevant to the subject matter of this text. These are "down low" behavior and HIV/AIDS. There are no specifically titled chapters devoted to these topics, due to these issues being ones that have been extensively written about and deconstructed by interdisciplinary academics and laypersons. Also though, psychologically, these issues are relevant to several chapters within the book. Thus, across chapters whenever relevant, I have included HIV/AIDS relevant research findings and references to "down low" behaviors as addressed by social science and health researchers.

Finally, I invite all parties who support social justice to join in furthering the study, research, and community engagement of this subject matter in the advancement of liberation psychology. There is much international work to be done regarding LGBT issues for people of African descent, especially as members of the global population become more visible.

Michele K. Lewis

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About the Author and Contributor

Michele K. Lewis is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Winston Salem State University, where she teaches courses in psychology of gender, cross-cultural psychology, and a liberal learning seminar on issues affecting LGBT people of African descent. She has served as committee co-chair of the Committee on Racial and Ethnic Diversity for the American Psychological Association (APA) Division 44, The Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues. She has facilitated community support groups for African American sexual minorities in Washington, DC and Winston Salem, NC. She is also author of *Multicultural Health Psychology: Special Topics Acknowledging Diversity.* Currently she serves as a member of the Executive Committee of APA Division 44.

Isiah Marshall Jr. is the program coordinator for the social work program at Winston Salem State University. His research and professional interests are in social work education, aging, Black families, and Black men and masculinity. He has worked with diverse populations in his training as both a social worker and sociologist.

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Chapter 1
Indigenous and Intersecting: People of African Descent in LGBT Psychology

Body and soul, Black America reveals the extreme questions of contemporary life, questions of freedom and identity: How can I be who I am?

June Jordan (1989)

A number of psychologists have stated that in order for psychology to become increasingly multicultural and inclusive, the research and theory that drives the research must incorporate more diverse populations; this must happen before it can be said that the findings of psychological research universally apply to multiple populations (Lawson, Baker, & Graham, 2006; Allwood & Berry, 2006). The focus of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) psychologies is no exception to this requirement. *LGBT psychology* has been described as a perspective that aims to support social change, as it focuses on increasing the visibility, validation, and acknowledgement of research, theory, and practice on LGBT concerns across the discipline of psychology (Clarke & Peel, 2007). Unfortunately however, since a seminal psychological study of gay men (Hooker, 1957), the findings of the research have thus far been primarily based on white participants. Also, as research is being increasingly done to include transgender persons, this research, too, has overwhelmingly sampled white transgender persons (Sánchez & Vilain, 2009; Veale, Clarke, & Lomax, 2008).

An explanation for the racial disparity within LGBT research must emphasize issues of white privilege (Twine & Gallagher, 2008; McIntosh, 1989; Dubois, 1936). It is often true that white LGBT persons may be erroneously regarded as not possessing a culture; thus there may be lack of acknowledgement that white LGBT persons' culture is inseparable from their sexuality (Riggs, 2007). Such thinking often leads to an assumption that the research findings based on white LGBT persons are universal, resulting in a *psycolonization of knowledge*. Thus, psychological knowledge derived from white populations is often published as the universal truth, seemingly unaffected by white persons' culture (Riggs, 2007).

It is imperative to continue to deconstruct and explain the relative absence of Black populations as a focus in LGBT psychology. Sampling issues for LGBT populations

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notwithstanding (Meyer & Wilson, 2009), additional complexities of doing such research with Black populations include intersectional issues (e.g., combined ethnic minority, gender, and sexual minority identities) within socio-historical contexts for Black populations (Bowleg, 2008). The significance of the intersecting identities of Black men and women who are also same sex attracted or non-gender conforming, may also relate to researchers' access to Black sexual minorities, and also affect the researchers' ability to actually secure Black participants for follow through participation in LGBT studies.

Intersectional Invisibility

Purdue-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) use the term *intersectional invisibility* in reference to the failure to fully recognize people with intersecting identities as members of their constituent groups. Furthermore, they assert that groups possess prototypical members. Thus for Black sexual minorities, because they do not fit the prototype of their constituent group, they are more likely to experience social invisibility. Anderson and McCormack (2010) provide an example of this in their discussion of Black gay athletes, whom they point out as being so unimaginable that no strong prevalent stereotypes even exist about them. Thus, such persons are often excluded from gay liberationist discussions. Coupled with this social invisibility may be a distinctive mixture of experiences of disadvantages and advantages, which the prototypical members do not experience. It is for this reason that this text advocates for increased research perspectives addressing LGBT people of African descent. It important to note that the issues discussed in this text may not be exclusive to sexual minorities of African descent, however the issues may be distinctive for those of African descent due to their intersectional invisibility. Purdue-Vaughns & Eibach detail intersectional invisibility as drawing on concepts of androcentrism, ethnocentrism, and heterocentrism as shown in Fig. 1.1.

They further expand upon the concept by specifying the various ways in which intersectionally subordinate group members may be rendered invisible, such as via historical invisibility (i.e. lack of full acknowledgement of Black gay activist Bayard Rustin's civil rights contributions), cultural invisibility (i.e. lack of full understanding of Black male "down low" behavior), political invisibility (i.e. lack of ethnic diversity in gay advocacy groups), and legal invisibility (i.e., lack of adequate legal representation for Black sexual minorities in some developing nations). For sexual minorities of African descent, more research is needed to investigate the effects of each of the above types of invisibility.

The use of the term, Black, for the purposes of this text refers to any persons of African descent who may identify as Black Hispanic, Black Caribbean, Black American (north and south), and Black African. Likewise, in previous sample selections of Black men who have sex with men, researchers have suggested that though the socio-cultural and historical backgrounds of Black people differ (i.e., refraining from essentialist notions of Black racial identification), people of African descent

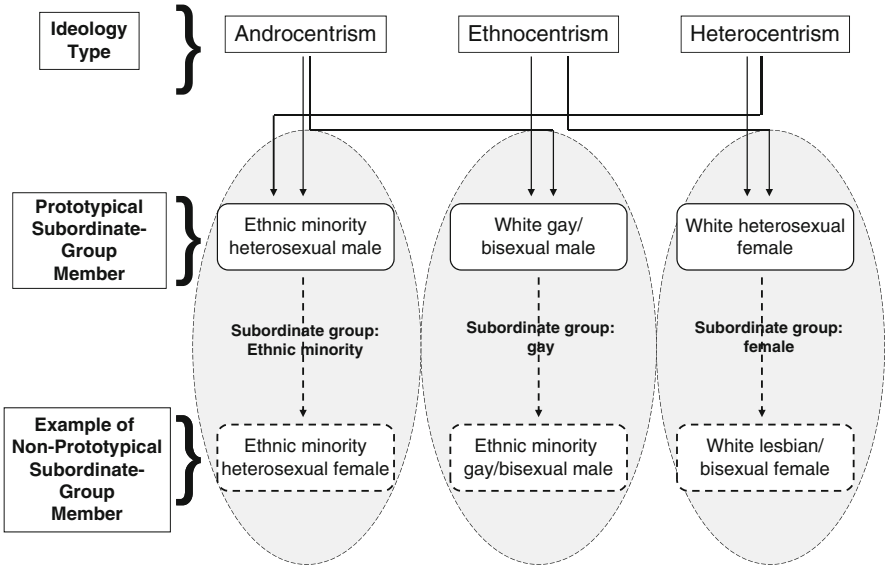

Fig. 1.1 Ideological sources of prototypicality (With kind permission from Springer Science+Business Media) (Purdue-Vaughns & Eibach 2008, p. 382, Fig. 1)

may share common aspects of Black experiences as they relate to one another, and relative to other racial groups (Graham, Braithwaite, Spikes, Stephens, & Edu, 2009). This may result in common behavioral, cognitive, and emotional expressions. As more studies accumulate that focus on Black LGBT populations, increasingly the field of psychology will be in a position to incorporate the findings of such research into textbooks and curricular development as examples of indigenous psychology (Allwood & Berry, 2006).

Indigenous Psychology from Within

Indigenous psychologies were developed and encouraged in response to scholars' criticisms of mainstream psychology as lacking in universality (Kim & Berry, 1993). Commonly, *indigenous psychology* is used to refer to the practice of non-Western researchers using the values of local populations, the concepts of local populations, and the belief systems of local populations to study the behavior and consciousness of native people in their own cultural context (Shams & Hwang, 2005). The *indigenous psychology from within* movement emphasizes a bottom up approach to generating theory, concepts, methodology, and understanding that will be culturally-based, and culturally appropriate for the population under study, as opposed to making assumptions and drawing conclusions on the basis of studying mainstream psychological theory and majority populations (Kim, Park, & Park, 2000).

Psychologists have acknowledged that mainstream LGBT research in psychology cannot be regarded as applicable to many ethnic minority populations due to the overwhelming presence of findings based on white, urban, gay, middle class, males (Greene, 2003). Yet, there are substantial numbers of Black *LGBT* persons who exist for inclusion in research (Battle et al., 2002). We use the acronym LGBT throughout this text with the caveat that this term originated within the aforementioned context of the *psycolonization* of knowledge. Thus it should be noted that labeling oneself LGBT may not be uniformly and consistently embraced by Black persons; however we use the acronym, LGBT throughout the various chapters at times, for its succinctness. We have chosen to omit the "Q" (queer) from the acronym due to knowledge of at least one study based on a large sample of Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons which revealed that the word queer had very limited use or preference in the participants' self-labeling of their sexual identity (Battle et al.). For this and other reasons to be examined in future chapters, we propose a concentration on people of African descent in LGBT psychology as a type of indigenous psychology for research consideration and formal academic study. The following quote represents culturally specific terminology usage by some same gender loving women of African descent: "Although the word aggressive is ordinarily used to describe a personality trait or behavior, the terms *aggressive, aggressor*, or *AG* are labels many Black lesbians in New York use to indicate a woman who has a masculine presentation of self" (Moore, 2006, p. 114).

In the previous quote, Moore makes reference to a mainstream psychological perspective in stating that the word aggressive is ordinarily used to describe a personality trait or behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Bergman, McIntyre, & James, 2004). However, she further indicates that the word is used with a somewhat different connotation for some Black lesbians. Black New York lesbians' usage of aggressive to self-describe may not always imply aggressiveness or even assertiveness in the common understanding of these words. Among some Black lesbians in New York, use of the word *aggressive* may not entirely indicate personality characteristics, but may instead be used specifically to denote a position along a masculinity-femininity continuum, often but not exclusively used to self- present to the world, a more masculine looking appearance. A top-down, *indigenization from without* approach is one that would attempt to apply a mainstream theoretical perspective to Black lesbians which does not fit with the women's cultural meaning of the word *aggressive* within the specific population. Thus, the women's motivations for identifying and presenting as *aggressive* could be misread if one were to draw conclusions without learning from the women themselves, within their proper cultural context.

Similarly, Black psychologists have also noted the use of derogatory terms such as "*funny women*" and "*bulldagger*" as being used among some Black people in reference to Black lesbians (Savage & Harley, 2005); this cultural terminology should not be assumed as known to LGBT researchers operating from within a predominantly white cultural perspective. Again, an indigenization from without approach would result in such terms potentially being misunderstood when a researcher is attempting to make meaning of the culture and language being used.

An important area of emphasis within mainstream LGBT psychology has been the issue of *gay identity development.* Gay identity development has been defined as

a process whereby the individual progresses from a state of self and others assuming the individual is heterosexual, to an open and affirmed state of homosexuality (Cass, 1979). Cass's original identity formation model includes six stages that are conceptualized as a linear progressive trajectory of development. The model has consistently maintained popularity among mainstream LGBT researchers as the classic outline for studying and understanding how gay identity is formed (Cass, 1984; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Frable, 1997; Marszalek & Cashwell, 1999). Although some researchers have challenged the model's applicability to lesbians (Degges-White, Rice, & Myers, 2000) due to Cass' model having been developed solely on white gay male research participants, it is a fact that limited studies have examined Cass' model or other models' applicability to Black populations (Loiacano, 1989). In at least one publication, Cass does not make mention of the ethnic makeup of the participants of her research, which suggests that the reader will assume their whiteness (Cass). But, should researchers also assume that the model will generalize to non-white populations? One study suggests perhaps not exactly (Loiacano, 1989).

The six stages of Cass' model are identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis. For purposes of discussing Black populations of LGBT persons, we focus on Cass' fifth stage of *identity pride*. The identity pride stage is defined as a nearly complete acceptance of one's gay, lesbian, or bisexual self along with awareness of homosexual rejection in the wider society. The world is thus likely to be perceived as divided into two camps: heterosexual and homosexual. The individual's commitment to the homosexual group, or sense of group identity is very strong during the identity pride stage. This is expected to lead to activism, and purposeful confrontation with the establishment (Degges-White et al., 2000). During the identity pride stage, the gay identity is the primary identity. The gay identity during this stage is stated as taking precedence over all other aspects of the person's life. It is also stated that during this phase, disclosing one's sexual identity to others, commonly referred to as *coming out*, is likely to increase. If researchers assume universality of this psychological stage, then it would be expected that this stage description, as a part of the developmental process of gay identity formation, would also exist within people of African descent.

Loiacano (1989), using a small sample useful for exploratory research, found that Black Americans experience significant challenges to developing and maintaining their positive gay identity. The challenges to their establishment of a consistently positive identity came from members of the Black community as well as from the white gay and lesbian community. These challenges are reflective of Black LGBT persons' experiences with integrating at least two stigmatized central identities (e.g. race and same-sex sexuality), because both identities are still used as a basis for rejection and discrimination. Because this is likely to be true too for other ethnic and racial minorities, but not an issue for white LGBT persons, it is possible that all of Cass's stages and their accompanying descriptions may not be broadly applicable to many ethnic minority LGBT persons. Thus, for Black populations, we must be cautious in expecting to see the same linear progression through the six stages as outlined by Cass (Martinez & Sullivan, 1998). The following is an example summarized from Loiacano's (1989) study of gay identity issues among

Black Americans: A Black college student, Diane, attended a predominantly white college, where she maintained relationships with members of the Black community there for support. Diane was anxious regarding coming out to her Black social support network because she did not want to be rejected by them. Subsequently, Diane found herself exploring her feelings of lesbianism while still continuing to date men. Years later Diane decided to come out to significant others in her life, but she was still anxious that her identification as a lesbian might alienate her from her primary reference group – Black Americans.

"The Black community" as an important reference group may be highly valued by Black persons, depending on their stage of Black identity development (Cross, 1971). Clearly in the above example, Diane has achieved self-acceptance as a same sex attracted woman, yet she does not seem to have easily moved forward to Cass's pride and synthesis stages regarding her sexuality, because of her anxiety about acceptance in the Black community.

According to Cass' model, after having successful coming out experiences during stage 5, LGBT persons should move on to the final stage of *identity synthesis*, in which they become an integrated healthy person who no longer prioritizes the sexual identity; it is simply a part of who they are. In a study of white, Latina, and African American lesbians, it was found that majority based theoretical assumptions about identity synthesis and coming out may be less applicable when we consider sociocultural and historical context for African American lesbians (Parks, Hughes, & Matthews, 2004).

It has been elsewhere written that an additive versus an intersectional approach to understanding identity among Black LGBT persons is a mistake (Bowleg, 2008). For many Black LGBT persons, there may not exist a prioritizing of the gay identity as indicated in Cass's stage 5. Thus, logically, one can deduce that the same need for a synthesis in stage 6 may not be applicable to significant numbers of Black LGBT persons. Although some researchers have concluded that sexual identity formation is not significantly influenced by culture (Rosario, Schimshaw, & Hunter, 2004), other colleagues agree with the assertion that such a conclusion based on non-significant findings comparing different ethnic groups' developmental progression, should not be interpreted as the insignificance of ethnicity and culture, which in some instances is too broad, complex, and varying to control (Riggs, 2007).

Research has shown that majority white LGBT samples may be actively, politically gay in order to reduce continued invisibility and discrimination (Levitt et al. 2009). However, such behavior may be different for Black persons based on evidence of racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in civic and political participation (Frasure & Williams, 2009). Such disparities have been attributed to economic inequality, constrictive immigration policy, systemic bias, and mobilization bias. The anxiety mentioned previously in the example of Diane represents concerns that may influence her outward and open involvement in gay activism or gay pride activities. It should also be noted here though, that it should not be assumed that gay identity pride is nonexistent in Black LGBT persons. Though there is much variation in the characteristics of the attendees, large numbers of Black LGBT persons annually attend Black Gay Pride celebrations across the U.S. in major metropolitan areas (Battle et al., 2002).

Nevertheless, researchers have addressed the issue of conflicting social identities for Black gay and lesbian people (Icard, 1986; Greene, 2000b; Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999). The research on conflicting social identities for Black gay and lesbian people is warranted given what has been written about the beliefs of some Black heterosexuals who may believe LGBT identity to be white behavior that is at odds with Black identity, Black cultural values, and Black interests (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003; Lewis, 2003). These attitudes have been referred to as *cultural homophobia*, a product of Black concerns about resisting the perpetuation of images of Black people as being sexually deviant and pathological (Cole & Guy-Sheftall). This ideological perspective among some African Americans has also been referred to as an endorsement of *ethnosexual mythology,* manifesting as internalized racism (Greene, 2000a). Thus the existence of conflicting social identities could pose a problem for Black LGBT persons in ways that are different from white LGBT persons. This is yet another example of the need for concentrated study and training in research perspectives addressing people of African descent who are LGBT.

Also, some theorists possess a belief that same-sex attraction and sexual expression contradicts *Afrocentricity*, which focuses on African epistemological relevance, centeredness, and location. Some advocates of Afrocentricity assert that "homosexuality" is non-existent in Black Africa, particularly prior to colonialism, and thus "homosexuality" is incompatible with Afrocentricity and Black nationalist thought (Welsing, 1991; Asante, 1988; Summers, 2002). For example, Afrocentric psychologist Na' im Akbar (2003) states in the book, *Akbar Papers in African Psychology*, that *some* [italics mine] Black LGB persons suffer from what he refers to as *alien self disorder*. While Akbar does not distinguish between the Black LGBT persons who have the disorder and those who do not, he does assert that alien self disorder is the explanation for some Black gay person's sexual identity. He states that some Black LGB identity is a result of accumulated psychological distress when unable to meet white standards of acceptability; so the Black LGB person gives up and decides to emulate whites, i.e., homosexuality. Akbar's language of alien self disorder thus suggests that homosexuality in some Black persons is non-normative, and essentially a pathology stemming from experiencing institutionalized racism. Such views as these being promulgated by well known Afrocentric psychologists, may exacerbate a lack of acceptance among segments of the Black community.

There is existing ethnographic research that details same-sex attraction on the continent of Africa, specifically including regions and peoples within East Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, and Southern Africa (Murray & Roscoe, 2001). Though this research is incomplete (less information presented on lesbian behavior relative to male behavior) and also imperfect (few detailed accounts of pre-colonial same sex practices), sufficient information is available to reject notions that same-sex attraction and gender-bending cases are alien to indigenous African culture (Ellerson, 2005). Gay and lesbian life and culture across the African Diaspora have also been depicted in film as presented by The Pan African Film and Art Festival, the first Black film festival to highlight films made by and about LGBT people of African descent (Cannick, 2008). Thus, scholars within Black studies departments or other academic departments who may advance notions of heterosexual homogeneity throughout

the Black Diaspora have been unfortunately influenced by U.S. centered Black heteronormativity that has predominantly characterized Black Studies curriculums (Walcott, 2005). If Black Studies curriculums can be advanced to also incorporate the Black diaspora as thoroughly as they currently address Black U.S. population issues, knowledge of the behaviors of Black persons in other nations will become better understood. For example, lesbian activist, Tsitsi Tiripana, a native Zimbabwean, is openly advocating for the rights of lesbians and gays in her nation and across the continent of Africa through an organization that she belongs to known as GALZ-Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (Smith, 2000). Tiripana states that her organization does research and they know that gay and lesbian people have always been in Zimbabwe, even though her President [Mugabe] calls them pigs and perverts. Mugabe thinks that their same sex attraction comes from exposure to Americans and Europeans. Tiripana also states that persons such as Mugabe believe that gay issues belong to whites or foreigners, though 70% of the gay women in Zimbabwe are Black and indigenous.

Consistent with the need to avoid imposing labels and concepts that are outside of the indigenous culture, the people within various regions of Africa may not apply the same labels to the behaviors as in the West. For example, coming out, bisexual, cross-dresser, and transgender are terms that should not be presumed to be used to describe Africans or the behaviors. Although homoeroticism can be found throughout the African continent (though understudied), the terminology for such behaviors is not necessarily consistent with usage in Western cultures (Ajen, 2001). Labels for same-sex relationships, gender transgressions and sexuality (some derogatory) exist across the African Diaspora as shown in Table 1.1.

In an overview of West African homoerotic expression, Murray and Roscoe (2001) include that in the West African context, there are men who would never consider or identify themselves as gay, even if they regularly engage in sex with other men. Furthermore there are other men who clearly prefer same sex contacts, but they too would never label themselves publicly as gay because of the consequences. Such men exist within a culture in which homoerotic expression is not indicative of a gay identity. In fact, homoerotic expression may even be allowable as long as it does not exclude heterosexual behavior and marriage; as long as the behavior remains invisible; and as long as the homoerotic behavior is not prioritized (Murray & Roscoe). However, during homoerotic expression, although in heterosexual marriages, some men may or may not utilize a condom (Murray, 2001), which may be explained by a host of interpersonal factors.

Significance of Culture and Interpersonal Factors as Black Issues

In a study done in the West using African American men who sleep with men (MSM), researchers have emphasized the need to go beyond individual-level mediators of risky behavior (i.e., lack of condom usage) when trying to design programs to address HIV rates in African American MSMs (Mays, Cochran, & Zamudio, 2004). For Black MSMs, irrespective of nationality, there may be interpersonal factors and

Table 1.1 Cultural terms for same sex identities or behaviors in the African diaspora

Batty boy (Jamaica)	Gay male (derogatory)
Buller man (Anglophone Caribbean)	Gay male (derogatory)
Genge (South Africa)	Masculine male in same sex relationship
Gordjiguene (Wolof-Senegal)	Manwoman
Injonga (South Africa)	Male identified partner to skesanas
Isitabani sesilisa (Zulu, South Africa)	Homosexual male
Isitabani sowesifazane (Zulu, South Africa)	Homosexual female/lesbian
Madivins (Haiti)	Lesbians
Man-Royale/sodomite (Jamaican derogatory)	Lesbian
Mashoga (East Africa)	Passive gay man
Masisis (Haiti)	Gay males
Matiism (Suriname)	The practice of women who have sexual relations with other women but who typically also will have had or still have relationships with men simultaneously
Moffie (South Africa)	Equivalent of terms such as *queer* or *faggot*. originally a term of derision; it has been re-appropriated as a term of pride by gay men
Ngochani (Zimbabwe)	Male or female homosexuality
Oubis (Wolof-Senegal)	Feminine gay man
Sagoda (Ethiopia-Konso)	Receptive male in sex with other men
Sanky Panky (Dominican)	Masculine male sex workers who penetrate men or women for pay
Skesanas (South Africa)	Biological males dressed as women and adopts the sexually receptive role
Toussou Bakari (Abidjan, Ivory Coast)	Lesbian
Travestis (Brazil)	Gay-identified male sex workers with a permanently altered feminine appearance
Trasvestis (Cuba)	Gay men who pass as women
Woubi (Abidjan, Ivory Coast)	Male who chooses to play the role of "wife" in a relationship with another man
Yan Daudu (Hausa-Nigeria)	Feminine cross-dressers who have sex with men but are married to women and play husband role with their wives
Yauss (Wolof-Senegal)	Masculine man who sleeps with men
Yossi (Abidjan, Ivory Coast)	A bisexual masculine man, perhaps married, who accepts the role of a woubi's husband

social constructs that are more relevant to the risky behaviors than the significance of individual factors such as the construct of self-esteem. Interpersonal factors related to African American MSMs have been identified as (1) close and intimate relationships, (2) neighborhood and community ties, and (3) sources of social support (Mays et al., 2004). Consider the following fictional example which details the influence of possible interpersonal factors:

> "Rick" is comfortable with his sexual expression as an MSM. The behavior does not cause him distress. He has been regularly sleeping with one particular man for the last year and a half. During this time, he has developed feelings of attachment and respect for this regular

> sex partner. However, they are not monogamous, and this is acceptable to them both. With his consistent sex partner, Rick always uses a condom out of respect and concern for one another's health. With men who are casual encounters (no closeness or connection), he may be more cavalier, and may not consistently use protection. This is particularly the case when Rick is on travel and feels no ties to the community or neighborhood where he meets a man.

Mays, Cochran, & Zamudio also mention social constructs such as social inequalities, constructions of Black masculinity, and social perceptions of various MSM identities as needing more study in relationship to meeting the HIV prevention needs of African American MSMs. For example, an African American MSM who is trying to economically survive by means of trading sex for money based on social inequalities, and who also identifies as hyper-masculine, may take more sexual risks based on both of these factors (socioeconomics and role expectations). Thus, HIV prevention efforts designed for such populations of men would need to be constructed with as many of these interpersonal factors and social constructs as possible in mind. A focus on these interpersonal and social constructs is consistent with Nobles' (1973) concept of the *extended self* for African Americans.

Whether based on the continent of Africa, or throughout regions of the Diaspora, Nobles (1973) has written extensively of an African worldview which incorporates the concept of *extended self*. The extended self would also apply to some Black LGBT persons who demonstrate interpersonal concern when they consider how likely it is that they will be rejected by the Black community once "out", or if they embrace labels such as "gay", irrespective of their actual homoerotic feelings and behaviors. According to Nobles, the *extended self* of the African worldview means that there is no distinction between one's self and one's people. The *extended self* relates to the inability to distinguish between the self or the I, and the collective. Though collectiveness is typically discussed in positive terms for health, the *extended self* worldview should be studied for how it impacts the well-being of various populations of ethnic minority LGBT people over time, as they may cover their homoerotic desires and behaviors to conform to the heterosexual wider society and Black cultural community's norm (Yoshino, 2007). Though all groups possess culture, the unique interplay of cultural relativity and sexual identity is critical to the study of members of Black LGBT populations.

"Indigenization from within" is the best approach for understanding behavior within its proper cultural context, instead of imposing theory, concepts, and methods that have been derived from populations outside of the culture (Allwood, 2002; Kim et al., 2000). Because "indigenization from within" is an approach that respects and values the cultural context of human behavior, it is more likely to produce research interpretations that are less culturally biased. However, while discussions of the indigenization of psychology are known to those within cross-cultural psychology and other disciplines (i.e., anthropology), the concept may be less familiar to those outside of these areas. Thus it is important to know the concept and its relevant approaches for researchers interested in researching understudied populations, even within western cultures. This applies to those interested in studying Black LGBT populations in both western and non-western contexts.

Intersectionality Research

> He [Wertheimer] did not ask: How are Gestalt qualities possible when, basically, the perceptual scene consists of separate elements? Rather, he objected to this premise, the thesis that the psychologist's thinking must begin with a consideration of such elements. From a subjective point of view, he felt, it may be tempting to assume that all perceptual situations consist of independent, very small components. For, on this assumption, we obtain a maximally clear picture of what lies behind the observed facts. But, how do we know that a subjective clarity of this kind agrees with the nature of what we have before us? Perhaps we pay for the subjective clearness of the customary picture by ignoring all processes, all functional interrelations, which may have operated before there is a perceptual scene and which thus influence the characteristics of this scene. Are we allowed to impose on perception an extreme simplicity which, objectively, it may not possess? (Kohler, 1959)

In the early 1900s when Gestalt psychology was exported to psychologists in the U.S., along with it came the idea of the rejection of elementism in favor of a focus on whole perceptions of behavioral and mental experiences. Though the white German males who originated this approach to studying psychological phenomenon were culturally and historically far removed from contemporary scholarly interests in the lived experiences of LGBT people of African descent, the Gestaltists' ideas have relevance to how contemporary psychologists should view and approach intersectionality research, which is inherently complex rather than simplistic.

In researching Black LGBT populations, we should not attempt to separate the various aspects of the individuals' identities into mutually exclusive categories, and expect to properly understand their experiences. Intersectionality research focuses on examining multiple oppressed identities within often marginalized groups who have primarily been rendered invisible in the focus of research study (Warner, 2008). Each of the numerous identities that comprise the person will uniquely contribute to the whole lived experience of the individual, in ways that cannot be completely or accurately informative by examining any one of the identities in isolation. Psychology has been comparatively slower to embrace intersectionality research, and the necessary methodological considerations for conducting such research, relative to disciplines such as women's studies (Warner). Other disciplines such as sociology, social work, and feminist scholars from multiple disciplines have been employing the construct for several decades. In consideration of Black LGBT populations, the research must incorporate questions of the participants that do not force the participants to respond to items such as the following: Which identity is more important to you? (i.e., being Black or being a lesbian); Which identity causes you more stress? (i.e., being Black or being transgender); Rank your identities in order of concern for you on a day to day basis: gender, race, sexuality, class, spirituality.

Such questions assume an additive nature to the various identities, as opposed to an intersecting relationship among the identities (Bowleg, 2008). Conceptualizing these identities as additive assumes that they are independent and separate, and that together they cumulatively make up the Black LGBT persons' experiences. In actuality, as the Gestaltists suggested decades ago, "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts."

Researchers must not subjectively impose a structure to the experiences that does not apply. The multiple oppressed identities intersect to form a unique experience that is different than what could simply be expected by assuming an additive nature of the characteristics. The multiple marginalized identities are mutually constructed in the lives of Black LGBT persons, and must be examined within their proper socio-historical context (Szymanski & Gupta, 2009). This applies whether the research being done is of a qualitative or a quantitative nature (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Szymanski & Gupta, 2009), though both methods will pose challenges, as the researcher attempts to meet the objective of highlighting intersecting effects (Bowleg).

Cole (2009) proposed three questions that psychologists might ask as a strategy for posing intersectional questions in psychological research:

- Who is included within the category?
- What role does inequality play?
- Where are there similarities?

Cole's questions may be applied specifically to examples regarding research about LGBT people of African descent. For example, regarding question 1, researchers should consider whether their samples represent diversity within the Black community as opposed to primarily sampling African Americans. As stated previously, Black populations include culturally diverse male and female identified persons across the African Diaspora. Also, researchers must be specific in labeling exact numbers of bisexual and transgender Black persons who provided information for the study. Often, bisexuals, transgender, and lesbian populations are understudied in LGBT research. It would be misleading to imply more diversity and thus generalization than truly exists. And, intersecting influences among sexuality, gender, race, nationality, and culture must be examined.

Regarding Cole's second question concerning inequality, Black LGBT persons relative to white LGBT persons, may be differentially affected by such public and private institutions as family, the law, and marriage. Thus if doing research on an issue such as Black LGBT attitudes on "gay marriage," researchers would need to be aware of how political, material, and social inequality may produce different attitudes, motivations, and outcomes for Black LGBT persons, relative to majority white LGBT samples (Frasure & Williams, 2009). It could not be assumed a priori that there is a uniform LGBT community opinion on such an issue. Legal matters concerning this and other issues may need to be examined specifically in relationship to cultural factors for many Black LGBT persons (Fullwood & Lyons, 2005).

With respect to Cole's last question concerning, Where are the similarities? – she suggests that this question would be beneficial for planning community interventions and political organizing. For example, if a study of gay marriage attitudes among a diverse sample of Black LGBT persons revealed common ground between the sample's opinions and a sample of the opinions of a majority white LGBT sample, this would provide an opportunity to build coalitions among diverse disadvantaged groups around the issue of gay marriage and family rights.

ADDRESSING Model

In the areas of counseling psychology and social work practice (Hays, 1996; Icard, 1986), professionals have advocated for multicultural counseling that addresses the complexity of culture and conflicting social identities. Hays proposed a model labeled by the acronym *ADRESSING*, for use by counselors who may work with diverse clients representing multiple oppressed identities. The nine cultural issues of the model may have relevance when conducting research studies or providing services to Black LGBT populations. The nine cultural issues are (1) age and generational influences, (2) disability, (3) ethnicity, (4) social status, (5) sexual orientation (6) individual heritage, (7) national origin, (8) religion, and (9) gender. Extrapolating and interpreting possible intersections of each of these cultural influences requires a shift in the thinking of psychologists, who have often been trained to think in a linear, uni-dimensional, and positivist manner, as opposed to examination of data from within historical, social, and cultural contexts.

Advancing the Study of People of African Descent in LGBT Psychology

Although the central focus of this text is to highlight people of African descent in LGBT psychology, another function of this text is to create, increase, and promote education/scholarship that focuses on people of African descent issues in LGBT psychology. Afrocentric theorizing has secured its own identity among dominant Eurocentric thought, and these theories have met the approval of diverse researchers and practitioners who use and apply these theories in their writings and their work with clients. However, these Afrocentric perspectives have often neglected broad aspects of sexuality. Prevalent sexual realities in the African American community (e.g., homosexuality, bisexuality, the AIDS epidemic), cannot be marginalized, and the need is great for structured concentrated scholarship. It is critically important that Afrocentric scholars engage in research that investigates the intersectionality of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

"Queer" Studies Programs

Over the past 20 years, largely liberal, predominantly white institutions (PWIs) have developed and organized major degree and certificate programs which focus on gender/sexuality studies (e.g., women's studies and queer studies). In 1974, one of the first courses in gay literature was taught at City College of San Francisco (Collins, 1992). The central ideas of LGBT studies were to (1) analyze public perception of LGBT people; (2) to integrate theory and practice; (3) to encourage community service work; (4) to enhance community involvement and activist work

and (5) to increase academic reading and research (Escoffier, 1992; Collins, 1992). Yale University, the University of Maryland, the University of California at Berkeley, UCLA, and DePaul University offer degree programs in queer studies. Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois is one of the first programs to offer a doctoral degree in Black Studies with a Black queer studies component; however to date, there are no historically Black colleges or universities that exclusively offer a concentration in queer/LGBT studies.

The Role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

There appears to be a disconnection between some social realities (e.g., misogyny, bisexuality, sex within the prison industrial complex) and focused attention on these issues in the curriculums of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). HBCUs, founded mostly after the civil war and mostly located in the Southern United States, once had the express purpose to educate newly emancipated Black slaves. Theses educational institutions, mostly financed by church, mission societies (e.g., United Methodist, United Church of Christ, African Methodist Episcopal Zion), and white corporate philanthropy (e.g., Mellon and Rockefeller Families), have been a viable part of Black communities for over 140 years . HBCUs can claim noted alumni such as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Morehouse College), Jesse Jackson (North Carolina A&T State University), The Honorable Barbara Jordan (Texas Southern University), Louis Farrakhan (Winston-Salem State University) and the American Psychological Association's CEO, Norman Anderson (North Carolina Central University). Although HBCUs have played an integral role in civil rights, education, and training of future leaders they have regrettably remained relatively silent on the mental and physical health of Black LGBT persons.

As mentioned previously, many HBCUs were founded and are still connected with religious tenets, which may be relevant to the quantity of research, discourse, and education about sexual identity. However, it should be acknowledged too, that historically and currently, black gay and lesbian faculty and staff are employed at HBCUs (Watkins, 2001). For example, Alain Locke taught at Howard University in Washington, DC (1912–1953). Though he had to suppress or cover his sexuality due to the negative views of homosexuality shown by the African American and Bhai communities, many colleagues knew about his sexuality. This manner of being Black and gay is defined as an *open secret* (Buck, 2005).

Although in many ways HBCUs have maintained their traditions, contemporary Black LGBT students have begun to change and challenge the cultural milieu of HCBUs. Today, several Black LGBT students at HBCUs can be found who are outspoken and confident in their sexuality. There are some Black LGBT students who have organized groups that serve as a support network and a resource for the students and their allies. LGBT affirming groups currently exist at HBCUs such as Texas Southern University, Howard University, Morgan State University,

Winston-Salem State University, Morehouse College, Spelman College, and Norfolk State University. However there are still some Black college campuses that have used bureaucracy to impede the creation of LGBT affirming groups on campus (Perry, 2007). As HBCUs continue to have increasing numbers of questioning and out Black LGBT students who embrace their multiple identities, these institutions will need to increasingly change to holistically serve developing students.

Sociopolitical Issues

The impact of focused courses and programs in LGBT studies has had far reaching implications for white LGBT communities. For example, HIV was labeled as a gay, white male disease in the 1980s, and the number of persons who died from the disease were staggering; however, in the last 10 years infection rates among gay, white males have dropped dramatically while unfortunately, infection rates among African American men and women have increased (Janes, St. Lawerence, St. Lawerence, & Aranda-Naranjo, 2005; Wright & Patterson-Gaston, 2009). The decrease in transmission rates among gay white males can be partly attributed to education, community involvement, and activism within this community in addition to the benefits that come with white privilege.

During the height of the AIDS epidemic in the mid-1980s, many grass roots organizations such as *Mobilization Against AIDS in San Francisco* and *Act Up* addressed AIDS and the lack of governmental assistance via public forums, marches, and civil disobedience (Duyvendak, 1996). These tactics were effective to the point that they were able to obtain the attention of President Ronald Regan in 1987, who was subsequently forced to mention the disease at the Third International Conference on AIDS in Washington D.C. (Democracy Now, 2004).

Due to varying cultural complexities, African Americans did not initially perceive the early 1980s AIDS epidemic as relevant to their communities. Nor did the white LGBT community do substantial outreach to the African American community as a part of its efforts to counter the disease. This serves as an example of how differences in education, degree of activism, and white privilege can lead to disparities in the necessary visibility and positive change. This also highlights the need for a cultural shift in order to achieve positive change, which we are optimistic can occur with greater education about and research on LGBT people of African descent.

Conclusion

Intersectionality research necessitates a broad examination of variables that pertain to people of African descent in LGBT psychology. It is expected that gender, social class, ethnicity, region, nationality, spirituality, age, and sexual identity, to name a few, may each intersect to produce distinct and varying cultural issues to be examined

by researchers and practitioners addressing the mental and physical health of Black LGBT persons. It is also necessary that the examination of research perspectives regarding people of African descent in LGBT psychology avoid the pitfalls of additive approaches that assume that multiple marginalized identities can be compartmentalized and then rank ordered. Because we propose that such intersectional research is also a type of nascent indigenous psychology for Black populations of LGBT persons, we advocate for a broad and diverse examination of interdisciplinary literature that uses multiple methods of inquiry. Disciplines such as public health, social work, medicine, history, African American studies, sociology, and women and gender studies, in addition to psychology can provide rich resources to inform a thorough study of LGBT people of African descent using relevant theory from areas such as cross-cultural, indigenous, global and liberation psychologies.

Recommended Readings

Battle, J., & Barnes, S. L. (2009). *Black sexualities: Probing powers, passions, practices, and politics*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press [several of the chapters of this collection are relevant to this chapter and future chapters of this text].

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Chapter 2
Gender and Black Communities

> *Semenya's tale begins with a tomboy who always wore pants to school, didn't mind playing rough, and endured plenty of taunts from the boys she regularly competed against in a poor village 300 miles north of Johannesburg. The head of her secondary school thought Semenya was a boy until Grade 11.*
>
> Sawer and Berger (2009)

The above quote is from a news article concerning the elite runner Caster Semenya, at the time, an 18 year old South African world champion gold medalist in the 800 m. Controversy ensued when the International Association of Athletes Federations (IAAF) ruled that Semenya would have to be subjected to testing to prove that she is in fact a woman. The testing enlisted the expertise of psychologists, endocrinologists, gynecologists, and geneticists. She was scheduled to be tested in order to determine whether she would keep her title and medal. Semenya's physique, running style, and tone of voice suggested male sex to the typical onlooker; however gender is far more complicated than these characteristics. What is equally as interesting as the Semenya gender controversy, is the ease at which her parents, Black South African, accept her difference. Both of her parents have been quoted as saying that she was always different; she was never girly. She has frequently been subjected to assumptions that she is a boy, or litmus tests to prove that she is a girl. Her parents say that she was born that way. Medical specialists deemed Semenya to be *intersex* after a series of tests. Intersex has been cited as "born with ambiguous genitalia, sexual organs, or sex chromosomes" (Gough, Weyman, Alderson, Butler, & Stoner, 2008).

Semenya's case is a good example of the challenges faced when one is naturally a gender variant individual. Her experience is attributable to many cultures' socialization towards an overly simplistic binary and mutually exclusive gender categorization of male or female. Unlike Semenya's case in which her sexuality has not been publically made an issue, and her parents exhibit health-promoting acceptance of her difference, often being gender different may raise questions about sexuality and also the degree to which an individual will be fully socially embraced within the community.

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The issue of gender nonconformity, sexuality, and acceptance in Black culture is complex. For example, there are some situations in which there is a type of "acceptance" of gender nonconforming expression (i.e. when heterosexual Black male comedians parody femininity), versus other situations in which there is comparatively more rejection (i.e. if one is a very feminine Black male, and openly gay in society). Comparatively less has been written on communities of color in LGBT scholarship, which partly explains the gap in the quantity of in-depth analysis of gender issues among Black LGBT populations. However, one theoretical approach to these issues promulgates gender nonconformity, gender non-traditionalism, and gender transgression within African Americans as means of dismantling oppression and embracing metaphysical belief systems that derive from indigenous collective consciousness and the ancestral collective unconscious (Phillips & Stewart, 2008). This may be useful and relevant for Black LGBT persons who are non-gender conforming.

Research has shown that even among Black lesbian populations there may be adherence to gender stereotyping and gender traditionalism similarly to heterosexual populations (Sneed, 2002). Researchers found that a sample of Black lesbians perceived lesbian gender identity as analogous with heterosexuals' gender identity views. Traits such as being "feminine", "warm", and "adaptable" were negatively associated with a butch identity. Traits such as "masculine" and "athletic" were negatively associated with a femme identity. The women also negatively associated traits such as "sensitive to the needs of others", "affectionate", and "understanding" with masculine identity (Sneed). More studies are needed which examine the development of sexual identity and gender identity among Black lesbian populations to expand the writings that have been done on the development of *sexual scripts* among adolescent African American young women (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Sexual scripts refer to socially constructed guides for how one should behave in a sexual relationship or sexual encounter. Though adherence to these sexual scripts among the lesbian population of Sneed's study is not necessarily negative, such attitudes may be problematic if they interfere with authentic presentations of oneself, in favor of a self-presentation that one feels is expected.

Additional research on attitudes of gender traditionalism is also needed to expand the work that has been done with a predominantly African American (56%) heterosexual sample of young women who indicated traditional beliefs about women (Parrott & Gallagher, 2008). Their beliefs were discovered to relate to their having higher levels of sexual prejudice toward lesbians. A positive relationship was found between the women's levels of sexual prejudice against lesbians and their having increased anger in response to female-female relationship behavior. Researchers suggested that the women's traditional beliefs about women may determine their anger and potentially aggressive behavior towards lesbians (Parrott & Gallagher).

It would be informative to study a diverse sample of Black lesbians for how their gender identities and sexual scripts relate or do not relate to the socio-historical discourse concerning the racist and oppressive images of African American women described by Stephens and Phillips (2003). The researchers identified these images as "Jezebel", "Mammy", "Matriarch", and "Welfare Mother". In their work, Stephens and Phillips present the four images as the foundation for contemporary

African American female sexual scripts existing in hip hop culture such as "Freak", "Golddigger", "Diva", "Dyke", "Gangster Bitch", "Sister Savior", "Earth Mother", and "Baby Mama". How such scripts relate or do not relate to same gendered loving Black women is unknown, but in need of investigation.

Stephens and Phillips (2003) only give scant attention to the lived experiences of Black lesbians in their commentary as they explain the "Dyke" label. However, the focus in their work is more specifically on the presumption of lesbianism, as the label is applied to Black women who demonstrate strength and nonchalant attitudes towards males. It is worth pursuing through empirical research whether diverse groups of African American lesbians have had experiences within the African American community that are consistent with Stephens and Phillips' reference to lesbians being viewed as asexual mammies or emasculating matriarchs in relationship to their interpersonal encounters with males. It could also prove informative to assess whether the other labels are also represented among young Black lesbians' identities and sexual scripts as a result of their exposure to hip hop popular culture. Although the four images of the Stephens and Phillips study were used to explain sexual scripts and gendered behavior specifically among young Black women, sexual scripts should also be examined in the study of middle-aged and elderly Black lesbians, as they have had differing degrees of exposure to these pop culture images. Yet, middle aged and elderly Black lesbians have been likely exposed to other sources of sexual scripting. Such investigations would be a welcome contribution to the literature, since for many years now, scholars have written about the images of Blacks depicted in popular culture (Sims-Wood, 1988). It is time that researchers delve into how these years of imagery have impacted gender schemas of populations of Black people who do not identity as heterosexual.

Gender Non-conformity and Transgression as Metaphysical

The *metaphysical approach* to identity or understanding of self is less concerned about social conformity and social structures that are in place to keep individuals confined to one of two binary gender categories. The metaphysical approach to identity, advocates for individuals getting in tune with their spirit and inner vibrations, to transform their thinking in order to be liberated in their gender expression, which is a cultural phenomenon not uncommon among some Native American and African people (Jacobs, Thomas, & Lang, 1997). An example of this is vividly depicted in a segment of the documentary, *Venus Boys* (Baur, 2004), in which a biological female, Storme Webber, who is of diverse ethnic heritage (African, Native American, European) embraces the gender identity of transgender. Storme is comfortable with certain physical characteristics which are typically perceived as masculine features (i.e., fuzzy goatee/whiskers on chin); Storme does not dress in stereotypical nor traditional feminine nor masculine attire. Storme makes the statement in the documentary that transgender individuals were historically healers within some African and Native American cultures, and were historically well accepted in the communities.

Philips and Stewart have related a metaphysical approach to characteristics such as *gender non-traditionalism*, *gender non-conformity*, and *gender transgression*; they define each of these as follows:

- Non-traditionalism refers to expressions of gender, sexuality, or race that would be rated as "outside the mainstream" as it is defined by both insiders and outsiders.
- Non-conformity refers to expressions of gender, sexuality, or race in which people consciously go against the grain of the mainstream in the pursuit of personal authenticity.
- Transgression refers to expressions of gender, sexuality, or race in which people purposefully confront and contest mainstream conventions as part of a larger political agenda for social change.

Internet and cable radio personality, B. Scott, identifies as a multiracial/multiethnic person of African descent who is a self-identified openly gay androgynous man. Scott represents each of the above three characteristics in self-presentation. His gender-nonconformity is particularly noteworthy because of his being born in Virginia, and raised in a rural agricultural region of North Carolina. Scott has stated in interviews that he prides himself on being gender bending and thus challenging rigid notions of Black male masculinity (Arceneaux, 2009). He feels that it makes no sense to conform to arbitrary standards of masculinity, though he has been criticized by some in the gay community who accuse him of reinforcing stereotypes of the flamboyant and effeminate gay male. Such reactions from some in the gay community are testament to the internalized homophobia which challenges freedom of gender expression. To date, there are limited empirical psychological studies that specifically aim to study femininity among Black gay men to understand more about positive marginality for such men, as well as possible challenges that they experience as they live in various communities (Wilson et al., 2010). Increased empirical research in this area is necessary.

Traditional Gender Roles and Identity in Black Culture

It has been elsewhere written that hip hop culture may be examined for its influence on Black identity, including gender identity, among Black youth communities; specifically, hip hop has been discussed as a form of cultural capital used by Black youth to authenticate their Black identity (Clay, 2003; Gray, 2009). However, since the expression of Black identity authenticated by hip hop culture may dictate that gender expression exist along traditional gender roles, those who are gender nontraditional and Black may not be regarded as authentically Black. They may then face social challenges (Lemelle & Battle, 2004; Collins, 2004). Black Caribbean authors have argued that both men and women may be boxed into artificial constructions of masculinity and femininity through media images that reinforce stereotypes (Slocum & Shields, 2008). The more popular these media images, the more that these images

may likely negatively influence societal attitudes towards those who do not fit the stereotype, such as some Black non-gender conforming LGBT individuals. These stereotypes coupled with heterosexism also lead to attempts to box same sex couples into heterosexual paradigms, i.e. when same sex couples are asked by heterosexuals, "Who is the man in the relationship? Who is the woman, in the relationship?" As stated earlier, it should be noted again that sometimes even the same-sex attracted persons themselves may promulgate these heterosexually derived norms.

There is irony when it comes to mainstream hip hop's promotion of sexism and heterosexism, because there is evidence that "gayness" is embedded in hip hop; though same-sex attracted expression is not mainstreamed or widely depicted as normative within hip hop, it is not uncommon (Tomas, 2009; Dean, 2008). Specific examples of the irony within hip hop regarding Black homosexuality and Black gender non-conformity are seen in (1) the glorification of male sexuality in hip hop, (2) the preoccupation with men's fashion in hop, and (3) the patriarchy and misogyny within some of the lyrics and videos (Tomas). Women are rarely portrayed as significant in contemporary hip hop culture, even though there are and have been successful female artists in hip hop. However, many of the characteristics of hip hop culture signify male infatuation.

Black cartoonist and satirist Aaron McGruder in his animated series, *The Boondocks,* satirized Black male homophobia in hip hop in an episode entitled *The Story of Gangstalicious,* (Barnes & MacGruder, 2008) in which a closeted Black male rapper denies being gay while also demonstrating obvious sexual interest in and interactions with other Black men. Other Black characters depicted in the episode espouse extreme homophobic statements.

Psychologists have written about satire and the techniques employed within it to convey social commentary (Kreuz & Roberts, 1993). Consistent with the psychological literature on the use of satire, the effectiveness of MacGruder and Barnes's *Ganstalicious* episode is based in the stability of the mental representations that are present while viewing the episode. Examples of mental components used in MacGruder and Barnes' conveyance of their message to the viewer and the hip hop community in general with the *Gangstalicious* episode are the following:

- Hip hop is ironically homophobic.
- There is exaggerated machismo in the language and style of several Black male rappers.
- There is still substantial naiveté and denial about the existence of homosexuality within hip hop.

Thus, Barnes and MacGruder's *Gangstalicious* episode is a satirical parody used to effectively critique the hypocrisy of homophobia embedded in the subculture of hip hop. This episode is in keeping with the intent of satire which is to comment on society and/or the state of the world; it is also meant to be derisive (Kreuz & Roberts, 1993).

In his autobiographical expose on the hip hop industry, Terrance Dean, who once lived as a closeted bisexual Black man, candidly recounts his psychological confusion and stress in *Hiding in Hip Hop* (Dean, 2008). Dean reveals his struggles with trying to project a masculine heterosexual image while constantly experiencing

intense sexual attraction to other Black men in the entertainment industry. What is also interesting in Dean's personal history is the fact that he was presumed to be gay or bisexual by other men, while he was supposedly in "hiding". Psychologically, this suggests a disconnection between the actual image of Dean's Black masculinity and sexuality which he was projecting to others, versus his idealized self image. Often he reveals that he was not as undetectable as a same gender loving man as he presumed that he was. Within himself and among other Black males in the industry with whom he had sexual relations, there was such disdain for male femininity that Dean seemed to be in denial about some of his own personal characteristics which may have prompted questions and assumptions regarding his sexuality as a Black man. For example, although it remains to be examined based on men of African descent, there is research precedent for the likelihood that even characteristics such as acoustic measures (the sound of a man's voice) may be a basis for others predicting Dean's perceived same sex attractions and degree of perceived masculinity (Munson, 2007).

It is evident from Dean's memoir that the patriarchy and misogyny that exists within society at large, and within subcultures such as hip hop seem to promote an aversion to femininity, specifically when femininity exists within a Black male body. Thus, patriarchy and *hegemonic masculinity* have potentially negative consequences for bisexuals (male or female) who are non-gender conforming, and also for transgender men and woman. Hegemonic masculinity embodies the most honored way of being a man, and necessitates that all men present themselves in compliance with its rules of being a man, including the subordination of women and femininity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Caribbean authors have also written on the existence of pervasive patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity within various Caribbean cultures. This directly relates to the negative experiences of Black gay men of Black Caribbean culture whose experiences are often stressful. Such men may be referred to by a pejorative term called *Buller Man* which means homosexual in some Anglophone Caribbean terminology (Slocum & Shields, 2008). The pervasiveness of heteronormativity, patriarchy, and traditional attitudes about acceptable gender and sexual expression negates the sexual identity of gay men and lesbians in some Caribbean cultures; it may also lead to violence against LGBT residents, such as has occurred on the island nation of Jamaica (Padgett, 2006). Also, in other regions of the Black Diaspora such as in Kenya and South Africa, lesbians have been subjected to "*corrective rape*" if they are openly lesbian (Topazzini, 2009). Corrective rape being a violent act enacted against a lesbian to punish her and attempt to change her sexuality.

Persons of African Descent: Gender Transgressions and the Metaphysical

For Black men and women who are bisexual, their sexuality may be deemed gender transgressive because of persistent traditional attitudes about gender roles. Specifically, it may be cognitively challenging for some to understand a person's

ability to be romantically and sexually attracted to both men and women, particularly as the critic attempts to cognitively process what this means in relationship to traditional sexual scripts that are based on traditional gender schema. For example, if someone with traditional views of gender perceives a Black man's sexual role to be the aggressor in the act of penetrative sex with a woman, this person may become confused and uncomfortable with the reality that the same Black bisexual man may also enjoy receptive sex when in a sexual act with another male. The converse is also equally plausible; a bisexual Black man may enjoy a more dominant and aggressive socio-emotional and sexual expression with a man, while being more sexually submissive and interpersonally docile in relationships with a woman. Similarly, varying possibilities may apply to the emotional and sexual experiences of bisexual Black women. Unfortunately though, relatively little has been written on Black male and Black female bisexuality, though it has been indicated that culturally sensitive psychotherapeutic ecological approaches may be necessary when intervening for the well-being of African American bisexuals (Scott, 2006).

Historic Black female figures such as Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton, Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith, have been identified as reflecting bisexual expressions of sexual desire (Phillips & Stewart, 2008). African American actress and singer, Nel Carter, lived with a female partner at the time of her death. Thus she too has been identified as a Black bisexual woman. However, only a few Black bisexual women such as Nona Hendryx and June Jordan have openly identified as bisexual, thus rendering many Black bisexual women virtually covered (Yoshino, 2000). Although Nel Carter and Bessie Smith represent examples of Black bisexual women who loved other women, their sexual identities existed within the realm of what has been described as a sort of "*down low bisexuality*" (Phillips & Stewart). As such, only scant attention has been given to their same gender loving relations. Thus, their sexual identities have been marginalized. Knowing more about such populations of Black women is likely to also prove informative for health related interventions which are greatly needed. For example, Nel Carter, experienced many health challenges. She experienced two brain aneurysms, and fatal heart disease in association with obesity-related diabetes; Carter also at one time in her life battled substance abuse. Her Black bisexuality coupled with various health challenges is consistent with reports from psychologists regarding the relationship of intersecting identities of oppression with social, economic, and cultural barriers to achieving optimal health (Greene, Miville, & Ferguson, 2008).

The degree to which Black men openly and comfortably claim and express bisexual identity, has not been adequately addressed in scholarship, yet the bisexual behaviors which exist in a more clandestine manner have been extensively explored in media presentations (i.e., Oprah Winfrey Show) of the "*down low*" (DL) phenomenon. Though Black authors have not consistently agreed on the degree to which DL behavior should be emphasized in relationship to the cultural complexities of HIV/AIDS in Black populations, Black authors have consistently presented the label as one that over time has become more narrowly defined to refer to men who desire a private life of sex with other men, while also using it as a marker of masculinity not stereotypically associated with gay men (Boykin, 2004; King, 2004).

Largely, however, the prevalence of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Discuss" attitudes has rendered bisexual members of Black populations relatively invisible within discourse and scholarship on African American sexuality. This is ironic given that researchers have uncovered that bisexuality is more prevalent among ethnic minority men relative to other men (Heckman et al., 1995). There are various cultural complexities contributing to this discrepancy between behavioral manifestations of Black male bisexuality and open acknowledgement of it (Sandfort & Dodge, 2008). Successful and healthy same-gendered loving Black men have extolled the complexities and challenges of being included in the black community's standard definitions of black masculinity. One of the men of the study was quoted as saying that even other black gay men valorize masculinity to the degree that they often prefer someone who appears to be "a straight man who just happens to sleep with men (Wise, 2001)".

Redefining black masculinity within the Black community to be more expansive and thus inclusive would also increasingly benefit Black transmen who have been outspoken about the salience of their combined Blackness and maleness (Lora & Ziegler, 2008). Redefining Black masculinity may also have implications for Black trans women, some of whom have reported a strong desire to be romantically involved with a traditional masculine heterosexual-identified Black male. However, due to the threat that such a relationship often poses to the heterosexual-identified male's Black masculinity, several transwomen have had to face the reality that pursuing such heterosexual-identified Black males may be life-threatening, because the pursuit may evoke violence (GSSA, 2009).

Drag, Negro Faggotry, and Other Gender Transgressions

In the foreward to his autobiography, *Lettin it All Hang Out* (Charles, 1995), drag queen supermodel, RuPaul Charles discusses his developmental trajectory towards embracing his Black masculinity. "…when I am in drag I feel totally at ease with my feminine side, now, for the first time in my life. I feel totally at ease with my masculine side. It's not just the way I look, it's the way I feel that I am projecting. ….more to do with what's coming from the inside than things on the outside, like my goatee or my baggy pants. And I'm loving it! It's almost like I've found a long lost twin brother and been reunited with something that, until now, was just a shadow in my life (Charles, 1995, pp. X–XI)." As a drag queen, even as a little boy, RuPaul was very comfortable in makeup and heels. He candidly states, however, that the other aspect of who he is – the masculine persona – had to gradually develop as opposed to innately manifesting as a part of his identity. In contrast, his femininity was innately present.

Helpful to RuPaul's gender transgressive expression was the acceptance that he received from his older sisters and his mother. Though his mother was foul-mouthed and often displayed what many would consider verbally abusive language towards her children, such language did not extend to her stating negative or unhealthy commentary on RuPaul's femininity as he was a developing boy. Although researchers

have found that such family acceptance of LGBT youth is longitudinally health beneficial for LGBT persons (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009), RuPaul later in life did develop substance abuse issues, which he explains as due to his feelings of being different among his peers.

Though RuPaul is among the most well known examples of an openly gender transgressive man of African descent (along with 1970s disco singer, Sylvester) other Black men have "played" with gender in ways that have largely been viewed as non-threatening. Subsequently these Black males' gender queerness has been acknowledged, mainstreamed, and largely accepted within significant portions of the Black community. Such men of African descent are Little Richard, Dennis Rodman, Michael Jackson, and Prince. We mention these Black males here solely in the context of gender nonconformity; however other scholars have categorized Black men such as RuPaul, Prince, and Dennis Rodman as examples of "*White Negroes*", with Rodman and RuPaul specifically being described as performing minstrelsy (Magubane, 2002). Magubane labeled these Black men as white psychologically, though physically of Black race. Though Magubane writes that she defines them as *white negroes* not because of their gender nonconformity, it is difficult to disentangle her views from this characteristic, particularly as her work is published in the journal, *Men and Masculinities*.

What in these gender non-conforming Black men's histories (other than their celebrity status) has allowed them to be comfortable being who they are, is worthy of examination among a wider number of Black men who possess such characteristics. Studying relatively happy and healthy Black men who are gender queer and yet diverse in sexual identity would prove informative and also consistent with a post World War II push in psychology to focus moreso on the positive behaviors among human beings which relate to a better quality of life. The more that we can learn about such men of African descent who are comfortable embracing feminine characteristics, and yet still be comfortable in their Black maleness could be used to ease feelings of difference among young children of African descent who do not fit neatly into the gender binary, or who may be instinctively gender transgressive as was RuPaul Charles as a Black boy.

In addition, as we learn more about ethnically diverse samples of gender queer individuals, we may be able to advance indigenous psychologies which relate to more contemporary gender theory which embraces symbolic, spiritual, and mythical gender emergence (McKenzie, 2006). The concept of *gender diagnosticity* allows for changing definitions of masculinity and femininity with shifts in time, settings, and cultures. One contemporary psychological perspective is that we live in an era of *gender emergence* in which masculinity and femininity are not fixed realities based upon biological sex (McKenzie). It may prove beneficial to the advancement of diversity if greater numbers of Black persons from western societies come to understand open displays of masculinity and femininity within biologically male, biologically female, or intersexed bodies irrespective of whether the expressions fit a sex stereotype.

The association of any Black person with white race, due in part to gender nonconformity is problematic. It has been found that outside of African American

culture, one may find acceptance of gender nonconformity that contradicts commonly held views about African gender conformity (Teunis, 2001). Using a case study from Dakar, Senegal, Teunis reveals that gender and sexual identities in Africa reveal more diversity than what much of the literature suggests via reports on AIDS and sexuality. There seems to be a greater variety of sexual behaviors than the work focusing on heterosexual transmission of AIDS in Africa would suggest. However, secrecy and lack of public scrutiny has kept the diversities hidden. Teunis calls for longer term ethnographic studies to uncover more of the diverse gender expression and sexuality across the continent of Africa that he learned about in Dakar. Dakar, Senegal was chosen for the investigation due to its large population and lack of specific laws forbidding homosexuality as in other African nations such as Kenya, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.

MIAKAS

Men Interested in AKAs (MIAKAs) are comprised of gay men of African descent who embrace their femininity and have adoration for the Black sorority known as Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated (AKA). Embracing their femininity, and boldly enacting gender transgression, MIAKAS have subjected themselves to ridicule, anger, and verbal assault as they show passion and respect for AKAs (Blumfield, 2008). The additional controversy of these men's interest in AKAs is spurred by the males'emulation of the AKA's feminine style of dress, wearing of the pink and green colors, imitation of the sorority's probate and step shows, imitation of the women's mannerisms, and MIAKAS upholding of the traditions of the sorority, AKA. MIAKAs are gender transgressive in their affinity for femininity; thus, this is a key reason for the anger and criticism that they arouse in their Black heterosexual peers. The negative reactions to these same-gender loving feminine Black men known as MIAKAs relates to more traditional historical views of gender that purport that it is best for men to be masculine and for women to be feminine; however, more contemporary views of gender refute the validity of this claim (Lippa, 2005). Mainstreaming discussions of gender, masculinity and femininity within Black communities in light of contemporary views of gender may aid in the understanding of behaviors such as those enacted by MIAKAS. A lack of understanding of the social and developmental psychological explanations for MIAKAs' behavior has been reflected in the commentary of critics who question why MIAKAs do not join gay male fraternities or question why they do not join heterosexual dominated traditional Black fraternities. Such questions reflect a lack of understanding. The options to join gay or traditional mainstream Black fraternities for MIAKAs would not fulfill MIAKAs' needs to express uncensored femininity; femininity is a comfortable and natural part of MIAKA's identity. Femininity can and does naturally exist within Black male bodies. Additionally, the irony of the intense disapproval of MIAKAs by some, lies in the fact that underground chapters of MIAKAs continue to exist on the campuses of several historically Black universities (i.e., Dillard,

Morehouse, Texas Southern, Langton have all had MIAKAS in their midst) as they have for several decades.

Some men and women within the context of HBCUs have characterized the MIAKAs' gender transgressive behavior as mockery of the AKAs (Blumfield, 2008). However, the *affiliative coping model* provides a plausible psychological explanation for the MIAKAs' behaviors. These mens' creation of MIAKA chapters may actually be a strategy used to manage heterosexism, which includes the building of a support system within oppressive environments (Wilson & Miller, 2002).

The affilliative coping model has merit in explaining the MIAKAs' behavior; affiliative coping suggests that the mens' "sorority" behaviors may be ways of coping with heterosexism experienced from heterosexual Black men in Black fraternities at the HBCUs. Some openly LGBT, gender non-conforming individuals have experienced struggles with regard to attaining full membership and unquestionable acceptance in greek life on campuses. Much like the U.S. military, though LGBT persons have always been present in these organizations, often they have covered their sexual identity or passed for heterosexual. Men and women who possess non-gender conforming mannerisms or style may find it more difficult to cover or pass, thus they may resort to forming their own groups that allow them to express themselves and bond as they so desire.

We must also examine why MIAKAs may opt not to join fraternities that are designated specifically for gay men (i.e., Lambda Phi Theta, Gamma Mu Phi, and Delta Phi Upsilon). The complexity of reasons for this are not presently fully understood, but this could be studied via asking research questions of MIAKAs about their gender identity schema, and specifically asking questions about their constructs of masculinity/femininity. Finally, for HBCUs, which are primarily within southern states where there is high religiosity, condemnation of homosexuality may be even more prevalent, thus impacting LGBT individuals' comfort level in attempting to join traditional groups on campus. Research has shown a positive correlation between frequency of prayer and greater condemnation of homosexuality among members of sororities and fraternities (Robinson et al., 2004). The existence of MIAKA "chapters" is not a new phenomenon of established social networks of Black gay feminine men. MIAKAs' presence and pride in their organization is consistent with the culture of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU), which have traditionally shown reverence for Black greek life in the undergraduate experience (Harper & Harris, 2006).

Negro Faggotry and Patriarchal Parody

Black heterosexual identified comedians Eddie Murphy, Damon Wayons, and David Alan Grier share a common history of performing what filmmaker and activist Marlon Riggs referred to as *negro faggotry* (Riggs, 1991). Negro faggotry refers to these comedians' performance of stereotypical parody of effeminate gay men, with the conscious objective of deriding such Black gay men's existence in pursuit of

a laugh from the audience (Johnson, 2003). However, Johnson has discussed these Black male heterosexual comedians' behaviors as queering their own Black masculinity. Specifically, Johnson deconstructs the comedians' behaviors from a psychoanalytic perspective which purports that unconsciously these comedians' parody of Black male femininity stems from the patriarchy that is entrenched in their rigid notions of authentic Black masculinity. This rigidity prevents some heterosexual Black men from embracing and identifying the parts of themselves that relate to a gay femme Black man (Johnson). Thus, unconsciously, in their parodies of Black male femininity (equivalent in their performances to gayness), Murphy, Grier, Wayans and other Black heterosexual identified male comedians have been described as melancholic over the loss of this part of themselves that cannot be comfortably expressed outside of their comedic performances. Their behavior has been described as a complex result of loss, refusal to grieve the loss, and then subsequently the incorporation into their psyches, a feminine component of themselves, which manifests in their comedy routines. The result of their performing such routines is the queering of Black masculinity to include feminine aspects of what these men really desire that they could express in everyday life. In classic Freudian interpretation, these motivations would not be a part of the comedians' conscious awareness. The existence of these Black comedians' feminine expressive behaviors, solely within the context of their comedic performances, contrasts with the feminine and open expressiveness of MIAKAs, who are Black men who fully embrace their femininity. If feminine expression were perhaps more acceptable among wider populations of Black men, then perhaps comedy would not have to be relied upon as the primary avenue for its expression among some heterosexual identified Black men.

On a related note, though not directly examined within the literature on negro faggotry, are the feminine personas of other Black male comedians, who instead of parodying Black gay feminine men, they parody Black women. This can be seen in the performances of several heterosexual identified Black male comedians such as Tyler Perry as *Madea*; Martin Lawrence as *Sheneheh*; Jamie Foxx as *Wanda*; Eddie Murphy as *Rasputia*; Flip Wilson as *Geraldine*; Ricky Smiley as *Bernice Jenkins*; and Cedric the Entertainer as *The Cafeteria Lady.* The humor found by some, in these Black mens' performance of drag likely stems from the patriarchy that underscores the "ridiculous" thought of a Black heterosexual man choosing to dress as the "lesser" sex. Also for this same reason, it is likely that the opposite behavior is not similarly seen as being as humorous for a Black female comedian to perform drag, i.e., as a male persona.

Psychologically, it is worth investigating the question of why such behavior has been so widespread among Black heterosexual identified male comedians? Are there explanations beyond the patriarchy inherent in the behavior? It is worth exploring why Black male comedians in drag and *negro faggotry* performances are acceptable as gender transgressions within many sectors of the Black community, but it is not as acceptable when gender transgression exists among Black gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons. It is plausible that the explanations are to be found in the complexity of cognitive, environmental, and social role theories of gender, as well as overall discomfort with various aspects of diverse black sexuality.

Increasingly open discussion of the subject of this chapter within mainstream Black media has begun to occur. On October 19th 2009, Black syndicated radio talk show host, Michael Baisden, aired the issue of male students of Morehouse College dressing in feminine attire, including heels, mini-skirts, and make-up during class attendance at the college. Baisden received on the air calls from segments of Black America regarding the issue, during which disapproval was expressed by both Baisden and his cohorts, as well as callers. Though the attitudes during the segment were not open and affirming, the fact that the discourse occurred is encouraging, as typically such issues are not addressed in mainstream Black media. Based on the content of the discussion, and the college under discussion, HBCUs will need to acknowledge their LGBT students sooner rather than later.

A few Black actors have skillfully portrayed gender transgressive characters in dramas (Ving Rhames as drag queen Holiday Heart in *"Holiday Heart"* and Queen Latifah as Cleopatra "Cleo" Sims in "*Set if Off*"). However, these individual dramatic performances have gone unacknowledged as impetus for discussions about the reality of these identities within Black communities. Gender schema among Black populations may likely positively shift to acknowledge more diverse expressions of gender among Black men and women, as there continues to be increased mainstreaming of Black gender transgression in media. The following examples reflect such mainstreaming: Isis (Black transwoman model) from *America's Next Top Model*; Bebe (Black Cameroonian Drag Queen) from *RuPaul's Drag Race*; Vogue Evolution (Black gay male and transwoman dance crew) from *America's Best New Dance Crew*; Felicia Snoop Pearson (Black masculine lesbian actress) from *The Wire*; Dorae and Tiara featured in the 2006 documentary *Transtasia*; and J. Alexander (Black gay gender-bending modeling coach) from *America's Next Top Model*.

Conclusion

There are members of Black populations who switch their gender expression between masculine and feminine. There are members of Black populations who combine masculinity and femininity in the same expression, with several contradictory elements within the same self-presentation. There are members of Black populations who exemplify queer gender expression while lacking clearly defined gender categorization. Such persons may still though, reject commonly used labels among white populations such as transgender or queer. A need to move beyond the binary based on the acceptance of multiple and culturally diverse examples of gender expression is necessary, such that individuals can be comfortable expressing their spiritual selves and authentic expression. This is in keeping with cultures such as some Native American and African cultures in which such persons have been described as sacred, gifted, natural, and spiritual beings. As presented in this chapter, there are examples of persons of African descent, historically and contemporary who fit these descriptions, but these persons have not been extensively formally studied for

the information that may be learned from their lived experiences. Complex cultural explanations underlie discomfort with certain forms of gender transgression among some people of African descent. Increased empirical research into the limitations placed on black male gender expressions and gender schemas for Black men and women is needed.

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Chapter 3
Religion and Spirituality

It was time for me to begin studying the Bible, but, more importantly it was time to discover my own spiritual core.

Linda Villarosa (2006)

The African American church, in its various forms (i.e., there is no monolithic African American church), historically has served as a foundation for psychological, spiritual, social, and economic support for many African American families (Haight, 2002; Dunn & Dawes, 1999; Frame, Williams, & Greene, 1999; Bell & Bell, 1999; Taylor, Chatters, & Levin, 2004). Alternatively, while being described as an important and powerful institution of the Black community, it has been noted that some of the institutional tenets and practices have been barriers to empowerment and healthy psychological development (Outlaw, 2006). Given this fact, it is imperative that research and psychological services targeting Black sexual minorities and Black transgender persons address the possible significance of religious and/or spiritual identities within the population (Icard, 1996).

In the interest of acknowledging the literature's distinction between the terms *spiritual* and *religious*, we reference that spiritual typically refers to a more intrinsic orientation which relies on an internal authority, by which truth and value are based on individual experience and personal insight (Buchanan, Dzelme, Harris, & Hecker, 2001). The term religious typically refers to extrinsic orientation as guided by a truth mandated by scriptures, religious leaders, and institutions such as a church, mosque, synagogue, or Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witness. Horton-Parker and Fawcett (2010) state another significant distinction between spirituality and religion. They assert that spirituality is often individual or private, and religion is frequently public or in the open. It should not be assumed, however, that the two are mutually exclusive.

Often, multiple identities are compartmentalized as being mutually exclusive, thus it can be challenging for some to understand the co-existence of a devout religious identity and a same-gendered loving and/or transgender identity. Sometimes too, Black LGBT persons themselves may experience stress over what they perceive as incongruence between being Black, LGBT, and also religious (Hussey, 2009).

M.K. Lewis and I. Marshall, *LGBT Psychology*, DOI 10.1007/978-1-4614-0565-8_3,

For example, research has explored whether religious Black gay men with AIDS have experienced challenges in negotiating their various identities within Black church contexts. Ten Black gay men with AIDS who were interviewed in a study, reported feeling oppressed and marginalized by their clergy due to being gay and having AIDS. Although over time, an increased number of the men left the Black churches where they were persecuted or marginalized, several of them mentioned that prior to making the psychologically healthy decision to leave the church, they did, for a time, wish to become heterosexual as a result of anti-gay sermons preached by the clergy (Miller, 2007). In another study of an African American gay male with AIDS, his coping included using his spiritual, religious, and cultural strengths to resist internalized dislocation from God due to heterosexism and homophobia. Instead, he was able to cognitively and emotionally relocate God from rejecting places to places that were conducive to his healing (Miller, 2005).

Religious based persecution of LGBT individuals is not exclusive to Black LGBT people; other LGBT individuals within the U.S. have also been reared within religious contexts that condemn homosexuality (Schulte & Battle, 2004; Barton, 2010). Specifically though, the culture of religiosity and spirituality have a long history in the lives of Black people throughout the Diaspora before, during, and after colonialism and slavery. Thus, no matter the Black LGBT persons' current attitude and experiences with religion, they likely possess cultural knowledge of religion's significance within the race, and likely have knowledge of existing negative attitudes that are fostered within the extrinsic religious contexts of certain traditional and conservative Black church experiences (Pitt, 2010; Harris, 2009).

How Religion Became Salient for Blacks in America

The story of how religion unfolded as significant in the lives of peoples of African descent in British North America is attributable to the complex intersection of each of the following: forced acculturation, assimilation to the dominant European Protestant Christian culture, and voluntary adaptation (Sernett, 2010). Religion was the primary means by which slaves were able to voice their desire for freedom as they meditated on the preached word and sang spirituals within "invisible institutions" (Sernett). The gatherings back then could be likened to varying types of contemporary Black church gatherings, however often clandestine. Once emancipated, former slaves viewed their freedom as divine providence, thereby rendering religiosity highly prioritized within the Black American cultural experience in distinctive ways from white populations' experiences with religion.

Following emancipation, people of African descent established their own churches in the post–Civil War South. In the North, people of African descent established churches such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816; the African American Episcopal Zion Church; and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Further diversity of worship experiences emerged in the north in the form of independent Black Baptist congregations. The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., became the first national organization in 1895, followed 20 years later

by a rival organization, the National Baptist Convention of America. The Pentecostal and Holiness churches appeared among African Americans in substantial numbers around World War I, particularly as the numbers grew, members became urbanized, and people continuously wanted to move northward. Even greater diversity was established during the years in between World Wars I and II, with the emergence of Black Jewish and Black Muslim groups. Thus with these various developments, it is important to acknowledge that there could never be a monolithic Black church experience. In addition, people of African descent may also have religious experiences as participants not only in Methodist and Baptist congregations, but also Roman Catholic. The various African American churches have always served multiple functions within Black communities. Sernett lists examples such as protest and praise, forums for political discussions, personal salvation, housing assistance, employment, education, recreation, and healthcare. These are all examples of multiple social support roles that have been played by various forms of Christian based Black church experiences (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1996).

Black pastors and other religious leaders in the church often make reference to biblical quotes regarding love and justice. Christian congregants may also be reminded of the question, "What would Jesus do?" However there is irony in such comments as they apply to justice for Black sexual minorities within several facets of Black Christianity. However, the fact that the Black Church still remains an influential institution in the community renders it significant as a resource and outlet for advancing the well being of Black LGBT persons (Queener & Martin, 2001). Historically, Black churches have presented an opportunity for Blacks to express themselves politically when excluded from other settings during the pre-civil rights era. However in contemporary times, Black LGBT persons, generally are not unrestrictively accepted within several traditional Black Church congregations, although they may exist within these church settings in a marginalized manner.

Regarding the oppression of Black LGBT populations within some mainstream traditional Black churches, here we refer to the definition of *oppression* as used by Deutsch (2006) as the experience of repeated, widespread, systemic injustice. This need not be extreme and involve the legal system (as in slavery, apartheid, or the lack of a right to vote), nor violent (as in tyrannical societies). Deutsch's definition of oppression is suitable within the present cultural context of discussion, particularly as the LGBT oppression within some Black churches is unlikely to involve violence, unlikely to involve a denial of voting rights within the church, nor likely to occur in conjunction with church laws forbidding a sexual minority's entry to the church. The injustice is likely in the form of silencing, condemnation, shaming, invisibility, and unequal treatment, i.e., forbidden church weddings for same sex couples, though heterosexual couples may have such a ceremony in the same church. Deutsch distinguishes this form of oppression as *civilized oppression.* Civilized oppression is entrenched within unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols. It is also entrenched in the assumptions underlying institutions and rules, and the collective consequences of following those rules. Subsequently, there are some Black LGBT persons who are culturally prohibited from engaging in open political expression in some of the churches, even though their participation could be instrumental in advancing Black

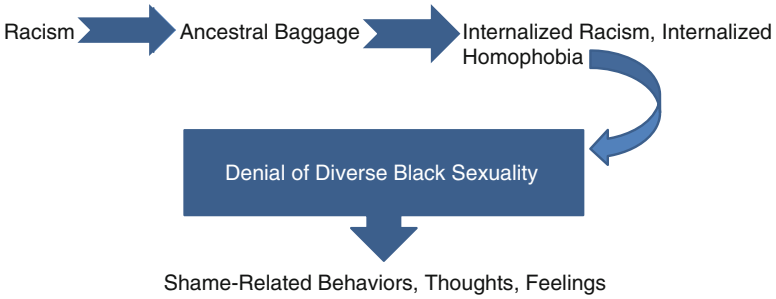

Fig. 3.1 Racism and resulting ancestral baggage may negatively affect heterosexual and LGBT people of African descent. This may then lead to a denial of diverse Black sexuality, and shame-related attitudes about Black same-gendered sexuality

LGBT equality among the wider Black community. It is known that community activism and resulting community influence can occur through more politicized Black Churches (Swain, 2008). Thus, a discussion of religion and the church as a significant issue that is relevant to the advancement of the rights and well being of Black LGBT persons is intuitive.

Numerous factors may influence the thoughts and feelings among Black people about LGBT persons of African descent as seen in Fig. 3.1.

The layers of variables include but are not limited to racism and ancestral baggage, and a lack of promotion of historically accurate information on diverse Black sexuality. These factors may lead to a denial of diversity of sexuality among Black populations. Also, selective attention bias regarding interpretations of specific biblical scriptures stressful self-discrepancies for some LGBT persons of African descent; and internalized homophobia can lead to shame-related behaviors, thoughts, and feelings as shown in Fig. 3.2.

For those LGBT persons of African descent with positive outcomes and experiences regarding the integration of their spiritual self and their sexual minority self (i.e., unashamed), issues of empowerment and positive self-affirming growth is relevant. An individual's degree of openness to alternative "religious" experiences is also potentially relevant to successful integration of a religious/spiritual identity and LGBT identity. These are each detailed in the sections below.

Racism and Ancestral Baggage

Debasement, abjection, and shame have been associated with both queer identity and Black identity; when the two intersect, this may evoke the most extreme vilification and disgust within some members of society (Stockton, 2006). This is also due in part to the fact that mainstream depictions of heteronormativity have historically excluded people of African descent, and thus even moreso marginalized persons of African descent who are same gendered loving people. Black same gendered loving

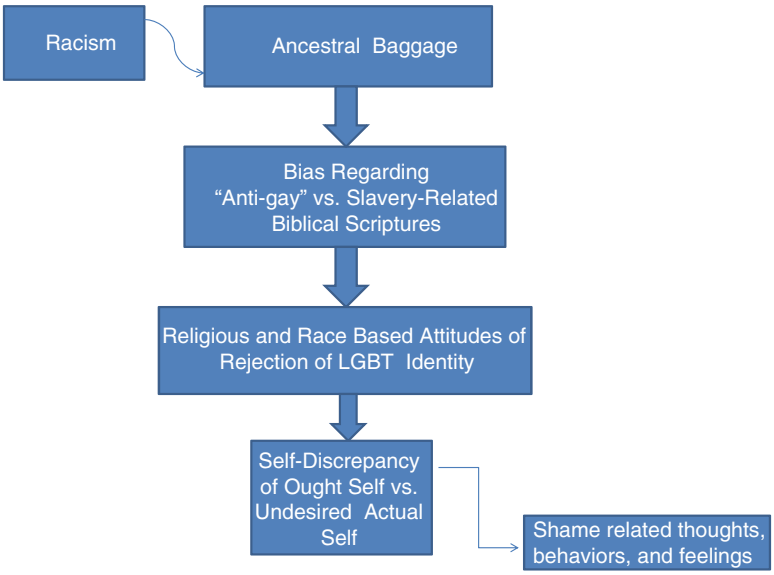

Fig. 3.2 Racism and ancestral baggage may influence the cognitive bias for certain biblical references, religious and race based LGBT attitudes, self-discrepancies, and shame-related attitudes about LGBT identity

people may also be questionable within some conservative religious contexts. Acceptance among the conservatively religious may be difficult to obtain from those who perceive LGBT identity as debased, pathological, dirty, dark, vile and sinful (Stockton). Thus, some Black heterosexual identified persons, in order to attempt to create boundaries around positive and acceptable Blackness, may render their own Black LGBT members invisible. Black LGBT persons may be rejected by some in their own race in an attempt to secure conspicuous "normal" Blackness.

Ferguson (2004) cites Max Weber's argument that the separation of sexuality and religion was not always the case; he references that this only came about during the emergence of a cultic priesthood that regulated sexuality through legalized heterosexual marriage, in an attempt to control or regulate perceived irrational sexual expression. Non-heteronormativity that is perceived as irrational behavior, has often been equated to Black sexual relations (Ferguson). Ferguson states that this applies whether Black sexuality involves common law marriage, out of wedlock births, single headed families, non-monagamous sexual relations, unmarried persons, or Black LGBT relationships. It appears that although heteropatriarchal norms were never meant by whites to include Blacks, some members of the Black race, due to racial oppression, may still turn against other Blacks who are sexual minorities based on these same mainstream heteropatriarchal norms. This is evidenced by Black religiously-identified heterosexuals who reject Black LGBT persons based on religious reasons. Such attitudes are consistent with ideology which originated with white racism, which referenced Black sexuality as wild, unstable, undomesticated,

abnormal, and immoral (Ferguson). Thus, a question that we pose here for critical examination is:

> How has the history of racism in the U.S. affected Blacks peoples' understanding of their sexuality, including same gendered loving sexuality?

An answer may lie in the reality that racism has produced a narrow focus on heterosexual sex in Black culture to avoid racist accusations of being hypersexual, depraved, lewd, and bestial. This stereotype avoidance may influence some Black heterosexual attitudes of condemnation of Black same gendered sexuality. However, Black sexuality is and always has been diverse, including more than the expression of one man to one woman sexual engagement (Aarmo, 1999).

Psychologically relevant to religious based rejection of sexual minorities is selection bias among some traditionally conservative religious populations. For example, Biblical references to master/slave dynamics that scripturally condone slavery and unquestioning obedience to a master are not typically addressed among Black congregations, and if so, they are not supported as Biblical mandates. Yet, other passages (i.e., Leviticus 20:13; Genesis 19:4–8) when selectively taken out of context and misinterpreted, may often be quoted as Biblical condemnation of same gendered loving identity.

What psychologically explains some Black persons' disregard for the disturbing slave related references of the Bible, yet comparatively their common and consistent support of the perceived "anti-gay" scriptures of the Bible? The answer may be related to what the literature references as different types of injustice, which may be differentially perceived. For example, within anti-gay Black churches, it is plausible that disregard for *cultural imperialism* such as the white enslavement of Blacks is ignored or dismissed as ludicrous or outdated in contemporary relevance. However the *moral exclusion* of fellow Black LGBT church goers may be condoned based on a belief that LGBT persons are not entitled to fair outcomes and fair treatment within the "moral community" of the church (Deutsch), particularly when such views remain prevalent in wider contemporary religious cultures. Other scholars have also addressed this discrepancy and negative selection bias for "anti-gay" scriptures as related to the issue of some Black heteorsexuals' desire to avoid acknowledgment and acceptance of any sexuality that would confirm negative historical racial stereotypes regarding Black depravity (Griffin, 2006; Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003). This suggests a type of ancestral baggage.

The concept of *ancestral baggage* has been used to highlight the ways that individuals may be influenced by elements of loss and negativity that are linked to past cultural influences (Mckenzie-Mavinga, 2009). Ancestral baggage in the lives of African Americans stems from the experiences of racism and its associated intergenerational learning dating back to the legacy of colonialism and the atrocities of slavery. Mckenzie-Mavinga states that the well being of Black people may necessitate an increased awareness of ancestral baggage, such that negative effects of such baggage can be addressed and unlearned, with progress made towards a healthier existence. Religious based rejection or discomfort regarding Black sexual minorities and transgender people of African descent may represent ancestral baggage. This may partly stem from racist societal beliefs about Blacks and their sexuality, as well as internalized

race-based stereotype avoidance. Such rejection and discomfort with same gendered identity may even extend to some Black LGBT persons of socially imposed lower self-esteem who hide, cover, or deny their same gendered loving sexuality; this is commonly referred to as internalized heterosexism (Szymanski & Gupta, 2009).

Silencing and Shame Effects

When not openly condemned in Black theological seminaries or Black churches, there may still be silence around same gendered loving people, suggesting disapproval. Behaviors that are related to this religious based and culturally sanctioned civilized oppression is "down low" behavior and other forms of compulsory heterosexuality in efforts to exude hypermasculinity for some gay behaving or bisexually behaving Black men (Ward, 2005). In some cases too, there is actually sanctioning of the leading of double lives among same-gendered loving persons of African descent.

For example, Ruff (1992) describes in an article in *Essence Magazine,* the stories of Black women who provide social support to one another regarding their marriages to Black men who are gay behaving or bisexually behaving. The women of the article varied in whether their husbands' sexuality was hidden or actually revealed to them relatively early; however in all cases there was an expectation that the men might change due to having a wife. Such expectations are consistent with heterosexism. The men who hid their true sexual attractions represent silencing and shame effects; this behavior is consistent with the desire to be attached in a socially acceptable manner in order to belong or fit in (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). One gay identified Black man who was discussed in the article chose a heterosexual marriage because he wanted to have a family. His belief that he could only have a family in the context of a heterosexual marriage reflects the internalized oppression and heterosexism that can lead to such attitudes. Such "traditional family values" are often taught within the context of traditional conservative religious institutions which promulgate heterosexual expression. Another Black gay man is quoted in the article as saying to his wife about his attraction to men, that his behavior is probably just a stage that he might grow out of. He also referred to his liking of men as temporary, based on maintaining a desire to still have sex with women (Ruff, 1992). He made the statements in spite of saying that he had known he was gay since high school, and all of his friends were gay. His wife was also the only woman with whom he had ever been.

Compulsory heterosexuality for religiously identified people of African descent is not a new occurrence. An example of a lesbian relationship and subsequent compulsory heterosexuality in the Black community is evident in the correspondence between two Connecticut freeborn women of religious Black families during the nineteenth century (Beemyn, 2004). One was domestic servant Addie Brown, and the other was a teacher, Rebecca Primus. A review of letters preserved from Addie Brown, reveal an emotional friendship of high intensity (including the caressing of one another's breasts). This relationship was recognized and appreciated by the women's families. Unsurprisingly though, the two women were still expected to marry to

maintain social respectability and religious codes. Both women reluctantly did marry men. This too represents the social desirability of many Black gays and lesbians to be accepted among family, friends, church family, and community. The women's relationship and subsequent heterosexual marriages, are examples of compulsory heterosexuality that were consistent with the sign of the times, but is still found among Black gays and lesbians of modern times, with similar social and religious condemnatory explanations.

Self Discrepancy Theory

In addition to the normal human motivation for social affiliation and the desire to belong, it is important to also examine self-construals of religious LGBT persons of African descent, for how self-construals and self-discrepancies may impact their behavioral outcomes. For example, *self–discrepancy theory* (Higgins, 1987) proposes that if an individual experiences a discrepancy between the ideal self – ex. "I would love to be happily attached to a same sex partner" and the ought self – ex. "I *should be* happily attached to a person of the opposite sex", negative emotions may be experienced. Another related concept can be found in Ogilvie (1987), who suggests that an *undesired self* has an even more powerful influence on a person's emotions relative to the *ideal self* or *ought self*. Specifically, the desire to avoid the *undesired self* is evident in the following taken from Ruff (1992), in which it can be noted that one Black man mentioned not wanting to fit the stereotype of a "finger-snapping, ass-wiggling queen." Thus this can result in a number of compensatory behaviors, including heterosexual marriage via church ceremonies to counteract such an image within society.

If a person of African descent possesses a collective identity, it is plausible that other members of the Black family, members of the Black church family, or members of the Black community in general, may have a significant impact on how the person feels about his/her sexual identity. Thus it may be difficult to accept one's sexual minority status if one's Black church family rejects the LGBT individual's *actual self* based on a belief in a righteous heterosexual *ought self* identity. Research has been conducted on self-discrepancy between religious persons' *actual self* and *ought self* in order to examine what type of religious coping would they choose when faced with a personal crisis (Lilliston & Klein, 1991). The findings were that religious people who experienced a discrepancy between their actual self and their ought self were more likely to enact a religious behavioral change in response to a personal crisis, so that the new behavior is more consistent with what is seen as the ought self.

An example of this exists in the sentiments and behavior of self proclaimed ex-gay African American gospel singer, Donnie McClurkin, as indicated by his stating that God does not call one for such perversions (i.e. homosexuality). McClurkin has stated that one's only hope is Jesus Christ, and were it not for Jesus, he would have remained a homosexual. McClurkin espouses that God delivered him from homosexuality (Monroe, 2009). McClurkin touts an ex-gay identity that he proclaims

to have achieved through religious intervention. McClurkin views his previously gay identity as undesirable, as evidenced by his statements that his former same sex attraction was abnormal sexuality. He also believes that same sex attraction was not what God intended for his life because it conflicts with his masculinity (Monroe). Based on the religious enculturation received within McClurkin's church, *Church of God in Christ*, his dissonance, anxiety, and resulting change in his attitude about his sexuality stems from a discrepancy between the actual self and the church imposed ought self.

Monroe (2009) writes of the *Church of God in Christ* as the largest African American church in the United States, and the largest Pentecostal church in the United States; yet due to an obvious and substantial Black gay male queer gospel presence in the church, Monroe also characterizes the church as conflicted with itself, due to being the loudest in rebuking same sex attraction. Via the example of the *Church of God in Christ's* anti-gay teachings conflicting with the obvious presence of its Black gay male congregants, one can see the discrepancies in actual self, ought self, and ideal self as far as the church's identity. Using this example, it is understandable how some religious same gendered loving people of African descent who have been indoctrinated in such church teachings, would feel agitation, anxiety, or confusion regarding the church's acceptance of their sexual identity.

A highly publicized example of this agitation and anxiety is depicted in a 2009 airing of an episode of the *Tyra Banks Show.* During the episode, a 16 year old African American male was interviewed subsequent to the controversial posting of a YouTube Video from the boy's church, which showed the boy experiencing a *casting out* or exorcism of an "*unclean homosexual spirit*", typically believed to be a type of demonic possession of an individual's body. The casting out was conducted by the teen's Pastor, Patricia McKinney, of *Manifested Glory Ministries* in Bridgeport Connecticut. The teenager accepted the "exorcism" as the will of God, and he also expressed a belief that he would go to hell if he failed to be delivered from the "unclean homosexual spirit". Psychologists have noted that LGBT persons who have experiences based in this type of religious mind set are put at risk for potential harm (Ford, 2002). Research has also uncovered that those LGBT persons exposed to ex-gay ministries may actually come away from the situations more committed to embracing their sexuality (Johnston & Jenkins, 2006). Five psychosocial issues relate to LGB persons' decisions to maintain participation in the ex-gay ministry experience. These factors also influence the participants' thoughts about the experience (Johnston & Jenkins):

- They typically chose conversion therapy out of desperation.
- They typically chose ex-gay ministries due to being extremely vulnerable.
- The conversion therapy exacerbated self-loathing.
- Ex-gay ministries exacerbated conflict between religious ideology and sexual identity.
- Participants realized that they nor other participants there with them were changing sexual identity in response to the experience.

If the agitation and anxiety that is felt by LGBT persons about the undesired self is strong enough, some individuals of African descent may even choose to pursue one of four types of *passing/closetness* within Black churches (Griffin, 2006). The following represent the types of passing/closetness:

- Lesbians and gays who believe they are sinful and deserving of heterosexual church members' condemnation
- Lesbians and gays who publicly deny being a sexual minority, pass as heterosexual, and they condemn homosexuality
- Lesbians and gays who publicly deny being a sexual minority, OR they are silent about their identity and pass through silence; they may participate in fighting homophobia without revealing that they are gay or lesbian
- Lesbians and gays who accept who they are, but do not feel that they can "come out" or reliably speak out against heterosexual oppression in the Black church

Phillips, Silvia, and Paradise (2007) further suggest that the undesired self is a valuable component of self-discrepancy research, but not to the exclusion of consideration of the person's *global self-esteem*. Global self esteem, when high, can reduce the significance of perceived discrepancy between ideal self and actual self, thereby weakening the likelihood of a significant undesired self leading to passing, denial, or participation in ex-gay ministry.

Diverse Black Sexuality

Black history must increasingly become more comprehensive, extending beyond coverage of Blacks in the U.S. during the U.S. civil rights era. Black history must also extensively cover Black Diasporan history to include African culture pre-colonialism. Black psychologists have argued for an understanding of human behavior based on the philosophical principles of ancient Africa (Nobles, 1991); however this often does not include emphasizing writings about African societies that allowed for a wider (relative to European countries) range of sexual activities and gender possibilities which existed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. European whites should not be automatically deemed responsible for same-sex sexual practices on the African continent. Specifically, there is some evidence that heterosexist and ethnocentric Europeans were shocked and sometimes appalled by same sex sexuality that they witnessed upon reaching parts of the African continent. Their religious based heterosexism was the basis for their disapproving attitudes. Their Christian religious beliefs were also explanatory for these attitudes.

It is important that more people of African descent be exposed to information regarding spiritual, sexual, and cultural practices of African ancestors to foster education about the diversity of behavioral expressions and non-binary gender identity (Aarmo, 1999; Chan, 1994). This may be a valid step towards eliminating the ancestral baggage related to religious based rejection of Black LGBT persons in some traditional Black churches.

Diversity of Religious/Spiritual Significance and the Lives of LGBT People of African Descent

Just as there is not a monolithic Black Church, Black LGBT persons who possess a religious identity vary in socioeconomic status, gay identity development, denominational or non-denominational practice, and whether they attend mixed sexual orientation churches or predominantly gay churches. These factors have implications for whether Black sexual minorities may engage in more public or private religious involvement (Cutts & Parks, 2009). Cutts & Parks distinguish *public religious involvement* as attending worship services, whereas *private religious involvement* is prayer or the viewing of religious television programming at home. This has implications for what the individual's religious experiences have primarily been.

In some cases, Black LGBT persons find emotional comfort and fulfillment during public religious involvement within predominantly gay, predominantly Black churches. One such example is *Inner Light Ministries* in Washington D.C. (Fears, 2009). *Inner Light Ministries* has served a small community of Black sexual minorities for over 16 years in Washington D.C., USA, and congregants have described it as a place where they can be themselves. Many of the congregants have also stated that they have experienced rejection from heterosexual Black men and women, from mainstream Black ministers, and from members of the white LGBT community; thus they welcome a safe sanctuary for expression of all of who they are. Church experiences such as that found at *Inner Light Ministries* assists Black sexual minorities in the healthy integration of their sexual and religious identities. Specifically too, *Inner Light* has been instrumental in having many of its Black HIV positive congregants address the stigma and shame of being HIV positive. Inner Light Ministries is not the only such church that exists; there are others. Within the smaller city of Winston Salem, North Carolina, a similar ministry, *Church of the Holy Spirit,* has a predominantly African American LGBT congregation. However, for Black LGBT individuals who are still on the trajectory towards self-acceptance, finding a suitable religion or church home may pose a challenge.

Psychologically then, how do Black LGBT persons negotiate dissonance involving a salient Black cultural identity, a salient religious identity, and either blatant or subtle disapproval and/or rejection from within their own Black cultural community due to religious based persecution and internalized racism? One reaction may be negotiation through silence and covering, or hiding. This is likely to be the case if Black LGBT persons are conscious of their sexual identity conflicting with their Black identity, thereby believing that this jeopardizes their group attachment and group acceptance by heterosexual members of their race. A feeling of disconnection from other members of the race can have negative consequences for Black persons' self-worth (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001).

Some LGBT persons of African descent may speak out and refuse to engage in *compulsory heterosexuality* in spite of religious sanctions; others may choose a more spiritual identity that liberates them from more fundamentalist or dogmatic external religious authority. Specifically how Black LGBT individuals react to challenging faith community experiences may be influenced by personality, or

Table 3.1 Spiritual/religious practices as reflected in *Spirited: Affirming the Soul and Black Gay/Lesbian Identity* (James & Moore, 2006)

- Christian minister
- An integrated identity of Black LGBT spiritual and sexual pride
- An emphasis on social relations; interpersonal connections vs. isolation
- Yoruba
- A developed personal relationship to God
- An emphasis on love and internal spiritual identity
- Rejection/departure from the traditional Black Christian church and homophobia
- Buddhism
- Shamanism
- Ifa (Nigeria)
- Voodoo (Benin)
- Self-acceptance in spite of traditional Black Christian church experiences
- Possession of an inner truth
- "Saved and gay" after departure from *Church of God in Christ*
- An acceptance of the personal unique divine; "I belong to no religion; I belong to God"
- Self love as divine design
- Self//spiritual expression through the arts and creativity
- "Spiritual not religious"; "many ways to make one's way to the divine"
- Wicca
- Unitarian Universalist
- A Focus on God's Love and Blessings
- Taoism
- "Discovery of my Own Spiritual Core"; *Unity Fellowship Church*

influenced by the degree and type of religious-based experiences they have had with family members and church members. Due to the communal nature of the church experience, the opportunity to perform meaningful traditions and rituals in the church, and other social and emotional benefits of being actively involved with an institution of worship, Black LGBT people may experience a feeling of void or loss if they detach from organized religious worship service of the tradition in which they have been enculturated (Miller, 2007; Griffin, 2006).

Again, it must be acknowledged that diversity exists among the many types of Black churches. However, there are numerous African Americans who are or have been affiliated with conservative Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal denominations, which have been associated with machoistic and hetero-supremacist dogmatism condemning any sexual identity other than heterosexual (Griffin, 2006). In relation to this, however, the trajectory and resulting religious or spiritual identity which is pursued and sustained by LGBT people of African descent may vary significantly (James & Moore, 2006) as seen in Table 3.1.

The varying types of spiritual connection and enlightenment represented in Table 3.1 support the literature which states that the integration of sexual identity and religious identity may not be realized in a church, but through empowering meditation, nature, art, music, or sexuality (Daniluk & Browne, 2008). Fourteen men and 29 women of African descent contributed to James and Moore's (2006) *Spirited.*

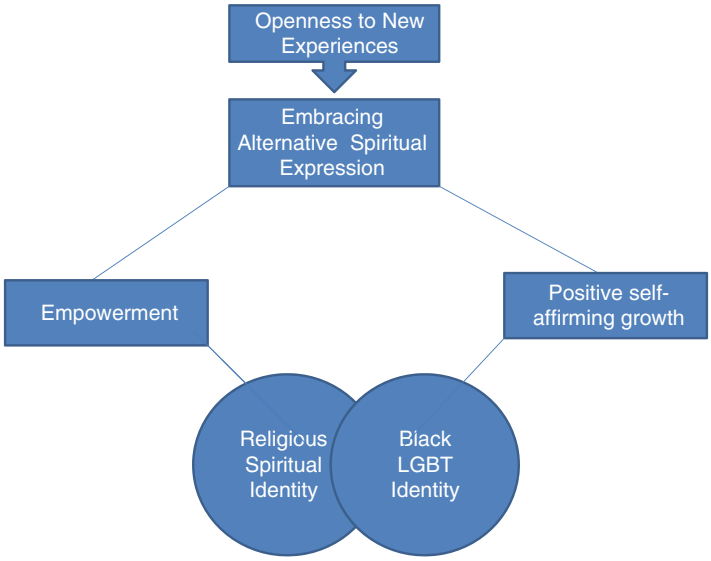

Fig. 3.3 Personality of openness influences embrace of alternative spiritual expression, leading to positive self-affirmation and empowerment. Healthy integration of sexuality identity and spiritual identity is likely to occur

The *Spirited* contributors described what primarily is referred to as positive and affirming sexual self-constructions (Daniluk & Browne). The contributors incorporated an empowering sense of spirituality in their lives, irrespective of exposure, for some of them, to oppressive religious teachings and beliefs about same-gendered attractions in a traditional more conservative Black church. In each essay of *Spirited* (James & Moore), the contributors describe a cognitive restructuring, which enabled them to seek alternative spiritual practices, or enabled them to let go of oppressive influences that acted as barriers to their healthy integration or acceptance of a sexual minority identity and spiritual identity.

Upon reading the collection of essays of James and Moore (2006), one can identify each of the following in the various personalities of the LGBT contributors of African descent: (1) imagination (2) artistic interests, (3) emotionality, (4) adventurousness, (5) intellect, and (6) liberalism. These characteristics have been noted by psychologists as relevant to the personality domain of *Openness to Experience*. Research has also found that individuals scoring high in Openness to Experience are likely to value art and beauty; are likely to possess a vivid imagination; appear intellectually curious; and remain open or willing to experience a wide range of emotions and/or beliefs (Proctor & McCord, 2009). Openness to Experience has also been found to negatively correlate with religious fundamentalism, and correlate positively with items assessing open-mindedness to a novel religious situation (Proctor & McCord). Thus it can be hypothesized from this (as shown in Fig. 3.3) that LGBT persons of African descent who are high in openness to experience may be more

likely to subsequently integrate alternative religious or spiritual identities with their sexual minority identity.

Examples of alternative practices as options for LGBT persons of African descent include the Creole spiritual traditions such as that practiced by Yoruba slaves of Brazil, *Candomble* worshippers, and practitioners of *Umbanda* (Conner, 2004). These practices are based in and nurtured in LGBT spiritualities (Althaus-Reid, 2005). Such practices have been referred to as the religions of the *Other,* particularly as pertaining to sexuality. Creole LGBT spiritual traditions have been discussed as sources for the experience of unique encounters with the sacred and divine. A reason that has been given for why Creole spiritual traditions may be more successful (relative to Christian religions) at addressing issues such as AIDS as well as same gendered loving identity, may lie in the fact that Creole spiritual traditions do not prioritize or normalize exclusive heterosexuality as an ideology. Thus, unlike Black conservative Christianity found in some Black churches, there is no psychological conflict in the Creole spiritual traditions regarding how to address the Black AIDS epidemic within same gendered loving populations. The practices are also not committed to exclusive binary gender categorization as either male or female (Conner). Gender is viewed as fluid, with many examples of gender transformations among the individuals engaged in these spiritual/religious traditions. Such openness to different spiritual experiences may produce more positive or affirming integration of identities than what could be obtained solely through following the teachings of a traditional conservative Christian westernized Black church. A good example of a type of religious practice that is void of sexual and gender-based stress can be found in the Afro-Surinamese *Winti* religion (Wekker, 2006). This practice incorporates several active, meaningful deities and it allows for multiple conceptions of the self. Neither gender nor sexuality within Winti practice is fixed. At any given time one may choose a gender role irrespective of biological sex. It is also not expected that any aspect of the so called self will need to become integrated or regarded as core and essential. This includes not necessarily prioritizing what gender one may love or have sexual involvement.

Black Liberation Theology and Psychosocial Relevance

While there is much more work and progress to be made with regard to issues of religion and spirituality for LGBT people of African descent, there are religious/spiritual leaders of African descent who do promote an affirming and inclusive stance towards LGBT people. Their attitudes of acceptance typically stem from what has been referred to as a radically inclusive liberation theology stemming from a social justice motive. From this perspective, sexism in the Black church, homophobia in the Black church, and discrimination or silence regarding persons with AIDS in Black churches are contradictory to a true liberation theology. In the words of heterosexual African American religious leaders such as Kelly Brown Douglas and Black liberation theology founder, James H. Cone, there is evidence of their desire

to increase acceptance and inclusiveness of same gender loving people in Black churches (Comstock, 2001). Other heterosexual identified African American pastors such as Alvin O. Jackson speak of having experienced a cognitive shift from thinking and preaching condemnation of same sex attraction, to now openly embracing sexual minorities (O'Bryan, 2006).

In the 1960s when *Black liberation theology* was created by James H. Cone, it was developed with a focus on the crisis among Black people due to racial oppression. Over time though, critics of Black liberation theology criticized it on the grounds that the scholars of this approach became so academically rigid that Black liberation theology failed, due to being out of touch with the actual people of the Black community (Azibo, 1994). Others have criticized Black liberation theology for its lack of adequate attention to diverse Black sexuality. Such critics have spoken out against a Black liberatory theological presentation of Black LGBT people as solely victims of homophobia, victims of discrimination, victims of AIDS, and victims of negative coping behaviors (Sneed, 2008).

What has not been adequately addressed is how relevant issues for LGBT people of African descent can be increasingly integrated into course offerings at historically Black schools of divinity, such as possibly within the following courses which are offered at the Howard University School of Divinity (HUSD). Course descriptions are from the Howard University School of Divinity website (HUSD, n.d):

> ***Ethics and Human Sexuality*** examines sexual life styles in contemporary America and their impact upon the traditional family structure, emphasizing such areas as open marriage and communal living.

Including Black LGBT families in a course such as this is both logical and necessary.

> ***The Church in the Urban Community*** examines the crises of faith and belief in the lives of urban people, with emphasis on social, religious, political, and economic institutions.

In U.S. cities such as Washington D.C., Atlanta, Georgia, Oakland, California, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and New York City that have significant Black LGBT religious/spiritual populations, such a course as the one above could be especially beneficial in addressing the needs of LGBT people of African descent.

> ***Social Issues and Justice in the New Testament*** focuses on biblical perspectives on justice in relation to social issues as slavery, discrimination, economic exploitation, violence and family life.

This course, in incorporating issues for LGBT people of African descent, would need to also incorporate information on the resilience of members of the population, and examine the healthy Black LGBT families that exist in spite of their various social challenges.

> **Justice and Peace in the New Testament** is designed to explore both the biblical mandate for peace and for its corollary, justice. ….study texts and supportive literature that help the students gain a better appreciation of the fundamental interrelatedness of these two biblical concerns. ……assist students in transposing such biblical mandates into a responsible hermeneutic for social action and justice ministries today.

This course seems particularly appropriate for educating future religious leaders to be culturally sensitive to the need for social action and organization among LGBT people of African descent in conjunction with Black heterosexual religious allies.

Mind and Spirit

There is an integration of the psyche and the sacred for many people of African descent (Edwards, 1994). An example of this is found in Sneed (2008), where he cites academician E. Patrick Johnson's recount of Johnson's experiences at a Black gay nightclub. Johnson is cited as stating that the Black gay club reflects the culture of Black churches, in its infusion of carnal dancing (i.e. spirituality though music and creative expression), sweaty bodies, and the religious fervor similar to a Pentecostal church service. Johnson is also cited as comparing the energy and passion of the disc jockey in such settings to the role of Black Baptist ministers. Thus when Edwards (1994) makes the argument that liberation theology and liberation psychology under an African centered framework cannot be separated, she is suggesting that the mind and the spirit are united. Thus, for sexual minorities of African descent who experience anxiety or agitation around the integration of their spiritual/religious self and other aspects of themselves, it should be anticipated that this may be health compromising and psychologically meaningful (Horton-Parker & Fawcett, 2010).

Sneed (2008) asserts that for Black LGBT people, there is a desire to truly belong to the larger Black community. However, he states that this reconciliation cannot happen if Black LGBT experiences are merely tolerated and addressed only in the service of fighting White racism. He advocates for an enhanced perception of Black queer life as being more than an ongoing struggle against White racism. Instead, his perspective calls for greater research attention to the overall lives of LGBT people of African descent, many of whom are happy and successful, as well as juggling the same daily living issues as their heterosexual counterparts.

Conclusion

Conflict experienced by LGBT people in the process of integrating their sexual identity and their religious/spiritual identity, though not exclusive to LGBT people of African descent, is especially culturally relevant for people of African descent. Researchers or practitioners who address the population should inquire about the individuals' experiences and attitudes around the issue of religiosity. LGBT people of African descent have likely been enculturated from an early age to embrace some form of worship experience. The intersecting identities of race, sexuality, and religious/spiritual self may together strongly inform their sense of self. The salience of race

cannot be overlooked as it directly relates to ancestral baggage and concerns about how Black people are sexually perceived in society. Scriptures or other religious writings that may appear to condemn same sex sexuality may be employed by heterosexual people of African descent in order to gain compliance with compulsory heterosexuality. Compulsory heterosexuality may also be upheld as the norm due to misinformation or lack of information about the diversity of Black sexuality throughout the history of Black people.

For LGBT people of African descent who desire to be accepted by church family and biological family, the conflict between being LGBT and religious may result in silencing and/or shame-related behaviors known as internalized heterosexism. This sometimes also results in uncomfortable feelings and cognitions regarding an actual but undesired self in relationship to an ought self.

The healthiest of LGBT people of African descent are likely to be those whose thoughts do not include notions of an undesired self. Those who have a healthy integration of sexual identity and religious/spiritual identity will be those who have cognitively restructured their attitudes about religion, and have a relatively high global self esteem. The cognitive restructuring is able to occur in relationship to being more open to new experiences. This includes new ways of expressing the spiritual identity. Populations of LGBT people of African descent do exist who practice African inspired, Eastern, and creative forms of spiritual expression. These practices can be very different from what they were initially reared to practice, yet the new chosen practices can be healthier for the integration of the intersecting identities.

Progress has been made regarding heterosexual identified Black pastors speaking out in support of LGBT inclusiveness. Yet there are still denominations and clergy within Black faith communities that enact oppressive sermons and teachings on the issue of same gendered loving identity. The degree to which greater numbers of Black faith communities and divinity schools can address the spiritual and religious development of LGBT people of African descent, the closer Black populations come to truly achieving a Black liberation theology and liberation psychology that meets the needs of all.

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Chapter 4
New "Outsiders": Black Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Students in a Historically Black University Context

> *Were there not somewhere in this world rebels with whom he could feel at home, men who were outsiders not because they had been born black and poor, but because they had thought their way through the many veils of illusion? But where were they? How could one find them?*
>
> Richard Wright (2003)

The above text is taken from Richard Wright's existential novel, *The Outsider*, originally published in 1953. The words are the thoughts of the protagonist, Cross Damon, a Black intellectual searching for his identity, who deems himself an outsider; he does not live his life pursuant to a particular religious ideology, racial ideology, political ideology, or social conformity. In *The Outsider*, Richard Wright presents characteristics such as race, gender, and political affiliation as "veils of illusion" that are constraining, and a hindrance to experiencing autonomy, happiness, and free will. Damon, tormented by his life, gets a once in a lifetime opportunity to shed his life for a new identity, free from the "veils of illusion".

Black lesbian writer, Audre Lorde, also employed the term "Outsider" in her collection of essays, "*Sister Outsider*" (Lorde, 1984), in which she provides social commentary about difference in her essay, *Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference*. Lorde asserted that some human beings respond to difference with fear and loathing in predictable ways. Specifically, Lorde also wrote that humans may attempt to destroy difference when difference is deemed subordinate. Such would explain the murder of Sakia Gunn (15 years of age), an African American Ag (Aggressive) lesbian of Newark, New Jersey. Gunn was murdered on May 11, 2003 by an older Black male reportedly after rejecting his advances, and telling him that she and her friends were lesbians (Chan, 2009).

A desire within the Black community to be unified in the fight against racism as a significant issue among Black Americans, may also contribute to the miseducation that Black unity equates to a monolithic Black people. This can perpetuate the ethnosexual mythology that all Black people are heterosexual. Lorde wrote that "outsiders"

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such as Black LGBT persons, i.e., Sakia Gunn, may be ignored or explained away as deviant. Scholars have addressed the relative silence and dismissive nature of the Black press and white mainstream media around incidents like the murder of Sakia Gunn; this dismissal is one culprit in the perpetuation of Black LGBT persons' invisibility and insignificance (Neal, 2006).

Wright's novel and its existential theme, along with Lorde's use of the term "outsider" may apply to a sector of Black lesbian, gay, and bisexual young people who can be viewed as contemporary outsiders, similarly to young Sakia Gunn. In a historically Black university setting, these students, like Wright's character Cross Damon, exist outside of their university, regional, religious, and cultural norms. But what veil of illusions do they subscribe to, or reject? How do they find one another as fellow outsiders within this context? How do they manage or negotiate any feelings of being different, if and when such feelings arise? Are they happy?

Existential Psychology and Happiness

The concept of happiness has been the subject of sociological and psychological studies. In positive and humanistic psychological studies, the concept of happiness has been stated as varying from subjective well-being to the achievement of life goals (Jacobsen, 2007a). Happiness has also been articulated by existentialists who relate happiness to a sense of freedom, or following one's own voice or calling (Jacobsen). Existential psychology also makes use of the word authenticity to reference a genuine life that is a possibility open to everyone. According to existential psychologists, all human beings must at some point reflect upon their lives and make a decision to either live falsely or instead live openly, authentically, and freely (Jacobsen, 2007b). However, such existential perspectives on happiness among Black same sex attracted students at historically Black universities, has not previously been the subject of focused research study. However, Black and white college students have been compared regarding their attitudinal and affective reactions to gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals (Negy & Eisenman, 2005). The research investigating Black and white students' affective and attitudinal reactions to LGB individuals has revealed that church attendance, religious commitment, and socioeconomic status should be controlled before drawing conclusions about the degree of homophobia and homonegativity among Black heterosexual students. Also, church attendance, religious commitment, and socioeconomic status may be relevant in relationship to Black LGB students' adjustment, self-concept, and experiences.

Regarding the current exploratory research of Black LGB students at an HBCU that is presented in this chapter, the goal was to learn about the students' possible experiences with issues such as homophobia and homonegativity, as well as their positive experiences within the context of the university, the familial context, religious contexts, and other situations that might emerge from the students' discussion of their life space. In addition, we expected that the results of this research may have implications for policy at historically Black colleges and universities, in light of the fact that

HBCUs have relatively recently begun to tackle homophobia via diversity initiatives (Petrosino, 2003).

As in other exploratory research (Negy & Eisenman, 2005), we refrained from making specific hypotheses about the HBCU students' happiness. However, in consideration of the students being in the "*Bible Belt*", which constitutes southern and Midwest areas of the United States known for religious fundamentalism, and previous findings about frequency of church attendance being significantly related to homonegativity, we were interested in learning about the students' experiences (positive or negative). The "Bible Belt" geographic context is relevant for this group of students, specifically in relationship to the relative pervasiveness of messages that they may have heard over their developmental trajectory concerning what is truth as handed down from those who have the power within their regional context to insert the biblical "truths" into public consciousness (Foucault, 1972, 1978; Birden, Gaither, & Laird, 2000). In the Bible Belt, such persons of power are likely to be pastors and other religious figures of the students' communities, in addition to family members.

We also acknowledge the significance of the media as a source of power in the ability to promulgate traditional Black male stereotypes within communities. Gender stereotypes within Black communities typically advance normative attitudes of acceptance of only narrowly defined Black male masculinity, leading to a type of *Black masculine privilege* (Neal, 2006). This Black masculine privilege can be problematic for Black men who are feminine and Black women who are masculine. Such individuals are viewed as subverting the dominant cultural hegemony, and they also subvert the Afrocentric patriarchal culture (Scott, 2007). Until gender proliferation as opposed to binary gender categories becomes mainstream, it may remain difficult for the wider society to accept masculinity in female bodies and femininity in male bodies (Halberstam, 1999; Corbett, 1999), referred to in the literature as *girlyboys* often initially appearing during *homosexual boyhoods*.

For researchers interested in people of African descent in LGBT psychology, it is important that we study even small samples such as this current understudied sample of Black LGB students attending historically Black universities. It is crucial to place particular focus on whether the students make use of active coping within the setting. Studying these students in their "outsider" status extends the literature that has primarily focused on white participants' attitudes regarding the positive aspects of being a gay man or lesbian (Riggle, Whitman, & Olson, 2008; Savin-Williams, 2008). To date there is still a paucity of literature that mentions some of the positive aspects and experiences of being a gay man or lesbian among Black populations (Greene, 1997; Bowleg, Huang, Brooks, Black, & Burkholder, 2003; Battle, Cohen, Warren, Fergerson, & Audam, 2002).

Active Coping

Active coping has been described as a coping orientation that emphasizes maintaining proactive responses to stress in a manner that facilitates positive outcomes (Tyler, 1978). Researchers have investigated active coping in Black lesbians for how its

use can be predicted by internal factors such as self esteem, race identification, and group identification, or external factors such as social support, and perceived availability of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender resources (Bowleg, Craig, & Burkholder, 2004). Other qualitative research has focused on how lesbian and gay college-aged students' high school participation in leisure activities (i.e., sports, music, internet) help them to negotiate their self-understanding and social relations (Kivel & Kleiber, 2000). Active coping has specifically been studied among Black lesbians for how it can be predicted by external factors such as social support and perceived available LGBT resources (Bowleg et al., 2004).

Our attention here to the students' social networks and social capital is informed by evidence that the resources available through social networks, bolsters individuals' well being (Scott, 2007). Because at the time of the interviews, the university did not have any formal organizations for LGB students, nor an LGBT competent counselor in the health center, attention was paid during interviews to any evidence of social and political forms of invalidation of the students, such as might have affected their degree of silence on campus, feelings of being invisible, or their use of active coping. We anticipated that these factors could potentially influence the students' degree of happiness as outsiders.

Psychosocial Competence Model

The theoretical framework undergirding the present study is a psychosocial competence model for Black Americans which focuses on the role of individual and environmental factors which are indicative of active coping (Bowleg et al., 2004; Anderson, Eaddy, & Williams, 1990). It is possible that contemporary "outsider" LGB students in a historically Black university context may reveal examples of active coping (internally and externally based) in order to achieve happiness in the college setting. We regarded the students' degree of subjective well-being as worthy of study within the context of their experiences of race, gender, religion, and social networks within a southern regional culture (Taylor, Chatters, Hardison, & Riley, 2001; Sears, 1989).

The subjective well being of the students was also of interest in relationship to whether the students would or would not behaviorally reflect the *closet paradigm* (Ross, 2005). The closet paradigm refers to the degree to which a same gender loving person is operating in a state of oppression and secrecy about one's sexuality, or is open, autonomous, and free about naming and exhibiting the sexual identity. Others have discussed the closet paradigm as perhaps not fully applicable in consideration of multiple identities (i.e., race, sex, class, southern) and intersectional effects for persons who are not white (Ross). Neal (2006) has specifically referred to the "closet" as a term that is most appropriately reserved for white communities. Thus we did not expect the students of this study to neatly or clearly categorize as "closeted" nor "out of the closet" in accordance with mainstream usage of the term.

Method

Participants

Students were eligible for the study if they were at least 18 years of age, identified as Black, and also identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Participants (N = 8) ranged in age from 18 to 26 years of age. All but one student identified as exclusively Black/African American. One student acknowledged being perceived as Black by others, based on his phenotype. However, his own racial identity was more nuanced with comparatively more minimized acknowledgement of his Black identity.

There were four male identified participants and four female identified participants. One participant identified as a first generation college student. All participants were natives of southern states. The participants were from larger metropolitan areas (four students), moderate sized municipalities (two students) and small towns (two students). Most of the participants (five students) did not indicate involvement in campus organizations or campus leadership positions. Participants were diverse in academic concentration representing social sciences, natural science, exercise science, justice studies, social work, and business. Participants' status at the university was senior (two students), junior (three students), and freshmen (three students). Half of the participants listed receipt of an honor award (i.e., honors program or dean's list) in their collegiate history. Pseudonyms or fictitious initials chosen by the participants are used in this study wherever reference is made to a specific participant's comments.

Procedure

Participants were recruited for this study using flyers that were randomly distributed on campus, via distribution of flyers in classrooms, via student referral, and via advertisement of the research project on a *Facebook* page. After students contacted me to express an interest in being interviewed, they were emailed an informed consent form. I then followed up to determine the students' continued level of interest in participating. Students were informed that the interview would take approximately 90 min. I then scheduled them for an interview and gave them instructions as to where to report for the interview. This study was approved by the institution's review board in Fall 2007, and all interviews were conducted in the Spring of 2008.

Upon arrival for the interview, I provided each student with the same copy of the informed consent form that was emailed to them. Participants were required to again read the form and sign it; they were asked if they had any questions before beginning. I then explained to the students that the interview would be semi-structured using a general script. The semi-structured interview was the same for all students, and consisted of 30 general questions with multiple subcomponents. All voice recordings of the students' interviews were obtained using a Sony Microcassette Transcribing

Machine (M-2000). Interviews were transcribed verbatim, including the indication of pauses, and stream of consciousness responses.

The first half of the interview focused on personal factors of the student (identity, family, childhood), and the second half of the interview focused on the university setting, regional setting, and students' attitudes about the Black community in relationship to their LGB experiences. I informed students that they should expand as much or as little as they desired on any question during the interview. I also informed them that they could ask clarifying questions if necessary. The student and I had respective copies of the same script during the course of the interview, so that the students could see the direction of the interview and follow along as questions were posed. This was done to aid in clarity for the students. I also listened through headphones to the voice-recording while the interview was in progress to ensure sound quality. At the conclusion of the interview, I gave the students a debriefing form and again asked if they had any questions, reactions, or additional comments.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a commonly used method of qualitative analysis that researchers use when attempting to extract patterns of information within data. There are a range of thematic methods that should be explained so that any researchers' assumptions guiding the analysis can be delineated. Unfortunately though, as it has been elsewhere written, a clear description of the process and practice of the methods of thematic analysis is often lacking in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This can place subsequent researchers in a quandary as to how to replicate studies or compare studies of similar content. Because I view my foray into studying Black LGB identified students within the historically Black university context, as a still nascent area of research in psychology, I will here provide detail as to how the themes were derived.

For the current study, I had two data sets of information: male identified and female identified Black LGB students attending a historically Black university. I perceived the data as potentially analyzable according to the eight data items, because I anticipated that unique and significant information might appear within an individual's commentary. My data corpus was represented by all interviews and all questions posed, including answers to any unscripted questions. Thus interviews were analyzed based on gender; information that consistently appeared across gender; and unscripted and latent themes that existed consistently throughout the data corpus.

For the current study, thematic analysis is an ideal method of investigation due to it not being wedded to a pre-existing theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Substantial research with Black LGB students attending HBCUs is still nonexistent, thus I thought it important to utilize analytical methods that could compliment a wide range of theoretical frameworks. I also chose thematic analysis for the study due to its contextualist nature. I was interested in not only student experiences, meanings, and reality, but also how the students' experiences, meanings, and reality were affected

by a range of societal factors. Via thematic analysis, I expected to be able to examine the students' realities while also going beneath the surface of their commentary.

Also, again, because I was investigating an under-researched area in which the participants' views and experiences are relatively unknown, I have provided a rich thematic description of the entire data set in the presentation of predominant themes, as opposed to an in-depth focus on a particular theme, question, or data set within the data. This approach is informed by previous literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I took an inductive approach to analyzing the interviews, meaning that I coded diversely for themes without regard for themes that previously existed in other research. This was again due to the lack of psychological research findings that specifically utilize Black LGB students attending an HBCU. For similar reasons I also used broad criteria for theme selection, such that I did not pre-determine a minimum number of frequencies of occurrence within the data set as criteria for theme inclusion. However the themes do represent information that was highly consistent across the students' interviews. Complete quotations from the participants are deliberately included here under each theme, due again to the lack of information on this population. I felt it necessary to provide the students' information in detail, in keeping with the goals of a critical liberation psychology, un-silencing marginalized voices. Wherever ellipses appear in the students' transcriptions, this indicates a pause in speech, an unfinished thought, or a trailing off into silence.

Results

Codes were determined based on a thorough review of all students' transcripts. I listened to each tape in its entirety for the initial review, while making notes only. Subsequently for transcription, I listened to each participants tape while transcribing verbatim. After each tape was completely transcribed, I then listened again to the tape while reading the transcription to ensure a match. Throughout each transcript words, phrases, emotions, and behaviors mentioned and found to be similar for each student were highlighted. This produced one theme that was present for only the male identified students (see Theme 5 below). Final codes were deemed reliable based on inter-rater review, discussion, and confirmation of themes with a colleague.

Immediately of note was the emergence of the information specific to the students' motivation to participate in the research study. There was no compensation for the students' participation, and the interview consumed over an hour of their time. In addition, the research existed within an environment where such research had not previously been conducted. Also, as indicated previously, at the time of the interviews, the university also did not have formal recognition of LGB students on the campus in terms of a gay student organization. The students' responses related to their motivation to participate in the research was simply coded as, "motivation to participate in interview". Upon analysis of the students' responses to the question of why they granted the interview for this research, the following common theme emerged across both the male and female students:

Theme 1: Helping Ourselves, and Helping Others Learn About Us

> "Well, I really wanted it to help out the university. Just so they can get a better idea of who we are. And what we go through. Uhm..you know, cuz like I said, nobody really asks us questions, or they don't think, you know, things are really as deep as they really are. It's a whole psychological and emotional baggage that they don't see sometimes." ("Beckum", male)

> "Just the lack of research that is being done on gay and lesbian people on an HBCU campus…I think it's probably groundbreaking. Just to participate in a study to help out the university; I feel like it's my duty as a student" ("L. B.", male)

> "[student's name] sent me a message on Facebook. And I was thinking to myself, well how did she pick me out of like the thousands of people on campus? And so…I was actually on my way to New York when I got the Facebook message, and so I was like well, since she picked me, that must mean something. And I don't…I don't believe in luck; I believe in destiny, and in fate. And so in order for her to pick me out of all of the thousands of people that go here, then that must mean something, so why not? I just hope that what I said can be helpful in some way." ("Miles", male)

> "I said I would love to do it! Because I feel like there needs to be an articulate voice heard. The face of "*gaydum*" does not need to be a boy that looks like a girl, or a girl who looks like a boy. It just needs to be a person who has intellect and can articulate themselves, and things of that nature. And I feel that if I can add to that aspect of being gay then I've done my part." ("SB", male)

> "You don't know what is going through a person's mind. I think like, it's very important that this study is done, cuz I felt like if uhm…that the people who are doing this research care, and want our voice to be heard; then why not do it?" ("Tiffany", female)

> "Well because I've noticed in trying to do research for different classes that there isn't too much information about HBCUs. There is some, but not much. And there is like zero about gays and lesbians in HBCUs. And so I was like, why not? You know, this will help more than it could hurt anything. Once you put some type of information out there you can help people learn; help people cope, and understand things better." ("C N", female)

> "I don't know. I just…I don't know really. I wanted to do it. Cuz when she [student assistant] posted it, all of us was there, and they [friends] was like yeah, I want to do it. Cuz maybe it will …maybe we'll start a movement! So I was like, well I'll do it! I don't care; I ain't ashamed." ("C", female)

> "Because I'm used to having a closed mind, and not being… or like doing things, like that are dealt with, like gays and lesbians. And I was like, you know, why not do something different and do an interview, and talk about how I feel about things? How I feel about myself, and society, and open up. And it gave me time to open up and think about things, about how I am. And how…. this is how I want to be. I really enjoyed doing this interview and I would do it again if I had the chance…with something again." ("TTR", female)

Another common theme that emerged across all but one of the students was a belief that being LGB and Black is problematic in response to being asked about their perceptions of degree of acceptance within the Black community, and their perceptions of the general societal perceptions of being Black and LGB. The one student who did not specifically state this opinion about his Blackness and queerness as problematic, also had a comparatively different perception of his Black identity. The theme among seven of the eight students emerged as the following:

Theme 2: "Being Black Matters", Negative Statements and Lack of Acceptance

> "…I feel like in the African American community it's just so much tougher on us, because we…I don't know what it is about the African American community; it's [being LGB] just a no, just don't (L.B., male)."

> "I think that African American women for the most part are more tolerant of it. Maybe from my standpoint…from what I've seen. They are more tolerant. Uhmm, but Black men…it depends on their age group; but for the most part I don't think…they are not really tolerant at all. (Beckum, male)"

> "I think publically, society perceives Black gay people a little bit differently than they perceive white gay people. I think that society perceives Black gay people as being loud and ignorant, and just over the top. I don't think that society feels that Black gay people can function in society." (SB, male)

> "I think African Americans probably look down. Because we already have it hard because of our race, and people already say it's hard enough for us to get jobs and things, and then us being gay doesn't help. And it's like they expect us to do wrong, and not to ever succeed at anything. (TTR, female)"

> "Being Black and gay don't go together! Black people, most Black people, they don't do the gay thing. They don't do the lesbian thing. They don't; it's just like you just don't talk about it." (C, female)

> "I think African Americans are less willing to accept it. Sometimes you hear them say…oh that's nasty. And they see it as white people on TV doing it…or they find out about it…oh you're going to hell." (CN, female)

> "In the African American community I think we're treated really bad, personally. Because they look at it like…I think the older generation, the way they're brought up and I…I can't get over it. It's all about religion to them too, and it's all about this is what we know and this is what is right. You're doing wrong, you know." ("Tiffany", female)

Though all but one of the students made strong negative statements regarding their perceived degree of rejection, "otherness", and being an outsider within the Black community and society in general, they each made strong statements indicating being self-possessed and committed to being authentic with their sexual identity in spite of homophobia. The only exception to this was when several were speaking of the family context, in which a type of respectful covering was practiced. However, the authenticity expressions of their identity when in public, emerged as the following,

Theme 3: "I Am Going to Be Me"

> "I just want to be me, and that's all. So you can either take me or not. That's the attitude that I have now. So I pretty much just try to be me regardless of who I'm with, where I am, what I'm doing." (Miles, male)

> "I pretty much just came to my own conclusion, that you know, people say things because that's how they've been raised and they've been taught. So it helped me to accept myself more because, I mean…I am, because I am". (Beckum, male)

> "You can't tell me what I can and cannot do. You can't tell me that I can't be gay on your campus. There is no way you're gonna do that. You'll be in for the fight of your life!" (SB)

> "I really don't care what people think at this point. Because what they think doesn't matter. What they say doesn't matter." (LB, male)

> "Here lately, I feel like I've started to not care what other people think of me. Because I am who I am. And if you don't like it then you know, that's your choice." (TTB, female)

> "I don't really care. I'll just tell them (But not my mama!). As long as they [those inquiring about her sexuality] ain't being like, rude or inconsiderate. If they really just asking me just to know then I'll tell them. It really don't bother me." (C, female)

> "I should have rights just like anybody else; I'm no less of a human than the next person who is a heterosexual. So if I want to kiss my significant other then I kiss her; if I want to hold her hand I hold it. I dare people to say something about it. I got to be blunt." *(CN,* female*)*

> "How do they expect for me to just sit here, and know how I feel, and love somebody, and keep it in the closet? You know like, that's not fair to me. They [heterosexuals] can sit there and love their man and I can't sit here and love a woman? Like, I can't do that." ("Tiffany", female)

Some lesbian students spoke of their non gender conforming style of dress in relationship to the motive to be comfortable, without making any reference to the degree of sociocultural acceptability of it. All but one of the lesbian students discussed female masculinity as a part of her identity and image. None of the female students were uncomfortable with their female masculinity, though they expressed that others sometimes are confused by, or disapproving of their image.

In comparison, the male students (with one exception) spoke of blatant femininity and flamboyance in gay men in disparaging terms, and they implied that this should be managed due to its inappropriateness and undesirable nature. Each of the male students admitted to some degree of non gender-conformity, or what they described as feminine characteristics in their personality. Information regarding non-conformity emerged when students were asked if they perceived their same gender loving identity to be generally apparent to others, particularly strangers. The relevant theme that emerged from this is as follows:

Theme 4: "I May Be Non-Gender Conforming at Times, BUT…"

> "..most of the African American guys that I know are the overly effeminate ones. And so when I come around…I mean, yes I have my feminine ways, BUT it's not like I'm always snapping and popping my tongue with the neck rolling, the finger waves and all of that. So people kinda think that I'm cool for that, because I'm a regular guy, but I just happen to like men." ("Miles", male)

> "I mean I can wear some baggy pants one day and put on a skirt the next, BUT it really doesn't…does that really identify me? You know…I don't really understand that" ("Tiffany", female)

> "My style of dress is one way that I don't try to hide it [sexual identity]. I mean this is the clothes that I feel comfortable in. BUT I still don't feel that people should determine your sexuality by the way you dress, because some people just dress this way because they feel comfortable." (CN, female)

> "And I dress.. I guess you could say maybe boyish like, and that's how I guess some people figure it out, before I even tell them sometimes too. BUT it's how I'm comfortable and it's, that's just the way I feel." (TTR, female)

> "I had this one relationship; he was upset because I wasn't doing what he thought I should be doing, since I was pretty much, you know, in the feminine role, BUT I wouldn't let him talk just any ole kind of way to me". (Beckum, male)

> "I think it [style of dress] has a lot to do with people thinking I'm gay. BUT just cuz I dress like a boy don't mean I'm gay. It's not just my dress, but my attitude, and how I talk, and how I carry myself, that kind of stuff". (C, female)

> "I would rather not be…have any feminine actions, BUT it's just uncontrollable. I'm not going to pop myself every time I do something feminine." (LB, male)

> "I'm not gone say I don't have bags [purses], BUT I'm definitely not gone carry them on campus. Now I'll take them to a gay event all day, BUT there's a time and place for everything. So you just have to know how to manage that." (SB, male)

Another gender relevant theme emerged when male students discussed their developmental experiences. This was specifically reflected by the male students' comments. Each of the male students mentioned being prepared and experienced, regarding physically defending himself when bullied or disrespected as a same gendered loving Black man. This is labeled as:

Theme 5: "We Can and Will Fight!"

> "And when I beat him up [school kid], he kind of just left me alone. And everybody was like, ok…so he's not as calm, he's not so ….he's not as much of a punk as we thought he was" ("Miles")

> "Uhmmm I do worry about them [his more feminine gay male friends], cuz I've been walking with them and guys have said things. And I will be like, Do you want me to take care of that?" (LB)

> "Just cuz we gay don't mean we can't fight. That's another thing that I don't like, that goes back to that stereotype question. A lot of straight people think that gay people can't fight. I don't know why that's a stereotype, but it is. A lot of gay people can actually fight a lot better than a lot of straight people…" (SB)

> "And then when I was younger, no one really messed with me cuz they knew I could fight anyway, so I didn't have anybody trying to rough me up. Or if they did, they learned otherwise not to mess with me [laughs]" ("Beckum")

All of the students acknowledged a lack of formal LGB resources or student group at the university. They did not view this as a deterrent to meeting other LGB students on the campus, or in the wider community due to informal networks and their involvement with leisure activities. This theme was labeled as,

Theme 6: "No Formal Resources Are Here for Us. We Informally Meet Other LGB Students"

> "I started hanging with someone that goes here, and he just started introducing me to all these different people. And one day I went to the mall, and I was like wow, I really do know a lot of people here now" ("Miles", male)
>
> "I was in choir, and choir has a lot of gay people in there…uhm…actually I got closer to a lot of them [gay students] after I came out." ("Beckum", male)
>
> "There's no counseling; no kind of group; no kind of nothing. I think the university kind of sweeps it [LGB presence] under a rug …when I need someone to talk to, I go to my gay male friends. They are down for me no matter what I do. They understand me." (LB, male)
>
> "There's not really a lot for like the gay and lesbian and bisexual students to do. Like, there's not a group or anything for them. People can be like around other gay and lesbian people to be theirselves[sic]. You just have to make friends." (TTB, female)
>
> "We just informally find one another. And or we might notice that you're new and we'll make an introduction. We might say, "hi", or something like that. It's just that informal way and then you just…we don't really say anything, it's body language… a lot of times." (CN, female)
>
> "You get it [support] from other people that's like me. Like, cuz you are tighter with them. Most of the gay people at school, on campus, know each other. It don't [sic] really matter if they are a senior or a freshman or what they is[sic], everybody really know each other." (C, female)

The leisure activities mentioned by the students as outlets for them to "hang with" their fellow LGB students on campus, was via basketball, modeling troupe, shooting pool, bowling night, choir, and going together as a small group to the university café. Two of the students referred to the university café as a place on campus that causes mild anxiety for them whenever they enter it alone. The following are two students' comments, "When you walk into the café, normally you don't go in there by yourself, so you go in there with a group of your friends…and you'd know…like I said, you get that same lil eerie look like you know people are looking at you, but you just like, well I don't care" (C, female). This student also stated that she and her friends all dressed the same, "we all… I guess you could say are studs". The gay male student's comment regarding the university cafeteria was as follows: "The café…uhmm…everytime I go in the café, I feel like I'm a spectacle. But depending on my mood, sometimes I like it and sometimes I don't" (Beckum, male). There was no consistency across the students in identifying any place on campus where they feel particularly comfortable or particularly uncomfortable.

Each of the students made substantial and poignant commentary on the impact of religion in their lives; they also discussed the relationship of "Bible Belt" religiosity to their sexual identity and attitudes; this emerged as the following:

Theme 7: "I Believe in God But…"

> "I have gone through some things in church that have sort of pushed me away from being religious. But I still know. I still have a connection with God…but I'm just not so heavy into it like some people are." ("Miles", male)
>
> "I still believe in God; I go to church, but when they be throwing that whole, if you like… if you homo you going straight to hell. I don't be paying that no mind." (C, female)
>
> "I'm Christian, but I don't…I don't really consider myself Baptist or Protestant, you know, or anything like that. Cuz you know, I've done a lot of research, and then as far as me being who I am, I just feel like labels are kind of funny, and that's what's kind of messed stuff up anyway." (Beckum, male)
>
> "I believe in God you know, I'm a Christian, but I don't…I don't believe like…heaven like, thank you Lord; this and this…you know how those holy rollers are? I'm not one of those holy rollers. Like I know there's a lot of gay people out there today who are really into church. I'm not." ("Tiffany")
>
> "I'm a firm believer in God; I'm a firm Christian. I honestly, I know I've read the Bible on it [being gay]; I've prayed over it; I've thought about it…But in my walk, I feel like in my walk, I feel I'm closer to God than I am to the devil. I don't personally think that God would put me here to walk this road if this wasn't the road that I was supposed to walk." (SB, male)
>
> "I know in the Bible it's one man and one woman. And I know it's [being gay] wrong. But I feel God is going to respect me either way. And I know that it is wrong, but at the same time it's me." (TTR)
>
> "I mean, I believe in God and you know uhh, there's…I go to a gay church here every now and again; there's a church for homosexuals. They just preach acceptance. That's all you can do. But I just have my own relationship with God. That's all that matters to me (LB)."

One lesbian student was different from the other students in her commentary about religion. She stated that she believed that not being raised to go to church had a positive influence on her acceptance of her lesbian identity and her high self esteem. She felt similarly about the fact that she was not told that being a lesbian was wrong by the women who reared her. Thus she identifies herself as spiritual as opposed to religious, and she does not have churchgoing as a part of her developmental trajectory or her current behavioral practices. She identifies herself as a believer in God and a believer that a strong spiritual identity is a protective factor in buffering the stress of being a lesbian in society.

Two themes emerged from the students' commentary that relate to their experiences with their families regarding their LGB identity. One theme reflects the experience of some form of family conflict either in childhood, or later after the realization by family that they are same sex attracted. They were asked to describe their families' degree of acceptance of their sexuality. Some of the students reported having achieved some progress since the initial conflict, but even in these situations another behavior was revealed, that of silencing or "Don't ask; Don't tell", even though the loved ones may know. In some way, each student referred to an unspoken awareness that it is not acceptable to speak openly or frankly about the fact that they are gay or lesbian among certain members of their families, including for several of them, their parents. The two family related themes are as follows:

Theme 8: "My Family? We've Had Conflict Regarding My Identity"

"My mom's a minister, and so when I first told her she got so upset. She had me going to all these church meetings trying to get into all these deliverance services. She was thinking there was something wrong with me that I was sinning and all this other stuff. When I said that I liked being the way that I was…they (Mom and Stepdad) put me out. So I didn't have anywhere to go. I was bouncing from place to place for about a month." ("Miles", male)

"When she [mother] found out I was gay, it was tough on her. She just didn't know. She felt like it was her fault. We were like best friends. And when I went to college it was kind of like we stopped talking for a while. You know it's better than what it started out with. I'll tell you that. You know, when you go from being best friends with your mom to barely talking to her…man I'm telling you, that's tough" (LB, male)

"She [Aunt] would make these comments to me and that's why you know, we always argued. Until this day, we don't have any kind of relationship…my brother, he don't…he kind of has a…me and him don't have a relationship anymore either. He don't think it's right." (TTR, female)

"[mother yelling] Why do you have to be gay?!!! And I said, that's the root of the problem. And so we talked about it, and she [mother] got mad, and I got mad, and we said some things" (SB, male)

"Just growing up…my mother, and actually my entire…all of my siblings. They were just not into it; she [mother] didn't think…she said it was wrong; that's not right; the Bible says this, the Bible says that. It's kind of hard to break away from your mama's upbringing…making her…and she feels like she's a bad parent." ("Tiffany", female)

"Uhmm my parents weren't receptive at first. I think now they're starting to understand that this is who I am. I think they've known all along. When I was younger, I used to have a whole bunch of GI Joes, but uhmm, my Dad you know, he threw all those out. Because he said he didn't want me playing with dolls. And that really…that kind of traumatized me. I think me coming into myself about it, I think it disappointed them in a way." ("Beckum", male)

"He's [father] ok with it now. But then it was like, cuz I'm his only biological daughter…so he was just like he just don't like it. He just…he just, it was like he just hated me" (C, female)

The same student (CN) who was the outlier regarding identifying as spiritual, as opposed to religious, also did not report having conflict with family members about her sexual identity. However, she too, reflected the next theme related to family:

Theme 9: "My Family? They Know, but We Don't Talk About It"

"Well me and my family, we really don't discuss this part of my identity" (CN, female)

"…it's just something that never comes up now. She [mother] knows about it; she doesn't like it; but she knows that I'm happy" ("Miles", male)

"..like now, she [mother] don't even ask me. I dress like I'm dressed right now with the t-shirt on and the baggy pants; she just…she don't ask. But I never told her; so I guess you

could say she the only person I ain't never really verbally said, yo, mama I'm gay; but she met some of my girlfriends, but I don't introduce them as my girlfriends, but she done seen them." (C, female)

"As far as my sisters go, uhmm, I haven't told them told them, but I think they have an idea. Cuz they're not dumb [laughing]. And uhmm, I think they have an idea. Cuz I see how the 13 year old looks at me sometimes" (Beckum)

"You know how some people see it, but they don't want to say nothing about it? That's how my grandma is. I think she knows, but she's like, Hey baby, how you doing? It don't matter. She don't want to talk about it. It's like I know, but I don't want to talk about it." ("Tiffany", female)

"…me and my Dad don't talk about it. That's just something we don't talk about. I never said it to my father, but I know he knows" (SB, male)

"…and now we're just at that point where she [mother] knows and I know she knows, but we're just not going to talk about it. …if it comes on TV we got to turn, and we can't talk about it; we're not going to talk about it; no watching Will and Grace [laughing]. If Sex and the City has a gay episode…can't watch that." (LB)

Only one student who was the oldest of the group (aged 26) did not provide commentary that fit this theme. She made no mention of the existence of "Don't ask; Don't tell" among her family members in relationship to her lesbianism. However she did reveal that there was no mention of same sex relationships, attraction, or identity in her family when she was growing up, though she did acknowledge having gay uncles.

All but one of the students expressed the desire that there be more events or acknowledgement of LGB presence on the campus, or also within the wider Black community. The one student who did not express desire for more resources and LGBT education made several statements throughout the interview that were indicative of possessing gay stigma or internalized homonegativity. For example he stated, "if you bring in a group [LGBT campus group] that tries to provide unity, then something, one little incident between two members will divide it up real quick, and then it'll just fall apart; gay people have a lot of issues". The other students' responses that reflected a theme of wanting more LGBT education and resources are as follows:

Theme 10: "We Need More Campus Resources and LGBT Education in the Black Community"

"They [African Americans] don't understand it. Like they stereotype you, if they…if you're not acting like that one gay dude with the weave with the long nails, then you're not gay. But, that's part of knowing the information and what's out there, being experienced and exposed to things." (LB)

"I feel like some people aren't being themselves. If we had a group then we could connect with each other even more, and people could get to know each other. And they could feel more comfortable around campus being themselves and being out." (TTR)

"The forum [one campus forum had been held at the time, about homosexuality] that we had, it ended way too early and there was still so many questions that people had, that

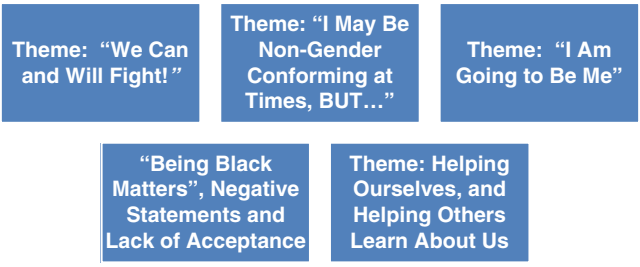

Fig. 4.1 Five of ten themes based on interviews with LGB HBCU students

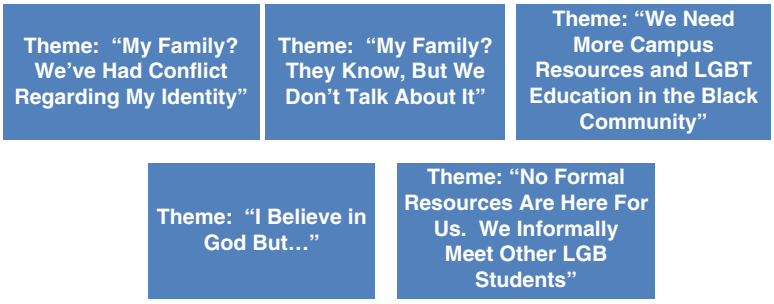

Fig. 4.2 Five of ten themes based on interviews with LGB HBCU students

had to go unanswered. …so I don't know..I guess they could have more things like that [forums]" ("Miles")

"I think we could start something really good. I think most students that are probably in the closet or confused, or want to know more about it, and just the ones that actually just know they are gay would probably come out. I think it [gay organization on campus] would be a good supportive thing to do." ("Tiffany")

"They [African Americans] just avoid the whole situation. They don't… if you gay they just…it's abnormal so people just; people are afraid of what they don't know. So they just talk about it. They say stuff that they don't really know. They don't have no clue about." (C)

"I heard the LGB subject discussed pretty ignorantly, using improper terminology and expressing open ignorance. And then they [classmates] considered there's nothing wrong with their ignorance, and they don't care to know anything else about it. Because this is what they know; this is how they feel and that's the end of it. You know sometimes, you know, if you're the only gay or lesbian in the classroom and you hear some form of ignorance you come to this crossroads, should I advocate? Or should I just let it slide?" (CN)

"You know, people say things [homonegative comments] because that's how they've been raised and they've been taught" (Beckum)

Summary statements of the ten themes of this study appear in Figs. 4.1 and 4.2.

Discussion

The LGB students of this study, in their "outsider" status on the campus of an HBCU, could best be described as generally happy with high subjective well being. Using Jacobsen's (2007b) description of having a sense of freedom, or following one's own voice or calling, all of the students exemplified this, specifically in relation to the theme of "*I Am Going to Be Me*". There were also several examples of their demonstration of psychosocial competence and the use of active coping within the environment (Anderson et al., 1990). For example, they informally find one another and bond during leisure activities, and provide social support for one another. Their responses indicate a high level of acceptance of who they are, and overall comfort level. It is likely relevant that these students were eager to participate in the study due to being comfortable and happy with themselves. This theme of "*I Am Going to Be Me*", reflects one of several instances of the students displaying active coping within the environment, while being a sort of outsider.

These students are not likely to be representative of all of the LGB students on the campus, nor of LGB students attending other HBCUs, because they volunteered to come to a 90 min interview with no tangible incentives. These student responses are perhaps largely reflective of Black LGB students at an HBCU who are comfortable and open in their sexual minority status. It is possible that having achieved this status, the students of this study were able to conceive of their research participation as a type of LGB activism at the university. Their responses under the theme *Helping Ourselves, and Helping Others Learn About Us,* reflect a sort of actualization motive that humanistic theory would explain as only being possible after having achieved healthy self-esteem.

The students did make mention of other students who are "hiding" on the campus who are less comfortable relative to themselves, particularly Black men who they described as "on the down low". Lesbian students also acknowledged that there are female students who are also "hiding" on the campus. The hiding and down low students are not represented by the students' commentary here in this study. For this reason, future research must make special effort to connect with the students who are members of the LGBT community, but who are not yet as open, candid, certain, and comfortable as the students of the current study. As has been the case with previous studies of LGBT people of African descent, larger numbers of this marginalized and often hidden population are needed.

Consistent with research highlighting the significance of both religious commitment and multiple minority stress among Black LGB persons (Negy & Eisenman, 2005; Bowleg et al., 2003), the findings for two of the themes should be noted here. The theme "*I Believe in God But…*" was likely reflective of the students being reared in southern states among Black families that prioritized the development of a religious identity from an early age, including some form of regular church attendance. However, due to the students also having been exposed to conflicting information about their sexual identity and acceptance of it within their faith communities, several of the students expressed a form of active coping around religion which

allows them to still perceive of themselves as God-connected or a believer, without embracing some of the negative ideology of religiosity that they have received via messages heard in their churches or from condemning family members.

The theme, "*Being Black Matters*" was clearly an example of intersecting identities for these students. A part of the frustration that was evident in their commentary was their sense of not feeling accepted among the wider heterosexual African American community. This is relevant to what other scholars have referred to as the ethnosexual myth that all Black people are heterosexual. Confronting this mythical norm is often a challenge for many Black LGBT persons.

Race and religion, though socially constructed entities, may still serve to constrain the expressiveness and free will of individuals when they lead to narrow perceptions of being and doing. Most of the students of this study, though deemed as sort of outsiders within the HBCU, were still very much committed to expressing religious appreciation and a Black identity. Thus, race and religiosity were vividly represented as salient components of many of the students' identities, having significant meaning to them in conjunction with their sexual minority identity. Thus, when race and religion conflict with their sexual identity, it is understandable that this may cause stress and frustration.

The theme related to gender conformity issues, "*I Have Gender Non-Conforming Ways But…*" emerged as nearly all of the students self-described as at least some of the time, being non-gender conforming in their mannerisms or style of dress. There were apparent gender differences in the students' degree of comfort with gender non-conformity. The students' comments reflect that female masculinity is accepted moreso than male femininity within the campus environment. Some of the women did, however, admit to being stared at due to being different. All but one of the males expressed negative attitudes and prejudice against flamboyant femininity in Black gay men, even though all admitted to having some feminine expressions of their own. The one gay male who did not express discomfort with male femininity was a self-described feminist, and he also expressed advocacy for gender fluidity.

The lesbians of this study did not express negative attitudes regarding female masculinity within themselves, or other women. This may actually mirror the attitudes of young women in the wider Black population, but more research is needed specifically with Black participants. This may also be due to the legacy of socio-historical factors influencing the acceptance of androgyny among women of African descent, who did not have the same privilege as white women to present themselves as dainty and fragile.

The theme of "*We Can and Will Fight*!" emerged from the males as they were discussing growing up, as well as in the discussion of their present day encounters with machismo heterosexual males. The students' commentary under this theme reflects another example of the students' active coping with other peoples' negative assumptions and bullying in reaction to their sexual identity and gender expression. We attribute the gay male students' ability to fight, to some heterosexuals' false assumptions about gay men in accordance with what Corbett (1999) labels as "*girly-boys*"; the students' defensive active coping style of being capable of fighting and winning physical altercations likely developed initially during "*homosexual boyhoods*" (Corbett). In accordance with Neal's (2006) usage of the term *masculine*

male privilege, it is also likely that due to the gay men's perceived feminine characteristics, the heterosexual bullies do not believe that feminine men have the *masculine male privilege* of being a good fighter.

At the onset of this study, I was interested in knowing the answers to questions such as How do the students as a group of "outsiders" find one another within the context of the HBCU? How do they manage or negotiate any possible feelings of "otherness"? Based on the theme of "*No Formal Resources Are Here For Us. We Informally Meet Other LGB Students*", I was able to determine from these students' commentary that they do not find it difficult to meet one another, often due to informal networks and nonverbal detection. The students do manage to find one another and spend quality time together. One primary means by which they are able to do this is via their leisure activities (basketball, modeling troupe, shooting pool, skate night, bowling night, choir, going together to the café). This is consistent with Kivel and Kleiber's (2000) findings which revealed the significance of leisure activities for LGB students' identity formation. Via the informal social networks, and actually relying on their LGB friends for social support, the students are able to manage many feelings of otherness within campus life. However, because the university cafeteria is a place where large numbers of students congregate, and two students mentioned the cafeteria as a place where they feel on display, this may be worthy of future study as a particular topic of interest.

None of the students reported any long term feelings of isolation as an LGB student on the campus, yet they did express feeling invisible on the campus as a group, due to lack of formal acknowledgement of their presence as a population at the university. This sentiment has also been expressed by other HBCU alumni who are sexual minority (Pritchard, 2007). Several students expressed that since there is no formal acknowledgement of LGB students on the campus, they were not immediately comfortable even revealing themselves to other LGB students until they felt the timing was right.

Due to the significance of the Black family to many Black persons, a family's silencing of discussion of a family member's LGB identity is emotionally distressing, with possible long term consequences. However more research is needed into this phenomenon for Black LGB persons and their families. This issue was labeled under the theme, "*My Family? They Know, But We Don't Really Talk About It*". It is possible that negative long term consequences may be produced even as the individuals appear to have adapted to the discomfort, anxiety, and silencing around the issue within their families. As the students recanted their experiences with family members, they seemed to be revealing, not so much that their families do not know, but precisely that they have not said to them that they are LGB. At times this was stated as "my mama don't know", but in actuality it is that the subject is not discussed or verbalized. Examples such as this indicate the need to be cautious of referring to some Black LGB persons as being "in the closet", in conjunction with the "closet paradigm" (Ross, 2005). For some individuals to state that they are not "out" to mother or grandmother may actually mean, "mama knows but she doesn't want to talk about it, so out of respect for that, I have never said anything about it". So, this begs the question, "Are the students really *in the closet*?" Does the closet paradigm truly apply to them?

It is also important to note that only one student did not name a family member when asked who was a role model. This again demonstrates the importance of the Black family to these students, just as it is for heterosexual Black persons. Yet, there was no specific mentioning of role models who are Black LGB persons, though celebrities, Da Brat and Dennis Rodman, were mentioned in relationship to their non-gender conforming styles of dress. Lenny Kravitz was mentioned not due to being LGBT, but for his daring to be different with his fashion style and his musical genre as a Black man in America. Perhaps if more high profile Black LGB persons openly discussed their sexual identity, this would influence Black families towards being able to speak openly with their LGB family members. Four of the students mentioned knowing of gay uncles within their families, although acknowledgement of the uncles' partners or life as a Black gay man was not openly nor positively discussed within their families.

For the theme, "*My Family? We've Had Conflict Regarding My Identity*", strong statements were made about how the students felt that they are perceived and treated in the Black community. This should be dealt with in focused programming and research. Now that HBCUs have acknowledged a need to address homophobia via diversity initiatives (Petrosino, 2003), there is also a message here to HBCUs to begin to think seriously about establishing LGBT family focused counseling education and research within centers on campus. This may advance education and emotional support for Black LGB students and their siblings, parents, or even extended family members, since several students spoke of grandmothers, aunts, uncles, and cousins in the discussion of their LGB identity. Having such services established within the context of an HBCU setting may assist in dispelling notions of LGBT issues as white issues only.

The Theme, "*More Resources on Campus; More Education in the Black Community*" emerged as the students were expressing frustrations with lack of visibility and lack of accurate perceptions of who they are. However, also for some of the students, perhaps because they have adapted to the "Don't ask, Don't tell, Don't discuss" behavior in their families, the experience of this same lack of acknowledgement within the HBCU environment was normalized for them. Marginalization on the campus seemed to have become normative for some of them, and some also expressed apathy regarding the lack of resources and attention. They were not certain that more resources would positively impact their overall college experience.

It was evident that a need for trained university counselors with experience in LGB issues is necessary. Across several of the interviews, as students discussed past experiences, issues of anxiety were revealed regarding being outed before they were ready; substance abuse and depression in response to a break-up; stress over rejection from fraternity membership based on being "too gay"; dorm-related discomfort and misunderstanding with heterosexual roommates; unresolved issues over child molestation; the stress of being a "down low" male student for some peers; and "we [bisexuals] are the whores of the community" was a societal perception that was mentioned by the one male student who identified as bisexual. More research is definitely needed to explore each of these issues within this targeted population.

All but one of the students made reference to one forum that was held on campus that was devoted to the discussion of homosexuality in the Black community; at the time of the interviews, the forum was the only event that had ever been held on the campus to acknowledge that there was an LGB population on the campus. One lesbian student specifically referred to the forum's atmosphere as hostile due to some heterosexual members of the audience's expression of inflammatory remarks. Feelings seemed mixed as to whether the forum was harmful or helpful to the campus climate. Currently (subsequent to the conduction of this research), a GSSA (Gay Straight Student Alliance) does exist on the campus, and other panels and film screenings have occurred. It would be worthwhile to do a survey of LGB students on the campus to find out how they feel about the GSSA organization, LGBT status on campus, and the campus climate in the aftermath of having a GSSA.

With the exception of two students who were openly critical of the university on many levels, most of the students had positive feelings about the university in spite of the marginalization of their LGB identity. The HBCU racial socialization was mentioned as an asset for most of the students. All of the students referred to the professors as being a strong asset regarding their satisfaction with the classroom experience and office hour assistance. Professors thus may be a source of positive change for LGB students if professors are willing to act as advocates; the students also suggested that professors should be increasingly more inclusive of LGB educational content in their courses. The students suggested that LGB students may possibly identify faculty allies across the campus, and ask these professors if their names may be included in a brochure made for entering LGB students during orientation to the university. It is also worth mentioning that all of the students were in agreement that openly LGB students can be popular (i.e., student government, homecoming court, etc.) on the campus, in the same manner as a heterosexual student. The LGB students of this research felt that popularity is based on knowing the right people and joining enough organizations. We regard this as a positive sign of change among younger generations of Black students.

Finally, due to the lack of sexual minority research being done by psychologists on the campuses of HBCUs, we believe that this exploratory research of male and female Black LGB students might prove informative for developing future studies of the population, and informing policy at historically Black colleges and universities.

Recommended Readings

Bennett, M., & Battle, J. (2001). We can see them, but we can't hear them: LGBT members of African American families. In M. Bernstein & R. Reimann (Eds.), *Queer families, queer politics: Challenging culture and the state* (pp. 53–67). New York: Columbia University Press.

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Chapter 5
Black Gay Men of the South: Research Implications and E. Patrick Johnson's *Sweet Tea*

Now I speak and my burden is lightened lifted free.

Marlon Riggs (1991)

Via interdisciplinary research, scholars are likely to be most successful in capturing the broadest picture of issues facing Black LGBT populations. As we are presenting people of African descent in LGBT psychology as a type of indigenous psychology, researchers will need to be open to multiple methods of research of the population. It would be negligent and culturally insensitive to dismiss research that does not fit the common mainstream psychological ideology of what constitutes valid research information. Because the subject matter is a type of indigenous psychology, researchers of people of African descent in LGBT psychology must continue to acknowledge the significance of traditions in African culture such as the oral tradition, and rely on this tradition to obtain significant qualitative information. Thus, this chapter is an analysis of E. Patrick Johnson's *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South* (2008). Psychological implications of his themes will be presented with the objective of generating research questions to inform future psychological studies of Black LGBT populations.

E. Patrick Johnson, professor of performance studies and African American studies at Northwestern University, uses the oral tradition as a research methodology to uncover themes from 63 Black southern men who identify as gay, drag queen, gender fluid, and transgender. The participants ranged in age from 19–93, with the majority (42) of them being between the ages of 26–45. The sample of participants hailed from 15 southern states and the District of Columbia. The states included Maryland, Kentucky, Texas, Virginia, Tennessee, Louisiana, North Carolina, Arkansas, Mississippi, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Florida, Georgia, Missouri, and Alabama. Johnson's sample also provides a good example for discourse on intersectional research due to the men representing a broad range of age, class, gender, and educational demographics.

While it is understood that 63 Black men of the south cannot be regarded as representative of all Black gay and gender non-conforming men in the south, psychologists

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can replicate Johnson's reliance on the *oral tradition* and *snowball sampling* to access information on additional men of this population. These techniques may be highly appropriate and culturally relevant means of generating research information from often hard to access Black LGBT populations. Snowball sampling, respondent-driven sampling, and nuanced methods of sampling may be required when attempting to access *hidden populations*; such methods have been used in a study of Black men who have sex with men, but who identify as heterosexual (Icard, 2008). There is also evidence that respondent-driven sampling may be useful in deriving valid population estimates via chain referral samples of hidden populations (Heckathorn, 2002). Thus, more respondent-driven studies such as Johnson's need to be conducted with Black LGBT participants so that population estimates may be obtained. Nonprobability samples (i.e., bars, flyers, advertisements) often used for investigating hidden populations should not be dismissed as mere convenience samples, particularly when targeting diverse groups of Black LGBT individuals.

Young ethnic minority men who have sex with men have been virtually invisible in general population surveys; Johnson's use of snowball sampling assists with filling in some major gaps. In addition to his approach, techniques such as *time-space sampling* could also prove beneficial for studying Black LGBT populations. Time-space sampling is a probability based method for enrolling participants of a target population at times and places where they congregate rather than where they live (Stueve, O' Donnell, Duran, Doval, & Blome, 2001). It is likely that due to the weight of cost and time, relative to the benefits of outreach, Johnson did not utilize time-space sampling for his interviews with Black gay men of the south. Instead, the men of his sample were interviewed either within their own living spaces or the homes of a close friend or relative. When considering whether to utilize a technique such as time-space sampling, the researcher will need to be mindful of the quantity of the participants' time that would be required. This is significant because factors such as the immediate storytelling environment may influence the final story that is created by the storyteller (Banks-Wallace, 2002).

Johnson's interviews in *Sweet Tea* lasted over an hour for each participant. For several men, their interviews were very lengthy; the men were eager to have their marginalized voices heard. When obtaining such a volume of data from individuals, an added benefit may be to give the participants the comfort of relaxation and privacy within their homes, as they tell their stories.

Oral Tradition and Black Culture

Johnson's usage of Black gay southern men's oral histories is consistent with African and African American oral tradition (Sale, 1992). The study of people of African descent in LGBT psychology must include the oral tradition due to the significance of the use of words and stories, and the social commentary within them in various African cultural traditions (Gates, 1987). The *griot* within traditional African societies was highly regarded by the people for his or her storykeeping community role, and today there is a consistently growing appreciation of storytelling

and listening for its consciousness raising effects (Simmons, 2003). Historically, Black writers have also used the storytelling of folktales as a means of "revealing" their own autobiographical experiences of struggle, and to provide commentary on social attitudes of the times (Chesnutt, 1969). Thus, as a body of work to be studied, there is much that can be gained from this approach in terms of adding to the LGBT psychology literature, multicultural psychology, social psychology, and indigenous psychology from within the culture.

Though Black LGBT southerners have co-existed within southern communities since the beginning of time, this has not been adequately documented or discussed. Thus, the recording of stories plays a vital role in making these lived experiences not only visible, but sustaining. Johnson's participants' stories have relevance to LGBT psychology and the growing attention to intersectionality research, because weaved throughout the men's narratives in *Sweet Tea* is the glaring significance of the identity of being southern in conjunction with being Black and gay.

Storytelling in the oral tradition also has health benefits (Banks-Wallace, 2002), which serves as another reason to advance the use of this tradition in the study of broad and diverse samples of Black LGBT persons. This population's health characteristics have been underexamined. Banks-Wallace writes of storytelling and story sharing as sacred work that African Americans have historically relied upon to build harmony in the African American community; for sustaining cultural identity; for assistance in the struggle for freedom; for clarity in the meaning of one's existence; and for survival. Though Banks-Wallace does not write specifically about Black LGBT persons, the benefits to storytelling that she espouses has direct relevance to the lived experiences of many Black LGBT persons, some of whom are profiled in Johnson's *Sweet Tea*. Through the stories of the men of *Sweet Tea,* we gain insight into the answers to existential questions about happiness, truth, freedom, self-actualization, and authenticity.

The storytelling method has also been incorporated in a form of *participatory action research* investigating Black gay men and Black lesbians of South Africa, revealing signs of strength, hope, and optimism in the midst of oppression and despair (Graziano, 2004). This and other research findings have revealed the benefits of using the participatory action research approach in order to increase the representativeness and the cultural competence of sampling and research strategies. Thus ideally, in the study of people of African descent in LGBT psychology, members of the population, their family members, and service providers should provide guidance to researchers on all aspects of the research including methods, recruitment, instrumentation, analysis, coding, materials development, and dissemination and application of findings.

Johnson's Themes in *Sweet Tea*

Johnson's prolegomenous comments in *Sweet Tea,* address the participants' *performance of southernness* (Johnson's reference to the mens' southern cultural style) which cannot be separated from their word choices, sexual identity development,

and descriptions of what it is like to be a Black gay man. It is also unquestionable that the men all embrace their Black ethnicity, though they are far from a monolithic sample. Ethnic identity consists of the following three components: (1) the degree to which individuals have explored issues regarding their ethnicity, (2) the degree to which individuals have resolved what their ethnicity means to them, and (3) the degree to which individuals feel positively or negatively about their ethnic group membership (Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bámaca-Gómez, 2004). The men of *Sweet Tea*'s embrace of their African American ethnicity and generally positive self-esteem seem to have been formed as a result of identity exploration and identity resolution that occurred during their formative years within the specific southern geography, and within their families. The relationship between identity formation and geographic region has been demonstrated in psychological research (Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007). The first theme that Johnson presents in *Sweet Tea*, describes the mens' experiences growing up in the south in Black families, which he labeled:

Growing Up Black and Gay in the South (Theme 1)

For this theme, the men of *Sweet Tea* reveal in the oral tradition, their experiences with growing pains, fond memories of playing with relatives and friends, family conflicts, and many of the same memories of development in a Black southern cultural context as their heterosexual African American counterparts. Johnson also reveals under this theme, that the men's recollections of racism were significant in their developmental histories irrespective of age, again similar to findings in heterosexual Black persons (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001). Researchers have discussed persistent categorical treatment such as racism for how it may produce similar socialization experiences across different generations and age groups of African Americans. In consideration of this, it is problematic when behavioral researchers conduct developmental studies of African consciousness and degree of psychological distress in Black men, with no inclusion or acknowledgement of whether there were Black gay or bisexual men within the sample (Pierre & Mahalik, 2005). What could psychologists possibly learn if they took an interest in studying constructs such as African consciousness and Black racial identity within a gay or bisexual sample of Black men? Such findings would be useful in informing the work of service providers who work with Black gay populations. Presently, the literature is lacking in inclusiveness of research findings that have been based on stated sexually diverse representations of African Americans, this further contributes to the perpetuation of a presumption of heterosexuality among Black populations.

"Parenting and family drama" is explored by Johnson as a means of depicting the variation in the mens' family structure. We gain some insight into how the mens' particular familial backgrounds relate to or affect their later relationships and personality development. The information that we receive in this section of *Sweet Tea* can be an impetus to further exploration by behavioral scientists. It is especially refreshing to read of several men who can attest to positive personality and general

esteem outcomes, though coming from varying types of Black families. Some were reared in the context of a single parent home, some a two parent household. There were men who had parents who fought; for several others the home was peaceful. This represents an area for research where information is relatively nonexistent for Black gay populations. How do family dynamics and structure of Black families relate to the developmental socio-emotional trajectories of Black gay men? Also in studying such a question, what differences may or may not surface if we compared this research question for Black gay males of different geographic regions?

Another issue which Johnson introduces under this theme of growing up, is that of the men's educational experiences. He introduces a particularly interesting issue for further exploration, which is the acknowledgment that a number of the men of *Sweet Tea* demonstrated an early passion for learning, creativity, a feeling of being artistic and different, possession of a drive, or over-achieving characteristics. Johnson is careful not to make an essentialist statement about what we know is a very diverse population; and he does not assert that all men of the sample fit this profile, but the recognition of this pattern in several of the men who he interviewed suggests a need to explore this relationship in formal research. If research were to demonstrate a relationship between Black gay male identity and the aforementioned qualities, what would this suggest? What theoretical perspectives might explain it? How might such characteristics relate to scores on psychological scales such as Mobley, Slaney, and Rice's (2005) *Almost Perfect Scale*, as it has been revised for use with African Americans to assess perfectionism?

Johnson reveals in reference to his own obtainment of a Ph.D. as a Black gay southern male, that perhaps there exists some need to overcompensate for one's gayness in order to diminish the significance of the sexual minority status. However, we have little research of ethnically diverse LGBT male samples to support such notions of coping with heterosexism (McDavitt et al., 2008). At most, we have the research findings done in primarily white populations of the effects of homonegativity, internalized homophobia, gay related stigma and rejection sensitivity (Luhtanen, 2003; Meyer, 1995; Pachankis, Goldfried, & Ramrattan, 2008). These concepts may be relevant to Johnson's cognitions regarding his own personal motivations, but how might this relate to other men and other related constructs that have been examined in African Americans?

Research has been conducted which includes African Americans in the study of perfectionism (Castro & Rice, 2003). However, comprehensive studies of perfectionism that take into account ethnicity are lacking. It could prove valuable to administer *Multidimensional Perfectionism Scales* (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1990) to a diverse sample of Black gay males in order to retrospectively explore the childhood prevalence of this construct in the men for how it may relate to later adjustment. Though Johnson nor the men of *Sweet Tea* use the word perfectionism, the construct should be studied for its potential relevance to later achievement. Johnson points out with this theme, that the individual men's stories were fraught with conflicts, contradictions, and complications, which is a testament to the complexity of the lived experiences of the target population.

In this section, the men of *Sweet Tea* also share their childhood recollections of gay members of the Black community. This is an area of relatively unexplored territory for LGBT research, though the all too common lack of openly gay Black male role models has been previously acknowledged by other scholars (Washington & Wall, 2006). How does the presence or lack of Black gay male role models for gay Black men influence Black gay identity? None of the men actually refer to a gay community figure as having been a role model, but their memories of such men's status or reputations within their communities are vivid. This subject is in need of further exploration in light of paradigms put forth to explain both productive and counterproductive culturally based masculine behaviors and realities (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2004). Such behaviors may very well be informed in part by the presence or absence of Black gay male role models within gay Black men's cultural communities.

Coming Out and Turning the Closet Inside Out (Theme 2)

Fewer studies of coming out in the traditional meaning of this concept have been done which emphasize the family's reaction to coming out, versus emphasizing the emotions and thoughts of the LGBT individual during and after coming out. In *Sweet Tea,* under Johnson's theme of coming out, he provides some evidence that a close examination of Black families' realities in response to having a gay family member is warranted. What is particularly salient in this section of *Sweet Tea*, is the number of times that various men remark that family members know of their sexual identity, though the issue has never been stated or discussed, nor do some of them feel that it is ever likely to be officially discussed. Too, Johnson profiles some men who revealed that even in the aftermath of coming out to their families, the issue has never been mentioned again. The information here is similar to the findings of another study of southern Black LGB students attending an HBCU (see this text, Chap. 4, Theme: My Family? They Know But We Don't Talk About It).

The finding, however, is inconsistent with a study of a white family in which the entire family is conceptualized as having a new gay identity subsequent to the gay family member's coming out. Baptist and Allen (2008) posed the following research questions to six family members about their reactions to learning of having a gay relative: (a) Could you tell me about your experience when you knew that Jack was gay? (b) How did other family members react to Jack's coming out? (c) How do you feel about having a gay family member? (d) How did you decide to share or not to share this news with others? (e) What has helped you cope with this news? (f) What has changed in your family since? (g) If you looked back to when Jack came out, what would have helped you better receive the news? (h) What was or is your biggest challenge having a gay family member? The study appears in the journal of *Contemporary Family Therapy*; yet for professionals attempting to do effective therapy with Black families, such questions may not be culturally relevant. Information gleaned from the men of *Sweet Tea* suggests that there may not consistently be

a defining experience of the family learning that the Black man is gay. There may be no discussion of the Black man's gay identity among extended family. Thus, it may be virtually impossible for parents and other relatives to answer how they feel about having a gay family member, particularly if the entire issue has been avoided. Questions about challenges and change in the family subsequent to receiving the news may be equally non-applicable.

Social Constructionism Theory purports that individuals define themselves by their interaction with others and by those others' perceived understanding of the individual (Gergen, 1985). One man of *Sweet Tea* stated that sometimes his family members make disparaging remarks about gay people in his presence, because he states that they forget that he is gay. He states that they just see him as their son, not their gay son. This behavior likely stems not only from a silencing around the issue, leading to avoidance and denial, but also a sense of family members constructing their own identity for their gay male relative. In their constructed reality for their gay male relative, he may not be gay. The theory also suggests that in the men's interactions with some family members, the men may see and define themselves according to the family members' understanding of them. Thus they continue to characterize themselves as "not being out" to certain family members, even as they understand on some level that the family members already know that they are gay. Also, there may be multiple realities involved for the various family members. For example, several men reported being most comfortable telling a sibling first, particularly a sister. Thus in this sample, sisters operated from a different reality than other family members. It would be valuable in future research, to investigate the relationship of Black gay men and their sisters in further diverse samples of Black gay men.

In depth case studies of Black families and their LGB family members is needed in order to learn more about how social constructionism theory applies within this cultural context. A question which Baptist and Allen (2008) also raised in their study was, how do family members reconcile dichotomies and contradictions between accepting their gay member and maintaining the family's values? This question may be particularly relevant for work with Black families around the issues of gender non-conformity and sexual minority identity. The stories of various men of *Sweet Tea* suggest that the family's cultural values such as religiosity, respect, cultural codes of silence around sensitive issues, and an extended self identity may sometimes create culturally relevant challenges to a healthy acceptance of gay family members. However in spite of this, several of the men demonstrated healthy self esteem, self acceptance, and authentic expression of their gay identities, even as their family members may avoid the issue entirely. For Black LGBT individuals who desire to engage in family counseling with their family members concerning their identity, service providers should utilize techniques that are culturally appropriate, holistic/systemic, values driven, and capitalizes on the strengths found to be inherent in many African American families (Gregory & Harper, 2001; Bell-Tolliver, Burgess, & Brock, 2009).

Gayness and the Black Church (Theme 3)

This chapter/theme of Johnson's *Sweet Tea* has clear and direct relevance to the issue of time-space sampling that was previously discussed. Johnson's interview data here suggest that if it were deemed appropriate to do so, the church would be a useful venue for obtaining research access to Black gay males. While Johnson does note that "the Black church" in its many variations is often still accurately associated with sexism and homophobia, he also describes the church as having rather nuanced ways of enforcing some of its tenets. Specifically, this description relates to the fact that while some Black pastors may castigate homosexuality from the pulpit, several obviously gay Black males are nevertheless often a prominent presence in the church, particularly as members of, or director of church choirs. Johnson consistently explores the following question with the men of *Sweet Tea:* Why do you think that there are so many Black gay men in the church, especially the choir*?* Of note to those researching and studying Black gay men should be the substantial degree of consistency across the men's responses to Johnson's question. Each of the following represents somewhat consistent responses given by the men:

- The church as a place where the men first felt a sense of community and belonging (building community)
- The ability to psychologically separate the church as a place of community from the negativity expressed in the space by some pastors
- The church choir provides an opportunity to express creativity and leadership, talent, theatricality, and multiple identities such as spiritual, gay, or gender fluid
- The church is an avenue for open expression
- The church is a meeting place for dating or casual hook ups

The men's responses under this theme highlight the irony of omission of LGBT identity as a variable in many studies which use Black samples to investigate development and personality. The gay men of *Sweet Tea*, across all themes, demonstrate the significance of Black cultural values and experiences to their identities, similar to their heterosexual counterparts. Thus, it is negligent to omit Black LGBT persons from studies in the fields of African American studies and Black psychology; though still to date, few studies in these areas of scholarship focus on Black LGBT persons.

According to psychological theory regarding contextual domains of socialization, the men view the church as a place that fosters the Black cultural socialization process (Boykin & Toms, 1985). Their connection to and appreciation of the church is consistent with Afrocentric values according to West African traditions, because behaviors such as singing in the church choir allow for the expression of Afrocentric values including spirituality, harmony, movement, verve, affect, communalism, expressive individualism, and orality (Boykin & Toms). Several of the men commented that from an early age, they were socialized by parents to be religious, which lead to their enjoyment of the performances, rhythm, and emotionality inherent in church attendance; the men being introduced to this at an early age is consistent with Afrocentric parenting beliefs and child rearing practices (Thomas, 2000).

Several of the men also comment on how gleeful they feel upon putting on the choir robe, singing and swaying to the music. This was discussed in conjunction with their description of how they feel a sense of freedom when openly expressing themselves in the church choir, which is like no other setting. By these comments, the men suggest participating in role flexibility, which involves behaving differently to accomodate specific contexts and situations (Wilson & Miller, 2002). The church choir seems conducive to the men's display of behavior that some of the men do not feel comfortable displaying outside of that context.

This relates to what has been elsewhere described as African American gay and bisexual men's need to strategize in the face of heterosexism; Wilson and Miller (2002) address dual oppression as related to race and sexual identity in Black gay men. Other researchers have also examined the double minority status among Black gay and bisexual men for how this relates to sexual problems, psychological adjustment, and stress (Zamboni & Crawford, 2007; Green, 2007). Of particular relevance to the men of *Sweet Tea* are Wilson and Miller's findings regarding Black gay and bisexual men's coping strategies in non-gay friendly environments such as the Black church and other predominantly African American settings. They found that several coping strategies were used by Black gay and bisexual men in non gay friendly contexts. *Role flexing* was identified as the altering of actions, dress, and mannerisms to cover the gay identity. This was found to occur in Black gay and bisexual men in a number of ways such as being extremely macho, being sanctimonious around church people, concealment and deceit about being gay, passivity, changing sexual behavior, standing ground, and keeping the faith (Wilson & Miller).

The men of *Sweet Tea* suggest that these seemingly stressful identity management tactics are relaxed or nonexistent when they are actively participating in the church choir on Sundays. This is perhaps because the culture of many traditional southern Black church services supports the incorporation of the emotional expressiveness, verve, and creative movement that many of the men of *Sweet Tea* describe as being consistent with their gay-related talents. An in-depth analysis of this *church choir phenomenon* should be undertaken with diverse samples of gay Black men across various geographic or regional contexts. It is also worthwhile to study Black gay and bisexual men who are not church goers or choir members in order to determine if they likewise have outlets of open creative expression which allow them to relax role flexing tactics.

After reading the men's commentary under this theme, it seems apparent that they may share some of the same attitudes and behaviors as Black heterosexual church-goers. There is some indication that heterosexual church-goers also utilize the church as a place to meet persons for dating and making possible romantic connections, i.e., singles ministries exist in several Christian churches to allow for Christian singles to meet and mingle. Comparable to the men of *Sweet Tea*, heterosexual Black church goers may also separate their fondness for a particular church community from their attitudes about certain beliefs and commentary expressed by ministers or pastors within the church. While this may be a useful coping strategy for Black LGBT people, being continuously passive in the midst of anti-gay comments by those in power should be fully examined via research to understand the cognitive and emotional processes involved in this type of oppression.

Finally, two men of *Sweet Tea* stood out for their perspectives on religion and the Black church. One man spoke passionately of his rejection of religion, specifically Christianity, as he views it as the white man's religion that has been forced upon Black people. Another man spoke of constant prayer in hopes of being delivered from his sin of homosexuality. How prevalent both of these men's perspectives are among the wider population of Black gay and bisexual Black men warrants further exploration in relationship to research on *African self-consciousness* (Pierre & Mahalik, 2005) and also in relationship to the deconstruction of the processes of reparative therapy (Bright, 2004). African self consciousness has been cited by Pierre & Malik as the specific idea of developing beliefs that it is healthy for Blacks to develop awareness and knowledge of their cultural identity and cultural heritage, to recognize factors that affirm their Black lives. *Reparative therapies* are controversial techniques based in psychoanalytic theory, which have the objective of changing same-sex attraction to heterosexual; often the clients seeking reparative therapy are those who experience a conflict between their sexual identities and religious identities (Bright; American Psychological Association, 2009). The degree to which wide numbers of African American gay men would be likely to endorse such therapies in conjunction with their religious identities should be explored given the number of men of *Sweet Tea* who expressed strong religious identity.

Homosex in the South (Theme 4)

Throughout this section, the men's stories are set against the backdrop of the south for how it has influenced their sexual behaviors and attitudes in predictable stereotypical ways. The section also, however, reveals how the mens' sexual behaviors contradict traditional stereotypes about sexuality in the south. In this section, Johnson presents men who tell of stories of open sexual activity as well as more secretive "down low" sex.

Researchers have addressed the fact that when sexual behaviors occur, scripting also occurs on three distinct levels: cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts, and intrapsychic scripts (Simon & Gagnon, 2007). *Cultural scenarios* refer to the existing instructional guides for people's lives within any given context. All institutions and institutionalized arrangements within a culture represent signs and symbols through which the requirements and the practice of specific roles are proscribed. For the men of *Sweet Tea*, the southern church represents such a cultural scenario. Interestingly, several men of *Sweet Tea* made mention of the church as a place where sex takes place. Specifically how and why the church became a significant cultural scenario for sexual behavior among these Black gay men requires further investigation. However, we can speculate that with the church being such a pervasive part of the mens' sociohistorical development, many opportunities for sexual exploration were available to them during the many hours that the men spent in this context with other curious or same gender loving males.

Interpersonal scripts refer to the processes whereby the individual is key in shaping or altering a cultural scenario so that certain behaviors become a regular part of a particular context or scene. Simon and Gagnon (2007) suggest that it is by interpersonal scripting that an individual can achieve congruence between his or her identity and the expectations of the culture or context. This appears evident by the seeming normalcy of the church "hook-ups", as was mentioned under this theme. According to this section of Johnson's narratives, many of the men of *Sweet Tea* experienced the acquisition of sexual contacts as a consistent part of their interpersonal sexual scripting, such that their identity as a gay male is congruent with their regular attendance and participation in church. Other cultural scenarios in which the men provided examples of using interpersonal scripts and having substantial sex was on campus while students of historically Black colleges and universities, and while they were enlisted in the military.

Several men describe an abundance of gay sex on the campuses of HBCUs, the majority of which are located in the south. Interestingly, several men reported that the HBCU campus climate was more embracing of gay identity and gay behavior in the 1950s and 1960s compared to today. The older gay men spoke of a degree of acceptance at HBCUs in the past that is not the same at such institutions currently. This may be attributable to more extreme and narrow contemporary codes of Black masculinity in the midst of hip hop culture as a site of gender and sexual socialization (Javors, 2004; Munoz-Laboy, Weinstein, & Parker, 2007; Oliver, 2007). More research is definitely needed concerning this area. For example, how might the chronosystem be affecting any changes from more accepting to less accepting? Would such a characterization of acceptance even hold true among larger and varying samples of Black gay men who attended HBCUs in the 1960s and 1970s? It must be acknowledged that it may be difficult to gain access to representative samples of the men who had sex in this contextual era. This is not necessarily solely due to such men being in hiding about being gay, but may relate to lack of disclosure of sex-related information by some southern African Americans (Mohammed & Kissinger, 2006; Gaskins, 2006). Several of the gay men who attended HBCUs during the late 1960s and early1970s spoke of the freedom to express gay sex as being prevalent and easy to achieve during those years. Unfortunately, scholarship on sex among gay men from the 1970s has focused primarily on white gay men (Goode & Troiden, 1979). Less attention has been paid to Black gay men who were sexually active during this time, especially in areas outside of large metropolitan areas like NYC. This speaks to the invisibility of Black LGBT persons across the decades.

Johnson's data cites more than one HBCU under this theme, as mentioned by various middle-aged men when they recall their sexual exploits during their college years. If these men's stories in this section are indicative of wider more prevalent sexual behavior on college campuses (HBCUs), then a wealth of information on psychology and sexuality among Black gay persons is available for research. Gaining access to a variety of types of men who may have been involved during the 1960s and 1970s may be a challenge. Although the men express that the sexual activity was prevalent, this does not necessarily mean that today such men if married, partnered, or heterosexual identified would want to revisit these stories and share

them with researchers. This is a frustration of doing LGBT research in general, and more specifically with Black populations. The fact that such "carrying on" as Johnson labels it, occurred in three contexts (Black church, HBCUs, military) in which is commonly viewed as non-gay friendly environments makes them highly worthy of further examination in other groups of Black gay men.

Intrapsychic scripting produces fantasy for the sexual individual in which reality is reorganized. This helps the individual to actualize his or her multilayered wishes and desires. Simon and Gagnon suggest that this level of scripting represents a part of the process of the creation of the self. They also suggest that intrapsychic scripting is a means of allowing the sexual being to express libidinal desires in connection to social meanings. For example, some of the men of *Sweet Tea* recounted having sex with very masculine "heterosexual" athletes during their college days. For one man in particular, he boasted about only loving masculine and "straight" men his entire life, as opposed to feminine gay men. In his description he relays a joy at having his fantasy fulfilled, especially as the social meaning of masculinity for him is a part of how he sees his lovers and himself as a man attracted to other men. His reorganized reality (intrapsychic scripting) or fantasy seems to be that he is having sex with a man who is not really gay because the man is so masculine. The potential to learn more about these levels of scripting in Black gay men is vast. We encourage studies in this area as more researchers make concerted efforts to expand the research on Black gay populations.

Under Johnson's theme of sex in the south, the men address the HIV/AIDS issue in relationship to its prevalence rates among African American men. Specifically, it is mentioned that the rates are rising among Blacks in general but alarmingly so in the south among the college aged. One man raised the need to have more honest discussions about sexuality in Black communities. Some of the men mention ignorance about what homosexuality is. Some men mention ignorance over what AIDS is. The complicity of silence around Black sexuality may be related to rising HIV/AIDS rates in the south, irrespective of sexual identity. Several of the men stated that Black people do not want to talk about it (HIV). This was followed by statements such as Black people do not want to talk about being gay either. Throughout this section, denial and avoidance used as coping are reflected. Several of the men spoke of apathy, denial, and lack of HIV testing in their regions, though of course that is not to say all experienced this or failed themselves to be tested. However, several of the men of *Sweet Tea* acknowledged Black cultural usages of euphemisms when referring to death, AIDS, diabetes, and other illnesses. For example, some Black persons using "sick" to denote someone with AIDS, as opposed to saying the actual name of the disease itself. This is likely used as a means of coping, but may be barriers to mental and physical health across the long term. One man spoke of how he psychologically benefited from openly confessing to having an HIV + diagnosis.

Ecological systems model is highly relevant to this section in which several of the men blame the culture of the south with its religiosity (the Black church) and other cultural codes as factors affecting the behaviors of gay and bisexual Black men who take sexual risks and avoid getting HIV tested. Cultural codes of the region and ethnic group membership represent macrosystem factors which may be

explanatory of sexual behaviors (Corcoran, 2000). Significant also, was one narrator's statements that stigma and shame may often exist in the culture regarding asking certain questions. For example, he stated that it is considered rude or offensive in the south to ask necessary health questions of a potential sex partner such as, "Have you been tested?" Such a belief system is reflective of what the health belief model states about the likelihood of taking positive steps toward changing an unhealthy behavior. What this man describes is a belief (i.e., rudeness or inappropriateness), that hinders making a healthy change in behavior.

Of note, a few narrators tell of sexual abuse/molestation or nonconsensual sex at an early age. One man revealed that guilt, shame, and codes of silence existed around the violation such that the abuse went unreported when he told his parents. The prevalence of such violations and the aftermath must be further studied in Black populations so that we may learn more about childhood sexual abuse as it relates to sexual risk taking. This would expand the literature which has demonstrated a relationship between these variables in predominantly white samples of gay and bisexual men (Jinich et al., 1998).

Transitioning the South (Theme 5)

This theme of *Sweet Tea* is an in-depth account of four narrators who evidence that thriving Black trans and gender non-conforming communities can be found in the south. Among the four persons profiled by Johnson, no accounts of physical or verbal attacks were revealed. Although this is only a small sample of the population, this fact is encouraging. Definitely, further examination of the population is needed. Previous research with transgender women of color has investigated the relationship between the experience of transphobia and the likelihood of elevated HIV risk from unprotected receptive anal intercourse (Sugano, Nemoto, & Operario, 2006); these findings with transgender women of color were based on a sample in San Francisco. The study should be replicated with African American transgender women across the U.S.

One narrator of this theme uses a different label to refer to what the mainstream LGBT psychological literature refers to as "transgenderism". She refers to her identity as "*indifference*". This should be noted by those working with gender non-conforming Black populations out of respect for how they may wish to self-describe in relationship to their sense of self (Wong, 2002). This is evidence that Black populations may not embrace common terminology used by white LGBT populations. This same narrator also, like some other trans-identified persons, made a decision that having gender reassignment surgery is not necessary because all of her other non-biological transitions are complete, irrespective of the unchanged anatomical characteristics (Heath, 2006).

A second narrator's story provides food for thought regarding gender expectations in relationship to gender identity. This narrator demonstrated a type of gender-nonconformity in which outward dress and style reflect stereotypical male gender,

but internally this narrator feels female. While this may not be totally unique in terms of the meaning of gender variance, what is interesting is that this narrator does not alter style of dress and physical appearance to appear female. Thus she reports to Johnson that she has been mistaken by other transgender persons as a female to male transgender male instead of being correctly identified as a male to female transgender woman. This narrator raised several issues of gender identity, gender expression, race, and class to be further examined in future studies.

A third narrator openly lives as male-identified, a drag queen, and gay. It is notable that Johnson profiles this Black southern man who is happy in his male body. However he is also comfortable expressing his femininity through cross-dressing and performing. He represents an example of a Black man who challenges what the literature describes as traditional cultural codes of authentic Black masculinity (Mahalik, Pierre, & Wan, 2006).

A fourth narrator under this theme demonstrated ambivalence in terms of gender affinity but securely identifies as gay in sexual identity. His ambivalence also concerned his continued attraction to and interest in drag, although he no longer performs in drag. He demonstrated ongoing confusion about the validity of several gender related identities and labels as to their fit with his self concept. His attitudes can be related to gender transcendence theory or a movement away from gender binaries (Nausner, 2002). It is necessary to study the prevalence of such a view in other Black gay men.

Johnson points out that the lessons to be learned from these narrators' stories is the complex nature of acceptance of difference in the south. Primarily, these narrators are treated as integrated members of their African American communities, and they live their lives freely. Their stories are reasons to examine stereotypical views of the south as being universally hostile towards sexual minorities and those who are gender non-conforming. However, it should be noted that these narrators do experience microaggressions within their communities, suggesting that more education and discussion is needed around diversity of gender expression within Black southern communities.

Love and Relationships in the South (Theme 6)

One couple that Johnson profiles under this theme has been together for over 40 years. Johnson mentions how these men and another couple refute the stereotype that all gays are sexually promiscuous (Lynch, 2002). In this section Johnson also demonstrates that some Black gay men of the south identify as single and celibate, while some identify as single and promiscuous. Several men did state that they were happy being single, which is not surprising if these men are otherwise socially integrated and connected in their families and communities (Mays, Chatters, Cochran, & Mackness, 1998).

Some of the men of this section of *Sweet Tea* admitted to being in search of companions, which is consistent with research that has shown that self-concept, social

integration, and companionship are three key elements in Black gay men's life satisfaction (Christian, 2005). They not only varied in relationship status, but also they varied in their political views on issues such as support for gay marriage, yet all spoke of the necessity of having rights as a gay person. The prevalence of gay political activism and gay rights advocacy among Black LGBT persons has not been adequately examined, and thus is in need of research.

Another issue that has not been adequately examined in the social science literature is raised under this theme by Johnson; this is the issue of interracial love among gay men involving one Black partner. Given that Black gay men of *Sweet Tea* who were partnered with white men in the south spoke of challenges such as racism, family opposition, and class differences, it is worthwhile to do studies of these relationships for how they may or may not relate to the literature on interracial heterosexual couples, which has addressed the implications for mental health counseling, and the diversity in coupling patterns across diverse Black populations (Solsberry, 1994; Batson, Qian, & Lichter, 2006).

Black Gay Men Across Generations (Theme 7)

Under this theme, Johnson profiles two older gay Black men, and two younger Black gay men. Surprisingly though a significant age difference between the young and the old, there were similarities in the men's developmental trajectories. Similarities existed with respect to all of the mens' cognizance of the presence of racism, which has been supported by the literature on Blacks' experiences with racism (Sue et al. 2008), and the relevance of HIV/AIDS to their social networks (i.e., older men who have suffered the loss of friends to AIDS) and their sexual lives (i.e., younger men growing up in the age of AIDS). The information of this section should motivate further research into the strategies of survival employed by gay Black male southerners inter-generationally. In the stories of this theme, issues of class, race, and gender are presented; resilience emerges as salient. This section of *Sweet Tea* is consistent with other research which has demonstrated that older Black gay men, even after histories of experiencing racism and ageism do not show negative mental health outcomes as a result of being stigmatized (David & Knight, 2008). The lives of the older men of *Sweet Tea* primarily appeared happy and well adjusted. This is also consistent with research of the more distant past, suggesting that these positive results may be stable findings for samples of older Black gay men (Adams & Kimmel, 1997). It should be noted that there were examples of individuality, and various chronosystem effects existent under this theme. Focus groups and cross sectional studies of multiple variables related to stigma, risk, adjustment, and wellness among younger and older Black gay men would be effective means of expanding upon Johnson's current theme. In addition, though not mentioned in *Sweet Tea*, further research should be done to investigate intergenerational romantic relationships among Black gay men, to expand the literature regarding this subject that has focused on white gay men (Yoakam, 2001).

Conclusion

E. Patrick Johnson's *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South* raises many research questions for future study of Black gay men in the south. The mens' stories shed light on the lived experiences of the target population, and far more research is needed to expand upon Johnson's themes. As indicated in Table 5.1, several research questions are prompted by these narratives with respect to issues such as social development, sexual behavior, gender identity and gender diversity, personality and creative expression, spiritual identity, and relationships.

Johnson's findings also suggest more exploration into seemingly unlikely contexts of investigation such as churches, the military, and HBCUs. Vast opportunities for further research are evident by Johnson's exploratory interviews of the men of *Sweet Tea.*

As is common in discussing research with Black LGBT populations, gaining access to Black gay men or men who have sex with men who are less open about their

Table 5.1 Potential psychological research inspired by E. Patrick Johnson's *Sweet Tea*

- Research the constructs such as African consciousness and Black racial identity within a gay or bisexual sample of Black men
- Research the family dynamics and structure of Black families as related to the developmental socio-emotional trajectories of Black gay men; compare this research question for Black gay males of different geographic regions
- Research the early passion for learning, creativity, a feeling of being artistic and different, possession of a drive, or over-achieving characteristics in Black gay men
- Perfectionism as a specific construct should be studied for its potential relevance to later achievement in Black gay men
- How might the presence or lack of Black gay male role models for gay Black men influence Black gay identity?
- Investigate relationships between Black gay men and their sisters in diverse samples of Black gay men
- How might family members reconcile dichotomies and contradictions between accepting their gay family member and maintaining the family's values?
- In-depth analysis of the *church choir phenomenon* should be undertaken with diverse samples of gay Black men across various geographic or regional contexts
- The degree to which African American gay men would be likely to endorse reparative therapies in conjunction with their religious identities
- Further investigation of the three contexts (Black church, HBCUs, military) in which one would commonly view as non-gay friendly environments for further examination in additional groups of Black gay men
- The potential to learn more about the three levels of scripting in Black gay men (cultural scenarios, intrapsychic scripting, interpersonal scripts)
- Studies to examine instances of sexual molestation and nonconsensual sex in the men's life experiences
- More research to examine the lives of Black gender variant persons thriving and surviving within southern Black communities
- Black gay men in interracial relationships and in inter-generational relationships

sexuality is necessary to expand the knowledge gained from Johnson's interviews. All of the men of *Sweet Tea* were open with their sexual identity as opposed to being "down low", "closeted", or perhaps in possession of a more nuanced sexual identity. Due to the snow ball sampling that was done for *Sweet Tea*, men who exist outside of the openly gay social network may have been absent or less accessible. This raises the issue of how to best access these men who are not as "out" or comfortable with their sexuality.

Finally, as Johnson notes, narrative analyses should be conducted with Black lesbians of the south. A large study of Black lesbians throughout southern states would be a valuable contribution to the LGBT literature. Black lesbian's voices are comparatively invisible, though we know that they currently exist and have always existed. Oral histories produced via snow ball sampling and time-space sampling methods are also likely to be effective with Black lesbian populations. Questions remain as to whether similar themes of *Sweet Tea* will emerge with a Black lesbian sample, as well as what additional themes may emerge.

Recommended Readings

Johnson, E. P. (2008). *Sweet tea: Black gay men of the south an oral history*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
[For a reading of the cultural richness of Johnson's narratives this book is recommended to fully experience the wealth of information that the men provide in detail.]

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Chapter 6
Sexual Minority Women of African Descent

I am African American. Respect Me. I am Woman. Respect Me. I am Lesbian. Respect Me. I am Whole

Aisha Shadidah Simmons (2006)

Greene (2002) defines African American lesbians as a large and diverse group of women to be found in every age group, social class, educational background, physical ability, and geographic location. This diverse group also comprises women who have multiple identities, all of which are likely salient to how the women see themselves. For our purposes here, we use the reference, sexual minority women of African descent with the objective to be inclusive of any same sex attracted woman who may identify as Black, irrespective of her identification as a lesbian (Ohnstad, 2009), and irrespective of her country of origin. However, when specifically referring to African American women, we will specifically state such. In addition, the purpose here for using language that is more broadly inclusive versus more narrowly stated is informed by the literature. For example, in a survey of 153 female university students in Barbados and Jamaica, survey respondents were found to have created independent sexual self-concepts that counteract racist, sexist, heterosexist, and elitist myths. The participants also stated that they actually defy attempts to regulate their sexuality (Marshall & Maynard, 2009).

It should also be noted from the literature, the term *Mati-ism*, which is a Suriname Tongo term for women who have sexual relations with women; the term has been used in the literature to establish an Afrocentric framework for same sex sexual practices among women of African descent (Wekker, 1993; Battle & Bennett, 2000). Other Black lesbian-related terms which appear in discourse and literary forms are *Zami* and *Afrekete* (Lorde, 1982; McKinley & Delaney, 1996).

In addition, Ellis (2005), in her critique of traditional psychoanalytic theory discusses the significance of phenomenological theory and language when discussing women's sexuality. *Phenomenological ideas* were founded by German philosopher Edmund Husserl, and aim to explore phenomena as they appear in human

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consciousness, with attention to describing human experiences. Phenomenological ideas support that human experiences are always dependent on context; thus, as life events and context changes, so might human phenomena such as sexuality. Ellis suggests that women's self-descriptions and associations regarding their sexuality may arise out of perspectives that are shifting. Therefore, because many women may not adopt a label of lesbian sexual orientation, but instead may see themselves at various times as women who sleep with or can be sexually attracted to a woman (Wekker, 2006; Diamond, 2009), the focus here is on women's experiences versus the fixed identity label.

A clear example of contextual significance and sexuality among women of African descent is represented in the work of Wekker (2006). During her ethnographic study of Afro-Surinamese women, Wekker reveals the use of the term *mati work* to describe the practice of woman to woman sexual expression and relationship. Through Wekker's research, we come to understand that the women do not refer to themselves as "a mati" nor any term denoting self-identification or self-labeling of sexual identity. Instead, mati work is used to refer specifically to the mutual obligations, caring, concern, and sexual relations that women may express towards one another. It is understood within the culture that mati work (a noun) represents acts of passion, love, assistance, and sharing that will also exist simultaneously with sexual reproduction and relationships with males. Because the women of Wekker's study are Black working class women, she situates their sexual culture within political and socioeconomic perspectives. Men within the cultural context, are regarded by the women as necessary to establish pregnancy, and for financial support. However, the sexual relationships with women involved in mati work are also viewed as significant, and physically and emotionally satisfying. Wekker's perspective in describing and explaining the working class Surinamese women's sexual behaviors can be related to feminist theoretical frameworks.

Feminist Standpoint Theory

Much of this chapter is based on the literature regarding shared experiences of both positive and negative marginality for women of African descent who may also be sexual minorities (Beckett & Macey, 2001). Related to this, *standpoint theory* has been presented in continuous discourse about the need for solidarity among women within a feminist social justice perspective. Standpoint theory asserts that a group's location within hierarchical power relations (i.e. oppressed group status) results in the individual members of the group possessing shared experiences (Collins, 1998). Feminist standpoint theory is an appropriate theoretical framework for addressing psychological development of Black sexual minority women. Feminist standpoint theory provides for an understanding of how cultural influences shape individuals' potential and shape their perception of boundaries. The theory also can be used to explain how a woman perceives herself in relationship to her surroundings. Standpoint theory relates to explorations of how Black same gendered loving women's sense of self, psychological growth, and even physical health are constructed within

their particular and transitioning social locations (Zaytoun, 2006; Sanchez, Meacher, & Beil, 2005; Taylor, 2008).

Standpoint theory explains the experiences of Black same-gendered loving women who are invisible, such as Black Cuban lesbians of Havana who experience social isolation. Within the lesbian community of Cuba, which is dominated by white and *mulata* lesbian scenes, Black Cuban women are not regarded as desirable because of their lack of perceived femininity, lack of wealth, lack of passivity, and their possession of bodies that are not light-skinned and thin. Because this is the perception of beauty within the socio-cultural context of Black Cuban lesbians, it is difficult for the women to access safe, women-centered, social spaces (Saunders, 2009). Saunders' study focused on the now defunct, *Grupo OREMI*, an organization which was developed in 2005 by a group of eight primarily Black "out" lesbians in Havana. The purpose of the group was to provide safe and public space for lesbians, with a specific target market of Black lesbians, in hopes of building racial solidarity and a sense of community for the most culturally marginalized of women in Havana, Black lesbians. Grupo OREMI was state supported by the National Center for Sex Education, but folded due to public pressures about the "negative" influence of such a public space where women were openly being affectionate with one another. This in part, reflects the disdain for lesbians relative to that for gay males in Havana.

Saunders also reports in her study that the Black Cuban lesbian women also embraced internalized racism and the values of hegemonic femininity. The Black women's stated preference too, was for a woman who is light skin, feminine, and long haired, even though many of them did not possess these physical characteristics themselves. They are also unlikely to be preferred by such women who they find desirable. Saunders attributes the demise of Grupo OREMI to a racialized sex = gender system in Cuban society that acts as a barrier to Black lesbians' ability to be fully and independently engaged in Cuban society. She gives two main reasons, (1) There is a racialized and heteronormative femininity that exists in the wider Cuban society, which lesbians too embrace, such that white feminine women are what is valued in the society, whereas Black lesbian women are always viewed as mannish, masculine, and undesirable and (2) In Cuban society, race is downplayed in favor of nationality. The focus on nationality renders it culturally inappropriate within the society to engage in anti-racist discourse, because Cuban's self-perception is one of being racially inclusive. Thus, the Black lesbians in Havana who are being racially rejected and marginalized do not even have the sanctioned recourse to publically protest their experiences of injustice.

Thus in Havana, Saunders asserts that Black lesbians find it challenging to be autonomous, organized, and active in the fight against their oppression, though Grupo OREMI was successful for a short time. The experiences of these women provide an example of the need for Black women to be collectively unified as a group in the fight against racial oppression, heterosexism, and sexism. Collins (1990/2000) asserts that growth and meaning of self for Black women may be bound to community.

Black same gendered loving women must be included among the larger group of Black women when addressing the physical and mental health of women of African descent. Unfortunately though, texts focusing on health issues for Black women may

not specifically highlight issues for Black same gender loving women (Collins, 2006). Although diversity exists across class, self-labeling, and degree of gender conformity for same gender loving women of African descent, collective strategies as opposed to individualized health and empowerment strategies are necessary (Collins, 1998; Asanti, 1998).

Same-gendered loving women of African descent, by nature of their being, defy the ideology of racism, heterosexism, and patriarchy. As such, if they also claim identities of womanist or feminist, then they may be negated or pathologized (Ferguson, 2004). Thus, several aspects of Black women's life spaces are in need of more extensive research, discourse, and media exposure, such as through the use of experimental narrative films that aid in dispelling negative stereotypes and combating the silencing of the herstories of Black sexual minority women (Simmons, 2006; Rees, 2007).

Marginality

Because same gendered loving Black women experience a marginalized sphere of existence, it is salient when Hollywood films present what has been referred to as *ghettocentric* masculine valorized imagery, such as a stud Black thuggish lesbian dying a violent death following the commitment of a felony (Keeling, 2003). Keeling discusses the Black stud and deviant character of "Cleo" in the 1996 film, *Set it Off*, to deconstruct the psychological explanations for Hollywood's use of such a depiction of African American lesbianism. She asserts that such a characterization and depiction of the character's violent masculine death is depicted in the film in order to appeal to audiences who might not otherwise be able to accept a Black lesbian image within this genre of Black cultural film. Keeling states that the objective of the filmmakers' inclusion of the Black thuggish masculine character in *Set It Off* is actually for the purpose of honoring a code of *ghettocentric* common sense regarding Black masculinity. This is opposed to having a purpose of honoring the diversity of Black women, including Black same gendered-loving women, who just happen to be masculine. Keeling's use of the term *ghettocentric* refers to cultural products such as music and movies that synthesize and promote the sustaining of specific narratives regarding lower income urban spaces where predominantly African Americans and immigrants of color reside.

A femme and attractive Black lesbian is also portrayed in the film as Cleo's girlfriend. According to Keeling, this is done by necessity to further legitimate or add value to the Black masculine lesbian character in the film. The "femme" portrays the "butch's lady", but again, not for the purpose of producing and valuing a Stud-Femme relationship, but to appeal to a ghettocentric common sense of Black thug life, i.e., "every thug needs a lady". The femme character and the gratuitous violence that is Cleo's death is used to valorize ghettocentric Black masculinity (i.e., Black masculinity = having a hot woman and a hard violent death). Keeling also notes that the femme Black lesbian character, Ursula, never speaks in the film. The character is purposefully silenced. What is the conscious or unconscious psychological implication of this depiction? From a feminist standpoint perspective, and generally

Table 6.1 Gender-based labels in a Black lesbian Chicago sample (Wilson, 2009)

Masculine labels	Combined characteristics	Feminine labels
Hard stud	Aggressive femme	Ultra femme
Studs	Soft stud	Femme
		Pillow princess

Other labels may also be used less often, for example, STEMME, as representing combined feminine and masculine characteristics.

within the psychology of gender, such depictions serve to situate women in low status positions of insignificance or objectification.

At best, when characters such as "Cleo Simms" and her femme girlfriend are depicted in films, this may be regarded as examples of art imitating life. It is a fact that codified expressions of gender among lesbians are a persistent central component of lesbian sexual culture (Wilson, 2009). In her ethnographic study of gender and sexual culture, Wilson specifically examined femme/stud identity and other gender-related concepts as used in the cultural language of African American lesbians in a Chicago sample. The study's aim was to address the following three questions, (1) What function, if any, does lesbian gender play in Black lesbian sexual life? (2) How is lesbian gender constructed and understood? (3) What are the ranges of perspectives regarding lesbian gender in Black lesbian communities?

Findings from this study which used focus groups, interviews with community leaders, and participant observation of Black lesbian open mic performances, revealed that the women did adhere to gender labels and gender roles which structured their sexuality, dating, and relationships. Similar findings have been revealed in a study of Black lesbians in New York City, where some of the women use the label, *aggressive*, to assert a masculine identity (Moore, 2006). The social pressures to conform to gender roles come from the community, friends, potential dates, and romantic partners (Wilson, 2009). A range of perspectives regarding Black lesbian gender was found to characterize the women's sexuality, attitude, and style. The gender based labels that the women used, ran the continuum from extreme masculinity to extreme femininity, with some "in between" labels as shown in Table 6.1.

Wilson offered explanations for some *hard studs'* (i.e. women who present very masculine style) stance of no touching of their breasts or vagina by their partners during sex. She suggests that these attitudes may be due to *rejecting femaleness* or *maintaining dominance*. Ellis (2005) also states that language (i.e., hard stud labeling) may have conscious and unconscious meanings for sexual minority women within particular contexts in order to create certain worlds of existence. For example, when Black sexual minorities prefer labels such as "stud" instead of butch, or "same-gender loving" instead of gay, the cultural significance of the embrace of these labels is highly meaningful.

Some of the women of the study did express informal resistance to the use of labels, because some of them refused to identify themselves according to femme-stud labels (Wilson, 2009). Interestingly, there were more negative attitudes and rejection of stud identity labels versus rejection of extreme feminine identity labels. Due to socio-historical experiences with marginalization, sexism, and institutional

racism, Black lesbians may have a need to appropriate terms that are unique to their culture when naming themselves, thus we see how the use of language allows the women to act as agents of their culture.

It is likely that although some Black lesbians may reject the *hard stud* image of a fictional character such as a "Cleo Simms", it is also likely that many Black lesbians would also perceive the character to be realistic and familiar. Portrayals of Black lesbianism anywhere in mainstream media are relatively rare, so this has implications for Black lesbian identity development and subsequent reactions to Black lesbian media images when they do exist (Howard & Lewis, in press). For example, in an audience research study using a focus group of African American lesbian viewers' reactions to the Showtime series, *The L Word* (a fictional lesbian-focused series), the following is an excerpt from one Black lesbian research participant (Howard & Lewis):

> Moderator: even though the Black characters are stereotypical, why do you like them?
> Shelly: Because they are there…

Another participant in the same study responded to the same question by saying, …it's [seeing members of the race on screen] something to grab on to. The participants' comments reflect the emotional impact of even limited or biased portrayals of Black lesbianism in mainstream media, due to the relative lack of visibility of Black lesbians in mainstream contexts.

Identity

Identity as a developmental construct should not be regarded as static, but instead it is always potentially transitioning. Thus regarding Black same-gendered loving women as a diverse group, the women experience the world from multiple and ever changing identities, and from various social locations. Examples of varying social locations include but are not limited to whether the women of African descent are older or younger, working class or middle class professional, married or single, mothers or childless, or urban versus rural dwellers. Also, some same sex attracted Black women are transitioning out of heterosexual marriage, whereas others may have never been involved with a man at all. Though it is known that a woman's specific self-labeling as bisexual or lesbian is culturally influenced, nonetheless there is evidence that same-gendered loving behavior among women is not novel in the history of several cultures across the Black Diaspora. However, a public "gay" identity may not exist universally, as this is more often associated with Western cultural values. As such, among several indigenous cultures of the Black world, same sex sexuality may have been accommodated, yet the behavior may not have been discussed as significant.

Conner and Sparks (2004) have described several examples of "*children of the spirits*" who expressed gender complexity and varying degrees of same-sex interaction and transgenderism during dance performances and practices of African-inspired Haitian voudou. The once popular usage of the term, "*one of the children*" (Hawkeswood, 1996) to reference LGBT people of African descent may have

derived from this concept of "*children of the spirits*." Also, Morgan and Reid (2003) discuss a distinction or debate between traditional and modern approaches to homosexuality, for example within nations such as South Africa. Among many African cultures, a collective identity that prioritizes kin, community, lineage, and the social good is more likely to be the norm, unlike an autonomous sexual identity which is common in western cultures. This may also relate to differences in identity labeling as same sex attracted in some non-western cultural regions.

Female Same-Sex Attracted South African Healers

Morgan and Reid conducted an ethnographic study of seven Black same sex identified female *sangomas,* or traditional healers in South Africa. The purpose of the study was to investigate how kin, community, sexuality, and integration of modern and traditional practices have shaped the identities, attitudes, and behaviors of the female sangomas. The researchers' methodology utilized semi-structured audio or video taped interviews at the women's homes. A cultural insider was used for the fieldwork, who spoke fluent *isiZulu;* all interviews were transcribed and translated into English. The researchers utilized the cultural insider to obtain the field data, due to the grave need for the establishment of excellent rapport in this subject area. This is because same sex sexuality for a sangoma, whether male or female, is a veiled practice within South African culture. Most sangomas identify as heterosexual, with cultural denial of true homosexual practices among sangomas. At best, the common acknowledgement within the culture is non-sexual flirtatious same sex occurrences among sangomas. However, within this cultural context, a female sangoma who has been possessed by a male ancestral spirit may then marry a woman based from this understanding. The rationale is that while she is possessed by a male ancestral spirit (the gender of the ancestral spirit in possession always takes precedence), a female sangoma may marry or be intimate with another woman, because she would then be considered a man herself.

Generally speaking, the personal agency of the sangomas must be subordinated to the gender identity of the ancestral guide. Morgan and Reid did, however, report an age difference in this regard, for the sangomas that they interviewed. Younger women were more likely to make decisions about wife selection based on their own personal agency in negotiation with their inner dominant male ancestral spirits. Older same sex attracted sangomas were more likely to follow the guide of their male ancestral spirits regarding the chosen wife.

The Morgan and Reid study is the first primary research study to focus on same sex identity or practices for sangomas in South Africa. In the study, female sangomas were interviewed who combined the modern with the traditional. For example, they sang Christian hymns in identification with a Christian God, yet they also had direct experience/communication with their spiritual ancestors. In a traditional sense, they also, within their same sex relationships or homosexual marriages, accommodated a heterosexual dynamic by maintaining that one partner must be the "man" and the

other must be the "woman". It was not regarded as uncommon for a female sangoma to have a wife, to whom she displayed behaviors as a social male. This is a practice that aligns with a traditional African heterosexual norm which accommodates such gendered structure (Gevisser, 1999). For example, one of the same sex sangomas played the role of the social male (i.e., breadwinner and no household duties) to her wife, though she herself had given birth to five children from a former heterosexual marriage. The motivation of a biological woman to have children is in keeping with the cultural emphasis on procreation for the good of the lineage or collective identity.

It is noteworthy that one of the lesbian-identified sangomas also rationalized sexual acts with a wife, although supposedly the wife was chosen by the male ancestral spirit, who might sometimes disallow sexual activity. The rationalization allowed the same sex attracted sangoma to be able to experience a type of culturally sanctioned "lesbianism" by being able to couch it as due to her dominant male ancestral spirit's desire, as opposed to her own desire.

With respect to features of modernity in the sangomas' identities, all of the sangomas who were interviewed, identified themselves by the term "lesbian", with two of them also identifying as bisexual. This finding is at odds with a more traditional African norm of refraining from the adoption of a public static sexual identity label. For one of the sangomas, her lesbian identity was embraced prior to becoming a sangoma. Morgan and Reid state that it is likely that there was an overlap of her personal desire for a woman, with the desire of the dominant male ancestral spirit dwelling within her.

In another example of modernity, there was an example of a sangoma who had "come out" as lesbian to her mother, whose mother then replied, "I know". Another sangoma declared herself bisexual with a lesbian preference. She claimed bisexuality based on her cultural belief that she possessed male and female ancestral spirits inside.

The sangomas of the Morgan and Reid study viewed their same sex desire through the authoritative power of their dominant male ancestors (all female sangomas of the study had predominant male ancestors). As such, this gave female sangomas a certain degree of power within their patriarchal cultures. In reference to standpoint theory, this results in their lesbian marginalized status being transformed into a social location of power. Female sangomas are both respected and feared by males in the culture who seek the sangoma's intervention for the purposes of healing. Thus with the various examples from the Morgan and Reid study, one can see the local traditional and global contemporary influences that are evident among the same sex attracted sangomas of the ethnographic study. The women were characterized as neither completely feminine nor completely masculine, but in between the two based upon which ancestral type spirit was present. In relationship to standpoint theory, women are still viewed as lower in social status within the cultural context; thus lesbian-identified sangomas are only regarded as acceptable when they can be associated with a powerful male ancestor. The lesbian aspect of their social position then becomes more acceptable because it can be regarded by kin and community as the result of the dominant male ancestor who has requested that she obtain a wife. In this regard, the belief is that the male ancestor must be pleased in order for the sangoma herself to be a success.

Diverse Voices

There is no one static Black lesbian identity or psychological experience, though there are likely shared challenges and triumphs. Moore (1997) compiled an anthology of 41 diverse Black sexual minority women's voices for *Does Your Mama Know? An Anthology of Black Lesbian Coming Out Stories.* The content provides readers with insight to the wide range of emotions experienced before, during, and after accepting one's same sex attraction. The contributors to the anthology include women who identify as African American, biracial, Haitian American, Louisiana Creole, Jamaican-American, Jamaican-Canadian, Bajan, and first generation Cape-Verde American born. Including the voice of a biracial lesbian in the collection is a noteworthy contribution, as Bing (2004) has mentioned biracial lesbian voices are most invisible among the available information on women.

Via the use of a case study referred to by the name of Amy, Bing (2004) presents the cultural context of the identity development of a Black-White biracial lesbian. Amy initially disclosed to her psychologist that she did not feel "as if she fit in anywhere", leading to a suicide attempt. Bing presents Amy's case as one in which the struggle between her racial and sexual identities, resulted in a compromise of Amy's emotional health. She suffered frequent major depressive episodes, resulting in two hospitalizations for active suicidal thinking, which has been discussed in other research (Meyer, Dietrich, & Schwartz, 2008). The case of Amy is just that, a case study, thus we cannot infer that such negative emotional experiences would exist among other Black-White biracial lesbians. In the case of Amy, her situation was also unique in that she phenotypically could not pass for white and easily gain acceptance among white lesbians. In addition, she was adopted by a white family in a white community, in total isolation from knowledge and experience of Black culture. This too, partly resulted in her feeling that she did not belong among African Americans. Amy's treatment, by necessity, focused on her internalized homophobia and internalized racism, with a goal of helping her to establish an acceptable healthy identity. Feminist approaches to therapy for cases such as Amy's are likely to be beneficial, which is consistent with feminist standpoint theory. Bing suggests, that a feminist therapist, though, who is white and female would still need to be sensitive to her own white privilege, and how it may impact a client who is a sexual minority woman of color. A multisystem approach including self-examination, family, friends, and community would also need to be a part of the process of such women's healthy identity integration (Stanley, 2004; Israel, 2004).

In addition to the voice of a biracial lesbian, the diversity of the Moore anthology further encompasses the voice of the socially invisible elder lesbian (Fullmer & Shenk, 1999). Once again, the inclusion of this diverse voice is valuable in collections of writings on Black same gendered loving women. There is limited examination of the lives of older Black lesbians in the literature, though there is evidence of positive marginality among such women (Hall & Fine, 2005).

Hall and Fine used narrative analysis to chronicle the lives of two older African American lesbians aged 73 and 85. Hall and Fine describe the women's lives as

examples of the concept of *positive marginality*. Positive marginality refers to the strength, vibrancy, and radical possibilities that exist and develop in the margins of social arrangements or social contexts (e.g. gay bans in the military, Jim Crow). The concept was created to highlight the existence of socially disenfranchised people whose lived experience is in the social margins, yet such people resist internalization of oppression and low self esteem. Positive marginality refers to those who turn their difference into strength, critique, and active resistance. It has also been stated that positive marginality has been seen in Black people worldwide. Positive marginality has the potential to provide Black people with psychological tools, survival skills, and coping styles to resist oppression (Hall & Fine).

The narrative analysis of the two lesbian elders of the Hall and Fine study was based upon two individual and one joint interview with the women (the two were close friends of 50 years). The following are the examples of positive marginality reflected in the women's life stories:

- *Critical watching and reframing* – rejection of stereotypes, countering of negative messages from oppressors, refusal to see oneself as marginalized
- *Converting obstacles into opportunities: Taking the outside chance*-oppressive situations in which the women somehow found a way out
- *Subverting social institutions and creating safe spaces* – nontraditional use of very traditional social institutions such as marriage, school, family, and the law
- *Lives of meaning created through activism and seduction*-personal and professional lives dotted with activist politics and queering of gender and sexual relations

The stories of the two women's lives were presented by the researchers as examples of elder Black lesbians who were able to (1) seize opportunities, (2) have satisfying lives including their 50 year friendship with one another, and (3) create safe spaces for themselves in spite of living through challenging and socially conservative societal times. Though there are likely other Black elder lesbians who do not represent positive marginality, the Hall and Fine study provides insight regarding women who many would likely expect to have had a dismal life trajectory based on their social location at the margins. Yet the women of the study clearly did not fit this categorization.

Lastly, the Moore (1997) anthology also includes teen and pre-pubertal memories of contributors; interracial first love relationships; intergenerational love; and the stories of women who are married and on the "down low".

Bisexual Women/Women Who Sleep with Women

Given that essentialist notions of sex and gender are common, as well as binary categorizations of homosexual or heterosexual, those who are different in the manner of bisexual identity are typically invisible (Miller, 2004). Furthermore, when the issue of bisexuality is discussed among Black populations, it is frequently in reference to Black bisexual men, also sometimes referred to as men who sleep with men (MSMs) or brothers on the "down low". Very rarely have bisexual women of African

descent been studied. It is also likely that based upon physical appearance, mannerisms, and gender of the bisexual woman's partner that her bisexuality may still be denied even once it is revealed. She may also even be unfairly accused of "passing" for heterosexual (Miller) or as being a lesbian. Thus, layers of variables are significant when attempting to investigate the factors which influence the development of a bisexual identity, particularly as it intersects with other cultural identities such as being of African descent.

Using qualitative interviews with 14 ethnic minority identified bisexual women, Brooks, Inman, Malouf, Klinger, & Kaduvettoor (2009) found that each of the following were salient factors for the women of their study:

- Having a self concept of what it means to be bisexual
- Attempting to manage the bisexual identity
- Challenges and strategies of managing multiple identities
- Community identity
- Pressures from family and other social contexts
- Partner relationship challenges

In addition to the above research findings, recently researchers have begun to study once married African American lesbian and bisexual women to understand the coming out process by which they develop their same sex sexual identities during and after heterosexual marriage (Bates, 2010). Though there is some degree of overlap in these women's experiences and their white counterparts, researchers and clinicians should be aware of Black women's special needs and cultural considerations.

In what she deemed an inductive exploratory descriptive analysis, Bates studied 12 African American women who had all been legally married to men at least once. Based on the interview data, seven thematic areas emerged, (1) lack of available sex education from parents during developmental years, (2) early awareness of same sex feelings, (3) strong family and social expectations impeding their ability to fully explore female attractions; marriage considered a vital component of their family and community belief systems, (4) religiosity impact on their self-acceptance and their overall process of sexual identity development, (5) feeling of emotional and some degree of physical void throughout their relationships with men, (6) difficulty assimilating into the mainstream African American community since coming out, and (7) while comfortable with disclosing their sexual identity, they prefer to do so only when necessary.

Several themes can be readily identified across diverse perspectives of women. For example, of the nearly 50 entries of women from the Moore (1997) anthology, the following themes reoccur:

- Religious upbringing
- School girl crushes on female teachers or other little girls during youth
- Concern about integration of Blackness and sexual minority identity
- A quest for a lesbian community or search for literature/information on lesbianism
- Temporary as well as feigned practice of heterosexuality
- Fear or anxiety about "coming out" to the family, particularly Mama
- Passionate girl on girl experimental making-out during youth

- Subtle or blatant disapproval from parents, often based on shame or sin attributions
- Mother praying about the lesbianism; parents in denial about daughter's sexuality
- College memories of same sex feelings, thoughts, or experiences
- Conversations and thoughts regarding having children
- Thoughts about gender scripts and degree of gender conformity (i.e. feelings of being different)
- Desiring to be free, just to be themselves
- Veiled Black lesbian role models, i.e., silence in the community or family about lesbianism

One contributor's (Bryan, 1997) entry in the Moore anthology is uniquely compelling due to her passionate oppositional critique of a certain packaged Black feminist lesbian identity, which she feels ironically places restrictions on varied ways of expressing and being a Black lesbian. Bryan's opposition is to what she describes as a radical Black feminist lesbianism that may inadvertently impose "rules" for how one should style one's hair (i.e., locks vs. afros, braids, or weaves); how a Black lesbian should dress; what books and media she should engage; the politics that she should adopt; and what is appropriate sexual stimulation and activity. Her stance is anti-restrictive and anti-labels, she supports that any lesbian-identified Black woman can "keep it real" and be free to express her lesbianism in many ways, even if it is outside of the norm of feminist or womanist theoretical perspectives.

Empirical studies support content of Moore's (1997) anthology. For example, Fisher (2009), in a study of Black lesbian identity, found that her participants expressed a lack of Black lesbian role models. This prevented *cultural mirroring,* and thus no guides for how to navigate development. In the study, participants spoke about the power of having even one role model for reassurance of "I am not alone".

Other findings from the study were youth's anxieties surrounding disclosure of the lesbian identity to family due to fear of loss, which the women described as heightened by working class status (Fisher, 2009). Black lesbian and bisexual women's experiences of coming out and being out are influenced by cultural collectivism shaped by their families, communities, and religious concerns, as opposed to individualistic needs to "come out". Black lesbian and bisexual women's experiences of coming out and being out are also contextualized through the intersection of race, gender, and sexual identities, rather than separate identities (Bowleg, Burkholder, Teti, & Craig, 2008).

Fisher (2009) also uses the concept, *motherhood mandate*, which she described as the expectation among men and women that Black women will have babies to enhance the legacy of the African American population. The women of her study expressed pressures in this regard due to some family and community members' belief that lesbians cannot and should not have children, marking them as traitors to the culture. Five out of the eight participants stated that they would like to have children.

It was also revealed that being "closeted" versus disclosing had implications for self-esteem. The women reported feeling safer in disclosing to friends or even strangers versus family. In addition, as African American women, they reported that they did not feel a part of the larger lesbian community, because they are viewed as a

novelty in the wider white lesbian community. The experiences and commentary of the young women of Fisher's study are reflective of a feminist standpoint theoretical framework because of their marginalized social locations as lesbians, African Americans, and women (Greene, 1995).

Greene's Perspective on the Use of Feminist-Psychodynamic Approaches

Due to the existence of life at the margins with respect to sexuality, race, and gender, women of African descent who are same gendered loving may experience challenges to optimal psychological well-being. In her work entitled, *African American Lesbians and Bisexual Women in Feminist-Psychodynamic Psychotherapies: Surviving and Thriving between a Rock and a Hard Place*, psychologist Beverly Greene (2000a) addresses the relevance of integrating feminist therapies and psychodynamic therapies in the treatment of African American lesbians.

Greene first acknowledges that feminist and psychodynamic therapeutic approaches have traditionally been thought of as too narrow in scope to adequately address the multiple intersecting identities and social positions of African American lesbian women. However, she asserts that in the context of a consciously aware and culturally sensitive therapist, the two approaches in combination may be beneficial in addressing the psychological well being of African American lesbians. She suggests that if practitioners of both will seriously consider and anticipate the social locations and cultures via which African American female clients have developed, then therapists may then also examine specific issues of being female along with conscious and unconscious intrapsychic factors. What good is it to emphasize an African American lesbian's unconscious thoughts, feelings, and emotions, as the therapist focuses on the client's social challenges as a woman, if the therapist does not also consider the degree to which a woman has experienced racism, classism, family conflict, spiritual conflict, or heterosexism? Greene also asserts that internalized racism and internalized homophobia may be present.

Greene does not fail to alert practitioners to the many layers of potential stressors that may exist for African American sexual minority women that run the gamut from (1) stress if the Black lesbian has a white or other non-black partner, (2) stress due to exposure to ethnosexual stereotypes about being a Black women, and (3) stress from members of the Black community who feel that reproductive sexuality is the only sexuality that is normal, or which benefits the race. Guided by her research and clinical practice, Greene discusses the therapist's need to be able to distinguish when an African American lesbian is having challenges based on internal psychological conflicts versus having challenges due to social contexts, though the two may also overlap. Also, since sexual minority women of African descent are unlikely to have developed in total isolation, Greene also highlights the need to consider past and present relationships and their patterns for how they may be affecting the woman's decision making, coping behaviors, and self concept.

Mothering and Black Lesbianism

In discussions of Black same gendered loving women, it is culturally necessary to examine the significance of mothering. Two reasons for this are (1) reports that substantial numbers of African American lesbians are rearing children (The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2004) and (2) for decades, when discussing the well-being of Black families and individuals' development mothers' impact along with extended family influence has been examined (Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996; Greene, 2000b). It is the latter that will be the focus of this section.

The positive influence of mother-daughter relationships on the Black lesbian daughter's development of self has not been extensively studied relative to such investigations for heterosexual women. However, all is not doom and gloom surrounding coming out to one's family as a Black lesbian, although there are numerous factors that may potentially influence a positive or negative outcome. It can be debated whether the *Don't Ask Don't Tell* policy found among some Black families regarding their lesbian or gay family members is a type of acceptance, or is it merely tolerance and not acceptance at all? *Don't Ask Don't Tell* in this Black cultural context, refers to the act of silence around discussions of sensitive issues among Black families, with sexuality being a common topic to be avoided.

This silencing around sexuality has, in part, been deemed a legacy of slavery, based in the motivation to portray an image of sexual purity for Black women, whose bodies were historically debased (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003). The sexual silencing is thought to be done to protect Black women from harmful racist and sexual oppression. Though the sexual silencing has the immediate goal of protection against negative stereotypes about Black women, the silencing also represents a type of social constraint that may lead to stigma consciousness, often associated with negative psychological outcomes (Lewis, Derlega, Clarke, & Kuang, 2006). A daughter's relationship with her mother is believed to be central in the Black community because Black mothers can teach their daughters how to negotiate race and gender. Thus based upon this, Black mothers may figure as significant in the lives of Black lesbians irrespective of whether the lesbian daughters are operating from a status of "closeted", *don't ask don't tell*, or fully disclosed about their lesbianism.

Miller and Parker (2009) present the mother-daughter bond between Black lesbians and their mothers, using a Black feminist framework. Using a review of the Black feminist literature, the authors discuss the positive impact that Black mothering can have on daughters' self-reliance and self acceptance, in spite of Black lesbians being de-valued in the wider society as Black women. The authors suggest that Black lesbians who have been affirmed by their mothers, and reared against traditional notions of womanhood (i.e. being passive and dependent) are more apt to move past silencing about their lesbianism. In fact, Miller and Parker suggest that because some Black mothers have educated their daughters to reject internalized oppression, and may have reared them to have high self esteem, some Black lesbian daughters may feel empowered and confident to reveal their lesbianism to their mothers and other members of the family.

Miller and Parker's work is a welcome addition to the literature. From it, we can hypothesize that Black lesbians seeking to reveal their sexual identity to their mothers

may find success in explaining to mothers how their upbringing actually has equipped the daughter with a healthy sense of self. The daughter can explain to her mother how this contributes to her motivation to be fully liberated in living her truth, unashamedly. Miller and Parker imply that Black lesbians may often acquire skills from their mothers that are beneficial to them when they later come out to their mothers, family, workplace, and society. Empirical research in this area of investigation is needed. Research is also needed to assess emotional aspects of the mother-lesbian daughter relationship and how such measures may correlate with emotional aspects of the daughters' relationships with their female partners.

Conclusion

Women of African descent who are same gendered loving represent a broad and diverse group. As such, in doing research on the population or providing services to them, the cultural context of their experiences is significant. The cultural context may impact how the women desire to be labeled or identified, or perhaps not identified by a label at all. More research into this area is necessary, particularly to expand upon the gendered structure of labeling, dating, and sexual expression that has been found to exist among some Black urban lesbians. Thus far, research has demonstrated consistency in identity labeling for the U.S. cities of Chicago and New York (Wilson, 2009; Moore, 2006); obtaining information about Black lesbians of other cities and nations would also enrich the literature.

Some women will clearly reflect life outcomes of positive marginality that are worthy of empirical investigation. More can be learned about women at the margins who have successfully integrated and embraced all aspects of themselves.

Miller and Parker (2009) introduced the position of reframing Black lesbian mother-daughter relationships to be viewed as potentially beneficial to lesbian daughters from a Black feminist perspective. Empirical investigations into Black lesbian mother-daughter relationships, with a goal of understanding how the women's relationships with their mothers may impact their psychological development and interpersonal relationships is valuable.

Some women will have life experiences lived at the margins with more negative or distressing outcomes. For these women, research and services targeting them will likely need to take a multi-systems approach to addressing their experiences. Research and services will need to include family, work history, health status, friends, partners, and psychosocial issues related to sexism, racism, and heterosexism. Each of these factors has the potential to impact a woman's existence, such as how she perceives herself, and how she copes with stressors. Unfortunately, there is still relatively limited empirical research available on Black sexual minority women, and even moreso for those residing outside of the United States. The research that has been done on Black Cuban lesbians is enlightening, and learning more about these women and others like them from other regions is overdue.

While there are some limited studies available on older Black lesbians and Black lesbian youth, less is known about the experiences of multi-racial women and

women who may identify more closely with western concepts of bisexuality. Additional research is also needed to expand upon the work done on African American women who have transitioned out of heterosexual marriage into a same gendered loving relationship. Given the enculturation of heterosexism in many societies, it is understandably challenging for these women to make the transition. A major contribution to the literature would also be the investigation of women who are still in heterosexual relationships, but aware that their self-perceptions are transitioning and becoming more expansive than solely heterosexual orientation. An abundance of research issues are open for investigation with women of African descent. As Black LGBT issues increasingly become a part of Black consciousness raising, we anticipate that more research into these areas will appear in the near future.

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Chapter 7
Cultural Complexities and Conflict

How dare someone piggyback on the civil rights movement? What you really have is an elite group of people masquerading as a minority and systematically imposing their will on the majority.

Bishop Harry R. Jackson Jr. (Giaimo, 2009)

The above quote from Bishop Harry R. Jackson, an African American heterosexual identified man, regarding gay marriage highlights one of several cultural complexities in the analysis of people of African descent in LGBT psychology. Cultural complexities are salient to conflicting views between some Black heterosexuals and some Black LGBT persons (i.e. as seen within some Black faith communities). Cultural complexities are relevant to the conflicting views between some Black heterosexuals and white LGBT persons (i.e. Bishop Jackson's implication). Cultural complexities are also relevant to conflicting views between Black LGBT persons and white LGBT persons (i.e., racist based disunity). Cultural complexities are also relevant to the often conflicting behaviors of some ethnic minority populations, including those who are LGBT, with public health messages. There may also be conflicts between LGBT people of African descent related to dominance and power issues within a romantic or sexual relationship.

Such culturally based conflicts relate to the psychological literature regarding five beliefs that have the potential to propel groups towards conflict (Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003). Although for this chapter, the focus is on conflict and challenges faced by Black LGBT people due to five dangerous ideas that have been discussed by psychologists, we also advocate for further research interests on stress and resilience outcomes for Black LGBT people. This is due to reports of Black LGBT persons having lower incidence of mental disorders relative to their white LGBT counterparts (Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, 2007).

Bishop Jackson's above quote renders invisible, any members of the Black community who are also sexual minorities. His view is consistent with pervasive sexual, racial, and class schema of LGBT identity as being equated with whiteness and elitism (Han, 2009). The Bishop's words also relate to concerns about vulnerability, superiority,

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distrust, injustice, and helplessness for Black populations. These concerns have been noted by psychologists as being dominant beliefs that may propel groups towards conflict (Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003).

Vulnerability

According to Eidelson & Eidelson, the *vulnerability* core belief may lead to a conviction and focus on possible disastrous outcomes for certain groups or individuals. Subsequently, the group members who feel vulnerable may become hypervigilant as they expend energy contemplating and acting to prevent what they perceive to be a loss or injury to their cause or group. Advocacy for LGBT civil rights, in the minds of some Black heterosexuals may be perceived as a misappropriation of civil rights that somehow infringes on Black progress. Feelings of vulnerability may lead to oppositional stances on the advancement of LGBT rights in favor of prioritizing Black civil rights advancement. However such views, may in part, be moderated by age. For example, in a study of younger Black college students, it was found that younger generations of Black students were more likely to have positive attitudes about gay politics and were likely to support gay civil rights due to beliefs in similarities between the two groups (gays and Blacks) as targets of discrimination. However, the students were not likely to support broader political ties between Blacks and gays (Rabinowitz, 2006). This suggests that the students may view a support of broader political ties with gays as somehow infringing upon their own goals and objectives. Unfortunately, in coming to such decisions, the advancement of Black LGBT persons is often not a part of the considerations, due to the relative invisibility of LGBT issues within African American communities.

Specifically, Bishop Jackson's concern about vulnerability of the Black family in the face of the outgroup's (LGBT activists) advocacy for gay marriage, is exemplified by the following comment that he made: "Marriage in the black community is nearly at the extinction level, and right behind it, Hispanic and white communities are following," "A decade from now, we continue on this trend, marriage as we know it will maybe become a historical afterthought (Giaimo, 2009)." The Bishop's words here reflect his concern that Black community interests are vulnerable to being eliminated, as gay interests are advanced. This is further evidenced by the following comment from the Bishop, "Everybody in the black community knows that our families are all torn up," …. "I don't think you have to be a rocket scientist to say this [gay marriage] is not going to strengthen marriage." Bishop Jackson appears to believe that he must remain opposed to issues such as same sex marriage because he believes that same sex marriage generally hurts the institution of marriage, which is already suffering in Black communities. Thus, social justice for Black populations may be viewed by persons as Jackson as being in competition with advocacy for gay rights. This may be related too, to some writers choosing to juxtapose gay civil rights issues to Black civil rights issues in both media coverage and academic research (Gross, 2008; British Psychological Society, 2009). This may inadvertently

create a perception of competition between gay rights and Black civil rights, as opposed to expanding what can be viewed as civil rights across multiple and diverse populations.

Vulnerability: What About Black LGBT Families?

More research and discussion are needed about Black gay and lesbian headed households in which Black children are being reared or nurtured. Bishop Jackson's conceptualization of Black families, likely does not include such families, though they are prevalent. Attention to this sector of Black communities could possibly evoke the need to conceptualize home, family, and marriage in new ways that are more fluid, and which embrace the diversity of Black love, commitment, attachment and variety of Black LGBTQ homes and family life (Guzman & Sperling, 2009).

A good example of diverse LGBT family life can be seen in the construction of home and family in ballroom communities of young African American LGBT persons. Ballroom culture may also be referred to as *house culture*, in which African Americans, and in some cities, Latino/a LGBTQ persons exist within stable and significant family-like structures (Arnold & Bailey, 2009). The house culture of ballroom communities consists of national social networks, often with several chapters throughout the U.S.A. Although ballroom culture began nearly 50 years ago in Harlem, it has since expanded to include major U.S. cities such as Chicago, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Cleveland, Charlotte, and Philadelphia (Arnold & Bailey). Each house is under the leadership of house mothers and fathers (also typically LGBTQ) who are the family heads. The main purpose of the houses is to provide support for the "LGBTQ children" as they compete in elaborate balls against other houses of LGBTQ families. Arnold & Bailey cite the ball competitions as consisting of fashion runway modeling, vogue dance, theatrical performances, and a variety of gender and sexual identities and expressions. This is all performed with recognizable ties to African traditions of rhythm and verve (Belgrave & Allison, 2009, p. 42).

Though African American LGBT ballroom culture is elaborate and extensive, with obvious historical significance, house culture has received limited scholarly attention. Thus, a wealth of potential information on a segment of the Black LGBT population is virtually untapped with regard to making a contribution to the LGBT literature and African American studies. Arnold & Bailey (2009) addressed this dearth in the literature by examining African American youth in ballroom cultures of Detroit, Michigan and the San Francisco Bay Area in California. They chose to study ballroom culture due to the salient concepts of home and family that are inherent within the various "house" families, contradictory to what many who promote conservative family values may view as healthy and stable families.

Various forms of social support for marginalized African American LGBT persons exist within the houses, such that the members are able to find support for their non-traditional gender and sexual expression. Also, due to strained relations that

Table 7.1 Gender-sexual identity of Detroit, Michigan & San Francisco, CA Ballroom Community cultures (Arnold & Bailey, 2009)

1. Butch queens (gay men)
2. Femme queens (male to female transgender individuals at various stages of reassignment)
3. Butch queen *up in drags* (gay men that dress and perform as women)
4. Butches (female to male transgender individuals at various stages of reassignment)
5. Men (men born male and that live as men, but do not identify as gay)
6. Women (women born female and live as women, and are straight, lesbian, or queer)

may exist with biological relatives, African American youth of the house cultures may also find figurative and literal homes within their ballroom communities. For these reasons, the researchers argued that the ballroom scene provides African American youth with support not only for their gender and sexual identity expression, but also provides multiple forms of support for HIV prevention.

Due to the disproportionately high prevalence rates of HIV and AIDS among young African American men who have sex with men (MSM), the researchers state that the ballroom communities/families should be in partnership with community based organizations to provide HIV /AIDS intravention for these youth. The work of Arnold & Bailey is groundbreaking due to the researchers' in-depth scholarly treatment of ballroom culture, which helps to fill in the gaps in the research on the kinship practices of African American LGBT people. The researchers note that studies of African American kinships are almost exclusively heteronormative, and the scholarship on LGBT kinship generally focuses on white gays and lesbians, due to the white cultural hegemony of LGBT scholarship. Findings from Arnold & Bailey's research were that house cultures, as constructed families and homes for the African American youth, offered the youth critical support, both in terms of HIV/AIDS prevention, and in the treatment arena.

Overall, gender played a significant role in how the house mothers and house fathers of ballroom cultures intervened in a supporting role for youth's maintenance of health positive behaviors, including how to avoid HIV transmission. Within the ballroom communities that were studied, a distinct gender-sexual identity system existed, as shown in Table 7.1.

An understanding of the gender-sexual identity roles is important for examining specifically how the house mothers and house fathers assisted with HIV/AIDS health communications to the youth. The following were specific findings:

- *Butch queens or femme queen mothers* were nurturers and confidants regarding hearing the youths' intimate details of sexual encounters
- *Mothers* played a crucial role in teaching their house members to be safe and to use condoms with their partners
- House mothers provided support when young men engaged in risky activities, by taking the young members for HIV testing, and identification of resources
- *Butch queen or butch fathers* helped their house members address larger structural factors that contribute to HIV vulnerability (e.g., educational achievement, employment assistance)

Thus, though marginalized as examples of healthy Black families, African American LGBT persons who are members of ballroom cultures, should be more widely studied in the scholarship on African American families, health, and functioning. It appears from the preliminary study of ballroom cultures, that these house cultures as tightly knit families, may be effective in reducing African American LGBT youths' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection. Those such as Bishop Jackson, who oppose gay civil rights in the interest of healthy Black families, are in need of education about the healthy functioning of the diverse Black LGBT families of house cultures.

While it is unknown whether Black LGBT persons are equally involved in pro-same-sex marriage activism relative to white LGBT persons, there is no question that such members of the Black community are partnered and married (i.e., the first couple to legally marry in Washington D.C. USA. was a Black lesbian couple, Sinjoyla Townsend and Angelisa Young Terkel, 2010). LGBT people of African descent are also participants in social support networks, and they have similar vulnerabilities and obstacles, about which Bishop Jackson shows concern in his quest to protect traditional Black marriage and family. Furthermore, the following results were obtained in a study released by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Black Justice Coalition (The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2004):

- Three in five Black female same-sex households consist of mothers parenting children. Black lesbian couples are raising children at nearly the same rate as married heterosexual couples.
- Black same sex couples earn about $20,000 less per year than white same-sex couples and are less likely to own the home they live in.
- Black same sex couples are more likely than white gay couples to hold public sector jobs, which may provide domestic partner health insurance.
- Black same sex couples are almost as likely as Black heterosexual couples to report living in the same residence as 5 years earlier, a key indicator of relationship stability.

These results highlight that lesbian and gay African Americans are actively involved within, and are integral parts of the African American community. Thus, anti-gay parenting policies may pose a particular threat to Black LGBT parents or would-be parents (Cahill, Battle, & Meyer, 2003). The task force study is the first to analyze demographics and experiences of Black same-sex households using year 2000 census data. However, more research is needed on Black LGBT families and relationships.

In addition, research findings have been reported from a nationwide survey of Black lesbians, reporting that the women experience depressive distress in conjunction with worries about their finances and their relationships (Mays, Cochran, & Roeder, 2003). Increased social services and civil rights to protect their relationships would likely prove health beneficial for them and their children, thereby assisting to increasingly stabilize these Black families that are equally as important as the Black families of heterosexual couples. Also, it is unlikely that extending or promoting marriage rights to include such families, would further de-stabilize Black families, whether same-sex headed or heterosexual. Conducting more research on Black gay

and lesbian families is not necessarily a formidable task given that Black gay and lesbian persons and their children are often in existence in Black churches, barber shops, neighborhoods, heavily Black populated cities holding Black gay pride events, and various other Black businesses. Encouragingly too, traditional Black organizations such as the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)* currently have leaders who support LGBT inclusiveness in civil rights advocacy, as evidenced by the following, "Black people of all people should not oppose equality, and that is what marriage is all about. We have a lot of real and serious problems in this country, and same-sex marriage is not one of them"– Julian Bond, chairman of the NAACP (Zongker, 2009).

The vulnerabilities of LGBT persons of African descent are magnified as a result of their dually oppressed status as both racial/ethnic minorities and sexual minorities. Increasingly, this message must be emphasized. The relative invisibility of the Black LGBT population may lead to the limited construal by some, that LGBT issues are white only issues. The cognitive belief that gay civil rights infringes upon Black civil rights is an example of perceived vulnerability that can lead to inter-group conflict.

Superiority

According to Eidelson & Eidelson, the cluster of attitudes commonly associated with the *superiority* belief includes a sense of specialness, deservingness, and entitlement. Such a cluster of attitudes is most apparent in the review of research studies that are published on LGBT populations. Research in the social and behavioral sciences on LGBT issues primarily has been conducted on white populations, which renders others insignificant and seemingly undeserving of attention. Superiority is also relevant in circumstances in which dominant group members are not even conscious of such cultural hegemony (Fine, Weiss, Powell, & Wong, 1997; Sue et al., 1998).

White privilege is relevant to the superiority belief. White privilege has been addressed by some scholars of LGBT psychology; however much of the scholarship within the field of psychology has been accused of suffering from *ethnocentric monculturalism* (Sue, Bingham, Porche-Burke, & Vasquez, 1999), equating to an inherent sense of superiority regarding white normative LGBT experience. This necessitates more research that specifically focuses on the lived experiences of Black and other ethnic minority LGBT persons. If the values of a dominant white in-group of LGBT persons are assumed to equally apply to Black and other ethnic minority LGBT persons, this will more often than not, fail to highlight differences in cultural values and experiences which have a significant impact on behaviors and feelings amongst diverse Black LGBT people.

For example, in a sample of African American lesbians, research findings have supported a *complex additive* multicultural-feminist oppression perspective for explaining the women's experiences with racist events, heterosexist events, and internalized heterosexism (Szymanski & Meyer, 2008). Thus, research on lesbians which does not take these factors into consideration would be remiss and culturally insensitive.

The topic of coming out has also been extensively written about within LGBT psychology, but primarily presented from a perspective of a Euro-American normative worldview. This reinforces notions of Euro-Americans' superior status in determining standard coming out processes. Interestingly, even in a research study with a predominantly ethnic minority lesbian sample, ethnicity as a variable of interest to coming out went unexamined in favor of examining another characteristic, "butch-femme" identity (Rosario, Schrimshaw, Hunter, & Levy-Warren, 2009). One could reason that analytical research decisions such as this may stem from assumptions that ethnicity (e.g. white, Asian, Latina, or Black) is insignificant to coming out, or more specifically that a Euro-American standard for coming out is universal. While researchers have emphasized that ethnicity alone may not be assumed to affect parental reactions to coming out, ethnicity's relationship to other culturally based variables is significant to coming out (Merighi & Grimes, 2000).

The results of research on coming out across ethnically diverse groups of adolescents sheds light on the importance of moving beyond findings that are based on dominant-culture populations (Potoczniak, Crosbie-Burnett, & Saltzburg, 2009). Dominant-culture populations have been reported to show negative parental reactions to coming out in 3–5% of cases. In a study of ethnically diverse LGBTQ adolescents in South Florida, one example of an extremely negative parental reaction was feelings of shock leading to expulsion of the adolescent from the home. Specifically, nearly 30% of the African American adolescents of one of the study's five groups reported being temporarily evicted from their home after coming out, even though they were later welcomed back as a family member. In all instances where the one groups' members mentioned being expelled from the home, the students were African American. Interestingly though, they reported that although they lived for a time with a relative, under a bridge, or in some other scenario, they were all eventually allowed to reunite with their families as a part of the household. However, what explains such a negative initial reaction (expulsion), followed by a resolution over time which resulted in the African American adolescent being welcomed back by the family? Such findings are worthy of further in-depth analysis, but initially seem to suggest a sort of familial strength that prevails over extreme initial anger and conflict. However, the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of the youth while they were expelled deserve significant attention.

In the aforementioned study, African American students were also more likely to report disclosing sexual identity to extended relatives versus immediate family, and they were more likely to view *non-traditional religious expressions* in the family as positively related to their family's negative reactions to their coming out. Non-traditional religious expressions within the family were identified as the following:

- Expressions of bringing bad spirits into the house
- Expressions of bringing evil into the family
- Expressions that being a sexual minority would "destroy your soul"

If such non-traditional religious expressions are not as commonly present in dominant-culture populations, obviously they will not be written about as a part of the literature on parental reactions to coming out. Thus the *ethnocentric monoculturalism*

which stems from superiority beliefs (conscious or unconscious) leads to an incomplete and unrepresentative body of knowledge of LGBT behavior and experiences. Furthermore, this also contributes to the perpetuation of the belief that LGBT issues equal white issues.

Experiences with superiority and sometimes overt racism is also plausibly explanatory for why some Black LGBT persons choose alternative descriptors in reference to themselves, as a means of distinguishing themselves from labels that are often perceived as being of European American and privileged-status LGBT origin. A term that has been reported as used by Black LGBT persons in addition to the terms gay or lesbian is "*same-gender loving*." Research findings also reflect that some Black LGBT persons may generally have an aversive reaction to usage of the term *queer* to self-describe, due to negative political and/or white privilege connotations of the term. This is evidenced by survey results of Black LGBT persons, which revealed that racism is still a prevalent experience for Black LGBT persons when they come in contact with white LGBT persons. The following are results from Battle, Cohen, Warren, Fergerson, and Audam (2002), from a survey of LGBT attendees at a Black gay pride celebration:

- Half of respondents agreed that racism is a problem for Black GLBT people in their relations with White GLBT people, with one-fifth of them strongly agreeing
- A third of respondents reported negative experiences in White GLBT organizations and with White GLBT people in bars and clubs; slightly less than a third reported positive experiences in these same contexts

These findings point to the reality that racism remains an obstacle to overcome in order to improve relations and reduce conflict between Black LGBT populations and dominant-culture LGBT populations.

Distrust

Eidelson and Eidelson (2003) discussed distrust as a potential source of conflict due to the focus of distrust being on a presumption of hostility and malicious intent regarding outgroup others. Typically, when groups or individuals expect that outgroup others will hurt, humiliate, cheat, lie, manipulate, and take advantage of them, conflict between the two groups is inevitable. Many studies do exist of African American men who have sex with men in relation to health issues such as prostate testing and HIV testing (Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science, 2008; Centers for Disease Control, 2001). Many such studies though, report the low usage of health screening for Black men without providing accompanying extensive psychological or socio-cultural explanations of some of the underlying reasons for the disparity.

Psychological theory regarding cognitive based explanations of behaviors necessitates a consideration of *perception of control* in Black men who have sex with men.

Perception of control has been studied in relationship to race and gender. Findings suggest that Black men and Black women's perceptions of control may have complex socio-cultural and historical explanations (Bruce & Thornton, 2004). Health psychologists have written that the sense of control is a moderator of social class differences in health (Lachman & Weaver, 1998). Desires to maintain a perception of control may extend to health behavior decisions as well.

Undisputedly, HIV/AIDS has become a disease that primarily affects people of color of all sexual identities. However for the purposes of this section, the focus is on the prevalence of the disease in Black men who have sex with men, in an effort to deconstruct the complexities of the distrust issue in relationship to the men's health related sexual behavior, their sense of control, and how and why the behaviors may conflict with public health messages. Studies of Black men who have sex with men, and also who have sex with women have been extensively conducted in conjunction with the issues of HIV/STI testing, prevention, and intervention (Brooks et al., 2003; Mays, Cochran, & Zamudio, 2004; Miller, Serner, & Wagner, 2005). Also, regarding Eidelson & Eidelson's overview of the five beliefs that propel groups towards conflict, the socio-cultural historical reality of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Black populations relative to white populations is linked to socio-historical oppressive health-related events, possibly including all five beliefs: superiority, injustice, vulnerability, helplessness, and distrust.

In an in-depth explanation of the spread of HIV/AIDS among African American men, Lemelle (2003) presents background on the historical precedence of this racialized occurrence. Lemelle presents that, from the beginning of HIV/AIDS, race relations between racial minorities and public health and medical professionals were strained. He asserts that western medicine's relationship to blacks has been paternalistic in its efforts to "civilize" black people. Such attitudes are historically relevant to notions that Blacks are naturally hypersexed, contagious, dirty, immature, and sexually perverted.

As an example of a historical devaluation of Black bodies among health researchers, Lemelle (2003) refers to the Tuskegee syphilis experiments that were conducted on Black men in order to gather research results on untreated syphilis. The research continued until even after penicillin was made available during the course of the 40 year study, and could have cured the men's syphilis. Many of the Black men died from the untreated syphilis in the interest of scientific curiosity, highlighting a devaluation of Black lives. Thus it is partly for this reason, Lemelle writes that some members of the African American community may distrust health professionals and researchers, believing that HIV/AIDS was created by the U.S. government as a part of a larger conspiracy plot of Black genocide. Such a conspiracy theory is rooted in knowledge of socio-historical racial biases in public health research. Injustices have also lead to health disparities in the availability of medications, the availability of culturally sensitive therapy, and elevated morbidity and mortality rates among Black HIV/AIDS populations. The issues of distrust of those in the medical and public health fields by some Black men who sleep with men, may manifest through health compromising *fighting back behaviors* such as relatively low involvement in prevention programs and relatively low involvement as research participants in clinical trials research (Lemelle).

Some negative health behaviors can be thought of as expressions of fighting back in an attempt to take control against the negative historical body politics for Black persons. *Negative body politics* is rooted in the historical legacy of slavery, and the degradation of Black bodies, which in the past lead to annihilation and humiliation of Black bodies (Jackson, 2006). Unfortunately however, the fighting back behavior as described by Lemelle (2003) has detrimental health consequences for the men, as their efforts to have a sense of control may sometimes result in hiding or covering their same sex behavior; avoiding knowing or discussing their HIV/status; and engaging in risky sexual situations, sometimes in clandestine and unsafe spaces. A commitment (consciously or unconsciously) to insubordination regarding health messages, as a means to exercise more control over the body is a deeply rooted psychological and sociological quandary for some African American men who sleep with men. These research findings relate to the broader framework of the distrust belief. In this case, the conflict arises from the men's sexual attitudes and behaviors contradicting the public health messages of the Centers for Disease Control. Health messages regarding knowing one's HIV status and using condoms may be largely ignored due to racist based distrust, and a desire to exercise a sense of freedom and control of one's body and life in the midst of racism and heterosexism.

The men's sexual behaviors can also be examined in relationship to the closely knit interconnectedness of the men's social networks. Due in part to their being discriminated against by gay and bisexual men of other racial groups, Black men who sleep with men constitute a relatively smaller socially networked group of men exchanging sex with one another (Raymond & McFarland, 2009). This leads to a greater likelihood of the incidence of the disease circulating within the closely knit community.

Ethnic sexual and masculine identity (ESM) formation and conflict has also been studied for bisexually behaving African American men (Wilson, 2008). The study's aims were the following:

- Demonstration of why a dynamic-ecological framework should be employed in order to fully understand the formation of ESM identities
- Presentation of a conceptual model of ESM identity formation and conflict among ethnic minority MSM that is grounded in the dynamic-ecological perspective
- Use the model to demonstrate how bisexual behavior among African-American men may be better understood by examining ESM identity formation and conflict among these men

For the above study, the conflict is believed to exist between the men's ethnic and sexual identities, leading to negative health behaviors and poor health outcomes. Wilson also highlights the diversity of labels, behaviors, and cognitions for African American men who are bisexually behaving. Thus, he asserts that referring to Black men who sleep with women and men as DL (down low) is oversimplifying their identity. According to Wilson, there are as many as ten different uses and meanings of the term DL. This too reflects the complexity of ethnic sexual and masculine identity (ESM). Studies have shown that irrespective of African American men's

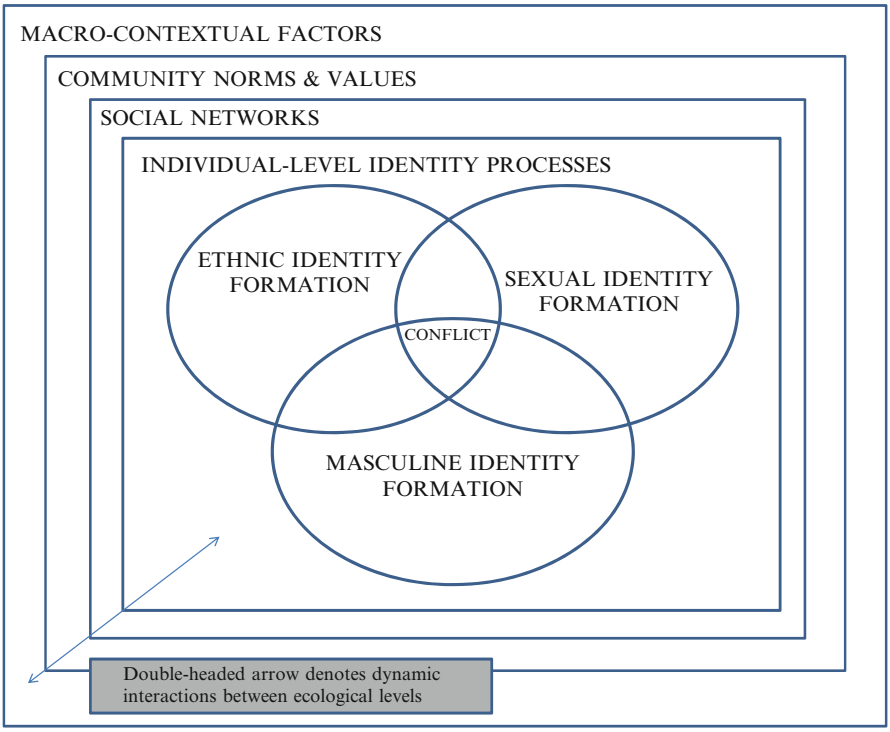

Fig. 7.1 A dynamic-ecological model of identity formation and conflict among ethnic minority MSM (With kind permission from Springer Science+Business Media) (Wilson, 2008, p. 799, Fig. 1)

sexual identity (including gay identity), they are more likely than their white counterparts to behave bisexually. For the purpose of exploring conflict, Wilson researched only bisexually behaving African American men who were primarily attracted to men but who identified as heterosexual. Conflict was expected for these men because their attractions were more towards men, yet they still engaged in sexual behavior with women and embraced a heterosexual identity. Wilson asserts that various ecological systems (social networks, community norms and values, and macro-contextual factors) impact the individual's attitudes about being a man, being Black, and being same sex attracted. The interplay of these various factors is what can lead to identity conflict, as shown in Fig. 7.1.

Macro-contextual factors of being a Black same sex attracted male in the U.S. may be linked to distrust and race based injustice that bring these men into conflict with protective health messages and protective health behaviors. In an analysis of the complexity of socio-political factors that contribute to the racialized spread of HIV/AIDS, Lemelle (2010) provides an overview of the problem, and he details how the problem may be addressed by social policy. It is important that blaming the victims is rejected regarding such a complex issue. The complexity of underlying explanations is in need of ongoing extensive research by interdisciplinary scholars.

Injustice

The injustice belief revolves around mistreatment (actual and perceived) by specific others or by the world at large. It is relevant to realities such as the paucity of research on African American women who sleep with women (WSW) or for Black lesbians. The relative invisibility of research on mental and physical health issues among these populations amount to injustice in terms of a failure to increase the quantity of research available on the population, which could ultimately benefit Black same gendered loving women.

In one study of African American WSW, researchers expressed that health officials have essentially dismissed African American bisexual women or WSW as being of low risk for sexually transmitted diseases, and thus such women have been overlooked in health studies. The injustice of this practice relates to the women having a false sense of security regarding their degree of risk, and subsequently their health may be compromised. The following are findings from a study of African American women who sleep with women (Champion, Wilford, Shain, & Piper, 2005):

- Bisexual African-American women in the study engaged in a wide range of sexual activities and sexual relationships that did not vary by age.
- Sexual behaviors were high risk involving multiple and concurrent partners, and group sex. The sexual activities often involved substance use but rarely included contraception or STD protection.
- Although most of the women believed that in some contexts it is possible to contract and transmit STD between women, many of these women were unaware of the various methods of protection against STDs that are available for bisexual women. Others who were knowledgeable about STD protection methods for bisexual women simply chose not to use them.

The findings are significant, considering that these women all had a previous history of STD. There is a discrepancy between the women's actual degree of risk and their perceived degree of risk. Health messages relevant to these women may go unacknowledged in some cases. This is but one example of the injustice of marginalization within health research and outreach, which negatively impacts the lives of same-gender loving Black women.

Injustice and Black Fem Queens/Nu Women

Inequality and injustice are also at the root of health disparities and higher risk sex work among Black male-to-female residents of a House Ball community of New York and New Jersey (Hwahng & Nuttbrock, 2007). The female-identified members of this community adopted terms such as *fem queens, nu women*, or *girls* as opposed to terms such as transvestive, transgender, or transsexual.

Relative to the Asian sex workers and white cross-dressers of the same study, the Black *fem queens/nu women/girls* reported engaging in more streetwalking and resulting sex work in cars, on the streets, and in abandoned parking lots. This work was often viewed by the participants as their only alternative for survival, which then often lead to drug use as a means of coping with rapes, cuts, and beatings by clients. They were also least likely (relative to Asian and white participants in the study) to be empowered to negotiate for safer sex with their clients. Subsequently, as a result of their marginalization as Black male-to-female persons, the Black participants of this study had the highest HIV vulnerability. The results of this study are disturbing for some of the most marginalized and vulnerable members of the trans community, Black urban male-to-female sex workers. Clearly more research and outreach is needed on the injustices and psychological and physical consequences for this population of women. The inadequate quantity and quality of research on Black LGBT people to meet their needs is an injustice linked to significant health disparities. The Black nu women/fem queens' experiences are also relevant to the core belief of helplessness.

Helplessness

According to Eidelson and Eidelson (2003), helplessness includes a defining feature of a core belief in one's personal helplessness, and the belief that even if one displays carefully planned and executed actions, these actions will unlikely lead to desired outcomes. In some cases, the individual may perceive himself or herself as lacking the requisite ability to attain a goal. Eidelson & Eidelson also suggest that a disconnection between effort and reward may occur in conjunction with repeated conflicts within the lived environment or the larger socio-cultural context. For Black LGBT populations who experience multiple sources of oppression based on more than one marginalized identity, helplessness may lead to reduced motivation to change health risky or negative coping methods. An expected result of helplessness is that those who become helpless may not take action, even in situations in which they should or could act to positively alter circumstances.

An example of this can be seen among sectors of gay Black South Africans who have high HIV infection rates. Issues of power and helplessness appear to be significant in the research findings among Black South African men who sleep with men, but who identify as heterosexual and bisexual. Heterosexual and bisexual identified Black South African men control the degree of condom usage, as opposed to the men who are gay identified being able to control condom usage. Gay identity was found to be more highly correlated with the exclusive practice of receptive anal intercourse, and these men were at more risk for HIV infection. Other factors related to powerlessness, disenfranchisement, and HIV infection were (1) being older than 25, (2) being of lower income, (3) purchasing drugs and alcohol for a male partner in exchange for sex, and (4) unprotected anal intercourse (University of California-San Francisco, 2009). In the study's 378 participants, all of South Africa's Black

African ethnic groups were represented in the sample. Traditional views of masculinity and femininity and associated behaviors, in association with gay versus bisexual or heterosexual identity for these men related to feelings of being disempowered to make healthy decisions about condom use. If the gay identified men are anally receptive, low income, and in a position of having to buy alcohol and drugs in exchange for sex with men who may not choose to use a condom, such gay identified men are at increased risk for infection, yet continue the unsafe sexual practices. For gay identified men, it is likely due to a sense of helplessness in comparison to the perceived status and power of the bisexual and heterosexual identified men who have sex with men. The researchers of this study assert that the findings demonstrate a pressing need to promote condom use among not only heterosexual identified Black South African men, but also among the bisexual identified men and straight-MSMs of the population, who have less feelings of helplessness and passivity within the culture.

In yet another study of men who have sex with men in South African township communities (the Gauteng province), 45% of the men reported a history of sexual coercion with accompanying alcohol use (Lane, Shade, McIntyre, & Morin, 2008). The failure by researchers to adequately address masculine dominance bias in relationship to perceived power and sexual helplessness supports a continuation of sexual practices that conflict with the objectives of HIV/AIDS health programs.

Helplessness and Domestic Violence

Another issue less often publicly addressed and researched, but very relevant to the issue of conflict and helplessness is that of domestic violence. *Domestic violence* has been defined as "violence perpetrated by a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend against his or her partner" and poses a striking threat to women (Robinson & Chandek, 2000). Among people of various sexual identities, this is often regarded as a taboo subject with resulting difficulties in gaining access to the affected persons. In relationship to being able to adequately research Black LGBT persons who experience domestic violence, the challenges may be magnified. This is partly due to the often hidden nature of such persons, and culturally based norms about revealing such race secrets (Senturia, Sullivan, Ciske, & Shiu-Thornton, 2004). However, there are examples of domestic violence among same sex populations being publicly exposed: "The pervasiveness of violence in these clubs where young women go is really sort of a dire need that's being ignored. There are a lot of dynamics going on there that need attention. I think that since this seems to be occurring in the lesbian-of-color community – and don't get me wrong, I'm sure it occurs in other communities – I believe that we as a lesbian-of-color organization have a duty to address that, or at least talk about it. I don't know that we can cure it or reduce the numbers, but I do know that the first thing you have to do is start talking about it. It's sort of a taboo subject. No one wants to talk about domestic violence

or alcoholism, but these are very real issues" – Sheila Alexander-Reid, Women in the Life Association (O'Bryan, 2007).

Sheila Alexander-Reid, in the above interview, also goes further to relate the violent behavior among some young Black lesbians of color to their adoption of machismo attitudes. Such ideology is based in gender traditionalism, and may exist within some instances of dom-femme role playing among the youth, where there is a distinct power differential as related to masculinity and femininity distinction. It has been elsewhere written that patriarchy is an ideology, such that anyone, irrespective of gender, race, sexual orientation, or class can internalize and express such patriarchal behaviors (Douglas, Nurridan, & Perry, 2008). Research is needed among Black lesbian couples to examine the full range of systemic factors contributing to domestic violence. Shelia Alexander-Reid of Women in the Life Association also suggests in her interview, that perhaps there is a lack of sufficient Black lesbian role models for young women to learn appropriate ways of relating to one another. Focused research into the conflicts among Black same sex couples must investigate why the abusers inflict the violence, and specifically why the victims often accept the violence or are sexually attracted to the hard aggressive image of some of their partners. No doubt there are numerous complex socio-culturally based explanations for such incidents among young Black lesbian couples.

Because the subject of domestic violence is taboo, Alexander Reid's Women in the Life Association recognizes the need to entitle targeted workshops, "*No More Drama*," instead of "domestic violence workshop," in order to attract Black lesbian participants through association with the popular rhythm and blues single of the same name as performed by artist, Mary J. Blige.

Though Black lesbian violence rarely makes mainstream news, on January 11th 2001, a Black lesbian, Wanda Jean Allen, was put to death in the state of Oklahoma for killing her lesbian lover (Simo, 2001). At the age of 41 at the time of her execution, Ms. Allen was also reported to be poor with an IQ of 69, and brain damaged. Her trial has been discussed as consisting of homophobia including "dyke" stereotypes within the legal system of Oklahoma. The prosecutors in her case repeatedly portrayed Allen as the "dominant member" of the relationship, an aggressive "male"-type, and therefore portrayed her as more prone to violence (Simo).

It should not be overlooked that because Allen was Black, lesbian, poor, non-gender conforming, and mentally deficient, her case was one of multiple intersecting marginalized identities and oppression, rendering she and her murdered lover disenfranchised members of society, and at higher risk for experiencing domestic violence (Hampton, LaTaillade, Dacey, & Marghi, 2008). The stress of the oppressive circumstances is worthy of study in relationship to helplessness related conflict and escalating violence. The history of domestic violence in Allen's relationship, and her mental deficiency were allegedly not highlighted in her trial, however the lack of acknowledgement of these factors is problematic and reflects injustice.

Robinson (2002) has also highlighted the case of an African American lesbian who was repeatedly abused by her African American alcoholic female partner.

She felt trapped and helpless in the situation for a myriad of reasons related to her oppressed marginalized status, including:

- Lack of resources
- Unequipped social service agencies for dealing with African Americans and lesbians
- Unresponsive police officers (particularly when alcohol is involved)
- Combined experience of racism, sexism, and homophobia as a battered Black lesbian
- Fear of being *outed* by her partner to relatives, employer, and housing authorities
- Guilt related to her acceptance of the myth of mutual battering, because she attempted to defend herself against her abusive partner

There are likely more cases of such relationships, but until sufficient research is done which uncovers more of this hidden population, domestic violence among same sex couples remains a relative gap in the literature on Blacks who are sexual minorities.

Conclusion

Eidelson & Eidelson's analysis of five beliefs that can lead individuals or groups towards conflict can be used to examine challenges for Black LGBT populations in conjunction with an examination of relevant cultural complexities. Vulnerability, superiority, injustice, distrust, and helplessness relate to several issues of significance for Black same gendered loving people. Issues related to these concepts may bring Black LGBT people into conflict with heterosexual members of their own race, as well as into conflict with others outside of the race who are sexual minorities. The core beliefs presented in this chapter may also bring Black LGBT people into conflict with one another. This chapter examines a few of such issues. Tensions may exist between Black heterosexuals and LGBT populations surrounding feelings of vulnerability; racial tension and conflict may exist between Black LGBT persons and white LGBT persons surrounding beliefs about superiority; conflict may exist between Black MSM's sexual expression, their needs for feelings of control, and the sometimes failed safe sex HIV campaigns hoping to reach them; and the injustices of racism, heterosexism, and marginalization for Black LGBT populations may lead to helplessness and distrust-related conflicts such as avoidance of culturally insensitive health related services. Adherence to rigid gender roles associated with power and dominance may also lead to feelings of helplessness, negative coping, and difficult emotional experiences leading to escalating violence in domestic partnerships or sexual dominance by some partners within a relationship.

Far more research is needed to adequately examine the myriad socio-cultural variables that contribute to the lived experiences of Black LGBT populations and ensuing conflicts with members of their own race and with out-group members. Research must also examine both the stress and resilience among Black LGBT populations. Resilience as a topic of interest among Black LGBT populations is significant, as it has been found that Black gay men and Black lesbians have fewer

mental disorders than their white counterparts (Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, 2007), irrespective of conflicts, cultural complexities, and multiple intersecting identities.

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Chapter 8
Covering, Cultural-Centrism, and Liberation Psychology

> *It's not about us gays…Homosexuality is not about sodomising young boys. What about relationships among people who are not hurting anyone?*
>
> Val Kelende, lesbian activist, Ugandan citizen
>
> (Muhumuza, 2009)

The above quote from Ms. Kelende is taken from an interview in which she speaks publicly to a reporter in Uganda in the aftermath of an anti-gay bill that was proposed to the House by one member of parliament, Ndorwa West MP David Bahati. The proposed bill named a new felony, "*aggravated homosexuality* [meaning that] the offender has sex with a person who is disabled or underage, or when there is HIV transmission; the crime should attract the death penalty, while consenting homosexuals should be imprisoned for life" (Muhumuza, 2009).

The bill also proposed that third parties are susceptible to penalty of 5–7 years in prison if they fail to report another person's homosexual activity. This crime is referred to as *promotion of homosexuality*. Authorities in the capital city of Kampala would like to see the legislation passed such that Uganda becomes one of the most dangerous places for gays (Muhumuza, 2009).

As a nation, many Ugandans view homosexuality as taboo; thus Bahati's bill has stoked homophobic feelings among Ugandan citizens. For gay and lesbian Ugandan citizens such as Val Kelende, the further criminalization of homosexuality ensures that violation of their human rights is government sanctioned. Bahati's bill has the approval of Uganda's president, Museveni. Although Uganda's penal code already criminalizes homosexuality, the proposed bill if made into law would drive the already hidden Ugandan gays and lesbians further underground, which also has consequences for the country's fight against HIV/AIDS, and for increasing the citizens' percentages of HIV testing and counseling.

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Covering

The plight of being driven further underground for Black gays and lesbians in Uganda relates to the concept of covering. *Covering* has been defined as toning down a disfavored identity in order to fit into mainstream (Yoshino, 2007). The toning down may be in the form of expression of personal style, language, or careful selection of friends and acquaintances, or the avoidance of affiliation with certain others. Yoshino writes that the twenty-first century has ushered in a new debate about gay covering, as opposed to former debates about gays passing for heterosexual, or debates about the attempted conversion of gays to straight. Regarding covering, the individual does not lie about possessing the disfavored identity, but instead the identity is camouflaged so as not to be too conspicuous.

Yoshino further distinguishes the existence of *queers*, verses the existence of *normals. Normals* is the concept used to label gays and lesbians who blend into the wider society and are thus not alienated from the wider society; *normals* also refrain from being subversive in the expression of their "gayness." The assimilation or blending of gays into the mainstream society such that a gay civil rights movement is rendered no longer warranted has been referred to as the achievement of *homonormativity*.

Also regarding covering, by contrast, the concept *queers* has been used to refer to gays and lesbians who behaviorally and publically emphasize their difference from heterosexuals; they may be described by or viewed by some as flaunting their same sex attracted identity (Yoshino, 2007). Though the usage of concepts such as *normals* and *queers* is not culturally universal, the act of covering and passing regarding disfavored identities is likely universal. Examples of covering are evident in nations such as Uganda, Jamaica, and Nigeria, where punishment for same sex identity is harsh and maybe even life-threateningly legal. Covering may also still appear in nations that have legalized same-sex marriage, such as South Africa. Oswin, 2007 highlighted a type of covering by members of The National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equity/Equality Project (NCGLE/EP) of South Africa. The members were very self conscious about their style of dress, mannerisms, and image as gay and lesbian when they needed to meet with members of parliament. They expressed a desire to not appear too flamboyant or in any way inappropriate (Oswin, 2007). South African gay and lesbian activists have reported being self-conscious regarding successfully assimilating during meetings with members of parliament. Their references to the need for professionalism and consciousness of their audience suggest that members of The National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equity/Equality Project (NCGLE/EP) of South Africa wanted to cover any hints of perceived inappropriateness. They wanted to avoid any "1980s style" flamboyantly extroverted mannerisms in their approach of government officials (Oswin).

Homonormativity is not a reality in many countries including within the U.S.A.; gay rights being viewed as a human rights issue is still a challenge to some persons' cognitive schema of human rights. Increasingly though, the issue of LGBT human rights violations in nations such as Jamaica, Nigeria, and Uganda is being addressed

in scholarship and news media. The challenge of granting asylum to LGBT persons who may be criminalized, physically harmed, or killed in their home countries because of their refusal to cover or deny their sexual identity has been raised for consideration (Heller, 2009).

The Asylum Dilemma: Reverse Covering

Though the nation of Senegal has been discussed as a tolerant democracy relative to some other nations of the region, controversy regarding homosexuality within this Islamic practicing nation has received international media attention (Associated Press, 2010). When Senegalese gay male, Madieye Diallo died he was properly buried by his family. However, a few hours after the burial, an angry mob went to the grave, yanked out his corpse, spit on it, dragged the body away, and dumped it in front of the home of Diallo's parents. Expectedly, following this incident, gay men in Senegal panicked, as they reported feeling as though they were hunted animals. News spread rapidly of the mob behavior due to cell phone technology that allowed a video of the incident to be shared widely. Following this incident, gay men immediately went into hiding. Some of the men fled to surrounding nations such as Gambia. However, the Gambian president issued a statement that gays who had entered his country had 24 hours to leave or be decapitated. The gay men responded to this order by returning to Senegal, but they were forced to live on the run. Due to the recent increase in Senegal in the desecration of the dead bodies of gay men, gay residents of Senegal are candidates for asylum.

Those seeking *asylum* are those who have fled their country due to fear of harm, legal persecution, or death in their own country based upon some unjust action in the home country. The asylum seeker requests that the government of the host country allow him or her to remain in the host country for safety. *Reverse covering* has been described as the requirement to publically perform gayness in a court of law before an immigration judge, in order to be deemed authentically LGBT and in need of safety (Heller, 2009).

In some U.S. courts, the requirement is that the performance of gayness must be in the most stereotypical and narrow proscription of perceived sexual minority identity. The objective of reverse covering in the legal system is to have the LGBT person demonstrate before an immigration judge that the sexual minority identity is so naturally and instinctively blatant that it cannot be covered. Thus the conclusion would be that remaining in the anti-gay country of origin would be life-threatening; the court's decision is then that asylum must be granted to the LGBT individual. LGBT persons who are perceived as "too normal" in appearance or expression, may pose a risk as far as being granted asylum (Heller, 2009). Such a case occurred with a Guyanese career criminal, Peter Conrad Ali, who sought asylum in the U.S. out of fear for his gay identity in Guyana. A judge dismissed Ali's case in part because he doubted that Mr. Ali could be a "feminine contemptible homosexual". In his ruling,

Judge Alan Vomacka is quoted as saying, "violent dangerous criminals and feminine contemptible homosexuals are not usually considered to be the same people" (CaribWorldNews, June 2008a). This leads to the question of, how does being placed in a position of reverse covering impact LGBT asylum seekers?

Reverse covering demands can be particularly challenging mentally, behaviorally, and emotionally for LGBT asylum seekers. In nations such as Uganda or Jamaica where homosexuality is illegal or life threatening, blatant stereotypical or flamboyant expressions of same sex identity, as occurs in other cultures is prohibited. Such expression cannot be fairly expected to be possible for many non-western asylum seekers, once they appear before a U.S. immigration judge (Heller, 2009). Legal system procedures that are insensitive to this cultural reality exemplify what is called *culture-centrism* (McAuliffe & Milliken, 2009).

Culture-Centrism

Culture-centrism is a tendency for individuals to judge people of other groups, societies, or lifestyles according to the standards of one's own in-group or culture, often viewing out-groups as inferior (McAuliffe & Milliken, 2009). Being forced to reverse cover, for someone who comes from a cultural background in which such behavior would be severely punished, is likely to evoke anxiety and trauma. To compound the challenge of the culture-centrism and sexual minority status, race and class will likely be challenges as well for Black LGBT asylum seekers (Bashi, 2004). The stress of such intersecting identities is commonly a reality, even in a nation such as South Africa which has legal same-sex marriage. Such is reflected in the reality for LGBT South Africans (of whom the majority are poor and Black), who are plagued by unemployment, poor education and illiteracy, homelessness, lack of access to electricity and water, and poverty and crime, which is similar for Black South Africans in general (Oswin, 2007).

Cultural de-centering is necessary for those who encounter LGBT asylum seekers. Cultural de-centering is a counseling model that is used with counselors who must work cross-culturally with clients who differ from them on some characteristic. The objective of cultural de-centering is to increase the counselor's empathy, and to increase their embrace of cultural difference. Culturally de-centered individuals commonly refrain from absolutist beliefs that their own cultural perspectives are the sole truth.

Cultural de-centering within the justice system would result in attorneys and judges being educated about the cultural insensitivity of expecting LGBT asylum seekers to reverse cover in order to remain in safety in a new country. A new culturally de-centered procedure would take into consideration that more liberated and mainstream expressions of gay or lesbian behavioral styles may be non-existent in persons who have primarily experienced oppression with respect to their sexual identity within their home countries. The expectation that LGBT asylum seekers must

reverse cover has been discussed from the perspective of human rights violations (Heller, 2009).

Cultural-centrism can be examined in relationship to the beliefs of government officials and some citizens of countries such as Uganda, where Black LGBT persons have a precarious existence. Although cultural de-centering does not suggest that all beliefs or cultural practices should be embraced when they differ from one's own (especially when involving harm to individuals), it is important to acknowledge that anti-gay beliefs in some nations may be reflective of a traditional or conservative religious culture, such as is evident in the following: "Homosexuality is a problem that we must not allow to take root. For us, this is not a thing we take lightly because it is against Allah's laws. A sin is a sin and we must ensure that it does not take root here. If people pushing for it think it is okay in their countries, what makes them think that the same situation obtains in our country? ….We want to be left on our own to decide the way we do things… This is a matter [homosexuality] that we oppose entirely.- Sheikh Nsereko Mutumba, public relations officer of the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council" (Ladu & Kasasira 2009).

Similar culturally centric sentiments about maintaining autonomy of culturally-based decision making regarding same sex attracted identity and behavior are reflected in the Jamaican Prime Minister's views: "Jamaica is not going to allow values to be opposed on it from outside, said the PM [Prime Minister Bruce Golding]. We're going to have to determine that ourselves and we're going to have to determine to what extent those values will adapt over time to change, change in perception, change in understanding as to how people live (CaribWorldNews, 2008b)." Mutumba's and Golding's beliefs and feelings about homosexuality that are expressed in the previous statements, are culturally-centered in both religion and national culture. The same holds true as explanations for the behaviors of the angry mob in the nation of Senegal, in the case of Madieye Diallo.

Similarly, officials of Uganda have been quoted as stating that European gays recruit in Uganda. This belief implies that the behavior does not naturally exist within the country, but instead is being influenced by cultural outsiders. Although the African continent is not culturally monolithic due to the diversity of peoples and ideologies, opposition to homosexuality has been noted by officials in several African nations. Anti-gay attitudes have been discussed as rooted in an attitude that homosexuality is un-African, a white man's disease brought in with colonialism (Rinaldi, 1998). The following is a quote from Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe: "Let the Americans keep their sodomy, bestiality, stupid and foolish ways to themselves. Let them be gays in the USA and Europe. In Zimbabwe gays shall remain very sad people forever" (Rinaldi).

Such anti-gay attitudes by some African leaders are worthy of further examination in consideration of diaries and documents found from European explorers, missionaries and colonial administrators from the 1600s and onwards. Such documents have revealed a type of European obsession with the open same-sex sexuality that they found in some parts of Africa. Subsequently, Europeans used this behavior on the continent as a means to justify their beliefs in white superiority, and as basis for "civilizing" Africans (Rinaldi, 1998). Ironically, contemporary fervent opposition

to LGB identity and behavior among some Black Africans may be internalized racist-inspired homophobia that originated with European oppressors (Rinaldi).

Mutumba's and Mugabe's beliefs on the subject of homosexuality are strong, and represent the construct of psychological dogmatism. *Psychological dogmatism* is a personality characteristic which involves a closing off in relation to taking the perspective of others, and a lack of openness to contradictory evidence (Ross, Francis, & Craig, 2005). Persons of any cultural background may be characterized as dogmatic. It has been assessed in individuals to determine whether their belief systems are open or closed; it has also been assessed for its relationship to religiosity.

Cross-cultural conflict may ensue when a dogmatic position is not only a component of an individual's personality, but when it is also a culturally sanctioned negative belief about an entire group of people, i.e., LGBT persons. Cross-cultural conflict is reflected in the reactions to Uganda's anti-gay bill from other nations such as the Canadian government calling the proposed Ugandan bill vile and hateful, and the Swedish government's threat to cut aid to Uganda over the would-be law. A Swedish minister too, described the proposed Ugandan law as appalling.

Psychologists have distinguished cultures of the world in terms of how culture contributes to a sense of identity and to human relations (Maiello, 2008). Some traditional cultures of the world may be more dogmatic regarding the acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender expression out of a sense of maintaining the identity of the culture as heterosexual. However, as stated previously, due to the possible influence of colonial imperialism, among other factors, on contemporary Black African attitudes about homosexuality, we must be cautious regarding drawing conclusions that the attitudes of today represent indigenous or traditional African views on the subject. Tracing the origins of homosexual behavior on the continent of Africa is complex, and has often been oversimplified or addressed using circular reasoning. Tools such as contradiction, denial, and reversal of history influence the perspectives taken by various scholars who have written on the subject of homosexuality in Africa. The following have been identified as significant by Pincheon (2000):

- Contradiction – focus on exclusionary acts and acts of racism
- Denial – focus on race, racism, homophobia, and homophobic arguments about gay persons of African descent
- Reversal – shifting the power of arguments to ignore the double experience of racism and homophobia by claiming a primary identity referent at the expense of other aspects of identification and identity formations.

Cultural Hegemony

Is cultural-centrism most significant to the anti-gay controversy in Uganda, or is the push for the anti-gay bill an example of cultural hegemony based in U.S. Christian conservative evangelicals traveling to Uganda to promote an anti-international gay

agenda culture war message? Such a question has been raised by one religious figure, Rev. Kapya Kaoma, project director at Political Research Associates, and Zambian Anglican priest. Kaoma and others have spoken to the press regarding a wave of U.S. evangelicals who carry messages abroad to oppose same sex identity, same sex marriage, and other LGBT rights. The *U.S. evangelical movement*, including the ex-gay movement and pro-family drive, has been linked to the persuasion of anti-gay groups in Uganda such as *The Family Life Network* (Baklinski, 2009; Whitaker, 2007).

In March 2009, *The Family Life Network* of Uganda sponsored a seminar entitled, "Exposing the Truth Behind Homosexuality and the Homosexual Agenda". The objective of the seminar was to educate Ugandan citizens using what they referred to as reliable and current information that would allow the citizens to protect themselves, their children, and their families from homosexuality (Baklinski, 2009). To further promote the idea of being under attack by gay recruiters, the executive director of *Family Life Network*, Stephen Langa, stated that the seminar was aimed at also exposing the tactics, strategies, and methods of recruitment used by those in the "homosexualist movement." The psychology of perceived vulnerability to a gay takeover is evident in the following statement from Langa: "A well-funded and well organized homosexual machinery is taking one country after another by de-criminalizing homosexual practices in those countries and legalizing gay marriages in some of them. Uganda is now under extreme pressure to de-criminalize homosexuality (Baklinski)."

Fear and Persuasion

The previous statement from Stephen Langa represents a common psychological *appeal to fear* that is used to persuade others to adopt specific attitudes and resulting actions. In efforts to persuade others, manipulation of perceived vulnerability and severity of risk has the potential to impact how the fear appeal is processed. This then has the potential to impact the intentions, attitudes, and behaviors of those being persuaded (de Hoog, Stroebe, & de Wit, 2008). The following is another example of the psychology of a fear appeal: "It's more than spirituality. Homosexuality is akin to sodomy and you know what that means. There are grave consequences like HIV/Aids, psychological torture and others. – Dr Nsaba Buturo, Ugandan Minister of State for Ethics and Integrity (Ladu & Kasasira, 2009)."

Cognitively based explanatory models suggest that upon hearing these *fear*-based messages, groups or individuals may process the message in such a way as to believe that a *danger-control action* must be taken. Subsequently, for those who believe that a particular action will be effective, the action is taken. Legally sanctioned criminalization, disenfranchisement, threat, or murder of identified LGBT individuals within a country, are examples of danger-control actions chosen due to their perceived ability to eliminate the "dangerous" LGBT presence. Fear, however, is not the only emotion relevant to anti-gay attitudes. Another emotion related to anti-gay sentiments and beliefs is that of disgust.

Disgust Reactions

The emotional reaction of *disgust* has been found to be effective in causing individuals to possess morally condemning beliefs about specific individuals or groups of people (Nussbaum, 2001). Feelings of disgust have the potential to impact moral judgments such that certain behaviors or certain people who evoke disgust reactions are also likely to be very harshly morally evaluated. Individuals' feelings of anger, and concerns about harm may also be directed towards behaviors that are regarded as taboo, such as homosexuality; disgust is an emotional reaction to perceived violations involving taboo behavior, even if the taboo behavior actually causes no harm to anyone (Gutierrez & Giner-Sorolla, 2007). Examples of disgust reactions in response to taboo behavior are reflected by persons who believe that gays will molest children; gays will recruit children into "gay lifestyles"; or beliefs that legalizing homosexuality is on par with having sex with animals. Such disgust related attitudes may be culturally learned and sanctioned.

Shame and Rejection

Specifically, shame should also be examined in relationship to some Black persons' desires to disassociate with behaviors or attitudes that may be perceived as white-acting. It may be viewed as shameful to embrace such behaviors (i.e., homosexuality) within one's Black culture. This is relevant to the 30 years of work done by psychologist William Cross on *nigrescence theory* (Worrell, Cross, & Vandiver, 2001). Nigrescence theory explains racial identity stages of Black persons via shifts from being pro-white or self-hating Black, to being anti-white, to finally being more bicultural or multi-culturalist in one's racial attitudes. Black LGBT persons may hear from some of their fellow Black community members, that being LGBT is un-African, or symptomatic of possessing a white man's disease. Such negative beliefs are identified by Cross as typical of the racial identity stage of immersion-emersion, which characterizes intense pro-Black involvement, including being anti-white. Some Black persons at the immersion-emersion stage of racial identification may be more ashamed of, and denigrating of Black LGBT individuals if the perception is that they are "white-acting".

In situations in which being a Black gay or lesbian is believed to be racially prohibited, and also a religious prohibition, LGBT persons who are open and affirming of their identity may be forced to go into hiding, as indicated in the following news excerpt: "A Nigerian lesbian has gone into hiding to avoid arrest days after marrying four women in the Islamic city of Kano….. An estimated 2,000 guests watched Aunty Maiduguri, 45, wed the four women in a sumptuous ceremony that was followed by 2 days of feasting and merry-making. But neighbours tipped off the authorities, who enforce Sharia law (Reuters, 2007)." When follow-up news accounts of the Maiduguri story reported that the woman in question turned herself in, she claimed a misunderstanding, and that she is not actually a lesbian (BBC, 2007). However,

since married woman may be stoned for lesbianism, and single women caned for lesbianism in Nigeria under Sharia law, it is difficult to ascertain if Aunty Maiduguri was truly misunderstood, or if she is attempting to cover for her well-being.

When People Cannot Be Who They Are

Experiences of hate speech, rejection, and severe gay-related stress (i.e., due to criminalization of homosexuality), heightens stigma consciousness leading to emotional distress and other health risks among gays and lesbians (Hamilton & Mahalik, 2009; Polders, Nel, Kruger, & Wells, 2008; Lewis, Derlega, Griffin, & Krowinski, 2003; Mays & Cochran, 2001; Rosario, Rotheram-Borus, & Reid, 1996). Thus, irrespective of how anti-gay legislation and sentiments originate (cultural centrism or cultural hegemony), research has shown that there are harmful mental and physical health effects of oppressive policy when legislation removes the rights of marginalized groups such as LGBT individuals due to anti-homosexual bias (Aguinaldo, 2008; Cochran, 2001). Research has highlighted this with respect to anti-gay marriage rulings in the U.S.A., but for LGBT persons particularly in non-Western settings, scholarship must be advanced to research the effects on individuals, of legislation which allows for the imprisonment or murder of Black gays, bisexuals, lesbians, or transgender persons.

Even in cases in which same sex couples have been criminalized, imprisoned, and later pardoned by their president, they may still live with the anxiety of being physically harmed if they remain in their homelands. The following is a quote from Malawian citizen, Tiwonge Chimbalanga, following being pardoned and released from prison, convicted of sodomy in Malawi: "I think it is going to be hard to stay in Malawi. I am afraid of what people might do to us. We probably need to seek asylum in some other country. Is there a place for us? I don't know (Bearak, 2010)." Even though Tiwonge Chimbalanga and fiance Steven Monjeza were pardoned by President Mutharika, the president still released a statement maintaining that the two committed a crime against the culture, the religion, and the laws of Malawi. President Mutharika also made it clear that he does not condone gay marriage. Specifically, Mutharika referred to homosexuality as unheard of in Malawi, and illegal (Bearak). The president pardoned the couple at the urging of United Nation's delegates, who suggested that anti-gay practices in Malawi were harming Malawi's international status and reputation.

As in the case of Nigerian, Aunty Maiduguri, follow up news to the Malawian story stated that Monjeza is relinquishing his relationship with Chimbalanga and will be settling down with a woman. Monjeza stated that he has learnt his lesson from his prison experience and he no longer wants anything to do with homosexuality (Telegraph Media Group Limited, 2010). Again, due to the dangerously oppressive nature of being same sex attracted in some regions of the world, it remains difficult to know whether these updates to the stories are true, or motivated out of fear of life threatening repercussions.

Afropessimism

In a Fall 2009 segment of the *Rachel Maddow Show* on the MSNBC cable news network, Maddow addressed the proposed anti-gay Ugandan bill. Though Maddow was well-intentioned in speaking out against anti-gay legislation in Uganda due to its human rights violating nature, she did so at the expense of perpetuating stereotypes about Ugandans. Specifically, Maddow focused blame for the Ugandan bill on the compassionate conservative evangelical movement. She admonished and urged white males of the U.S. conservative right to return to Uganda to dispel myths which they told to Ugandans about HIV/AIDS relief and the evils of homosexuality. Maddow suggested that compassionate conservatives are largely responsible for the Ugandan's creation of the anti-gay bill. She stated what she saw as a need for Scott Lively (promoter of reparative gay therapy in a seminar of the Family Life Network in Uganda) to return to Uganda to retract what he told the Ugandan citizens. She asserted that Lively and U.S. Christian conservative evangelicals and legislators can essentially influence the Ugandans to cease the anti-gay legislation.

While there is some relevance of a cultural hegemony effect in the ensuing anti-gay legislation in Uganda, and a use of fear to persuade, there are also additional psycho-sociohistorical and cultural factors to be examined within the nation of Uganda with respect to anti-gay sentiments. To oversimplify the issue to one of white men needing to take action as parental/authoritarian figures of correction (following their manipulation of the people) sustains negative beliefs about the minds of Africans. Myths and stereotypes of Africa and Africans have long been a part of U.S. attitudes. Specifically, there has long been a popular negative portrayal of Africa and Africans as "backward", "savage", "tribalistic", and "uncivilized" (Gordon & Wolpe, 1998). U.S. citizens and citizens of other nations tend to see and hear information about Africa that creates a stable schema of *Afropessimism*, which Gordon & Wolpe describe as a view of the African continent as little more than a "gigantic basket case," replete with deep-seated stereotypes and negative images. Such Afropessimism is evident in the following words from a U.S. bishop on the issue of gay human rights and Ugandans: "They've moved out of animism into a very superstitious kind of Christianity. They've yet to face the intellectual revolution of Copernicus and Einstein that we've had to face in the developing world. That's just not on their radar screen." – John Spong (Rinaldi, 1998).

Covering and reverse covering demands, anti-gay cultural centrism and cultural hegemony may all lead to psychological distress for affected LGBT persons across the Black diaspora. Human rights violations for LGBT persons are sustained by the use of fear tactics, the evocation of reactions of disgust, and the threat of shame and rejection. Human rights violations of Black LGBT persons may also be aided by pervasive attitudes of afropessimism and apathy regarding the likelihood of change in some regions of the world. However, Black LGBT human rights violations can be addressed via the theoretical perspective of liberation psychology.

Liberation Psychology

Liberation psychology focuses on oppression and liberation at the structural level as well as at the level of individual lives (Moane, 2003). Societal structures and ideologies create negative conditions such as poverty, violence, stress, discrimination, prejudice, and human rights violations which are all applicable to Black LGBT populations across the Diaspora. Collective action to eradicate afropessimism, fear and rejection, violence, and disgust reactions regarding Black LGBT populations is necessary to eventually achieve homonormativity among diverse cultures of people. Sexuality is one behavior susceptible to control and suppression by religion, culture, and law (Moane). The role of psychologists in this social transformation is to acknowledge any internalized oppressions within Black LGBT persons, as well as aid people in the positive transformation of negative social conditions.

In order to engage in the practice of liberation, psychologists are needed to work directly with Black LGBT populations to help advance critical consciousness and strategies that are based on Black LGBT persons' personal needs and concerns. A community psychology of liberation is one that focuses on barriers to unification among the oppressed. Barriers such as low self esteem and lack of confidence must be diminished so that oppressed individuals may organize and take action on their own behalf. Successful strength-building among oppressed groups of Black LGBT persons is protective against oppression and is a form of resistance. It should be noted too, that not all Black LGBT persons who have been oppressed are helpless, but instead may resist oppression and are resilient and courageous. However, for Black LGBT persons who have an unhealthy sense of self due to shame and internalized homophobia, it is important to assist them to become resilient and free by shrinking and externalizing shame from the core of the self. Van Vliet (2008) identifies five necessary sub-processes that will aid in freeing the self from oppressive shame. The five sub-processes as they relate to self esteem and shame are shown in Fig. 8.1 as connecting, refocusing, accepting, understanding, and resisting.

At the micro, meso, and macro levels, the role of the liberation psychologist is to assist people in their actions against oppressive forces, rather than to act as an expert on the experiences of the people who have faced oppression.

Progress

In the nation of Kenya, there is select progress for Black LGBT citizens which stems from a refocusing and acknowledgement by the Kenyan government that homosexuality does exist in Kenya. Confronted by growing evidence that sex between men is a significant driver of new HIV infections, the Kenyan government decided to launch a survey of gay attitudes and behaviors in Kenya's three largest cities, Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisuma, which was scheduled to take place in the year 2010 (Wadham, 2009). This is significant because the Kenyan government and the majority of Kenyans have long ignored homosexuality in the fight against AIDS.

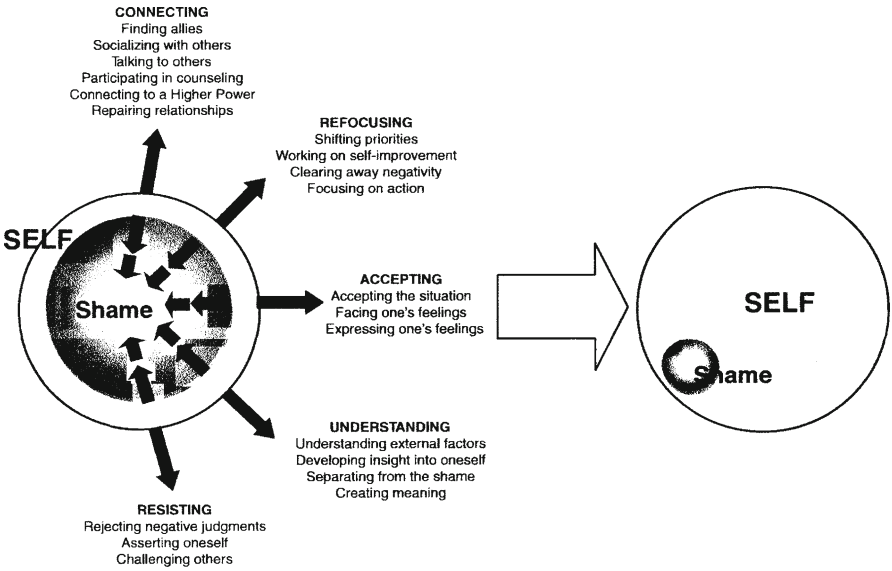

Fig. 8.1 The process of rebuilding. The arrows extending outward from the self represent the expansive and enhancing forces of the five main sub-processes on the self. The inward arrows represent their effect on shrinking and externalizing the shame from the core self. (Copyright© 2008 by the American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission. The official citation that should be used in referencing this material is Van Vliet, J. K., 2008)

Although the gay acknowledgment is progress, sex between men remains illegal in Kenya. It is punishable by up to 14 years in prison, and is perceived as Western-imported, morally wrong behavior that is limited to tourist areas in the nation (Wadham). Members of the gay community in Kenya are hopeful that the inclusion of gays in the nation's health research will help reshape Kenyan opinions.

Other Black scholars have written of the need for a Black liberation movement regarding the struggles of Black LGBT persons, as indicated in the following: "One of the most serious challenges facing black gay intellectuals is the development of a progressive view of homosexuality in the African American community. Such a perspective is needed to assist the larger African American community's struggle for self-determination by freeing it from the limitations of homophobia, as well as to liberate and self-actualize black gay genius.… [Blacks] often think of homosexuality as one more problem caused by white oppression" (Simmons, 1991). Liberation psychology advocates for freeing oppressed peoples.

Conclusion

In order to advance a Black liberation psychology for Black LGBT persons, micro level practice interventions will be increasingly needed, such as working with individuals to address negative effects of discrimination, harassment, fear, and shame.

Macro practice interventions will be increasingly needed to address public policy and to change asylum rules and regulations that currently violate LGBT human rights. Macro level interventions are also needed to increasingly be applied globally to educate people about the lack of scientific evidence in support of reparative therapy to change or cure homosexuality as a disease of perversion and disgust. Macro level interventions are also needed to address cultural de-centering regarding Black anti-gay attitudes.

Multiple qualities and intersecting factors such as race, class, gender, nationality, and region must be considered in order to effectively engage in scholarship surrounding the culture of Black LGBT covering and international Black LGBT human rights violations. The need for culturally sensitive international laws to address LGBT asylum seekers will likely remain a concern until more education and outreach become available. The advancement of research in the area of indigenous psychologies among the varied peoples of African descent must include LGBT person's own voices, as well as their actual historical writings so that we can learn more about the daily threats being experienced by Black LGBT persons internationally. This will raise awareness and advance transnational Black LGBT human rights, and the objectives of liberation psychology.

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Chapter 9
Urban and Rural Challenges

The Harlem he [James Baldwin] had been born into was still very much a community… The majority of the people came from the South, often called the Old Country, with a strong family and church tradition and a sense of neighborliness.

W. J. Weatherby from *James Baldwin: Artist on Fire* (1989)

After the end of the Civil War and the end of slavery in the southern United States, large numbers of people of African descent fled plantations in search of better opportunities in the northern United States. The African American *great migration* is characterized as a mass exodus of former slaves and their descendents from southern rural states such as Georgia, Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas to urban centers such as Chicago, New York, Detroit, and Washington, D.C., from approximately the turn of the twentieth century through the 1930s (Trotter, 1991). Although it seemed like an ideal plan, many found that they continued to face job, housing, and social discrimination even after relocating. Furthermore, although social welfare policies and programs were extended to the majority of those in the nation, Blacks were systematically disenfranchised (Tice & Perkins, 2001).

Less often told are the stories of Blacks who subsequently migrated from the south who were members of the Black same-gender loving community. Thorpe (1996), however, has shed light on the experiences of Black lesbians in Detroit, Michigan during the years 1940 to 1975 defined as the *second great migration*. By her account, there has always been, and continues to be politics of sexuality which may potentially impact the experiences of Black same-gender loving men and women. For example, Black lesbians during the years of Thorpe's analysis, did not patronize white establishments in Detroit, due to sexual politics and racist codes used by whites to keep them out. A few of the racist codes were the following (1) butch Black lesbians were not acceptable in the white owned spaces because they were believed to be trouble makers; (2) Black lesbians should not date white lesbians; and (3) Black lesbians who were deemed too femme in appearance and mistakenly thought to be heterosexuals, were excluded from the white venues.

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Black families and individuals, during the post-civil war era, who left the south in search of better opportunities in northern urban centers, experienced similar inequalities as in the south, but now faced the inequalities with the hopes of new opportunities. Many African Americans thought that life would be much better when they moved from the south to the north. For example, creative and artistic Blacks from southern and Midwestern regions migrated to northern cities and found open expressions of their artistry and personal desires. More recently, the literature on same-gender loving people of African descent who migrated from the south has been given more attention. Specifically, there is a movement to acknowledge the queered identities of some of the Black artists of the Harlem Renaissance who migrated from more rural areas to New York (Hagwood, 2010).

At a time in history when gays and lesbians in general were more marginalized than today, Blacks who were same gender loving during the Harlem Renaissance were unacknowledged as persons with multiple intersecting identities. Though the Black men and women of this era may not have expressly labeled themselves as LGBT (just as some contemporary people of African descent do not), it has been asserted that their affinity is evident in their writings and other artistic creations (Hagwood, 2010). Black lesbian and gay artists came together to create and support one another during the Harlem Renaissance. However, their sense of community with one another was not regarded as closeted nor "out", due to the times being different. LGB identity was less significant to the artists then in the way that it is today in western cultures. For many of these artists there was no closet because they were freely doing what they wanted to do, and they were being who they wanted to be. Hagwood, however, writes that an exception to this is evidenced in the veiled references to lesbianism among Black lesbian writers of the time such as Nella Larsen, Jessie Fauset or Angelina Weld Grimke. This likely reflects the differing sexual politics operating during the Harlem Renaissance for women relative to men.

Social Cognition: Impression Management Theory

Whether living in rural or urban areas, some people of African descent who are sexual minorities and/or transgender may be conscious of their social positions, and may try to manage how they are perceived by others. However, what factors influence the choices made by members of devalued or stigmatized groups regarding how to manage others' perceptions of their devalued group? This question has been the subject of research in social psychological studies of devalued or socially stigmatized groups such as women and African Americans (Roberts & Settles, 2008). For people of African descent who are also sexual minorities, concerns relevant to impression management may be particularly significant, due to multiple devalued statuses. Roberts and Settles focused on strategic or deliberate suppression, as well as strategic/deliberate accentuation of positive characteristics for those of devalued social groups. An example of such strategic accentuation of positive characteristics is presented in the Lester and Goggin (2007) text, in which a Black woman seeking another woman

in a personal advertisement, strategically uses the name Brown Suga and Chocolate as her descriptor in the ad . This is known as *strategic management of social identity*. Why individuals may attempt to deliberately suppress or deliberately accentuate certain characteristics associated with their social group is a relevant question for people of African descent living in both urban and rural communities. The question is relevant, whether the persons are managing their impressions in the real world or the virtual world of online communications. For example, a study of ethnically diverse men who have sex with men found that when these men sought bare-backing sex online, race- and gender-based characterizations (based in ethnosexual stereotypes) existed among the men when making online statements about themselves, as well as when making references to men outside of their racial group (Wilson et al., 2009). The exoticization of Black gay men and Asian gay men create feelings within these men of sexual objectification. Thus impression management behaviors in relationship to such characterizations may occur.

Roberts and Settles found that three individual level factors independently influence the strategic management of devalued social identity:

- Perceptions that the group is devalued and stigmatized
- General impression management tendencies
- The personal importance of the group membership to one's self-concept

LGBT people of African descent may attempt to manage their identities when engaged in online chatting, in personal ads, and within the Black and white, gay and heterosexual communities. For LGBT people of African descent who possess a very salient Black identity as central to their self-concept, the literature suggests that they are likely to manage their impressions by using statements of positive distinctiveness about being Black. Although Roberts and Settles report that self representational behaviors and impression management motives can also be unconscious and unintentional, here we indicate the strategic or deliberate management efforts among LGBT people of African descent in rural as well as urban communities, including online contexts.

The aim of this chapter is to highlight some of the experiences of Black sexual minorities living in urban and rural areas of the United States, particularly in the southeastern and northeastern United States. This chapter, using impression management theory, will focus on significant issues such as (1) the use of internet technologies in LGBT social engagement, (2) community experiences, (3) interpersonal relationships, and (4) social stigma and how it impacts the lived experiences of Black LGBT people living in rural and urban areas, whether they are stationary or in-migrated.

Technology

The use of technology has a significant impact on the social behaviors and social cognitions of individuals (Cooper, 1998; Halkitis & Parsons, 2003; Kramer & Winter, 2008). Technology such as the internet/world wide web, cam2cam, instant

messaging, and social networking sites have revolutionized the manner in which sexual minorities communicate and form relationships with each other (Aban, 2007). Thirty years ago, one of the chief outlets for meeting other gays and lesbians in major urban areas was in bars, or via real world social networks of friends and acquaintances. Though these forms of meeting are still of interest and pursued by sexual minorities, these forms have been supplemented by various forms of online encounters in both urban and rural contexts.

Haag and Chang (1997) suggested that in the earlier stages of internet social service delivery to lesbians and gays in rural areas, technology was used for each of the following:

- Sharing community resources
- Meeting via electronic networking
- Posting newsletters on bulletin boards
- The establishment of different Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to offer various gay/lesbian oriented chat rooms and content

Technology has impacted sexual minorities in urban and rural areas by creating somewhat safe, anonymous environments by which they can meet one another. We use "somewhat safe" due to research findings that rural men who meet men for sex via online resources may have riskier sex, in addition to still seeking sex partners in a variety of other venues (Horvath, Bowen, & Williams, 2006). This empirical evidence suggests that there is a need for diverse safe sex interventions covering multiple contexts.

Equity, however, does not exist for various rural and urban contexts regarding internet access. Haag and Chang discussed issues such as the lack of government regulations, faulty advertisement, and challenges to delivering internet based social services to isolated rural areas. In addition, researchers point to the dynamic and rapid change of technology as being continuous. Agencies that deliver social services must strive to keep up with the demand for new information. Importantly, one major issue that social science and health researchers did not fully anticipate was how the use of technology would eventually contribute to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases due to the instant access to a willing sexual partner. The issue of sexual behavior and the internet has been addressed as it pertains to Black gay males between the ages of 18–35 (Toomey and Rothenberg, 2000; McFarlane, Bull, & Rietmeijer, 2000).

It should be noted too, that for some Black same sex attracted men, one means of strategic impression management of their stigmatized identity may be reflected by a preferred interest in online connections with other men, as opposed to venturing out to popular cruising spots. For same sex attracted Black men, each of Roberts and Settles' individual level factors mentioned above are salient for the men's strategic management behaviors when online. Concerns about, and identifications with valorized hypersexual and hypermasculine Black male identity often impact some Black men's culturally based behaviors (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2004). Such concerns may also be relevant to social networking behaviors using technology, such as *Adam4Adam* connections.

Over the past 10 years, cyber dating has become a popular avenue for dating and sexual hook-ups (Lawson & Leck, 2006; Meerkerk, Van Den Eijnden, & Garretsen, 2006). Currently, there are over 800 online dating websites (same-sex oriented and opposite sex oriented). Although heterosexual oriented sites are very popular, *Adam4Adam* ranks in the top 10% of online dating websites (Aban, 2007). Adam4Adam or A4A, is a social networking site based in New York City that is designed especially for gay males. According to the company's website, their goal is to help men find new friends and create new relationships quickly and at no cost. The website allows the user to create a profile to clearly state one's intentions and express uncensored desires. The site is available world-wide, and the users can edit their online location in conjunction with vacations or out of town travel. The site does not charge membership fees, due to being supported by donations and sponsor advertisements. In its stated goal on its website, Adam4Adam emphasizes quick results at no cost. As a company serving a subculture on the internet, Adam4Adam's slogan may be especially appealing to gay men due to fulfilling empowerment and emancipation needs (Döring, 2009). Furthermore, sites such as Adam4Adam may serve as places of refuge for those with limited alternative outlets (i.e., gay men in rural, remote, or homosexually restrictive cultures). In such contexts, the internet may be meeting each of the following needs: ameliorating social isolation, facilitation of social networking, strengthening of self-identity and self acceptance, communication of practical information, and increased political activism (Döring).

In the same vein as Adam4Adam, there are other popular male sites such as Gay.com, Craigslist.com and Manhunt.com. The percentage of non-white Adam4Adam member subscribers is higher than the percentage of non-white people in the United States populations, but this varies by geographic locale (Aban, 2007). Research into demographic representation in Atlanta, San Francisco, and New York City profiles evidences a trend of higher representation of men of color among younger aged cohorts, with decreasing ethnic diversity in the profiles as age increases (Hoppe, 2008). Moreover, it appears that Black gay men in Atlanta utilize Adam4Adam more frequently, relative to their usage of Manhunt.com. Hoppe (2008) suggests this difference in subscribers may be based on Manhunt.com being a pay site and Adam4Adam being a free site. This implies that differences in use of personal ads and websites for fulfilling same sex desires may be socio-political, socioeconomic, and racialized.

Extensive empirical investigation of people of African descent regarding online technologies and sexuality is understudied. However, a major contribution to the literature does exist via Lester and Goggin (2007) in *Racialized Politics of Desire in Personal Ads,* which contains analyses of same sex attracted women of African descent, and same-sex attracted Black men. Contributors to the edited collection deconstruct the racialized meanings of the narrative analyses created by the writers of personal ads both in print and online. The work reflects the racialized use of impression management among writers of personal ads, who demonstrate varying degrees of emphasis on their race, skin complexion, gender expression, and sexual desires. The existence of impression management motivated writings is reflected in the following statement from the text: "As with any autobiographical text, whether long narrative or abbreviated personal, the narrator sets out to inscribe a particular

identity onto the printed page, to re-create himself in the best possible light, either for the long term, in a text to be read again and again, or for the short term – in the temporary personal (Wilson, as cited in Lester & Goggin, p. 82)." Through the analyses of print and online ads, one obtains information about the salience of writers' race and varying degrees of concern about *positive distinctiveness* (i.e., demonstrating that they are proud Black LGB people) and their concerns about Black LGB stigma and debasement (i.e., emphasis on success and obtained financial security). The following are summary conclusions based on analyses of Black women's personal ads within the Lester and Goggin text:

- Print and online personal ads can serve as vehicles to make Black lesbians a visible community
- The language of ads written by Black females seeking other Black females may be warm and positive as opposed to the negative socio-historical language that has positioned Black women as debased, vile, and negative
- Black queer women's identities (as reflected by writers of ads) are without boundaries, often defying mainstream assumptions about Black lesbians
- Via online ads, Black lesbianism exists within liberating sites that are controlled by the women in terms of self-representation, negotiation of the meaning of their multiple identities, sexual desires, and cultural struggles
- Interracial (black/white) online searches among women seeking women may include impression management tactics and concerns (i.e., being drawn to one another based on what is mutually perceived and presented as exotic or different)

Contributors to the above information in Lester and Goggin (2007) culled their information about the Black women's online use of technology from the following sites: *Adult friend finder, blackandwhitesingles, womanline, match.com, lesbianconnect, coupleme, interracial-dating-services.net, yahoo, ebonyadultmatch, and gayblackfemale.com*.

Another study found within Lester and Goggin (2007), was a narrative analysis of Black men seeking Black men advertisements seeking a substantive meeting and possible relationship, as opposed to a sex-only motive. Regarding these Black men, the following are summary conclusions based on the analysis:

- Concerns regarding impression management of devalued and stigmatized group membership as a Black gay man is significant in the construction of the men's ads
- The men's ads acknowledge (i.e., through coded language and descriptors) historical and racial knowledge regarding negative construals of Black men in general, but especially Black gay men
- Impression management concerns may lead to "cool posing" which is often represented by a detached and aloof persona being presented, even in an ad seeking another Black man
- Impression management concerns are displayed in ads by emphasizing masculinity, intellect, professional status, religious interests, and sometimes perceived non-normative Black attributes and interests

The research information from Lester and Goggin (2007) provides evidence that more research is needed to empirically investigate race, class, and gender as they

manifest for LGB people of African descent who use technology and print ads to meet one another. As stated previously, relatively little is known about the impact of technology on Black people, but apparently Black gay men do frequently use sites such as Adam4Adam. Overall, little empirical research exists focusing specifically on Black LGBT populations living in the United States or abroad. Wheeler (2003) suggests that social stigma, a lack of indigenous research, and beliefs among researchers that Black LGBT persons are insignificant are reasons why limited research exists.

Race and geographic location are intuitively significant to the issue of technology for Black LGBT people. Most relevant to this chapter is the reality that even for the research mentioned here from Lester and Goggin (2007), the information is largely derived from LGB people of African descent living in more urban areas. Though access to the internet is not limited to only those in urban areas, understandably, due to privacy concerns and lower overall numbers of local rural and "out" residents, less representative samples of rural residents is likely in such research. Using internet banner ads that are ethnic specific and that indicate payment for participation has been suggested as potentially useful in recruiting more diverse samples of rural MSMs for research (Bowen, 2005).

Otis (2008) warns that public perception continues to be that LGB persons are primarily urban dwellers, suggesting that in some regions, rural LGB people remain invisible within their communities. It is also likely that for such reasons, rural LGB people of African descent may have different impression management concerns compared to urban dwellers. Such differences could make it more challenging to do outreach to these communities during health campaigns. Therefore, we cannot make definitive generalizations about Black LGBT populations based on several of the studies available, particularly regarding those in more remote locations.

Also noteworthy, is the literature that suggests that African Americans remain relatively disconnected regarding the digital divide. According to Hoffman and Novak (1998) there is an apparent divide between African Americans and Whites in technology usage and access. The divide is chiefly based on disparities in levels of education and income, such that whites are more inclined to use technology fully; this has also been evidenced by data indicating that young African Americans are far more active on the micro-blogging *Twitter* site relative to whites (Frazier, 2010). This is attributed to the reality that the digital divide lessens when African Americans are able to access the web via mobile devices, to which *Twitter* easily lends itself. If a Black family does not have internet access at home, then accessing information from the web via the mobile phone is crucial. Again, further research that is relevant to these findings is needed for diverse populations of people of African descent.

Data from *Adam4Adam.com* suggests an elevated internet pattern of usage regarding Black gay males. *Quantcast.com,* is an internet website which measures and organizes the world's audiences in real-time so that advertisers can buy, sell and connect with desirable consumers. According to Quancast, African American men make up 38% of users of Adam4Adam. *Quantcast* describes Adam4Adam.com as a top 5,000 site that reaches over 509,000 people in the U.S. monthly. The site attracts predominantly educated, young adult males who are African American (Hoppe, 2008).

Additionally, Adam4Adam.com subscribers may also visit popular pornographic websites such as Thugpayperview.com, Latinmensociety.com, and Thugboy.com. These sites feature video sex acts between Black, Latino, or Blatino masculine, well-endowed tops and muscular bottoms. Online fees are associated with viewing this content, which can be paid one time or on a recurring basis. Tops are sometimes characterized as "gay for pay." *Gay for pay* refers to persons who engage in gay sex, but may identify as heterosexual. This term is used mostly with men who are considered sex workers (i.e., escorts, models, pornographic actors). Many *gay for pay* sex workers are also labeled *trade* (Mays et al., 1992). Trade is defined as a masculine male (often used in reference to Black men) who engages in sexual relationships with other men; however out-group others may not suspect this of him, based on stereotypical masculine visual appearance, style, or conversation (Mays et al.).

According to Hollister (1999), in many gay male settings, the young, the muscular, and the unfamiliar are more likely to be sought after as partners. The description of this type of man may be enticing for some gay men. These characteristics are desirable because they fit with hegemonic idealized masculinity, as has been indicated in a study of Black male sex within adult all male movie theaters (Lemelle, 2010). Due to gender and sexual identity politics in some geographic areas, trade may be more likely to go undetected because of rigid social cognitions that same sex attracted men are primarily feminine (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009). Trade may be employed in construction, may ride a motorcycle, and may have sex with multiple women. Each of these characteristics matches idealized masculine images which may effectively result in impression management of the stigmatized same sex behavior or identity.

While Black gay men in urban areas appear to be open and confident when using sites such as Adam4Adam, Black gay men in rural areas, comparatively, may not post pictures or provide the same degree of physical descriptions in their profile. This could be hypothesized as motivated by desires to protect the rural men's images (i.e., impression management) among close knit families, church members, and community members. However, empirical study is needed in this area. When occurring, such impression management concerns could put these men at a disadvantage for meeting other men in contemporary times. When chat rooms initially became available via ISPs such as AOL, photographs were not supported by the service. People met solely based on physical descriptions. Currently though, not having a photograph to share with other subscribers may be regarded as a violation of cyber-etiquette, especially with the availability of digital cameras and smart phones. However, although there may be some challenges to meeting in more rural communities, many men and women of more remote areas and smaller towns and cities are still able to informally find one another, including having private gatherings at private residences via word of mouth/referral within a select network of men and women. Such gatherings have long been a part of the community building for Black people, as in the times of legal racial segregation in the U.S. (Morgan, 1996).

Black residents in some rural areas may face problems with technology that are rooted in economics and availability of various ISPs. Although many companies in rural areas offer high speed internet, there remain challenges to service access in some

rural areas. For example, the state of North Carolina is substantially agricultural with higher concentrations of residents in larger cities such as Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham, and Greensboro. However, some areas in the third largest city, Greensboro, were relatively slower to offer high speed internet access for its residents (Borland, 1999; Fox 8 News, 2007). Comparatively, in most heavily populated urban areas, internet access is readily available in homes and coffee shops. Depending on the personality of the individual, and the quality of resources available, Black same sex attracted persons in more rural areas may resort to frequenting whatever gay friendly venues are available, having private invite only meetings at homes, or using online mechanisms that they feel can be used discretely. For example, there is a higher known percentage of MSM in gay friendly urban settings than in rural settings, leading rural MSM to be more geographically isolated from gay culture centers and other venues. Rural MSM and LGB individuals though, are not monolithic. Some are using the internet for meeting, traveling out of town, as well as they may be living in a "live and let live" type of rural community where they are not closeted (Lieb et al., 2009). More research into these behaviors for sexual minorities in smaller or more rural areas is needed.

Communities

Historically, during the great migration, and less often studied during the second great migration (1940–1970), Blacks have been mobile in search of new opportunities. This includes moving from one geographic U.S. region to another, or from one southern city to another southern city (Adams, 2006). Intuitively, Black LGBT persons should be included in such research. Members of the Black LGBT community may travel to larger cities in search of better opportunities for career advancement, potential friendships, intimate relationships, or to find community and entertainment.

Rhonda Coates, based out of Greensboro, North Carolina, is an African American entrepreneur and owner of *SugaWalls Entertainment*. Coates has been in business since 2004, and she refers to her LGBT entertainment events as serving the state of North Carolina (R. Coates, personal communication, June 21, 2010). The mainly 18–25 year old patrons of her events, travel from around the state to the parties. Coates would also like to see, however, expanded offerings within the Greensboro area, due to what she perceives as a lack of services to meet the needs of young professionals, who are her target population. Based on the success of *SugaWalls Entertainment*, it appears that younger predominantly Black LGBT patrons will travel to find community, even from relatively rural regions of the state of North Carolina. In addition, as younger populations of Black LGBT individuals are no longer as closeted, but comfortable with their sexuality, it is expected that more services for the community will be increasingly needed.

There is an ever growing number of Black Pride events in major cities around the U.S. High concentrations of migrated-in Black gays and lesbians participate in Black Pride events in cities such as Washington, D.C. (D.C. Pride), Los Angeles,

California (At the Beach- ATB), Atlanta, Georgia (In the Life Atlanta), and Houston, Texas (Splash). The Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area of North Carolina recently joined the growing list of Black prides, as Shades of Pride non-profit organized the inaugural Black Pride celebration for the Triangle region during summer 2010. Signs of the times have also brought on the need for an international community of LGBT people of African descent, as evidenced by the existence of The International Federation of Black Prides (http://www.ifbprides.org/).

Some LGBT people of African descent may leave smaller, close knit, family oriented contexts of their rural or southern home communities. However, research has shown that Black migration from southern regions to urban regions is selectively influenced by education level, occupational skill, and other forms of human capital such as family stability (Boyd, 2009; Wilson, 2001). Once relocated, Black LGBT persons may find satisfaction living in more diverse and affirming communities in large urban centers (Lemelle & Battle, 2004). They may also find themselves living in relatively more liberated, socio-economically diverse communities versus the somewhat homogenous "white gay" urban community neighborhoods of major cities such as Dupont Circle-Washington, DC, Montrose -Houston, Texas, and Folsom Street-San Francisco, California (Catania, Canchola, Pollack, & Chang, 2006). Although some may prefer an urban setting in which to live, there are still LGBT persons who live (and enjoy) small, rural areas of the south (Dews & Law, 2001). In both locations, urban and rural, there are a number of challenges that individuals may face with respect to varying stigmatization vs. empowerment status. How the different contexts produce similar and/or different coping mechanisms related to impression management of devalued status requires more research. Researchers have acknowledged that there are numerous methodological issues to be addressed in doing community based research into the health and social service needs of the population (Wheeler, 2003).

The Significance of Race

Overall, it has been indicated in the literature that the connectedness to the gay community and gay culture may be interpreted vastly differently by Black sexual minorities relative to the dominant white gay culture (Parks, 2010). There are also likely to be unique experiences too for Black gays and lesbians of rural vs. urban areas (Whitlock, 2009).

Although the ideas of segregation and separate but equal have been lawfully dismantled, race as a social construct continues to dominate in the U.S. in both rural and urban areas. The low socioeconomic status of Blacks overall in many rural areas, paints a picture of inequalities based on socio-historical factors. Furthermore, even as white gays and lesbians themselves experienced oppression during Stonewall in the 1970s, preceded by the civil rights era, there appears to be continuous racially charged ideology about African Americans as a whole (including Black LGBT populations) within some white LGBT populations.

For example, Whittier (1997) interviewed several white gays and lesbians about the racial division in a small southern town. They characterized African Americans as people who wore "Afro Sheen" in their hair. This was provided as a reason why Blacks were not invited to integrate gay parties or pool parties. They also expressed cognitive beliefs that as whites, they "would be killed" if they went to a gay bar in a predominately African American community. Their social perceptions were that Blacks walking along the street outside of the white gay bar were up to no good; however, they did not make the same assumptions concerning white pedestrians. In relationship to impression management theory, racially based stereotypes and commentary by whites about African Americans, as indicated by Whittier's study reflects the stigma and devalued status of Black people. Thus, as a coping mechanism, some Black LGBT persons may choose coping mechanisms meant to avoid or reduce racist experience, thereby acting as health protective actions (David & Knight, 2008).

Whittier (1997) and Malebranche, Fields, Bryant, and Harper (2009) examined socialization among Black gay males living in rural and urban areas, respectively. Black participants in Whittier's study thought that most white guys are very open in their rural area, and white society is more open and educated on the subject (same sex identity). However, the subjects felt that Blacks are still very conservative in their thinking, including beliefs that God will punish, or something bad is going to happen, because a Black man is supposed to be a man (Whittier).

In an interview with gay Black men in urban areas who identified themselves as MSM, the men explained that although they lived in cities with concentrated gay communities, they did not feel like they were a part of those communities, but described their participation as being displaced outside observers of the gay community, versus being active members within the gay community (Malebranche et al., 2009). These comments suggest that the term "gay community" may not have the same meaning for Black gay men. For example, Herdt (1992) asserts that being gay [white] represents ultimate claims to social acceptance in contemporary society. He uses the popularity of the gay pride March/parade in major cities such as New York and San Francisco as evidence of how white gays have progressed in terms of civil rights.

Comparisons of Black LGBT persons in urban and rural areas should be done to investigate any possible differences in the salience of race in their lived experiences. For example, Whittier (1997) mentions a female, heterosexual-identified, Black bar owner of a gay bar who has pictures of Nelson Mandela and Malcolm X on the walls of the club. She also often serves as DJ and emcee at the bar. In this latter capacity she occasionally gives a lecture on African American pride. This reflects that the bar owner is aware of the significance of race to her Black gay patrons in the rural context. Do similar occurrences take place in Black owned LGBT establishments in urban settings? A comparative analysis using such questions would be informative.

Large numbers of LGBT people of African descent support Black gay pride events in major cities with high concentrations of Black gays in major metropolitan areas. Additionally, many of the Black gays and lesbians in rural areas travel to these large urban cities for these events (Whitter, 1997). Although the events are

meant to strengthen the Black gay community, some Black gays in urban areas may still feel that they are not part of the Black gay community. A few participants in Malebranche et al.'s (2009) research study who identified themselves as MSM in an urban area, felt that only their sexual attractions to other men could classify them as gay. However, otherwise, they did not feel the label of gay was positive in any way. In addition, the negative influence of the word, gay, impacted their choice to distance themselves from identifying as gay and as affiliated with a gay community. This is an obvious example of impression management concerns leading to strategic efforts to avoid stigmatization. Furthermore, one participant stated that community has a lot of connotations to it, including a kind of sense of togetherness, which he did not necessarily feel exists in the Black gay community. Specifically, he believed that this is a bridge still yet to be crossed. Although Black and white gays and lesbians share sexual orientation as a commonality, the ways in which each group defines and perceives gay community can be very different. Some white gays and lesbians may have definitions unconsciously based in superiority, power, and control. Some Black gays and lesbians, similar to their heterosexual counterparts, may have ideologies influenced by socio-historical factors dating back even to slavery. Akbar (1996) has described *psychological slavery* as psychologically damaging residual effects of being enslaved and oppressed as a Black American race. Studies of psychological slavery should be investigated within Black LGBT populations for possible relationship to feelings of community and impression management behaviors within communities.

Some Black LGBT persons who continue to consciously and unconsciously live in pain are worthy of further examination. In addition, if they have limited social support this can make social functioning extremely difficult. Such marginalized people may also feel that their communities are fragmented. Moane (2003) states that *fragmentation* defines various ways in which oppressed people are divided among themselves, and she states that divisions stem from both differences within the oppressed groups as well as from outside pressures. Also it is often the case that oppressed people have had to leave their communities, resulting in fragmented families and erasure of history and culture. Results of fragmentation on oppressed people can be isolation, division, and disunity. Further studies of this phenomenon, among people of African descent who are same gendered loving, need to be conducted in both rural and urban communities. Due to the multiple intersecting identities of the population, fragmentation can be examined for its relevance to within-group relationships of Black LGBT people, as well as its relevance to Black LGBT relationships with members of the heterosexual Black community in rural and urban contexts.

Relationships

Although Black LGBT people have family members with whom they are close, family members may not always be affirming or acknowledging of the LGBT identity. At best, for example, Black lesbian identity and relationships have been superficially

acknowledged as evidenced in literature and media (i.e., *The Color Purple, Women of Brewster Place, Set It Off*). Frequently, media characterizations of lesbian relationships/identity may be based on stereotypical views and ridicule, with fewer representations of respect (Raley & Lucas, 2006). Also, sexist fantasies depicted in pornography of men having sex with two women and woman on woman sex in pornography may further negatively influence the perceptions of same gendered loving women's intimate relationships (Jenefsky & Miller, 1998). These depictions may make it more difficult for lesbian relationships to be taken seriously, resulting in greater impression management issues for two women who are married or seriously committed as a couple.

Regarding males, some Black men may feel that they must fit within the social construct and role expectations for Black men that has been set forth by the communities in which they exist (Majors & Billson, 1993). Black masculinity codes may subsequently equate being gay with weakness or inferiority. Thus, Black men may then shy away from or become hyper masculine to mitigate against behaviors that could be classified as a diversion from the masculine code. Among Black same-gender loving men, further research is needed regarding bonding with other men, and how the bonding may be influenced by socio-historical, cultural, and fragmentation issues.

An example of fragmentation that has been presented in the literature is father absence from the home due to several reasons such as death at an early age, incarceration, emotional distance, or a father simply not knowing who he is or what to do (Malebranche et al., 2009). Participants from the Malebranche et al. study discussed how men in young boys' lives are expected to teach the boys to behave in the way that society expects them to behave as a male. Other participants mentioned that hustling equals survival; and that masculinity is couched in one's ability to "make babies". New research should focus on the trajectory of men who previously identified as heterosexual with children, but then later in life adopted a different identity as a gay father. Such research would allow us to delve more deeply into the issues of stigmatization, devalued status, and impression management behaviors developmentally.

MSM in the urban setting reported that they desired fatherly qualities in a partner, with masculinity being an important influence on attraction and intimacy when it comes to seeking other men. This preference may also extend to sexual roles. However, just as these men are searching for a father figure, the individual placed in the father role may have his own concerns. Black men who are considered MSM and down low Black men, may wind up playing the role of father in a relationship, based on traditional stereotypes about Black masculinity. Playing the role of the *responsible* "father" can be a daunting task for a gay Black man who enters a sexual partnership with another Black gay man.

Some Black men have described their Black male role model growing up as the "hustler" type that "made babies", or who were incarcerated (Malebranche et al., 2009; Majors & Billson, 1993). In addition, some of these men reported subsequently continuing to multiple sexual relations without securing any lasting emotional relationships. Black men, irrespective of sexual orientation and urban or rural context may be similarly socialized in their Black masculinity. Also, Black men's attachments

to intimate sex partners may be influenced by father presence or father absence (Willis & Clark, 2009).

Cool pose is described by Majors and Billson (1993) as a Black masculine strategy embraced by Black males to cope with and survive the challenges of racism, oppression, and marginality. It manifests as ritualized forms of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances. Cool pose is also meant to convey the message of pride, strength, and control (Majors & Billson). Hence, cool pose may be used in all types of relationships to help Black men cope with the complexities of their relationships.

Note that in Majors and Billson's (1993) definition of "cool pose", they list as a component, impression management. In order to maintain cool pose, the Black man must be concerned about his image and how he manages it in the face of beliefs and expectations of him as a Black man. These beliefs and expectations too are likely to shift somewhat from urban to rural contexts, yet the behaviors would still likely be expected to adhere to ritualized forms of masculinity.

The challenges to forming healthy relationships that Black heterosexual women face may mirror the same challenges faced by Black gay men. Studies have supported the idea that some Black women perceive themselves as competing for a limited pool of Black male partners (Ernst, Rupert, Nevels, & Lemeh, 1991; Lemelle & Battle, 2004). Although this conflict is worthy of greater discourse in order to address fragmentation in the Black community, what is more important are the efforts to slow the rise of HIV among Black MSM and heterosexual women. The focus and attention in this area should lean toward developing positive self esteem and building positive relationships as protective factors. Several Black gay male groups across the country have dedicated resources toward creating services and programs that cater to the total person. The Black Gay Men's Network is a professional network committed to creating soulful, loving connections among Black gay men. Their focus is specifically on self-discovery, relationships and dating, sexuality, health and wellness, politics, spirituality and finances. Unfortunately, though, there is still disparity in rural locations relative to urban areas regarding LGBT people's access to such services and networks (Neely, 2005).

Additionally, *Us Helping Us*, in Washington, D.C. sponsors empowering weekend seminars. These types of activities are very important to the development of Black gay men. However in order to increase positive relationships, focus needs to be inclusive of family and community as well (Hill, 2003). Family is very important as it relates to Black gays and lesbians' support system. In addition, Lemelle and Battle (2004) suggest that empirical evidence can assist in educating the Black community about the debilitating effects of spoiled identities, which may have consequences for having healthy attitudes and relationships. Increased attention to intervene in this area may increasingly result in Black LGBT people engaging in wholesome healthy relationships. Moreover, doing such work has the power to dispel myths regarding Black LGBT relationships, across urban and rural contexts.

Social Stigma, Impression Management, and Fragmentation

The previous sections regarding technology, communities, and relationships all potentially intersect with social stigma among the Black LGB community. Many of the studies reviewed for this chapter included some element of social stigma induced by the greater community on Black LGB people. Black LGBT people face social stigma from at least three entities: (1) primary social groups (i.e. family and church members) and (2) their white gay counterparts. Additionally, a third layer of oppression is worthy of discussion. This third layer of oppression may come from within the group, such as within gay Black male networks. This may be fundamentally rooted in impression management concerns about achievement, perfection, and excellence. This third possible layer of challenge is worthy of extensive research.

As mentioned earlier, some gay Black men have reported that they feel that there is no sense of community among Black gay males. This is evidenced by the following excerpt from Lester and Goggin (2007, p. 91): "BGMs (Black Gay Males) work hard to excel in their chosen careers in an effort to deflect all negative stereotypes lodged against black men. Eschewing the image of the parasitic black male who refuses to be a contributing member of society, BGMs present themselves as wholesome individuals who tout the virtues of independence, diligence, and initiative. These same BGMs form social groups of like-minded individuals for whom success and excellence are the norm. They shun those who do not seek to advance and improve themselves; they are especially suspicious of those who bring no comparable quality to the relationship."

These concerns may be examined for their possible link to internalized racism and internalized homophobia. Some Black gay men may fight hard against stigma to show society that they can be "different" from any negative stereotypes of Black gay men. Hence, this is impression management based on devalued status. Such gay Black men, for example, may profess attending the "best" colleges; may have achieved a great job with supervisory responsibility; may live in an upper middle class community; may dress impeccably; may be obsessed with their bodies/appearance; may drive luxury vehicles; and may take exotic vacations. However, they may also subsequently become exclusionary of other Black gay men who do not measure up. The underlying explanation may be related back to stigma management or impression management in an attempt to mitigate against perceptions of the devalued status of Black gay man.

Fictitious examples of the social class extremes are recognizable in the characters from two well known Black gay male writers. Though fictional characterizations, these novels were widely read by same gendered loving and heterosexual Black Americans, thus potentially shaping perceptions and attitudes. In most of the late E. Lynn Harris' books (*Invisible Life, Just As I Am, If This World Were Mine*), readers are exposed to Black characters of a higher socioeconomic status who can be considered successful as exemplified by their trappings of success (home, professions, cars, clothing) and lifestyle. However, in Earl Hardy's book (*B-Boy Blues*) the

characters are considered, "around the way" or "hood" type brothers who are searching for love. These polar extremes are played out in the real lives of many Black gay men.

Also, African American writer/director, Patrik Ian Polk provided viewers with a glimpse of gay black males who were in-between the polar extremes in his series, *Noah's Arc*. This series challenged the cognitions of viewers by presenting "regular" Black gay men with careers and relationships, who were neither thuggish nor leading lavish lifestyles. However, yet again, the characters were urban, not rural. Thus, still segments of the Black LGBT population are virtually nonexistent as living breathing examples of Black LGBT diversity. Such persons are even more marginalized.

Therefore, when questions are asked about the gay Black community and its ability to combat the multiplicity of issues faced (sustaining monogamy, relationships, fighting HIV), the answers are complex. For men and women who are highly motivated by impression management concerns related to being stigmatized, it may be more difficult for them to focus on coming together to help strengthen and change their community. In addition, such posturing type behaviors associated with impression management, may interfere with engagement in meaningful dialogue about positive change. Preoccupations with geographic origins, attire, and physical attributes will not combat further fragmentation. Such views, though certainly not representative of all, for some are problematic with respect to the creation of a more cohesive and politically empowered Black LGBT community. The social cognitions may be rooted in issues of internalized racism and devalued group status, which must be addressed.

Finally, Cannick (2004) writes:

> Did activism in the African-American community die with integration? It is disappointing to see the number of Black gays and lesbians that turnout for a rally. Black gays and lesbians are going to continue being invisible and ignored as long we continue to ignore ourselves. Our issues won't be taken seriously, until we take them seriously for ourselves and rally behind them….. What is going to have to happen in order for Black gays and lesbians to play a part in their own liberation?

Conclusion

Irrespective of living in a rural or urban area, Black gay men and women experience both challenges and positive distinction. This chapter primarily presents from the literature, issues of Black gay men living in urban and rural areas. This is primarily due to disparities regarding the quantity of research on Black same gendered loving women relative to Black same gender loving men. Less information is available for women, and comparative examination. The information of this chapter highlights the need for additional research on impression management behaviors in men and women across geographic regions. More research is also needed on how Black same gender loving men and women in urban and rural settings make use of technology

in pursuit of online social networking, dating, and sexual contacts. The work summarized here from Lester & Goggin, provides preliminary information which suggests that there is more to be examined regarding these issues. Though people of African descent who are also sexual minorities in many regions of the world, including parts of the U.S., are hidden and hard to reach populations, efforts much be made to reach them. Though many LGBT people of African descent are thriving and resilient, others are anxious regarding social stigmatization of their status as devalued. This can result in various impression management behaviors which may lead to aloof and fragmented communities in some regions. Research is needed to investigate these attitudes and experiences in order to more fully understand the mental, physical, and emotional needs of greater numbers of LGBT people of African descent living in both urban and rural communities.

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Chapter 10
Education, Research, and Community Services

The path of least resistance and least trouble is a mental rut already made. It requires troublesome work to undertake the alternation of old beliefs.

John Dewey (n.d.)

Cognitive restructuring is necessary regarding the beliefs about the people and the issues deemed worthy of attention when learning about or researching people of African descent. To date in psychology, as well as in Black Studies curriculums, those who are sexual minorities of African descent have been insufficiently included in the academic literature, and in universities' course content. In conjunction with the recommendations of scholars who advocate for the advancement of indigenous psychologies and liberation psychology, the inclusion of LGBT people of African descent as a formalized cultural study in liberation psychology is overdue.

As early as the 1980s, psychologists wrote of the challenge of social change for psychology (Sampson, 1989). Sampson provides a contextual overview of the origin of psychology under an individualistic framework of the modern period in the nineteenth century. Via Sampson's paper, students are able to learn about the context-based shifts in psychology over the centuries. The shift has been from a focus on families and units, to a focus on individuals, to a current and future need to once again return to connectedness and groups in the pursuit of a global psychology, including disenfranchised people worldwide.

People of African descent are far from monolithic, and students, researchers, and service providers should refrain from essentialist positions. However, many individual people of African descent are culturally connected to extensive kinship networks, faith communities, and a desire to belong within a wider Black cultural community. Thus the population should be included in courses and research which focus on Black experiences. Increased attention to the study of LGBT issues among people of African descent will necessitate interdisciplinary education and research utilizing a multitude of methods to obtain information on the life experiences of LGBT people of African descent.

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This final chapter in part addresses the need for development and support of Black LGBT focused studies at historically Black colleges and universities and within LGBT studies. Curricula addressing this population at any university, to the degree appropriate, should incorporate Afrocentric theoretical paradigms and culturally sensitive training materials in order to best serve ethnically diverse LGBT populations. There is a need for psychologists to broadly educate students on conducting research with underserved hidden and hard to reach populations. This includes an increased usage of qualitative research methodologies and field observations in conjunction with experimental approaches, as initially recommended by progressive education advocate, John Dewey (Rosiek, 2003). Such research-based knowledge would aid in advancing the education of broader numbers of future professionals in psychology about the diversity of global Black sexuality and gender expression.

Represented in this chapter, is information obtained from interviews with service providers in Washington D.C. and Chicago, Illinois who are addressing the needs of Black LGBT people. An overview is also given of an outreach rap session in existence in Winston Salem, North Carolina for Black LGBT people and allies, and a program underway in Dallas, Texas for Black men who sleep with men. Finally, conclusions and next steps are offered for the study of Black issues in LGBT psychology.

Education

Academic research on people of African descent tends to dwell on those of heterosexual identity. However, this does not fully speak to the diversity of Black people. The void in the research may reflect a cultural struggle with critically discussing sexuality. This may be even moreso the case regarding the experiences of Black sexual minorities.

In 1968, the origin of Black Studies as a formal academic major has been referred to as a remarkable and sudden event (Rojas, 2007). Black Studies was born out of conflict, in which students made ten demands of the college's president at San Francisco State College. The first demand was for the creation of a Department of Black Studies. Other universities such as the University of Chicago, University of Illinois at Chicago, and Harvard University also had students actively engaged in the call for Black Studies. Students then were vocal and active in the successful creation of Black Studies, owed in part to the significance of the Black Power movement at the time. Increasingly today, as gay liberation is shaping youth activism, contemporary out and proud youth in high schools and universities will likely increasingly make similar demands to be properly acknowledged (Cohen, 2007). Similarly to the origin of Black Studies, it may require an increasingly radical social movement to bring Black queer studies into the mainstream of Black Studies and psychology.

The development of Black Studies' programs across the U.S. also subsequently resulted in a proliferation of Afrocentric scholars. However, the early Afrocentric theories failed to critically examine people of African descent who are also sexual

minorities. If we are to fully understand societal impacts on all Black people, we must also include those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. Historically Black colleges and universities too, must develop courses and curricular specializations that focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues, as these intersect with Black cultural experiences. This is logical, since historically, HBCUs have stood on the forefront of various socio-political issues. However, recent research has reflected that HBCUs may need to increase their education of students regarding urgent social problems, and they must regularly re-visit their vision statements (Taylor & Jones, 2007; Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009).

Black LGBT content is sparse or non-existent in textbooks. However content on Black LGBT persons can be infused throughout general education curriculums of undergraduate studies. Students and practitioners who will have the opportunity to work with diverse populations should be competent in meeting the needs of the population. Furthermore, students and practitioners will need to be able to acknowledge the diverse experiences of LGBT populations within a socio-historical framework. Black LGBT persons' possible experiences with various types of social challenges (i.e., poverty, homelessness, substance abuse), as well as group members' experiences of thriving in positive marginality will need to be acknowledged.

Unfortunately, though we advocate here for greater inclusiveness of LGBT content in social sciences and social work curriculums, a study by the Council on Social Work Education and Lambda Legal (CSWE & Lambda Legal) (n.d.) found that social work students are not being adequately prepared to serve LGBT individuals. This was especially so regarding their level of preparedness to work with youth. The study utilized survey methodology to assess social work program directors and faculty members. Most of the programs did not formally assess their students' competence in serving LGBT populations, did not contain content on LGBT youth, did not provide field placements in youth oriented settings, and faculty members were found to have insufficient awareness of LGBT issues. The Council on Social Work Education and Lambda Legal recommended that each of these issues be addressed by university programs. Based on these findings, the time is long overdue to infuse LGBT awareness into wider curricula, and into the student development objectives of student organizations. One particular organization at Morehouse College has begun to address LGBT issues.

On March 23, 2010, the historically Black men's college, Morehouse College in Atlanta Georgia held its first ever Gay Pride week on campus. The week's activities included a panel event entitled, *Out and in the Spotlight*. B. Scott, gay African-American TV/Radio personality and internet celebrity was featured on the panel. The *Out & in the Spotlight* panel was one component of a week-long pride week at Morehouse College. The events were hosted by *Safe Space*, which is a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organization that openly addresses the issues of homophobia, hegemonic dispositions, racism, sexism and oppressive gender construction.

While opinions varied on Morehouse's overall marketing support of this event (i.e., statements were made that pride week was not listed on the college's events calendar), a pride week on the campus without incident is progress. Now is a good

time for faculty, staff, and student activists to capitalize on the momentum of discussions of LGBT issues within HBCU cultural contexts (Petrosino, 2003; Prichard, 2007).

Another example of this momentum is reflected at Winston Salem State University (WSSU), a historically Black university. The Provost at WSSU, Dr. Brenda Allen, supports the inclusion of LGBT issues in the university's curriculum. An LGBT themed liberal learning seminar for freshmen has been approved by the general education curriculum at WSSU. At the request of Dr. Allen, a seminar will be offered at WSSU in the Spring 2011 academic year. The liberal learning seminar will be one of several seminars available to freshmen. It is entitled *Black Issues in LGBT Psychology*, and will be based on much of the content of this text. The subject matter will be used to teach critical reading, critical thinking, and scientific literacy as general education outcomes to freshmen. Thus, not only will the students be exposed to *Black Issues in LGBT Psychology* as significant academic study, but they will learn how to think and read critically about the content. They will also be expected to learn the science of how psychologists address social issues, conduct cultural studies, and analyze the science of issues such as gender variance. Research studies and other readings focusing on sexual minorities of African descent will comprise the reading assignments for the seminar. The seminar has been designed to incorporate undergraduate qualitative and quantitative research, writing to learn assignments, and problem-based learning.

Educators are chiefly responsible for enhancing knowledge, and must be prepared to adequately train students to work with the diverse public. Green (1998) offers the following guidelines for faculty in training programs: (1) multicultural competencies should be goal statements; (2) multicultural faculty leadership should be shared by all for multicultural teaching and transformation; (3) faculty multicultural training should include lectures, workshops, peer case consultation, reading seminars, and group discussions on the inclusion of multicultural content and (4) there should be co-teaching of intercultural awareness by leaders of different cultural groups reflecting the students' cultural compositions. Such material should also be infused across the curriculum as opposed to compartmentalized into one required diversity course (Kline, 2008).

Cultural Issues

Karen Giles, a licensed clinical social worker for Washington D.C.'s *Us Helping Us* was interviewed for this chapter in June of 2009. *Us Helping Us* is a community based AIDS organization providing services primarily to African American males. Giles shared insights regarding the need for service providers to be sensitive about Black cultural issues in working with the population that she serves. She highlighted the need for service providers to have cultural sensitivity regarding the men's concerns regarding self-labeling as gay. Giles reported that the men's concerns often stem from their perceptions of authentic Black masculinity.

Us Helping Us also offers a retreat for its clients. One of the objectives of the retreat is to have the men to explore the impact of being African American and gay. The reflections' retreat is for gay and bisexual African American men, irrespective of their HIV status. During the retreat, the men go to the mountains, and may be asked a question by faciliators such as what comes to mind when they think of "gay". The group typically consists of about 12 men. Giles mentioned how, often times in the beginning of retreats, some of the men respond with negative comments like "*weak, faggot, queen",* and negativity in response to the word "gay". Giles also reported that there have been similar responses initially from the men to the question, "What comes to mind when you think of an African American male"? Men have given responses such as loser, cheats on his wife, doesn't take care of his children; again initial negativity. However after the men initially release this, subsequently during the weekend they are often able to see some of their strengths. The group's facilitators use the stages of change model to help the men to see where they are and where they would like to be (Moore, 2005). Giles described the retreat weekend as very empowering for the men. They leave on Friday and come back at the end of the weekend. This cultural awareness of such issues for some Black gay men is unlikely to be learned via training programs based in Eurocentric gay male paradigms. Thus, the deconstruction of African American males' sexuality requires an examination of multiple levels of influence (Lewis & Kertzner, 2003).

Research

Rosiek (2003) refers psychologists to the historical ideas of John Dewey regarding the need to do meaningful research which details humans' experiences within their proper societal contexts. Positivistic ideas in psychology, lead to hypothesis testing using quantitative measures. However, Rosiek reminds readers that prior to the influence of positivism, psychologists of Dewey's era valued broader methodologies such as content analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, and phenomenological analysis which allow for a deeper understanding of humans' psychological experiences in their day to day lives. Often these methodologies are thought of as tools for sociologists, anthropologists, and scholars in cultural studies, but not psychologists. Like Rosiek, I argue that qualitative methodologies and the findings of interdisciplinary research should be incorporated into psychological research designs to maintain the human element in conducting social science research. These methods especially should be used by those who conduct research with LGBT people of African descent due to the marginalized nature of the population's life experiences. Via such qualitative methodologies we are able to gather life stories, including raw emotions, thoughts, and experiences of the population, and the researchers who conduct the studies (Lewis, 2011).

In calling for what he refers to as a qualitative research methodology that psychology can call its own, Rosiek makes the argument that psychologists should conduct phenomenological analyses to learn about human beings through their

own cultural voice. As previously proposed in Chap. 1 of this text, the formalized international study of LGBT people of African descent can be viewed as a type of nascent indigenous psychology. This subject as a type of cultural study in liberation psychology, is warranted. It necessitates the use of methodologies and instruments to study the populations from within, as opposed to attempting to apply outside standardized quantitative instruments to research the population.

Rosiek refers to the term, *qualitative experimentalism* in describing the type of methodology that psychologists may adopt as a tool to distinguish the discipline of psychology from other disciplines. The first research step using this methodology to study LGBT people of African descent, is the use of qualitative methods to access what has been referred to as hidden narrative information from within a marginalized population (National Cancer Institute, n.d.; DeBlaere, Brewster, Sarkees & Moradi, 2010). The second step would then be to use the information obtained via qualitative methods to create experimental designs that reveal possible cause and effect outcomes.

One specific example of how the second step applies to the research of LGBT people of African descent pertains to the issue of healthy integration of a spiritual identity with a sexual minority identity. As presented in Chap. 3, Fig. 3.3, it is possible that persons with the personality characteristic of openness may be more apt to have an attitudinal shift away from internalized homonegativity that has been based in traditional conservative religious beliefs. It is plausible that open persons may be able to move towards more diverse expressions of spirituality that are more consistent with their same gender loving expressions, after they have been exposed to non-western or non- Christian conservative specific ideology. An experimental study to investigate possible shifts in such attitudes after exposure to information about African-inspired spiritual practices or other non-western spiritual beliefs are worthy of investigation, with the caveat that this would be done only after first gathering qualitative data about the participants' religious experiences and beliefs.

Battle, Bennett, and Shaw (2004) presented an overview of research spanning 25 years on African American LGBT populations. Their conclusions and suggestions for next steps for social science research include increased acknowledgement that gay men and lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender men and women are significant members of the Black community. Their suggestions for new areas of research (i.e., beyond HIV, oppression and its negative effects) include family structure of Black LGBT families, sexual behavior and identity, political issues and attitudes, healthcare, discrimination, and religion. In addition to these suggestions, we advocate for further studies of gender non-conformity (i.e., Black male femininity) and its developmental impact for Black LGBT people, including experiences of positive marginality in association with gender non-conformity. Furthermore, as repeatedly reflected by the void in the literature, psychologists must make greater in-roads to reaching and researching the lives of Black transgender men and women, and Black lesbians. For example, while an international interdisciplinary Black gay research group (www.bgrg-international.org) currently exists for researchers interested in Black gay male and Black MSM populations, a comparable research group does not exist for researchers interested in same gender loving women of African descent.

Community Services

Karen Giles of *Us Helping Us*, also provided insights regarding the significance of the moment that parents may first recognize that they have a gender non-conforming child. Giles' assertion is that there may be a moment when a parent experiences "something" about a son or daughter which may be viewed as non gender normative. She mentioned the need for a creative and effective way for service providers to reach parents at this moment. Whether the child later acknowledges a same gender loving identity, heterosexuality, or transgender identity, Giles' point is that parents will need to cope with feelings of grief and loss over not having the child that they may have expected to have. She believes it is significant to provide outreach to parents very early when parents first acknowledge difference in their children which may suggest transgender and/or same sex sexuality. However, she acknowledged that knowing the best way to access the parents at this stage is not clear. A relevant challenge to this mission is the racial disparity regarding African Americans' overall level of comfort in seeking psychotherapeutic assistance and speaking openly about depression, grief, and loss (Craigwell, 2010; Williams, 2008).

A significant portion of Giles' interview highlighted the importance of dealing with family issues. Several of the men within the population of men with whom Giles works have been criticized and ostracized by their families. Giles points out that many of the men have never been able to communicate any parts of their sexual identity with family, which has led to isolation for many years. Giles stated, "it's heartbreaking to hear some of the stories of how they [men] were not able to talk with their families". Giles regards it as important to work with individuals, but she asserts that she wants families to also get the help that they need.

James Johnson is a social worker who also provided an interview for this chapter in June of 2009. Johnson provides mental health services to Black men who are clients of Whitman Walker Max Robinson Center in Washington, D.C. The Max Robinson Center is named after African American network news anchor, Max Robinson, who died of AIDS in 1988. The clinics' primary objective is to provide HIV/AIDS services to underserved clients in Southeast Washington D.C. Johnson spoke of a need for more cultural awareness for service providers. Johnson (a white male), admitted to not always feeling well versed in the cultural language and experiences of some of the same gender loving Black men for whom he provides services. For example, Johnson recounted a time prior to his becoming more culturally aware, when he was confused by some of his client's use of the word "*punk*" as a derogatory term used to refer to gay Black men in some Black communities. Johnson's admitted cultural confusion upon hearing this word was based upon his association of the word "punk" to solely a rock music cultural context, and not as language used to specifically refer to a non-gender conforming or often times gay Black male.

Johnson also spoke of some of his client's denial of same sex activity experienced during previous incarceration. Interestingly, Johnson stated that often clients may mention having knowledge of consensual sex as well as rapes occurring between males in prison, but commonly, his heterosexual identified Black male clients deny

having experienced sex while in prison. Developing creative and culturally sensitive methods of getting men to truthfully discuss such experiences when they may have occurred is crucial. An extensive examination of this issue is needed. Limited information is available which demonstrates that prison culture for incarcerated Black men results in their using various resources, roles, and posturing in order to reconstruct normative versions of masculinity (Nandi, 2002). However we need to know more about whether the reconstructed prison masculinity shifts or remains somewhat stable when the men are released back into society, irrespective of the men's sexual identities.

Johnson also mentioned his sessions with some same-sex attracted Black men who repeatedly endured anti-gay commentary from within the churches that they attended. He mentioned not quite understanding why these men do not find another church to attend. Karen Giles too, made extensive comments related to the significance of family and the church/religion for several of her clients. The men's desire to stay within their churches and families of origin may sometimes come with a very high price, due to the type of marginalization they experience in some of these contexts. The men's desires to stay connected to some form of faith community is consistent with the research findings on religiosity and psychological well being for Black Americans (Colbert, Jefferson, Gallo, & Davis, 2009). It also happens that some persons, during times of life challenges, may opt for counseling via a pastor or other church member rather than a professionally trained mental health services provider. Such instances could be problematic if an LGBT individual's family members and church family members expect social conformity via compulsory homosexuality (Maccio, 2010). Those providing community services to LGBT people of African descent may be faced with having to address such conflicts if and when the individual is comfortable enough to discuss this.

Dr. Peter Ji Interview, PFLAG, Chicago

The content of this section was obtained from an interview with Dr. Peter Ji on December 29th 2009. Dr. Ji received a copy of the interview transcript and made any necessary corrections. Dr. Ji was serving as the President of the Parents Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) Chicago chapter at the time of the interview. I (first author) spoke to him about the origins of African American outreach for PFLAG Chicago, including some of the successes and challenges. PFLAG of Chicago is located on the northside of the city. According to Peter, the Northside Chicago chapter is located in a predominantly white and more affluent area near Wrigley Field and the Center on Halstead (LGBT Community Center). His PLAG chapter had been receiving calls to the helpline from families and people of color, requesting to make contact with other families of color; yet PFLAG did not have the resources to help. They were also receiving calls to the help line from local area counselors who wanted to refer Black families to a PFLAG chapter, but no real

expertise existed for Black families. In addition, Southside Chicago residents found it difficult to travel to the northside for PFLAG meetings. Not many families of color were living on the northside, and it was speculated that not many southside families would be able to connect with many of the northside PFLAG families. These factors lead Ji to realize the need for a PFLAG chapter on the Southside to meet the needs of Black families residing there.

After receiving start up money from PFLAG national, Ji spread word to his own members. He was able to get a few people who were interested in helping, and they formed a planning committee. Initially it was difficult to find someone who was willing to commit to it. Thus he spent about a year trying to find the right combination of people who would be willing to commit monthly for 6–7 years to achieve a self-sustaining Southside chapter. It then took time to find a meeting space, which included numerous discussions regarding the pros and cons of having a church as a meeting space. Dr. Ji admitted initially having no connection to Black gay listservs or Black gay communities of the area. So, he initially made cold calls to explain the idea for the chapter; he then went to restaurants to have dinners with the few contacts that he made.

At the time of the interview, the Southside chapter had been in operation for about 18 months. Initially the meetings were held in the Hyde Park Neighborhood Club. The Southside PFLAG chapter is partnered with Affinity Community Services (see the following interview, this chapter). The partnership with Affinity is ideal because at the time of the interview, Affinity was located in the heart of the Southside; it could be accessed through public transportation, and it possessed sufficient meeting space. Keith McCoy, an African American male, leads the Southside chapter. He and three other persons are actively involved who are also African American: Two gay men and one lesbian identified woman. McCoy facilitates the monthly meetings.

At the time of the interview there was only the one Southside chapter serving African Americans; each of the other chapters (13 total) in the Chicago land area are predominantly white. Thus there is limited minority representation among PFLAG, with no strategy for how to diversify the chapters more than what currently exists. Racial and ethnic segregation for LGBT communities is still a problem in most cities, and Peter admits that Chicago is no different. Dr. Ji mentioned the need to be careful and sensitive about giving the impression to Black communities that PFLAG is seeking a relationship with them, with no clear explanation as to why. Ji mentioned the need to avoid any impressions of tokenism or exploitation. He understands that members of the Black community may wonder, "What's in it for us to affiliate ourselves with you? Will you be able to understand or relate?" Other issues that Dr. Ji mentioned regarding the Southside community are:

Class Issues

Internet access is a problem for Black families on the Southside. So, the use of the internet to inform about PFLAG events and meetings is a challenge. The use of schools and churches to market the existence of the Southside Chapter has been presented as primary options. However, awareness and promotion of the Southside chapter continues to be an issue.

Parents
Parents participate intermittently; the Southside chapter has attempted to reach out in terms of involving parents. However, work and socioeconomics are barriers. Transportation issues are also barriers to getting the parents involved. The chapter tries to offer opportunities to connect parents with one another (i.e., connect them so that they can informally talk on their own time/schedule) so that they do not have to have to rely on a chapter meeting to see another parent. Parents seem to enjoy talking to other parents who have a gay child, when their schedules permit. It is tough on several of the families in terms of finding the time to meet or talk, though some are interested in the work that the organization is trying to do. Regarding parents' reactions to their LGBT children—some of them are still in this stage of – *we still don't understand what's going on*; *we accept them [gay children], but we don't understand what this all is*; several seem accepting yet confused.

Lack of Black Transgender Awareness
Peter personally knew of a few openly out Black transgender persons that he has met. The trans population is working hard to have their voices recognized, but it is such a difficult group to access. Peter stated having personally met a few transgender persons who have concerns and want a voice; however, admittedly his contact has been limited and needs development. He views the population as a hard to reach population. However, he definitely feels that more contact and information on what is happening on the Southside is needed regarding Black transgender issues.

Teens
LGBT younger and older teens participate in the monthly group, sometimes in large numbers, but without parents for a host of reasons. In Chicago, there are other services available for LGBT people; however more services are needed in various parts of the city for people to access, particularly for those on the Southside. Black teens come out to meetings in large numbers, but not often with their parents for youth events. Peter expressed some concern about this because he feels that ideally more parents should be aware that the kids are coming to these events. The LGBT youth do make references to grandmas and aunts; and group leaders have queried the teens as to how might they get these family members to participate. Many of the kids are without fathers, and there is a lack of supportive male involvement from immediate or extended family. It would be a tremendous help if more fathers would be involved with PFLAG efforts. However many fathers are absent from the children's lives. This lack of supportive male involvement is an issue for white youth populations as well.

Religion
There are ever-growing Black pastors who want to be open and affirming, however there is sometimes a rift in terms of pastors being able to openly express support for Black LGBT people among their congregations. Pastors need the congregation financially, so the issue is very complex. Pastors' concerns must be respected in terms of the congregational risks, but currently, PFLAG Chicago is brainstorming about possibly selecting a church to host guest speakers from Black LGBT populations who might visit the church, hoping to change hearts and minds. This is so that open

and affirming pastors can obtain more support from their congregations. Ji believes that one church could really be a case study of intervention efforts on the Southside, though there must be trust and relationship built with a pastor.

Though he has found it exciting to take on the challenges, Peter admitted that PFLAG Chicago is nowhere near where he thinks that they should be for taking on the issues that are needed for communities of color, and providing adequate outreach services. Importantly though, he has dispelled some myths that he had about the Black community regarding openness and acceptance of LGBT issues. There is diversity in attitudes and opinions about LGBT issues within the Southside community. Ji expects that with more access and outreach to the population, he will continue to learn more and understand more about what is truth and what is myth.

Also, for this chapter, Kimberly Hunt, the director of Affinity Community Services provided an interview. Due to the literature's relative lack of Black lesbian voices, Ms. Hunt's interview is presented with her complete responses to the interview questions, as transcribed. The interview took place on January 7th 2010, Ms. Hunt received the transcription of the interview for her review in order to make any necessary corrections. Affinity Community Services is located in Chicago, Illinois.

Kimberly Hunt Interview, Affinity Community Services

How long have you been with Affinity as Executive Director? What was your trajectory to doing this type of work? I am the very first director and was hired in May 2009. I had been on the board for 2 years prior, and I started I guess via experiences as a young person growing up in the 1970s. My mother worked in the urban renewal office in Kansas City. Many African American communities got uprooted and mother's job was to help individual property owners get fair value for their homes. Unconsciously, I guess I watched my mother work to help people, and that was the seed that influenced me towards urban planning and public policy. I always looked out for the "underdog". My public policy interest was so that I could understand the language; so I could translate this to communities and then up to the power structures. I co-founded a for-profit consulting firm called OHcommunity partners – the intent was to bring best practices to non-profits for under-resourced communities. Bringing tools to community organizations was another goal. We focused on economic development. I joined Affinity's board after a few years into that. I wanted to bring my experience and skills to Affinity's already great work; I was intrigued by the work and leaders of Affinity. I loved being on the Board, the programming, and Affinity's approach to the community work. Affinity operates from a values perspective, and has a lot of integrity regarding the community. It has always had good leaders on the board who have integrity; this is very important.

What are the most challenging aspects of your work? What are the most rewarding aspects of your work? Fundraising is always a challenge, particularly because for organizations that do social justice work, there are not a lot of foundations that fund this type of work; they want to see significant amounts of the income coming from

the constituents, which is hard for low income constituents. As a social justice organization you have to practice what you preach. You cannot just go to power structures and ask what they are doing, but you have to be mindful of how you do your work, and how you approach constituents and volunteers respectfully. We must be careful not to perpetuate the power structures that we want to modify. Being a leader is challenging because you have to constantly think about your motivations for decisions, and have thick skin. You have to put constituents first and be "on" all of the time, even when you don't' think you're "on"! Positive aspects of my work are at the program level because I get to put some things in place that are truly designed to help people. I come into contact with lots of other individuals who are trying to change the world, when people have lots to be depressed about. Seeing young people who I have helped train, and I have learned from, and then seeing them go on to excel and keep it going.

Tell me about the diversity of types of Black women who are the constituents of Affinity. Communities are not monolithic. We define primarily as LGBT youth of color, and lesbian and bisexual African American women. We are expanding to include Black women irrespective of sexuality. There is a range of incomes, range of education, and range of religious and spiritual beliefs. There is some generalized dynamic between lesbian and bisexual women as far as tensions. The thought among some lesbians is that there is mistrust of bisexual women (i.e., they are not making a choice). We have just begun to touch on this tension. Much of our programming has not dealt with raising these issues in terms of dialogue. It relates to sexual health and reproductive health. Also among discussions about youth it comes up because the youth are more verbal without trying to be politically correct. The youth seem to be more accepting of bisexuality on some levels. Youth don't like labels as much, and are more open to having different experiences without nailing it down right away. For some of them bisexuality is a fall-back position, as they are experimenting. Bisexual women come individually and with partners. One of our scholars in the Leadership Institute identifies as bisexual. Until recently, our youth population started at 18, but now it has moved to as young as 13. We also have women well into their 70s and 80s who are a part of our core constituency.

What plans do you have for expanding services or outreach to the women of the area? Any other collaborations such as with Amigas Latinas? What was the impetus behind the collaboration with Amigas Latinas? The two groups were started at about the same time. Recent collaboration started as Affinity was going through strategic planning and a desire to broaden our work to individuals, but thinking broadly about partnerships and different levels of work. I realize that we can't do it all ourselves. We honed in on STD infections and how high this is among people of color. It is not just a black issue. Discussions about marriage equality and gay civil rights and people seen in the media are white males, with some white women. It became apparent that we have some education to do in our own LGBT communities, requiring bringing more people of color to the table. Also, there have been some rifts racially between blacks and Latinos, and Affinity wanted to move beyond this. We have future plans for expansion in terms of health advocacy work in terms of reaching more Black women, perhaps through the Black church to build relationships

(i.e., a domestic violence campaign through rape victim advocates, also a group called *Aqua Moon* – they use spoken word and stage productions to do social justice work). Our campaign has involved reaching out to Black churches to address domestic violence from the pulpit, with materials available and volunteers present for educational awareness within a small group of churches. Our goal is to reach more Black women regarding our health work. We also are partnered with National Action Network (Tony Wayford) in work on a health summit in April on health issues specific to Black Women's Health.

Are there women who are coming out of heterosexual marriage seeking support at Affinity? Yes! The fluidity issue is nuanced. What gets layered on top of this concept for women in general and particularly for women of marginalized communities, is that women are expected to marry, have babies, etc. Any going against the grain can be problematic. Sometimes sexual fluidity is not the primary explanation, but it is the dealing with expectations. For some women they may be very aware of what they are feeling (same sex attraction), but the expectations are so influential. Women may proceed down the heterosexual path because that's what is expected. After a lengthy heterosexual marriage and children, a woman may have to have a discussion about how she would really like to live her life. Lots of women coming out of marriage have these similar experiences. For some it was "I didn't know until I met this certain person"; some women choose to step out of the marriage, but some are still with their husbands and hidden. *The burning bowl* ceremony (a ritual to release negativity with a positive replacement) attracts a wide variety of people as a spiritual piece of Affinity, and some may come out who are married women dealing with this issue. People are at different places where they cannot be out at work or to their families. We must respect where everyone is.

I noticed on your website that you responded to a request from constituents to have Bible study. How did this come about, and what has been the response to these meetings? Most or many constituents are from the broader Black community and were brought up in the church. Some have left completely, organized religion, or for some it is perceived rejection for being out, and it extends to any Black church, so they don't' go. There is however, still a desire to be a part of some sort of faith community. It is such a part of family culture for generations that they miss it when they feel they can't be a part of it; *burning bowl* awakens a desire to be reconnected to this again and to be around similar minded people. At the last two burning bowls, they were real feel-good kinds of events. Some kind of follow up activity is then desired. It is Christian-centric. Bible study is the follow up. We have LGBT members lead bible study and examine the words from a spiritual and safe place, rather than literal interpretations; text is examined and discussed. Affinity has also had a book discussion group by author Terry Angel Mason – it was empowering to the LGBT community. Mr. Mason said to the group, "God does not hate you" – he said this, and you could feel the tension go away and feel the difference in the group (group of about 30 or 40 Black gay men). Affinity has had a lot of men in the space in the last 6 months. In February, Affinity will have a panel on religion in the LGBT community.

Are there other services offered on the Southside of Chicago for members of the Black LGBT community? There have always been a number of groups that have served some niche, and what they provide depends on generational issues and what the coming out experiences have been like over the years. There were underground and above ground parties from the 1960s onwards (not formal 5013c). There have been some other folks working with youth. There is the Black Pride Group and the Men's Groups. Some focus on health issues or Arts and Culture. It's easy to look for the non-profits because most have websites, but also it is important to acknowledge that in marginalized communities there is a lot of work going on that doesn't have formal or western structure. There is a desire to serve a group of people and build community, so these groups have no staff, but their founders are still around, still doing the work because people have the needs. Particularly, young people too are doing things under the radar.

I notice that you have a new initiative for transgender women. What can you tell me about the Black transgender community on the Southside of Chicago? Our mission statement always included the transgender community; we haven't had programming geared specifically towards the population, however Affinity has a history of standing up for transgender people. There was a gathering place many years ago called *Moving Mountains Café*. Once a month there was a space for women – lectures, panel discussions, social gatherings; it attracted lots of women (mainly white, with no men allowed); no transgender women were allowed either, but Affinity was one of the few groups that refused to participate because of this discrimination. This was early in Affinity's years. Finding the African American transgender community is very tough because it is a fractured community. Helena Buschong has done lots on the local and national levels for transgender issues. Helena attended a meeting that was an LGBT community liaison meeting. At the meeting, I talked to Helena and invited her to hold meetings at Affinity (to provide space for one of Helena's organizations). Helena responded by making a specific request to be a part of Affinity, and I said yes! So, the details of the transgender outreach program are being worked out (life skills work, dress for success, resume building, discussion groups), but is underway.

What kinds of service needs do Black lesbian or bisexual mothers need? How to come out to the children. There is a roundtable; however, no family focused programming has existed in the history of the organization. I'm not sure why, with so many women coming out of heterosexual marriage. This has been dealt with in a peer way, but we need to expand and learn more about this. There were lots of children at the holiday programming sponsored with *Amigas Latinas*! We definitely need more family-focused programming.

Tell me about the community conscious raising that Affinity does. The butch-femme issue is relevant here among young couples, i.e., domestic violence, but Affinity wants to address domestic violence issues broadly in the African American community. I am really an advocate for integrating LGBT issues with any issues related to social justice. This is Affinity's approach to health issues, domestic violence issues. We want to do work with the Catholic church around youth violence issues. Details are still being worked out, but youth violence in Chicago is out of control.

What do you find are the most pressing needs of young Black women/youth who are out, or "coming out" today? Affinity focuses on affirming youth and making youth feel safe and whole people; I feel that someone must step up as mentors and protectors of LGBT youth. The youth are vulnerable and developing persons. Sometimes the youth don't know what is best for them at times.

How much involvement do you see of the women's family members or other allies? We haven't always had a forum for that, but for *Jazz in July,* people bring people from their lives or friends because it is a fun event (concert, fundraising event). PFLAG Southside meetings provide opportunities for families to be engaged. Back in early fall 2009, I got a call from a young man looking for services for his sister who came out at 16. She is now in her late 20s. His concern for her was that she had no support services. The mother thought that she was going through a phase, even though she had been with her partner for almost 10 years. He wanted to bring her around positive people. He wanted to come and check out Affinity for his sister to be sure it was safe, and he has been to every event since! His sister finally came to the holiday event with her son.

How do you see Affinity as a model for other organizational start-ups to follow? Affinity may be regarded by some as a model because of the work that we do in this community and nationally in terms of its health advocacy efforts. We even commission research when we have to. Also, our volunteers take their knowledge outwards. We also play an informal role in Chicago as mediator and providing technical assistance in the community. We try to provide values and principles for how to behave as a social justice community organization with integrity.

The interview with Kimberly Hunt was enlightening and encouraging in terms of the type of support available to the constituents. Ms. Hunt's description of the organization and the program offerings are likely benefiting the community of women and youth due to the social structure of Affinity, the types of social interactions that occur, and the women's perceptions of the support that is available in their times of need or crisis (Uehara, 1990).

Out Like Us – PFLAG Winston Salem

Information for this section is based on my (first author) monthly work during 2008 to 2010 with *Out Like Us* in Winston-Salem. I served as the group's facilitator for the monthly *Out Like Us* rap sessions. In August 2008, *Out Like Us* held its first rap session/support group in the city of Winston Salem. *Out like Us* refers to the African American outreach committee of the PFLAG Winston Salem organization. Similarly to the experiences of PFLAG Chicago, PFLAG-Winston Salem has a history of being gravely underutilized by African Americans in the city. However, the only African American PFLAG-Winston Salem board member at the time, approached her fellow board members with the suggestion to do something to foster African American outreach. Thus, the *Out Like Us* committee was formed. At the time of

this writing, the committee was still in existence and provided a 2 hour monthly rap session targeting African American LGBT people, their families, and allies.

It was decided to refer to the monthly group as a rap session, as opposed to a support group in the initial marketing efforts, in hopes that this would be more successful in attracting participants who may be deterred by the label "support" group. Though *Out Like Us* is a sub-committee of PFLAG, whose mission is to provide support to parents, families, and friends of LGBT people, the rap sessions have primarily been attended by Black lesbians. Although not established to be a woman only group, over the duration of the rap sessions, attendance by Black men has been sparse. It has been an ongoing challenge to identify how to engage Black men of the Winston Salem area in the rap group. The lack of Black male participation may be likely due to a host of intersecting reasons mentioned elsewhere in this text, but may also have particular relevance to the city's relatively small size and location in a southern region (Peter Ji in his interview stated that Black males are very active in the Chicago Southside group meetings). Gender may also be a factor, due to the *Out Like Us* committee members being lesbian identified, and myself as the group facilitator of the rap session also being a woman. At each meeting, participants are encouraged to invite male-identified persons to the meetings. A few of the meetings have had one or two male persons present. On such occasions, the males have been heterosexual siblings or children of lesbian participants. Less often have the male participants been gay, bisexual or transgender Black men.

Meetings are held in the city's only African American predominantly LGBT attending church, *Church of the Holy Spirit*. Though the church has played a significant role in the LGBT community of Winston Salem by hosting a number of meetings and events for local LGBT groups (including the annual Trans People of Color Conference), there are still segments of the Black LGBT population who prefer not to meet in a church facility. Thus, this too is likely a barrier to reaching wider numbers of people. Though *Out Like Us* rap sessions have been held consistently for approaching 2 years at the time of this writing, the committee still faces an uphill battle to remain active. *Out Like Us* has not been successful in expanding its activities beyond the monthly rap sessions, and attendance by family members is still underwhelming. Like Peter Ji expressed regarding the beginning of the Southside chapter of PFLAG, it has also been a challenge to find a committed group of people to do the *Out Like Us* work, in order to thrive. However for each meeting for nearly 2 years, consistently there have been persons who come, looking forward to having a discussion. The rap sessions have focused on topics such as Are We Healthy?; Telling the Kinfolk; What's in a Label?; Black Love; Issues With Mother; and Raising Children in a Gay/Lesbian Household. *Out Like Us* would like to expand the numbers of new attendees (rap sessions attract on average about eight to ten participants), secure a stable and committed committee, establish a partnership with the gay/straight student alliance of Winston Salem State University, and expand its community services for Black LGBT people and their friends and family members. Exceptionally well attended meetings have had as many as 20 enthusiastic participants, suggesting that there is a need for, and an appreciation of such offerings in the Winston Salem community for African Americans. However, far more services are needed in this geographic area to centralize the experiences of same gendered loving

people of African descent. Centralizing cultural experiences in the provision of services has been emphasized by counseling psychologists for meeting the needs of LGBT people of color (Moradi, DeBlaere, & Huang, 2010).

Young Black Ellument – The Dallas Experiment

The Dallas experiment, entitled Young Black Ellument, has a mission to provide services beyond just safe-sex training. Specifically, participants learn how to cope with homophobia within the Black community, as well as coping with discrimination and other issues related to being economically disadvantaged (Jacobson, 2010). The program's target population is young Black men who have unprotected sex with other men. So far, the effort has reached more than 300 Black men, mostly ages 18–29 in Dallas. It is a 4 year $1.6 million project which includes social activities such as picnics, fashion shows, worship service, weekly coffee hours and an event called "Queerly Speaking." Researchers from the University of California, San Francisco are conducting the social experiment to determine in a year, if more of the men will be practicing safe sex and being tested regularly for HIV. Their infection rate will be compared to similar young men in Houston who are not involved in the prevention efforts.

Dallas was picked due to a lack of such programs in Dallas (prevention programs targeting young Black men). Dallas County has had the state's highest HIV/AIDS infection rate for years. 52% of the new cases were Blacks, while Blacks accounted for only 21% of the county's population in 2008 (Jacobson). It has been stated that many are reluctant to be tested because they fear discrimination. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is funding the Dallas project.

CDC has struggled to stop the spread of HIV among young Black men. It is important to note though, that this is not necessarily due to the men engaging in more sexual activity, but due to being a fairly small network of people having sex with each other. Jacobson also states that one researcher suggests that the men have not learned to communicate about sex, much less safer sex, with a lack of basic knowledge about HIV/AIDS. Based on preliminary anecdotal information, it is also believed that programs may also be drastically needed in Dallas for teen prevention of HIV/AIDS.

The Ellument group operates out of a drop-in center, and they provide computer access and free condoms. The program uses Facebook and MySpace to get out the safer sex messages. Such outlets are viewed as a new way to reach the men with safer sex information; they also do outreach in gay clubs. The drop in center also has a "*confessional wall*". Each month, a question is written on the back of the bathroom door, and visitors are urged to anonymously but truthfully respond to the question. Several men who have visited the wall thus far have written that they have had sex for money for reasons such as fun, food, tuition, rent, or to pay bills for their relatives. If successful, the Dallas program will be replicated in other cities. The preliminary promising results of this Dallas community based intervention is consistent with the reduction of sexual risk taking found in another community based HIV prevention intervention for African American men who have sex with men and women (Operario, Smith, Arnold, & Kegeles, 2010).

Conclusion and Next Steps

As indicated by Sampson (1989), if psychology is to move forward with a more critical and inclusive psychology, it must be prepared to meet the challenges of social change. LGBT issues for racial and ethnic minorities must increasingly become a part of psychologists' work. Specifically, for people of African descent, HBCUs and other institutions that prioritize diversity are in unique positions to advance the study of the content of this text. A goal should be to educate, train, and inspire future generations of educators, researchers, and community service providers to address Black issues in LGBT psychology by using multiple methods and integrated research and writings across multiple disciplines. Also, as reflected in the comments of community service providers of this chapter, and research findings, alternative practices are in order to reach the hidden populations of Black LGBT persons and their family members. As discussed in this chapter and other chapters of this text, culturally sensitive alternative practices are needed that will be successful in spite of socio-cultural explanations that can be barriers to accessing the populations. For example, substantial numbers of Black persons may avoid therapy/counseling as well as avoid participating in research studies, however hearing their voices is imperative.

Regarding next steps for educators, researchers, and community services there are many places where Black men and women gather and socialize; such spaces meet psychosocial and cultural needs. One example of such a place is the Black barbershop, but, how can we tap into this? Another example as mentioned in this text is the Black church. Both Peter Ji and Kimberly Hunt of this chapter mention the significance of being able to partner with churches to provide community services for Black populations of LGBT persons. Community-based participatory research which involves the church would be beneficial.

Psychologists must also move full speed ahead with organizing conferences about Black issues for LGBT people of African descent at HBCUs, as HBCUs are located in Black communities. Those researching Black LGBT populations would be wise to become integrated with the community in a culturally sensitive manner. This will enable us to better educate, research, and serve LGBT people of African descent who are in the surrounding community. We especially need to reach members of the Black transgender community. Increasingly too, contact must be made with youth in colleges and other youth in the communities. Youth LGBT cultures are more open and comfortable with themselves than previous generations of Black LGBT people; however they still need role models, guidance and education. Youth also require help in coping with family and developmental issues.

Also regarding next steps, those in social sciences should model the participants of the lesbian feminist leadership institute held in February 2008 in Mozambique (Matebeni, 2009). Blacks throughout the Diaspora should be motivated to develop Black feminist thinkers and leaders who address the needs of LGBT people of African descent. This should occur irrespective of gender, nationality, and sexual identity. The participants at the week-long lesbian feminist leadership

institute in Mozambique comprised a diverse group (i.e., multinational, varying sexual identities including heterosexual, and transmen). We are optimistic that such a diverse gathering to interrogate Black LGBT needs can and should be replicated at HBCUs and other institutions with diverse populations.

A replication of the Mozambique institute's highlight of issues around sexuality, particularly same-sex sexuality and the contentious issues on gender in Black communities, may help to dismantle the marginalization of those of African descent who are sexual minorities and/or transgender. Within institutions that address social justice issues of diversity worldwide, the need is great for an analysis of models that are most applicable to the diversity of Black activists, academics, researchers, students, psychotherapists, transgender people, same gendered loving people, and their allies. This text has aimed to generate an increased critical consciousness about the marginalized diversities of Black same gender loving and Black transgender people. The result of this and other relevant interdisciplinary work will hopefully advance studies of LGBT people of African descent as a culturally informed, intersecting identities body of work in liberation psychology.

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