

TEACHING BEYOND THE DEFICIT MODEL: GAY AND LESBIAN ISSUES AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS, LATINOS, AND ASIAN AMERICANS.

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PREVIOUS STUDIES OF GAY AND LESBIAN identity development focused mainly on the experiences of European Americans. Recently, attention has been given to the effects of race or ethnicity on this development process (Cox & Gallois, 1996; Fassinger & Miller, 1996; Troiden, 1989). It is generally believed that gay men and lesbians have difficulties forming a positive identity due to the stigma assigned to being homosexual. This stigma must be managed by a process of disclosing to some, while concealing from others (Cain, 1991). However, the authors believe that if a deficit perspective, which focuses on the individual's weaknesses and societal barriers, is used in social work education to examine race and ethnicity issues, gay men and lesbians of color will always be represented as having substantial and continuous difficulties. Even if the coming-out process is portrayed as a positive step for gay men and lesbians, it is always perceived as a difficult process for people of color to form a healthy gay/lesbian identity while simultaneously maintaining a positive ethnic identity. This multiple minority status has been described in the literature as problematic for gays and lesbians (Eliason, 1996; Snider, 1996).

When problems become the focus, lesbian women of color are thus faced with "triple jeopardy," as they must cope with oppression due to their race, gender, and sexual orientation (Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996). Gay and lesbian ethnic minorities are faced with a unique challenge--integrating two identities, one pertaining to ethnic culture and the other to sexual orientation, in a society that does not fully accept either one. It is our responsibility as social work educators to examine not only this challenge, but also the strengths that gay and lesbian ethnic minorities possess to alter this deficit view. Therefore, this article has two purposes: (1) identifying major variables contributing to this challenge and (2) examining whether a strengths perspective exists in current literature to describe the process through which gay men and lesbians of color first form their cultural identities and simultaneously develop and maintain their personal identities. The authors will first offer a critical view on using current teaching frameworks of minority identity development for working with gay men and lesbians. Then we will analyze the literature of the past decade to examine similarities and differences among African Americans, Latinos (designating Americans of Latin or Hispanic origin), and Asian Americans in terms of difficulties and strengths.

Minority Identity Development Theories

As ethnic minorities assimilate into two or more cultures, they may find their experiences reflected in any of the five stages of the Minority Identity Development Model (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989): (1) Conformity, where dominant cultural values are preferred to one's own cultural values; (2) Dissonance, when values and beliefs are challenged in a time of cultural confusion and conflict; (3) Resistance and Immersion, when the values of the dominant culture are rejected and only those of the minority culture are held; (4) Introspection, when the narrow restrictions of the previous stage are questioned, and a conflict between loyalty to personal autonomy and ethnicity occurs; and (5) Synergetic Articulation and Awareness, when self-fulfillment occurs with cultural identity, and cultural values are accepted or rejected on their merit or prior experience.

It is important to note that a person's identity development does not have to start from or end at any one stage. Also, identity development does not move in a linear fashion because of the influence of the environment on an individual's experience (Zera, 1992).

Similarly, the Cass (1979) Model of Homosexual Identity Formation utilizes six stages of development. These stages include: (1) Identity Confusion; (2) Identity Comparison; (3) Identity Tolerance; (4)

Identity Acceptance; (5) Identity Pride;, and (6) Identity Synthesis. These stages move the individual from confusion into comparing, accepting, understanding, and associating personal identity with sexual orientation. This model explains the coming-out process as a "positive element" in a person's identity development (Kottman, Lingg, & Tisdell, 1995). It has a balanced view of both the negative and positive energy diverted into forming a personal identity.

Another model of homosexual identity formation, what Troiden termed (1989) the ideal-typical model of homosexual identity formation, involves four stages: (1) Sensitization; (2) Identity Confusion; (3) Identity Assumption; and (4) Identity Commitment. Sensitization occurs before puberty and involves feelings of being different from one's same-sex peers. During this stage children may experience difficulties with self-esteem, socialization, cognition, psychological integrity, and development of interpersonal skills. Identity confusion occurs when adolescents start to recognize that they have thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that might be homosexual in nature. This occurs for males at about age 17, and for females around age 18. Stage 3, identity assumption, typically begins for males between the ages of 19 and 21, and for females between 21 and 23. This stage involves the individuals recognizing that they are gay or lesbian. Gay and lesbian cultures are explored during this stage and a homosexual identity is accepted. Stage 4, identity commitment, involves the integration of a homosexual lifestyle into an individual's life and rarely occurs during adolescence.

A critical analysis of these developmental models helps educators and students identify the fact that the process of gay and lesbian identity development can be nonlinear. The identity development of one individual may start from Stage 1, while another individual may start from Stage 3 and then move to Stage 2. Because their identity development can be nonlinear, there is a need for using an integrative approach to work with gay and lesbian populations, especially with ethnic minorities. In sum, the Minority Identity Development Model, Troiden's four-stage model, and the Cass Model of Homosexual Identity Formation share three theoretical assumptions. First, an individual's identity development is not static; it moves from rejection and denial of self-image to accepting one's identity as positive. Second, an individual goes through confusion and rejection stages to search for the meaning of identity, to a complete separation from and rejection of the dominant society. Third, the acceptance of a person's own identity is a goal to achieve.

These three common areas demonstrate the importance of assessing and promoting the individual's ability to synthesize their individual experience of life. They also provide a theoretical background for understanding and identifying obstacles and strengths in achieving a positive and productive identity. These three areas also provide practical advice for practitioners working with gay and lesbian people of color. However, the three areas do not specify how a client's personal characteristics and their cultural orientation may at the same time affect the direction of his or her identity development. In order to contribute to a better understanding of the multiple identity issues faced by gay men and lesbians of color, and to provide guidelines and suggestions for practice, this article will focus on examining current research on gay and lesbian issues affecting ethnic minorities.

Method

Based on the rapid development of practice with gay and lesbian populations, a 10-year period (1989-98) was chosen to examine the most recent research efforts so that future directions could be analyzed. African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans were chosen as the focus of the analysis because of their growing numbers. They are the three largest ethnic minority groups in the United States, representing 13%, 11%, and 4% respectively, of the total population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997). From these three groups come many shared experiences as well as different perspectives on identity development.

Information was obtained by using a keyword search in PsychInfo, Sociofile, and Social Work Abstracts.

Keywords utilized in the search included gay, lesbian, identity development, ethnicity, ethnic minority, race, color, homosexual, African-American, Latin-American, Asian-American, and Latino. Use of a keyword search may have excluded some articles that were not keyed in under these abstracts, and the most recent articles of 1998 may not have been included. In this search, 22 journal articles were located and reviewed for content analysis.

During the literature review, common concepts and themes were identified. These words and concepts were categorized by the three ethnic groups. The common categories were then cross-referenced with variables identified in a grid format and discussed between the authors. This selection process was further critiqued by two mental health professionals. As a result, 14 variables frequently identified in these articles were considered significant for this study. Table 1 lists these variables in alphabetical order with respective references: (1) Assimilation/Choosing between Cultures; (2) Cultural Values; (3) Disclosure; (4) Discrimination; (5) Family Values, Roles, and Expectations; (6) Gender Roles; (7) Social Support, Resources, and Role Models; (8) Language; (9) Manhood and Machismo; (10) Oppression and Multiple Minority Status; (11) Rejection; (12) Religion; (13) Sexual Behavior; and (14) Socioeconomic Status and Education. A content analysis with key concepts being reexamined was completed to analyze the practice orientation of these studies, as well as the similarities and differences between and among the three ethnic groups.

Table 1. References for Information on Identity Development Factors by Population Group

Identity Development Factors	African Americans
Assimilation/Choosing between Cultures	Greene, 1994; Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996; Jackson & Brown, 1996; Loiacano, 1989; Mays, Cochran, & Rhue, 1993; Monteiro & Fuqua, 1994; Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993
Cultural Values	Greene, 1994; Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996; Loiacano, 1989; Monteiro & Fuqua, 1994; Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993; Jackson & Brown, 1996; Stokes, Vanable, & McKirnan, 1996
Disclosure	Morris, 1997
Discrimination	Greene, 1994; Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996; Icard, 1996; Jackson & Brown, 1996; Loiacano, 1989; Mays, et al., 1993; Monteiro & Fuqua, 1994
Family Values, Roles, and Expectations	Greene, 1994; Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996; Icard, 1996; Loiacano, 1989; Morris, 1997
Gender Roles	Greene, 1994; Loiacano, 1989; Zamora-Hernandez & Patterson, 1996
Social Support, Resources, and Role Models	Jackson & Brown, 1996; Loiacano, 1989

Language

Manhood and Machismo	Monteiro & Fuqua, 1994
Oppression and Multiple Minority Status	Jackson & Brown, 1996; Loiacano, 1989; Mays et al., 1993
Rejection	Greene, 1994; Loiacano, 1989; Monteiro & Fuqua, 1994
Religion	Greene, 1994; Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996; Icard, 1996; Jackson & Brown, 1996; Morris, 1997
Sexual Behavior	Cochran & Mays, 1994; Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996; Jackson & Brown, 1996; Monteiro & Fuqua, 1994; Stokes et al., 1996
Socioeconomic Status and Education	Icard, 1996; Jackson & Brown, 1996; Morris, 1997
Identity Development Factors	Latin Americans
Assimilation/Choosing between Cultures	Almaguer, 1991; Baez, 1996; Carballo-Diequez, 1989; Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993; Zamora-Hernandez & Patterson, 1996.
Cultural Values	Almaguer, 1991; Baez, 1996; Carballo-Diequez, 1989; Chan, 1989; Greene, 1994; Zamora-Hernandez & Patterson, 1996.
Disclosure	Baez, 1996; Carballo-Diequez, 1989; Chan, 1989; Greene, 1994.
Discrimination	Zamora-Hernandez & Patterson, 1996.
Family Values, Roles, and Expectations	Baez, 1996; Chan, 1989; Greene, 1994; Zamora-Hernandez & Patterson, 1996.
Gender Roles	Baez, 1996; Chan, 1989; Greene, 1994; Zamora-Hernandez & Patterson, 1996.
Social Support, Resources, Role Models	Baez, 1996.
Language	Carballo-Diequez, 1989; Greene, 1994; Zamora-Hernandez & Patterson, 1996.
Manhood and Machismo	Baez, 1996; Zamora-Hernandez &

	Patterson, 1996.
Oppression and / Multiple Minority Status	Baez, 1996; Carballo-Diequez, 1989; Zamora-Hernandez & Patterson, 1996.
Rejection	Chan, 1989; Loiacano, 1989.
Religion	Baez, 1996; Carballo-Diequez, 1989; Greene, 1994.
Sexual Behavior	Almaguer, 1991; Carballo-Diequez, 1989; Zamora-Hernandez & Patterson, 1996.
Socioeconomic Status and Education	Carballo-Diequez, 1989; Greene, 1994; Zamora-Hernandez & Patterson, 1996.
Identity Development Factors	Asian Americans
Assimilation/Choosing between Cultures	Chan, 1989; Greene, 1994; Loiacano, 1989; Manalansan, 1994; Sohng & Icard, 1996.
Cultural Values	Chan, 1989; Greene, 1994; Ho, 1995; Pan, et al., 1995; Sohng & Icard, 1996; Tsui, 1986.
Disclosure	Chan, 1989.
Discrimination	Chan, 1989; Sohng & Icard, 1996.
Family Values, Roles, and Expectations	Chan, 1989; Greene, 1994; Ho, 1995; Pan, Wu, & Gil, 1995; Sohng & Icard, 1996.
Gender Roles	Chan, 1989; Sohng & Icard, 1996.
Social Support, Resources, Role Models	Chan, 1989; Greene, 1994; Sohng & Icard, 1996.
Language	
Manhood and Machismo	
Oppression and / Multiple Minority Status	Chan, 1989.
Rejection	
Religion	Pan, et al., 1995; Williams, 1994.
Sexual Behavior	Pan, et al., 1995; Tsui, 1986.
Socioeconomic Status	Manalansan, 1994.

and Education

Commonalities Five common themes were identified as variables affecting the identity development of gay and lesbian African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. These variables were discrimination, oppression, choosing between cultures, rejection, and social support. Discrimination and oppression occur within multiple communities for gays and lesbians of color. Gay and lesbian ethnic minorities experience oppression within their ethnic communities for being homosexual, as well as racial discrimination from the larger white society. This makes it very difficult to assimilate into both cultures, which may ultimately make them feel that they must choose between cultures. In addition, many gay and lesbian African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans experience rejection from the white-dominated gay and lesbian communities, leaving them with limited social support, few resources, and a lack of role models to assist them in negotiating the complex process of identity development.

Discrimination and racism have been well documented as they relate to gay men and lesbians of color (e.g., Mays, Cochran, & Rhue, 1993; Monteiro & Fuqua, 1994; Sohng & Icard, 1996). Racism and discrimination continue to negatively affect people of color regardless of their sexuality. In a study assessing the psychosocial well-being of gay African American, Icard (1996) reports that African Americans continue to live in a hostile environment that limits their ability to succeed socially and economically. Jackson and Brown's (1996) study emphasizes how racism is experienced both from the Anglo heterosexual community and from within the gay and lesbian community. It is expected that gay men and lesbians of color must function in multiple communities, including their racial/ethnic community and the gay community. Thus, they may experience discrimination within their ethnic communities for being a sexual minority, and racism in the larger society. As described in the general literature on ethnic minority gay men and lesbians, "ethnic minority homosexuals ... face bigotry and isolation in the wider gay community and sexual prejudice in their ethnic communities" (Sullivan, 1993, p. 1), and at the same time, these individuals face racism that is often seen as a cause of internalized homophobia (Wagner, Serafini, Rabkin, Remien, & Williams, 1994). The literature analyzed in this study also shows that many gay men and lesbians demonstrate the need to model "normalcy" as a method of coping with the resistant thoughts of not meeting the ideal of the larger culture (Greene, 1994; Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996). The process of identity development for gay men and lesbians of color is hindered by rejection from the gay community (Monteiro & Fuqua, 1994). This adjustment process is even more difficult for women, who find themselves at the bottom of the gender hierarchy. In a study exploring the mental health issues of minority lesbians, Greene (1994) notes that being a female or an ethnic minority provides an individual with a higher status than being a lesbian. As a result of this hierarchal perception, minority lesbians face the struggle of choosing between their ethnic community or the lesbian group. This identity struggle further leads them to reject their sexuality in order to fit in and function within the heterosexual community. Gay or lesbian persons of color may see the white community accepting gay men and lesbians more openly than their respective ethnic/racial groups. However, when they try to become part of the larger gay community, they face discrimination. Loiacano (1989) studies the political issues facing black lesbians and finds that people of color tend to be excluded from participating in lesbian political groups by being left out of the planning and decision-making process.

Although assimilation into the gay/ lesbian community can be a difficult task, some minority gay men and lesbians have found the support network of their ethnic group to be helpful. On the other hand, the cultural norms and expectations of some ethnic groups make the involvement of natural support systems more problematic than helpful for gay men and lesbians of that ethnic group. This is often the case for Latinos (Baez, 1996). Some examples of the kind of support systems provided by ethnic groups include the extended family, folk healers, religious institutions, merchant groups, and social clubs. Individuals who feel that they are a part of the gay community experience a higher level of assimilation and are less

dependent on these natural support systems. Manalansan (1994) indicates that the process of assimilation into the gay community is influenced by the values of the culture in which a person is reared and socialized, not their place of birth. Although minority gay men and lesbians may wish to seek and maintain their cultural identity, some of them may find that the lack of resources, social support, and role models can further complicate the process of identity development (Morris, 1997; Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993).

Similarities between Groups African Americans and Latinos

In the literature, many similarities have been noted between African-American and Latino gay men and lesbians. These similarities include impacts of religion, socioeconomic status, and sexual behavior. Greene (1994) states that Catholicism in Latino communities and Protestant forms of Christianity in African-American communities are strong cultural components. In both communities, interpretations of the Bible have often been used to reinforce homophobia.

Catholicism is an integral part of the Latino culture and encompasses traditional and conservative values that strongly denounce sexual minorities. This has alienated many Latino gay men and lesbians and has caused enormous guilt (Carballo-Diequez, 1989). Baez (1996) cites a 1992 study conducted by the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission that found no major religious organizations in support of gay and lesbian rights in Latino communities. In addition to Catholicism, Santeria (the syncretism of Roman Catholic and African/Yoruba beliefs) and Spiritualism (a European-based belief system relating good and evil spirits to the causation of human behaviors) are widely practiced in Latino communities. Santeria involves a system of rituals and folk beliefs brought from Africa to the Caribbean region during the slave trade. Many of the African deities were given names of Catholic saints to ensure the continuation of rituals and beliefs in Latino cultures. Spiritualism involves calling on the spirits of the dead to provide guidance and advice to those who are suffering. Although both of these belief systems are not supported by the Catholic religion, Santeros and Spiritualists use a body-mind approach to help direct gay and lesbian clients deal with their emotional problems with cultural support (Baez, 1996; Carballo-Diequez, 1989). It seems that these two religions offer help to the gay and lesbian community, but the literature does not address how these spiritual leaders were selected to help these clients. Since gay and lesbian rights were not the focus in this helping process (Baez, 1996), it is unclear whether the leaders actually accepted the gay and lesbian status of these clients, or simply wanted them to change by chasing away their "evil spirits."

Religious institutions clearly play a vital role in African-American communities as well. Greene and Boyd-Franklin (1996) report that African Americans in general have strong spiritual and religious beliefs that reinforce homophobic values. African-American gay men and lesbians may experience a conflict between their sexual identity and their religious beliefs, creating pressure to choose between the two. Icard (1996) discusses the difficulties experienced by African American gay men and lesbians due to the church's intolerance of homosexuality and the belief that it is a sin. Those minorities who are confused over their ethnic identity, gay/lesbian identity, and religious experience are likely to internalize negative thoughts of being gay and struggle with the irreconcilable choice between spirituality and sexuality. The effects of socioeconomic status and education serve to further compound the process of identity development for gay men and lesbians of color. Socioeconomic status and level of education are major factors contributing to social problems and emotional distress for ethnic minorities (Icard, 1996). Zamora-Hernandez and Patterson (1996) state that compared to whites, levels of education, income, and employment are lower for Latinos. This is believed to be the result of age, immigration status, geographic location, language barriers, discrimination, lack of skills, and poor schooling (Carballo-Diequez, 1989; Zamora-Hernandez & Patterson, 1996). Similarly, socioeconomic status and education among African Americans have been perceived as contributing factors to major discrimination against gay men in this

population. Icard (1996) attributes this weak tolerance to African American gay men's lack of opportunities to meet their needs for play, work, and love because of their economic instability. Sexual behavior preferences among homosexually active African-American and Latino men have been shown to be similar. Members of both groups identify insertive anal sex as their most preferred sexual practice. The preferred sexual practice among homosexually active white men is insertive oral sex (Carballo Dieguez, 1989; Stokes, Vanable, & McKirnan, 1996). The preference for insertive anal sex can be problematic as high rates of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS, are closely related to this type of sexual behavior (Cochran & Mays, 1994). Also, within African-American and Latino cultures, sex is commonly perceived as a means of procreation. Since many members of the Latino and African-American communities believe that the nonreproductive nature of homosexual sex can be a threat to the survival of the group, bisexuality has become more common (Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996; Jackson & Brown, 1996).

Latinos and Asian Americans

The identity development process of both Latino and Asian-American gay men and lesbians is affected by the importance of family in these cultures and the way in which family is defined. Family values, roles, and expectations and gender roles have been observed to be similar within these cultures. Newman and Muzzonigro (1993) report that the presence of traditional family values is more closely related to identity development than race. Latino and Asian-American families strongly believe that traditional family values help support their members to carry out their roles and duties (Greene, 1994).

Latino cultures strongly emphasize the importance of the family as the basic unit of society. Family, in this context, is broadly defined to include the nuclear unit, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and more distant relatives. Godparents and close family friends who are not blood related are considered integral members of the family system as well. The emphasis on strong family relationships, makes social support readily available in the event of a problem (Carballo-Dieguez, 1989). As described in the literature of Latino culture (e.g., Morales, 1992), men are expected to provide for the family and to defend and protect it with a strong sense of loyalty, while women are expected to be submissive to men, respectful to elders, and are often expected to reside with their parents until they are married. Gay men and lesbians may experience conflict between these gender roles and expectations and their sexual identity (Zamora-Hernandez & Patterson, 1996). Carballo-Dieguez (1989) indicates that Latino family structure interferes with privacy, as family members are very involved in each other's business and are free to make their opinions known. A gay or lesbian individual may feel badly when responding evasively to questions from family members about personal relationships. On the other hand, the emphasis on respect within Latino culture may help gay men or lesbians avoid harassment by people outside of the family.

In Asian-American culture, being gay or lesbian is viewed as a rejection of traditional gender roles. Asian Americans view the family as the primary social unit throughout one's lifetime. Asian-American culture views the continuation of the family through marriage and child rearing as a primary obligation (Chan, 1989). Obedience to parents, conformity to authority, respect for elders, and clearly defined gender roles are significant features in the Asian-American family system. Men are expected to marry to continue the family name, while women are expected to be submissive and to recognize the importance of their roles as daughters, wives, and eventually mothers. Open disclosure of a homosexual identity is therefore viewed as threatening to the continuation of the family and encompasses a rejection of prescribed roles within the culture (Greene, 1994; Ho, 1995). Confucianism in Asian-American cultures prescribes clear gender roles for men that contradict gay cultural ideals and roles. Within the system of Confucian gender roles, men are expected to obtain domestic virtue before public virtue. Men can only be seen as public leaders if they have cultivated themselves and maintain a harmonious and well-regulated family (Sohng & Icard, 1996).

African Americans and Asian Americans

In this study, no similarities were found between African-American and Asian-American gay men and lesbians. Although both cultures appear similar in terms of their emphasis on family relationships, this similarity has not been documented in the selected literature. Differences in socioeconomic status and education, sexual behavior, and religion may further contribute to different experiences for African Americans and Asian Americans in the process of gay and lesbian identity development.

Uniqueness

Although African-American, Latino and Asian-American gay men and lesbians share some strengths and barriers in identity development, the literature has addressed unique aspects of these groups separately.

Table 2 summarizes these common factors, as well as the unique variables relevant to each of these groups. Most discussions in the literature are related to barriers rather than strengths.

Table 2. Strengths and Barriers Affecting Minority Gay and Lesbian Identity Development

General

Barriers

1. Racial/ethnic discrimination and oppression
2. Sexual discrimination and oppression from the larger heterosexual society
3. Discrimination within racial/ethnic community for being gay or lesbian
4. Discrimination and rejection by the gay and lesbian community
5. Multiple minority status requiring assimilation into many different cultures
6. Limited social support
7. Few resources and limited access to resources
8. Lack of healthy role models

Strengths

1. Ability to cope

African Americans

Barriers

1. Traditional Protestant values that condemn homosexuality
2. Cultural emphasis on the reproduction function of sex
3. Perceived as having lower levels of education and socioeconomic status
4. Stigmas toward homosexuality

Strengths

1. Flexible gender roles
2. Family independence and interdependence

Latinos

Barriers

1. Strong Catholic values that condemn homosexuality
2. Traditional family structure that highly enforces rigid gender roles

3. Family loyalty versus sexual identity
4. Perceived lower levels of education and socioeconomic status
5. Difficulties resulting from communication and language

Strengths

1. Families as the basic units of society

Asian Americans

Barriers

1. Traditional cultural and family value that condemns homosexuality
2. Traditional and rigidly defined gender roles and expectations
3. Homosexuality perceived as a threat to family continuation

Strengths

1. Family as the primary social unit throughout one's lifetime
2. Traditional religions do not address homosexuality

African Americans African-American culture is characterized by strong family ties that involve both the nuclear and extended families and that encompass a wealth of obligation and support. Gender roles in African-American culture are more flexible than those in European-American culture and other ethnic minority groups. This is believed to be the result of interdependence among family members in African-American culture (Greene, 1994; Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996). In addition, African-American culture places a high emphasis on family, marriage, procreation, and commitment to the community. Having a gay or lesbian identity is perceived as contradicting these values and threatening the continuation of the culture (Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993).

Strong anti-gay sentiments in African-American culture have been well documented (Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996). Homosexual behavior is only tolerated in this community when it occurs in private and when it is not discussed or acknowledged (Stokes, et al., 1996). Due to strong cultural pressures, African-American lesbians are likely to maintain close relationships with their families, to be dependent on the family, to maintain contact with men and heterosexual peers, and to have children (Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996; Jackson & Brown, 1996). For African-American men, acceptance by peers requires adherence to traditional male behaviors and mannerisms. Furthermore, the more traditional the family, the more likely that homosexuals will experience negative family circumstances (Icard, 1996).

The process of African-American gay and lesbian identity development is not only complicated by conflicts between African-American cultural norms and minority sexual identity. Conflicts between African-American cultural norms and the norms of the dominant European-American culture also interfere with identity formation. For example, African-American men are presented with two contradicting models of masculinity. European-American cultures encourage men to be independent, dominant, self-confident, nonconforming, emotionally self-controlled, and the initiator of sexual behavior. Conversely, African-American men and women are encouraged to maintain independence and interdependence, balance their strength with gentleness, to be emotionally expressive and emotionally controlled, while allowing either gender to be the initiator of sexual behavior (Monteiro & Fuqua, 1994).

Latinos

In addition to the variables previously discussed, language creates a barrier to gay and lesbian identity development for Latinos. Latinos living in the United States have different levels of proficiency with the English language and come from diverse cultures. These differences create diverse levels of bilingualism.

Many Latinos who have not mastered either language may speak "Spanglish," borrowing words from each language to express themselves. This language issue creates enormous difficulties in assimilating into the European-American dominated gay and lesbian communities. The Spanish language does not have easily translatable words for expressing gay pride (Carballo-Diequez, 1989). For example, homosexuals in Latin American countries use the English term "gay" to identify themselves with a positive image rather than being named by other pejorative terms used by the general population in their respective countries. Additionally, many emotions and affective meanings do not freely translate from Spanish to English (Greene, 1994). As a result, many translated words have negative implications and have significant impacts on the gay community.

Asian Americans

Religion, sexual behavior, socioeconomic status, and education are variables found to be unique for Asian Americans. Asian Americans are reported to have higher levels of education and socioeconomic status than other ethnic minority groups (Manalansan, 1994). Asian religions do not overtly address homosexuality. Subsequently, many Asian cultures do not convey any messages to families or the larger society that gay men and lesbians exist (Ho, 1995). However, Williams (1994) found that homosexual behaviors were described in books about Buddhist monks in China and Japan and asserted that Buddhism "is more tolerant of sexual variance than Western religions" (p. 89). As previously mentioned, homosexuality is rejected in Asian-American cultures not because of religious convictions, but rather because it is perceived to threaten family and gender roles and expectations.

Fellatio and genital touching were found to be more common sexual behaviors than anal intercourse among Chinese homosexually active couples. It was found that, in the homosexual culture in China, active and passive sexual roles are not mutually exclusive and do not necessarily reinforce traditional gender roles (Pan, Wu, & Gil, 1995). Higher levels of education and lower levels of high risk sexual behavior compared to other ethnic minority groups may help to explain lower rates of HIV transmission among Asian Americans. In establishing relationships, European-American standards of beauty, masculinity, and respectability are often adopted. Because stereotypes of Asian-American women are often attractive to European-American men, many Asian-American gay men feel that they can be attractive to gay white men only when they adopt a dependent and submissive role (Tsui, 1986). In short, the literature on gay and lesbian identity development for ethnic minorities is dominated by a deficit perspective--the conflict of certain ethnic cultural norms and a minority sexual orientation obstructs identity formation for ethnic minority gay men and lesbians. A common theme in the literature is that the multiple aspects of identity development create confusion among minority gay men and lesbians and a common concern is the lack of support available to minority gay men and lesbians. In only a few instances does the literature describe how they use their strengths to develop strategies for dealing with the challenges of identity development. Using a traditions-oriented perspective, the literature on differences among African-American, Latino, and Asian-American cultures' attitudes towards and acceptance of sexual minorities focuses on social stigma, family dissonance, and value conflicts. When the literature on ethnic minority gay men and lesbians considers their families and cultures as a support or resource, only a few strengths have been identified.

Implications for Practice and Education

Gay and lesbian African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans share the dilemma of conflicting cultural and sexual identifications. But because of various levels of social attachment and diverse personal responses to their multiple identifications, they are differently affected by and responsive to this shared dilemma. This study found that the literature of the past decade has focused heavily on barriers and deficits experienced by gay and lesbian members of these three ethnic groups and offered little examination of the three theoretical assumptions of identity development shared by the Minority Identity

Development Model, Troiden's four-stage model, and the Cass Model of Homosexual Identity Formation: (1) the nonstatic nature of the search for identity; (2) the strengths of moving through various stages during this search; and (3) the commitment to end oppression. This finding points out the importance to our profession of educating our students from a strengths perspective. More researchers need to focus their studies on how ethnic minority gay men and lesbians utilize strengths in the ever-changing process of identity development. In addition, if the literature does not analyze the developmental and cultural aspects of gay men and lesbians' mental health needs, it may reinforce the deficit view and stereotypical images of these populations across gender and age groups.

Social work education emphasizes cultural sensitivity as a prerequisite for practice. In the literature, the similarities and differences of African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans are mainly discussed from the societal and cultural perspective. It is important to address the fact that social workers can adopt both micro and macro analytical views in assessing clients' perceptions of themselves. The analysis presented in this article represents just a beginning effort to examine the balance between a strengths focus and a deficit focus in practice and research. It is hoped that future research will focus on the analysis of strengths and provide insight for practitioners to help clients develop skills to deal with both the internal and external stressors that intervene in their identity development.

For the benefit of social work education, it is important to present recent findings related to minority populations. The limitations of this study include the employment of a content analysis method that can be perceived as subjective, and the categorization of conceptual areas limited to those frequently identified by the selected articles. Nevertheless, it also reveals several weaknesses of current research efforts related to minority gay and lesbian populations. First, many of the comparisons between ethnic groups in the literature seem to be heavily focused on cultural stereotypes. Second, the frequently identified areas are mostly related to barriers and deficits, and the selected articles are mostly descriptive with very sketchy data to substantiate how these barriers have been identified. Third, the literature does not provide much information on how minority gay men and lesbians utilize their strengths and resources in positive identity development. Fourth, the majority of the articles published in this topic area deal primarily with gay males. Fifth, only one study cited in this research describes issues related to adolescents and older men (Icard, 1996). Few studies have documented differences among gay and lesbian adolescent issues and their strengths. Also, no research focuses on the issues of older gay men and lesbians. Future research should concentrate more on the needs of lesbians, with special attention to youth and the elderly.

In working with gay and lesbian persons of color, social workers and helping professionals need to become familiar with cultural values and factors that affect the process of identity development. Awareness of the process of cultural identity formation as well as gay and lesbian identity formation will improve the practitioners' ability to assist clients in navigating this intersection. Furthermore, practitioners need to become skillful in eliciting from clients the cultural values that cause them difficulties functioning within many diverse and contradicting value systems and cultures. These cultural values in turn can be reframed into positive strengths and resources.

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